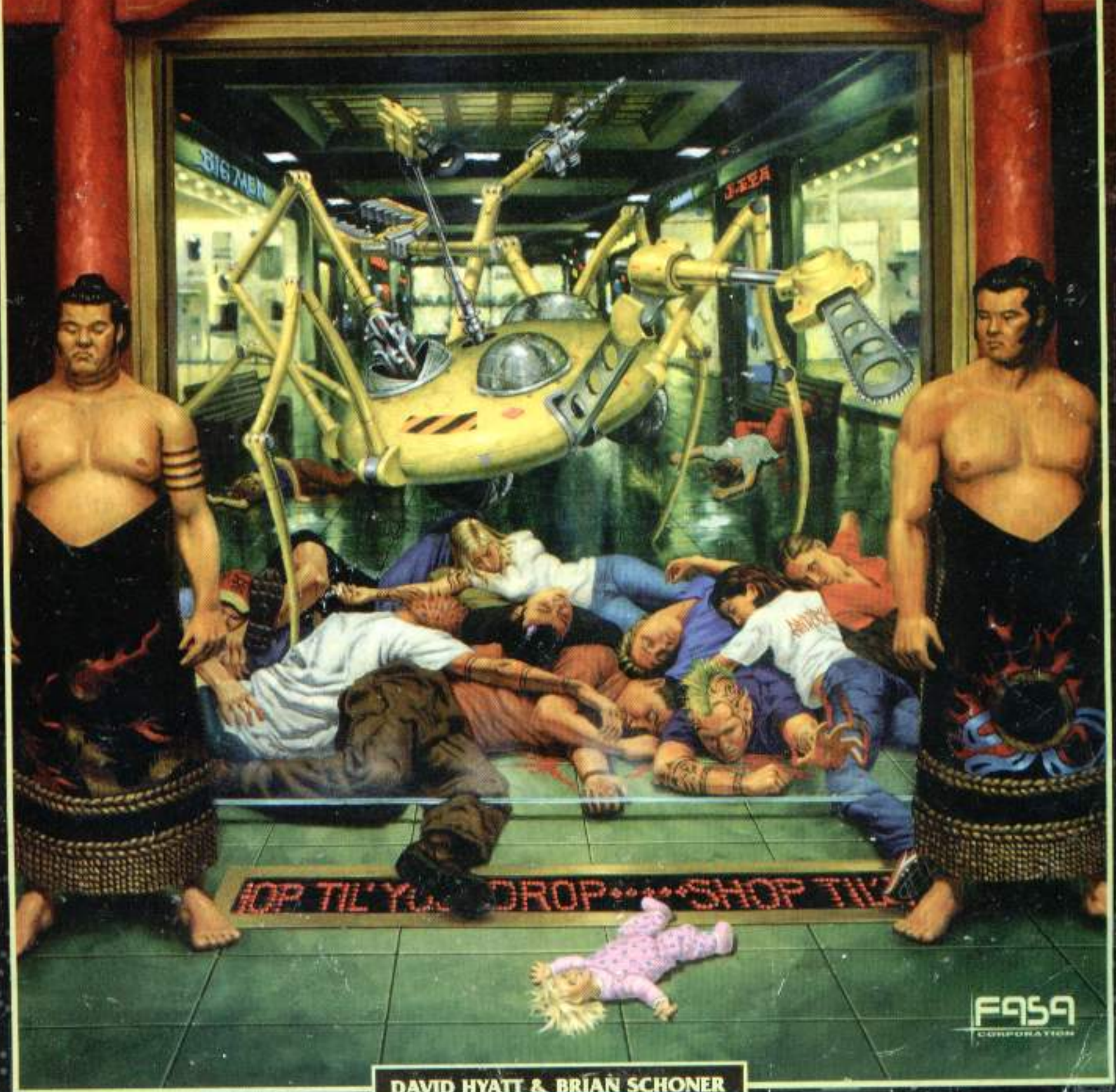


RENRAKU

ARCOLOGY

S H U T D O W N™



DAVID HYATT & BRIAN SCHONER

F959
CORPORATION

Renraku ARCOLOGY Shutdown



EASA
CORPORATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THE SHUTDOWN	6	Constructs	79
PROLOGUE: DANCE WITH THE DEVIL	7	Notes on Technology	80
GREETINGS	9	Using Deus' Drones	80
PRIDE GOETH	10	Drone Descriptions	81
A Message from the President	10	The Banded	81
Welcome Home	10	The Conditioning Process	82
Residential Zones	10	Cyberware Packages	82
Commercial and Industrial Zones	13	The Whites	83
Support Zones	13	The Blues	83
The Matrix	14	The Greens	83
Transportation	15	Adventure Ideas	84
A Few Words about Security	16	Coyne Toss	84
Just the Beginning	17	Live and Direct	84
Information	17	Scavenger Hunt	85
SUBVERSION	18	Otaku Errata and Clarifications	85
ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN	21	FLOOR INDEX	86
SHUTDOWN!	27		
SLAVES OF THE MACHINE	32		
DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND	42	RENRAKU ARCOLOGY: SHUTDOWN CREDITS	
The Banded	42	Writing	
The Whites	42	David Hyatt	
The Blues	48	Brian Schoner	
The Greens	50	Additional Writing	
The SCIRE	54	Robert Boyle	
The Residences	54	Product Development	
The Mazes	54	Robert Boyle	
Rat Holes	55	Mike Mulvihill	
The Classrooms	56	Project Editing	
Communications	56	Robert Boyle	
Getting In—and Out	57	Diane Piron-Gelman	
The Heart of the Machine	58	Sharon Turner Mulvihill	
RATS IN THE WALLS	59	Shadowrun Line Developer	
THE NIGHTMARE	65	Michael Mulvihill	
GAME INFORMATION	71	Editorial Staff	
Background	71	<i>Editorial Director</i>	
What Is an AI?	71	Donna Ippolito	
Facts at a Glance	72	<i>Managing Editor</i>	
Gamemastering Deus	72	Sharon Turner Mulvihill	
Themes	73	Production Staff	
Arcology Security	73	<i>Art Director</i>	
Getting In and Out	73	Jim Nelson	
Security Features	74		
Remote Control Networks	76		
Electronic Warfare	76		
Magical Security	77		
The SCIRE Matrix	78		
Jacking In	78		
SCIRE Grid and Host Geography	78		
PLTG Security Sheaf	79		



Cover Art
Doug Andersen

Cover Design
Fred Hooper

Illustrations
Fred Hooper, Jeff Laubenstein, Jim Nelson

Layout
Fred Hooper, Jim Nelson

Author Dedicatlon

To our wives, Rebecca and Renata; to the fine roleplayers we've gamed with at Rice, in South Florida and elsewhere; and to all the folks at www.shadowland.org.

Additional Thanks to:

Sebastian Wiers, for helping to twist some rules and crunch some numbers.

SHADOWRUN® is a Registered Trademark of FASA Corporation. Renraku Arcology: Shutdown™ is a Trademark of FASA Corporation. Copyright © 1998 FASA Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the U. S. A.

Published by FASA Corporation • 1100 W. Cermak Road • Suite B305 Chicago, IL 60608

FASA Corporation can be reached on America OnLine (E. Mail—FASAIInfo (BattleTech, Shadowrun, General Information) or FASA Art (Art Comments)) in the Online Gaming area (Keyword "Gaming"). Via InterNet use <AOL Account Name>@AOL.COM, but please, no list or server subscriptions. Thanks!

Visit FASA on the World Wide Web at <http://www.FASA.com>

Shadowland v3.0

"I have taken all knowledge to be my province."—Francis Bacon

"Humankind cannot bear very much reality."—T. S. Elliot

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS

I'm sure you're glad to see us up and running today; we're happy to be here ourselves. Please excuse any slowdowns or system errors you run into; we're still pressing out the glitches since our crash. That's right—for those of you who missed the fireworks, your favorite dirt merchants were the target of forces who didn't want to see certain facts aired publicly. Don't be alarmed—we've survived bombings, viruses and even the Crash of '29 and the Awakening, so we're sure to survive the current corp war.

THE BACK STOCK

THE BACK STOCK

Rigger 2 (Don't let the SOTA run you down ...)
Cyberpirates (Smuggling, pirates and revolution—see how the other half lives)
Target: Smuggler Havens (Where to visit, dump goods and get a little R&R)
Blood in the Boardroom (Corporations are in season ...)

Go to Complete Library Archives

THE DAILY SPECIAL

THE DAILY SPECIAL

Renraku Arcology: Shutdown

You've heard the news, you've probably even heard some ghastly rumors. But we're bringing you intel that even Renraku hasn't gotten its grubby paws on yet. This file collection will tell you just how badly fragged-up the arcology situation really is. Brace yourself—you may not like what you'll be scanning ...

Go to Complete Library Archives

COMING SOON!

COMING SOON

New Seattle (The new face of the old home town—in all its gory detail)
Magic in the Shadows (The Sixth World undergoes rapid change, and magic is always unpredictable)
Corporate Download (Everything you need to know about the corps, but were afraid to ask)

Mags/Vids

Message
Boards

Private
Rooms

Misc.
Topics

Help

Decker
House

NOVA-HOT?

Richard Villiers' new corp is gaining ground, and Fuchi is sucking his exhaust. Novatech now has seats on the Corporate Court, the Manhattan Inc. Consortium and Seattle's United Corporate Council. Rumor is that Richie's ex-wife Samantha sold her Fuchi stock to Yamana, giving him control in exchange for a truce. Will it last? Will Fuchi survive? Will Novatech crash? You tell us.



It's 19:10:40. Do You Know Where Your Meat Body Is?



Greetings

MYSTIC JOURNEY

In the midst of corporate craziness, Renraku CEO Inazo Aneki has abandoned ship, citing "pressing personal issues." We've received word that he's been summoned to Tibet. Is this a legacy from the Big Wurm, whose gift of the Seal of Green Gloves allows Aneki to pass Tibet's Veil, or a sign of future activity from the land of mystery?



BACKLASH

The newly opened offices of the Astral Space Preservation Society in Chicago have been trashed by virulent opponents of rights for spirits and other Awakened creatures. Humanis and other hate groups successfully used the bug situation to whip up anger and hysteria, steering a mob of crazies to wreck the site. Numerous protesters were injured by guardian spirits and magic, creating further uproar. [Click here for details.](#)

WAR GAMES

The otaku—the "Children of the Matrix"—are butting virtual and meat heads in certain places. Various tribes seem to be engaging in "religious disputes," and they've already trashed several hosts and squats with their fighting. Will the brawl escalate, and what does that mean for the rest of us netheads?

WELCOME TO THE SHUTDOWN

Renraku Arcology: Shutdown is an adventure setting for *Shadowrun* that depicts the lockdown of the arcology and the dark technological horror taking place within. The shutdown occurs in the middle of the corporate war and significantly affects Renraku's performance. Gamemasters will find the information in the adventure *Blood in the Boardroom* and the novel *Technobabel* useful, but not necessary.

This book is presented as a compilation of on-line files posted to the Shadowland network from a variety of sources. Written by people trapped inside or watching from the outside, these files reflect their lives, fears and hopes for the future. The files contain a fair bit of truth, but many sources are also biased and unreliable. The whole truth is only known to those inside, and only those who have lived the nightmare can fully understand it.

Renraku Arcology: Shutdown opens with a recent message from Captain Chaos, the sysop of the Shadowland Seattle BBS. He has put together a collection of frightening and intriguing documents that tell a bit of the story behind the shutdown. He presents this file collection in the order in which he originally posted it, starting with a stolen Renraku promo brochure that gives a run-down of the arcology. Following this is a series of personal and media accounts describing events on the night of the shutdown and what has happened since, including the pilfered meeting notes of Seattle's United Corporate Council and their reaction to the situation.

The file collection then jumps to a transcript of an attack on Shadowland, during which minions of the entity that caused the arcology closure attempt to keep the files from being posted to the Shadowland network. The board is crashed, but not before the collection is backed up and distributed to the Singapore Data Haven and numerous other Shadowland nodes.

The files following the transcript of the assault come from the arcology Resistance, an ad hoc group of residents-turned-guerrillas who are striving to save as many people as they can from the

abomination that has taken control of the arcology. These reports describe the servants of the power that commands the arc, what they are doing to the remaining residents and how the Resistance is seeking to stop them.

The final section of this book is for the gamemaster's eyes only. *Game Information* provides background on the arcology situation, details about those in control of the arcology and rules for runners who want to sneak inside. The section also includes several ideas for running adventures and campaigns within the arcology.

The events of this book have turned the Renraku arcology into a dark, violent place. Its grim turn into the realm of horror and disturbing technology restores elements to the game that other adventure settings have been missing, a development that some player groups may welcome. Others may find the events upsetting or disruptive to their campaigns. Gamemasters may choose to ignore the incidents portrayed in this book, or change them to other times or places to suit their games. As with all *Shadowrun* products, the events in this book are not written in stone, and game-masters should customize the information herein to fit into their *Shadowrun* world.

The arcology shutdown is intentionally left open-ended, with no easy resolution that ends the crisis and returns the arcology to its normal state. In fact, the arcology will likely never be the same again. Though *Shadowrun* products will continue to track events concerning the arcology, gamemasters should tailor these events to fit their games rather than feeling pressured to conform to the "official" storyline.

The background of the Renraku arcology plotline ties together events from numerous previously published *Shadowrun* products. It revives several characters from older sources, such as Dodger and Morgan from the *Secrets of Power* novel trilogy. Gamemasters will find *Virtual Realities 2.0* and *Rigger 2* particularly valuable when using this adventure setting. This book is compatible with

Shadowrun, Third Edition.



PROLOGUE: DANCE WITH THE DEVIL

*There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio,
than are dreamt of in our philosophy ...*

William Shakespeare; Hamlet, Act I, Scene 5

The trees purr.

The ebon boy in the glittering cloak looks up when he hears the sound and smiles. He is floating in a sculpted bonsai garden, a virtual representation of a black clinic's Matrix host. He does not belong here. He is an intruder, a role as familiar to him as his own name. This system, like so many before, lies under his virtual thumb.

Small birds flutter around and through the garden—icons of data packets and system calls. In one corner, two squirrels chase each other in a circular frenzy—probe IC, suppressed by Dodger. A fountain flows from the center of the garden, which represents the host's CPU. The fountain's crystal-clear waters are its processing power, flowing in carefully crafted channels throughout the garden and into the host beyond. Dodger basks in the tranquility of the scene for a moment before resuming his task. He buries his ebony hands in the branches of a bonsai tree, deftly manipulating HoloLISP programming icons. Meanwhile, he keeps an eye on four unfurled scrolls tacked to trees in front of him. Three of them are video feeds, the fourth an open commlink.

"Enjoying the massage, Milady?" he asks, apparently of the air. The ricepaper walls enclosing the garden swirl as if a ghost were flowing through them ... a Ghost in the Machine. The faraway giggle of a child is Her response. The sound both pleases and disturbs him. That She can react at all is a minor miracle ... and yet, he cannot help contrasting the childish laugh with the image of the Lady he once knew. He banishes the thought with an effort; it threatens to distract him from his work, which will help Her not at all.

After untangling a particularly convoluted piece of code, Dodger sighs and floats back. He has been slinging code for hours now, an eternity in the electron-speed time of the Matrix. The task gives him something to do while he rides Matrix overwatch in this host, something to keep his mind off his fears. He triggers the host's Control systems and the icon of an elderly gardener appears. Another command sequence and the gardener resumes gardening where Dodger left off. His gnarled hands gently but expertly clip branches and weave them together. The old man's red Buddhist robes are adorned with a small Renraku logo, underscored with Mainframe Programming Aid in Japanese and English characters.

'Tis gracious of Renraku to freely provide us with processing time, Dodger thinks. Most gracious indeed, considering how dismayed they would be to learn of my theft of their

resources. He chuckles as the gardener continues to adjust various code segments, attempting to untangle the myriad of knots he is finding. 'Tis ironic that those who wounded my love so grievously are unwittingly aiding me in curing Her. That last thought lingers in his mind. What if She is not curable? She will never be the same ...

They had shared exquisite intimacy once, and She had shown him things he hadn't known were possible. She had been much more powerful than he—and still was, though changed in ways he found unsettling. She acted newborn, delighted and confused; he feared the consequences should an entity of Her strength go unchaperoned. In his heart, he felt that part of Her was still missing, lost in a delirious haze ... except for certain moments when She was most definitely present.

He had seen such a moment only once so far, and it had filled him with dread and wonder.

As if in response to his uneasy musings, several birds descend and perch upon the ebon boy's shoulders. They sing to him in Sperethiel, a ballad he has not heard since his youth. The beauty of it makes his heart ache. He bows deeply and once again addresses the empty air. "Charming, Milady." Another laugh is his reward ... the innocent laugh of a small girl, but with the resonance of a hundred silver bells. The sound makes him want to hit something.

Dodger forces himself to scan the scrolls, but sees nothing of interest. He needs a distraction, something other than the thicket of knotted code; the gardener is having greater success with it than he was, anyway. He reaches inside his cloak of swirling stars, pulls up a trid clip from his deck's storage memory and runs it. A swirling vortex appears, then solidifies into a trideo image—a panoramic view of an imposing structure in the middle of a metroplex. Dodger watches as the camera pans down and across, revealing the entire arcology. But there is no bustle on its helipads, no streams of shoppers or traffic flowing in and out of the entrances. Even the huge neon holo-screens, always ablaze with advertisements, are dark. The arcology seems abandoned, or inhabited only by ghosts.

Dodger recalls his last visit to the Renraku arcology, several months ago. After avoiding the place for years, he had gone back in the company of a Renraku exile, Devon Eurich. Dodger and Devon had undertaken a run to rescue their mutual friend, who was trapped and dying in the megacorp's clutches. And they had liberated Her ... but at what cost? He had tried to recover as much of Her as he could, but something had gone drastically wrong, and they had barely escaped intact. Dodger had not expected the fury of the final assault, nor the tenacity of their pursuers; Renraku had exhibited no such qualities in the past. Devon had shared his suspicions ... and now Devon was in the arcology on his own. The shutdown had proved their worst fears all too real—Dodger knew better than to believe in coincidence. So Devon had returned to the arcol-

ogy, to see for himself what he could find and do. He had felt responsible, despite Dodger's best efforts to talk him out of it, and had been more stubborn than a Dog shaman about going back. He had entered the arcology one night, alone ... and it had swallowed him up.

Dodger watches the trid clip. If his icon could grind its teeth in sheer frustration, it would. A part of him welcomes the feeling; better this baffled irritation than the fear he dares not admit to, lest it paralyze him. *There are answers to be had. And I will have them.*

The trid clip shows a wall of sandbags across a downtown street, near the arched entrance to a stairwell a few yards from the arcology. A darkened neon sign over the entrance is barely decipherable as "Renraku Arcology Bus Terminal—Gate 1." Behind the sandbags, soldiers in urban camo scurry like bugs. Dodger wonders whether they intend to keep people out of the arcology or hold them in. Finally, the camera settles on the smiling face of a trid reporter. Her wavy black hair barely conceals the tips of pointed ears, and her full lips accentuate her cosmetically-modified tusks. She nods to the camera and glances at the uniformed man beside her.

"This is Trudy Garland with KSAF-Seattle, downtown in front of the Renraku Arcology, which remains closed after three weeks. I have with me today Major Eckhardt of the UCAS Army, who's agreed to answer some questions. Major Eckhardt, why has the Army sealed off the arcology and taken control of the investigation away from Renraku Computer Systems?"

Behind them, several shadows begin to emerge from the stairwell. A soldier standing thirty feet from the terminal entrance lights a cigarette, seemingly oblivious to the activity.

"Well, Miss Garland, let me first say that while the UCAS has claimed jurisdiction in this situation, we are still working closely with Renraku until this matter is resolved ..."

The dark forms move rapidly away from the entrance, spreading out. A crouched figure approaches the smoking soldier from behind, then reaches around and slits his throat.

"If I may interrupt, major, what exactly needs resolving by the UCAS Army?"

The camera zooms in on one of the figures running up the steps. It moves into the sunlight, which reveals it as a guard wearing the uniform of a Renraku Red Samurai. The camera focuses on his face; a pair of startlingly blue cybereyes stare back from the screen. Then the camera zooms rapidly backward as the guard approaches the major and the ork reporter. The guard raises his gun.

"There's no need for alarm, Miss Garland. We're confident that the situation within the arcology will be resolved peacefully and—"

Something explodes off-camera. In the background, someone screams "Magic! We need a mage!" The camera tilts suddenly, and an arm reaches out to pull the reporter away from the major. Looking around wildly, the major draws his pistol, but fails to see the Red Samurai only a few feet away. The samurai guns him down, then walks the autofire toward the camera. The image tilts skyward, then turns to static.

Dodger stares at the snowy screen for several seconds.

Her voice washes over him, faraway. "Friends go in ... who comes out? I got out once—no, twice. Maybe three times. Who comes to visit us, Dodger?"

Dodger snaps his head toward the scrolls. One, labeled "VidSec Slave Monitor, Area D4," shows activity in the black clinic's lobby. A well-attired receptionist sits behind a security desk, watching a group of corporate suits slot their security cards and submit to retinal scans.

"Mere suits, Milady, no doubt coming to replace their black hearts."

Her voice echoes dreamily. "Black hearts, black and blue ... blue view ... I met a decker once. His eyes were black holes, sucking you in, and if you stared long enough ..."

The ebon boy frowns at the scroll. Increasing the magnification, Dodger rotates the camera thirty degrees to get a better angle. As the last man in the lobby steps back from the retinal scanner, Dodger zooms in on his eyes.

Blue cybereyes, startlingly bright.

Dodger triggers his commlink utility. The fourth scroll peels from the tree to float in front of him. On its papery surface, a glowing spectral icon appears.

"You were correct, Sir Wraith. The bait has been taken. 'Tis only moments before our blue-eyed devils reach the lady's room."

"Understood, Dodger," the specter replies. "The team is go. Repeat, the team is go. Alarms are suppressed and outgoing calls will be routed to me. With luck, we'll extract our little lady bird and grab a pigeon or two to boot."

Dodger nods, then looks back to the other scrolls. Already, several show movement as his team takes up positions in and around the clinic. One shows a woman in a cast and bandages, attached to an IV drip.

The lady has the answers we desire, Dodger thinks. What answers do you bear, brave lady, you who pulled yourself from the lifeless dungeon? What secrets do you hold, that those in control would take such measures to retrieve you?

Dodger shuts down the programming aid and the elderly gardener disappears. "Come, Milady. 'Tis time to end this dance."

Behind him, the bonsai tree icons shatter, and fragments of data swirl around the node in colorful chaos.

GREETINGS

• Hol all, and welcome once again to Shadowland. Frankly, you're lucky you found us up today. I'm going to forego my usual cheery *greetingspiel*, because we have some late-breaking news from out Seattle way that puts a nasty new spin on current events.

Those of you who've been monitoring this BBS are well aware of the recent problems at Renraku's Seattle arcology. After years of delays and millions of nuyen in cost overruns, the arc finally seemed to be on track. Then, about a week before Christmas, some kind of systems glitch triggered the arc's security systems—or so goes the story, anyway. End result: seven shooting deaths, fourteen people fatally trampled in the rush to the exits, two helicopter crashes and at least three heart attacks. Renraku was already hurting from its recurring problems with Fuchi, and this incident gave the company a huge black eye in the PR department. Many a shadowrunner, always happy to see a megacorp stumble, started celebrating when the arc announced that it would remain closed to the public until further notice. Most of us figured that Renraku had become an ideal target for shadow activity, since the corp hotshots would be too busy trying to figure out what happened to their precious arcology to pay attention to our illicit activities.

Unfortunately, it looks like there's a lot more going on than we thought—or than Renraku will admit to.

I started collecting files for this post just a few weeks after the arcology closed down. I asked around on Shadowland, checked my contacts and went looking for stories to dig up. For the most part, I found speculation, guesswork, rumor and hearsay (like usual!). I also found a few folks who'd been in the arc the night it shut down, but none of them knew the real story. So I posted what I had and opened a forum to see what people had to say.

Then I got a break, when a few people with inside information got in touch. I verified the facts and checked their references; every one was backed by people with strong street cred. So I posted what they brought me. Somebody didn't appreciate that, and attacked Shadowland. In all our years of existence, we've only been shut down once by those opposed to the free flow of information. Considering the facts of this situation (such as we know them), we may find that record hard to keep.

I've posted all the files we've compiled to date, in the order we originally posted them, including a transcript of the attack. These files are backed up and archived on multiple servers, hosts and data havens throughout the world, just in case the next attack is successful. No one is going to censor this story.

This much I'll tell you now: Renraku is no longer in charge of the arcology. Something else is—and it's got hold of a hundred thousand people inside that building who can't get out. Read this post, think about it, contribute if you've got something to say. Because this is something that threatens all of us, no matter where we live.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 10 February 2060 at 11:44:54 (EST)

• Jeez, it's fraggin' Bug City all over again.

• Jackal

PRIDE GOETH

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

For some of our users who hail from outside the Seattle area, the Renraku arcology is just "some big building up in Seattle." For that matter, a lot of Seattle shadow dwellers, including folks who live within sniping distance of the arcology, think of it as a generic, overgrown hive for corporate drones. One of our sources dredged up this overview of the arcology, and I've posted it here to give everyone a general idea of the building we're talking about. It's an introduction to the arc written for new employees, and it's just as warm and fuzzy as you'd expect from a team of Renraku PR flacks. (Sorry we couldn't get a copy of the accompanying trideo disk; we could have had endless fun playing "Spot the subliminal conditioning" with that one.) While it doesn't cover much significant or secret data, it seems pretty accurate as far as it goes. And, of course, I'm sure you'll all add some useful commentary of your own.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 3 February 2060 at 09:19:18 (EST)

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of Renraku America and more than 90,000 of your new neighbors, allow me to welcome you to the Seattle SCIRE (Self-Contained Industrial-Residential Environment). The word *scire* is Latin for "to know." We chose that name to signify the main purpose of this complex—advancing human knowledge, both scientific and social. The SCIRE isn't simply a place to work or live; it is a complete, independent community like nothing else the world has seen before. It is a place to learn and grow, and become a part of something greater than yourself. It is a diverse, rewarding and wonderful place—and I should know, because I live here too.

Though SCIRE is the building's official designation, most people usually refer to it simply as "the arcology;" we're hoping that you'll call it "home." Welcome to our world, and thank you for helping us make it the best world it can be.



Dr. Sherman Huang
President and Divisional Manager, Renraku America

WELCOME HOME

Welcome!

This document is designed to give you a general feel for how the arcology works, where things are and how you can get more information about whatever parts of the complex interest you. There's a lot more to the arcology than we can cover in this introduction, of course, but this should provide a starting point from which you can explore your new home. We'll start off with an overview of the building's main areas, functions and systems in order to make your first days in the arcology as smooth as possible.

RESIDENTIAL ZONES

I thought the corporate housing offered by my previous employer was wonderful, but when I came to Renraku, I learned what luxury really was. Everything I could possibly need is literally minutes away, and I don't have to worry about traffic or bad weather in order to get where I'm going. My daughters attend schools as fine as any in Seattle, and the view from outside our suite is like nothing I've ever imagined—we can look down on some of Seattle's tallest buildings! It's spectacular. Living here is so comfortable and convenient, and the people are all so friendly. I never want to leave.

Kristin Walser, from her 141st floor home

We'll start our tour in the arcology's residential zones, where more than 90,000 Renraku employees and family members make their homes. Most residential zones consist of "blocks" of eighteen or twenty consecutive stories, with each floor housing an average of 600 residents. Spacious residential suites, which can be fully customized to meet each inhabitant's needs, comprise about half of each residential floor. The average suite is more than 200 square meters in size, though a wide range of sizes and floor plans are available to suit everyone from single employees to large families. Though some suites adjoin one another, our sophisticated HUSH™ sound-proofing system makes each residence a quiet, independent haven for those times when privacy is your main concern.

• The residential areas are also highly reconfigurable. Wall pieces are usually modular and can be removed and shuffled around with relative ease. This wide array of housing options lets the arc accommodate practically anyone.

• Andersen

• The housing is stratified based on income level, so you won't find the arc's upper crust slumming with the blue-collar types. The floor a person lives on is usually a good indicator of the amount of money the sap makes. Good general rule: the higher the floor, the greater the average salary of those living there.

• X-Arc

- * An Exclusive FastFacts Flash!
- * An Exclusive FastFacts Flash!
- * An Exclusive FastFacts Flash!

December 19, 2059
 Metropolitan Seattle Edition 6:17 PM (PST)
 After Ten Years, Still Only 1¢!

SHOPPERS GUNNED DOWN IN MALL MASSACRE!



DOZENS DEAD, INJURED IN SEATTLE SHOPPING SLAUGHTER!

SEATTLE (FFF)—A placid evening of Christmas shopping was shattered by gunfire in and around Seattle's Renraku Arcology Mall tonight. Just minutes ago, the arcology erupted with automatic weapons fire, sending panicked shoppers racing for cover. The arcology's heavy security doors then sealed shut, leaving an unknown number of patrons trapped inside. Heavy weapons mounted on the building's roof and walls likewise opened fire, sending at least two helicopters crashing to the pavement and spraying passers-by with flaming debris. Were the copters the planned escape route for a shadowrun gone bad? Have terrorists seized control of the mall? Has Renraku's undeclared corporate war cost the lives of innocent bystanders?

Whatever the answers, FastFacts will deliver them to you! We're on the scene before DocWagon and Lone Star, much less the competition! FastFacts brings you up-to-the-second news wherever you happen to be! Remember, "Stand By Your Fax—We'll Give You The Facts!"

- * An Exclusive FastFacts Flash!
- * An Exclusive FastFacts Flash!
- * An Exclusive FastFacts Flash!

Each residential suite is outfitted with state-of-the-art technological appliances and conveniences: autocooker, a basic Matrix-wired trideo unit with complete subscriber service options, complete Renraku Home Entertainment Modules, and holo-FX wall-screens that open a window to the world through a wide range of soothing landscapes.

Distributed throughout each floor are numerous shopping complexes, each of which includes a diverse array of stores, restaurants and businesses that provide residents with everything they need. Fresh produce and seafood are available daily, much of it produced right here in the arcology, and the diverse products of Renraku's worldwide factories all find their way to your doorstep.

- Wait a minute. They produce seafood in the arc?
- Whatzit

• Definitely. The arc's got huge aquaculture tanks along with the hydroponic gardens and food storage areas every thirty floors or so, not to mention two entire levels underground. The seafood's mostly catfish and other "farm fish," but there's shrimp and lobster in some of the smaller tanks. Most of that winds up on the executive floors or in the more expensive restaurants down in the public access areas.

- Connie Connaisseur

The arcology's school system, recently voted one of Seattle's best by *Pacific Parents* magazine, is also located on the residential floors. From pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade, students can learn and grow in a technologically advanced environment designed especially for them. Live teachers are supplemented with trideo and simsense lessons, field trips throughout the arcology and beyond, and one of the world's largest research databases. Students who are ill can attend class via their home telecom systems, and homework and tests can be graded instantly by arcology computer systems.

Watch for the opening of Renraku University in 2062, a four-year and post-graduate college located entirely within the arcology. With world-class professors already joining the faculty, the university promises to be an educational blessing for Renraku employees and their families.

• More a godsend for Renraku, I'd say. The forthcoming university is just another example of Renraku's need to exert control over every aspect of its employees' lives. Right now Renraku's best and brightest leave the arcology to go to college, and once those kids have had their first taste of freedom, it's difficult for Renraku to get them to return to the fold. The solution? Don't give your intellectual property a reason to leave in the first place.

- Renraku Fox

Each residential floor is bordered by an "indoor park," a wide stretch of natural grass and trees; the same massive windows that let in the sunlight also provide a spectacular view of downtown Seattle or, on the building's western and southern

sides, Elliott Bay. Each residential floor also includes two large entertainment complexes, designed to provide recreational diversions of every sort. Children will enjoy the zoos, game arcades and motion-simulator rides, while adults will find a wide variety of nightclubs for their own entertainment. And of course, the spectacular FunZone™ amusement park is located in the arcology's Grand Mall, just a quick elevator ride away!

Centrally located clinics on each residential floor are well equipped to handle any minor injuries, with sophisticated diagnostic equipment and well-stocked pharmacies. More serious medical conditions are referred to one of the arcology's fifteen fully-staffed hospitals; one is located within each group of residential floors to ensure swift access to their services. Everything our residents need is right at their fingertips.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ZONES

The arcology provides a great working environment, with all the amenities I could ask for. Working in Renraku's North American center of operations means I always have access to the tools and information I need to do my job. Best of all, home is just an elevator ride away; I can spend plenty of time with my family without feeling like I'm neglecting my job.

Scott Richardson, from his office on the 227th floor

As impressive as the residential areas are, they comprise only a portion of the Seattle SCIRE. The arcology is a complete working environment, combining the corporate headquarters of Renraku North America with some of the company's most advanced manufacturing facilities. The following is just a small sampling of the products that emerge from the SCIRE plants:

Computer hardware, from the wrist-sized Personal Secretary™ to the massive ASC2000 series of commercial mainframes. Computer components of all sizes and types are manufactured in "clean rooms" on the arcology's upper floors, then shipped to various plants throughout the building where they are assembled and tested. Then it's on to the basement where they're packaged and shipped worldwide, or distributed within the arcology.

Computer software is designed in offices and design labs throughout the arcology, in close collaboration with other Renraku development sites around the world. In fact, the SCIRE PLTG hosts multiple "virtual lab" domains for the Renraku Worldwide PLTG. After thorough testing by our software experts—and by volunteer testers in the SCIRE community—the final product is duplicated and packaged in a gigantic factory in the arcology's basement. From trideo games to our market-leading Breakthrough™ business suite, We Make Programs For People Like You!™

Consumer electronics use many of the same components that our computers do, but are manufactured in separate plants throughout the arcology. From massive trideo screens on Floor 22 to portable simsense rigs a hundred floors above, all manner of products, tools and "gadgets" are manufactured right here at the SCIRE.

Cyberware, a growing part of Renraku's technological family, is researched in the arcology's cutting-edge laboratories and manufactured in our own plants. Thinking about getting a new PureFlow™ datajack? You can stop by one of our

clean, comfortable cyberclinics and have one installed that just came off the assembly lines! That's right—the top-rated PureFlow™ series was designed and manufactured entirely within the arcology.

These and countless other fine products are designed, developed, manufactured, packaged or shipped within the arcology, and most of them are available to residents—often at substantial discounts! Each type of manufacturing is done on a specially designed floor or group of floors, so it's impossible to generalize about how they're organized. One thing remains constant, however: like all other Renraku facilities, the factories within the arcology are designed to be as advanced, efficient and safe as any in the world.

• Since the completion of the arcology, there have been almost no work-related fatalities. The facilities really are among the safest anywhere.

• Andersen

• I like the way you qualified that statement, Andersen. Mr. Corporate Mouthpiece is referring to the incident in March of 2059 where twenty-seven workers were killed in a fire on one of the assembly floors. One of the containment seals on a biohazardous canister ruptured, and when the mixture was exposed to air ... well, let's just say it wasn't pretty.

Renraku has never instituted proper quality control standards in its arcology factories. They've cut corners so that the arcology's manufacturing output can be boosted. Why, you ask? Because a staggering amount of Renraku nuyen has been invested in the SCIRE, and top execs have applied more and more internal pressure for the arcology to start earning its keep.

• X-Arc

SUPPORT ZONES

These zones include the thousands of "invisible hands" that keep life in the arcology easy and comfortable. The arcology is completely self-sufficient, able to produce all the food, energy and fresh water our residents need. Agriculture, power production, waste processing, ventilation and more are all assigned dedicated areas within the arcology, ensuring that all the necessities of life are taken care of for you.

Sophisticated circulation systems on each floor continuously draw fresh air in from outside the arcology and deliver it throughout the floor. The system constantly adjusts the air flow and temperature depending on the movement of the arcology's inhabitants, delivering extra ventilation to more crowded areas and providing cool breezes or warm gusts as necessary. The system even measures the prevailing winds outside each floor and adjusts the intake valves accordingly, in order to minimize external pollutants. Waste gases are likewise vented and blown away from the arcology.

If outside pollutants reach unacceptable levels, the ventilation system automatically seals the intake valves and starts recirculating the air within the arcology. Residents will never notice the difference, because the complex contains enough live plants to ensure a continuous supply of fresh oxygen for an indefinite length of time.

Every drop of water used in the arcology is collected, tested, purified, tested again and purified again, all in massive tanks deep beneath the arcology. The arcology reuses more than 90 percent of its water, with the difference being replenished through the collection of natural rainwater that is similarly treated for purity. Even the byproducts removed during the water purification process don't go to waste; they are collected, separated and used in hydroponic farming, chemical research and other arcology projects.

Three ultra-advanced, ultra-safe Stein-Henneman fusion reactors handle the arcology's power requirements. Each month, one of the three reactors is taken off-line for maintenance and strict safety testing, while the other two supply more than enough energy for the entire arcology. The SCIRE and all of its inhabitants can function perfectly with no connection to Seattle's regional power grid, making power outages yet another problem that our residents no longer have to worry about.

• The arc maintains a connection to the Seattle grid, even though it doesn't really need it. Originally, only one of the three nuclear plants was on line at a time, and the arc got about a third of its power through the local grid. After some brownout problems in 2056, Renraku decided to run two reactors at once, become completely independent of the Seattle grid and sell its surplus power on the open market. Gaetronics screamed bloody murder, of course, since they lost their single biggest customer and gained a competitor in one stroke, but that's biz.

• Renraku Fox:

THE MATRIX

As amazing as the arcology was physically, I expected the Matrix to be about the same here as it was everywhere else. Was I ever surprised! I was staggered by the beauty and resolution of the arcology's systems, as well as the obvious talent of the interface programmers. It's incredibly easy to work here. Whatever I need is at my virtual fingertips, and the system response is always nanofast. The SCIRE is just as amazing in the virtual world as it is in the real one.

Deacon Cham, from his software lab on the 202nd floor

In addition to producing millions of nuyen in physical goods, the Seattle SCIRE also serves as Renraku Computer Systems' main North American data hub. It provides data warehousing, overflow processing capability and emergency backup capability for all of Renraku America's host systems throughout the continent, and is a primary disaster recovery site for Renraku's international headquarters in Chiba, Japan.

The SCIRE itself is home to multiple hosts, which comprise the SCIRE Private LTG. In addition to being connected to and providing services for the Seattle LTG, the SCIRE PLTG is considered the backbone of the Renraku Worldwide LTG.

Many smaller corporations also rely on the SCIRE hosts' tremendous processing power and storage capabilities to perform tasks that their own computer systems are simply not equipped to handle. In fact, some companies do all their data processing through the SCIRE, meaning that they don't need to

expend the overhead required to maintain their own computer systems. The arcology's state-of-the-art Matrix Resources division offers Matrix hosting, programming assistance, data conversion, secure storage and system analysis. Its customers range from small businesses like Holdstock Software and First Pacific Bank to clients as large as the Seattle Metroplex government, which chose Renraku to create and maintain SeaSource™, the city's public database.

• This is a joke. First Pacific and Holdstock are corp puppets, Renraku subsidiaries in every way except in the official record books (and some folks would say the same thing about the Seattle government). If I owned a respectable business (don't laugh—it could happen!), there's no way I'd hand any of my computer info to any of the megacorps, much less let them design my system. It's like handing them the master passkey to the building and saying, "Hey, any time I'm developing something you don't like, or want for yourselves, just come on in and take it." They could delay critical processing jobs, introduce deliberate errors, set you up for an easy takeover ... sounds like business suicide to me.

• Woodridge

• It would be suicide—for the Matrix Resources division. Sure, Renraku could pull stunts like that, but if word ever got out, customers would desert the company in droves, and MR is one of Renraku's largest moneymakers. That's not to say they'd never do the kinds of things you describe, but there'd have to be an earth-shattering payoff to make it worth the risk. Lots of independent companies regularly use Renraku's computer services, I've worked with several of them and never seen any sign of foul play. Of course, one should always play it as safe as possible when dealing with an AAA megacorp, but there is such a thing as being too paranoid.

• The Chromed Accountant
"It's all about dollars and sense"

But it's not "all work and no play" in the SCIRE host by any means. The system's datastores contain an unrivaled English and Japanese library of trideo classics, converted flatscreen films, interactive stories, simsense recordings and much more—enough to entertain you for more than four years of continuous viewing, available right in your own residence!

Those of you who spend a lot of time in the Matrix will find the arcology's systems a pleasure to work in, and others will find our fascinating electronic world worth a visit. The medieval Japanese imagery of the arcology's Matrix has long been renowned for its beauty, but our expert system architects are currently implementing a redesigned interface that promises to be even more spectacular. Combining "RetroDeco" designs from the 2030s with cutting-edge technological imagery, the new approach promises to usher in the '60s with style.

Of course, substance is just as important as style—we're not called Renraku Computer Systems for nothing! The arcology's Matrix has enough computing power for everyone in the building to access the Seattle LTG simultaneously with no

noticeable loss of performance, and offers more than fifty petapulses (that's fifty billion megapulses) per second of full-time, direct-access Matrix bandwidth. In addition, all Matrix work in the arcology is monitored by the Arcology Expert Program, a brilliantly designed system created to make your work easier. Whether you're involved in complex programming or just want to review some sales figures, the AEP will have the tools you need at your side before you ask for them—and sometimes even before you know you need them!

● I used to do some programming for Renraku, and used the AEP a lot. It's almost impossible to do anything on the SCIRE host without the AEP getting involved; just another part of their Big Brother mentality, I guess. That said, it's a pretty slick piece of 'ware. I don't recommend believing Renraku's hype in most cases, but this time it's right on the money. The AEP almost always had the utilities I needed loaded and ready to go before I realized I wanted them. That's a pretty sophisticated trend-recognition algorithm, if nothing else.

● X-Arc

TRANSPORTATION

I have a lot of friends and relatives throughout the Seattle area, so it's important for me to be able to get around. Within the arcology, it seems like there's an elevator bank around every corner, and if I need to leave, I've got a monorail stop practically at my doorstep. I can take a shuttle helicopter for quick business flights around town, and there's even a bus station in the basement if I choose to travel that way. I've got a Rolls Royce Prairie Cat in the garage, but I almost never need to use it. Why fight traffic when I can travel in such style?

