



SHADOWRUN

BETTER THAN BAD



DEEP SHADOWS SOURCEBOOK



BETTER THAN BAD

CATALYST
game labs™

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JACKPOINT

CONNECTING TO JACKPOINT VPN...

...IDENTITY SPOOFED
...ENCRYPTION KEYS GENERATED
...CONNECTED TO ONION ROUTERS

>>>LOGIN: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
>>>ENTER PASSCODE: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
...BIOMETRIC SCAN CONFIRMED
YOU'RE IN. USE IT WELL.

“AT THE END OF THE DAY, I FIGHT FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES.
IF THAT MAKES ME AN OUTLAW, SO BE IT.” - ANGELA PARKHURST

JACKPOINT STATS

103 Users are active
on the network

LATEST NEWS

• Z-OGB calls reports
of crates of missing
certified credsticks “highly
exaggerated.”

PERSONAL ALERTS

• You have 18 new private
messages.
• You have 7 new responses
to your JackPoint posts.
• A man named Danny is
calling, wondering if you'd
like to be “number eleven.”
There are 7 members online
and in your area.

Your current rep score: 772
(69% Positive)

Current Time: 14 April 2080,
1833 hrs

WELCOME BACK TO JACKPOINT, CHUMMER:

Your last connection was severed 20 hours, 20 minutes,
and 40 seconds ago.

TODAY'S HEADS UP

• We all know going in that this topic is going to make
Clockwork insufferable. Buckle up.—Glitch

INCOMING

• The Matrix: Like the Wild West, only with no judicial system
whatsoever and faster gunslingers. [[Tag: Kill Code](#)]
• Look, you're not going to become a rock star. But still, here's a
few bands you could join. [[Tag: No Future](#)]
• If we're gonna be honest, you probably should panic. [[Tag: The
Neo-Anarchist Encyclopedia](#)]

TOP NEWS ITEMS

• UCAS Secretary of Commerce Sharon Patel calls Ares
relocation discussion “mere sabre rattling.”
• Azanian government says quarantine in Radfontein area
poses no danger to adjacent areas.
• Fort Lewis Zoological Gardens to display spider-like creature
of “unknown evolutionary origin.”

INTRODUCTION

Some shadowrunners will tell you there are no such things as good guys and bad guys in the shadows. There are only the living and the dead, and anything you do to stay in the former category is just fine.

This book is not about them.

Instead, this book is about the runners who look at the messed-up, drek-filled Sixth World around them and say, “It doesn’t have to be like this.” Are they going to change the entire world? Probably not—too much money and power are aligned against them. But will they fix some damage, right some wrongs, and make the lives of a few people better? Damn right they will.

Since they follow in the footsteps of the legendary bandit Robin Hood, who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor, these runners are known as hooders. The reasons they do what they do, the causes they take up, and the methods they employ are enough to fill a book—specifically, the book you’re reading now. Maybe they’re cleaning up a neighborhood that the megacorps have filled with toxic sludge. Maybe they’re hunting down predators or others who exploit the powerless. Or maybe they’re simply looking to shift some of the world’s resources around to those who really need

it. Whatever the case, they are putting their skills to the service of something larger than themselves.

We start with **Lights in the Darkness**, a basic look at who is trying to do good in the shadows and what motivates them. **Fixer-Upper Opportunities** provides information on the jobs these hooders might do and how they’ll find them. **Pretoria, Hurrah** takes a tour of one of the best spots on the globe to do hooding work—the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Metroplex in Azania, or Paydubfau, as the locals call it. In this sprawl, the haves do direct battle with the have-nots, and the fight is just beginning. **Jacaranda Citizens** looks at some of the denizens of Paydubfau, as well as a notable hooder team. **Being Less Bad** focuses on some of the techniques and ideas a runner might use in hooding, and **Building a Hooder** provides the tools and rules a hooder needs to get the job done.

With that information, a runner should be prepared to go out and right some wrongs. Make no mistake—running the shadows remains a dirty business, and any runner is going to end up in situations that would make a regular corp drone blanch. Maybe you’ll never be comfortable thinking of yourself as a good guy, but once you take up the cause of justice, you at least know that you’re better than bad.

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FRIENDS WILL BE FRIENDS

Wheezer took a quick look, and just shook his head. “Stupid fraggers are just *trying* to piss me off,” he said, climbing off his Scorpion. Pointing at the brawl they were approaching, he said, “Neckless, you take the ones on the right; Deep Dish, you’ve got the left.” Wheezer cracked his neck and started in. “Nukem’s mine. Maybe we can end this before *she* gets here.”

Deep Dish grunted, “*Si, jefe.*” Neckless just nodded. Wheezer waded in beside his companions. His target was a pale-skinned troll calling herself Nukem, a handle that came, near as the big troll could tell, from her hair-trigger temper. She was smaller than he was, but only by a horn’s breadth or so. She was every bit as focused and vicious, and she had her eyes on his job. Damned if he was going to let that happen.

Her back was to him; she was duking it out with one of the numbnuts who’d been trying to muscle in on his turf. A dozen or more storefronts had been smashed, and some civilians had been hurt. This normally wouldn’t have bothered him, but the brawl had spilled out of his turf and into Thunder’s, and the last thing he wanted was trouble with her. With a speed that belied his considerable bulk, he seized the collar of her jacket with one hand and her belt with the other. With the same motion, he spun and slammed her into a ferrocrete wall.

That slowed her down. Wheezer stole a second to see how Deep Dish and Neckless were doing. They were outnumbered, but they were big boys. Those two could hold their own until he finished with his problem kid. Nukem was still shaking it off; he

didn’t give her any more of a chance. Spinning her to face him, he grabbed the collar of her t-shirt in a massive fist and drove her into the wall again. He lifted her up to his eye level and leaned in close to make sure she could hear him. “I made it really simple for you, girl,” he hissed. “Go in, teach these fraggers a lesson, come back. Which part of that did you *not* understand?”

Nukem sneered at him. “What are you so fragged off about?” she spat. “I’m doing what you said—teaching them to stay off our turf!”

He pulled her closer to his face. “I said not to let it turn into a drawn-out brawl, you ignorant slitch!” He looked around them. “What do you call this?” He didn’t give her a chance to answer. “What was the last thing I told you before I sent you out?”

“Don’t go into Thunder’s turf,” she said defiantly.

“Where the hell do you think we are?”

A spiteful look crossed her face. “Thunder’s turf.”

As if to punctuate her words, there was a flash of light on Wheezer’s left, and a clap of thunder pealed right next to them. Both trolls clapped their hands to their ears, Nukem falling like a bag of rocks as she did so. Wheezer tried to shake off the ringing in his ears as he grabbed her collar and dragged her towards the spot where Thunder was standing.

Deep Dish, a human built like an ork, was standing next to her, a renegade Vaquero held by the collar in one muscular hand, an invading ganger in the other. Like most everyone, he was shaking his head, trying to make his ears work right again. Judging





BY PATRICK GOODMAN

from the looks of the ork lying just behind him, the scorch marks on his unfamiliar jacket still smoking, the human magician had just saved him from getting shivved.

"*Gracias*," he said through gritted teeth. Then, with hardly any effort at all, he bashed the two gangers' heads together and dropped them to the street.

Wheezer and Thunder stared each other down for a few moments. There had never been any love lost between them, but over the past few months they'd managed to reach an understanding. He turned away from her and surveyed the damage; there was a lot of it, both property and people. He shook his head and waved Neckless over. When he arrived, he said, "Get those jackets off Nukem and her crew. They're gone."

His lieutenants set to work. Thunder sighed, shot him a toxic look, and walked off without a word to examine the destruction. Most of the gangers seemed able to function, so Wheezer looked down at them. "In case you didn't figure it out on your own," he said, "lightning bolts hurt. Just ask your chummer there." He pointed to the ork with the scorched jacket. "Thunder catches you in her territory again, you'll find that out the hard way again." He paused and took a breath before continuing. "If I catch you - any of you - in *my* territory again, you'll wish it was just lightning bolts. You've got twenty minutes to clear this turf. Deep Dish, Neckless, keep 'em honest." He turned without waiting for a response and stomped off to find Thunder.

He found her in the remains of a small bodega, crouched

next to a pair of young girls, one of whom had a nasty cut across her face, probably from the shattered windows. The bars that had protected the windows were mangled, lying on the floor amidst the shards of glass and wrecked shelves. Without turning around, she said in a quiet voice, "This is all they had, Wheezer." She put her hand on the girl's face; her hand glowed silver over the wound, which closed itself as he watched.

Wheezer shuddered a little; magic always freaked him out. "And you want me to do ... what, sweetheart? I'm really not the 'cry me a river' type."

Other than a glare and its implied threat, there was no response for a few minutes. Eventually, Thunder's hands stopped glowing. She whispered something to the two girls, and they dashed to the back of the store. Thunder turned around to face him. "We had a deal, Wheezer," she said sharply. "You remember?"

The troll nodded. "I remember," he said. "That's why we were rounding up —"

"*This is your fault!*" she screamed, indicating some of the random destruction around her. "A dozen or more smashed-up cars, more broken windows than I care to count right now, and I have no idea how many people were wounded!"

Wheezer glared back at her. "That's bull, girl, and you know it," he spat out. "My crew had orders to stay out of your neighborhood. I came in to clean up after them!"

"Then get busy cleaning up after them!" He started to say something, but nothing came out; he hadn't anticipated that



response. Thunder continued before he had a chance to recover. "That's what I thought," she said. "I forgot for a second that you don't really give a damn about anything. Get the hell out of my neighborhood." She spun on her heel and walked away.

He watched her go for a few seconds, not sure if he should be more pissed off at Thunder or Nukem for the current situation. He still hadn't decided when he turned around and stalked toward his bike. Neckless and Deep Dish were gone, as were the intruders and the outcasts. Probably just as well, since he likely would have shot any of them on sight just then. He mounted his Scorpion, started it, and roared away.

Half an hour later, he realized he was near the old San Jacinto College campus. He shook his head; the girl had gotten to him more than he'd realized. She'd been wrong; he did give a damn about something. Someone, rather. He was only a few blocks away, too. He hadn't been back in years, but he knew Ma and the girls still lived in the same apartment they'd moved into after he'd left home; he sent them money every couple of weeks, and Ma kept taking it.

Without quite meaning to, he turned the bike in that direction. Moments later, he parked in front of the six-story tenement. He had only been here once before, and he remembered that she lived on the first floor. He was grateful; he was a big troll, pushing half a ton, and he had some very real doubts that the stairs in this building could endure his weight.

He sat there for a few minutes, staring at the door, debating whether or not he should go in. *You've come this far, drek-for-brains*, he thought. *Might as well go in and prove Thunder wrong.*

He squeezed his way through the entry way and, hunched over so his horns didn't tear up the ceiling, walked to the end of the corridor. Gently, he knocked on the door. A few moments later, a human woman with terra cotta skin and graying hair opened it. She stared up at him, a look of mixed worry and surprise on her face. "Hi, Ma," he said.

She stared a moment longer, then moved aside. "Hello, Darren," she said. "Come in." He nodded and contorted his way through the door. Ma closed it behind him. "What happened to your voice, son? Are you sick?"

He sat on the floor of the living room and shook his head. "Run-in with the Star," he said simply.

She sat down on the sofa. "I suppose I should have guessed," she said with a sigh. "It's been nearly nine years, Darren. Why are you here now?"

Because a skinny little breeder girl got under my skin, he thought. Aloud, he said, "Has it really been that long?"

She nodded. "Sara and Eliza just turned sixteen."

He nodded. "Thought I'd see how you all were doing," he said.

She nodded again. "We're doing that thing again, Darren," she said, "where we just say things at each other and nod. Stop doing that. Why are you really here?"

Wheezer nearly nodded again out of reflex but checked himself. "Honest, Ma," he said. "I was just wondering how you all were getting along."

"Uh-huh," she said, pointing to her throat. "Another run-in with the Star?"

He rubbed his own throat, almost self-consciously. "Something like that."

She sighed. "We're doing all right, son," she said finally. "The girls are in an Ares technical school; they're very bright. If they

do well, they could get citizenship." She looked up at him, right in the eyes, something most people never bothered doing. "They're out with friends right now," she said. "They think you're dead; I think we should keep it that way."

He took a deep breath. "Yeah. Yeah, probably not a bad idea," he replied. "Just wanted to make sure everything was okay."

He rose and made his way to the door. As he was turning the knob, Ma said, "Son?"

Wheezer turned around. "Yeah, Ma?"

She hesitated for a moment. "You're a better provider than your father ever thought about being," she said, "and I don't want you to think that I'm ungrateful. A lot of times, what you've given us has kept us from going hungry. I don't know if I've ever thanked you." She paused, apparently not sure where to go next. "It's just that they have a chance to get out of this," she said, waving around her, "and —"

"I understand. Ma. I'm not exactly a great example."

She smiled, then said, "I love you, son."

He smiled in return. "I know. Love you, too." With that, he made his way outside to his bike, fired it up, and roared back to his squat.

The pistol roared and kicked in his hand as his Scorpion accelerated beneath him. Wheezer watched another rival ganger lose control of their bike and plow, full-tilt, into one of the countless cars that were parked along Travis Street. He screamed like a scared kid at a horror trid festival until the impact silenced him.

Wheezer looked over his shoulder at the Knight Errant patrol cars that had joined the fray, and then up at the giant red Ares logo looming over Downtown from their tower at Travis and Polk. The troll woman who'd hired him and the gang had wanted a distraction, and with the Knights joining the fray, she was getting one. With interest.

He'd had worse times.

A message flashed in one of his AROs. <We're clear; thanks for the help. Don't stay on our account.> Wheezer holstered his pistol, raised his hand to his lips, and let loose a long, shrill note—his vocal cords might be nearly useless, but when he whistled, you could hear him in Galveston. Almost as one, the Vaqueros peeled away, and started screaming toward the interstate and away from the Knights' jurisdiction.

He'd only gotten a few blocks when he noticed that he'd gained some company. Half a dozen bikes, Vikings and Scorpions carrying orks and a troll, had joined him as he roared toward home turf. Before he had time to react, they'd encircled him, and then he saw her. Nukem.

She pulled her bike closer, matching his speed as he gunned his own engine. He weaved his Scorpion through traffic, trying to pull away from the other troll. He lost track of the rest of her posse as he concentrated on his biggest problem; glancing over, he saw her smiling ferally as she swung her own Scorpion closer to his. "Oh, frag me," he spat into the wind. She was herding him off the freeway, and he'd fallen for it.

He found himself in an empty side street. The two thugs ahead of him screeched to a halt, boxing him in. *Well, it won't be your first road rash*, he thought. Without hesitating, he gunned his engine, and then laid his Scorpion down on the pavement. He released his grip on the handlebars, letting the bike hurtle at full



speed into the enemy gangers as he slid to a painful stop. There was a crash and the wet sound of motorcycle versus metahuman body.

As he rose, Wheezer saw that one opponent was down, most likely for good, and another was limping badly as he made his way toward him. Nukem and the rest of her posse had dismounted and were also approaching him, some with shivs already drawn, others bare-handed. She herself was idly swinging a short length of chain. He looked at Nukem and said, "Busy night?"

The girl just chuckled. "We did all right for ourselves. At least as good as you boys did," she replied.

He looked at her warily. "You were at that party, too? What did they pay *you*?"

She showed him a credstick. "Twelve large, plus whatever we could carry off."

"Oh, really?" he said. A plan to set things right with Thunder came into view.

She put the stick away and swung her chain in a lazy circle. With that same feral smile on her face, she said, "I'm going to enjoy paying you back, old-timer."

"I'll bet you are," he hissed. He cracked his neck as he looked at the half-dozen or so orks and trolls forming a circle around him, then smiled with matching ferocity. "Ladies first."

A couple of days later, Wheezer limped into Thunder's garage. His face was a swollen mess, with his left eye lost in bruises. He could see well enough out of the right one, and he'd heal up eventually.

The human woman was working on a beat-up Jackrabbit and hadn't noticed him yet. She wasn't wearing her duster, opting for a cropped t-shirt and jeans. He wasn't sure why that surprised him, but it did. He seldom ever saw her out of uniform, and she didn't look right to him. He could see that she had more ink on her than he'd have thought. He knew she had a tribal pattern of some sort on her belly; from where he stood, he could see a simple cross on her right shoulder. That didn't bother him, but the other tattoo on that arm did. The long sword that took up most of her right forearm, the blade wrapped in blue flames, almost made him change his mind about what he was doing there.

"Never took you for Human Nation, kid," he said much more calmly than he felt.

She didn't look up from her work. "I'm not," she said. "That sword was Dragonslayer's symbol long before the Awakening. We're taking it back, one scumbucket at a time."

"We?"

"Some friends of mine," she said matter-of-factly. She stood up from the Jackrabbit's innards and looked at her visitor. "Shit, Wheezer, what happened to you?" she asked. "You look like hell. I mean, worse than you usually do."

He chuckled, and it hurt. "Ran into some old friends," he said. "They won't be causing either us any more trouble." He pointed to the tattoo. "You expect me to believe that drek about the ink?" he asked.

She shrugged. "You never asked the Preacher about his jacket, and he has the same sign on it. And his bike. Why are you grilling me about it?"

Wheezer paused; she was right. He never had given Leland

Dunn any grief about the symbol, and he wasn't really sure why he was bothered by it now. He took a deep breath and nodded. "Fair enough." He walked over to a workbench as quickly as he could and plopped a melon-sized fist down on its surface. "Nukem and her goons send their regards. Least, I assume they do." When he lifted his fist, there was a small pile of credsticks sitting on the bench. He turned and walked away as she stepped over to examine the things.

"What's this?" she asked.

He paused, and said over his shoulder, "Those are all certified. About twenty thousand, all told. Give it to those kids in the bodega who got hurt."

"Why?"

