

SPRAWL

SURVIVAL GUIDE™



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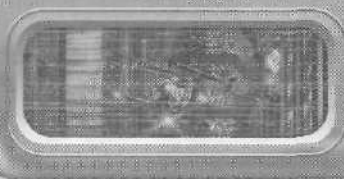
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4	Techno-Social Networks	46	Shelter	90
DOWN TO BASICS	5	The Year in Politics	47	Food	91
LIVING IN THE SIXTIES	6	Love Without Boundaries	49	Clothing and Washing	91
Our Humble Homes	6	Body Fashion	51	Medical Care	92
Keeping House	8	The Eye in the Sky	52	Getting Along with the	
The Networked Home	11	Spirituality: Something to		Neighbors	93
Welcome to the Jungle	14	Believe in	53	The Hook-Up	93
Places to Stay	14	Education: Skool Daze	54	Who's What in the Shadows	94
Getting Around	16	Curing What Ails You	57	Reputation	97
What You Want, When You		IT'S A SMALL WORLD	59	Moving On, Moving Up	98
Want It	17	Modern Travel	59	The Plan	99
Entertainment	21	Getting Out of Town	60	Getting a Job	99
Nightlife	22	Documents	60	Meets	100
Music	24	Culture Shock	62	Doing Your Homework	102
Trideo: TV in 3-D	24	Shadow Travel: Getting There		On the Run	104
Simsense: Be Who You		On the Sly	62	Delivering the Goods	106
Want To Be!	25	Commercial Travel	63	Downtime	107
Simsense: What's On?	27	Illicit Travel	67	The Enemy	109
Corporate Fun	28	Global Report	71	Interview with Federated-	
Advertising	30	Africa	72	Boeing Security	109
On the News	31	Asia	73	Know Thine Enemy	110
Sports: The Big Leagues	32	Europe	75	The Law in the Shadows	112
2063 Pro Sports Overview	34	North America	78	Buying the Law	113
The System	37	South and Central America	79	Getting Caught	113
Keeping Track of Our SInS	37	Oceania	80	The Crew	114
Credsticks: Cash on the Go	38	LIFE ON THE RUN	81	Material Matters	115
Money, Money, Money	39	The Scoop	81	Interpersonal Issues	116
Law & Jurisdiction	40	The Switch	85	Summary	117
Society	43	Twist Interview	86	GAME INFO	118
Lines in the Sand	43	Fatima Interview	88	Gear	118
Sisters Under the Skin	45	Neal Interview	89	The Home Telecom Terminal	118



Household Drones	121
Electronic Paper	123
ColorChange Paint	123
Credsticks	123
Credstick Beacons	123
Hacking Credsticks	123
Hacking Credstick Readers	125
Forging IDs	125
ID Edges & Flaws	126
Edges	126
Flaws	126
Detailed Lifestyles	127
Using this System	128
Area	128
Comforts	129
Entertainment	130
Furnishings	131
Security	131
Space	132
Other Considerations	133
Lifestyle Edges & Flaws	137
Integrating with Lifestyle	
Costs	137
Lifestyle Edges	137
Lifestyle Flaws	140
Sample Lifestyle Packages	143
Acquiring or Removing	
Edges and Flaws	144

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INTRODUCTION



Sprawl Survival Guide touches upon the basic aspects of the world of *Shadowrun*: society, travel and life as a shadowrunner. This book is intended to be a primer on what the world in 2063 is like—and in particular, what being a shadowrunner is about. The details it provides on the world and how technology and magic have shaped it will allow gamemasters to establish futuristic settings that are rich, vibrant and realistic. This book will also assist players in figuring out how their characters fit into the scheme of things and how they live their daily lives.

Sprawl Survival Guide is presented as a series of electronic documents posted by Captain Chaos, sysop of the vast Shadowland archive and data haven—the number one source for shadowrunners on what's going on in the world of *Shadowrun*. The documents come from a variety of sources, both underground and mainstream, but are directed towards an audience of shadowrunners. These sources are each unique in outlook and perspective, influenced by their own particular prejudices and interests. Each article is marked up with a running commentary by shadow denizens who add to, revise and contradict the original post. These inserted comments add innuendo, allegations, opinions, rumors, misconceptions, misinformation, lies and sometimes even the truth to the information presented. It is left up to the gamemaster to decide what information is correct and which is just filling, as appropriate to his or her game.

The first document, *Living in the Sixties*, delves into various facets of society in 2063. First it describes the modern home, with all of its technological conveniences and security vulnerabilities. It then explains nightlife and various forms of popular

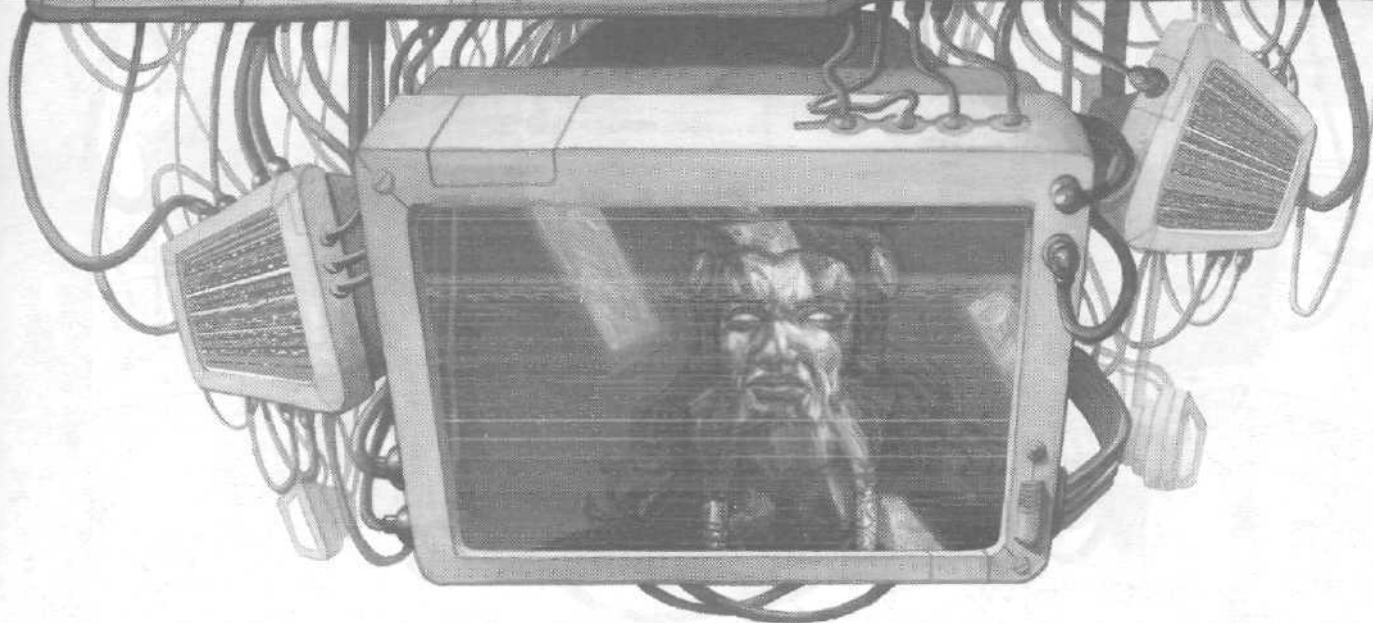
entertainment, from music to shopping to trideo and simsense. This includes an overview of modern sports and how they have been affected by the Awakening and science. The chapter goes on to detail various ways people interact with government/corporate systems: SINs, credsticks, accounts, law and jurisdiction. Finally, it discusses a number of far-reaching societal aspects, such as as racial intolerance, sexuality, techno-social networks, fashion, omnipresent surveillance, religion and education.

The next section, *It's a Small World*, provides an overview of the state of travel in *Shadowrun* with a strong emphasis on what shadowrunners can do to bypass legalities and smuggle contraband. It also includes a *Global Report* section that quickly runs down the current events and socio-political-economic climates of each continent, highlighting a few cities and places of specific interest to shadowrunners.

Following this, *Life on the Run* gives a ground-level introduction to life in the shadows. It follows the development of a "newbie" who takes to the streets and learns the basics of how things work in the underworld. A number of interviews with different shadow denizens are included to offer differing viewpoints and perspectives.

Finally, the *Game Information* section explains how home telecoms and dataterms work in detail and includes a number of new common-use drones. Some basic costs for everything from bus fare to sports tickets are included as a reference guide. The use and abuse of credsticks and credstick readers is explored, including a few Edges and Flaws for fake IDs. Finally, a complete set of optional rules for expanding on a character's Lifestyles is presented, including a wide range of Lifestyle Edges & Flaws.

DOWN TO BASICS



Nighthawk, Rikki Ratboy, Neon Antichrist, Warthog, Head Crash, Ricochet Rita, Wedge ...
RIP all of 'em.

These are just a few of the shadowrunners that died on the streets of the sprawl during the last month. More fodder for the devil rats or chopshops. Their names will soon be forgotten, remembered only as a listing in Shadowland's Scrolls of the Dead.

I'm not trying to be harsh, or to pick on these dead runners in particular. I've heard of far too many runners lately, though, who permanently logged off because they made what can only be called basic mistakes. They didn't slot off a dragon, cross Damien Knight or tangle with a toxic spirit—nothing so heroic or flashy. No, they died because they slotted one BTL too many, got caught in a gang crossfire or were too loose-lipped in the vicinity of a Lone Star snitch. In other words, they got sloppy.

They say it's always the small things that get ya, the minor details we all overlook that trip us up. So I said to myself that maybe it was time to take a look at the basics, the nitty gritty not just of how things work in the shadows, but in society in general.

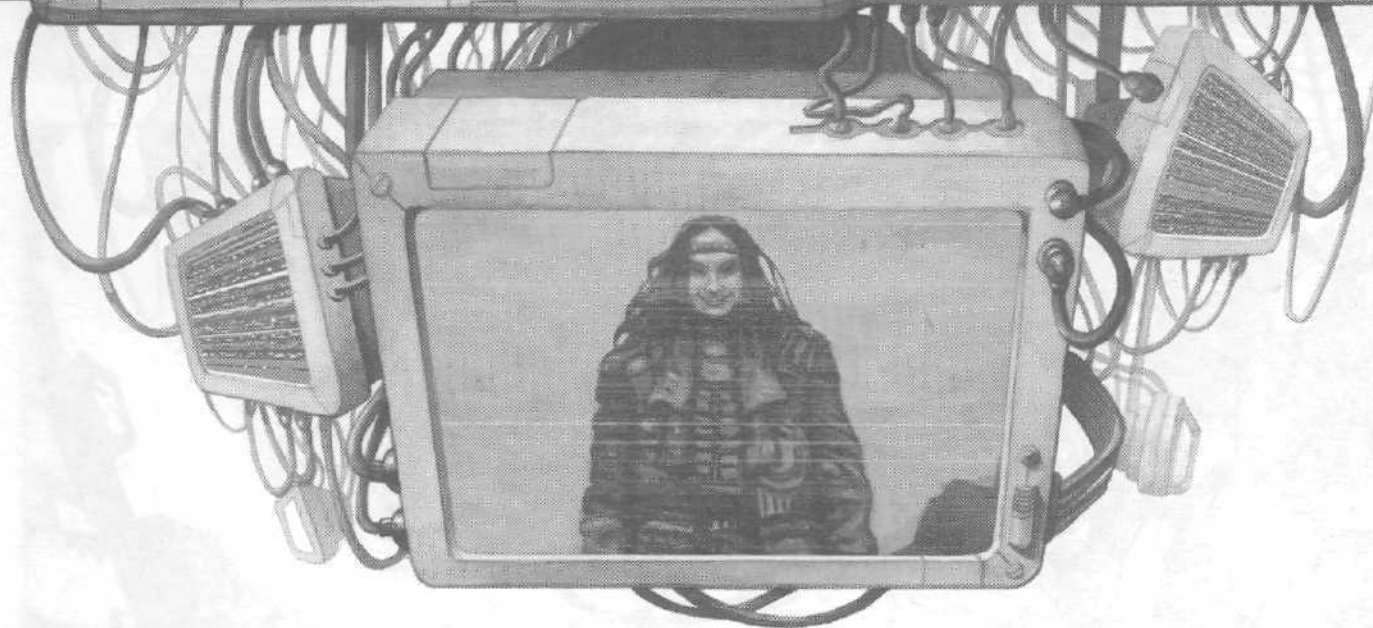
The most rudimentary thing to remember about shadowrunning is that it's about survival. For a lot of us, taking to the shadows was the only chance we had to avoid a more unpleasant, destitute or sterile existence. We made the choice to commit crimes not to save the world, for some political cause or to become rich, but to put food in our mouths and live for another day.

So that's the purpose of this file collection, in a nutshell. I'm hoping it will remind all of us to keep our cybereyes open, keep the bigger picture in mind and take nothing for granted.

• Captain Chaos.

Transmitted: 30 April 2063 at 05:04:23 (PST)

LIVING IN THE SIXTIES



In my never-ending quest to provide shadowrunners the hard data they need to keep from becoming involuntary organ donors, I felt it was time to return to the basics: daily life. What use is it to teach a shadowrunner all about dragons and megacorps if he doesn't have the basic street-level survival skills? We take it for granted that everyone keeps up to speed with the latest advances in modern living, but with the way technology accelerates changes in society and daily life, it can be hard to hang on when things take a curve. A lot of us have lived in the Barrens and shadows for so long that we forget how the norms live, much less the elites who carry on behind their monowire gates and drone-patrolled perimeter walls.

First up on today's lesson is an overview of modern life, from the rose-tinted viewpoint of the straight world. We lifted these files from *LiveWire Magazine's* still unpublished "Looking Towards 2064" issue, the latest in an annual series. It's a corporate organ, of course, despite the polite fiction of editorial independence. We chopped out the advertising and the more shameless shills; those interested in speculation can join the discussion over on the "Guess the Monolithic Corporation" SIG. We're hoping the rest of you will stick around and spill your .02 nuyen on how life in the Sixties really works.

• Captain Chaos

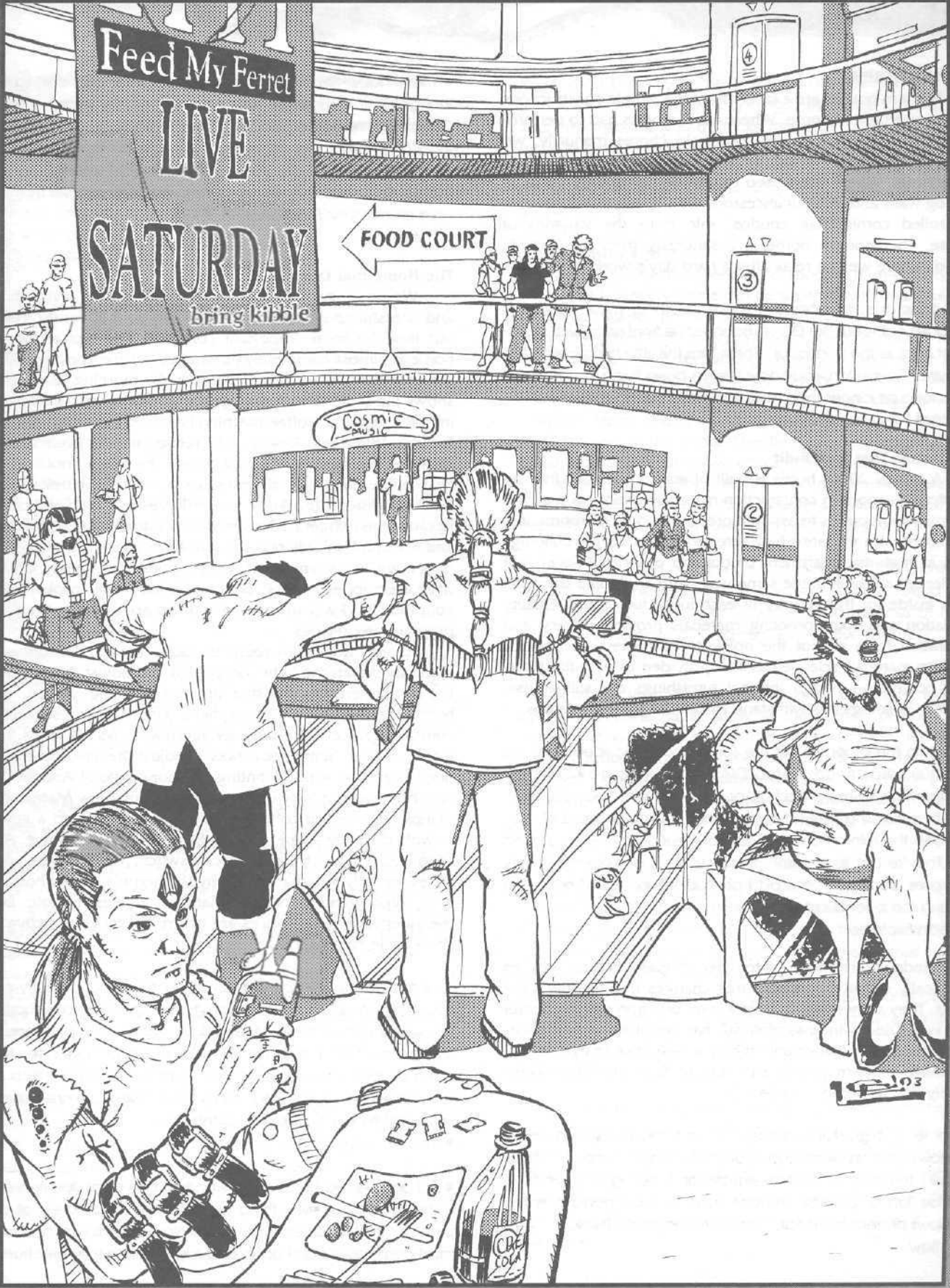
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OUR HUMBLE HOMES

We spend half our lives in them, yet our own homes often rate no more than the briefest attention from us. From the earliest days of mud huts and crude tents, our houses have evolved into comfortable and luxurious domains safe from street crime and the worries of the world. They are castle and keep, our defense against the outside. Even the most private homes, however, can surrender the secrets of our personalities to the careful observer. It seems fitting to begin our coverage of life in the 2060s with a close look at how we live.

• Frag this. Home is anywhere that keeps the acid rain off my head for the night, security is the blade in my arm and comfort comes in 40-ounce bottles. Anything else is a friggin' luxury.

• Brick



KEEPING HOUSE

Modern houses are a far cry from the simple constructions people used to call home. Where our forebears had to perform all but the most menial of household chores manually, we enjoy all the labor-saving devices that our technology has brought us. Where wind used to whistle in through chinks in the log walls and chill our ancestors, we sit snug in our climate-controlled comfortable condos, safe from the vagaries of nature. The modern home is a sanctuary from the outside world, where we can relax after a hard day's work.

- Is it just me, or does this make anything more than two decades old seem like Daniel Boone-style frontiering with buffalo just outside the front door? There was this little thing called the Industrial Revolution, you know. We've been living in urbanized cities for a bit longer than this plastic little screed makes out.

- Fidget

The House That Jack Built

A typical 2060s home is built of environmentally friendly plasticrete—modern construction materials often use recycled polymer compounds to assist in preserving our environment—reinforced with the latest high-strength alloys. Larger buildings such as high-rise apartment blocks and other multi-occupant residences are built in the same way, with additional structural walls inside for the security of each individual home. Quality insulation and soundproofing materials provide privacy and separation from all but the noisiest—or nosiest—neighbors. Modern materials science has also provided us with fire retardant polymers—though internal furnishings are still at risk, modern buildings can withstand all but the hottest infernos.

- And on the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, you can buy ultra-cheap prefab DIY homes. It's hard to decide whether they're more like huts or glorified tents, and your average box-dwelling alleyrat might feel at home in one, but they do keep the rain off and provide four (semi) solid walls around you. They're not that common these days, as housing density increases, but there's the odd pre-fab "shantytown" here and there in the poor quarters.

- Urban Explorer

Windows are made of toughened glass, coated with an electrically sensitive laminate that changes the window's tint levels. They sometimes contain a layer of argon gas to counter heat loss. Older windows often still have photochromatic glass, where the panes darken and lighten in response to light levels, but more modern homes can control their tint levels completely from a home console.

- Homes in high-status areas tend to have really dark-tinted windows—the residents can afford the exorbitant power bills for all the internal lights to compensate, and the high-tint windows provide lots of privacy. Perhaps even more important, tinted windows protect the inhabitants from magical attack.

- Ratlaw

- The window-tint craze caught on just after cars started featuring full-tint windows, and for much the same reasons. Obviously, street-level windows tend to be tinted more heavily than ones on higher floors since people on the thirtieth floor usually don't have to worry about random bystanders with magical mischief on their minds. Any magical mischief that high up is usually fully intentional.

- Autonome

The Home that Does It All

We no longer have to waste our time with trivial chores and stressful housework; our house can do it all for us, freeing our time for more important concerns. The typical modern home is almost completely automated for the convenience of the occupants. When you wake up in the morning, every clock shows the same time as you glance across to the cup of morning java that your coffee machine has been instructed to make for you. When you look in your refrigerator for breakfast you know all the food is still fresh, since the fridge monitors the best-before dates of all the produce and alerts you before good food is wasted. You know you'll have milk for your coffee, because the refrigerated dispenser monitors the reservoir level and will automatically reorder your beverages via Matrix shopping if you're running short. Cooking breakfast is easy, as your oven is equipped to cook, broil, nuke, toast, boil, cool or freeze your food, and will automatically do so according to your pre-programmed recipes.

As you walk from room to room, motion sensors automatically switch the lights on and off and adjust them to your pre-set preferences for that time of day and season. Your home's sensors collect atmospheric data and its host receives constant updates from weather information Matrix feeds; how else does your home know how to adjust the air-conditioning, humidifiers and window tinting for your comfort? And on your way home after a busy day at work, it's but a few Matrix commands to have hot coffee, freshly-baked bread and a newly-downloaded newspaper waiting for you when you arrive. And, of course, you barely have to flick a switch. Most modern appliances are fully automated, run by the home's central host and easily reprogrammed via the Matrix or wireless remote. Even the independent appliances are controlled by voice activation and simple commands.

- Homeowners who pride themselves on being "security-conscious" often set essential services to respond only to authorized voice prints. So, of course, their voiceprints have to be recorded somewhere for the appliances to refer to, and more often than not they forget to plug that little loophole. If you need to get someone's voiceprint, you could do worse than checking to see what his water cooler responds to.

- Invader

- Yet another part of the electron trail that dogs Joe Average. If the records of everything he does are all collated at one point, it's that much easier to profile him. Which is why, of course, most corps build back doors and spyware into their electronics,



particularly consumer data terminals. Little embedded programs collect all the Joe Average data—what he eats and when, what he watches, what he buys, etc—and periodically update the company. Some spyware even steals data from other spyware, to build better profiles. Then whenever Joe uses these devices or accesses the Matrix, he gets targeted with adverts specially contrived to fit his tastes. It's a marketing analyst's wet dream.

- Grassy Gnoll

- Oh, please. There is a limit, you know. Next you'll be telling me the faucet dispenses microscopic tracking devices with my water.

- Skeptic

- Are you sure it doesn't?

- Grassy Gnoll

- Actually, the collection of marketing data is no joke. With the amount of data a home terminal sends out, it's completely trivial for an attached appliance to invisibly squirt out a package of local data to a specified Matrix address. There are all sorts of anti-spyware proggies you can run to counter this, of course, but the direct market corps inevitably come out with newer and sneakier spyware that can bypass your filters.

The bonus to deckers, of course, is that these spyware datadumps can be really helpful in building your own profile of a target. Just monitor his Matrix line, or access the data files of the spyware embedded in the device. People just fail to realize the copious amounts of personal data they leave lying around on all of their electronics.

- Sneak

Imagine life without all these conveniences; imagine a home where every appliance worked separately and had to be controlled manually. If you can imagine what it's like to operate your trid set with no remote control, you have an inkling of how much of their lives our forebears used to waste on trivial chores.

If you're horrified by the wasted energy that used to be spent on so many little menial tasks, be thankful for the age you live in. Modern housecleaning is largely taken care of while the occupants are at work and school. Simple cleaning drones operate while you're out of the house, keeping your home spick-and-span—though they've had less to do ever since the common adoption of statically-charged walls, carpeting and furniture that repel dust and dirt.

- I hope you all see the possibilities in this. Cleaning drones, however autonomous, can be intercepted and reprogrammed to perform any number of more reprehensible duties. And, since the occupant is used to seeing them whirring across her nice carpeted floors, she's unlikely to pay them much attention at all.

- Crunch

- Cleaning bots aren't the only common household drones—robotic pets are still a very big thing. They're animated and realistic, they respond and do tricks, they don't destroy furniture or make a mess on the carpet, and best of all, they turn off and store nicely in your closet. I can't imagine keeping an actual live, smelly critter for company around the house.

- Technophile

A Room with a View

Unfortunately, the pressures of modern high-density living mean that not every home can be situated with beautiful views of the cityscape; not every apartment is a penthouse with sweeping vistas from every window. The possibilities implicit in modern imaging technology, however, have gone a long way to alleviate this; huge trideo-screen "windows" allow the occupants to look out upon any vista they choose—or can imagine. From Martian landscapes to London's Hyde Park, from the top of the Space Needle to a yacht cruising in the Bahamas, modern homeowners can feel like they're living anywhere they wish. Hidden surround-sound speakers provide a subtle soundtrack to add to the scene's realism, whether it's the twittering of birds or the sound of relaxing breezes.

- Relaxing. Yeah. In my college dorm we used this relaxing trid feature to play never-ending looped segments of Speed Coma concerts, NASCAR races or Desert Wars sequences at full volume for weeks on end. "Relaxing" is a relative term.

- Cacophony

Similarly, upmarket homes are often decorated internally with photovoltaic paint, allowing the home's central host to change the wall color to suit the owner's mood, the time of day, the ambient lighting conditions and so on. The latest fad amongst sophisticated homeowners is ruthenium-polymer paint, which is far more expensive but allows much finer detail and image resolution, for breathtakingly real wall art.

- Which is delightful, I'm sure you'll agree, except it can be real confusing to jander into a room you were in an hour ago, only to see the walls have changed from saffron to bright red and there's a great big katakana symbol on the far wall. If you're not paying attention, you can get lost pretty easy that way. Plus, I've heard tell that some enterprising security designers are programming the walls to strobe, change patterns and otherwise do disorienting things in compromised areas when the alerts are tripped, to delay any intruders.

- Thumper

- Still, any home with trideo windows or color-changing walls can be used to your own advantage. If you control the home's central host, you control what the walls display. Obviously, it's not often worth the effort for a four-room city apartment. If you're intruding in a bigger house, however, the applications for camouflage, subterfuge and misdirection are obvious.

- Skerrick

LIVING DAY-TO-DAY

There are those, of course, who live another lifestyle. Whether due to financial misfortune or social choice, some choose to subsist on a day-to-day basis, living in illegal "dosses" and ignoring the responsibilities of citizens in today's society.

- My my, Hard-hitting social exposé, this. Sure, we're all just losers who don't want to do an honest day's work. Frag, I wanna see this "Journalist" lose her Job (excuse me, "get down-sized") and end up living in vermin-infested dosses like the rest of us. Self-righteous little slitch, isn't she?

- Skar

These people have always been known as "squatters." They occupy a residence without the consent of the legal owner and make their homes there until they are evicted—and then they move on to their next "squat." The amenities available to squatters are a mere shadow of the facilities that legitimate residents enjoy. Most squatters can't afford normal services, and many have evaded being assigned SIDs, so they operate without proper electricity, water or Matrix connections. The more technically-competent of their brethren will often hook up illicit taps on power and communications services to siphon off stolen resources for their own unsanctioned use.

- There's a lot more variety among squats than this indicates. Some squats will have all the hook-ups, or will stealthily reside in a "good" neighborhood, or will be part of a community of squatters that watch out for and support each other. Other squats might be barely-standing wrecks with no roofs, the stink of the ghouls that lived there earlier and a steady turnover in occupants as previous ones get chased off, die or worse.

- Umbrella House

Of course, with no legitimate service accounts and no Matrix connections, squatters can't enjoy the amenities available to regular homeowners and tenants. Their squats will often have scrounged or stolen appliances, and sometimes they'll even have the electricity to power some of them, but the integration and automation that make our homes so comfortable are beyond the reach of such a lifestyle.

- And frag, there's nothing like knowing Mr. Homeowner is going to wake up to your overnight hacking handiwork in his face tomorrow, after he cuts you off in traffic today. Photovoltaic vandalism—it's the greatest cure for road rage I've found.

- SJT

Since modern homes are often designed around how we use them to relax, current architecture and furnishings favor "experience centers" rather than antiquated living rooms. Instead of a focus on experiencing old 2-D entertainment media, ex-centers have simsense in mind. These areas feature

futons and low furniture made for reclining as well as inventive, space-saving layouts for residents to relax together while enjoying the privacy of their own minds.

- In other words, we cut social space down two-thirds, since it's all in your mind when sim-sensing. A lot of old, low-rent apartments are actually hack jobs where they simply divided an old flat in half using cheap barrier materials and crammed in some extra haphazard plumbing. Who needs space anymore?

- Ben

Stocking the Kitchen

If there was one area where our forefathers didn't realize how fortunate they were, it was their easy and unlimited access to fresh and natural food. Though their food wasn't clean and safe by modern standards, the low populations of the times meant it was certainly plentiful, and everyone could either produce or afford foods that look luxurious and extravagant by today's standards.

- Yes, hearken back to rosy yesteryear, where food was abundant. And please conveniently forget the history of Third World populations that starved while excess food rotted away or was discarded in First World nations. Just as we should forget that the corporate elite today eats like kings while a delicacy in the Barrens is a fresh devil rat.

- Green Piece

That's not to say that our food today is unpleasant, of course. Modern health and safety standards work constantly to ensure the food you eat meets stringent quality requirements, while the latest advances in genetic engineering allow farmers to produce crops and stock designed to get the maximum out of their environment. Two centuries ago, no one could have imagined we'd be growing barley on polar icecaps, and yet now the agritech researchers of Naturekraft assure us it's but a few years away.

All of these advances mean that most families can afford a healthy diet with a good balance of both traditional organic foods and "new foods" made from soy products, mycoprotein and the like. The modern food industry excels at transforming mundane soy into a vast range of synthetic foods, particularly foods with interesting flavors but not much textural variation. Soy potatoes, for example, really are nearly as good as the real thing. Synthetic new foods are almost always the basis for fast food and pre-packaged convenience foods, too.

- I was about to ask about the content of Nerps, but on second thought I'd rather not know.

- Bung

- If all of that biotech really worked as advertised, real food wouldn't be a luxury right now. But the bottom line is that synthetic foods are cheaper and easier to supply to the masses, so



we eat dog food when real (well, genetically-modified) fruits and vegetables could be just as available, if more expensive.

- Tomacco

Sometimes only the real thing is good enough, of course, and it's fortunate that there are still plenty of natural-food vendors to feed us. Though real food costs more than it used to, it's still well within the reach of families with reasonable incomes, and provides variety and enjoyment that synthetic foods may never match.

• Frag, I don't know that many families who eat much real food all that regularly. This article really is all about "how to feel inferior to people who have more money than you," isn't it?

- Tacoma Zhang

• You noticed.

- Ratlaw

THE NETWORKED HOME

In today's information age, instant and unlimited access to the data you need is crucial. Even one's home depends on the Matrix—from the weather reports that remind you to take your air-filter on bad smog days to the monitoring systems that automatically call maintenance services when your drains clog; unseen computer networks make your everyday life possible in countless ways.

The modern home is fully Matrix-wired—optical ports for networking are ubiquitous in every room, while the home's central terminal processes the datastream and handles information requests. Most telecoms also run a local wireless network, allowing your appliances and devices to communicate with "no strings attached," avoiding the "cable spaghetti" of fiberoptics.

Discreet displays on networked appliances, from the fridge to the dishwasher, show alerts when new calls and emails arrive so you'll never miss that important message. Hardworking homeowners save precious minutes every day as they check their email from the microwave while it's defrosting their dinner.

• Ho, ho. Of course, the so-cute wireless connectivity makes it that much easier to eavesdrop on the data transfers, unless they're using secure point-to-point connections like laser links, which are usually considered overkill anyway.

- Notch

• It's amazing how much personal information Joe Citizen broadcasts to his neighborhood over his wireless net every day: private email, trid calls, viewing/cooking preferences, social calendar, journal entries, addressbook, etc. Some people will even share their nets with their neighbors. There have been enough stalking and remote vandalism incidents over the years so that wireless nets come with built-in security and basic broadcast encryption, but any tech-wiz with a rep can subvert that. You'll only find real security if your target is rich or requires some privacy.

- Wardriver

• Wireless nets make it easy to plant data or wreak havoc remotely. Want to frame someone? Plant an incriminating file on his home network without ever entering his house. Need a distraction? Override the safety features and instruct someone's oven to overcook and start a grease fire from a few blocks away. Hacking has never been so much fun.

- Glitch

Working From Home

Historians tell us that one of the greatest effects of the Matrix was the decentralization of the workplace. Dedicated Matrix connections mean that many corporate employees can easily work from home without risking their employers' security, while the full-spectrum sensory immersion of the Matrix means that virtual meetings are just as productive and comfortable as fleshworld ones. Virtual offices allow employees to interact with their colleagues just as in real-world offices, enabling the stimulus of creative input that fosters business achievement and progress, all from the comfort of their own home.

Employers still have to consider the safety and integrity of their information systems, however, so eligible staff are often offered accommodation in corporate housing enclaves. These arrangements are a win-win situation—the staff member has comfortable (and sometimes luxurious) housing subsidized by his employers, while the corporation can ensure that their data and systems are secure. Only low-sensitivity projects are offered to telecommuting workers outside the corporation's direct aegis; this usually covers marketing, customer service, sales and technical support.

• Busting into the home of a telecommuter used to be an easy way to get access to a corp system with legit IDs and passcodes. These days, though, the corps have wised up—the hosts offsite employees access are usually isolated from the main corp system, or blocked by a heavy chokepoint with more IC than the North Pole.

- FastJack

For Your Safety

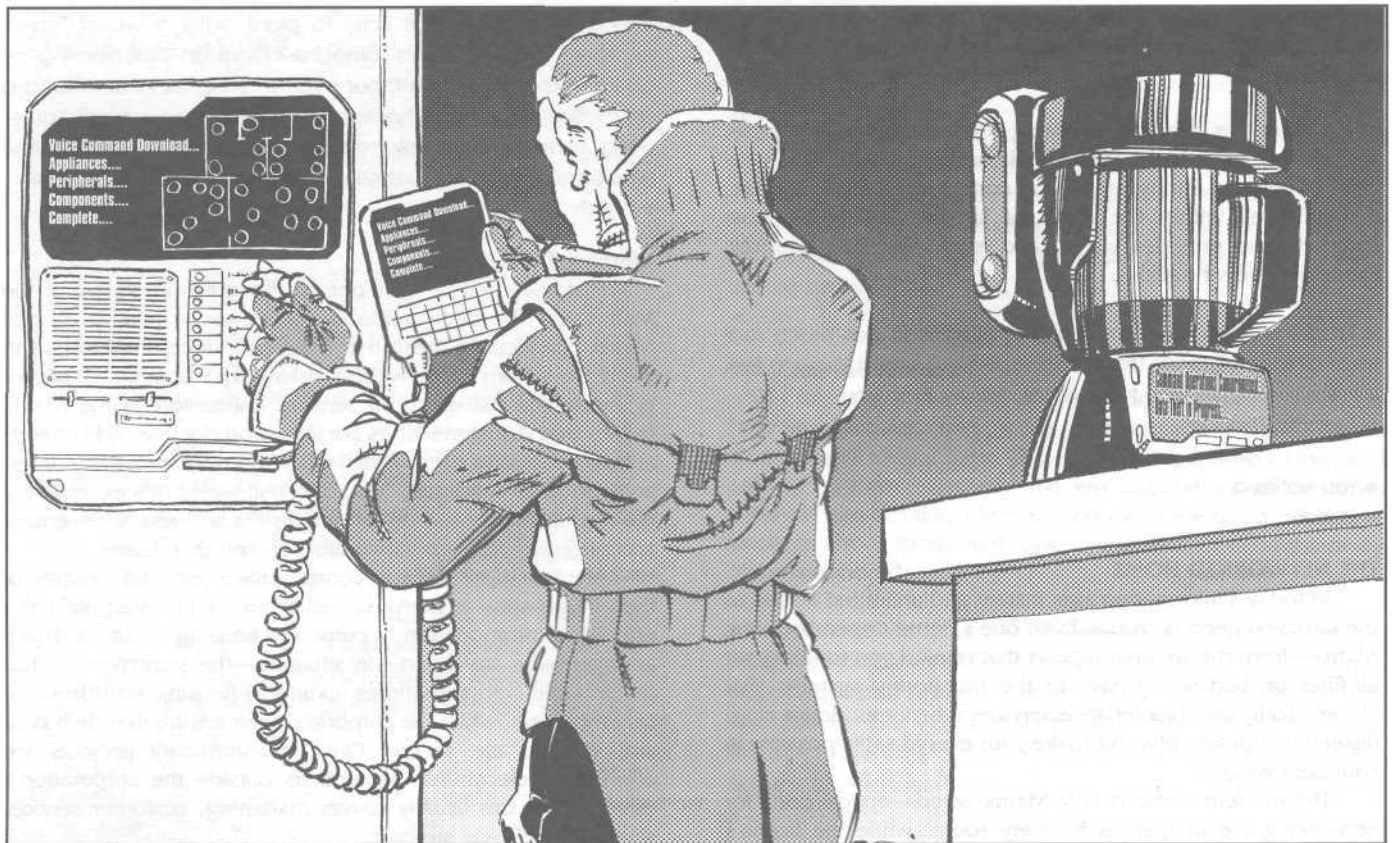
An active Matrix connection also protects your home's security. A typical modern home is protected by a number of high-tech security measures that would not have been possible in the days before integrated home systems. At the most basic level, the maglocks on your doors trigger your home's Matrix connection to send emergency break-and-enter alerts to your security company if the lock is compromised or forced open.

• Which is why you buy quality tools and learn to do it right, of course.

- Sneak

• In swanky neighborhoods, the doorlocks call Lone Star, for frag's sake. You slip with a tool when you're busting the lock and a silent call goes off to Lone Star. Rent-a-cops are bad enough; real cops are worse.

- Razor Rick



Most homes also feature window alarms, since with modern climate-control technology most homeowners never need—or want—to open a window. The sensors are incorporated into the same circuitry that controls the window tinting and triggered by opening the window or breaking the glass. (Of course, you can easily disable the alarm from the home's central terminal if you *want* to open a window.) Again, these alarms use the home Matrix connection to dispatch alerts to a nominated security provider.

Almost all homes also feature integral PANICBUTTON circuitry to call for help in the event of emergency, whether medical or security. During the night, lights are controlled by motion sensors, ready to flood your home with light if an intruder tries prowling around. And, finally, the ubiquitous doorbell has been all-but-replaced by camera systems—why open your door to an unwelcome security risk?

Beyond these simple measures, home security varies with the occupant. A number of companies, such as Wolverine and Zero-Zone Security, offer comprehensive home security packages that follow the same design principles as other home services—seamless, transparent to use, and invisible unless they're needed. Your home's central terminal monitors input from all the devices and notifies your security provider immediately if any of the alarms are tripped.

• Check out the security download over on the State of the Art: 2063 forum for more data on security measures. Most of it focus-

es on corporate security, but you could still run up against any of these devices in a regular home. Still, unless the security designers have gone all out with the networking, the weak point is still going to be the control unit—the home's cyberterminal.

• Highwire

Exclusive residential areas, whether luxury condominiums or corporate complexes, often feature enhanced measures at common entry points for residents' security. Metal detectors are the most common, though you might also see chemical detectors and cyberware scanners to keep out undesirable elements.

• Latest in the Revolting Developments department: I've seen a few housing complexes that proudly advertise chemsniffers and internal surveillance within the apartments, aimed at protective parents worried that Junior's got a drug problem or is sneaking out at nights.

• Ginger

• Big deal, corp housing hives do this sort of thing already. If your boss suddenly schedules you for a check-up, it's because the scanner in your toilet probably tasted traces of something it didn't like.

• Kusanagi

- The real security for those with power isn't just pervasive sec-tech toys. It's actual physical segregation from the rabble. Arcologies, gated communities and walled corporate enclaves ensure that loyal wageslaves and their bosses remain isolated and protected from the masses. Many downtown business districts follow the same model, riot-proofing and privatizing public space by using strategically placed pallsades, bulletproof barriers and gateways to limit street-level access and channeling foot traffic to elevated walkways.

- Urban Explorer

The same connectivity that will instantly bring the police can also summon emergency medical help. For people with medical conditions or implants who need monitoring, subscription medical providers offer scanning/testing suites for home use. Users can rely on automated systems to provide proper medications or call up their doctor for step-by-step instructions in an emergency.

- I wish black clinics offered services like that. It's hell when my supratheroid acts up.

- Soma Tick

- Hack a house's med system like that, and you can get the occupants to dose themselves for a nice snooze while you b&e.

- Sneak

Medical and security problems aren't the only emergencies your household might face—fire is an ever-present risk. Modern homes feature sophisticated fire sensors, both smoke detectors and heat-sensitive thermal sensors that sound penetrating alarms and dispatch emergency alerts to the local fire department. Top-end systems also deploy interim fire control measures, usually in the form of gas and dryfoams to smother the blaze.

Some homes also feature curiosities from last century: highly secure in-home fortresses with independent power and communications. Common in some social circles, these "panic rooms" were intended for protection in case of home security, though their popularity waned as ordinary home security measures became more effective with improving technology. Very rare in apartment blocks, their star is on the rise again in single houses—secure Matrix connections and wireless drone networks can make a panic room into an unassailable fortress until help arrives. Though they don't come cheap, some consider it a small price to pay for ultimate security.

- These can ruin anyone's day, trust me. There are ways around every security measure, sure, but one of these can turn a simple home intrusion into a complete headache for you.

- Invader

- If you've got to go up against one of these, your first priority is shutting down their contact with the outside world—do everything you can to interfere with their Matrix feed and jam their drones ASAP. On the other hand, you could just walk away and

try something easier; breaking into a well-designed safety room can be like trying to crack open a coconut with a plastic fork.

- Sneak

- Panic-room bunkers are just the beginning. I pulled an extraction raid on one rich wanker who had his own counter-surveillance rooms and a biowarfare shelter. I've also heard of blokes with astral containment areas, "unbreakable" safes and even escape tunnels. Never underestimate the security wealth can buy.

- RoofRat

Integrate and Automate

The greatest strength of home network technology is that it's seamless and invisible. Well-designed systems are transparent for the home user—you never need to think about what your system is doing. All the mundane chores of life are dealt with by expert system to free up your time for pursuits you enjoy. Your home's central cyberterminal listens to your appliances, your entertainment units and your work computer and does the hard work for you so that you don't have to think about it.

- Which is the biggest weakness for people like us to exploit.

- Sneak

- The one thing Joe Average never learns is "plan for the worst." Your average middle-class home puts all its eggs in one basket, data-wise. Security, telecommunications, personal banking records—hell, even the automatic programming for the bread-maker. It's all there; you crack into a home telecom and you've got their whole lives at your fingertips.

- DangerMouse

- Aye on that. Jane Wageslave might well keep her work data on a separate computer that's isolated from the home net except when she's working online—if she's instructed to by her employer. Otherwise, there's a fair chance she'll never be that careful. People who live within the system tend to assume that everyone else does too, until it's too late.

- Metropolis

- You hack a house, it's not just files you get access to. Active appliances are where it's at. Sure, you won't usually get much more than giggles from hacking someone's coffee machine, but think for a sec—every telecom unit has a camera for vid calls, and most homes have more than one unit. Hack that network and you've got yourself a couple of makeshift surveillance cameras that most people just never notice. And that's just the start of it.

- Black n' Decker

- A large number of Matrix worms and virii now specifically target networked home functions and appliances. Remember the "Humanis" worm that infected half the home audio systems in the DeeCee grid with human-supremacist propaganda last

year? Or the "boycott" worm that infected kitchen systems and instructed them to order a certain corp's soy products in place of others?

- Hacktic

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Sure, you could spend every waking moment inside your fully-networked, comfortable labor-saving house. But why deny yourself the diversity and excitement you can experience in any major city? As soon as you step outside your front door, the world is there for you to sample.

PLACES TO STAY

Whether you're traveling on business or for pleasure, your accommodation can make or break your trip. When you're looking for somewhere to stay, where can you choose?

Motels

The most common and flexible choice is a motel. From budget-conscious offerings to the truly luxurious, motels fill most needs for travelers and transient visitors. All but the high-end motels are largely automated, with bookings handled via Matrix reservation. Motel rooms and suites can be booked by the hour, day, week or longer periods.

When you check in, you slot your credstick and confirm acceptance of your reservation—or select a room allocation if yours is a spur-of-the-moment stay. The check-in console—usually situated with other amenities for a traveler's convenience, such as banking kiosks, vending services and public-access Matrix terminals—dispenses disposable magnetic keys for every occupant that automatically expire when it's check-out time.

Most motel rooms offer basic kitchenettes with vending services for packaged foods and drinks. Service drones efficiently clean the rooms when summoned or after check-out. Though the services can seem impersonal to some, the motel chains assure us that the economies of automation allow them to keep prices low for travelers. Security is usually managed by automated sensors, though establishments in the more comfortable suburbs often have a (meta)human security presence for the safety of their clientele.

- Likewise, motels in shabby parts of town usually have meat guards, though for the sake of the premises rather than the guests.

- Slum Lord

- Most motels will let you maintain an "open account"—as long as your cred's good, there's no preset check-out time. They make handy dosses and emergency bolt-holes, but be careful—as soon as your cred runs out, they will throw your gear out on the street.

- Cestus

- Some of the less reputable ones have been known to steal from infrequently accessed rooms. A few daring entrepreneurs have even tried blackmail based on interesting contraband they've found in some rooms. Of course, no one sensible leaves a papertrail back to their real identities, but it's still a waste of a fake ID.

- Manticores

- From the other perspective, motel owners can be interesting people to cultivate—who knows what you could buy off them in future?

- LoRent

Transit Hotels

The most automated establishments of all are the space-saving transit hotels, or boxtels. It's easy to see where their ghoulish nickname of "coffin hotels" came from—each cubicle is not much bigger than its occupant. These facilities are very common in areas of high population density or places that see many visitors each day, particularly travel junctions such as transit centers and airports.

Checking in at a hotel like this is even simpler than at a mainstream motel. They don't require reservations, of course, and paying the daily fee gives your credstick access to your assigned cubicle. Your credstick becomes your key for the duration of your stay.

A typical "coffin" is about two and a half meters long and one and a quarter meters high and wide. A sturdy maglocked door provides access near the foot of the bed. The sleep-surface is surrounded by a plinth that provides shelf space. The compact cubicle features a number of amenities, usually a trid unit with limited cable access and a multipurpose telecom/Matrix terminal. All the facilities are, naturally, pay-per-use.

Most transit hotels have limited staff onsite, though several security guards serve to keep tempers cool in such crowded environs. Cubicles are furnished with waterproof fittings so they can be automatically cleaned; the door locks closed after an occupant checks out, the electronic appliances are sealed behind a waterproof bunker door and the cubicle is flushed with high-pressure fluids to cleanse and sterilize the area.

- Some coffin hotels tag themselves as being meta-friendly, which doesn't mean much except they've got cubicles sized for various metatypes. Troll-sized coffins, which have about an extra meter in all dimensions, can be very handy. Those desperate for company can often squeeze an extra person into one of these, or you can fit a hefty amount of gear in a cubicle like that instead.

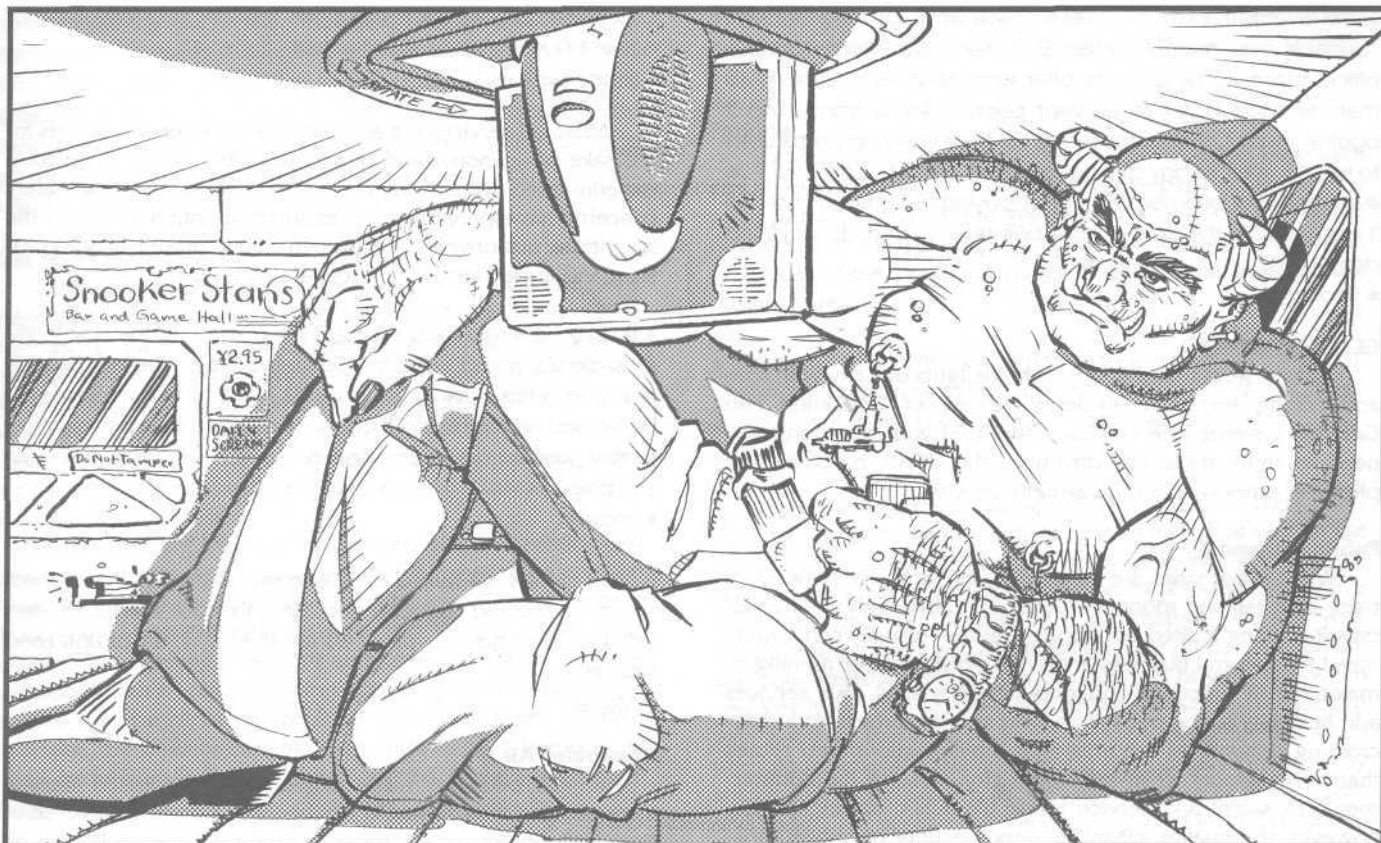
- Sable

- Or, you know, a troll could sleep in it.

- LoRent

- A coffin hotel used for its intended purpose? Surely you jest.

- Sable



- These places aren't bad for some anonymous decking. Their error-checking algorithms are so weak they have a glass jaw, so you can check in with the flimsiest of fake SIDs. Result: one anonymous jackpoint with a reasonable amount of privacy and comfort. Better than sewers, anyway.

- Kephalos

- Just don't let yourself get pinned down in there; if you torque off somebody real-time and they go looking for you, there aren't many places to run when they're knocking on your cubicle door.

- Dirty Habit

Full-Service Hotels

For the discriminating traveler, the only appropriate solution is a hotel. Less common now than in the past, these establishments put the comfort and convenience of their customers first. Vacationers on a budget may be put off by the higher prices, but hotels provide luxury and prestige for those who don't mind paying a premium.

Despite their position in the upper bracket of travel accommodation, there are still hotels to suit a range of budgets and needs. Full-service hotels also cater to those who find heavily-automated establishments discomfoting; they are staffed by metahumans, and automated services such as cleaning and laundry are performed very discreetly.

Hotels are commonly located in city centers where motels cannot secure enough space for large parking lots. The central location of most hotels makes them ideal for business travelers who need quick and convenient access to convention facilities, corporate headquarters and city attractions. Upper-end hotels offer a range of services, from laundry services to secure storage to air-taxi flights.

- If you've seen some corporate-labeled buildings around and figured they look more like hotels, you're right. Most of the megacorps are hopping on the "private hotel" bandwagon for their important traveling execs. They get all the bonuses of extraterritoriality, and it's a nice way of shuffling funds around internally (since the corporate hotel bills the exec's home department for her stay, and so on).

- Tie Fighter

- The extraterritoriality means pulling your usual shenanigans inside one of these corp hotels is just like doing it in the middle of a research lab—you're more likely to wind up dead than in the slammer.

- Arioeh

- Hotels are great places to score blackmail material. You'd be amazed how many suits think they can cut loose when they're far away from their spouse/family/boss/corp. Need

some leverage on that Ares exec? See what sorts of indiscreet "business expenses" he piles up when away from home & office. Some corps actually offer such services on the sly to their own top brass, to prevent people like us from using it against them. Other corps snoop on their traveling employees to see if there are any dirty secrets they need to cover up. I've even heard of one corp discreetly buying out a hotel chain so it can identify the bad apples before they can do anything damaging.

- Spook

GETTING AROUND

Of course, it's hard to enjoy the delights of a city with sore and aching feet. Our in-depth review of GridGuide and GridLink systems (see our last issue) told you everything you need to know about city driving in the UCAS, but there are plenty of other ways to get around the city.

Public Transport

Most major cities are covered by an extensive network of train, light rail and monorail routes that ferry high volumes of travelers along limited but popular routes—usually commuters travel into central business areas, with other routes running to major transit junctions and popular attractions. Bus services add flexibility to the public transport system, providing a criss-crossing network of suburban and inter-neighborhood routes that cover almost all of a modern city. Despite the commitments to safety and service made by public transit officials, however, the quality, cleanliness and security of public transportation varies widely from city to city, or even one neighborhood to the next. Fares are cheap and affordable, and easily paid by credstick when boarding.

- Ah, the crush of bodies at Rush Hour, the nonstop advertisements, the sweet smell of the antiseptics they use to flush the cars clean of blood, vomit, urine and graffiti each morning. I love public transportation.

- Fidget

- You'll be hard-pressed to find reliable public transport into Z-Zones like the Barrens, or even the lower-rated suburban neighborhoods.

- Brick

- You can get high-volume commuter and transfer passes at discounted rates, but you need a registered credstick to store the pass. That means you leave a data trail of your movements in the transport agency's files wherever you go.

- Bart

- Forget buses and trains, it's all about the underground moving pedways beneath your average city center; y'know, what the suits use to grab lunch a few blocks away. These walkways extend for miles and connect to almost every building that

counts. Security tends to be tight, though, and anyone that doesn't fit in is quickly escorted out.

- Urban Explorer

Most rail services are automatic or have remote drivers for the sake of economy and personnel safety. Some cities have experimented with drone-controlled bus services, but safety concerns have prevented widespread adoption so far. In the meantime, bus drivers are seated in a bulletproof Plexiglas capsule, and armed security patrols are common.

- Bulldrek. The real security is only in force during the day: cameras, drones, guard dogs, the works. Even then, the pickpockets and con artists have a field day. At night, security coverage is nil—it's just not worth the expense. So you'll find transients, prostitutes, gangers and worse. The only security you have is what you pack.

- Yeager

- Most drivers will turn a blind eye unless they're threatened. You try and pull a hijacking and the entire bus will get flooded with knockout gas. The driver will just sit safe in his box until Lone Star arrives.

- Moises

Commuter Air

As life becomes more urgent and population density increases, intracity air transit has become a popular travel solution. Helicopters are the most common vehicles, followed by commuter VTOL craft that can land on rooftops and dedicated helipads. City governments provide civilian air traffic control that regulate it all, including the numerous air-taxi services, though monitoring becomes increasingly complex as more traffic takes to the skies.

Air traffic is policed by a network of drones that act both as monitors and as signals, regulating traffic flows around the city airspace. Most law enforcement agencies have an Air Patrol division of some kind, though smaller corporations contract this out to specialized airflow police agencies.

Extraterritoriality has created some complexities for air traffic management, as protected areas have a corresponding extraterritorial airspace that may be deemed a no-fly zone at the corporation's discretion—most corporations are willing to open their airspace to mainstream traffic, however, in all but the most sensitive of areas. There are also no-fly zones in each city that overlap the airports' airspaces, to prevent commuter aircraft from causing serious interruptions to intercity air traffic.

- As a general rule of thumb, publicly-accessible areas of extraterritoriality—like corporate shopping malls and so on—usually have open airspace to match. Caveat flyer, though.

- Highwire

- Air traffic is set to become a major headache for most city governments within ten years, actually; traffic studies seem to show that mainstream adoption of intracity air travel is increas-



ing exponentially every year. Of course, the increased traffic up there makes it easy for less legit vehicles to get lost in the crowd, but city airspaces are starting to get very messy. As licensing restrictions ease—which they will as it gets more popular and pressure increases to give more civilian licenses—it's going to get more dangerous up there.

- Sky Scraper

Taxi Services

Perhaps the easiest way to get around, taxicabs are easily identifiable by vibrant color schemes and attention-getting advertising. Cabs are usually remotely-operated (except in neighborhoods where vandalism is a common occurrence) and rely heavily on their autonavs and the GridGuide service. In some municipalities, each centrally-located driver directs a number of cabs, but safety concerns have prevented wide-scale adoption of this practice. Most taxis are minivans in order to accommodate trolls.

Upon entering the cab, passengers slot a credstick and select their destination—provided they have enough cred on the stick, they're on their way. Once the cab reaches the destination, the appropriate fare is deducted. If the credstick lacks funds or the passenger doesn't authorize the transaction, the cab doors won't unlock and the company automatically dispatches a crime report to the local law enforcement agency. Naturally, the passenger cabin is monitored by cameras at all times for security's sake, making discreet in-cab frolicking a thing of the past.

- Some cab companies just lock down the cab and then drive you to the local precinct house for a charge of fare evasion, which is really galling.
- Mooch
- As always, automation is a weak spot, security-wise. Though cab interiors are tightly sealed, some canny jury-rigging can override the automatic navigation and commandeer the cab. Alternately, a rigger can simply seize control of the cab away from the cab company's remote network. Either way, the cab company is alerted straight away, the theft is immediately reported and the vehicle is tracked via its transponder.
- Rigger X

Some taxi companies offer more personal service with (meta)human drivers for executive and luxury services. Though security is tight for the driver's protection as well as the passenger's, the discreetly-armored sedans, minivans or limousines are luxurious and comfortable. Some services offer armed drivers who are streetwise and skilled in protective services and defensive driving.

- And then there's the niche at the other end of the scale. Despite the dangers of the Barrens and other famous Z-zones, there are armed and dangerous taxi services who're willing to drive anyone anywhere, for the right price. A trip through the

Barrens might cost you a thousand times more than a ten-minute drive downtown, but it's a whole lot better than walking.

- Z-Zoner

Parking

Of course, for those who've chosen to drive their own cars, there's one factor you can't forget—parking. There's no point getting where you're going, after all, if there's nowhere to leave your car when you get there. Fortunately, most cities have reasonable parking facilities in all but the most central business areas.

- More and more cities are simply banning cars from their city centers, or charging special admission fees to cut down traffic. That's where being a motorcyclist comes in handy.
- Skidmark

Most parking needs are served by large multi-story parking lots—some brave souls still choose to park their cars on the street, but the security risk is too great for most drivers. Some of these lots are simply huge, with a score of levels both above and below ground. The service is automated—you slot your credstick upon entry and are assigned a lot number to park in, and your credstick is billed for the duration of your stay when you slot it as you leave. Being required to slot a credstick to gain entry to the lot also keeps vandals and criminals away from your vehicle. Parking-lot security is usually provided by automated drone patrols, though a number of providers offer special security services on the below-ground levels, complete with metahuman attendants.

- Be warned: a lot of the parking lot companies have cooperative arrangements with their local law enforcement corps, which allows the cops access to the parking databases to search for wanted vehicles and people. This can be a nasty surprise.
- Ferris
- That's an understatement—and it goes beyond that. Rumor has it that Lone Star and Knight-Errant both operate a number of parking companies as subsidiaries. It's a nice little profit-maker on the side, and that way they can guarantee unlimited access to the lots' records.
- Conspir-I-See

WHAT YOU WANT, WHEN YOU WANT IT

With today's advances in online shopping and self-sustaining homes, shopping is no longer the tedious weekly chore it once was, but a whole new leisure activity!

Matrix Shopping

Most goods and services can be ordered online in a matter of minutes and shipped directly to your door, arriving hassle-free within a day or two—or even overnight! Local stores often offer speedier delivery—restaurants and grocery stores typically deliver within two hours.



FLATS: CLOTHING ON THE GO

Locked out of the house in your underwear? Never fear, Qwik-Shacks and other automated stores sell cheap, disposable clothing via vending machine. Commonly called "flats," these rain-resistant jumpsuits offer no visual frills in a uniform dull gray color. More expensive flats come as a complete ensemble: gender neutral boxer shorts, slacks and pullover shirt, with hats, scarves and gloves available during winter months.

- A lot of factory corps require their working stiffs to wear flats on the grounds they foster "uniformity and teamwork" and drek like that. Mostly it's to squash individuality, keep people from wear gang identifiers or save costs on real work clothing.

- Derek

Flats are meant to be worn once or twice, then disposed of in the machines provided by the manufacturer (located wherever you can buy flats), which provides you with a 25 percent credit towards your next purchase from the same vendor to encourage recycling.

- Once or twice? I know a guy in the Barrens who's been wearing the same pair of flats for almost three years straight now. There's not much left as they've started to biodegrade, but he's still wearing 'em.

- Skaven

- Wearing flats anyplace you might be recognized is a fashion faux pas—most people wear them while commuting in poor weather, then change into proper clothes when they get where they're going.

- Connie Connoisseur

- Fashion faux-pas in some circles, but club kids have taken to wearing them for nights on the town, often spray-painting them or attaching reflective strips to them. And let's not forget that flats provide a convenient method of disguise and camouflage for runners. Just watch that you don't leave a purchasing data trail, in case you have to ditch the outfit where it might be recovered.

- Minx

Electronic commerce is closely monitored by government (and corporate) authorities to ensure that retailers closely follow import/export restrictions and tariffs. Even though goods may be legal in the originating country, attempts to import such goods into a country where they are illegal are frowned upon, and both the online store and the customer can be fined or face more serious charges.

- So you buy from the stores that don't talk to the guvmlnt, ya know?

- Traveler Jones

- The Native American Nations often ignore online transactions that violate local law as long as the buyer is in a friendly NAN nation, and as long as the shipment itself doesn't attract a great deal of attention. Actually, a lot of small corps do this too, knowing that there's no way they'll actually get prosecuted.

- Coyote

- Hell, some smugglers have taken to shipping material into Seattle and other major metroplexes under guise of shipments from the big online retailers. NetMart, for example, ships such a variety of stuff that customs officers rarely bother to inspect their shipments. Bold smugglers pack box after box full of BTLs, then cruise through the borders claiming that they're delivering dried flowers and interactive Dunkelzahn robot-dolls.

- Leggy

- The authorities mostly concentrate their efforts on major distributors of counterfeit goods. A good chunk of the brand-name items for sale online are actually cheap knock-offs. The problem is, most of these manufacturers are either safely holed up in small countries that want the revenue or they're backed by the corporate rival of the brand they're imitating.

- Bootlegger

Automated Shopping

Living a 24-7 modern lifestyle means that you sometimes need basic supplies at 03:00 in the morning. To meet this demand, franchises like Qwik-Shack and On The Go have established automated stores on street corners, inside apartment complexes and hospitals, near public transit stations and anywhere else they can cram one. These unattended storelets are nothing more than secure rooms filled with vending machines offering non-perishable items: food, personal hygiene and baby care products, cheap electronics, chips and softs, disposable clothes and other inexpensive but often necessary consumer goods. Many automated stores also feature Song-O-Mats™ and UCAS Online Matrix Kiosks. Every store of this nature has double security doors—much like a bank—so you cannot enter without a credstick that both has a positive balance and checks negative for arrest warrants.

- On The Go quickly learned that the machines needed to be firmly bolted to the floor. Orks and trolls were getting frustrated with the buggy and annoying interfaces and tipping them, throwing them or even carrying them out the door. "Interface Rage" is still common in unattended stores, but usability has increased in the last few years ... at least, that's what the corps say. People with large fingers still find many interfaces cumbersome.

- People Watcher

Shopping Centers

For recreational shopping, nothing beats a visit to a large shopping center. Online and automated shopping can be sterile and lifeless, but malls are a hub of activity for people of all ages.



They offer a variety of stores, restaurants, and entertainment possibilities inside a clean, controlled and safe environment.

- When they say controlled, they mean controlled. Malls in decent neighborhoods are segregated. Movie theatres, food courts and entertainment areas are accessible to all, while shopping areas can be limited to those with a valid credstick and specific destinations. These states of partial lockdown aren't common, but can be put into operation at a moment's notice in the event of suspected crime, bomb threats, etc.

- Connie Connoisseur

- Next time you're in a mall, if you ever go, take a quick inventory of the stores. Most shopping malls are either entirely or partially backed by a single megacorp, so 75 percent plus of the stores inside it will be owned by the corp. The music being played will be from one of their "artists," the simsense flicks will be produced by their studios—you get the idea. Modern "recreational shopping" is just another attempt to brand shoppers without them realizing. Some wholly owned corporate centers even employ extraterritoriality law on their premises, so they can ignore fair trade laws and undercut local merchants.

- Corp Watcher

- Forget malls. You want to find unbeatable prices, find your local black market bazaar. Every sprawl has at least one, if not dozens. More often than not, they're deep in a Z-Zone in the blasted shell of some ex-consumer-hellhole, safe from the pigs, but occasionally they'll be in regular low-income areas with the shadowbiz happening on the down-low. You'll see all sorts of vendors, from bootleggers (good as the original) to scavengers (amazing what people throw away) to petty thieves (where else do the mobs and smugglers unload their excess goods)? Hagglng and trades are accepted, but refrain from getting too aggro, as the vendors tend to back each other up.

- Fidget

Franchises

Franchises play an important role in the modern economy, offering consumers an at-home feel no matter where they may be—in a shopping mall, the school food court, or on a strange street in a foreign country. The best franchises maintain their unique feel while blending in elements of the local culture.

- Except most don't bother, as they're more interested in keeping costs low and putting competing local shops out of business.

- Star*ucks

Modern franchises tailor the shopping experience to be relaxed and enlightening. Stores scan your credstick beacon when you enter and assemble a consumer profile based on your purchasing history (while simple security scans also alert to the potential danger of armed individuals). Employees greet you by name rather than pestering you, allowing you to explore the store's product experience clusters. Automated systems display consumer reports and other information on

THE HOT SHOPPING SPOT: AURORA VILLAGE

Located on 200th Street in Downtown Seattle and stretching four city blocks deep and across, and six stories up, Aurora Village is the most breathtaking shopping center in Seattle (since the Renraku Arcology closed). Ruthenium polymer ceilings and walls simulate a sunny atmosphere inside—a far cry from the depressing weather outside. Shoppers can browse the 230+ stores on the upper and lower levels, whether getting a new outfit at The Beaux, upgrading to the latest software at Nybbles & Bytes, or even nipping into Body+Tech for some elective designer surgery in the afternoon. Travelers can make Aurora Village their temporary home in Seattle, as the North end connects to Aurora Village Westin hotel. On the south side—a three minute ride on the express people-mover—is Aurora Park, a small amusement park and simsense arcade. Finally, on the west side (and open to both customers inside the mall and to the street outside) is Aurora Nights, a collection of night clubs and dance halls.