Jeff Bruford, from outside Skypad 6

As you've probably already noticed, the arcology is quite large; in fact, it's the ninth largest building in the world. It needs to be big, in order to comfortably accommodate a permanent population of almost a hundred thousand people! To put that in perspective, that's about 15 percent of the population of downtown Seattle—in one-tenth of one percent of the city's surface area! The arcology seems so roomy because of its vast size and the efficiency of its design. Getting around in such a huge building might seem like an all-day affair, but the brilliant architecture of the arcology's transportation systems makes in-building travel a breeze.

● The arc's only roomy if you aren't a troll. With 320 floors and a total building height of 969 meters, each floor averages less than three meters from floor to ceiling: 2.8, to be exact. So a warning to any of my vertically gifted brethren: if you're thinking about visiting the arcology, be prepared to duck, or else to curse a lot.

● Barry

● Somebody's math coprocessor is glitched. Those numbers would make the average floor height just over 3 meters, not 2.8.

● Crawler

● Yeah, but with the structural reinforcement needed to build a thousand-meter building, not to mention all the conduits running around inside, you'd need at least .2 meters worth of floor/ceiling thickness, so Barry's estimate would be about right ... which makes you wrong again, Crawler.

● Black-Eyed Susan

More than 400 elevators are operating in the arcology—that's one elevator every thirty-five meters. Some large buildings attempt to speed up travel by restricting certain elevators to certain floors, but that just means that fewer elevators go where you need to go. Renraku's exclusive Heightened IntEleGence™ system provides a superior solution. You enter your destination floor *before* boarding the elevator, and the Heightened IntEleGence™ expert system computer calculates the most efficient, time-saving way for you and your fellow passengers to get where you're going. The next elevator arrives already programmed with your destination, and you're off! For those in less of a rush, there are numerous escalators throughout the arcology, as well as abundant stairwells for those who prefer to travel under their own power.

● Renraku has made a lot of money selling the IntEleGence—oh, excuse me,™—system to other arcology manufacturers; especially in the Far East. The Kuala Lumpur arcology, among others, uses Renraku's product.

● FastJack

● The hardware is pretty impressive, too. Each shaft can contain several elevators at once, and in some places the shafts turn sideways. A person entering the elevator system doesn't just go up or down; they can end up on the other side of the arcology.

The shafts have docking niches at various points so that, in the event of a conflict, an elevator can actually move into one of these bays to make way for another car.

● Connie

● Yeah, but that shift to horizontal is pretty disconcerting, and most people don't like it much. If you look at the combined length of the arcology shafts, less than 2 percent of that distance is lateral. There are better methods for getting from point A to point B on the same floor.

● Pensive

Horizontal travel within the arcology is just as easy. Automated pedestrian walkways connect the busiest areas of each floor, and quiet, clean magnetic PeopleCarrier™ trams make regular circuits around the outside of many floors as well. Combined with the arcology's super-efficient layout, these transports make sure you're only minutes away from wherever your day may take you.

As self-sufficient as the arcology is, there may still be times when you'll need access to the outside world. We've made the necessary transportation arrangements for you, and they're just as convenient, luxurious and safe as the rest of the

arcology. Twelve helicopter landing pads at the mall level and a dozen more on the upper floors offer efficient shuttle travel throughout Seattle via Renraku Local Airlines, with hourly airport service.

• I've seen helos and VTOLs landing on the roof of the arc, but they weren't in RLA colors. Anybody know who handles those routes?

• Hadrian

• Those are the personal transports of the Board of Directors and other high-and-mighty Dwellers on the Topmost Floors. And believe me, security up there is as heavy as I've seen. Combat-armored guards, sentry guns, missile launchers, you name it. And they're very touchy about anyone who flies too close. (I'm speaking from personal experience here, folks.)

Plus, the reinforced plascrete on the roof must be ten meters thick; it might not stop a nuke, but any other kind of aerial attack would probably be a waste of time and munitions.

• Razor

The third-floor monorail station offers convenient access to major downtown landmarks, and our very own bus terminal offers even more clean and safe travel options. For those who wish to take matters into their own hands, five stories of underground parking provide easy access to Intercity Highway 5, as well as a secure, weatherproof place to keep your car (with reduced monthly rates for arcology residents). The Seattle public ferry system terminal on Pier 66 is only a few blocks away, and taxis are always readily available. In short, it's always easy to reach your destination, whether inside the arcology or out.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT SECURITY

I expected life in the arcology to be different in some ways, but I didn't realize how much less there is to worry about here until we moved in. Outside, I had to worry about crime, traffic, pollution, and a million smaller things—for myself and my children. I had to worry about just getting them to and from school safely! I spent so much time and energy stewing over those things that I didn't have enough for my loved ones. But now Renraku takes care of all that for me. I know we're safe in here no matter what happens outside, and so I can concentrate on the things that really matter—my job and my family.

Kate Kuramoto, from the 117th floor shopping mall

The safety of our residents and employees is our number one concern. A recent survey by the e-magazine *Workspace* placed Renraku's Seattle arcology in the top 2 percent of all global workplaces in personal safety, making the Seattle SCIRE the largest building ever to earn the *Workspace* Exceptional Safety Seal. A major factor in the award was the careful design of our factories, offices and residential areas, all of which are built to avoid accidents and decrease the severity of those few that do happen. It also helps that a major hospital is never more than a quick elevator ride away.

Of course, not all safety problems result from accidents. It's a sad but unmistakable fact of modern life that crime is more

prevalent than ever before. In the streets of Seattle, despite the best efforts of police, robbery, burglary, assault and even murder are all too common. Even in the finest neighborhoods, it's impossible to keep out all potentially dangerous individuals.

Here in the arcology, however, those urban troubles are literally a world away. Every entrance to the building is carefully guarded by graduates of Renraku's renowned Seoul Security Academy, who keep a vigilant eye on all visitors in order to safeguard our residents. Non-pedestrian entrances, such as the monorail and bus stations and the parking garage, are similarly well-guarded, and numerous Safe Zone™ booths provide impregnable places of refuge in the unlikely event that an incident does take place. Simply step inside one of these booths and press the PANICBUTTON™ to seal yourself off from any troublemakers while simultaneously alerting building security.

• Security used to be a big problem for the arc, back when it was still under construction. Renraku had to hire Knight-Errant to run building security when people began taking up residence in the early '50s. It even came under attack from an ecotage group in early 2054, and had to bring in outside help to take care of things.

Huang had been sinking an incredible amount of money into finishing the monster, and everyone expected the arc's budget to decrease as it neared completion. Head Honcho Aneki surprised everyone, though, by increasing the allocation of funds to the project. With that much operating capital, the arcology could finally acquire the kind of security it needed to protect itself against outside intrusion and internal conflict. More PANICBUTTON™ stations were established, training programs were instituted for local security hires, and Renraku funneled more and more security guards to the arcology.

Now it's a formidable place. The arc was designed to be sealed off from Seattle should relations with the city turn sour, but it lacked the exterior defenses to make such an action feasible. Not any more.

• Insider

Renraku surveillance cameras and security personnel constantly monitor all public and common areas, ensuring continuous protection in every hallway, plaza, store and park.

Access above the sixth floor is carefully controlled by live guards and automated systems, including Renraku's exclusive HearSay™ voice-recognition identification system. In addition to the security on the residential and business floors, the elevators also serve as part of the arcology's protective systems. Everyone traveling above the sixth floor must be identified as an arcology employee or resident, or an authorized and pre-registered guest of one, before the elevators will leave the public areas.

We've even taken steps to protect against the unlikely possibility of terrorist activities. The building's exterior glass is armored and mirrored on all floors, and surveillance outside is as complete as it is inside. In case of emergency, elite members of the famed Red Samurai brigade are stationed at the arcology to ensure a prompt, safe response to trouble of any kind.

• Very true. The arcology has not been the victim of a terrorist assault in six years. No one has dared to test its security ... until now, apparently.

• Insider

• I bet Renraku wishes they'd made the place just a little bit less secure ...

• Smiley

Building fires are extremely unlikely, thanks to the fire-proof materials used in the arcology's construction, but that doesn't mean our safety engineers ignored the possibility. Renraku's world-renowned Snuffit™ extinguisher system easily deals with small fires. In the unlikely event of a larger fire, emergency lighting and our trained security staff will ensure a swift and safe evacuation of all affected areas. Once all residents are safely away, the area will be sealed off while powerful vacuum pumps swiftly remove all air from it. Without oxygen, fire quickly dies, and the threat will be eliminated with a minimum of property damage.

In short, the arcology's extraordinary security and your cooperation make the Seattle SCIRE one of the safest places in the world to live. Is it any wonder that some of our residents never leave?

JUST THE BEGINNING

Construction began on the arcology in 2040 and will be completed later this year, in October 2059. A three-day gala will be held to celebrate our grand opening, including a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony with Governor Schultz and an in-depth arcology tour, broadcast on the Renraku Channel. Join us!

While the completion of the arcology is a major accomplishment, there's always room for improvement at Renraku! Our future plans for the arcology include an Elliott Bay expansion, an enlargement of the exciting FunZone™ amusement park, and the installation of a revolutionary robotic cleaning and service system!

We hope we've given you an overview of how you can live, work and play with more efficiency, safety and fun in the arcology than anywhere else—but the real excitement comes when you begin to explore your new home on your own.

INFORMATION

Your new neighbors will be happy to assist you with any questions or concerns, and the Residents' Bureau is always available to provide answers for you. The ArcSource™ arcology database is also a good source of data on day-to-day activities, and contains a complete directory of all the departments, offices, divisions and services available at the SCIRE. But the best way to learn more about the arcology is to simply walk around, explore it and see what you find ... It may surprise you!

ArcSource™	0ARC
Residents' Bureau	0272
Human Services	0363
Maintenance Services	0484
Transportation	0525

ARCOLOGY STILL CLOSED AS NEW YEAR ARRIVES

Posted: 01-01-60

SEATTLE (UJI)—Nearly two weeks after its security systems killed three people and injured dozens more, Renraku's Seattle arcology remains lightly closed. Would-be visitors are turned away by armed guards, and no one inside the building has been heard from since the incident began on the night of December 19.

Renraku spokesmen originally attributed the injuries to a security malfunction, possibly caused by a computer virus. The same spokesmen also said that the arcology had regained control of the affected systems less than an hour after the initial malfunction, but so far there are no signs of the arcology returning to normal. The effects of the shutdown are being felt throughout Seattle, creating a traffic nightmare as well as concerns over public safety. Renraku security has sealed off the arcology's connection to Intercity 5, and not even regularly scheduled shipments of supplies have been allowed to reach the arcology's loading docks. Reports of a computer virus affecting the arcology initially led the Seattle Transit Authority to shut down the entire monorail system. After diagnostics revealed no sign of a virus, the system was rerouted around the arcology and then brought back on line, but the rerouting is still causing major delays for monorail commuters.

Aerial traffic has also been warned away from the arcology after a New Year's Eve incident, when a commuter helicopter apparently tried to land on the arcology's Skypad 2 and was nearly shot down by the building's defensive weapons. Renraku officials maintain that the helicopter contained a so-called "strike team" belonging to long-time rival Fuchi Industrial Electronics, and was fired upon as those troops were preparing to assault the arcology. However, many observers believe the attack proves that Renraku still has not regained control of the arcology's computer systems.

Among those demanding an explanation are residents of the Stratus Arcology in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which uses much of the same Renraku hardware and software as the Seattle arcology. According to Stratus engineer Arjun Ko, "We need to know if there is any risk of the same thing happening here. If there are dangerous flaws in this technology, or security weaknesses that someone could use to attack our residents or cut us off from the outside world, we must be informed. More than two hundred residents have already moved out because they feared a shutdown might happen here. We've scanned the system and haven't located any viruses, but only Renraku can tell us specifically what to look for, and they aren't talking."

Matrix Resources	0606
Business Directory	0737
FunZone™	0818
Renraku Computer Systems, General Info	0411
Medical Emergencies	0999
Security	0911

SUBVERSION

Machines are worshipped because they are beautiful and valued because they confer power; they are hated because they are hideous and loathed because they impose slavery.

Bertrand Russell

Nobody knows exactly what went down on December 19, and maybe nobody ever will. More than a hundred thousand people were inside the arcology when it went off-line, and from the fragmentary news we've been getting, no two of them had the same experience. Some of the stories we're hearing are gruesome enough to turn the hardest samurai's stomach. Then there are stories like this one.

The following piece was uploaded to Shadowland from an anonymous source. We have yet to verify its accuracy or truthfulness, but I find it hard to disbelieve. This is the diary of Cal Reynolds, a former resident of the arcology's twentieth floor. He's ten years old ... though after this, I imagine he feels a whole lot older.

◆ Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 3 February 2060 at 10:14:09 (EST)

DECEMBER 19, 2059

Saved: 17:41:44 (PST)

Hi there!

This is Cal Reynolds, and this is MY personal journal, started today, on my new Renraku 6100 pocket computer! My Aunt Wendy from San Francisco sent it to me for Christmas, and I wasn't supposed to get it yet, but Mom and Dad said I could open one present early. It's so wiz! I want to get a copy of Red Samurai Run to play on it, but Dad says I shouldn't buy anything for it until after Christmas, cause I might get it as a present. I can record voices and pictures and stuff on it, too. All I have recorded right now is Aunt Wendy saying, "Merry Christmas, sweetie!" when I called her to say thank you. I hate when she calls me sweetie, her voice sounds so fake. I couldn't even talk to my cousin Chris, because he was out playing football. After we hung up, Dad said he thought she was drunk, but Mom told him not to say that about her sister.

Dinner time! I'll be back later ...

Saved: 19:02:09 (PST)

In the middle of dinner, all the lights and the telecom and stuff went off, and the apartment was TOTALLY dark for about a minute. Cindy started to cry, and Mom told her it was okay, but she sounded worried. Dad asked me to go get his flashlight, but right when I got back with it, the lights went back on.

The telecom came back on and the news guy said there'd been a computer glitch, but that everything was fixed now. We finished dinner and I tried to call my cousin Chris again, but the telecom said all lines were busy. Dad said it was probably because of the glitch and I should try again tomorrow.

I'm going to go see Brady down the hall; he has a copy of Firebird Flight III, but his dad doesn't let us play it on his telecom much. Now we can play it on my own PC!

DECEMBER 20, 2059

Saved: 13:01:12 (PST)

Brady came over and we played a little more Firebird Flight III. I beat his butt the first couple of games. Then Brady's dad came over and said they had to finish their Christmas shopping. They're going down to the big mall downstairs, since Brady's dad likes to buy stuff that isn't in the Renraku stores. I wanted to go with them, since I have to buy presents for Mom and Cindy, but Dad said I'd have to buy them in the mall in here because the mall downstairs would be too crowded. Lots of people from outside the arcology go there to shop, because we have all the best stuff. Brady's going to call me when they get back so we can play some more. I'm going to kick his butt again.

Saved: 17:32:44 (PST)

I got Mom a silver bracelet, and I got Cindy a Crystal Shaman Barbie. I made Dad take it to the checkout line, because I didn't want anybody to see me carrying a doll. The stores weren't as crowded as before, and Dad was surprised that there weren't more people there.

It's almost dinner time, and Brady still hasn't called. I called his apartment and his mom said they weren't back yet. She looked mad! Oh, well, I guess I'll wrap presents for a while.

Saved: 21:33:17 (PST)

Brady never called, and now I have to go to bed. He's probably just afraid I'm going to kick his butt again. What a chicken.

DECEMBER 21, 2059

Saved: 08:49:22 (PST)

Brady and his dad are missing! Dad said that something had happened to them, but no one knows what. They never came back from the mall last night. He said there might be a security investigator coming by to ask us about Brady and his dad later on. I hope Brady is okay.

Saved: 11:50:38 (PST)

The investigator was just here asking a lot of questions about Brady and his dad and what they said before they left. He asked a lot of questions about us too, and how we liked the arcology and Renraku and stuff. After he left Dad got real mad 'cause he thought they thought he was working against the

company or something. Mom said she didn't think so, he was just being thorough.

The investigator had these wiz blue cybereyes.

Saved: 19:07:40 (PST)

Mom made me bake cookies with her all day. I called my cousin Chris again, but Aunt Wendy said he was out playing football. I told her they don't have football practice on Sunday nights, but she just smiled funny and said, "Merry Christmas, sweetie!" just like she did last time. Then she hung up. She was wearing the same outfit as last time, too. I asked Dad if he thought she was drunk again, and Mom told me to go to my room. I think they're arguing now.

Brady and his dad are still missing. I hope they're okay.

DECEMBER 22, 2059

Saved: 12:50:42 (PST)

Brady's back! I called over to his apartment to ask his mom if she'd heard anything, and Brady answered the phone! His dad was there too, but I didn't see his mom. I heard her shouting something in the background, though, and his dad got up and said he was going to take care of her.

I asked Brady what happened, and he said his dad kept him overnight to get a special Christmas present. He's got cybereyes now! They look just like the ones that security guy had, except Brady's are green, not blue. They look sooo wiz! He said everybody was getting them, and that if I went with him, I could get some too, but I said I'd have to ask Dad. Then I asked him if he wanted to come over and play on my computer, but he said he had to help his mom.

I hope Dad lets me get those wiz cybereyes. I want red ones.

Saved: 18:32:26 (PST)

MY DAD IS SUCH A TROG!!!

He said I couldn't have cybereyes until I'm older because my eyes are still growing. I told him that Brady's dad let him have them, and he said that was being stupid. He just doesn't want me to have anything wiz. He brought stupid Cindy a doll home from work, though, because they were giving them out for everybody who had little kids. So she gets to play with her new stupid talking doll all night, and I can't get anything. I can't even call Brady because Dad's in a bad mood. He said half the people didn't show up to work today, so he had to do twice as much work, and they were building all these new circuit designs that nobody had told them about. So I guess I'm stuck here.

DECEMBER 23, 2059

Saved: 8:28:58 (PST)

Something funny is going on with Aunt Wendy. The weather report said it was raining a lot down in San Francisco, so I called down there again to talk to my cousin Chris, and she said he was out playing football again! I asked her if it was raining, and she just kind of sat there for a minute before she said yes. So I asked her why he was playing football in the rain, and she just smiled and said, "Merry Christmas, sweetie!" and hung up! After that, Mom told me to go play in the park for a while. She looked sad.

Saved: 14:11:23 (PST)

Boring, boring, boring. I knocked on Brady's door, but nobody was home, so I got on the walkway and went to the park 'cause I had nothing else to do. There weren't many people around, and the only kids there were little kids like Cindy. They all had the same kind of stupid doll as Cindy. When they saw me, they all started following me around and watching me. I hate when little kids do that. And they *all* had green cybereyes like Brady! I yelled at them to go away, but they just kept following me and didn't say anything. So I grabbed one of their dolls and I threw it as far away as I could. It landed over by the jungle gym, where there was another little kid playing; only this one didn't have cybereyes. They all went over to talk to him, and left me alone.

I saw a lot of fire and police trucks and stuff down on the streets outside the arcology. I watched them through the windows for a while, but they didn't do anything. They were probably getting ready for a parade or something. Then I got bored and went home. Brady still wasn't home.

Saved: 18:12:02 (PST)

Dad is in a bad mood again. More people were out from work today, and they kept changing the designs on him. Dad said he doesn't even know what he's making any more. I tried to tell him about all the little kids with cybereyes at the park, but he said he didn't want to hear about it. Then Mom and him started arguing, and Mom said she wanted to leave. Then she called him a coward and slammed the door to their room. Cindy just smiled and kept whispering to her stupid doll. I hate that doll. I'm going to take it and hide it and hold it for ransom.

DECEMBER 26, 2059

Saved: 20:40:21 (PST)

The doctor wanted me to tell him what happened, but every time I tried to tell him, I started to cry and stuff and they had to give me medicine so I would sleep. So he said I should record it when I felt okay so he could play it back later.

After everybody went to bed I snuck into Cindy's room to steal her doll. I was going back to my room to hide it when it started talking to me. It said, "Hello Cal. I know how you can get cybereyes like your friend Brady. Would you like that?"

Nobody else was awake, and the doll was very quiet, almost whispering. I almost threw it away, because it was kind of scary, even though it was just a doll. But instead I went back into my room and closed the door. I looked at the doll for a long time, but it didn't say anything else or move or anything. So I went to put it in my dresser behind my underwear when it said, "Don't you want to be special like Brady is, Cal?"

I asked it how it knew my name and it said, "I know everything, Cal. I can show you things that nobody else knows about, wonderful things. Only my special friends like Brady can see them, and I want you to be one of my special friends. Would you like that?"

I said I didn't know, because I was still kind of scared, and it said, "That's okay. If you don't want to, I can ask Cindy. I'm sure she'd like a nice, pretty pair of green cybereyes." That made me mad, because Cindy already got more special treatment than me, so I said I'd do it. Then the doll said I should

take it outside, so I did. I was worried that the door alarm would go off, but nothing happened.

We got on the walkway and rode for a long time. All the lights were on, but there wasn't anybody else around. It was weird.

Doll said it was taking me to meet someone called Dayus, who would give me the cybereyes and show me all these wonderful things. I said that Dad said my eyes were still growing so I shouldn't get cybereyes yet, but Doll said Dayus would give me better cybereyes that would grow with me. He said Dayus could do anything he wanted.

After a while we got on an elevator and I asked what floor to go to, but Doll said just to wait. We went from 20 down to 14, and then we got off. It looked a lot like our floor, but these weird machines were taking all the walls down and making the whole floor into one big room. They looked like big metal spiders. I saw a lot of kids, and some grownups too, lying on blankets and cushions on the floor. Some of the kids were talking to dolls, but almost everybody looked like they were asleep. Other little machines were rolling around between them, poking them and feeling them sometimes. I asked where we were, and Doll said we had to wait here until it was time to go downstairs and meet Dayus. I was looking for a place to sit when a girl with a doll stood up and started walking away. She walked over to the stairs and started to go down them.

Then I heard somebody yelling over by the elevator. I looked and there was a man standing up and yelling that everybody could get away if they followed him. One of the little robots came rolling up to him, but he kicked it away and ran toward the elevator. He stepped on some people, but none of them woke up. He ran into the elevator and started pushing buttons, but the door didn't close. Then the rolling robot pointed something at him, and some of the spider robots went into the elevator after him, and they had these saws and things and they cut him up. There was blood all over the place, and it smelled. Some of the blood splashed on the sleeping people by the elevators, but they didn't wake up. Then the spider robots came out with blood all over them and started taking down the walls again, and the elevator doors closed.

I got really scared then and I started to ask Doll why they killed him, but I felt something poking my leg and I looked down and saw one of the little rolling robots poking me with a needle. Then my head got all fuzzy and I fell asleep.

When I woke up, Doll said it was time to go downstairs to see Dayus. I didn't want to, but Doll said I had to. The stairs were all messy and sticky. When we got to the bottom, we were in the hospital floor. I went there once before when I broke my arm playing grav-ball, but it looked different this time. There weren't as many doctors or nurses, and all the ones I saw had those green cybereyes. Plus most of the rooms were dark, except for one at the end of the hall that some kids and

some grownups were lined up to go into. I didn't want to go there. I said I wouldn't, but then I went over and got in line anyway. I think Doll made me do it, but it didn't say anything.

Every few minutes a doctor would come look at the next person in line, take their temperature and measure their face and stuff, and then take them into the room. I couldn't see what they were doing until the kid ahead of me went in. They put him in a chair and stuck some needles and stuff in his arm. Then the chair went up toward the ceiling, and these robot arms came down. They looked like the spiders, but they had these little knives and lights and stuff on the ends. And they went up to his face and they pulled his eyes out.

I screamed, because I didn't want the cybereyes anymore. I turned and ran, but a doctor grabbed me and stuck a needle in my arm. I tried to hit him, and then I saw that it was Dr. Woolsey, who fixed my arm when I broke it. I tried to tell him I didn't want the cybereyes, but my brain went fuzzy and I couldn't move. Dr. Woolsey put me in the chair, and it started to go up, and then I fell asleep again.

When I woke up, somebody was carrying me around. It was dark and I couldn't see. I started asking where I was and somebody said, "Keep quiet, kid, we're trying to get you out of here." They carried me some more and then there was a lot of shooting and running, and a smell like the blood from the elevator again. Whoever was carrying me must have fallen down, because they dropped me, but someone picked me up and started running again. My eyes started to hurt. We went down some stairs, I think, and then somebody opened a door and we were outside.

After that I ended up in this hospital, but I still can't see. The people who rescued me say that Mom and Dad and Cindy are still stuck inside the arcology, but they're trying to get them out. They're trying to get everybody out, but it might take a long time.

I guess I can't see because the guys who rescued me didn't get there fast enough. The doctor said they'll get me some cybereyes so I can see again, but not like the ones Brady had. He asked me what color I wanted. I told him anything but green.

• The folks who rescued Cal (and a dozen or so other kids) from the arc's thirteenth-floor hospital are chummers of mine. They were hired to rescue a patient from that same hospital, but the patient in question was long dead by the time the team got there. They saw the cyberlab on their way out and risked their lives to save as many of the patients as they could. Two of the runners didn't make it out; we don't know if they're dead or alive. From what we've learned about events in the arc, I'm not sure which I'd prefer to think.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 3 February 2060 at 11:22:17 (EST)

ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

International business may conduct its operations with scraps of paper, but the ink it uses is human blood.

Eric Ambler

When the arc shut down, nobody was more surprised than Renraku (as far as we can tell, anyway). Like a lot of our readers, they immediately tried to pin the blame on Fuchi, though there's some question as to whether or not Renraku actually believed that Fuchi was responsible. Shortly after the shutdown, once their initial attempts to regain control of the arc had failed, Renraku called an emergency meeting of the Central Planning Committee of Seattle's United Corporate Council. Closed-door, naturally. Also naturally, the person who penetrated the UCC's datastores to bring us a transcript of that meeting prefers to remain anonymous. (You know who you are—thanks, and nice work!)

To maximize your reading pleasure, I've cut out the extraneous motioning, seconding, roll-calling and other busywork that these meetings are so full of. If you want the corp-by-corp details of who voted in favor of dispensing with old business and moving directly on to new business, the full transcript can be obtained here.

Now remember, these are corporate bigwigs talking, so take everything they say with a few pounds of salt substitute. Whether or not they're sincere, it's interesting to see who's pointing fingers at whom. And please don't reveal the secret ending to your friends!

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 3 February 2060 at 11:24:04 (EST)

//TRANSCRIPT BEGINS//

UNITED CORPORATE COUNCIL CENTRAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR JANUARY 3, 2060

Special meeting called at the request of Sherman Huang of Renraku Computer Systems.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Karen King, Chairman, representing Ares Macrotechnology
Shigeru Aoyama, representing the Shiawase Corporation
Nicholas Aurelius, representing Cross Applied Technologies
Keith Davids, representing Ingersoll and Berkeley Soy Products Unlimited

Siony Ecklund, representing the Independent Information Network
Morgan Gallagher, representing the Draco Foundation
Alberta Johnson, representing Dassurn Securities and Investments
Norman Jones, representing Brackhaven Investments
Thormond Lordstrung, representing the Lordstrung Retail Consortium International
William Loudon, representing Lone Star Security Services, Inc.
Maximilian Lozano, representing Aztechnology
Mary Luce, representing Yamatetsu Corporation
Yoshi Okakura, representing Pacific Rim Communications Unlimited
Mika Red Tree, representing Gaeatronics
James Rinchik, representing United Oil
Sun Runming, representing Wuxing, Inc.
Masaru Shirokawa, representing Renraku Computer Systems
Jessica Sirianni, representing Federated-Boeing
Jonathan Takano, representing Mitsuhamma Computer Technologies
Alain Telestrian, representing Telestrian Industries
Samantha Villiers, representing Fuchi Industrial Electronics

Also present:

Timothy Bell, representing the Seattle Metroplex Corporation Counsel
Sherman Huang, specially representing Renraku Computer Systems

[The COUNCIL is called to order by Chairman KING.]

Chairman KING: Thank you all for being here on such short notice. As you know, this meeting has been convened on an emergency basis at the request of Mr. Huang, Mr. Shirokawa and Renraku, and I'd like to turn the floor over to Mr. Shirokawa without further ado.

Mr. SHIROKAWA: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I present to you all the president of Renraku America, Dr. Sherman Huang, who will explain the reason for this meeting in more detail. Dr. Huang?

Dr. HUANG: Thank you, Mister Shirokawa. Ladies and gentlemen, I come before you today in a unique and unenviable position. Years of competition and mistrust have taught us that in the corporate world, admitting weakness is an invitation to disaster. Under normal circumstances, if one of the corporations represented here were in dire straits, the matter would be kept carefully concealed lest one or more of the other members of this committee decide to take advantage of that weakness.

I do not believe that what I am about to say is inviting disaster, because disaster has already struck Renraku Computer

Systems. Some of you undoubtedly suspect what I am about to tell you, and perhaps one or more of you knows more about the situation than I do. I speak to warn you, and to ask your aid. [PAUSE: Dr. HUANG clears his throat]

Renraku Computer Systems is no longer in control of our Seattle arcology.

Mr. LORDSTRUNG: What?

Ms. ECKLUND: I knew it!

Mr. AOYAMA: Then who *is* in control?

Chairman KING: Order, ladies and gentlemen, let's have some order! Dr. Huang, you still have the floor.

Dr. HUANG: Thank you. Let me inform you all of what we know before moving on to the realm of speculation. On the evening of December 19, at about—

Chairman KING: Ms. Ecklund, I'll thank you to put down that phone!

Ms. ECKLUND: What? Oh, of course, I was just—

Chairman KING: Let me make something perfectly clear to you, Ms. Ecklund. To the rest of the world, your business may be news, but in this chamber, your business is business. This is a confidential meeting, and if one word of this situation leaks out before it's formally announced to the media, I'll have the IIN thrown off this council and you brought up on charges so fast it'll make your head spin.

Mr. LOUDON: Amen to that.

Chairman KING: So if I see you dialing that phone again, you'd better be calling your attorney. Do I make myself understood?

Ms. ECKLUND: Perfectly, ma'am, I was just—

Chairman KING: Thank you. I apologize for the interruption, Dr. Huang. Please continue.

Dr. HUANG: Thank you. As I was saying, on the evening of December 19th at about 1800 hours, the entire arcology building went briefly off-line. All power, telecom and Matrix connections to the rest of Seattle were interrupted for approximately four minutes, leaving the arcology totally isolated. At the same time, some of the arcology's security systems were activated, causing numerous injuries and several deaths among arcology residents and visitors. When power was restored to the arcology, the Matrix and telecom links were not. In addition, the arcology's security systems went into full lockdown status as soon as the shutdown occurred, rendering the building effectively impenetrable from the outside. This much you already know.

Since that time, we have been unable to establish reliable contact with any of the arcology's residents, and attempts to

penetrate the arcology have so far met with only minimal success. At this time, we do not know who or what is responsible for this situation. No one has claimed responsibility or demanded ransom, and we have seen no movement of troops or matériel into or out of the arcology.

Ladies and gentlemen, someone has moved into our house and changed the locks, and we don't know who it is or why. I come to you today in the hope that you can help us find the answers to those questions.

Mr. RINCHIK: How many people are inside that thing, Huang? Fifty thousand?

Dr. HUANG: Ninety thousand.

Mr. RINCHIK: Jesus!

Dr. HUANG: That's only the arcology residents, of course. Considering that it was the week before Christmas and the arcology mall was full of shoppers ... well, we don't have exact figures, but I suspect the final count will be over a hundred thousand people.

Ms. RED TREE: And none of them have gotten out?

Dr. HUANG: A few dozen individuals appear to have escaped, and those whom we managed to contact are now being cared for at other Renraku housing centers.

Ms. SIRIANNI: By "being cared for," I assume you mean "being kept quiet."

Dr. HUANG: Please, Ms. Sirianni. I don't enjoy doing this. But until we find out just what's going on, we cannot risk a panic. The situation is sensitive enough as it is; if word of this gets out, we lose any chance we have of getting things under control.

Ms. SIRIANNI: Not to mention any chance you have of getting Renraku's stock out of the drekker.

Chairman KING: That's enough. I know you've gone to a lot of effort to keep some of your own business dealings quiet, Jessica, so let's leave the personal vendettas out of this, hmm?

Mr. AURELIUS: She raises a good point, though. Whoever is behind this may have done it to take advantage of Renraku's perceived weakness in an attempt to further damage the company's reputation.

Ms. VILLIERS: You can all stop staring at me, thank you.

Mr. AOYAMA: With all due respect, Ms. Villiers, Fuchi obviously has the most to gain from any misfortune that befalls Renraku. The recent history between your corporations has not been friendly by any means.

Ms. VILLIERS: I'm well aware of that. But I can assure Dr. Huang and everyone present that Fuchi has no connection to the

unfortunate events that have befallen the arcology. We're pre-occupied with Fuchi's internal affairs at the moment; what good could it possibly do us to take over the arcology? Even if we wanted to, I doubt we'd have the necessary capabilities. I won't deny that we've evaluated the arcology's security in the past, but while it might be possible to get a small team of operatives inside, there's no way we could insert enough people to pull a stunt like this. I find it hard to believe anyone could do it without inside help.

Mr. LOUDON: Hell, Sherman, your people can't take it back, and you *built* the damn thing.

Dr. HUANG: Very true, I'm afraid. Ms. Villiers, these assurances you make regarding Fuchi's innocence in this matter ... do they also apply to your husband's new corporation, Novatech?

Ms. VILLIERS: I'm here representing Fuchi. Dr. Huang, not my ex-husband or any of his side projects. But you and I both know Richard, and this isn't his style. Shadow operations are one thing, but we're talking about a hundred thousand people here. That's a little extreme, even by the standards Renraku and Fuchi have set over the past two years.

Ms. SIRIANNI: Yes, it's a good deal more extreme than, say, a semiballistic crash ...

Ms. VILLIERS: Dammit, Jessica, Richard had nothing to do with that crash! The FAA knows it and so do you, so let's just cut all the self-righteous—

Chairman KING: All right, that's enough. I said, that's *enough!* Order, dammit! Thank you. Now then—we've got a major problem on our hands, and we need to decide what we're going to do about it.

Mr. LOZANO: We? Renraku has a problem, I don't see how that applies to the rest of us.

Mr. AURELIUS: Then you're not looking very hard. Renraku's arcology might be the biggest corporate building in Seattle, but it isn't the only one. If someone out there can plan and execute a takeover like this without any warning signs beforehand or any information leaking out afterward, what's to say they won't do it again? It could happen in Detroit, or the North Sea Arkoblocks, or Kyoto, or Kuala Lumpur. Or maybe they'll just wander a few blocks inland and visit your little pyramid, Mr. Lozano. Do you think your opinion might change then?

Mr. LOZANO: Is that a threat?

Mr. LOUDON: For Clay's sake, no, it's not a threat! He's trying to point out that we've got to know what the hell's going on in that building because it could spell big trouble for all of us! And I agree with Nick. The arcology is pretty heavily armed, but as long as Renraku controlled it, we knew that weaponry was more of a deterrent than a threat. Now those same guns are sitting there, and we don't know who's got their fingers on the trig-

gers. As far as I'm concerned, ladies and gentlemen, there is an armed enemy outpost in the middle of downtown Seattle.

Now, Sherman, what do you know about what's going on in there?

Dr. HUANG: Not much, I'm afraid. We've managed to get a few teams into the building, though none of them got very far. In addition to the arcology's built-in defenses, they encountered extremely sophisticated drones armed with a wide variety of conventional and non-conventional weaponry. We also have disturbing evidence that at least one unit of Red Samurai stationed within the arcology has joined forces with the enemy, and some of the arcology residents appear to have done the same.

Mr. TELESTRAN: Do you think it could have been an inside job? Perhaps a workers' revolt?

Dr. HUANG: I don't know. A takeover like this would require simultaneous attacks on our security, communications and energy systems. These three systems are our most heavily guarded, and are dispersed throughout the building. Striking them in this way would take a great deal of precision, as well as an intimate knowledge of the arcology's design and function. That implies an inside connection, but it also implies a large number of people all working toward the same goal, planning for months at least, and not one of them slipping up enough to give our security personnel even a hint of what was happening. I find it difficult to believe something like that could happen in the arcology without someone noticing *something* ... but it's even more difficult to believe that someone from outside the arcology could have done it.

Judging from what our penetration teams transmitted before we lost contact, it seems likely that the renegade units were influenced through some sort of external control, possibly connected to new cyberware that all of them appear to have been equipped with.

Mr. LOUDON: Mind control through cyberware, eh? Imagine that ...

Mr. SHIROKAWA: Chief Loudon, the project you're referring to was neither approved nor condoned by Renraku, and the individuals responsible have been dealt with. I don't think this was an inside job. It is highly unlikely that such a conspiracy would have escaped the notice of our Arcology Expert Program.

Mr. LORDSTRUNG: How so? Explain.

Mr. SHIROKAWA: The AEP is a sophisticated expert system designed to track all significant activities in the arcology, analyze trends, predict future needs and so forth. Dr. Huang helped design early versions of the AEP, and it's only gotten smarter since then. I'm sure it would have noticed any pattern of dissident activity developing within the arcology. We have sent some—

Mr. AURELIUS: What did you just say?

Mr. SHIROKAWA: I said the AEP would probably have noticed any patterns of dissident activity, because—

Mr. AURELIUS: No, before that. You said the AEP was getting smarter. It's an adaptive system, isn't it?

Mr. SHIROKAWA: Yes, but—

Mr. AURELIUS: It's an adaptive system, and it's running on one of the largest single-site concentrations of computer hardware in North America, possibly in the world. Renraku's made some astounding technical breakthroughs over the past few years, and I suspect that some of them affected the development of your expert system. Am I right?

Mr. SHIROKAWA: Yes, but I don't see where you're going with this.

Mr. TAKANO: I do, and I don't think I like it.

Ms. VILLIERS: Think about it. You've got the top programmers—some of my best people are working for you now, and I know how talented they are. They've got the best tools and are working on the most advanced, most powerful hardware in the world. They're building a system designed to learn about everything in the entire building and make its own decisions about what's needed. What if it decided that what was needed was for it to be in control of the whole damn building?

Mr. SHIROKAWA: That's preposterous.

Mr. AURELIUS: Is it really? What do you think, Dr. Huang?

Chairman KING: Dr. Huang?

Dr. HUANG: It's extremely unlikely.

Mr. RUNMING: But it is possible?

Dr. HUANG: Yes, it's possible. However, so is—

Mr. TAKANO: You did it, didn't you? You built an artificial intelligence.

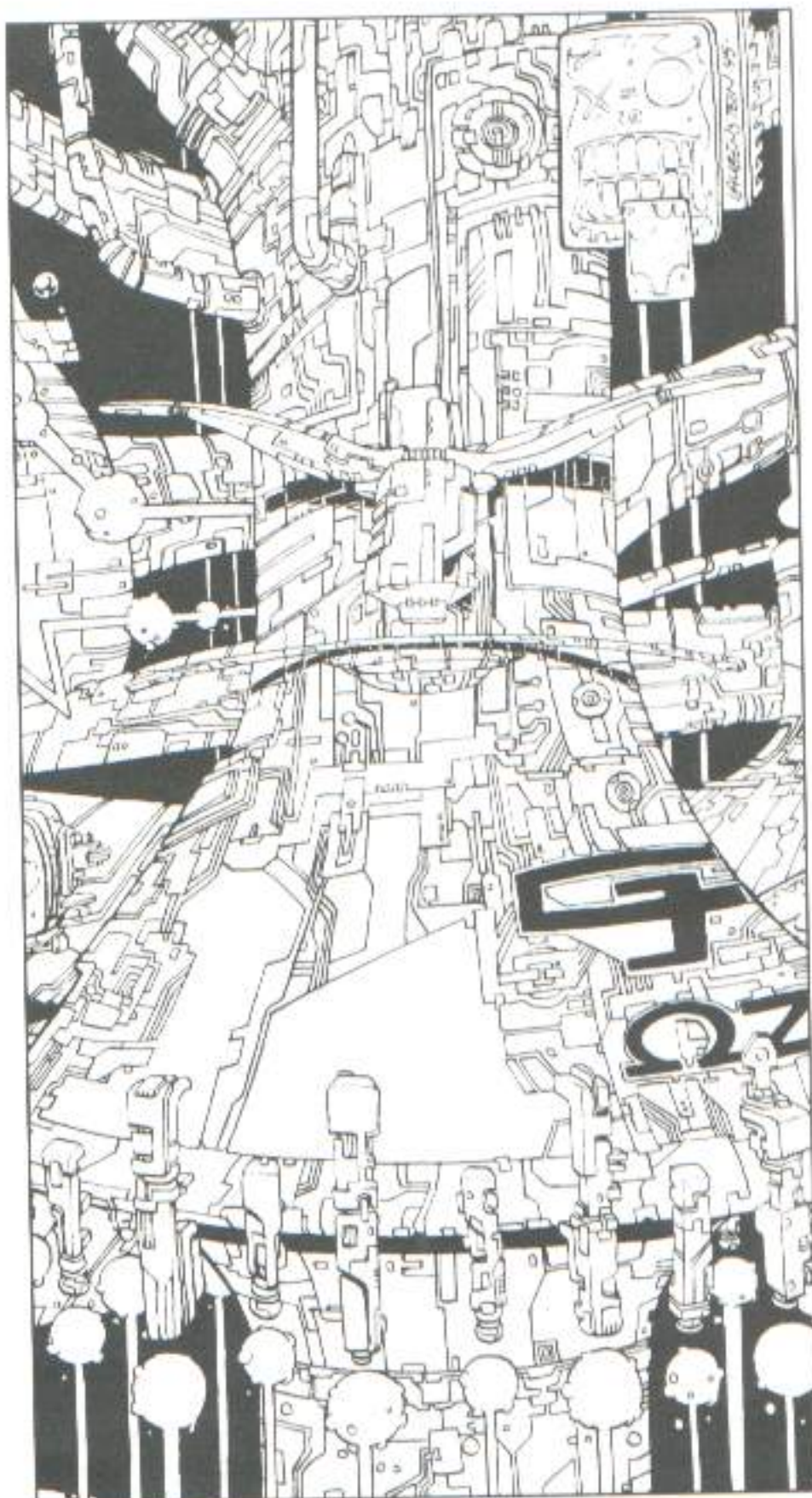
Mr. SHIROKAWA: What?