The tone of her voice told him it wasn't a challenge; she was truly curious. He turned to face her again. "You were wrong the other day. I do care about things."

Thunder looked sheepishly at the ceiling. "I know," she said. "Look, I didn't mean to—"

He raised his hand. "It's okay," he said. "We're not friends, Thunder. I get that. You don't have to apologize to me for de—"

She leaned her head back in frustration as she clenched her fists and snarled, "Let me finish!"

"—fending your turf," he finished, involuntarily flinching as if it would help if she threw some kind of spell at him.

She brushed her hair out her face and said, "Thank you." Taking a deep breath, she said, "I was wrong the other day, to blame it all on you. You've always been straight with me, and you've kept out of my neighborhood." She paused, looking for something to say. For his part, he kept his mouth shut. "Bible says I should love my enemies. I'm not quite sure I'm ready to go that far just yet, but maybe ..."

He looked down into her eyes. "Are you trying to say that we *are* friends?"

She shook her head. "No," she said. "No, we're not friends, Wheezer. But maybe we don't have to be enemies."

Wheezer stood there in silence for a little while, thinking that one over. "One less thing to look over my shoulder about," he said, more to himself than to her. "That wouldn't suck." He took a deep breath and made a decision. Turning his attention back to Thunder, he said, "I'm still going to keep you honest, you know."

She smiled, and said, "I'll do the same for you."

The troll nodded and regretted it as his bruises asserted themselves. "Okay, then. Not-enemies it is."

She breathed a sigh of relief. "Good deal." Noticing his wincing, she added, "I could do something for that, you know."

He shook his head. "That's something friends do," he said, turning again towards the door. "We've only been not-enemies for a minute or so; let's not rush things. I'll live."

"Fair enough."

He turned back to look at her. "Thanks, though." With that, he headed for the door.

"Wheezer?"

He paused again, and said over his shoulder, "Yeah?"

She rattled the credsticks in her hand. "This is very not bad, man. Thanks."

"Yeah, sure, anytime," he said. "Just don't tell anybody."

He felt strangely comfortable with things as he limped out of the shop. He hadn't set out to make a new friend, or anything like that ... but he had lost an enemy, and that was just about as good. He smiled as he climbed on his bike and rode away.



LIGHTS IN THE DARKNESS

POSTED BY: OLD CROW

ROBBING HOODS

You've heard it before. The food riots in the late 1990s created the flashpoint. New Yorkers rioted, attacked a Seretech hazmat truck that they thought concealed food, and were gunned down by Seretech security. Twenty Seretech employees and two-hundred New Yorkers died. When the other shoe dropped, Seretech was vindicated, and the Supreme Court of the old U.S. of A. gave corporations the right to maintain their own armed forces to protect their property. It all started because of food.

It really isn't hard to understand. Normal folks can live and let live as long as they have what they need to get by. When they lack basic necessities, communities can often come together, get creative, and make ends meet. But when that doesn't work, nature takes over, and we start killing each other. Know what? Maybe that's okay. It ain't my preferred way things go, but people are gonna survive at any cost. What pisses me off is when there's plenty of food (or other necessary resources), but it's hoarded and protected by the powerful. Those powers then use violence and other forms of coercion to make sure everyone else lives lesser lives while they luxuriate. After natural disasters, those who take necessities from abandoned stores are branded looters, while those who steal billions from taxpayers and wageslaves are elected to high office. Yeah, that bothers me. And historically speaking, I ain't alone.

That's when you get Robin Hood. Oh, I know he ain't real, chummer, or if he was, he wasn't the green spandex superhero from old cartoons. But the reason people love Robin Hood is they know in their bones that he was right. In rare fanciful moments, people allow themselves to believe

that good and bad aren't concepts dictated by law, but rather by some higher sense of justice. Justice meaning what is best for everyone, not just some arbitrary few. And when they realize laws have nothing to do with justice, people go full Robin Hood. That's why we call 'em hooders. They steal from the rich and give to the poor ... or at least one of the two.

While people will eventually do what they need to survive, the ones who take risks first so others don't have to are the real heroes. Some feed the people, some slay dragons, some do both. But the propaganda from the top down about hooders is always the same. "If you break the law, you're a bad guy." What the powers that be never stop to ask (on purpose, I might add) is whether or not the laws themselves are bad. And if so, is it not the lawmakers who are the real bad guys? I submit: yes.

A GREAT CLOUD OF HOODERS PAST

Observe this natural phenomenon. Truly, this has gone on since the first age of metahumanity (whatever we call that period, the First World, or whatever was before that). At the very beginning, there weren't any laws, so our kind, shadowrunners and hooders, would be anachronistic then. But once groups of people got so powerful that resisting became complicated and unlikely to succeed, the rebels-with-a-cause stepped in.

An ancient example is Bulla Felix, an Italian bandit. His name loosely translates as "lucky charm" and he, along with six hundred followers, vexed the Roman Empire early in the third century B.C.E. With his affinity for clever disguises, he outwitted Roman forces at every turn. He only robbed from nobles who passed through his territory, leaving the poor unharmed, unrobbed, and unhindered by





Rome. For his trouble, he was killed by wild beasts in an arena.

Twm Siôn Cati was a hero known as the Welsh Wizard. He was born in Tregaron, Wales, around 1530, and spent his life using magic tricks to steal from the rich. He only gave to the poor when it amused him, but nobody's perfect. This guy was a riot, though. Once, a poor man asked Twm to help him steal a pitcher. Together, the man and Twm confronted a merchant. The poor man snuck behind the merchant, and Twm distracted him by claiming one of the pitchers had a hole in it. The merchant and Twm went round and round until Twm put his hand in the pitcher and exclaimed, "If there's no hole, how could I have put my hand inside?!" The merchant cursed Twm for being an idiot bastard, but meanwhile the poor man stole a pitcher from behind the merchant's back.

Rob Roy MacGregor was driven deep into debt by the Duke of Montrose in seventeenth century Scotland, ending with his wife and children evicted as their home burned to the ground in front of them. With nothing left to lose, MacGregor became a bandit, aiming his banditry at the Duke. He escaped prison many times and was beloved by the people for his charity to the less fortunate.

Juraj Janosik had a career as a brigand in Central Europe in the early 1700s. He robbed aristocrats and rich merchants, immediately sharing what he'd stolen with the local poor. The wealthy who passed through his lands often heard, "Stop! Your soul belongs to God and your money belongs to me!" Janosik had such a true lover's heart that no one was killed or even hurt in his robberies. For his trouble, he was pierced by a hook in his side and left to dangle until he died.

Have you ever heard of Nezumi "Rat Boy" Kozo? He was a laborer and firefighter by day, but by night was a nimble thief in Japan's Tokugawa period. When he was finally caught, he confessed to stealing over thirty thousand ryo from at least

one hundred different feudal lords. None of the money was ever found, because it was all given to the poor. Rat Boy even had the decency to divorce his wife before his capture so she would not share in his shame—or his fate. He became known as the greatest thief in all Japan, and even now, people take pieces of his gravestone as souvenirs. It has been replaced many times.

What about a female example? La Carambada, Leonarda Emilia, was an indigenous Mexican woman who dressed as a man to rob travelers in the nineteenth century. After each robbery, she exposed her breasts to the men she robbed, revealing herself to be a woman, in order to shame them within their patriarchal culture. Of course, only a slotter would feel shame from being bested by a woman, so it served them right! Bad as hell with a machete, a gun, and her horse, she started her bandit career because the Mexican government executed her French lover. She gave all the money she stole to Mexico's poor, saying her only reward was the systematic terror of the Mexican elite. Tell me that ain't inspiring.

I could go on about Scotty Smith in South Africa, Edward "Ned" Kelly, Chucho el Roto, Pancho Villa, Salvatore Guiliano, Clergyman Brazil, Phoolan "Bandit Queen" Devi, Malala Yousafzai, or Liu Xiaobo. I could talk about how Gandhi or Anne Frank were proto-shadowrunners for breaking the laws of the rich and powerful. Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Malcom X, and Martin Luther King Jr. fought against racism by breaking the laws that they found unjust and encouraging others to do the same—not for their benefit, but for the people. Were they not shadowrunners? Hooders?

A COMMUNION OF REBELS, REVOLUTIONARIES, AND RUINED

But the world changed after the Seretech decision. What did all of the above hooders have in com-



mon, besides courage and a will to do good? They all fought against injustice, often as embodied in unjust laws and officials. After Seretech, the enemy evolved. Before Seretech, governments reigned as the law of the land. Sure, corps had tremendous power, but theoretically they still had to respect government authority. After the decision, the ultimate power no longer took (only) the form of a geo-political entity whose boundaries were clearly drawn and whose army was identifiable. In the Sixth World, the enemy at the top of the food chain is the corporation; more aptly, the multi-national corporations who have gained extraterritoriality and so-called sovereignty. These AA and AAA corps, and those that aspire to be, are the true enemy, the true thieves, the true devils who need to be stopped.

- We could have a long discussion here about whether the Seretech decision represented a seismic shift in the landscape of power, or if it rather was an incremental adjustment that recognized how power was already evolving, but it would take some time and likely would not add much to the central point here, so I'll resist entering into it. I'll simply add this: In all cases, the true enemy is consolidated power.
- Fianchetto

In the twenty-first century, however, the devil can go places we can't, escape every law, run from every fight. They are the new unjust law. Their very existence is a blight upon freedom and self-determination when their every move is coercive and manipulative, to the point where wageslaves and salarymen don't even know they aren't free. It is now a shared illusion, like the Matrix, but economic and cultural in nature.

Hooders in the Sixth World break that illusion. This explains the large overlap between do-gooders and neo-anarchists in our century. If the world is controlled by the selfish, powerful, and callous, then rebellion is the only moral option; if the world is controlled by inhuman and dehumanizing corporations, the only moral option is neo-anarchism.

- Says the neo-anarchist.
- OrkCEO
- At least he smokes what he's sellin'. More than I can say for some of us here.
- Slamm-0!

But I'm not trying to make a case for neo-anarchism (at least, not here). And while the aforemen-

tioned overlap is evident in this upload, neo-anarchists aren't the only hooders in town by a long shot. Later in this upload, Freya's gonna bring a different POV, but it still comes down to breaking the law for a good cause.

Anyway, perhaps the first sign of the world turning toward its current direction came in the year 2000, just as the century turned. That year, Shiawase brought a nuclear power plant online, freeing themselves from dependence on municipal power. The plant survived a botched attack by the radical eco-terrorist group TerraFirst!, which led to the Supreme Court's Shiawase decision in 2001, establishing corporate extraterritoriality, and gave multinational corporations the same rights and privileges as foreign governments. This allowed these corps to defend themselves more aggressively against similar attacks. Now, whether you believe that TerraFirst! was behind that attack or (like I do) that it was staged by Shiawase to make extraterritoriality a reality, the TerraFirsters were the vanguard of open rebellion against the megacorps in our brave new world.

Barely a year after the Shiawase decision, the U.S. government teamed up with the corps to give us another reason to need hooders. They used eminent domain to grab Native American land and then leased it to the highest bidder for exploitation. The final straw was when United Oil was given carte blanche to exploit the resources of ten percent of the remaining Native land. A new group of freedom fighters, the Sovereign American Indian Movement (SAIM), stood up to this injustice in 2009, capturing a U.S. Air Force missile silo in northwest Montana. SAIM just wanted the stolen land back. The government pretended to negotiate, but instead they took the silo back by force. Not, however, before a lone nuclear missile was launched at Russia. What a different place we would live in if the missile found its mark, but instead, for mysterious reasons, it never did. The most unfortunate fallout from the Lone Eagle incident, as it was later called, was the demonization of Native Americans nationwide.

In late 2009, congress passed the Re-Education and Relocation Act, legitimizing internment camps for Native Americans, leading to the biggest "Frag you!" in the history of hooding. On December 24, 2011, Daniel Coleman, better known as Daniel Howling Coyote, rallied the SAIM revolutionaries in the Abilene, Texas, camp, along with the rest of the Amerindians in captivity, and just walked out.



Walked. That isn't to say that the guards didn't try to stop them. They fired everything they had. But the bullets, or rocks, or whatever else they threw at the escapees just harmlessly fell away. Whenever an escapee was in danger, witnesses reported a glowing energy surrounded them. They walked out of the camp, into a storm outside the compound, and vanished, leaving no trace.

Of course, the walkout was illegal, but it saved lives. Howling Coyote wasted no time building coalitions and bringing people together. On June 10, 2014, he announced a new coalition called the Native American Nations, or the NAN, and declared all of North America the home of Native tribes. Further, he demanded everyone with European, Asian, and African ancestry leave the Americas or face dire consequences. No one listened, but a month later, the Redondo Peak, a dormant volcano near Los Alamos, New Mexico, erupted violently and buried Los Alamos in ash, along with everything else in the area. Daniel Howling Coyote claimed responsibility. He claimed responsibility for the volcano erupting! He said, "I have called on the power of Mother Earth to cause this disaster!" He added that unless his initial demands were met, more of the same sort of disaster would follow. It was then that the United States began taking Daniel seriously. This is why so many of us think that passive resistance just won't work. The powerful only listen to power and fear. And Howling Coyote gave them a taste of both.

On August 17, 2017, as the U.S. military moved to exterminate the tribes and deal with "Native American aggressors," Daniel Howling Coyote and his NAN began the Great Ghost Dance. A ritual of massive scope and massive personal cost, the result was the eruptions of four volcanoes: Mount Rainier, Mount St. Helens, Mount Hood, and Mount Adams, all simultaneous, all in the Pacific Northwest. Many Natives willingly and honorably gave their lives to power that ritual. Now, don't get me wrong, a lot of innocent lives were lost as a result of Howling Coyote's actions and the actions of the Native American Nations that surrounded him. And I ain't saying that I support all of that. But I can't sit back and criticize people who finally get enough mojo to say enough is enough after centuries of getting beat down. And even if I won't fully defend his actions, you can find people who will without too much trouble. Power only listens to power, this argument says, and few can argue with the results.

The next year, in Denver, the NAN, the United States, Canada, and Aztlan came to the table. The Treaty of Denver was offered, and while it wasn't everything Howling Coyote wanted, it was enough for the time. The NAN received sovereignty over the vast majority of what was the Western United States. Daniel Howling Coyote was placed as the head of the Sovereign Tribal Council over the various NAN tribes. Breaking the law, standing up for the oppressed, getting a better future for your people? For my money, Daniel Howling Coyote is the patron saint of hooders.

But he wasn't the only one. In the shadows, we have been exposed to the best the world has to offer. People like Peter Clarris, a.k.a. Da'Profeszur, who spent years in the shadows helping the unfortunate, especially trolls. What about Twist, a shamanic shadowrunner in Seattle who burned himself out to save the world from a demon? Doc Raven gathered a group of do-gooders around him like Wolfgang Kies and Kid Stealth and went looking for magical threats and protecting people who couldn't protect themselves. Why? No reason other than to do it, chummer. Clifton Pritchett was writing neo-a literature and organizing corporate datasteals and sabotage while most of us were in diapers. Unseele Dan and his pals fought the power in Tír na nÓg in the '50s and '60s, while Red the Vampire keeps things as safe as he can around Chicago these days. These are just a few notable examples, mere drops in an ocean of folks who are mad as hell and refuse to take it anymore.

Standing tall among them was Captain Chaos, sysop of Shadowland, a precursor of JackPoint in many ways despite its continued operation. Cap was an anarchist through and through, a shadowrunner with a true heart for bringing down the bad and lifting up the good. For decades he fostered a spirit of cooperation among the shadows, urging runners to punch in the right direction, and then arming them to do so. He was quick with a sermon about anarchy and just as quick with a ban for hate, but he rarely judged those who did things differently than him. He just created a wide-open space for people to come together and secretly plot for the good of the world. But he died, like so many of our best, saving as many of his friends as he could when he went down with the ship during Crash 2.0 back in '64.

But that was a long time ago. Who are the bold standing against the powerful today? There's a lot





of 'em, chummer. These aren't strictly shadowrunners. Most would recoil at being equated with us. But here's the state of hooding from ten thousand meters. Who's monkey-wrenching the gears, who's spitting in powerful eyes, and who's reaching down to help the ones that can't help themselves?

WHAT'S HOODING NOW?

NEO-ANARCHISTS AND ANTI-CORPS

First, showing no bias whatsoever, are the pure neo-anarchists. Their war is fought against the corps first, then the state, in order of danger. Only when power is dispersed will a legitimate society of the people and by the people be able to take hold. But it is true that not all anarchists are hood-

ers, just like not all hooders aren't anarchists. So here are the groups planning for the revolution and what happens after, while punching up or reaching down.

- I know Ebran the Scribe isn't the most popular voice here on JackPoint, but did anyone read his work, "Debunking the Neo-Anarchist Myth?" He called it back in the '40s and '50s. Neo-anarchism just doesn't work. We may not like it, but capitalism won. It isn't best for everyone, true, but it works and keeps working, or else something better would have replaced it by now. To that point, didn't we used to have a ton of do-gooder and neo-a shadowrunners? And what happened? They all got real or got dead. Now, they are just fossils or neo-anachronisms who try to deny the truth of realpolitik in the Sixth World. It's a dead end, folks, and since I marginally care about what happens to everyone here, just give up the silly dream before it gets everyone hurt.
- Cosmo



- I didn't think this kind of blindness existed here. After everything you've read and seen, you still believe that? Corps are artificially keeping capitalism in place by denying the public access to real news and controlling every aspect of buying, selling, and education. This isn't the world choosing greed, nor is it the invisible hand. This is oligarchy disguised as free market.
- Chainmaker

BLACK CROSS

Any sort of organized anarchist movement that exists in the Sixth World has the Anarchist Black Cross, or AB+, somewhere in its DNA. AB+ has roots in anarchist movements from the Fifth World. In particular, they are a direct descendant of the Anarchist Red Cross, started in 1905 to thwart Tsarist Russia. The Anarchist Red Cross organized self-defense and aid for political activists, prisoners, and their families. During the Russian revolution, they changed their name to the Anarchist Black Cross in order to avoid confusion with the International Red Cross. Black Cross has been in constant operation since, focusing on giving aid to those who are arrested, persecuted, or oppressed. They do what they can to give political and legal support to those who stand against inequality and injustice.