- Aurora Nights is a population destination of local yuppies. Security is tight inside all of Aurora Village, but you can occasionally score BTLs and other contraband just outside Aurora Park or in the arcades if you're careful. Prices are higher than the rest of the sprawl because you're Downtown.

- The Dead Deckers Society

demand, while animated, personalized advertisements steer your attention towards items you might like according to your profile. Radio-tagged items make purchasing quick and easy, while also deterring shoplifters.

- And people wonder why I hate shopping.

- Green Pixie

What are some of the more common franchises, and what do they offer? Here's a quick guide:

Electronics: The most popular destination for shoppers of all ages, electronics stores tend to specialize in either consumer electronics (phones, p-secs, cameras) or computers/cyberdecks and software. Megastores include both along with household necessities such as stoves, fridges and other appliances. Experienced technicians can help you assemble, repair or custom-build devices. Eastern Electronics, Gadgets, MediaMix and ACE (Ares Consumer Electronics) are the top franchises.

- If you're looking to buy a deck at one of these places, don't. They mainly stock pre-fabricated machines, all similarly configured to fit large purchases from local businesses, schools or government institutions—and they're loaded with spyware. You want a real deck, find an independent shop that caters to the technologically hip and that sells SOTA machines, spare parts and jury-rigged high-end boxes.

- Glitch

INDEPENDENTS ONLY: LORE SHOPS



Stores that sell magical goods are an interesting departure from standard franchises. Only a small (but dedicated) segment of the consumer population is interested in purchasing charms, talismans, augury tools and other "magical" items. Perhaps tellingly, actual practitioners of magic tend to give such magic shops a wide berth. While high quality items of interest to the Awakened are in high

demand, the economic model of the magical market dictates that these "talismaner" stores are usually small operations, run by a single person or a small staff. The nature of magical communities in any given metropex means that the staff and customers often share a close relationship, as the customers have specific needs of which the staff (often magically active themselves) is well aware.

Lore shops are usually located in areas where rent is cheap, even if the location itself is not ideal for other businesses; for example, in the basement or second floor of another commercial building or out of a home. Lore shops are typically quiet, friendly places amenable to browsing, as magically active shoppers prefer to look over and feel the goods before they buy. Most shops are cluttered; not untidy, but in need of a good Dust Shelves spell. The lucky storekeeper with extra floor space often have a reading room—for a few nuyen, customers can sit in comfy chairs, read, drink herbal tea and chat with other patrons. Many stores offer their own enchanting services, at specialty rates and with long waiting lists.

- Lore shop security varies. Smaller stores make do with spirits and wards of the staff's creation plus basic maglocks, while larger stores have more extensive physical and technology security coupled with magical defenses.
- White Witch
- Magic users tend to be somewhat territorial, so it's not uncommon for local magicians to band together to protect a local store if it's burgled, or even get together regularly to enhance the security themselves.
- Talon
- Don't forget that astral tracking can be used to track down "stray" magical talismans.
- Shetani
- Crooked talismongers don't stay in business long in one place. Because word of mouth is so prevalent in the magical community, shysters stay on the move, from neighborhood to neighborhood and then to entirely new cities when their cheating ways are discovered. If you find a new guy working out of a van on the corner, buyer beware.
- Magster

Media: Until recently, real-world media stores were a thing of the past. Why leave the house when you can just download trideo, sims, games and music? MediaMix stores are staging a comeback, though, thanks to new attractions designed to lure in customers, from in-store celebrity appearances to the ever-present and eye-catching Song-O-Mat kiosks. Music aficionados joke that the only reason to shop in real-world stores is for the chip cases and liner notes, and indeed packaging is the only thing that sets the stores apart from their online kin.

- For those so indie it hurts, allow me to explain the Song-O-Mat, the pinnacle of bland corporate marketing. This nefarious device allows the consumer to select the beat, genre, instruments and vocal stylings of their choice, and an expert system constructs a song just to suit their tastes. Artistic merit is less bankable than popular appeal, after all, and at least the Song-O-Mat doesn't die of overdoses or trash hotel rooms.

- Slamm-O!

- Mitsuhama's Insta-Muse does the same thing, making every user a music composer if they're willing to take some time to tell the system what they want. Sounds cool, eh, like the gateway to a future where Top 40 artists don't rule the music world. Except that all music generated using these programs is archived and copyrighted by Mitsuhama, so don't be surprised to hear your personalized beats on mainstream radio a few months later.

- Kidd Trideo

- For those who need their music fix on the go, the PolyAural label is testing a range of music-chip vending machines across Seattle and Portland. They sell chips of the latest chart-topping albums and inexpensive players. Naturally, the major chain stores aren't happy, since this is probably the final nail in the coffin. They're all hurrying to get their own vending machines out there and dispensing chips to the masses.

- Audiophile

- Word has it that a couple of enterprising franchise owners have arranged for about three quarters of the PolyAural machines in Seattle to suffer enough convenient vandalism to put them out of commission. Hell, I'd have taken the job; bust open the machine and there's a few thousand nuyen's worth of chips there just waiting to fence. Somehow I figure the corps are going to yank the "vending machine" idea soon enough.

- Crowbar

- Until they do, there's a handy use for them. The players they sell are practically disposable, but they still do the job—they have all the same electronic components inside them as any other gizmo and can be cannibalized for parts in about ten seconds flat. If you're looking for electronic parts in a real hurry, these machines can be lifesavers.

- Highwire



Self-Defense: Today's world is a well-armed one. Reliable training, certification and retailing of firearms and other defensive weaponry for law-abiding citizens is a must. With over 200 locations in North America, Weapons World is always nearby to serve your needs! Each Weapons World franchise is locally owned, operated and staffed, and all employees are certified in firearms procedures through Ares Arms.

To ensure security, entrance to Weapons World is granted only after a security check in the lobby, including electronic and physical scans. On the ground floor, racks of fine weaponry and protective gear from Ares Arms and other well-known manufacturers line the aisles and walls. The basement includes storage space, offices and the classrooms and firing ranges necessary for the training and certification that Weapons World offers.

- Don't get any ideas about raiding that storage space—security is military-base heavy. Same goes with shipments to the stores.
- Nightfire

• Weapons World isn't just a pro-Ares shop, though they tend to promote Ares product heavily. Nonetheless, realize that everything sold there can be traced back to the exact point of purchase within minutes. Naturally, none of you readers are irresponsible enough to do anything illegal with a firearm, right?

- Errant Knight

Body-Mods: In a time when good looks are affordable and easy to acquire, who would pass them by? Bodyshops are present in almost every mall, offering a range of fast and minor procedures to give you that new look you desire. Nightengale's, Body+Tech, NuYu and MetaType clinics feature a small, trained and certified paramedical staff and offer products and services like designer cybereyes, datajack implantation, cosmetic bioware, implant maintenance and repair and even nanotattoos.

- Some of these shops are like meatpacking assembly lines. The inspectors tend to be harsh on them so they're usually clean and up to code, but occasionally there's the bad apple that cuts corners or buys second-hand wares off the streets. Some of the docs just aren't good enough to be full-on cybersurgeons, though they want to be. If you want to take a risk, they might be happy to practice their technique on you.

- Twitch

ENTERTAINMENT

As the pace of progress marches on, we find ourselves with more and more ways to spend our free time. Here we review some of the more popular ways of relaxation in today's busy world.

• What free time? Despite all the labor-saving devices this bint yaps on about, I don't figure most folks have any more free time than workers of a hundred years ago. Probably less, since the corps that own our souls write strict deadline rules and mandatory overtime into our contracts.

• Bitter Lemon

NIGHTLIFE

New York used to be called "the city that never sleeps." These days, that applies to just about every UCAS city and sprawl in the world—as the sun goes down, the neon lights flicker on and the nightlife heats up. Nowhere is the vibrancy and energy of a big city more obvious than in its late night streets, and here we look at some of the many ways to enjoy a night in the city.

Mainstream Nightspots

Every city in the UCAS boasts an impressive array of clubs, bars and other entertainment venues. Clubs and bars are licensed to serve alcohol, and so by law they must cater to an adult audience. The legal drinking age in most states of the UCAS is 21, as it has been for a hundred years or more. Many of these venues pick a theme (sports bars are particularly common, for example) to distinguish themselves from their competition, but underneath their different decors, staff uniforms and house cocktail names, most bars and clubs are fundamentally the same.

• The drinking age limit is an affront to orks and trolls. By the time I'm legal to drink and get in a club, I'll be middle-aged and halfway dead. Fraggin' moralists.

• Goblin-Boy

• Move to the NAN, or Europe, or someplace else with more lax age limits. Or just join a gang or find other ways to raise hell and get in trouble, like most bored teenagers do.

• Grassy Gnoll

• Legal age or not, if you look young and you're running with a fake ID, avoid bars that card at the counter. These places tend to card you more than once, which means your fake ID has more of a chance of failing an integrity test.

• Gnat

Popular clubs tend to be loud, intense places with expansive dancefloors, dedicated DJs, light displays and a standing cover charge, whereas bars offer quieter, more relaxed environments for drinking and socializing. Clubs will often feature "VIP" areas for special guests and performers, or they may offer private areas for those who don't mind the expense.

• Make sure you get a rundown on what exactly "private" means. In some cases, you just get a room to yourself. In others, you get a room outfitted with wards, white noise generators and other countersurveillance gear. You get what you pay for.

• Bullet

• Security at clubs varies with the territory. At the minimum, they'll have bouncers on hands—typically orks and trolls (but not always) to manhandle troublemakers, drunks and chip-heads. Their job is to break up fights, keep things calm, and hold perps for the Star if necessary. If the clientele tends to be rowdy or the place is upscale, expect bodyscans and weapons-checks. If you get caught packing, most places will just ask you to take it away, or they'll check it for you like a coat (though how securely they store it is up in the air). Any place that expects trouble will have additional tech and magical security, especially if it has any mob connections (which most do).

• Dirk

• A lot of bouncers are off-duty cops making some extra cred on the side. Don't expect these guys to cut you any slack—unless they're on some syndicate payroll, in which case they keep quiet.

• SPD

Niche Venues

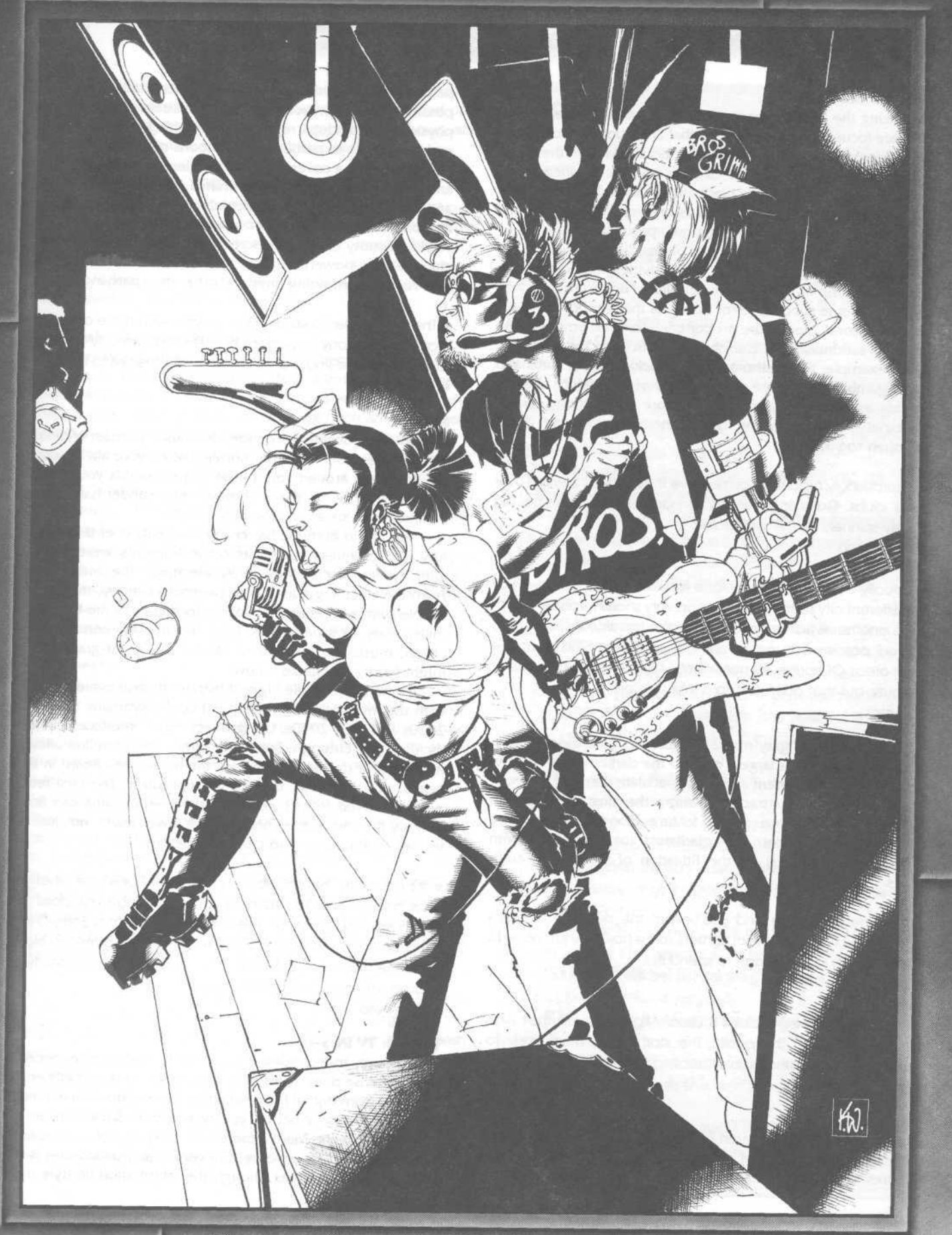
Many clubs take the "theme" idea a little further, and tailor their experience to appeal to particular subcultures. This trend began fifty to seventy years ago and has accelerated over the years. Today, many city clubs are aimed at very specific interest groups. A cross-section of alternative clubs in a typical city reveals nightspots for almost everybody—there are venues aimed at Matrix culture, neopunk and counter-establishment groups, alternative-gender people, pro- and anti-meta groups, the magically-active and so on. Unlike most mainstream clubs, which are basically the same under their trappings and image, these venues vary much more widely. Each club is likely to have very different policies, atmosphere and social norms, depending on the alternative group it cultivates.

• They used to say that the alternative clubs were the only places that would understand you and your personal kink. Nowadays, who knows if that's even true? Way too many of them are just cynical exercises in exploitation by bland corporate ventures, carefully engineered to fit a particular subculture in the least offensive way—which neatly removes all the flavor and interest from a particular venue. Where's the cultural value in an "ork club" when you know it was really designed by a bunch of human marketing experts in a random Japanacorp office in Nagoya?

• Tuskadero

• Still, the truly indie clubs are about the only place to find individuality these days. Even if most "subculture" clubs are really about as alternative as Ares-brand neo-anarchist merchandise, there are those on the cutting edge that are run for and by the people in that culture. At the risk of sounding elitist, if one of these clubs is the place for you, you probably already know where it is or how to find it.

• Socio Pat



Underground Clubs

Taking the "niche" concept one step further, underground clubs are focused around activities that are taboo in society and sometimes even illegal. They usually operate without the proper permits and licenses, so their very existence is illegal—let alone the activities that take place there. Naturally, these clubs are hard to access; the proprietors are reputed to maintain strict privacy and security for their own protection.

Most people would find these places distasteful; there's a reason why society frowns on the activities that take place there, for example. The milder examples of underground clubs involve extreme subcultures or activities that *would* be legal if they were conducted in the proper environment. Stripped, the infamous sadomasochist club shut down in New York last year, is one example; the plethora of bareknuckle boxing clubs and illegal gambling joints are others. Many of these clubs actually operate as restricted areas within more conventional public nightspots—if you have the right connections, the inner doors will open to you.

- Unsurprisingly, organized crime have their sticky fingers all over these clubs. Gambling venues, in particular, tend to be big money-spinners for the syndicates.

- Belladonna

- Actually, Denver's a funny place for "illicit" clubs. What with all the different city sectors, legality can vary sharply from one sector to another, which means clubs in the jurisdictions with more relaxed policies can easily cash in on thrill-seekers from the other areas. Of course, it's not illegal, which takes away some of the buzz, but that doesn't stop a lot of visitors.

- Crystal

Beyond these "gray-market" clubs, there are the truly illicit establishments that largely cater to the darker side of human nature. Law enforcement agencies speculate that illegal bloodsports are common attractions—more than just underground boxing matches, these places feature bloody fights to the death between modern-day gladiators (or sometimes with drones or paracritters) for the titillation of their jaded audiences.

- If you're desperate and you've got the skills, the money's good—they have to attract fighters some how. You just have to hope you live long enough to spend it.

- Wolverine

- Security at less-legal clubs is usually tight to keep their existence secret from the public. The staff is also more likely to exceed its legal authority in protecting the establishments.

- Pub Crawler

Matrix Clubs

Clubs that aren't located on any city street, Matrix venues cater to as many kinds of clients as real-world clubs do. Two features set Matrix clubs aside from its real-world counter-

parts—the anonymity of an online persona, and the creativity possible in an environment not constrained by real-world physics. Matrix clubs represent everything from simulacra of real-world bars to parties on the moons of Saturn.

Most have a cover charge equivalent to mainstream clubs, and even offer sim-loops that mimic the effect of club drinks and mood enhancers. The clientele are often rather jaded, as fashions emerge and drown ten times faster than in the real world. Security is usually discreet, but careful; high-use Matrix clubs feature powerful intrusion countermeasures to discourage visitors from doing anything other than partying.

- The tendencies towards 3133tn3ss are even more common in Matrix clubs. Many have deeper levels that are only accessible to people-in-the-know, or to deckers with the skill to cut in.

- Grid Reaper

MUSIC

You're probably surrounded by music for most of the day. Music wakes you up in the morning when your alarm sounds; it follows you around your house and surrounds you with full-spectrum glory; it plays through the subdermal implants behind your ears as you jog or work out.

The sound of music has changed rapidly over the last century. For countless years musical instruments were acoustic, until modern technology really electrified the music scene. From the electric guitars of the twentieth century, through the simple synthesizers and digital compositions of the turn of the millennium, to today's synthlinks and neurally-enhanced creations, music has evolved so rapidly our great-grandparents might hardly recognize it now.

Perhaps the single biggest leap in musical evolution came with the invention and refinement of the synthlink in the late 2020s and early 2040s. Using direct neural interface technology that was cutting-edge for its time, the synthlink allowed musicians of the day to produce the music they heard in their heads, not the music they could reproduce. The final fetters were removed from human creativity—musicians can finally play us the music they hear in their own heads, not just the echoes they managed to transcribe before.

- It's not quite that simple; you can't just transcribe what you hear in your head. You still have to edit, arrange, mix, polish; it's not music-making for the talentless (that's what a Song-O-Mat is for). But there's an incredible freedom in being able to reproduce the music in your head without wasting your creativity on fiddling with composition programs.

- Chantuse

TRIDEO: TV IN 3-D

Though trideo doesn't provide the depth of experience that simsense does, most of us gather our news and idle entertainment from digital high-definition three-dimensional holovision, aka trideo. Whether you watch it on flatscreen, in the holocube or in the Matrix, there's a wide range of trid shows to suit every viewer's appetite. Conventional broadcasting is still available in many areas, though the information lifestyle most



of us lead directs us to Matrix or satellite feeds, where the channels and possibilities are more numerous. If standard programming isn't your fare, special pay-per-view shows and interactive programs and games are also available.

SIMSENSE: BE WHO YOU WANT TO BE!

Simsense is the mature technology behind the most productive and entertaining tech-toys on the market, from cyberdecks and vehicle rigs to remote surgery suites and home entertainment units. Yet how many of us understand how it works? Follow us on a short tour of the wild world of simsense as it's used in the entertainment industry.

The Basic: Simsense Production

Ever wonder how it is that you can "become" the key character in a movie, like Methane from *Elemental Endgame* or Patrice Kim in *Corp Script*? Simsense allows you experience what happened to someone else just as though you are really there, going through the same events as the artist who recorded it.

Simsense is recorded through a device called a *simrig*, which can be worn or implanted. When a sim recording is played, it triggers two types of responses in the user: sensory and emotive. The sensory track triggers brain responses, while the emotive track triggers emotional responses. Only *full-X* ("full experience") simsense releases can handle both sensory and emotive tracks, while users of a *baseline* simsense only get the sensory tracks; they have to provide the emotions on their own! Full-x simsense can only be recorded through an implanted simrig, which is why the best simstars have one!

Performers

So who are these wired performers? You've heard the names: Elise Nirveau, Fall Starr, Kurt Tusker, Murray Hooper, Winona Flying-Horse. More than top performers, these artists are able to meet the rigorous demands of being a sim-star—and we mean more hardship than accepting awards or dating supermodels.

First, simsense performers must keep in excellent shape. Who wants to experience the symptoms of someone fatigued or in poor health? A baseline sim-artist only needs to keep his or her body in top form, but full-x performers need to be on the ball emotionally and psychologically as well, so they can lay down the appropriate emotions on-demand. The stars jump through all sorts of hoops to get into the right mental zone: magical manipulation, medication, biofeedback monitoring, or the more traditional meditation and yoga.

- So the muscled-up hunks and super-hot babes that work in action and porn sims might be completely fragged in the head, but it doesn't matter to the end-user, as long as their flesh feels good.
- Social Experiment
- Whereas full-x stars live and die by the emotional façade they put forward. Frag yoga, that's where a bottle of gin or a BTL chip comes in handy. No matter what a performer does to keep the

TRID LISTINGS

So what's on? A more apt question would be "What isn't?" Here's a quick glimpse of what filled today's 8pm time slot:

[ABS] Tales of Atlantis. It's war between the troll barbarians of the Eastern Highlands and the ork tribes of the Western Plains, with the noble emissaries of Atlantis caught in the middle. Will they create peace between the warring factions?

[AW] The Awakened World: Inside the Shasta Lodge. For the first time, the great dragon Hestaby permits viccars inside the Lodge high atop Mount Shasta and gives an exclusive interview talking about her role in the California Free State, Tir Tairngire and international politics.

[CBC] Survivor: Renraku Arcology. Who will get booted from the previously-sealed upper floors of the arcology this week?

[COM] My Succubus. Wiz-kid Danny has conjured the very sexy Synthia, but can he keep her satisfied (and under control)? Explicit sexual situations and dialog.

[FNET] Expanding Horizons. Father Albert explores the possibilities of extra-terrestrial religion. (Paid Programming)

[HMC] NERPS! An inside look at what this miraculous product can do for you, your family and your household appliances.

[HOT] Hard Corps. They're company cops, they're roommate, they're lovers. Can Brett and Tom keep their relationship a secret in order to protect their careers while still dealing with the worst criminals in the city? Explicit sexual situations and dialog.

[HPC] Arise Humanity! The Humanis Policlub Forum presents "SURGE: the True Danger We Face."

[KSAF] On the Street: 60 live minutes with Bob the cameraman.

[LSC] Seattle Lone Star Beat Report. A new shadowrunner terrorist gang threatens your livelihood. Find out how you can help stop them.

[META] Wyrms Talk. Masaru's viewpoint on the sinister shedim spirits.

[NABS] Tyee! Chief Thunder (John Three Arrows) must rescue Daniel Howling Coyote when a turncoat calls in a US assassination squad, threatening the Ghost Dance (rerun).

[NBS] Kitchen Witchery. Wanda the Kitchen Witch whips up her latest magical brews and enchanting elixirs.

[NN] Micro-News. All the news of the day, summed up for you in 20 minutes or less. Optional expanded downloads available for premium channel subscribers.

[PBN] Against the Hive Masters Revisited. Extensive commentaries and new documentary footage in conjunction with the fully-remastered new edition of Euphoria's classic final sim.

[SXE] SURGE Protector: A Matrix geek rationalizes his changeling fetish by imagining himself a hero possessing an antiviral.

[SXT] Ask Trollbabe! First base through home plate and out of the arena. Frank and fun sex education for young adults.

[TBC] Splat! The Battle Channel presents outtakes and accidents from 2062's Desert Wars Challenge.

[T6W] Possessed! True stories of people who have suffered from spiritual possession and the things they did while "under the influence." Includes footage of an actual banishment ritual.

[WSB] Golden Glory: A preview of the 2064 Olympic venues and events!

[¥M¥] James' Bonds: Investor James Jones talks bonds—what's hot and what's not.

edge, they walk a razor-fine line that's easily stepped over. Simsense performers make the most unstable actors and actresses from yesteryear look completely normal, and that's saying something.

- Green Thumb

- Most sim-stars have rigorous contract clauses that severely restrain their personal behavior. As wealthy as they are, though, most find it hard to abide by such petty rules. Media corps are always paying people to keep their stars on a tight leash, while the stars themselves will often do anything they can to sneak out for some unmitigated excesses.

- Prime Runner

Stand-Ins, Stacking and Sense Patches

Because simsense deals with emotions and experiences, it's extremely difficult to substitute a performer in for another one. Stunt doubles and other stand-ins must not only be able to handle the physical stunts, but they must also have a perceptive set that closely matches the star's sensorium. The track can be modified in post-production, but it pays to start with a good match.

To accomplish this, studio techs use a trick called stacking. Stacking is a relatively simple process: run the star through a pre-recorded baseline simsense and record full-X from his or her responses to the action. This smoothes out any rough spots in the response and adds the star's emotive track. Stacked experiences degrade, so you cannot continually stack emotions on top of a baseline track; after about three overlapping attempts, the original recording becomes fuzzy and distant while the peaks and valleys of the emotions level out, making the recording less interesting.

Sense patches are one of the final weapons in the battle against mediocre sim. Culled from people with interesting and

useful sensory ranges, these patches can be used during stacking or post-production to provide that final punch. A rung lower than natural sense patches is psuedostim, computer-generated special effects. These are usually used only when absolutely necessary (for example, to simulate a scene involving paranormal but sentient creatures) as they are extremely cost- and time-intensive. Once a psuedostim is created, it's stacked through the performer's sensorium to create the full-range effect.

Magic and Simsense

Special effects are used in place of active magic in most simsense products for several important reasons. For one, mana spells and astral perception simply do not show up on simsense recordings at all. While physical spells do show up on a recording, they're physically taxing to cast. Safety is also a large concern—it's usually safer to use special effects to simulate fireballs or other substantial combat-based spells.

On the other hand, magical illusions are sometimes cast to fool the actors, thus creating emotive responses to the (nonexistent, according to the recording) illusion. This trick is used to record the appropriate response to visual effects that will be added later, or to get an extra emotional

edge in scenes where it really counts. This technique creates more vivid experiences than psuedostim, so studios usually shell out the bucks to have a magician or two on the special effects staff.

The Wet Record and Post-Production

Before post-production, the recordings (both full-X or baseline) from a simrig are known as a wet record. Post-production is when the wet record is entered into a device known as a simsynth—or, if you're in the biz, "the simth." The simth is used to clean the wet record of background noise—stray thoughts, concentration lapses, etc. After that, the recording is mixed together to perfection, blending in sense patches, psue-



dostim, computer generated special effects, voiceovers and other post-production modifications. The final work is smoothed out and modulated until it's more real than reality.

SIMSENSE: WHAT'S ON?

Once limited to action and adult-oriented films, simsense releases now encompass all major genres of entertainment and education.

Action-Adventure

There's always an audience for adrenaline-pumping action—everyone wants to be the hero who blows the bad guy away. Action-adventure simsense tends to focus on one or two performers only—the hero, the villain and sometimes the henchmen. The new model of “reality action” shows operate with a “game show” like premise, and typically feature under-prepared mundanes being forced into perilous circumstances: fending for yourself while fighting off others in far away locations like South American jungles or the far north of the Trans-Polar Aleut.

What's Hot: There's a blockbuster anti-shadowrunner sim each month, and those set in Aztlán or South America like *Ivory Coast* and *Fourth World* are all the rage lately. Brilliant Genesis started marketing *The Wild Hunt* reality show in late 2062, and since then dozens of look-alikes have been rushed to market.

- Unfortunately, the saturation of action-sims makes every Joe Citizen on the street think he's a badass superhero. Major pain in the hoop when you have to deal with schmucks like that on a run.
- Pulp

Comedy

Comedy is the odd genre out; few people like to be humiliated, and comedy relies on characters being on the short end of a joke more often than not. Comedy releases are often recordings of popular stand-up comedian's performance or take the POV of an “innocent bystander” who just happens to tag along with some hapless pals as they get into all kinds of trouble.

What's Hot: For those willing to take the fall, the *I Can't Believe They Did That* series provides pratfalls aplenty: rigged performers taking part in shopping cart derbies, being shot out of cannons (without a net!) and other brain-damage-inducing stunts.

Romance

Romantic sims enjoy a large but not blockbuster following, especially among 25–40 year old women—particularly those working for major corporations. They are usually PolyPOV and feature two performers: the romancer and the romanced. Occasionally a third character is also available, usually a second potential romancer. Romance sims are formulaic and trite, but that's what the audience clamors for!

What's Hot: *Virtual Lust*. The name says it all.

Music

Live concerts are major sellers in the simsense scene, though many long-established stars eschew them as being too grandiose and taking away from the meaning of the music.

BRAIN BURNERS

It goes without saying that there's a more harmful side to simsense. Within North America, the legal requirements on simsense products are uniform, to keep sim tracks from venturing into damaging or addictive peak levels. As a result, sims that exceed these limits—known as BTL, “Better Than Life” chips—are also illegal throughout North America (BTLs stimulate response centers in the limbic area, or “pleasure area” of the brain, and are more intense and addictive than any other simsense variant available). The exception to the rule is California, which allows a higher peak-level than other states (so-called “California Hots” are legal within the CFS but illegal elsewhere).

What's Hot: Recent trog-rock shockers Axes to Battle have scored big with *Cut You Up*, taken from their 2063 arena tour throughout North America. Rumor has it that they're about to follow with the sequel *Cutting Again* from that year's European tour.

Sports

Sportsims tend to place fictional players in real leagues and teams. They focus on a player's journey to the big leagues or redemption after major career problems like a serious injury or being traded to a new team. Season highlights packages for a particular team are also very popular. Athletes with simrigs are more common in the flashy and dangerous big-ticket sports like Urban Brawl, Combat Biking (Remember the mega-hit sim *Dead Air?*), auto-racing and extreme “sports” like para-gliding. The networks air these on live pay-per-view and make a pretty penny, especially when the games are expected to be bloodier than usual. Sports related releases are usually carefully worked over in post-production to avoid fans feeling too disoriented after bone-crushing hits and firearms frenzies.

What's Hot: *Burning Bright*, the '62–'63 season highlight sim from the Calgary Flames featuring Brent Karoski has been a top seller since it's release.

- Most networks are “socially conscious” and cut to a different POV if they can see that a fatality is about to occur, but they don't always manage to do so. And of course, you can bet there's money changing hands under the table. Violence sells, and the North American public buys.
- Media Watcher

Childrens

The advantages of kidsims are numerous—the kids get quality entertainment at home, the parental units get a break, plus there are many educational and social benefits of simsense. Stricter parents can even monitor their kids' using habits and modify the intensity of the experience as necessary. Modern education uses simsense as a teaching tool, both in the classroom and over the Matrix for students taking part in home- or distance-education.



What's Hot: Truman Technologies will have a huge hit on their hands this fall with the release of *Clay Dungeons*, a wondrous romp through the medieval fantasy world inside every child's imagination!

- Ah yes. Raise them to be young addicts, so they'll be buying a sim every week from the time they start getting enough allowance to the time they die from lack of exercise and too many krill flakes.

- DSLR

- Hey, at least chipped-in kids aren't running out and shooting up the neighborhood ... well, until they find daddy's persona-fix BTLs.

- Trepa Nation

Documentaries

Docusims are gaining more and more ground in the simsense market, focusing on subjects such as paranormal animal hunts, crime investigation or the simple exploration of a foreign country. Alternate docusims on subjects such as the World Wars of the early 20th century exist, but they are obviously recreations, more akin to a proper simsense movie than a documentary. "Extreme reporting" has also found a home on the major networks, with reporters going into war-torn countries, trailing shadow-teams and finding their ways into other places where they just don't belong.

What's Hot: *Angel Phoenix*, documenting the rebuilding and rebirth of LA as part of the Pueblo.

- I hear Affiliated Artists is looking for a runner team that's willing to let themselves be rigged for 6 months to a year. You'd have to be pretty desperate to take a gig like that.

- Moke

Educational

Sims offer all the benefits of actually attending a lecture or a formal meeting and are used to save time and precious personnel resources. A group of prospective employees can be given early employment training (such as company procedures, first aid, etc) without the need for direct supervision, and can then be given practical hands-on demonstrations and quizzes afterwards.

What's Hot: Ares Safety Series sims, which allow trainees to get realistic experiences in dealing with hazardous situations such as fire rescues, gas explosions or hostage situations.

CORPORATE FUN

For our viewers who are part of one of today's large corporate families, you're not just limited to publicly-available amusements. As a valued member of a corporate team, you might have access to sims and shows you never knew about—why not ask your personnel officers about it today?

- Wow, I haven't heard "corporate families" used in a sentence since my flatmate got his last accidental dose of psychotropic IC.

- Bung



Many employers have access to the finest quality entertainment production facilities; all our largest corporations and many of the mid-sized ones have solid presences in the entertainment industry. These studios are put to good use by corporate entertainment divisions to produce media for their employees. Corporate news-media broadcasts are the most common, featuring an interesting mix of corporate news and views with local and national current affairs. Many corporations also produce trid shows (and, sometimes, full-featured sims) showcasing their contracted talent. They run the gamut of documentaries, dramas, comedies and action thrillers, with production values as high as any public entertainment offering.

- Sometimes the mix gets spiced up with mainstream shows being piloted for the next season. The corp touts it to their employees as an "exclusive preview" and they get plenty of free test audiences out of it. It also gives corpsec something to do, as they then get to track down the internal "leak" who inevitably bootlegs it.

- P2P

- It's hard to decide what's the toughest to swallow—the blatant editorializing and misrepresentation of the corporate "news" bulletins, or the more subtle hooks and corporate conditioning in the trid and sim "entertainment."

- Kill Your Trid

- I did some bodyguarding work for an actress who told me about the years when MCT had her under contract. They'd snapped her up, but then their studios couldn't find any mainstream vehicles for her, so they put her to work starring in their corporate dross trids. She said by the end of it she'd lost so much self-respect she was considering changing careers to janitor work.

- Drama Queen

- For most corporate employees, the bias is relatively subtle, but over time the pro-corp messages and subliminal conditioning are tantamount to brainwashing. For those who live and work in arcologies, for instance, their only input is corporate. They have serious culture shock when they get out and find the world works a little differently on the outside.

- Auntie Social

Many corporations also stage exclusive entertainment events for their staff as a reward for loyal service. These events range from internal sports matches to exclusive simsense premieres that the glitterati only wish they had access to.

- Oh, puh-lease. Do they really think people are going to believe that their corp loves them so much they'll let them into an exclusive event and turn Passion Synclair away at the door? Not even wageslaves are that naïve.

- LoRent

Access to events like these are often part of an employee rewards program, where the corporation can reward consistent excellence, valuable innovation, loyalty and dedication. Corporations often stage exclusive performances of plays and musical concerts, advance screenings of the hottest sims, and parties and social functions.

- It's a cheap deal for the corporation; they usually own the talent in question, so the events cost them almost nothing to hold and make the employees feel all warm and fuzzy and loved.

- Socio Pat

- Needless to say, these are great opportunities for thee and me. If you can get into an event like this, security's usually lower inside because they figure everyone's on their side. Even if you're not there to do biz, you can meet some useful contacts or gather some valuable intel for the future. It's all about who and what you know, after all.

- Collide

- And for those with short attention spans, events like these are often full of "sensitive personnel"—i.e. those at risk of extraction. It gives them a chance to get out and have fun while still staying safe, so a ticket into an event like this can be doubly valuable for an enterprising runner.

- Pistons

Many employers also offer subsidized and pre-organized holidays for their staff members—guided tours of interesting scenic or historical spots and package deals to popular vacation destinations. It's a great way to get to know your colleagues in a more relaxed environment and to see the world at the same time. Obviously, the groups avoid dangerous and unstable areas, to keep it a safe and fun vacation for everyone.

- These are actually kinda fun. The tour guides are pretty knowledgeable, even if they are full of corporate propaganda, and the tour groups often have the advantage of corporate visas to get access to some pretty out-of-the-way places. If you can attach yourself to a group like this and pretend to be a happy wageslave, you can have a surprisingly good holiday ... or, of course, you can use it as a convenient cover to get into some locale where you're not supposed to be.

- Traveler Jones

- Well, that would explain the group of "German tourists" I stumbled across in Jordan last month. They had their cameras out, seeing all the sights—admittedly, the cameras were on the ends of guns, but I guess the desert camo was just to fit in with the locals. Funny how the "tour guide" had patches on his outfit that looked just like a Saeder-Krupp Lieutenant's insignia, but I guess it's time to get my cybereyes replaced again.

- Manticore

When In-House Isn't an Option

Of course, today's corporations realize that they can't entertain their personnel all of the time. Occasionally, corporate staff will venture outside of the company's bounds for a night out. Even in these cases, many companies still look out for their employee's best interests, offering two specialized kinds of services.

The first are the executive protection specialists—otherwise known as bodyguards. Though senior management and public figures obviously need bodyguards, such services are often invaluable for other workers as well. It's not uncommon for a valued expert to come under threat from an organization who'd like to deprive his employers of his services, whether through kidnapping or more dangerous means, and one should spare no expense in defense of one's life and livelihood.

Those corporations who don't have in-house security for these situations will usually have a contractual arrangement with a number of bodyguards who can provide protection for a valuable staff member. Bodyguards are trained to assess potential threats and to keep you safe no matter what—and yes, they're paid to take a bullet in your defense. If you're looking for protection that's not subsidized by your employers, your corporate security department can often recommend reputable contractors available for private hire.

- It goes without saying that this is good work if you're clean enough to get hired—it's relatively safe, and it's legal—but it's also handy if you want to infiltrate the corp you're theoretically contracted by, or if the putative protectee is actually your mark.

- Palladium

- I picked up a private-hire job like that after I'd been contracting for a particular corp for a while. The hirer obviously liked my face, since he kept me on for almost six months—he was a nervous kinda guy—and in the end I wound up helping him extract himself from his own corporation. You can get some surprising opportunities from gigs like that.

- Cutter

The second specialists are the escort services who exist to accompany busy corporate executives to public functions and keep them company when they're out of town. Corporate-sanctioned escorts are well-educated, interesting and personable people whose social skills and friendly demeanors make them ideal companions. Not only do they imply a certain status when they appear by your side at a corporate function, but it's often relaxing to have trustworthy company—business travel can be exhausting without enjoyable leisure time.

- Oh, how terribly discreet. Yup, there's a whole 'nother kind of "body corporate" out there, and it's usually wearing lace underwear.

- Bung

- To be fair, not all corporate escorts are joygirls and joyboys. Some really are just good conversationalists who are good company and a social asset by your side—of course, they're usually the ones who work directly for the corp and report to the intelligence division to make sure you're not getting out of line.

- Spook

- And then there are the specialists who combine bodyguarding and escorting. Kicking ass while looking good is always a plus.

- Trinity

ADVERTISING

The corporate message is everywhere in today's urban world. No longer constrained to billboards or bus benches, advertisements now adorn every surface and space that's not already occupied (and some that are). Animated graphics, bright colors, flashes of light, holographic images, unusual sounds and jingles are all used to catch our attention and direct us towards things that we might want. Ads have worked themselves into every aspect of our lives, whether you're making a phone call, logging onto a Matrix site or taking an elevator. Every device and appliance you use, from your bedroom to the street, aims to sell you something.

- This is more than obnoxious, it's an occupation of our personal and mental space. It amazes me that garbage like this is allowed and encouraged in our community spaces, while the cops shoot kids for tagging a wall with a spraycan.

- Just Seeds

The nature of modern ID systems and relational databases now allows for "targeted marketing" to pinpoint services and products that we are personally inclined to favor. The beacon on your credstick allows every store and display you pass to look up your personal credit history and purchasing habits and create a personalized ad on the spot. Not only are we exposed to things that advertisers know we like, we are even addressed by name. Likewise, your vehicle or pocket secretary may pinpoint your location and direct you towards nearby items of interest, perhaps with special offers or promotions. Finding what you want has never been easier—even if you didn't know you wanted it!

- And if that wasn't enough, the legal definition of "subliminal" messaging gets weaker every year, or in many cases just isn't enforced. So the next time you get an unexpected craving or desire for some ... product, beware.

- Krylon

Truthfully, the sheer amount of advertising can be distracting, adding to the level of visual and noise pollution. Each city's tolerance for this varies: New York's Times Square perpetually

glows and chatters, while other cities place advertising restrictions in certain areas. For safety's sake, projected and holographic images are usually barred from high traffic areas.

ON THE NEWS

Today's newscasts offer an unprecedented level of detail and drama, rivaling even action-sims in excitement. The prevalence of cameras and recording devices throughout society means that the news is rarely caught without humorous or interesting footage to accompany the day's litany of crimes, violence, scandals, press conferences, politics, sports and metahuman interest stories. Enhanced features provide additional background details for each story, from timelines, maps and biographies to image collections, recordings, archives and viewer response forums. With hundreds of newschannels broadcasting around the clock, the public has never been so informed as it is today.

- **Gag me.** Modern reporting is all about the sex and violence. A story's got a slim chance of making it to broadcast unless it has some sort of emotional punch to it. That's why you'll see reporters crawling all over themselves to interview people in tragic, inappropriate situations, while they're still in shock and covered with blood. Makes me sick.

- Farrell

- **Let's be fair.** It isn't so much news as entertainment. Reporters film re-enactments and stage shots all the time. Let's face it, their jobs are on the line. If there's no dramatic news to report on, they'll make some. Heck, I know some slimebag reporters that keep runners on retainer for just that purpose.

- Digger

- **Don't forget the propaganda angle.** Most of the major news outlets are in the hands of the megacorps, which means they need to toe the company line. Is anyone surprised that NBS never has anything bad to say about Ares or Nadja Daviar, but they seem to take particular delight in roasting Cross over the coals every chance they get? It's also why corp press releases are swallowed whole and reported as fact, without any independent fact-checking, and then regurgitated across every media outlet.

- Errant Knight

Though newscasts are traditionally viewed via trideo or Matrix feed, our accelerated society means that people want the latest news as soon as it's available. Media outlets fulfill this need with subscription news services that transmit you the news as it happens, according to your pre-set filters, direct to your pocket secretary or cellphone.

Though we still have not achieved the paperless office or newsroom, electronic paper has brought us close. Flexible, reusable and stain-free, it's a simple matter to download the latest newsfax onto your e-paper so that you can take the news with you and read it wherever you like. Almost all trideo and Matrix newsfeeds feature a companion download version

PIRATES!

No discussion of media outlets can avoid mentioning the small army of underground, radical, illicit and often illegal broadcasters collectively known as pirates. Refusing to be bound by regulatory bodies, licensing, endorsements, advertising contracts, inter-corporate relations or even simple decency, pirates transmit their own unauthorized signals on trideo frequencies, via hacked Matrix feeds or by injecting them into satcasts.

The content of pirate feeds runs the gamut: bloodsports, raw pornography, extremist propaganda, bootleg trids and sims. Pirate transmissions cross the spectrum from quality productions indistinguishable from legal broadcasts to ad-hoc programs created by amateurs. They also include quasi-legal transmissions with illegal content that is legal in the country of origin and re-transmissions of shows that previously aired on subscription services.

- Despite Livewire's bias, not all pirates are disgusting, lewd or without social merit. The Orks First! and Green-Watch pirate nets in Seattle, for example, cover relevant meta-rights and eco-issues that the mainstream media doesn't. Some Shadowland nodes even have affiliated pirate feeds, broadcasting news of interest to the local criminal population.

- Natas

- In case you're wondering, yes, the quasi-legal pirates often air advertisements. The corps know a good opportunity when they see it, and they can't be slapped for purchasing adspace in a country where the broadcast is legal.

- Ferret

- Lest we forget, corps and governments are not above a little broadcast piracy themselves. The Salish regularly bombard Tsmshian citizens with anti-government propaganda and calls to end the conflict, while some corps have used surreptitious pirate blasts to leak insider knowledge in their favor.

- Spook

Authorities find it difficult to shut down pirate transmissions as they often operate from a mobile platform to avoid triangulation or they transmit from outside the law's jurisdiction. In most cases, authorities only attempt to hunt down broadcasts that interfere with commercial transmissions, are considered "subversive" by the powers-that-be or incite a high volume of citizen complaints.

- Some underground clubs feature pirate feeds that cater to their clientele.

- Pub Crawler

meant to be printed out (or saved to e-paper), usually released hourly (breaking news, often called "screamsheets"), daily (major national and international news stories plus local news) and weekly (news magazine style).



Today's reporters are also a new breed, less hampered by the cumbersome equipment of the past. Many reporters or their cameramen employ recording and broadcasting implants of all sorts, so that they can bring us the stories live and direct on the double. News anchors are more telegenic than ever, thanks to real-time digital image manipulation and direct-feeding of stories into their retinal displays.

- I've known some reporters who have gone all-out with the implants, turning themselves into living sensors. These guys don't miss a beat, but it can be hard to hold a conversation with them as they're constantly distracted.
- Trudy
- That's nothing. Ever met one of the hardcore investigative journalists? I knew one who used persona-overlay BTLs so that he could better infiltrate his targets. Best schmoozer I ever met. Too bad he went native.
- Gravity
- Have you seen Newsnets latest anchor? It's not even a person—it's a program. One of those knowbots, coded out to be a hyper-real trid personality. Everybody loves her, so expect it to catch on.
- Lucius

SPORTS: THE BIG LEAGUES

Modern sports are a strange hybrid of media spectacle, fan exuberance and cash cow. Large numbers of fans continue to devote themselves—and their nuyen—to their local sports teams. Season-end finales have become meganuyen festivities, outclassed only by the free-for-all between advertisers to outdo each other.

Just as there's no denying that sports are our society's outlet for celebration, we also can't forget how much sports have changed since the Awakening and the advent of cybware and other technologies.

- Some believe that sports are the modern opiate of the masses. These disenfranchised and short-sighted individuals overlook the fact that sports are really an opiate of the corporate world. Sports revenues across the globe run into the trillions of nuyen annually, causing corporations to throw themselves prostrate before star athletes who demand ludicrous tribute. The corporations are only too happy to meet their demands, provided the return on investment is great enough.
- The Chromed Accountant
- Yeah, so sports are a big game that only the corps and some pampered athletes win. Big surprise. All I care about is getting some hooligan action on. Win or lose, let's riot!
- Slamm-O!



Technology and Sports

Three decades after cyberware was first introduced into professional sports, augmentation is common but hasn't taken over like many feared. Though implants, drugs, genetic manipulation and other technology were the death knell for many world records, in competition none of these are a match for natural ability, guts and the will to win.

Many talented and unaugmented athletes feel that implants or drugs would adversely affect their natural abilities. An imperfect interface between flesh and machine could mean the end of their careers. Implants are also more subject to wear and tear than the natural body, and even minor implant damage may require time-consuming surgery or recuperating time. *Though teams will often foot the bill for key players, the cost of top-quality implants is still prohibitive. For the same price as a top of the line set of wired reflexes, a team could hire an above-average player for the season.*

- Most of these concerns aren't justified. Top athletes get exceptional performance out of augmentation. Brent Johnson required only minor wired reflex augmentation late in his career to become one of the quickest goalkeepers in soccer. He was able to get more out of them due to his natural abilities.
- Doc

There are two types of athletes who pursue significant cyber modification: has-beens and never-weres. Young players with no hope of reaching the top professional leagues are more likely to gamble with cybernetics. At the other end of the scale, older players whose skill levels have decreased with age accept implants to extend their careers. Sometimes these gambles pay off, sometimes not. Two-time MLB league MVP winner Clayton Licari found out the hard way in 2059 when he tried muscle replacement on his ailing left arm to help his pitching game. Soon after, Licari was consistently throwing 160kph fastballs—but he never regained the fine control he had before the surgery, leading to his early exit from professional baseball.

- That's putting it mildly. During his last MLB appearance against the Yankees he accidentally beamed two consecutive batters so hard that to this day they still drink through sippy cups. Rumor has it several Yankees teammates went over to Licari's place after the game and gave him the career-ending beating of his life.
- Cletus
- There's a third category of pro-cyber athletes: women. Though sex doesn't matter as much as skill and ability in most leagues, women are still a minority. More and more women are taking advantage of implants to level the playing field. Same goes for dwarfs.
- Croff
- Augmentation isn't just about cyberware. Some professional teams are heavily involved in backroom deals to sign high school players, in return for a combination of designer drug

treatments and gene-therapy. Ostensibly this is done to give them greater natural performance down the road when their skills mature. So far, though, there's no proof that this works. If you want to know who's involved, look toward teams who have had several consecutive terrible seasons.

- Inside Penetration

One implant that is widespread among athletes, especially in death-defying sports such as auto-racing, urban brawl and combat biking, is the simrig. Broadcast networks charge a premium to experience sports live via simsense. This has lent a new dimension to star athletes who are valued for their emotional takes as well as their athletic prowess.

- Most of those "live" sim feeds have a slight delay so an expert program can scrub the rough parts out and also ostensibly so that they can cut off the feed if a death or serious injury occurs. Funny how those tracks always make it out on the black market anyway.
- Zhang

The Awakening and Sports

While the intricacies of technology and sports are finally being nailed down, the issue of magic and sports is much more complex.

Adepts have participated in athletic events for a long time—possibly since the advent of sports. It wasn't until two decades after the Awakening that many top athletes were identified as adepts; some didn't know themselves. After a major fuss, most sports leagues simply made it legal for adepts to participate, but not all.

Spellcasting is currently only permitted in urban brawl and is strictly prohibited in most other sporting events. Even in urban brawl there are severe restrictions, such as no influencing thoughts or actions of opposing teammates. There are a few magicians playing professional sports, but they do not use spells during games. Due to rampant cheating and interference from not only players but the crowds themselves, nearly all professional sports are astrally monitored by trained magicians and spirits.

- It just isn't feasible to have spellcasters play sports. There are too many factors involved in spellcasting. You'd have to write a whole separate rulebook for spellcasting if you allowed it. Then there's the problem of needing referees with astral perception ...
- Nodog

Spirits, free or otherwise, are currently not allowed in any pro sports. No other paranatural creatures have been allowed, with the exception of several sasquatch who participate on NAN stickball teams.

Metahumans continue to make inroads into sports. The CAS Supreme Court ruled in 2056 (*Baker vs. MLS*) that professional sports leagues could not deny playing time to participants based on metatype. This judgment was quickly accepted as legal precedent by other leagues.

• There's a classic example of mainstream media dealing with a politically correct issue. What they don't say is that thanks to this asinine ruling, Grunts and Troggs will eventually completely take over professional sports. It's already happening. There's hardly any human linebackers in the NFL anymore, and don't even get me started on urban brawl.

• Fb-

• Maybe orks and trolls on the whole are stronger than humans, but you can't block people from participating just because of their race.

• Socio Pat

• It used to be rumored that there was a gentleman's agreement among pro teams to keep meta-recruitment low. Without commenting on the veracity of that statement, I can definitely say that if there ever was such an agreement, it is rapidly falling by the wayside.

• Inside Penetration

2063 PRO SPORTS OVERVIEW

So what are the big sports and big leagues, and what restrictions do they enforce? Here's the brief rundown of the world's top pro sports. (Unless otherwise noted, all sports restrict the use of implant weaponry, spells, spirits and paracritters).

Auto Racing

Leagues: NASCAR, Formula One.

Restrictions: Adepts, drugs, implants (NASCAR only), nanites.

NASCAR has maintained its emphasis on driver skill, while Formula One focuses on the engineering of both car *and* driver. NASCAR also only allows vehicles that fit very specific vehicle templates, so that all competing cars are more or less the same.

• As the purest form of the sport of racing, NASCAR's pretty dull compared to Formula One. It still has legions of loyal fans in North America, Formula One's just an engineering contest.

• Defensive Driver

• There's talk of making a new Formula One league where cars are armed. The drivers' unions in the respective leagues are completely against this, but the corps are more worried about nuyen and ratings.

• Rigger X

Baseball

Leagues: North American League (North America), Nippon Professional League (Japan, parts of China).

Restrictions: Adepts, metahumans (NPL only), nanites. Limited cyberware and bioware allowed.

Skillwired pitching can put a baseball over home plate every time, but makes pitches more predictable and easier to hit. By far, the most popular augmentation of choice is drugs, mainly steroid derivatives.

Basketball

Leagues: NABA (North America), EBA (Europe), ABA (Africa), CBA (China and most of the Asian Pacific region)

Restrictions: Cyberlimbs, height or reach-mods, drugs, nanites. Only limited reflex boosters allowed.

Minor reflex enhancers are popular among players as of late, even though they make players more jumpy and foul-prone. Dermal plating is also becoming a favorite.

• Dermal's popular because refs aren't calling as many fouls.

• Cletus

The NABA is considering allowing the new Sure Shot™ throwing assistance cyberware to be used by players. Initial human trials indicate that the ware, which is based off of smartlink technology, is too accurate.

• I'll second that. One of our teammates had this installed. He throws grenades right on target every time. No bounce.

• Weird Harold

Combat Biker

Leagues: World Combat Cyclist League.

Restrictions: None.

Combat Biker isn't just a sport, it's a soap opera for sports fans. Cameras follow players on and off the court, delve into their personal lives and generally paint them in the worst possible light for maximum ratings. Because the players are encouraged to be flamboyant and outrageous, off-court confrontations are reaching an all-time high.

• Not to mention off-court killings. Some of the team rivalries are completely out of control. The media actively encourages it.

• Hitler

Originally created when a savvy entertainer convinced two rival go-gangs to battle it out in front of cameras, the goal of combat biker is to capture a drone-mounted flag and land it in the opponent's goal circle. The combat biker arena is football-sized, divided into a maze with four lanes and features a skyway track that runs over the middle of the field. The nine-member teams ride a variety of machines and carry an assortment of nonlethal weapons, from maces and nets to riot guns and concussion grenades.

As soccer is to football, combat biker is to urban brawl: much more popular in the rest of the world than in North America. Combat biker is extremely popular in Central Asia, where Yamatetsu has given it significant financial backing.

• More deaths and less lawsuits due to weak legal systems. What more could you ask for in a sport if you're a corporate sponsor?

• Mangler

• A lot of Asian go-gangs actually stage their own combat biker tournaments, hoping to catch the eye of the discreet talent scouts that WCCL franchises send out.

• Gun Fu

Court Ball

Leagues: Aztlan Court Ball Union

Restrictions: None (cyberweaponry allowed).

Immensely popular in Aztlan, the average North American citizen has only a vague idea of what this sport is about. Many major media outfits decry court ball as too violent, despite an equally high casualty rate in urban brawl matches.

- I think the major objection to Court Ball is the ritual sacrifice component. Of course, that's also what makes it so cool!
- Bloodyguts

A revival of an ancient Aztec game, courtball pits two teams of three in a square, sunken court, with goals scored by passing the ball through a ring attached to one wall. Three replacements are allowed, and play continues until seven points are scored or one team is eliminated.

- It's also an old tradition that the captains of courtball champion teams are sacrificed to the gods. Aztlan denies this, but each year the champ's captain has mysteriously died or committed suicide.
- Pyramid Watcher
- The Aztlan court system occasionally sentences severe felons to play on novice court ball teams in matches against professional teams.
- A-con

Football

Leagues: NAFL (North America), EFL (Europe), IFL (Indian subcontinent, central Asia), OZFL (Australia, New Zealand), DFL (Drones).

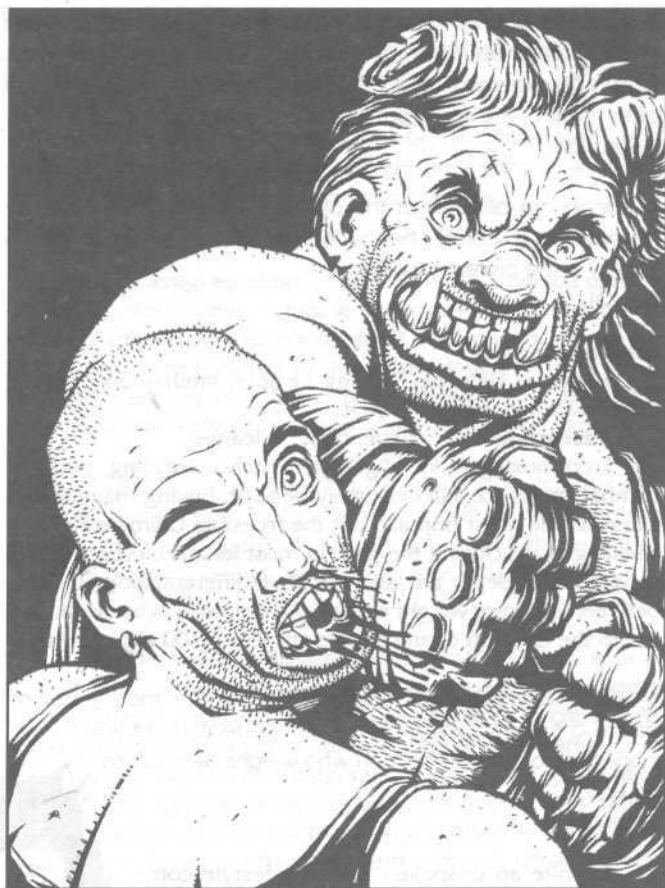
Restrictions: Cyberlimbs, telescoping limbs.

Just about anything goes in modern (American-style) football, and it shows. Popular implants include BattleTac systems and hydraulic arms for linesmen to block with.

To better accommodate the talents of cyberjocks, pro leagues now use a 150 by 60 meter field. Football pads have grown more like actual armor, and the football itself has gotten denser and heavier (2 kg).

- This sport's completely ruined. There's no athletic talent involved at all anymore.
- Grumpy Old Man
- Says you. I'd say it's better than ever.
- Fb-

The main leagues in football are not on par with each other. NAFL is the primary league, EFL the secondary. Football became popular in Central Asia only in the past ten years, as restrictions on cyberware eased. OZFL plays under a set of rules incompatible with other leagues. The Drone Football League runs games just like regular football, except that each team has a budget that they must allocate between offense, defense, special teams and, most importantly, repairs.



- In recent years, drone football teams have been heavily recruiting retired Formula One drivers, as they make excellent pilots.
- Rigger X

Hockey

Leagues: INHL (North America, Europe, Russia, South Africa, Australia)

Restrictions: Adept. Limited cyberware and bioware allowed.

Hockey's INHL is an open professional league. It is not based on geography.

A few new rules will be going into effect next season. First, players will be allowed to use exoskeleton enhancements and body armor. Second, fights will not be called off until one player either taps out, a la "pro" wrestling, or is beaten unconscious. Previously the fight was over when one of the participants fell prone. Third, three bench clearing brawls will be allowed per game, up from just one last season.

- I may have to cut back on my Urban Brawl watching, this sounds interesting.
- Bloodyguts
- There is a growing schism between players and the modifications they choose. Hard-hitters go for the armor and strength



modifications, while an equal number of speed scorers go for reaction and aiming modifications. Both factions view each other with extreme disdain. This makes no sense to people who aren't fans of the sport, but the rift is indeed there.

- Eurasian
- Adepts are allowed at the amateur level and skew heavily toward speed scorers—hence the controversy in allowing them to play in the professional leagues.
- Snarl

Personal Combat

Leagues: Ultimate Fighting League, International Boxing Commission, numerous others.

Restrictions: Vary depending on league.

From boxing to kick-fighting to sumo wrestling, personal combat sports are still extremely popular. Boxing maintains its status as the most popular, but the freestyle Ultimate Fighting challenges are closing the gap. In most leagues, cyber-modifications and adepts are allowed, but differentiation is made between different weight classes. Advances in cyberware have led to the creation of an Ultraweight Class (200 kilos and up).

- These weight classes effectively solve the race problem. You're a troll and you want to fight? Great, meet your opponent, a cybered human who weighs as much as you do.
- Bee Sting

Despite an unspoken rule in freestyle combats not to intentionally maim or kill each other, the number of deaths rises each year.

- Combatants who do maim or kill intentionally are considered fair game by the rest of the league's combatants.
- Shiv

Drone combat leagues are also growing a wider fanbase each year. There is even some discussion on creating a professional drone-metahuman league, allowing drones and professional fighters to challenge each other.

- They can't be serious.
- Skeptic
- When you get up into the Ultraweight class, there isn't much distinction between man and machine. Seems like the next logical step to me.
- Tetsuo

Soccer

Leagues: FIFA (International governing body), NAMLS (North America),

CONMEBOL (South America), UEFA (Europe), CAF (Africa), AFC (Asia), OFC (Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Oceania), numerous national-level leagues.

Restrictions: Adepts, drugs, nanites, phenotypic alteration. Implants only allowed to correct injuries, not to enhance. Some regional leagues ban metahuman participation.

The major issue affecting soccer today is whether to include adepts and metahumans. Most leagues are allowing metahumans to play, however there is strong resistance to this in more conservative regions of the world, such as the Middle East and Southeast Asia. These arguments threaten to tear FIFA apart.

- Hard to believe we're having this argument in the 2060s. Get with it, people.
- Snarl

Stickball

Leagues: A-ne-jo-di League

Restrictions: Drugs, implants, nanites. Sasquatch allowed.

Stickball's growth in popularity can be traced directly back to one thing: its acceptance of magic. Adepts and even mages are allowed to participate in this sport. The use of magic attracts huge audiences, as most people have not ever had the chance to see magic in action. For many, magic is only something they have heard about or seen on the trid.

- Currently spellcasters are prohibited from casting spells on the opposing team. Stickball's governing body is experimenting with an all-spellcaster league, however, where spells against the other team are permitted. Word has it they're satisfied with the results and could introduce it publicly in the next year or two.
- Painted Owl

Urban Brawl

Leagues: ISSV (International), NAUBL (North America)

Restrictions: Control manipulation spells only.

Like combat biker, urban brawl started as a recorded contest between rival street gangs. It has also adopted combat biker's soap-opera style of off-court reality TV. Many players still come from street level backgrounds, though specially-trained athletes and even university and corp teams participate. Brawl zones—three city blocks wide and four deep—are secretly selected from the worst ghetto wastelands and secured just days before each match. Two teams of thirteen brawlers enter the zone, equipped with regulated firearms,





melee weapons and heavy armor, and attempt to get the ball into the opponent team's goal zone. Drone cameras catch all of the brutal action.

- Ghost help the SINless residents of any area that gets condemned as a "brawl zone." ISSV goons sweep in and forcibly evict everyone, no exceptions. The competing teams will pay good cred for intel on the area, though, even going so far as to hire runners to bypass ISSV security and scout them out.
- Brick

The leagues have been plagued recently by a rash of incidents of fans hiding out in the neighborhoods before the game, while the brawl field is being set up. Whether streaking or seeking autographs, fans who appear on the field during the game are often injured or even killed.

- NAUBL's been lucky so far. No one who's done this has had a SIN and thus couldn't sue the league (or at least, that's the story).
- Blaster
- NAUBL's been doing something else you won't see mentioned in any mainstream media organization: They've been actively recruiting shadowrunners to play as ringers, often on a per-game basis. Each team has two or three major flamboyant personalities that get most of the press coverage; everyone else is just cannon fodder, so it's easy for runners to blend in.
- LoRent

THE SYSTEM

Though it rarely attracts attention, there is a system and structure that enables our society to function. It's not surprising, however, that most people never think about it; it's designed to be as transparent and inconspicuous as possible. The mechanisms of society—identifying and protecting citizens, maintaining the flow of information, and so forth—are there to smooth the path of everyday life, not to inconvenience you.

- And it's also there to monitor, track and profile you for the state and corps—all for your own safety and best consumer interests, of course.
- Cynic

KEEPING TRACK OF OUR SINS

Those of us born in the UCAS and CAS are familiar with System Identification Numbers (SINs)—we've had them since birth. This convenient number establishes our citizenship and civil rights, and allows government and credit agencies to easily categorize our personal data. But how do authorities use our SINs? Do foreign and corporate citizens have them, and are they compatible? And what about the unregistered SINless masses?

The GSINR (Global SIN Registry) is the regulatory body that sets the worldwide standards for how SINs are used and assigned and also what data is correlated with them. Not every

nation in the world uses SINs (though most do), but those that do comply with GSINR protocols. Extraterritorial corporations are required to adhere by corporate law.

- The GSINR is a fully-funded project of the Corporate Court, natch. And yes, they maintain a worldwide registry of SIN data, though it's riddled with errors and inaccuracies.
- Conspir-I-See

SINs are assigned either at birth or when a person obtains citizenship. Your name, birthdate and location, citizenship and details of parents are recorded with it. National and corporate SIN registries are required to share their data with the GSINR, but otherwise they keep the data confidential, only making it available to law enforcement and other appropriate agencies.

- The actual SIN is created using a formula that includes elements of your personal data. This means that cops can look at your SIN itself and determine your initials, year of birth and state of birth, so making one up on the spot won't work.
- Digit

Though rare, dual citizenship (such as UCAS/Ares) is possible; in such cases, you would have two separate SINs. Some corporations or nations, however, will revoke your citizenship if you become a citizen of another country or corporation.

In many nations and corporations, your SIN guarantees you an established set of civil rights or privileges (visas confer a more limited set). Without that SIN, you officially don't exist, and may be subject to harsher treatments and penalties. The SINless also find it harder to get by in society, as a SIN is required to legally rent, get a job, open a bank or utility account, purchase travel tickets, attend school, or even use many basic consumer services.

- You want to destroy someone's life? Have their SIN revoked. It's no simple feat, mind you, but the risks are often rewarding.
- FastJack

Law enforcement agencies and government judicial agencies can assign SINs to the SINless, though the process is often lengthy and invasive, and in no way guaranteed. Applicants must prove their identity (a challenge unto itself), that they have something to offer to society, and their upstanding nature as a law-abiding person. Law enforcement can also assign criminal SINs to registered criminals; these SINs simply add an extra digit that denotes the subject's criminal/legal status. Criminal SINs are cross-indexed with additional data, such as photographs, biometric scans, criminal records and sometimes tissue samples.

- Some countries still won't grant SINs to metahumans. In more liberal areas, however, sasquatch, dragons, free spirits and other sentient critters have managed to obtain them (why they want one, I don't know).
- Spook

CREDSTICKS: CASH ON THE GO

Credsticks are an ubiquitous part of modern life. They can be issued by many different vendors—your bank, a megacorporation, or even the government. They are all fundamentally the same in function and form: a cylindrical object four inches long and sized like a typical writing pen, well suited for carrying in your breast pocket, wallet, purse, or worn on a wristband.

Registered Credsticks

Registered credsticks hold all the necessary information a productive member of society needs to get through the day and act as a multi-function device for financial transactions. The color of your registered credstick determines the maximum transaction amount and also the type of verification required to use it: standard (5,000¥/passcode), silver (20,000¥/fingerprint), gold (200,000¥/voiceprint), platinum (1,000,000¥/retinal) or ebony (unlimited/cellular).

Registered credsticks allow retrieval of encrypted personal information for a variety of purposes:

Identification: All credsticks store the basic information provided to the issuing agency—name, address, birthdate, SIN, digital signature and other important pieces of information. Additional identifying documents, such as your passport, birth certificate, nationality and citizenship documents can also be stored. Many workplaces will also encode your credstick with vital information about you and your occupation, especially if your job involves public safety, such as Lone Star patrolmen or DocWagon medics.

Security/Biometric Patterns: Retinal, voice, thumb and palm prints can be recorded onto your credstick for verification purposes. DNA information and passcodes can also be stored.