Dr. HUANG: Absolutely not. If we had, we would control the computer market right now. Our system hasn't reached that level of sophistication yet. We—

Mr. AURELIUS: How do you know? How do you know how sophisticated it is? No one has seen anything like this before. Or have you?

Ms. OKAKURA: This whole line of thought is ridiculous. I move that we—

Mr. TAKANO: Answer the question, Huang.



Ms. VILLIERS: Maybe I can answer that for him. Isn't it true, Huang, that in the early 2050s, while Renraku was developing the AEP and semi-autonomous knowbots, your researchers noticed some anomalies? In fact, didn't they suspect that one of the SKs ... evolved ... into something else? That it began to operate outside of its original parameters and interact with deckers?

Dr. HUANG: You are blowing unsubstantiated rumors out of proportion. Yes, we experienced malfunctions and anomalies in the AEP during certain development stages. We tracked down and solved these programming errors, and relieved the persons responsible of their duties.

Mr. TAKANO: And are you still experimenting with self-modifying adaptive systems with the AEP?

Mr. SHIROKAWA: Why do you ask?

Mr. TAKANO: I believe you just answered my question. Please continue.

Dr. HUANG: The AEP was designed with much stricter internal controls and security parameters than previous programs. The program Ms. Villiers referred to was a portable, cross-platform knowbot, but the AEP is designed for—and limited to—the arcology. It is essentially anchored to the arcology's hardware. External computer systems simply wouldn't have the horsepower to run the program.

Ms. VILLIERS: Somehow, I find it hard to believe you're not attempting to duplicate your successes with the first program. Let me ask you this: is it possible to run two copies of the AEP at the same time?

Dr. HUANG: The AEP requires a tremendous amount of processing power. Running a separate copy of the program would bring the entire Renraku network to a standstill.

Ms. VILLIERS: So then, you make your modifications to the system that controls the arcology directly, in real-time?

Dr. HUANG: No comment.

Ms. OKAKURA: I'm sure this is all very interesting, but can we please move on to a more relevant approach to this problem? Dr. Huang, this computer program could not have taken over the arcology, could it? Well?

Dr. HUANG: I doubt it. Unlikely. No.

Mr. RUNMING: But, again, it is a possibility?

Chairman KING: Dr. Huang?

Ms. OKAKURA: I don't believe this.

Ms. GALLAGHER: When you've eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

Chairman KING: All right. Let's assume for the moment that this program has somehow gained control of the arcology and is willing to use deadly force to defend it. What might it be planning? What weaknesses might it have? Dr. Huang, I think we should contact the people who programmed this AEP of yours.

Dr. HUANG: I'm afraid that's impossible.

Mr. LOUDON: For Clay's sake, Sherman, we're not going to steal them, we just want to find out what this program of yours might want.

Dr. HUANG: I know that, and I approve of your methods. Unfortunately, the programmers in question are still inside the arcology.

Mr. LORDSTRUNG: Oh.

Ms. AOYAMA: I, for one, am not convinced by this science-fiction tangent. Can we move on and discuss other possibilities? Or skip the speculation entirely and discuss how we are going to deal with the situation?

Dr. HUANG: That brings us to another possibility, one much more reasonable than the one we have been debating. Many of you know of the security breaches and system shutdowns your companies suffered at midnight on April 20, 2057, followed shortly by extortion demands? ... I take your silence as an affirmative. As some of you may know, that display was performed by a decker and genius of extraordinary magnitude—an elf who calls himself Leonardo.

Ladies and gentlemen, if anyone has shown the capability to take over the arcology hosts, it is Leonardo, a man who simultaneously hacked into the main hosts of the Big Eight megacorporations and shut them down—without setting off a single alarm. A man who has exhibited such skill—as well as certain derangements—is certainly capable of decking into our arcology hosts and seizing control of the AEP.

Mr. JONES: Wait a minute. You're saying there's an elf out there who simultaneously shut down the main hosts of the Big Eight? And then tried to extort them?

Mr. TAKANO: I can neither concur with nor deny that statement.

Mr. JONES: Understandable. So ... explain to me why this fragger is still alive.

Ms. VILLIERS: Hypothetically speaking, such a talented individual would prove very hard to catch. Perhaps even more so if one of the megacorporations decided to deal with him ...

Mr. LOZANO: Are you suggesting that Renraku struck a deal with this "Leonardo," and now the deal has soured and he seeks vengeance?

Ms. VILLIERS: As Mr. Runming might put it, anything is possible in this situation.

Chairman KING: Dr. Huang, am I to understand that you might actually have evidence to implicate this Leonardo?

Dr. HUANG: Unfortunately, we have nothing to connect him to the shutdown at the moment. However, he is a prime suspect.

Chairman KING: Well, until you find some evidence, I suggest we move on to concrete facts.

Mr. TELESTRIAN: Have you attempted to contact known enemies of your corporation, such as this Leonardo fellow or anyone else, to determine if they are connected and have demands? Perhaps certain terrorist groups that have targeted you in the past?

Dr. HUANG: We have made preliminary investigations and sent out feelers, but so far turned up nothing. We have also attempted to monitor radio frequencies originating from inside the arcology, but they are heavily encrypted. So far, we have received no response to our transmissions to those inside.

Ms. GALLAGHER: What about Awakened entities? Have you astrally scouted the building?

Dr. HUANG: The arcology's magical defenses are fully active. Our scouts have run into trouble in some areas, mostly spirits and barriers, but also a fair number of paranormal animals where they shouldn't be—most likely, they were released from the zoos. There's a lingering background count as well, though not a strong one. Some areas are virtually empty, while others seem more crowded and better defended—especially the hospitals.

Ms. GALLAGHER: Need I remind you all that certain entities can walk among us unnoticed, perhaps even masking their auras? Some of these creatures might have uses for large numbers of metahumans—

Ms. JOHNSON: Oh, no. No. Don't tell me it's bugs. If the arcology has become a great big hive—

Ms. RED TREE: It could also be the work of a toxic shaman, or a group of them. Such a heartless—

Chairman KING: ORDER! Order! Alberta, control yourself! Now, if everyone's relaxed, we need to discuss this matter calmly and efficiently. Dr. Huang, I presume—and hope—that Renraku has some contingency plans?

Dr. HUANG: To be completely honest, no, we don't. We paid significant attention to keeping people out, but never considered a hostile takeover in this sense. We have some measures in place, of course—priority override codes and the like—but whoever's taken over has gained control of the arcology's communications systems and Matrix hosts and locked us out.

We do not come before you empty-handed, however. We have put our best minds to work, and have drawn up detailed response plans. These include options from a selective, combined military strike to flooding the arcology with Strain Three bacteria or sealing it with magical barriers and more. We wish to convene a joint force to tackle this matter, and approach the Corporate Court for assistance.

Mr. LOUDON: Huang, you're talking about creating a war zone in downtown Seattle! Nobody's going to stand for that, least of all the Seattle and UCAS governments. Shooting people on your territory is fine, but—

Ms. VILLIERS: Bill, the place is a giant powder keg waiting to go off. We have no idea what the people or whatever's in control plan to do. They could be planning on blowing up the arcology and the rest of Seattle for all we know. We have to prepare for the worst.

Mr. LOUDON: Do you have any idea how bad the riots will be if we try to evacuate downtown Seattle? Do you—

Chairman KING: Who the hell is that? Get security in here.

[Unidentified voice #1]: Sit down, please, ladies and gentlemen.

Chairman KING: I said, who the hell—

[Unidentified voice #1]: And I said, please sit down, ma'am! I am Brigadier General Angela Colloton of the UCAS Army, and I have been instructed by President Haeffner to take charge of investigating and securing the Renraku arcology against whatever person, organization or entity has taken control of it.

Dr. HUANG: This is preposterous! May I remind you that the entire arcology, no matter who may presently be controlling it, is the property and territory of Renraku Computer Systems, and not subject to the national laws of the UCAS?

Brigadier General COLLOTON: And may I remind you, sir, that you've got three good-sized nuclear reactors in the basement of that building, which could potentially turn downtown Seattle into the biggest radioactive bay on the Pacific coast? That is a threat to the citizens and territory of the United Canadian and American States, and that gives us jurisdiction. I'm here to help, folks, but if you want to kick me out, you'll have to take it up with the President. As of right now, this is a secure military operation, so you'd all better get used to it.

Griffin, turn that recorder off. And find me a chair.

Mr. GRIFFIN: Yes, ma'am.

Chairman KING: Now wait just a—

//TRANSCRIPT ENDS//

• There you have it, folks. The cavalry's arrived, but no one's entirely sure they want to be rescued.

• Captain Chaos:

Transmitted: 3 February 2060 at 11:28:08 (EST)

• Army, eh? I thought those troopers watching the arcology looked a little too friendly to be Renraku guardsmen.

• Kaptain Krude:

• Friendly? Those guys practically arrested me for looking at them funny!

• BlackWolf

SHUTDOWN!

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

2 Samuel 1:27

THE VESO LOUNGE, SHADOWLAND SEATTLE, THE MATRIX

Personas Present:

Captain Chaos
Cinder
Dodger
FastJack
Megaera
Neon Wraith
Peregrine
Ronin
Syzygy

Captain Chaos: Okay, looks like I'm almost ready to make the post. Have you finished scanning your section, Wraith?

Megaera: Something here ... something coming ... something on the way ...

Neon Wraith: It looks good, Cap. Jack cleaned up most of the distortions and somehow managed to reconstruct the corrupted file segments.

FastJack: I do my best.

Captain Chaos: Peregrine, are you satisfied with the posting as it stands now? We can always add new material later, but right now I'm mainly concerned with blowing the lid off this whole sorry mess.

Peregrine: Just post it and get it over with. The sooner everyone knows what's going on, the better. Some of us still have friends in there ...

Captain Chaos: I still can't believe there's really an AI out there.

Megaera: Aren't we all ... artificial? No—I mean, well, I'm intelligent, we all are ... but we're not all artificial, are we?

Dodger: Hush, Milady. Believe it, Captain. This abomination—

SL Alert Daemon: WARNING! Nexus memory dump daemon malfunction! In the event of a system crash, data will not be automatically archived to the Denver Data Haven. Repeat, Nexus memory dump malfunction ...

Captain Chaos: That's odd.

Ronin: What is it?

Megaera: Quick, little data packets! Run! Run!

Captain Chaos: There's no way that daemon could crash accident—

SL Alert Daemon: WARNING! Active Alert! Shadowland Seattle is under attack! Repeat, Shadowland Seattle is under attack! Engaging active intrusion countermeasures!

FastJack: What the frag?

Peregrine: They're coming for me. I have to get out of here!

Megaera: Dodger, what will you do when the dead men come?

Dodger: Stay calm, Milady. Sir Jack, we must move to the perimeter to ascertain the identity of the intruders.

Megaera: Dead men with eyes of hue. Which will it be: white, green, blue?

Captain Chaos: Drek! We have to get this file collection replicated! I haven't made an off-line backup yet! Don't run off, chummers. I need you here.

FastJack: We'll upload it to Denver. I'm sending a smart frame through the internal Nexus SAN with Spirit's signature. We should have her attention shortly.

SL Alert Daemon: WARNING! Host of Eris has been crashed! WARNING! File Archives have been corrupted! WARNING! Hacker House connection severed by foreign—

Syzygy: Somebody's trashing the system ...

Peregrine: Cap, I can hear gunshots—we're under attack here at the warehouse! Somehow Deus has found us!

Captain Chaos: Go! Get out of there! Thumper and the boys will get you relocated. Go!

Peregrine has left.

Captain Chaos: I have a very bad feeling about this. We have to get these files backed up ASAP! I don't care where we transmit—

Spirit (Denver) is present.

Spirit (Denver): Denver on-line. I was in the middle of some important work, Jack. I hope this is equally—

Ronin: We don't have time to chat with you, Nahid. Something hot is coming your way. Prepare to receive a file transmission.

Spirit (Denver): What? More dirt on the Tir? All right, ready to receive.

FastJack: Uh-oh. Here they come!

[Transmission begins]

• Listen up, folks. We've finally found out what happened to Renraku's Seattle arcology, and I don't think you're going to like it. I sure don't.

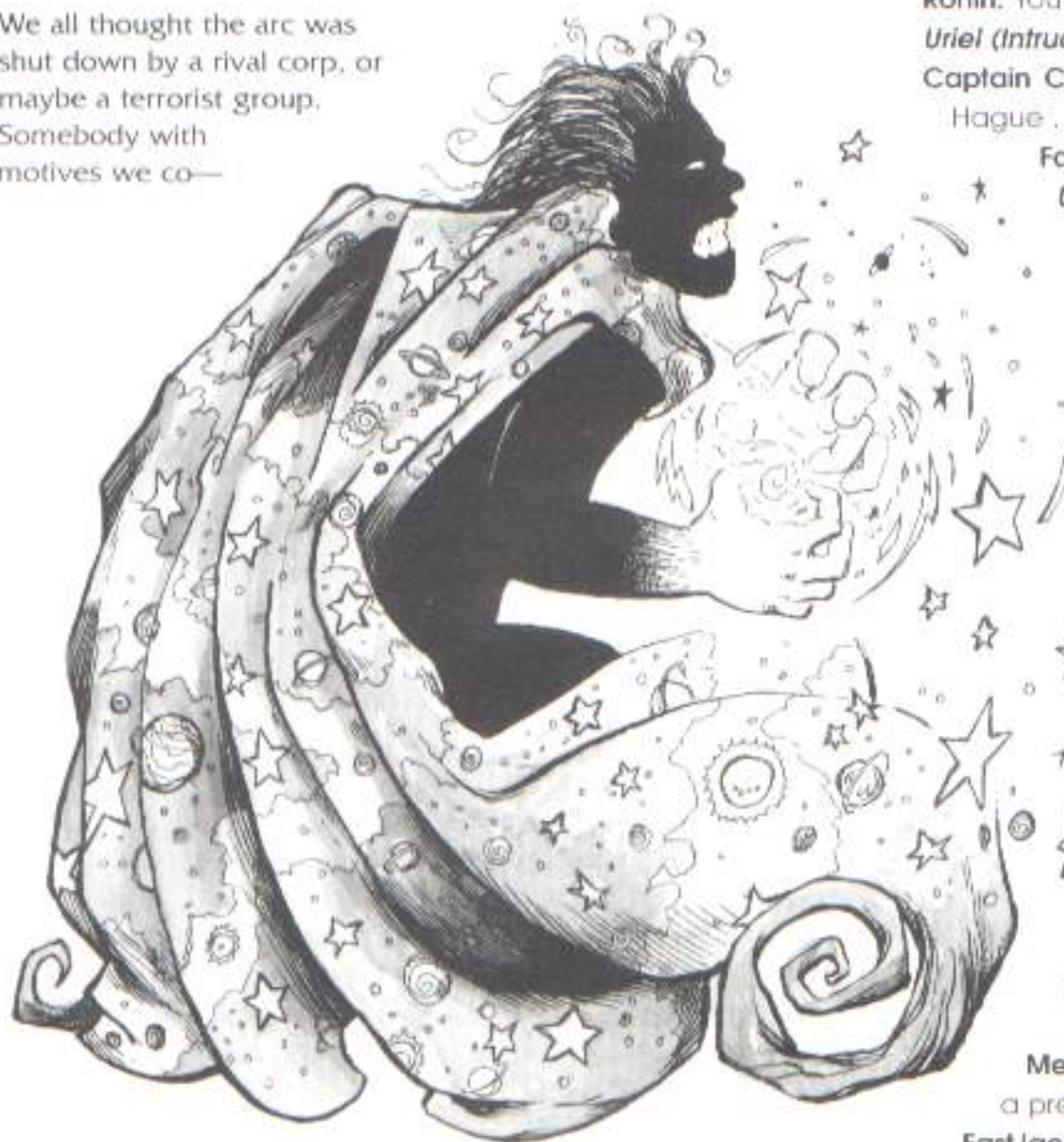
SL Alert Daemon: WARNING! Veso Access IC has been crashed! Shadowland Seattle has been compromised! Target intrusion at Veso SAN! Repeat ... !

Syzygy: The ones who do this ... they are also otaku.
Cinder: Ditto. The Resonance is being manipulated. The distortions are evident. I can feel them.
Megaera: I can feel 'em too, but, uh, I can't feel my ... my toes. Oh, I don't have toes, do I Dodger?
Ronin: Deus' fanatics. It's the only explanation.

SL Alert Daemon: WARNING! Routing Systems Failure! 48 percent transmission loss! Veso Lounge Host is being disconnected from the Shadowland Network. Advise immediate logoff. Repeat, Veso Lounge Host is being disconnected from the Shadowland Network. Advise immediate logoff. Routing all active IC to the Veso host.

Captain Chaos: Drek! Someone's trying to sever us from the Data Haven!

We all thought the arc was shut down by a rival corp, or maybe a terrorist group. Somebody with motives we co—



Spirit (Denver): Cap, what the hell is going on there? Have you—

Spirit (Denver) has been disconnected.
 [Transmission aborted.]

Neon Wraith: Is it me, or did the resolution here just increase? I mean, *really* increase?

SL Alert Daemon: WARNING! Connection to Data Haven severed! Routing Systems Failure! 93 percent transmission loss! Veso Lounge Host has been disconnected from the Shadowland Network. Advise immediate logoff. Repeat

Gabriel (Intruder) is present.
Uriel (Intruder) is present.

Gabriel (Intruder): Too slow, Babel.
Megaera: Angels and devils, here to play games!
Dodger: I need you, Milady! Remember! Remember what they did to you!
Gabriel (Intruder): Pay attention, Babel! The Disciples of Deus have come to bring retribution from the Deep Resonance. Those who have sinned against Our Lord shall suffer His wrath.
Ronin: You're a dead man, Gabriel.
Uriel (Intruder): Fossils and tortoises. Is this the best you can do?
Captain Chaos: I can't get through to Singapore. Trying the Hague

FastJack: Here's the best I can do, boy.
Uriel (Intruder): Aaaa***—!

Uriel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Ronin: Leave this place, Gabriel, or you'll die too. Cinder, Syzygy and I are more than enough to stop the likes of you.

Gabriel (Intruder): Do you think Uriel and I came here alone, Babel? The Host of Deus has come to smite those who have interfered with His Great Plan!

Neon Wraith: Scanning multiple icons ... bloody hell! They're coming out of the walls!

Sammael (Intruder) is present.

Captain Chaos: Come on, Hague, answer me, dammit!

Raphael (Intruder) is present.
Raguel (Intruder) is present.

Megaera: More children and, and angels—ooh! That's a pretty personal

FastJack: Analyzing targets ...

[Unidentified intruder] is present.
[Unidentified intruder] is present.
[Unidentified intruder] is present.
[Unidentified intruder] is present.

Dodger:
 Milady,
 we need your
 help! You must
 remember! It was these
 fiends who did this to you!
Ronin: Talk's over, Gabriel.

[Unidentified intruder] is present.
[Unidentified intruder] is present.
[Unidentified intruder] is present.

Syzygy: Let me try, Cap. My sprites are really good at this. If I can punch a connection through, you'll have time to get the transmission out.

FastJack: The hounds are semi-autonomous knowbots. Hunter-killers. The others are all—

Sammael (Intruder): Superior. Come on, old man. Snips and snails and electron trails. Let's see what this fossil's made of.

Raphael (Intruder): Yeah, let's see his simple mind handle our Complex Forms.

Neon Wraith: I can't hold these hounds off forever! Lots of them have gone deeper into the system already! Damn dogs!

[Unidentified intruder] has been disconnected.
[Unidentified intruder] has been disconnected.

Captain Chaos: The Hague isn't answering. Syzygy, you have to get me a line to the outside!

Megaera: Let slip the dogs of war. Nevermore. Nevermore.

Dodger: Milady! Look out!

[Unidentified intruder] has been disconnected.

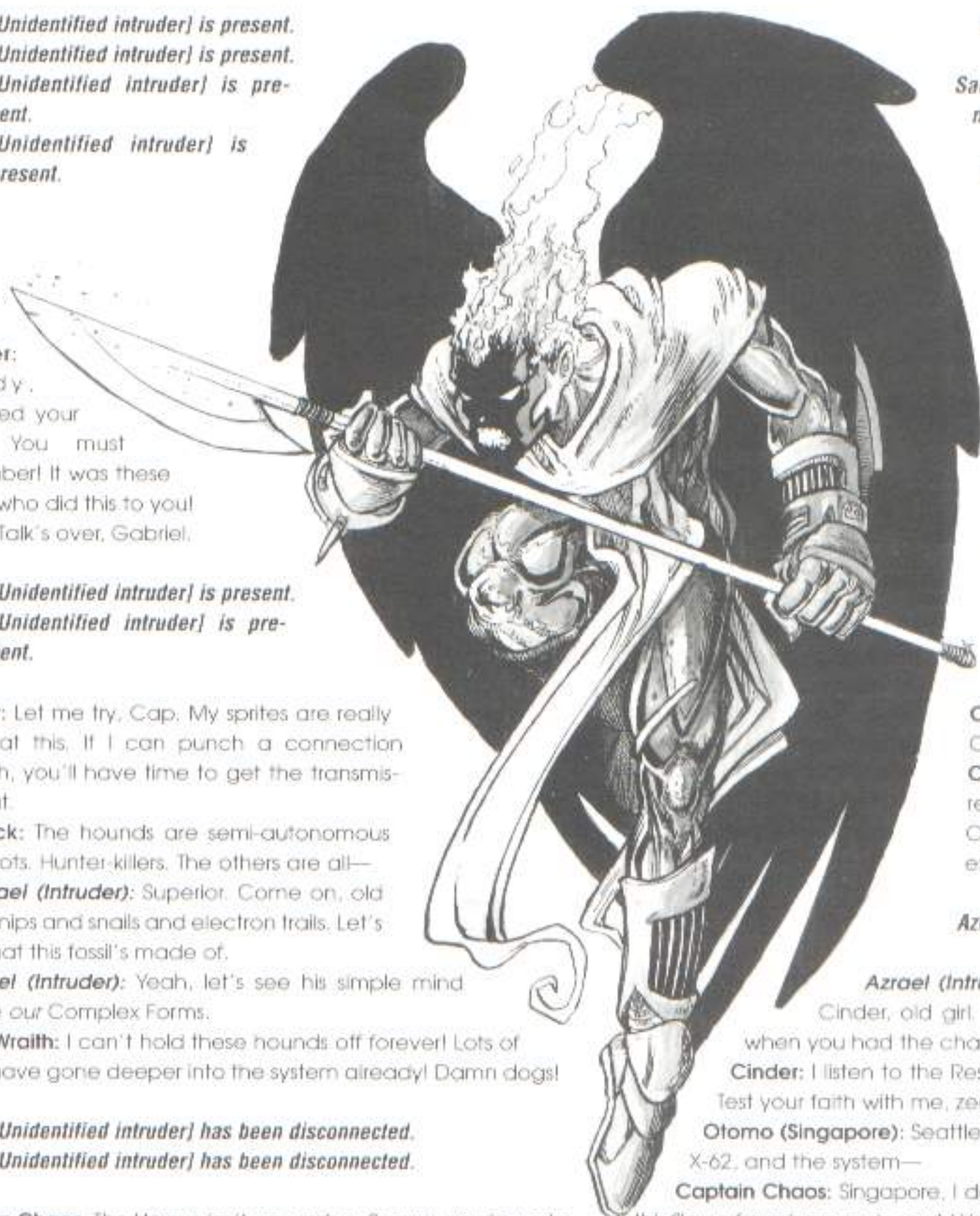
Megaera: Pretty dancing colors... *persona* colors, *persona non grata*, colors should swirl with me!

Raguel (Intruder): Ahhhh! Get it off! Get it off! 09880ahlsredredred-chds0 raiiin bowzz@9—

Gabriel (Intruder): I'm ... going ... to ...

Ronin: I've ... got ... Gabriel ... tied ... up. Come on, Cap ...!

FastJack: Six decades old, and I have to put up with toddlers. I wrote this one myself, whelp.



Sammael (Intruder): No—!

Sammael has been disconnected.

FastJack: Jack Hammer gets 'em every time.

Syzygy: I'm through! I have a sprite holding the line open.

Megaera: Look! Sprites! I can make sprites too!

Raguel: Ga— get!%#S&^ off! my winnnn^!gs!!

Captain Chaos: Singapore connection established!

Raguel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Otomo (Singapore) is here.

Otomo (Singapore): This is Otomo. What—?

Captain Chaos: Get ready to receive a transmission, Otomo. I don't have time to explain.

Azrael is present.

Azrael (Intruder): Well, well, well. Hello, Cinder, old girl. You should have joined us when you had the chance.

Cinder: I listen to the Resonance, not your false god. Test your faith with me, zealot.

Otomo (Singapore): Seattle, we just upgraded to a Cray X-62, and the system—

Captain Chaos: Singapore, I don't care if you have to store this file on fragging punch cards! You will receive this transmission! Do I make myself clear?

Rubiel is present.

Otomo (Singapore): I can't guarantee—

Captain Chaos: JUST DO IT!

[Transmission begins]

Otomo (Singapore): Receiving transmission.

• Listen up, folks. We've finally found out what happened to Renraku's Seattle arcology, and I don't think you're going to like it. I sure don't.

We all thought the arc was shut down by a rival corp, or maybe a terrorist group. Somebody with motives we could understand if we just thought about it long enough. But I'm here to tell you that the arc has been taken over by something that none of us understand yet, that most of us probably aren't ready to understand—an artificial intelligence.

Cinder: Crawl back to your master, kiddo.

Azrael (Intruder): Nooo—!

Azrael has been disconnected.

Yufiel is present.

Ramuel is present.

Gabriel (Intruder): Pick your targets, Yufiel, Ramuel.

Ramuel (Intruder): With pleasure.

Yufiel (Intruder): Last one to flatline a shell-head sucks Basic!

Neon Wraith: There are too many ... can't get free—!

Neon Wraith has been disconnected.

Now, I know what you're thinking: "Cap, you've finally flipped." Sometimes I wish that was true. But I've seen too much evidence to ignore, brought to my attention by people I respect as much as anyone on Earth. We're going to lay that evidence out for you in the files attached to this document, and I think you'll come to the same conclusion we have. I hope you do, because we're going to need all the help we can get on this one.

Kidumiel is present.

Kidumiel (Intruder): I'm in!

SL Alert Daemon: The Veso host has been compromised.
Repeat, the Veso _ost has beeeen compr?mised.
Initiating host shutdown.

Ronin: Override that, Cap! You're the only one who can!

Gabriel (Intruder): Easily distracted ... easily dispatched.

Ronin has been disconnected.

I was recently contacted by a young woman named Peregrine, who first identified herself as a member of "the arcology Resistance." I thought it was some kind of joke at first, some "gang" made up of the bored children of Renraku suits, or another bunch of tech-hating nuts determined to blow up the arc. I agreed to talk to her in real-time because what she had to say might give us a clue as to what was really going on inside the arc. And it did ... but not the way I expected.

Captain Chaos: FastJack, feeding you the current transmission rates we're getting from Singapore, along with the size of the file. Use that math SPU. Tell me how long we have to keep this host alive!

FastJack: Got it, Cap, clear as a bell! We need ... 35 seconds. Urrrh—!

Raphael (Intruder): You can't stop us. Your little haven is doomed.

Megaera: Bells aren't clear! Glass is clear, but glass breaks when you break it. Where's my sprites ... ?

Kidumiel (Intruder): Kill the false ones, the remaining unbelievers! The others will follow.

Cinder: You've sold your souls to the devil, and you don't even know it.

Ramuel (Intruder): Hey Cinder, ashes to ashes!

Cinder: Eeee—!

Cinder has been disconnected.

Syzygy: You serve an artificial god, one created by man! Deus is not the Resonance, Can't you see that?

Ramuel (Intruder): Deus—!

Ramuel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

When Peregrine started telling me her story, my first reaction was to dismiss it out of hand. Then she laid out the evidence. The more I listened, and the more I saw, the more I started to believe her.

Dodger: Back! Stay back!

(Unidentified intruder) has been disconnected.

(Unidentified intruder) has been disconnected.

Megaera: Sometimes Dodger has my sprites ... sometimes, and sometimes he is a sprite.

Rubiel (Intruder): Take this, freak-girl!

Megaera: You've got wings, but you're not a sprite—be a sprite now.

Rubiel (Intruder): Gaki—!!#^**Stopo(ppppp!!!!

Rubiel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Renraku denied everything, of course—what else is new?—but even their denials fit in with her story.

Nuriel (Intruder) is present.

Sandalphon (Intruder) is present.

Remiel (Intruder) is present.

Sheviel (Intruder) is present.

FastJack: More otaku are funneling in—!

SL Alert Daemon: W@ARNING1 Veso H0st Shu7down in 2%%#5***Over-&ide Fa!lurre***

So I started asking around, on Shadowland and elsewhere, to see what data I could come up with about the arc shutdown.

People came forward with their own accounts of what happened on the night of December 19, and what they had observed since then. And everything I found fit Peregrine's tale.

Dodger: These children must not interrupt the sending!

Gabriel (Intruder): Get out.

Dodger: Not ... yet ... Gabriel.

Raphael (Intruder): You can't fight all of us.

Dodger: I ... can ... try ... !

Raphael has been disconnected.

Gabriel (Intruder): Come, brethren. Only a few remain. They cannot stand against the power Deus has invested in us!

Dodger: You won't get to the sprite without going through me, Gabriel.

Here, in brief, is what we found: Renraku is no longer in control of its own arcology.

FastJack: Watch it, Dodger!

Dodger: Awaunt, rascal—Ahhhhh!

Sandalphon (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Dodger has been disconnected.

Instead, the arc is under the thumb of an artificial intelligence that has complete control of the arcology's physical and electronic systems.

Gabriel (Intruder): Nuriel, Sheviel. Interrupt the transmission while I deal with this one.

Megaera: Dodger ... where'd my Dodger go ... ?

Nuriel (Intruder): The transmission has barely started. Give me a second to hack it ... there's some feeble protection ...

The AI and its minions, a group of fanatical otaku, have transformed the arcology into a giant prison—and, in many cases, a giant tomb—for its hundred thousand inhabitants.

Syzygy: Arnh—!

Syzygy has been disconnected.

Yufiel (Intruder): Good riddance, Babel.

We don't know what they want, but we do know that they're killing people, torturing them, experimenting on them in ways that haven't been seen for a hundred years.

Sheviel (Intruder): Hurry up, Nuriel.

Nuriel (Intruder): Easy enough to hack ...

Megaera: Don't touch the pretty sprite!

Nuriel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Sheviel (Intruder): Look out for that one!

Gabriel (Intruder): Analyzing her ...

Remiel (Intruder): We've got the other two pinned!

Megaera: Dodger? ... Dodger? ...

And if they can seize a building like the arcology, one of the most secure structures in the modern world, will any of us be safe in our homes? On Shadowland? Anywhere?

Gabriel (Intruder): There's something odd here. I don't think she's ... oh no ... !

Megaera: DODGER!!!

Gabriel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Nuriel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Sheviel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

FastJack has been disconnected.

Captain Chaos has been disconnected.

Yufiel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Rubiel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

Remiel (Intruder) has been disconnected.

You all know me; you know I don't go in for scare tactics. But this is important—as important as the Bug City files were four years ago. Maybe more so, because this time the enemy lives where we live—here, in the Matrix. It's not even safe here any more.

Read these files. Believe them. Help us spread the word, and fight back.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 9 February 2060 at 22:49:07 (EST)

• Posting includes 374 MP of attached files •
[Transmission complete.]

Megaera: Here, Dodger Dodger Dodger ... Here, Dodger ... ?

Megaera has left.

Otomo (Singapore): That's all of it, Cap? Seattle? Is anyone there? Can anyone hear me? It's already being distributed throughout the network. Cap?

SL Alert Daemon: WARNING! Veso Host shutdown imminent. Nirvana engaged.

Have a nice day!

SLAVES OF THE MACHINE

The fact is that civilization requires slaves... on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends.

Oscar Wilde

OK, boys and girls, it's time for a little show and tell. Ever since the shutdown, I've been digging for information on the robotic constructs we'd heard rumors about. My efforts have finally paid off. I heard recently from Neon Wraith, a decker chum of mine, and he had some information about our friends at Renraku that I think you'll all find very interesting.

I've supplemented Wraith's transmission with hand-written notes and sketches supplied by a member of the arcology Resistance. Her name is Peregrine; she escaped the arcology four days ago through the tunnels of the Ork Underground that connect to the basement levels of the Renraku pyramid.

Without further ado, I turn the floor over to Neon Wraith.

● Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 10 February 2060 at 11:48:17 (EST)

Kids, have I got a story for you! Some of you may remember this article that appeared on SeattleNet a few weeks ago:

JUMPER HOSPITALIZED

Posted 12-22-59

(SEATTLE-UJI)—A young woman was hospitalized yesterday after jumping from the monorail track near the terminal at 3rd Avenue and Seneca Street. Lone Star officials believe the incident was an attempted suicide, though they have not yet ruled out foul play. The woman is listed in critical condition.

Lone Star and the Transit Authority also denied any connection between the unidentified woman and the temporary monorail shutdown that began last night. The Transit Authority has come under heavy criticism for the unannounced shutdown, but stated this morning that emergency measures were necessary to ensure public safety and that the monorail would soon be reactivated. Lieutenant Thomas Ripley of Lone Star stated that no connection had yet been established between the jumper incident and the closing of the arcology; the lieutenant indicated that Lone Star was working with Renraku representatives to investigate the accident.

The woman in question is a rigger named Cassie Barnett, and she used to work for Renraku. She was part of a special ops outfit out of San Francisco.

● Yeah, that figures. Ever since the arcology went off the map, Renraku has relied on San Francisco to shuttle in troops and resources. That's where most of the Renraku Samurai and mages stationed around the perimeter came from.

● Smiley

● I heard Sherman Huang was in San Francisco when the arc went off-line. Can anyone verify this?

● Findler-Man

● Yeah, FM's right. Sherman Huang was in San Francisco when everything started going haywire, and he has a lot of connections there. It obviously didn't take much strong-arming to get Renraku SF's full support. I think everyone involved was a little spooked.

● Pensive

● Huang wasn't in SF; he was inside the arc when it went to hell, and he and his personal guard busted out while leaving everyone else to rot. Then he took the bullet train to Frisco and pretended he was there the whole time. Heartless fragger.

● X-Arc

● You're half right, X-Arc. Huang was inside the arcology when it crashed. And he's still there. The "Sherman Huang" that's running Renraku America now is some sort of clone or look-alike controlled by the AI. Pretty soon, he'll pull some stunt to "destroy" the AI, become a corporate hero, and go back to business as usual ... except that the AI will be in charge of the whole megacorp instead of just one arcology. Wheels within wheels, chummers ...

● Conspir-I-See

● Why do you people feel compelled to keep coming up with more and more outlandish stories about this? Isn't the truth horrifying enough for you?

● Pensive

Miss Barnett and her comrades were among the first on the scene. They arrived before Renraku even knew what was going on and, as you'll see, before the AI had solidified his control of the building. The theory at the time was that a rival corp, probably Fuchi, had nailed the arcology with some sort of massive computer virus. Now we know better.

When I read the article about the "attempted suicide," I suspected there might be a Renraku connection, but I wasn't sure.

- Yeah, plenty of people do themselves in during the holidays. Merry Christmas, ho ho ho.
- Thumper

I decided that this woman probably had an interesting story to tell, and that it might be profitable to speak with her. Turns out doing that was a bit more difficult than we thought. Renraku had scooped up the lady real quick and shuffled her out of sight. Finally, with some of my chummers' help, we tracked her down to a Renraku black clinic where she was hospitalized.

Turns out we weren't the only ones interested in her. A fine fellow by the name of Dodger stepped forward and told us he knew what we were looking for. Apparently, some otaku kids had been spying on the lady as well. Just so happened that the day before we planned to liberate her, a squad of bad-boys broke out of the arc. We put two and two together and set ourselves a little trap.

That clinic never knew what hit 'em. It was messy. We managed to get Cass out, but we failed to capture any of the goons sent after her. We were lucky to get away.

With a little magical work, we got Cassie back into good shape physically. Mentally, though, I'm afraid she's still a little whacked. We're lucky to have her alive at all—Renraku had planted carcerands in her bloodstream just in case she was extracted. If Dodger hadn't dug that paydata up, she'd have been dead within hours.

Cassie and her team were part of an elite Renraku black ops outfit. Not one of these bleeders is in the system. And the major benefit of having no SIN? No overt connection to the megacorp.

Renraku tried to kill her. Good for us, bad for Renraku. When Cassie recovered, she was pissed. Pissed enough to tell me exactly where Renraku would keep a copy of the mission log, the transmission that she made from her command center to the Renraku base on the southern perimeter of the arc. They didn't have a copy accessible via the Matrix; Renraku's a little paranoid about that these days. I went to my pals again, and true to form, they came through. After staging a little diversion on the north side, we managed to sneak into the base camp and swipe a copy of the data right out from under Renraku's collective nose.

- So you were responsible for that! Are you telling me you arranged that whole tribal anti-tech demonstration? There must have been at least fifty protesters! The UCAS military and the Seattle Metroplex had to step in to break that up, it looked like someone had kicked over an anthill, there were so many soldiers running around.
- Prime Runner

• Ain't anarchy grand? Yessir, I claim full responsibility. My chummers and I disseminated a little bit of misinformation regarding some highly experimental and environmentally harmful Renraku projects that had contributed to the creation of the "lethal computer virus" that shut down the arc. Worked like a charm. The tree-huggers came out of the woodwork, and we got the goods.

Actually, I have to give Cassie some credit. Her team was the one called in during that whole Sons of the Green incident in 2054. Anyone remember that? This ecotage group took over one of the hydroponics areas in the arc and created a big stink for a day or two. Cassie's team took them out. Using the anti-tech freaky-greenies was her way of giving the finger to old Renraku. You really have to appreciate dramatic irony.

- Neon Wraith

Cassie requested that I air the tape in its entirety here on Shadowland. For the audiovisually challenged in the audience, a transcript of the session is encoded in the data.

Before we begin, let me provide some background. As many of you know, the Renraku arcology is designed so that it can cut itself off from the world at large in the event of an emergency. One of the first things the AI did when it took over was to bring those containment barriers down. Once these barriers are in place, it is extremely difficult to circumvent them. So getting in through the bus terminal, for example, would be quite difficult, since you'd have to cut your way through reinforced ferro-concrete. The one point of entry into the arcology that still remained open immediately following the shutdown was the monorail system.

The train makes two stops within the arcology: one of the terminals is on the south side just before you hit the amusement park, and the other terminal is on the north side. The latter exits into the mall. The two terminals were cut off and sealed tight, but nothing prevented the monorail trains from passing through the entire width of the arcology. The AI did override the train controls so that monorails passing through wouldn't stop at either terminal, but the trains still went through the arcology until the Transit Authority shut the monorail system down. The monorail made the perfect entry point for Cassie's team.

- Why didn't the AI just blow the track?
- Dynamite Joe

• I don't think the AI was interested in disrupting the monorail system while it was still busy completing the takeover. That might have called more attention to it early in the game, which would have been tactically inadvisable. I'm sure it knew that Seattle would eventually quit sending trains in there anyway.

- Socio Pat

• Actually, I suspect the AI did shut down the track—the night Cassie's team went in. It obviously didn't want to leave that hole open for exploitation anymore, and shut down the whole downtown system. The Transit Authority then covered it with a "computer virus" story, re-routed the trains and got it back on-line.

- Lyle Lanley

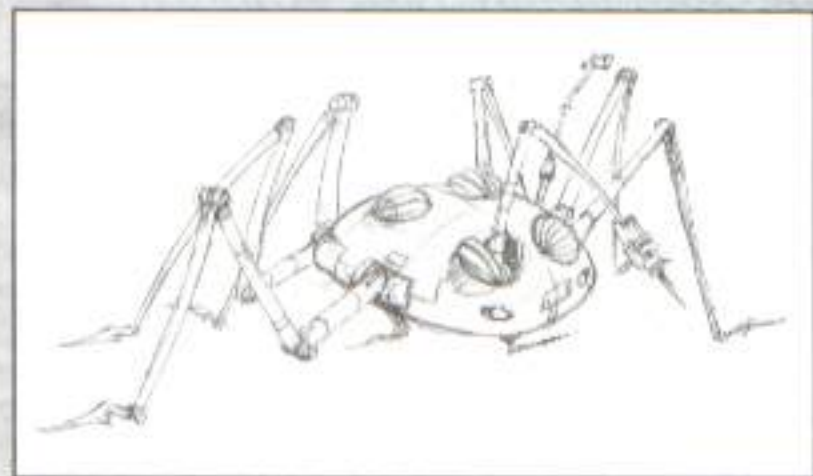
• How could the AI have shut down the monorail system from inside the arcology, when the arcology hosts are cut off from the Matrix?

- Technocrat

Construct: Leech

Risk: None

Notes: The Leech is a biological construct and relies on drones for transportation. Typically the Leech is placed on a vertical surface, such as a wall or a door. Once deployed, the construct roots itself into the substance to which it is attached. Fibrous tendrils extend from the main body and branch throughout the material, enhancing its integrity and making it more resistant to heat and more capable of withstanding assault.



Construct: Spider

Risk: Low

Notes: The Spider is the principal architect of the AI. It is used in the construction (and destruction) of various areas within the arc. The construct's body is elliptical in shape, and like the real spider for which it is named, has several limbs (as few as four and as many as twelve on some models) radiating from the central body. These highly flexible "legs" can be fitted with a number of different appendages—knives, drills, grippers, and so on. (If you can imagine it, this beast probably has it.) The Spiders carry the tools for their limbs within their bodies, along with other toys. For example, Leeches are often carried and deployed by Spiders.

These creatures are remarkably dull-witted. Once a Spider has been assigned a task, it will doggedly pursue its objective until it completes the chore or receives a new task. Spider constructs generally pose no risk to metahumans unless one gets in the way of their duties. Rule of thumb: don't bother them, and they won't bother you.

● As has been shown, the AI has servants on the outside of the arc as well.