As technology has advanced, the Black Cross has kept up. They use the technology of the enemy against them to surprisingly good effect. AB+ has a dedicated and highly skilled cadre of deckers and a growing number of technomancers who do everything from liberating data to making fake SINS and permits, as well as developing Matrix-like networks for struggling revolutionaries to use in war-torn and restrictive environments.

To that point, AB+ is well known to the poor and oppressed of developing nations. They drop into the poorest areas and turn the disenfranchised into fledgling revolutionaries because they address people's most basic needs. You would be surprised how thankful and open-hearted people are when you feed them their first good meal in a month. Also, they heavily recruit criminals—people who are more likely to push back against the law and have less to lose.

- So, they manipulate people by giving them food and basic necessities, recruit the worst of society, and then turn them into drones?
- Clockwork

- Some groups are pushy, yes, but many AB+ cells just want to help people. People become interested in you when you are seen as heroic, so you don't have to manipulate at all. And regarding the criminals, Gandhi said, "Where choice is set between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. I prefer to use arms in defense of honor rather than remain the vile witness of dishonor." You can choose to be better than a criminal; you can't choose to stop being cowardly.
- Chainmaker

- Who's Gandhi?
- Borderline

Depending on how much the state or corp is cracking down, you can also find the AB+ acting as an independent news press, pushing back against the slanted propaganda that typical media shovel into the mouths of their sheep. One example is the Apple Press in Manhattan. Beyond that, they have safehouses in every major city and even in some arcologies, so bottom line: if you are a rebel or are in political trouble, AB+ should be your first call.

BLACK CRESCENT

In 2038, during the Night of Rage, a group of anarchists spontaneously came together in Berlin to oppose the race riots plaguing the city. The group that would be the Anarchist Black Crescent formed at that time to treat the wounds of the heroes injured defending non-humans. A Turkish-Palestinian hobgoblin named Ozgur al Housari and a hermetic human doctor named Louise Derrida kept as many people safe as they could over those five days of terror. Since then, the Anarchist Black Crescent (ABC) has become just as international as the AB+.

Strictly dealing in medical aid, the ABC runs into the most dangerous warzones on the planet, because that is where people are getting hurt and need the most help. But they can also be found in the worst sprawls in North America, such as Chicago or Redmond, Seattle, along with having some sort of presence in most major cities. While not nearly as staffed, funded, or supplied as Crash Cart or DocWagon, the Black Crescent often functions in the same capacity, rushing into turbulent situations and rescuing people who need it. But they do it for the poor, rather than for those who offer the most nuyen.

The ABC has a higher percentage of Awakened individuals on its staff than the typical medical



team, because that allows them to offer aid regardless of the drugs, organs, equipment, and cyberware they may not have access to.

- Mages who don't want to be sucked up into the corporate system learn fast that they will still not be able to live normal lives. That's why there are so many of them in the Black Crescent, and so many are SINless or shadowrunners, too.
- Ecotope

BLACK STAR

Sensing a need to bolster the Black Cross' activity, the anarchist group Black Star got its start in 2036 in Chicago at the international anarchist gathering. If the Black Cross provides political aid and the Black Crescent medical aid, Black Star effectively provides shadowrunning aid to the anarchist movement.

Black Star is made up of mostly of shadowrunners, organized organically into teams of affinity, whether that affinity is a hatred of a certain corp, love of a certain city, or possession of certain abilities. All shadowruns that Black Star participates in are runs directly against national or corporate authority, runs intended to send a political message or raise awareness, or straight up hooding runs benefiting the poor, oppressed, or outcast. Besides that, they offer workshops on decking, demolitions, sabotage, infiltration, firearms, self-defense, data gathering, helpful magic, and other useful information for up-and-coming revolutionaries

Despite a worldwide network, the group suffered greatly and disbanded after suffering huge losses in Bogotá fighting for Amazonia in their war with Aztlan. In late 2075, however, Black Star appeared again and began heavily recruiting. Many who didn't fight in the Az-Am War returned and in the last five years have rebounded quicker than any thought possible. Now you can find bands of Black Stars in myriad cities again, roaming about making mischief, or bunkering down, secretly plotting for the good of metahumanity.

- Yeah, yeah. You've done quite well getting the band back together. But I wanna know where you got the cred to pull that off. You didn't just ask everyone really nicely; I've seen the loadouts you all have on your missions, and I know how much you pay runners when you are shorthanded. Working for the people doesn't afford that, chummer. Fill in the blanks for me. I want the truth.
- Picador

- You can't handle the truth! Heh. I've always wanted to say that.
- Old Crow

OVERREACH

While Black Star secretly plots for the good of the world, Overreach screams and thrashes to denounce just how evil and wrong the world really is. Based somewhere in Mbabane, Azanian Confederation, Overreach is a radically violent anarchist organization. While they aren't limited to any one region, they have a clear preference for targets and operations in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, with the vast majority of their work occurring in the Azanian Confederation.

Since 2064, they've not gone a year without a major bombing or terrorist act, but most of their operations are less public. They train activists with combat, decking, and demolition skills, returning them to mundane lives waiting for opportunities to strike. Many become shadowrunners, taking high-risk jobs against corporate or government targets, doing whatever damage they can once they have the right access. This has gained them a smeared reputation in the shadows, as many Overreach operatives demonstrate a willingness to ditch contracts, or even teammates, to further their goals.

Overreach has been vilified so often in the media that they are virtually synonymous with terrorism. A willingness to kill civilians, often crowds of them, as collateral damage to an operation makes them a perfect boogeyman to scare wageslaves. Overreach sees their activities as war, however, and believes these casualties are an acceptable loss in order to continue fighting.

As a general rule, Overreach has no primary operations. They gather more violent activists to themselves by permitting and encouraging even the most deadly attacks, given that they make a loud enough statement or have a large enough impact on the right targets: corporations and governments.

ATTACK!

In the early twenty-first century, when it became clear the corps were indeed crafting an unstoppable power grab, a group called ATTAC—the Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens, changed its name to Attack! to reflect the defeat of ideas alone.



Previously, ATTAC was trying to push taxing all international money exchanges one percent in order to eliminate financial speculation. After the change, they became something different. They went underground, hoarded weapons, tools, and bombs, and waited for opportunities—not to change hearts and minds, but to fight the corps by any means necessary. They aren't neo-anarchists necessarily, but there are some neo-a's who are part of the group. They are more of a catch-all group for anyone who is anti-corporation. As such, communists, anarchists, eco-activists, religious nuts, and even nationalist groups pinning for their old mother countries have found a home there.

Mostly populated with young metahumans who are disenfranchised by the system, Attack! has no formal structures, leaders, or ideals. It is a loose network with nothing to offer by way of building anything, just bringing down the corps. Attack! suffered some in the late 2060s due to a string of corporate infiltrators, and as a result, some larger groups within Attack! broke off and joined other organizations. An Amerind eco-terror group led by a person known only as Dr. Black defected to Overreach in the early 2070s, as did Nebukadnezar and his Islamic Freedom Movement.

EQUITY

As peaceful as Attack! is violent, Equity seeks to take down the corporations by providing education instead of destruction. While the two may not be mutually exclusive, Equity doesn't spend time doing what others are already doing better. Instead, they break many laws of the corporate world by reminding people that there is an alternative to corporate sovereignty and domination. Like Attack!, they are not unified in their vision for a world after corporate rule, and that is what keeps them relatively small-time. But if you are looking for information, statistics, philosophy, and creativity all in one place, Equity can help you get it and disseminate it, legal or not.

MINORITY RIGHTS GROUPS

I'm sure I'm gonna get drek about this, so I'll address it upfront: The following are not hate groups. They are particular about their focus, and they have a range of activities from peaceful to hostile, but they aren't hate groups. Alternatively, you will not

find a group below listing any pro-majority demographic groups. The reason for that, like everything else hooders talk about, is power. Minority or disempowered groups don't have the power to force their will onto others in the same way empowered and majority groups do. So while the Sons of Sauron may hate, firebomb, and talk nasty about humans, those are understandable actions in light of the way orks and trolls have been treated by humans. In the same way no one blamed the early Americans for starting a revolutionary war over taxes, judging these groups for their actions when they've been systematically impoverished, devalued, degraded, and killed, is at best blind, at worst hypocritical.

As a father of a dwarf son who's growing up in a Humanis-infested city like Chicago (and let's face it, where *isn't* Humanis a problem?), these groups are near and dear to my heart. The Transhuman League and the PoLas get put into this category sometimes, too—they're more post-metahuman than pro-metahuman, but their pro-diversity message usually meshes well with the others. And as a dad of an adopted elf girl who's seen more than her fair share of the street shadows, there is always room for more feminists as well.

- I wouldn't put ORC and the Stonecutters in the same sentence right now. With the way the dwarfs have been muscling into the Seattle Underground, tensions are rising fast, and the ORC could use some help digging up dirt to counter the dwarfs' political influence. Unless the Axegrinders and Sons of Sauron turn the Underground into a bloodbath first.
- Bull
- I have a feeling this'll get me another "kids these days" lecture from Thorn or somebody, but why isn't there a pro-elf policlub?
- /dev/grrl
- There used to be, but they turned into countries when they grew up.
- Frosty
- The Transhuman League has been active in campaigning for Monad rights, too—without much success, unfortunately.
- Plan 9

GHOUl LIBERATION LEAGUE

Even more so than most metahumans, ghouls, most whom didn't do anything to cause their condition, endure near-constant abuse. Whether



it is because of fear, revulsion, or ignorance, the ghoulish population has been driven out of nearly every major city, even the ones that have tried to embrace them. The Ghoul Liberation League began because of Chicago's mistreatment of ghouls, and they continue to gain numbers. Tamir Grey, the ghoulish sympathizer who provided leadership and activism on their behalf, and who was killed for that good work, provided a rallying cry, and they continue to carry on his ideals. The group struggles hard against society and their own needs, but they are gaining ground, if slowly.

- Nice to know at least one person hasn't bought into the fearmongering.
- Hannibelle
- I hope it is equally nice to know that some of us believe fearmongering is necessary.
- Clockwork

STONECUTTERS GUILD

The Stonecutters are the oldest, largest, and most widely recognized dwarf fraternal organization in the world. Founded in Boston, UCAS, in 2043, the organization provides fellowship, networking, and a philanthropic hand to dwarves in need. As a fraternal organization, the Stonecutters Guild unites dwarves of good character who, despite their varied religious, ethnic, or social backgrounds, share a belief in the bedrock of the Stone and the brotherhood of dwarves.

The traditions of the Stonecutters are founded on allegedly Fourth World architecture, and its fraternal ceremonies use the architecture of ancient "Dwarves of Throar" to symbolize moral lessons and truths. For example, Stonecutters are reminded at lodge to "Be as deep as the Old Mines, as welcoming as the Nine Halls, and as profitable as the Grand Bazaar."

- The Stone? What are we, in *Dungeon Age: Reckoning*? That sounds awfully stereotypical for a dwarf organization to venerate "the Stone."
- Bull
- Your information is incorrect.
- Mr. Bonds
- Oh? Which parts? I am earnestly curious. These Stonecutters guard their secrets well, and my little crows were not able to glean as much as I'd like.
- Old Crow

- I can't say. You are seeing their outside face correctly, and they are a good group. But the beliefs and rituals are ... off.
- Mr. Bonds
- Not very coy. It seems we have a Stonecutter in our midst, bound to conceal the truth. I can respect that, just like I respect the good the Stonecutters do in their communities. But since we're being honest with each other, may I assume you approve of the Stonecutters' less-laudable actions?
- Old Crow
- No group is perfect.
- Mr. Bonds
- There are many who would never join an organization that would have them as a member.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- Love it when Mr. Obscurity spins up the classics.
- X-Prime

If you know any prominent dwarves, it's a good bet they are either members or have some connection with the Guild. They are well funded and don't hesitate to throw that weight around when necessary. They don't like to get their own hands dirty, so they aren't hesitant or ashamed of paying you lots of cred to do some good on their behalf. But usually *only* for dwarf-kind. Sometimes you end up running against someone you'd rather not, but not often.

- Any connection to the Zhigul Makers?
- Elijah
- You've heard of them? I didn't know they were common knowledge here.
- Old Crow
- Not common, but the *Court of Shadows* upload mentioned them as native to Earth but having a presence in the Court, so I was curious.
- Elijah
- Yes. There is a connection. One I've tried hard to suss out. Anyone have any leads?
- Old Crow
- PM me. And bring your credstick.
- Frosty



- Don't do this, Jane.
- Mr. Bonds
- Don't threaten me, Mark.
- Frosty
- You know what? I won't. PM sent.
- Mr. Bonds
- Sorry, Magpie. Offer is off the table.
- Frosty
- Figures. Nuyen wins again. The truth will go free eventually.
- Old Crow
- Not today.
- Mr. Bonds
- What *exactly* do we lack, drekhead? Are you suggesting we are just big and dumb?
- Glitch
- I didn't say it ...
- Haze
- Nope. Nope. No fraggin' way. Banhammer is swinging. Haze, you're gone for a week. You've been warned about bringing that racist drek in here. If you're so much more intelligent than me, try finding your way back in before the ban is lifted. And one more like that and you'll be suffering more than just a Matrix ban.
- Bull
- Whatever <comment deleted by Sysop>
- **USER HAZE BANNED**
- Beat me to it.
- Glitch.

SONS OF SAURON (SOS)

The SoS are probably the most controversial entry here, due to their blatant racism against non-orks and trolls. While the Sons of Sauron don't want to kill or enslave everyone who isn't a troll or ork, they do view all of society as complicit in the oppression and exploitation of their kind. As such, they have exactly zero problem with fire-bombing an entire train station to kill a high-ranking member of Humanis who happens to be riding to work.

- You are off your rocker, Crow. These guys belong in another upload: the one about threats. They are dangerous and vile. I have fewer problems with Mothers of Metahumans or the Ork Rights Committee, but the Sons are completely different.
- OrkCEO
- You are right—they are different. The Sons of Sauron are tired of playing by the rules set by the oppressors and have decided to put the pressure where it works the most. Have you noticed the relatively little pushback the UCAS has given them since? Sure, they talk a big game about cracking down, but the truth is, they are afraid of the SoS since they have been more and more aggressive. The Sons have Overreach's full support.
- Clarion
- What does the UCAS have to be afraid of? I mean, sure, they're big and tough, but so are elephants. But they lack the stuff that would make them truly dangerous to cultures ruled by elves and humans. We don't need to be afraid.
- Haze
- I don't condone the Sons' violence-first modus operandi, but I also can't fault them for it. Being in the Sons is a safer choice than trying to navigate life through a system built by and for elves and humans.
- Hannibelle
- Well, I fault them for it. Racism is racism, no matter if the target is orks or humans. They're just bullies picking on weaker humans. That, in turn, will turn even more humans against them. It's a cycle that keeps repeating.
- Hard Exit



- That perspective may not be wrong, but it is also easier to have from the outside of the fight.
- Mihoshi Oni

MOTHER EARTH

I don't know whether I'm more grateful that these groups exist, or depressed that we still need them after two hundred years. The **Mother Earth** poli-club is ... well, the mother of all feminist poli-clubs, if you'll forgive the expression. Their interests run the gamut from reproductive bioethics to feminist eco-extremism. Similar, but more militant, groups are **Rote Zora**, a network of clandestine women-only cells who take the fight to anyone who exploits women or the environment, and **Sie**, covens of female-supremacist pagans and witches who focus on punishing sexual exploitation and objectification.

- If you decide to work with either of the militant groups, be warned: They're sometimes more "pro-women" than "pro-equality"; and they treat male runners accordingly. I had the unpleasant experience of being accosted and threatened while trying to arrange a deal with a Sie coven, for the terrible crime of working with a male pilot.
- Red Anya
- Some of them can be real hypocrites, too. I regularly get hate mail from radical feminists accusing me of "collaborating with the patriarchy" and "promoting the objectification of women." Funny how they'll trot out the whole "a woman's body is her own" line when it comes to abortion rights, but conveniently ignore it when a woman wants to start her own escort service.
- SeaTAC Sweetie

SURGE/PROTECT

One disturbing trend that you notice if you study history long enough is that whenever a new group comes in contact with an existing culture, there are always those who hate and fear it. Since 2061, those who became changelings due to the SURGE (Sudden Unexplained Recessive Genetic Expression) phenomenon have experienced the largest rise in violent prejudice. Even as technomancers have been gaining some measure of acceptance, changelings are still reviled, largely due to the chaotic and unpredictable nature of their differences from mainstream metahumans. Into this backdrop, SURGE/Protect was born. SURGE/Protect is a group of changelings who have been brought together through various circumstances

to seek out and protect other changelings when no one else will.

- Technomancers are not gaining as much acceptance as the corps might have you think. Only Evo, Spinrad Global, and Saeder-Krupp (of all corps) come close. Still, your point is taken. Changelings will never technically get "support," since they are often seen as mutants rather than a race or group unto themselves.
- Netcat

Those rescued are given the option of being trained by their leader, a rather large changeling named Hibernia Donovan, who looks like she was chiseled out of half a ton of stone. Once she trains them, she sends them out to help other changelings in and around the CAS. SURGE/Protect headquarters out of a renovated hotel in Jonesboro, Arkansas, CAS. They don't quite use a third of the hotel's capacity, so there is always room for more changelings who need a place to crash or a new family to be a part of.