Financial Access: Your registered credstick is linked to one or more bank accounts and can be used to pay for goods and services at retail stores and over the Matrix. Transactions occur immediately when a credstick is validated by a credstick reader. Stick-to-stick transactions are also possible, but they must be recorded and validated by a credstick reader before the transaction is considered valid. Thus, you can accidentally overdraw your bank accounts if you are not diligent about validating your account balance—however, this is easily done at public data terminals or via your own Matrix connection. Most issuing companies require that a credstick be validated once a month. Registered credsticks can also act as certified credsticks for the purposes of financial transfers, though the money must be allocated as certified before the transaction begins.

Transaction Logs: Your credstick makes a record each time it interacts with another device, which is invaluable for verification disputes. Financial transactions are also logged, and certain purchases may leave simple data files known as “cookies” for consumer profile purposes. Point-of-purchase credstick verifiers and beacon transponders can access your cookies to evaluate your purchasing habits and recommend other products and services that may appeal to you. Transaction logs may be manually erased at any time.

Permits and Licenses: Licenses and permits that allow you to work in certain occupations and allow you access or ownership of restricted equipment are stored on chip—this

includes your driver’s license! Most licenses require you to carry your credstick with you any time you are on the job or using/transporting the equipment. If you have a license or permit and aren’t sure about the specifics, find out! A little bit of awareness can save you an embarrassing and costly mistake!

Contracts: Homeowners, employee and personal contracts can be stored in a manner that doesn’t allow for others to modify the contract without your consent.

Medical Data: Storing your medical history, insurance and any information that could be vital to an EMT or any other medical professional on your stick is highly recommended—many insurance policies dictate it.

Beacon: Current models of registered credsticks also come with an optional beacon feature, easily activated or de-activated by the user. Beacons listen for a radio query and transmit an appropriate response. The default response includes your basic ID info, credit balance, issued permits and cookies logged by previous purchases; you can modify your response settings to fit your personal preferences. Beacons allow you access to personal electronics equipment, Matrix connections and even whole areas of a home or office. Beacon responses are also used by retailers to direct personalized advertisements and offers your way. Finally, beacons are used by some security services to log entrances into secured buildings.

- I doubt it needs to be said, but turn this damn thing off if you value your hide, not to mention your privacy.
- Glitch

Certified Credsticks

Certified credsticks are almost always issued by a bank and function purely as a financial transaction device, similar to cash or bearer bonds. They carry no ID or other info, except for a simple financial transaction log. Certified credsticks have no limits on transaction sizes but also feature less safeguards. Since they do not require ID to use, a certified credstick belongs to whomever holds it; if yours is lost or stolen, you are out of luck.

- Be aware that most issuing companies keep some information when you purchase a certified credstick—typically the location, time, amount, and in some cases your personal information. So don’t go buying a certified stick with a registered one, chum.
- Mongoose

Credstick Verification Readers

Credstick readers are strictly regulated by their distributors and are customized in firmware for each establishment that buys or leases them so they can access only the data necessary to their operation. Unlike standard credstick slots that can only read the information on a credstick, credstick readers are actually capable of verifying the data (by accessing and cross-referencing numerous linked databases) and authorizing financial transactions, including stick-to-stick transfers. Distributors have permanent remote access to credstick readers and all transactions are logged to prevent misuse and to allow for remote disabling if necessary.



- Ten years ago, these systems were a lot more easily defeated: hack the firmware, deck into the distributor's Matrix node and tweak a few pulses to make it look like the reader is just doing its job. Now, things are a lot tougher. The hardware has better anti-tamper detection and the distributors have tightened their nodes down more. You can still do it, but it's a lot tougher and requires a decker online monitoring dataflow the entire time the reader is connected to the Matrix. Tampering with a bank is a federal offense in most countries in the world ... ahem. Stay informed! Stay safe!

- Neuron Basher

- You can't frag with the distributor's access to the reader easily, either. Major distributors try to access the reader on a frequent but random basis. If it shows up as offline too frequently for their tastes, they flag it, disable it and won't reconnect it until you can fully explain why it was offline.

- Neon Flower

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Though the credstick performs a thousand and one useful functions, most people still think of it as the key to their wealth, and indeed that's still their primary function today. Though finances have become more abstract over the last century, as electronic credit has gradually replaced cold hard cash, the movement of money is as vital as ever as a foundation of our

society. In a world where one nanosecond's trading can change the face of a megacorporation, the ways we control our money may be different from a hundred years ago, but they're no less important.

Almost all regular banking is done online. Paying bills—whether manually or automatically—is performed via Matrix banking, as is everything from funds transfers to credit applications. Automated banking serves everyone—it keeps costs down for the banks, it's convenient for customers who can handle their finances at any hour from any location, and it helps maintain security by keeping most transactions away from unnecessary human intervention. Now, it's quite common to do all your banking without ever dealing with a human banker, from opening your first savings account to applying for investment loans.

- On the plus side, you can now rob banks without having to deal with messy situations like panicking tellers, gung-ho bank guards, alarms and dye packs. All it takes is a lot of decking skill and the willingness to risk frying your brain on some black IC.
- FastJack

- The best banks, of course, are the ones with snailmail addresses in foreign countries, or ones with no physical address at all. Why pay taxes when you can squirrel your cred inside a bank that won't squeal about your assets to the IRS? If you're worried about an audit, grab yourself an anonymous account accessed



via encrypted remailers and proper codes (and hope that the bank is legit enough that it won't just evaporate with your money some day). For real fun, open a string of high-privacy accounts in different banks and start your own money laundering operation.

- Grid Reaper
- Shadow banks are the way to go, especially if you're SINless. In some areas of the world, these are the only financial institutions the poor can access. Most of these are syndicate ops—traditionally the Vory or the Seoulpa Rings—so be careful you don't extend your credit limit too far, cuz they take loan collection seriously.
- HK Kid

Most banks offer services including but not limited to: daily transaction accounts, credit accounts, high-yield investment accounts, long-term investment accounts, long-term financing, loans and share trading accounts. Customers can select any or all of these options to customize accounts for their own needs; banks encourage their customers to integrate as many functions as possible into one account. For example, where a traditional bank customer might maintain a separate credit account and daily transaction account, a more modern-thinking consumer would combine these functions into a single transaction account with a credit limit for overdrafts. As the world has become more electronic, the traditional lines between "credit" and "debit" have blurred. Most people's net worth is measured in terms of available funds.

- And that's something the financiers love, since just about everyone in this consumerist world has a tendency to live beyond their means. The banking system just adds that extra encouragement to spend-spend-spend. A society that's permanently in debt is a society that's paying a lot of interest on their loans.
- The Keynesian Kid

Corporate banks often offer special accounts to their employees, with attractive package deals. Employee accounts are neatly integrated with personnel records, avoiding payment mishaps and delays, and there are often attractive alternative payment offers such as stock options and salary packaging.

- I'm sure I don't need to tell you all what a bad idea it is to let your employer run your bank account for you. Apart from all the insidious privacy concerns—like corporations identifying "undesirable" employees based on spending patterns and what they buy—it certainly makes breaking your contract that much harder.
- The Chromed Accountant

Of course, sometimes an electronic solution simply won't suffice, and most banks still have physical presences for that personal touch. They're usually frequented by clients with complicated needs, who require personal attention for the best service. These are usually complex business or investment

accounts, though; most customers never need to trouble themselves with visiting a bank in person. Few banks still maintain secured vaults with physical valuables; those that do offer safe deposit boxes for premier customers, usually secured with biometric scanners.

Banks also offer other physical services—for those without direct Matrix access, most banks have kiosks and booths in shopping malls, public transit stations and busy streets. These areas are enclosed and heavily protected, with reinforced glass and walls and high-tech security measures to deter miscreants; they require a legit credstick to access them.

- These areas are more trouble than they're worth. They're hell to bust into, have plenty of security in case you slip up and the kiosks are well secured and virtually unhackable anyway. And if all that weren't enough, they're almost all in plain sight of the public, too. If you have nefarious ideas concerning these, I'd suggest you look for an easier mark.
- Hoodrat

LAW & JURISDICTION

The modern legal system can seem intimidating and sometimes confusing, and the problem is made worse by media entertainment that irresponsibly dispenses with legal accuracy in the name of dramatic license.

- Don't think it's a joke. I've seen guys plead not guilty to any number of crimes, on the grounds that they thought it was okay because the cops on the frid did it.
- SPD

Fear not, however; our legal experts have assembled a quick introduction to the legal system of the UCAS. The legal systems in other North American nations vary to greater or lesser degrees. The judicial processes of the CAS are much the same, for example, while the Republic of Québec has based its procedures on the Napoleonic Code and is very different indeed.

Legal Jurisdiction

One of the greatest barriers to effective law enforcement is the morass of boundaries and jurisdiction issues that a peace officer must disentangle when they're pursuing a suspect or investigating a case. Peace officers tell us that the greatest single change in the way police work was done was the development of corporate extraterritoriality.

Extraterritoriality meant that police officers did not automatically have the right to enter certain corporate premises in the course of their duties, because those premises were no longer part of American territory. (That's right; extraterritoriality happened so long ago that it predates even the founding of our great nation.) Police officers of the time were already used to extraterritoriality as it applied to diplomatic buildings of other countries and soon adapted to the new corporate extraterritoriality as well. At least corporate extraterritoriality didn't come with the far greater headache of diplomatic immunity, which has plagued law enforcement officers far more.



- That's right on point. Diplomatic immunity extends a lot further and excuses all sorts of mad behavior. Frag, even diplomatic vehicles are treated as extraterritorial property, which plays merry hell with traffic policing.

- Spook

- Except that, as a courtesy, most megacorporate bigwigs are afforded the equivalent status anyway. I can kind of see the reasoning, I guess, since they're deemed to be the official representatives of another "national entity." Still, it makes for just another complication. It gets even messier when a nation decides not to extend that particular courtesy to a given corp suit, as is their right. It doesn't happen often, but there's nothing more satisfying than watching a fatcat crumple when he realizes he might just have to face some of the music after all.

- X-Star

Police departments already had procedures for liaising with other areas—before extraterritoriality, most major cities had up to four police forces keeping watch. Peace officers were already well-practiced at cooperating with other security forces; the corporations' right to maintain their own laws and security was quickly assimilated by the law enforcement community.

- Four police forces? How do they figure?

- GnuB

- City PD; that's one. County police and state troopers usually have at least some jurisdiction in the city, as well. And then there's the Feds—never forget the Feds.

- SPD

- In my experience, extraterritoriality really doesn't work that way on the streets. There's nothing that torques a cop off quicker than knowing his perp is hiding in that arcology and knowing the corp will never let him extradite the slot. If there's a chance to bend the rules and bag the fragger, most cops will take it.

- X-Star

- Well, you're not that cop any more, so don't let it rile you. It works both ways, too—despite what the Constitution says about recognizing corporate contracts as valid and allowing corps to extradite criminals to face their justice, it's amazing how *uncooperative the local authorities can be when a corp starts throwing its weight around*. Obviously, if you're already sitting in the slammer the corp will probably get you, but more often than not a corp demanding information about "wanted criminals" gets less than complete assistance.

- Legal Beagle

- It's made even more complex by the fact that most law enforcement is done by corps these days, and intercorporate politics can make DeeCee look like a kid's sandbox. If Knight-

Errant does your town's security and Ares is the corp that wants you—yeah, you're fragged. But if it's Mitsuhama who's after you, the amount of help they get from KE is almost certainly dependent on corporate politics and has nothing to do with the merits of the case.

- Errant Knight

- And even if everyone's playing nice, there are a whole bunch of complications that arise from extraterritoriality, and the regulations can be hard to memorize. I beat three assault charges and a manslaughter rap a couple months ago simply because I was arrested on extraterritorial Renraku property. Lone Star didn't dot every "i" and cross every "t" before they busted in there, so the arrest was invalid. I don't know the ins and outs of it, but I do know my lawyer was cackling with glee as he went over the case papers. Case was thrown out of court and I'm a free man. Mind you, I don't recommend relying on any assumptions that it'll work for you too—the cops don't goof up all the time, after all, nor will you necessarily have the cred to blow on a top-notch lawyer like I did.

- Negative Burn

Protecting and Serving

For your safety, law enforcement officers in the UCAS have a wide range of legal powers to employ in the course of their duty. Peace officers may detain any suspect for interrogation for up to 72 hours without charging him. Likewise, police are empowered to stop any person or vehicle at any time to check ID, vehicle registration and insurance. Personal and vehicle searches and astral scans are allowed without warrants, while private property may be searched and scanned if consent is given or if the officer has probable cause to believe laws have been broken.

For private law enforcement contractors, corporate property is strictly off-limits without proper warrants. Investigators also do not need warrants to request Matrix logs, credit histories, phone records, utility information, GridGuide records and other files. Most forms of surveillance also do not require authorization, with the exception of wiretaps and mind probes.

- Don't believe for a second that cops won't do this anyway. It's tradition to take the law into their own hands whenever they feel justified—which is always.

- X-Star

- If it catches bad guys, who cares, right? Except that all sorts of cops exploit these powers for their own ends, whether it's stalking a woman they like or harassing someone who owes their brother money. And then there are the cops who take syndicate cash ...

- SPD

Police officers employ a wide range of gear and tactics to protect the public. Almost every unit is equipped with a basic



metal-detection wand and cyberware scanner. Random checkpoints will also be manned with chemical sniffers. Awakened officers make ample use of detection spells like Catalogue to search for restricted items, as well as astrally scanning for illegal uses of magic.

- And there's everybody's favorite tactic: profiling. No surprise that orks and trolls get "randomly searched" more often than norms, just like your average chromed monster or tattooed punk is more likely to get stopped for scans and questioning.
- Brick

From Crime to Criminal

If a crime is committed and a suspect is arrested, they're removed to a police facility and held for questioning. After the arrest, police officers only have a limited period of time to act, so they need to be very efficient. The law states that a suspect must make their initial appearance in court within three days of their arrest. Most hearings are dealt with via telepresence for reasons of safety, privacy and efficiency, though high-profile case hearings still take place in person.

- It used to be two days—or four, if you were arrested on Friday, since the courts weren't open on weekends—but all that changed back in '26 when the court system was verging on collapse. Cops were having to drop charges left, right and center because they just couldn't get people to the courts in time. Radical overhauls were made, and now courts are run 24/7, via telepresence. Judges aren't happy about treated like shift-workers, mind you, so pray that you get a weekday hearing.
- Legal Beagle

The initial court appearance involves formal charges being laid against the prisoner, who may—depending on the crime—apply for bail. If they do and the judge grants it, they go free on their own recognizance to return for a nominated court date. Should bail be inapplicable or refused, the prisoner is remanded to custody to wait for their trial. Bail agreements may often include limiting conditions, such as restricting the accused to certain areas of a city or preventing them from associating with specified people or groups.

- Beware, all this stuff only applies to locally-enforceable laws and to people with valid SInS. There are some federal offenses—treason, terror crimes, immigration violations, stuff like that—where breaking them can get you held indefinitely without charges, without trial, without anything except rotting in a cell somewhere. And the SINless are just in a world of hurt. The possibilities for abuse implicit in something like that are just terrifying.
- Eurasian

For those whose bail is more than they can afford, bail bondsmen exist to provide them with their freedom anyway. Bondsmen effectively provide a loan for the duration of the bail period and usually require some security such as property. If

the accused doesn't show up for the hearing, the bail is forfeit if they do not reappear within a set timeframe. Bondsmen often hire skip-tracers and bounty hunters to track down such people and return them to the local law enforcement officers.

- Tracking down FTAs—Failure To Appear—can be sweet money if you're on good terms with a bail agent. Lots of skips are just petty criminals, disorganized idiots or people too afraid of "the system" to show up for their court date. Of course, there are enough of the other kind that it's not an easy ride, but most bail agents offer 10 percent of bail for skip-tracing. Nice work if you can get it.
- Tracker

For minor offenses, the initial appearance will often resolve the whole issue—the charged party will enter a plea, the judge will make a decision and apply a sentence if necessary. This is usually limited to very minor charges, such as traffic misdemeanors and public disorderly offenses. The accused is also entitled to legal representation at all times, from arrest onwards; those who can't afford to pay can request a state-appointed representative.

- Between the SINless who aren't entitled to Constitutional rights and the free lawyers who take nice stipends from the corporations to make sure they don't mount a too-sterling defense, you're in trouble if you're a runner hoping for a fair hearing in the courts. You're better off representing yourself—which, yes, you can do.
- Legal Beagle

The next step is arraignment, where the defendant enters a plea against the charges against them. If this is a "not guilty" plea, they are then tried by a jury of their peers—usually twelve fellow citizens, though this varies in some cases. (Some minor offenses may be tried by municipal courts without a jury, but these cases are usually restricted to minor infractions of the law with small penalties.) A trial can take anywhere from a day to several years, depending on the complexity of the case and the ferocity of the lawyers.

- Note that "fellow citizens" excludes megacorporate SINners (except those with dual UCAS citizenship) from serving on juries.
- Nuyen Nick

Once the jury has handed down their verdict, the defendant is either free to go or is sentenced by the judge. Sentences usually involve fines or incarceration, sometimes both. For first offenders, particularly in cases with some mitigating circumstances, a judge may choose to issue a suspended sentence with a "probation period," or may exchange incarceration for community service work of some kind. Those found guilty can also appeal against the verdict or their sentencing; appeals are taken to senior courts, who may refuse to hear the case if the judiciary find the appeal has no merit.



- If you're going to buy a judge, during the appeal process is probably the best time. In a lot of states, that's where they have the most discretionary power, which can make or break you.

- Legal Beagle

SOCIETY

Social change is inevitable and constant, but the whirlwind of the last six decades has altered our world drastically in a short space of time. Regardless, society has borne up against the chaos and life goes on. Here, *Livewire* looks at some of the social factors that affect the dynamics of your life in the 2060s.

LINES IN THE SAND

Unfortunately, the social upheavals of the past century have left scars on society, as traumas are wont to do. There's always been a human tendency to differentiate "us" from "them," and the changes that have rippled through our world have separated many new groups of "us" and "them," breeding conflicts where once none existed.

The sociological consensus is that no single event has been responsible for more societal divisions and prejudice than the Awakening. With magicians suddenly exhibiting incredible powers and the transformation of humans into other metatypes, the lines between "possible" and "impossible" suddenly blurred. Many people took a while to adjust.

The Awakened Peril

The appearance of magicians and adepts shocked people out of their complacent beliefs about the nature of reality, provoking nearly as much resentment as fear—public hysteria mounted over the thought of magical supermen holding ordinary people to ransom or uncontrollable mage psychopaths slaughtering the innocent. These fears subsided as the incidence of magical crime and destruction stabilized at low levels, but most people still have difficulty remembering that magicians are just ordinary folks like everyone else. Legislation regulating magic use has gone some way to quelling these fears; powerful spells are carefully controlled and any use of magic to affect other people is treated as a very serious magical assault. Many jurisdictions also require the magically-active to be registered and licensed to practice their talents, for public safety.

Privacy from magical intrusion remains an understandable concern. Though many mundanes still fail to comprehend the nature of magic and the astral world, most know enough to worry that astrally projecting peeping toms or spellslinging eavesdroppers may be spying on their private lives. "Astral privacy features" are a common placebo sold by dishonest security salesmen, as few are willing to meet the costs of true privacy.

Mundane envy of the magically-active is equally natural, but unfortunately less avoidable. Magic allows experiences beyond the reach of ordinary people, and as an inborn gift

bestowed solely by genetics and inheritance, it's inaccessible to all but a lucky few. Accepting one's mundanity can be a hard lesson to learn.

- Whoa, tactful. Nice to see she's doing her bit to foster as much envy as possible.
- Maglster
- Oh, and let's not forget reverse prejudice, hmm? It's not just all unreasoning envy on the part of the mundanes; the magically-active have their fair share of thauma-snobbs who look down on anyone who can't sling spells or see the astral plane.
- Golem

These feelings have often inspired unreasoning fear of legitimate magical displays among the unAwakened. The appearance of a spirit in public or the noticeable casting of spells in public areas still sometimes causes widespread panic and hysteria. Sixty years after the Awakening, fears persist that mages are going to band together and use their powers for terror, spying on and controlling the public at large.

The New Racism

The prejudices and hatred engendered by UGE, Goblinization and SURGE are equally regrettable and far more widespread. Humanity has a sad history of xenophobia; those who are different have typically been derided, feared or hated. The behavioral patterns behind this trend are well-documented, and in the past the victims were usually people of different gender, ethnic derivation or sexual preference. With the rise of metahumanity, our fear at the "unnatural" changes sweeping our world suddenly had a new and obvious target.

More recently, changelings have suffered the same prejudice and hostility that metahumans faced after the Awakening, despite overwhelming scientific evidence that they were merely undergoing "secondary Goblinization".

- Hey, people are dumb. They have an amazing ability to stick their heads in the sand and ignore the blatant truth.
- Fish Face

Never lacking for attention and potential members, anti-metahuman groups bent on racial vilification have been particularly active since the Comet brought a new wave of metahumanity for them to victimize. The President himself has called for sympathy and understanding between metatypes to try and quell the rash of trouble—the most recent law enforcement statistics available show a small drop in racially-motivated violence and hate crimes over the last six months, down from the record peaks of previous years. 2061 and 2062 both saw more reports of violent assaults, property damage and harassment on racial grounds than any previous years since 2032.

- Humanis gets a bad rap. It's not about persecuting metahumans, it's about promoting the integrity and survival of the first

race, the human race. If metas can have meta-rights groups and meta-only clubs, why can't humans do the same?

- Hugh Mann
- Then why does Humanis focus their energy on blaming metahumans for every social ill they can think of? I don't blame Humanis members for being pissed off at how society screws people, but point the blame towards the real enemy—capitalism. If regular people are ever going to get out from the crushing bootheel of the corps, we need to work together, not fight each other.
- Antifa

Despite the progress made in encouraging peace on our streets, social discrimination is sadly alive and well. Though they make up almost 15 percent of our population, less than 1 percent of the Fortune 500 CEOs are orks or trolls, and the average wage of metahumans is 17 percent lower than the national average. Metahumans—particularly trolls and orks—comprise a very inequitable 42 percent of our prison population. Though concrete figures are hard to come by, statisticians estimate that nearly twice as many metahumans as humans are SINless and merely "probationary citizens" of the UCAS. We may have made progress, but our nation still requires an act of Congress to bestow citizenship on sentient beings who aren't *Homo sapiens*. Many say that truly civilized behavior still eludes us, when harmful prejudicial assumptions dog every metahuman today.

- Except the elves. They've got it good.
- Gothmog
- You're really not helping, you know.
- Green Pixie

With all the attention focused on metaracial prejudice and discrimination, it's easy to forget the deep divisions that have marred human society for thousands of years before the Awakening. Many distinctions based on skin color and ethnic grouping did indeed vanish overnight during UGE and Goblinization, as people found new and more compelling groups to despise or fear, but long-held grudges do not fade overnight. Ethnic groups with high racial dynamism and discrete social identities—such as many Asiatic and Middle-Eastern groups—still clash over cultural and spiritual issues the same way they have done for millennia, though the phenomenon is largely hidden by the hot-button issue of metaracial prejudice.

- Wha?
- Bung
- Translation: Ethnic groups who have a strong cultural identity, a sense of isolationism or superiority and a willingness to protect their "specialness" are no more integrated or peaceful than they were before the Awakening.
- Socio Pat



• The other big social discrimination, and it's no surprise our journalist glosses over it, is the sharp distinction between the powerless and the empowered. It's hard to define which symptoms are causes and which are effects, but reputable sociologists—not corporate shills—agree that there are deep class divisions in our supposedly “equal opportunity” society.

• Bespectacle

• The groups can be variously painted as rich vs. poor, educated vs. illiterate, management vs. employee. I'm inclined to think the latter is the most accurate, but that may lay too much blame at the feet of the corporations.

• Socio Pat

• I get along fine with my boss ... when I'm the one with the gun.

• Class Warrior

• Bespectacle hit upon it; the truest division lies between those who have control over their own lives and those who don't. The trick is identifying what defines which group you're in. The predators tend to have money, education, positions of power within corporations or governments and access to—and control over—information. The prey don't. But what determines where you end up?

• People Watcher

• Interesting to ponder where your average runner fits along the self-determination scale. Are we victims for the corporations to kick around like footballs, or are we forging our own fates in defiance of mainstream society?

• Talon

• If I could answer that, I might have picked a different career.

• Dirk

• One factor that really affects runners is the Chrome Effect. We might all look at cyberware as being just another tool of the trade, but to the guy on the street it makes your average samurai as scary and incomprehensible as a mage. I'm not going to debate the pros and cons of cyberware, but you have to admit that most ordinary people just can't understand a man who's willing to have two perfectly good arms removed and replaced with shiny metal ones. They don't want to trust a man who can have his hands around their throat before they can take another breath.

• Manticore

• I'm of the opinion this will fade in time; we're seeing trends towards more radical self-modification every day. Give it another fifty years, and enhancing your reaction time or mental processing power is going to be as ordinary as having your irises repigmented.

• Technocrat

• Sister Journalist didn't mention it, and no surprise, but the pervasiveness of the Matrix is another one of those dividing lines. Now you can live almost your whole life on the Matrix, which breeds a subculture of people who have a completely different set of social norms than the people they live among. Before you all get aggro, I'm not criticizing deckers—but how many of you feel you have anything in common with your neighbors any more?

• People Watcher

• Hey, that applies to all of us, not just the ones who live Matrix-style. I've read a few articles—yeah, yeah, I can read—and society's sense of community has been dropping like a stone for the last three hundred years or so. These days it's disappearing faster and faster. Most of the studies seem to chalk it up to the fact that though we have communications technology like never before, our life is delivered to our doorstep in neat little bite-sized parcels and we don't have to actually interact with anyone any more. Frag, when your fridge reorders everything over the Matrix, you never get to go next door to borrow a cup of sugar, do you?

• LoRent

SISTERS UNDER THE SKIN

As the world economy globalized and technology decreased the distance between people over the past centuries, we have seen large migrations of ethnic groupings across the world. Borders no longer define a culturally-specific society, as every nation is home to an array of minority cultural groups, blended together and living side by side. Nowhere is this more apparent than UCAS, whose melting-pot history of cultural diversity planted the seeds for a vibrant modern culture that enriches all its participants.

Though the geographical meshing of cultural groups is often a cause for dissent and discrimination, anthropologists have long agreed that influxes of outsiders are vital for bringing new concepts and practices into a nation, preventing stagnation. This kind of environment fosters intellectual and social development and helps keep a nation at the forefront of innovation. You can certainly see the effect it's had on the UCAS over the last two hundred and fifty years!

In an era where it is not unusual to find Aztlaners, Poles and Thais living next to each other in Sioux City, migration is simply a universal truth of human nature. Clannishness is another, as immigrants often do not find the welcome they expected.

A complicated set of factors acts to keep cultural groups together upon their arrival. First, they usually lack resources and have few choices about where to settle; with limited options, many end up living in the same areas and so remain in contact with their fellow migrants. Secondly, many of them face linguistic and cultural barriers, which are easier to overcome with support from one's peers; many migrants group together unconsciously for mutual comfort. Thirdly, memories of the home country and family left behind, and discomfort in a strange new land, make many new settlers eager for the touch of familiarity they found in others with the same origin. Ultimately, the hostility and unwelcoming demeanor displayed

by many citizens towards these "interlopers" turn eager new citizens away from the new culture they had adopted and back to the acceptance of "people like them."

Though this fortunately doesn't lead into complete fracturing of ethnic groups, it does lead to the strong cultural enclaves that flavor so much of our modern society. For convenience and economy, most migrant groups settle around the ports of their arrival, so coastal areas (like Seattle and New York) tend to have an amazing blend of cultural influences.

In the past, many migrant groups were eventually assimilated into their new society as they grew accustomed to the norms and the previous inhabitants warmed to their presence. In modern times, however, ethnic groups are finding it easier to co-mingle while still maintaining their cultural identity. Linguasoft and translation technologies have broken the language barrier, while our wired society allows members of cultural groups to remotely keep in contact with their peers. Across the globe, it is no longer unusual to see different skin tones or hear multiple languages on any street corner.

- Now for all the useful stuff that this so-nice screed didn't mention. The single biggest effect of all this multicultural settlement has been organized crime. Every migrant group has been poor when they've landed, and poor people turn to crime. Most of us are living proof of that. So when you're an Irish immigrant in the tenement slums of New York, too poor to know where your next potato is coming from, what do you do? You gang up with some of your buddies—who, whaddya know, happen to be Irish too—and steal yourself some potatoes, or something equally enterprising. Drekcetera. It's the same reason anyone turns to crime; it's just the ethnic dynamism of most migrant cultures that means they take up the hobby in a group, for protection, instead of single-entrepreneur-style. And groups become gangs, and gangs become syndicates, and suddenly it's organized.

- Scratch

- That's neat and tidy, but not entirely accurate. Most of the major syndicates' presence in the UCAS is from immigrant criminals, not a sudden desire for a life of crime by previously well-meaning settlers. The Mafia arrived here escaping a Sicilian government crackdown; the Yakuza deliberately expanded here like a business decision; the Triads arrived en masse after fleeing the victorious communists in China in 1949. I'd be willing to bet that most of the other ethnically-derived syndicates here were born the same way.

Mind you, the factors Scratch describes would certainly explain why the syndicates, once introduced here, could establish themselves, recruit and thrive the way they have done.

- Socio Pat

- A rule of thumb: thanks to migratory patterns, you'll usually find the European syndicates on the east coast, and the Asian syndicates on the west coast. Which makes sense, when you look at a globe.

- Pointer

- Don't let that fool you into thinking that each town is a one-syndicate burg. You might get predominant cultures here and there, sure, but you're going to find Triads and Yakuza in Boston or Philly, just like you'll find the Vory and Mafia in Vancouver or Fresno. And of course you'll find everything (and then some) in lovely dysfunctional old Seattle.

- Lady Tsung

- This discussion of cultural groups brings to mind something Livewire hasn't addressed: the impact of the Awakening. That mega-event inspired a new wave of cultural groups to coalesce based on metatype or magical affinity. Witness the Ork Underground and Tarislar, for example, or on a larger scale, Tir Tairngire. We've even seen a similar phenomenon with the otaku tribes of the Matrix. Like ethnic groupings, these neo-tribal units have a tendency to circle the wagons and stick together.

- People Watcher

TECHNO-SOCIAL NETWORKS

The advent of both the Matrix and personal wireless communication brought many changes to our world, but few could have foreseen the way they changed our social interactions. With no one far from a cell call or email message, everyone is immediately and universally accessible to their friends and coworkers—unless they choose not to be. In the business world, your prospects for future ladder-climbing may rely on you staying connected; should your superiors or underlings be unable to reach you at a critical moment, you may inadvertently be responsible when disaster strikes. Even children and young adults have been affected, as they can more readily communicate with their peers without the meddling and censoring influence of their parents and guardians.

Some of these changes have taken us in opposite directions. The widespread use of vidphones added a visual element to telecommunications, changing our communication patterns now that we suddenly faced each other during phone calls and viewed each other at all hours of the day and night. On the other hand, the widespread use of Matrix persona icons allows us to present whatever self-image we prefer, adding an element of anonymity and mistrust to online interactions.

- Vidphones were a boon to prostitutes worldwide, as they allowed the hooker to scope out the john's face in advance, so he or she could avoid ones that were ugly or looked like trouble. Cellphones also allowed hookers to work independent of pimps, who were really just parasites anyway.

- Belle

One development that millions take advantage of is the creation of vast, decentralized peer-to-peer networks. The most popular are the various file-trading schemes used to swap music, utilities, sims, trideo and other items. Few new releases hit the stores that haven't already appeared online in bootleg form, available for quick download. Because there is no central body running the system, however, authorities are helpless to shut them down.



- The best of these p2p networks trade illegal goods, like hot decker utilities, IC programs or juicy paydaydata. Be careful what you download, though, as there's never any (easy) way to verify the origin. Corrupted and mislabeled files are annoying, but the data bombs and worm-laden files are hell.

- Glitch

The various location-based sensing networks are another example of how our society has been impacted. By signing up for a simple service, such as the popular Immortal Combat game, your pocket secretary (or whatever mobile device your Immortal Fighter avatar resides on) will be informed whenever you are within the vicinity of Immortal Combat player, so you can virtually duke it on with strangers on the bus, in the park or wherever you find them. Similar networks allow people with common interests to locate each other by alerting them whenever they are in proximity. Such networking has been a boon for carpooling, romantic connections and hundreds of other special interests.

Because many of these techno-social networks are decentralized, the addition of reputation networks is essential for helping assess the worthiness of strangers. Reputation networks allow you to "rate" those you interact with and also allow you to access the ratings left by those you know or trust. So on an online auction, for example, you can gauge a seller or buyer's trustworthiness judging by the reputation they have built making auction transactions. Today, many people share

product and service reputation files with their friends, so that when shopping they can be alerted to items their friends endorse—or warn about.

- The shadows are ripe for systems like this, as runners live and die by their reps. Most Shadowland nodes employ reputation systems on the SIGs and in the hiring halls, which helps to pick out the mooks from the pros. I know some fixers that swear by it.

- Link

- The primary drawback to rep systems is that you can map out associations by them. You need to hunt down everyone some nosy runner talked to in order to hush up some corporate Info-leak? Take a look at who he vouched for on the shadow-boards.

- Cheshire

THE YEAR IN POLITICS

As ever, it's been an interesting year in politics. Our regular reports from the nation's capital have traced the day-to-day dramas in DeeCee, but a few trends have emerged from 2063 that promise interesting things for '64 and beyond.

Our esteemed President Haeffner and his impressive off-sider have taken a few knocks to their popularity lately, as the turbulence of the last few years has finally settled and everyone's had a chance to take stock of life. The major parties have



LiveWire

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Despite all the politicking in DC, we can't forget the voices at home that keep speaking for change. Policlubs are the grass-roots social activists in touch with the community—or their own constituent elements of it, anyway—and are often the only politicians that most of us ever see.

Policlubs range in intensity and involvement from associations of citizens concerned over any particular issue to hard-line splinter groups of mainstream political parties that are often accused of suspicious tactics or even terrorism. Many espouse extremist policies, which is no surprise; the major parties are there to represent the majority of the population, while policlubs speak for "fringe" elements and the more unusual political viewpoints of our fellow citizens.

Many policlubs work for social activism, in addition to seeking Congressional representation for their constituents. A typical policlub organizes rallies, marches and other demonstrations; it publicizes its policies to local residents, in case they weren't aware of the issues the club addresses; it seeks to educate the public on the facts behind its platform of choice.

- Or, more often, it tries to brainwash people into thinking just like all the rest of its members. Some of the splinter factions are more like cults, in terms of the dedication that members display or the social activism the group carries out.
- Spart
- Provided they're not infringing on anyone else's rights, they're still a valid part of the political system, even if you don't like what they have to say.
- Deep Green

The most famous organizations include the Humanis Policlub, which promotes a pro-human social milieu, and MOM—Mothers of Metahumans, an activist group supporting metahuman rights and trying to break down discrimination. Understandably, these two groups often clash directly.

- Often violently. The MOM boys used to make a habit of scheduling "peaceful demonstrations" right outside Humanis chapterhouses so they could legitimately crack heads and still claim they were defending themselves when the inevitable fights began. MOM mostly stopped that after Humanis started coming out with guns instead of baseball bats.
- Monkeywrench

Every area has a huge variety of policlubs, however, catering to almost every political hot-button issue. Those interested in social activism can find listings of local organizations in any Matrix directory.

- Not if you want the clandestine groups that are interested in direct action and who think political lobbying is the equivalent of begging for crumbs from the master's table. Those groups hide out on Shadowland or within their own private networks.
- Antifa

managed to score a few points off them with adroit handling of some key policy points—the Technocrats gained popularity during the federal data security scare in the fall, for example, though the White House came through most of the year's storms relatively unscathed.

- "Federal data security scare" Indeed. Pfff. For you foreign readers, we had a flap back in May about federal contractors being blackmailed to release access data for some relatively sensitive systems. It looked bad for the White House, until it was revealed that an Archconservative party aide was the one doing the blackmailing—suddenly Congress went very quiet. It hit the Pres a bit; it hit the Arch-Cs harder, and the Technocrats came out of the whole thing smirking since they got to do a whole lot of I-told-you-so-ing.
- DeeCee Insider

The popularity of the President and the VP remains unprecedented this far into a term of office, and they're heading into next year's election season looking like strong contenders. Policy platforms are starting to firm up; though they haven't revealed any clear strategies yet, the focus is likely to be on revitalizing the UCAS after the Comet Chaos. As independents they're still throwing the major parties a curveball, and analysts say they're unlikely to give up that advantage any time soon.

The **Archconservatives** had several setbacks this year, losing a few popularity points when their secretary Harrison Barker admitted he married an elf earlier this year. They've come back hard in the last two months, however, with an aggressive marketing campaign playing off public fears of SURGE changelings, and pundits suspect new powerbrokers have a vision for the party that might pay off for them.

The **Democratic Party** has largely held ground this year. July's leadership shakeup, when Natalie Stevens displaced former leader Robert Castorelli in a lightning-fast political coup, eroded the gains they'd made with strong pro-stability policies earlier in the year, but the party is holding steady and looks to exit the year in much the same condition as it entered.

- Castorelli was a fun guy to party with, maybe too fun. Word in the DC social scene says that some of his past indiscretions were about to come back to haunt him and the party as a whole. Presumably Stevens had the nod from the party machine to tip him off the cliff—possibly literally. Castorelli disappeared in early August, and none of his pals seem to know where he is. Official story says he's "in retreat" preparing for a career as a business consultant, but that reeks of spin to me.
- Prof

In contrast, the **Libertarian Party** hit the wall in a big way this year. Details aren't clear, but it appears that several major sources of funding dried up. The party cut back its publicity efforts drastically, but it seems the rot goes deeper; several major party figures have jumped ship to other political parties, usually fringe groups.

- A couple of the boss-dogs got stupid—they started on an anti-regulation policy kick that was just as much of a threat to their corporate masters as to the existing governmental machinery. Presto, no more moolah. Expect desperate measures from the Libertarians if they're going to survive as a major party until next election.
- The Keynesian Kid

Commentators are still speculating about what the **New Century Party** is up to. They've been uncharacteristically meek and mild all year, with little in the way of their usual bold pronouncements and extremist politics. Theories as to their distraction have run the gamut, covering everything from assassination attempts to incredible magical discoveries, with all kinds of mundane politics in the middle. So far, the truth has yet to be revealed.

Meanwhile, the **Republican Party** has made a strong showing all year. They've garnered quite a degree of support for the latest iteration of the "Reunify North America!" platform, largely from citizens left nervous in the wake of the Comet's crisis. The President will probably be competing directly with the Republicans for these votes, and unless he comes up with something solid the Republicans stand to gain a lot of support.

The big winners of the year were the **Technocrats**, however, who impressed voters early in the year with their adroit handling of the issues around the data-security issue and capitalized on that image with a number of well-timed publicity releases about their "vision for the technological UCAS." Analysts have suggested for years that the Technocrats lost their way almost as soon as they were established; perhaps they've found it again. 2063 has definitely been one of the most successful years in their history; it remains to be seen if they can parlay this into long-term strength.

LOVE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

It might be hard to imagine now, but sexuality used to be one of the most divisive issues to raise its head in Western society. Religious and traditional values ensured that most countries had very narrow definitions of what was "normal" or "right," and sexual behavior was one of the last bastions of moralists crusading against society's permissiveness. The power and influence of Christian churches have waned in the UCAS and North America in general, however, and their ability to define public morality has evaporated in parallel. As the world changed beneath everyone's feet in the first three decades of this century, people re-evaluated their priorities on a broad scale, and public acceptance of alternate sexuality gradually increased.

Though the legal system has never defined public opinion, it's telling that marriage was fully secularized—and same-sex marriages legalized by default—in the sweeping legal and Constitutional changes when the UCAS was formed.

- Conservative political elements have tried ever since to have those changes repealed, thankfully without success.
- Gremlin

- It's not all beer and skittles, though. If the public was all warm and fuzzy about it, we wouldn't get social commentators like Melody Tyger going all activist about gender and sexuality like she did on her last album.
- Femina Ex Machina

One's sex is usually defined as the physical side of the equation, relating to the genetic and bodily manifestations of sexual identity. Sex defines the difference between male and female and any number of degrees in between.

Science and society now understand that sex isn't necessarily a black-and-white equation. Beyond and between male and female sexes, there are any number of steps. Hermaphrodites are one example, with the physiological characteristics of both genders; at the extreme, they may be born with both male and female reproductive organs. Alternatively, one subculture—who often refer to themselves as "neuters"—have minimal sexual characteristics and often appear asexual.

- Neuters claim that by eliminating their libido and hormone imbalances they can focus their energy and concentration more. Some of them start young and suppress their puberty through drugs or genetic changes. Might sound appealing if you're a workaholic, but who wants to give up sex?
- Kink

Gender, by contrast, is usually the element of sexuality that is dependent on behavior and identity. Whether formed by environmental input, genetic predisposition or some other combination of factors, gender describes degrees of masculinity and femininity. Again, there are any number of points along the scale, and sexuality activists hailed it as a breakthrough when public opinion accepted that there were more than two choices for sex and gender and that they did not necessarily have to match. The androgynous have been challenging these stereotypes for decades, identifying themselves as either having both male and female sexual characteristics or none at all, but being far from asexual.

The medical advances of the last half-century, particularly in the nanotechnology and genetic-engineering fields, have been a boon to the alternative sexuality movement. It's easier than it's ever been to select your own sex to match your gender or to more accurately reflect your self-image. Pundits suggest the next big breakthrough will be magical; thaumaturgy research proceeds apace to develop spells that allow permanent sex transformations.

- Just quicken a shapechange spell. I did it for a year and it blew my mind.
- Androgyne

Meanwhile, all these changes have had some significant impacts on mainstream society. It's hard to believe now, but just one hundred years ago non-heterosexual preferences were very much taboo, and open acknowledgement would



ruin lives and careers. These days, the vast majority of possible preferences will hardly elicit a raised eyebrow, let alone any form of discrimination.

- Except there are still plenty of radical, extremist and just plain traditionalist groups who are itching for an excuse to reverse society's "moral decay." The Hammer of God group goes around blowing up family planning clinics for fun; don't think you'll get off lightly if you're gay, or bi, or god forbid, polyamorous. And they're just one splinter group; there are dozens who'll hate you for being different in any number of ways.

- Femina Ex Machina

- One of the biggies is cross-metatype relationships. Just like interracial relationships used to get people pelted with rocks in the bad old days, there are plenty of hate groups who'll happily lynch you for hooking up with someone who's "not your kind." For some reason, ork/human pairings seem to attract the most vile of the abusers, though sociologists are still working out why. Like its ancestors in hate, though, this kind of violence is based out of racial prejudice and hatred rather than out of sexual repressiveness.

- Kink

Among the various forms of relationship beyond hetero- and homosexual couples, it's perfectly common to see polyamorous relationships and "swinging" couples (who maintain a stable emotional relationship while adventuring sexually with any number of other partners). Polygamy was also legalized by default when marriages were defined on a secular, contractual basis, and a number of activists immediately tested the new legislation with contracted multi-partner marriage arrangements.

- One of the biggest restrictions on sexual freedom was lifted when medical science found a cure for AIDS a few decades back. Incurable STDs really put a damper on people's sex lives when they realized that carelessness really could kill them. There haven't been any particular STDs since that are as scary as AIDS, and medical science has cleaned the bulk of them up pretty quickly. Add in easier and easier

birth control options: implants, reversible surgery, magic. Once people started realizing that they could fix anything with a quick trip to the clinic, they started relaxing and enjoying themselves again.

- Trick

- Maybe amongst the middle classes and richer, but like I keep saying—not everyone has access to the latest medical technology. If you can't afford antibiotics or immune-boosters, it

doesn't matter whether you've caught syphilis or ebola—it's going to kill you either way.

- Hacksaw

What's Not Done?

"In this era of open-minded permissiveness, is there anything still sacred?" Well, yes—there are some acts that have always been frowned upon and probably always will be. Activities that cause unwelcome harm to a participant or are not fully consenting are still frowned upon and legally punishable. In other words, sexual violence and rape are still taboo, as are sexual activities with those who're incapable of giving informed consent.

- In other words: sex with minors, the intellectually impaired, or those for whom you have a "duty of care." Just about everyone agrees they're still taboo.

- Kink

- The latest activist quandary is around the issue of sex with non-metahuman sentients. Half the legal systems in the world—the UCAS

included—are still very shaky on exactly who gets to count as "people" or not. All kinds of potential partners fit into this category: everything from sprites to sasquatches and many in between. And then there are materialized spirits, since many magicians believe they're sentient, and shapeshifters, and ... well, anyone or anything capable of using a shapechange spell or power, really.

- Xenophile

- Echo that. At the very least, it'll raise as many eyebrows as Scarlett O'Hara would have if she'd run off with a black woman. More likely, it'll land you a whole lot of abuse and harassment and quite possibly criminal charges for anything ranging from "perverted practices" (depending on the legal system) to "unlawful abuse of animals."

- Legal Beagle





BODY FASHION

Fashions and fads come and go faster than the morning dew. Taking a look around any public area makes it obvious that clothing and hairstyle trends have fallen before more extreme fashion statements—today, the latest look is in body-modification. Why limit your self-expression to what you wear, when your whole self can be a canvas to show your image to the world?

The mildest forms of body fashion have been popular for centuries in the form of tattooing. The trend really gained momentum when “body piercing” stopped meaning earrings. These days, those looking for discreet or minor ways to decorate themselves have a number of options. Tattooing is still the most popular; beyond traditional black-and-color tattoos, body artists can now offer bioreactive inks, glowing inks and more. Last year’s big trend, of course, was BodyWorks’s mainstream introduction of animated tattoos powered by nanotechnology. Despite initial safety concerns, the fashionistas leapt on the bandwagon, and the results were impressive. Siena Bardot, the popular Seattle club singer, wowed her audiences with an animated anaconda that writhed sinuously around her to the beat of her music, prompting a score of imitations.

- And the latest application: Mason Kendall, of the Tacoma Wings Brawl team, has one across his back as part of his sponsorship contract with Ruger—chummer’s a walking billboard for ‘em. Lovely, huh.
- Cynic

Body coloring has seen another evolving trend over the last half-decade; full-body dyes and tints are a less startling sight on the streets than they used to be. These body enhancements are less popular largely because most employers particularly frown on them—they can’t be disguised in a business environment, and unnatural colorings often make an ordinary face look disturbingly alien.

- An easily-led pal of mine went in for this after a bit too much to drink. He’s lucky it’s reversible, because he got sick of us calling him “Smurf” really fast. It was a lovely shade of blue, though.
- Karl
- All-over tints are an invaluable part of any disguise inventory, of course. They were real popular in the San Francisco shadow community for a while—with the right dye job and a teeny bit of cosmetic surgery, any gaijin could pass for a Japanacorp worker. Which was, you know, somewhat convenient.
- Argo

Body piercing has also kept pace with a changing world. The basic piercings—ears, brows, noses and navels—are practically de rigueur for those under twenty-five, and more exotic piercings are also common. Today’s body-fashion experts tell us that almost any spare flesh can be pierced somehow; the cutting edge of piercing fashion is in simple implants and inlays. Fashion

FASHION TRENDS

Let’s not forget clothing when we’re looking at this year’s styles. The deliberately casual look of last year is way out, and in its place we’ve seen a range of graceful and exquisite formal wear in luxurious and decadent fabrics. Long hemlines and sleeves hint at modesty, but the sheer fabrics and plunging backs ensure it’s merely an illusion, creating subtly daring outfits.

Trends in streetwear are more divided. While the fashionistas all agree that last season’s natural-look craze is old news, this season sees a variety of styles hitting the mainstream. One camp of designers, including the up and coming ReactorCore house beloved of clubgoers in the know, is focusing on the cutting edge of our society—their look is edgy and as modern as it gets. Metal elements accentuate the clean lines of neofiber garments; everything from color-change polymer tech to heat-sensitive moldable vinyls are making an appearance here. Add in odor-eating fibers, silk-weave armors, flexible displays and integrated electronics. The look is minimalist, androgynous and totally tomorrow, and it’s on the streets right now.

Meantime, casualwear goes back to its roots with this season’s look. The influential designers are taking leaves from the pages of history; neotribal stylings hearken back to our ancestors, though modern fabrics keep the look up to date. From the primitive peoples of prehistory to the Aztec and jungle tribes of South America, today’s style is all about looking savagely cool.

pundit Elaine McTiernan of CAS New Vogue predicts that next year’s must-have will be implanted gems in patterns influenced by Hindi body decorations.

- I saw a gorgeous example a few nights back; this chick had flowing metal scrollwork actually embedded in her flesh. It wasn’t just a big piercing; her skin overlapped the edges, like the metal was set in, but it didn’t feel like it was anchored all the way to the bone, either. It looked fantastic. She had better detailing than my car.
- Firebird

In all the changes, no one’s forgotten hairstyles either. Unusual cuts and colors come and go—glow-in-the-dark pomades were this season’s novelty, lending a new look to the average nightclub—but the trendsetters have been focusing on alternative hair. The cosmetic surgeons of Your Image clinics tell us that scalp-work is on the way up; the cognoscenti have been opting for alternative-fiber implants to add unusual textures and movement to their hair.

- Again, this has applications for runners—a friend of mine had implants of electrically-sensitive filaments based on ruthenium polymer technology. Hers is DNI-linked, though it doesn’t have to be. With one thought she can go from blonde to brunette to red-head—or something more exotic—and every subtle shade in between. Invaluable.
- Sneak



• I note there's no mention here of the real cutting edge in body modification. Piercings and inlays and funky hair are all well and good, but there's not much shock value. The extremists are all about scarring and cutting and anything that smacks of savagery. Barbarism is back.

• Glasswalker

• Yes indeed. Branding and burn scars are the new tattoos—they're so common they're almost mainstream. Taking that a step further, there's some really attractive faux-tribal scarring around, probably done surgically. And I saw one clubhead yesterday who had a plaited band of skin around his wrist; the scarring and faux flesh made it clear it was his own skin. Must have had it peeled back, braided, and then laid back down in place to heal.

• Xenophile

• Filed and pointed teeth are making a comeback, which is disturbing—people who look like cannibals freak me out. Then again, I had my own replaced with carbon-fiber teeth, so I can't talk. I get some weird looks when I smile, but it's worth it; you never know when you'll have to bite through steel cables at short notice.

• Thumper

THE EYE IN THE SKY

When you get in trouble—perhaps you're walking down the wrong street too late at night, or got in the wrong carriage of a train in a dangerous part of town—you want to be confident that help is at hand even if you're unable to call for it. It's this reasoning, along with the desire for public safety and peace on our streets, that has prompted most city governments and major corporations to install security features in public areas. Our city streets, public transport, shopping malls and sports arenas are well-protected by security cameras monitored by peace officers to stop crimes as they happen. Without the "eye in the sky," most crimes would be over and the criminals long gone before the police were even alerted.

• ... as opposed to their sterling response times now, you mean?
• Dvixen

• Hey, I don't know about you, but they always show up fast enough when I accidentally trip alarms. Or are you only committing crimes in Z-Zones these days?

• Smiley

In areas with low violent crime rates, the feeds are merely recorded for later review if a crime does take place, to allow the perpetrator to be identified easily. This simple measure allows a law enforcement or security agency to release more staff to patrol more dangerous areas.

• Hah. The vast majority of security footage is never monitored real-time; it just goes into the archive for later review. (And if you think they ever delete it like they say they do, think again.)

• X-Star

• Don't expect cameras to only show up on lightpoles and buildings. The latest trend is to saturate a neighborhood with sensor-laden blimps. These buggers hover in place, scanning the goings-on below. A cop rigger can quickly jump in and zoom up on a hotspot as needed. Instant eye in the sky. They're fun for riggers too, if you can crack the encryption.

• Sky Scrapper

• Even worse are the ritzy 'hoods where they install vectored thrust sec drones on stylized platforms each block. If an alarm is triggered, security can activate a drone immediately on the spot. Nasty.

• Reciprocity Rik

The practice was challenged in 2043 by alarmists who felt that their concern for their own privacy took priority over public safety and security; they brought a suit in the Supreme Court against the Seattle Metroplex Council, Lone Star and all the major megacorporations for invasion of privacy. The Court naturally ruled that the suit had no merit; their judgment stated that the security systems passively recorded information that was already in the public domain. The cameras were not intrusive and did not impinge upon the private holdings of the plaintiffs, but merely captured images of public areas that any member of the public could see for themselves anyway.

• And the bribes were flying thick and fast that day, I bet. None of the defendants would have wanted to risk the judges ruling in favor of the "alarmists." There's fairly compelling evidence to suggest that Shiawase owned one of the judges by that point anyway, for what it's worth.

• Metropolis

• Actually, from a purely legal standpoint, the court's decision was the correct one anyway. It may have unpleasant social implications, and it might justify all kinds of repellent practices, but it's unfortunately right.

• Legal Beagle

• Yeah—the public gets no privacy ... but you can be sure the people in power have all of the privacy they can buy.

• Brick

Similarly, the expert analysis systems that are set to watch over electronic information are hard at work guarding your security. They perform numerous functions for the public's protection—everything from monitoring the spending patterns on your credit account to alert your bank in case it's been stolen, to analyzing security camera footage in airports to identify the faces of known criminals and terrorists.

Every electronic transaction you make using the Matrix—which is to say almost everything, from phone calls to mail order—leaves a record behind. This provides excellent security for you, because it makes disputes about your actions easy to resolve. The music store doesn't send you the goods you paid for? You can produce evidence of your payment, while they

can't produce an authenticated goods receipt. A concerned spouse worries that you're being unfaithful one night when you're working late? You can show them the transaction reference when you bought a cup of coffee from a vending machine in your office that night. And the system minimizes the risk of false accusations—it doesn't matter if the criminal who robbed the talismonger's shop had a car just like yours; GridGuide records show that you were stuck in a traffic jam two neighborhoods away, so Lone Star doesn't even need to investigate you.

- And we all know how easy it is to fabricate details like this, which destroys the system's integrity—or worse, we know how easy it is to fake evidence against someone and falsely prove them guilty of something. Does the average citizen really believe the system's that perfect and inviolable?

- Arclight

- Look, you and I, we all know that the system doesn't work this way and it's not at all benevolent. The worrying thought is how many Joe Averages believe this hype? Most people are way too complacent about what the authority figures do to them in the name of some seemingly-admirable cause, and no-one stops to read the fine print until they're the one in the manacles for no good reason. Bit too late by then.

- Cynic

- And of course it's never equitable. Those with the know-how can cover their own tracks, but those with money or influence can make sure no one gets to see their records anyway. It puts that much more control in the hands of the already-empowered—they can find out about everyone else, yet still maintain their own privacy.

- Class Warrior

SPIRITUALITY: SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN

Everybody needs something to get them through the day, and for a lot of people that something is religion. The sprawls are home to all sorts of religious and spiritual beliefs: chances are good that if you look hard enough, you can find representatives of not only the world's major faiths, but most of the less well-known ones as well—including a few it might be better if you *didn't* find.

- Surprisingly for such a melting-pot environment, you don't see a lot of religious-based violence in the sprawls. Among the underclasses, they're usually spending so much time and energy just trying to survive that they don't have time for it, while the wealthier and more privileged folks have other outlets for religious disagreement besides killing each other in the streets. Mostly they just ignore each other if they don't see eye to eye—at least when they're not killing each other for some other reason.

- Socio Pat

Religion got a big boost back at the Awakening, and no wonder—when half the world is dropping dead of VITAS and

WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

Excerpted from Lone Star Public Information Services.

In a typical day, here are a few of the ways you leave footprints that we can watch for your safety and security:

- Opening your locked door leaves a record of your access in the maglock. (Cheaper locks don't have this feature; upgrade your locks today!) If you have a centralized security system, it also leaves a record of your access in the security terminal.
- Credstick transactions leave records with the reader unit and with your bank service, protecting you against credit fraud and electronic theft. Phone calls leave records of the number dialed, the duration of the call and the location of your phone at the time.
- GridGuide records the location of your vehicle whenever it's in transit.
- Signed contracts—everything from leases to royalty agreements—are authenticated by credstick and stored with legal filing agencies, to protect you against breaches of contract.
- Shopping malls and public streets have real-time surveillance cameras to protect you from crime and to protect the innocent from false accusations.
- Cross-border travel leaves records of your passport details and travel authentication, so authorities don't challenge your right to be there.

the other half is sprouting horns and pointed ears, it makes sense to look to some higher power for answers. It didn't last long, though: as people got more comfortable with the changes, religion (at least the organized variety) took a big hit in favor of the temptations of techno-secular society on one side and the more magic-oriented spiritual paths on the other. You still hear about how the Awakening turned religion (and particularly people's perceptions of it) on its ear—everybody knows the story about how Pope John XXV issued the encyclical *In Imago Dei* in 2024, declaring among other things that magic wasn't inherently evil, for example.

Here in 2064, though, most of these problems have been settled. That's not to say that religious strife is at an end—far from it!—but rather that many belief systems have absorbed the Awakening and its changes, either accepting them as facts of life or dealing with them according to their beliefs. Whether they view these facts as positive or negative varies widely, but magic, spirits and metahumans are here to stay and most folks seem to accept it.

The Old Standards

The number of people who call themselves "religious" has been dropping a little each decade. Despite the fact that organized religion is on a definite downward trend, the world's major faiths are still going strong. If statistics are true, the average sprawl-dweller doesn't have much to do with organized worship, but most people admit to identifying with some kind of faith. For many of these people, that means the big ones: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and so on.

- In a lot of cases, churches provide more than just spiritual comfort—they also function as centers of social life, networking organizations, hiring halls and other things that don't have much to do with a higher power.
- Holly

- Sometimes their purposes are a little less altruistic as well—I know for a fact that one of the larger Catholic churches in Seattle is in the pocket of the Bigjo Family, and there are strong rumors that one of the larger mosques in Redmond contributes on the sly to the New Islamic Jihad's coffers.
- Kendall

Give Me That (Really) Old-Time Religion

Beginning in the previous century, many people became disillusioned with the major religions and sought sources of inspiration that better spoke to their beliefs. This led some to embrace nature-based faiths such as Wicca, the Norse-based Asatru, Shinto, Druidism, Egyptian mysticism and Native American spirituality, among others. Many of these have gained significant adherents in the years after the Awakening, and a few even rival some of the major world religions for numbers of worshippers. The Path of the Sun, followed by many citizens in Aztlan, is but one example.

- This doesn't surprise me. With the mess the corps have made of the world these days, it's no wonder people are returning to more nature-based belief systems.
- Selena
- The fact that even the thickest skeptics can see magic working doesn't hurt either.
- Sourceress
- Actually if you look at sheer numbers, you should count Wicca as a mainstream religion these days.
- People Watcher
- There's some interesting discussion going on about religion and shamanic totems—are they gods, or are they just ways to put a recognizable face on a metaphysical force? That's a topic you don't want to bring up over dinner with magical types present. Trust me.
- Starfall
- Considering the fact that I have a shaman buddy who follows Toaster—no kidding!—I sure as drek hope they're not gods.
- Gleep

Faith for a New Age

Unlike the revivals, some of which have been around for thousands of years and are now enjoying a resurgence, some new religions and belief systems have been born in the post-Awakening world. The most visible of these newer religions is the Children of the Dragon (or the Church of the Dragon, depending on which half of the schism you follow). Churches

(called crèches) have popped up in almost every major city and some smaller towns as well, and their good works and charitable operations make them welcome members of the communities where they reside.

- Let's not forget the otaku and the reverence they hold for their "Deep Resonance." That's a modern belief system if I've ever seen one.
- Renraku Fox
- Same goes for the Path of the Wheel followed by legions of Tir elves. Don't believe for a second that there's any historical basis for it—it's just another way to keep the masses in line.
- The Laughing Man

Cults and Sham Spirituality

"Cult" is a dangerous word to throw around, because one person's cult is another person's True Faith. Nonetheless, any time you combine gullible people seeking truth with unscrupulous organizations seeking to further their own aims, disaster can result. Take the Universal Brotherhood for example. Sure, we can all look back with 20/20 hindsight and say we saw through them, but pick up any periodical from the early 2050's and you'll likely find a story about the UB and all the good they were doing.

- No kidding. I was pretty down-and-out in those days, and I got more than a few meals at the UB. I still shiver to think how close I came to being "united" with my Allen Bug Overlords.
- Calamity John
- Let's not forget about the Comet cults, either—even though lots of the smaller ones have disappeared after their visions didn't come to pass, some of them refuse to give up.
- D Bunker
- It's not the cults that bother me—it's the televangelists. There's something disgusting about a guy with plastic hair, a bad suit and several thousand nuyen worth of dental work rooking old ladies out of their life savings. At least the cults aren't usually beaming themselves into people's living rooms.
- Skeptic

EDUCATION: SKOOL DAZE

Everybody knows that if you want to succeed in today's corporate world, you need a good education. Now more than ever, students are exposed to a wide range of knowledge to help them make the important decisions about what they want to do with their lives. Fortunately, students today have a vast array of educational opportunities from which to choose, many of them tailored to their individual needs.

- And the corps' individual desires.
- Cynic
- One way or another, everybody gets an education. Whether it's quality schooling from some hoity-toity institution or hard lessons



on the streets depends a lot on who you are, who your parents are and who you know (not necessarily in that order).

- Profezzur X

Our grandparents would surely marvel at the opportunities available to children these days. Today's children are more likely to be educated using a sophisticated suite of Matrix applications, customized placement tests and simulations than by a live teacher standing at the front of the classroom. While some would argue that the "personal touch" of bygone educational methods is lost this way, educational professionals believe that the advantages of tailoring lessons to each student's learning style outweigh any potential problems. Besides, students still have access to live teachers if needed via the Matrix, so discussion is certainly available if needed.

- Some of this is pretty wiz, I have to admit. My chummer's got a ten-year-old daughter, and last week she and her class took a field trip to the British Museum using their simrigs. She said it was just like being there, down to the obnoxious tourists and the smell of the coffee shop. Plus they can do things using sim that they couldn't do in real life, like touch the Rosetta Stone and climb into a sarcophagus to see what it feels like.

- Fidler-Man

- This is all great, but it's by no means universal. The corp kids and the rich kids get it, but once you get out of their little exclusive enclaves you'll find classes getting by with twenty-year-old computers, dodgy Matrix connections and oversized classes. Sure

there's a real teacher there, but half the time he's too busy keeping the place from being a warzone to worry about teaching.

- Max

Private Schools

The two most common types of private schools are corporate sponsored and privately sponsored. Both are expensive and have stringent standards for entry. In the case of corporate schools, only people affiliated with that corporation (and in rare cases, specially chosen others) are allowed to attend, while private schools almost always require evidence of academic or athletic aptitude in addition to their hefty tuitions.

- This is true unless your mom or dad's a rich alum—in which case they'll relax their standards to "breathing."

- Prepster

- And in most cases "human."

- Bung

- This isn't quite right, though—there are private schools that don't look at your pocketbook as their first and only criterion. Religious schools are still going strong, for example (and often you don't even have to be part of their faith to attend). And don't forget military schools—they're more than just a place to ship Junior to keep him from getting tossed in the slammer these days. Most nations (and many corps) take these very seriously.

- Blade



- Most private schools are almost prisonlike in their security—don't let the pretty flowers and trees fool you. Mom and Dad are scared to death somebody's going to kidnap Junior, and Junior's often-times looking for a way out himself. Most places tag the kids upon entry so they can keep track of them.

- Finny

Public Schools

"Public school" is a bit of a misnomer, because even most public schools are privatized, with government subsidies taking up the slack. The quality varies, though too many are combat zones where getting out alive is more an accomplishment than getting out with a diploma.

- Public schools don't usually look too hard at students' SINs—as long as the government doesn't complain, every extra hoop in a seat gets the school more funding.

- Brick

- Because they don't have the funding of the private schools (and they can't be as selective), public schools are usually more interested in shuffling the kids through the system than in actually teaching them something. Security is tight, conditions are usually abysmal and graduates who can't read or do basic math are common. It's depressing, really. Getting a good education from a public school these days is the exception, not the rule.

- Pedant

Magic Schools

Most schools sponsor some sort of annual testing for students to determine if they have magical potential. Those who test positive are given the opportunity to take magical training. Talent level determines the type of training: full mages, shamans or adepts are usually removed from their normal classes and placed in dedicated magic schools, while would-be magicians of lesser power are given training supplemental to their regular schooling.

- Sounds great, doesn't it? In reality, though, this only happens for the kids in the nice schools. When was the last time a SINless kid from the Barrens got a shot at this kind of training?

- Cleo

- Magic is magic, Cleo, and it's rare. Sure, it's harder for a kid like that to get identified (especially since they often don't have the budget to do the proper testing in poorer schools) but once they're marked, they've got a free ride. Nobody wants to waste talent like that.

- Magister

- Kids like that usually end up in corporate magic programs. The corps figure that the kid'll be so grateful to be taken out of squalor that he'll pledge his undying loyalty to Mother Corp. Sad thing is, they're usually right.

- Cobalt Blue

- The nice thing about magic schools is the access they give you to all sorts of useful things—illicit spell formulas, clandestine magical groups and so forth. Ambitious and enterprising students can graduate with a lot more knowledge than their teachers think they've got.

- Winterhawk

Informal Schooling

Some parents, for whatever reason, choose not to participate in the traditional educational system. Some, perhaps for religious reasons, do not want their children exposed to the "outside world," while others fear the physical dangers encountered in many public schools. Some simply believe that they are better qualified than the school system to teach their children.

- In a lot of cases they're right. Today's technology makes it easy to get the information you need.

- Cynic

The usual choice for these parents is homeschooling, though, a growing movement of parents have formed "educational cooperatives"—similar to homeschooling except that instead of one parent teaching his or her own children, a group of parents gather to teach all of the group's children. This lets them make use of a wider range of teaching talents while providing the children with social opportunities within their own group.

- It's not always parents doing it, either. I've heard of one in the Redmond Barrens where this retired guy set up a school for the kids around there who wouldn't normally get any kind of education. He's been doing it for years now—in fact, I heard recently that one of his kids got into U-Dub on a scholarship.

- Fast Freddy

- Don't forget cults—the last thing they want is for their kids to have access to the outside world, especially when they're young.

- Northstar

Higher Education

Once students get through their secondary education, many choose to continue on to college while others opt to learn a trade. Corporations have a continual need for students of both academic and blue-collar disciplines, and both can lead to rewarding careers.

- Oh, yeah—unstopping the drekkers in the Shlawase executive washroom is a really rewarding career.

- Fangface

- Hey, you'd be amazed what kind of information plumbers can overhear if they keep their ears open.

- Josephine

Today's colleges are mostly private and cater to a wide range of academic disciplines. While a good college education continues to increase in cost, many students who show academic or



athletic promise can obtain scholarships that pay for some or all of their schooling. For children of corporate employees, all sorts of financial aid is available.

- Yeah, if the kid signs his life away to the corp and chooses the right corp-approved school, that is.
- Ranger
- Colleges are breeding grounds for shadowrunners, especially deckers and hermetic mages. They get fed up with the restrictions of a safe life, get a look at what's out there in the world and jump ship before they end up as wagslaves.
- Rei

Not everybody is cut out for college, though, nor does college teach many of the skills that are useful in our society. Trade schools offer courses in the so-called "blue collar" disciplines like plumbing and carpentry, secretarial and technical training, and instruction in other skills that don't require a heavy academic background. Most trade schools have short-term (two years or less) programs of study, and many of them offer night classes so students can work during the day.