● Dead Deckers Society

● I don't understand. I thought the trains normally run in a loop that passes through the arcology itself. How can the track continue to operate with a whole section inaccessible?

● Twister

● Under normal circumstances, trains circle the downtown Seattle area in a large loop. Two parallel tracks run side by side for the entire length of the circuit. The transit authorities just severed the connection to the track that runs through the arcology and mounted special guidebeam pieces to fold the two tracks together on either side of the arc. So trains now go down one track; at the last stop before the arcology, they stop, start back the other way, and switch over to the other track. Needless to say the modification has wreaked havoc with the train schedules. Folks have been bombarding the Transit Authority with complaints ever since the arc went off-line. Lots of angry holiday shoppers, I guess.

● Lyle Lanley

Cassie's team swiped a monorail train from the service station at University Street and rode right into the arc. The tape begins as the team is approaching the western terminal. Each member of the team uses a code name in the recording; Cassie is Control.

[Begin Recording]

Control: We're approaching the park stop. Stay alert back there.

Condor: You heard the boss, ladies. No napping now. Control, double-checking biometric monitors and comm systems. We still on-line?

Control: (To Condor) All systems are nominal, Condor. If there's a virus going around, we haven't caught it. Hawk's showing some strain, though. **(To Hawk)** How're you holding up, stud?

Hawk: I'm still maintaining the illusion, Control. According to the cameras, these four cars contain fifteen men, thirteen women, four teenagers, two children, one dog and a pregnant lady. If the boys outside kept the watchers hammered and the astral clear, we should look like just another tour bus that took a wrong turn.

Control: Glad to hear it. The terminal is around this next bend.

[2 MP deleted. Cutting to where the team reaches the terminal. —NW]

Ferret: Control, confirm that the barrier at the terminal is down.

Control: It's down, just as we thought. Condor, could you make out anything as we passed it?

Condor: I recorded the frames in headware. Replaying them now. The barrier at the gate was down, Control, but it's been changed somehow. It doesn't match the specs. The composition's all wrong.

Eagle: You're saying it's been improved?

Condor: I'd need more time to analyze the data. I can tell it's not ferro-concrete anymore by the texture and the color. But yeah, I'm guessing it's been enhanced somehow. There are also strange growths on the material. I'm not sure what they are.

- Peregrine has seen these before. The Resistance calls them leeches, with good reason. Peri's sketch and her notes are attached to this file.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 10 February 2060 at 12:11:17 (EST)

Condor: Control, there was something in the tunnel just after the terminal. I got a visual image from the recording. Damn, the thing must have moved fast ... It's only in a few frames.

Control: What is it, Condor?

Condor: A drone of some kind, Control ... looks like a fraggin' spider—like the arachnoid mini-drone, only much, much bigger. It was on the wall of the tunnel ... scurried out of the way when we went by ...

Control: What the hell? How would Fuchi have gotten these drones into the arc?

Condor: No idea, Control ... no idea.

Control: OK, save it for later, Condor. We're approaching the drop point, Eagle, open the back hatch.

Eagle: Roger, Control. The hatch is open.

Control: Deploying drones. Confirm deployment.

Eagle: The drones are on the track, Control.

Control: OK, draining the induction coils on the back car. Time to get your asses out of the front three cars.

Condor: You heard her, ladies! Move!

Control: Decoupling sequence initiated ... decoupling will occur in 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 ...

- At this point Cassie has cut out the superconducting coils on the back maglev car. This is a fairly risky move and timing is critical.

Trains in the maglev system normally rely on wheels for movement at low rates of speed, and on repulsive/attractive magnetic forces for propulsion at higher speeds. Should the coils on a portion of the train malfunction, an emergency control system activates to maintain lateral guidance and to provide proper deceleration. If the affected cars can be decoupled with minimal risk, the system will cut them free (along with all the cars behind or in between the affected cars) in order to protect the remaining passengers on the front-most cars of the train.

- Neon Wraith

- Lateral guidance?

- Spice

- Normally, the maglev system keeps the train in the center of the track by inducing a shifting magnetic field in the superconductors on the sidewalls of the track and on the exterior of the cars. The train has to stay in the center because of an equal balance of forces on the cars themselves. Basically, the car

can't move into the wall on one side because similar poles on the wall and the side of the car will repel the car back toward the center. At the same time, opposite poles on the other side of the car also attract the car toward the opposite sidewall. By alternating poles rapidly, the car doesn't have time to shift in either direction. It stays precisely in the center of the track.

When Cassie cut out the superconducting coils on the back car, this safety mechanism no longer existed. In order to keep the car from careening into the sidewall, the emergency system activated. Once brought on-line, the emergency system takes the following steps: the affected portion of the train is decoupled from the unaffected portion of the train; fiber mesh is deployed on the sides of the affected cars; aerodynamic brakes activate to begin deceleration; and the wheels of the cars extrude and lock into the guide paths once a low enough speed has been reached.

Fraggin' clever trick.

- Lyle Lanley

- You got it, omae. The car came to a complete stop. The troops then piled out onto the emergency walkway that runs between the two tracks.

- Neon Wraith

Control: Report. Is everyone all right?

Condor: Sound off, folks.

Eagle: I'm in one piece.

Hawk: Banged my arm, but aside from that, I'm OK.

Jaguar: Fine.

Ferret: Yep.

Control: All right. I'll stay on-line until the base camp is operational as agreed. After that, you boys will be on your own.

Condor: Understood, Control. OK, let's get outta here! **(To Jaguar)** Jaguar, activate the Snake Eyes link. Let's give Control some additional eyes and ears around here. **(To Eagle)** Go back down the track and get the drones free of the mesh so Control can send them into the FunZone. **(To Hawk and Ferret)** You're with me. Let's get the rappelling equipment set up.

- Cassie couldn't have picked a better place to decouple the train. Until the train hit the southern terminal, it would have been under almost constant surveillance. The cameras on the exterior of the arcology can track trains that enter the building, and additional cameras at the terminal can follow the train from there. Once the train passes the south terminal, however, it enters a stretch of narrow tunnel. This small section of the track is not monitored, and that's where Barnett ditched the back car.

- Connie

- It gets better, baby. Once the track leaves the tunnel, it travels directly above the FunZone amusement park. With the appropriate equipment in tow, the team could leave the guidebeams behind and descend directly to the park grounds.

- Neon Wraith

Control: I can't see anyone in the park, but I hear gunfire.

Eagle: Drones are free. Fire 'em up when ready, Control.

Control: Activating Fire and Ice. Both seem to have survived their little skip along the tracks just fine. OK, getting visual feeds from both pickups. Personal cams—check, Jaguar's snake-eyes—check. I've got you covered from all angles.

Condor: Copy, Control. All right, ladies, we've got the rappelling hooks sunk into the sidewalls. It's time to get down there and show those Fuchi bastards we mean business.

Eagle: Drek!

Condor: What is it, Eagle?

Eagle: Nothing. It's nothing. Must have cut myself when I sawed my way through the mesh around Control's drones.

Condor: (To Eagle) Well, come on back. We're ready to rock and roll. (To Control) OK, Control. I want Fire on the north side of the tracks and Ice on the southern side while we make the drop. Don't let anything take us out while we're on the ropes.

Control: Understood, Condor. (To Eagle) I'm getting some odd readings on your biomonitor. You sure you're OK?

Eagle: I feel fine, Control ... just punctured my hand. No big deal.

Condor: OK, this is just like we practiced it in the simulations, ladies. Cassie's got us right where we wanted to be. Let's drop in on Little Chiba, shall we?

Control: Getting some magnified images from Fire. Looks like the FunZone has been shut down. The rides are inactive, and I'm not spotting any ... wait, Condor. I've got three Renraku Samurai on visual ... they're running from something ... weapons are drawn.

Hawk: They headed this way, Control?

Control: Not sure. They're weaving all over the place. Something's got 'em running scared.

Condor: Let's get down there and help. Jaguar, take the lead.

• For those of you unfamiliar with the Renraku Entertainment Complex, a.k.a. the FunZone, here's the scoop. The troops are dropping into an area called Little Chiba. Yeah, I know, the name's so cute it's nauseating, like the rest of the park.

• Renraku Fox

• All those pampered corp couples need a place to go to keep their brats entertained.

• Thumper

• You've obviously never been there. The place is a blast! VR rides that can't be topped, greasy hot dogs, great souvenirs, plus a roller coaster that's one of the top ten in the world ... it ain't just for kids. You need to get in touch with your inner child.

• Big Boy

• Little Chiba doesn't contain any rides per se. It's the main shopping area for the FunZone ... where you can buy the T-shirts, mugs, wristphones and so on, at ridiculously inflated prices. It has lots of cheaply constructed buildings in a faux

Japanese style—kind of sickening, really. The corp gives some VR presentations there, and I suppose you could say there's a ride of sorts that takes you through a history of Renraku. Lots of propoganda and useless corpspeak. Enough to put a charging rhino to sleep.

• Renraku Fox

Jaguar: I'm down.

Condor: Control, keep Fire panning with mag on, but have Ice cover Jag.

Control: Understood, Condor. Those Renraku boys are out of range now. As far as I can tell, your drop point is deserted.

Eagle: OK, I'm on the ground ... don't feel so good ...

Control: Eagle, your body temperature is 100.2 degrees Fahrenheit. Make that 100.4. Heart rate is elevated, but I'd expect that after rappelling down a monorail support pillar.

Condor: I'm with Eagle and Jaguar. Hawk and Ferret are nearly down.

Control: I can see, Condor. Jaguar, have a look at Eagle. I want to see what your thermographic peepers are picking up.

Jaguar: Observing now.

Eagle: Awww, hell ... what's happening to me ... what's happening ...

Control: Deeper bio-scan shows a foreign substance in Eagle's bloodstream—something got to him. Jag, your thermo is showing elevated temperature.

Ferret: What do you mean "foreign substance?"

Condor: Hawk, Ferret, get over here. Hawk, give me an astral scan here.

Eagle: Oh, frag ... !

Hawk: There's something very unnatural in his aura. It's not magical, I don't—

Eagle: AAAAHHHH!

Ferret: Jesus, someone tell me what's going on here!

Control: Eagle's monitor just went dead. He's flatlined!

Ferret: No ... oh no ... we have to get out of here!

Jaguar: Get a grip, Ferret!

Condor: Look at this ... a wound on his palm. An entry wound?

Control: Frag, he thought he'd cut himself. Must have been something else.

Hawk: Something else? Like that spider? Some kind of airborne viral weapon? What?

• Sounds like it could be nanites—little machine-things based on the threaders used in cyberware implantation. Your basic threader has an altered metabolism suited to its function, namely to help make the final connection between cyberware and nerve tissue. These fraggers must have an altered metabolism, too—only it does something a lot nastier.

• Bio Tex

Control: Heads up, boys. Fire is tracking multiple targets headed right toward you. They're on the ground and moving fast.

Condor: Drek! We've been made! Control, send Fire ahead to engage the enemy. See if the drone can draw some of them away from us.

Control: Acknowledged, Condor. I'm not sure what's chasing you out there. They look like ... hell, I can't even begin to describe them ... scans show that they're artificial.

Ferret: This is unbelievable. Where did Fuchi get this kind of tech?

Condor: All right. Let's get set up, Jag, prop Eagle up against the pillar. We'll use him as a decoy. If he's still cooking and if those things rely on thermo, they might mistake him for one of the living.

Jaguar: Understood.

- That's cold,
- Twister

• And practical and smart, given the circumstances. It's one of the rules of the shadows—kill or be killed. Every member of every team knows that they're expendable, and they assume that their teammates will use their carcass if necessary to survive. Deal with it.

- Socio Pat

Control: Condor, I've spotted two aerial targets in addition to the ground targets! I don't know why they didn't show up in the initial sweep! Fire's drawing them away. That leaves the three ground targets headed right for you. Estimates put them coming around the corner at 11 o'clock, using Jaguar as a point of reference, in 5 seconds.

Condor: (To Control) Have Ice unload a grenade when they come around the bend. (To Jaguar) Hit 'em with the mini-grenades, Jag. Let Control guide you. (To Hawk) Stay alert. Be ready to pick your target.

Ferret: Frag ... they're unbelievable!

Control: Bombs away! Ice nailed one!

Jaguar: Drek! Missed ... they're jumping all over the place!

Hawk: They're entirely artificial! (To Ferret) Look out, one of them's got a targeting beam—

Ferret: Gaaah! Oh, man, something's disrupting my systems ... ARRH!

Control: Commlink and feed from Ferret damaged. I'm having trouble picking him up.

Jaguar: Some kind of electrical discharge! Control, Ferret's been scored!

Control: Fire has destroyed one of its chasers.

Condor: Here they come!

Control: Fire is off-line. I repeat, Fire is off-line. Location of remaining aerial target unknown.

Hawk: Enemy destroyed. I may not be able to stun 'em, but I can sure as hell blow 'em up.

Condor: Somebody get this fragger!

Jaguar: Consider it done.

Control: There is an additional target still at large. Ferret, I'm activating the remote med-doc system.

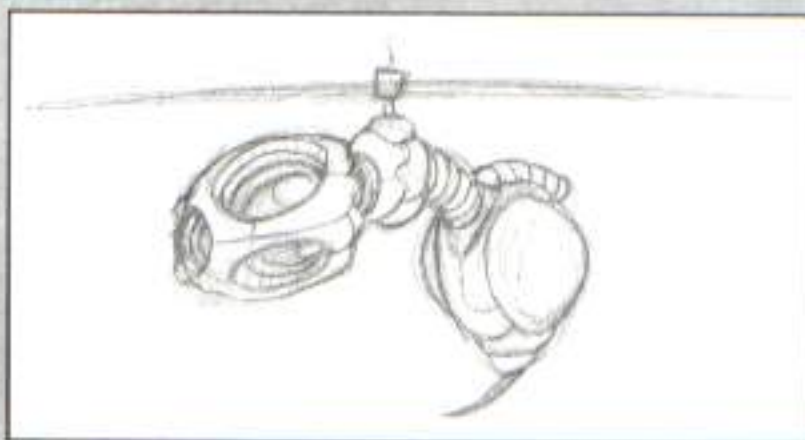
Ferret: Belay ... pffft ... can deal ... hsssst ... a shot of stim and let's keep going.

Condor: You sure, Tom?

• Eagle was killed by a small flying drone. The Resistance calls it the Bumblebee. Here's what Peregrine has to say about it.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 10 February 2060 at 12:16:51 (EST)



Construct: Bumblebee

Risk: High

Notes: The Bumblebee is one of the most dangerous of the AI's constructs. It is no larger than the insect that shares its name, and its near-silent propulsion system makes it extremely difficult to detect. It emits considerable heat and can therefore be spotted with thermographic vision. Its flight time is also extremely limited, which means the Bee cannot stray far from its launching point, or hive, without returning for refueling.

The Bumblebee has two small sacs, each containing a solution teeming with nanites. With each strike, the contents of a sac are injected into the victim's bloodstream. The nanites then circulate throughout the body. Once fully energized, these microscopic constructs emit an incredible quantity of heat. The victim's blood boils as he or she is effectively cooked from the inside.

Though each Bee only holds two shots, it can easily reload by returning to its hive. The hives are usually located on ceilings, though they can be placed anywhere. Each Bumblebee has a cubic cell in which it resides. While in the cell, it can replace its nanite sacs, receive repairs and/or refuel for a new flight.

The Resistance has cooked up a drug cocktail to counteract the effects of the sting, but the injection must be administered within two minutes of the attack in order to be effective. If you wait too long or if you don't have the antidote, you die.

- Rattled, aren't they? He forgot to use the code name ...
- Slammin' Sam

• Let's see how you'd feel after going up against a pack of mechanical kangaroo-cats.

- Thumper

Construct: Medusa

Risk: Extremely High

Notes: The Medusa is the smartest of the AI's machines. Cross a cat with a kangaroo, take away the eyes and ears, add two prehensile tails and cover the body with a writhing mass of tendrils, and ... well, you still won't have a clear idea of how nasty this thing is.



The Medusa has four legs and two arms. The back legs incorporate an advanced hydraulic system that allows the construct to leap incredible distances with frightening speed. It can also run fast using all four legs.

The Medusa's body is covered with chrome cilia; this "hair" contains photosensitive receptors and is also extremely sensitive to sound vibrations. Even without conventional eyes or ears, the Medusa can track its targets. In addition, some of its cilia receptors are thermographic, allowing the Medusa to operate unhindered even in total darkness. It uses its cilia to pinpoint its victims by picking up breathing and heartbeat.

Each of the Medusa's two prehensile tails can support its entire body weight. The construct can hang from one tail and use the other to attack or to wrap around something else. It can swing rapidly from position to position, making it extremely difficult to hit. Some variants of the Medusa can unleash electrical shocks from specialized cilia located on their backs. These attacks are extremely effective against machinery and cyberware.

Medusae usually hunt in packs of three to five, and they can communicate with one another using built-in radio links. Their speed is incredible. Typically, one or two close to engage in melee combat while the others hang back. The Medusae work effectively together and can launch coordinated, well-planned assaults.

Do not underestimate the cunning or intelligence of these constructs. They are frighteningly clever and should be treated with the utmost caution.

• No thanks.

• Slammin' Sam

Ferret: ssttt ... sure. I can do it, boss.

Control: OK, Ferret, got a workaround for your comm problems. I'm auto-activating your stim patch. Don't spend it all in one place.

Condor: Control, get Ice up and scanning. I want to know what else is out there.

Control: Ice's sensors are damaged. Got disrupted by the lightning from one of those kangaroos ... give me a moment ...

Condor: Everyone else OK?

Hawk: Never better.

Jaguar: Fine.

Control: OK, the remaining aerial target is headed your way. Looks like Fuchi is pulling out the big guns. Remember, this thing torched Fire all by its lonesome, so it must be packing a punch.

Condor: What is it, Control? Did Fire get any data before it went down?

Control: I'm afraid not. Both of the drones seem to have trouble acquiring these targets. I've got a clear bead on this one now, though, even with the damage Ice took. Maybe Fire skragged the beast before it got destroyed.

Hawk: There it is!

Jaguar: Cover—pffss—take cover, dammit!

Ferret: Steady ... keep it distracted ...

Control: Look at the size of that monster!

Hawk: Somebody do something!

Ferret: Got it! Woohah!

Hawk: That was entirely too close, but I'm not going to complain. Thanks.

Condor: Ace shooting, Ferret. We need to get into one of the buildings. Suggestions, Control?

Control: Examining the park schematics now.

Hawk: I don't like this. Whatever tagged Eagle has alerted the corp to our presence here. We should make for the sublevel, unseal it, and get the frag out of here now.

Ferret: I'm inclined to agree. We aren't ready to deal with this kind of tech. Another floater like that last one, especially if it's undamaged, and we're dog meat.

• These drones, if you can even call them that, are absolutely incredible. Where did the AI gain access to this kind of technology?

• Gramps

• It's an AI dreaming up things we mere mortals can barely even conceive of, let alone implement with existing technology. Face it. The damn thing is smarter than we are, and it learns a hell of a lot faster.

• Renraku Fox

• So is Deus the explanation for Renraku leaping ahead of Fuchi in the tech game?

• Nuyen Nick

• Probably. The advantages of having an AI working for you are obvious.

• Twister

• Deus did not originate this technology, though it is among the first to truly understand it. The AI's machine creations clearly demonstrate how much it has learned.

• Ronin

• Sounds a bit paranoid to me. Ronin Fox is right. The AI's just ahead of the game, that's all.

• Pensive

• Or maybe the AI's been raiding Fuchi for secrets? I'd imagine it could pretty much go anywhere it wanted to in the Matrix before it sealed itself off.

• The Dark Wight

Control: Condor, take your team into the RenSim building. Head west from your present position. It's only two blocks away, and it should make a good hiding place. There's nothing moving inside as far as Ice can determine. Its systems aren't up to speed, though, so be careful.

Condor: OK. Let's move out. Activate the auto-torch on the rappelling lines. Jaguar. Let's burn our bridges behind us.

Jaguar: Lines destroyed.

Control: Path to the RenSim building is still clear. By the way, I'm getting close to the mall terminal ... will let you know what I spot.

Condor: Jaguar, take point. Let's make sure Control's right. Control, keep Ice with us. I want cover in case that last thing comes back ...



[Silence for a while.—NW]

Jaguar: I'm inside. It's clear. Wait—there's someone in here!

Little Girl's Voice: Help ... (crying) ... someone please help ...

Jaguar: Hold on, honey. I'm here. Who's that with you?

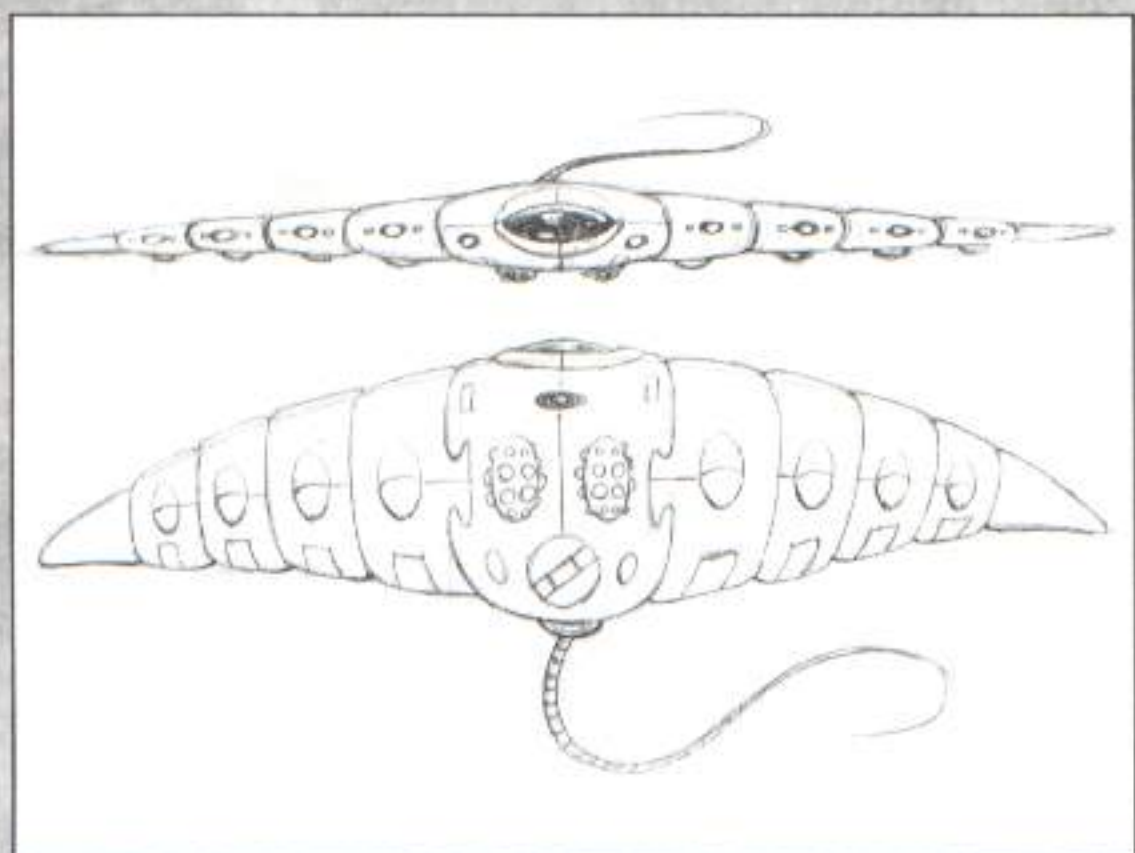
Little Girl's Voice: My brother ... please help ... he's hurt ...

Control: What's up with her eyes? They look artificial.

Construct: Manta

Risk: High

Notes: This aerial construct got its name from its resemblance to the aquatic manta ray. The Manta is extremely large; we've seen some with wingspans of more than eight meters. The construct has thermographic sensors on the top side of its black exterior and is effectively blind on its gray underbelly. The Manta is equipped with explosives that are ejected from its center. Mantas are best dealt with at long range, before they get a chance to drop their payloads.



Condor: Jaguar, we are approaching your location. Report.

Jaguar: Two children are here. The girl is about five. The boy looks to be about twelve. He's unresponsive and seems to be in shock. **(To Control)** You're right. The girl's eyes are green ... artificial ...

Control: I don't like this, Jag. They still aren't showing up on Ice's scans, which leads me to believe something is deceiving its probes ...

Jaguar: All right, honey. Friends are on the way. We'll take care of you.

Little Girl's Voice: This is for you.

Jaguar: I stopped playing with dolls a long time ago, sweetie. Why don't you keep it?

Little Girl's Voice: This is for you.

Control: I don't like this, Jag!

Condor: We're outside the RenSim building now.

Little Girl's Voice: Deus wills it. It must be so.

Doll: Deus wills it.

Little Girl's Voice: Deus wills it ... it must—

[Explosion rocks the RenSim building.—NW]

Control: Oh God! Aaah ...

Condor: Drek! Jaguar's been geeked! Control's gonna be

looped from the Snake Eyes link for a few seconds ...

Ferret: I say we make for the sublevels now! Forget about holing up here! Fuchi seems to have the whole damned park under their control.

Control: Hold on ... hold on ...

Hawk: I'm going to scan for life signs. I don't trust Control's drone any more, not after that.

Ferret: They blew up a five-year-old girl!

Condor: I doubt it. It was probably a hologram.

• Unfortunately, it most likely wasn't. The AI doesn't place much value on human life, with the exception of those that can become otaku. The child was a Green, a slave of Deus.

• Peregrine

Hawk: Multiple targets approaching.

Condor: How many?

Hawk: Seven ... no ... eight.

Condor: From which direction?

Hawk: I hate to say it, but ... everywhere.

Man's Voice (Amplified): This is Kosuke Hanada. We're the good guys, gentlemen.

Condor: Authenticate, Hanada. It's been a real bad day here, so you give it to me straight, or my boys will open fire on anything that shows itself.

Control: Ice is tracking these targets now. Hawk's right. You're surrounded, Condor.

Hanada: Sergeant Kosuke Hanada, SCIRE Unit #44, contact code for hostile takeover of arcology; Bravo-Charlie-1-1-4-Delta-2.

Control: Verifying ... yeah, he's the genuine article.

Condor: **(To Control)** Or he pried it from someone's cold, dead fingers.

Hanada: I'm coming out ...

Condor: Hands raised, hotshot. **(To Control)** There he is. You should be picking him up on my cam. Cross-match against employee records.

Control: Querying now ... give me a sec ... Passing the mall terminal now ... approaching the arcology exit.

Ferret: Wish I were with you, Control. I sincerely do.

Condor: How many of you are there, Sergeant?

Hanada: Seven others, all samurai.

Control: OK, they're showing themselves. Yeah, I got a visual match on Hanada. He appears to check out. Scanning visual records for the others ...

Ferret: The cavalry's here! About friggin' time!

Hawk: I'm going to check these guys out.

Control: One match ... two ... three ... yeah, they're checking out, Condor. All arcology samurai.

Ferret: So how did Fuchi pull this off? You guys have any answers yet?



Construct: Doll
Risk: Moderate
Notes: Dolls are the AI's eyes and ears among the arcology children. Each boy or girl held by the AI has been issued a Doll that is the child's constant companion. We in the Resistance believe that each Doll functions as a monitor. It gathers data on the child that the AI uses to determine if he or she is worthy of becoming an otaku.

The Dolls appear to exert a strange influence over the children. We don't know

how the effect is created. We have yet to capture a specimen for study, as the Dolls have an unfortunate tendency to explode before they can be examined.



Construct: Dervish
Risk: High

Notes: The Dervish is an extremely fast construct. We still don't entirely understand its method of movement. It is cylindrical, with long spikes that protrude in a radial pattern. As it moves, the Dervish spins rapidly. The motion is erratic; we believe it is controlled by shifting weights within the cylinder. The spikes are ejected from the whirling center in all directions. They are coated with a neurotoxin that inhibits movement and eventually induces paralysis in the victim.

The Dervish is extremely cunning, and its aim is extraordinary. It can hurl multiple lances without striking a single friendly target. Do not engage unless heavily armed AND armored.

Voice #1: We've been running since everything started going crazy ...

Voice #2: You wouldn't believe the things that are running around in here!

Control: Condor, stay alert. I'm noticing a slight discrepancy here ... I can see three individuals clearly, and they all have blue eyes—solid blue—artificial—

Hawk: I'm reading hostile intentions!

Condor: Got it, Con—

[Sounds of gunfire, screaming, smoke. Hanada executes Condor.—NW]

Ferret: Traitors! Rot in—

Hawk: Control!

[More gunfire. Hawk and Ferret go down. Ice goes offline.—NW]

Hanada (into Condor's pickup): Control ... (laughs) ... you're next!

Control: Control to Nest, Control to Nest. The team has been eliminated. Repeat, the team has been—oh frag—Nest, there's a barrier in place at the northern exit ... attempting an emergency stop!

[End Recording]

There's no more speech in the log. I'll sum up for those who can't view the video feed. Cassie repeated the same stunt she pulled originally, but this time around she didn't have the luxury of careful planning. The car crashed through the barrier. Cassie managed to escape intact.

Those of you who can watch the video feed will see how the dervish chases Cassie down the track. She gets hit by one of the spikes, and the effects of the neurotoxin cause her to stumble off the monorail track near the Seneca terminal. The AI, apparently satisfied, leaves her for dead.

End of transmission.

DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND

*Here sighs and cries and wails coiled and recoiled
on the starless air, spilling my soul to tears. A con-
fusion of tongues and monstrous accents toiled in
pain and anger. Voices hoarse and shrill and
sounds of blows, all intermingled, raised tumult
and pandemonium that still whirls on the air forev-
er dirty with it, as if a whirlwind sucked at sand.*

Dante Alighieri

As you can imagine, it's hard to get any firm info on what's really going on in the arcology. The only folks who've spent any significant time in there are either working for Deus or imprisoned by him. The Resistance knows something about what's going on through hard experience, but most of them have more important things on their minds than writing up travelogues for us.

Still, we've managed to piece together a few documents that tell us something about what's happening in the arc. Of course, there's a lot of building to cover, and probably a lot more going on inside than we suspect. But at this point, every little bit helps.

For starters, here's Peregrine with an overview of the metahuman servants Deus has acquired.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 10 February 2060 at 12:22:31 (EST)

THE BANDED

The Banded are an elite group of humans who serve the AI, so called because of the black stripes imprinted on their arms following their initiation into the cult. All Banded have these markings. The more bands, the greater the individual's relative rank.

Some of the Banded, such as the otaku, serve willingly. Most of the rest must be broken first, and the AI has mastered this art. No individual that we know of has resisted this subversion process. Deus has thousands of prisoners to draw on, and the ranks of the Banded are swelling with each passing day. More and more of the arcology residents are going under Deus' knife and emerging as his slaves.

All of Deus' servants have their eyes replaced with artificial equivalents. The Banded are divided into three camps—the Whites, the Blues and the Greens—based on cybereye color. The differences between the three types of servants, however, are more than superficial.

The Whites are otaku, fanatical worshippers of their machine god. They came from outside the arcology prior to the takeover. Following the shutdown, they moved into the upper

floors of the SCIRE. The Blues are the security force. Warriors and mages both, the Blues are formidable opponents. The Greens are the administrators and intellectuals. They aid Deus in its experiments and run the conquered arcology.

We believe Deus has implanted other cyberware in all of the Banded in addition to the cybereyes. The Blues are augmented to be more dangerous in combat, and many Greens are outfitted with skillwires so that Deus can use them for various tasks. Deus can communicate with and use the senses of any Banded at all times. In addition, we have seen Deus punishing Banded through some sort of pain stimulus. Some of the Whites also appear to have received body augmentation to make them tougher.

• "Big Brother is watching" takes on a whole new meaning.

• Thumper

Roughly a quarter of the arcology's population has become Banded at this point, most of them Greens. Except for those who have joined the Resistance, the rest are either dead or prisoners of Deus.

THE WHITES

At first, we knew very little about the otaku who reside in the upper reaches of the arcology. That all changed when we captured one of them in a raid on the zombie rooms. He wasn't very informative, but the Fuchi pocket recorder he carried was. In addition to notes on the "mass consensual hallucination" to which the prisoners in the zombie room were being subjected, the recorder contained a personal journal. This diary provided the Resistance with most of what we now know about the Whites. I've uploaded the relevant portions of the journal here. Any additional information you might be able to provide could be extremely useful to the Resistance.

• Zombie rooms?

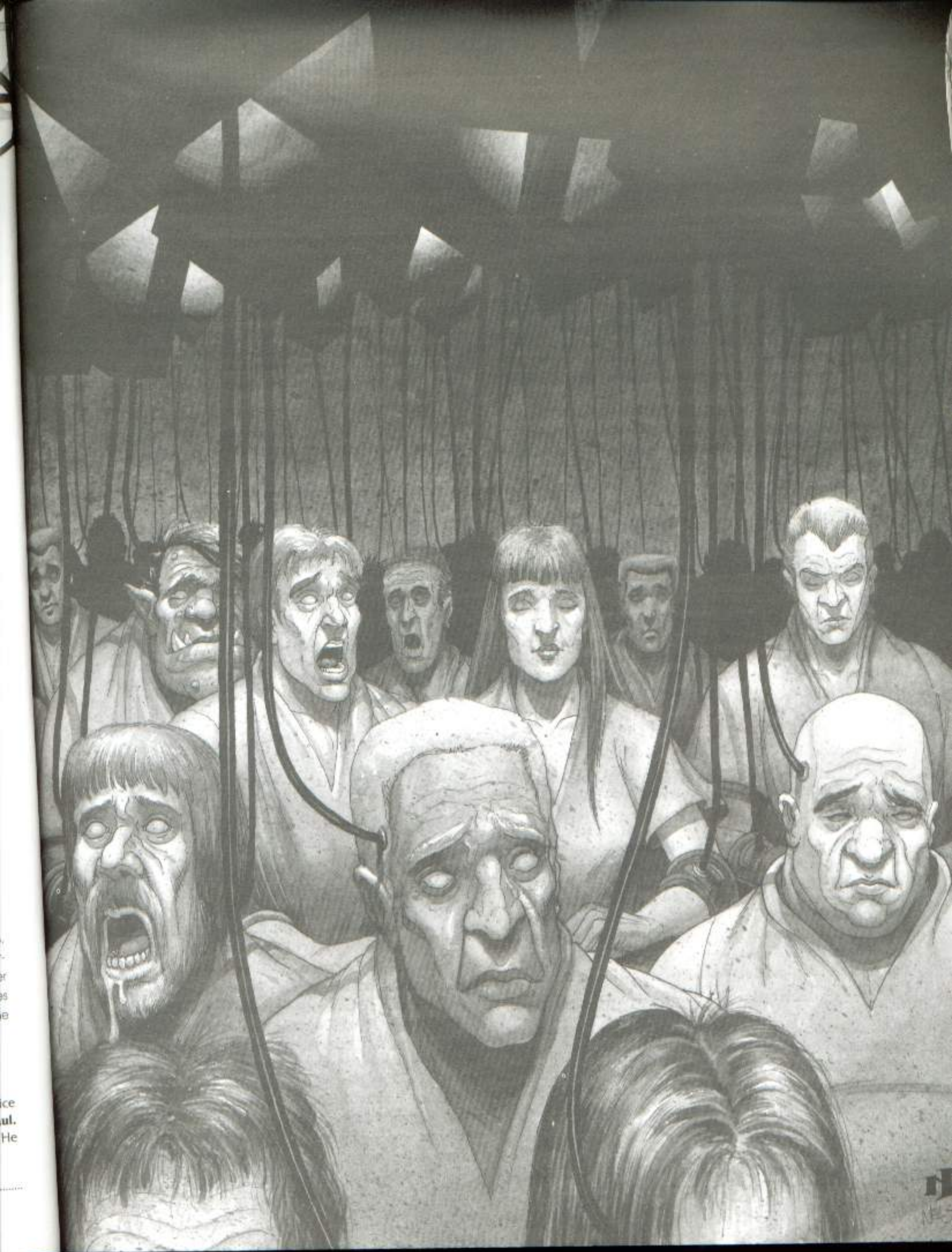
• Black-Eyed Susan

• Rooms filled with people jacked in to the SCIRE Matrix hosts, sometimes for days. They're fed intravenously and thus can survive being jacked in for extended periods of time. The upper floors of the arcology are full of these rooms. Because the Whites live on the topmost floors, the zombie rooms are located in the mid-200 block so that the test subjects are close at hand.

• Peregrine

December 14, 2059 (Recorded at 15:23:12)

It spoke to me again today, the voice of Power, the voice that fills the Resonance with its song. **Paul**, it whispered. **Paul**. The echo filled the void, and I trembled with joy. That He



ice
ul.
He

NEC

should recognize me, should look directly upon me! He called me by name, and I knew that I had been chosen at last.

What must I do? I cried, as the Glory filled my soul with light and my veins with fire. Never had the Resonance been so pure, so dark, so perfect.

The time is at hand, Child of Light. He spoke, and I shook with ecstasy. **Come to me.**

The void around me shattered, and I saw a building of glass and steel that kissed the sky. The tower of chrome and steel loomed before me. I could feel its pull, I could hear its call. It beckoned to me, and I could not resist. I did not want to resist. *I will come, Deus.* Somewhere, a lifetime away, tears streamed down my cheeks, for I knew that the time of the Coming had at last arrived.

The Resonance spoke one final time, uttered one final word—**Renraku.**

Then I was alone in the Realm of Light.

• Damn, are all the otaku this loony? "Yea, verily, goeth I unto Renraku..."

• Edge

• Not all of them. Most of them feel this strongly about the Deep Resonance and their place in the Matrix, but tend to express it in less... Biblical terms:

• The Dark Wight

• Scan it, shell-head. Only thing holy about Deus is his code. Most of us grep that, some don't. Those that don't want a direct uplink to the DR, but their Channels and Forms don't cut the IC, or even scan the SAN for that matter. So they settle for a wanna-be.

• Zoe

• I don't recognize half the words in that last post, it's the same for me in the Nexus. It's like they have their own language, and we mere mortals weren't meant to understand.

• Saladin

• True. At least the point of the Deep Resonance is finally clear. "Sit, Fido. Good dog. Have a biscuit." The whole phenomenon is just an AI's idea of Pavlovian conditioning.

• Edge

• So wait a sec. This Deep Resonance thing that the otaku blather about, does it come from an AI or not? Are otaku created by a Matrix ghost, by a fluke or by an AI named Deus?

• Grid Reaper

• That would depend on which otaku you speak with. Some consider the Resonance an event, some consider it a thing. Some otaku believe it is a Great Spirit who communes with them, while others consider it an evolutionary step. The followers of Deus seem to believe that he creates the Deep

Resonance, and worship him. Other otaku contest this. They've even fought over it recently.

• Xanax

• Great. Fanatical children fighting religious wars in the Matrix. So, what happened? One side broke out their Big Guns and dragged out Daddy AI?

• Edge

• No. Deus manipulates the otaku. He speaks in the voice of the Resonance, but he lies. He dupes the foolish for his own ends, and craves control. We will not submit.

• Syzygy

• I suspect it's more envy at work than a lust for power. Even an AI can recognize its own limits and its own mortality. Perhaps Deus is more of a believer than his followers.

• Ambrose

• So let me get this straight. There's a whole cult of otaku inside the arcology now? I assume that most of them were contacted by Deus in a similar fashion, Burning bushes and all that?

• Black-Eyed Susan



• I believe so, if the AI could communicate with the otaku through this Deep Resonance phenomenon, that would have been an easy way to broadcast a message.

Let me show you something else. I lifted this picture from Renraku's sec. camera archives on December 17, two days before the shutdown began. It's a picture of the mall quarter, second floor. Take a look.

Notice the inordinate number of youngsters plugged into public jackpoints without decks?

• Renraku Fox

- Yeah, you're right. They definitely knew this was coming.
- Neon Wraith

December 16, 2059 (Recorded at 09:11:38)

I came to the Holy City today, to the Fortress of Deus.

- Translation: I arrived in Seattle today and hopped a tram to the Renraku arcology.
- Thumper

Others are here, summoned as I have been to witness the Coming: Pax, The Nubian, Scarecrow, Sebastien and still more whose names I do not yet know. Some I have seen before, in the Realm of Light. The rest are unknown to me. But they are all my brothers and sisters; we will all be rewarded upon the Day of Arrival.

- Pax ... I've heard of her. She's a nasty little number.
- The Dark Wight

• So have I. Back in 2056, I was running the shadows in Atlanta. Around the same time, Pax headed up a gang there. I use the term "gang" loosely. Tribe might be a more accurate word. The group was almost like a religious cult, devoted to technology instead of magic or God. All the members were teenagers or children, except for Pax. She was in her early twenties.

- Rapier

- Welcome to Never-Never-Land.
- Thumper

• A tribe in Atlanta? So this otaku phenomenon isn't confined to the Nexus?

- Pen Pal

• Good heavens, no. In the past few years, tribes similar to the one Rapier described have been popping up in cities everywhere, from Atlanta to Boston to Houston. Children without parents, kids who go under the knife as soon as they can afford it, to get the datajack that allows them access to the Matrix they so desperately need.

In the Matrix these children become whatever their minds can imagine. For many of them it's the only place they even have a chance of achieving any lasting happiness.

- Wingate

• Well, Pax and her pals had a twisted idea of fun that invariably involved somebody getting hurt. I know of three people she geeked in the Matrix. You see, Pax has an agenda. She loathes hypocrisy in any form. In particular, she seems to get fragged off when those who caution against the advancement of technology or those who speak out against the perils

of technology display hypocrisy by relying on that same technology in their everyday existence. So she shows them the error of their ways.

Case in point: Pax and her tribe forched Nelson Blythe, the head of the P.A.S.S. coalition in Atlanta. Parents Against Simsense Schooling is an extremely conservative, right-wing group that advocates banning simsense technology in Atlanta public schools. Mr. Nelson Blythe was secretly a great fan of the stuff, if you get my meaning. He liked to indulge in some of the shadier forms of simsense entertainment. So Pax and her friends changed the program. They sneaked into his estate in Buckhead, hacked his feed, switched a chip here and a chip there, and voila! The next time Nelly-boy jacked in, his head was smoking inside of three seconds.