- SURGE/Protect has a good relationship with the merc company called the **Iron Cavalry**. Since the IC is also made up of changelings and non-metahuman sapients, they are sympathetic to what Donovan is trying to do. They'll often act as an arm of SURGE/Protect when they get wind of changelings in need in areas further away from North America.
- Baka Dabora

POLAS

PoLas is more a movement than a group, but it's one I've been watching with great interest for the last few years. Members, if you could call them that, claim PoLas as an identity rather than an organization with rules, goals, and the rest. PoLas is short for "post-labels," and that is essentially everything you need to know about them. They refuse any sort of labels and refuse to be defined by anything other than not being labeled. There are metahumans from every stripe among them, but whether human, troll, changeling, male, female, young, or old, they refuse to acknowledge any identity but the lack thereof. Individuals within the movement are encouraged to be just themselves and nothing else. They choose their own, unique names and only refer to each other by those designations. I mention them here only because they have taken on the SIN industry, hacking into corporate and national SIN registries and



erasing details about other PoLas. Where there are physical records, they have done B&E jobs to erase those as well. Since mandatory System Identification Numbers are a blight on all free people, they get put in the hooder category until further info comes in.

- Some among the PoLas are shadowrunners. It's terribly confusing when they refuse to give typical information about themselves. They won't say they are Awakened or cybered, troll or dwarf, etc., instead just saying how they "can get the job done." More than anything, I hate when they look at you like an oppressor for pressing them for info.
- DangerSensei
- So don't press them.
- Goat Foot

ENVIRONMENTALISTS

It's no secret that we've treated the planet like drek for years, so it shouldn't surprise anyone that a bunch of people are willing to stand up and fight back on her behalf. Eco-activist groups can range from mainstream policlubs to radicals and eco-terrorist groups.

- As pleased as I am to see eco-activism on this list, remember that the most extreme eco-terrorist magicians are at risk of turning down the toxic path—and in some cases, already have. During my time with the *Grüne Zellen*, I faced several shamans and witches from Green War who had given in to that kind of corruption. It was highly unpleasant.
- Ecotope

TERRAFIRST!

TerraFirst! was among the first groups in the twenty-first century to get radical against the corps; they were also the first to be labeled by the corps as a terrorist organization. TF cells typically consist of three to eight members and are completely autonomous, meaning one group has no influence or responsibility over the actions of another. Their activities include sabotaging facilities, breaking into corporate headquarters, destroying mining/logging camps, and kidnapping/assassinating biotech engineers. They show remarkably little remorse for the pain they cause, because they claim the callous disregard these corporations and individuals show toward the planet makes them deserve none. If you are looking to do some damage

in the name of environmentalism/eco-terrorism, this is your group. If you happen to be in Europe, **Grüne Zellen (Green Cells)** is a similar group.

SAVE OUR SEAS

Save Our Seas (SOS) is dedicated to the protection of the seas. It's financed by donations and mostly sticks to legal activism, but it also finances illegal action and shadowruns against corporate destruction of the marine habitat. Save Our Seas began in the 2020s, when the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society merged with the remnants of the Greenpeace fleet. Their president, Angela Devon, keeps herself above reproach concerning their illicit activities, but behind the scenes, she orchestrates most of their operations.

The Awakened Liberation Front (ALF) is a similar organization with focus on rescuing Awakened animals from captivity, while the **Astral Space Preservation Society** operates in similar fashion, but for the purpose of cleansing and protecting the astral ecosystem.

- The ALF is much closer to TerraFirst! in its dealings. They are just barely trying to seem legitimate anymore.
- Ecotope

KLABAUTERBUND

Of course, there is also **Klabauterbund**, who act like eco-anarchists, having loose alliances with everyone from neo-pagans to neo-anarchists, focusing on ditching technology in favor of the old ways. Their name, Klabauterbund, literally means "league of the ship-kobolds," in reference to the mythical German maritime fae bound to ships. They can be extremely useful to hooders even the smallest bit aligned to their purposes. They often provide safehouses, shelters, training camps, or just basic necessities to those who they feel kinship with—and their definition of "kin" is absurdly broad. As long as you aren't a corp stooge, you might be able to fit in somewhere. Just be prepared for a sermon or five about how whatever you like is evil. They are mostly neo-luddites, but don't give most allies a hard time unless it interferes with their way of life.

- These losers can definitely be useful. I've taken advantage of them and their hospitality many a time. Just mutter complainingly about how much you hate Saeder-Krupp, and you're in.
- Kane



NATIONAL/LOCAL REVOLUTIONARIES

I could spend all week writing up each individual revolutionary group that is responding to a particular local bad guy. Every unjust corp, nation, or philosophy has detractors willing to frag the system to see things change. But there are a number of well-organized, influential, or successful movements that have earned a special mention here, even if they aren't dedicated to a particular cause (although some surely are).

I used to love to write about Berlin, but for those not paying attention, the anarchist Flux state there gave way to an uneasy truce between corps and the Anarchists (as if), which was finally completely destroyed when the corps took over and unified Berlin again in 2072. Alas. But there are those in other places still fighting for the souls of their homelands. I would also mention that back in the 50s, **Die Nachtmacher** (the nightmakers) was a fiercely anti-corp, anarchist policlub, and they still exist today. Beware though—Die Nachtmacher was revealed to be nothing more than a pawn used by the great dragon Alamais to war against Lofwyr and Saeder-Krupp. They are as dead as disco, despite their name continually being used as a petty voter-registration protest.

In the California Free State, **Ben Alvarez** continues his retail war against the corps with the **CAWS**, or the **California Agriculture and Water Society**. In California's central valley, CAWS rallies small farms and farmers who have been hurt by corps and focuses their energy into hooding. All of the existing small farmers love Ben, and those who have been forced out have joined him like a group of merry men. They stage corporate sabotage, plan Matrix runs to California agribusiness hosts (usually to change prices and delete proprietary agriculture), and plan extractions of unwilling corp participants. Ben is an outlaw through and through, but he is a damn good chummer.

While not soundly in the "hooder" category, the Russian island of **Kronstadt** and Scandinavia's **Ship City** offer life free of corporate or national interference. They are experiments, if only because smugglers and organized crime want it that way. Still, if you are savvy, you can do some good in the world by camping there while still wanted everywhere else. Staying with the theme of geo-political anarchy, **Peru** has been a decentralized anarcho-communist state since the Shining Path

kicked the corps out after the orichalcum rush in the 2060s. Truth be told, the **Shining Path** is hiding something big, and has been for nearly a decade, but they keep Machu Picchu and Lima functioning, and functioning well, despite corporate and cartel pressure. Outside those two places, the cartels are still a huge problem and things are chaotic, but the Shining Path has somehow kept the cartels from taking over completely.

- There is no "somehow" about it. The Shining Path are in tune with ancient spirits. The Nazca lines wash the land in astral energies so much that a stable astral rift has formed and the Shining Path has a symbiotic relationship with the spirits that come and go from it.
- Plan 9

In Tír na nÓg, you can find the **Liptons**, a group of theatrical guerilla poets who cause all sorts of mayhem by disrupting public events, crashing corporate fundraisers, fouling up national parades, and generally causing havoc all the while recording their escapades and uploading the footage to the Matrix for all to see. They are silly to a fault, pointing out the absurdity of the powerful elites, but don't mistake them for amateurs. It takes an incredible amount of planning to pull off what they have year after year and never get caught. They have taken on nearly mythical status among the common Irish and are a constant, if non-violent, thorn in the Tír's side.

Keeping with the theme of elven elites, the **Rinelle Ke'Tesrae**, or Rebels of the Spire, had a cultural moment in the early 2060s where they overthrew the leadership of Tír Tairngire. They had help, no doubt, but they were a diverse group of revolutionaries who were sick of the elven princes stomping on everyone else in pursuit of their agenda. I bring this up for two reasons: First, the Rinelle **Ke'Tesrae** is dead, no matter what you hear. Any group claiming to be Rinelle are just posers. Second, the Rinelle **Ke'Tesrae** uprising reminds us of a very important fact: revolutions can work. Get a broad coalition together, be clear on your goals, and take the fight all the way up the top.

I mentioned the Rinelle had help when overthrowing the princes of Tír Tairngire. Much of that help came from the **Unseelie Court**. There seems to be a lot of misinformation, or missing information, regarding the Unseelie these days, but I can say for one hundred percent sure that the Unseelie Court that operates here in our world are grass-



roots revolutionaries through and through. They have been battling the Seelie Court, the true rulers of Tír na nÓg, since the Seelie first made themselves known. They have a long and storied history of fighting against the elves in power, and they have been vilified for it. But they aren't villains. They want freedom, just like the rest of us. While the Seelie have pulled back their overt machinations and have become insular in the last decade, the Unseelie have not. Rather, they've branched out, pushing beyond the boundaries of Tír Na nÓg, just like they did when they helped overthrow the princes of Tír Tairngire. Beyond the British Isles and Europe, they have targeted operations in Asia, the Middle East, and North America. They are full of noisy, uncouth, and bizarre characters, but being pretty isn't a qualification for fighting. They aren't picky, either. If you're willing to fight against Seelie, elven elite, or whatever other oppressive regime they're targeting, you'll have a home among the Unseelie.

In the aftermath of the Az-Am war, Black Star was disbanded (see above). But the resistance to Aztlan continued on when former Black Star commander Aufheben created a new company called **Bright Star**. Rather than spread itself thin and devote itself to principles, Bright Star focused all of its energy on freeing Bogotá from Aztlaner control, or failing that, creating as much hardship for the Azzies as possible while supporting the people in their desire for independence. It hasn't worked, at least not yet, but since Aufheben died, a new leader, El Fénix, has been keeping the fight alive.

DO-GOODERS/ VIGILANTES/ANTIFAS

I could talk about antifas too, who have a long and proud tradition of fighting against far-right groups, as there's a lot of overlap between these groups and basically every other militant activist community. **Antifa Direct Action (ADA)** takes the fight against jackbooted thugs to the streets, with everything from counter-protests and political rallies to good old-fashioned skull-cracking. I've heard they do their fair share of Matrix vandalism, too. The **Edelweiss Pirates** are like a giant antifa fixer network, coordinating between local groups and even hiring shadowrunners for jobs in areas where the antifas don't have their own presence. **International Spotlight** is an anti-fascist NGO that "monitors" (i.e., pays for datasteals against

fascist groups around the world and drags the worst of them into the light. In fact, I could go on forever about groups that are worth joining, but at some point, Bull or Glitch is gonna shut me down.

- I was just getting to that. Most of us know these guys already. Speed it up, willya?
- Bull

Lastly, there are those who just want to do good. There's the **Imagination Foundation**, the **Sprawl Scouts**, the **Rogue Lodge**, the **Blazing Swords**, and numerous others—some with agendas, some without—who try to fix things up in their corner of the universe. Good luck to them, and to you if you decide to join them.

SHADOWRUNNERS AND HOODERS: A MATCH MADE JUST FOR US

Now, I never play judge when it comes to fighting the corps and the tactics runners use when survival is on the line. Neither am I trying to convince anyone to put down your guns and manaballs. Having said that, the big lie the corps keep selling is we are at odds with the forces we encounter. What I mean is this: There is a wider difference between the CEO of a corp and the security guard than there is between the security guard and the runners who encounter them. The CEO is all about control and selfishness. Both runners and the guards are just trying to survive and get by. The rich and powerful have convinced wageslaves, salarymen, and corporate security that they are on the same side as the CEO and the shareholders, and that shadowrunners and SINless are the bad guys. Once they believe that, they act according to what they think is their best interest while all along, the brainwashed corporate masses are being crushed beneath the same weight as the SINless. The saddest part of all of this is the brainwashed citizenry become more and more enmeshed in the lie the longer it is perpetuated.

The same technology that would allow for a real, true neo-anarchist system to flourish is the same tech that spreads lies with startling efficiency. So that's where shadowrunners come in. But



first, there is more bad news. Shadowrunners, in my experience, are often susceptible to the corporations' lies. Scan this: If there is a large paracritter threatening a small village, the people of the city might band together to defeat the paracritter, and in doing so, make their village safer and better. But suppose the most able warrior in the village, rather than fighting the monster, simply follows its path of destruction, collecting valuables from the pockets of the dead villagers? The warrior's short-sighted and selfish actions not only take an able warrior out of the fight, hastening the destruction of the village, but the warrior only gets rich in the short term. When the paracritter is done with the easy prey, it will come for the warrior, and even if the warrior did escape, his village and his people would be dead, and his valuables worthless. Shadowrunners used to know their place against the corps, but these days, I see more runners act like the selfish warrior. This is to no one's best interest.

- Your story sucks. If I was the warrior, I'd just go to another village after I gathered up all I could carry.
- Kane
- Unfortunately, in the real world, the paracritters are great dragons, and there's no escaping to another world.
- Clarion

We are not a rich lot. It's not that some of us don't have money; lots of hooders and neo-a's do.

But compared to the resources of the enemies we face, even all of us together can't hope to find parity. We don't tax people, especially those who hate us. We don't have inheritances from our elite mothers and fathers. We don't have precious minerals or other natural resources to trade. We aren't allowed by our enemy to carry weapons equal to theirs, nor could we afford them or build them if we were. We don't get leftovers when our superiors upgrade. We don't have a count of our numbers, nor do we know exactly what assets we can all bring to bear. We don't have the luxury to spend our lives in daily training because unlike them, we must also find ways to survive without corporate or national support. We have to find our own teachers of magic and Matrix skills. We must form our own communities, trade almost entirely locally, and we have no police force, judicial system, or financial recourse when we are wronged.

Get it?

In order to make any meaningful change, we

must address these discrepancies. War is not only coming, it is upon us. It has been for longer than we care to admit. We don't have time to plan ahead, stockpile, invest, or negotiate with the powers-that-be. We have to find ways to be stronger, wiser, and kinder *now*.

We need teams of deckers to carve out bits of the Matrix and make them ours. We need technomancers to find weaknesses to exploit in the fabric of the corporate firewalls and share them among us. We need hackers to hack the world. We need street samurai who haven't abandoned their souls along with their essence. We need adepts to be strong, not just physically, but morally. We need heroes to look up to. We need mages to build bridges to the astral world, learning from shamans how to interact with spirits in a way that endears us to them, as opposed to binding and coercing them like the corps do to everyone. Awakened of all traditions must respect the natural world and the differences between us without trying to change each other. We need them to stand up to the myriad threats that assail all of metahumanity, not just our neighborhoods, and thus not only save the world, but also win hearts and minds. We need infiltrators to discover, locate, and co-opt new technologies from the corporations so the work of the many no longer only benefits the few. We need anti-bug weapons from Ares. We need the sort of cutting-edge manatech NeoNET was working on before they fell apart. We need Wuxing's research on the effects of geomancy on urban poverty. We need to befriend the monads when Evo hurts them. We need to find the nuclear weapons the UCAS has and disable them so what almost happened in Chicago can't ever happen again. We even need the rockers and the faces to make us look better than we sometimes forget to be. In short, we need everyone possible to do all the good they can, every moment possible.

We need to keep jury-rigging our own gear, with necessity as our patron mother, finding ways to get past the most difficult counter-measure with the minimal resources available to us. We need to rally around dead heroes like Tamir Grey, Preacher, Howler Chandra, and Daniel Howling Coyote, as well as create our own. We need the artifacts of ages past to level the playing field. Things like the Arrow of Red Dragon Slaying, the Net of Marduk, the Mel'Thelem, or the Spear of Destiny. Most of all, we need runners who will run the shadows not for the nuyen, but for the glory of taking down dragons, for the good



it does our communities, and for the chance to prevent the future from being dominated by only one, monolithic, greedy, nihilistic, and self-destructive ideology built on lies, thievery, and coercion.

And some real food here and there would be great.

So that's it. Whether you fight the bad or create some good, you've got company. In an insane world where the "legitimate" forces dominate using coercion, greed, deceit, and seduction, the only sane response is to disconnect from that system—become a runner, become a hooder. There's your invitation.

- Wow. That was the most inspiring bunch of bulldrek I have ever sat through.
- OrkCEO
- A bit preachy, but the info was solid.
- Thorn
- I hate to say it, but he's right. My folks taught me all that same stuff, but frankly, I got lazy. Belly Blaster Burritos and the newest tech are siren songs ...
- Slamm-0!
- Don't make yourself feel bad, baby. The mean old anarchist is just trying to guilt everyone into a crusade.
- Netcat
- But honestly, 'Cat, it ain't all bulldrek. You know better than anyone how bad the corps are.
- Slamm-0!
- So what if I do? Joining a crusade is a good way to get ourselves, or little Jack, killed. No thank you. I'll protect me and mine. The hooders can look out for themselves.
- Netcat

- Hah! I agree with the techofreak! No one ever does for me, so I'll just keep on looking out for number one.
- Clockwork
- Is it too late to change my mind?
- Netcat
- Never.
- Red
- Sorry Crow, this is fragging nuts. I've seen what the anarchists can do, and what they have done. Blowing up corp hospitals, taking innocent hostages, and siding with Amazonia in a war. Your people aren't any better than the corps. I sleep just fine at night knowing I am doing what I can to survive and thrive, just like people have done since the beginning of time.
- Balladeer
- Those are not things to be ashamed of. Casualties happen in war. When the enemy is so much stronger and larger, the oppressed must transcend the old morality and do what is necessary to win. You say you are just trying to survive. Sounds like you meant to say "I'm a coward."
- Clarion
- Wait a damn minute! Not everyone w <6.8 mp deleted by Sysop>
- I had no idea this was going to get so heated so fast. I go on a little Matrix recon mission, and I come back to a full-fledged flame war on JackPoint. There's plenty more to discuss in this doc, so don't waste all that anger here. Plus, talking about another JackPointer's mother is against rule #43. Be nice.
- Glitch



FIXER-UPPER OPPORTUNITIES

Pressing his back against a half-rotted wooden support beam, Big V controlled his breathing as he glanced at the Ares Alpha display in his overlay. Full clip, set for three-round bursts, safety off, everything in working order. A quick glance around the corner showed that the flashlights were getting closer. Three, maybe four seconds before the shooting started. He ran his thumb over the pink and white cartoon unicorn on the stock. "Everybody's got a price," he muttered, then stepped out and opened fire.