- Do your homework before you sign up for one of these, and make sure it's reputable. Many of them want all the money up front. You'd be surprised at how many of them just up and disappear overnight, either because they went out of business or because they meant to take your money all along.
- Tangent
- It wouldn't get mentioned here, of course, but there are some "trade schools" out there that teach less socially acceptable skills, too. For instance, there's a place in Seattle where you can learn lockpicking, breaking and entering, how to steal cars, and all sorts of other useful things they don't teach you in "real" school.
- Minx

- There's a lot of informal education going on in runner circles, too—if somebody owes you a favor you might get them to teach you to shoot better, show you a new spell or tutor you in some Matrix skills. And if you've got the skills yourself, you can pick up some cred on the side by making yourself available for instruction.
- Argent

CURING WHAT AILS YOU

No matter how carefully you live your life, sooner or later you're going to need healthcare. Modern-day medical care runs the gamut from state-of-the-art to bottom-of-the-barrel, so here's a guide you can use to help you keep your pocketbook (and your body) intact when the need arises.

Private: The Best

It's no surprise that your best bet for quality healthcare is a private hospital. These institutions have the best funding, first shot at the best staffs and the finest facilities money can buy. If you need something that's risky, difficult or downright experi-

mental, a private hospital is the way to go. The same is true if a "new you" is what you're after: private hospitals are the best place for trendy mods like cosmetic biosculpting, fashion cyberware and rejuvenation therapy. Such care doesn't come without a price, however, and not everyone can afford treatment at this level. You'll need a valid SIN and a top-notch health insurance policy to get in the door.

- Or work for the right corp. Most of the big ones maintain their own private hospitals for the use of their employees. The smaller corps have contracts with local hospitals.
- Arclight
- Don't believe that just because a hospital's ritzy and private that you're necessarily safe there. For instance, I've heard more than one rumor that Cougar Mountain Hospital in high-class Bellevue is running a tidy organlegging operation out the back door. Be careful who you trust, chummers—exclusive doesn't mean you're out of the woods.
- Pragmaticus

- No discussion of private hospitals would be complete without mentioning cyberclinics. The best ones don't advertise, of course—they get plenty of business from word-of-mouth. Humana in Seattle is a fairly well known example (if you're in tight with Shiawase, anyway), but there are several more around the area. You'll have to find them yourselves, though—the services they provide are too valuable to risk raffing them out to the wrong people.
- Argent

Public: The Rest

Public hospitals and clinics provide healthcare services for the general public, including those who don't have health insurance or other means of securing a higher level of care. Like any institution operated by the government, public healthcare providers range from very good to very poor, largely based on the area where they're located.

- Public hospitals are much more likely than private ones to be engaged in a little backroom organlegging. The money they get from Tamano and the Yaks helps them buy equipment they normally couldn't afford—that is, when it's not lining the pockets of some corrupt administrator.
- Doogie
- On the other side, though, some of the inner-city hospitals are getting quite a reputation in metahuman medicine. For example, St. Agnes's in Atlanta has some of the world's premier experts on ork OB-GYN. Despite the fact that it's poorly funded and constantly on the edge of disaster, Deireadh An Tuarthell in Tarislar is making itself a name in the field of elven physiology.
- Raygun

Many smaller clinics serve the neighborhoods where they're located and operate on a more informal basis, welcoming all

patients and doing whatever they can to provide aid. Chronically understaffed and notoriously uneven in their performance, the clinics are nonetheless highly valued by those they serve.

- This is true. Even most gangs consider them neutral ground because who else is going to patch them up after their latest fight? They might break in and steal drugs on occasion, but the docs are off limits.

- Ocelot

- Surprisingly, clinics like this can be a good place to get magical healing. The big hospitals are so hamstrung by all the laws governing magical medicine that it's hard to find and prohibitively expensive. I've seen more than one mage or shaman who got disgusted with the red tape and jumped ship to where they could actually help somebody. Some of the stuff they do isn't strictly legal, but in a lot of cases it works.

- Mystic

- I notice they're very conspicuously leaving something out of their corp-tinged view of the world: what about all the street docs, shadow clinics and other places that Joe Corper probably doesn't even know exist?

- Neko

- These places aren't just for shadowrunners and other street types, either. You'd be surprised at how many corp suits we see after dark, either looking for drugs they can't get legitimately because they haven't been cleared, treatments they can't get approval for or just a way to get around the rings legit places make you run before you can get treated. I won't name any names, but just last week I helped an exec type and his teenage daughter quietly take care of a little trouble she'd gotten into. The week before that, I took care of a kid who was sick as a dog—his mom brought him in because she couldn't get an appointment at the corp facility until a week later.

- Welby

- Lest anybody think these back-alley places are all sweetness and light, remember that quite a few of them are in back alleys for a reason—the docs lost their licenses (or never had 'em in the first place), they're performing questionable procedures like elf-poseur surgery or "humanization" treatments on metas, or they've got an organlegging operation going. Yeah, they might be your best bet if you're SINless, but be careful.

- Snarf

Armed Response

Nowadays you can't count on having your medical emergency in a safe place—and if you don't, your best friend is your DocWagon bracelet. Armed-response medical assistance services like DocWagon operate on a subscription-based model, where you pay in advance for the level of service you want. Depending on what you paid for, they do everything from providing pay-as-you-go service to scooping your bullet-riddled

body from the middle of a gang firefight and doing their best to return you to life and health.

- Fraggin' straight. When was the last time you saw the local meatwagon risk their hoops to drag your carcass out of a warzone?

- Roadkill

- Yeah, just don't count on having them help anybody else while they're there. Local ambulance service might not take bullets for you, but they'll get your chummers out too—even the ones who don't have DocWagon bracelets.

- DoubleTalk

- Not entirely true. DocWagon's a corp, but the folks who work for them are still healers. Sometimes they'll bend the rules a bit if they can get away with it.

- Jess

Health Insurance

With all the medical options available to people these days, a good health insurance policy is one of the best investments you can make. Insurance isn't cheap, but fortunately most citizens are able to get high-quality coverage through their places of employment. Skyrocketing medical costs combined with the growing array of services available in the realms of preventive, emergency and elective care all mean that a good comprehensive medical policy is a must for you and your family.

- Yeah, which works great if you're a shiny happy corper. Not so great if you're unemployed, or even worse, SINless. Most private policies are more expensive than the corporate group rates, and usually the coverage isn't as good. Even if you can afford the premium, you'd better have a SIN. They won't touch you if you don't.

- Lindsay

- Good luck if you're an ork or a troll, too. Even those who work for corps get shafted because our lifespans are so short. We end up paying twice the premiums the other metatypes do.

- Bung

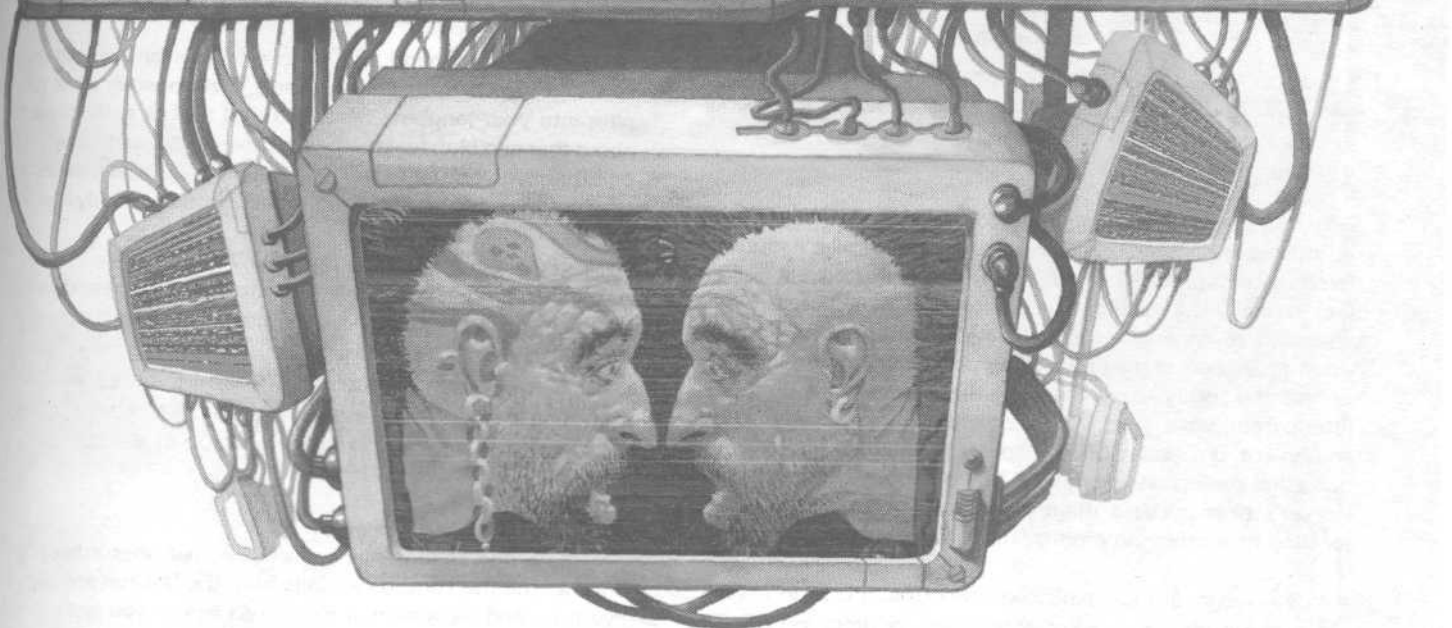
- Sometimes the corp grunts don't have it so good either—health insurance companies have everybody by the short hairs and they know it. They're not supposed to cancel policies when people get sick with something expensive, but they've been known to do it. And if you've got a pre-existing condition lots of 'em won't even look at you.

- Cynic

- It's actually one of the ways corps hold onto employees they don't want to lose, particularly ones with medical problems somewhere in the family. I know one researcher who's miserable where he is but he won't leave because his wife has some weird disease. He's afraid if he bolts, he'll lose her medical coverage.

- Jenner

IT'S A SMALL WORLD



At the risk of beating a dead horse, I want to remind all of you that reputation is just a barometer of your ability to deliver the goods. In today's marketplace, your rep is made or broken by your ability to get in, get the job done, get out and hopefully get home and get paid. I've recently spent a lot of quality time mulling over the problems runners face in this aspect of their operations. It quickly became apparent to me that runners on average take the effects of commercial travel and Matrix Interconnectivity on our trade for granted. Hidden in the safety zone of whatever societal crack you managed to fall through, it's common to disregard the impact high-speed globe-hopping and instant communication have had on the way we turn a buck. So what does all this mean for Joe Runner? Well, to shed a little light on the subject for you, I've asked a friend to give up the goods. Her name these days is Rancine. She's a big-shot travel agent who moonlights as what she calls an "undisclosed commodities relocater." I'll let you make of that moniker what you will.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 30 April 2063 at 05:42:31 (PST)

MODERN TRAVEL

by Rancine

It's a small world, and it just keeps getting smaller. In our grandparents' day, the old U.S. was called the melting pot of the world. Well chummer, that melting pot has pretty much spilled over to cover most of the planet.

Even though the mass migrations of the last couple of centuries have mostly petered out with advent of international and megacorporate balkanization, today's mass-media society, cheap travel and information infrastructure have brought the global village to a whole new level. Strangely enough, the cultural revivals that followed the Native American emancipation and the European and Asian nationalisms have only fed this trend, rather than blocking it. As often as not, ethnic traditions and art are absorbed and reshaped by global media for international consumption, leaving the original forms mostly untouched.

- A lot depends on where you're going. Global culture means little in the Aussie Outback or the African Savannah.
- Rabid
- You don't have to go that far. In some parts of Europe you can get sliced and diced for making the wrong assumption about someone's nationality.
- Sepherim

According to some guy named Webster, the word "travel" means to go from one place to another, to make a journey, to advance or proceed. In this day and age, that covers quite a lot. In the latest dictionary editions, the definition is often stretched to encompass virtual travel via the Matrix and the astral projection of magicians. Few people will argue, however, that the reality experienced by these travelers is quite different from what you would experience by actually going someplace *physically*. Strictly speaking, neither grid-running nor astral projection constitutes "travel," since even though a decker's or magician's mind perceives movement from one location to another, no physical movement is involved.

- True enough. Standing in downtown Calcutta is an entirely different experience from projecting there or dropping into the local Matrix LTG. No less mind-boggling, but completely different. They're simply different realities.
- Maglster
- Yeah, but in terms of legal jurisdictions, it's where your consciousness is that counts. If your persona or astral form trespasses into a high-security MCT computer or lab, it doesn't matter that your meat body was nowhere near those places when the law comes looking for you.
- Legal Beagle

For our purposes, we'll stick to the traditional definition of travel. Most of us in the biz of dodging narrow-minded officials, neither magic nor the Matrix provide the kind of highways we require to get to and from our objectives. Our roads lie in the shadows, chummers, and that's where we intend to keep them.

GETTING OUT OF TOWN

Few of us need any excuse to want to take a trip, but to those reading these boards the reasons usually boil down to the basics: business, pleasure or flight.

Business

Business these days comes in all forms. You'd be surprised at how many people prefer the familiarity and nuances of physical presence when conducting business; there's something reassuring about shaking hands in the flesh that Matrix telepresence can never quite emulate. In the shadow biz, trust is everything, so nothing beats some mano-a-mano facetime.

Taking work abroad has both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, if you take a contract on a target overseas, you're not going to know the territory as well as the locals.

Most of your hard-built resources and contacts will be of no use to you. This can be a major frag if you take a wrong turn during a chase and get lost or you need to acquire some special gear pronto.

On the other hand, the locals won't be familiar with your face and rep. This means you don't have to worry about running into your longtime neighborhood rival or getting razed about that one blunder you made a few years back (y'know, the one that everyone still gives you drek about). In fact, the locals may not even see you coming, which is usually exactly how we like it.

- Used to be mercs did all the globe hopping, but these days you don't have to be a prime team to make serious cred playing on the global market. Savvy fixers have no problem networking to get top talent from abroad if they think it betters the odds of delivering the goods. Not everyone is cut out for it, of course, but with the right contacts and skills a man can make a bundle.
- White Tiger

Pleasure

It's a fine shadowrunner tradition that after a big score, once all the med and repair bills from the last run are paid, to live it up and blow all that extra cred before you get soft and comfy. There's no way better to do this than skipping out for a no-holds-barred vacation: R&R in Monaco, a zero-g massage on the Shibankuji Freefall Resort, a safari in Azania or anywhere else that fits your fancy. If the idea of rubbing elbows with norms in tourist traps scares you, there are plenty of "alternative" ways to enjoy yourself: bloodsport gambling in Vegas, paracritter bounty hunting Quebec or sampling the brothels in Bangkok. You name it and your friendly neighborhood fixer can probably arrange for you to travel someplace interesting for your downtime ... at a price.

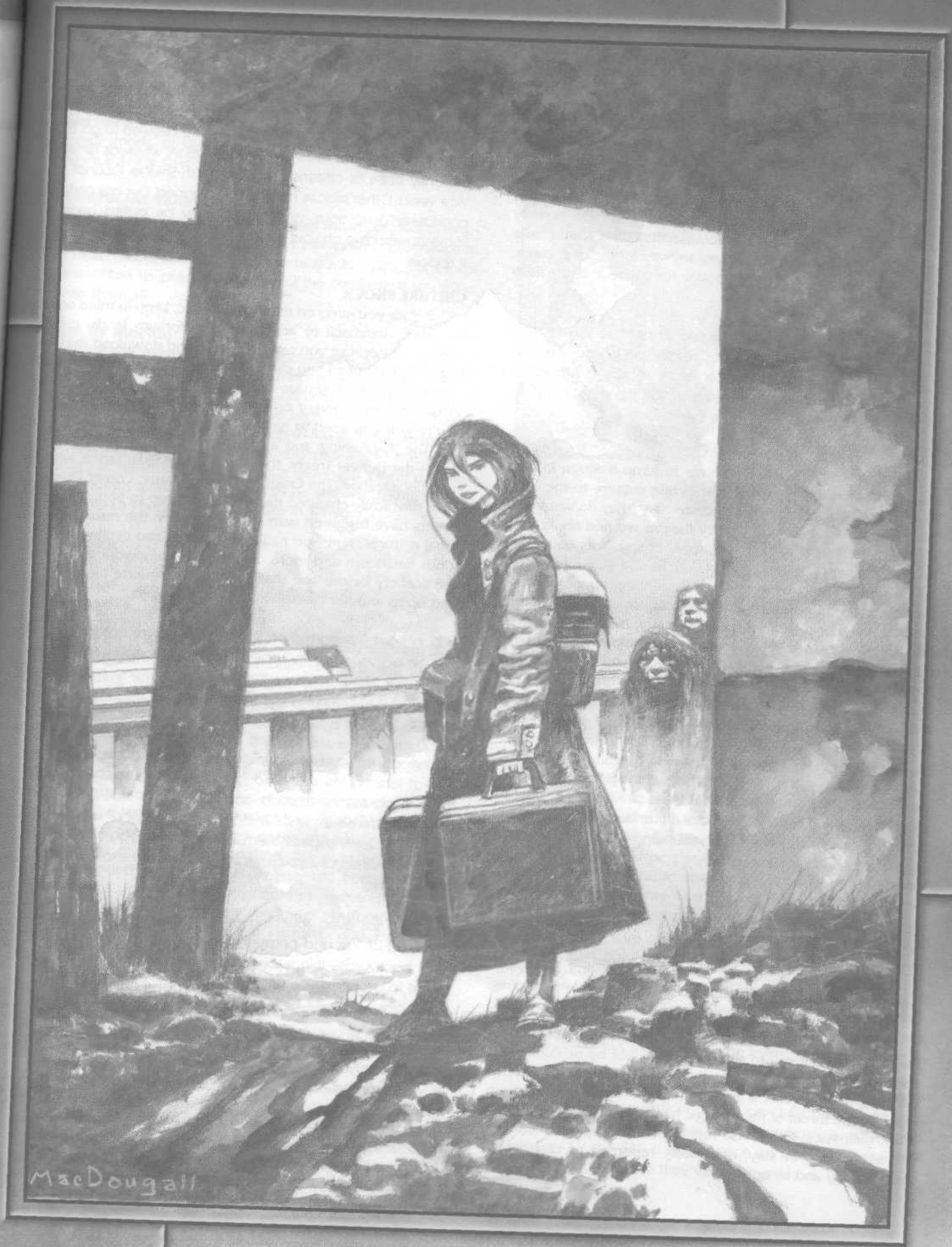
- Don't forget that celebrities, politicians and scientists go on vacations too. These are prime windows of opportunity for extractions, stings or even wetwork on one hand and freelance security on the other. Take your pick.
- Fleur de Lys

Flight

Last but not least, we have flight. Let's face it, at one point or another in your career, you're going to have to pull a vanishing act and relocate. You may simply just need to let the heat cool down until you can return, or you may have built up enough enemies and grudges that you need to disappear for a while and let social Darwinism trim down your people-to-avoid list. In fact, it helps to have some contingency travel plans prepared in advance, just in case you need to get out right-fraggin-now, without saying goodbye to your squeeze, feeding your pets or dallying around transport hubs that bounty hunters have staked out.

DOCUMENTS

Assuming you take some commercial form of travel, you'll need to arrange for the proper paperwork (real or faked) before



MacDougall



you leave the country. In addition to the passport encoded onto your registered credstick, you may need a visa from the country you're traveling to, though sometimes these aren't necessary. NAN citizens traveling to other NAN countries do not need visas, nor do the CAS and UCAS require them from each others' citizens. Some nations, like California, simply don't bother with visas, usually because they have a hard time keeping people out of their country anyway (or in some cases, keeping them *in*). Visas can be applied for online or in the flesh at a consulate or embassy.

- Be careful about making visa applications in person if you're using a fake ID. If they catch it, you're officially on extraterritorial property at an embassy or consulate so you're subject to arrest and prosecution under their laws. On the other hand, in-person apps are more likely to be approved.
- Spook

The number of hoops you have to jump through in your visa application differs radically from one country to the next. ID and credit balance checks are customary (they do want your tourist nuyen after all), but mostly they're worried about your threat as a terrorist, criminal, smuggler or spy. Your country of origin may weigh heavily against you, as will a criminal SIN—and in some cases, your metatype. Depending on the country, a whole range of other info may be requested and evaluated: medical and inoculation records, itinerary, hotel reservations, etc. If you plan to bring any restricted equipment (including implants, cyberdecks, software and foci), you may need to apply for permits and present your licenses from your country of origin. Strict nations like The United Kingdom and Tír na nÓg also require that magicians register themselves and obtain a permit for any legal magic use.

- You can also apply for student or work visas instead of a tourist visa. Though they last longer, these are harder to obtain, as they require additional personal data, acceptance from a company or school, and a valid-sounding reason for why you should study/work in their country.
- Paper Chaser
- Corporate citizens generally have a much easier time obtaining visas, especially work visas, as long as their megacorp operates in the intended destination. If you generate a false ID, choose an appropriate corp.
- Turner

Even after all this paperwork and several weeks of waiting, they may just tell you to slot off anyway, for no particular reason other than they don't like your looks. Or if you get accepted, they may request a blood or tissue sample to keep on hand, so the threat of ritual magic hangs over your head if you break their laws. Other visa restrictions may apply, such as a limited duration to stay, mandatory reporting of changes to your itinerary and so on.

- Another angle to consider is that many countries place restrictions on where their own citizens are allowed to go. Tír citizens (both) are not allowed to enter Aztlan, whereas Tsimshian currently bans its citizens from the Salish-Shidhe Council and vice versa. Other places may not be banned, but are certainly considered suspicious, and so you may be pulled aside for some questioning on your return.
- Spook

CULTURE SHOCK

Before you jump on that semiballistic, keep in mind one of the main drawbacks to adventuring in foreign lands: culture shock. Just because you can slot a chip and download the local lingo doesn't mean you can fit in. Sure, you can probably find some people with similar-looking mugs who speak your language in almost every country in the world, but eventually you're going to need to navigate the social terrain yourself.

The Awakening and all the drek that's happened since then—the Denver Treaty, the Euro-Wars, Balkanization, corporate globalization, The Crash of '29, the Matrix, Comet Chaos—have drastically changed the world from top to bottom. These events have triggered wars, ethnic clashes, the resurgence of tribal cultures, renewed nationalism, rises and declines in religious fanaticism and more. So do your homework and scope the scenery before you make a critical etiquette blunder and end up as another statistic in the travel reports.

- Don't get me started on slot-a-culture chips not living up to the hype. I've yet to find one that can reasonably fill me in on any local etiquette or customs without making me look like retarded slag in the eyes of the locals.
- Alias
- Linguasofts have effectively demolished the language barrier—at least in the so-called First World. But elsewhere you still face hundreds of dialects and languages that have never been registered on chip. They have the habit of cropping up when you least expect them, so make sure you have a local guide or translator if you're going somewhere exotic.
- Flak Jack
- That's not even touching on problems like local accents, evolving idioms and phrases that crop up even in your North Am backyards—things an off-the-shelf linguasoft can never hope to cover.
- Scholar
- Thankfully, there's at least one language we all share these days: the nuyen.
- The Chromed Accountant

SHADOW TRAVEL: GETTING THERE ON THE SLY

All right, let's move this forward and get all of the cards on the table. You have certain assets you'd like to relocate without having to answer to all those pesky customs agents.

Well, friend, you have two options. You can travel commercially and use a few tried-and-true tricks to keep unwanted retinas off your goods, or you can hitch a ride on the road less traveled—a.k.a. the shadow byways.

COMMERCIAL TRAVEL

Our modern world offers five main means of public, long-range transportation, from the pricey planes and cruise ships to the more plebeian buses, trains and personal autos. Each form of transit has its pros and cons, and the competent smuggler knows them all.

Come Fly with Me

Air travel remains the most efficient way to shuttle material across borders. Not only are modern airliners statistically the safest means of travel, they're also downright fast. Even the most basic passenger planes—the high-speed civilian transports (HSCT)—move at speeds of up to Mach 3. If a person's in a serious hurry, there are always suborbitals and the space-scraping semiballistics. These days it takes you longer to commute through traffic from Renton to downtown Seattle than it does to fly to your grandma's house in Tokyo.

- Magicians need to take care on semiballistics. The flight path takes you to the fringe of space, where the mana warp can seriously hurt you if you assense or play around with magic.
- Magister

While other forms of mass transit have suffered from poor city planning, the depletion of municipal funds and general overcrowding, air travel has remained "above" the morass, so to speak. Though the Sovereign Tribal Council spent months in legal contention over interstates and railways that ran through their territory, they settled the airspace issue with an alacrity born of necessity; their economies depend too heavily on airborne commerce.

The major airlines have been at the forefront of the effort to shrink the world into a homogenous global community, ensuring that peoples of all races, needs and nationalities have equal access to rapid transportation. For over twenty years now, the entirety of the airline industry has been compliant with various international ergonomics requirements for metahuman physiques, so that seats and restroom facilities can accommodate dwarfs, elves, humans, orks, trolls and sundry types of racial variants.

- Though trolls are happy that a selection of the seats in passenger jets are now big enough to accommodate us, we'd just as soon do without such large portions of airplane food.
- Concrete Trog

Though traveling any of the world's airlines remains more expensive than ground-bound forms of transportation, the price is not as exorbitant as you might think. Business-class tickets for an HSCT flight between Seattle and Vladivostok average around 1,800 nuyen per round trip, while suborbitals and semiballistics are a bit more exclusive, ranging from 2,500



nuyen and 4,000 nuyen for round-trip coverage between most of the planet's international airports. Corporate employees can usually find cheaper rates if they use an airline with corporate affiliation. Almost all corps provide free travel for business use, shuttling employees back and forth across the globe on a daily basis. More and more such business meetings, however, are now being conducted in virtual boardrooms (or even pre-designated astral conference halls).

By and large, airport security is tight. Most international airports maintain rapid-response teams, equipped with police-grade weaponry and backed with magical support. The corps are particularly aggressive when it comes to reacting to threats within their air terminals; though they still limit their response teams to gel rounds, tasers and freeze foam, they use chemical weapons with impunity. If an airport enjoys an especially large security budget, you can expect to find astral wards placed over critical areas, such as the control tower, as well as heavy blast doors that slide into place over windows and exits during the event of an emergency.

- Be warned, mate, not all airport security blokes are cheap rent-a-cops. To the contrary, some are fully trained soldiers. Some of the folks patrolling Heathrow, for example, were hired straight out of the SAS. It all depends on who runs the airport and what sort of trouble they've previously had.
- Union Jane



- Corp sec squads have been known to gas an entire terminal with Neuro-Stun and apologize to the innocent bystanders at their convenience. And that stuff about non-lethal ammo only holds true until the security personnel take hostile fire—then the kid gloves come off.

- Little Ben

The would-be smuggler shouldn't have to worry about such things, however, if the proper steps are taken to avoid a security response. The gauntlet through which a smuggler must pass is generally the same in every airport. It includes at least two walk-through MADs—one of which is always concealed so that you don't know you're being scanned—an ultrasonic examination of carry-on luggage, a credstick ID check, a cyberware scan and a hand-held chemical "sniffer" check to detect explosives and other dangerous elements.

- So we (a) carry non-metallic items, (b) disguise our loot as innocent objects to fool the ultrasound hounds and (c) leave the fuel-air explosives and illegal implants at home.

- Temple

- Or (d) use magic to manipulate the thoughts of those who would observe us. The weak link in any security chain is its lack of sufficient magical support. Few airports have the resources to counter a determined spellmeister.

- Hammer

- Don't count on that. Most international airports have at least one magician at the checkpoints at all times, and they usually employ spirits to keep an eye on just that sort of magical meddling. The airports that regularly deal with terrorist threats will have even more mojo.

- Shetani

- Checked baggage also goes through a whole series of scans, including all of the above and more. They've just had too many incidents with remote hijackings using bombs, drones or just remotely released biochem weapons. Strict airports may also include an astral scan. If they're being extra cautious, they'll do a magical cataloguing of the hold's contents before takeoff.

- Leggy

Air travelers are also subject to passenger screenings, where security quietly pulls aside anyone with a criminal SIN, anyone whose name appears on security watch lists, a random selection of passengers and anyone marked as suspicious during the checks and scans. Security personnel then conduct a physical search of these passengers, ranging from the casual once-over of UCAS guards to the extreme violation of personal space that is the security routine of the Pueblo Corporate Council.

- Speaking from experience, if you do run into trouble with the law at an airport, your best bet is to swallow your pride and ride it out until they transport you elsewhere. Starting a firefight at an airport is a quick way to get yourself labeled as a terrorist, and you'll probably face more firepower than you brought with you. If you're smart, though, you can play innocent until they move you and the security is more lax, then hope your friends bust you out or try a break yourself.

- Shetani

No discussion of airport security would be complete without mentioning the Matrix safeguards regarding air-traffic control. Each airport maintains its own PLTG, and these are among the most heavily ICed warrens on the grid. Full-time counter-intrusion deckers maintain an unceasing vigil, to ensure that no one tampers with the precisely calibrated codes necessary to land a computer-controlled semiballistic.

Magical security around air-traffic-control towers is equally formidable, as recent FAA laws require all airports to maintain a 24-hour staff of magicians and attendant spirits. The larger the airport, the higher the grade of initiates you can expect to be patrolling the astral perimeter.

- Rancine's not kidding. A heads-up for anyone doing biz in New Orleans: the new chief of the magical response team at MSY makes use of two of the biggest, baddest loa spirits this 'ol cowboy has ever seen. An initiate buddy of mine tried banishing one of these Gollaths—they say he might one day regain the use of his legs.

- Decker del Sur

Finally, it's worth mentioning security on the flights themselves. Modern pilots are VCR equipped and have complete rigger control over the plane, including internal cameras and maglocks to off-limit areas. Stewardesses are trained in threat identification, and many airlines send along undercover air marshalls on randomly selected flights. All of these personnel may be armed with tasers, stun weapons or firearms with gel rounds.

- You have to be careful about firing guns in a pressurized craft; a stray shot can bring the whole bird down.

- Skeet

The Iron Horse

Though not as important as it was in the days of the Rail Barons of nineteenth-century America, train travel remains a vital vein in the body of public transportation. Modern passenger trains are generally high-speed monorails, providing various levels of creature comforts, depending on a traveler's need. All major North American cities boast sizable train stations handling both passenger routes and cargo-only lines, though the latter still rely on the old-fashioned dual rail system and are thus slower and far less efficient. These dual-railers may be dinosaurs, but their résumé speaks for itself.

- There's been a lot of clack over the years about converting the world's train system to a common-gauge monorail, but like Rancine says, the dinosaurs have a proud and undeniable "track record," so to speak.
- Natasha

Europeans have always relied more heavily on rail transportation, so it's no surprise that the network of lines is more extensive in those countries, with even small towns and villages maintaining a manned train station around the clock. Eurail offers a variety of packaged deals servicing Western, Central and Eastern Europe. Prices for individual trips vary greatly according to the route and the corporation who owns that particular stretch of track. For example, going from London Waterloo to Paris Nord costs a traveler 280 nuyen for a distance of 494 kilometers, while that same traveler pays only 230 nuyen for the 1,487 kilometers between Paris Est and Wien Westbahnhof in Austria. In way of price comparison, crossing the North American continent from Seattle to New York's Penn Station costs 450 nuyen, though the rigors of this journey are compounded by the inevitable slow-down caused by Salish-Shidhe and Sioux border inspectors.

- Slow down? Try screeching halt. I swear, those testy Sioux rail jockeys have finer toothed combs than any train security people in North America, with the possible exception of the Pueblo, who seem to take it as a personal affront that anyone is traveling by train through their lands. If you're hoping to squeak any no-no goods through NAN territory, I'd suggest you take pains to disguise it, rather than hide it, as simple concealment in false-bottomed containers and whatnot will usually be discovered in a search.
- Sixth Gear

- If you believe the Sioux inspectors can try one's nerves, love, then I invite you to spend a few years waiting in the queue at any station in London's outlying areas. The BritRail system is out-dated, the delays interminable, the cutpurses rampant. Honestly, at times I think the chief deterrent to smugglers is not border security, but rather all the aggro one must suffer through while waiting for the train.
- Union Jane

Train stations are notoriously lax on security, running simple ID checks and the occasional scan of luggage for bombs. International stations try harder, incorporating passenger MAD scans and physical contraband searches. Passenger trains themselves carry little security aside from internal cameras (which may or may not work) and panicbuttons to alert the conductor. If a problem arises, the train is halted and the nearest law enforcement agency alerted. If necessary, the conductor can lock a car to prevent a criminal from escaping.

Whether they are mono- or dual-railed, most modern trains have been outfitted for rigger control. In an effort for even further efficiency, some corporations have hardwired rigger networks onto the tracks themselves, enabling a single rigger to command several routes at once. Many cargo-only lines

are completely devoid of the metahuman presence; their freights are loaded by drones, shipped on trains guided by autopilot systems and unloaded by preprogrammed forklifts.

- Machines to save our lives. Machines dehumanize.
- K.R.

One unique problem that the rail industry has always faced is that of "freight-hoppers." Though traditionally considered a practice exclusive to migrant workers, the SINless and other pariahs, freight-hopping has become increasingly popular with students, thrill-seekers and—since the passing of Halley's comet—changelings affected by SURGE and living in a brotherhood of self-exile. Anyone with an eye toward smuggling may find it easy to mingle with these outcasts and use the freakshow atmosphere as camouflage to conceal a variety of contraband.

The Seven Seas

When most people think of sea travel, they picture languid ocean cruises to exotic places. Ocean-liners and pleasure yachts are used primarily for folks on holiday, rather than those looking merely for a mode of transportation. This, of course, makes these vessels ideal for smuggling, as no one expects a time-conscious smuggler to make use of such an inefficient mode of travel. Security levels at most ports-of-call are considerably less heavy-handed than those at airports. The biggest problems faced by the staff of cruise ships are not bootleggers, but illegal passengers. Modern ship manifests include a holographic image of each passenger, enabling the crew to spot stowaways more easily. Those intending to travel by ocean-bound vessel while using a false identity should consider altering their physical features, if only to a slight degree.

- Cruise ships will carry a few security personnel, but nothing a street sam would break a sweat over. If something major erupts, they call the Coast Guard. The exception would be cruise lines plagued by pirates or carrying some of society's elite; they'll have some serious firepower on board.
- Temple

Cruise ships are almost always rigger-controlled. The riggers work in shifts, their drones maintaining round-the-clock upkeep throughout the vessel. The riggers have total command of the ship's facilities and are among the highest paid personnel in the business. The rigger's cabin is usually the only place on board where one can expect to find fortified security measures, such as reinforced bulkheads and retinal-scan access doors.

Cruise fares range wildly, depending on the line, the route and the level of onboard luxury. Passengers can expect to pay anywhere from 500 nuyen per person for no-frills accommodation to a common port, to 5,000 nuyen for first-class treatment to an exotic vacation spot.

Taking the Bus

For those on a budget, the bus is the travel mode of choice. Bus fares range from 20 nuyen for very short jaunts to



300 nuyen round-trip from Seattle to DeeCee. While rail travel predominates in Europe and Eurasia, buses are the prime people-movers in North America, servicing nearly every population center, be it urban sprawl or rural town. Some lines use passenger hovercraft instead of actual buses.

In order to cut overhead, bus line services are heavily automated. Trips are booked and charged via the Matrix, and passengers are automatically charged for items purchased from the bus's onboard "necessities shop." Most buses are remotely drone-operated, often via satellite. Internal cameras and panic buttons provide a modicum of security for and from passengers.

- You've gotta keep the old cyber-peepers open at those bus stations, many of which are not what you might call "clean and well-lit places." Certain stations have become hubs for every drifter, vagabond and sticky-fingered transient in the area. During the wee hours, security is lax and the crazies come out of the woodwork. Oh, yeah, and use of the restrooms is often made easier if you have an air filtration system. Talk about your toxic zones.
- Rat-Tall
- Smuggling is child's play on buses. Fact is, buses are the great untapped well in the world of contraband conveyance. The bags stored in the undercarriage area are scanned as a lumped group with hand-held MADs and chem sniffers, meaning that a lot of stuff goes undetected. The bus workers simply move too many people per day to concentrate on searching every parcel they load and unload. And the big brain that controls all the bus movement isn't exactly the most impregnable host in the Matrix.
- Ridge Runner
- In remote areas, buses are easy prey for go-gangs and raiding nomads, just like cargo auto-trucks. If you're taking a long bus trip through the Badlands, it's not a bad idea to pack some heat.
- Skerrick

The Long Hard Road

Many cities around the world boast GridGuide and GridLink systems, careful monitors that keep the traffic flowing in the sprawl and make life less worrisome for day-to-day commuters. But as the saying goes in mechanics' taverns everywhere, "There ain't no grid of any kind past city limits."

- Or, in the words of an Aussie rigger friend of mine, "Here in the Outback, a driver's got himself a choice of two fine transit systems: GridTooth and GridNail."
- Tak777

One of the most rudimentary means of getting from one side of an international border to the other is simply to climb inside a car and drive across. Though the ubiquitous and relatively inexpensive mass transit services have greatly decreased the number of personal vehicles on the highway, there are still some places lacking train or bus service, just as there are some

times when it's better simply to avoid public transportation altogether. Car rental remains a popular choice, with prices averaging 60 nuyen per day, plus extra fees for high odometer readings and surcharges for surpassing the vehicle's suggested physical limitations.

By far the most conspicuous occupants of the interstates and highways are the multi-axle freighters that move large amounts of material ranging from food products to machine parts. Anything that doesn't require the speed of air travel is usually shipped via overland trucking. All triple-A corporations own fleets of such vehicles, some piloted by remote, others steered to their myriad destinations the old-fashioned way—by truckers.

- Ah, now you're speaking my lingo. Nothing like the feel of eighteen wheels thundering the pavement beneath you. The trucker subculture is like nothing you've ever seen. It's part testosterone festival, part secret society, part beer-drinking, country-music-listening lonely-hearts club gearhead gathering. Smuggling has become an integral part of the trucking underworld, and those guys (and gals) really stick to one another's guns. I heard that a Lone Star undercover agent disappeared after trying to buddy-buddy a suspected gunrunner at a truck-stop. Truckers speak their own weird argot, and they're in pretty much constant communication while they drive. Word of possible infiltrators spreads fast through the brotherhood of truckers. A difficult network to crack.
- Jake Brake
- Hey, Jake? 'Member those lot lizards that night in Shakey Town? Hey-hey! Catch you on the flip-flop, man.
- Cab-Over Pete

The over-the-road trucking industry must deal with the Byzantine trade regulations inherent in crossing over so many different national borders. A tractor-trailer making the long haul from the California Protectorate to Atlanta at one time or another occupies a piece of blacktop in four different countries, each with its own idea about road tolls and import fees. While the Ute nation is only minimally concerned with the upkeep of roadside scales and random trailer checks, the PCC is much more assertive in its efforts to thwart improper shipping techniques and exact their proper due for goods brought into their sovereign bosom. Drivers intending to cross international or corporate borders are advised to verse themselves in the changes that take place in the law by simply passing over an invisible boundary line.

- I must endorse this suggestion with a personal example. I once enjoyed a healthy commission for moving several thousand kilos of "unattributable assets" from Paris to the Rhein-Ruhr megaplex in an articulated lorry (semi-truck, for you Yanks). As it turned out, the moment I hummed the big artic into the Grand Duchy of Westrhine-Luxemburg, I was beset upon by two teams of especially cheesed-off border guards. Seems that I'd forgotten to bugger with the Juggernaut's vehicle termination chip, and the Westrhine dwarfs were able to get a satellite read on



my overloaded trailer. Quite queer, actually, how fast they come running when they think you're trying to avoid adding your import tariff to the national coffers.

- Union Jane

Common Features

Whatever form of public transport a traveler chooses, he or she can expect to find a common package of amenities to make the trip as comfortable as possible. In airliners, buses and trains, passengers can expect to find tridphones in the seatbacks in front of them, Matrix jackpoints and a variety of personal climate-adjustment controls. Extended journeys provide passengers with simdecks to relieve boredom. All cruise ships offer similar services, with the added diversions of swimming pools, racquetball courts, casinos and live music.

- Why is any of this important? Because Wiley Smuggler uses all the assets at his disposal, including disguising his illegal goods as the aforementioned simdecks, tridphones, racquetball rackets and musical instruments—items that won't draw attention. Or he assumes the identity of a lifeguard or croupier. In other words, Wiley Smuggler knows his territory.
- Tak777

The decision to travel first class or coach depends upon the smuggler's cover story as well as his bankroll. Regardless of the method of travel, first-class passengers eat real food instead of a soy-substitute, and they generally aren't billed for extended Matrix use.

ILLICIT TRAVEL

Traveling commercial routes is great when it's practical. But getting from point A to point B isn't so easy when the goons at point B have declared the better part of your luggage (or your person!) as verboten material. In these cases, it's best to look toward other, more clandestine means of inserting yourself and your cargo into the country. Traditionally, there are five primary means of moving your hoop and hard supplies while staying under the radar of those humorless customs officials. *Forgery* entails the use of dummy documents that get you past security. *Concealment* involves hiding your illegal gear so that it appears as something else. *Bluffing* requires savvy communication skills, an actor's knack for improvisation and a little money to help grease the wheels. For those of you who'd rather have other people take the risks, there are *mules* to do your dirty work. Finally, when all else fails, *running the border* illegally will get you where you need to go.



- The best solution is usually a combination of these methods. Use some forged IDs and some bluffing to get all the people in your team inside. It's generally a good idea to send along your chromed combat monsters with the illegal implants and anyone who's carry concealed goods separately, so that if they run into trouble they don't compromise everyone. As a rule, it's best to try and scrounge up gear in your destination assuming there's time, you know some providers and it's available. But that's not always an option, so getting a mule or a smuggler to bring it in is better than carrying itself—but you sure better trust the mule or smuggler to get the job done right.

- Dre

Have Forgery, Will Travel

Things aren't always what they seem. In the business of illegal transit, never has a truer maxim been uttered. Sometimes the easiest way to travel while keeping Big Brother off your back is to take a commercial mode of transportation under a false identity and/or with false paperwork.

The art of forgery has existed for thousands of years, since the day some knave in ancient Mesopotamia decided to cast his own coins and pass them off at the local market. In the modern era, where virtual data has taken the place of most hardcopy forms of exchange, the forgery of old has little application. The forgery operations of today require teams of programmers with bleeding-edge software and squads of deckers with the capability to penetrate and insert data into an array of secure databanks. Despite a high-tech virtual arsenal, there remains a bit of poetry in the soul of modern forgery operations as they continue the cloak-and-dagger tradition.

- Skilled forgers are highly paid professionals who pride themselves in the furtive trade of turning a person into someone else entirely. In truth, having inside contacts or backdoors into the system is what truly makes or breaks a forging circle, which is why most of them are syndicate operations.

- Snow Tiger

False documents run the gamut from passcards to visas to the digital encoding inside a credstick. The more manufactured correlating data that can be tied to a document, the better. A fake ID and SIN look better when also supported by a bank account, forged diplomas and licenses and linked entries in birth certificate and voter registration archives. Competent forgers must also be schooled in the scanning, reproduction and altering of biometric prints. Forging operations with the high level of expertise, the specialized equipment, the necessary funds and the resources to manufacture and propagate false data entries are expensive and few and far between. Locating them is often a protracted procedure, as is the process itself. Any ID that you can get overnight is probably more trouble than it's worth.

- The forging operations that aren't run by syndicates or equally organized outfits tend to focus and specialize in one area, such as faking medical files, creating tax records or appropriat-

ing death certificates. Usually these guys contract out to larger ops, but some fixers may know enough of these independents to swing you false documents without the mob knowing what you're up to.

- Link

What makes false documents so effective, particularly false ID, is that verifiable data is usually scattered across a range of different databases and hosts. There is no single worldwide database that every nation, corp, bank and credit company can access when making a background check—in fact, there are thousands. Some of these are redundant systems, some contain more depth to their information or maintain a higher standard of quality. An ID that trips red flags when scanned at a UCAS airport might very well breeze through a background check at a bank in Istanbul. Cross-referencing all of the basic ID data in a registered credstick is a slow and inaccurate process—a process too slow for most checkpoint queues. As a result, many verification systems are optimized to only substantiate a bare modicum of data. The better the verification system, the more additional details are cross-references and checked, and the longer the process takes.

- The disparities between systems work in our favor, but they also give us ulcers. There are so many variations from one database to the next that it's well nigh impossible to predict if the credstick you just had forged in Denver is going to be accepted in Boston or set off every alarm in North America.

- D-Con

- The best advice for anyone hoping to apply various ersatz IDs across international borders is to make an exhaustive study of each entity's background-check capabilities. For example, Lone Star does not readily share information with the Aztlan government, so a wanted criminal from Renton will likely encounter no difficulties at all when traveling through Chihuahua. The first time he makes a tridphone call in Topeka, though, he finds himself surrounded by squad cars in minutes. Do your research. Take copious notes.

- Socrates

- One of my ID checks failed once, but I was able to bluff my way past security by claiming the systems had my records confused with someone else. I told them I had recently cleared up the problem, but that the corrected data probably hadn't trickled down through the various nets yet. This sort of drek happens all the time, and the guards were too lazy to make the calls to verify my story, so I passed on by. Had the jitters for weeks whenever I had to use my credstick after that.

- Z-Zoner

- One major drawback to false IDs is that you often need to attach your real biometric scans to them. This can work against you in two ways. First, if a random system audit happens to compare those scans to other ones you've made under different IDs

and recognizes they're the same, your ID will be flagged and suspicious and you can expect an investigation (especially if there are any warrants attached to that other ID). Second, if your fake ID ever gets compromised, not only have you lost that ID but whomever you tricked now has your actual biometric data on file, which can haunt you later.

- Julian

- That's why some forgery ops also run a side business in deactivating IDs that are no longer used or wanted—just hope they get to it before the authorities back up the data.

- Gordie

Traveling Incognito

Sometimes it's not enough to brandish a false ID; every now and then you have to fake your *face*. Disguises range from the basic (hair dye and phony glasses or a Physical Mask spell), to the comprehensive (cosmetic surgery or genework). The underworld abounds with individuals who will—for a fee—transform you into nearly anyone you can imagine. Some of these experts are merely makeup artists who can give you a crash-course in cosmetics, while others are plastic surgeons whose shadow clinics are stocked with state-of-the-art equipment to completely reinvent your body. Come in an elf, go out an ork.

- For those of you needing a full-body mod without draining your bank account, drop me a line and we'll see what we can do for you. I happen to be on good terms with a former dermatologist who left L.A. during the recent chaos and has since set up shadow shop as a face-fixer par excellence.

- Chico Man

- If you're speaking of the dubious Dr. Karl Ashmann, then please give me a moment while I recover from my fit of terror. I wouldn't let that Frankenstein near my skin even if my arm was burning and he had the only fire extinguisher in the building.

- Streak

- Beggars can't be choosers.

- Chico Man

- No, but even beggars can insist on clean scalpels.

- Streak

- It probably goes without saying, but make sure your new look matches whatever ID you're using. An ork who passes an ID saying he's an elf is in trouble.

- Mongoose

Border security as a whole has yet to come up with an effective means of spoiling a good disguise. The sure-fire way to penetrate a false front is through magic, but the resources required to employ magicians at every checkpoint often makes this option cost-prohibitive.

Concealment

When you come right down to it, the essence of smuggling is hiding. If you don't have properly forged papers to authenticate your payload, then you simply must hide that payload so that no authentication is required. Just as espionage agents carry cameras designed as ink pens and smart bombs in the shape of tridphones, the successful smuggler has perfected dozens of ways of making one item appear to be another.

- Want a good example of what Rancine's talking about? Check out the nifty little sidearm from Shlawase Armaments called the Puzzler. Not only is the sucker undetectable by most scanning devices, it's also designed to be broken down into its constituent parts. These parts look like innocent items—lipstick tubes, razors, that kind of thing. Very clever.

- Prometheus

The primary key to concealment is fooling the various automatic scans: magnetic anomaly detectors, chemsniffers, ultrasound and the like. There are various high and low-tech means for doing this, from using plastic components, to breaking down gear into disguised constituent parts, to enveloping the cargo in scan-defeating substances or shielded compartments. Detection magic can also be fooled, either by altering the item enough or concealing it within a warded container (which may itself raise suspicion). Magical goods can be hidden from astral scans and spells by enveloping them within a biomass.

The advantage to using concealment as a means of smuggling is that inspectors must physically examine the article to have any hope of detecting it for what it truly is. Though security may be trained to identify concealed cargo, smugglers who do their homework will know when each inspector's shift begins and ends, and they'll time their movements so as to catch an inspector when he's at the end of his working day. Weary from hours of sifting through cargo and eager to get home to his family, the inspector functions with impatience and a dulled sense of perception, decreasing the likelihood that he'll realize that your simsense recorder is actually a claymore mine.

The Con is On

One element that's always the smuggler's ally is metahuman nature. By and large, border security and customs personnel are honest folk, simple blue-collar joes and janes who walk a straight line and bring home honest nuyen. But most of them are not above bending the rules a little in exchange for something in return—often that something is as little as a kind word, while other times that something means cash, cold and hard and delivered under the table. Regardless of the commodities involved in this quid pro quo, the smuggler must be highly skilled in conversation and have a flair for playing a role. It also helps to be a natural empath and generally an all-around smooth operator.

When it's all said and done, there are three basic ways of talking someone into doing what you want them to do. You can *bribe* them, you can *con* them and if all else fails, you can simply try to *fast talk* them.

Bribery: Money talks. Often the easiest way to facilitate a backstairs entry into a country is simply to pay border guards and customs inspectors to look the other way. The advantage to this method lies in its speed and efficiency. The obvious disadvantage is that the smuggler leaves behind a trail of people who know of his illegal entry and could potentially turn against him.

Everyone has a price. Even the most honest person has been known to turn a blind eye to Ye Olde Moral Compass when confronted with a large enough pile of cred. But not all bribes take the form of money. A certain security rigger might be persuaded to shut down the border drones if assured that his college-bound daughter will be accepted into MIT&T; a disgruntled customs worker may overlook questionable baggage if promised tickets to the World Cup. Runners capable of pulling social strings to make things happen for NPCs can use this influence as a form of currency when it comes time to grease some palms.

- Personally I've seen Proteus AG security men in French Guiana wave through a cache of grenades for as little as 500 nuyen, and the CAS goons at the Oklahoma border once "overlooked" a flour sack full of BTLs for the very reasonable sum of a thousand smackers. But a word to the wise: don't bother trying to grease any Saeder-Krupp palms. Rumor has it that Lofwyr's head of security has made it known that anyone caught accepting a bribe will be shopping for a cyberhand.
- Claymore

Conning: The act of conning someone usually requires pre-planning, so that the smuggler can arrange a clever bit of artifice to trick the target, or mark, into performing the desired behavior. History abounds with classic cons, each one usually involving extensive acting abilities on the part of the con-artist. A full-blown con almost always requires props, a supporting cast and careful orchestration.

The more frequently a border guard deals with corporate trucks, government officials and other paperwork-brandishing travelers, the more likely they are to fall for a well-timed con job. These inspectors are so used to seeing a variety of company logos and departmental initials that they won't find it odd that an army general pulls up at two in the morning in a limo with government plates. Guards at more isolated checkpoints, however, or those that deal mostly in civilian or "ordinary" traffic, will be on their toes whenever they encounter something out of the ordinary.

- Cons are all about two things: luring the mark into a false sense of security and distracting them from the real agenda. The first depends on acting skill, the story and anything that can be used to back the story up and make it plausible. The second requires barraging the mark with information and never giving him or her the chance to think things through.
- Leggy

Fast Talking: This is negotiation in its purest state. Rather than forking over a bribe of certified credsticks or preparing an elaborate con-game, the smuggler depends on nothing but the gift of gab and a fair amount of personal charm. Anyone is

potential prey for the smooth-talking smuggler, but the best marks are those guards who've been on the job for several hours, their wits dulled by boredom or fatigue. This is definitely a one-on-one skill, as its much more difficult to fast-talk your way past two or more listeners at once.

Mules

One of the best ways to avoid detection is to have someone else take all the risks. Using a *mule* means employing a proxy to carry your contraband. Often the mule is someone in need of cash and willing to face the perils of smuggling and the consequences of getting caught. BTL bootleggers make extensive use of mules, paying squatters, poor itinerant workers and other sorts of impoverished people to transport their product.

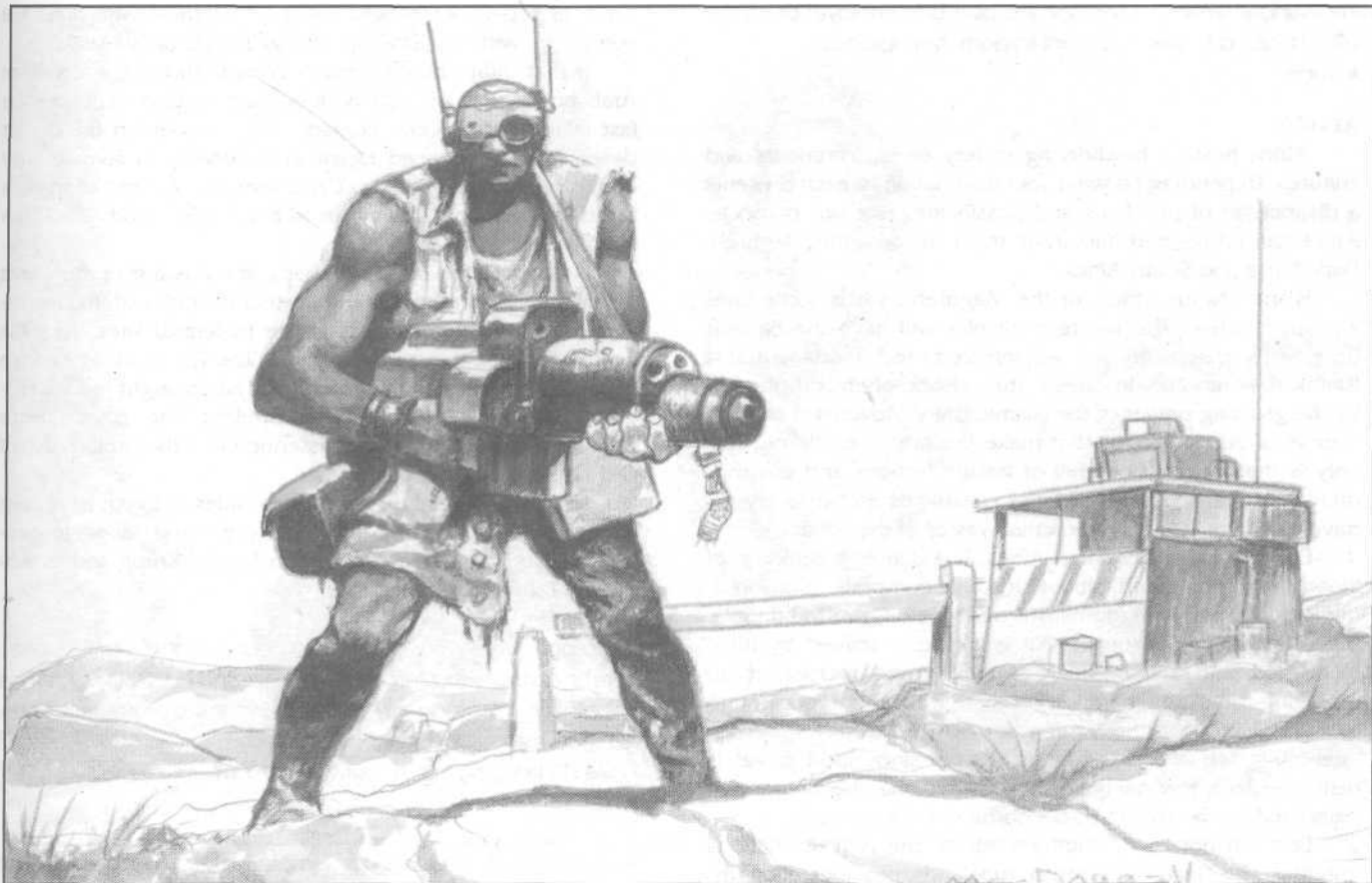
On average, a mule of this caliber earns 100 nuyen every time they successfully cross the border and deliver their load. Though this figure might seem meager to most, among the SINless and disenfranchised, even this pitiful amount of cash goes a long way. Mules never know the names of their patrons, so they have nothing to reveal if they're apprehended. Large smuggling rings employ dozens of mules for each run, loading them down with contraband and sending them across the border at various points. Though they always lose a certain percentage of their product to the authorities, they more than make up for the loss by the sheer volume that makes it safely across and turns a profit on the streets.

More expensive mules are those outfitted with cyberware that enables them to perform more effectively, namely hidden compartments in cyberlimbs or data lock headware to protect the sensitive data they're carrying. Shadowrunners rarely make use of mules, as they are not given to trusting untrained, underpaid strangers with their valuable gear. One way of overcoming this problem is to plant the contraband on the mule in such a way that he never realizes he's being used. Smugglers have been known to stash merchandise in briefcases, vehicles and clothing and then conveniently pick up the load after the mule has successfully crossed the border.

- Need a mule but afraid of being linked to the operation or getting burned by an incompetent courier? Snag a hair off a street person, slap 'em with a Control Thoughts spell via ritual magic and walk 'em like a marionette to make the pickup and delivery. Proven effective. Even this method comes with its own perils, though.
- Dark Side
- Spirits make excellent mules, especially if you only need to move something a short distance.
- Iconoclast

Running the Border

Perhaps the easiest way to get outlawed goods and people across hostile borders is to slip in the back door. Rather than trying to conceal your wares for transportation through checkpoints, sometimes it's best just to avoid those checkpoints altogether. The shadows are crowded with smugglers and t-bird jammers who know a variety of secret routes and illicit



ways and to get inside a country with no one the wiser. The deal with hiring smugglers is the same with hiring shadowrunners—check their rep, make sure they know their trade, and pay 'em well enough that they'll do the job right.

A lot of smugglers refuse to carry live cargo—crates of BTLs don't backseat drive, complain about the cramped conditions or ask for rest stops. Those that do tend to have a strict "shut up, stay out of the way and do as you're told" policy, though few are going to refuse help in dealing with pursuing patrols or pirates when the heat is on.

Few smugglers work solo; most have a network of mechanics, locals and even border personnel to call on. This is particularly true with the destination, where the smuggler is likely to contract with local help for a secure dock, nighttime temporary landing strip, storage/concealment facilities to hide the transportation, and so on. This extra help may expect some additional compensation from the passengers, especially if they're helping to offload cargo, allowing use of safehouse or providing some other type of service. You're also likely to meet some of these folks if your ride takes advantage of a rigger stop—the shadow version of a truck stop for smugglers. These charming places are usually staffed with friendly, colorful ex-jammers, and they usually have mechanics and parts. Watch out for the rest, as they're dives filled with soulless gutter scum who may be more interested in keeping your cargo than letting you continue on.

GLOBAL REPORT

• Long gone are the times when only so-called prime runners were on the lists of international talent. As Rancine said before, it's a small world and it keeps getting smaller. A growing percentage of shadow denizens are becoming mobile, in most cases on a strictly regional basis, but a growing number are taking international assignments. In response to rising demand, the Shadowland crew is inaugurating Global Report, a spin-off of our popular Shadow Watch service. Global Report will keep you posted on the hottest locations for business and pleasure, around the globe. So without further ado, I'll hand you over to our newest sysop for a shameless plug of our latest feature.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 30 April 2063 at 05:51:12 (PST)

• Global Report will be online next week and will feature regular updates on some of the best travel locations for runners with an eye out for international job opportunities. Discreet, competent professionals you can trust are a rare commodity in this day and age. Johnsons and fixers alike prefer to hire talent from their personal black books rather than depend on unknowns, even if it means sending runners to unfamiliar surroundings. After all, a foreign runner can always hire a local guide or pay some

Infomonger, while the Johnson just gets another layer of deniability. Here's a teaser of Global Reports' first uploads.

• Rubik

AFRICA

Africa hosts a bewildering variety of environments and cultures. Depending on what your destination is, each presents a distinct set of problems and possibilities. For our purposes Africa can be divided into three main regions: the Maghreb, Dark Africa and South Africa.

Islamic North Africa, or the Maghreb as it is sometimes known, is where the Western traveler will have the hardest time. This patchwork of westernized and fundamentalist Islamic nations easily inspires culture shock, often complicated by the growing power of the Islamic Unity Movement and the dozens of ethnic groups that make the area their home. Not only is the region chock full of hostile factions and environmental dangers, but beyond the coastlands and a few well-traveled routes lies only the lethal wastes of the Sahara.

Dark Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, is a bubbling cauldron of bloody interethnic and tribal feuds and corporate-sponsored, neo-colonial petty kingdoms. From the Gold Coast to Ethiopia, the land remains an untamable wilderness, stained by tribal bloodshed and shifting allegiances. Rumors persist of an emerging tribal confederation reaching from the upper Congo to Lake Victoria, in a region formerly known for bloody interethnic wars. Data so far is scarce, since local travel is restricted to a few navigable waterways and the overgrown trails used by the roving trucks of the trading caravans.

Last but not least, Southern Africa, the Azanian nations together with Natal and Angolan tribelands, provide yet another distinct environment. The area is a patchwork of primal landscapes and corporate strip-mines, industrial sprawls and primitive villages, a *mélange* of a dozen native and foreign cultures. Be warned, even when it seems eerily familiar, there's an unsettling *otherness* about the most everyday things. Well-kept highways and regular flights facilitate regional travel. Except for a few heavily farmed areas, however, driving a dozen miles from a city center will land you in the wild and dangerous savanna.

This is the area of the globe you'll probably have the least hassles getting in. What few customs and border checks remain are easily bribed or circumvented. Use of the numerous private and corporate airstrips is a common means of insertion. Major seaports are other useful entrance points since customs officials there are uniformly more lax and corrupt. Getting round the continent is much more challenging and dangerous; be prepared to fork out serious nuyen for off-road transportation and guides.

Cairo (Egypt)

Cairo has always been one of the few places in the region that catered to both sides of the Islamic divide. Spiritual Islam and the mullahs held significant sway over the local population until '61, when the Islamic Unity Movement (IUM) turned to harsher stances on Western presence and began mobilizing hardcore Muslims. Since then, Cairo has become a refuge of

sorts for secular Arabs and Middle Easterners who don't see eye to eye with the IUM's partisans in their native lands.

If that didn't breed enough complications, the dominant Arab population and the Bedouin and Nubian minorities are fast falling out. Several nomadic tribal leaders in the deeper desert have renounced Egyptian nationality in favor of their ethnic roots. Nevertheless, Cairo remains one of the markets for their caravans trading in sub-Saharan goods and Dark African exotics.

Adding to the spiraling chaos, the passing of the comet threw the City on the Nile into further turmoil with the materialization of astral constructs at the millennial sites along the banks of the great river and around Giza. The resulting invasion of tourists, mystics and Egyptologists has brought much-needed nuyen into the country and ruined the government's chances of bringing internal dissent and the proliferation of Old Faith cults under control.

Recently, several megacorps' facilities in Egypt have been targeted by what seems to be an organized sabotage campaign. Foremost targets have been Saeder-Krupp and its subsidiary, Fatima Petrochemicals.

• Despite what you may have heard in the pro-IUM press, heretic cults are thriving in back alleys and hidden temples. The population is increasingly divided, and the government is having increasing trouble keeping the awakened sites sealed off while still bringing in the tourist revenue.

• Anubis

• Isis will return to us; as her Temple has returned, so shall our Lady.

• Jollnar-Ka

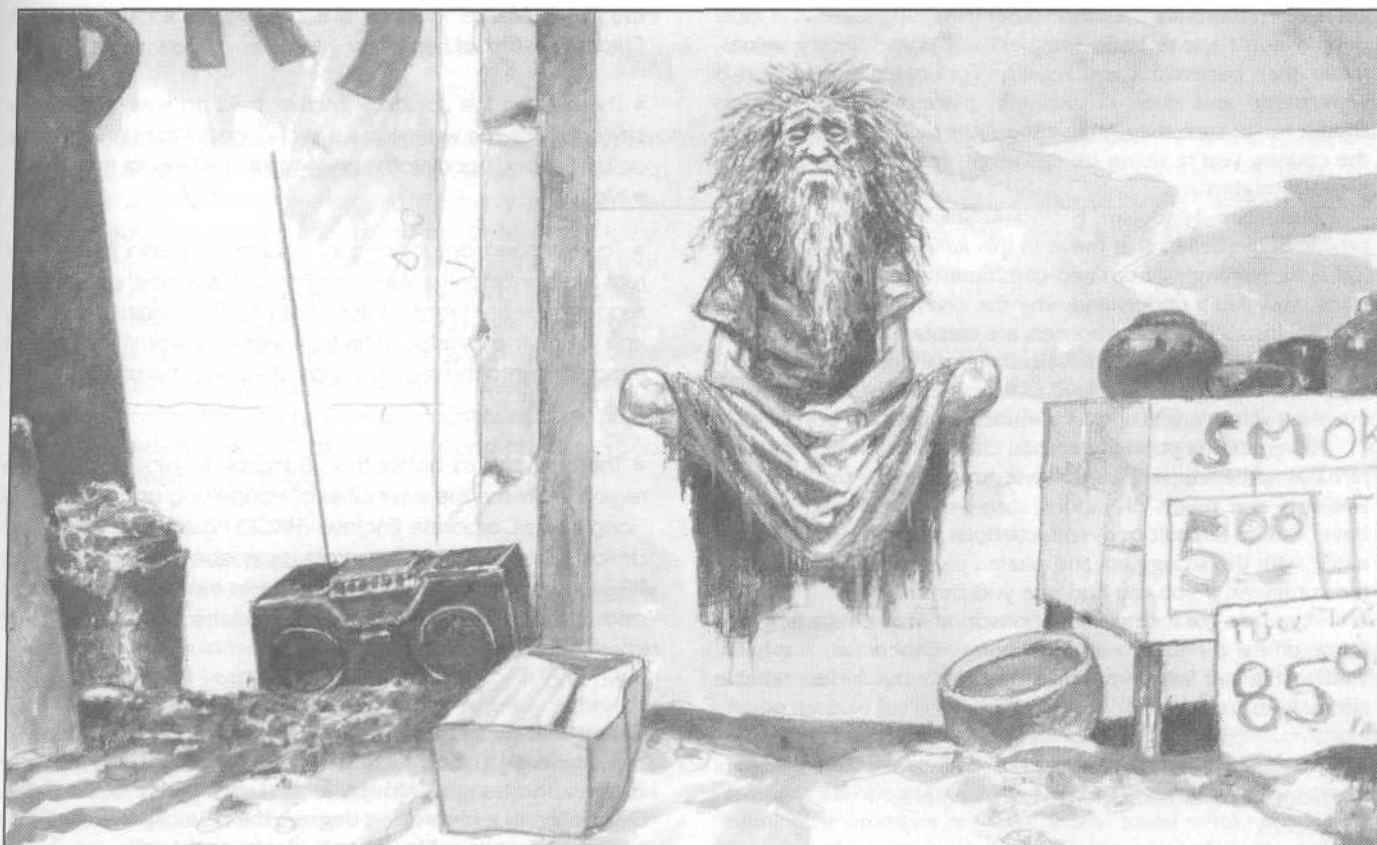
• Whoever's hitting Saeder-Krupp and the others, it isn't runners. I'm well-connected in Cairo, do a lot of biz with exotic merchandise coming out of the Sudan and Ethiopia, and there hasn't been a whisper about who's behind it among the fixers I deal with.

• Mad Ahmed

Cape Town (Azanian Confederation)

While Cape Town isn't the biggest urban sprawl in Africa, it is one of the most diverse. The city lies about 60 kilometers north of Cape Point, in a natural bowl overlooking the southern Atlantic with the magnificent Table Mountain to the rear. Capetonians were once said to live on "Africa time," which was somewhat slower than most other major cities. This relaxed atmosphere was attributed to Table Mountain, renowned as one of the most spiritual places on earth and one of the reported lairs of the great dragon Mujaji, the Rain Queen, protector of the native Xhosa people.

Unfortunately for the many disparate residents of Cape Town, it's been on a slippery slope since the turn of the century. In the last ten years, criminality has soared to unbelievable rates, police presence has become non-existent in many parts of the city and inter-tribal violence is at an all-time high



(especially between traditional enemies like the Xhosas and the Zulu). Widespread poverty and illiteracy have mined all attempts to dig the Cape out of its hole. In some places, only U.N. Relief Aid is keeping people fed and clothed. Life has become the cheapest commodity, and there are people selling their children as indentured laborers for the corp factories in the hopes they will get a better chance in life!