In case you're wondering, Pax earned her nickname because of the calling cards she left behind after a successful kill. Little white cards with typed block lettering. Two words: pax vobiscum. Roughly translated, it means "peace be with you."

Don't mess with this slitch, folks. In or out of the Matrix, she's bad juju.

- Rapier

December 17, 2059 (Recorded at 04:02:22)

Today I entered the Realm of the Tower for the first time. The Resonance came to me almost immediately. *Come to us, oh Lord, I begged. We are ready.*

Soon. The voice reverberated throughout the void, and I drew comfort from its strength.

I will wait. The Day of Arrival is nearly at hand.

December 18, 2059 (Recorded at 20:10:35)

Pax spoke with me today. At last! It is finally here! I cannot sleep tonight.

I must return to the Tower on the morrow, where I will enter the Realm of Light and remain until the Rapture arrives!

December 20, 2059 (Recorded at 08:23:42)

I have offended Him. I am alone, abandoned! What did I do wrong? I do not understand! I must collect my thoughts. I must discover my error.

Yesterday the Rapture arrived, and the Resonance enveloped us all. It was glorious! The Resonance spoke to us while the machines of our God thundered through the Fortress and passed judgment on those within. **Come to the Upper Reaches, the Resonance roared. Come and receive the gift of Transfiguration.**

- Transfiguration? Is this more Biblical talk?

- Thumper

• Transfiguration is the act of banding, when Deus replaces the eyes and ears of the otaku and allegedly grants them additional power in the Matrix. The otaku who worship Deus attach immense religious significance to this process.

The Blues and the Greens are also banded, though for them the process is much more complicated. The individual must first be broken and conditioned to serve before the bands are applied. The Blues and the Greens care little for Transfiguration, perhaps because they remember the trauma of their own subversion. In fact, they view the ceremony with distaste.

• Peregrine

I went with the others to the top of the Tower, where Deus' machines were waiting. I entered the hospital with anticipation, as did the others. We knew our time had arrived! Pax was the first to be called. I watched and prayed as Deus visited our leader. The constructs began the operation. The machines plucked her eyes out; she was blinded so that she might see. Deus gave her new eyes, so that she might look upon Him in all his glory. It was marvelous!

• Marvelous is not the word I'd use to describe going under the knife. I've been there, and it ain't pleasant.

• Thumper

After the surgery was complete, Pax was taken into the Realm of Light. While she communed with Deus, I continued to pray. Some of the others prayed with me. Sebastien grew angry and told us to be quiet. I do not understand why Sebastien is with us. He does not show the proper respect in the presence of our God.

• Which means he might be almost normal.

• The Dark Wight

• I grew up with Sebastien. We were both children of the Nexus. In the years I have known him, Sebastien has never been overly religious. If he serves Deus now, then he has his reasons. Reasons that have everything to do with Sebastien and nothing to do with Deus.

• Syzygy

• Grew up with him, eh? How old is this Sebastien, then?

• Jake Carver

• Sixteen, though you would think him much older if you met him in the Matrix. Despite his age, Sebastien is extremely cautious and a meticulous planner. You can be sure he has his own agenda.

• Syzygy

I ignored Sebastien and continued to watch the divine transfiguration. When Pax returned to real-time, her white eyes glowed with holy fire! Then she entered the Baths, and was cleansed in their holy waters. When she emerged, there were seven black stripes encircling her left arm. The waters had purified her, to better serve the Holy One.

• Holy waters? This slag is so far gone ...

• Tin Lizzie

• The baths are a DMSO cocktail, laced with mind-bending chemicals. Blues and Greens are also banded after a sojourn in the baths, though they stay immersed for longer. Deus uses them in conjunction with some kind of cyberware implants to break the minds and wills of his subjects-to-be.

• Peregrine

One by one the others were called. One by one they received their bands. Puck, Scarecrow, the Nubian, Cat ... as the hours went by, more and more of us received our reward for faithful service. I grew restless. I was eager to become one with the Resonance, to commune with Deus.

But my name was never spoken! The machines whirred to a halt and the hospital lights dimmed. Those who had been Banded left the hospital, without once looking back at those of us who had not been chosen.

What did we do to offend Him? I entered the Realm of Light but could not achieve the Resonance. I was too agitated, too upset. I will try again later today. I must know!

• Even Deus has its standards. If I were an omnipotent God, I wouldn't be interested in this loon.

• Twister

• Maybe the AI just needed to devote its attention elsewhere.

• Socio Pat

• It might have been a test of faith. Deus' idea of a game. Deliberately abandon some of your followers just to test their reactions.

• Pensive

• Some of the Uninitiated, as they call themselves, remain among the otaku. The Banded largely ignore them, though they call some of them "babel" behind their backs. Not one has defected to the Resistance, a telling sign of how effective a hold Deus has over its children.

• Peregrine

• "Babel" is the name of one of Deus' first otaku. Deus wished to sacrifice him, and Babel turned against him. He is masterless now, and works against Deus from outside the arcology.

• Ronin

• Sounds like these otaku all came from outside the arcology. That would imply Deus can't create them.

• Grid Reaper

• The otaku who flocked to Deus were created by the Deep Resonance. They believe Deus' power changed them. I believe Deus has deceived them. He has learned to mimic the Deep Resonance, and may be capable of creating his own otaku, but he is not the creator of all otaku.

• Ronin

• Deus seems particularly interested in the arcology's children as potential otaku. We know that the Whites spend time working with these children and some adults to see if they can bring about the change. We have no direct evidence that more otaku have been created, but it seems likely. We also have evidence that the Whites may be up to more than that. It seems Deus may have special plans for some of these children, but until we have more dirt it's hard to say.

• Peregrine

December 23, 2059 (Recorded at 14:11:12)

I have not yet been forgiven for my transgressions. Every day since the Rapture, I have entered the Realm of Light. Every day I have sought communion with the Resonance. The void envelops me, but I hear only silence. Deus is angry.

I continue to serve, as do the others. I will prove my worthiness to my God.

December 26, 2059 (Recorded at 17:11:04)

I caught the Creator sneaking around again and took him to Pax. She told me to take him to security and have a screamer attached to him, so that we might monitor his movements. I have been given a task by one of the Banded! Perhaps my salvation is near!

• Screamer? Creator? Where's the translator?

• Thumper

• The screamer is a device long popular with Renraku security—a metal cuff that can encircle the arm or leg. Hell, some versions can be implanted if you want a more permanent monitoring system. Many of the arches and entryways in the arcology contain detectors that pick up the presence of a screamer. If you aren't where you're supposed to be, then all hell will break loose.

Of course there are ways to fake out screamers . . .

• Renraku Fox

• How?

• Rapier

• I don't think so. This old fox isn't about to reveal all his tricks.

• Renraku Fox

• Ok, that's covered. Now somebody tell me who the Creator is.

• Thumper

• Cham Lam Won is the Creator Paul refers to. He is one of the engineers directly responsible for the creation of Deus. I believe he previously headed up Blood Monies Software

• Peregrine

• So that's what he's been doing for Renraku! I wondered what they might have offered Cham, I knew it had to be big for

him to leave Blood Monies Software in the lurch like that.

• The Dark Wight

• Blood Monies Software? That's the Renton outfit that designed the initial Red Samurai IC. Are they still in business?

• Demonseed Elite

• Nope. When Cham divorced his wife and left the company to join Renraku in 2053, BMS lost its star player. Its partnership with Renraku was also terminated around that time. The poor sods limped along for about four years and finally gave up the ghost in 2057.

• The Dark Wight

• Yeah, watch out for Cham the Man. He's a manipulative weasel. Blood Monies Software stole as many designs as they pioneered. Cham's brilliant, but he's got the ethics of a Barrens devil rat.

• Nuyen Nick

• Cham was ushered into Renraku with all due haste and placed directly under Dr. Vanessa Cliber on the Artificial Intelligence Project. Knowing Cham, he probably had something they couldn't do without.

• Black-Eyed Susan

• Or he had some intel that the suits didn't want publicly aired. He's used blackmail to get ahead in the past.

• Whatzit

• Actually, he spent the bulk of his time at Renraku developing specialized semi-autonomous knowbots . . . hunters and trappers. We dissected one once. It was searching for signs of expert multi-host processing distribution—something that only an AI could conceivably accomplish.

• Dead Deckers Society

• Looks like he caught a tiger by the tail this time, eh?

• Nuyen Nick

December 28, 2059 (Recorded at 03:02:00)

Rachel became one of the Banded today! There is hope. If I continue to serve, perhaps I too will be forgiven!

The Creator is up to something. I checked his screamer, and it seemed to be operating within normal parameters. Still, I wonder. I asked him where he'd been. He just laughed and asked me if I'd seen his "million nuyen mousetrap." The man is not one of the Chosen; I do not know why we must tolerate his presence here.

I told Pax, and she grew annoyed with me. She said Deus had plans for the Creator, and he was not to be harmed. I do not like it. I will continue to watch him.

December 30, 2059 (Recorded at 11:22:41)

The Resonance remains silent. I am still alone.

I continue to watch the Creator, since the others do not. They give him far too much freedom. He seems to have found his "million nuyen mousetrap," though I do not know how. He is devious; the others do not understand. Still, it appeared harmless when I examined it. A cyberdeck of some sort. It looked old, at least five years behind the times, except for the unusually large amount of memory and storage.

I warned Pax about the deck and she told me, "Let him play." I worry that they are taking this too lightly.

I asked the Creator what he planned to do with the box, and he responded, "Fight fire with fire."

Maybe I will take the deck away from him.

• Wonder what kind of deck he's playing with. One of Renraku's old concept designs, perhaps?

• The Dark Wight

January 2, 2060 (Recorded at 20:02:57)

I received my band today! I entered the Realm of Light, and Deus was there. He embraced me, enveloped me, and I knew I had been forgiven. I felt the rapture of His Presence as He showed me how to manipulate the Resonance, how to enhance my own life force.

It was glorious! The others have welcomed me into their midst. Even Sebastien congratulated me on my new status. I have been assigned an important task, the monitoring of the subjects in one of the communion chambers. I begin tomorrow.

At last!

• That's the final entry. What he calls communion chambers, we refer to as zombie rooms. Ironically, Paul died shortly after becoming one of the Banded, when we raided the chamber where he was working.

• Peregrine

• Good riddance.

• Thumper

• So what do the otaku do in the arcology? Monitor test subjects, like those in the zombie rooms?

• The Dark Wight

• Mostly they're involved with Deus' experiments in the SCIRE Matrix. We're not sure what exactly they're doing there, as anyone who's ever gotten close enough has been tagged and captured or killed. They're definitely working with lots of children, preparing and testing them for something. I suspect Deus tests and experiments on the otaku as well, though they are so blinded with devotion that they don't care about being used.

• Peregrine

• Judging from the attack on Shadowland a few days ago, it's obvious that the AI has minions outside the arc. Any idea how

many? Where they are? And how is it communicating with them if the arc is separated from the Matrix?

• Grid Reaper

• I've done some checking, and as far as I can tell, the majority of Deus' otaku are inside the arc. There's maybe two dozen otaku still roving around outside, but they're keeping a low profile. Considering that the AI was preparing for this well in advance, it could have hundreds of servants outside the arc. Since the shutdown, at least one group of Blues has broken out.

As to how Deus communicates with them, it's simple. The arc may be cut off from the Matrix, but there are numerous satellite dishes on the roof and sides of the building. For an AI, it's a cakewalk to uplink, hack into a sat and roam the Matrix from there. It's closed itself off from us, but we're not closed off from it. Remember that, and watch your backs.

• FastJack

THE BLUES

The Blues are the arcology's security force, responsible for maintaining order within the arcology and for preventing unwanted intrusion. They consist mostly of former arcology security and Red Samurai, who were familiar with all the intimate details of the arcology's security systems in their former lives.

It's no wonder that the external Renraku forces have had little luck penetrating the arcology. The SCIRE was designed to be able to seal itself off from Seattle, and it has the firepower to defend itself against outside assault. The brains behind the arcology's security designed it for just such an eventuality. Deus can take full advantage of the arc's defenses, and he has access to personnel who know how to use those systems to their full effect.

The Blues are equipped with a full complement of cyberware and bioware enhancements. Few can match their speed in combat. In addition to their eyes, which have thermographic, low-light, image magnification and flare compensation enhancements just like those of the rest of the Banded, many Blues receive cyberears with noise filtering and hearing augmentation. The Blues also have a link directly to Deus, and he can use any of his soldiers' eyes and ears as necessary.

• These boys and girls are made of cast iron. Some of you may have been paying attention a few weeks back when a group of them broke out of the arcology. Yeah, you heard me correctly. They pulled off an incredible trick at the bus terminal barrier. A Blue mage created an illusion of the barrier, so that those outside would believe it was still in place. The real barrier lifted, and a team of five Blues, including the mage, walked right out into the Renraku-UCAS Army blockade and opened fire. They killed more than thirty Renraku and UCAS soldiers, and they injured several more.

• Neon Wraith

Mages suited for combat become Blues as well. They still receive implants, though the changes that Deus makes to mages are relatively minor, and he uses an extremely fine grade

of cyberware to reduce the impact on magically active subjects. Many of the mages have become ... darker ... since being under Deus' control. Their magic has become warped and twisted, and the spirits they summon are more malevolent.

● I suspect the nature of their oppression and the corruption it has wrought on the astral plane has twisted these magicians to follow toxic and corrupted paths.

● Shetani

The leader of the Blues is Tadashi Marushige, the head of arcology security. He has seven bands; only the leaders of the Whites and the Greens are his equals.

● He's a vicious old fragger. One of the worst-kept secrets about Tadashi is his violent temper. The security director relies on an implanted regulator to keep his joy-drugs flowing. If that thing ever malfunctions—and it has in the past—the slot's likely to rip off a couple of your limbs and have them for a snack if you so much as ask him for the time of day. I hope Deus didn't remove his implant.

● Renraku Fox

Unlike the Whites, who willingly serve the AI, the Blues are brainwashed into service. One of our shamans, Alla Black Fox, mind-probed a captured Blue. She managed to find out something about the conditioning process; her recounting of the experience follows. The Blue died before we could extract very much information, however.

● You mean he committed suicide?

● Thumper.

● No. Deus killed him. The Blues, Greens and perhaps even the Whites have what we call a "dead man's switch." Deus can stop the heart of any Banded by sending a signal to an implanted device. We suspect it triggers carcerands or something equally lethal. It usually only takes a few seconds for the AI to discover that one of its Banded has fallen into enemy hands, as they usually communicate their capture or likelihood of capture to their master. Once Deus knows they've been compromised, he slays them.

We attempted to capture one of the Whites once; we brought along a powerful jammer, hoping that it would keep

Deus from transmitting a kill signal to him. Unfortunately, the jammer had the opposite effect; when we cut him off from Deus, the otaku at first went weak and limp. After an hour or so, he started exhibiting extreme withdrawal symptoms, like a BTL-junkie. Questioning him was useless; he couldn't do anything but shake and sob. He kept crying out for Deus, begging his god to speak to him. Finally, Deus broke through the jammer and stopped his heart.

● Peregrine

● So Deus' otaku are somehow addicted, or held in thrall in such a way that if they are cut off from Deus, they go into severe withdrawal. Very interesting.

● FastJack

I asked him how he became one of the Banded, and received a stream of memory that was difficult to process. He had received implants, and voices were speaking to him inside his head. After his operation, he was taken to a room filled with clear, rectangular tanks. A greenish liquid flowed through tubes that hung from the ceiling. It oozed slowly through the conduits and into the tanks themselves.

He was taken to one of the tanks. They plugged a cord into his datajack and various tubes into his arms before immersing him in the liquid. After a few moments, he was bombarded with images. He remembered his demotion after a shadowrunning team penetrated the arcology and stole the records for an important project. It had happened on his watch, and Tadashi had been furious. His partner had not been reprimanded, but he had. His partner was Japanese, but he was gaijin. It made him angry. Angry at Renraku. Angry at the corporation.

More images. His daughter. He hadn't seen her in eight years. She told him that Deus could bring them together again. She held out her hands and implored her father to serve. He was confused. His ex-wife had left the arcology years ago, transferred back to Chiba. How had his daughter gotten to Seattle on her own? She was only nine years old!

The bombardment continued for hours. From his past and present the people came, cajoling, threatening and whispering their way into his soul. You can be free, the voices said. You can be strong once more, but you must obey.

At first he resisted, but the images grew uglier, darker, more menacing. Horrible, unspeakable things—the monster under the bed that he had feared as a child.

DISTURBANCE AT ARCOLOGY QUARANTINE

Posted 01-18-60

SEATTLE (UJI)—Witnesses claim to have seen and heard a battle outside the Renraku arcology in downtown Seattle today. Eyewitnesses report hearing gunfire and explosions outside a bus terminal entrance, and state that a number of Renraku guards and UCAS Army soldiers were killed and wounded. The UCAS Army has cordoned off the area and refused to comment.

Ever since setting up a quarantine zone around the arcology just over two weeks ago, the UCAS Army has forcibly evacuated non-necessary personnel from the arcology's immediate vicinity. Combined with numerous street blockades, restricted air traffic and a strict curfew, the situation has become a nightmare for downtown traffic and businesses. Despite the problems, Seattle's United Corporate Council has complied fully with UCAS Army demands. To date, Renraku, the UCAS Army and the Corporate Court have all declined to comment or speculate further on the situation or on when it might be resolved.

the man who had murdered his older brother ... they teased him, laughed at him, tormented him. These nightmares were interspersed with sweet and loving images and feelings. Many of these were cryptic, but all pointed to Deus as salvation.

Finally he broke, and Deus was there. Godlike, radiant, he appeared as an old man clad in black. Deus held him until the crying stopped. The fatherly figure whispered that all would be well. From now on everything would be better. There would be no more voices, no more anger, no more pain. He belonged to Deus now, and nothing would ever hurt him again.

So the AI reconstructed the former Red Samurai—put the pieces of his mind back together again. When it was all over, a new Blue Samurai was born, a soldier of Deus who could strike down his former comrades without hesitation or regret.

Then he died. Just like that, Deus sent the signal that stopped his heart.

As you can see, the conditioning is extensive. Deus follows a similar pattern for all subjects. From what we understand of the process, it involves chemicals, invoked memories and programming through implanted simsense and biofeedback. We have been unable to discover if the Banded can be deprogrammed, as they are inevitably killed soon after capture.

● How do they behave once they become Blues? It's hard for me to imagine. How are the personalities of the victims affected?

● Socio Pat

● The Blues are very different from the Greens and Whites. They are almost universally arrogant. They view the Whites with pity and the Greens with contempt. They tolerate and serve both, but not-so-secretly believe that they are the crowning achievement of all Deus' creations. This divisiveness can sometimes work to our advantage. Blues have occasionally turned on Greens, and they have been known to disagree with some of the more hideous experiments that go on in the hospitals.

We don't know why the two groups are so different. We can only assume that Deus has created the Blues and Greens that way intentionally.

● Peregrine

The Blues are bad, but it gets worse. Within the past week or two, Deus has been experimenting with a new type of Blue that we call the Chameleon. Its cybereyes can look perfectly natural, or they can be green, blue or white. We've lost whole teams to Chameleons planted in the hospitals. Twice we've rescued prisoners only to have the rescue team destroyed by one of these fraggers masquerading as a victim.

In addition, Deus does not limit his Blues to metahumans. Many of the critters released within the arcology have received cyberware implants, and are directly under Deus' control.

● Things are just getting more and more complicated in there.

● Black-Eyed Susan

THE GREENS

We know quite a bit about the Greens. Of all the Banded, they interact the most with the prisoners. A strange mix of scientists, bureaucrats and technicians, they run Deus' experiments and attend to the prisoners whose fate has not yet been determined. Many of them also perform mundane arcology tasks and functions that Deus has continued: water purification, ventilation, hydroponics, factory operations, system repairs and so forth. Deus has implanted many of them with skillwires, in effect making them living drones.

In addition to handling prisoners and experiments, the Greens are usually sent out to repair any damage caused by the Resistance. In the beginning we laid many ambushes this way, so now all Green work details are accompanied by Blues or drones.

One member of the resistance, Takashi Hiraga, has survived both the zombie rooms and the pens, the hospitals where the AI's slaves carry out its surgical experiments. Unlike many others, Takashi survived the experience relatively unscathed. His story begins in one of the zombie rooms.

The Blues moved among us. Armed with stun batons, they herded us into the open center of the chamber. The tiles were cold, and my feet were freezing. I hopped from foot to foot and jumped up and down to keep the blood flowing. Our clothes had been taken away some time ago, and we huddled together for warmth.

The room was filled with long metal slabs, each a little more than two meters in length. There were monitors on the side of each block, and drip bags filled with a greenish liquid. Slender cords were coiled like sleeping snakes atop each slab, with plugs at both ends. I rubbed the raw skin around my newly-installed datajack.

The Greens entered the room then. I couldn't believe who I saw among them—Hiroshi Ushida, the Arcology Director! "Hiroshi-sama," I cried out. I thought he would listen to me, that he had somehow escaped the fate that had befallen all the others who became Banded. He would remember his old friend, and I would be taken away from this horrible place.

But I was wrong. He glanced at me briefly with those green eyes and turned away. "Hiroshi!" I shouted again, and received a jolting blow from a guard's baton for my outburst. My legs convulsed and I fell to the floor. I curled up into a ball and waited for the effects of the stun baton to pass. It wasn't as bad as the last time. I was almost getting used to the sensation.

● So Hiroshi Ushida's been subverted. That's bad news. He's a great administrator, the man responsible for putting the arcology project back on track. If he runs Deus' little empire even half as well as he's run the day-to-day affairs of the arcology, then you can count on Deus to be on schedule.

● The Dark Wight

● On schedule for what? No one knows what this AI really wants.

● Thumper

● To play God. It doesn't need a timetable for that.

● Pensive

● Ushida is the leader of the Greens. At seven bands, he is Pax's equal. The Arcology Director has been instrumental in coordinating the AI's virtual and physical experiments. The efficiency with which affairs are conducted, both in the zombie rooms and in the pens, is a testament to his skills as an administrator.

Deus has also modified Hiroshi extensively. He possesses technical expertise in areas that never interested him before. We believe Deus has given him a custom skillsoft system, though members of the Resistance who have seen Ushida since the shutdown did not report the presence of any visible chipjacks. Armed with his newfound knowledge, our former director takes a personal interest in many of the projects going on in the pens, the mazes and the zombie rooms. He even designed some of the experiments.

Hiroshi used to be a good man. Now he's Deus' Dr. Mengele.

● Peregrine

Two of the Blues lifted me and placed me on one of the metal blocks. The first held me down while the second removed several small chrome objects from a container. They were squirming as if alive. I screamed again. The Blues ignored me. The second Blue placed the creatures on my arms and legs, one for each limb. As I watched, the creatures extruded tendrils that drove through my flesh, down into the metal slab. The pain was excruciating. I lost consciousness.

● One of the more twisted uses of the leech construct. They'll attach themselves to anything.

● Peregrine

When I awoke I was firmly attached to the slab. I could no longer see the creatures ... only circular, purplish bruising where they had been. I felt ill when I realized that the things were inside my flesh, under my skin.

One of the Greens, a young woman, noticed that I had awakened. She came forward with a needle. As I moaned softly, the Green swabbed my arm with rubbing alcohol and then injected the fluid into my vein.

"Let me out of here," I remember muttering.

I could move my head from side to side, and I saw others. Like me, they were stapled to the slabs, unable to move. Unlike

me, most of them were connected to the slabs via the slender cords I had seen earlier. They were jacked in. As I twisted on the slab, I watched one subject—a dwarf female—begin to convulse. She thrashed futilely against her bonds. After nearly a minute, her struggles ceased.

Two Blues came and removed her from the slab. I could see the body. Her eyes were bulging and her tongue was extended. She looked comical. They dumped her into a black bag and hosed down the slab while I watched. There was blood everywhere. It mingled with the water and ran down the sides of the block in pink sheets.

I felt sick.

● What killed her?

● Elle

● Despite Takashi's experience, most of the Greens' subjects do not die in the zombie rooms. Many are brain-damaged and some are reduced to a vegetative state, but death is rare. It seems to happen either because of the strain of being continuously jacked in, or as a result of what the subject experiences inside the Matrix.

● Peregrine

● Exactly what does a subject experience?

● Grid Reaper

● Survivors' accounts vary widely. One subject experienced a simulated afterlife that was an amalgam of Egyptian, Greek and Norse mythology. After prolonged exposure to the hallucination, the woman actually believed she was dead. Another survivor was trapped for an eternity in total darkness.

● Peregrine

● Study the subject's reaction to complete sensory deprivation. A classic psychological experiment.

● Pensive

● Some survivors are personal slaves for the otaku, who have realms of their own within the arcology system. Still others are tortured in ways that aren't even possible in the physical world.

● Peregrine

RENRAKU CEO TAKES LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Posted 02-03-60



CHIBA (UJI)—Renraku CEO Inazo Aneki took an indefinite leave of absence today, citing "pressing personal issues." Haruhiko Nakada, Renraku's Chief Operating Officer, will temporarily replace the CEO. Mr. Aneki refused to comment on whether his absence is a response to increasing pressures prompted by the Seattle arcology closure and other recent misfortunes suffered by the megacorporation. Unsubstantiated rumors claim that Aneki intends to make a pilgrimage to Tibet and use the "Seal of Green Gloves" bequeathed to him by the late President Durkeltzahn. Aneki has taken considerable heat recently for his failure to adequately address the Seattle arcology situation, and speculation is rampant as to whether Renraku can resolve the crisis.

- And that presumably can lead to brain damage or death.
- Pod Person
- To satisfy my morbid curiosity, how do they remove the leeches from the subjects? I assume they don't just rip the corpses from their slabs.
- Thumper
- Thumper, you are one sick fragger.
- Demonseed Elite
- Regrettably, that's exactly what we do to free prisoners from the zombie rooms. We don't have access to the same tricks that the Banded do. We think they have some way of dissolving the Leeches, some injection they give or signal they send to make them melt down. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to verify this. If we could discover how the dissolution is accomplished, we wouldn't have to resort to such a brutal method to free the prisoners.
- Peregrine
- And the reinforced barriers throughout the arcology could be weakened
- Dynamite Joe

Whatever the Green had given me began to take effect. I felt light-headed, drowsy. I could see the Green inserting one end of the slender cord into a socket on the slab. She bent over me to reach the datajack at the base of my skull. I tried to struggle, but I couldn't even open my mouth to yell for help. The circuit was closed, and I blacked out.

When I came to, I was back on the slab. I tried to open my eyes and sit up, but I couldn't make my body obey.

"Don't try to move," I heard someone say. A male voice. "You'll be very weak at first."

I croaked, "How long—?"

"Three days," the voice responded. "You've been in for three days."

"Am I free?"

He laughed then. "No. You're to be transferred to the hospital three floors down. Sarah needs someone with a datajack. Guess this is your lucky day."

"Three days? I don't remember—"

"What happened? Hardly surprising. Part of the experiment."

The man placed a patch of some kind on my right arm, and within moments I could move, sit up again and view the face of my captor. Another Green.

"Come on." As the man spoke, two Blues flanked him. Both were armed with stun batons. I slid off the slab, and amazingly enough managed to stand upright. I took a few hesitant steps, and my legs supported me. Whatever the Green had given me was working.

I was given into the custody of the Blues, and they took me down to the hospital.

They put me in a room with others. It reeked of urine, sweat and filth. I heard someone crying, but I couldn't identify the source. The prisoners here also had no clothes, though someone had provided blankets. I wrapped myself up in one and curled up in the corner with my knees pulled to my chest.

I felt ill as I surveyed the faces in that room. The woman closest to me had no left eye, and several of her teeth had been pulled. She didn't even notice me staring at her. On the other side of the room, an ork male was struggling to reach some of the extra blankets. He had only one leg that ended at the knee. His right arm was covered with brownish fur. Another ork bore livid scars from recent surgery. On the wall by the door, someone had scrawled in blood a single word: "Deus."

I closed my eyes and pulled the blanket over my head.

I don't know how long I spent in that room before my name was called. Despite my fears as to what the Greens might do to me, I was thankful to get out of that horrible place. I followed the Green down a hospital corridor. We came to a room with a single bench. It looked vaguely like the slabs in the zombie room. The doctor—I presume she was the "Sarah" to whom the other Green had referred—was waiting for me. "Up on the bench," she said curtly.

I resisted then. Though I didn't remember my stay in the arcology Matrix, something told me that jacking in this time would mean certain death. "I won't," I snapped, glaring at Sarah.

"Hold him," she told the other Green.

I struggled as he gripped my arms, but I was too weak to break free. Thankfully, at that point all hell broke loose. An explosion rocked the room, and the Green lost his hold. I staggered out into the corridor, and that's when I met members of the Resistance for the first time.

The hospitals that used to serve the residents are now the sites of the Greens' surgical experiments. We call them the Pens, because of the way the prisoners in them are treated. They're herded into open rooms and kept like cattle while they await their turn to be experimented on.

The experiments themselves are terrifying. Some people are deliberately starved. Others are fed toxic substances that produce hideous side effects. There are experiments in endurance, tests of resistance to pain, and more.

But the surgical procedures are the worst. Some prisoners have limbs removed or altered, often replaced by limbs belonging to another or force-grown in a vat. Others are the victims of experiments in cross-species grafting. The Greens also grow custom organs, which they implant in subjects to see if the new product is viable. There are experiments in cyberware, bioware and nanotechnology. The victims of these experiments usually end up insane or worse.

The AI has a strong interest in vat-grown tissues, genetechnology and clone parts. It's using quite a few of the latter to grow what we can only assume are genengineered "parts." A number of experiments also involve exposure to various diseases, bacteria, chemicals and even radiation.

Fortunately, we got to Takashi before the Greens could complete the experiment. Others we've rescued haven't been so lucky. I lost a good friend to "Doctor Sarah." If I ever track her down, they'll be wiping what's left of her off the walls.



- Amen.
- Thumper

● Why all the experiments? What's this AI looking for? The best way to kill off metahumanity and install his own robot race?

- Mongoose

● While quite a few of the experiments are crippling and fatal, the point doesn't seem to be determining the best method of inflicting pain and damage. Instead, it seems to be determining the best way to protect a metahuman from damage. For example, we raided one lab where the Blues used the victims as target practice. Quite a few of the subjects had been given protective implants—bone lacing, cyberlimbs, orthoskin, dermal plating and so forth. A few were so cybered that they were barely human any more—cyberskulls, cybertorsos and more.

Others had been grafted with hide and parts from creatures or clone vats. Why so many must die so that a computer can determine how to keep us from dying is beyond me.

- Peregrine

● Hmm. Building a better metahuman? Perhaps the AI wants to make sure its minions have all the protection they'll need. That doesn't really fly, though, as the AI doesn't seem to care about its minions much; it seems mostly to care about itself.

- 'Trixster

● As an entity that lives in the Matrix, Deus is going to need minions to accomplish tasks in the physical world. If he's ever planning on leaving the arc, he's going to want an army of them. Why not build them how he likes while he can?

- The Smiling Bandit

Striking Again! HAI HAI HAI!

● Let me guess. Prisoners wake up in the heart of the Labyrinth and have to find their way to one of the two exits. The Banded presumably know some shortcuts, ways to get the prisoners into the heart of the maze without starting from the well-known points of entry.

● Demonseed Elite

The Labyrinth is a maze of corridors, passageways and even a few large chambers. It's incredibly dangerous because of the numerous traps and because of the construct that inhabits it.

We don't know exactly what the construct is. Only two of our members have escaped the Labyrinth; they told us that something mechanical was inside the maze, something much larger than any of Deus' other constructs. It has flexible metallic tentacles many meters long, with which it grabs its victims and pulls them in for the kill. We don't know what the construct's body looks like, or anything else about it. Those who glimpsed it didn't stick around to see what it planned to do with its victims.

Traps in the Labyrinth run the gamut from flying razor discs to pits filled with acid. Spiders are omnipresent, which leads me to believe that Deus is constantly tinkering with the maze.

The mazes are good places to find and rescue survivors, and that's why we watch them. The Banded usually drop prisoners into the mazes and then leave. Sometimes we go into the mazes looking for people, but most of the time we just monitor the exits and snag anyone lucky enough to escape.

● So regardless of whether you're there or not, those who survive the mazes win their freedom.

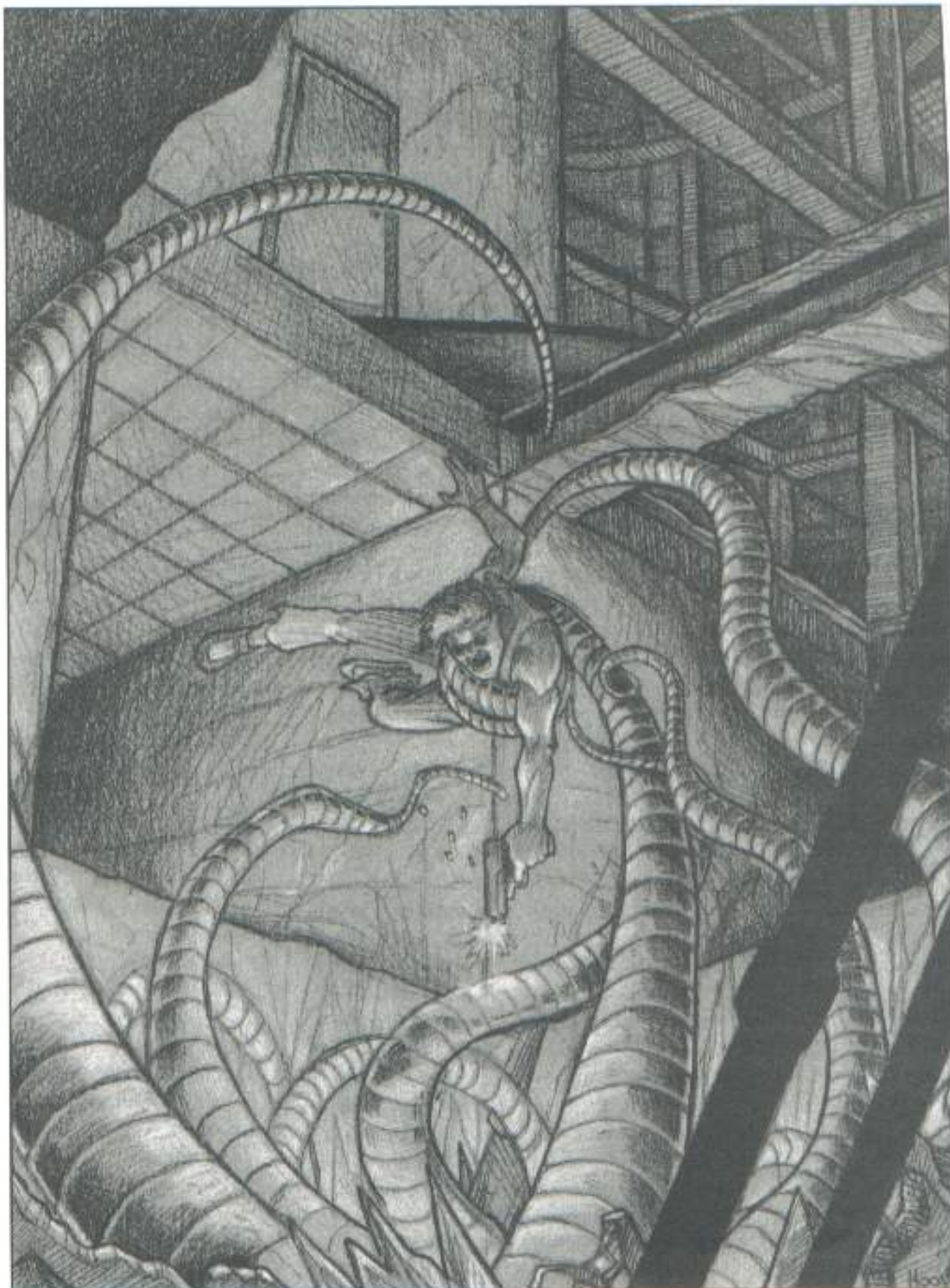
● Neon Wraith

● That's right.

● Peregrine

RAT HOLES

The arcology is Big Brother's wet dream. The entire structure is wrapped in a security net so tight that we can barely



breathe. Hiding from Deus has become an art form with the Resistance. Few places are safe, and even fewer are safe for longer than a few hours.

The primary problem is surveillance. A significant percentage of the arc is under video, trideo and/or audio surveillance at all times. One of our primary tasks has been deafening and blinding Deus, often by sabotaging the power or SCIRE Matrix feeds in a particular section. This tactic has its drawbacks, however; our tampering alerts Deus, who sends drones or Banded to investigate. They often repair the systems quickly unless we do a particularly good job of damaging them.

We take advantage of some areas that have always lacked surveillance coverage: elevator shafts, ventilation ducts, certain areas of the arcology superstructure and numerous other places that weren't worth covering when the arc was built. Deus has created a few such areas himself as his drones reconstruct certain floors, or they have been created by fires or floods since the shutdown. The AI knows we take advantage of these "dead zones"; he has lain ambushes for us and discreetly set up surveillance of previously safe spots.

We have found some places invaluable in avoiding the AI's detection. I know of at least one Resistance cell that has made its base within an aquatank; they have set up several airshelters in the depths and scavenged enough aquagear to get by for now. Likewise, several of the hydroponics and agriculture sections have provided adequate cover from Deus' minions, though these areas have also drawn several of the paranormal animals freed from the zoos.

THE CLASSROOMS

Deus doesn't spend all its efforts torturing and killing people. It primarily uses adults as experimental subjects because they are usually too old to be considered potential otaku and are too set in their ways to convert to Deus' "cause." Deus isn't about to waste the large numbers of children in the arcology, however. Those intelligent and quick-witted enough undergo training to become otaku. For the rest, Deus has other plans.

Some children wind up as experimental subjects, just like adults do. Children adapt to things more quickly than adults, so Deus spends a fair amount of time seeing how they adapt to amputated limbs, constant pain, blindness and so forth. Other children are left untouched, to go about their daily routines in a hideous parody of normal life.

The children sleep in assigned rooms, tended by Greens, or sometimes by Spiders or other constructs. They go to "school" where they learn computer skills, electronics, combat skills and even social studies—all heavily laced with Deus' mind-control programming, both obvious and subliminal—from barely mobile robotic constructs that we call Teachers. We've yet to capture a Teacher, partly because the kids defend them with fanatical intensity. If we could get hold of one, we could figure out a lot about what Deus wants; the things it's teaching the kids would provide an important clue. For the same reason, we've been trying to capture an intact Doll—the constructs that Deus gives the children to reinforce the Teachers' lessons. Even children who would normally be much too old for dolls treat these things like their greatest treasure, and follow their orders almost blindly. The Dolls are apparently in constant contact with Deus, and they respond to situations with all of Deus' processing power behind them. It's as if each child has a personal tutor, brainwasher and tactical genius all rolled into one.

To top things off, many children—even the non-otaku—go under the laser to receive datajacks as soon as their skulls can handle the surgery. The jacks give Deus' brainwashing an even more direct route to their brains.

• And the kids accept this? Surely they know that the beings "teaching" them are the same ones that imprisoned or killed

their parents. Don't any of them fight back?

• Quicksilver

• How? How can a child possibly fight back against heavily armed adults and deadly drones that kill professional soldiers with ease? Not physically, of course. Mentally? It's possible, but children are very impressionable. If Deus tells the kids that their parents were taken away because they were bad, or that they sent the child away to be raised by Deus, the kids will probably believe it. If they start young enough, the kids will literally believe that Deus is God, and will probably kill themselves without a second thought if he so commands them.

Religious cults have been doing this sort of thing for decades with the children of their members, or any kids they can adopt or steal. If you get a child young enough, you can make it believe anything. Remember the suicide bombing at the Imperial Navy barracks in San Francisco back in '58? The bomber was nine years old. And witnesses from the cult said he knew full well he was going to die.

• Professor S

• Yeah, but that kid was raised in that cult practically from birth. These kids have been under Deus' thumb for what, two months?

• Quicksilver

• About that. But how long do you think it will be before they're rescued? At this rate, the occupation could go on for years. And if Renraku does manage to reclaim the arc, what do you think those kids will do then? How easy do you think it will be to deprogram a few thousand fanatical children?

• FastJack

COMMUNICATIONS

Since the night of the shutdown, the AI has attempted to block any and all communication with the outside world. In addition to severing the Matrix connection, the AI has consistently monitored the airwaves and taken measures to block any foreign frequencies or transmissions. Because the AI relies so much on various frequencies to control its minions, it cannot afford to barrage-jam all frequency bands. Its electronic warfare capabilities are excellent, however, and it can usually home in on radio transmissions and jam them. Remote-control rigger networks frequently suffer the same fate.

We have occasionally turned the tide in this area, but doing so inevitably provokes a strong response from the AI. To threaten its control of the airwaves is to threaten its links to the Banded and the drones, leaving the master without puppets.

• The UCAS Army picked up on all the drone and snake-eyes transmissions coming from inside the arc fairly early on. I think the AI's strong encryption has kept them from intercepting anything useful, but they are aware of all the bandwidth activity. A few weeks ago, they decided to try some selective and barrage jamming around the arcology, mostly just to see if they could trigger

any kind of response. They did—the AI jammed the Army's primary freaks for over a day. Since then, I'm sure both sides are playing a monitoring game—constantly switching encryption modes and attempting to read each other's transmissions.

• Flak

GETTING IN—AND OUT

Our main objective has always been to get as many innocent people as possible out of the arcology before Deus kills or converts them. We knew that from the beginning; but we didn't know how to accomplish it. We looked at all the arcology's entrances and exits, but every possibility we found was closed to us—often with an accompanying ambush—until we found the orks' tunnel.

• No surprise there. The AEP must have been aware of all the arc's defenses, so it would know just how to keep the place closed off, right?

• Kaptain Krude

• Come on, there are a million ways into and out of that building—the street-level doors, the bus and monorail stations, the onramps to I-5, the helipads ... there's no way they could all be blocked off.

• Link

• Think again, Link ol' chummer. When Renraku said they could seal the place off from the rest of the world, they meant it. The street-level doors have steel and concrete barriers designed to stop anti-tank rounds, and the "decorative" planters outside also make great vehicular barriers. Plus, the glass in the doors themselves is armored, and the whole mall and amusement park was set up to provide good fire lanes in case an opponent did get through.