"Not what we signed up for," said Icon, showing the courage of a decker on a run in the flesh.

"It was open-ended," returned Long Tall Sally. LTS was a troll hermetic magician and much more used to the physical side of things. She also had a big heart. Hell, it's why they were in this mess in the first place.

"Open-ended? We came to the Ork Underground,"

"Seattle Underground," corrected Leon. Stickler for accuracy? More that he was a little racist. V was used to it.

"Seattle Underground, whatever. Regardless, we're here to help some squatters, right? Keep the dwarf gangers from rustling the place, provide a little aid, that kind of thing, but facing off against a Hard Corps strike team? Frag *that*."

"It's not as if we haven't fought corporate security before. Why so worried?"

"Because when we trade shots normally, it's standard security while we're running away. A few shots to keep heads down while we escape, maybe a grenade for cover, but this? This is holding an area against a full-scale invasion. We're not built for that."

"I am. Big V too."

"Big V's already said no."

From where he sat cleaning his weapon, Big V just grunted. Sure, he was big ... not ork big, let alone troll big, but he'd already made his view known. He fought for pay, and these would-be refugees couldn't pay his bill.

Leon quietly looked between the two. Living the rigger stereotype, he was better with machines than people. He wasn't sold on the argument of LTS, but he was at least listening. The boss lady, Ingenue, was in the next chamber, trying to keep the orks calm while getting information about escape routes. It'd ultimately be her call about what they did, but she hated to be the tie-breaker if it was two to two. If LTS could get Leon on her side, they might be able to swing her to helping out. No Leon made it three against one, and Sally tended to lose those.

"That's because they're poor. Sometimes you have to do the right thing, even if it isn't the easy thing."

"Right thing? *Right* thing?! How is throwing our lives down the drekker the right thing?!"

"What throwing away? We hold the area, while the orks slip away, then we take the same cave out since we're not bogged down with all the kids, elderly, and so on. It's a ... what do you call them? Active holdings?"

"Holding action," grunted V.

With a snap, LTS nodded, pointing a smile at the samurai before adding, "Yes, holding action. We don't have to win, just delay."

"Holding against a dozen or more guys with guns and psycho-crazy brains! No offense to Big V, but Hard Corps goons are loaded with wires. They're hyper-violent nutbags!"

Whatever the next round would have been, Ingenue chose then to return, saying, "Gather up team. We hit the final negotiations stage. I want to lay it out for you and get some feedback before I give this an up or down."

Big V didn't bother gathering up. He already knew they couldn't meet the price.





A grunt as some shrapnel from the wall scattered across his arm. Stone shards hurt like a mother but they were better than bullets. He ducked lower, fishing out a grenade while his cyber-ears fed an enemy bullet count to his AR feed. He idly made a note to thank his doc for the upgrade suggestion. When all three rifles flashed “reload,” he stood, hurled, and dove for cover.

The explosion probably roared, but his ears shut it out (seriously, write that doc a nice letter for Christmas!) and the cave shook, dropping debris on whatever survivors there might have been from that patrol. Problem was, they were just one of a bunch. He glanced at his arm, spit on the cuts, then rubbed it in with his other forearm. Save the medkit for when it counted. Still, he was worried about leaving a blood trail.

Big V blinked, then laughed at himself. He went to the other pouch on his belt, passing up a roll of stickers and a few coins to find the Hello Puppy adhesive bandages. “Well damn,” he said with a chuckle, then got to doctorin’.

As usual, it was a scrum. LTS was quiet in the background, hanging her head and looking sheepish as the boss lady told the refugee leaders that the deal was off. Icon and Leon were beside Ingenue, trying to shield her from outbursts, but people were upset. It’s one of the reasons Big V hated all the talking. He was a simple guy. Point and shoot simple. Everyone called him a street samurai since he was cybered and well-armed, but truth is, he was just a mercenary. Pay him, he’d do whatever you wanted. No money? No service. Simple.

“Excuse me,” came a quiet voice by his side.

Big V turned his head, dark glasses hiding his

eyes as they scanned over the young child at his leg. “What?”

The child was, what, seven? Eight? No, ork, so probably closer to five. She was in the same dull castoffs and worn colors everyone down here wore, with her dingy hair hanging loose. The only brightness around here was the stuffed unicorn she clutched against her chest. “Will there be room for Uni-Kun on the bus?”

V blinked, confused. “What?”

She held out the unicorn for a moment, saying, “Uni-Kun. Mommy said that we had to leave things that wouldn’t fit on the bus, but Uni-Kun’s a person not a thing so he can go, okay?”

Oh frag me, thought V before asking, “Not my call, kid, even if there was a bus. And there ain’t.”

Her turn to blink, before saying, “Mom said we’re supposed to get on a bus to go on vacation.”

“Yeah, well, ain’t no bus.”

“But ...”

“Katie!”

The kid turned as her mom scurried up, looking disheveled and poor like everybody else here, quickly taking her by the hand. She harsh-whispered, “Told you not to go over here,” before looking up at Big V with an embarrassed smile. “I’m so sorry. She got away from me with the crowd. Did she bother you?”

Big V snorted. “She was saying something about a vacation.”

The mom winced, then nodded, saying, “I was telling her that we all have to go on vacation soon. She’s really excited to see a school bus for the first time.”

“Ain’t no bus.”

“What?”

He nodded to the talk that everyone else was in. “Ain’t no bus. We were hired to help against the gangs. Hard Corps is a whole other story. The elders can’t meet our price, so we’re walking. Y’all are on your own.”



Her eyes widened at that, saying, “But you have to help! We don’t have a chance against those people!”

Big V shrugged. “Just biz. Nothing personal.”

The mom was dumbstruck by that. She scooped up the kid and stomped back into the crowd. The kid looked over her shoulder at Big V, then faded into the crowd.

He took a deep breath. “Just biz.”

He tossed his weapon to one side, having burned through his last Clips™-brand magazine, scooping up some spare ammo from the still-dying security goon at his feet. “Sorry, need this.” He checked it for jams or clogs, calling up the current killcount. AR said nine, but he knew that there’d be more. He’d kept one of the first ones alive long enough to ask about that, but he’d been surprised at how low-rent these guys were. They weren’t the cybered-up chainsaws he expected. These were just grunts on combat drugs with Colts, who never expected to face real resistance. He kind of regretted not—

Weirdly, he registered the gunshot in his feed before he felt it. Bullets don’t carry that much impact, especially after passing through armor, but they’re shockingly hot. This one passed up from his right hip, slipping up under his armored jacket and burning in his gut. He fired one burst into the head of the wounded guy on the ground who turned out to still have been alive enough to draw a pistol, then another out of anger.

“Frag me.”

He leaned back against the wall of the cave, drawing out his medkit. Not that it could do much, but a stick-on bandage wasn’t going to do the job. He winced as the kit went to work, then managed a tired laugh. “At least I can afford medical coverage after this.”

In the distance, Sally’s elemental had been found out. He could hear the earth rumble as bullets erupted. Once it was done, he’d be truly alone. He glanced at his castoff Alpha, then dug into his pouch, pulling out a roll of stickers. He stuck a cute pink pig on the shoulder stock of the Colt M23. He managed a smile. “Not alone after all.” He then swallowed a howl as the medkit fused the wound closed.

Ingenué was good, but even she couldn’t fully deflect the heat pushing her way. Big V stayed to one side, idly checking his Predator to those who might see him, but through the magic of tinted glasses, he was actually making certain that the heat didn’t inflame. Sally had Ingenué’s right side, while Icon had her left. Of course, the twitchy rigger’s nervousness around people wasn’t a good thing, but he wanted to make sure their rep didn’t take a hit from turning the job down.

He let his hands idle to focus more on the crowd for a moment. A runner had only just come in to tell them that Hard Corps was outside, gearing up. They had about fifteen minutes to wrap it up and go. “Idiots. Just tell ‘em no, pack up, and go. Ain’t hard.”

A tug on his sleeve brought his focus back. Fortunately, he had his reflexes turned off, otherwise the kid ... “Ghost. You tryin’ t’die, brat? You don’t grab a samurai, *so ka?*”

She fidgeted for a moment, but stood her ground. Her mom was only a few steps behind, still showing some anger but also staying quiet.

“Momma says they didn’t have enough money to buy you?”

“Hire, not buy, but yeah. They came up short. We’re professionals, kid. We don’t do nuthin’ unless we get paid.”

She ruffled through her backpack, a worn little thing that should have been thrown away, but the Underground found it, patched it up, and got it usable again. From it, she drew a brown porcelain boar bank. Just a little ceramic thing smiling through tusks featuring a slot on its back for storing coins. Common as dirt, help teach kids the value of saving. “Would this help?”

He looked at the boar bank, then at the mom like she’d grown a second head. “Is she serious?”

Mom stepped up, rubbing her child’s shoulders in support. “She is. I tried to talk her out of it but she’s got her father’s stubborn streak. It isn’t much, but it’s everything she’s got.”

V took the bank, shaking it near his ear for a small rattle. “That true, kid? This is all you got?”

She nodded.

With a contemptuous snarl, he shattered the bank against the cavern wall.

He swatted at his glasses with his left hand, knocking the blood-splattered things to the ground.



In the back of his head, he heard a small voice of rebellion, since he wouldn't have a smartgun link active without them. Of course, the Colt he'd had was now lying on the ground along with far too much of his blood. On the upside, the pain from his maimed right shoulder was so bad that he didn't notice his right eye was a pulpy mess. With his left, he glanced at the murderous cyber-warrior before him, grinning madly. His pal's remains were off to one side, still convulsing as servos tried to move the corpse while getting no response from the nervous system. The other was somewhere behind him, but they were clearly taking their time.

He fumbled at his left hip, drawing his katana with a clumsy yank. A now-bloodied white kitten sticker smiled up at him from the base of the sword's grip, the big adorable eyes bringing a fluttering laugh to him for a moment before it died in a wet cough.

The Hard Corps heavy tossed his gun to one side and then extended spurs from each arm, slowly. His raspy laugh in return made it clear that they were going to finish it up close. It was probably going to be painful.

He closed his remaining eye, finding perfect inner calm as he spoke.

“Word given and true,
My lord knows I will follow
Duty beyond death.”

The sound of blades clashing rang throughout the tunnels.

He drew near LTS, who was talking with a few of the now-resolved orks. “—friend who owes me a favor. When you get topside, he'll try to get you into Redmond, It's not much, but ...”

“New plan,” he said, striding toward his team.

“Vince?” Ingenue, normally unflappable, was shocked enough to drop his name, not his handle.

He shook his head. “You can call me Mr. Johnson. I'm here to present a job for my client. The window on this opportunity is closing quickly, so you'll forgive me if I'm brief.”

The three gathered around him now, as interested as they were confused.

“You'll be escorting these refugees through the tunnels behind you until the arranged emergence. You will contract transportation to meet you there at your own expense. Once everyone is loaded

up, you'll get them to Puyallup.” He passed over a poker chip, stating, “Present this to gentleman at the gate. He'll take them in. Your job is to make sure that they all get there safely.” He passed a chrome credstick over to Ingenue, saying, “This should cover your standard rate, plus a bonus for the immediate nature of this mission. It will also cover the transportation fees.”

Ingenue slid it into her commlink, pausing a moment. “Vince ... this is your personal account. This is...”

He closed his hand over her hand, shaking his head. “Mr. Johnson. I'm well aware of how much is on there. Are you taking the job or not?”

She nodded quietly, fighting back emotion. Sparing her the moment of shame, Mr. Johnson turned to Icon, adding, “One of those rides will be a school bus. Yellow. No room for debate on that.” Icon stayed tight-lipped, but nodded.

Sally already knew before she asked, but she still took a turn to raise her voice, “What are you going to do?”

Big V—Mr. Johnson—smiled brightly, rubbing a sticker onto his rifle. “Hold the line for my client.”

The Renraku executive moved with the confident strides of a man on a mission, his assistant somehow keeping two steps behind despite her skirt and heels. As soon as he entered the charnel cavern, he paused only long enough to sweep an eye over the wounded being treated and unmoving line of enforcers under white sheets before finding the commander of the operation. His stride brought him there quickly, barking, “Report!”

The commander popped into a salute out of habit, returning, “The area is cleared, sir! All hostile action nullified.”

He gestured back to the line of the dead, saying, “I only see our boots, commander. No worn-down shoes, no half-nuyen foot wraps. No orks.” He leaned in, growling, “How many?”

Following a chirp to her datapad, the assistant stated, “Nine enforcers dead, including one elite operative. Twelve wounded, including two elite operatives. Twelve missing.” She adjusted her glasses, then added, “Zero orks.”

“Hostiles, commander?”

“No orks sir, but one samurai.”

“One!”

“Y-yes sir. His remains have been searched, and



the weapons and ammo he possessed match all the damage we've seen, other than the stray spirit. He had no magical gear, so we believe it was a naturally occurring—

“One. Samurai. Do you realize how much this operation is going to cost us? Resources spent, time wasted, and I have to lay the blame on *just One. Shadowrunner*.” He turned to fume for a moment, running his fingers through his perfectly coifed hair to catch his focus, then turned back to the worried commander. “Any evidence of his employer?”

The commander nodded quickly, having a handkerchief passed to him, which he unfolded. “We found this, sir—a roll of stickers, a “goodbye Puppy” pin, and three dollars and forty-seven cents in UCAS currency.”

A fierce backhand knocked everything flying, rage now boiling through the exec. “We're out tens of thousands of nuyen and you bring me *stickers?!*” He glared at everyone present, shouting, “There has to be more! No one sells their life for *pocket change!* Fan out and tear through *everything!* It was Horizon, or Saeder-Krupp, or *someone* who was behind this! Bring me answers. *Now!*”

As the remaining enforcers scattered, starting to tear through the meager possessions that the refugees had left behind, it was easy to miss the coins rolling about. One came to a stop just beside the outstretched right hand of the street samurai who'd fought to the bitter end. A single UCAS nickel. A cybernetic warrior. An oath fulfilled.

As the team rolled out some quick, quiet good-byes, with Sally promising the service of a spirit she had whistled up, Big V couldn't help but be at peace. He knew what his job was. He knew he'd give them time to escape. He also knew the price. “Sir?”

The soft voice of the kid's mom. Kid, heh. The client's mother. “Yes ma'am?”

“I don't understand. The money the elders were talking about ... it was a year's pay for me, but it wasn't enough. Katie's bank couldn't have had more than five nuyen in it. Why would you take that?”

Big V nodded, a serious tone in his voice. “Ma'am, in my line of work, I've been offered a hell of a lot of money. Cars, houses, women ... had men offer me their wife, their kids, whatever I wanted. *Anything* I wanted. In the end, everybody's got a price.

He glanced at the smiling child, now helping an elderly ork gather the last of his possessions to leave. “But I ain't ever had anybody offer me everything they had.”

He looked back, smiling past the tear that he brushed away from his cheek. “Turns out, that was mine.”

Deep in the night, a line of vehicles quietly drove to Puyallup. In the last vehicle, a worn yellow school bus, a young ork girl looked back at a home she'd never see again. With one arm, she hugged her plush unicorn tight. With the other, she touched the window.

“Bye bye ...”



- You're welcome in advance. I set up this little nook on JackPoint to act as a bulletin board for open jobs. Many of you don't need or want any jobs at the moment, and some of you aren't into the do-gooder stuff, but for those that are looking for job or maybe hiring runners to do them, this is as good a place as any to hunt first. Also, it gives a decent bird's eye view of the hooding/runner scene in real-time. Check back periodically for updates and feel free, as always, to add your own commentary or help-wanted ads.
- Slamm-0!
- Look at you. Sounds like you are trying to do your part without actually having to move from the couch. A decent first step.
- Clarion
- Go suck amber gel.
- Slamm-0!

IT'S ALL ABOUT POWER

POSTED BY: OLD CROW

While my connection to Black Star isn't a secret, I am not by any means exclusively concerned with their activities. I'm not their leader, after all, just a fellow freedom fighter. As such, my little crows constantly update me about individuals and groups raging against their own contextual machines worldwide. I've also included intel that came across my feed that, while not hooding per se, might have ramifications netting a positive change in the world.

- Ghost. "Netting a positive change." You guys are killing me. The world doesn't work like that. Why am I even here?
- Clockwork
- That is a good question, boyo. One you should ask yourself more often.
- Thorn
- He's not wrong, though. The time for "making the world a better place," along with rainbows, unicorns, and the kingdom coming is long ago, in an age far away.
- Kane
- So what, you just gonna roll over and let the oppressors win? That makes you complicit.
- Clarion



- Geez. Calm your pickaxe, shorty. I'm not one of the bad gu ... heh. I can't even finish that with a straight face. Just get real, ya'll.
- Kane
- You show your ignorance with that racist dwarf jab. I am proud of my metatype, and your ignorant comments prove my point. JackPoint is not just a haven for shadowrunners to share information—it is a haven for bigots and shadowrunners too rich to care about anyone else.
- Clarion
- Who invited her to JP again? My bigoted hoop is gonna get tired of that soon.
- Kane
- I did. Doesn't matter if I disagree or we all do, hers is a voice that doesn't get heard enough.
- Old Crow

BLACK STAR

The Session of Black Star is offering the following jobs to anyone looking to do bad drek for a good cause. There isn't as much nuyen in these as I know you'd like, but the chances to build your network, frag the system, and do some good are pretty high. Before you ask, yes, Black Star has its own teams of runners that could do some of these runs. Two things to note, however. First, they don't have nearly as many operatives as you might think (or as they'd like). These runs needs to get done, but they don't need to be by BS ops. Second, we've found that once runners get a taste for doing good, it grows on them. So doing a run for BS doubles as a recruitment tool. You do the run like a pro, with no needless death and an eye toward the little guy, they just might invite you to join the ranks.