The prime waterfront real-estate, overlooking the natural harbor, now houses the guarded homes of *tsotsi* mob bosses, wealthy East Indian entrepreneurs and retired Skull Coast pirates. The rest of the city is slowly decaying in its own filth. The only true authority anyone recognizes outside the protected enclaves of the rich is the word of the Rain Queen's shamans.

For those in the shadows, if you can take the endemic poverty and ethnic tension, the Cape is a perfect place to slip into southern Africa and start up a net of contacts. Arms dealers, merc brokers, blackmarketeers and tribal leaders regularly trawl the shadows of Cape Town looking for talent.

- Word has come down the Mountain that Mujaji is not pleased with the current state of affairs. In recent months, the Rain Queen's shamans have been seen across town holding meetings and talking to fixers. Whether this is a sign of big changes for the Cape or one of the Queen's cryptic plans, we have yet to see.
- Indra

- The government in Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal isn't quite ready to write-off the Cape either. There's talk of resorting to military intervention to remove the current *tsotsi* warlords and clean up the city. Negotiations have kicked off with MET2000 and Combat Inc to supplement Azanian forces, so expect the locals to start hiring soon too.

- Moji

ASIA

The largest and most diverse continent, covering about 30 percent of the Earth's land mass, Asia is rather a geographic term than a homogeneous continent. Asia has the greatest range of land elevation of any continent, the longest coastline, is subject overall to the world's widest climatic extremes and harbors some of the most ancient and unique cultures in the Sixth World. The distant East hosts many different extremes: the industrialized megaplexes of Japan, Korea and coastal China; the forbidding wildernesses of the Southeast Asian and Indian jungles; the gelid steppes of Mongolia and Yakut; and the mountainous domains and the hidden kingdoms of the Himalayas.

There are countless reasons to go to Asia. Whether you're seeking mystic enlightenment, the remains of ancient cultures or cutting-edge cybertech, the oldest religions or the most recent software, you'll find it all in this bewildering realm. For the international traveler, the biggest problems are the culture barriers (exotic doesn't describe it), language (linguasoftware don't

cut it when there are literally thousands of languages and most people don't speak trade tongues) and the different values, rather than paperwork and legality. Fortunately, corruption is widespread and even ritualized in places. Inbound runners should make sure they grease the right palms; depending on the country you're going to, this might be laughably easy or a protocol nightmare.

Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Shinto are only the most prolific of the beliefs that thrive in this land. Mix this with political systems ranging from neo-communism to absolute monarchies, and you'll understand why the continent is wracked by political instability. Asia's borders are constantly shifting to new configurations: many are militarized and dangerous, others simply don't exist. You don't have to worry about patrols if impenetrable tropical jungle and its denizens protect the border.

Given that beyond the coastal cities most of the continent remains undeveloped—and some areas are in the hands of warlords and rebels of various sorts—overland road and rail travel can be difficult or even hazardous. It's far easier to catch a ride with the smugglers and pirates plying their trade across the continent, if you can find one you can trust.

If you've got a corporate sponsor or Triad contacts, Hong Kong offers the best entrance point. Otherwise, Bangkok, Vladivostok and Saigon provide reasonable but far less reliable alternatives.

- Don't forget to get a guide, since barely a quarter of the local languages and dialects are available on chip.
- Flak Jack

Bangkok (Thailand)

The millennial city still lounges, seductive and mysterious, on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, home to many of Asia's idiosyncrasies. One aspect of Bangkok that always fascinates visitors is that, at first sight, the abyss between filthy rich and miserably poor seems to have abated. This illusion is born from city ordinances that for the past 30 years have made it mandatory for all construction to be approved by a Thai Heritage Commission. All buildings now follow strict construction guidelines using traditional motifs, detail work and color schemes.

This has given the city a semblance of unity it doesn't truly possess. The uptown districts remain the province of the wealthy and corporate, while the slums and red-light districts Bangkok is infamous for still hug the river. Beyond the Asian-baroque ultramodern city center, you'll find the biggest under-world market in South East Asia in the old city.

While there are many independents and the merc biz is great, there is little in the way of an organized shadow community in southeast Asia. The closest thing you'll find are the diverse Bangkok markets. Held every other day on a huge barge on the river, the "Hive" draws Johnsons from across the region to negotiate with an equally eclectic group of fixers and dealers pimping their stables of runners and mercs. The constantly-shifting dens of the Slave Market sell everything from Euro and Asian fleshdolls to gladiator muscle, or even living delicacies for your favorite meta-pet. If you're looking for ripped software, pirate deckware or hi-tech prizes, check out

the Black Market held in the claustrophobic streets of the Chinese District of Sapanlek.

- There's also the Jatuchak Market, held on weekends on the city's outskirts. The war years have changed it from an innocuous antiques and handicraft market into something far more sinister.
- Mahmut
- There's been an upswing in Triad activity and PPG-related runs in recent months. Rumor has it that S-K is moving in after the success of recent joint ventures with the Thai regime, and Lung isn't taking the invasion of his territories very well. With the Triads expanding into the region, things will only get nastier.
- Ripon Bey
- The only places better than Bangkok to pick up biz in the region really are the sister cities of Hong-Kong and Macao. The Hong Kong Corporate Enclave (HKCE) houses the Wuxing HQ amidst a huge megacorporate presence (including several PPG powerhouses). Since everything in the HKCE is privatized and interests collide regularly, it's also the primary source of inter-corporate runs in the region.
- Wu Ling

Calcutta (Indian Union)

Fascinating. Bewildering. Few words can truly describe exotic and strange Calcutta, largest city of the India Union. Often alien to a frightening degree, the new city mercifully still has many recognizable western elements though.

The Calcutta sprawl is a microcosm of Indian culture blending ultra-modern technology and traditional architecture and lifestyles. The city died in the teens: tens of thousands lost their lives to the two waves of VITAS, and the city was almost razed by the blazes that followed. Today, Calcutta is a city reborn, boasting a population of 10 million; it is a state-of-the-art sprawl, a showcase of the progressive aspirations of the Indian nation and a tribute to the dead of the Plague Years. Despite attempts to clean up the slums surrounding the new city, they remain, tenaciously feeding off the city's blooming economy.

Calcutta has one particular feature that makes it very interesting to us: it's the best source for bleeding-edge software and wetware on the continent. Calcutta has a huge number of small software development houses that constantly churn out trend-setting packages and cyberware subsystems. Their designs are preyed upon by the megacorps, who subsidize their first few years' R&D by developing quasi-legal wares and peddling them on the Matrix. Inevitably, these outfits are snatched up by one of the Asian megas when they're about to hit the big-time.

- Calcutta was rebuilt during the craze surrounding the nascent Matrix tech and it was put to unprecedented use and incorporated in the city's infrastructure. Their Grid-link analogue has been in use for 25 years, all utilities and services are Matrix-controlled and all but the poorest buildings have Matrix con-

nections. In fact, the state actually supports 50 percent of the installation cost of a basic datajack for residents.

- Technophile

- True to the trend for cultural revivals, the Hindu caste system has made a serious comeback since the Awakening. Parts of the tenets of the faith revolve around the purity of the caste. Purity is measured by a complex metaphysical code that translates directly into daily life. One such element is the belief that all sorts of organic fluids are impure; at the risk of overgeneralization, this means manual laborers who sweat a lot are obviously on the bottom rung of the caste system. One current trend is for Kshatriyas (warrior/ruler born) and even some Munis (holy men) to strip their mortal form of impurities by replacing it with cyber. Their highly-decorated, colorful and obvious cyberware makes them easy to spot.

- Kumar

Neo-Tokyo (Japanese Imperial State)

The changes wrought by Emperor Yasuhito are dragging the Japanese people screaming and kicking out of the neo-feudal, traditionalist mindset and into the Sixth World with the rest of us, and only 50 years late.

The latest buzz is that the Emperor recently refused a reconstruction plan offered by the megacorps and are taking a direct hand in the reconstruction of the Tokyo megaplex's districts that were hardest hit by the '61 Quake. The Emperor's refusal has divided the megas, though all are pledging their unconditional aid to the effort. Shiawase and Yamatetsu (which reopened offices in Japan in 2062 but remains headquartered in Vladivostok) are openly supportive of the young Emperor, while MCT, Renraku and Yakashima are throwing a tantrum about their plans being turned down.

- There's a lot of speculation about what the Emperor has in mind for reconstruction, but so far the details remain secret. The megas will pay mega-cred for that data.

- Yas

Yasuhito has gathered a consultancy group to direct the engineers that includes Shinto priests, Wujen mages and geomancers as well as traditional architects. Apparently, Yasuhito believes that changing the cityscape will help change Japanese society. Given Oriental understanding of Feng Shui, I'm inclined to believe he knows what he's doing.

- Is anyone else thrown off by the fact that this 16-year old is getting away with ordering about some of the world's biggest corps?

- Skeptic

- Do not forget this is Japan, my friend. The Emperor not only has divine right on his side but is empowered with the highest executive powers under the State of Emergency Act. Surprisingly, Yasuhito has become very popular among the lower and mid-

dle classes. On top of that, his past decisions have proven very successful and bode well for his continued rule.

- Mushin

- Besides intercorporate black ops, the market is in chaos with all the different factions at each others' throats. The Japanacorps are falling out after Shiawase's alliance with the Emperor and nobody really knows what deal Yasuhito cut with Yamatetsu.

- Corp Watcher

- Our shadows were caught as much by surprise as the rest of the Japanese people by the changes. As many here, we've been slow to adapt. Some factions have taken to bringing in outside talent to further their agendas. While gaijin and kuwaruhito still stand out, they are more open minded than some of the local veterans.

- Neon Flower

EUROPE

Another continent that oozes history and tradition, Europe's nations' roots date back millennia, each with their own culture, ethnicity and language and united by a peculiar form of fraternity paid for in blood and war. Western Europe in particular is going through some major changes that might complicate life for outsiders. Several European countries have signed on to the New European Economic Community, and when it's up and running, it promises to make locals' travel within the NEEC a breeze and border controls for foreigners a pain in the hoop.

If you plan on looking for work across the Pond, you should read up on the quirks of European life. Americans, in particular will find the transition easier through a north European sprawl: London, Europort or Hamburg. Southern Europe is a far more conservative environment, less open but often more appealing to outsiders. For instance, in southern Europe there's a pervasive bias against cybertech of any sort. Biotech and genotech augmentations are accepted, but ever since the Marseilles Scandals of '51, overt cyber of most types is frowned upon and strictly regulated.

Whereas the American shadow community evolved from military, underworld and corporate outcasts, the Euro scene borrowed much from the decommissioning of the intelligence community after the Euro-Wars. The trend is for subtler, less violent ops, often mixing politics as well as corps.

On the plus side, European and Anglo-American cultures have more in common than either would care to admit. Most Europeans speak more than one language.

Frankfurt (AGS)

Though it doesn't get the attention that Berlin, Hamburg or Rhine-Ruhr often do, this German sprawl has surprised everyone by becoming a flashpoint for all types of shadowbiz for the better part of a year. The demise of great dragon Nachtmeister at Lofwyr's claws in '62 seems to have been the



trigger, but trouble has been brewing for quite a while. Our German sources say the feud was long running and often spilled over into black ops. The struggle between Saeder-Krupp and the local powerhouse Frankfurt Bank Association (FBA) had been a source of profit for local runners for years, but a number of other factions started hiring foreign teams soon after the infamous Dragon Dogfight. Meanwhile, the good old Germanic spirit kept the city toiling on even after sections of old downtown were cordoned off and occupied by S-K troops following the titanic battle.

- Johnsons apparently think the local scene is too compromised and prefer to bring in external assets. Bad news for the locals, good news for the rest of us.
- Bahner

Currently, contracts are being offered to look into Nachtmeister's death and the resulting power struggle on the board of the FBA. Board infighting and the competition's dirty tricks took a few months to clear up, but eventually CEO Waffenschmidt came out on top. Those who thought things were going to calm down, however, were seriously mistaken. Recent events bode well for the shadow trade, as Proteus AG

and several other corps are making moves on the FBA, trying to profit from its current lack of direction. Lofwyr has been uncharacteristically inactive, his attention diverted by events elsewhere, but it's expected he'll get involved if Proteus goes for a hostile takeover.

- Frankfurt also housed one of the biggest Shadowland nexi in the AGS. It was a great source for info on the underbelly of the city and the machinations of the FBA, S-K and Eurocorps like Proteus and AG Chemie. I use the past tense because Shadowland Frankfurt vanished from the Matrix last week.
- Mütter

New Monaco (Free City)

A treaty with France in 1918 contained a provisional clause stating that should the Grimaldi dynasty ever die out, Monaco would become a semi-autonomous state under French administration. That's exactly what happened when the Royal family was killed during the 2028 earthquakes that wrecked southern France. Facing the fallout of the Euro Wars, economic recession and subsequent secessions, France never got round to rebuilding the Principality.

Enter Spinrad Industries, fronting a consortium of Eurocorps. Johnny Spinrad's corp leased the ruined Principality from France for 100 years and initiated an ambitious reconstruction project.

Today, the waterfront casinos, hotels and ballrooms are back to their former glory, drawing the *crème de la crème* of European society, executives and jetsetters from across the world. The world-famous Monte Carlo casino hosts the Grand Tour Summer Ball every year, and the city is a motherlode of business for runners with the right contacts. It is *the* place to go to be seen and rub shoulders at the roulette and card tables with the jet-setting crowd, media stars, politicians and high-level Mafia lords.

Ares Global Entertainment and the other players like DeMeKo and Sol Media also gathered round, feeding off the colorful and scandal-fertile celebrity scene.

- Don't go thinking it's just bodyguard duty and running security either. With this crowd, a lot of wheeling and dealing goes on behind the scenes. Whether it's digging dirt on someone or another, running an IntSec sting on a VP whose loyalty is in doubt or network for those so inclined, you'll find work for all sorts here.

- Blanchet

- And if you've got the right contacts and enough money, Monaco is a great place for some R&R. Make sure you bring your Zoé suit though, this is tux and tie country. Without the proper etiquette and connections, you stick out like a sore thumb amongst this Euro-glitz crowd.

- Artisan

Odessa (Ukraine)

Pearl of the Black Sea, hometown of Bioenergetica Ukraine (BE) and the biggest smuggling crossroads in Central Asia: Odessa has it all. Beyond the facade of giant corporate billboards and the opulent remains of Soviet architecture lies the true face of this rundown industrial port city. It's often startling to find so much bustling life in rusting and moldering side streets of this once-great sprawl.

Through the Euro-Wars, Odessa blossomed into a huge logistics crossroads that drove the Russian war machine. Thousands flocked to the city, fleeing poverty in the countryside. The local parallel economy grew. The Vory discreetly spread their influence through violence and corruption. Even when the war shifted to new fronts, Odessa remained a strategic port.

After the war, however, Odessa was abandoned to its own fate. BE moved to the city in 2040, cutting a generous deal with the government and slowly revitalizing the local economy. Many western corps followed, taking advantage of Odessa's leniency towards corporate affairs. Thanks to the growing presence of big nuyen, a powerful underworld network and its prime location on the Black Sea, Odessa soon evolved into a major smuggling nexus, home to a huge black market economy and one of the best points of entry into Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

- Vory power rules the underworld and gets a cut of every deal. That means most officials are so dirty they'll turn a blind eye for the right price. Most of the big smuggling routes to the Baltic, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Central Asia cross Odessa. If you're going to any of those places, this is a good place to find a ride.

- Deep Red

- Local weapons and armor sales are up. Strangely enough, most of the demand isn't coming from either of the big factions in Turkey, but rather from a bit player, the Kurds. Gotta wonder if their pal Aden's bankrolling them.

- Saevar

- The situation in Turkey's taking a turn for the worse, and we're seeing a steady flow of refugees fleeing the region. With them are some elements of the Turkish Maffiya's Grey Wolves faction. Needless to say, the Vory are not happy with this turn of events.

- Zartan

Oslo (Scandinavian Union)

Also known as "Chiba West" (though I warn you never to say that to a local), Oslo is a slightly different type of shadow hotspot. If you want some of the best custom 'ware outside Chiba and Switzerland, this is the place to come. Norway has the most fragile economy of the Scandinavian Union countries and the government is a corporate sellout; port officials are notoriously easy to bribe.

Downtown Oslo is kept safe and clean, belying the actual state of the nation. Hugging the harbor, Downtown is renowned for its magnificent Opera, giving the area its unofficial name, Operatown. Hotels and high-class condos share space with the corp-emblazoned scraper skyline, crowding in a protective circle around the tourist trap Operatown and the commercial district on the luxurious waterfront real estate. The squalor and poverty gradually increases the farther from the city-core you get.

- There are exceptions, like the Nesodden peninsula south of the city, where the wealthy have their mansions and some of the smaller corps have their private clinics.

- Audun

Surrounding Operatown, you'll find an area about 3 to 4 blocks wide and heavily patrolled by police and corp security forces. Nicknamed "the Buffer," this part of town keeps the city's elite safe from the destitute masses and also gives the casual visitor the impression that Oslo is a clean and peaceful city. Nothing could be farther from the truth; outside the Buffer, Viking gangs rule the streets and protests/riots are commonplace. It's also out there you'll find the best—and most secretive—chop shops.

- Oslo also hosts a growing number of small tech companies that are profiting from the Scand Union's Wireless Matrix Initiative. Since they're partially government-sponsored, the big

boys can't buy them up. Instead, corps such as S-K, MCT and Yamateisu have been extracting some of the top talent.

- Espion

NORTH AMERICA

We've had a review of the old New World with last year's *Shadows of North America* download, so we're keeping this update brief. Since North Am sees the highest number of cross-border ops and houses the best networked shadow community, going mobile seems to be next big thing. Getting hired for out-of-town jobs is becoming routine and the fixers handling these operations are raking it in. Border security and customs checks across North Am are among the toughest, however, requiring either a good network of contacts to circumvent the patrols, some top grade fake identification or both. Additionally, the tension between several nations continues to escalate, making life difficult for the chummers who make a living on the major smuggling routes. More information will be forthcoming in future uploads; meanwhile, here are some developments for those of you who may be looking to travel soon.

If you're inbound from overseas, Seattle, L.A. and Miami are all easier on customs than most other sprawls. Otherwise, corporate flights and smuggler rides are the two most common methods of traveling long range.

Seattle (UCAS)

The inevitable port of call for many travelers on the Pac Rim and a hub of corporate activity, Seattle has been through a lot in the last few years. It remains a major hotspot on the Pacific Coast. The Renraku Arcology debacle, the reopening of Tir Tairngire's borders, the regular Tsimshian-Salish border flare-ups and the '58 Mob War have drawn many new runners looking for work to the City on the Sound.

Seattle is also benefiting from its location as a travel hub. You've all probably seen the Tir government's media blitz billing the country as the place to go for your back-to-nature vacations. A surprising number of slags are falling for the hype, and many come through Seattle on the way to Tir Tairngire or the Salish lands. Enterprising runners have been using the lowered security of the tourist tours to slip into both nations with minimal hassle, mixing in with the vacationers on departure and fading away after the tour group checks into the first hotel.

- The Tir Princes hope that tourist money will jumpstart their economic recovery plans, but they're glossing over recent Rinelle attacks on major tourist sites and the Portland-Seattle high-speed monorail link.

- Autark

- Social unrest has been gradually increasing: five thousand marched in protest in Portland last week. Police did not intervene despite some ugly incidents around in the districts surrounding the Star Chamber, though isolated arrests did occur last weekend.

- Class Warrior

For far too long, people's attention has been directed downtown, to the Renraku Arcology. With the liberation of the Arcology finally complete, cleanup and reconstruction got off to a rocky start when Renraku execs and Metroplex authorities butted heads over who was going to pick up the tab. The rehabbing has started up again, but it seems negotiations between Renraku and Governor Lindstrom over the future of the arc have simply stepped out of the public spotlight.

- Liberated my hoop! There are over 30 floors still under lockdown. Army units keep those levels sealed off, but I managed a peak at their status boards when my team got in for some scavenging, disguised as a tech crew doing repairs to the elevators. We might go back in a couple of weeks now that the recovery is back underway. If we do, I'll try to get into one of those floors and upload my scan.

- Scrap Rat

Even with the reconditioning, structural, technical and computer experts will take months to assess the extent of the damage and the systems' reliability. Of the 100,000 people imprisoned inside on December 24th, 2059, less than 10,000 were found alive. A staggering 63 percent of that number now suffer from some sort of disability. Former Seattle Governor Schultz remains among the missing.

Las Vegas (Ute)

You might not expect this den of perdition to make this hotspot list, but as we all know things aren't always what they seem. Vegas has long been the perfect place for shadowfolk to lie low for a while or take some well-deserved R&R. Where else would you find an entire city that revolves solely around making you happy? The gambling, the prostitution and the vice all give Vegas a powerful allure, and millions of people make the pilgrimage there every year despite the general Ute bias against Anglos. But you probably know all this. What you want to know is why Vegas is here. Well, it isn't for the Elvis shamans or the Freakshow at the Flamingo, I can tell you.

- Elvis lives!
- King shaman

- Elvis who?
- Lead Foot

- I saw the Freakshow last month and I still don't know what to think. Eve Billings, a.k.a. Lady Rattler, was just another Vegas showgirl until SURGE hit in '61. At first everyone thought she'd got a bum deal—scales, forked tongue and changes to her bones. That only lasted until they saw her on stage! Lady Rattler raked it in with a ground-breaking season at the Flamingo's Karma Room, then launched the Freakshow extravaganza. All the performers in the production are changelings and it's the biggest show in Vegas. Eve has just announced a nationwide tour kick-

ing off this Summer, so chances are you might get to see it in your hometown.

- ShowBuzz

Las Vegas has cropped up in Shadow Watch updates several times over the last two months. It's clear something is going on, we're just not sure what. Behind the ruthenium billboards and giant holo-animatronics, there's been an influx of shadow assets. It seems all the players are hiring: the Casino corps and the Vantesse and Comanche mobs. But there hasn't been the interplayer flare-up we expected. The cover up is making things even more mysterious.

- I know this is the Ute, but someone must be spending big nuyen to keep mouths shut if nothing has hit Shadowland yet.

- Gambit

- If the Vegas corps and mobs are forking out gobs of nuyen just to keep the talent quiet, it must be something big. Something the corps are frightened will ruin Vegas's rep as a pleasure den.

- Pike

- Fools! You white men have always been blinded by the light! Stop looking to the Strip and start looking to the desert and you might find your answers.

- Weaver of the Winds

SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Instead of the balkanization and fragmentation seen elsewhere this century, both Central and South America have gone through unifications, leaving a handful of nations where once there were dozens. Aztlan brought Central America under its heel and Amazonia has done the same with much of South America. The independent states that remain—like Peru, Chile and Argentina—are the frail, surviving vestiges of the Latin American culture that once flourished in the region.

Another major change has been the way large stretches of the southern continent have reverted to virgin tropical forest. Repopulated by the native tribes and paranormal animals, these jungles are as dangerous and unknown today as they were 500 years ago. Only the native tribes can navigate the deadly wilderness any distance from the great waterways; unfortunately, many natives are hostile to foreigners. Truth be told, if you're not getting paid huge amounts of cash by a pharmaceutical or biotech corp to retrieve some samples, you don't want to go there.

Entire cities have been swallowed up by the jungle in a disquieting parallel of what happened to ancient local cultures like the Mayans, Toltecs and the Incans. The surviving urban areas are a stark contrast to the verdant and awakened wilderness. They're also the most visible difference between Amazonian and Latin American culture. In former Brazil, the remaining outposts of humanity are little more than small towns and villages. The exceptions are the colorful cities that

make up the Metropole megaplex reaching from São Paulo to Rio de Janeiro.

Argentina has become the bastion of Latin American culture, but much of its old world colonial charm is kept intact at the cost of a widening social divide. While Amazonian cities are swathed in color, eco-friendly and boast less economic stratification than ever before in their history, cities like Buenos Aires are marked by understated colonial opulence and a gap between the haves and have-nots that has never been so far apart.

If you stick to urban areas, you can get by with Spanish and Portuguese linguasofts (local variants, please), but if you go into the wild, do yourself a favor and hire native help. Despite national borders becoming militarized zones separating Aztlan from Amazonia (and also Amazonia from Argentina in the south and Peru in the west), they are far more porous than the authorities would like. Then again, border patrols will be the least of your problems if you travel overland in South America.

Metropole (Amazonia)

Linking the giant sprawls of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, this teeming metropolis of 20 million souls is the biggest megaplex in the world, beating out both Tokyo and Tenochtitlán for the title. The only remaining urban area of any size in former Brazil, this energetic hive of humanity has been cured of many of the endemic problems that plagued the turn-of-the-century sprawls. Despite this, it has never gotten rid of its dark underside. No matter how hard Amazonia's awakened overlords have tried, they haven't got rid of the gangs that handle critter and telesma smuggling, prostitution and the flourishing trade in awakened drugs.

Brazil had always been a melting-pot culture, assimilating all the African, American and European influences seamlessly to produce its own unique style. Now Amazonia has added the Awakened to the lineup of influences. There's nothing quite like experiencing the Leblon markets or sharing the Copacabana beach with a naga clutch. For those interested, the Metropole has one of the hottest music scenes today, spawning acts like Eddie Mwabe and The Pensantes. Be warned, though, the local culture and general attitude towards the paranormal and Awakened throws many people off.

- About three months ago, a major Green War training camp on the outskirts of São Paulo was completely destroyed. Hualpa had things covered up, but he's had feelers out for the culprits ever since. I've heard the runners who carried out the operation were foreign and that another great dragon was behind it.

- Bira

- Why is it always another dragon! Could have been a corp hit-squad just as easy.

- Carioca

• Everyone from Universal Omnitech to Green Globe International has standing bounties for Amazonian flora and fauna. There's a steady trickle of smuggled critters and plants through the local syndicates, but for the really good deals they have to rely on foreign talent, since the authorities crack down hard on the trade.

- Rabid

Buenos Aires (Argentina)

Billed as the last-standing bastion of Latin American culture in South America, Buenos Aires is also the center of economic and political resistance to Amazonian expansion. The government has been shored up by financial and military aid from Aztechnology for years, but the Japanacorp also joined in after Amazonia's threats last year to kick them out of Peru and South America. Of the megas present, only Novatech and Ares keep a neutral stance.

The city retains much of its Old World charm; some call it a piece of Europe in the Americas, combining a contemporary high-rise business district with the colonial architecture of the outlying neighborhoods. Beyond that, however, the social divide becomes as clearly visible in the cityscape as it is in the country's leadership. Buenos Aires is encircled by shantytowns, *villas miserias* that house an inexhaustible supply of temporary workers for the corporate mills and farmlands.

Since the Argentinean military is over-extended—and it is necessary to keep the *villas* quiet—mercs are in high demand. To boost its appeal, Buenos Aires has reduced customs limiting cyber and weapons and hosts an annual Arms Fair that rivals Athens' in size and attendance.

• Revolution is cooking in the *villas*; people are tiring of the status quo. Amazonian agents are at large and spreading dis-sension. It's only a matter of time before this pot boils over.

- Azedo

• Buenos Aires is a strange place. All aspects of the Spanish heritage are glorified, but it has its own distinctive culture, the trademark rhythms of South American life. The music is fascinating, the language melodic, the people friendly ... that is, until you see the dirty truth it all masks. The merc contracts for border work always pay well, but you won't see me taking any.

- Picador

OCEANIA

Compared to many of the regions in this global review, the island nations of Oceania are little-visited backwaters for most of us in the shadowtrade.

Australia features an unbelievable range of climates and terrain types—not to mention unique Awakened oddities. The islands of New Zealand and Micronesia are enthralling and generally peaceful. They feature an equally diverse choice of terrains and meteorological phenomena: tropical jungles, tem-

perate meadowlands, snow-capped mountains and arid deserts. Both Australia and New Zealand have English as their primary language and their cultures preserve a lot of European colonial elements; both also remain members of the British Commonwealth. Comparatively, Micronesia is still an unusual destination, though it has some appeal to paranaturalists and ethnographers for its unique ecosystems, rainforests, wildlife and native headhunters.

Though the bulk of the shadow activity centers on Australia, New Zealand has seen an unexpected upturn in black ops.

Auckland (New Zealand)

Auckland is the capital of New Zealand and the Maori nation. The two nations share the physical territory of the islands. A Council of Maori elders and a democratically-elected Cabinet govern the country through a unique dual-chamber system. The other aspect which makes New Zealand stand out is the fact that it's probably the most environmentally conscious country on Earth.

Often pointed out as a perfect example of eco-friendly development, Auckland is normally a pretty lively and safe tourist destination. It's home to a lot of envirotech and biotech development corps; the undersea research stations built offshore in the Tasman Sea and the Bay of Plenty drew some attention during the race for the Draco Foundation awards, but none were big enough to qualify. The World Wildlife Fund has a major presence on the isles and strong ties within the Cabinet and the Maori Tribal Council.

Recently, the Maori and the WWF have been involved in several protests against the huge Japanese fishing fleet which has been trawling just beyond national territorial waters. The last couple of clashes have degenerated into open violence, with shots being fired by both sides. The Japanese Navy has even stepped in, sending two missile cruisers into the region. Though there has been no official reaction from the NZ government, several radical Maori groups and the WWF have vowed to continue the protests regardless. The shadows of Auckland have heated up as several parties seem set on taking the fight to another level. Since the local talent pool is limited, runners are being brought in from Oz and elsewhere in the Pac Rim.

• Masaru's involvement with the WWF could explain a few things. After all, he must be itching to take a bite out of the Japanese after what they did to his Philippines.

- Arimaonga

• I don't think so. There's more going on here than meets the eye. Neither the Zealander government nor the JIS wants this to devolve into an open fight. It's the Maori radicals and their friends in the WWF that are exacerbating the situation.

- Z-lander

LIFE ON THE RUN



I don't like surprises because they tend to be unpleasant. When the following showed up in the queue, I was set back on my heels. We at Shadowland don't necessarily cater to babes in the woods—we like to assume almost everyone here has paid at least a little bit of dues—so we don't set out to solicit or dig up information for complete newbies. What we are about, however, is survival—and the key to that is knowledge. I'm naturally suspicious of Journalists who try to force-feed us their version of reality, but our donor here, Zoe, actually provided something useful: a guide to life and survival in the shadows. You'll have to bear with her, as the useful stuff unfolds during a process of discovery that is riddled with Zoe's own biases. But take a look; I think you'll be as pleasantly surprised as I was.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 30 April 2063 at 05:54:36 (PST)

THE SCOOP

by Zoe

To those of us born with a SIN, the world is a place of daylight. Choices are black and white, if mundane. It's a binary paradigm; with few exceptions, we're happy with it and see no other way to be. Now and then, however, we're given a glimpse into another world: the shadows. We have no idea what it's like, but we know its denizens are frequently harbingers of destruction and corruption. It's a gray and midnight realm we're all too eager to sweep under the carpet, fearing we would be forcibly dragged into its grasp and never see our pedestrian but safe way of life again. As a journalist, I am the one who ensures you never forget its existence, much like a mother reminds a fretful child about the bogeyman.

• I know someone's going to ask, so I may as well pre-emptively answer: "Zoe" is Abigail Danvers, a young stringer from NewsNet. Abby has been listed as being on an extended vacation for the past year; it looks like we're about to find out just what she's been doing during that time.

• Renton Raker

So what happens when the one you rely upon to report tales of the bad guys becomes one of them? You get the following collection of interviews and stories—all in the name of bringing



you the news, though I strayed somewhere along the way. My original intent was simple: shine a light into the shadows and reveal what lay within. I went into it, however, with an ulterior motive instead of with journalistic detachment.

In reporting my last story, a gun battle between street trash and security defending Federated-Boeing property, I witnessed bystanders shot down by stray gunfire. One of them was a little elf girl who couldn't have been older than eight years old. Someone called for emergency medical assistance, but I don't know if she survived. I watched the scene unfold in front of me, unable to do anything other than mechanically note every detail, and as I scribbled, an intense need seized a hold of me. I couldn't allow another day to pass without comprehending why and how this was allowed to happen. As my investigations progressed, however, I learned nothing is quite that simple. I stepped into the shadows, and they swallowed me whole.

- Looks like it's not only the road to hell that's paved with good intentions.
- Cynic

The first step came with trying to get answers. To get answers, I would need to approach both sides. I was certain the majority of what I was looking for, however, resided in the shadows, so my focus was there. I began searching for interviews through a contact of mine who has had experience with the legal gray areas. It took a while and entailed more than a few favors, but eventually I came into contact with a man known only as Six. Some of you are already familiar with the name, knowing him as a fixer. To the rest of my readers, a fixer is someone with connections to many areas of criminal society and the members within it. He or she can find or fix you up with nearly anything—for a price, of course. Six is a difficult man to get in touch with, like a phantom skirting the outer edges of your vision. I pursued an interview with him for NewsNet for the ultimate scoop: speaking with a criminal and getting the dirt on "what it's like." I got what I wanted, and more.

- "What it's like?" This should be good for a laugh. When's the last time anybody really fragging cared?
- Bung

//Begin File Attachment//

LIVING IN SIN?

A NewsNet exclusive

21 April 2062

- This article's about a year old. I remember skimming over it while doing a little babysitting and wondering what possessed Six to do this.
- Fatima

The shadows ... what is it? For some, it embodies the dregs of modern society, those people who can't and won't conform to social custom and the laws of the land. We see them as violent criminals who would steal your last nuyen,

knife you in an alley and leave you to die. For others, it's the birthing ground of rebellion and conscientious objection, a world of darkness in which daring individuals defy the powers-that-be in order to do what's right while everyone else around them is busy climbing upon each other's backs to get ahead. The truth, like the denizens of the shadows themselves, is maybe somewhere in between.

But we here at NewsNet are not content with simple speculation: we want the cold, hard facts. We decided we weren't going to rest until our readers got the information they deserve. After all, it's high time the shadows were brought into the light and held accountable. So, after some inquiry and looking around, we found someone close to the situation, a man named "Six." Here's what he had to say.

NewsNet (NN): First of all, I'd like to thank you for consenting to this interview. I understand your privacy is critical.

Six: That's an understatement. Privacy is an illusion if you've got a SIN. For someone like me, it's essential.

NN: Then how do people find you? These services you provide, whatever they may be, are obviously not very common.

Six: What, you think we take out an ad? "Shadowrunner for hire, call LTG# 1234-5678"? It's all word of mouth, sweetie, and it's a lot more common than you seem to think.

NN: But just how common, really? Certainly, your services may be used by the SINless, gangs and criminals, but they are reviled by mainstream society. Corporations rail against the threat shadowrunners pose to their business, and law enforcement condemns your activities as terroristic. Don't you care that society at large doesn't want you?

Six: Get off it. First, not everyone who's SINless is a criminal—and if they are, it's usually because crime is the only option they have to survive. Second, *your* straight society not only wants us—it needs us. Who do you think hires us? Corporate suits couldn't do their dirty work without us.

NN: Please. Not every corporate manager is corrupt.

Six: Is that what you think? That everyone who hires a runner is some wayward sheep from the corporate flock? I'd agree some of these slots are crooked sons of slitches, but every single one of them is just doing what someone higher up told 'em to do.

NN: You sound a little like a conspiracy theorist.

Six: Believe me or not, I don't give a jack. This is common practice. It's the way things work. We're their bread and butter. It's easier to hire a shadowrunner to sabotage a rival's project than to have your own people do it. Cheaper, too. We're deniable. If something goes wrong, the shadowrunner gets the blame. It doesn't travel back to the corp. Sorry if that upsets your little world view, but it's not your world you wanted to talk about, now is it?

NN: No. It's not. So, exactly what is it you do?

Six: I'm a fixer. Shadowrunners come to me when they need a job, a SIN, a weapon, anything. Others come to me if they need a job done. In those situations, I act as middleman, contract out the work and play employer for the day. I'm trusted to be discreet. Without complete privacy, word gets out to the wrong people, police, wannabe shadowrunners with more 'ware than brainpower and anyone else who might damage, destroy or take

over my operation. Just last week, some new punk thought offing me would get him in with the local Yaks. As you can see, I'm still breathin'.

NN: You make it sound rather one-sided. Do shadowrunners get something out of this, as well?

Six: Are you kidding? The payoff goes both ways, though the corps don't like it that way. They'd prefer it more one-sided, but everyone's got to be realistic. Can't use us to find out everyone else's dirty secrets and steal them without us making a profit, too. A good, long-term client learns to turn a blind eye. The ones who jerk shadowrunners around tend to live on borrowed time—someone always finds out the dirt they're up to, and it's not always us who sets things straight again.

NN: That makes it sound like not all shadowruns are sanctioned, which is what you implied earlier. Which is it?

Six: Is everything binary with you? Non-sanctioned runs are the anomaly. Of course someone's going to wonder what the frag is going on when a big chunk of nuyen's been creatively juggled into disappearing.

NN: Of course. Moving on, then ... "Six" is a rather unusual name. Is that your real name?

Six: You're asking my real name? Who do you think you're talking to, your next door neighbor?

NN: No. I thought I was speaking with a shadowrunner, a known criminal.

Six: Lady, you've got some titanium *huevos*, no matter what sort of connections you've dug up to find me. My real name doesn't matter. To the law and everyone else who knows the shadows, I'm Six. I just did several favors to come talk to you, and you can bet your sweet trideo ass they'll be repaying me very well.

NN: I see. Well, our readers are very interested in hearing what you have to say, so I'd say it's a fair trade. You've said you're not a shadowrunner, but it's obvious you know some. How about the famous ones? Know anyone resembling the runners in the sims "Eclipse" or "Corp Script," or the assassin Caine in the sim "My Brother's Keeper?"

Six: Famous? Don't know nobody *famous*. What I do know are runners with good reps, but not a one of 'em will ever be *famous* unless you count the Lone Star blotters, or when someone like you reports on another unknown group of saboteurs. We know each other, but none of you will ever know us if we do our jobs right.

NN: Not even one name?

Six: You still don't get it, do you? We don't have SINS. We don't *exist*. We're paid to remain anonymous and when the nuyen runs out, we stay anonymous. We've fallen through the cracks, like your lipstick through a sewer grate.

NN: That can't be entirely true. Sure, there are SINless living on the streets, but not all of them turn to crime, as you mentioned earlier. And there are rehabilitation programs. I can't believe someone would willingly risk losing their life or going to prison for so little in exchange.

Six: Lady, you're talking about people who have nothing left to lose. While we run the risk of being homeless and starving, we also have a drekload more freedom. If we score big, we'll be more well off than your average wageslave. You want to know what it's like? Take off the neon-flash sunglasses and have a

NEWSNET ASKS: "WHAT'S A SHADOWRUNNER?"



Maria Cardenas, corporate secretary: "They're always blowing things up and kidnapping important people. They really need to lock them up and throw away the key."

Scott McKenzie, Lone Star patrolman: "I'll tell you what a shadowrunner is: a threat to law-abiding citizens. Doesn't help when punk kids get themselves all kitted up in cyberware and decide they're a shadowrunner because they saw 'Sapphire: Shadowrunner for Hire' a million times."



Alfie Sandoval, simsense enthusiast: "Hey, I chipped 'Eclipse' a couple times. When the runners busted in that room with the guns all budda-budda-budda, putting holes in all those workers, I mega lost it. So wiz! Those are shadowrunners, for true."

Libby Horsch, teacher: "A sad statement on our society is what they are. We uphold the destructive and criminal elements as heroes. What does that say about our values? How do I tell my students there are better role models out there? Even our late President Dunkelzahn holds no charm for them."



Deena Welch, Doc Wagon paramedic: "I don't really have time to talk. I get to go earn my pay and patch up someone caught in the crossfire of some gun battle. Maybe when my shift is over."

Hank Healing-Claws, licensed Bear shaman: "Shadowrunners come from the shadows. That is all they will be. But shadows can obscure, and what we most need is light to show the way, not darkness."



good hard look around you. It's about survival, by any means necessary—something I don't think you could do.

NN: I've been on some dangerous assignments. I know my way around a gun. Would you lay money on that?

Six: Why would I? If I'm right, who do I collect from? Hell, I could pick up the phone and hire someone right now to clean out your accounts. No. "You wanna lay money on it?" You're a joke. I'm done with you. You're a waste of my time.

And with that, the line fell silent, leaving me with more questions and the thought that I had just been challenged. What is it really like being a shadowrunner? Why do they *really* do what they do? Are they the armies of the forces of light and dark, as some simsense movies would have you believe, or are they folks just like you and me, going through life without the advan-

tage of a SIN and a secure place to live? Whatever the truth may be, NewsNet will be there to report it.

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- I nearly laughed myself offline, reading that. It's one thing to encounter suits without a clue, and another to see some empty head brag about what they think they know about the shadows. Hoo.

- Pistons

- What's truly amusing—or not, depending on your viewpoint—is that all of the above is as slanted as the roof of the Mitsuhama pagoda. Painting the shadows and shadowrunners as dangerous and/or glamorous sells, and that's the real truth. You want to know what people really think? The opinions are much less lock-step and a lot more diverse than what we've been shown so far. I uploaded a copy of the answers I got when I did my own asking around.

- Newshound

After the interview, I knew I had to prove Six wrong. Somewhere in my head, I had the idea that it couldn't be as bad as people have said. If others survive life in the shadows, why couldn't I? I told myself it was wounded pride that was sending me to the streets. It was easier to swallow than the gnawing image of that little girl from the Federated-Boeing incident and the need to pin the blame on something, anything. The shadows made an easy target, and so I took up Six's challenge. If I could find out why anyone would turn to the shadows in the first place and publish my findings, then there was a chance—albeit a slim one—that no more innocent bystanders would suffer from the second-hand violence.

- Which shows not only how ignorant the public is on the topic of the shadows, but the media as well. There've been unofficial inquiries—because you know, official ones tend to be published more prominently—into mortality rates in Z-zoned areas, and what they found doesn't surprise me or anyone else I know. But I can tell you, if the numbers were the same for even a C-zoned area there would be massive cries of outrage.

- Link

- That's because the dichotomy between the haves and have-nots has only grown wider. The poor aren't any poorer than in any other era of history. The rich have just gotten even richer. Wealth buys you some really cozy blinders. Just look at Los Angeles and what happened to it when the walls came falling down. The divisions may not be as great elsewhere as they were in L.A., but you can bet the wealthy wish they were.

- Socio Pat

THE SWITCH

It was several weeks before I presented the idea to my editor. I told him I wanted to engage in some major investigative journalism—immersing myself in the streets, living in poverty, and blending in so I could present what it was really like to our

NEWSHOUND ASKS: "WHAT'S A SHADOWRUNNER?"



Vic, a Tacoma squatter: "I don't know no shadowrunners, but for a few nuyen I might."

Some Federated-Boeing slag: "A what? Look, I don't have time for questions like this. I've got an important meeting."



Kandi Krome, a Downtown prostitute: "Some of my best and worst customers. They got the nuyen to zero, but some are real violent drekwipes, too. I take my chances. Hey, you got a cigarette?"

David, a factory worker: "Should I care? Yeah, I've chipped a sim or two, but my cousin says he's got a friend who's a shadowrunner, and I wouldn't trust either of 'em to buy me a sandwich with my last nuyen. 'Scuse me, I got to get back to work."



Grace Thorvaldsson, Auburn resident: "Well ... they're people with certain talents, and ... oh heck. They commit crimes for money, but the way things are, can you blame them? If it weren't for my little boy, I might be doing the same thing by now."

Tucker, shadowrunner: "That's a spacey question, but thinkin' about it, it's not a bad one either. It's not like anyone ever asks us anything, except if we'll do the job. That's what we are to them, our "employers"—we're walking miracles. We'll do just about any task they put in front of us for the right pay. Some of us have different standards and some have specialties, but at the end of the day it's all the same. Someone wins, someone loses and the rest of us are still no better off than we were before. So why do I still do it? I don't know how to do anything else. Sure, sometimes I wish I was making a difference, but that's a load of drek if you can't eat."



readers. He sensed my passion and, despite his concerns, gave the story his blessing.

Permission secured, I set about contacting Six again. The first time around, I had a few contacts who had friends, and they had friends ... and so on. This time, however, it was a lot more difficult. Some of these friends of friends were upset, feeling they squandered favors with nothing but the ire of Six to show for their efforts. Undaunted, I tried a more direct approach.

- Like that's a mystery? Six figured he'd be showing up in a fluff piece. Instead, he gets blindsided by middle class morality. He

SHADOWRUNNERS IN THE MEDIA

From the mega-hit simsense movies to the news that makes history, these are how shadowrunners are most commonly portrayed in the media.

Against the Hive Masters: The last simflick for megastar Euphoria before retirement, shadowrunners were featured prominently in the simsense smash. It was also rumored that shadowrunners had been behind her kidnapping prior to the making of the sim.

Sapphire: Shadowrunner for Hire: In this blockbuster sim, Passion Synclaire portrays a lone shadowrunner who takes various criminal jobs while searching for the enigmatic Mr. Jackson who killed her father five years earlier. Lots of damage and mayhem follow in her wake, up to the startling conclusion where downtown Seattle is nuked off the map. It spawned three sequels.

Eclipse: The saboteurs hired to attack a space station in this sim are shadowrunners. Who hired them and why are a mystery until the very end. The dialogue stinks, the acting stinks and the plot stinks. Don't waste your time with this trash.

Marathon: The newest sim from Amalgamated Studios stars Corey Costner. Barred from the New York marathon because he's an adept, Daniel Velos is allowed to race when shadowrunners begin killing contestants randomly and instigating violence in the streets. One by one, he takes them down until he faces off with their leader, a troll named Toothgrinder.

Whose Swag Is This?: This trideo sitcom pits a shadowrunner "family" who constantly battle against Xi7o Corporation to keep them from buying their block of the sprawl. Trideo Guide calls it "the funniest show of 2063!"

Deep Shadow: A trideo docudrama about a boy's journey to manhood on the streets of Atlanta. Most of his role models are shadowrunners, who take him from one hair-raising job to the next and unsuccessfully evade law enforcement half the time.

Dunkelzahn's Assassination (9-AUG-57): Among the suspects in connection with President Dunkelzahn's assassination were various groups of shadowrunners.

Renraku Arcology Shutdown (19-DEC-59): Shadowrunners were again among the suspects when shoppers were massacred in the mall of the Seattle Renraku Arcology prior to the sealing up and shutdown of the entire structure.

Comet Chaos (11-AUG-61): Many organizations, fueled with comet fever, sprang up as Halley's Comet bypassed the Earth. One group, the Church of the Undying Light, was the victim of arson when unknown suspects burned down an outreach center. Due to the Church's close ties with the SINless, many believe the arson to be the work of shadowrunners.

took a risk talking to a reporter—his rep could have taken a big hit. I'm still sucking up to Six to get back in his good graces. Costing me a ton of nuyen and it's not making me happy, but that's wiz, cuz I'm sticking it to my guy. Fair's fair, and Zoe better have learned you don't screw your contacts over.

• Razor

I was able to eventually get in touch with the fixer. He wasn't pleased to hear from me, but after listening to all the details, he seemed intrigued by the idea. I know now that the sum of nuyen I offered helped greatly, raised from selling off some of

my possessions. It's not easy to set up an alternate identity, so payment is absolutely necessary.

In order to completely immerse myself in the underworld—and to prove to Six that I wasn't going to wimp out—the first step was to completely separate myself from my old identity. I didn't want to completely erase it as I planned to return to it at some point in the future, so I paid to have my SIN flagged as deceased, but in such a way that someone would notice it had been done erroneously if they checked. It appeared to simply be a glitch in the system.

- It's actually easier to flag a SIN as deceased than it is to create a new identity from scratch. In some cases, though, it's not enough to look "dead"—all aspects of the identity need to be erased. Even with auto-deleting agents, that's not always possible, as many databases keep backups offline.

- Sekhmet

As for my identity in the shadows, that was another issue altogether. I needed a legit story. Nothing too detailed, yet peppered with enough hardship to keep it believable. Being a Vietnamese elf, I decided upon "a refugee from San Francisco." It allowed me leeway in claiming ignorance concerning certain aspects of life in the shadows, which was my main criteria. The rest of the story went like this: my family was still in SF, and I needed to raise enough money to get them to Seattle. A common enough tale to keep most people from asking twice about my background. For the nosy, however, I'd limit myself to saying I had an ill father in one of Saito's concentration camps and my mother was working as a housekeeper.

- This story is beginning to sound familiar, and not just because it's the same story I hear every other day since Seattle started getting a steady influx of refugees from CalFree. If it's who I think it is, then Zoe owes me 50 nuyen. Sitch said she'd give me a lapdance, then slotted my credstick and ran.

- John

While the SIN alteration was taking place, I took advantage of the time to conduct a few informal interviews with some shadowrunners—under my new guise, of course. I had to shed my reporter skin. Any information gathered had to come under the cloak of everyday conversation. Since I have an ear recorder and plenty of headware memory, it was simple to record several conversations and transcribe them later. The first one comes from Twist, who I met while Six was still establishing my credentials.

//Begin File Attachment//
TWIST INTERVIEW
18-JUN-2062

Me: That's my story. What about you? How did you get into all this?

Twist: Seems like ancient history now. It might as well be, anyway.



Me: Why's that?

T: I got in over ten years ago. That's a long time in the shadows, frankly. Most people tend to burn out or get killed before then. [chuckle] Guess I'm an old man. That's fine by me. It was so long ago, it feels like an entire lifetime. But it's a life I'm glad I left. If I had remained a researcher for Renraku, I might have been caught in the arcology when it went offline.

• Avaunt! There is a paradox, or perhaps a slight deception at work. If you had not left, Twist, my Lady might not have awakened from her slumber.

• Dodger

• True. You've heard me say it a thousand times, but you have my deepest sympathies and apologies for your loss, even if I still don't understand how code can affect you so.

• Twist

Me: Did you know anyone who was still working there when everything went haywire?

T: Haywire? That's an interesting way to put it. Yeah. I did know people. For a while, I had the pleasure of being Inazo Aneki's protégé.

• And with Aneki found dead in the arcology, guess who eventually made it on the list of suspects? Even if Twist wasn't inside, it's not as if he couldn't have smuggled someone in to get the job done.

• Jaxon

Me: The Aneki?

T: Yeah. I see you're familiar with the name.

Me: I am. Wow.

T: I still wonder why he bothered himself to follow me and my career. He was like a father to me after my parents had been killed. It made my decision to leave Renraku that much more difficult, but eventually I had to. No matter what I believed of Aneki-san, the rest of his corporation was, and still is, shot through with corruption. It made no sense for me to remain loyal in the face of it.

• Oh yeah, I'm sure the corporate life was just so terrible. Cry me a fraggin' river.

• Wheeler

• Corporate life has its own pressures. You may not have to wonder where your next meal is coming from, but you're subject to



strict work ethics, pressure to achieve, intense mediocrity and mind-numbing corporate propaganda. Told what to eat, what to watch, what to wear, who to see; it's a sheltered life. Everyone you live and work with might as well be a clone, because they're all the same. And whenever you fall a deadline or have a disagreement with a superior, the threat of poverty is hanging over you—and you've seen how miserable those people are. When the corporation is all you've known your entire life, the thought of being separated from it is terrifying. Most corp kids who run away don't make it on the streets.

• Ellie

Me: Understood. So what did you do? What made you decide the shadows were better than life as a suit?

T: Renraku had been my family. Going to another corp was unthinkable. And I had made a few friends in the shadows who helped me see, as violent and hopeless as it seems, that the shadows still had some light of its own. I had their help in becoming who and what I am.

Me: Lucky you.

T: It was far from easy, though. And I'm sure you can find a few friends, too. You'd be surprised at how easy it is to do so.

Me: You're probably right. Hey ... you mentioned something about light in the shadows. Are you talking about the Church of the Undying Light?

T: No.

Me: So what do you mean by "light?"

T: I'm a rarity in the shadows. Someone with spiritual conviction. A moral code. Most runners tend to abide by their own rules, which is often reduced to one simple rule—there are none. There are plenty of jobs out there if you're willing to do anything. Personally, I can't stomach killing. But, there are plenty of alternatives.

Me: Then why the gun?

T: This is a Narcoject. I load it with knockout drugs. Ya see, I know what it's like to lose a loved one, and I can't do that to someone else, no matter how much I get teased about being a pacifist. I won't take a job if I know people will die. I've lost out on a few opportunities for big nuyen as a result—just last month, I walked away from the destruction of the new Cross biolab out in Snohomish. The Johnson stressed by any means necessary. I told him I wouldn't take a life. He told me to take a walk. But sticking to my guns also means having a reliable reputation, better than most of the crazies out there.

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• Just a note: you don't have to be a pacifist to explore alternative methods of mowing down anyone and anything in your way. Narcojects, stun batons, sleep spells or even a well-placed whack upside the head also work and keep everything quiet when you need to be.

• Whisper

• Bah. Sometimes, you just gotta take 'em out before they take you out. I don't want anyone on my team whose unwilling to shed some blood. Some security dreg ain't gonna think twice

before putting one right between your eyes, and you better not get the jitters when staring down the barrel of his gun.

• Hangfire

The conversation with Twist gave me a lot to think about. Maybe I was wrong about shadowrunners. Still, I needed to speak with more people. Not everyone is like Twist. My next interview wasn't so easy and took longer to get. By the time I met up with Fatima, I had spent approximately a month on the streets, trying to decipher the ins and outs of the social hierarchy in the shadows. During that time, I found out who controlled what in the little slice of Downtown I'd begun to call home, which made it a little easier to know who I could talk to without landing myself in a world of trouble. But that part of the story is for later.

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FATIMA INTERVIEW

19-JUL-62

Fatima: ... yeah, I don't often come to Matchstick's. It's a little corny, y'know? But sometimes, low-key is what you need.

Me: Understood. So where do you usually hang out?

F: I tend to like Club Penumbra, even if it's been on the quiet side for a few years now. If you're looking for work, that's another good place to go. It's just that most of the work might take you inside Renraku, and that's a fragging scary place to be. The astral there is ... never mind. Can't talk about it.

Me: Not a problem. Being a mage doesn't sound easy.

F: It's not. You know what it's like being a metahuman. If you've got even an iota of magic talent as well, people either start looking at you like a trained monkey or worse, like you're covered in drek and threatening to smear everyone else with it. And that's just the regular folk. Corp recruiters don't even see you as a monkey, but as a tool. And drek can always be washed off. Humanis sees someone like me as a contagious and lethal virus that needs elimination.

Me: I hadn't thought of it that way. I always thought people with magic were lucky.

F: [snorts] I wouldn't call surviving the Night of Rage "lucky," even if others would.

Me: I'm sorry. I wasn't born yet. Is that how you ...

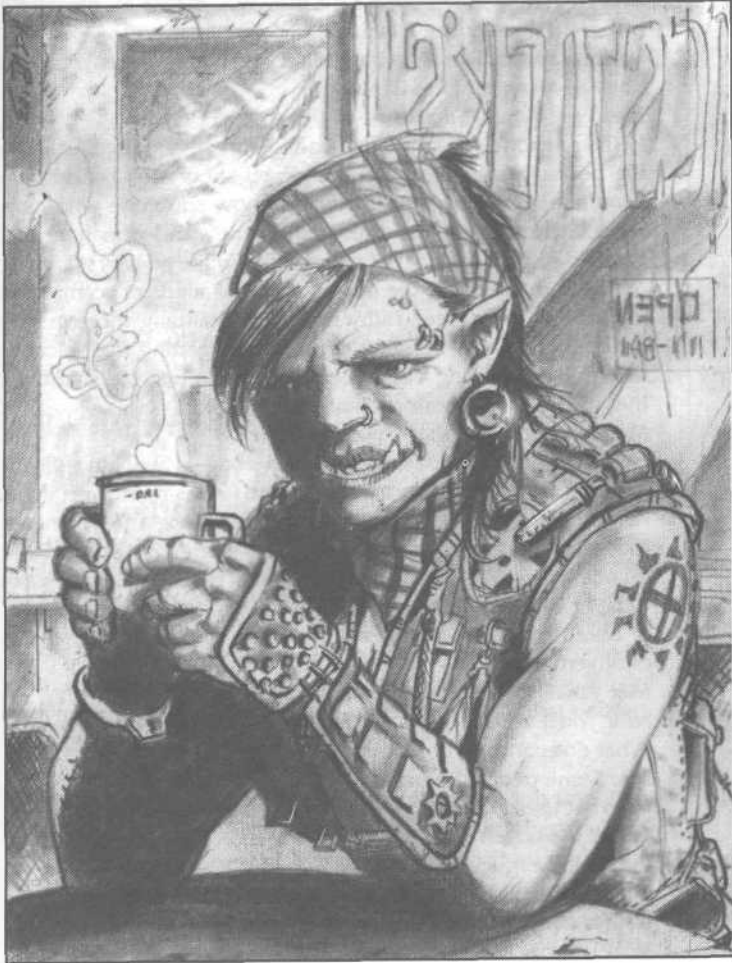
F: How I what?

Me: ... got started in the shadows?

F: You could say that. I was just a kid, then. Life after that was nothing but survival, seeing what we could beg for or scrounge up to keep going another day. When I got old enough, I got tired of begging and started running with a gang. More excitement, that's for sure. And I could always count on my people to watch my back ... like family, you know? You always knew your place.

• Here's a tip—though they may seem like easy targets, never pick on the low man in a gang's hierarchy. Doesn't matter if they treat him like drek, they're the only ones allowed to do so, and they'll come after you if you even look at the peon crosswise. They look out for their own with a vengeance.

• Smiley



Me: I know what you mean. I've been hanging around with the Drakes. Never a dull moment.

F: Yeah. Makes you feel like you're actually doing something. And after a while, Mom didn't ask where the money was coming from. She was always too tired from working the latest drek job to care. Just as long as I could keep myself out of trouble with the law and could hide my wounds, she could convince herself we were doing fine.

Me: Sounds familiar.

F: It's common enough. Besides, it never lasts too long, gang-life. You rise in the ranks, die or leave. The first tends to lead to the second eventually, so that just leaves you with dying or leaving. And if some raging mob of meta-haters couldn't kill me, I don't see why I'd let someone else have the honor.

Me: Fair enough. I've tried not to get too close a tie to the Drakes anyway, so it shouldn't be hard for me to walk away.

F: Be careful when you do, though. A gang may let you walk away, but they'll never really let you leave, you scan? Once enough people know you and have formally accepted you, they'll want to be sure you never forget where you came from if they ever need your help.

Me: Trust me, I don't think I'll be forgetting any time soon.

F: Just saying, Zoe. Been there, slotted that chip. But hey, they're good chummers to know if you don't have the time to go checking word on the street or if you want to get rid of something quick-like. Just don't go and frag them—or you're hosed.

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- Is it just me, or does Zoe's newbie runner act make you want to toss her in the Snoqualmie?
- Trid Snoop

- It's irritating, but no more than you are. I'm betting you're just raging jealous because a female elf from a rival news agency thought of this before you.
- Ferret

- It never occurred to me she'd be recording our conversation. I kept wondering if I was ever that raw. Looks like I'll have to treat every thing I say as if I'm being recorded. This was relatively innocent stuff, but there's no telling what could happen next time.
- Fatima

- Come now. I don't have to tell you that paranoia is every runner's watchword. If you can't remember that, then maybe it's time to retire.
- Neon Wrath

While what Fatima had to say was more informative than I thought, I didn't feel I had a nearly complete enough insight into shadowrunners and their motivations. I can understand survival or needing to break away from a life that rings false, but so far I hadn't seen or heard much from those with avarice on their minds, and it was obvious such people did exist. My third conversation, however, became my last. Though Neal was extremely interesting, my instincts were telling me that pursuing more information from him would get me in over my head.

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NEAL INTERVIEW

10-AUG-62

Neal: Can I get you a drink?

Me: Thanks ... yeah, I could do with one. Umm. You have a nice place, here.

N: It works. It's quieter than that dive. What'll you have?

Me: I'll have what you're having. So why were you there?

N: Had a little business to take care of with someone. Just a few words ... badda-boom, badda-bing ... you know how it is.

Me: Oh, well, sort of. Still trying to make a name for myself.

N: Just a kid, eh? That takes me back. When I first started, I used to be a member of a pro-meta polyclub. Shoulda seen me, ranting my fool head off to anyone who'd listen. Pop told me I was a right firebrand, always taking a whizz in some Humanis jerk's krillflakes.

• Neal? Pro-metahuman rights polliclub? Someone tell me this isn't Neal the Ork Barbarian, or I'm going to blow chunks.

• Cynic

• Lucky you, no it's not Neal the Ork Barbarian. I think I've heard of this guy, Neal Slattery. If so, he's about as independent as you get when you've got ties to the Mafia. He sometimes goes to the Gates Casino in Bellevue or Casino Corner in Everett and sharks a few rising-star gamblers who've got money to burn. The Ciarniellos and Finnigans aren't too happy with him for that (and other trespasses), but they haven't offed him yet. No one knows why, but guesses are rampant and run the gamut from blackmail on a dead man's drop, to being blood-related, to outrageous luck and everything else in between.

• Smiley

• Zoe may have developed just the right instincts, because she was right about Neal. He and some compadres managed to pull off the heist of the century a few months ago ... for all of one day, at least. They took it into their heads to clean out the vaults at The Ultra Resort in Auburn. It was a nearly flawless plan and brilliantly executed, but they obviously hadn't counted on whoever really owns the place to track them down. Every single one of them was later found strangled with fiberoptic cables, and every single movable possession each might have had—from shoes to furniture—was missing.

• Twister

• Then it's a safe guess that it was probably one of the families listed above that offed him and his partners.

• Smiley

Me: Really? Ah ...

N: Oh, hey, don't worry about me trying to recruit you now. I think you're cute, but my radical agitator days are behind me. I used to try to make things better for the world—get abused meta kids into shelters, get food vouchers for the homeless, yadda yadda yadda—and I'd also get all militant about Humanis and racial profiling and drek like that. Those were fun times, but they were a waste of time.

Me: What happened?

N: You have a killer smile, doll.

Me: Thanks.

N: So yeah ... one day, I'm taking clothes to some old alcoholic ork, when a few ork kids come out of the guy's alley. They'd just rolled him for his money and kicked him a few times and I could still hear him groaning. Stupid me gets involved, hey? I ask 'em to hand the money back. They laugh, jump me and knife me for my trouble, calling me a smoothie. Found out later they were Sons of Sauron 'bangers. Week after that, I found out one of my charitable partners was skimming from the donations. So I left.

Me: How terrible.

N: I guess. I just grew up and realized no one's innocent. Every polliclub, every so-called high-minded organization, was just like everyone else—and everyone else just wants to separate you from your money. [laugh] Including me.

Me: Had me worried there for a tick. Wiz, thanks for the drink. I can understand money. Is that what motivates you? Money?

N: You say that like it's a bad thing. I can't think of anyone who does anything for free. Can you?

Me: Well, what about some of those soup kitchens?

N: Takes money to keep 'em open. They may not collect from the poor slots who eat there, but you know they collect from *someone*. Tell you what, I used to know someone who ran a soup kitchen. He'd use the grant money and donations and pretend to be a "servant of the people" while he was skimming off the top and using the basement for all kinds of scams. And the folks who donate? Filthy rich suits. Standing there in their deceptively casual designer clothing and getting their pictures taken while handing over a big fake check. Just the kind of PR that makes them more money.

Me: When put like that ... you're right.

N: Damn right I am. Don't get me wrong—I wouldn't slit my grandmother's throat because someone waves five nuyen at me. First, she's already gone and second, it'd take a few hundred thousand more than that. [pause] It's a joke. I'm just saying I'd do nearly anything for the right amount of money. There're some things I wouldn't, either because it'd be too easy to get caught or because I'm just a big softy, but the real deal is money. Lots of nuyen.

Me: What do you do with your money?

N: If you'll pardon my sayin' so, that's a chipheaded question. What does anyone do with money?

Me: Some people hoard it ...

N: What use is it, then? Money's meant for spending. Once I've got all the nuyen I can get, I'm taking it on a lifelong vacation to the Carib League.

Me: That sounds really nice. It's better than Seattle, where it's always rainy and depressing.

N: You know it. So, ah, why'n't you come sit a little closer, eh?

//End File Attachment//

• Runners like Neal give us all a bad name. When the world is set against us, we have a choice. We can take the path of selfishness and greed and sticking up solely for ourselves, like Neal did—but isn't that just mimicking what the system does? Or we can take the path of giving a drek and working collectively to build a better world, a new one in the shell of the old, without the corps and other exploitive fraggers.

• Malatesta

Neal most likely isn't the most representative example of shadowrunners. But his interview, along with the others, told me more about them in general than any blockbuster trideo show. While I was gathering these conversations, I was also beginning to experience first-hand what it was like to live on the streets of the sprawl.

SHELTER

My first concern was a place to live. Six gave me an address for a safehouse, just in case I couldn't find anything or needed a place to hide if things went really bad. Otherwise, I was on my own with no idea where to stay. We both agreed

Downtown would be a good area for me, since he hesitates going to the Barrens himself. It wouldn't have been fair to prove my bet there.

- What, too good for us Barrens bums? Thousands of people eke out an existence there, comfortable or not, and some have turned to the shadows for work. How doesn't that qualify?

- Bung

- If you haven't noticed, those people you're talking about have lived there for a while and not known much else. They're used to it. Zoe isn't, and you want to drop her in the middle of Glow City?

- Social Adept

- Sink or swim. It's how everyone else learns.

- Bung

For several days, I searched for a place to live and not just crash for the night. I needed the small amount of cred I had for food, so I couldn't even afford a coffin. The first night, when I realized I wasn't going to find a vacancy that didn't require a SIN, I stumbled into a homeless shelter. It was full. The look the proprietor gave me while turning me away made it clear space could be made if I was willing to keep him company for the evening. I don't think I could be blamed for feeling that beneath my dignity and so I continued my search.

- "Shelters" are rarely that. Most are filthy, overcrowded and force you to submit to religious sermons, addiction counselling or worse, "self-empowering" pro-work conditioning sims. They do nothing to keep the "guests" from preying on each other, and rapes and violence are common. No place for grown male trolls, much less women and children.

- Escapee

I tried sleeping where I could—bus benches, doorways. I avoided areas that were unlit or out of sight—alleys, empty parks—so that I wouldn't be vulnerable to urban predators. The vomiting addicts, chipheads and other desperate-looking residents of these areas reinforced my decision. But even in public areas I encountered problems, like harassment from gangers brandishing weapons or solicitations for prostitution. Even when the streets were crowded, passers-by would turn a blind eye.

Time and again, however, I would need to move. Most of the time, it was a Lone Star patrol, who'd nudge me with a baton or a kick and growl "Move on," or "This ain't no hotel." Sometimes it was just hearing the approach of people, full of violent exuberance and obviously needing a target to vent it on that would send me on my way. In all, it was impossible to get a full night's sleep out on the streets.

- Lone Star won't bother you in the Barrens. You'll have bigger problems to worry about, like marauding devil rats or ghouls.

- Dre

I realized I needed to find real shelter, without being able to pay for it. I had heard of orks living in the sewers and underground tunnels, but I wasn't ready for that. I considered camping out on rooftops, but the security on most buildings deterred this. In the end, after an exhaustive search, I moved myself and my pitiful bag of possessions into a mildewed and crumbling efficiency inside a ramshackle tenement, barred the door with the one piece of furniture in the room, a moth-eaten couch reeking of urine, and curled up in a corner. Sleep, however, still eluded me.

- Welcome to the wonderful world of slumlords and squatting. Sadly, in your situation, the first is a blessing since they don't care if you have a SIN or not, they just care that you pay. But if you can't pay, you're right back on the street. Squatters can theoretically stake their claim anywhere abandoned, but those claims are frequently in contention with druggies, gangers, ghouls or anyone on the run. You have to take your chances.

- Housing Authority

- The best squats are those in upscale neighborhoods. Find an empty property, perhaps one whose owner is overseas, tax delinquent or recently died, and break in. As long as you don't dress like gutterscum and stay low-key, the neighbors probably won't care.