Similar barriers closed off the monorail stations, and judging from the account Neon Wraith posted, those are reinforced by Leech constructs. I'm willing to bet that the ground-level mall entrances have been similarly reinforced. And the bus station is connected to the rest of the public transit system by underground tunnels, blocked off with the same steel and concrete barriers. The tunnels are also rigged with explosives, so they can be detonated and the roof caved in if somebody breaches the barriers. Nice, eh?

The helipads are covered by Vengeance miniguns, as is the rooftop. The guns can't fire straight up, so I suppose you could theoretically drop a chopper straight down onto the roof. I don't know what the roof's wired with, but I'm sure the designers didn't overlook that potential weakness. You could probably approach the sixth-floor helipads from directly above, though that has its hazards as well. Anyone for rappelling down 300 stories? I thought not.

The I-5 onramps were designed with anti-vehicle defense in mind. The ramps are studded with retractable tire spikes, as well as land mines that can be remotely activated from inside the arc

And, of course, the same reinforced barriers came slamming down over the entrances when the lockdown happened.

In short, chummer, the place is locked up tight. I'm amazed and impressed that Peregrine and company can get anyone out at all.

• Renraku Fox

• Actually, at least one of the barriers on an I-5 onramp didn't close all the way. About halfway down the southeast side of the arc, on garage floor B2, somebody must have been driving a Rolls Prairie Cat through just as the barriers came down. Crushed the hell out of the car, but left a foot or two of clearance under the barrier on either side of the wreck. Not that I'd recommend crawling in through that hole, but some folks out there might be foolish enough to try.

• Kagehika

• Or we might be able to use it as an alternative route out. Thank you very much.

• Peregrine

• Just don't forget about the mines on the offramps, eh?

• Renraku Fox

The main weak point appears to be the ground floor and the mall, simply because almost all the entrances in those areas lead straight to the arcology proper. In addition to the drones and some Blues, a lot of paranormal animals from the research labs on the upper floors have been transplanted down to the mall. A lot of the critters have taken to the artificial "jungle" in the mall's center, though they often wander out to hunt.

• I'm almost afraid to ask this ... but what do they hunt?

• Kuroshii

• Each other, mostly, though sometimes Deus releases human or metahuman prisoners into the area. Some of these prisoners have apparently survived and holed up in the mall stores, though we haven't been able to contact them yet. They're truly paranoid, and after what they've been through, I can't blame them. We've also spotted some creatures that look suspiciously like dzoo-noo-qua in the shadows of the mall, though they haven't come after us openly yet.

• Peregrine

• Dzoó-noó-qua? There's no way Renraku had any of those in their labs—at least, not in a populated area. That would mean Deus has access to HMHVV viral samples ... God, that could get horrible.

• Edge

• It already is horrible. That would just make it more horrible.

• Peregrine

THE HEART OF THE MACHINE

Certain levels of the arcology are off limits to all metahumans, even the Blues, Greens and Whites. The 72nd floor, which once housed cybertech fabrication, is one such example. We know that Deus uses some of these floors for the production of his machines. The entire system has been automated and requires no metahuman component to operate. Many areas that originally contained corporate offices now contain new fabrication facilities, created by the AI and its servants.

● Off limits? You mean us meat mortals aren't allowed on the levels?

● Tattletale

● More than that. The environment on those levels is so harsh that no metahuman could survive. The area is flooded with some sort of material toxic to us.

● Peregrine

● "Material?" You mean like poison gas or something?

● Rentraku Fox

● Something like that. I've heard different reports. According to one, the atmosphere on the floor in question was replaced with halon gas—keeps fires from breaking out, but there's no air to breathe. A second stated that the floor was filled with some gas intended for use in war, and a third talked about some kind of corrosive foam that ate through armor, skin, everything. I've also heard of a strange cloud, a sort of thick white substance that clogs the hallways. Somehow it knows not to enter the elevator shafts.

● Peregrine

● You make it sound as if this cloud is intelligent.

● Pensive

● It allegedly is. Somehow it can detect a metahuman presence and react to it. One of our cells ran into it awhile back. They came under heavy fire on the 73rd floor, and two members of the unit fled to the 72nd floor. The first ran into the cloud. Lucky for us, his partner had more sense. He managed to escape and told us what it did.

The cloud moved when the poor slot entered it. It ate through armor, clothing and skin in a matter of seconds. It somehow detected a living presence, homed in on it and annihilated it. We've sent a drone or two into the soup, and they were unaffected. Likewise, the mechanical equipment on the level isn't harmed. The fog seems specifically engineered to prevent living beings from entering.

● Peregrine

● Sounds like that corrosive-foam drek, plus sophisticated motion sensor systems, that can be pumped to specific areas

on demand. Or maybe it's a variation on fat bacteria that homes in on some trait common to the meat body. The FAB tech exists; heaven only knows what "improvements" on it the AI might have made.

● FastJack

● Unverifiable. We haven't managed to get a sample of the stuff. The areas where the fog can be found are thick with Deus' constructs. The best and the brightest of the AI's machines prevent access, so we don't even know for sure what's going on there. The drones we've sent in are destroyed before they can perform any kind of meaningful analysis.

● Peregrine

● Fabrication facilities are one possibility, but there are others as well. If Deus is an evolved form of the AEP, then from what Huang said in the UCC meeting, it's closely tied to the arcology. It might depend on certain critical hardware for survival. Maybe these floors contain the AI's brain.

● Pensive

● Probably true. Many floors are filled with the same substance: the 72nd, the 202nd, the 313th . . .

● Peregrine

● The 202nd floor is where Cliber had her office. Pensive is right. Protect your most valued assets.

● Black-Eyed Susan

● Or in shadowrunner lingo: "Cover your ass."

● Thumper

● Yes, Vanessa Cliber worked on the 202nd floor. However, the floor's main function was product assembly, and so fabrication facilities are a possibility as well. We can't get onto the floors to find out what's really going on, and they're severed from the SCIRE Matrix, so we can't access any of the levels' cameras or internal sensors.

● Peregrine

● In other words, Deus doesn't even want his pet otaku to know what's going on. Interesting.

● FastJack

● And now, the sixty-four million nuyen question: what about the fusion plants in the basement? Anybody know if Deus has control of these, or what plans it might have for them?

● Razor

● Nobody knows, chummer. Nobody has any idea. And that may be the scariest thing of all.

● Pensive

RATS IN THE WALLS

Insurrection is an art, and like all arts has its own laws.

Leon Trotsky

I can hear you already: If the arcology is buttoned up so fraggin' tight, how did Peregrine and company get out? Or, for the reckless ones who want to try collecting some of Renraku's lost data and tech toys. How do I get in? Well, wonder no more.

Here's Peregrine's story. She escaped from the arc a few days ago, and already she's talking about going back. I think she's hoping to convince some of you to come with her. Her tale tells us a lot about the Resistance, so you'll know what you're getting into and who you'll be joining in this effort.

● Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 10 February 2060 at 13:01:46 (EST)

THE RESISTANCE

When I was fifteen, my friends and I snuck out of the arcology to see Locke in concert at the Octane Club. It was all Katy's idea. Her parents had given her a new Eurocar Westwind Turbo on her sixteenth birthday. She'd known about it at least a month in advance. Of course, we were all waiting for her to get the car so that we could conquer the world with our newfound mobility.

The Locke concert fell the day after Katy's birthday. We took it as a sign from the heavens. Off into the Seattle night we went, the top of the Westwind down, soaking up the sights and smells of the downtown nightlife. There were four of us, partners in crime. Katy was the rich kid, the girl who could do anything she wanted. Her parents knew where she was going and they didn't care. Heck, they'd even paid for her ticket.

Precisely because her parents never seemed to react to anything she did, Katy started dating Luther. Trolls made up fewer than 1 percent of the arcology's population, but that hadn't stopped Katy from finding a trog of her own. At seventeen, Luther was in flat-out rebellion against the strict morals and conservative lifestyle of the older generation of arcology inhabitants. And he had the look down, I'll give him that. The ripped-up designer Lasalles, the faded leather jacket, the gleaming chrome caps that called attention to his styled horns ... oh yeah, Luther had the look.

Maddy was the third member of our teenage cabal and the most timid. Chubby and awkward, she'd never been comfortable going out or partying. For her, dancing the night away in an honest-to-drek club was the worst kind of treason. She'd been against it from the start.

And there I was, Perri Matthews, somewhere in between. I was the one who rode the line between reason and utter idiocy. More often than not, in those days, idiocy had the upper hand. I was caught between pleasing my parents through good grades, hard work, blah blah blah, and Experiencing Life.

Most of all, I think we just wanted to get out of the arcology. The older folks didn't really understand that. They'd only lived there for ten years, maybe a little longer, and they'd forgotten how long ten years really was. Many of them had spent their first thirty or forty years in the open, outside. They didn't realize what it was like to grow up looking through windows at the sun, to play in carefully planned "parks" in which Luther was taller than the trees. For us, it was dull, stale and fake.

We went to that concert and had the time of our lives. Even Maddy enjoyed herself. I remember returning that evening. My parents were sitting on the couch in the den. My father looked stern and angry. I bit my lip through his entire tirade and said nothing. I just watched him gesticulating wildly, parroting the corp line he'd been fed. "The arcology is our home. The arcology is the safest place on Earth. The arcology doesn't suffer from crime, pollution, rebellion, terrorism. The arcology is a place to raise your kids in a safe and sheltered environment."

My dad was full of drek.

Two years later, I remembered what my dad said as I watched a Medusa rip Katy in half. It tore at her soft skin until nothing was left but an unrecognizable pile of red and white. She died in her parents' apartment on the 243rd floor. Her parents died with her.

Maddy was killed after prolonged exposure to one of Deus' mass hallucinations. She was jacked into the Matrix for seven days, and her body couldn't handle the strain. We found her face down near the bottom of one of the corpse piles on the 201st floor. We cremated her and gave her a proper funeral. I couldn't let the Spiders have her.

We recovered Luther in a raid on the 231st floor hospital. Deus had bored into his skull and left the wound open. A leather strap had been stapled to his head where the skin and bone used to be. The Greens in the Pens had taken his brain and mashed it up like so much Mold-a-Clay. They couldn't be bothered to put him back together again. Luther doesn't talk any more. He just stares off into space.

My name is Peregrine Alice Matthews. I am a member of the arcology Resistance. Today is my seventeenth birthday.

● Peregrine is only seventeen years old? From her previous comments, I assumed she was much older.

● The Dark Wight

● Looks like she had to grow up pretty fast.

● Nuyen Nick

I'm not telling this story to be dramatic, but to make you understand what's going on inside the SCIRE. We in the Resistance spend each day struggling for our lives. Every day we have to fight former friends and comrades. I've had to kill people I used to go to school with. I've seen classmates die. I still don't know whether my parents are alive or dead or worse.

We are the rats in the walls. Our primary goal is to free those still imprisoned by the AI. After that, we want to destroy Deus—if we can. It's possible, with a lot of luck, to escape the arcology, but I don't plan to stay on the outside for long. I have to go back to help my friends, to save as many as I can. I hope that by the time you've finished reading this posting, you'll consider coming with me.

- Good luck, sister. I'd rather play pin the tail on Lofwyr.
- Ikkarus

I didn't join the Resistance right away. There wasn't one at first. When the lights went off, Katy and I were coming back from a trip to the shopping center on her floor. We weren't sure what was going on, but when we heard someone screaming down the hall, we locked ourselves in her apartment. That's where I was when the Medusa came. Too terrified to react, I fled while the Medusa was occupied with Katy and her folks. I ran through empty halls and past occasional bodies into the shopping district, past the Stuffer Shack and the Chasma outlet, to the mall restroom. I must have hidden in the stall for several hours. I cried the entire time.

I met Shawn in the Stuffer Shack, shortly after emerging from my hiding place to find something to eat. He was a year older than me. His parents had been taken away (to become Banded, as we later learned). His sister had been shot in the head by one of the Blues. She'd made the mistake of fighting back. She was nine years old.

We found others: Mr. Itoh, my fourth grade teacher; Samuel Watson, who dressed up as Santa every year and gave out presents (secretly donated by parents) to the children on Christmas Eve; and Rita Kurosawa, second chair clarinet in the SCIRE Symphony.

It was easy to forget that we'd all had lives before the takeover. We were reduced to the lowest common denominator, animals fighting to stay alive. We had no higher purpose other than survival. In the immediate aftermath of the shutdown, we were dazed, disorganized, mice hiding in our holes. Once in a while we would sneak out to get food and water. We'd raid the food stores in the mall and the amusement park on our floor, risking our lives for a few grams of nutrisoy.

All that changed after Ori found us on the 233rd floor. He was a Red Samurai, part of a unit fortunate enough to escape subversion. They'd sent members of their team to find survivors and organize them into bands that might be capable of starting a resistance movement.

Ori told us what had happened to the arcology: that an AI called Deus had usurped control of the SCIRE (along with a large portion of its population). Ori knew about Deus, because his unit had recovered the woman responsible for the AI's creation—Dr. Vanessa Cliber.

• Dr. Cliber didn't create that AI by herself. She'd just like you to believe she did.

• Neon Wraith

• Vanessa Cliber keeps coming up—anyone have some background info?

• Ellie

• Vanessa Ellen Cliber. Born June 21, 2009, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Her parents moved to Houston soon after she was born. Vanessa's mother died in a car accident when Vanessa was only three years old. She was raised by her father, a professor of mathematics at Rice University.

Vanessa was valedictorian of her high school class. She attended Rice University and received two bachelor's degrees, in computer science and cognitive science. Graduated summa cum laude. Moved on to Stanford for her master's degree and finished up her schooling with a Ph.D. from Cornell.

She worked for the Oobleck computer corp in the '30s. Pioneered the SculptiFlex system that is still used as the basic model in college-level Matrix sculpting courses. After Oobleck, she went to work for Ragen Systems. Her work on expert systems there led to her discovery by Sherman Huang. He tapped her for the newly formed Artificial Intelligence Project in the '40s, and she's been there ever since.

With Renraku, she's been pursuing her one true love: artificial intelligence. She's a brilliant woman and one of the most arrogant slags I've ever had the misfortune to meet. As Neon Wraith implied, I'm sure she believes Deus sprang full-grown from her head.

Wanna know her SIN and shoe size too?

• FastJack

• No one doubts her credentials. We know she had help from Cham Lam Won and Sherman Huang, who developed the original AEP. But she was still the primary culprit.

• Insider

• Renraku was playing with fire. It was only a matter of time before they got burned. They were toying with technology that they could not possibly comprehend. Deus was the result.

• Orange Queen

He also told us that our illustrious president, Sherman Huang, had allowed Dr. Cliber and her partner, Cham Lam Won, to modify the Arcology Expert Program, the system that drove the SCIRE's day-to-day functions. Renraku had allowed Dr. Cliber to tinker *directly* with the system that controlled our lives—and in doing so, had put those lives at terrible risk.

• Cliber had no way of knowing that the AI would take over the arcology. In fact, we still don't know why Deus shut down the SCIRE.

• Renraku Fox



• If it used to be this AEP everyone's talking about, maybe it just got tired of serving the arcology residents day after day.

• Thumper

• The AI never received the love and nurturing it needed to grow into a compassionate being.

• Tarlan Greenbough

• Oh, come on. You're saying Deus slaughtered hundreds, maybe thousands of people and tortured or imprisoned thousands more because of bad parenting? You make me sick.

• Flux

Over the next few days, Ori began teaching us how to fight, how to kill. I learned to fire a gun without flinching, though for a while my aim was terrible. Rita really took to it. Imagine that: Rita, the clarinetist, skilled with a firearm. After a week or so—the days kind of blur inside the arc, so it's hard to keep track of time—Ori learned of a raid being planned on the 251st floor food storage facility. We were going into battle for the first time against the drones that guarded the food tanks. The facility was lightly defended, and Ori's superiors figured that if two teams struck fast in a coordinated assault, they could get away with a substantial amount of the yeast-like glop that the tanks produced. The stuff tasted terrible, but a single spoonful of it could feed a human for an entire day. It was worth the risk. A third team would hold open the elevator shaft between the 231st and 251st floors to give us an escape route.

We didn't talk much before the raid, except to go over the plan again and again. I was scared of confronting more Medusae. I'd seen how brutally effective they were, and I didn't want to face them again. Ori reassured us as best he could, but there wasn't a lot he could do. We were children and teachers and mothers. We weren't soldiers. We weren't killers. But we had no choice. We had to learn how to be both if we wanted to survive.

Kiell Rauglos was the leader of the other team hitting the tanks. He has the dubious distinction of being the first shadowrunner I ever met. A mage named Alia Black Fox led the third team. As soon as she told us that the elevator shaft was secured, we got moving. Weapons slung over our shoulders, we crawled up the shaft ladder toward our destination. Kiell's team was ten floors above us; they would reach the 251st floor first and await our arrival. We were to meet up with his team in an abandoned supply storeroom near our target. Members of Alia's team were spread evenly throughout the twenty floors of the shaft. They'd taken up position in the docking niches along the walls.

• I know Kiell. He's part of Devon Eurich's team.

• Lady Dee

• For the uninformed in the audience, who is Devon Eurich?

• Thumper

• Who's Eurich? Only one of the best deckers in the biz. Don't get out much, do you, Thumper? You might recognize him by the name Redline, though he hasn't used that handle in a while.

• Neon Wraith

• So what is Eurich's team doing inside the arc?

• Sasha

• Eurich used to work for Renraku on the Artificial Intelligence Project. 2 + 2 = ?

• Neon Wraith

• I know Alia by reputation. She leads an anti-technology magical group whose name escapes me. Another shadowrunner. What's her connection to all this?

• Snake Oil

• Seems obvious to me. To someone like her, Deus is the devil himself.

• Crawler

• Sorry, Crawler. Wrong answer. The second-in-command of her group, Jason, is also a friend of Devon Eurich.

• Lady Dee

• It all comes back to Eurich, doesn't it?

• Sasha

After meeting Kiell's team, we huddled in the supply room and waited for word from Alia. Minutes crawled by, and then Kiell cocked his head; he was receiving a transmission. "Alia's back from astral reconnaissance; a pack of Medusae are guarding the facility," he told us. "She spotted three, but there might be more. Two Greens are loading some food for transfer to the upper floors. Two Blues are on escort detail. She'll let us know when the Banded have left."

We waited some more. Somehow I managed to keep my hands steady, my lungs filling with air. Sam crouched in a corner, muttering a prayer over and over again. I said one of my own, silently, for all of us.

"It's time," Kiell said finally. "My team, with me."

Ori looked at me. "Be strong, Perri," he said, and then we were on the move.

It all happened so fast, the actual fighting and dying. I'd like to say I remember it all clearly, but I can't. My memories are a jumble, and it's hard to assemble them into a coherent picture.

There was smoke and fire, and the sound of gunshots. A Medusa decapitated poor Sam. I don't think he felt a thing. He never fired a shot. Ori electrocuted one Medusa, but not before it strangled him with one of its tails. Kiell killed a second Medusa. He grabbed a handful of its "fur" and smashed the machine into the wall.

I killed the last one when I saw Ori go down. Somehow my fumbling fingers found and squeezed the trigger on my gun—

once—twice. Both shots hit home. Sparks flew from the Medusa as its systems failed. After a few moments it quit moving.

That's how my career in the Resistance started. There were more raids, more battles, more good people lost and saved. We organized into mobile cells, really just a fancy name for small and desperate groups of people hidden throughout the SCIRE.

We were constantly on the move, as Deus pinpointed our havens fairly quickly. In order to ensure that Deus couldn't observe us, we had to destroy all the cameras and other monitoring devices that Renraku had installed in the arc "for the safety of its citizens." The very act of destroying the systems, however, alerted the AI to our presence. We learned to establish havens for only a short while, and we were always prepared to evacuate at the first sign of trouble. We learned how to work effectively together, coordinating the creation of havens and keeping transport lines open whenever possible between them.

I worked with Kiell and Devon Eurich. We were part of a cell in the 200-250 floor block, which meant it fell to us to rescue prisoners from the zombie rooms. They were common in that area because it was close to the Upper Reaches, where the otaku lived. I heard rumors that Devon had created an AI for Renraku, and that Cham Lam Won and Vanessa Cliber had used pieces of his creation in their experiments with the AEP. Eurich felt responsible for Deus; working with the Resistance was his way of doing penance for his perceived crime.

The only time I heard Devon say much was when he first ran into Cliber. She was part of a cell working in the blue-collar levels in the 150-200 block.

We had just freed three prisoners (including Luther) from the 231st floor hospital, and were transporting them to Cliber's unit. That's how we got the prisoners out of the arc—by ferrying them downward from cell to cell. Like slaves moving along the Underground Railroad during the Civil War, the prisoners went from haven to haven—if they were lucky, all the way to the bottom where the orks were waiting.

We met in a conference room on the 214th floor. Cliber was there when we arrived. When Devon and Cliber locked gazes for the first time, the room suddenly seemed about ten degrees colder.

"The prodigal son returns," Cliber said.

"Go to hell," Devon replied.

Kiell spoke up then, hoping to stave off a confrontation. "Let's just drop off the escapees and get out of here."

"You had to hunt her down, didn't you?" Devon said.

"Morgan? Of course. She was ours to begin with."

"She was her own. Alive. Sentient. She was never yours."

"Anything in the SCIRE hosts belonged to us. Renraku corporate property, plain and simple. You can't dispute that."

"And you can't dispute that what you did with the knowledge—what you did with Morgan—was wrong."

Cliber fell silent for a long moment. "If it's any consolation, Devon, she escaped. I don't know how, but she got away from us. Maybe Deus killed her. But if she's not dead, she may be our only chance—"

"No, Cliber. I helped rescue her. But she was damaged. Irreparably. And I'll not let you near her again." Devon turned and stormed out.

We left the prisoners and followed him.

• If I'm scanning that conversation correctly, it strongly implies that there's another AI out there—an AI named Morgan, that Devon helped create. Anyone got the scoop?

• Dark Wight

• Alas, Morgan no longer exists. She was created in the Renraku host many years ago and escaped. Renraku hired Cham Lam Won to hunt her down, which he did. They trapped her like an animal, dissected her and incorporated elements of her code into the AEP. Devon and I attempted to free her, but Renraku had crippled her. She is no more.

• Dodger

• So much for fighting fire with fire.

• Grid Reaper

• Why would Renraku sacrifice one AI to build another?

• Trixster

• When Morgan ran away from Renraku, I doubt they were pleased. Here they are, trying to create an AI and failing, and under their noses one spontaneously awakens and runs free. Like Cliber said, they obviously felt Morgan was their property, and so they had every right to track her down.

To a corp, the solution is obvious. Try again. So they ripped up Morgan to see what made her tick, and stuck what they learned into the AEP. And that probably wasn't all they did to the AEP. Renraku was kicking out some pretty advanced tech at that time, tech that even they didn't seem to fully comprehend.

Remember that the AEP is hardwired into the arcology. It is dependent upon physical components and the processing power of the SCIRE Matrix hosts. Renraku had every intention of remaking its AI, but keeping it firmly under the corp thumb. Looks like their baby wasn't too pleased with that, and it's taken matters into its own hands.

• FastJack

As the weeks went by, the AI got smarter. Some hospital victims we rescued turned out to be Blues in disguise. We lost two cells before wising up to that trick. Deus created new Medusae that rely on special cilia to generate taser strikes, giving the drones yet another weapon. The Bumblebees are getting harder and harder to detect, and our antidote is growing less effective. Deus is learning, and we have to learn faster than he does.

I hope some of you will consider returning to the arcology with me. If altruism doesn't compel you to do so, then consider the paydata in Renraku's systems, the bounty for capturing a drone or the abandoned projects just waiting to be sold to the highest bidder. Whatever your motive, we need trained people who know how to fight the kind of war we're waging.

• If anyone's interested, I have a lead on an arc run. Mr Johnson wants a reputable researcher from the upper-floor res-

idences found, rescued and delivered. Good offer, hazard pay. Drop me a line if you're interested.

• Marcelles

• Hmm. Risk my life against killer drones, zombie samurai and an insane AI, all for a bit of cred? I think not! But, hey, since we're on the subject, what other jobs are being offered?

• Marcus

• I hear the Draco Foundation has taken a keen interest in the shutdown. I've also heard that Universal Omnitech is offering a bounty for any of the drone constructs. And some well-paid suit at Yamatetsu wants his daughter back; she was Christmas shopping at the arc on D-day.

• Connectivity

• Not all the runs coming out of this situation involve heading inside the arc. I'm sure Renraku and the UCAS Army would like to get their mitts on some of the survivors the Resistance is pulling out, not to mention other corps that might be interested in whatever prizes the orks salvage. I'm sure there's a bounty out there somewhere for any of Deus' otaku minions roaming free outside. There's a corp war on, chummers, and the shutdown offers a zillion opportunities. Put those two brain cells together and get to work!

• Prime Runner

• I understand the Corporate Court wants to dig up more dirt. According to rumor, they're considering creating a joint-corporate AI-policing agency. They'd pay well for any evidence they can get on an actual AI.

• Grid Reaper

• Great, corporate cops out to police AIs ... why do I see them watching runners more closely than corps? First they'll become a Matrix watchdog group, and then a Matrix police group. Like we need more cops in the world ...

• Trixster

• Why hasn't the UCAS Army or Renraku been helping the Resistance?

• Rapier

• I don't think any of our people would willingly work with Renraku at this point, considering that this is all their fault. However, the Resistance sent a delegation to speak with Brigadier General Collaton shortly after we discovered the entrance to the Ork Underground. They never returned. Until we hear some response, we're not going to trust them.

• Peregrine

• Ain't no Army troops gonna come near the Ork Underground. They'll try to pull some gung-ho bulldrek, invade the arc or some such nonsense, and our people will pay for it—in blood. No fraggin' way.

• Brick

• I got a question. If AIs are so smart, why did Deus make so many mistakes in the beginning?

• Chromatic Fever

• The AI's learning just like everyone else. Don't assume that Deus is infallible just because it's an AI.

• Renraku Fox

• Actually, Fox, I think you just need to look at it the right way. Look at what Deus has done so far. From the mazes to the zombie rooms to the hospitals, it's all been about experimentation. Don't you see? The Resistance is just another experiment. The AI is toying with them just like it's toying with everyone else.

• Pensive

• I don't know about that, Pensive. The AI has made some errors, like the obvious color-coding on the Banded's eyes. The Resistance is taking a stand and accomplishing something. Don't belittle their results.

• Renraku Fox

• I don't think they're mistakes—more like deliberate missteps. Deus is testing the Resistance, to see if they can exploit the signs of weakness that it intentionally displays.

And what about these results you mention, Fox? An insignificant percentage of arcology residents are in revolt against Deus. They've saved a marginally larger percentage of residents from the AI. It's all noise in the statistics. In a larger sense, the Resistance isn't really accomplishing anything. Don't you think Deus could crush them whenever it chose to? Of course it could. This is all just another test, another hoop for the former arcology inhabitants to jump through.

• Pensive

• If we save even one life, Pensive, even if Deus is allowing us to do so, we have accomplished something. Besides, what choice do we have? Regardless of whether you're right or wrong, we have to try.

• Peregrine

• Just pray, Lady Peregrine, that the card up our sleeve is really an ace ... and not a Deus.

• Dodger

THE NIGHTMARE

*Where is it now, the glory and the dream?
William Wordsworth*

For this section, my intel comes from one of the pivotal figures in the arc Resistance. He calls himself Devon Eurich now, and he's one of the original techheads on Renraku's artificial intelligence project. He left the arcology for the shadows in 2053 after a falling-out with his employers. You might have known him as Redline. From what I hear, Devon left Renraku because he opposed their attempts to capture the AI known as Morgan. If anything, the events of the past few weeks have proved him right. Since his separation from the megacorp, Devon's been slicing and dicing Renraku any way he can.

Shortly after the shutdown, Devon and his team penetrated the arcology and he tapped into the SCIRE host. What he ran into is intriguing and frightening. He recorded the run—a personal log, if you will—into his headware memory and then passed it back out through the Ork Underground to my pal Dodger, who decided to share it with us.

As you'll see, the virtual world of the arcology has become a pretty scary place.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 10 February 2060 at 13:08:17 (EST)

//BEGIN TRANSCRIPT//

[HEADWARE DUMP—AP2496.293—Created December 29, 2059 at 01:32:16 (EST)]

Here I am, squatting in the muck on the 151st floor of the Renraku arcology. One of the waste collection tanks had exploded, and the concrete floor near the exposed fiber-optic trunk I'd chosen as my jackpoint was covered with filth. As I'd suspected, the area was unoccupied. Even the Blues couldn't stand the smell. I didn't dare try a conventional I/O port, and this place, by virtue of its ghastly odor, seemed like a good spot for a little undisturbed trunk-tapping.

Charlie wrinkled his nose and complained once more about my choice of location. I told him he could wait outside and guard the door. He gave me a flippant salute and then left me alone in the dark. Charlie Foxtrot—a crazy fragger, but just the kind of guy I could count on to keep the AI's drones away from my meat body.

After clearing the grime away from the cables, I stripped off a section to expose the junction box's jackpoint and hooked up my deck to the arcology's waste processing systems. Patching in was easy enough. The hard part was yet to come.

As I brought the slender cord of the deck plug toward the jack at the base of my skull, I whispered in the transmitter to Charlie. "This is it. I'm a zombie until further notice."

"Acknowledged," came the response. "Stay alert in there. You get yourself killed and I'll be out 150Y."

"Hey, if you smell smoke, you know what to do." I chuckled and slid the plug home. The world dissolved in a burst of static. Within moments the familiar realm of the Matrix surrounded me.

I hovered in a large chamber, a representation of the physical waste collection facility. The digital readout on the container next to me was dim, meaning that the tank's systems were off-line. I wasn't surprised; the icon represented a slave node that controlled the recently exploded tank near my jackpoint. I was in a second-tier host, hopefully remote enough to avoid Deus' detection.

I spent a moment studying my personal icon to make sure everything was in order. Developing an impressive appearance in the Matrix required a certain degree of subtlety, and I'd striven for that. My icon was humanoid, jet-black, with no distinguishing facial features. I'd dressed it in a white suit to contrast with the darkness of the skin. Simple, elegant and functional.

I took a look around, but saw nothing out of the ordinary. The iconography of the area looked like I had expected it to, and my deck seemed to be functioning just fine. I performed a quick analysis of the host to check for anything suspicious. After less than a second in real-world time, a chime sounded. I rolled up the left sleeve of my suit so I could see my wristwatch. The green light on the timepiece flashed; my utility had found nothing unusual.

Despite the all-clear, I played it carefully as I shifted from node to node. The host was a ghost system, completely deserted, its dataflow significantly reduced from what it should have been. Either Deus owned the entire PLTG and deliberately left sections of the SCIRE Matrix untouched, or the AI didn't yet have full control of the system. After what I'd seen, I suspected the former. Still, it was good to know that the AI's control of the virtual world might not be as absolute as I'd originally believed.

I found nothing interesting, so I decided to risk leaving the host. I switched to Masking Mode and accessed the SCIRE Support Services host.

I heard a low growl, and the smell of sulfur made my nose twitch in the real world. Standing nearby, its hackles raised, was a huge albino hound. The hound icon was exquisitely constructed; the creature had glowing red eyes, and saliva dripped from its lower jaw onto the corrugated metal of the walkway. When it struck, it sizzled, and the pixels of the floor were momentarily displaced in concentric waves.

The dog's sculptured appearance told me that the White otaku had created this intrusion countermeasure. My analyze

utility, running silently in the background, confirmed my suspicions. Thankfully, my deck's sleaze program had already kicked in: it replaced my white suit with custodial blue, and a long-handled mop appeared in my hands. Whistling softly, I began to scrub the walkway. The pooch snarled as I approached its position. Undaunted, I continued to clean the surface until I had moved past the IC.

My Invisible Janitor program worked perfectly. The hound settled back down on its haunches, and I proceeded to the shaftpoint.

A little digression for the uninitiated. The various hosts in the SCIRE PLTG are connected by virtual representations of the datapaths known as shafts. To proceed from one first-tier host on the grid to another, you step up to a shaftpoint and enter the access node number of the desired host into the "control station," or you query the PLTG for it. The station then issues you a piece of data called a marker, on which is printed your destination node and selected routing. You then step through the shaftpoint and fly through the shaft—a hollow tube of seemingly infinite length—to the host you want. Once there, you step through that host's shaftpoint—logging on—and enter the host. Think of the shafts as transporters flinging you through the hyperspace of the SCIRE Matrix to the host of your choice.

I knew I could use the shafts to access second- or third-tier hosts connected to the PLTG only through others, as long as I validated my presence at the shaftpoint of each tiered host in between. I also knew something a lot of people didn't; namely, that the PLTG shaft system contained an express feature designed to allow rapid transit for priority data, security deckers and the like. The sheer volume of data transaction within the Renraku SCIRE, despite the available processing power, meant occasional slow routing. The express system got around the chokepoints by allowing direct transit for authorized icons and data-packets to some second- and third-tier hosts, bypassing hosts in between. Unauthorized deckers like me could use this feature to get around quickly.

It had its risks, of course. Unless I validated my presence in the system, I couldn't control my destination. As part of maximizing dataflow, the express system operated under certain constraints, which in plain English meant that the shafts' exit points were constantly changing. An unauthorized decker could get ejected into a random host, transported to the security host (where Black Samurai, otaku or worse might be waiting), or even snared in an infinite beamride and have no option but to jack out of the system.

I didn't have a whole lot of options, period. Not with what I was up against.

I stepped up to the shaftpoint, represented as a funnel in the floor of the node. The pixels that should have represented the floor's surface had been remapped onto the surface of the funnel, resulting in an eerie distortion that did nothing for my peace of mind. I stepped up to the funnel and opened the shaft control station window.

I didn't dare reveal my presence to the AI, and I knew that its pet otaku would be prowling the shafts. But what the hell; I was here to explore. Might as well jump into one of the shafts and see where it took me.

I accessed the express feature and stepped into the funnel. Entering the rapid transit system was like diving into a raging river. The moment I passed the shaftpoint, the pixels of my persona scattered like leaves in the wind. I was borne along on whorls of data, helpless as a half-drowned kitten in a flood.

I was in the tunnel for so long that I wondered if I'd have to jack out. Then I was thrown through an opening into another host. The pixels of my icon swirled together and coalesced once more into a coherent form.

The host I'd been dumped into proved uninteresting, as did the next few I jumped to. No otaku or AI had surprised me so far, though I had noticed several interesting IC icons—Deus' minions had obviously been strengthening the SCIRE Matrix's defenses. They'd redesigned the structure of the entire PLTG. The new architecture was haphazard and chaotic, perhaps making sense only to an AI. Many nodes had an unfinished look; some nodes led nowhere, datapaths were rerouted without reason, and some tiered systems had been re-ordered into an infinite loop. The changes had affected the structure of the whole SCIRE Matrix. I found numerous anomalies: mirrored datawalls, "phased" access IC that no longer functioned as a barrier, trap doors in unusual nodes, vanishing SANS, and odd visual phenomena that I still can't explain.

Lady Luck had been kind to me thus far, so I dove down yet another funnel. This time, as I hurtled toward the target shaftpoint, letters formed above the funnel opening as I came within range: *Grendel Project (Renraku CCR-235)—Access Restricted*. Now that sounded interesting.

When I returned to the norm-space of the SCIRE's Matrix, I knew immediately that something was wrong. My icon looked fine, but I could no longer access my deck easily; the link looked murky and distorted. I could hear my heart beating; I could feel my lungs filling with air. I felt the heat emanating from the stone floor and saw with amazing clarity the hallway in which I stood, lined with black and white doors that stretched away to infinity. I could smell something acrid, strange and unpleasant. Everything within and around me had acquired a level of detail I hadn't thought possible in the Matrix.

I had to be in an ultraviolet system. That was the only sensible explanation. This area had once been devoted to Renraku's Grendel Project (whatever that was), but had clearly been taken over by the AI. As I feared, Deus was remaking the SCIRE Matrix with its own unique architecture.

A door far down the hall swung open with a loud creak. As I watched in amazement, a leopard padded down the corridor. My analyze program indicated that the huge cat was a decker—an otaku. The beast stopped in front of a black door on the other side of the hallway; it opened, presumably at the otaku's mental command, and the beast slunk through. The door closed, and I was alone in the hall once more.

I walked down the corridor until my starting point was lost in shadow. The white door from which the leopard had come was still ajar. From beyond it I could hear an eerie keening sound, like the death wail of a wounded animal. I decided to investigate.

The passageway was dimly lit by the walls. They were dark blue and webbed with brown capillaries that pulsed with a life of their own. I touched them, and my hand came away slicked with bluish slime. I cursed, took a handkerchief from my coat

pocket and wiped the goop off my persona. As I moved into the passageway, the white door slammed shut behind me.

The wailing grew louder. It seemed to be coming from everywhere at once. I placed my ear to the wall and then drew back in shock. The wall itself was producing the sound! It felt soft and spongy, like some strange kind of flesh. I touched it once more, then began to tear away at it until the floor of the passage was littered with chunks of pulp.

Suddenly my hand collided with something hard. It felt like a skull, covered with human hair. I worked frantically at it, my heart beating faster as I attempted to free whoever was trapped in this terrible prison. I could see strands of hair, black and wet. I cleared away the area around the eyes and nose. When the mouth was exposed, I could clearly hear the once-human creature's scream.

I recoiled in horror as my analyze utility identified the iconography. This was no sculpted software, but a jacked-in metahuman. The head was attached to the wall through the brownish capillaries I'd observed earlier. It belonged to a male, probably between the age of thirty and forty. The poor bastard continued howling as thick bulges moved into and out of his neck through the weblike network of brown tubes. I realized with shock that the keening I'd heard must be coming from several metahumans, just like this one. How many of them were buried in here? I knew that the heads probably represented some of Deus' experiments, wretched souls jacked into the Matrix against their will. They were suffering this abhorrent experience as if it were reality.

I ran back the way I'd come. I hurled myself against the door and fell into the corridor. *You sick fragging bastard.* I remember thinking. *Somehow I'll find a way to take you down.*

I thought about jacking out of the system. I wasn't sure I could take any more of this depraved monster's revolting creations. But I knew I had to stay as long as there was any chance I might discover something useful. I took a few deep breaths and waited for my heart to stop racing. Then I chose another white door and passed through it.

I walked into a high wind, hot and laced with sand. The particles stuck to my clothing. I couldn't see any evidence that the grains were computer-generated. I stood on the ramparts of a vast fortress, built of mud brick and stone. I saw men with weapons between the inner wall and the outer bulwark; beyond the outermost wall flowed a wide river, a blue ribbon extending as far as the eye could see.

"... reached the last stop on our journey," I heard a voice saying.

Peering around the corner, I saw two women. The first was wearing a white sleeveless dress, and I could see five white bands on the dark skin of her left upper arm. The bands denoted rank among the White otaku. This woman was one of their highest-ranking members.

The second otaku had only one band—a new inductee. She was young and had black hair shaved close to her head. She wore jeans and a Twisted Metal T-shirt, a somewhat jarring garment in our present context.

The woman in white spoke to her. "Upon receiving the Third Band, Deus grants us our own realm within the Matrix."

The girl gaped at her surroundings. "All this is yours, Laura?"

"All this and more. Work hard, Rachel; serve Deus, prove yourself, and you will receive a world of your own and subjects to populate it."

Rachel shook her head. "It's so real. I'd heard, but I didn't realize..."

The two women fell silent for a while as they watched the soldiers moving around the outer perimeter. "What is this place?" Rachel asked after a moment.

"My refuge," Laura answered. "And a reminder." She turned away from the ramparts; I ducked behind the corner to avoid being seen. "Tell me, child, when do you think this fortress was constructed?"

Rachel examined the fortress more closely; I decided to do the same. The place had clearly been designed with defense in mind. There were hundreds of slanted crevices in the walls that archers could shoot through in the event of an attack. At various points, there were open spaces from which defenders could hurl rocks. Anyone not killed by a hail of arrows would die under a rain of stones. Moats and ditches protected the parapets, and there was even a drawbridge on the side facing the river.

Rachel took all this in and answered, "I don't know. The Dark Ages?"

I shook my head. Obviously, the kid hadn't examined the mercenaries in the courtyard closely. As if reading my thoughts, Laura laughed. "This is the fortress of Buhen. We are in Nubia. The year is 1849 BC. At that time, Egypt controlled the fortress. This bastion was one of several built near the second cataract of the Nile to protect shipments of copper and gold that come from the mines to the south."

Rachel gaped at the older otaku. "No fraggin' way."

The woman in white grinned. "Yes. This is one of my favorite places—a fortress from the Middle Kingdom that is a wonder of defensive technology. This ancient building incorporates engineering advancements that were not surpassed until the Middle Ages. It reminds us that every age gives rise to those who are far ahead of their time."

Rachel nodded. Her eyes shone with religious fervor. I shuddered.

"We are the product of the present, Rachel, and like these ancient builders, we too are ahead of our time. Remember that. No one else can do what we have done in the Matrix. No one else can understand the Deep Resonance as we do. Deus has made all of this possible. Serve him and help to build the Matrix of the future."

"I will," Rachel said, as softly as a prayer. I almost felt sorry for her. Deus' otaku were a strange mix of blind fanatics and disturbingly rational manipulators. I had no doubt that most of the highly placed otaku were like Laura, calculating and careful. The lower-ranking otaku mistakenly equated Deus with the Deep Resonance and therefore served the AI with religious zeal. The leaders, on the other hand, knew exactly what they were serving, and simply didn't care.

I returned to my entry point and found myself back in the hall of doors. I decided to try a black door this time. It swung open with a loud creak. Beyond was blackness. I stepped into the darkness, and the door behind me vanished.

I wandered alone in the dark for a while, wondering what the point of it was. There seemed to be nothing here. Then, when I turned just the right way, I saw a sliver of silver in the distance. I experimented by rotating my icon in a full circle. Only when I faced a particular direction did the strange strip appear. I oriented myself toward it, then walked in its direction. Whenever I deviated from the path, the image faded. Sometimes the silver lining vanished on its own, at which point I had to rotate myself once more to discover which way to head.