- Oh wow. So I can take a job for less money, and if I go out of my way to do a good job, papa Crow is gonna give me more low-paying jobs? Sounds like a con to me.
- /dev/grrl

ATLANTA

Atlanta is in the middle of a top-to-bottom make-over at the moment, preparing to make a bid to house a AAA-corp national HQ within their fine city. One major wrench in the gears of progress is the Dome, previously as Fulton County Stadium and Turner Stadium. Deep in the Atlanta barrens, it ceased being used for sports long ago, as many

SINless moved in seeking shelter. Over time, a sort of darwinistic tribal community emerged. The "insiders" act as a sort of nobility, while the "outsiders" live beyond the walls of the dome in squalor. Scheduled gladiatorial fights allow tribes or families to move in or out of the Dome, depending on whether their gladiator wins or loses. An elf named Dread Moon is asking for help there.

- Dread Moon (Moonie to his friends) was raised from a young age in the Dome. He's a warrior who acts as a gladiator and bodyguard to their master. He's been raised to fight, intimidate, and kill.
- Hard Exit

Dread Moon desires to be free of his master and live his own life, but every Paladin (as they are called) is fitted with a cranial bomb to make sure they never turn on their master. Dread Moon wants some runners to kill (or otherwise take out) the Pit Baron, Emory Buchannon. Buchannon never leaves the safety of the owner's box, so the only way to get to him is to fight and become champion of the gladiatorial arena. He greets all champions personally. Buchannon counts on Dread Moon to stop anyone from harming him, but Moonie won't stop you when it is time for them to strike.

- At first glance, the Dome looks just like any other sports stadium from the twentieth century. Looking closer, you can see that much of the wear and age of the building has been patched, but not by Sixth World workmanship. The stadium has been repaired with an organic-looking material that makes it look vaguely like an insect hive but much larger.
- Pistons
- On the inside of the Dome, things aren't terrible, but they are downright odd. There are regular food deliveries and the sanitation is acceptable, and a sort of honorable culture has emerged. Seats have been replaced with hotel-like dorms that all face toward the arena and walkways crisscross the stadium, made of the same organic material found on the walls. Inside the Dome, gangers live alongside mages, vampires, and even bug spirits. This uneasy alliance is kept only due to the strict rule that violence (and feeding) is only inflicted during the gladiator matches or outside the Dome.
- Kane
- That is madness.
- Mr. Bonds



- THIS IS ATLANTA!
- Slamm-0!
- Oh, brother.
- Netcat

BALI

If you are looking for something odd and a bit exotic, there is allegedly a gang of monkeys that are creating problems for businesses in Bali, in the Enlightened Kingdom of Bali and Lombok. In times past, monkeys stole from tourists all the time, mostly from curiosity or hunger, but lately, they've become more aggressive and coordinated. Local reports suggest that the targets of the monkey attacks are corporate offices and the nature of the attacks seem to be distraction. They are running interference for someone attacking corporate holdings in Bali.

These attacks are being so successful that Mitsuhama corporate security was called into investigate the gang of monkeys and discovered at least one of the primates had a datajack installed. Two things: One, if Mitsuhama deigned to bring forces in to deal with this, they must have experienced quite a loss to justify the expense. Two, if these monkeys can be used to rattle corporate cages in ways that metahumans cannot, Black Star is interested in how they might recruit these agile attackers. Head to Bali, discover how and why these monkeys are warring against the corps there, and if possible, make positive contact with whatever or whoever is behind them.

- A monkey gang? Matt Wrath loves living in this world! Oh yeah, sure, it is depressing and controlling. But a gang of monkeys! One with a datajack! Sweet Christmas!
- Matt Wrath
- I knew an anti-corp runner who relocated to Bali back in the late '60s. He was also a hanuman dwarf. I wonder ...
- Stone

BOSTON

This one is extremely time sensitive. With the crumbs of NeoNET still falling, security in related corporate facilities in Boston are noticeably understaffed and in a state of uncertainty. Previous NeoNET employees know their smaller operations will be bought up by other megas or AAs, but no one knows when that shoe will drop. Up-

per management, meanwhile, is busy angling to take their research and career to a winning corp rather than staying on a sinking ship.

This situation is particularly true for in the area of manatech. Before NeoNET lost Manadyne, Celedyr was subversively using certain scientists there to work on a few of his pet R&D projects. Once Manadyne left the NeoNET umbrella, Celedyr kept these scientists on, creating a small offshoot called Boston Manatech, which, since it was made up of former Manadyne employees and equipment, should have been overseen by Villiers. But Celedyr wouldn't have that. He kept it secret, and for good reason.

Once NeoNET fell, Celedyr couldn't legally take those assets with him, but he hasn't forgotten Boston Manatech. Scientists at their facility are begging for help escaping. They are apparently wanting to go into business for themselves with the information Celedyr forced them to discover. Unfortunately, they are in a guarded, underground lab where they have been both living and working for nearly five years. Extract these scientists, their work, and whatever prototypes you can, and get them out of town to St. Louis.

- I've heard of the work Boston Manatech is doing. Specifically, much of it is anti-manatech. Their experiments involved what they were calling "grey mana," which isn't really what it seems. They experimented with orichalcum, reagents, paracritters, and Awakened plants and minerals, but what ended up being in the grey mana, I'm not sure. Point is, this grey mana has negative reactions to mana on a microscopic level. Mages and adepts aren't harmed by it, but it does seem to fritz out their power somewhat. Interesting stuff, but I never had the change to follow through any further because of the lockdown.
- Respec
- I was the one who they reached out to initially. I booted them to Black Star since this is a bit outside my typical scope. But the scientists have been treated like slaves under Celedyr. No wonder they want out. Gladly, their shared trauma seems to have bonded them like brothers. That might play into why they're calling their new venture the Grey Brothers Auction House.
- Red
- The *Street Lethal* data drop has more info on this.
- Hard Exit

The scientists aren't paying anything, but they are bringing tech with them that could give those



of us at the bottom an edge against the corps for once. Bleeding-edge tech, research on how to develop it, and the chance to get these scientists producing corp-funded manatech on the black market. Win-win-win. This could be big. Expect payment in non-traditional, but very valuable, currency. It might even be worth the difficulty involved with breaking into a dragon's private research facility.

DETROIT

As far as Awakened groups go, the Missionist magic taught at Remnant Divinity School in Detroit flies pretty far under the radar. Of course, the poverty-stricken residents in the Ares company town would disagree. The graduates of RDS do more to help Detroit's poor than almost any other organization. Now, it seems, they are facing a problem they are not equipped to deal with.

As a result of what happened in Chicago recently, an influx of bug spirits has made their way to Detroit. Maybe they didn't get the memo that Detroit had enough of its own. With the loss of their hives, many of these bug spirits went even more wild than usual. Looking for a new queen, these bugs have kidnapped Rev. Belle Robinson, a Missionist mage and founder of RDS. It appears they wanted to be discreet about it, hoping to leverage her connection with the city's poor for their own ends, but their plan was discovered—unfortunately, not in time to protect Rev. Robinson.

- Are we gonna talk about what happened in Chicago? Some of us were busy on the other side of the planet.
- Goat Foot
- Oh, wow. You really didn't hear? The shadows were buzzing (no pun intended) about this for weeks. A Truman Tech Mr. Johnson infested a dragon with a wasp spirit queen (who even *thinks* that way?). For years, insect spirits had been multiplying and scheming underneath Chicago. When the UCAS government found out, they wanted to literally nuke all of Chicago to deal with the problem. Fortunately, some black ops work took care of things before it came to that. Aztechnology and Saeder-Krupp, of all people, took credit for the save, which isn't entirely undue, but the biggest slap in the face was when the Azzies and SK told the world what the UCAS government planned to do. Chicagoans are ready to revolt now, with absolutely zero confidence in the president and Congress after they were almost obliterated without any warning. Still, the bugs seem well and truly gone, so there's that.

Unfortunately, the corps are moving in full force now, what with Operation: Takeback being such a success, so Chicago is just as dangerous as ever, just with a new coat of paint being applied.

- Bull
- So if you were wondering why Chicago corridor expats are bailing for Detroit, alongside a few bugs apparently, that's why. Bull, I noticed you didn't mention those of us involved in those events.
- Red
- Another place and time. It'll all come out eventually. It always does.
- Bull

To take the job, make contact with Carter Stevenson, an elf who works with Robinson. He was a witness to the abduction and can give you details about the bugs and how you can track them. He can also offer information about the Missionists, Rev. Robinson, and Remnant Divinity School, and the good-form merges that infiltrated the divinity school. His initial report said the bugs looked like locusts, so don't come to town unprepared.

Detroit's poor rely on people like Rev. Robinson and the people she teaches. The Black Star cell in Detroit is preoccupied with something big at Ares HQ, so you're on your own. Contact Rev. Baily Warner, the current president of Remnant Divinity for payment.

DUBAI

I know many of you remember Aufheben fondly, as do I. His last mission was in Dubai, where he was killed. He and a former associate, Mossad agent Mara Ariel, were on the trail of an artifact they called the Net of Marduk. His last notes were that the net could actually trap dragons. Skepticism in that matter is heartily suggested.

- Why aren't you a believer, Old Crow? Seems like the kind of thing that would get your blood pumping.
- OrkCEO
- In my experience, if something seems too good, it usually is. Would I love there to be something that could stop a great dragon in its tracks so something like Sirurg's mass murder never happens again? Sure. But when this turns out to be nothing more than a glorified amulet of snake charming, I'll still be working the work.
- Old Crow





Regardless of my feelings about the artifact however, there is an offer on the table. The last time the net was seen, it was in the hands of the Great Dragon Aden, stolen from a group of power players in the Arabian Caliphate. According to Mara, those players have paid well in human lives to extract the item from Aden's horde. Once in the hands of Wesley Saade of the fighting force Jamil Islamyah, it went missing again. Mara was familiar with its astral signature, so she tracked it to Istanbul, where she has gone radio silent.

- Whaaaaat? Is this even believable? How could you possibly buy that a group of people, no matter who they are, could infiltrate a great dragon's horde and steal something. I was involved in that once. Once. And I have never had so much backup, so much state-of-the-art gear, and been so drek-my-pants scared in my life. It should also be noted that we did not get what we went there for.
- Balladeer

- Might it be more believable if they had help from another dracoform?
- Frosty
- Get out. They just went through this. No dragon is going to turn on the others so soon after the Dragon Civil War is over.
- Cosmo
- There are a few dragons who have come to care for metahumanity and the planet more than their own kind. They won't ever say it, but their actions are crystal clear, don't you think, Thorn?
- Frosty
- No sense in denying it if you've already made up your mind.
- Thorn



A decker named Jinn is your contact. Find him in Istanbul and he'll give you the info needed to track down Mara and the Net. Black Star is paying to find Mara, not for the Net, but I'm sure Mara will have ideas about that when you find her. Follow her lead and get her to safety.

HAVANA

There is a shipment of weapons scheduled to sail through Caribbean League waters soon. They aren't just any weapons, though. These are thousands of Narcoject's new line of non-lethals. Hoping to improve their image in the UCAS, Lone Star made a large (and largely symbolic) purchase of the weapons. After the string of cases going to court accusing Lone Star of excessive violence, and subsequently losing another contract or two to Knight Errant and the Minutemen, the Star will buy whatever you put in front of them, as long as it makes them seem like the safer and more just choice.

- They are not, nor have they ever been, the safer and more just choice. These weapons, like all other non-lethals the Star has bought, will sit in a warehouse, only to be touted out at photo ops or well-planned (and recorded) operations. The cops don't care about lives, but they want the public to think they do.
- Hard Exit

It's not that Black Star doesn't want the cops using non-lethals, but we know they won't. Further, this won't hurt Narcoject either, just in case you think they're on the level. This shipment is insured, so Lone Star will still get their PR toys, Narcoject will still get paid, and the only losers are the insurance scammers.

The ship carrying the Narco cargo will be passing by Havana, Caribbean League, on its way to Houston and then on to Austin. Good news for you. Black Star also wants this stuff delivered to Texas, so anywhere you want to make the move and steal the stuff, as long as it doesn't make it to Lone Star HQ in Austin, is fine. Once you have the shipment, deliver it to the Black Star cell in the DFW sprawl.

- There's a lot of moving parts here. First, you need to find the shipping manifest to know the time and route of the shipment. Then you need to either get some Gulf pirates to help you get the crates from the ship, or wait until they are transported to rigs once they make landfall.

Security gets a hundred times better once you're in Texas, especially where Lone Star is involved, so plan this run carefully and make sure you have a plan, not only to get the merch, but also to get away with it.

- Sunshine

MUMBAI

The Tzuri Group is an A-rated corp based in Mumbai. They bought their way up the ladder almost exclusively by selling artifacts discovered in twin sunken cities in the Gulf of Khambhat off India's northwestern coast. Since then, the Tzuri Group has been a growing manufacturer of talismans, fetishes, and other low-level magical trinkets. Their biggest seller is their image, however. Tzuri has been hocking the value of Necro Magic wherever they go as the hip, new magic of choice for the enlightened and rational mage. After their chairperson, Dr. Jennifer Stinson, saved GeMiTo back in 2075 from the VITAS-4 outbreak, Necro has been media darlings.

But according to former employee Jesse Hodges, all is not well within Tzuri. In a letter written in his own blood, Hodges claimed that Stinson was not what she appeared to be, and that if she isn't stopped, the world itself may be in danger. Hodges quit the company years ago after a falling out with Stinson, but he never discussed why. Unfortunately, Hodges now seems to have gone completely insane and now either can't or won't speak at all. Magical attempts to read his mind or communicate without words have been equally fruitless.

- Sounds like a big pile of "leave-well-enough-alone."
- Kane
- I almost got whiplash from watching you transform from "big tough guy" to "scared little boy" so quickly.
- Borderline
- Har. It ain't "scared." It's they-aren't-paying-enough.
- Kane

Hodges' wife and best friend are not satisfied with letting this go, however. They are convinced that Hodges' condition is a retaliation of some sort for his disagreement with the direction Tzuri was heading. They are offering to pay runners to infiltrate Tzuri HQ in Mumbai, rummage through physical and Matrix data, and discover what they can about Stinson and Tzuri. Specifically, what could illuminate why Hodges went nuts.



OSLO

Saeder-Krupp is scrambling since the merger of Spinrad Industries and Global Sandstorm. Now threatened in markets they once dominated, like Southern Europe and the Arabian Caliphate, S-K is pushing to further exploit resources. In particular, S-K has made a deal with the Scandinavian Union to put a hold on civilian activity within the inner Oslofjord. S-K seems convinced there is something under the waters of the fjord worth paying off Oslo officials to get to. Of course, this would have a major disruptive effect on the everyday lives of Norwegians in the area, but that isn't the big reason for the job.

A runner who calls himself Bifrost, who normally runs in Denver, is alarmed by something beyond the citizenry of Norway. He claims that there is indeed a source of power buried under the waters of the Oslofjord, but not the natural resource kind. Bifrost suggests that an ancient artifact—a sort of mana battery—is there, and it needs to stay undiscovered for everyone's safety. Don't know how he knows this—ask him when you get there. But he is paying runners to disrupt Saeder-Krupp's attempts at excavation. This could be a face-job, sabotage, or misdirection. However it gets done, Bifrost will pay big in talismonger goods or even bits of orichalcum.

ON THE FRINGES

These next couple of jobs aren't official Black Star ops, but they might be of interest to those of us looking for some less-traditional hooding opportunities.

- If you want to do good, go volunteer at a soup kitchen and leave the criminal stuff to those of us who aren't lying to ourselves. When are you guys gonna learn that no amount of "hooding" is going to make you a good-guy shadowrunner? There are no good guys. Not anymore.
- Clockwork
- Someone must have hurt you pretty bad in order for you to be so chronically cynical. Who was it? Fellow runner? A mentor? Girlfriend?
- Axis Mundi

SPINRAD GLOBAL

Endless running opportunities are resulting from the newly minted Spinrad Global ascending to AAA status. Johnny finally tied the knot to Gabri-

elle Al Thani in an over-the-top Qatari marriage ceremony, complete with traditional and luxurious elements. Those of us who've been around long enough still aren't buying Johnny's conversion or his sincerity, but he is playing the part of the dutiful husband and religious faithful. Of course, his business dealings remain every bit as outlandish as they are calculated, so while Johnny's personal image has been subdued over the last few years, biz has been booming for him.

His wife, however, seems just as suspicious of Johnny as we are. She is hiring runners (through trusted servants) to gather dirt on Spinrad. She wants to know where he's going, and specifically if he is seeing anyone romantically or doing anything to compromise his alleged faith. She is paying well, and if you get any dirt, it would damage Johnny's image, Caliphate connections, and his bottom line. We're just a few months into the "The Year of Spinrad," so this is an opportunity to strike while the iron's hot and do maximum PR damage.

- We all know Johnny is doing those things, but the question is: Is there anyone good enough to catch him doing them? My money says no.
- Nephrine
- I'm not sure anyone who takes this job will be able to find anything, due to Johnny being the consummate expert at covering his ass. But if you do find anything, it might not be what you're looking for, but it won't be any less harmful to Spin's rep.
- 2XL

TENOCHTITLAN

As discussed in the *Forbidden Arcana* and *Dark Terrors* uploads, it shouldn't surprise anyone that the threat from the so-called Elder Gods is growing. Aside from Elijah and Frosty, most of us haven't dealt directly with these beings or their lesser servants. For what it's worth, I hope you don't have to. But it doesn't look like this will remain the case much longer.