- Pope Squat

FOOD

My starting budget of 20 nuyen for food quickly ran out, despite eating a lot of cheap vending-machine food and noodles from the street vendors. Until I developed an income, I faced starvation. I watched carefully to see if food could be filched from the rare sidewalk eatery and quickly developed some decent shoplifting and table-diving skills. Recalling teen years of working at places like McHugh's, where food not bought that day was thrown away, I risked food poisoning and took to dumpster-diving behind bakeries and restaurants. Panhandling and soup kitchens were more options available to me, though I hoped to avoid them.

- Panhandling's harder than it once was, now that we no longer use coins or hard cash. Most people don't want to be bothered to stop and slot cred. Buskers get by easier, cuz you're selling a performance, but Lone Star will rush you out of AA-zoned districts or bust you outright. Whenever I faced the problem of no cred and no food, I simply mugged yuppies or stole from cars, selling the goods to a fence.

- Dharma Bum

CLOTHING AND WASHING

Clothing wasn't a very high priority since I had my own already, but trying to get it washed was a trial. For that matter, so was taking a shower, as my squat didn't have running water (though it did have something like runny black ooze). I had to



suffice with sneaking into park district shower rooms and washing my clothes in public restroom sinks. This began to explain the faint stench of even the most presentable street denizens.

- No money for clothes? You've got a few choices: steal it from drop-off sites for charities, shoplift, raid unattended laundromat machines, roll a drunk or take some from a corpse. The folks who manage to live just one step above street level learn how to make the stuff, buy it cheap from second-hand stores or just buy the bland drek from vending machines. You're only limited by your budget and imagination.

- Fashion Victim

MEDICAL CARE

Medical care was also a distant worry, since I hadn't planned on getting injured or sick anytime soon. Thankfully I didn't, but I soon learned you can plan all you want—drek happens regardless. In fact, this is how I met Ebekah, who'd later join me and my crew.

Ebekah, who is all wide eyes and shy demeanor, had been frequenting the same noodle shops as I had. I thought about approaching her to talk, but hearing her soft-spoken voice whenever she ordered gave me the feeling she'd be more inclined to clam up if I did, so I let her be.

One day, however, someone else decided to approach her for something more than a friendly chat. A local tough, a tall human kid who looked all of sixteen and hadn't hooked up

with a gang yet, became pretty upset when she didn't respond to his clumsy overtures. I wanted to intervene on her behalf, but what was I going to do? Throw razor-sharp wit and barbed one-liners his way? Needless to say, he displayed his displeasure by grasping her by the back of her head and slamming her face into the counter. Her nose exploded in a splat of blood and she remained face down on the counter, still and apparently unconscious. The entire place fell silent for a second, then everyone resumed their shoveling. I was shocked, but still reluctant to act. The kid started to walk away, chuckling, when Ebekah raised her hand. A spell arced up from her fingers and slammed him to the pavement. Fight over.

I was ashamed of myself for standing idly by ... the least I could do was help her find medical attention. Luckily, there was a free clinic nearby with halfway competent staff, though we had to wait half the day before seeing someone.

There are few free clinics available. There used to be more, but they had belonged to the now-defunct Universal Brotherhood. In the absence of a free clinic, most people take their chances with medkits (when available) and cheap, over-the-counter painkillers from a Stuffer Shack. There are also street doctors, who range in ability from absolute quackery to skilled cybersurgeons. Most of the free clinic staff, for example, are trying to work their way into a hospital or feel the need to do a little charity. Others don't have licenses to practice anymore, either because they lost a malpractice suit, have a drug or chip habit or simply never had a license to begin with. Some are in hiding,

usually because they had a falling out with a corp or the law. Some street doctors are on a gang or Yakuza payroll. While most won't rat you out—they want clients, and clients avoid docs with bad reps—it's best to check into them and know who you can run to in an emergency and who's going let you bleed to death on their doorstep.

- I'm sure if Ebekah hadn't gotten dinged on the head, she probably could have healed herself or known of a local shaman who could do the healing for her. There are a few out there—usually followers of Bear, Dog, Snake or other community-minded totems and idols—who heal as a service to the community.

- Whisper

- Some hospitals and bod-mod clinics like Nightingale's will occasionally turn a blind eye as well, but not very often. With clinics, too, you run the risk of being pushed through an organlegger's chopshop. There's good money to be made in selling body parts, and some doctors or clinic managers are greedy enough to go down that path.

- Doc

GETTING ALONG WITH THE NEIGHBORS

No one survives for long on the streets if they don't make friends and try to become part of the local community. This can be tough if you're an elf in a predominantly ork neighborhood or an Aztlaner in Chinatown, since there are different cultures at work. It's still not impossible, though, if you've got needed skills or resources. The more you do for your neighbors, the more they'll do for you. Etiquette, though, is the real key to getting on the inside of the inner workings of the streets. A bottle for the local wino or giving up your seat to a ganger at a crowded bar can both go a long way.

- There are some street-level players who really have this angle tied up. Everyone on the street in their 'hood is acting as their eyes and ears. You can't get anywhere near 'em or say anything about 'em without them knowing.

- Spider Damascus

It may be a shock to those of you with SInS living in protected neighborhoods, but police raids and gang drive-bys are just a part of the local daily color in C-zone neighborhoods. If you are not privy to these events before they happen, or at least have a friend who is willing to pass on the info, you will end up as street grease. Tip-offs can be easy to come by or virtually impossible, depending on how you treat those in the know.

The sprawl is like a warzone. You generally look out for each other, but each is still on his own, gangs being a quasi-exception to this rule. A neighbor of mine would tell me if a Lone Star patrol was coming through, but if I got into trouble, he'd keep quiet and I would have to deal with it alone. I'd share cigarettes and soykaf with the prostitutes on the corner, and they'd help me get my clothes washed. If one was getting hassled by her pimp, however, my attention was immediately somewhere else.

I learned my lesson quickly on this front. I tried helping, once, when I saw a pimp slapping around one of his girls. The woman became just as irate as her pimp with my intrusion into "her" business. I was sticking my nose in where it didn't belong and she made that abundantly clear with a spit in my face and a swift kick to the knee with her pointy high heels. I backed off immediately, turned and walked away. Within seconds, their scuffle resumed and I could hear the stinging slaps of his hand against her face.

- Her business or not, I have no tolerance for that sort of male drek. If I was there, that pimp would have lost his fingers.

- Butch Lee

- She's lucky she wasn't pressured to become part of a pimp's harem or worse. It's a shame, but it's a commonplace event when a girl takes to the streets.

- SPD

- It's the easiest way to make money, as everybody has their own body as a resource. True for boys as well as girls. And if you can't handle the personal time with strangers, there are always the meat puppet parlors—you won't remember a thing, though you'll probably feel it.

- Spook

THE HOOK-UP

For a month, I kept to myself, watching everyone and everything around me closely. Just from observing body language and stealing snatches of conversations, I learned a few names of the more "respected" residents of my little corner of the sprawl. I took note of what they liked, how others perceived them and their reputations. It became clear rather quickly that a gang called the Drakes held the tightest grip on the area. Most of the action and information went through them.

With that in mind, I set out to make a friend or two.

- I don't think all the circuits in her head are functioning. The Drakes? They're insane. They're not just a bunch of "troubled youths" in need of rehabilitation. The majority of these people are adults and more than willing to inflict pain and suffering on those who don't meet their approval. Besides, over half of them worship dragons or believe they can become one if they just flap their arms hard enough.

- Smiley

It didn't take long before I made the acquaintance of an ork slot called Coil, who insisted on calling me Hatch. As a diminutive, it was annoying, but taken in context with their colors and symbols, I accepted the name and kept my mouth shut. The most important thing was acceptance; if they didn't allow me into their ranks, I would have to pack up and go elsewhere as well as avoid the Drakes from now on. I think they knew I didn't like the name, so I wasn't surprised when Coil eventually used it to start a fight. It was mostly one of words—"So Hatch, what's it

like being a stuck-up keeb? If I smeared you right now and threw you on toast, would you taste like a cookie or a dandelion?"—but it would've progressed quickly to a nasty brawl if I didn't stay frosty. Having witnessed another initiation earlier in the week, I knew I was getting similar treatment; not quite as formal, but serving the same purpose: making me a Drake.

- Zoe was lucky. Most gangs have two ways of accepting female members: what they call either "sexing" in or a beat-in. The first basically consists of handing your body out to the other members of the gang to use as they would. The second, which it looks like Zoe went through, consists of getting into a fight with one or more members of the gang, to prove you're tough enough to handle what they do. Most of the girl gangers I've met have all agreed that you keep more of your self-respect if you go through the beat-in, even if you lose a tooth or break an arm.

- SPD

- That doesn't even begin to touch some of the other initiation rituals required in other gangs. Some are just bizarre, while others are torturous to the point of being lethal. The rest are some combination of both, like the requirements to become a Halloween.

- Fidler-Man

- Not everyone's got the spark, you know. Takes a special kind of crazy to become one of us.

- Janey

From then on, life became both easier and tougher. I now had the benefit of their protection, but more things than I'd anticipated were expected of me, like acting as lookout for deals or letting them party and crash at my place. This meant less privacy and taking risks with the law. It also meant that I was now a target for rival gangs and Lone Star. I had to be conscious of crossing turf boundaries and where and how I flew my Drake colors. Luckily, I avoided serious trouble, but I saw firsthand how other Drakes were beaten and stabbed by rivals, beaten and forced to snitch by cops and then beaten by the Drakes for not standing up for themselves.

The pros and the cons somehow managed to balance themselves out, especially when I could participate in a job they were doing or someone taught me a new trick. I definitely bless Tapper, who left the Drakes to become part of my team, for showing me how to make my own Matrix jackpoint and introducing me to Shadowland.

WHO'S WHAT IN THE SHADOWS

My start with the Drakes was just the first real step, and there were many more to go. I learned a little from the gang, filling in the rest of the information about how things worked with Six's help after I was able to contact him again. Gangs and organized crime have a loose sense of structure, but things are much different in other segments. It all interconnects like a web, albeit a crooked one. To demonstrate how it functions, I'll be breaking

down the following for easy consumption: gangs & bosses, fixers, fences, Mr. Johnsons, smugglers and organized crime.

Gangs

Gangs, surprisingly, fill a niche as important as anything else in the shadows. With few exceptions, their members grow up poor, needing direction in life as well as a sense of belonging. Gangs tend to act as a second (or first) family to its members, creating a fierce sense of loyalty. Organized crime (Mafia, Yakuza, Seoulpa Rings, Triads and the Vory) sees them as foot-soldiers, recruitment pools, cannon fodder, distribution outlets (chips and drugs, mostly), information resources and more, depending on their needs and their relationship with the gang or gangs in question.

- Some gangs also play a vital role in a neighborhood, acting as the local authority, especially in Z-Zones. They provide self-defense, put food on the table, make judgements and issue punishments. Naturally, most of them abuse this power to get their way, but some actually act in their community's self-interests, helping folks who need it and bringing other resources to bear. This is particularly true in communities with a strong cultural bond.

- Socio Pat

- Yeah, but even these gangs have to participate in the underground economy to get by. And when they're that tied to the community, everyone's involved, from grannies to kids. In my 'hood, the gang uses shorties (the local kids) to spot cops and rival gangers, act as delivery boys and otherwise do things that will eventually get them jailed or killed.

- Wiz Kid

- True for street gangs, but go-gangs and thrill gangs are a little different. Go-gangs tend to be more organized, with a wider area of coverage and bigger operations, though there's usually at least one spot in the sprawl they call home. The thrill gangs are the worst—especially the upper-class brats whose parents provide partial immunity from the law—they only care about themselves and their particular sociopathic interests.

- Shetani

Fixers

The fixer is arguably the most important role in the shadows. Fixers are the go-betweens, pushers, gossips, salesmen and talent scouts. They excel at finding black market goods and services through their web of connections and contacts. Need a weapon? Your fixer can get you one to buy or rent, clean or dirty, no SInS attached. Need a SIN? Your fixer can have one made, though faster and better cost more. Need a mechanic or street doc? Your fixer knows just the right person. Fixers rarely do a job themselves, they just know someone who can; you'll pay a finder's fee for the service. Most fixers deal only in untraceable currency, though some will peddle favors, information and influence—and you can be sure they'll call in any markers or debts you owe at some point.

• The key to being a good fixer is not just knowing how to get people what they want, it's knowing what they want before they do. Your fixer is wiz if he calls you up to see if you're interested in the latest paydata on Knight Errant's security procedures, or if you'd prefer to purchase the IC-breaker program that is especially effective against Novatech's latest black IC. Quality fixers have their finger on the sprawl's pulse, and they'll have a sense of what you're up to and what you might be needing.

• Link

• Fixers thrive and die by their contacts. They go to great pains to know all sorts of people, even if they are so mundane or their specialties so specialized that they might never be of use. Most contacts are useless or unavailable 99 percent of the time, but when you suddenly need to acquire a passcode to the Mitsuhama building or locate a weapon that can take out a basilisk, you'll be glad you kept in touch with that MCT secretary or bought that reptile parazoologist a new sunlamp for his birthday.

• Findler-Man

• Fixers usually have certain specialty areas that they're well-versed and connected in, like arms or software or data or politics. It makes it easier for them to keep on top of it rather than spreading themselves thin.

• Spotlight Sally

Most of the good fixers have had long careers as shadowrunners. The job comes naturally after you've developed a large addressbook of contacts in your p-sec, a good rep and a sufficient bankroll. It also helps to know the intricacies of the biz, who the local players are, how they relate and how to negotiate, bluff or threaten as the situation warrants.

• Fixers that trade in information need to tread carefully when it comes to their clients. It's crucial for their biz for clients to feel safe in revealing some confidential data. If that data later shows up for sale or in someone else's hands, the fixer's rep will plummet unless she can prove she wasn't the leak. It's a tricky position to be in, to know so much about your clients but also bound to keep it separate from the other secrets you buy and sell.

• Gitichgoomi

• The same conflict arises with fixers who have close relationships with other shadow denizens. They're supposed to treat it all like business, but when another client comes along with a job that threatens the friend, the fixer is faced with a personal conflict: sell out the client or betray the friend. Truthfully, I don't know any fixers that don't have some sort of personal attachment, whether they're tight with a mob boss, buddies with a runner crew or have an illegitimate kid they help pay for. It's an Achilles' Heel.

• FastJack

Fixers typically wear more than one hat. Some sideline as fences or Mr. Johnsons, while others even have legit jobs—club

owner, real estate agent, lawyer, pawnbroker, entertainment industry agent—in order to obscure their shady dealings. Most have a score of connections in the legit world, with corporate or even government figures as clients and contacts; in fact, this is how most of them are known to Mr. Johnsons. A few front for larger operations like Yakuza gumi or smuggling rings, but most prefer their independence.

• Many syndicate groups view fixers as competition and will try to move in on their turf.

• Carver

Fences

If fixers can get you anything you want, fences can sell anything you've got. Fences tend to be picky about what they purchase—they'll take what they can sell, and they may avoid certain items that are too hot. You'll only get a fraction of the street value, since the fence needs to make a profit on the resale and is also doing you a favor by laundering the goods in an untraceable manner through the black market.

• In general, fences will pay 10 to 30 percent for an item, and resale it at 50 percent or more. The hotter and more specialized the goods are, the higher the costs—and the risks.

• Findler-Man

Fences tend to come from a smuggling or organized crime background, and they're just as likely to try and sell purchases out of the area to blur the trail as they are to move it locally. Most have one-way relationships with local gangs, buying whatever stolen goods they've recently pulled in. Their clientele tend to be fixers, smugglers, syndicates and the occasional rich person with shady interests.

Like fixers, they tend to specialize in a particular area: art, weapons, cyberdecks, foci, prototypes and anything else you can dream up. Most fences work alone or with a partner, but larger operations might run chop shops for stolen cars or organ-legging rings for used implants and other parts.

• Fences need to be good at appraisal and spotting fakes. This is especially true for items like artwork, gems and magical goods. There's been a glut of fake trinkets on the market since Dunkelzahn's Will, and the Orichalcum Rush had everyone scrambling.

• Link

Mr. Johnson

Ask a shadowrunner who he hates and loves the most, and you will always hear "Mr. Johnson." This is the person who hires runners to steal a prototype, sabotage a lab, hack into a rival's Matrix system, kidnap, kill and more. Mr. Johnson can come from any corporation, any background, offer any sort of job and any amount of nuyen. Some may permanently fill that role at a corporation with titles like "Asset Location Manager," and some may be hired once and never work for that particular corp again. Mr. Johnson could be offering you five thousand nuyen one week to crash a flower delivery service Matrix host,

and the next week, your neighbor is suddenly named Ms. Johnson and offering you 500 nuyen to find her missing daughter. Bottom line: the role of Mr. Johnson is the most nebulous role in the shadows, and that can be a blessing or a curse. Anonymity can either protect a runner and his employer from law enforcement or isolate a runner if he's caught.

- Johnsons will do whatever is necessary to protect that anonymity. If you screw up a run, don't be surprised when Johnson hires someone to beat you into a coma as a "lesson" or outright kill you. Rest assured, this happens. Any of you slots remember Wiggy? Think back to that spectacularly botched run against Fuchi in '55. Fool managed to get himself on tape, so his face was plastered all over the news. Imagine my non-surprise when his body was found a week later, floating in the harbor, with a double-tap to the back of the head. Anonymous but reliable shadow sources say a man fitting the description of Wiggy's Mr. J hired the services of someone in La Familia to make the hit.

- Sekhmet

For a shadowrunner to make money, he needs Mr. Johnson. But never forget, Mr. Johnson needs us as well. This does not mean, however, that Mr. Johnson can be trusted. Ultimately, Johnson acts in the interests of himself and his employer (usually in that order). That means he may lie, conceal certain truths or intentionally mislead the runners he hires. You should always investigate a Mr. J, so you won't be dealt an unpleasant surprise when he pulls the rug out from underneath you.

- Say that again. Misrepresentation is a necessity to many Johnsons, as they know we'll be doing what we can to investigate them and the situation. A carefully dropped hint, a subtle corporate logo, a manufactured "slip" that seemingly reveals something about Johnsons' background—all of these are red herrings Johnsons use to deceive runners and plant a false trail. No Johnson worth his salt ever leaves a meet without expecting to be tailed. If your Johnson is up front about who he works for, or his name and face show up in corporate databases, be alert that he may be attempting to frame a rival corp using you.

- Wobbly

- Yeah, don't fall for the "concerned citizen" or "bumbling-suit-who's-out-of-his-element" act either. A lot of corp Johnsons excel at acting, so they can play the part and convince a runner team they're acting on behalf of the community or some poor schmuck who needs their help. This gig is especially great for getting runners to do a job for cheap, in a rush or without proper resources.

- Head Hunter

- Keep in mind that Johnsons also have a reputation to protect. If they regularly screw over the runners they hire, no fixer in the world will procure talent for them.

- Charlie

- Assuming the fixer knows who she's dealing with. A lot of corps rotate their Johnsons around to different areas for this very reason.

- Errant Knight

- Not every runner needs a Johnson. There are independent thieves or pirates who simply deal with fences and smugglers, or people who play fast and loose with the stock market—inside traders, corporate raiders and worse—and make their money that way. Then there are mercenaries like me, who go where there's a war and let each side try to outbid each other for our services, or the political hoodlums who go on runs for some sort of cause. Some experienced runners will just keep an eye out for what's hot and either generate their own runs or offer their services to an interested party. Most runners, though, are comfortable with the way things are. It means not having to search for your own work and letting it come to you.

- Hangfire

Smugglers

Smugglers are the crucial links between one sprawl's shadows and the next. A fixer or fence may be able to find or sell a few crates of weapons, but the one who moves the merchandise is the smuggler. Smugglers develop contacts in quite a few places, especially along their favored routes. They tend to go with the flow and travel wherever the goods are going, though some develop specialties in defeating the border security in a specific area and so settle there. Cargo varies, ranging from metahuman (dead or alive), tanks of water or sugar to teslas, electronics or vats of soy products.

- The main profit in smuggling comes from shipping goods that are legal and cheap in one area (Like Cal Hots in the CFS) and reselling them in places where they're illegal (and subsequently more expensive). Actually, a lot of smugglers don't even deal with illegal goods, they just move stuff clandestinely to avoid paying taxes and tariffs or transport hard-to-obtain goods (like water in the CFS or Ute).

- Josie Cruise

Syndicates usually have their own permanent smuggling operations, transferring chips, drugs, weapons, etc from one family, *renge* or *gumi* to another. Most smugglers are a fairly independent bunch, though, preferring to operate on their own schedules and at their own pace.

- Despite the competitive turns things take, the smuggler community is fairly tight-knit. We tend to know who likes to take what sort of routes and when, so if I don't have the time or the "inventory" space, I'll pass word to someone who does. It's a dysfunctional little family, but I wouldn't trade it.

- Ridge Runner

Organized Crime

Organized crime—syndicates—is a world within a world. Each syndicate has its own culture and methods, though their



goals will generally coincide. A Mafia boss will not do the same things the same way as a Yakuza *oyabun*, but where it concerns the takeover of a drug lab or starting up a new brothel, domination of the market will always be the name of the game.

The Mafia and Yakuza are hierarchical, by and large. Triads and Vory are only slightly less so, and the Rings are composed of cells that rarely, if ever, interact with each other. Most syndicates deal with all of their work in-house, using their own smugglers, fences and soldiers, but on occasion they outsource work and hire gang members and shadowrunners.

Compared to the gangs and the street-level independents, the syndicates are in another class. They're the heavyweights on the street scene, the ones everyone else treads carefully around and hopes to avoid. They simply have more resources and more manpower, enough to eradicate smaller criminal groups—though usually the threat of incurring their wrath is enough to deter problems from the small fry.

While there are benefits to working with or for the syndicates, the biggest drawback is the inability to maintain independence. Once you're in, you're in, whether you like it or not. In that sense, they're akin to the gangs, though the resources available to them are significantly greater. The best bet for any runner is to remain polite to any and all syndicate members you come into contact with, and investigate thoroughly (but discreetly) any "opportunities" they pass your way.

- For more information on the syndicates, check out the Underworld SIG.

- Captain Chaos

- So if the Finnegans offer me a job to whack Tony Gianelli ...

- GnuB

- Run, Run fast, run far and get a complete makeover.

- Twitch

REPUTATION

There is a cliché I believe to actually be a truism in the shadows: it's not what you know, but who you know. Reputation can make you someone to know or leave you the lowest of the low. Cultivating the rep you want is a constant work in progress; a careless word or gesture can destroy it. I saw this up close myself at least once, and thankfully I wasn't involved.

Shortly after Jules (who I'll introduce later), Ebekah, Tapper and myself had started running together, we made the acquaintance of a fragger I'll call Dinky. Dinky was a genius with all kinds of electronic gizmos, but he always let his mouth run away with him. He wasn't part of our team, just someone we hired for the job based on a few recommendations.

The Johnson was from Mitsuhamma and wanted us to intercept a shipment of chips coming in from Pueblo. The job itself was null sweat and all went smoothly until payment time. As



we were getting paid, Dinky started firing his mouth off about “injuns” and asking why Johnson didn’t just ask “his Yak friends” to take care of it. There was a look on Johnson’s face and a certain chill in the air that said unmistakably just how badly Dinky had messed up. Tapper found out later that Mr. Johnson was half Zūni, half Japanese, with a deep hatred for the Yakuza.

So why should anyone bother with reputation? There are several answers, but the most important one is “to get ahead.” If you’re a shadowrunner, you won’t get anywhere until you have a solid rep. The big nuyen jobs will not arrive at your doorstep without one. Unless you’re happy with a certain status for the rest of your career, the fastest way to rise is to make people aware of how wiz you are.

- Goes without saying that a bad rep is the fastest way to fall, too, though good and bad are in the eye of the entity you’re trying to impress.

- Social Adept

- Reputation is malleable that way. One well-connected person with mean intentions can sink your reputation if they try hard enough. Countering slander and innuendo can be a difficult thing—especially if the person doing the character assassination had a better rep and more clout than you to start with. On the positive side, if you fail to redeem yourself, you can deep six that identity, move to a new sprawl and start over.

- Psyche

- That’s also why it’s best to measure someone’s rep from more than one source. Online reputation systems, like the ones some Shadowland nodes use, can be really useful for this sort of thing, as you can access how people you know and trust rate people you don’t know and don’t trust.

- Grid Reaper

The first step in establishing a worthy rep is to do what you say you’re going to do. Stick to your word. If you promise to kill someone within a certain timeframe, do so ... and always bring back proof. A reputation is hard to earn if no one knows what you’ve done.

- And this, of course, is where reputation is a double-edged sword. The more people who know what you’ve done, the more exposed you are to gossip, enemies and law enforcement. The key is to make the right people know—like the fixers and Johnsons who supply you with work—and to let the others guess at your mystique.

- Lei Kung

- Don’t confuse doing “what you say you’re going to do” with “never backing down.” Too many runners get all macho when they butt heads and think they’ll lose face if they back down, even if their opponent is obviously superior. A good rep will say you know when to fight, when to run and when to deal.

- Riot Grrrl

- For long-time runners, reputation has a way of turning into urban legend. We’ve all heard of the FastJacks, Argents and Strypers in the world. Heck, some of the stories you’ve heard about them may even be true. But each of them started out somewhere, and they all bleed just like the rest of us.

- D Bunker

Even if you can deliver what you promise, always look for ways to do it better. Deliver sooner than expected, with a smile and wrapped in a stolen bowtie. Not only do you impress others, but it helps you improve your skills by going that extra klick. Reputation is also a motivating factor when it comes to fixing your screw-ups; mistakes have a habit of multiplying when not corrected.

- I have to stick in a word of caution: make sure the pay is good enough for these extra little flourishes, or else everyone’s going to come to expect the same treatment. I might do a little extra to impress a wiz-flash Johnson, but you can bet I won’t bother with Knuckles the brain-dead thug unless he’s got serious clout with someone higher up.

- Archangel

Most importantly, find a niche. If your niche is shooting, that’s not much of a niche. Any joe-boy shadowrunner can fire a gun. Do you shoot with two chromed Savalette Guardians akimbo? Can you make a rubber bullet kill someone instead of stun them? Is your specialty firing military-issue weapons? Then make sure others know this and that you’re the best in the business at it.

As long as you can back up your claims, there is nothing wrong with a little ego-brandishing. This ensures you attract the right kind of jobs for what you do. Being known for pulling off a run in a certain way (quick, stealthy, quiet, loud or splashy) will also get you mileage with the people who want things done in your particular style.

- While this is true, I’d beware of someone who wants a run to be splashy with lots of collateral damage. Chances are, Johnson’s not telling you everything and that can come back to bite you in the hoop.

- Lady Tsung

MOVING ON, MOVING UP

I did eventually leave the Drakes. As Fatima wisely said, it wasn’t a permanent parting, since if they ever needed me they would undoubtedly call. While jobs I did as a Drake were definitely not “low-risk,” they weren’t of the caliber I began to pull off with a shadowrun team. There’s a big difference between bullying a corner store owner for protection money or watching over a crate of CalHots for the *oyabun*—things I participated in with the Drakes—and breaking into a corp executive’s office to leave an unmistakable message about where his loyalties should lie.

I can see why some stay in a gang for years, but my goals were loftier. After I’d established a street rep with the Drakes, I called Six to see if he could hook me up with a real shadowrun.

He said he might, but I needed to come see him first—there was someone he wanted me to talk to. That struck me as odd, though it turned out for the better. To explain, I'm offering the following recorded conversation.

- Odd? You know, I would have taken that as a code phrase for being sold out. But hey, since you're starting to be a big time runner now, I'm sure you know best.
- Prime Runner

• Okay, there's something I really have to say: What the frag is with these chummers who go and pick a name for themselves? And worse, make it something like "Blood Razor" or "Screaming Death"? Let's get actual. The only time I want to hear something like that is if they really earned it, otherwise I'm going to laugh myself into a hernia. There's a few times where you might get to pick a handle, such as on the Matrix, but most of the names I've seen were given. I know Neon Samurai earned his, but Prime Runner has always made me giggle.

- Pistons

//Begin File Attachment//

Six, Julian
23-JUL-62

Six: Glad you showed. Got someone I want you to meet.

Julian: Hoi.

Me: Hoi. How're tricks, Six?

S: Sprawl's done you good. Look, I'll make this quick. You want on a run, it'll be with Julian. He knows his way around and can fix whatever you might glitch.

Me: I may need someone to tell me how it all breaks down, Six, but I'm not a walking disaster. No offense, Julian.

S: Maybe not, but "I didn't mean to" won't work if things do go bad. Non-negotiable.

Me: You're right. I scan.

S: Good. The two of you talk while I take care of a few details. [sound of walking away]

J: So I get to break you in, huh?

Me: Only if you buy me a drink first.

J: Whoa, alright, bad joke. Let me try this again. Hoi, I'm Julian. Most call me Jules. And you are?

Me: Zoe. Sorry, it's been a rough couple of months.

J: Echo that. Well hey ... since we'll be working together—unless you decide you don't want this run so badly anymore—how about you give me an idea of what you can do?

Me: Fair enough. I'm mostly good at talking to people, really. Prior event aside, that is.

J: Everyone's got an off day. Just as long as your off day isn't during a run, it'll be smoother than Grid Guide at low traffic. Anything else?

Me: I shoot a little, I deck a little. Just enough to keep me fed, though. I'm no Fastjack. You?

J: I'm your man when it comes to the guns, no joke. I'm also handy with electronics. I've had to pop a lock or three, growing up.

Me: So how did you get started, anyway? I mean, I knew Six a bit before I met ...

J: The Drakes.

Me: Huh?

J: I said the Drakes. The gang. Only they weren't always the Drakes. They used to be the Dragons, but the slot who ran the gang then, "Blacktooth," got himself geeked.

Me: That explains it. I know them. Wait a minute—you're that Jules? The one the Drakes talk about?

S: [sound of returning footsteps] All taken care of. Are we ready?

J: Primed and ready to fire.

Me: Of course.

S: Wiz. Alright, here's ...

//End File Attachment//

THE PLAN

Naturally, my first time out would be a milk run. The ones that followed were not, and it didn't occur to me until my fifth that not only was I breaking more than a few laws, I actually enjoyed it. There is a thrill during a run I didn't get as a reporter. This left me deeply troubled, but that's for another time. Here, what I'd like to do is discuss what goes down on a typical shadowrun (if there is such a beast). I'd also like to cover what can happen if things foul up and what you can do to either fix them or get far enough away so you don't get splashed with the resulting mess.

GETTING A JOB

Before there can ever be a meet where a run can be arranged and terms negotiated, a runner needs to put herself out there to be hired. Frequently, that means going to various hangouts labeled as "runner bars," or jacking in to various Matrix locations that fulfill the same role, or just making sure there's a clear line of communication between yourself and your fixer(s).

This run began with myself, Tapper and Jules having a few drinks at Club Penumbra. Business had begun picking up at the nightclub again, so it was getting a bit crowded for a Thursday night. None of us were actively looking for business but we weren't about to turn anything down, either. We sat at a booth in one of the darker corners of the nightclub, making sure we could be seen but not conspicuous. We kept a casual eye on the folks in our vicinity as well as on the bar and the door, since either trouble or money could come our way—being prepared for either is always in one's best interests. This paid off later when a slag by the bar, a big beefy guy who looked like he'd be more at home as someone's protection than tossing back a few shots of cheap synthanol, dropped by our table. After a discreet question or two regarding work, names and availability, he dropped us an LTG number and advised us to call it the next night before eight.

- At physical and virtual locations alike, there are plenty of things to be aware of. Your first concern should be security—not only for yourself, but taking into account the needs of a potential employer. Seating arrangements, the availability (or not) of weaponry, privacy and access to security personnel are just a few issues you need to pay attention to.

- Faisal



Your fixer, if you are fortunate enough to know one, can also find you work. Sometimes he'll even do the talking for Johnson, if Mr. J is too inexperienced or he's particularly paranoid about security or putting distance between himself and the work he wants done. Occasionally, Mr. Johnson will contact you directly if he's made it his business to know who you are and where you live—which can be a big problem if he or someone he knows has it in for you—but that doesn't happen often enough to be a regular concern. If Mr. J does contact you directly, chances are your fixer gave him your information because he judged the situation to be relatively safe. For this reason, it's a good idea to have some sort of phone or message drop. Securing or encrypting your transmissions should also go without saying, otherwise you might as well take out a building-sized ad telling everyone what you're up to.

- This is where some runners slip up. If you have a decent decker, hacking into the local message boards to find someone's semi-hidden drop is as easy as digging for loose change in your sofa cushions.
- Mom on the Run

Some brave souls try to find their own work in the shadows. While there are some benefits to this approach, the risks are generally greater than the rewards. You may find yourself in the middle of a set-up, or the opportunity you saw may have already been seen by someone else ... and they've got corporate assets.

Or you can end up underestimating your payout or the opposition you encounter through lack of sufficient knowledge of all the particulars involved.

Still, for those who want to pursue this avenue, all I can say is take business courses. Study the stock markets and trade papers, read every scrap of news and understand what is currently swirling around in the consciousness of the world. The biggest payoffs these days come from several areas: biotech, nanotech, space and magic, but that can change in the blink of an eye. You'd also be advised to know a few fences or corporate buyers. While you could find your own runs, you'd have a tough time wearing the additional hat of "assets resale and distribution."

- And then there are people like me, who can and do make independent work feasible. The key is to always work smart and be a fraggin' professional, even if everything doesn't go according to plan.
- Prime Runner

MEETS

When you have the possibility of a job lined up, then it's time to meet your employer—frequently, Mr. Johnson. Again, meetings can be in the flesh or in the Matrix. Security remains an issue. The more precautions taken, the better. Minding your manners, knowing how to negotiate and what to ask for are also critical for a successful meet. Make time before your arrival at the

locale to find out what you can about the place. Are there cameras nearby? How often does Lone Star pop in, if at all? Are there any security measures on the premises that need to be dealt with in case Johnson hasn't done his homework? How easy is it for anyone to eavesdrop? Can you be traced? Bottom line is, case the area as thoroughly as you can and be prepared for the worst case scenario. You never know if Johnson or someone else might be laying a trap for you.

- This should include radio communications as well. Having a frequency scanner on hand can alert you, giving you anywhere from a few seconds to a few hours heads-up and let you live another day.
- DeeJay

- Also suggested is a white noise generator or some sort of bug jammer. That helps out with security, for all concerned.
- Tinker

- Since we're running down the litany, have your team's magician conjure a watcher or spirit to scan for astral eavesdroppers. Detection spells are useful for avoiding nasty surprises, but cast them in advance, not at the meet itself. Casting spells at meets tends to make people twitchy.
- Silicon Mage

Once you've researched the location, make a checklist for yourself. If you've got a portocomp, that comes with you. Otherwise, make sure you have a p-sec, phone or a decker. Any one of them can check credsticks, if you're given one as an advance payment. They can also store or send information you're given in relation to the job. Before Tapper joined the team, we learned the hard way when it came to being shorted.

At the end of negotiations for a particularly sticky job involving intel on a future simsense studio project, Johnson gave us a credstick which was supposed to carry several thousand nuyen. Neither of us had brought anything to check it, so it wasn't until we went to cash it in that we discovered we'd only been given half of the promised advance. We pulled off the run anyway, but gave Johnson only half of the intel until he coughed up the full amount. We also had another buyer lined up to get this information, so our efforts would be decently recompensed in case our employer decided not to give us what we were owed.

- So young, and already prepared to double-cross your Johnson? I don't know whether to be ashamed or proud.
- Cynic

Weapons are next on the checklist. No one goes unarmed to a meet. Packing too much firepower, however, can mark you as unstable or unprofessional. The only people impressed with a full arsenal are those who are wondering how you carried it all there without blowing off your own toe. If your meet has been scheduled in a location with a no weapons policy, you have three options. One, you can smuggle something in, but be pre-

pared to lose the job if you get caught. Two, go in naked, but keep some well-armed members of the team nearby to rush in and save your hoops if necessary. Three, bring items that can be improvised weaponry (lighters and hair spray, improv clubs), or count on team members who are weapons unto themselves (adepts, magicians, martial artists).

- Wherever you meet, at least make an attempt to dress appropriately. If by some miracle you get invited to the Eye of the Needle restaurant, leave the sprawl leathers and studs at home. The managers and waitstaff might not blink an eye at what you wear if you're there on someone else's say-so, but it will be painfully obvious to everyone with a clue that you're a runner and about to conduct business.
- Social Adept

In our case, Tapper tried tracing the LTG number we'd been given before we called up. It went through a rerouter or two, but this didn't surprise. That it ended up somewhere in Novatech before dead-ending didn't either, but we at least had some idea of what to expect. Using our own scrambled set-up, we called the number and were put in touch with Mr. Johnson, a middle-aged Native American suit with one of those thousand-mile stares. After some short back and forth, we found a neutral location to meet that appealed to both parties. We were both familiar with it, and it had the right mix of security and anonymity to minimize the chance of a setup.

When we arrived, we made sure to do so on time and all together (except for Ebekah, who we thought would be better off keeping a casual astral eye on things). Having never worked for this Mr. Johnson before, we felt it was better to err on the side of caution, keeping disruptions to a minimum. One of our previous employers, a made man, had wanted to start the meeting as soon as possible and became highly perturbed when a team member showed up late. He was loathe to repeat himself and nearly called the whole thing off. We've attempted to avoid that scenario ever since. The less he has to repeat means less chances for security leaks.

- I can't stress enough, at this point, how important it is to know how to behave. It doesn't matter who your Johnson is, if you torque him off you will lose money, one way or another. Keep this in mind—what works on the streets does not work for corps, and vice versa. You could intimidate someone down the street with an icy glare and flared nostrils, but if you pull that around a corp employer, you're going to get stonewalled.
- Nuyen Nick

- Flipside is true as well. If you grew up corp or rich, subtle repartee and barbed witicism is only going to end up getting you a p.o.'d employer if he's street. He may decide he'd rather geek you than work with you again. He won't wait to do it, either, if he can get away with it right then and there.
- Wolf



I'd advise a meet location where you can discreetly obtain a sample of Johnson's spit or hair for a ritual sample. Bars are perfect in this regard. We once paid some slitch to put the moves on our boss-to-be and thereby netted a few strands of hair. Through subtle misdirection and a small image-recorder, we also snapped some pix so we could do some more sleuthing later on.

Most Johnsons know you will try to investigate them. There's little they can do to avoid covert recording, but etiquette dictates that you don't engage in obvious violations of personal privacy or do anything that can be interpreted as a threat (as the collection of a ritual sample would be). If you do, Mr. Johnson and his cohorts, if he's brought any, will get understandably upset, cancel the job and possibly seek to kill you. It's also implicitly understood that anything said during the meet is confidential—it didn't happen—and so any attempts to record it or transmit it to others will be viewed with extreme suspicion and hostility.

- There's a fine line here, and it's important that runners know where it is and not to cross it. Scanning an aura, for example, is generally okay—you're just taking a look, right? But any sort of truth-analyzing or min-probing spells are right out—if you're not careful, you may get geeked as soon as your shamanic mask shows.

- Circumspex

I did most of the talking when it came to negotiations and getting information about the job, which was extracting an Ingersoll Aquaculture researcher from the Ingersoll & Berkeley building downtown. Tapper and Jules asked a few questions here and there and Mr. Johnson, a swarthy man with a faint Pueblo accent, didn't seem to mind. We were chill and carefully avoided anything that might annoy him, like making him repeat himself, talking over each other, or yammering incessantly at him. We did, however, try to squeeze as many particulars as we could out of him.

- As a rule of thumb, never agree to a job until you've got a solid grasp of what's going on. Johnson will stall and do as much as he can to make you commit before he gives you all the details, and that's as it should be. He's naturally worried about who finds out what he's up to, so he'll want to know you're on board before he shows you the full monty. On the other hand, if the Johnson failed to include certain crucial details—like you're expected to kill the extractee even after the ransom is paid—then you should feel justified in not taking the job since he misled you. If you take the job anyway, you sure better get paid accordingly.

- Twist

When the talks come around to pay, be prepared to negotiate. Your employer is going to try to shoot you a low figure and hope you take it. It's your job to try to squeeze as much as you can out of the deal without pushing it too far, so everyone walks away satisfied if not happy. It helps to know what the going rate is for certain types of jobs. While not everyone is on the same level of proficiency, it's still a good litmus test for figuring out what you should be getting. If it sounds like a bum deal, it prob-

ably is. You're justified in walking away if Johnson won't budge. Just make sure your rep doesn't take a hit if you do, because it's tough to shake "primadonna" once you get branded as one. The initial payment offered for the Ingersoll job started at twenty thousand nuyen, bumped up to twenty-four in the end. A good haul for us.

- Repeat after me, children: Half Up Front. Don't ever take a job and walk out of a meet without a good chunk of fresh cred on your stick. If the Johnson backstabs you later, at least you'll have something to show for it.

- Prime Runner

- Pay doesn't have to be restricted to nuyen, either. If Johnson has ties to Ares, see if he can't score you the new gun you've been drooling over or maybe provide you with some medical attention in case you get hit. Cyberware, bioware and nanotech are also attractive deals, especially if the actual surgery to install them is thrown into the pot. Be aware, though, that sometimes the corps like to frag you over when you're the most vulnerable. A new piece of headware could come custom with its own cortex bomb as a neighbor, or your bioware could be turned against you if a weakness or allergy to a particular substance is built into it.

- Nuyen Nick

- The pay scale should also depend on how much support you're getting. A Johnson who gives you nothing but a description of what he wants should pay you a lot more than a Johnson who hands you building blueprints, security audits, profiles of key personnel and keys to a safehouse. On the other hand, never trust something Johnson gives you without verifying it yourself—his own sources may be faulty, and that can get you dead.

- Nightfire

Last but not least, keep alert on the way out of the meet. The Johnson may have his own people checking into you, just as you'll be checking into him—after all, he's making an investment, and he might want some insurance of his own. Check for tails, physical and astral, and go over anything Johnson handed you with a fine-toothed comb and a good bug scanner.

- Not all meets have to be physical. Matrix meets provide a nice safe way to communicate anonymously, without the worries of astral or physical eavesdropping. All sorts of hosts provide secure spots. The main problem, of course, is that you're meeting anonymously—face to face meetings are much better for feeling each other out and establishing that you're not dealing with someone you don't want to be dealing with.

- Glitch

DOING YOUR HOMEWORK

A runner who hasn't even seen the inside of a schoolroom should still understand the importance of homework, or legwork. The suit who hired you may have provided all the information he



KW



is privy to—highly doubtful, but possible—but there’s always more to find out. Evaluate your sources to figure out which might yield additional valuable information and proceed from there. Everything is game: your next-door neighbor, the news (trideo and Matrix), your contacts, someone else’s contacts and so on.

When our team set out to find more information, we began with several things to investigate:

- Our target (in this case, the specific researcher): profile, schedule, friends and family, achievements
- Our opposition (Ingersoll Aquaculture, his corp): security procedures and building floorplans
- Mr. Johnson: who he is, who he works for, why he’s interested
- Other parties with an interest in the target

The last would be a bit harder to investigate, but would become easier once we had more information on the others (especially Mr. Johnson). While Ebekah took pictures of Mr. Johnson and began asking her contacts about him, Tapper went searching for floorplans. Jules went to the building itself to discreetly case the place and note security personnel as well as physical security devices (cameras, scanners, locks). I went to a Matrix café to surf the latest business news to see what I could find out about the company and developments that might concern our extraction target. Over the next two days, we were able to piece together a more complete picture of the situation than Mr. Johnson had initially given us.

- Basically, this boils down to investigating every aspect directly or even tangentially involved in the run. Your primary resources are your contacts, rumor (street, corporate, newspaper), the Matrix, magic, physical surveillance and occasionally, infiltration. Exhaust them all, and you can’t go wrong.

- Newshound

- When checking out your Mr. Johnson, get these questions answered: How much do you know about her? Why are you being hired for this job? Who are her enemies and her allies? How will she benefit from this run beyond what she’s told you? And how much information does she have on you? Your motivation here is to be sure Johnson doesn’t screw you over. And if she does sell you out, then you’ll have ammunition to either get revenge or just lay low and pick your battle for another day.

- FastJack

- There are several kinds of “interested parties” when it comes to shadowruns. They can be your personal rivals, your Johnson’s rivals or anyone else who deems your target ripe for plundering. Each possible group that might get in your way adds exponentially to the hassle of keeping the entire thing quiet, especially if you’ve been paid extra to do so. This necessitates careful prodding around contacts, no matter how trustworthy they may seem. Overzealous or careless research can alert your target or the competition. This can lead to substantially increased security,

unpleasant non-social visits, the termination of your job offer or, quite simply, your demise.

- Argent

ON THE RUN

Now that you’ve investigated everything, you’re ready to go, right? Wrong. Just taking off to do the job is a sure recipe for disaster. You need to plan what to do, who does it, when, sometimes even how, and what to do if the plan begins falling apart. Basically, you need a plan, a back-up plan, a contingency plan and an emergency plan. Cover as many bases as possible. In the event nothing works, it’s more likely it was out of your control or you went in over your head. Assuming you live through it and don’t get arrested, chalk it up as another lesson learned while you recuperate.

- The maxim that no plan ever survives contact with the enemy is guaranteed for shadowruns. In over 10 years of running and hundreds of runs, I’ve only seen one—I repeat, one—go exactly as planned—and I figure that was just my karmic dues for all the ones that were horribly fragged. Still, if you know your team well enough, you’ll know how to respond when things go wrong.

- Prime Runner

Everyone involved should have a clearly defined role. If they don’t, then they assist those who do or stay out of the way. Your decker sits overwatch if he’s not stealing a file or crashing the system. Your rigger takes care of surveillance, takes control of the building or keeps the car running and provides fire support. Your mage or shaman watches the astral, subdues magical security, casts spells or summons spirits. The razorguy, adept, gun bunny or samurai kicks hoop. The tech takes care of locks, breaks out the medkit to patch up team members, disables outer alarms and fixes or jury-rigs communications equipment. Your face takes point when it comes to speaking with the opposition or sleazing past guards.

- Runners can and do overlap in responsibility. Knowing what everyone is supposed to do leaves less room for error, though if you have an intelligent group with a wide range of talents, you have a lot more room for flexibility.

- Silk

We discovered in the course of our investigations that our target was slated to go on a corporate-sponsored vacation to the Carib League. Universal Omnitech, Ingersoll Aquaculture’s parent company, wanted him for an intensive joint project with Aztechnology and wanted to be sure he’d be well rested beforehand. We concluded our best window of opportunity for the extraction would be before he left for the airport, and a rigger would come in handy. Our digging revealed that Novatech employed Mr. Johnson, but would not likely be able to supply a driver. We set out to find our own and with Six’s help contacted an ork rigger named Road Rash (who later permanently joined the team). It meant further dividing the spoils later, but it was more important to get the job done properly.

The core plan was simple: infiltrate the I&B tower, masquerade as the target's "escort" to the airport and sneak him out under false pretenses. Tapper secured a fake corporate ID for me, which combined with my bluffing was supposed to get me inside I&B. Road Rash was in charge of driving the getaway vehicle, Tapper would keep an eye on me from the Matrix via wireless decking, Ebekah would keep an astral watch, and Jules was to watch after the two of them while staying ready to handle any physical trouble or pursuit. Given the circumstances, it was a solid plan. If we ran into trouble, Road Rash was supposed to take the rest of the team and drive off without me, and I'd get out of the building on my own and meet them later in the parking lot of The Omnidome.

Unfortunately, either someone had tipped them off or another attempt had been made to grab our target, because he was surrounded by Aztechnology security guards when I found him. This was a wrinkle we hadn't planned on. As I gave my spiel about "taking over from here" and escorting him to the airport, I was sweating bullets. But I managed to stay frosty while the security contingent stared at me, the old journalistic brass taking over. I even stared back at them with a raised eyebrow. I don't think I completely fooled them, but I instilled enough doubt that they relinquished him to me.

As we left, I could hear them communicating with their superiors, which meant they'd be after us as soon as they found out they'd just been scammed. I rounded the corner, target in tow, and hauled us both into a coat closet with a whispered plea to Tapper or Ebekah to do something to take care of these goons long enough for us to make it out of the building. When I heard the pursuing guards begin to hack and wheeze, I guessed Ebekah had heard me and sent in her air elemental. Less than a minute later, after I was sure they were unconscious, I hightailed us toward the elevator. We had a few minutes before reinforcements would arrive, so there was a reasonable chance we could get out of the building before we were found. Just to be sure, I pulled us off of the elevator at the tenth floor to take the stairs, to throw off the scent a little. Luckily, the target was confused and compliant, and didn't resist.

Still, we were almost intercepted outside the stairwell. Guards were approaching to our left; the service elevator, which would take us to the car in the loading dock, was waiting on our right. I hustled the target toward the elevator, pulling my gun to keep us covered. They couldn't risk hitting their researcher, and with the muzzle of my gun pointed to his head, all they could do was watch as the doors closed and we dropped. Getting into the car and leaving was just as hairy—they'd gotten a hold of some smoke grenades and rubber bullets and peppered the car with them. We managed to get away, however, with Road Rash living up to his name as he plowed over one guard and dragged him a few meters.

- Always know your escape routes and where your ride is waiting. If you prance around looking for your wheels when you should be fleeing the scene, you'll just end up with a prison sentence or an early grave.

- Neon Wraith

- More importantly, don't leave anything behind that could be used as a link in a ritual. You can't always plan when you get to leave, since departing in a hurry is oftentimes a necessity, but if you can, make every effort to get rid of everything—including your trash. Take it with you, contaminate it with chemicals, throw some kind of sterilization spell at it, anything that comes to mind. I've heard of some metamagic that can allow you to destroy it from a distance, but you might not get that luxury.

- Mr. Kleen

One of the biggest mistakes made on a run is to panic. It nearly happened with me when I discovered the target was well guarded, but I kept my cool. Panic attacks do happen, however, and it's important to remain focused on your role in the plan. Panicky people get tunnel vision and make rash decisions, so if they're expendable it may be best to just get them out of the situation. No one wants to be saddled with a job hazard, and that's what you'll make yourself if you continually lose your cool.

Another mistake is to get too cocky, and that can easily happen if the mission looks like a cakewalk. This mistake I *did* make on my second time out. If I hadn't been inclined to listen to Jules, I would have walked into a whole array of motion-sensors linked with concealed turret guns. One wrong step and we would have been ventilated for sure. Should a run be all too easy, you should really start to worry. Check over your surroundings in case there's anything you might have missed, because that's usually going to be the thing that will take you down when you're not watching.

- Something else to keep in mind: a lot of the security grunts you typically come in contact with don't like to get into a death match when the bullets start flying. If they get hurt, they take a powder and try to find help. After all, they want to live to see another day, and usually don't care for their employers enough to die for them. Some runners are like this, too, giving up too easily following a bullet graze on the arm. This can be a severe liability, especially when paired with a tendency to run off at the mouth. You never know what might get leaked for the price of a few bullet wounds. This is not to say a runner should stand even when it looks hopeless—just use good judgment.

- Lex Tallonis

- That reminds me of this one run where me and this trog were supposed to bust in a store and shoot everything up. Typical drek to push a protection racket for the Yaks. Simple, right? We get there, he busts the doors and windows, and I start blasting everything. Didn't take me long before I realized I was hearin' only my guns. Luckily the damage I did was good enough, because I found out afterward the big dummy forgot to load his fraggin' weapons.

- Bender

Whether the job specifies stealing data in the Matrix or raiding a corporate warehouse, most runners will take a little bit extra for themselves if given a chance. If the run goes south,

you'll still have something to show for it, and if it's a success, you have more cash to save, spend on upgrades, use as blackmail and so on. Johnsons really dislike this tendency, though, as it leads to complications and makes you easier to track. As a rule of thumb, unless the Johnson condones it, guard against taking too much or taking things that have unclear value.

- It's also a faux pas to resell any goods you specifically nicked for the Johnson. If the secret prototype plans he had you steal appear all over the Matrix the next day, they're no longer as valuable to him—and he might want his money back.
- Findler-Man

The same can be said about exorbitant amounts of damage during a run. Some runners go a little crazy and want to bust everything up, but if the job doesn't call for it, don't do it. It only ticks people off.

- Use your own judgment on this. If Mr. Johnson says he'd like an intimidating message to be sent, then sometimes destroying a few things can do the job. If he wants someone's Matrix system to be ransacked, though, there's a lot of wiggle room. Still, you better do what the man said before hacking with your sword at everything in sight.
- Tucker

• That's another thing: trust your gut. Some say this is paranoia, but in the shadows, paranoia is healthy; you stay alive much longer by avoiding the things that can kill if you're not careful. If the run is otherwise going smoothly and, despite all your precautions, something doesn't seem right, then it's probably a good idea to leave. You can try to leave after the work is done if you don't want to anger the Johnson or your rep is on the line, but the majority of the time, go when your instincts say go.

- Slamm-O!

• That includes witnesses, something not really mentioned here. There's several ways to handle them, depending on the situation. One is to simply kill them. (I don't think I need to repeat the old adage about how chatty dead men are.) The problem with this method is the possibility for revenge or restitution for a lost asset. Second is to incapacitate them. This avoids the messy issue of revenge, but usually only delays the witnesses' need to spill their guts. The third is to take them as hostages. This can lead to a manhunt, though, and the hassle of taking care of the hostage. Almost always a drag.

- Skaven

• Fourth is you take their ID and promise them and their family a nice home visit at 4am with your monowire whip if they even think about blabbing. That usually works.

- Trogdor

DELIVERING THE GOODS

If you thought finding a job and setting up a meet with Mr. Johnson was a paranoid affair, just wait until you're done with a run and need to unload the goods and collect payment. If you haven't cooled your heels for a stretch, by that time you'll be coming down from the adrenaline rush, feeling twitchy if you've had to exchange gun fire, and then there's the justified suspicion of being tracked to your location. No one can blame you for being on edge.

- It's even worse if Mr. Johnson sold you out, or if you just suspect he did. But none of us are bitter about that.
- Sir Caustic

You can never be too cautious when arranging to meet Mr. Johnson post-run to give him what he asked for and receive payment. In cases where the meet date and place has been prearranged since the run was agreed upon, investigate it thoroughly. Neutral territory is best for both parties concerned. While you would prefer somewhere familiar to you and your team, Mr. J would probably be extremely paranoid to do an exchange on your turf, and vice versa. The time of day for the meet is a critical concern as well, since some places that could be considered neutral during the day could become hostile at night.

• This could also include places that have seasonal activity. For example, sports arenas will be thriving and very public hubs of activity during the peak time of a team's season and otherwise dead during the rest of the year.

- Bronco Fan

• It's a good idea to keep an informal list of good places to use as meeting locations. This way if one of them—particularly the one you wanted to use while you're headed to your meet—is ever compromised, there are others to fall back on. Just never make one of your safehouses or hiding spots into a regular place to meet. That's the quickest way to be compromised once your enemies catch on.

- Prime Runner

• That's a lot of fuss and bother for me, 'specially since I do all my work in the Matrix. Who's got time? I get my fixer to handle the exchange as a trusted third party, and his fifteen percent cut's already figured into my price for the job.

- Priest

We were scheduled to deliver the target the next day, which meant we had to worry about being tracked after we left the Ingersoll & Berkeley tower. I used to think corporations couldn't act outside of their extraterritorial jurisdictions, but I've since seen them violate such laws with impunity. In this case, Universal Omnitech corporate security agents compromised our first safehouse; we still don't know how they traced us. We got away with only a few grazes, though we left the place pretty shot

up and I'm sure some of the neighbors took hits—"collateral damage" to the corp. We were lucky they didn't find out where the meet was to be held, though they did hound us until we discreetly let it be known we were no longer in possession of the personnel they sought.

While there's theoretically no profit for a corporation to perpetually pursue a runner, I have no illusions. They'd probably still geek us if they could, at least until they want our services. If they're especially vindictive, they'll wait until you're actually at the meet and frag up Mr. Johnson as well, to kill two birds with one stone. Even if you think the whole operation went off without a hitch, act as if you're being followed anyway. You never know who may have become interested in the meantime and will try to follow you to see what the deal is.

- The latest rage in the shadows for up-and-coming runners is to find and follow a veteran runner team to a meet in the hope that the team will be impressed and hire them. This tactic may backfire badly, though, if they pick the wrong time or the wrong coat-tails to ride. Some meets are firmly on the side of "you don't want to know."

- Sekhmet

Once everyone's there and you're ready to get down to the business at hand, remember your etiquette from the original meet. Nerves may be a bit strung-out, but showing you can handle business under pressure with a certain amount of chill will earn you repeat business, and not necessarily from the Johnson that originally hired you. I know the Johnson for the Ingersoll job seemed pleased with how we pulled off the run. Regardless, don't let yourself be pushed around if you feel your agreed-upon reimbursement will be insufficient, especially if your employer wasn't completely straight with you on important details you could never have found out on your own. For example, though we'd done a decent amount of legwork, Mr. Johnson probably knew the Aztechnology guards were going to be there and didn't tell us (the Azzies knew our target was looking for new employment, so they were watching closely to make sure he didn't skip out). Fortunately for all concerned, we had managed to pull off the job anyway. Essentially, if Johnson screws you, screw him right back. The easiest way to accomplish this is to simply refuse to give Johnson what he hired you for until payment has been received and verified. This includes renegotiated pay, which means if you have to meet again or otherwise make some arrangements for other delivery of the product, so be it. We renegotiated, asking for an additional 6,000¥ to make it an even 30k¥.

- Do not—I repeat, do not—do something as stupid as walk away with Johnson's money without delivering what you promised. Not only will Johnson come after you, but you can be sure others may as well. Your fixer and other acquaintances will cut you loose. No one wants to be associated with someone who reneges on a deal for no good reason.

- Hammer

- You also don't push Johnson for more when things have more or less gone according to the mutual plan. That just irritates the bugs out of everyone and makes folks less willing to work with you.

- Razor

After all of that work, the moment of truth arrives and you've received your pay. Time to go home yet? No. Were you with credsticks or with nuyen dropped into a secure bank account? Then verify those sticks or have your decker investigate the money trail and the money itself to be sure they weren't tagged with some sort of tracker, data bomb or data phage. Relocate and hide the money right away to ensure it doesn't suddenly evaporate. And take care that some thief isn't waiting in the wings to hold you up for your certified credsticks as soon as your guard is down.

If your pay comes in goods instead, check out the cases they come in, scan the items themselves and hook them up to diagnostics. Bombs can be planted, the gear itself could be defective or they could be set so they have limited usefulness (such as cyberdecks which can ghost through every system but the one belonging to the corp which gave it to you). Find the problems now so they can be corrected, instead of much later when you try to figure out why your Ares Alpha Combatgun keeps jamming.

DOWNTIME

Immediately after you're done with your run and received payment is not a good time for partying, unless you're using parties at crowded locations—especially open concerts and fairs—to get rid of a shadow or three. Besides, you'll need a secure place to crash, particularly if the sprawl suddenly became a more interesting but less safe space to live.

As a general rule, lay low and stick together for at least a week. Tack on more time if there's any chance of bringing down the heat—corporate security or law enforcement—on yourself and your associates. If someone's body odor reeks or he snores, put up with it and keep the group together. Better that than to be beaten to a pulp and hauled in. Just where you choose to do it, inside the sprawl or out of town, is a choice you'll collectively need to make. There are advantages and drawbacks to both. The first lets you wait it out somewhere you're generally familiar with, with your contacts and resources near at hand, but there's the risk of still being traced and caught.

If you leave town to lay low, there is a chance your destination will be a wiz and comfortable place to hide out. But there are also a ton of hassles associated with traveling, especially when you're in the Seattle sprawl: transportation, identification and spending cred without leaving a money trail. Also, anyone hunting you may be camping out at bus stations, train stations and airports, awaiting your arrival.

- Even if you zip out to another sprawl for a vacation, there's likely going to be a shadow scene there, and these days the world is a pretty small place. Don't be surprised if someone decides to



check out the new face in town and happens to discover that Ares has a bounty on your head.

- Cynic

When you are on the down-low, changing your appearance and habits can go a long way towards throwing off the metaphorical bloodhounds. Simple cosmetics, for example, can create subtle but striking changes. A change of hair style and color is more drastic, and can be done with an application of dye or bleach. Eye color is an even more radical change, but can be accomplished with colored eye lenses. Having a mage friend cast a spell to alter your appearance will also work, but for only a limited time and it may not work against cameras or similar devices. If you have the nuyen to spare and have a good contact, you could also arrange for cosmetic surgery. This change is permanent, so any runner pondering this should consider if he ever wants to see his original face staring back at him in the mirror ever again.

Likewise, carefully use your contacts to lay false trails for those following you. Know a few people in a gang? See if they'll spread word about you and your location ... somewhere else.

- Definitely useful if you've got a bounty hunter or assassin on your trail. They're tougher to shake than a corp security team or Mafia enforcement squad for one simple reason—money. To them, you equal dollar signs.

- Nightrunner

- It helps to keep an eye on the shadow-boards and online forums after a run, to see what the buzz is and who's asking questions. You may spot someone who's trying to hunt you down.

- Glitch

Since even a successful run can earn you a wound or three, medical attention is naturally a high priority once you reach your recoup destination. Sometimes a healthy supply of gauze and synthanol along with the biotech program in a medkit is enough to take care of your bloody woes. It's better if someone among you has some medical knowledge or healing spells. The most likely scenario, though, involves wounds serious enough to warrant a doctor. That can mean getting to a friendly back-alley street doc or searching out a clinic or hospital that won't ask questions, whether or not you wave enough nuyen under their noses to alter their records and keep their mouths shut. In the best case scenario, a friendly doc will make house calls.

- Though DocWagon and related companies have cracked down on who can have an account with them, some runners still manage to get one by paying in advance annually, sometimes a few years at a time, if work has been especially lucrative.

- Doc U-Dub

- Don't think having a contract with DocWagon will help, either, if you're caught in an extraterritorial zone. They're a corp too. Pissing off the big dogs is like biting the hand that feeds them. This also means they won't stop police from arresting you either, on

the scene or in the hospital, if you're wanted. Half the time, as in Lone Star's case, they're a corp too.

- Doc

- A word to the wise for anyone considering scamming a DocWagon Super-Platinum service contract: the biomonitor on the wristphone they give you has a different definition of "safe parameters" than you do. What's normal in the course of a shadowrun is not normal in the life of the super rich.

- Medico

- Remember what I said about ritual links? Having an account with DocWagon—which is a corp at heart—is tantamount to telling them where you're going to be for the rest of your life while they have your tissue samples. This doesn't even take into account if they sell these tissue samples to anyone else.

- Mr. Kleen

Once medical needs are met, you may have a mind to sell off any extra swag you managed to grab. What you need is a fence. If you don't know one personally or have an acquaintance who does, now is the time to find one. Again, this will be easier in the sprawl where you know more people, but what if you're out of town? Answer: do what you'd normally do, which is find a good hangout and get to know some of its denizens. Explain your need in brief, minimal detail after that. Expect to have to hand over a portion of your money to this new acquaintance as a "finder's fee."

While you're laying low, it's a good time to repair and restock your equipment. Clean your weapons, smooth off the rough or sharpen the dull edges, run your cyberdeck and cyberware through diagnostics and replace any slagged bits of their internal workings. You never know when opportunity or danger will come knocking, so getting back online should be a priority.

Last but not least, have you thought about what the other boys and girls are doing these days? Advances in cyber/bio/nanotechnology, new guns, upgrades for cyberdecks, the latest and greatest in magical gewgaws are just a few things to think about when considering ways of spending your money. Now is a chance to try to catch up to the state-of-the-art, though by the following week all of these things could be obsolete to those who follow the SOTA slavishly. Even if you can't afford the gadgets, there are things to read all the time which can improve your knowledge on a few subjects. Turning on the trideo will keep you up to date with the news, with the potential added benefit of letting you know when it may be safe to stop hiding out, or if moving to another location might be smarter. Use the time as well to get into better shape and practice the skills you know until you can perform them in your sleep.

- Upgrading your cyberware while you're really supposed to be hiding out is not necessarily smart. The surgeons who perform the operation may not know you, but if they need to consult with your so-called "regular doctor," you can bet someone you didn't intend on discovering you, is going to figure out where you are.

- Hangfire

THE ENEMY

Shortly after my third shadowrun, I realized this exposé wouldn't be complete without a picture of those people shadowrunners come into conflict with the most. I call them "the Enemy," not because this is what most runners label them, but to give a general yet unmistakable idea of how these people are viewed. But why are they seen this way? The following interview I set up may help shed some light.

//Begin File Attachment//

INTERVIEW WITH SGT. KELLY MACDONALD, FEDERATED-BOEING SECURITY
27-OCT-62

Me: Thank you for agreeing to this interview, Sergeant.

Sgt. MacDonald: It's my pleasure. I've enjoyed NewsNet for quite a while.

Me: First, can you give me a basic run-down on your job and what you do?

Sgt. MacDonald: Sure. Well, here at this particular facility, I work with other guards in one of several units. We patrol inside and outside the facility, rotating who does what several times within a shift. While patrolling, there is a checklist of things we need to regularly inspect to either ensure proper working order or maintain a minimum prescribed level of security. We also respond to emergency situations, such as fire or medical, so we get some training in how to be a first respondent. On occasion we have to deal with threats—

Me: Threats?

Sgt. MacDonald: Yes, I was just getting to that, though understandably I can't go into too much detail since it's proprietary Federated-Boeing information.

Me: Of course, I'm sorry. Please continue.

Sgt. MacDonald: Most of the time, when I say threats, I mean those things that are a threat to building security and personnel safety. Plenty of things can fall into this category, such as equipment failure or assailants who target Federated-Boeing personnel on or as they are departing company territory.

Me: I see what you mean. My guess is you deal with the second situation you described much more often than the first.

Sgt. MacDonald: Actually it all evens out, but since equipment is much more easily replaceable than personnel, our emphasis and priorities lay with life-threatening situations.

Me: Let me pose a hypothetical situation. Let's suppose this facility became the target of a shadowrun. What would you do first?

Sgt. MacDonald: Depends on the situation at hand, which is proprietary information. But if you don't mind a general response ... ?

Me: No, please, go ahead.

Sgt. MacDonald: The first thing any security guard does is assess the situation so he can react accordingly. From there, he can attempt damage control, loss prevention and see to personnel safety.

Me: When you say "damage control," what do you mean?

Sgt. MacDonald: Taking control of the situation if at all possible. Usually that will entail securing the area to minimize spillover elsewhere, salvaging broken equipment, remedying

safety hazards such as fires or out of control hoses and subduing or terminating intruders depending on the severity of the threat they pose.

Me: Sounds exciting. Of those, which takes precedence?

Sgt. MacDonald: I can't answer that.

Me: Would it pertain to "the intruders?"

Sgt. MacDonald: I'm sorry, ma'am, I can't answer that. If you want more information, you'll need to see the Security Director at our main offices.

Me: How about this, then? Isn't it true, of all the threats you've listed, Federated-Boeing lists shadowrunners at number one, even beating out a complete systems failure—which carries the very real threat of destroying this entire facility due to the nature of the products this company manufactures?

Sgt. MacDonald: I have no answer. Please see the Security Director for your answer.

Me: Sergeant, what's your personal opinion of shadowrunners?

Sgt. MacDonald: Personal? Well, speaking solely on my own behalf, I'd have to say I consider them to be terrorists. They brazenly commit crimes and threaten the lives and livelihood of hard-working people.

Me: To your knowledge, Sergeant, has Federated-Boeing ever hired shadowrunners?

Sgt. MacDonald: I'm, ah, certain ... ah, you'll need to ask the Security Direc—

Me: Thank you for your candor, Sergeant, and I apologize for pushing so hard. I may eventually speak with your Security Director.

Sgt. MacDonald: That's quite alright, I'm simply doing my job.