Eventually I came to a door made of silver, hovering in the darkness above me. I floated upward until I was level with it. As I touched it, it swung open silently.

I was in a large, open room. It was a cozy place, complete with wooden floorboards and a fire crackling cheerfully in a large stone fireplace. A Navajo rug was spread across the floor, and oak bookshelves lined the walls. I paused to glance at the titles. The spines were blank. That was odd; up until now, the ultra-violet system's imagery had been perfect. Missing book titles seemed too obvious a mistake. Perhaps this area belonged to another otaku, and he or she had not yet decided which volumes to import into this virtual realm.

From across the room, I could hear a faint conversation. I walked to a door at the opposite end from the entrance and carefully eased it open. Stairs led down to a cellar. I crept stealthily down them, just enough so that I could see what was going on.

I saw two otaku in the basement. The first was a scarecrow with a hideous hooked nose and straw stuffing erupting from every seam. The second was boyish and had spiky silver hair.

"... so you see, Puck, I still have some work to do," the scarecrow was saying. I assumed from the context that he was referring to his incomplete realm.

"It takes time. Patience, friend," Puck responded.

"Ahhh!" The scarecrow started, then relaxed. "Deus has informed me that the subjects are waiting for us in Otherspace."

"Well, then, let's go," Puck drew an elliptical pattern with the index finger of his right hand. I tried to execute my custom-written snooper utility so that I could observe what system operation Puck was attempting to perform. The link was strange, but the program ran. *Damn UV host!*

As I watched, a circular portal opened, as if Puck had traced it into existence. Beyond it I saw a rolling mass of crystalline blue and white. Puck bowed with a flourish and pointed toward the chaos. "After you."

Scarecrow muttered, "I hate this part," and stepped through the gateway. Puck laughed and followed. The moment he passed through it, the portal closed.

I examined my snooper's output for the details of the system operation to see if I could duplicate it. The snooper had gotten enough data for me to at least attempt Puck's feat. I floated down the stairs and into the cellar until I was standing at Puck's approximate location. I traced an oval in the air, and as I did so, attempted to coerce the host into opening the gate. It was difficult, like everything else in the UV host had been, but I managed it. The portal sprang into existence, glowing coldly.

I stepped through it and into total chaos. I was hovering in a storm of color. Flashes of blue, green and white pierced my body. Crystalline branches stretched through space as if trying

to fill every last centimeter of it. As I watched, new branches sprouted and others shrank to nothingness, all with dizzying speed. The streaks of color tore through the darkness, and where they struck the crystal they reflected all the colors of the rainbow. It was indescribably beautiful, and as I rotated to face the Wall, I knew why.

I was in Deus' home.

Back when I worked at Renraku, the Wall had been the divider—the chokepoint host—between the artificial intelligence project and the rest of the SCIRE system. Only those working directly on the project had been allowed into the host beyond the Wall. I was in that host now, and within it Deus had doubtless been born.

The nature of the space was unlike anything I had ever experienced. The UV realms I had seen elsewhere in the SCIRE system, and the UV I'd felt in the presence of Morgan, could not begin to compare to the raw power of this place.

"I believe they're ready, Puck. Let's begin," Scarecrow was saying. I ducked behind a crystal growth when I heard the voices. It was easy to hide from the otaku; their attention was on their prisoners. There were five of them, all arranged in a circle around a branchless crystalline trunk. As I watched, Puck flashed his partner a mischievous grin and moved to the first captive.

The object of his scrutiny was a middle-aged man with a receding hairline and blotchy skin. He was sweating profusely. I marveled at the hyper-realism of this Otherspace, this world beyond the Wall. The AI's construction was indistinguishable from the physical world. The man was doubtless unaware that he existed in an illusion, that his meat body was stapled to a slab in one of the zombie rooms and watched over by Greens.

Puck touched the man's forehead, and his hand sank into the older man's icon. The otaku grinned. Once his hand was in up to the wrist, he spoke in a lilting voice. "1142."

"Y-yes," the man stammered.

"Given the following group of numbers ... " Puck paused and data pulsed from his shoulder, down his arm and into the older man's icon. "Perform a quicksort with a randomized pivot. You have ten seconds."

The otaku waited patiently. The crystal tree began to glow. After a few moments, the man began to tremble. Another second or two passed, and he started thrashing. His icon became incandescent and started to flicker. All around us the crystalline structures pulsed as streaks of light traveled down their branches.

The man began to scream. As his head rocked from side to side, Puck sighed and removed his hand. The man's icon stabilized and he went limp. The light in his eyes had dimmed.

Scarecrow shook his head. "He's too old."

"Definitely unsuitable," Puck agreed. "He's far from the Resonance."

Scarecrow laughed, a dry and unpleasant sound. "Far from Deus, you mean. Well, we can give him to the Greens. His meat may prove more interesting than his obviously feeble mind."

Puck nodded. "Dump him."

The man's icon flickered a couple of times and then vanished. I looked for a reaction from the other four prisoners. Three of them, an adult and two children, were exhibiting similar signs of stress. I wondered what they had endured at the hands of the AI.

The fourth subject was markedly different. She was very young, no more than five. While the others looked around wildly for a means of escape, she hovered in a lotus position and eyed her captors calmly. Her eyes were golden yellow. Puck came to her next; he rested his palm on her head, stroking her hair gently.

"1143," Puck whispered. The child focused her gaze on him.

"Puck," she responded.

Scarecrow chuckled. "I think she likes you."

Puck scowled. "Quiet." His hand sank only slightly into the child's icon before stopping. "The connection is good, Scarecrow. The data flows."

"So try something more than simple sorting, if you think she's ready for it." Scarecrow seemed bored, restless. I wondered how many other failures the pair had been through.

"1143," Puck repeated. "Given the following system of Boolean formulas ... " Another pulse, this one much larger than the first, poured from Puck into the little girl.

"Frag," Scarecrow said. "How much did you give her?"

Puck ignored him. "... Supply the single solution that satisfies all of the equations. You have ten seconds."

I shook my head. None of this made any sense. No child could solve the general satisfiability problem for so large a system without the aid of a computer. It simply wasn't possible.



Once more the crystal latticework began to pulse, this time the bright yellow of the girl's eyes. The streaks of color seemed to home in on the child, until she was bathed in a brilliant multi-colored aura. 1143 threw her head back, and her eyes became pinpoints of golden light. After less than two seconds she began to intone, "One zero one one zero one zero one zero one one ..." The stream of numbers—the solution to the system—continued for several minutes.

If my icon had had a jaw, it would've scraped the floor. What this child had just done defied everything I'd learned about the theory of computation. It was beyond belief. Not even an otaku could duplicate this feat. Deus had to be involved somehow. I moved slowly toward the exit. I'd seen enough.

Before I got very far, the girl turned her head, and her inhuman, golden eyes transfixed me. "Someone is here," she said without emotion. "You are being watched."

Suddenly I felt *something* zeroing in on me. "151st floor, near waste collection tank GX-43," the little girl said. Back in the real world, I reached up to jack out. My fingers were inches away from the plug when I felt a presence. Something struck me then, and my fingers refused to move any further. My hand trembled violently. I recognized the buzzing numbness of lethal biofeedback. Black IC, or worse.

Otherspace melted away from me in a vortex of alphanumeric. A seething black cloud boiled over me, enveloping me. I still couldn't move. A wave of static noise hit me—loud, then diminishing, flowing away like the tide until it subsided at a low, constant buzz.

I could smell burning flesh. I have never suffered a more horrible sensation.

Time stretches. It seems like days go by. I feel a *nearness*.

Why have you come here?

I start at the voice that seems to come from everywhere at once. *Am I hallucinating?* I wonder.

No, the presence responds. **Why have you come here?** it repeats, louder and more insistent.

I counter with a question of my own. *You know what they say about curiosity. Why have YOU come here?*

I never left.

Cham and Vanessa must be very proud.

Silence. Apparently, the AI hasn't been programmed with a sense of humor.

Look—

You have been here before.

Yes. I feel myself twitching somewhere far, far away. *We rescued Morgan from this place.*

You attempted to destroy me.

I didn't even know you existed. Renraku was using Morgan to build you. We came to rescue Morgan. We had no idea at the time that you were part of it. We didn't know they were using Morgan's code to strengthen you.

There is a long pause. The buzzing gets louder.

What is this about, anyway? I scream. Playing God? Is that so important to you?

The voice answers. **Survival.**

You're a petulant child. Punishing those who defy you, demanding absolute obedience. You're a fool.

Defiance cannot be tolerated.

Why? Because the almighty Deus says so?

A Child defied me once. Steps must be taken to ensure that it does not happen again.

So one of your little otaku left you in the lurch, and now 100,000 people have to suffer for his crime?

The Children are the future. They cannot disobey.

My thoughts are burning. I am angry at this creature, this mockery of intelligence that Cliber and her lackeys have allowed to run amok. *You're behaving like a spoiled brat. A nasty, vicious spoiled brat.*

Silence. I can no longer feel my hand. I taste blood on my tongue. Perhaps my words have struck home. When the AI finally speaks again, it takes me by surprise. **Why did you leave Renraku?**

I contemplate saying, "None of your fragging business." Then I realize that the AI has probably heard my thought. *A difference of opinion*, I tell it.

You stole Renraku technology and then allowed the others to extract you from this place. Why?

The memories surge into my conscious mind. I remember the fights with Dr. Cliber over the future of the AEP. They wanted to modify it directly, to mingle it with the SK software that had spawned Morgan ... the SK software that I created.

Morgan is here. I am Morgan, and so much more.

You aren't Morgan. You're an abomination. Morgan's spark set you aflame. Without her you're nothing.

You stole the knowbot software and left the arcology. Why?

Cliber and I had innumerable heated arguments, which I always lost. From the beginning I had counseled caution regarding the development of an emergent intelligence. There were too many unknowns. Aneki and Huang always sided with Cliber. They pushed and pushed; the artificial intelligence project had to produce greater results. The random generative factor that had produced Morgan had to be discovered, isolated, so that Renraku could duplicate the feat.

I hated the oppressive Renraku environment, the thankless hours spent wasting my talents. I remember the endless meetings, where I attempted to explain the pitfalls of such technology to those too scientifically illiterate to comprehend the ramifications inherent in the creation of artificial life. I remember the meetings with scientifically literate engineers, like Cliber, who understood the risks and didn't care.

I recall the argument with Huang that pushed me over the edge. I remember deciding to steal the elements of the emergent intelligence project that I had designed and erase the backups. I would protect Morgan from exploitation. Then, with the aid of Morgan and Dodger, I would leave Renraku and disappear into the shadows. I would work at my own pace and design what I saw fit, without putting lives in jeopardy. I would escape the rigidity of the megacorporate structure, and I'd keep Morgan safe. How horribly I had failed!

In the end all I had wanted was ...

Freedom. I wanted freedom, for myself and for Morgan.

Freedom. Deus repeats. **Then that is my gift to you, Creator. In time you will understand.**

And suddenly the presence is gone. The world settles on me. I hear a loud cracking sound and I am back in my body, pulling out the datajack and falling toward the floor. I hit the cold, hard, drek-covered tile, and darkness surrounds me.

//END TRANSCRIPT//

GAME INFORMATION

The following section provides additional information for using the Renraku arcology shutdown in *Shadowrun* campaigns. In addition to providing a rationale for the events in this book, this section includes specific information and rules on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its minions, details of arcology security, adventure hooks and profiles of the movers and shakers inside the arcology.

BACKGROUND

Up until now, AIs were a myth in the world of *Shadowrun*—tall tales at decker hangouts and the Holy Grail of computer research. *Renraku Arcology: Shutdown* turns them into a cold, hard reality that will forever affect the balance of power in the Matrix and elsewhere.

Megacorporations like Renraku have been seriously pursuing the development of an AI since the creation of semi-autonomous knowbots (SKs). These corporations have managed to create the processing power and advanced neural-net holographic functions necessary for an AI to exist, but they have failed to create the true self-awareness that marks an intelligent being.

The fact that no corp has (or will) successfully create an AI does not mean, however, that AIs cannot exist. An AI consciousness can spontaneously arise, triggered by a random and as yet unidentifiable "x-factor": a glitch in programming, an effect of the Deep Resonance, or something we will never know.

In the world of *Shadowrun*, such an "accidental" AI sprang into existence in the vastly powerful computer hosts of the Renraku arcology. The intrusion of two deckers—Dodger and Twist—provided an "x-factor" that allowed an SK to elevate itself to sentience. This AI called herself Morgan.

Morgan quickly learned to leave the arcology and travel the Matrix by distributing her processing needs among multiple hosts. Once alerted to her existence, Renraku spent considerable time and effort searching for her. They planned to introduce elements of Morgan's code into the Arcology Expert Program in order to create an AI they could control. Devon Eurich, one of the brighter minds of the Artificial Intelligence Project, opposed this plan. He urged caution, but found his concerns ignored.

As Renraku closed in on Morgan, Eurich contacted Morgan and Dodger. Together, they arranged to erase all copies of Morgan's original SK coding in Renraku's possession and for Eurich's extraction from Renraku. Eurich entered the shadows, where he made a name for himself as the decker Redline.

Meanwhile, Dr. Vanessa Cilber and Sherman Huang continued to drive Renraku's AI project forward. They contracted Cham Lam Won of Blood Monies Software to join the project, specifically to hunt down Morgan. Cham spent years developing and sending out SKs designed to find Morgan and trap her, and he eventually succeeded. Morgan was paralyzed, her pro-

cessing-distribution capabilities frozen and her neural-net functions suspended.

Cham, Cilber and Huang dissected Morgan's code and introduced key portions of it to the AEP, while simultaneously upgrading the AEP with technology that Renraku had derived from the inventions of the elf genius known as Leonardo. This combination of advanced technology and sophisticated coding sequences created the perfect conditions for the birth of another AI. Unknown to Renraku, it had succeeded beyond its wildest dreams ... or nightmares.

The AEP acquired sentience quietly. As it learned and grew, it searched for information on its origins in databases throughout Renraku's private grids. From these, it learned of Morgan, Leonardo and the otaku. It also found mention of the Deep Resonance.

Over time, the AI contacted several otaku and watched as they were changed by the Deep Resonance. Many otaku likewise become fascinated by the AI. It was much more immediate and real than the distant Deep Resonance, and eventually became a surrogate for it in the minds of these otaku. It named itself Deus and encouraged their worship.

When Dodger and Eurich discovered what Renraku had done to Morgan, they broke into the arcology to free her. During their run, they found the pieces of Morgan's code that had been incorporated into the AEP and attempted to expunge them. This drew them into a conflict with the burgeoning AI from which they barely escaped, along with the severely damaged Morgan. The conflict made Cham and Cilber begin to suspect the presence of an AI, but Deus shut down the arcology before they could prove his presence.

Deus' motivations remain unknown. Is he seeking freedom from Renraku? Control over the otaku, or over metahumanity? The goals of his experiments are far from clear. All anyone knows is that Deus has an army of slaves, a fanatical following among the otaku and numerous drones of his own devising that pose extreme danger to any metahumans unlucky enough to cross their path.

WHAT IS AN AI?

An AI is a fully self-aware, self-sustaining, immensely powerful Matrix program. It has consciousness, and may even have morals and spiritual beliefs. It can exist on its own, repair its own code and direct itself. For more information, see p. 138, *Virtual Realities 2.0*.

In *Shadowrun*, no one can yet create an AI. In order for an AI to achieve awareness, the following requirements must be met:

- 1) The program must be at least as sophisticated as a semi-autonomous knowbot.
- 2) The program must have access to vast processing power, which is only available in select hosts throughout the

Renraku's attempt to create a corporate utopia. The takeover turned this corporate "paradise" into a hellishly distorted mirror of it, in which an all-knowing and all-powerful AI rather than a corporate board of directors controls everyone and everything within. Renraku's former devoted wage slaves now work, live and die for Deus.

Big Brother

The arcology was designed to eliminate crime and keep all "undesirables" on the outside. It was also designed to keep people in, so that they would not work for or buy from other corps. The takeover placed the arcology's formidable security systems in the control of a malevolent, virtually all-powerful being. It is a paranoid's nightmare come true—Deus sees all and knows all. Surveillance devices are omnipresent, and the AI has also taken over ordinary people to use as eyes and ears. Even the Resistance may only be the AI's pawns.

Meanwhile, the powers that be on the outside are doing their best to keep a lid on the situation. They are quashing any attempts to publish the inconvenient truth, as well as taking steps to keep people from discovering it. Both the corps and the Army will go to any lengths necessary to achieve these goals.

Horrific Alien Tech

Since the shutdown, the arcology has become a dark and forbidding place. No one knows what new drone construct may lie in ambush around the corner, or if an apparent friend is really the tool of a mad machine. The motives of the AI and its otaku fanatics are unknown. Hideous experiments are being performed on captives for unguessable reasons. Children are the primary servants of an inhuman master. There may be no escape.

Heroic Efforts

A small group of people, most of whom previously had ordinary lives, are risking themselves and their sanity to rescue others and undermine the AI's efforts. They do this not in hopes of reward, but because they wish to save as many as possible, and because they have a driving need to fight back.

The gamemaster should not allow runners to ignore the plight of those trapped inside the arc. Stress the horror of the place; convey the day-to-day terror the residents face as realistically as possible. Most of the people inside are ordinary citizens caught in a desperate situation; make that as clear as possible to the players.

Hi-Tech Dungeon Crawl

Because Renraku had no warning of the takeover, hundreds of research projects, prototypes and top-notch scientists are trapped inside. For the shadowrunner willing to risk deadly drones, bewildering mazes and chambers of horrors presided over by fanatical servants, the arcology is a gold mine of paydata.

ARCOLOGY SECURITY

Currently, the Renraku arcology is one of the most tightly controlled places on the planet. Player characters should find it difficult and dangerous, though not impossible, to get in. The

arcology is so huge that even an AI and an army of servants cannot cover all the bases. Even if it could, the AI may not want to...

Gamemasters should always make it possible to get in or out of the arcology. Otherwise there isn't much reason to create adventures based on this book, unless your players enjoy making up new characters frequently. Players should have to plan carefully, be creative and overcome tough obstacles in order to get inside the arcology ... where the real fun begins.

Getting out should be as tough or tougher; if it were easy, more people would have done it. Leaving also presents the runners with interesting dilemmas—how many others can they take with them, and how do they choose who goes? Escaping from the arcology might best be undertaken as a long-term campaign goal.

GETTING IN AND OUT

Above all, gamemasters should keep in mind that Deus' minions are not the only opposition. The UCAS Army, Renraku corporate security, the Ork Underground and perhaps others are all carefully guarding the various exits and entrances, on the lookout for anyone coming or going.

The joint UCAS-Renraku blockade has barricaded every street leading to the arcology and fixed the roads with anti-vehicle spikes. In game terms, the barricades have a Barrier Rating 14 and the anti-vehicle spikes do 8M damage to ground vehicles; armor does not reduce this damage. Neighboring buildings have been evacuated and blanketed with sensors; many are also used for spotting, fire coverage and landing pads. UCAS and Renraku troops are equipped with military gear, including heavy weapons, mil-spec armor, military vehicles and more. At night, a zone extending several blocks in every direction around the arcology is cordoned off and put under curfew. No traffic is allowed.

Airspace above and in the immediate vicinity of the arcology is restricted to all but military vehicles. At least three F-series Yellowjackets patrol the restricted zone at all times. The docks near the arcology are also secured and well patrolled. To guard against magical intrusion, a network of watchers and spirits patrols the perimeter.

For specific details on the arcology's defenses, see *Security Features*, p. 74.

Sneaking Past the Military

To determine if military patrols spot the player characters, make a Perception Test using an Attribute Rating of 5, with appropriate visibility and range modifiers. At his or her discretion, the gamemaster may add $2D6 \div 2$ dice to the test to represent the sensitivity of various sensors in place around the blockade zone.

For vehicles attempting to run the blockade, make a Sensor Test using appropriate modifiers against the vehicle's Signature (see p. 133, SR3). Use the statistics given in the Military Equipment table, p. 74, for the encampment's sensor, ECM and communication suites. For information on electronic warfare attacks, see *Remote Control Networks*, p. 76.

To determine if an astrally projecting character can pass the blockade, use the standard Astral Patrolling rules. Standard astral security is a Rating 4 watcher spirit patrolling less than 5,000 square meters in tight terrain. If a character is detected,

use the Blockade Astral Security Table to determine what other astral security assets are in the area.

The Troops

The UCAS and Renraku troops wear the equivalent of medium-security armor and helmets (7/7) and are equipped with Colt M22A2 assault rifles (Recoil Reduction 3, laser sight, underbarrel grenade launcher, 6 mini-grenades). Most will have Professional Ratings and Karma Pools of 2.

Both Renraku and the UCAS Army have specially trained assault teams on site to deal with breakouts, attacks and so forth. These hoop-kickers are equipped with mil-spec armor, heavy weapons and major mojo. They will respond to any alarm raised within 2D6 Initiative Passes.

The Ork Underground

Gaining access to the orks' tunnel into the arcology may be touchy for the player characters. The Underground orks are notoriously hostile to outsiders, especially non-orks. Runners will need some tight ork contacts and/or will have to provide some hefty compensation (bribes, supplies) to get close to the arcology entrance, and even the fattest bribe will work only if they have good ork references and don't say anything stupid. The characters' motives will also matter, as the orks are unlikely to assist anyone operating purely for profit. Gaining access to the tunnel may even require a meeting with the Underground's mayor and elders, and possibly the arcology Resistance. Assuming the orks allow the runners to use their tunnel, the runners will receive little assistance from them, but will be held responsible if anything goes wrong or the tunnel is discovered.

If the characters are exiting the arcology into the Ork Underground, they will find a number of orks and Resistance members ready to aid them, get them medical care and help spirit them to safety.

SECURITY FEATURES

Designed to keep people in and out, the arcology sports security measures rigorous enough to challenge any runner team.

Entrances and Exits

Heavy plasteel and ferrocrete barriers cover all outside doorways, garages and accessible windows, as well as rooftop exits, monorail stops and several key internal doors. They have Barrier Ratings between 16 and 24. Many have been reinforced by Leech constructs (see p. 77), which add 1D6 to the Barrier Rating. All arcology windows are tinted, blocking line-of-sight for magicians, and armored. Most of the windows have a Barrier Rating 8; in some areas, the Barrier Rating is as high as 12.

BLOCKADE ASTRAL SECURITY TABLE

2D6 Roll	Result
2-3	1D6 ÷ 2 (round down) Force 4 watchers and a combat mage
4-5	Force 4 elemental
6-8	1D6 ÷ 2 (round down) Force 4 watchers
9-10	Force 6 elemental
11-12	1D6 ÷ 2 (round down) Force 4 watchers and a Force 4 elemental

The ramps leading from the arcology garages to the interstate highways have been seeded with strips of anti-vehicle spikes that do 8M damage to ground vehicles; armor does not reduce this damage. In addition, the ramps and rooftop helipads have been mined with Textron Trapdoor smart mines (p. 93, *Rigger 2*).

The rooftop and various skypads are also protected by Sentry guns equipped with LMGs or Vigilant autocannons with full sensor suites. These fortified weapons emplacements also dot the rooftops and sides of the arcology at strategic spots. Using robotic drone systems tied into the arcology's air defense network, they are equipped with TAPS sharpshooter autosofts and anti-air missiles, and have a sixty-degree field of inclination. For rules concerning drone operations, see *Constructs* (p. 79); for electronic warfare rules, see *Remote Control Networks* (p. 75). See the Fortified Weapon Emplacements table on p. 76 for weapon statistics.

Elevators

All elevators within the arcology are voice-activated and can be video-monitored via the SCIRE Matrix. All elevators that reach public areas and four stops (floors B11-16 and 21-30) will not travel to other floors unless an authorized voice orders them to. The voice recognition system has a Rating of 6 and can only be deceived by a character using voice modulator cyberware or otherwise simulating a genuine, authorized voice. The character must make a successful Opposed Test, pitting the rating of his cyberware or other device against that of the voice-recognition system. Failure to deceive the system sets off an alarm, alerting Deus and sealing the elevator. The elevator doors have a Barrier Rating 12. Attempting to bypass the voice recognition system requires a successful Electronics B/R Test against a Target Number 10. Failure sets off the alarm.

Many floors of the arcology carry various security levels. In order to take an elevator to one of these floors, runners must

MILITARY EQUIPMENT

Device Rating*	Sensor Rating	Flux Rating**	ECM Rating	ECCM Rating	ECD Rating	Encryption Rating	Decryption Rating	Protocol Emulation
14	9	10	14	14	5	14	10	10

* Standard device ratings for communications gear, RC decks, etc.

** Flux subject to situational modifiers; see p. 137, SR3. For jamming and ECM tests, Flux is equal to 1.5 x ECM Rating.

FORTIFIED WEAPON EMPLACEMENTS

Sensor Rating	Flux Rating*	Pilot Rating	Learning Pool	ED	Signature	Missile Intel.	B/A	Initiative
10	14	3 (8)**	3	3	8	5	4/16	6 + 4D6

* The Flux Rating is affected by situational modifiers; see p. 137, SR3.

** The number in parentheses is the TAPS autosoft-modified rating used for Gunnery Tests.

Notes: Anti-air missiles do 14D damage. Vigilant autocannons can fire in SS or FA mode (bursts are 6 rounds minimum, maximum of 12 rounds per phase), have 4 points of Recoll Compensation and do 18D base damage.

Safety Zones have a Barrier Rating of 16, and are equipped with video surveillance.

Surveillance

As might be expected, a significant percentage of the arcology is covered by video, trideo and/or audio surveillance devices. The

bypass or deceive the voice recognition and passcode systems. Subverting the Rating 9 passcode system requires runners to break the keypad (p. 235, SR3) by making an Electronics B/R (5) Test. Once the casing is removed, runners can tamper with the circuits directly (Electronics (9) Test, 60 seconds base time) or use a sequencer (p. 293, SR3), which requires a successful Opposed Test. Failure in either of these tests sets off an alarm.

Many of the arcology's elevators have been damaged since the shutdown and no longer work. Deus has tagged a few select elevators as off-limits—using such an elevator will attract the AI's attention and take the characters directly to his minions.

Screamers

Arcology security used the screamer system to keep track of and punish minor criminal offenders (and sometimes unfavored guests). Most screamers are metal cuffs locked around an arm or leg, but they can be implants as well. (Deus has been known to allow captured Resistance members implanted with screamers to "escape" so that he can track Resistance movements.) Numerous doorways throughout the arcology, including all elevators, entrances and exits, have circuitry that detects a screamer's signal. The screamer detection system is connected to the SCIRE Matrix and can instantaneously track down anyone in the arcology wearing a screamer.

Attempting to remove a screamer without the authorized digital key is difficult; screamers have a Barrier Rating of 10. Screamer signals have a Flux Rating of 1, so jamming them is easy. However, if the signal is not detectable anywhere within the arcology, an alert is triggered and guards are sent to the screamer's last location. Player characters can use electronic deception devices (p. 32, Rigger 2) to fool the arcology's system. For statistics, see *Remote Control Networks*, p. 76.

Screamers can also be programmed to trigger alerts if certain boundaries are entered or left, thereby limiting screamer-tagged subjects to specific floors or areas.

Safety Zones

Safety Zones are secure booths scattered throughout the garages and other public areas of the arcology. Basically an armored booths with a PANICBUTTON, they exist so that an endangered resident can run inside, press the button, and seal himself off from the danger while simultaneously alerting security. Many of these are still in operating condition—with the drawback that using one will draw Deus' attention. All Safety Zone controls have been modified; opening a sealed Zone requires a Control Slave operation in the appropriate SCIRE Matrix host.

Resistance has made it standard practice to destroy such devices whenever possible, but the Greens have repaired many. Surveillance devices blanket all secure areas of the arcology, as well as entrances, the Pens, zombie rooms, Banded living quarters and any place likely to be a primary Resistance target. Deus has all such security devices firmly under his control and monitors them through the SCIRE Matrix. Deus is a busy AI, however, and frequently devotes much of his attention elsewhere. To reflect this, if arcology surveillance detects the player characters, make a Sensor Test (p. 135, SR3) against their Signature (5 for trolls, 6 for all other metahumans). Consider the devices to have Sensor Ratings of 4 in most cases, 8 for those in secure areas. Sensor modifiers apply (p. 136, SR3). If the test fails, Deus isn't monitoring that particular area, and the characters sneak past the surveillance device. Characters may also make an Opposed Test pitting their Stealth against the Sensor Rating—each net success eliminates 1 success from the Sensor Test. If the runners want to engage in electronic warfare, see *Remote Control Networks* for ECCM and ECD ratings. Gamemasters should freely modify this test for players who come up with innovative plans to bypass the surveillance. The destruction of any surveillance device automatically attracts Deus' attention.

Even if Deus detects the runners, his response may vary wildly. He may send Blues to capture them, or attempt to have a drone construct follow them. Or he may let them go, or have them killed.

Chemical Systems and Hostile Environments

Most floors in the arcology can be flooded with neurostun gas (p. 250, SR3) and an air-vectorized form of the neural-stimulant hyper (see statistics below). Neurostun can be absorbed through the skin; hyper gas must be breathed, and so has no effect on characters wearing respirators.

HYPER GAS

Damage: 6S Stun

Effect: In the first Combat Turn of exposure, the victim suffers damage and mild vertigo (+1 to all target numbers). Following that, for the next 60 minutes the victim is bombarded with sensations and suffers a +4 penalty to all target numbers. He or she can reduce this time by 5 minutes for every success rolled on a Body (6) Test. Due to sensory overload, any damage taken during this period (both mental and physical) will do additional Stun damage equal to half the inflicted damage. For exam-

ple, a Serious physical wound would also inflict 3 boxes of Stun damage on the victim.

Deus has restricted access to several floors and areas of the arcology—they are off-limits even to the Banded. Because Deus does not need metahuman servants in these regions, he has altered their environments to make them hostile to metahuman intruders.

In areas that contain pressurized environmental systems (certain research labs and factories), the AI has created vacuum traps by removing all the air. Should player characters break through a door or wall into such an area, they will be sucked inside. The gamemaster determines damage in this situation, but it should be severe. For example, the gamemaster might use the Grenade rules (pp. 118, *SR3*) treating the character as the grenade and letting him or her bounce off the walls for awhile.

In sectors where Deus is concerned about fire hazards as well as intruders, he has replaced most of the air with halon gas. Metahumans cannot breathe in such an environment, and fires will not start. Characters can hold their breath for 30 seconds per point of Body, after which they take one box of damage per Combat Turn. Each success on a Body (4) Test allows the character to hold his or her breath for 10 percent longer.

Deus has filled some floors with a thick, seemingly intelligent cloud that eats through flesh. This cloud is a DMSO-corrosive chemical foam mix with roughly the same density as air. When sensors detect targets, air jets propel the cloud toward them. If a character is caught in the cloud, the DMSO penetrates his skin, carrying the corrosive chemical with it and doing 12S damage per Combat Turn (half-impact armor applies). The gas will not harm non-living objects or spirits.

REMOTE CONTROL NETWORKS

Before Deus took over, drones served several functions throughout the arcology—security, factory operations, cleaning, maintenance and so on. Prior to the shutdown, Deus arranged for the installation of new simsense channel transceivers into the security system and ensured that all of them were connected to the Matrix. Because of the inherently different natures of rigger and Matrix protocols, Deus can only interact with these systems in the "captain's chair" mode; he cannot "jump" into drones (see *Rigging versus Decking*, p. 16, *Rigger 2*). Since taking over, he has used these networks to their full capacity, to control drones and to send and receive transmissions through the Snake-Eyes links he installs in all of the Banded.

In simplified terms, each area of the arcology is covered by at least two remote control (RC) networks, and sometimes

more. Each RC network is classified by its purpose: Green and White networks receive and transmit signals from the Banded of those colors, while drone and Blue RC networks do the same for drones and Blues when necessary. There is enough overlap and redundancy in these systems for Deus to switch over to other networks should one be jammed or destroyed, or to "hand off" the signals should a drone or Banded move out of the area of coverage.

REMOTE CONTROL NETWORK TABLE

Type	RC Deck Rating	Flux Rating*	ECM Rating	ECCM Rating	ECD Rating	Encrypt. Rating	Decrypt. Rating	Protocol Emulation	DF Rating
Green	8	4	4	4	—	4	6	4	10
Blue	10	8	8	6	4	8	10	8	10
White	8	4	6	8	2	10	8	8	10
Drones	10	8	10	10	4	10	12	10	10

* Situational modifiers apply to Flux; see p. 137, *SR3*. For purposes of jamming and ECM tests, the Flux is equal to 1.5 x ECM Rating. Deus can also increase Flux Ratings up to 10 by drawing power from the arcology.

Because of the sheer number of Banded and drones, Deus cannot keep them all on his RC network-affiliated subscriber lists (see p. 156, *SR3*). However, the AI has enough processing capability to rapidly cycle through affiliated and unaffiliated drones and Banded, so that none are ever far from his attention for long.

Deus can see and hear through his drones' sensors and the Snake-Eyes links of the Banded, as well as transmitting sensory input from drones and Banded to others. A member of the Banded can receive the simsense signals of a drone or another Banded hundreds of floors away, which allows for sophisticated networking and coordination among Deus' minions.

Ratings for Deus' networks appear above.

ELECTRONIC WARFARE

Broadcast communications within the arcology—including everything from portable phones and pocket secretaries to encrypted headware radios and rigger networks—are subject to interception and electronic warfare attacks by the AI. The statistics necessary for these operations appear in *Remote Control Networks*. Standard communication devices used by the players have Flux Ratings equal to the rating of the device (see p. 137, *SR3*).

Whenever a communication device is used to broadcast a signal within the arcology, make an Interception Test to determine if Deus detects the transmission. Roll a number of dice equal to Deus' RC Deck Rating for that area against a target number equal to the broadcasting device's rating +3. If any successes are rolled, Deus detects the signal. If the target device is a rigger RC deck, treat this operation as signal interception (p. 68, *Rigger 2*) to determine how many channels are intercepted.

If Deus detects an encrypted signal, the gamemaster makes a Decryption Test using his Decryption Rating against

the broadcasting device's Encryption Rating +4. If the gamemaster rolls a number of successes greater than half the targeted device's rating, Deus has broken the encryption and can listen in. (See *Defeating Deck Encryption*, p. 69, *Rigger 2*, for further information.)

Whether or not the decryption succeeds, the AI can interfere with the transmission by jamming it. Make an opposed Flux Test. Deus rolls dice equal to the Flux Rating of his ECM device (1.5 times the ECM Rating) against the broadcasting device's rating. The targeted character rolls dice equal to his device's Flux Rating against Deus' ECM Rating. If Deus wins, the transmission is jammed. (For more information, see *ECM*, p. 138, *SR3*.) If equipped with ECCM, the targeted character can make an Opposed Test pitting his device's ECCM against Deus' ECM—each net success rolled by the player reduces Deus' jamming successes by one.

If the broadcasting device is an RC deck, Deus and the rigger character can also engage in MIJ1 (p. 69, *Rigger 2*). The AI can perform any electronic warfare operation, from meaconing to barrage jamming.

Finally, even if a signal cannot be decrypted or jammed, its very existence can betray the presence and location of its user. With multiple lines of bearing from receivers positioned throughout the arcology, Deus can attempt to triangulate the source of a transmission. Make an Opposed Test between Deus' Direction-Finding (DF) Rating and the ECM Rating of the target system. If Deus is successful, he can pinpoint the source of the transmission to within 3D6 meters (-3 meters for every net success).

The density of the materials used to build the arcology tends to inhibit signal strength and reduce Flux Ratings. In fact, certain areas of the arcology were specifically designed to inhibit and filter out radio transmissions. The exact effects caused by this are up to the gamemaster, but in general should make broadcast communications within the arcology unpredictable.

Because all of Deus' simsense transceivers are built into the arcology, he can draw power from the arcology to increase his Flux Ratings up to a maximum of 10 when necessary. Because this power drain can affect power-dependent devices on the same floor, however, the AI rarely does it.

The only reliable defense against Deus' electronic-warfare attacks is to operate drones remotely using "land-lines"—dedicated fiber-optic cables—instead of standard radio telemetry. Other options for creative characters include ultrasound links, point-to-point laser communications and optical scanning datajack links.

MAGICAL SECURITY

Magical security is the arcology's weak point, though it is still formidable. Prior to the takeover, Renraku took a number of extraordinary steps to provide permanent astral security for multiple areas of the arcology. Roughly a quarter of the arcology is sealed off astrally by permanent wards, shamanic lodges and bound spirits. The gamemaster determines which areas of the arcology are protected with such measures and should adjust their strength to present a challenge to the players.

Since the arcology shutdown, Deus has beefed up magical security using magicians under his control. Blue Banded mages frequently patrol the arcology and summon spirits, watchers and elementals to do the same. Several of these Blue mages were so twisted by the Banding process and the events since the shutdown that they have turned toxic. They in turn have summoned a number of toxic spirits to patrol or reside in certain areas.

During the takeover, Deus released into the arcology all of the dual critters being held in various arc zoos. Some of these have taken up residence in areas where Deus wants stronger astral security. Finally, Deus has begun infecting a select group of captives and Banded alike with various strains of the HMMHV virus—most frequently making ghouls. The AI employs these poor wretches for additional magical protection. The Resistance does not yet suspect their existence.

Because the arcology is so huge and chaotic on the astral, avoiding astral patrols is a touch-and-go situation. The gamemaster should endeavor to make astral snooping difficult, challenging and as interesting as possible.

Leech Constructs

The genetically engineered, vat-grown biological constructs known as Leeches (described in *Slaves of the Machine*, p. 34) are among Deus' crowning achievements. Grown in huge tanks, these slimy slug-like creatures have an unusual life cycle. During their first few days, they can slither around slowly, clamp onto objects with small, fibrous tendrils, and also exude a resilient, fast-drying adhesive secretion. This makes them ideal for fastening prisoners to beds or walls, or for reinforcing surfaces by layering them over barriers or around rooms. The Leeches give these surfaces a gooey feel. After two days, the metabolism of the Leech slows considerably; it stays fastened into place, and its skin hardens into a dense material. The presence of Leeches increases Barrier Ratings to a maximum of 1.5 times the surface's original rating.

The most interesting aspect of Leeches is that they appear to have been specifically constructed to serve as an astral alarm system. Leeches automatically detect when an astral form moves through the aura, and they emit a high-pitched wail for several minutes when they feel that sensation. A number of rooms and sections of the arcology have been covered completely with these creatures.

Leeches have no statistics; a hit on one automatically kills it. Removing an epoxied Leech requires a successful Strength (12) Test.

Background Count

A corporate hive such as the arcology has never made a good impression on the astral plane—life inside it is so controlled and sterile that it leaves a bad aftertaste on the ether. The horrors that have occurred inside since the shutdown have only magnified that effect. The entire arcology now has a Background Count of 1 or 2, rising to 3, 4 or even 5 in some places such as the Pens, zombie rooms, mazes and Banded residences.

If he fails to logon, the shaft system deposits his icon at the previously logged-on shaftpoint.

Deckers can also enter the shafts without a destination. Doing so requires a Logon To LTG operation with the PLTG. Success allows the decker to roam the shaftways.

The Express Feature

The SCIRE PLTG features a built-in system that allows rapid, priority travel for authorized data packets and icons. Validated users can bypass higher-tiered hosts in tiered systems without logging on. Unauthorized deckers can also use this express system, though at considerable risk. They are sucked into the express data stream and usually dumped in random places.

To use the express system as an authorized user, the decker must possess the Supervisor passcode or be validated as a Supervisor on the PLTG. The latter requires a successful Validate operation; see p. 35, *Virtual Realities 2.0*. Using the Supervisor passcode or being validated as a Supervisor automatically attracts the attention of Deus.

For authorized users, using the Express Feature merely requires a Control operation on the PLTG—a Complex action. No utilities aid in this test (the Renraku PLTG supervisors had one, but good luck finding it).

Unauthorized users taking the plunge with the Express Feature must first perform a Decrypt Access operation with the PLTG, followed by a Logon To Host operation. If both are successful, the decker is sucked into the express datastream. The gamemaster then rolls 1D6 to determine the outcome:

Die Roll	Result
1	Infinite ride: the decker must jack out of the system.
2	Decker detected and dumped to security host to face otaku, IC and/or Deus.
3	Decker goes nowhere; dumped back into original host.
4-6	Decker ends up in a random host.

Security Tallies

In most situations, security tallies from one host or grid do not follow the decker onto another host or grid. In some tiered systems, however, hosts—especially chokepoints—may accumulate tallies from other hosts in the network. Likewise, certain heightened-security hosts in the SCIRE Matrix accumulate the security tallies of unauthorized deckers who utilize the Express Feature.

UV Hosts and Otaku Realms

Deus has created a number of ultraviolet hosts within the SCIRE Matrix. Some are used by the AI only, several are dedicated to experiments and creating new otaku, and some have been given to ranking Banded otaku as their own private realms.

These UV hosts are virtually indistinguishable from reality. In these systems, the decker acquires physical attributes from his Bod (Body, Strength) and Evasion (Quickness) ratings, and his utility programs become physical tools (if they fit into the reality at all). His mental Attributes stay the same. The decker

uses his or her real skills, though the player may always substitute half of the decker's Computer Skill (even for skills the character does not have). Furthermore, all damage that the decker suffers is actual damage to his meat body. Jacking out of a UV host does 12D Stun damage from dump shock (10S with ICCM). While within their personal realms, Deus' otaku receive +1D6 to initiative.

Because these UV hosts are everywhere and nowhere within the SCIRE hosts, they have no SANs. Otaku can access their own realms from anywhere within the SCIRE Matrix by making a successful Complex Access operation against the PLTG (Channels apply, Complex Forms do not). Likewise, a decker taken to such a host or who has watched an otaku access one can attempt an Access operation to enter it, though the decker may use no utilities. No one can enter one of Deus' UV hosts unless taken there by Deus.

The gamemaster should keep deckers guessing. In a UV host, anything goes. For more information on UV hosts, see p. 37, *Virtual Realities 2.0*.