Specifically, there appears to have been some sort of tear in the astral plane in the undercity of Tenochtitlan not long ago. While it was sealed nearly as quickly as it opened, an unknown number of these lesser terrors escaped into our world. These creatures, by and large, seem mindless and hungry, content to devour and destroy whatever they come in contact with, generally causing chaos and death. Rumors persist that when many of



- If anyone is reading this, I—we—could use some help. I don't know how long we've been down here, but it feels like a thousand years, even if the timestamps say it's only been six. Whatever this new Matrix is, it's not like the old one. We were gods then, we could do anything. But since Jormungand and Deus, we've been powerless. Can't see, can't type, can't move. Ghost only knows what happened to our meat bodies. Are we even still alive? Nothing makes sense, but here we are ... wherever "here" is. Kaos has escaped a few times, but he always comes back. It takes him longer and longer to recover each time, though. I'm afraid it is having a negative effect on him. He won't leave us, he said. Just like before. He didn't leave us then, either. I don't know why he can get out and we can't, but I'm hoping someone, anyone, will be able to get this message. Kaos isn't responding anymore, and it's been too long since he left. I don't know how to explain where we are, but it is somewhere in the Matrix, or somewhere like the Matrix, I don't know. My programs don't work anymore, I can't feel my deck—or anything else. There's a lot of us here, maybe thousands. Some have gone crazy, some have merged with each other. Oddly, some are still coming in, although they don't seem to be able to see us. Please, find us. Please help us escape, or if you can't, help us die. We can't live, or whatever this is, any more. Find Kaos. He's out there trying, maybe he needs help. Find him. Find us. Please.
- DionySys
Transmitted: 02-14-80 at 10:51:11 (MST)

these terrors are gathered, or perhaps when they grow or evolve, or when there is a more powerful terror present, metahumans are psychologically affected as well. Dark fears, unhealthy emotions, and compulsions toward base and damaging behaviors increase. Again, I am only presenting the most unrefined reports, so be skeptical of everything at this point.

- I don't like the sound of this. I hate that the number of escapees is unknown. That just makes me want to stay the hell away from Aztlan, period. By the way, are we calling these things "terrors" now?
- Dr. Spin
- Yeah, sorry. I'm not here to bring happy, happy, joy news. Just give opportunities to help. To your next point, reports of these creatures don't seem localized to Tenochtitlan, or even Aztlan, but sightings have occurred in various locations in Amazonia, PCC, and the CAS. But also, yeah,

- I'm calling the smaller ones "terrors" because "lesser Elder God servants" is just too inelegant.
- Old Crow

But all the news isn't bad. There is a group of runners based in Tenochtitlan who have made it their mission to track down and hunt terrors as part of their efforts to thwart Elder God activity in general. A runner by the name of Inana says she and her team have a secret weapon against these ugly buggers—she calls it Pícaro. What she needs is more backup. Get in touch with her through any local fixer in Tenochtitlan, and you can help do your part to stop this mess before any of these terrors gain a foothold.

- Since we are talking about things that scare us to death, have you all heard about the drek going on along the Southern California coast? One of my buddies was hired to do an extraction from the supposedly non-profit Scripps Research Institute in San Diego. The job went off without a hitch—he tranq'd and put the target into a breathable body bag, but when he got back to the safehouse, he unzipped the body bag only to find some sort of octopus instead of the elf he expected. His partner, a mage, assensed the thing and found it was definitely Awakened and they had a nasty conversation before the octopus nearly killed them with hostile magic. They barely escaped with their lives. So ... Awakened mimic octopuses masquerading as humans? Is this Elder God stuff? Because it sounds like Elder God stuff.
- Kat o' NineTales

INFECTED VIGILANTES

POSTED BY: RED AND FRIENDS

Straight out of the pages of a Darien Cross novel. Too good to be true. Utter bulldrek. Yep. I can read your thoughts.

But I'm quite serious. For all the horrible drek any Infected has to do to survive—or worse, activities they come to embrace—we are all more or less metahumans, with the same capacity for goodness and empathy as anyone else in the world.

- Sure. Assuming they stay sane.
- Stone
- I've seen samurai with cyberpsychosis. The results were fairly equitable.
- Hannibelle



- Fair point.
- Stone
- Yeah. Except for the part where they eat people.
- Chainmaker
- Well ... most of the time. Digestion expansion 'ware can—
- Gillette
- I'm just gonna stop you there.
- Slamm-0

So, with that in mind, here are some selections of Infected groups or individuals around the world who at least seem to have the best intentions for the people around them. I can't speak to their motives, because they are as varied as anyone else's. Some want to guard the herd. Others just want a better world for everyone. And some just try to find a justification in guarding good people so they can feed on bad people. Try not to paint with a broad brush, and remember: You're all one fluid swap away from being a ghoul, yourself.

- Stop reminding me.
- Bull

ASAMANDO

THE SYMBIOTE LEAGUE

POSTED BY: DEZ

Asamando has always been a place where one person's freedom is another's slavery. The only place in the world where the Infected can live without fear or shame is built on the industry of literally feeding on other metahumans, shipped in by the thousands. Whether waylaid refugees or supposedly executed inmates, living feedstock greases the machinery of Asamando's industry and livelihood. They exist in the nightmare under the dream, drained and consumed, and in some cases bred and farmed, feeding the monsters who call the nation home.

But not all monsters are evil.

While most Asamando natives have grown up with the cannibal culture humming in the background without a second thought, the massive influx of immigrants has brought Infected of all stripes behind the borders of the ghoul nation, and with them, their philosophies. Despite the general public perception of Infected as rapacious, psychotic beasts, a significant number

of them remember quite clearly what it was like to be metahuman. Many remember what it was like to be hunted. Even some Type 2 and 3 Infected born into their nature feel empathy for their prey. Sadism does not enter into the equation of their hunger, and while they do not deny their needs, they know there must be a better way for a nation of Infected to get what it needs rather than resorting to mass slaughter and slavery.

Organization began in twos and threes, concerned conversations about this supposed "utopia" they had abandoned their homes for. Yes, the architecture and technology and culture were all very accommodating, and yes, it was a chance to start again without fear of discovery. But the herculean effort to provide logistical support to the exploding population had taken the form of holocaust. There is no possible way to sustain a nation in this way, and for many Infected, a moral immortality is the real dream. The first truly Sixth World nation would not survive if it was built on a foundation of slaughter.

- You don't count the Tirs? Cascade Orks? Black Forest Trolls?
- Goat Foot
- Orks and elves have the benefit of a culture that stretches back to previous ages. Not so for ghouls, assuming they have ever had a culture. What's more, the Tirs are borne on the bones of Fifth World civilization. Nyamkopon is a young city where there was none before, built with the technology and consideration of its time and population.
- Dez

The League took shape when Queen Rani's soldiers began rounding up dissenters, labeling them as enemies of the state and snatching them away, never to be seen again. Rumors said they had been taken to secret labs for experimentation. Others said they were simply added to the cattle they adored so much. Either way, the Queen's efforts to suppress resistance have backfired. The need for secrecy has proven to be the catalyst for organization, cementing alliances and motivating quiet operations across the small nation to change the way the Infected treat their food.

The League lacks the resources to stage any military intervention, which would be pointless anyway, since they lack a cogent plan to replace the current system. Instead, they seek to recruit help in spreading their network of contacts. Inside



Asamando, they recruit researchers and politicians to their way of thinking, appealing to their morality or, at least their pragmatism. Several key elements of Asamando's replacement flesh research have been quietly leaked to other firms, and channels of communication established to open-source a collaborative effort. This has reinvigorated the all-but-forgotten race for the bequeathment from Dunklezahn's will, uniting the efforts of many independent biohackers and smaller, sub-corporate think tanks and research crews.

- So how are they gonna divide up the spoils?
- Kay St. Irregular
- Is anyone thinking about how this research could be used for, I dunno, *bad stuff*?
- Beaker
- I, for one, am rather thrilled to see this kind of group-effort from the streets. Can you imagine what could be accomplished and released without megacorporate interference?
- The Smiling Bandit
- For all that you might criticize megacorporate oversight, you really can't expect basement-bound rogue crackpots to release properly tested results, can you?
- KAM
- As always, my dear, you underestimate the possibilities of people.
- The Smiling Bandit
- As do you.
- KAM

Tied to this are the League's efforts outside the nation. They know it is only a matter of time before the whole world learns what Asamando is up to, and they cannot contain that truth. Better, instead, to put a sympathetic face on the Infected. By making sure the outside world knows many Infected worked to save lives even at their own expense, they hope to earn some lenience when the inevitable backlash comes.

- Fat chance there. You don't spare the cancer because there's still a few healthy cells left inside.
- Clockwork

The League works hard to foster connections to activist groups like the Ghoul Liberation

League and Mothers of Metahumans, as well as smuggler outfits. In many cases, the League establishes safehouses and means of leaving the country for any metahumans they can liberate from the feeding pens. While the League would love to save every soul, they know they must pick and choose, so they are far more likely to save children and other innocents, instead of the incarcerated inmate population. Paths cross the country and penetrate shielded containers and abandoned mining tunnels, aided by a surprising number of Asamando shifters and spirits.

- Great. So, not much help if you get caught in Asamando.
- 2XL
- The League is always looking for allies. A capable street operative is a feather in their cap. They can be a get-out-of-ghoul-jail-free card if you're willing to do a few favors to help the cause.
- Hannibelle
- There aren't a lot of successful smugglers in Asamando, but those who want a better shot can get a load of support if they're willing to bring in spare parts and babysit living assets out. It adds danger, since so many Infected can detect their prey metaphysically, but the payoff in diamonds alone is huge. Plus, you get a warm fuzzy.
- Red Anya

Meanwhile, other League members attempt to foster sustainable, ethically sourced trade as an alternative to wholesale slaughter. Without dropping any names, several consider investment in the future a great money-making opportunity and are trying to set up body-bank exchanges across the world to bring preserved metahuman flesh where it is needed most. Some of the insiders call this "The Graveyard Project," suggesting Asamando could be the disposal ground for all the world's dead.

- I cannot imagine that gaining much traction. People are sentimental about their dead.
- Goat Foot
- I get sentimental over the nuyen I get selling the dead.
- Hannibelle
- I get sentimental over drinks bought with nuyen from selling the dead.
- Kane



- Man. Talk about picking up the last round ...
- /dev/grrl
- This is actually getting some support from TerraFirst! and a few other eco groups. They see it as a way to preserve space taken up by graveyards and necroplexes in a world with a rapidly expanding population. Who would have thought that GreenPeace had an Infected office?
- Ecotope
- I think this is already moving. I was doing a little work in the Mediterranean (never mind where—it's more fun if you guess), when I got a scan on a massive container ship with a huge refrigeration setup. Nothing super weird about that, but I got a look at the cargo they were taking on. Bodies. Hundreds and hundreds of bodies, the parts stacked like bricks, with a significant quantity transplant-ready. The mage I had with me said it was a ship of the dead. A great black smear in the astral with an odd sense of hope and mercy. She looked spooked.
- Thorn
- They better have some excellent wards on that thing, because that sounds like a shedim nightmare scenario.
- Red

On the street, the League shows no colors and wears no identifying marks, instead using code phrases and operating in cells. The Queen's secret police have been far more active since the last food riot, and the League is their unadvertised nemesis. The safety of metahuman visitors to the nation is questionable at the best of times, and Leaguers often try to guard them from the shadows. This has led to violence in the streets from time to time, but it gives the more physically inclined members something to do, while offering a tangible effect. I'm guessing the people at the top keep them out of the loop. If a hothead gets caught, they can't give up more important members.

- Nice. Nothing like knowing you're expendable cannon fodder for your boss.
- Lyran
- You ... you do know what shadowrunning is, right?
- /dev/grrl

On the political front, sympathizers and secret members are pushing for sustainable harvesting techniques, cash incentives, and non-harmful methods that will turn blood-and-flesh donations into a workable business model that will invite

metahumans to supplement their income. The idea is to entice free metahumans to come of their own will and make a living in this way. Unfortunately, at present there is no means of implementing this on a large enough scale to make this a viable plan at present.

- Oh, just wait until all those freed "livestock" spread the word. Asamando won't be gaining trust on the global stage for a long, long time.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Even the fly is enticed into the mouth of the Venus trap.
- Man-of-Many-Names

CHICAGO

LONG PIG FARMS

POSTED BY: RED

Long Pig has been producing quality pork for ghouls and metahumans alike for years, earning the ghouls of Chicago an uneasy place among the populace of the Corridor. From the long-timers who have been doing this for more than a decade to the more recent dispossessed packs from the Zone, the pig farms make up for their unsavory population and atrocious smell by providing some of the finest pork and sausage in the city. They have been held up as an example of how a ghoul colony can exist in harmony with normal metahumanity.

Perhaps as an attempt to capitalize on that sense of community, the ghouls have started becoming more active in ensuring the security of their neighbors. It started with a rumble between the Cougars and the Six Feet, two minor gangs that had gotten their hands on some heavy firepower and were doing significant damage to the surrounding neighborhood. While the ghouls were safely out of harm's way, a group set out to investigate the disturbance. When they found civilians running for their lives and being cut down with automatic weapons fire, they leapt into action, quite literally. Decades of survival deep in the zone had made many of them veterans of dealing with petty warlords and insect flesh forms. Even with superior firepower, the gangers didn't stand a chance. Stealth and strength turned the rampage into a rout inside of ten minutes.

- Oh, that's bad news for the ghouls. Word is those gangs were supplied by corps looking to clean out the Corridors



so they can pave it over. Expect some ghoulish bounties in the next few weeks.

- Red Anya

The scene made local pirate trids, with ghouls sneaking behind heavy machine gunners to tear into them with claws, or leaping down from broken buildings to rend and snap necks. The greater story, however, came from the images of those Infected who guided gangers away from innocents, or carefully carried the wounded and children from the battleground, always covering them to help prevent infection.

Most impressively, the ghouls did not feed on the fallen (no bite marks were found on any of the living or dead, in fact), keeping those they had captured secured until the citizen's militia arrived to help. The ghouls' leader, Needles, gave a situation update, turned over seized weapons, and offered the surviving gangers for incarceration, warning to keep an eye on those who were potentially infected in the fight. He only asked the militia to consider sending the dead gangers to Long Pig if no one objected. Without any demands or drama, he rounded up his pack and returned to the Farm.

- How the hell are these ghouls exhibiting such restraint?
- Bull
- Needles is an old friend. He ran a tight ship with his pack before they merged with Long Pig. What's more, the Long Pig ghouls feed their own pork stock with ghoulish caps, which makes the meat taste like metahuman flesh. It's not a nutritive replacement, but it keeps the edge off the hunger.
- Red
- They are making a lot more cred as they export their specialty cuts to established warrens with the money to pay for it. Tamananus is even thinking of getting in on the action.
- Hannibelle
- Red! You're alive!
- Slim
- Oh, no ...
- Red
- Rick! Where have you been?! We thought you were dead!
- Slim

- Slim, take a breath.
- Red
- Why did you vanish? Needles was a mess after you left. Kept blaming himself.
- Slim
- I'm sorry. I wasn't exactly in my best headspace at the time.
- Red
- He's gonna flip when he hears you're okay! Oh man, Pretty! She's gonna—
- Slim
- *Slim!* Stop. Pretty knows.
- Red
- What?
- Slim
- She was there when I left. She knows I'm alive.
- Red
- I don't understand.
- Slim
- I couldn't stay. I was competition for leadership for the pack. That's all Needles had.
- Red
- What?
- Slim
- I couldn't take that from him.
- Red
- You ... you know what? You've got an awfully big opinion of yourself.
- Slim
- Excuse me?
- Red
- You think Needles can't handle himself? You think you're so damn important? We got by fine before you, and we did fine after.
- Slim
- I—
- Red



- Sort yourself out, Rick. Stop being greedy. Your family misses you.
- Slim
- **SLIM HAS LOGGED OFF**

The weeks that followed saw a dramatic shift in attitude among the neighboring hovels and settlements. Long Pig had been there for a long time, and they had never quite forgotten the presence of the public ghoul colony in their midst (particularly after the Meal Time Killings and Fear the Dark were on the news every night), but the farm had mostly kept to itself for a long time. It had passed into a passive discomfort. Now, this unsavory neighbor had shown itself to be friendly. Quite a few owed their lives and livelihood to the cannibals next door.

Perhaps the neo-anarchist spirit of the Corridor prevailed, as those few dissenters who spoke out against the ghouls were vastly outnumbered by supporters. Many left gifts for their rescuers, and tentative invitations were made for social occasions and business opportunities. They weren't exactly splitting a Grey joint over beers, but a dialogue was established. Things seem to be looking up until a band of friendly kids coming to visit were almost mauled by a hungry ghoul. Only the two with her managed to hold her at bay, yelling at the kids to run. The Farm, as an entity, had to make a statement:

We appreciate the offer of hospitality more than you know, but as conscientious neighbors and members of the community, we have a responsibility to keep you safe, and in part that means keeping you safe from us.

You may have heard that Infected suffer from far greater hunger pangs than in previous years. This is, unfortunately, true. We cannot help what we are, and we cannot divorce the idea that you are prey from our minds. Our isolation is purposeful, for your safety and ours, and while we are working toward the day when we can rejoin society as equals, please respect our privacy.

With that said, we hope you will continue to do business with us and include us in your prayers and decisions. If there is anything we can offer, if there is anything you need which we can provide, never be afraid to ask.

As a gesture of goodwill, the Farm provided the pork (from their metahuman consumption

breeds, fed on acorns and grass as opposed to the ghoul caps that are an Infected delicacy) for a neighborhood barbecue. A local Matrix café installed special routers and a correspondence hub for the ghouls, calling it GreyNet. Through this, the citizens of the Corridor have begun a pen pal relationship with the isolated ghouls of Long Pig.