//End File Attachment//

- And here I thought wageslaves were the corporate drones.
- Edge

- We just do tedious slave labor. If you want to see scary, tangle with Renraku's Red Samurai. It's like all traces of individuality and caring go out the window when they go through training. No wonder they were so easily subverted during the arcology disaster.
- Andersen

As shown, corporate security tends to take an impersonal view toward shadowrunner "threats." To them, shadowrunners are a nebulous enemy force—a simple "us versus them" mentality. Dealing with them is a part of a job to be done, much like others would file a report, take out the trash or fix a car. The standard corpsec officer feels no need to understand shadowrunners or their motivations; they're worlds apart. It's a simple black-and-white crime and decency issue.

Cops who walk a beat or deal with any particular neighborhood for extended periods tend to have more contact with the criminal element, and so are more likely to develop personal attitudes and prejudices. Street cops may feel personally responsible for everything happening in their precinct and will lay blame on the law-breakers for causing trouble. With few exceptions, they simply don't care that the punk holding up the corner store is desperate and doesn't have



options. It doesn't matter that he has no SIN to get a job or that his chip habit stems from despair at having no future. All that concerns them is that he's breaking a law, and law-breakers are to be punished. It's a process of blaming the symptoms of the problem—the crime, the drug and chip abuse, the violence—rather than addressing the root causes of the problem—the inequalities in society that lead people with no other options to desperation.

- Not all of us "criminals" are that way of our own choosing. Sometimes when a chummer tries to stand up for what's right, he gets branded a traitor. Lone Star's got a history of this.
- Wolf

Whether or not this is an acceptable attitude for the police to adopt, to most SINless, gangers and shadowrunners, this is part of what makes the cops their enemy—aside from police attempts to jail, beat or kill them. It's obvious what the police role in society is when they use lethal force to protect corporate property but don't lift a finger to help out starving SINless street people. No criminal is a saint, but he has quite a few reasons to label law enforcement as a foe. Street folk are resentful of the harassing stops and searches cops give them, and the heavy police presence in some neighborhoods reeks to them of paramilitary occupation. Women, metahumans, homosexuals, changelings and minority cultural groups tend to see some of the worst behavior from police, deserved or not. Add on the cor-

ruption and abuse of power rampant in some jurisdictions, and you can see why the police are treated as just another criminal syndicate in some areas.

- This antagonism between cops and SINless is not always a consistent thing. People are contradictory creatures after all, and some cops have a completely different personality off-duty. I know a corner tavern in Tacoma where cops and mobsters drink side by side.
- Wally the Hook

KNOW THINE ENEMY

Under this umbrella heading, there are several different groups, each with slightly different motives and methods but all with the same goal: to prevent shadowrunners from doing what they do. Sometimes this means killing a runner from a distance or up close; sometimes it just means subduing him and taking him to someone else who'll lock him up. Nearly all of them, however, will use any means necessary, even if that means overstepping their legal bounds.

Corporate Security

Corporate security is either handled by an in-house security division or contracted from a security provider such as Knight Errant. The main difference is that if a shadowrunner kills a contracted security guard, the security provider will feel the loss. A security guard employed by the corp itself is considered a citizen

(if extraterritorial) and company asset, so the corp will feel justified in nailing the runner to the plascrete wall.

What corporate security can do to a shadowrunner depends somewhat on the status of the company it protects. If it's A-level and below, they can arrest you and keep you long enough to find out what you've done before remanding you to the custody of a municipal or federal law enforcement agency, which will handle the rest of your adjudication and incarceration. If it's AA and above, however, extraterritoriality means they can do with you what they like without recourse, according to their own laws and procedures. You could be beaten, tortured, indentured or summarily executed.

In either case, their jurisdiction is solely on corporate property, and a shadowrunner can use this to her advantage. Most of the time, the local law enforcement doesn't like corporate security straying from their territory, even in pursuit of a felon. In cases like these the reverse is also true, though I wouldn't call it wise to stray onto corporate property. They're just as likely to shoot you as look at you if they don't want you there, whereas in the public domain you have the illusion of "justice" on your side (meaning they're not supposed to shoot you unless you shoot first, but whose word would be believed should it go to court?). But there are enough police no matter where you go that will turn a blind eye to corporate retribution, so a shadowrunner is advised to watch out for herself.

- Another advantage for would-be corporate intruders is if the company has an SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) manual for their security. Intelligent runners can use this manual to anticipate responses and response times—an invaluable during planning and when considering back-up and contingency plans. On occasion, this can provide information on how well-armed and armored security will be as well. Securing patrol schedules and other bits of related information can mean the difference between a botched and a smooth, low-incident run.

- Roofrat

Law Enforcement

This generic category covers the bulk of public or privatized municipal police forces, in addition to county, state, federal and military agencies. In theory, law enforcement has more restrictions when dealing with shadowrunners than regular corporate security. There are certain procedures to follow and steps to take, and deliberately avoiding them or tampering with the process can backfire on the cop or agent who tries. The police usually know all of these rules and regulations inside and out, however, and there's quite a bit of leeway in what they can do. They also tend to have the weight of judicial and media opinion on their side (despite untold counts of corruption and a severe lack of public confidence), simply because they are the forces that keep anarchy at bay.

- In the face of rising civil disturbances and violence, the majority of police forces have been paramilitarized. Body armor, urban assault vehicles and heavy firearms are common, and each agency has several units trained, equipped and heavily armed

against riots, insurrections, terrorist actions, natural disasters and major criminal threats—like shadowrunners.

- SPD

Company Men

Company men are the corporate answer to shadowrunners. Their status lies in quasi-legal gray areas, depending on how the corp defines their duties. Some company men are little more than highly-trained security while others conduct black operations on behalf of corporate interests. They are charged with protecting company assets, countering intrusion threats from shadowrunners, conducting corporate espionage and eliminating problematic "deniable assets."

Now and then, a company man may be the one hiring shadowrunners, or running alongside. Most often, however, company men are used against shadowrunners. They are specifically useful when a situation has become messy and someone trusted and close needs to clean it up. Some companies even hire runners to work for their company or keep them on retainer for certain jobs, doing the same things they did before but exclusively for the corp and with a measure of protection. In general, it's expected that company men will be equal or superior to shadowrunner teams in skill and ability.

- The drawback to company men, of course, is that they're less deniable than shadowrunners and can sometimes be traced back to the corp. For this reason, most corps go out of their way to zero out the old IDs of company men, plant new and false backgrounds, and equip them with gear that's not standard issue for that corp.

- Errant Knight

Bounty Hunters

Another quasi-legal profession, bounty hunters work hand-in-glove with bail bondsmen and the police. Bounty hunters get their jobs from bail bondsmen, who pays a bail bond to the court to insure a criminal will show up for his scheduled court appearance after being set free. If he shows, the bail money is refunded. If he doesn't show up, the bail bondsman contacts a bounty hunter and offers a percentage of the bail as payment to bring the criminal in. Considering some of the high bails set, it's no wonder bounty hunting can be a lucrative job. Since bounty hunters don't have the force and authority of law behind them, however, they can resort to all manner of ways to capture their skip, including traveling anywhere outside of the jurisdiction in which the criminal's trial is set. Some shadowrunners have become bounty hunters and vice versa.

- I know a bounty hunter who works for the Mafia now and then. He's something of a glorified leg-breaker, since his job is to find those people the Family wishes to "speak" with, no matter where they hide. He makes about the same amount of money as he would from a bail-jumper, but working for the Mafia means he'll have their assistance, protection and access to equipment which has "fallen" off of a truck.

- Pensive

Assassins

There's not much that can be said here that anyone hasn't thought of before. Assassins, in general, have been around for a very long time. They can be mercenary, with services for hire to anyone, or owe allegiance to a particular organization or company. This sort of profession lands squarely in the black, with no recognizable legal protection. Like the company man and the bounty hunter, shadowrunners can either be the target of one or become one. Assassins need to be extremely good at what they do, and that can separate them from the rest of the shadows, let alone the rest of metahumanity. A single failure can mean the loss of their reputation and career.

- It's heavier than that. An assassin who misses the mark usually ends up with a bounty on his own head.
- Peri
- Wetwork isn't always as simple as killing someone. Usually it involves killing someone in a specific way—most often in a manner that seems like an accident or natural causes. That kind of a job takes actual skill, especially if the mark is heavily protected.
- Tailor
- Most assassins tend to be scary people. We're talking extended-career runners who have lost all sense of empathy, mercenary veterans with haunted eyes, or soulless soldiers who were bred and trained for decades to serve as elite killers for their masters. Nasty fraggers, all of them.
- Cypher

THE LAW IN THE SHADOWS

Every Seattle resident has, at some time or another, seen Lone Star or the Seattle Metroplex Guard patrol the streets or haul people in to question them or arrest them in connection with criminal activity. These incidents, however, only touch the tip of the criminal iceberg. When cops or corporate security agents want to know what's coming from the shadows in order to prevent it, they take a more active—or rather, pro-active—role in the shadows themselves.

Monitoring

The first option available to law enforcement is to monitor the shadows. The tools at their disposal are informants, surveillance and data-mining from shadowy Matrix resources like the famed Shadowland.

Forget the trideo stereotype of suave undercover corpsec agents who skillfully maneuver their way into a shadowrunning team's trust. Actual undercover infiltrators are a rarity in the shadows; with the exception of critical cases, such an operation is too manpower intensive, expensive and risky for most security and police agencies. One mistake can bust an operation wide open and put the lives of security personnel at risk.

- Plus too many undercover cops end up dirty—the temptation is too great.
- SPD

Rather than fabricating IDs and backgrounds that may be compromised, it is easier for the cops to find someone who is already immersed in the shadows and pressure them to snitch, paying them for useful information. There is no shortage of shadow denizens with personal problems—chip and drug habits, heavy debts, psychiatric or medical dysfunctions—that can be used as leverage, not to mention the simple deal of exchanging arrest records and prison time for a lifetime of ratting people out. The drawback to this scheme is that informants have a monetary incentive to provide information—meaning that most of them aren't adverse to spilling unverified details or just making things up. The police know this, so they never completely trust Sammy the Squatter Snitch—but they'll still listen to him sing like a bird if it suits their purposes.

- The other problem with snitches is that since they have immunity to prosecution, they know they can get away with murder—sometimes literally. Some of them really let this go to their head, embarking on crime and violence sprees until someone takes them down.
- Covington
- Let's not forget that informants aren't just used to collect info. The cops and corps already have them wrapped around their finger, so it's null sweat to pressure them into spreading misinformation, stealing goods, planting bugs, tracking devices or items for frame-ups, and all sorts of other shady work. It's like having your own pet shadowrunner.
- Ex-Star
- The worst Judases are the ones who have been turned by exposure to psychotropic black IC. These poor slags don't even realize they're turning in friends because the conditioning blocks out their memory. Some of these turncoats have gone for years before they were caught.
- FastJack
- Snitches get no mercy in the shadows. If they're exposed, they're fair game.
- Ginsu

Aside from standard surveillance of known runners and random details received from regular people who called in to a "crimestoppers" hotline or in response to an exposé on a real-crime trid show, police and corporate security also have all of the same information sources at their disposal as shadowrunners do: data havens and info brokers. It's a sure bet that company or police deckers have the skill and guts to make it onto Shadowland, which can be a smorgasbord to anyone who knows how to search properly.

- And I'm living proof.
- SPD

- Believe it or not, but law enforcement sometimes monitors the shadows to keep an eye out for talent. Those feel-good stories about rehabilitating some kid off the street and into a "normal" life where he becomes a good cop? Pure PR spin. That kid probably hacked half of their system with one hand cuffed, meaning they'll want him as a good little police decker. He gets only so much "rehabilitation" as he needs to know who's in charge—them.
- Neon Wraith

BUYING THE LAW

As any denizen of the shadows will tell you, it's obvious that not all corporate security and police are on the up-and-up. Corporate security will always be looking for the corp's bottom line, while greed and the intoxicating allure of power are too strong for many underpaid and overworked police officers to resist. While this means that shadowrunners may have cops or corpsec as their primary competitors for shadowbiz, it also means that sometimes the law can be bought.

Most corruption starts small: a little bribe to look the other way, leaking police data to an old friend or pocketing some confiscated goods and nuyen. Eventually it leads to taking kickbacks on protection rackets, stealing from the evidence lockers, selling files to info brokers or running their own rackets on criminals and dealers. Shadowrunners can take advantage of this, but they need to watch out that the dirty cop doesn't decide that selling a runner out is more profitable than what the runner can possibly offer him.

- By my experience, over half of the Lone Star cops in Seattle are on the take. With a few of those cops, it's become a game to see who can screw who over faster. Internal Affairs is so bogged down with work that the best they can do is try to nail the worst ones.
- X-Star
- It can be extremely profitable to run a blackmail job on a dirty cop—some of these pigs can rival a veteran runner's rap sheet. But blackmail usually only works on the slightly-tainted cops, the ones who might still feel some guilt. The ones with hardcore corruption will just treat you as a threat.
- Wiley
- Another source runners can tap are ex-cops and former company men, especially if the retirement was not voluntary. They frequently have a plethora of stories to tell, rich in useful information and invaluable when planning a run. They can also help out when you want to avoid getting caught.
- Errant Knight

GETTING CAUGHT

Everyone fears getting caught and will do anything to avoid it. But there comes a time when everything that can be done is exhausted and a shadowrunner has nowhere left to run, leaving any number of consequences when the law catches up with her. Since the most common is still prison—or as some call it, "school"—then it must be covered, along with the repercussions. As one old jailbird said to me once, the whole thing doesn't end once you're inside.

Most of the methods used to avoid getting caught I've mentioned earlier in this document—having a plan, watching out for tails, leaving town, changing one's appearance—also applies to avoiding capture by the police. What also works are having corrupt cops watching out for you and warning you of a potential bust. Or, as distasteful as it sounds, a runner could manage to shift the attention on him to someone else in a kind of bait and switch. Run far and fast enough, and you could outdistance your pursuers.

- If the rest of the shadows finds out, however, your reputation can take a big dive. We may not always buy that "honor among thieves" drek, but it's a truism. You keep your mouth shut when it comes to your chummers. Unless, of course, the slag was someone everyone else hated, in which case your rep just went up.
- Sonny D

No one can run forever, though. When caught, there are several options: escape, fight or give up. Escape could happen with the right opportunity, tools and friends available and willing to help, but it requires patient observation, contact with someone to relay messages and knowing how to hide things (physically or mentally). Fighting it always means going to court and trying to contest any or all charges brought against you, but that winds up being a losing battle—the highest-paid lawyers tend to win, and guess who has more money? So what's left is giving up.

- That's more than a little fatalistic. Most fraggers I know would go kicking and screaming all the way.
- Razor

Prisons have "improved" due to privatization and advances in state-of-the-art technology, making lockdowns, control units, experimental drugs, sims and behavior modification programs more common than they used to be. There are still problems, though, with overcrowding, increased crime rates and understaffing. Add the unique social structures inside prisons and you understand why criminals call it "going to school." With anecdotes to share, fitness equipment to abuse and new contacts to make, one could be tempted to think some deliberately let themselves get caught in order to take advantage of these "amenities" (as well as regular meals and a regular place to sleep). Social status can rise or fall depending on the crimes committed, how tough others perceive you to be and the people you know. A microcosm of the outside world.

- It may be a learning opportunity, but prison is still hell, especially if you end up in a corp one with "experimental programs." The only pretense they still make towards "rehabilitation" is with frightening "behavior modification" programs—and these are likely to leave you brain-fried, drug-addicted or zoned out in a programmed "good citizen" personality loop. Even the standard joints stick you on sims most of the time to keep you pacified, and Ghost help you if you're a magician. And then there's the boredom, the violence, the gang politics, the rapes ... need I go on?
- Giddings



- Some have managed to avoid prison by sheer dint of servitude. Once law enforcement catches them, they're asked to do a job. It should go without saying most of these poor souls are regarded as Judases as well.
- X-Star

For those who are released from prison, there is a period of re-adjustment that many do not survive. Isolated from society for so long, many ex-cons simply can't fit back in and turn to addiction, suicide or self-defeating crimes that land them right back inside. Being labeled with a criminal SIN doesn't help, as any

hope of ever going straight is now thwarted—only employers hiring for the most back-breaking and dangerous jobs don't seem to care about the rap sheet.

- And then there are those runners who come out of the joint with a bigger and badder rep.
- Snake

THE CREW

Six months after I began this series of investigations, I'd discovered what it was like to live on the street, to be a member of a gang, to see what it was like on a shadowrun and to see how law enforcement intersected with the shadow community. But the most important thing I'd done was become a member of a shadowrunner team. In the beginning, the inner dynamics of the team hadn't seemed important. But after Six introduced me to Jules and I began working with him consistently, my opinion changed. Coupled with my growing enjoyment of this lifestyle, exploring this dynamic felt right and yet wrong. The need to logically explore this for the sake of my work for NewsNet eventually won out. I started the ball rolling with the most basic questions: 1) how and 2) why teams, or crews, are formed.

As I discovered, most crews form one of two ways. First, two or more runners go looking for more people to join them in a semi-permanent grouping of talent. This was the direction Jules and I took, with mixed success since we found the members we wanted right under our noses. The second way requires some luck—a thrown-together team discovers they work well together and decide to

remain a team from then on. More effort is involved in the first, as the core members have to recruit others, which can take quite a bit of time. There's also a risk of putting up with unprofessional runners while searching for ones who fulfill the needs of the team, but as I discovered, the risk and effort is well worth the occasional problem along the way.

- There's nothing like knowing you've got a good, solid crew to depend on. Who else will be there for you?
- Sonny D

Why put together a permanent crew? Peace of mind and convenience are the biggest reasons. When there's a permanent crew, there're no worries about working with raw newbies or chiphead idiots. You know everyone on the team, and you know they're reliable and can do their job well. Some prefer to hear about the job and then simply go from there, instead of dealing with new people every time and sacrificing efficiency for yet another round of "Getting to Know You." Becoming part of an established team can also be a reputation-booster.

So what makes a good crew? Using mine as a template, I'd say a good mix of skills and personalities. Everyone doesn't have to get along, but you can't constantly be at each other's throats either. Use common sense when recruiting people. If you're a predominantly human group with an ork or troll, then it's not a good idea to bring in some slot who used to work for the Humanis Policlub. A good crew will also figure out a way to come to a compromise on issues so they benefit everyone. Primadonnas are anathema, since their names may as well be "I" for how often they use it. A good crew will also work seamlessly together when everyone's talents are accounted for in the plan. In fact, recognizing when a job just won't suit your team's talents is essential to avoid disaster.

- I've seen a few odd teams put together for some odd jobs. One run I heard of needed a coordinated onsite attack on a particular Matrix system. A group of three deckers and two razorguys to watch over the deckers' meat bodies and deal with visitors was temporarily formed and worked extremely well. I don't think it could have been pulled off with another combination of talent.
- Lefty

MATERIAL MATTERS

The difference between worrying about safehouses, repairing gear or reasonable payment rates for a crew versus just one person is a matter of degree. What is a simple issue for one becomes complicated the more people you add.

The number one problem is living quarters, safehouses and other boltholes. Some group members like to maintain a separate lifestyle than the rest of the crew. Some prefer to have everyone piled in together to save nuyen on food and rent, among other things. Each can get more than a little hot under the collar when it's suggested one arrangement is better than another. Truthfully, there are pros and cons to each.

The biggest point in favor of individual residences is that it makes it more difficult for the whole team to be picked up at once should a surprise raid happen. In fact, some runners keep their personal lives completely private, even from their team, never giving away where they live or anything that might compromise their personal security.

There is also concern about nuyen. If one person's money is always going toward expensive living arrangements, it makes it difficult when it's time to pony up for communal gear and other team-related needs. Having everyone living together can obviate that complication. It's not an issue however, when you're

packed in together at the safehouse and waiting out a corporate manhunt team.. The biggest issue there is ensuring it's spacious and discreet enough to meet the crew's needs, while possessing the potential for good security.

- Living together, as runner teams and married couples can tell you, can also greatly magnify each person's faults when seen up close, day in and day out. It's a good team that can not only survive this, but joke about it without going on a murder spree.
- Socio Pat

Group assets can also be either a big headache or just background noise, depending on how willing your crew is to pool resources and take good care of them. This includes replacing and repairing them after a shadowrun. Team vehicles fall into this category. Whether or not you have a rigger in the group, the care of the vehicle is the team's responsibility, even if it's only ensuring the tank's kept filled and the tires are in good working order. It's no use having it around if it can't be driven anywhere.

Compensation the crew can agree upon should be determined as far in advance as possible, because having it crop up in the middle of negotiations with Mr. Johnson is the wrong time. Negotiations are when the crew needs to present a united front, and bickering and complaining about someone getting paid more than someone else gives the opposite impression. Since Johnsons usually set the fee on the run itself and the danger involved, larger teams will need to split the pot more and get less per runner. Sometimes the decreased pay is worth it for the extra set of eyes and hands. If a run goes badly and some members of the team require serious medical attention, most teams will give the lion's share of the haul to whoever gets hit hardest and divide the rest equally.

- Even a good team will have those who don't know how to save their money and use it as an excuse to complain about others "always" having more. You can try helping them figure out what they're doing with their money, but ultimately it's not your job to handle it for them.
- The Chromed Accountant

As important as it is to know the right people in the shadows, when it comes to group contacts, I've experienced first hand how maintaining those relationships can sometimes fall to the wayside. Keeping tabs with your fixer is all well and good, but if you never call your mechanic or your friend with the Mafia until you have a problem, your team may find its support eroding. Face it, even a call to hang out and get a drink at some cheap bar can do wonders for making sure your contacts know they're appreciated. At the same time, prepare to reciprocate favors. Friends are not a one-way pipeline of favors, tips and rumors all going to you and your team. In fact, giving an occasional free favor may net you more loyalty than you know until the time for its testing crops up. Take care of those you know and they will in turn take care of you.



- I know a secretary inside of Yamatetsu who's a single mother taking care of three kids, and occasionally she's dropped hints and things into my lap. So in return, I sometimes send her kids toys for Christmas or toss her some nuyen so she can get extra food or something nice to wear.

- Tacoma Angel

INTERPERSONAL ISSUES

As I hinted earlier, each member of the crew has a unique and necessary role. Money concerns and group assets are a part of taking care of the rewards, too, but knowing when to separate work from reward or play when either of these overlap is just as vital as knowing when someone's crossed the line from the business to the personal and how to deal with it.

I've found a few shadowrunners who approach a shadowrun as something fun to do with their time. It's not an entirely bad approach, because it can make a nasty job at least bearable. But there are those who literally can't seem to separate one from the other, and it can cause problems when the run is sensitive or on a strict schedule. The most obvious answer would be to not run with them, but when they're the closest you have to an expert in a given field, it's a sticky situation and should be handled with care. Your chummer may simply need a vivid reminder of the very real pitfalls of a run gone bad. How you choose to handle it is up to your group and your chummer's personality.

- In ours, just reminding him of a dead acquaintance—his cousin, the group's friend and former gunsmith—does the trick. Cheap shot, but it works.

- Tangent

Now and then, your crew may need to be reminded that if you work hard, you might actually get to play hard. In a runner's career, all work and no play doesn't make Jack a dull boy, but a dead boy. Without periods of rest and relaxation, the entire group's equilibrium will fall to pieces. No one will be able to perform well at anything, much less together. Naturally, you won't be able to drop by the local dance club if you're running from Triad enforcers, but when the danger has passed you could always go back for dancing, drinking and any other bits of fun. Take care you don't swing into the opposite direction, either. All play and no work means you get paid null and squat.

Not every runner's life is completely in the shadows. Hobbies, "outside" friends and family and even romantic interests are vital parts of anyone's life. Mixing the two, however, isn't safe. Keeping a wall between your lives is best.

- Even runners regarded as professionals still have problems with this, so don't think it's only wannabes who encounter this situation. In fact, if it doesn't crop up a minimum of three or four times in your whole career, I'd have to congratulate you or wonder what you were doing wrong or right.

- Prime Runner

- You've got a hobby outside of running? I'm shocked.

- Black-Eyed Susan

- You bet I do. Meet me at six.

- Prime Runner

Lives outside of the shadows can also be a problem, particularly if any member of your crew is leading a double life, with or without a legit SIN. In many cases, this "other" life can intrude into work and even the team's lives, depending on the situation and severity of the overlap. In my case ... well, let's just say I'm working on it, and I'm well aware of the inherent dangers. Some of you or your crew members may not be and need to figure out how to handle spillover before it happens. Blackmail is one outcome you don't want, and neither is the complete destruction of both your shadow and daylight lives. If you risk the dangers and pursue the double life and then run into problems, you need to figure out when and how to come clean to someone on either side to minimize the damage.

- I knew one chummer who was a rich son of a bitch and liked the thrill of stealing all kinds of drek. He didn't want to leave his rich life, so he just created an extra one in the shadows. If he'd ever been pressured to give up one of them, you can bet he'd give up the shadow life in a nanosecond, even though he'd miss it. Being rich was more important.

- Crown

Last but far from being least is the issue of relationships within the team. Whether it's family or a romantic entanglement, there are benefits and drawbacks. To outline the worst case scenario first, they can be used against you if someone ever wanted to convince you to do something you normally would say "no" to, such as betraying the team, double-crossing Mr. Johnson or sabotaging a shadowrun. Most importantly, however, it robs you of a crucial team member when you may need him the most. It can also create strife and division within the team if the rest of the members either don't like them or resent having the relationship put before the welfare of the team. Over-protectiveness toward a fellow teammate, or constantly putting them in the line of fire to prove you aren't playing favorites are both equally bad for team morale. What it boils down to is knowing when your brother or your lover is just another part of the crew.

If the problem is worked out, however, then having a family member or lover in the team can only improve how well your team works together. There's a reassurance that, even if by some chance the team falls apart, you still have them around to watch your back and be there for you.

My crew—me, Jules, our mage Ebekah, our decker Tapper and our man with the plan, Road Rash—has been a second family to me. Leaving them will be the hardest decision I have ever had to make.

SUMMARY

In the end, I spent a year in the shadows. It would be trite to say it's been an eye-opening experience. The cliché doesn't even come close. No one should be surprised that the standard media images of shadowrunners and other sprawl denizens are nothing but cardboard cut-outs abused to make nuyen. In my search for something or someone to blame for the horrible shooting of a little girl, I found that things like that happened every day. In no way did this revelation lessen the emotional impact for me, though on some days it was difficult to care when my own life was on the line.

I used to think people in the shadows just didn't care, had no sense of empathy. What I discovered instead is that many of them do. It just gets lost, buried, denied, killed or directed elsewhere along the way. When you see friends and loved ones living in hopeless, abject poverty and in fear for their lives, it's impossible to remain positive.

To those who I came to know and who may feel I've wronged them, I apologize, though that may provide no consolation for the betrayal they may feel. Perhaps knowing that my publication of this piece may lead to my arrest for my crimes may give them satisfaction. Personally I doubt it, but then again, those aren't the people I'm concerned about.

For anyone worried about Six selling you out, turning Judas or anything like that: don't even think it. He was paid, and not once did he ever truly lie about my situation with the exception of where I came from or the location of my parents, who no doubt would be ashamed to hear what I've done. I've come to accept that possibility. They may in time forgive me, but can I forgive myself?

I think so ... but only time will tell.

—Abigail "Zoe" Danvers

• I don't know what to say. I met Zoe and I liked her, but like anyone else I can't help but feel betrayed. What she said about Six just didn't help. She recorded me without my knowledge, so who else might she have sold information about me?

• Fatima

• There are plenty of sources, and more spring up every day. Even if you haven't pissed them off yet, chances are you eventually will and without meaning to. It's all about work, after all, not feelings. Get used to it.

• Neon Wraith

• Yeah, and you're cryo-hard, Wraith. Don't give me that. I've seen you.

• Bella

• Who said anything about my not having feelings? I simply know when they have no place. Not my fault if others can't

handle that. Obviously "Zoe" is one of those people who don't know when to set her feelings aside. Ironic. If she goes back and gets arrested, what's to keep her from giving out specifics and getting others picked up too? So our only recourse is to hope she escapes the punishment she deserves. How droll.

• Neon Wraith

• Well, she just may have escaped—sort of. Check out this short news clipping I found.

• Newshound

//Begin File Attachment
NewsNet Reporter, 24, Dies in Car Crash
23-MAY-63

At approximately 2300, a Leyland-Zil Tsarina registered to Abigail Danvers of NewsNet plowed into the lightpole across the street from Crusher 495, a restaurant and bar located in Touristville of Redmond. The sole passenger is believed to be Ms. Danvers, who was killed and charred in the explosion afterward. Police are not sure as of yet of the events which preceded the crash, speculating only that she may have been intoxicated due to the weaving tire marks found on the street leading up to the crash site. The remains were taken to Redmond General for an autopsy and full report.

//End File Attachment

• Oh, how cliché.

• Cynic

• That's pretty harsh, even for you Cynic.

• BethSheba

• I am feeling absolutely no pity for someone who is still alive.

• Cynic

• What, you think this was a set-up? She faked her death?

• BethSheba

• I think it's more likely, given her boo-hooing, that she did drink herself into a stupor and did us the favor of killing herself. More air for us to breathe.

• Neon Wraith

• Such angry youth. Whichever happened—and frankly, I could see either faking her death or committing suicide by car, though not for the reasons given so far—I hope she's done what she needed to do. Give her a break—she gave us one.

• FastJack

GAME INFORMATION



These rules describe home telecoms and dataterms, new drones, standard prices for daily affairs, expanded rules for credsticks and forging IDs and an expansive rules system for detailing character lifestyles. In addition to *Shadowrun, Third Edition*, the rulebooks *Matrix* and *Rigger 3* may be helpful in using some of these rules in your game.

GEAR

This section provides rules for several of the items and toys introduced in this book.

THE HOME TELECOM TERMINAL

As the entertainment center, household control interface and network hub, the home telecom is incredibly useful to residents—and to shadowrunners. In most homes, the telecom—also called the trid or the terminal—is the primary node in the household network to which all other devices are connected. Telecoms come with a wide array of components and features and in a variety of styles, from rack-mounted wall units to tabletop models to designs that are built into recliner chairs. Telecoms in luxury homes will have higher-quality display systems with multiple stations and bonus features, while lower-class homes will have cheap or antique units without a holo display or wireless node.

Telecoms are designed to be multifunctional and multi-user friendly. One resident can watch the latest sports trid, call his girlfriend and adjust the air conditioning while another simultaneously checks his email, prints a fax and listens to the latest Speed Coma single.

Telecoms are used to access a variety of Matrix services and accounts, as detailed in *Matrix Services*, p. 35, *Matrix*.

Telecom Components

Home telecoms typically include the following features:

Trideo Receiver: Typically the size of a laptop, this unit receives high-definition digital television (HDTV) and three-dimensional holo-vision (trideo), either by broadcast, Matrix feed or via an attached satellite dish. Trid receivers also pick up standard AM/FM broadcast radio.

Flatscreen Display: Depending on the model, this may range from a small plasma display or compact pullout flatscreen to a large life-size wallscreen. It can display any photographic or video input from the trideo, telephone, cyberterminal or attached device.





Holoprojection Unit: This component displays three-dimensional holograms from any trideo source. The holos can be adjusted in size to occupy anything from a small space on the desktop to a life-size cubic area.

Acoustic Speakers: Speakers come in an array of sizes and are usually distributed throughout the home, sometimes with audio pickups for voice commands, so that the user does not need to stay in the same room as the telecom.

Vidphone: This built-in telephone can both receive and transmit video or trideo images (input is usually displayed on the flatscreen or holo, while a built-in camera records output). Calls are sent and received through a Matrix account. Vidphones operate in speaker/voice command mode by default, though handsets and headsets may also be used for call privacy.

Computer: The telecom computer features software interfaces for controlling household functions and networked appliances. It includes a Matrix jackpoint, chip and CD reader, cred-stick slot and peripherals like a mouse, keyboard and VR gloves. It can also be used to access the Matrix in tortoise mode. This computer also acts as a bare-bones Matrix host; many users establish their own online "homes" here, with journals, photos, personal information and anything else they wish to share with the world or their friends and family.

Fax: Fax units are a combination of high-speed scanner, high-resolution color printer and copier all in one. They are the commercial standard for image storage and transmission, replacing all other computer peripherals.

Wireless Node: This wireless radio link connects the telecom to all other wireless-equipped appliances, devices and features in the home.

Optional Features: Telecoms can also incorporate or link to many other electronic devices, including cyberterminals, simdecks and satellite dishes. The most common household feature is additional access stations and display units so that the telecom can be accessed from any part of the home.

Subverting Telecom Systems

As noted in *Our Humble Homes*, telecoms can be subverted and manipulated in a number of ways by clever shadowrunners. Wireless nodes can be detected with a scanner (p. 289, *SR3*) and accessed with a radio interface (p. 61, *Matrix*). Typical wireless nodes have a Flux rating of 0 or 1. Security-conscious people will use broadcast encryption (p. 289, *SR3*) on their home networks.

Telecoms can also be accessed directly from the Matrix, assuming the jackpoint/MXP address is known. The minimal

host inside a basic telecom computer is the equivalent of a Blue-4 system with ACIFS 8/8/6/6/6 and a single Probe-2 IC program. Users may beef up these systems at the gamemaster's discretion.

A decker who accesses a telecom's host can access personal files and system logs (Edit File, Dump Logs), download biometric scan data (Download Data), monitor communications (Tap Comcall), manipulate household appliances and drones (Monitor Slave), spy on the occupants through the house's own cameras and sensors (Monitor Slave) and otherwise do all of the things that deckers love to do.

Telecom Drone Command

Simple cleaning drones in the home or office are rarely controlled through a rigger remote control network or closed circuit simsense system. Quite simply, that would be overkill, as such drones are rarely directly rigged and there are much cheaper ways of monitoring, controlling and debugging them. Most common-use drones are controlled via a simple telecom wireless drone-control package.

In game terms, the drone control package consists of a wireless link (p. 60, *Matrix*), remote control utility (p. 73, *Matrix*) and a remote control emulation module (p. 98, *R3*). These components are often cheaper, simplified versions (ratings 1 or 2 at best) and tailored for the average consumer's basic drone-command needs. In some buildings, drones are controlled by direct cable connections rather than wireless networks, but this is rare (cables get in the way).

The user can direct the drone control package to issue simple orders, schedule tasks, run diagnostics, locate a drone's current position, view

current sensor input and so on. The average drone is pre-programmed to automatically alert the telecom/user when it runs into obstacles, gets stuck, needs refilling, is about to leave the network's area (theft deterrence), malfunctions, senses a fire and so on.

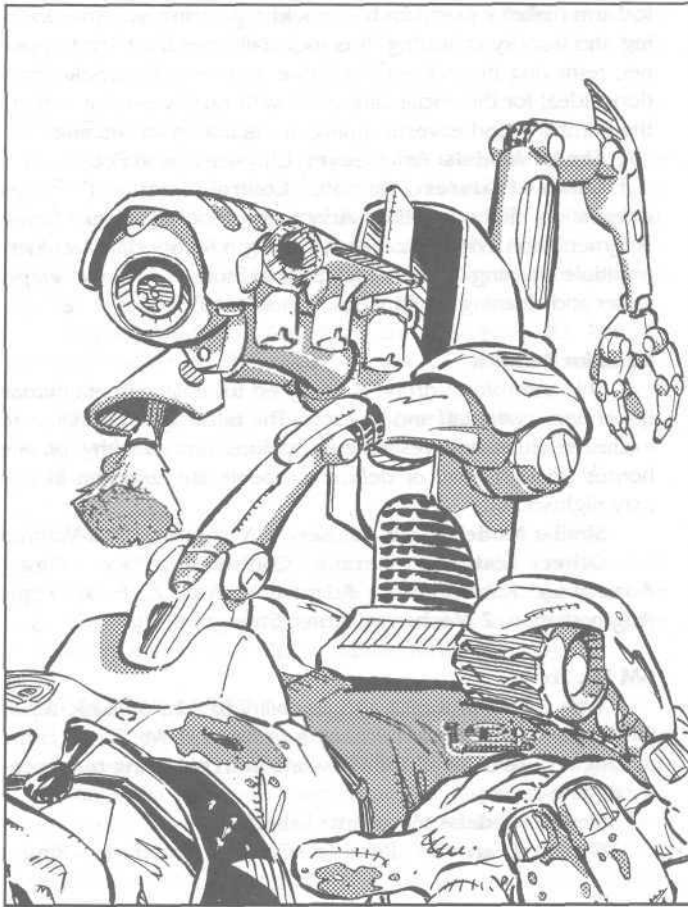
Subverting Drone Networks

Clever shadowrunners can easily take advantage of home/office cleaning drones. Riggers can use their remote control decks to locate, infiltrate and conduct MIJI attacks against these simple drone networks, often with very little effort. Deckers who have hacked into a telecom can also use the telecom's own drone package to monitor or control the drones using Monitor Slave or Control Slave system operations.

DATATERM HOST TABLE

Security Code: Green 4-8/8/8/8

Trigger Step	Event
5	Probe-6
10	Probe-8
15	Scout-6
20	Trace-8
25	Passive Alert
30	Probe-6 with trap Killer-8
35	Trace-8 with trap Blaster-8
40	Blaster-8
45	Active Alert
50	Blaster-10
55	Blaster-10
60	Shutdown



STREET DATATERMS

The ubiquitous dataterm is a common sight on the streets of 2063. A public version of the home telecom, dataterms come in a wide variety of forms. Common dataterms are built into sturdy wall-mounted alcoves, like the ATMs of the twentieth century. Street corner terms may also be stand-alone units, like a podium, or like a phone booth with one or more chair-equipped privacy booths. Privacy booths are equipped with PANICBUTTONS and can be locked by the user (Rating 4 maglock, booth Barrier rating 8); they are also monitored to ensure that vagrants do not abuse them. Dataterms can be found in parks, libraries, shopping malls, travel stations, post offices, convenience stores, large retail stores, restaurants and clubs that do not offer Matrix access at individual tables, and anywhere with high pedestrian traffic. There are common in neighborhoods with security ratings of C or higher, but in D and E-zones they are uncommon and often vandalized or in a state of disrepair. Dataterms do not appear in Z-zones.

Dataterms have many of the same features that home telecoms do: vidphone, tortoise computer, small flatscreen display, speakers, fax, Matrix jackpoint, chip and CD reader, and a wireless node for accessing the dataterm from the immediate vicinity. They also feature credstick readers (typically Rating 1) for ver-

ification of transactions. Dataterms in A and AA areas also feature holo projectors and low-end cyberterminals.

Most dataterms are owned, provided and maintained by the local grid provider. Each dataterm has its own public MSP account. The Dataterm Host Table (see p. 110) provides a sample security sheaf for a public dataterm.

Dataterms have sophisticated anti-tamper systems (Rating 6) to prevent unauthorized access.

HOUSEHOLD DRONES

The following is a small sampling of household, office and work drones that see daily use in the world of *Shadowrun*, cleaning, helping out or undertaking other mundane tasks.

VOR Robotics House Helper

The House Helper is a small drone with two caterpillar tracks that cleans floor surfaces. It includes vacuum, carpet shampoo, tile cleaner and wood polisher functions, and will automatically detect the type of floor and select the right cleaner. It can also be instructed to clean up spills, locate lost objects and perform minor pest control functions.

Similar Models: Mitsuhamma Floormaster, Dassault CleanBuddy

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Special Machinery (vacuum, wetvac, brushes, sprayer), Special Storage Area (liquid tanks, 2 liters total)

Mazda Dust Devil

Similar to the House Helper, the Dust Devil has four wheels in place of tracks.

Similar Models: Mitsuhamma Redcap, IFMU Mr. Dusty 3000

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Special Machinery (vacuum, wetvac, brushes, sprayer), Special Storage Area (liquid tanks, 2 liters total)

IFMU Mr. Green 3500

This outdoor wheeled drone handles outdoor functions like grounds sweeping, lawn trimming and even garden management and pest control.

Similar Models: GM Garden Gnome, Chrysler-Nissan Caretaker

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Autosoft Interpreter, Autosoft (Gardening 1), Special Machinery (lawnmower, sprinkler, shears, sprayer), Special Storage Area (liquid tanks, 5 liters total).

IFMU Mr. Fireman 3500

Intended for fire safety, this drone is designed to detect fires, alert the telecom, residents and local fire department, and attempt to extinguish fires.

Similar Models: Renraku HouseGuard series, Aztechnology Red Devil series

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Autosoft Interpreter, Autosoft (Firefighting 2), Special Machinery (smoke/fire detector, sprayer), Special Storage Area (10 liter fire extinguisher).

Renraku StreetCleaner

This automated street cleaner is a common sight in almost every city plaza and shopping center. Its battery engine and discreetly placed service niche make it eco-friendly and maintenance-light.

Similar Models: IFMU Mr. Sweep 2500, GM StreetSweeper

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Special Machinery (sweep and brush system), Special Storage Area (10 liter water tank).

IFMU Mr. Bright 3000

A corp's buildings should be as shiny as its reputation. To see that those glassy façades outshine the grime of the city, IFMU presents Mr. Bright 3000, a six-legged window-cleaning drone that works smoothly in heavy winds and never loses its footing on vertical surfaces, thanks to its patented foot-suction system and high-performance safety windlass. With its rooftop service niche, Mr. Bright 3000 is fully automated 7 days a week. For the perfect shine IFMU recommends using Brightsun™ cleaning solution. Also available in a household model for interior and exterior window and surface cleaning.

Similar Models: Renraku WindowWash, GM-Nissan Cleaner.

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Special Machinery (window cleaning gear, foot suction system, Special Storage Area (5 liter water tank), Winch (25 kg, business model only).

Mitsuhama Butlerbot

The Butlerbot's robotic system makes it slightly more intelligent and adaptable than standard cleaning drones. Its mechan-

ical arm makes it useful for household organizing, window washing and laundry collecting. It is especially useful for serving dinner, retrieving items from the fridge and other butler-like functions. Ideal for the social elite who want quality service without the bumbling and eavesdropping of (meta)human servants.

Similar Models: Astin Jeeves, Chrysler-Nissan Robomaid

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Robotic Pilot, Adaptation Pool 2, Fuzzy Logic Augmentation, Mechanical Arm (Strength 4), Special Machinery (multiple cleaning implements), Special Storage Area (beverage, water and cleaning liquid tanks, 5 liters total)

Renraku Barbac

This anthroform drone is designed to replace (meta)human bartenders, wait-staff and bus-staff. The pricetag limits its use to exclusive clubs and restaurants, casinos and wealthy private homes (though used or deficient models are common in less ritzy nightspots).

Similar Models: Saab Autoserver, Mitsuhama Ultra-Waitron

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Robotic Pilot, Adaptation Pool 2, Fuzzy Logic Augmentation, 2 Mechanical Arms (Strength 6)

GM Mr. Fix-It

With a built-in toolkit and an ability to take on basic repair functions, Mr. Fix-It is a mechanic's best friend. Mr. Fix-Its come in varieties useful for all sorts of work, from plumbing to carpentry to auto-repair.

Similar Models: Mitsuhama LaborSaver

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger

Model	Hand	Speed	Accel	Body	Armor	Sig	Auto	Pilot	Sensor	Cargo	Load
V.R. House Helper	4/4	10	2	1	0	8	0	1	1	0	0
Mazda Dust Devil	4/4	10	2	1	0	8	0	1	1	0	0
IFMU Mr. Green 3500	4/4	10	2	1	0	8	0	1	1	0	0
IFMU Mr. Fireman 3500	4/4	10	2	1	4	8	0	2	1	0	4
Renraku StreetCleaner	4/6	10	2	2	0	7	—	2	2	0	5
IFMU Mr. Bright 3000	4/4	2	—	1	0	8	—	1	1	4	2
Household model	4/4	2	—	1	0	8	—	1	1	4	5
Mitsuhama Butlerbot	4/4	10	2	2	0	7	0	2 (4)	2	5	50
Renraku Barbac	3	10	—	2	0	6	0	2 (4)	2	0	20
GM Mr. Fix-It	4/4	10	2	1	0	8	0	3	1	3	170
Ares Felix the SynthCat	4/4	15	—	1	0	8	—	1	1	0	5

Model	Seating	Entry	Fuel	Econ	S/B	L/T	Chassis	SI	Avail	Cost
V.R. House Helper	—	—	E (40 PF)	0.75 km/PF	—	—	Sm. Crawler (tr.)	.5	2/24 hrs	1,500¥
Mazda Dust Devil	—	—	E (40 PF)	0.75 km/PF	—	—	Sm. Crawler (wh.)	.5	2/24 hrs	1,500¥
IFMU Mr. Green 3500	—	—	E (40 PF)	0.75 km/PF	—	—	Sm. Crawler (wh.)	.5	2/24 hrs	3,500¥
IFMU Mr. Fireman 3500	—	—	E (40 PF)	0.75 km/PF	—	—	Sm. Crawler (wh.)	1	2/24 hrs	11,000¥
Renraku StreetCleaner	—	—	E (75 PF)	0.75 km/PF	—	—	Med. Crawler (wh.)	1	2/24 hrs	7,000¥
IFMU Mr. Bright 3000	—	—	E (40 PF)	0.5 km/PF	—	—	Sm. Walker	1	2/24 hrs	6,500¥
Household model	—	—	E (40 PF)	0.5 km/PF	—	—	Sm. Walker	1	2/24 hrs	6,000¥
Mitsuhama Butlerbot	—	—	E (75 PF)	0.75 km/PF	—	—	Med. Crawler (tr.)	1	2/24 hrs	25,000¥
Renraku Barbac	—	—	E (40 PF)	0.5 km/PF	—	—	Med. Anthroform	1	3/72 hrs	44,000¥
GM Mr. Fix-It	—	—	E (40 PF)	0.75 km/PF	—	—	Sm. Crawler (tr.)	1	2/24 hrs	27,000¥
Ares Felix the SynthCat	—	—	E (100 PF)	0.5 km/PF	—	—	Sm. Walker	1	2/24 hrs	9,500 ¥

Adaptation, Autosoft Interpreter, Autosoft (any Build/Repair skill at Rating 3), Special Machinery (toolkit), 2 Mechanical Arms (Strength 4)

Ares Felix the SynthCat

This fully automatic housecat doesn't destroy the furniture or mewl for food, and it never breaks children's hearts by dying or running away. It plays, purrs and sleeps just like any other cat, only without the other unpleasant side effects of living animals. Felix comes with its own sleeping basket that doubles as a disguised recharging station.

Similar Models: IFMU Kitty and Doggy 4000, Renraku HomePet series, VOR Growler, Honda K-9, Mitsuhamma Beastie series

Other Features: Remote Control Interface, Rigger Adaptation, Robotic Pilot, Improved Neural Network 1, Adaptation Pool 2

ELECTRONIC PAPER

Not truly paper, electronic paper mimics the look, feel and flexibility of paper while allowing the data it displays to be swapped out. Most electronic paper comes in standard sheet (maximum capacity 20 Mp) or tabloid forms (50 Mp).

COLORCHANGE PAINT

This paint is impregnated with photovoltaic compounds that change color in response to variable electrical charges, like the chameleon paint described on p. 153, *Rigger 3*. The paint is sold by the liter—one liter will cover approximately ten square meters of wall surface. Areas to be painted must first be treated with a fine conductive mesh that serves as a base coat, before the ColorChange paint is applied.

Though similar to ruthenium polymers, ColorChange paint cannot achieve the detail and precision of display that ruthenium can. ColorChange paint is also not suitable for applying to fabrics or anything else that requires flexibility; the coat of paint must be continuous and unbroken to function (though photovoltaic fabrics exist to meet these needs).

The paint coating needs to be integrated with an electronic controller to change its colors. The controller unit's price includes setup costs, and is usually installed as part of the central home telecom.

CREDSTICKS

Basic information on credsticks is available on pp. 38–39 of this book, as well as pp. 238–239, 286–287, *SR3*. The information here expands but does not supercede any of the basic information. If you don't wish to add the extra complexity of this section to your game, simply continue to use the rules in *SR3*.

CREDSTICK BEACONS

Credstick beacons are used by retailers to identify consumers and their spending habits, by individuals as a quick passkey to personalized

locks and systems and by security personnel to identify visitors, log foot traffic and locate lost credsticks. The term "beacons" is actually a misnomer, as the credstick beacon does not continually transmit. Instead, the beacon chip merely listens for queries on specific frequencies and then uses the power of those signals to generate and transmit a response. People who value their privacy may easily turn their beacon off or set filters for what information it is allowed to transmit.

The devices that query credstick beacons, called beacon signalers, are micropowered transmitters with a negligible Flux, as they are designed to cover just a small, local area. The responses transmitted by beacons are also micropowered. Treat both as having Flux ratings of 0 with a typical range of 10 meters.

HACKING CREDSTICKS

Hacking credsticks is not an easy task, but shadowrunners may wish to do it for many reasons: altering or counterfeiting nuyen, altering or forging ID and other data or tampering with hardware.

Unauthorized Access

To hack a credstick, a character will need a cyberdeck (or any computer), a microtronics kit and a heavy-duty decryption program. Credsticks are loaded with anti-tampering protections designed to wipe the stick clean if tampering is attempted.

To open up the credstick's casing, the runner must succeed in an Electronics B/R Test. The target number is listed on the Credstick Hacking Table (p. 125). At least 1 success must be generated to open the casing. If no successes are achieved, the anti-tamper circuits have detected the intrusion attempt and will permanently erase all data (including ID files and electronic funds) on the stick. A wiped registered credstick is essentially useless, though its serial number could be modified and a new identity can be created on it (see *Forging IDs*, p. 125); wiped certified credsticks are slag.

Once the credstick's guts are exposed, other hacks can be attempted, as noted below.

Money Games

Once a credstick has been compromised, a runner can attempt to manipulate the amount of certified funds on the credstick. For example, if the runner creatively acquired a registered credstick with a large amount of certified funds on it, he could hack the stick and transfer the funds to another credstick that he can actually use. (Note that only certified nuyen can be manipulated this way; the money in the registered credstick owner's accounts is safely inside the bank's virtual vault, not on the stick.) To do this, the runner must first defeat the credstick's built-in encryption, using the rules for *Data Encryption*, p. 292, *SR3*. The credstick Encryption rating can be found on the Credstick Hacking Table (p. 125). Once the certified funds are decrypted, a successful Computer (Hardware) Test against the credstick's target number is

Item	Cost	Availability	Street Index
Electronic Paper	Mp x .1¥	Always	.5
ColorChange Paint	75¥/m ²	1.5	4/3 days
Paint Controller Unit	2,000¥	1	4/7 days

COMMON COSTS

The following are common services the characters may wish to enjoy. Most such costs are subsumed by a character's Lifestyle, but these costs are provided for gamemaster reference. Prices listed are average and will vary depending on locale and circumstances.

Service	Cost	Entertainment (cont.)	Cost
Dataterm	.5¥ per minute	Season tickets	2,000¥
Vending machine clothes ("flats")	5¥	Trid movie	15¥
Private room at restaurant or club	100¥ per hour	Sim/gaming parlor	30¥ per hour
Private room with privacy features†	200¥ per hour	Travel	
Prostitute services	20–50¥	City Transport	
Meat puppet parlor	50¥ per hour	Public transport (bus, rail)	1¥ per 10 km
Escort service	100¥ per hour	Public transport (1 week pass)	20¥
Bodyguard service	200¥ per day	Taxi	1¥ per 1 km
Medical insurance	200¥ per week	Z-zone taxi*	10¥ per 1 km
Housing		Commuter air	10¥ per 1 km
Coffin hotel (24 hours)	30¥	Parking (1 hour)	6¥
Hostel (24 hours)	30¥	Parking (all day)	25¥
Motel room (per hour)	20¥	Car rental (1 day)	100¥
Motel room (24 hours)	100¥	Car rental (1 week)	500¥
Hotel room (24 hours)	200¥	HSCT air travel	.1¥ per 1 km
Suite (24 hours)	500¥	Suborbital/semiballistic flight	.5¥ per 1 km
Luxury suite (24 hours)	1,000¥	Local flight	1¥ per 1 km
Food (per person)		Rail fare	.2¥ per 1 km
Vending machine meal	2¥	Bus fare	.1¥ per 1 km
Fast food meal	5–10¥	Bus/Rail 1-month pass	250¥
Breakfast or Lunch	10–15¥	Body Fashion	
Dinner	20–25¥	Tattoo§	50–1,000¥
Dinner at fancy restaurant	100–200¥	Whole-body dye	275¥
Entertainment		Piercing	20–250¥
Nightclub admission	15–50¥	Brandings§	150–500¥
Live Performance	10–200¥	Surgical enhancement**	As per cosmetic surgery;
Standard drinks	5¥		see p. 146,
Premium drinks	10–15¥		Man & Machine
Ticket to major sporting event	20–50¥		

* More charges may apply depending on threat level and damage

† Privacy features = white noise generator and astral wards.

§ Cost depends on size and intricacy of design.

** Includes implantations, scarification, scalp alterations and other cosmetic surgical modifications

required to convince the credstick to hand over the funds. Failure on either test means the certified funds are erased.

Alternately, a runner can attempt to counterfeit certified funds—in other words, create nuyen that don't actually exist. This would allow a runner to pass along fake payment for goods or services, though the deception is unlikely to hold up to scrutiny. In order to do this, the runner must fabricate or forge the digital signatures of the nuyen he is creating. This requires a successful Computer (Programming) Test against a Target Number 12 with a base time of 1 minute per nuyen. A special

Counterfeiting utility will reduce this target number by its rating. Note the number of successes.

Once these counterfeit funds are created on the credstick, they may be passed on and transferred as normal. The first time these funds are verified by a credstick verification reader, however, make a test using the reader's rating against a target number equal to the number of successes achieved. If the reader succeeds, it immediately detects the counterfeiting, locks the credstick in the reader, freezes any associated accounts and alerts the user and authorities. An investigation is sure to follow. If the read-

er fails the test the funds are accepted as legitimate, though the banks will soon notice a balance discrepancy and may launch an investigation if the amount is sufficiently large.

Changing Data

A runner who has hacked a registered credstick can also manipulate the data carried on the credstick. Aside from using these to forge IDs and other data (see *Forging IDs*), there are a wide range of applications for this sort of tampering, limited only by the runner's imagination. For example, passwords and biometric data could be changed, allowing someone else to use the stick as a limited form of impersonation or manipulate the user's bank accounts. Select information could also be altered or deleted, setting up the owner for trouble later when his face suddenly doesn't match the one on his ID, or he's caught carrying a weapon without a permit or his beacon transmits the ID of a wanted felon. The transaction logs on a credstick can also be changed or deleted in this way, allowing any incriminating data-trails to be erased or evidence to be fabricated.

Any of these changes require that the runner first defeat the credstick's encryption as noted above. Altering or erasing information then requires a Computer (Programming) Test against the target number on the Credstick Hacking Table with a base time of one hour. Reduce the target number by the rating of any Read/Write utility used.

Hardware Changes

A vulnerable credstick can also be bugged, either with a tracking signal (to track the user), dataline tap (to monitor the credstick's usage), a special micro-recorder (audio surveillance) or other device. Inserting such a surveillance device inside a credstick requires a successful Electronics B/R (8) Test with a base time of one hour.

It is also theoretically possible to insert other micro devices inside credsticks, from electroshock boobytraps to micro neurotoxin bombs, but the exact details are left for the gamemaster to handle.

HACKING CREDSTICK READERS

As the devices that verify the authenticity of IDs and credit transactions, credstick verification readers are even more protected against tampering than credsticks. A hacked credstick reader can be quite useful, however, to ensure that forged IDs or counterfeit nuyen are not caught by security.

Credstick readers can be hacked in two ways: physically or via the Matrix. Physical tampering requires an Electronics B/R (18) Test to access the device's internal electronics. If no suc-

cesses are achieved, the reader alerts the bank and authorities that it is being tampered with through its Matrix connection and turns itself off. A shutdown reader can only be reactivated with proprietary codes obtained from its issuer—or both an Electronics B/R (18) Test and a defeat of the reader's Rating 18 encryption.

If successfully opened, the reader's programming can be altered to accept certain IDs and counterfeit funds as legitimate. The runner must first defeat the reader's Rating 18 encryption (*Data Encryption*, p. 292, SR3) and then succeed in a successful Computer (Hardware) (18) Test.

Credstick readers remain in constant Matrix contact with the bank that issued them. If a reader is separated from its Matrix connection for more than 10 minutes, the bank will no longer accept transmissions from it until a bank service technician has verified its integrity.

A decker who attempts to tamper with a credstick reader via the Matrix must first contend with the Rating 12 Pavlov data bomb white IC (p. 104, *Matrix*) and the Rating 18 scramble IC. If these are bypassed, the reader can be manipulated or monitored with Control or Monitor Slave operations.

CREDSTICK HACKING TABLE

Credstick Type	Target Number/Encryption Rating
Certified	12
Standard Registered	10
Silver Registered	12
Gold Registered	14
Platinum Registered	16
Ebony Registered	18

FORGING IDS

It is almost impossible to run the shadows without some forged documents. Runners need fake SINs in order to travel commercially, reserve hotel rooms or-rent cars. Forged weapon permits are handy for avoiding trouble during random street stops. Faked medical records can provide a cover for illegal cyberware and so on. For the most part, crafting false identities falls into the realm

of resourceful criminal networks with the ability to insert falsified data into numerous databases. Prices for obtaining fake IDs can be found on p. 239, SR3.

Doing it Yourself

Though it's a long and difficult process, characters can create forged IDs or other documents themselves. This can be the basis for an entire adventure, as the character uses her decking skills and contacts to methodically have various pieces of data slipped into the archives of various agencies, corporations and banks. In this case, it would be up to the gamemaster to determine what rating the false identity has based on the success and failures the character has had and how in-depth the fabricated data went.

Alternately, the gamemaster can simplify this process into a single Computer (Decking) Test, with the Data Archive Familiarity Knowledge skill

Utility	Multiplier	Options
Counterfeiting Utility	10	J



(p. 25, *Matrix*) used as a complimentary skill. The target number for the skill test is 2 x the ID's intended rating. The base time needed is (rating x 10) days. The character needs a number of contacts equal to the ID's rating who, in the gamemaster's opinion, are in a position (and willing) to help in creating the forged ID—corporate or government wage-slaves, police officers, fixers, doctors and so on. If the character has an insufficient number of these contacts, add a +1 target number modifier and +10 days for each contact that is lacking. For example, if a character with only two appropriate contacts is trying to make a Rating 6 ID, she will suffer a +4 modifier, and the base time required will be increased by 40 days.

Reduce the base time by the number of successes achieved. If the character gets no successes, she works for half the base time before the process is inadvertently foiled.

Forging an ID also costs the character an amount of money equal to (rating x rating x 100¥)—the cost of bribes, favors and other expenses.

A decker is trying to create a forged ID for his girlfriend, who can't easily get a real one on account of being an anima free spirit. He goes for Rating 4, setting the base time at 40 days and the target number at 8. Because he only has three contacts that can help him out, not four, his target number is increased by 1 to 9 and the base time to 50 days. The decker scores 2 successes, so it takes him 25 days of work to establish the fake identity. It also costs him (4 x 4 x 100 =) 1600¥.

Erasing Identities

Note that the same process for forging IDs can also be used to delete or alter existing identities. Completely erasing an ID requires the same amount of work as creating one, so works and costs the same. The exact cost and effort to alter a specific aspect of an ID or having death certificates and coroner reports issued is up to the gamemaster.

ID EDGES AND FLAWS

Some forged IDs have little quirks or bonuses that aren't immediately apparent, but which can make a difference in difficult situations. ID Edges and Flaws have no point values; the ID either has the Edge or Flaw or it doesn't. An ID's Edges and Flaws should generally not be revealed to the player. Even the ID's creator will not usually know about them—or at least will not tell the buyer in case of known Flaws. Gamemasters can use Edges and Flaws in several ways:

Random Chance: Using this system, the gamemaster makes a simple 1D6 roll whenever a new ID is bought or created. On a result of 1, the ID has one associated Flaw. On a result of 6, the ID has one Edge. The gamemaster should randomly choose the Edge or Flaw from the list below.

Cheaper IDs: Using this system, the gamemaster allows the character to purchase IDs at less cost in exchange for taking one or more Flaws. Reduce the cost by 20 percent for each Flaw taken. The gamemaster should let the character know they're getting shoddier work, but should keep the exact nature of the Flaw(s) secret. Likewise, a character can pay

extra to ensure that their ID is of slightly higher quality (+20 percent per Edge). It is recommended that no more than three Flaws (or Edges) be allowed.

EDGES

The following are some common ID Edges.

Aging Well

Over time, the data that backs up and corroborates the false identity becomes stronger and more invulnerable to inspection. Every (rating) months, increase the ID's rating by 1 point.

Home Turf

The ID's rating is increased to rating x 1.5 (round up) for any verification tests in or by one specific locale or jurisdiction. The gamemaster chooses exactly what area it in which it receives this bonus in advance: in Chicago, in Novatech systems, etc.

Positive Confusion

Due to a similarity or computer glitch, the ID is often mixed up with the ID of someone else (usually in the character's favor). This will mean that sometimes things the character does or places he uses the ID actually show up in the other person's records. This makes it more difficult to trace the character's whereabouts and activities: add +2 to the target number of any test involved in tracking the character by the use of this ID.

Teflon Identity

For some reason, negative reports concerning this identity have a habit of getting lost, simply not showing up or just never being associated. Things like bad credit reports, traffic violations, license revocations, negative news stories and possibly even arrest warrants simply fail to show up on ID checks. This Edge should primarily be used as a roleplaying tool; gamemasters should not allow it to become an immunity from persecution.

Upstanding Citizen

Something about this ID tends to give the person checking it the impression that the owner is a well-respected citizen, most likely prompting a more courteous attitude than is typically displayed. This gives the character a -1 target number modifier on Social Skill tests for dealing with that person, provided the character does not do anything to disturb the charade.

Watertight

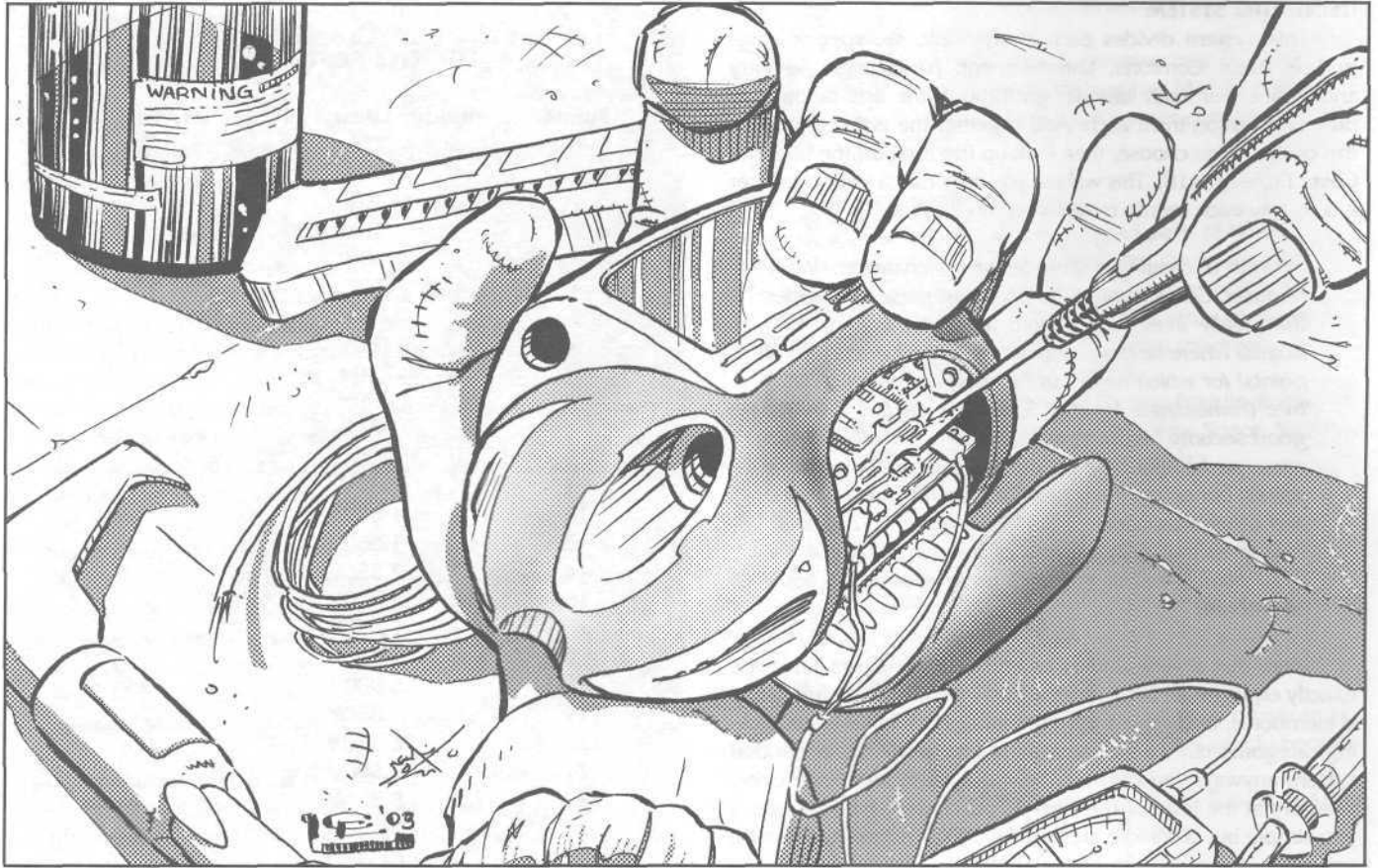
This ID was put together in such a way that it can stand up to a higher level of scrutiny than other IDs. In the Opposed Test between the ID and an ID scanner, the ID gets a -1 target number modifier.

FLAWS

The following are some common ID Flaws.

Dead Man's Shoes

The ID's SIN used to belong to someone who is now dead—the data has just been altered for the new owner. This means the new owner sometimes has to deal with unresolved aspects of



the dead person's life, from junk mail and subscriptions to long-lost relatives seeking to get back in touch.

Deterioration

The flimsy corroborating material that holds the ID together is slowly unraveling. Over time, the ID's rating deteriorates at a rate of 1 point every (rating) months.

Evil Twin

Similar to the Positive Confusion Edge, this ID is occasionally linked to something another person does (but in the other person's favor). This means that things another person does occasionally show up in the character's records, and usually they're not good. The character may be harassed by confused collection agencies, have large purchases of pornography or other odd tastes reflected in his purchasing histories, or may even have a warrant issued for the other person's crimes.

Expiration Date

Intentionally or not, this ID has a built-in expiration date. On this date, rating x 1D6 months from creation, the ID will be exposed or simply no longer function. At the gamemaster's discretion, this may be reversible with an appropriate amount of effort or expense (though it should lead to some complications when it suddenly expires).

Limitation

The ID operates at half its rating (round down; Rating 1 IDs will automatically fail) when verified in or by one specific country or jurisdiction. The gamemaster should choose exactly what area in which it will be less effective in advance: in Boston, in Ares systems, etc.

Major Goof

A mistake has slipped into the ID that an automated reader will not notice but a metahuman might. For example, the owner's age may be obviously wrong, or the ID might even indicate a completely different metatype. The ID does not suffer any modifiers on automated tests, however any metahuman looking at the ID may roll an Intelligence (4) Test to spot the mistake.

DETAILED LIFESTYLES

The rules on pp. 239–241, *SR3*, provide the basics for how to handle character lifestyles in *Shadowrun*. The alternate lifestyle rules presented here expand on that system and introduce an entire new layer of detail and complexity. This lets players rate specific aspects of their characters' lifestyles rather than the whole lifestyle at once. These rules are optional, so players that want to keep it simple should stick with the rules in *SR3*.

USING THIS SYSTEM

This system divides each lifestyle into six specific categories: Area, Comforts, Entertainment, Furnishings, Security and Space. For each lifestyle, go through the lists below and pick one option from each. Add together the point values for the options you choose, then look up the total on the Lifestyle Costs Table (p. 118). This will tell you how much your character has to pay each month to maintain this lifestyle.