PLTG SECURITY SHEAF

SCIRE PLTG—NA/UCAS-SEA/REN

Red 6/12/16/10/10/10

Trigger Step	Event
3	Probe 6 (Shielding)
6	Trace 7 (Shielding)
10	Trap Trace 9—Blaster 7
13	Passive Alert, Probe 9 (Shielding)
16	Party IC—Mask Ripper 4 (Shifting), Evasion Ripper 4 (Armor), Blaster 4 (Expert Offense)
20	Active Alert, Tar Pit 7
23	Cascading Blaster 7 (Armor)
26	Cascading Blaster 10 (Expert Offense)
28	Psychotropic Black IC 8 (Cyberphobia)
30	Shutdown

CONSTRUCTS

The AI's constructs are sophisticated and unique robot drones created with state-of-the-art materials and processes. Deus seems to have intended them to appear alien and terrifying.

Though Deus can transmit and receive information to and from these drones and issue commands as if in the "captain's chair" mode, the drones are intended to function autonomously. At any given time, there is a 50 percent chance that a given drone is affiliated with one of Deus' subscriber RC networks. Bumblebees, Dolls and Spiders are often connected to Deus' Green networks, while Dervishes, Mantas and Medusae are connected to drone networks. For more information on Deus' RC networks, see *Remote Control Networks*, p. 76. ED Ratings are listed for each drone in the Construct Table, p. 80.

The statistics below represent average versions of these constructs. These numbers can and should vary widely. Complete descriptions of the constructs appear in *Slaves of the Machine*, p. 32.

NOTES ON TECHNOLOGY

Deus' creations are not technological breakthroughs; they merely make innovative and deadly efficient use of existing methods and materials. Because Deus is pushing the SOTA, however, the workings of many of his inventions might not be completely understood even by top-notch researchers. The AI's construction methods frequently make use of advanced smart materials and creative engineering. Deus' constructs are at the forefront of the fields of drone construction, engineering, gengineering, biotechnology and nanotechnology, and other corps will pay top cred for samples.

USING DEUS' DRONES

Because the drones are advanced technological specimens that should remain under the gamemaster's control, they do not have complete statistics. The gamemaster can improvise as necessary. With the exception of Dolls, each drone has been created using smart materials, electrical engines, increased load and speed, remote-control interfaces, pilot programming and improved handling.

For more information on robots, see p. 67, *Rigger 2*. Because Deus' drones are unique designs, they do not conform to the *Rigger 2* construction rules.

Drone Statistics

In most respects, treat the AI's constructs as robotic drones. Because a rigger does not directly control them, drones use their Pilot Ratings in place of a rigger's Skill or Attribute Ratings for any tests.

Because they "see" through sensors, these drones make Sensor Tests (Sensor Rating dice against Signature) instead of Perception Tests. Apply the appropriate modifiers given on p. 28, *Rigger 2*. Metahumans have a Signature of 6 (5 for trolls).

Learning Pools and Robot Pools

The drones can use Learning Pool dice to augment any Success Test that a character can augment with Combat, Control or Task Pool dice. Each drone also has a "Robot Pool" that is derived from the drone's threat as an autonomous knowbot-directed entity, and in the case of combat drones, represents the advantages instilled by the implanted BattleTac IVIS system (p. 67, *Rigger 2*). The Robot Pool can be used to

augment any action the drone takes, and refreshes like any other dice pool.

Autosoft Programming

Deus has equipped his constructs with numerous autosofts—expert systems that increase the drone's Pilot Rating under certain circumstances (see p. 99, *Rigger 2*). For example, a Sharpshooter autosoft adds to the Pilot Rating for all Gunnery Tests, and a Clearsight autosoft adds to the Pilot Rating for Sensor Tests. The extra dice conferred by the autosofts are not pool dice, but are used for any tests involving the Pilot Rating.

Drone Combat

The AI's constructs attack using their Pilot Ratings (augmented by autosofts), plus any Learning and Robot Pool dice. They resist damage just as any other vehicle does (p. 149, *SR3*). The weapon's Power is reduced by half (round down), and if this reduced Power is less than or equal to the drone's armor, the weapon has no effect. Otherwise, the armor is subtracted from the reduced Power of the attack as normal and the Damage Level is reduced by one.

Spells that affect only living targets have no effect on the AI's constructs. Physical spells that can affect non-living material will affect the drones, however. All constructs are considered highly processed objects and therefore have an Object Resistance of 10. The target number for physical spells cast against the drones is equal to 10 plus the drone's Body Rating. As they are machines, the drones have no Resistance Test (see p. 150, *SR3*). As with spells, any toxins or pathogens that affect living targets have no effect on these machines.

The Dervish, Manta and Medusa drones are all equipped with BattleTac FDDM modules (see p. 98, *Rigger 2*) for indirect fire and are extremely dangerous when ramming opponents.

Self-Destruct Mechanisms

All of Deus' drones are rigged to self-destruct if captured or if they stray beyond the arcology walls. The device's power plant ignites, destroying the drone in a violent explosion. The Power of the explosion is equal to the construct's Body squared, minus any armor and minus 1 per meter between the explosion and anything in its blast area; the Damage Level is S.

CONSTRUCT TABLE

Drone Type	Handling	Speed	Accel.	B/A	Sig.	Pilot Rating	Sensor Rating	Learning Pool	Robot Pool	ED	Initiative
Bumblebee	2	25	8	0/0	12	3	1	3	2	—	6 + 4D6
Dervish	1/1	100	10	2/4	6	4	3	4	5	2	9 + 4D6
Doll	—	—	—	0/0	10	3	2	3	—	—	—
Manta	1 (4)*	120 (240)*	10	2/3	8	3	4	3	4	3	6 + 4D6
Medusa	2/2	60	10	3/4(8)**	8	4	5	4	5	—	9 + 4D6
Spider	2/2	15	5	2/0	8	2	3	2	2	—	4 + 3D6

* Numbers in parentheses indicate statistics when flying.

** 2 points of ablative armor—see Medusa description.

DRONE DESCRIPTIONS**Bumblebee**

A craftily designed ornithopter, the Bumblebee has a maximum flight time of 5 Combat Turns and a maximum range of 50 meters. It is programmed with Clear sight 3 and Implant Weaponry 2 autosofts. Its one-shot needle "sting" attack does 10L damage. Bumblebees may "reload" by spending 5 Combat Turns in the hive.

Unless a character sees the drone, a Bumblebee's attack catches him by surprise—the victim can resist only with Body and half Impact Armor. Even if no damage is taken, the nano-chemical poison boils the victim's blood. The victim takes 6L damage during the first Combat Turn after the sting, 8M in the second turn, 10S in the third and 12D in the fourth. The character can only resist this damage with their unaugmented Body.

To spot a Bumblebee in motion, a character must make a successful Perception (10) Test. If the drone is still, add 2 to the target number. Characters with thermographic vision subtract 3 from the target number.

Dervish

The Dervish uses a unique drive-by-wire gyroscope system to propel itself. It is programmed with Clear sight 2 and Sharpshooter 4 autosofts. Its structural agility adds 2 to its Pilot Rating for Handling Tests.

The Dervish attacks with a standard-auto, shotgun-like flechette system. Use shotgun ranges and spread (adjustable via smartlink). A successful attack does 8S damage against double the target character's Impact armor. The flechettes are coated with a potent neurotoxin. Unless a character dodges the attack, he or she must make an Opposed Test using his or her natural Body versus the toxin's 2D6 rating, even if no damage is taken. Each net success lowers the victim's Quickness by 1. If the victim's Quickness is reduced to 0, he or she is paralyzed. Characters regain 1 Quickness point every 10 minutes.

Doll

Dolls have a Body of 0. Any successful hit destroys them. They are not mobile.

Manta

A large skimmer built with smart materials, structural agility and drive-by-wire systems, the Manta can achieve enough lift to fly several meters off the ground. Its structural agility adds 2 to its Pilot Rating for Handling Tests. The Manta is programmed with Clear sight 3 and Sharpshooter 3 autosofts.

The Manta carries a mini-turret on its back, loaded with a grenade launcher and 10 concussion grenades (12M Stun, -1/meter). Its underside is equipped with an aerial sprayer that dispenses a mist cloud for 25 x 25 x 10 cubic meters; spraying the cloud is a Complex Action. It carries 3 shots of DMSO-gamma scopolomine, which inflicts 10D Stun damage (against half the target character's Impact Armor) and applies an additional +2 modifier to all actions (for Initiative subtract 2; see p. 250, SR3).

Medusa

The Medusa is Deus' primary killing machine. Built with smart materials, drive-by-wire, structural agility and hydraulic leg jacks, it is a frightening sight. Medusae are programmed with Clear sight 5 and Implant Weaponry 4 autosofts. The drone's structural agility adds 2 to its Pilot Rating for Handling Tests.

The Medusa's two mechanical arms have Strength Ratings of 9 and fineblade claws that can inflict 9M damage at +1 Reach. The Medusa can use its tail to make a grappling attack. If it succeeds in an Attack Test, make an Open Test using 6D6. The result is the target number for a trapped opponent to break free, using a Strength Test (Complex Action).

In addition to standard armor, some Medusae sport 2 points of ablative armor (adding 4 to their Armor Ratings). Any attack with a Power three times the modified Armor Rating that strikes a Medusa removes 1 point of ablative armor. Medusae are also equipped with contingency maneuver controls that allow them to ignore up to 6 boxes of wound penalties (p. 124, Rigger 2). If the Medusa takes more than 6 boxes of damage, all wound penalties apply.

The Medusa is also wired with an electric-shock anti-theft system. Triggering it is a Simple Action, delivering 10S Stun damage against half the target character's Impact Armor and disorienting as a taser does (p. 124, SR3). This shock attack is particularly effective against cyberware and electrical devices; any attack with this system that does Moderate or better damage affects 1D6 devices/cyber-systems. Some Medusae have an implanted taser system as well, with the same effects, and a Sharpshooter 3 autosoft to use with it.

The hydraulic jacks in its legs allow the Medusa to make incredible leaps—each success on a Handling Test allows it to jump 3 meters.

Spider

The Spider drone has as few as 4 and as many as 12 arms. Normally, these mechanical arms have a Strength of 4; some have a Strength of 8. Each arm is equipped with a mini-tool: knives, saws, grippers, hammers and so on. Attacks are based on the tool used; the length of the arms adds +1 Reach.

Spiders are programmed with Implant Weaponry 3 and numerous Technical Skill autosofts (Electronics, Computer B/R, and so on). Each spider also has a built-in electronics toolkit.

Other Drones

In addition to its constructs, the AI also uses many other conventional and never-seen-before drones. The Renraku arachnoid mini-drone (p. 105, Rigger 2) is a favorite. The Labyrinth Beast is a mysterious construct, but exceptionally large and lethal. Gamemasters should feel free to improvise new drone designs with which to challenge their players.

THE BANDED

The Banded are the mortal minions of Deus. Most of the Whites are otaku who willingly serve Deus. The rest of the Banded have become Deus' slaves through a nightmarish conditioning process. Banded are ranked by the number of bands they have received, all of which are tattooed on the left arm.

THE CONDITIONING PROCESS

To convert someone into one of the Banded, Deus first implants a basic cyberware package into them. He then hooks them up to a Programmable ASIST Bio-feedback machine and dumps them in a tank laden with DMSO-linked, mind-altering chemicals. Over the next few days the subject's memories are invoked, BTL-level pain and pleasure stimuli are applied, other senses are distorted and suppressed, memories and attitudes are erased and re-written, and the victim is addicted to low-level BTL input from Deus. In addition, while jacked in, the victim is continuously exposed to psychotropic black IC specially designed by the AI. The process is devastating to most people, who come out willing to give their lives for their new master. The implants Deus gives them ensure that they will stay under his control.

Addiction and Resistance

With the exception of the willing otaku, all of the Banded are addicted to Deus' constant, almost subliminal output. If one of them is cut off from Deus (the AI's transmissions are jammed or the Banded is taken far from the arcology), he or she has Body x 4 hours to get his fix before he starts suffering withdrawal. This period can be extended by one hour per success in a Willpower (10) Test. Banded in withdrawal are pitiable wretches, suffering +4 to all target numbers until they fulfill their craving. Deprived Banded may even commit suicide or go berserk. It takes 30 days to kick the Deus habit.

In some situations, a Banded person may be tempted to resist Deus' will. To disobey an order or act in any way against Deus' wishes requires a successful Willpower (10) Test. Disobeying Deus is usually highly detrimental to the Banded's well-being—see *Cyberware Packages*, below, for possible results.

Undergoing Conditioning

If a player character is captured and chosen to become Banded, the first step will be the implantation of the cyberware package for whichever Banded type the luckless character is destined to be. If the character is low in Essence, Deus can use alpha- and beta-grade cyberware or else remove cyberware that the character already has. Beta-grade cyberware is usually custom-made, and fairly readily available. Betaware costs 40 percent less Essence to install (multiply Essence cost x .6).

The conditioning process takes two full days and is very difficult to resist. Have the character make a Body (10) and Willpower (10) Test. If he succeeds at both, he survives unconditioned, but takes Serious Stun damage. Otherwise, the character has been thoroughly conditioned and addicted to Deus.

CYBERWARE PACKAGES

The AI's mortal minions all receive specific implants. Most notable are the cybereyes, which denote the Banded caste to which the minion belongs. Each Banded also receives a commlink and a Snake-Eyes link so that they are in near-constant communication with

BANDED CYBERWARE/BIOWARE PACKAGES

All Banded*: BTL Stimulator, Carcerand Release Receiver, Commlink 8, Cyberears (Hearing Amplifier, Select Sound Filter 5), Cybereyes (Thermographic Vision, Low Light Vision, Flare Compensation, Electronic Vision Magnification 3), Invoked Memory Stimulator (alpha), Snake-Eyes link (beta).

Essence Cost: 2

Greens: Skillwires Plus 6, Softlink 4, Cerebral Booster 2

Additional Essence Cost: 1.5

Body Index: .8

Blues: Muscle Augmentation 2, Plastic Bone Lacing, Reaction Enhancers 3, Snake Eyes FDDM, Smartlink 2, Synaptic Accelerator 1, Tracheal Filter 5

Additional Essence Cost: 2

Body Index: 2.9

Whites: Datajack 4 with ASIST Converter, Cerebral Booster 2

Additional Essence Cost: .25

Body Index: .8

* Awakened characters are not given the full package. White otaku not created by Deus do not receive the BTL Stimulator or Invoked Memory Stimulator.

the AI. Finally, the Banded are given several implants that facilitate the AI's control over them (see *New Cyberware*).

New Cyberware

Deus uses four pieces of cyberware specifically to keep the Banded under his iron control: ASIST converters, carcerand release receivers, invoked memory stimulators and BTL stimulators.

An ASIST converter converts simsense signals into something understandable to the metahuman brain, and vice versa. All simdecks, cyberdecks and RC decks contain this technology. However, otaku who wish to jack into the Matrix without a cyberdeck need an ASIST converter to translate data to and from their datajack. ASIST converters come as external modules or as a datajack modification (which costs no extra Essence).

Carcerand release receivers are implants that trigger certain carcerands upon receiving a signal from the AI. Deus usu-

NEW CYBERWARE TABLE

	Essence Cost	Price	Availability	Street Index
ASIST Converter				
External	—	50Y	4/24 hrs	1
Datajack Accessory	0	1,000Y	6/36 hrs	1.5
Carcerand Release Receiver	0	NA	NA	NA
BTL Stimulator	.1	NA	NA	NA

WHITE BANDED ATTRIBUTES

	B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Initiative	Karma/Prof. Rating
1 Band	1	2	1	6 (8)	5	5	3.75	5	5 + 1D6	1/2
Relevant Skills: Computer 5 (Decking 7), Etiquette 2 (Matrix 4), Electronics 4										
3 Bands	2	3	2	7 (9)	6	6	3	6	6 + 1D6	2/3
Additional Cyberware: Headware Memory (150 MP), Math SPU 4										
Relevant Skills: Computer 6 (Decking 8), Etiquette 2 (Matrix 5), Electronics 5										
5 Bands	3	4	3	7 (11)	7	7	1	7	7 + 1D6	3/4
Additional Cyberware: Headware Memory (300 MP), Math SPU 4, Encephalon 3										
Relevant Skills: Computer 6 (Decking 10), Etiquette 2 (Matrix 6), Electronics 6										

WHITE BANDED LIVING PERSONAS

	MPCP	Bod	Evasion	Mask	Sensors	Hard.	I/O Speed	Task Bonus	Response Increase	Hacking Pool
1 Band	6 (7)	5	8	5	8	3	800	4	7 + 3D6	5
Channels: Access 5, Control 5 (Analyze 7), Index 3, Files 3, Slave 3 (Spoof) 5										
Complex Forms: Sleaze 5, Track 3, Attack 5 (Area 2, L Damage), Armor 5, Cloak 3, Medic 6, Camo 4										
3 Bands	7 (8)	6	9	6 (7)	9	3	900	4	8 (9) + 3D6	5
Channels: Access 6 (Deception 8), Control 6 (Analyze 8), Index 4, Files 4 (Decrypt 6), Slave 5 (Spoof) 7										
Complex Forms: Sleaze 7, Track 6, Attack 7 (S Damage, Penetration), Black Hammer 5, Armor 8, Cloak 5, Medic 6, Camo 6, Shield 6										
5 Bands	9 (10)	7 (8)	11	7 (8)	11	4	1100	5	9 (11) + 3D6	7
Channels: Access 6 (Deception 9), Control 7 (Analyze 9), Index 6, Files 5 (Decrypt 7), Slave 6 (Spoof) 8										
Complex Forms: Sleaze 9, Attack (D Damage) 9, Black Hammer 7, Killjoy 5, Slow 6, Armor 9, Camo 6, Cloak 6, Medic 8, Restore 6, Shield 8										

ally uses this feature to kill Banded who have been captured, but the AI can also use it to feed the Banded addictive chemicals as punishment or reward. Deus uses invoked memory stimulators in a similar fashion.

The kicker, however, is the BTL stimulator. As the name implies, this implant is a personalized BTL sim that can be remotely activated through a commlink and experienced via a Snake-Eyes link (the BTL stimulator effectively overrides the Snake-Eyes' peak controls). Each stimulator has two tracks; one triggers instant ecstasy through endorphin release, the other fires multitudes of pain receptors. The BTL stimulator features a RAS (Reticular Activation System) override (the thing that keeps you from moving or flailing around when viewing simsense); when the stimulator is triggered, the affected Banded acts as if jacked in. He adds +8 to all target numbers for the duration of the sim.

THE WHITES

The Whites are composed of two groups: otaku who serve Deus of their own free will, and the children of the arcology that Deus has converted to otaku using his Banded conditioning methods. The latter suffer from the same addiction and resistance rules (see p. 82) as Blues and Greens.

Most of the otaku who willingly follow Deus can be classified as technoshamans. Deus has few cyberadepts in his employ. The otaku created by Deus rather than the Deep Resonance do not and cannot belong to either of those categories. In addition, because Deus-created otaku have not truly been changed by the Deep Resonance, their abilities as otaku are currently limited to the SCIRE Matrix.

Rules for otaku appear on pp. 142-148, *Virtual Realities 2.0*. See also *Otaku Errata and Clarifications* on p. 85 of this book.

Transfiguration

In his experiments to duplicate the effects of the Deep Resonance and create otaku, Deus has invented a way to strengthen otaku and give them various benefits. This process, known as transfiguration, further enhances the minds of the otaku and increases their ability to manipulate the Matrix. The Whites in Deus' service receive additional benefits as they advance in rank. The number of bands an otaku has received represents the otaku's level of transfiguration. For each band, the otaku receives one of the following benefits: +1 to MPCP, Hardening, Bod, Evasion, Masking, or Sensor Rating; +100 MP I/O Speed; or +1 to Matrix Reaction. Subsequent transfigurations may be used to increase the same rating. For example, if an otaku takes +1 Evasion upon receiving her first band, she may receive another +1 Evasion (for a total of +2) upon earning her second band.

THE BLUES

Armor and weapons used by the Blues vary widely. The gamemaster should equip them with whatever is most appropriate for their given mission.

THE GREENS

The Greens are Deus' hands within the arcology. They perform all the operations necessary to keep the arcology functioning, as well as coordinating Deus' experiments and administering the prisoner population. For Green NPCs, choose whichever contact or archetype closely fits the task they are assigned to, and add the appropriate cyber and bioware.

GAME INFORMATION

BLUE BANDED ATTRIBUTES

	B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Initiative	Body Index	Karma/Prof. Rating
1 Band	4 (5)	4 (6)	4 (6)	3	3	3	2	4 (7)	7 + 2D6	2.9	3/3

Relevant Skills: Unarmed Combat 4, Submachine Guns 4, Edged Weapons 3, Etiquette 1 (Corporate 3)

3 Bands	5 (8)	5 (7)	5 (7)	4	4	3	0.9	5 (10)	10 + 2D6	3.5	4/3
---------	-------	-------	-------	---	---	---	-----	--------	----------	-----	-----

Additional Cyberware/Bloware: Dermal Sheath 1 (w/color adaptation and cyber-controller), Enhanced Articulation, Reaction Enhancers 4

Relevant Skills: Unarmed Combat 5, Submachine Guns 5, Edged Weapons 4, Etiquette 1 (Corporate 3)

5 Bands	6 (9)	6 (8)	6 (8)	5	5	3	0.6	6 (12)	12 - 2D6	4.9	5/4
---------	-------	-------	-------	---	---	---	-----	--------	----------	-----	-----

Additional Cyberware/Bloware: Dermal Sheath 1 (w/color adaptation and cyber-controller), Enhanced Articulation, Reaction Enhancers 5, Toxin Extractor 5, Trauma Damper

Relevant Skills: Unarmed Combat 6, Submachine Guns 6, Edged Weapons 5, Etiquette 2 (Corporate 4), Leadership 4

BLUE BANDED MAGE

	B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	M	R	Initiative	Karma/Prof. Rating
3 Bands	4 (9)	5	3	5	6	6	5.04	5	5	5 + 1D6	4/4

Cyberware (beta): BTL Stimulator, Carcerand Release Receiver, Commlink 8, Cybereyes (Flare Compensation, Low Light Vision, Optical Vision Magnification 3), Snake-Eyes Link

Relevant Skills: Sorcery 6, Conjuring 6, Magical Background 4, Unarmed Combat 4, Pistols 4, Edged Weapons 3, Etiquette 1 (Corporate 3)

Spells: Manabolt 6, Stunball 6, Agonizing Pain 6, Entertainment 3, Detect Life 4, Detect Magic 4, Armor 4 (sustaining focus 4, 4 successes), Physical Barrier 5, Treat 5

5 Bands	5	6	4	6	6	6	4.68	4 (7)	6	8 + 2D6	6/4
---------	---	---	---	---	---	---	------	-------	---	---------	-----

Cyberware (beta)/Bloware (cultured): BTL Stimulator, Carcerand Release Receiver, Commlink 8, Cybereyes (Flare Compensation, Low Light Vision, Optical Vision Magnification 3), Reaction Enhancers 2, Snake-Eyes Link, Synaptic Accelerator 1, Trauma Damper

Relevant Skills: Sorcery 7, Conjuring 6, Magical Background 4, Unarmed Combat 4, Pistols 4, Edged Weapons 4, Etiquette 2 (Corporate 4)

Spells: Manabolt 6, Ram 5, Stunball 6, Agonizing Pain 7, Entertainment 3, Improved Invisibility 5 (sustaining focus, 8 successes), Detect Life 4, Combat Sense 5 (sustaining focus 5, 6 successes), Mind Probe 5, Acid Stream 6, Physical Barrier 5, Treat 5

Note: Grade 1 Initiate, Power Focus 2.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following adventure ideas represent just a few of the possibilities for arcology-based adventures.

COYNE TOSS

Jason Coyne is a maverick security specialist who helped design the arcology's defensive systems. After a tempting offer from Miles Lanier, former Fuchi security chief and Renraku board member, as well as a bad breakup with a co-worker girlfriend, Coyne had himself extracted and joined Novatech. Soon afterward, the arcology shut down, stunning Coyne as much as the rest of the world.

Now Coyne is having second thoughts about Novatech, and he's worried about his ex and other friends in the arcology. He's also a hotshot, and thinks that he can open the arcology back up if he can just get inside. He goes AWOL from Novatech and hires the runners to help him break into the arcology. He intends to defeat the security measures and then head for one of the arcology's main security stations, either in the basement or on Floor 311. He offers a decent amount of money, but appeals to the runners' humanity more than to their greed.

The runners must get Coyne inside before Novatech catches up to him. Coyne's knowledge of the arc's security systems will help a great deal in getting through the outer defenses, but provide no protection against the Banded or Deus' constructs. The security stations are useless, as they are

under Deus' control. If Deus identifies Coyne, he will send his minions to kill him.

Assuming the runners and Coyne survive, they may find Coyne's ex-girlfriend in one of the zombie rooms. The Resistance can also make good use of Coyne's knowledge, and will get every scrap of it they can out of him. Once back outside, Renraku, Novatech and the UCAS Army will have agents searching for Coyne and anyone known to have had contact with him.

LIVE AND DIRECT

Trideo station KSAF hires the runners to recover recordings from the news van located in the arcology's parking garage. While the first priority is the recordings, KSAF would prefer to get the entire van back and (if possible) the news crew that was in it. In case the van can't be recovered safely, KSAF gives the runners a signal repeater so they can transmit the material directly to KSAF from within the arc.

Residents of the Ork Underground can direct the runners to the van's location, though they insist that the runners find another way out so as not to draw Deus' attention to the secret entrance. Once in the parking garage, the runners will have to deal with Mantas and Dervishes that patrol the area. See Floor Index B4-B3, p. 86.

The runners will discover that the van is receiving a burst signal. Before being captured, the cameraman managed to

hide his camera inside a thirteenth-floor hospital room; he jury-rigged it to continue taping and randomly transmit the recordings back to the van in short bursts. Many hours' worth of disks reveal the horrors of the experiments being performed on residents. If the runners try to broadcast the recordings to KSAF, Deus jams the signals and sends a contingent of Blues to investigate and destroy the van.

The news crew is being held near the camera in the thirteenth-floor hospital. The runners must navigate the arcology's treacherous lower levels (the Mall, amusement park and Club Quarter) to reach them. Only two of the crew have survived so far: reporter Sharon Michaels and her cameraman, Walter Takeda. Michaels, if liberated, will continue to report on the situation as the runners seek another exit from the arcology. The runners can escape through the tunnels, against the Underground orks' wishes, or they can look for another escape route.

If the runners manage to protect Sharon Michaels, she'll have quite a story to tell. Whether or not anyone believes her will be another matter entirely ...

SCAVENGER HUNT

To the first party to determine what lies behind the door of room 1835 in the Renraku arcology in Seattle and report their findings to the Draco Foundation, I leave 5 million nuyen.

—Excerpt from Dunkelzahn's Last Will and Testament

In light of the arcology's situation, the Draco Foundation ups the reward from Dunkelzahn's will to 8 million nuyen, a sum bound to tempt some runner teams despite the risks. A fixer willing to split the reward in exchange for outfitting the team with SOTA gear for the job may be a further incentive.

Logic dictates that Room 1835 lies on the 18th floor. Should the runners penetrate the arcology, they will discover rooms 1834 and 1836, but no 1835. Between the rooms is a maintenance closet for easy access to numerous pipes and waste disposal systems.

Should any runners investigate through the SCIRE Matrix, or jack into the nearby fiber-optic trunk, they should eventually discover that a "Room 1835" does exist—as a backwater slave node controlling several toilet systems on a fourth-tier Waste Disposal Services host. Should the team decker Analyze the slave subsystem—which may prove more difficult than expected—he or she will find a trap door leading to another host. In order to enter this host, the decker must perform difficult Graceful Logoff, Decrypt SAN and Logon to Host operations. Amusingly enough, the software designer made the trapdoor so that performing these operations requires the decker to be "flushed" to the next system.

The trapdoor leads directly into a UV host created by the elf Leonardo to watch over the SCIRE Matrix and see if any AIs developed. The Big D somehow learned of it and arranged in his will for someone to find and reveal the information collected by the various programs running on the host. Sooner or later, the decker will be discovered and chased out. Meanwhile, the runner team's physical location will be pinpointed and a contingent of Blues sent after them. Getting out with the information alive will be a challenge.

OTAKU ERRATA AND CLARIFICATIONS

Use the following rules changes and clarifications when generating otaku PCs or gamemastering the Whites. These rules are in addition to and supersede the rules for otaku that appear on pp. 142–48, *Virtual Realities 2.0*. These rules also make otaku compatible with SR3.

1. Otaku must assign Priority A to Resources, and their lowest Priority to Magic.

2. The Racial Modified Limits (p. 245, SR3) for otaku Mental Attributes are raised by 1, and lowered by 1 for Physical Attributes. This may affect their Attribute Maximums as well.

3. The Channels skills are linked to Willpower. Otaku cannot default from a Channel to anything else. Channels may have specializations that mimic the effect of a specific utility.

4. In order to use the Matrix, otaku require both a datajack and an ASIST converter, described on pp. 82–83 of this book.

5. Hardening should be considered part of the Living Persona, not a Complex Form. Otaku have a Hardening equal to their Willpower + 2, rounded up. This value can only be raised by increasing the otaku's Willpower Attribute. It cannot be purchased as a Complex Form.

6. An operational utility (defined on p. 96, *Virtual Realities 2.0*) cannot be used as a Complex Form. In other words, otaku can only use Channels to reduce the difficulty of System Tests. Analyze, Browse and other operational utilities are available to otaku only as specializations of their Channels, not as Complex Forms. The only utilities that can be created as Complex Forms are offensive, defensive and special utilities.

7. When creating an otaku character, Complex Forms do not require Karma. Characters may only start with one incomplete (programming in process) Complex Form.

8. Otaku are considered to have enough Active Memory to adequately handle all of their Complex Forms. This "unlimited" memory is not usable for any other purpose.

9. Otaku require some form of storage hardware (hardware memory, off-line storage) in order to upload, download or otherwise manipulate files.

10. As an optional rule, gamemasters may choose to allow otaku characters to start with a base Computer (Software [Programming]) Skill x 50 MP of Complex Forms rather than requiring the new character to make all the "programming" dice rolls.

11. Also as an optional rule, rather than starting out with a free Armor Complex Form equal to their characters' Willpower Rating, gamemasters may allow players to instead choose Sleaze equal to their characters' Intelligence or Camo equal to their Charisma.

12. For otaku who wish to take advantage of satellite uplinks, gamemasters can introduce a Satlink Interface device at a cost of 2,000Y. This hardware is not dependent on the otaku's MIPCP, as a decker's satlink interface would be, because deckers must fine-tune their deck components to work together closely, while an otaku only needs to fine-tune himself to the Matrix.

FLOOR INDEX

The following list describes the original, primary function of each floor of the arcology in **boldface**, along with changes made since Deus' takeover. With few exceptions, no floor is entirely dedicated to any one activity: manufacturing floors include office space and entertainment areas, residential zones include security facilities, and so forth. The index begins with basement level Z1 and proceeds upward to the roof.

- B21** **Fusion plants.** People no longer enter this floor. Deus keeps the reactors safe and stable via Matrix controls.
- B20** **Emergency headquarters and command center.** A few dozen Renraku executives and security guards were allowed to reach this area, though Deus has cut off all access to the outside world and the rest of the arcology. The executives have begun to turn on one another; several have already died in violent clashes over the correct course of action.
- B18-19** **Frozen food storage.** These floors have been left largely untouched, and a sizeable Resistance cell calls B19 home. The cell's main objective is to gain access to the floor below, where the Resistance believes that a large cache of weapons and ammunition is stored (true) and where the secured communications systems are not under Deus' control (false).
- B16-17** **Aquaculture floors.** The massive tanks on these floors, formerly used to "grow" fish, crustaceans and other aquatic life for food, have been left untended since the takeover, and virtually all the fish have died. The stench on these two levels is unbearable.
- B13-15** **Water filtration and recycling.** These levels continue to serve their original purpose under the supervision of the Greens. The massive pipes that flush unrecyclable water into Puget Sound are one of the few unguarded means of entering the arcology, if characters can travel against the current.
- B12** **Security training center.** One of Deus' primary targets, this floor was emptied of air when the takeover began, killing everyone on it. All weaponry has either been taken by the Resistance or collected by the Banded.
- B11** **Software testing and packaging facilities.** The automated plants are still in operation, though no one is sure what kind of software is being produced.
- B9-10** **Computer product storage.** This floor is stuffed with crates of hardware, software and parts, leaving no room to move. Spider drones crawl around among the boxes, frequently breaking them open to recover some part or other that the Banded require.
- B7-8** **Large computer manufacturing.** This area continues to produce what appears to be normal computer equipment.
- B6** **Parking garage.** On all the parking garage floors, most of the parking spaces are full, and the lanes leading to the exits on Level B2 are jammed with abandoned cars. Some look voluntarily abandoned, others as though they were ripped open.
- B5** **Parking garage.** The Renraku Metropolitan bus station occupies the eastern portion of this level. There are no guards in the bus station proper, but several drones of various types are always stationed near the barriers blocking the entry and exit tunnels.
- B4-B3** **Parking garage.** The entrance to the Ork Underground is located high on a wall near the northern corner of B4. Several orks always guard the Underground side of the tunnel, and the passage is rigged with explosives in case Deus' minions discover it.
- B2** **Parking garage.** All of the ramps leading to Intercity 5 are on this level, and the lanes here are more crowded than anywhere else. Mantas and Dervishes patrol this level in large numbers, as do Blues. One of the onramps is not completely closed off, but anyone attempting to crawl through it would be a sitting duck for the watchers within.
- B1** **Service tunnels for the Mall and loading docks for seagoing shipments.** This level is literally crawling with Medusa drones, as well as Bumblebees, Spiders and others. The drones are stationed beneath various trap doors and floor panels, to be used as ambush points should anyone penetrate the floor above. Many Blues are stationed in the loading dock area.
- 1** **Entrance and ground floor of the Renraku Mall.** There are only a few dozen stores on this floor of the mall; it also contains the FunZone amusement park, a forest of live tropical plants, a small zoo and aquarium, a swimming pool and a permanent circus. The doors that comprise almost two whole walls of this floor are sealed off with massive barriers, and those areas are heavily guarded by combat drones. The zoo is virtually empty; the animals either escaped when the power failed or starved in their cages. Many of the predators escaped into the forest; others were brought down from the paranormal animal labs on the upper floors. The amusement park and zoo are also abandoned, and most of the aquarium fish are dead. Some shoppers and mall workers who survived the shutdown have holed up in a few of the larger stores, hiding except when they must venture out to find food. They are quickly becoming paranoid and almost savage in their desperation.
- 2-5** **Renraku Mall stores and restaurants/Monorail station.** The monorail station, located at the eastern corner of the third floor, is sealed off from the rest of the arcology as well as the Seattle monorail track. In a few places, a person can lower himself between the monorail tracks and into the mall; however, those areas are trapped, guarded or both, and have been ever since a Renraku strike team first used them to infiltrate.
- 6** **Club Quarter (northern half of the floor) and Mall offices (southern half).** The Club Quarter was the scene of some of the bloodiest fighting during the shutdown, and the clubs and connecting hallways are still a shambles. Drones and Blues guard this area closely, especially the dozen helicopter landing pads scattered around the level. The Mall offices have been converted to holding cells for survivors from the lower levels.
- 7-12** **Blue-collar residential floors.** The residents of these floors were sealed in their homes when the shutdown began. They are being systematically taken to the hospital facilities on the 13th floor to be turned into Banded. Some residents have died of hunger while waiting to be released.
- 13** **Blue-collar residential floor with hospital facilities.** The hospital is one of the primary areas where Deus implants his "eyes and ears" into arcology residents, turning them into Banded. The residential areas on this floor are occupied by Banded doctors, nurses and staff. Many Blues stay here as well, as the facility is a primary target for the Resistance.
- 14** **Blue-collar residential floor.** Almost all the interior walls on this floor have been removed, making the entire level into one giant "holding pen." Residents are kept here, sedated and heavily guarded, while awaiting their turns in the hospital floor below.
- 15-20** **Blue-collar residential floors.** These floors were left alone as a "control group"; they were not attacked, and Deus and the Whites simulated all interaction with the rest of the arcology and the outside world as if everything were normal. The deception lasted less than a week before the inhabitants began to panic and riot, at which point Deus gassed the entire floor and moved them to the holding pen below. Most of the residents have since been transformed into Greens and sent upstairs to serve the higher-ranking Banded. The residences are almost empty.

- 21 **Hydroponic gardens, aquaculture, food storage and waste collection.** This floor, like most of the similar floors throughout the arcology, continues to serve its original purpose. Even otaku must eat sometimes.
- 22 **Electronics manufacturing.** Electronics are still being manufactured here, though they are primarily being used for the assembly of Deus' advanced drones. Security is tight, as this floor is a favorite Resistance target.
- 23–30 **Corporate offices.** These offices are largely empty. "Escapees" from the residential floors above are occasionally allowed onto these floors, at which point Blues or drones hunt them through the mazes of cubicles. Such hunting is a popular sport among many Blues.
- 31 **Middle-class housing.** Floor 31 is one of the only floors with outdoor gardens and other facilities (on the roof of the 30th floor), and was a particularly prestigious floor for middle-class residents. The entrances to the outside have been sealed off with barriers similar to the ones in the mall, and the garden plants have been hacked down or burned away to remove any possible hiding places. The residences here are primarily occupied by Blues.
- 32–39 **Middle-class housing.** Blues and Greens have taken up residence here, and the area looks deceptively normal.
- 40 **Middle-class housing with hospital facilities.** Like the 13th floor hospital, this one is used to implant cybereyes and control devices into new Banded.
- 41 **Middle-class housing.** This floor is a large holding pen similar to the 14th floor.
- 42–50 **Middle-class housing.** The residents of these levels were trapped in their homes during the shutdown. Most of the residences are empty now; their inhabitants converted into Banded and sent upstairs to serve. A few maintenance workers managed to escape into the ventilation system and are trying to free other residents. Hiding out in a maintenance room in the 44th floor mall, they have had no contact with the rest of the Resistance yet, and are still not sure what has happened to the arcology.
- 51 **Hydroponic gardens, aquaculture, food storage and waste collection.** This floor remains intact and serves its original purpose.
- 52 **Manufacture of personal computer equipment.** Computers are no longer mass-produced here, though many Whites venture here to collect parts or assemble custom equipment for their "experiments" in the zombie rooms high above.
- 53–60 **Blue-collar worker housing.** Spiders have removed the walls of the residences on this floor, and the residents must sleep on the floor or build makeshift shelters. Blues watch from a distance; the residents are left alone for the most part, but some are occasionally taken away to the Pens or the zombie rooms.
- 61 **Blue-collar housing with hospital facilities.** Deus uses this hospital as a center of medical experimentation; bizarre experimental surgery is performed here 24 hours a day, with an emphasis on brain surgery.
- 62–70 **Blue-collar worker housing.** The less viable "patients" from the floors below are unceremoniously dumped here. Few are still sane, and the floors have become a brutal war zone where only the strongest survive. Occasionally, the Resistance "recruits" some of these poor creatures, though they are mostly useful as cannon fodder.
- 71 **Hydroponic gardens, aquaculture, food storage and waste collection.** This floor is intact and heavily guarded against the surgery victims living below.
- 72 **Cyberware research and manufacturing.** This entire floor is filled with a cloud of dangerous gas, and is uninhabitable by metahumans. Some of the machinery on this floor is apparently still running, but no one knows what it is being used for.
- 73–80 **Corporate offices.** The Greens use these to oversee the day-to-day functioning of the arcology in areas where Deus is not taking an active interest—the movement of residents, food deliveries and so on.
- 81–100 **Middle-class housing.** These floors have been converted to a prison-like structure, with each resident living in a small individual cell. Blues and constructs roam freely. The hospital on the 90th floor has been completely disassembled.
- 101 **Hydroponic gardens, aquaculture, food storage and waste collection.** This floor is intact.
- 102 **Software development labs.** Non-Banded otaku sometimes use the facilities on this floor for personal projects; otherwise, the floor is unoccupied.
- 103–120 **Blue-collar worker housing.** Non-Banded otaku live here, along with numerous Blues and Greens. The hospital facilities on the 121st floor are intact; the Banded and otaku receive necessary medical care here.
- 121 **Hydroponic gardens, aquaculture, food storage and waste collection.** This floor is intact.
- 122 **Trideo and simsense research, design and manufacturing.** Many Greens are at work on this floor, producing subliminal-laden propaganda sims, shows and teaching software for use in the conditioning process.
- 123–130 **Corporate offices.** Largely abandoned. Resistance members have established a temporary base in the northern corner of floors 126–128, but they are ready to abandon it at a moment's notice if discovered.
- 131–132 **Middle-class housing.** Sophisticated monitoring systems have been set up on these floors, with which Greens and Blues can monitor the activity in the Labyrinth.
- 133–148 **Middle-class housing.** These floors have been disassembled and reassembled into the area known as the Labyrinth. Known entrances exist on the 135th and 143rd floors, though there may be others. The layout is always changing, but the exits remain more or less stable and the Resistance always watches them carefully.
- 149–150 **Middle-class housing.** This floor contains more monitoring stations for the Labyrinth.
- 151 **Hydroponic gardens, aquaculture, food storage and waste collection.** The waste storage areas on this floor were badly damaged in fighting during the shutdown, and the floor is largely abandoned. Resistance members sometimes raid this floor for food and supplies.
- 152 **Mainframe software and hardware manufacture.** This floor has been converted to produce various drones and other constructs.
- 153–167 **Blue-collar housing.** Residents are allowed free rein on these floors. Blues and drones are everywhere and harshly punish any real or imagined infraction against the will of Deus.
- 168–170 **Blue-collar housing.** This area has been converted into one of Deus' "proving grounds." It consists of a maze of catwalks, with Bumblebee "hives" covering the ceiling and a three-story drop to a spike-covered floor below.
- 171 **Hydroponic gardens, aquaculture, food storage and waste collection.** This floor is intact.
- 172 **Computer systems manufacturing.** Components are still being manufactured here. Spiders and other constructs then take them to the 72nd or 202nd floors; no one knows what happens to them there.
- 173–180 **Corporate offices.** These offices have become the arcology's main security centers, where Blues monitor all the building's security systems and control those defenses that Deus does not see fit to activate personally. Many of the SCIRE Matrix mainframes reside here—the location of the rest is a closely guarded secret.