Jak is creating a lifestyle for his character, Wally Fikouras. Going through the six categories, Jak decides that Wally lives in a B-rated area (Area: Middle, 3 points) where he has a large apartment (Space: High, 4 points) for which he doesn't have quite enough furniture (Furnishings: Middle, 3 points) but has installed good security (Security: High, 4 points). Wally likes to relax, so he spends a lot on that (Comforts: High, 4 points) but on the other hand he doesn't care for trideo and other distractions (Entertainment: Low, 2 points). That gives the lifestyle a total of 3 + 4 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 2 = 20 points, meaning Wally's lifestyle cost is 6,650¥ per month.

Note that several entries on the Lifestyle Costs Table are exactly equal to the basic lifestyle costs from the SR3 rules. This is intentional: if you don't want the extra work involved in picking categories but the gamemaster wants to use this expanded system anyway, you can use the old system and have every category at the level of the lifestyle purchased. For instance, if you simply buy a Middle lifestyle for 5,000 nuyen per month, you have each of the categories at Middle.

Note also that a lifestyle can be further customized by taking Edges and/or Flaws for it, as depicted on p. 137.

Limitations

Some of the categories and specific options have limitations on how they can be combined with other options in order to avoid ludicrous combinations like Area: AAA and Space: Street. The gamemaster should use these as guidelines, but should also feel free to set his own limitations or ignore the limitations if a good explanation is provided. A gamemaster should feel justified in saying that the residents and security in an Area: AAA neighborhood would not allow someone to live there with Comforts: Street. On the other hand, a character might have a good backstory for how he squatted an abandoned warehouse (Space: Luxury) in an Area: Z-Zone. Ultimately, however, the gamemaster has final say over what will and will not be allowed.

Flexibility

Though this system breaks down each lifestyle into its specific components, it is not intended to be a rigid framework into which all characters' lifestyles must fit perfectly. Both gamemasters and players should give each other a fair amount of leeway in interpreting what each character's lifestyle includes (or not). The goal is to be able to create more vivid and fleshed-out backgrounds and settings for each character's daily life, not to nit-pick

LIFESTYLE COSTS TABLE

Points	Monthly Lifestyle Cost	SR3 Equivalent
-1	0¥	Street
0	15¥	
1	30¥	
2	45¥	
3	60¥	
4	70¥	
5	85¥	
6	100¥	Squatter
7	250¥	
8	400¥	
9	550¥	
10	700¥	
11	850¥	
12	1,000¥	Low
13	1,650¥	
14	2,350¥	
15	3,000¥	
16	3,650¥	
17	4,350¥	
18	5,000¥	Middle
19	5,850¥	
20	6,650¥	
21	7,500¥	
22	8,350¥	
23	9,150¥	
24	10,000¥	High
25	25,000¥	
26	40,000¥	
27	55,000¥	
28	70,000¥	
29	85,000¥	
30	100,000¥	Luxury
31	125,000¥	
32	150,000¥	

on whether your character's trideo came with a warranty or whether or not he has to pay extra for a *LiveWire* magazine subscription.

AREA

This represents the area you live in—or more precisely, the security rating of that area. The use of these ratings is explained on pp. 108–111, *New Seattle*, and some additional rules appear under *Burglary* on page 136. Once you've chosen the security rating, you can use the district write-ups in *New Seattle* to pick a part of town with that rating in which your character's home is located.

Z—Street-equivalent (–1 point)

The worst area possible, inhabited by the most desperate in society. You live among the homeless, squatters, chipheads,

ghouls and other societal cast-aways, metahuman or otherwise. Law enforcement never ever comes round, violence and crime are endemic and your security is entirely in your own hands.

Examples: The deepest, darkest parts of Redmond and Puyallup.

Limitations: You cannot choose higher than Middle lifestyle for the Space category.

E—Street-equivalent (0 points)

Not quite as bad as a Z-rated area, but still not a place where most people choose to live. The area is filled with transients, refugees, street gangs, criminals and others who live in abject poverty. The police presence is spotty at best; they don't involve themselves with what's going on unless they really have to, so for security you're better off looking to the local gang.

Examples: Most of Redmond and Puyallup.

Limitations: You cannot choose higher than Middle lifestyle for the Space category.

D—Squatter-equivalent (1 point)

Your neighborhood is a dirty, run-down business district, not a residential area. Though not home to many people because of this, those who do live here are typically low-lives of all sorts. Crime is common, so you need to be careful about guarding yourself and your possessions.

Examples: Parts of Auburn and Everett.

C—Low-equivalent (2 points)

A residential area that has seen better times is what you call home: dilapidated buildings, poor maintenance and petty crime are all part of daily life. The cops do sometimes show their faces, at least when something fairly bad happens. Just a typical part of the sprawl.

Examples: Much of Everett, Snohomish and Tacoma.

B—Middle-equivalent (3 points)

You live in a business district in one of the better parts of town. There's some crime, like everywhere else, but at least you can walk the streets at night without having to wear body armor and pack a pistol. Not often, anyway.

Examples: Much of Auburn, Fort Lewis and Renton.

A—High-equivalent (4 points)

This is a corporate enclave or better residential area with some fairly nice houses or (relatively) well-run apartment buildings around. The cops make an effort to respond to calls, and there is often a kind of neighborhood watch to keep crime down.

Examples: Council Island, parts of Auburn, Bellevue, Downtown and Everett.

Limitations: You cannot choose less than Low lifestyle for the Security and Space categories.

AA—Luxury-equivalent (5 points)

The neighborhood is among the best you're likely to find, with good housing, places to go and things to do. The security presence is solid; people that look like they don't belong are

likely to be stopped. You're unlikely to become a victim of crime in this kind of neighborhood.

Examples: Parts of Bellevue, Downtown and Tacoma

Limitations: You cannot choose less than Middle lifestyle for the Security and Space categories and cannot choose Street for the Comforts category.

AAA—Luxury-equivalent (6 points)

You live in one of the most prestigious parts of town. Private security patrols the area (in addition to the contracted city police), so crime is kept to a minimum. The neighborhood looks like a well-maintained park due to the small army of gardeners, janitors and handymen that keep it in perfect condition.

Examples: Waterfront areas of Seattle.

Limitations: You cannot choose less than Middle lifestyle for the Security category and not less than High for Space. You also cannot choose Street for the Comforts category.

COMFORTS

Everyone wants to live in comfort, but that is generally linked to how much money you can spend after other necessities have been taken care of. This category includes the basic necessities: food, clothing and shelter.

Street (0 points)

Comfort is where you find it, because you don't have any to call your own. You frequently go hungry or cold simply because there isn't any food or shelter to be found.

Examples: Public restrooms, soup kitchens, Salvation Army blankets, shoplifting.

Squatter (1 point)

You do have power, water and heating, though they come from portable sources. Your food is pretty bad, but at least it fills your stomach.

Examples: Flashlight, propane burner, military-surplus sleeping bag, processed soy or algae slop, laundromat.

Low (2 points)

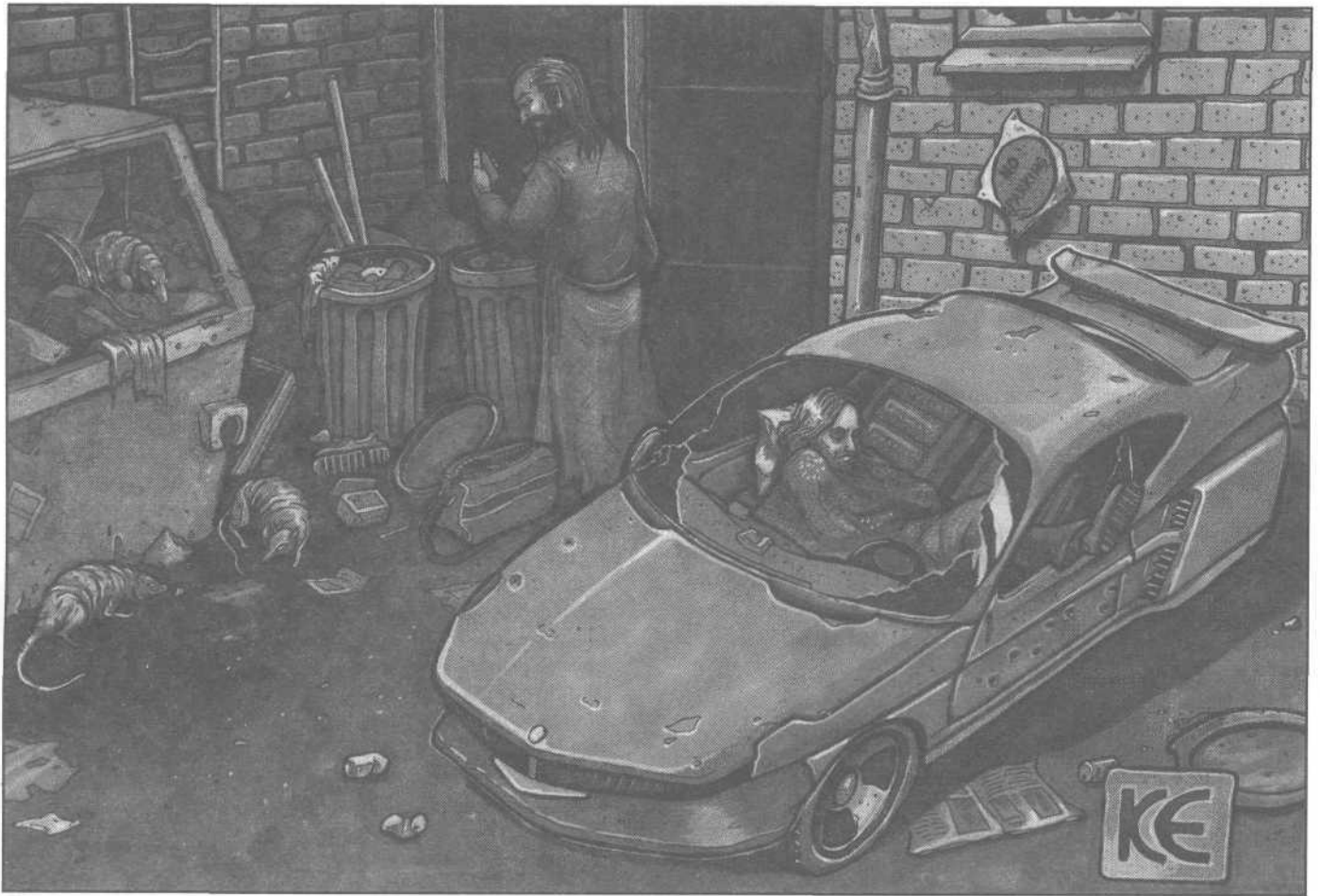
You have electricity, water and other amenities in your apartment, though they might be obtained through an illegal tap and are rationed and/or prone to going out at times, so it pays to keep a backup source handy. Your food at least looks like the real thing, and frequently even tastes like it.

Examples: Running water, NutriSoy™ food, shared washing facilities, central heating.

Middle (3 points)

Water and power only go out during high-peak brownout seasons and droughts. Your food consists of both the real thing and processed soy, but the two are often almost indistinguishable. Though you have to do most things yourself around the house, you might have some technological aids to ease the work.

Examples: Well-stocked refrigerator, cleaning drone, bathtub, dishwasher, centrally controlled or automated appliances, climate control.



High (4 points)

Water and power don't go out in your home unless something unusual happens. You get good, real food on the table every day, not the *ersatz-drek* others eat, and your refrigerator is filled with as much of it as you and your family require. To keep the house clean, you've got both high-tech appliances and one or two people to do the dirty work.

Examples: Refrigerator-oven, multiple cleaning drones, housekeeper and/or nanny, dust-repellant walls, excellent air and water filtration systems, grocery delivery service.

Luxury (5 points)

You have just about everything that makes your life more comfortable. You never eat anything less than the best and your kitchen is state-of-the-art. Then again, why make that kitchen dirty when there are so many excellent (and expensive) restaurants in the 'plex? A small staff maintains your house or apartment, and of course you have a chauffeur for your car as well.

Examples: Chauffeur, housekeepers and handymen, robotic servants, pool with hot tub and sauna, all-natural food.

ENTERTAINMENT

This category gives you something to do in your home. Entertainment can take various forms, with the descriptions below giving typical examples; if you prefer to have a large library rather than electronic gadgets, for instance, you could decide it's equivalent to Middle-level entertainment and pay the 3 points for that.

For more information about Matrix access, see p. 35 of *Matrix*. Also, *Target: Matrix* has more specific examples of Matrix entertainment.

Limitations: As most modern entertainment requires electricity, you cannot choose more than one level higher in Entertainment than you took for Comforts. For example, if you took Middle Comforts, you cannot take more than High-level Entertainment.

Street (0 points)

You have no entertainment to speak of.

Examples: Magazine from a garbage can, BTL with a few minutes' runtime left.



Squatter (1 point)

For entertainment, you're dependent on some (usually elderly and/or malfunctioning) devices, drinking with your homies on the stoop or going to the seedy corner bar.

Examples: Portable radio, hand-held video game, trideo in a public place, dataterm.

Low (2 points)

Your place is equipped with the basic necessities of modern living, but nothing outlandish or expensive. When you go out, it's usually to places that aren't very expensive, such as the movies or a local bar.

Examples: Basic Matrix access (p. 35, *Matrix*), home stereo system, trideo, vidphone/fax, low-end simdeck.

Middle (3 points)

Your home is well equipped to entertain you. If that's not enough, you can go out to find a lot more at any number of places catering to the middle classes.

Examples: Premium Matrix access (p. 35, *Matrix*), concerts, cheap telecom, simsense deck, Timberwolves season tickets.

High (4 points)

You can get more entertainment in your own home than many people see in their entire lives; you don't have the absolute, top-of-the-line gear, but it comes close enough to impress your friends.

Examples: High-speed Matrix access (p. 35, *Matrix*), high-end simsense deck, expensive restaurants, exclusive nightclub membership.

Luxury (5 points)

There is just about nothing you don't have, or can't go and do—your home has (very nearly) *everything* when it comes to entertainment, and what it doesn't have, other people are happy to provide to you when you want it.

Examples: Private club membership, complete home entertainment center, hunting expeditions.

FURNISHINGS

The size of your place is covered by the Space category; this one lets you pick how the place is decorated. Note that this is not related to the home's size at all: you could have priceless art and top-class furniture crammed everywhere in a one-bedroom apartment, or you might live in a big apartment with 700 square meters of totally empty floor space.

Street (0 points)

Furnishings?

Examples: Coat, trousers, shoes, shirt.

Squatter (1 point)

You own a few bits and pieces that make your house semi-inhabitable, but if a lot of friends come over they'll have to sit on the floor. In any case, all your furniture is ancient and continually needs minor repairs.

Examples: Mattress, mismatched chairs, upturned crates.

Low (2 points)

You own some cheap furniture, but at least you probably bought it new. You have enough of it to reasonably fill a small apartment.

Examples: Sofa, pop-star posters, complete bed, matched chairs.

Middle (3 points)

Your apartment has decent furniture in a style of your taste and you have enough to suit your needs. It's not of any prestigious brand or designer, but it doesn't fall apart when someone sits down on it, either.

Examples: Mass-production art, S-Kea furniture.

High (4 points)

You have all the furnishings your heart desires, enough to fill your apartment or house to capacity. What's more, it's of good quality and by designers who've already made a bit of a name for themselves.

Examples: Real wood paneling, crystal glassware, original art.

Luxury (5 points)

LOTS of furniture, all created by prestigious designers that make use of exotic materials and avant-garde styling. Alternatively, you might own precious antiques or just a very large amount of comfortable—if somewhat bland—modern furniture.

Examples: One-off designs, antique furniture, gold-plated faucets, works by famous artists.

SECURITY

This category represents how difficult it is for others to gain access to your property. The specifics depend on what you and your gamemaster have in mind, but can be anything from locks on the doors, on-site guards, payments to the local gang, or even the fact that you benefit from the security of the bunraku parlor next-door.

The ratings given in the sections below are for tests made to circumvent the security, regardless of what you decide that security actually is. For example, if you have Squatter-level security, you could say it's a padlock on a footlocker; for purposes of picking it, the padlock has a rating of 2, because that's what Squatter security provides. On the other hand, with Middle security, the locks on the doors will be Rating 4; if there's a caretaker in your building, he'll have Intelligence 4 with which to spot intruders.

Street (0 points)

You have no security to speak of, except what you can create for yourself. That usually takes the form of scaring away would-be thieves by whatever means available, so you would do well to invest in a weapon of some kind.

Rating: 1

Examples: Looking tough, tin can on a tripwire.



Squatter (1 point)

You have a place where you can store your valuables out of reach of common thieves, but the more resourceful ones will be able to get at it with a little trouble.

Rating: 2

Examples: Simple mechanical lock, old safe, locker at the bus station.

Low (2 points)

Although your security isn't great, it is good enough to at least delay serious attempts at getting past it. You won't normally be bothered by opportunistic attempts to steal your stuff.

Rating: 3

Examples: Average safe, payments to the local gang, big dog.

Middle (3 points)

Your apartment has security that will keep out casual thieves as well as the more determined ones, making it a relatively safe and secure place to live.

Rating: 4

Examples: Decent maglocks, PANICBUTTON alarm, building with a guard.

High (4 points)

You have a good system of locks and alarms on your property, and very likely a contract with a security company. All this makes it difficult for even experienced and well-equipped thieves to get in.

Rating: 6

Examples: Metahuman guards, security cameras, electrified fence, Ares Sentinel "P" patrol drones.

Luxury (5 points)

Security is so good that sometimes it just gets in your way—but better security than someone else, right?

Rating: 8

Examples: Paranormal animal patrols, automatic gun systems, guard spirits, on-site security magician.

SPACE

This is an indicator of the size of your dwelling. Its interior decoration is not considered here, as that falls under Furnishings.

Street (0 points)

You don't live in a building at all, but sleep in the open air.

Examples: Park bench, doorway, under a highway overpass.

Limitations: You cannot choose higher than Squatter lifestyle for the Security category.

Squatter (1 point)

At least you've got a roof over your head to keep the rain out, but that's about all. There's just enough room for yourself and perhaps a guest (provided they don't want to stay for the night, or at least not in a separate bed) but there really is no room to do anything in-doors.

Examples: Coffin hotel, cardboard box, shantytown hut, homeless shelter.

Limitations: You cannot choose higher than Low lifestyle for the Security category.

Low (2 points)

You live in a tiny apartment or studio that is not intended to be inhabited by more than one or two people. On average, these apartments have about 50 square meters of floor space and are very cramped for trolls. A shamanic lodge can be set up in the living room if you really want to, and though you can draw a hermetic circle, it's limited to rating 2 due to the room size.

Apartments like this are part of a big block of flats with at least ten floors, each of dozen or more apartments. If you're lucky you've got a balcony, else you'll have to make do with a picture window. If you have a vehicle, you can park it in a communal parking garage underneath the building, or on a large lot out front.

Examples: One-bedroom apartment, prefab DIY home, council flat, U-Stor-It™ space.

Middle (3 points)

You either have a decent-sized apartment in a large building or a small free-standing house with a garden, depending on what part of town you live in. On average, it is about 100 square meters with a moderate-sized living room, enough bedrooms for your whole family to sleep and live in (as well as maybe one or two spares) and a well-equipped bathroom and kitchen. For magicians, this is the minimum size of building in which you can set up a shamanic lodge in a room of its own. If you move the furniture aside, you can draw a rating 4 hermetic circle.

An apartment block will have a parking garage underneath the building, but unlike Low-class, it has reserved spaces for all the residents. If you have a house, you can park your vehicle on a driveway or in your front yard.

Examples: Two- or three-bedroom apartment, condominium, small single-family house.

High (4 points)

Your apartment is large and airy, or maybe you live in a moderately-sized house with a garden around it. Either has a large living room and kitchen, a study and/or dining room, at least one well-equipped bathroom and large bedrooms for your whole family and some guests. The typical size of an apartment is some 300 square meters, while a house has about 200 square meters of space. You can draw a rating 6 hermetic circle indoors if you want to.

For parking your vehicle, you have a private space underneath the apartment building, or a garage next to your house.

Examples: Typical single-family house or apartment, converted loft.

Luxury (5 points)

If you live in an apartment block, you've either got a multi-story penthouse or most of a floor to yourself. Most luxury housing, though, consists of villas surrounded by large gardens. In either case, interior space is 750 square meters or more with

more rooms than you'll ever really need, most of them as large as some low-class apartments. If you're a magician, you'll have all the room you need for a lodge or hermetic circle of almost any rating.

Examples: Villa, penthouse, large hotel suite.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A few more factors can come into play when figuring out a character's lifestyle costs. The more common ones are covered below, but others may crop up from time to time. The gamemaster will have to make decisions for those where necessary.

Buying a Lifestyle

This remains unchanged from the rule on page 241, *SR3*: by spending 100 times the basic lifestyle cost, a character can buy a lifestyle permanently. The gamemaster can place a lower limit on this if desired (for example, that only lifestyles of more than 5 points may be purchased), but this will probably not be necessary—very few players will want to spend the 1,500¥ necessary to permanently live in a dumpster in the Redmond Barrens.

Buying only part of a lifestyle is also a possibility; this way, you buy one or more categories only and still have to pay for the others every month. For example, you could buy the Space category to reflect that you own rather than rent your apartment. To figure out the price, add up the points for the categories you want to buy, and divide them by your total lifestyle points cost. Then multiply by your base monthly lifestyle payment, and then by 100.

The monthly lifestyle cost is based only on the points values of the categories you did not buy; the ones you bought are not factored into the cost anymore.

Wally likes his High Comforts and Security, so he wants to buy those permanently. They are worth a total of 8 points (both are High, so 4 points each), while Wally's overall lifestyle is worth 20 point, or 6,650¥ per month. To buy the two categories, Wally needs to spend $(8 \div 20) \times 6,650¥ \times 100 = 266,000¥$. Every month from now on, he needs to only pay for a lifestyle worth $(20 - 8 =) 12$ points, or 1,000¥.

Changing Ratings

There will come a time when a character wants (or needs) to change something about her home, whether it's redecorating or moving entirely.

Changing the Area rating obviously requires moving to a new place (unless the gamemaster wants to use this as the starting point for adventures designed to change the neighborhood's Area rating).

Likewise, a change in the Space rating usually requires a move as well, except in cases such as renting the apartment next-door and knocking out a wall.

Altering the Security and Comforts ratings may require a move if the gamemaster thinks it is appropriate, as it will mostly depend on the area: upgrading to even Middle-level Comforts in the Barrens is unlikely, but going from Middle- to High-level Comforts in an AA-rated neighborhood shouldn't be a problem.

Changes in Entertainment and Furnishings ratings don't usually require the character to move, as they represent things that can be put into just about any home.

The time required for these changes to take place can be determined by the gamemaster or using this option: changing a single category by one level takes 2D6 days. This is cumulative for multiple categories and levels: if Wally wants to move to a D-rated area (from B, so down two levels) and upgrade his Entertainment to Middle (from Low, a change of one level) as well, this will take him 6D6 days. If the total lifestyle cost goes up, this happens at the beginning (before the time is actually spent), but if the cost goes down, the change only happens after the necessary time has elapsed.

Multiple Lifestyles

If you want more than one lifestyle, such as one to actually live in and another to use as a hide-out, figure out the costs for each lifestyle separately. Don't add up their point totals, but add up the separate nuyen costs to find your total monthly lifestyle payment.

Besides his 20-point apartment, Wally has a hide-out that comes to 8 points. His total lifestyle cost is $6,650¥ + 400¥ = 7,050¥$ per month, because the two are calculated separately.

Regional Differences

The prices given on the Lifestyle Costs Table (p. 128) are for Seattle, the standard setting for a *Shadowrun* campaign. To determine the lifestyle cost in other parts of the world, refer to the sourcebook(s) published for the country or region in question; many (but not all) of these include a table of the area's costs of living relative to those in Seattle, from which the actual lifestyle cost can be determined. Simply multiply the lifestyle cost determined above by the appropriate percentage (either the entry for Cost of Living or for Lifestyle).

For example, page 103 of *Target: Awakened Lands* has such a table for Australia. It shows that the Cost of Living in Sydney is 150% that of Seattle, so a character with a lifestyle worth 21 points, pays $7,500¥ \times 150\% = 11,250¥$ per month in a campaign set in Sydney. A character living the exact same lifestyle in Perth would only pay $7,500¥ \times 90\% = 6,750¥$, though.

When no Costs of Living table is given in the sourcebook or no sourcebook is available for the area, the gamemaster should decide on the relative cost of living. As a guideline, keep in mind that big-city living is more expensive than life out in the sticks.

Roommates

When two or more characters live together in the same apartment, they can share certain costs and so spend less each than they would if they lived separately. To do this, the characters need to establish the base levels of all categories for their house; these are called the communal categories, and their costs will be shared. Each individual character can increase the levels of any categories except Area and Space, but these increases only apply to him or herself, not to any of the other characters



living in the same house. The character needs to pay for such increased categories.

To determine a character's monthly lifestyle cost, first calculate the cost of the communal categories using the Lifestyle Costs Table (p. 128) as normal, and then determine the lifestyle cost for the character's individual lifestyle. Subtract the communal lifestyle cost from the individual one to find the individual cost.

Now add 20% per character after the first living in the house to the communal cost. For example, if three characters live together, their communal costs are 40% higher than given on the table. The characters can divide the communal cost any way they want (the usual way is to split it evenly between them, but players can choose any other method they like) and add their share of it to their individual cost to find their actual monthly lifestyle payment.

Lisa, Jill and Running Eagle share a large apartment with a point cost of 26 (40,000¥ per month). Running Eagle wants some improvements and adds a few levels in some categories, bringing his individual cost to 28 points, or 70,000¥ under normal circumstances. This leaves $70,000¥ - 40,000¥ = 30,000¥$ that Eagle needs to pay out of his own pocket each month, plus his share of the communal costs. These are the base $40,000¥ + 40%$ (because there are three people in the apartment) = $56,000¥$, divided by 3 to give $18,667¥$ per person. Running Eagle's total monthly bill comes to $30,000¥ + 18,667¥ = 48,667¥$. Though that's a lot of money, it's actually not bad for a 70,000¥ lifestyle.

Characters can also live with one or more NPCs, using the same rules as when two player characters share an apartment. The gamemaster will need to decide each NPC's lifestyle category ratings, as well as what amount he or she shares in the communal costs. The gamemaster should also take care that players do not just take this option in order to save some money. The character might be required to take the Dependent Flaw (p. 26, *Shadowrun Companion*), for example, if the NPC roommate takes up some of the character's time.

When a character *supports* one or more NPCs, he or she will usually pay the full cost of the NPCs' communal costs. For example, a character with three children should pay the children's "share" of the communal lifestyle costs. Assuming they all have the exact same lifestyle, the net result would be that the character pays 160% of the base lifestyle cost, because the three additional occupants of the building add $3 \times 20\% = 60\%$ to the base cost.

SINless Characters

Being SINless does not prevent a character from having a decent lifestyle, but it does make things more difficult—a decent fake ID can literally be a lifesaver. To reflect this, a character using a forged ID to buy a lifestyle cannot spend more points in each category than the rating of the fake ID used plus two. For example, with a rating 2 forged SIN, no category can be taken at high-

er than High level (4 points). Without a fake ID at all, a character is limited to a lifestyle costing a grand total of 12 points.

Vehicle Overheads

The calculated lifestyle cost does *not* include vehicle upkeep or related payments. Those should be figured separately and added to the total, as explained under *Maintenance and Overhead* on p. 28, *Rigger 3*.

Keeping Up the Payments

Every month a character does not pay the full cost for one of his or her lifestyles, the gamemaster should determine the difference between that lifestyle's points total and for how many points the character actually paid. Round partial payments down to the nearest whole points total.

Now roll 2D6 (3D6 if the lifestyle has the Easygoing Landlord Edge, or 1D6 with the Trigger-Happy Landlord Flaw; see p. 144); if this roll is equal to or less than the difference in payments, the gamemaster should roll another 1D6, applying the Rule of Six if necessary, and subtract the result from the lifestyle's points total. The result is the character's new lifestyle level. The second roll is made every month until the debt has been paid off. (Naturally, nothing prevents the character from paying off the debt directly, rather than wait for his or her lifestyle to be reduced a second time next month.)

The gamemaster decides from which category (or categories) these points are taken, and what exactly the effect is on the character's life when this happens. For example, points taken off Space will probably mean the character is evicted, but could also be the landlord deciding to use the character's living room as a warehouse until he pays up. Points taken off other categories can represent some property getting repossessed (lowering Comforts or Furnishings), the power being turned off (reducing Comforts and/or Entertainment), things being stolen or burned in a fire (because Security is failing), the character's nightclub membership being cancelled (meaning less Entertainment) and so on. These are just examples the gamemaster should use as ideas for inflicting hardship of his or her own devising on the character until the bills get paid. The gamemaster should attempt to roleplay out these situations and give the character time to respond or take action (like selling his possessions before they are repossessed).

Wally's lifestyle costs for his main apartment are 6,650¥ per month, but last month he could only pay 2,500¥, or 14 points worth. This is 6 points below the 20 points his lifestyle is worth, so if the gamemaster rolls 6 or less on 2D6, Wally will be in trouble. Not too unsurprisingly, the dice roll low enough. The gamemaster then rolls another D6, getting a 4. Subtracted from Wally's lifestyle points cost of 20, this makes his new lifestyle worth 16 points (3,650¥ per month, or 3,000 less than the previous cost). The gamemaster decides 2 points will come off Wally's Entertainment (dropping it to Street) and 2 more off his Furnishings rating (putting it at Squatter). In other words, the repo men come by Wally's apartment and

take away most of the stuff in it, leaving him with little more than a mattress, a rickety chair and a kitchen sink.

This pays for 3,000¥ though, while Wally owed 4,150. The second month, unless Wally pays the 1,150¥ he still owes, the gamemaster will roll 1D6 again and reduce Wally's lifestyle by the roll once more.

Hiding from Debt Collectors

Characters may not want to pay at all. This can be resolved by roleplaying the character's attempts to hide from the landlord and bill collectors, or the gamemaster can simply call for a Success Contest between the character's Stealth and the landlord or bill collector's Intelligence (in case of the character renting from a corporation, use its Efficiency rating instead; see pp. 120–122, *Corporate Download*). Every 2 net successes on this test lets the character hide for a week before the debt collectors find him. If the character wants to remain in hiding, roll again after the time is up, but add +1 to the landlord/collector's Intelligence (or corps's Efficiency rating); this bonus is cumulative, so the third roll would be at +2 and so on. Gamemasters should not allow deadbeats to hide from their landlord permanently—he does have a key and the law on his side, after all.

If a character moves out and/or abandons that lifestyle in order to avoid the debts, the bill collectors will still pursue. If the character stops using their old ID, she may use the rating of another fake ID as complimentary dice for her Stealth Test. Eventually, if the character runs far enough and long enough, she may get away, but gamemasters should not make it easy and are encouraged to resolve the situation through roleplaying rather than dice rolls.

Boosting Services

If a decker character boosts his own Matrix services or subscription channels (see p. 35, *Matrix*), he can increase his Entertainment rating by 1 at no extra cost. This only applies if a character does the boosting himself; characters that pay for deckers to do it for them should consider the costs incorporated into their Entertainment rating.

Burglary

As an optional rule, the gamemaster can determine randomly if a character's place gets broken into. Each month, the gamemaster secretly rolls the apartment's Security rating against a target number set by the Area rating, per the Burglary Table. If this roll gets no successes, the apartment is successfully broken into.

With one success, a failed attempt is made that the character will notice (he or she is at home, security shows up, the burglars wreck a lock trying to bypass it or something similar). With two or more successes, there is either no attempt at all or one is foiled without anyone noticing.

If the apartment is successfully broken into, the gamemaster should roll 1D6 to determine which category is reduced by 1 point. For that month, the character still pays the full cost of the lifestyle despite the decreased rating. On the next month, the monthly lifestyle cost can be lowered accordingly (to reflect the loss) or restored to normal (reflecting that the character has replaced what was stolen).

It is up to the gamemaster to decide when exactly this burglary attempt takes place during the coming month. If necessary 1D6 x 1D6 could be rolled to establish the exact day (re-rolling any roll higher than the number of days in the month, of course).

Special Cases

Though this lifestyle system is geared mainly toward apartments and other permanent homes, it can also be used for other applications where characters need a building for some purpose.

Garages: The space required by vehicles is up to the gamemaster, with Low Space being enough to park an average car with little room to spare, while Luxury-sized Space could be used as a garage for

several trucks and trailers.

Hotel and Motel Rooms: The Hotel Ratings Table gives typical lifestyle ratings for hotel rooms and their associated points cost. Note that the Area is not rated because hotels can be found in all parts of town, so this rating must still be added to the points cost from the Hotel Ratings Table to find the lifestyle cost of a

BURGLARY TABLE

Area	Target Number
Z	6
E	5
D	5
C	4
B	4
A	3
AA	3
AAA	2
1D6	Rating reduced
1	Comforts
2–4	Entertainment
5–6	Furnishings

HOTEL RATINGS

Hotel	Space	Security	Furnishings	Comforts	Entertainment	Points
Coffin	Squatter	Middle	Squatter	Low	Low	9
Hostel	Low	Low	Low	Squatter	Low	9
Typical room	Low	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	14
Suite	Middle	Middle	Middle	High	High	17
Penthouse/bridal suite	High	Luxury	Luxury	Luxury	Luxury	24



room. This assumes a character rents the room on a more-or-less permanent basis; to rent a room for a night, divide the cost by 30.

All these costs are per person; the full price to rent a room is the calculated one multiplied by the number of people the room is intended for (in other words, a four-person room costs four times as much, etc.). The gamemaster should further adjust the cost based on the relative status of the hotel, by altering the ratings, or by adding Edges and Flaws (see p. 137).

Coffin hotel ratings are pretty much fixed—moving to another one tends to only change the Area rating. Besides only having one-person “rooms,” communal bathrooms and no food at all, nearly all coffin hotels provide the Cursed Amenities and Disgruntled Service Flaws (p. 143).

In a **hostel**, each room has bunk beds for four to twelve people, with complete strangers sharing rooms. It’s relatively cheap, but you get what you pay for: communal toilets, having to find your own food and the No Privacy Flaw (p. 143) at level 2.

A **typical motel/hotel room** is a bedroom with a single, double, twin single or twin double bed and an attached bathroom. The price normally includes breakfast at the hotel restaurant.

A **suite** consists of a number of bedrooms (single or double) and a bathroom, all connected by a corridor or to a central living area. A **penthouse or bridal suite** is a much larger and more luxurious version, usually located at the top floor of the hotel. It often comes with the Motivated Service Edge (p. 140).

The Granada Hotel is a hostel in a C-rated part of town. A bed costs 9 points, plus 3 for the Area; that’s 12 points, or 1,000 nuyen per month, reduced to 900 nuyen by the No Privacy Flaw. A bed for a night, then, costs $(900 \div 30 =) 30\text{¥}$, while renting a whole six-person room for yourself for a month would cost $(900 \times 6 =) 5,400\text{¥}$.

RV

A character who lives in a recreational vehicle or on a boat has a few special considerations. Typical RVs and pleasurecraft have the following ratings: Low Space, Low Furnishings, Medium Comforts and Medium Entertainment. For Security, use the rating of the vehicle’s anti-theft system (p. 149, R3). Large yachts will have higher ratings, while sleeper cabs on trucks have lower ones.

Because the character owns the vehicle, the Space, Furnishings and Security categories do not need to be paid for each month (Space cannot be upgraded either). The Area category is wherever the character parks the vehicle, so the gamemaster will need to keep track of the number of days spent in a given area and charge one-thirtieth of the points cost per day. (Round fractions up at the end of the month.) For example, if a character spent 7 days in an A-rated area and 23 days in a B-rated one, it will cost $(4 \text{ points} \div 30 \times 7 \text{ days}) + (3 \text{ points} \div 30 \times 23 \text{ days}) = 0.9 + 2.3 = 3.2 \text{ points}$, rounded up to 4 points.

(If this makes an RV seem like a cheap place to live, keep in mind that the character needs to *buy* the vehicle first.)

Workshops/Facilities

A shop requires Middle-level Space, while a facility requires Luxury level (see *Tools*, p. 288, *SR3*). Tools need to be purchased separately if the character wants to own them. It is also possible to rent a workshop or facility complete with tools; divide the cost of the shop or facility by 100 to determine monthly tool/equipment rental.

When a workshop is attached to a garage, the gamemaster will need to determine how many vehicles can be put into it.

LIFESTYLE EDGES & FLAWS

Lifestyle Edges and Flaws personalize the more particular aspects of a character's home. They function like regular Edges and Flaws (p. 15, *SRComp*) except that their value affects the cost of a lifestyle directly. Once the lifestyle's personalization is complete, the player adds up the values to obtain a final modifier; that modifier, plus one, multiplies the monthly cost of the lifestyle. This result is what the character must pay each month.

S.H., runner with rhythm, has a 5,000¥ lifestyle with the Bribed Security and Defensive Setup Edges and the Horrible View Flaw. The total value of his Edges and Flaws is (0.10 + 0.15 - 0.05 =) 0.20. Adding one, the result is a final modifier of 1.20. 5,000¥ x 1.20 = 6,000¥, which becomes S.H.'s total monthly lifestyle costs.

No more than five Edges and five Flaws are allowed per lifestyle—or even less if the gamemaster chooses. No matter how many Edges and Flaws are taken, though, the costs of a lifestyle can never be increased or reduced by more than 50 percent of its original value.

Likewise, the gamemaster has final approval on which Edges and Flaws can be chosen and should be appropriately strict when nixing combinations that fail the common sense test. At the gamemaster's discretion, certain Edges and Flaws may simply be inappropriate. You are unlikely, for example, to have a home with the Motivated Service Edge in the Z-zone areas if Redmond, just as you are unlikely to have a home with the Rough Neighborhood Flaw in a AAA-zoned part of Bellevue. All choices should fit with the personality of the home.

Any lifestyle made permanent (by buying it at one hundred times the base price) should be bought with Edges and Flaws already determined. They modify the final price as usual; simply figure out the cost for a month's rent and multiply it by 100.

INTEGRATION WITH LIFESTYLE COSTS

Lifestyle Edges and Flaws can work with or without the *Detailed Lifestyles* cost system presented on p. 128. Some of them were designed to work with that system in mind, however; these are marked with an asterisk (*). The rest can be used freely with either system.

LIFESTYLE EDGES

Astral Repellent
Value: +0.20

The astral feel of the home and its environment acts like a repellent. Spirits and other astral beings know to steer clear. Any astral being (including astrally projecting metahumans and conjured spirits) needs to succeed at a Willpower (5) Test to enter. Immediately after a conjuring succeeds within the home, the spirit must make the Willpower Test; should it fail, so does the conjuring. This Edge is incompatible with the Astral Magnet Flaw.

Bribed Security
Value: +0.15

The security providers for the home have been paid handsomely to offer more than adequate service. Be they Lone Star, private security guards or the local gang, all security response times are halved once the alarm is sounded. After all, security wants to please so it can keep its pockets lined. This Edge is incompatible with the Underpaid Security Flaw.

Concerned Neighbors
Value: +0.05

The character's neighbors take their neighborhood's safety to heart and will notice strange sounds and peculiar people (anyone to whom they haven't been introduced) moving in and out of the home. Whenever this happens, they will either check to see if the character's all right or call security. Treat them as having an Intelligence of 3 for purposes of noticing intruders. This Edge can be taken in conjunction with other "Neighbors" Edges and Flaws, each time pertaining to a specific set of neighbors.

Defensive Setup
Value: +0.10

The home with this Edge was either designed with architectural defense in mind or acquired that aspect by pure accident. It features corners and layout characteristics perfect for use as cover or advantageous positions in battle. When fighting indoors, characters familiar with the home (namely the character with the lifestyle and any regular visitors) can always move to gain the Partial Cover defensive bonus in ranged combat or the Superior Position bonus in melee combat. This Edge is incompatible with the Ambush Friendly Flaw.

Easygoing Landlord
Value: +0.05

The landlord isn't overly concerned with late payments or strict enforcement. Alternatively, he or she and the character go back a long way. If using the new lifestyle costs introduced in this book, roll 3D6 instead of the usual 2D6 when rolling to see if the character's lifestyle is reduced after insufficient payment. If using the standard *SR3* lifestyle rules (p. 240, *SR3*), roll 2D6 instead of the usual 1D6 to compare to the amount of missed payments. This Edge is incompatible with the Trigger-Happy Landlord Flaw.

Escape Tunnel

Value: +0.10

Whether by design or accident, the home features a concealed portal that can be used to secretly enter and exit without any external observers being the wiser. This might be a basement door leading to the sewers, a secret stairway hidden behind a bookshelf or easy access to the neighbor's roof and out-of-sight fire escape.

Good Insulation

Value: +0.05

Thanks to space-age materials and rugged architecture, the character's home is perfectly protected against the elements. No matter what extreme conditions might be going on outside, the character's home remains in tip top environmental shape (even during power outages). This Edge is incompatible with the Bad Insulation Flaw.

Good Reputation

Value: +0.05

The character's home itself is known to be a great place. Outside contractors and services will be eager to go on-site to do the work, as will delivery services. This gives the character a -2 bonus to all target numbers when negotiating with the aforementioned service providers. This Edge is incompatible with the Bad Reputation Flaw.

Hasty Access

Value: +0.05

The home is configured to give quick entry and exit whenever the character needs it. For houses or flats it may mean a quick-access fire escape or back door, while for twentieth floor penthouses there may be some express elevators or bungee rigging involved. Barring unusual circumstances, it takes a single Combat Turn to enter or exit the home at any time, from any room. This Edge is incompatible with the Difficult Access Flaw.

Helpful Neighbors

Value: +0.05

The character's neighbors are both friendly and eager to please. Whenever the character needs a cup of soykaf or a place to hide a large unidentified box, they'll be there to lend a hand. They always react favorably to the character and whichever friends he or she introduces to them. This Edge can be taken in conjunction with other "Neighbors" Edges and Flaws, each time pertaining to a specific set of neighbors.

Inconspicuous Housing

Value: +0.10

The character lives in a place that people just can't seem to find on the map or even easily on foot. It may be a nondescript warehouse with no address or that corner apartment that can't be seen from the street and isn't listed on the directory. This makes it harder for people to find the character, both friendly and otherwise. Increase the difficulty of all tests made to find or acquire information about the tenants by +1.

Insurance

Value: +0.10

Unforeseen circumstances are prepared for as an insurance company protects the character's real estate assets. This Edge is linked to a specific ID/SIN when purchased and will thereafter work similarly for every other lifestyle the character has registered under the same SIN. Whenever something bad happens to a home with this Edge (be it due to burglars or cataclysms) and the character decides to invoke Insurance, he or she gains a temporary lifestyle of value equal to the current lifestyle for as long as the replacements or repairs take. All this is done without any further expense. As soon as the character is back to his or her former home, however, the Insurance Edge's value goes up by +0.05 and the lifestyle's cost is recalculated.

This increase unilaterally affects all lifestyles under the same SIN and their costs must also be updated. Additionally, this rise in value is cumulative every time the Edge is invoked; modifying the lifestyle or removing Insurance to purchase it again later will not reduce its new adjusted value. Only lifestyles purchased under SINs that have never had the Insurance Edge are able to take it at its original +0.10 value. Lifestyles not registered to a SIN cannot have the Insurance Edge.

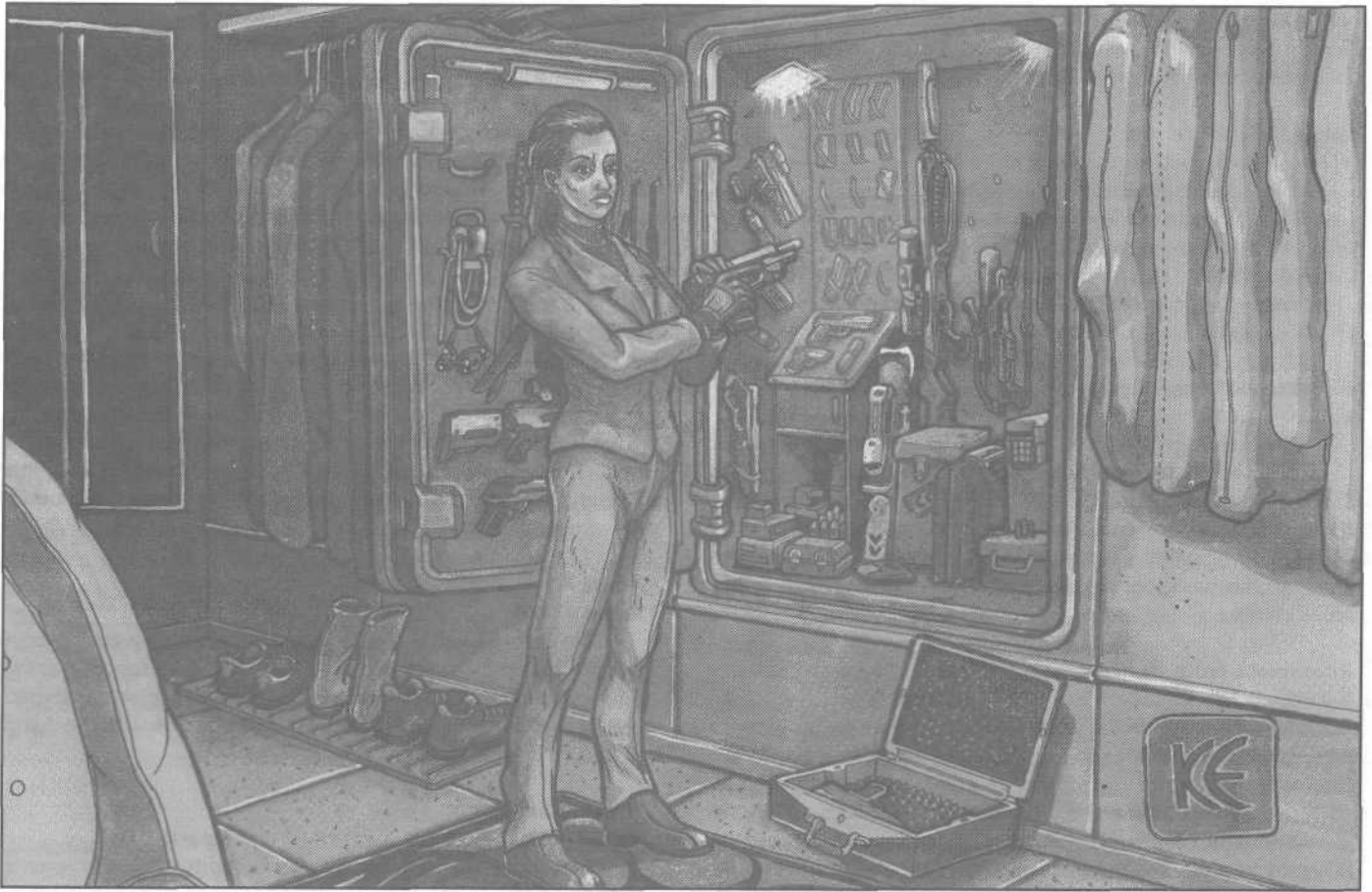
Biomod junkie Amy Burton lives in a decent apartment with the Insurance Edge and a 5,500¥ monthly rent. She also rents out a little room downtown for 1,100¥ a month, insured under the same identity. After a rather wild party with her tattooed and surgically altered pals, her main home is left in shambles. She decides to call in her insurance instead of paying for the repairs herself. During the time it takes for the workers to fix her place back up to code, she's housed free of charge in another apartment also worth 5,500¥ a month. Once the repairs are done, she moves back in merrily.

The insurance company has raised her premiums, though; the Insurance Edge goes from a +0.10 value to +0.15, making her new rent 5,750¥. Since her other lifestyle is also registered under her name and insured, it also undergoes the same change and now costs 1,150¥ a month. Were Amy to get an additional lifestyle under the same identity and want to have it insured, the Insurance Edge's value for that lifestyle would start at +0.15. Only if she purchases another lifestyle under a new identity will an Insurance Edge for that home start at a +0.10 value.

Manaline/Power Site in the Basement

Value: +0.20 (+0.30 for Awakened characters)

For reasons beyond metahuman comprehension, the home is located directly on a rating 1 manaline or power site (see p. 84, *MITS*). This confers all the usual bonuses of manalines and power sites to any magic users inside the home, but also tends to attract unwanted attention due to the obvious magical energies involved.



Masterful Engineering*

Value: +0.05

The home was crafted using SOTA methods that make any modifications much easier. The base time for renovations or any other form of home customization is rolled with 1D6 days per point instead of the regular 2D6 days (see *Changing Ratings*, p. 133). This Edge is incompatible with the Patchwork Engineering Flaw.

Motivated Service

Value: +0.10

The character's non-security home services, both inside and outside, are very motivated and efficient. They finish the job in half the time when time is a factor and always react nicely to the character and his or her visitors, companions and friends. This Edge is incompatible with the Disgruntled Service Flaw.

No More Neighbors

Value: +0.15

Through luck or the character's exasperated actions, the homes next door (and above and below) are empty. While this means no immediate help, it also means no distractions and no one to disturb. This Edge cannot be taken in conjunction with any other "Neighbors" Edge or Flaw.

One Step Away From Everything

Value: +0.05

The home is simply in the best possible emplacement it can be. Travel times to specialty outlets or services, such as the corner store or the hospital, are halved thanks to little or no traffic and judicious shortcuts. This Edge is incompatible with the Middle of Nowhere Flaw.

Pest Repellent

Value: +0.05

Stray animals and pests know to stay away from this home. This may be due to the tanning shop next door or the pet cemetery in the basement; no matter the reason, any critter wanting to approach the home with this Edge needs to succeed at a Willpower (6) test. This Edge is incompatible with the Infestation Flaw.

Privacy Screen

Value: +0.10 per level

The character's home is designed for privacy, be it through thick soundproof walls, strategically placed windows or other features. External surveillance or spying is made all the more difficult, suffering a penalty of +1 to all target numbers per level of this Edge. These penalties do not affect any

anti-privacy activities within the home proper. The Privacy Screen Edge can be taken a maximum of three times and is incompatible with the No Privacy Flaw.

Quiet Neighborhood

Value: +0.15

The character lives in a quiet, peaceful area of town. It's (relatively) safe to walk at night and the incidence of security breaches is much lower. Crimes happen half as often as normal around (and sometimes in) the character's home. This Edge is incompatible with the Rough Neighborhood Flaw.

Reliable Utilities

Value: +0.10

The building is kept in good condition and the owner has invested in technologies and services that ensure life can go on at even the worst of times. This may mean that there is a back-up generator on site or that the plumbing is of superior quality. Even in the most extreme circumstances, the basic services of electricity and hot/cold water still function.

Roommate From Heaven

Value: +0.10

The character lives with a helpful, friendly soul who either offers a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear or a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Additionally, the roommate also helps with the home's upkeep and takes care of things when the character is not home. "Roommate" Edges and Flaws can be taken more than once, cumulatively representing more people living with the character. Roommates acquired through Edges and Flaws do not contribute to the rent.

Terrific View

Value: +0.05

The home offers an amazing view of a specific area, offering both pleasant feelings and spying opportunities for the character. Multiple "View" Edges and Flaws can be taken, each applying to a specific area of the home's surroundings.

Vigilant Security*

Value: +0.15

The home's security is especially hawk-eyed and alert. The lifestyle's security rating is increased by 1 only for the purposes of the quantity of dice rolled against intrusion attempts. This can be due to motivated guards, a commanding position or other characteristics. This Edge is incompatible with the Inattentive Security Flaw.

Watertight

Value: +0.05

No matter how much it rains or pours, the character's home remains dry. Even flash floods and acid rain don't faze it. This Edge is incompatible with the Waterlogged Flaw.

LIFESTYLE FLAWS

Ambush Friendly

Value: -0.10

The character's home was practically designed to be invaded. Anyone fighting indoors must succeed at a Perception (6) Test to locate a way to gain the Partial Cover defensive bonus in ranged combat or the Superior Position bonus in melee combat. This Flaw is incompatible with the Defensive Setup Edge.

Annoying Neighbors

Value: -0.05

Neighbors hate the character or at least ignore the fact he or she exists. They make noise at odd hours of the night, disturb the character with requests and generally make life troublesome, going so far as to leaf through his or her snail mail if it's left to sit out. This Flaw can be taken in conjunction with other "Neighbors" Edges and Flaws, each time pertaining to a specific set of neighbors.

Astral Magnet

Value: -0.20

The home's astral feel is very appealing to astrally active beings. Unfortunate astral pests and wild spirits seem to gravitate to the character's home and few astrally projecting characters can fail to notice it. This Flaw is incompatible with the Astral Repellent Edge.

Background Count

Value: -0.20 (-0.30 for Awakened characters)

The home was witness to some unfortunate prior events, radiating hate, anger, sorrow, fear or other very negative vibes. It boasts a Background Count (p. 83, MITS) of level 1 and all that this characteristic entails.

Bad Insulation

Value: -0.05

Due to shoddy construction and flimsy materials, the home's insulation is practically see-through. The elements therefore rule over the character's home, preventing sleep and generally making life difficult in the heat of summer as well as in the frost of winter. This Flaw is incompatible with the Good Insulation Edge.

Bad Reputation

Value: -0.05

The home is thought to be cursed, jinxed or renowned for having tenants who don't tip. Outside contractors and delivery services will be very wary of coming on-site to do any sort of work. Any negotiation with the aforementioned people is done at a +2 penalty to all target numbers. This Flaw is incompatible with the Good Reputation Edge.

Cacophonous Neighborhood

Value: -0.05

The home is unfortunately placed near a highway, railway, motor factory, foghorn plant or other noisy feature of

urban life. This causes the character to have trouble sleeping and relaxing due to the constant audio bombardment, unless of course he or she happens to be deaf. Guests and visitors will mind all the same.

Crashpad

Value: -0.10

This place is well known to the youthful members of a particular gang, subculture or social circle as a place to hang out, party and crash at. People the character knows, barely knows or doesn't know at all are always showing up, looking to hang, get wasted or find a spot of floor to sleep on. Privacy and security are generally nonexistent, at least in the areas of the house not locked off.

Cursed Amenities

Value: -0.10

Hot water turns to cold, blackouts are commonplace and if it can go wrong, it usually has before the character wakes up. The home's basic services keep malfunctioning at the worst of times.

Difficult Access

Value: -0.05

Leaving or entering the character's home is excruciating and time-consuming due to faulty elevators, stairwells or time-released door locks. Going in or out, even in a hurry, takes at least two minutes. This Flaw is incompatible with the Hasty Access Edge.

Disgruntled Service

Value: -0.10

The character's non-security home services deeply resent him or her. They do their job when they want to and take their time, always making sure to "forget" little details or to leave little presents here and there to make the character's life a little more unpleasant. This Flaw is incompatible with the Motivated Service Edge.

Disgusting Neighborhood

Value: -0.05

Be it a dump, toxic waste treatment plant, tannery or other nauseating enterprise, the character's home is right next to it. Acting not only as an eyesore but also as a detractor to daily life, it makes the home much less enjoyable and tends to drive off guests and visitors, be they wanted or not.

Gnomes Under the Floorboards

Value: -0.10 or -0.20

Keycards, credsticks, magazines, chips and many assortments of single socks; if it's small and perhaps shiny, the character keeps losing it. Whether the home is a breeding ground for trinket snatchers or greater forces are at work, small (and often important) things keep getting lost around the home. When gear of Concealability 8 or more is left in the home, there's a 1 in 6 chance (when a 1 is rolled on 1D6 by the gamemaster) that it will be impossible to locate when the character searches for it later. At level 1, the item will eventu-

ally show up later (1D6 x 1D6 days); at level 2, it may be permanently lost.

Haunted

Value: -0.10 or -0.20

Apparitions, closets rumbling, cupboards shaking, doors slamming shut ... something's going on at the character's home, but no official sources can confirm it, much less help alleviate it. If the Haunted Flaw is taken at the second level, the source of the character's grief is a Force 1 Specter (p. 121, *MITS*) unable to be banished until this Flaw is bought off. For this to happen, the reason for the Specter's presence will also need to be unearthed and resolved. In either case, the home will be very difficult to sleep and rest in as frightening events keep all but the most sound sleeping residents awake and shaking.

Horrible View

Value: -0.05

The home offers a fantastic view of a wall, treatment plant or other vision-gouging sight. Nearly nothing can be gleaned from looking outside at that area at any given moment. Multiple "View" Edges and Flaws can be taken, each applying to a specific area of the home's surroundings.

Inattentive Security*

Value: -0.15

Security is moderately aware of the character's home at best. The lifestyle's security rating is lowered by 1 only for the purposes of the quantity of dice rolled against intrusion attempts. This can be due to narcoleptic guards, inviting back door entrances or other characteristics. This Flaw is incompatible with the Vigilant Security Edge.

Infestation

Value: -0.10 or -0.20

Local strays or small pests tend to gravitate towards and run amok inside the character's home, making life a living hell. They nibble power cords, eat food left on the counter and scurry around in the dark of night. Exterminators can help solve the problem for a few days, but the critters always come back. Taking this Flaw at the second level extends the invitation to paracritters; type and frequency of visits are up to the gamemaster. This Flaw is incompatible with the Pest Repellent Edge.

Intolerant Neighbors

Value: -0.05

The character's neighbors have extremely short tempers and will gladly report him or her at the slightest noise late at night. They are also very leery of personal contact, neighborly help and other social interactions. This Flaw can be taken in conjunction with other "Neighbors" Edges and Flaws, each time pertaining to a specific set of neighbors.

Living by Committee

Value: -0.10

The character doesn't fully rent his or her home, taking part in a community housing project instead. This means the charac-



ter pays less, but shares the greater part of the lifestyle's particularities with others and has to regularly attend meetings to address housing issues. Chores must also be performed with a modicum of regularity. Failure in these duties can cause the character to be evicted from the home.

Living With Parents

Value: -0.25

The character pays a lot less for his space because he still lives at home with his parents (or at least lives with a relative who owns the building). In addition to being the butt of jokes by his fellow runners, he also has to respect the rules of the house. This may mean a curfew ("You can go over to the arcology with your friends but be home by midnight!") or other restrictions ("I don't want your friends coming over again, they make too much noise!"). The only way to buy off this Flaw is by moving out of the house and into his own place.

Mail Leftovers

Value: -0.05

The previous tenant left his or her legacy to the character who now receives mail, threats, pets and angry debtors all

meant for the former occupant. Until this Flaw is resolved through roleplaying, it cannot be bought off and the mix-up will not be solved.

Middle of Nowhere

Value: -0.05

The home is as far from the local services as is metahumanly possible. Due to traffic and bad city planning, all travel between the home and specialty services is doubled in length. This Flaw is incompatible with the One Step Away From Everything Edge.

No Hazard Alarm

Value: -0.05

Fire, electrical hazards and other unfortunate accidents are not reported to security nor to the character, leaving him or her to discover them and take appropriate action.

No Privacy

Value: -0.05 per level

It's amazingly easy to spy on the character, even when he or she is taking steps to hide from sight. All attempts to undergo

spying or surveillance activities from outside the home receive a bonus of -1 per level to all target numbers. The No Privacy Flaw can be taken a maximum of three times and is incompatible with the Privacy Screen Edge.

Patchwork Engineering*

Value: -0.05

The home was build using shoddy methods and corner-cutting, which means any renovation or modification task takes 3D6 days per point instead of the usual 2D6 days per point (see *Changing Ratings*, p. 133). Additionally, the Rule of Six now applies to this roll. This Flaw is incompatible with the Masterful Edge.

Portal in the Closet

Value: -0.05 to -0.20

Hidden somewhere in the home is a feature best left undiscovered, a secret passage into an old (or still active) underground shortcut or hidden area. Unlike the Escape Tunnel Edge, though, this portal is well concealed and leaks or spews out something bad or horrible, depending on the value of the Flaw. A -0.05 Flaw might mean that there are some undiscovered, stinky serial killer victims in a crawlspace, whereas a -0.20 Flaw might mean that an underground ghoulish hive periodically uses the residence's old coal chute to come and go.

Roommate From Hell

Value: -0.05

The character lives with a nosy, lazy freeloader who disturbs his or her life more than anything else. "Roommate" Edges and Flaws can be taken more than once, cumulatively representing more people living with the character. Roommates acquired through Edges and Flaws do not contribute to the rent.

Rough Neighborhood

Value: -0.15

Undesirables cluster around your living area. Security violations happen more often and it's more dangerous to be outside at night. Crimes happen twice as often as normal around (and sometimes in) the character's home. This Flaw is incompatible with the Quiet Neighborhood Edge.

This Isn't Sam's Pizza

Value: -0.05

The home's LTG is constantly misassociated with a popular service or business. Nothing the character can do will alleviate the constant wrong numbers.

Trigger-Happy Landlord

Value: -0.05

The landlord despises the character or has a very structured way of running things. Alternatively, he or she may be friends with the repo man. If using the new lifestyle costs introduced in this book, roll 1D6 instead of the usual 2D6 when rolling to see if the character's lifestyle is reduced after insufficient payment. If using the standard lifestyle rules (p. 240, SR3), divide the 1D6

roll by two (rounding down) when comparing it to the amount of missed payments. This Flaw is incompatible with the Easygoing Landlord Edge.

Underpaid Security

Value: -0.15

In an effort to save money, a lot less of the lifestyle's money is going to security and they're not happy about it. Be they Lone Star, private security guards or the local gang, all security response times are doubled once the alarm is sounded. This Flaw is incompatible with the Bribe Security Edge.

Unreliable Security

Value: -0.05 per level

The cavalry doesn't always come charging in. Whenever there's a call for security, the gamemaster rolls 1D6. If the result is equal to or lower than the level of this Flaw, no help is on its way to come to the rescue of the home. This Flaw can be taken a maximum of five times.

Victory Gardens

Value: -0.20

The home is used as a hydroponics farm, growing indoor vegetables for consumption (or other "miscellaneous" plants for resale). While this offsets part of the lifestyle cost due to the contribution it gives in food (or other) expenses, the equipment takes up a large amount of room and has quite strict environmental demands to function properly. Understandably, this means less room to live in and diminished enjoyment of the home, not to mention the frequent upkeep required to care for the crops. Any home with the Victory Gardens Flaw has effective living space equal to one less lifestyle level than normal. For example, a Middle lifestyle home with this Flaw has as much living space as a Low lifestyle home. If using the *Detailed Lifestyles* costs, this applies to the Housing category.

Waterlogged

Value: -0.05

Even the slightest bit of rain drops in through the roof or rises up through the floor of the character's home, causing water damage and grief. This Flaw is incompatible with the Waterproof Edge.

SAMPLE LIFESTYLE PACKAGES

Following are some examples of how lifestyle Edges and Flaws can be used to create specific living conditions. While these are not hard and fast packages, they should nonetheless illustrate how Edges and Flaws can work together to create personalized living environments, no matter what level of lifestyle one starts out with.

Co-op Housing (-0.50)

Much cheaper than regular housing, living in a co-op means sharing resources and performing house upkeep for the good of all. Characters living in a co-op can rely on their fellow housemates for help, but will spend the better part of their time deal-

ing with the less motivated members of the household. A shadowrunner can live in a co-op as a means of establishing a solid identity that isn't easily traceable.

Roommate From Heaven 2, Cursed Amenities, Intolerant Neighbors, Living By Committee, Mail Leftovers, Roommate From Hell 4, Victory Gardens.

Community Beacon (+0.45)

The shining house atop a hill or the condo to which all gazes find their way, the community beacon is undeniably the home of a person who stands up for the neighborhood and helps everyone in it prosper. Shadowrunners seeking to uphold a sterling image of themselves in the public eye are best served by living in this type of home.

Concerned Neighbors, Good Reputation, Helpful Neighbors, Motivated Service, One Step Away From Everything, Quiet Neighborhood.

House of the Dead (-0.80, -0.90 for Awakened characters)

Creepy, disquieting and certifiably horrifying, the local frighthouse is a staple of the worst of neighborhoods or the most magically toxic of sprawl environments. The house of the dead is not a place many people live in willingly; rather, it's more the place where one is expected to spend the night in order to collect a sizeable inheritance.

(Note that this example is an exception to the rule regarding the number of Flaws that can be taken.)

Escape Tunnel, No More Neighbors, Astral Magnet, Background Count, Bad Reputation, Difficult Access, Haunted 2, Infestation 2, Middle of Nowhere.

Safehouse (+0.50)

The perfect places of respite for any pro, safehouses come in many shapes and sizes. They all have in common many attributes that give them their name, such as hidden defenses, emergency exits or no witnesses. Shadowrunners keep a safehouse for the recovery period after runs, where the heat is on and the best thing to do is lay low.

Defensive Setup, Hasty Access, No More Neighbors, Privacy Screen 2.

ACQUIRING OR REMOVING EDGES AND FLAWS

While most Edges and Flaws are implemented when a lifestyle is first created or bought, it's very likely some characters will wish to either add new features to their home or remove existing blemishes on an otherwise decent place to live.

Acquiring Edges often involves tracking down professionals to do some renovation work on the home, but there are some exceptions. The gamemaster decides what must be done in order to acquire the Edge for the existing lifestyle and, once the conditions are met in roleplaying, the character can simply begin to pay the higher cost the Edge brings with it.

Acquiring Flaws is a simple matter, as all it takes is a disaster, accident or pure coincidence to bring most of them into the picture. The lifestyle's cost is immediately lowered to accommodate the new Flaw. Some Flaws may be impossible to implement in an existing lifestyle.

To remove an Edge, the character must simply stop paying for it. Negligence and failure to upkeep the conditions will make most Edges go away on their own. As always, there are exceptions and the gamemaster determines what needs to be done.

To remove a Flaw, it must be repaired through roleplaying and the intervention of skills or experts. Once the conditions are met, the character must then begin to pay the higher price for his or her lifestyle.

If a lifestyle is permanent, the resulting cost of adding Edges or removing Flaws affects the total price of the lifestyle and must be paid in one lump sum. All costs are based on the original full value of the lifestyle, corresponding to 100 months. Adding flaws returns money in one payment; the way this happens (hush payment, compensation and so on) is for the gamemaster to determine.

SMG Guy currently lives in a Low level lifestyle with Annoying Neighbors, Trigger-Happy Landlord and Bribed Security. His player defines it as an apartment bordering the Seattle Barrens, using the local gang as security since one of their lieutenants owns the building. SMG Guy decides that now is the time for a change of pace, as he has little patience anymore for the loud three in the morning "sessions" of his next-door neighbors as well as the super constantly breathing down his neck.

The gamemaster determines that in order to get rid of the Annoying Neighbors Flaw, the neighbors themselves will need to be relocated. As far as the Trigger-Happy Landlord Flaw goes, that will necessitate some talking to. SMG Guy formulates a plan.

After throwing the next-door tenants out the second-story window, ventilating their studio apartment and threatening to do the same to the landlord, he generates some changes in the building. The gamemaster decides that this is enough to remove the Annoying Neighbors and Trigger-Happy Landlord Flaws. Since the landlord was also closely linked to security, however (being the lieutenant of the protecting gang), Bribed Security becomes Unreliable Security 3 as the gang becomes leery of getting anywhere near the guy that was tough enough to scare their leader. In the meantime, the building is now vacant; SMG Guy inherits the No More Neighbors Edge. SMG Guy finally has his peace and quiet.



STREET SMART?

New to the sprawl, kid? Wise up fast, cuz wiz wires or spell juice alone won't save your ass on the hungry streets. You flash your credstick in the wrong alley, drop a name in the wrong company, or flick out a spur at a gunfight and your organs will be next up for auction. Reps are built on etiquette and connections, not just chill attitude and piles of corpses. You need to know when to deal and when to wheel, or you're just another skidmark on the streets of the sprawl."

Sprawl Survival Guide details daily life in 2063, from home amenities to nightlife to coffin clubs and cred accounts. It also exposes the ins and outs of the shadowrunners' lifestyle—how they operate, who they deal with and how they survive. This information is essential for both gamemasters and players, detailing the world of Shadowrun and bringing it to life. Also includes expanded rules for lifestyles and fake identities. For use with Shadowrun, Third Edition.

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