- This is really gonna suck when the corps come in and push them out.
- Chainmaker
- I have a feeling they'll have a home waiting for them when everyone else picks up stakes and moves out of the way of the bulldozers.
- Old Crow

In the months since, the ghouls have sent the occasional member of the pack out, always well-fed and possessed of great self-control, to mingle and do business in town. The most ghouls anyone sees is when the militia calls in for help. Gang violence is, consequently, on a significant downturn.

TURNING A PROFIT WITHOUT CHARGING MONEY

MORALS AND CENTS

POSTED BY: RED

It's tough to make a buck when you're making a real difference. Sure, it's satisfying to stick it to a corp, but it's usually just the shift of power from one to another, not to the little. More often than not, it's their livelihood that is hurt the most.

- Awwwww. Poor little wageslaves.
- Clockwork

Hooding gets a bad rap with a lot of professionals. Bleeding hearts can lead to bleeding runners, and there's not a lot of money to patch them up afterwards. Hood runs are often how a street-level runner gets their start, running shit jobs for the block to get some experience. More than that, big-ticket corp Mr. Johnsons tend to look down on them, since they like managing the little people, and hoods have a tendency to act against corporate bottom lines and undermine their own image of control. So the



general attitude regarding hooding is that they are small-fry ops for suckers.

What most folks don't take into account is how many people need help, and how much help they can offer. Not all rewards are cash, and some things can't be bought.

- Ha! Prove it!
- Kane

NOT ALL THAT GLITTERS

The first thing you can get is gratitude. Yeah, I know, gratitude doesn't put food on the table or locks on the doors.

Or does it?

Let's say you pick a neighborhood and start playing hood. You could just play self-appointed judge/jury/executioner, and the street scum you take down is probably packing weapons and cred you can take for your own. But a real hood makes connections, finds a local fixer who has their ear to the pavement and can broker jobs for the folks who call the burb home. This can be everything from finding missing kids to standing up to the terrorizing go gangs or policlubs to gathering evidence of corporate corruption.

- So, mostly private eye stuff?
- /dev/grrl
- Private eye and generally some extra muscle, yeah.
- Red

These kinds of jobs don't have as much short-term danger as the big leagues, on average. There are exceptions, of course. If the missing kid joined a wendigo cult, for example, or the gangers are working for a bigger mob or other mover and shaker, things can get a lot more complicated. But more on that later. You do the job, but these are people who work eighty hours a week for crap pay. Maybe the neighborhood watch association puts together a nice little pot, but for the most part, expenses aren't covered, little to nothing up front, and not much to take home when all is said and done. So what makes hooding worth it, once you've got your rep and bigger and better jobs are calling?

First, consider that while people who charter hoods may not have cash, they have a lot of other things to offer. That neighborhood watch? Who is on it? What do those people

do, and what can they offer beyond money? Don't forget the benefit of a SIN. You help a SINner, you've got someone who can make legal purchases on your behalf. They can offer an alibi under the right circumstances. They can make the paperwork for a safehouse a lot easier to complete and give you a place to duck and stay low when the heat gets too close for comfort. Hell, even some home-grown stuffers can make life nicer.

- So, you're saying we can reduce costs by taking influence instead of cred?
- Strop
- I'd rather have the money, but money saved is money earned.
- Hard Exit

Second, just straight contacts. Sure, they can save you money and give you access, but they've got information, too. Criminals tend to underestimate the kind of connections and influence grassroots community members have. I've made friends of university teachers who had access to lab equipment, a vending machine stockwoman who could spare a few sets of coveralls to infiltrate a surprising number of businesses, data crunchers with passcodes, lawyers who can help when all else fails, and more than I could ever list here. They aren't the fences and fixers we all make use of, but they are the gossiping waitresses and bartenders, the private eyes and metro cops, the bloggers and secretaries and urban farmers who hear more than anyone ever thinks. A network like that can cast a bigger net than you'd believe.

- I get it, Red's a face. But this is a two-way street. You make lots of friends, and you've got a lot more people who can be used to hurt you. A lot of untrained, undisciplined, unprofessional loose ends who are risking their lives just by associating with a runner. That's bad for you, and honestly, you're bad for them.
- Winterhawk
- You're right to be cautious in who you call a contact, considering professional criminals are at least moderately prepared for the potential shitstorm that can fall on them. But I don't think that means this brand of contact doesn't have a place in the business. You just have to make conscious choices on who you involve, and how deep they get pulled in.
- Bull



Third, reputation. Sure, some folks are going to think less of you for going small-time, and the hard cases are going to give you drek for being a softy. But sooner or later, you're going to have to make that choice. Your rep is a reflection of who you are through what you do. If you want to walk the road of the assassin, wet work reps will follow you, as will the risks and rewards. It's a lonely road, and what loyalty you can buy is generally only for sale. But if you're willing to fight for the little guy, you learn just how many little guys there are.

- Yeah, with their hands out looking for free help.
- Clockwork

- When you are on your back, an open hand can help you up.
- Man-of-Many-Names

- Or slap you back down.
- Clockwork

- We all die alone. Living that way is just another kind of death.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Making the choice to do the moral thing isn't always easy, both in terms of what's good for the credder and good for the conscience. There's an old saying from the '50s: Find your own truth. If that truth makes you do things some might call heroic, you'll find more work of that kind coming in. It's not an easy life, but if you're remembered, it'll be as someone who made a difference.

- Heroism gets you and your team killed. Always play it smart.
- Thorn

- And let's not forget, a rep is how people know you. The wrong people can learn how to use that against you. You get known for going after Aztechnology, savvy Mr. Johnsons will use that to get your blood up and drive the price down. You stand up for the little guy, they pose as poor Mom and Dad who just want their son back, and you do it for even less. Do what you want, but try not to be a sucker.
- Kia

INTANGIBLE REWARDS

When a player runs a job well done but gets less pay, that can make for excellent drama, but it's rarely very satisfying. You could offer bonus Karma, but there are ways to make sure that the rewards reflect the situation.

During character creation, a single point of Karma is worth around two thousand nuyen. If you gauge the pay of the run by standard rates a corp Mr. Johnson can pay, you can convert that lost cash into Karma. That cost can go towards paying for certain qualities, equipment, or opportunities that the hood Johnson can offer. Examples include:

- Home Ground quality, applicable to the neighborhood helped
- Contacts
- Lifestyle payment and modules
- Favors with other contacts
- Intel and passcodes that make a later run easier

Feel free to use any reward that makes sense to you. For best results, balance it to the challenge of the game, and be liberal with the role-playing descriptions. Home Turf or Solid Rep, for example, can manifest as drinks on the house or kids coming to warn the runner when the Star is closing in. Lifestyle modules can be extra furniture from a grateful outlet store owner, fresh grown fruits and veggies from a private garden, or premium Matrix channel passwords shared. A favor can mean a security guard turning a blind eye or letting captured runners go. "You saved my kid sister. We're even." Sometimes the best rewards don't show up until a run or two later, and the players get the satisfaction of an unexpected payoff a long time coming.



THE INMATES ARE RUNNING THE ASYLUM

POSTED BY: BORDERLINE

I'm going to pop in to offer a job, too. This one is pretty close to home for many of us. It concerns the Redmond Barrens, my home sweet home. Over the last few years, the dragon Urubia has made her home in Redmond, specifically on top of a facility she's dubbed "the Funhouse." There are plenty of residents living in the Funhouse, an incredibly high number of Awakened for what it's worth, but the Funhouse currently functions as a giant mall, serving Redmond in a way that no other place can. It isn't chaos, though. It is more like socialism via dragon. Needs are met, opportunities are provided, everyone gets something there. Urubia has even managed to bring all the local gangs to heel, with the exception of the Ancients, who don't get into Redmond much anyway, so the Funhouse is literally now the safest place in the Barrens.

While I know this sounds like a good thing, and it is for the most part, something odd is happening as a result. I'd like to give Urubia the benefit of the doubt that this is an unintended consequence, since she has done a lot for Redmond, but she is still a dragon. The core fact is, the gangs are speaking to each other. They have been for years, but now, at the Funhouse, they have been drinking together, letting their guard down (since Urubia tolerates exactly no violence), and as a result, gang leaders are having rational discussions with each other. What many are discovering is that they have a lot in common, and some have decided to form a sort of ganger co-op. Cooperation between gangs means less gang violence, yes, but it also means becoming something more akin to organized crime, where no one is going to be strong enough to stand against them.

- Hahaha. Can you just see it? Like in one of those old Dick Tracy trids? A big table with representatives from all the gangs sitting around discussing how to divide up the city ... wait. That isn't funny.
- SeaTac Sweetie

So, if someone is looking for some work that will make a difference, hit up the Funhouse. Make

the rounds among the gangs and sow division. The major gangs involved seem to be the First Nations, Rusted Stilettos, Crimson Crush, 405 Hellhounds, Halloweeners, and the Death Heads, but those are just a few major players, with smaller gangs every bit as involved. Do what you can to prevent these gangs from teaming up, or prevent them from carrying out any plans they already have. Some faction of the Ancients seem to enjoy the Funhouse, while the majority have steered clear. Like I said, I can't speak for Urubia's true motives, but be prepared just in case this is what she actually wanted to happen. Mayor Scholl, of all people, is paying for this run. She is in the loop and has no desire for Redmond to become a headquarters for the new Seattle theme-park Mafia.

- Oh Great Ghost. It might be true. Last year, a client swore that he saw a dragon swoop down over the mayor's house just before he saw Scholl go in. Those kind of sightings happen all the time, so I dismissed it, but I've never seen Urubia and Scholl in the same place ... and their politics seem to line up.
- Bull
- This kind of rumormongering is beneath you, old man. Leave the half-baked theories to Plan 9.
- Snopes
- Still, that would explain a lot. A lot.
- Plan 9
- The scary part is what would happen in the gangs got together, began to act in unison, and *then* were disrupted. You could have gang wars all over Seattle as conflicting ideologies clash and leadership vacuums open.
- DangerSensei

A GLOBAL CONSPIRACY ... FOR GOOD! (MOSTLY)

POSTED BY: ELECTRIC BLUE

Greetings and salutations, all you carbon-based, electron-based, or anything not-yet-classified life forms!

My new uber-chum Glitch gave me a temp-pass here and asked me to do some digging for some paydata regarding some "hooding" (cute term, by the by) done on a more global scale.



What, you thought this hooding stuff was a purely local or maybe even regional thing? HA!!! Open your eyes chum-a-rooskies, there's a *lot* more goody-two-shoes, white hats, or insert your own nickname here types out there than you realize. No freaking duh, am I right? Otherwise what's the point of all this?

Anyway, time to slam another Hyper-DRIVE™ energy drink because seven just isn't enough to get the job done and get down to biz!

- Great, just when I thought this couldn't get any worse, now I have to deal with this hyper-active head case.
- Clockwork
- I am *not* a head case! Some of my best friendz R, but I'm *not!* Take it back or you'll be sorry.
- Electric Blue
- *pfft* Please, take your best shot.
- Clockwork
- Should we?
- Bull
- Nope. Let it play out.
- Glitch

DRACO FOUNDATION: BIG D'S FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

For those of you who don't know or weren't around for it (I think I was like negative five years old or something), once upon a time the great dragon and UCAS Pres-elect Dunkelzahn was assassinated on inauguration night. Later, as part of Dunkie's will, a foundation was created to not only act as executors of said will, but to carry on with his vision and legacy. Or something like that. What most people still tend to think of when it comes to the Draco Foundation is the giving away of a drek-load of the great dragon's personal swag. He must have a lot of it because twenty or so years later, they're *still* not done doling the goods out.

- It's a bit more complicated than that. Most of the bequeathed items or tokens of esteem have been given to their intended recipients, but a great many still remain unclaimed because of various complications, to put it mildly.
- Frosty

But there's more to the Draco Foundation than passing out stuff from what amounts to a great dragon's garage sale (but what a garage sale, know what I mean?). No, the foundation's reach has gone beyond that into various halls of power both on a corporate and governmental scale (heh, scale ...dragon, get it?). But that's for another file, I'm sure. What I'm about to talk about are some of the other projects and initiatives that Big D either had a direct interest in when he was still alive, or things that have since come up that the foundation's chair—namely, one Nadja Daviar—believed he would have taken an interest in despite the inevitable pushback from governments, corps, and in many cases other “private” entities.

Now, full disclosure: Everything's not completely unified within the foundation, as several board members (among others) are using their positions to accomplish their own personal goals and agendas, only to pass them off as what Dunkie wanted. Shocker right? But it would be disingenuous to ignore the elements within the DF that have been working, often quietly and behind the scenes, to do some honest good in the world, even if it's sometimes still for their own agenda. Hey, good is good, right?

Below I've listed a nice sampling of the more high-profile stuff in the vague flavor of hooding they're doing. Don't think for a nano-second, though, that this is a comprehensive list. The DF has developed quite a long reach and a lot of contacts in the shadows, which makes for a lot of ongoing projects and operations; many of which are firmly in the shadows.

- Juan always told me that there's nothing wrong with maintaining your honor and still getting paid doing it. Helping out and doing some good is still quite expensive.
- Picador
- Something else worth mentioning—while publicly the DF is still working to carry out Dunkelzahn's last wishes or at least act in the spirit of said wishes, they still continue to maintain and expand a rather extensive global intelligence network that rivals any government agencies or many corporate divisions. Aside from the obvious intent of keeping abreast of current events and issues, the Draco Foundation uses this network to remain proactive in investigating and in many cases 'dealing' with threats of various natures. They mainly use New Assets as their primary, but not exclusive, instrument of choice.
- Thorn





- There's also been chatter over the last couple of years about the Draco Foundation and the great dragon Arleesh butting heads over supposed threats, despite Dunkelzahn's will stipulating that the foundation assist her. But they've recently appeared to have reached some sort of détente over whatever they were fighting over. More on that later.
- Wyrms Watcher
- Shush! No spoilers. Hey, I got to actually say that!
- Electric Blue
- What is this, amateur hour?
- Clockwork

DRACO FOUNDATION GLOBAL INITIATIVES

MOUNT KILIMANJARO MEDIATION

Over the past few years, tensions have constantly been on the rise between pro-corporate forces sponsored by the Corporate Court to protect the Kilimanjaro Mass Driver and militant locals backed by hostile spirits. The locals are protesting the continued use of the mass driver despite promises of it being decommissioned once the Skyhook Space Elevator was complete. Skirmishes between corporate mercenary forces and local opposition have been on the rise recently, which threaten to engulf the area into full-out warfare.



However, representatives from the Draco Foundation arrived on the scene (without invitation from anyone). Currently, they are attempting to moderate between the two factions, albeit with limited effect.

- More like having zero effect, unless you count slotting people off as progress. The Foundation is being ignored by all sides who consider them interlopers at best, a complication to be dealt with at worse. At least two DF “moderators” have been assassinated, and four more simply vanished. All they’re doing is making an already tense situation worse. Are they trying to start another war?
- Hard Exit
- I’ve been hearing rumblings that the Foundation is desperate to stop the fighting. Rumors are sketchy but indicate someone found something the foundation wants, or wants to stop, and a war would seriously complicate things.
- Lyran

OPERATION: PHOENIX

Devastation caused by Az-Am War is still felt to this day in the rural areas of Central and South America. In an effort to elevate some of the suffering caused by both sides of the war, the Draco Foundation has attempted to send relief supplies to the region with the help of mercenary and paramilitary forces, only for them to deal with constant attacks by local partisans and unknown guerrillas. Aztlan and Amazonia claim to have no knowledge of these forces and have criticized the DF for invading sovereign territory and not coordinating a proper humanitarian response.

- Things have gotten so bad that the DF has sent representatives to various area cartels to ask for assistance. Good luck with that.
- Marcos

YELLOWSTONE OBSERVATION PROJECT

Working in conjunction with the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, this project is the covert observation and monitoring of the Yellowstone region. Unfortunately, the Draco Foundation has been repeatedly denied access to the areas by the NAN tribal council, but this has not stopped them from conducting operations.

- Anyone else picking up on a theme here? That the DF is sticking their noses in places they’re just not wanted?
- Icarus

ASAMANDO FOOD RELIEF PROJECT

One of the provisions within Dunkelzahn’s Will was an award for the creation of synthetic flesh designed to meet the dietary requirements of ghouls without having to rely on metahuman sources. Over the years, many have attempted, and a few have come close to claiming the reward. All, though, have ultimately failed. While some of the attempts have been able to make a meat-substitute that temporarily quells a ghoul’s hunger, none of them did anything for their nutritional needs, basically creating what amounted to what one scientist called “ghoul junk food.”

- Many of the individuals and groups that submitted their work to the Draco Foundation have cried foul about this, claiming outright theft of their work. The DF countered by claiming that once the work was submitted, it became foundation property. Needless to say, various lawsuits have been filed, further delaying research and development.
- Mr. Bonds
- And of course, data steals and sabotage runs have been on the rise against the DF.
- Mika

As the population of Asamando increases, the nation’s monarchy is quickly becoming desperate to find a sustainable food source. Offering their best researchers, the Draco Foundation has assigned a team to fast-track the research using previous submissions as a baseline for work. While the team has yet to be allowed into Asamando proper, Draco Foundations researchers continue with their work and petitioning.

ARLEESH: OUR NEW GUARDIAN DRAGON-MOTHER?

Okay, backtracking just a bit. Some may not know about the great feathered serpent Arleesh. She first came on the global scene in 2048. But since then she’s wasted *no* time getting up to speed. And unlike most of the other greats, she hasn’t become the head of a megacorp or some crim-



inal syndicate, or even president (elect) of the UCAS. No, her big thing is has always been the tracking down, containing, and/or eliminating magical threats.

Compared to the rest of the great dragons, she's the closest thing we have to a hooder dragon. But don't read too much into that. By all accounts she cares more for the elimination of threats; helping metahumanity is merely a byproduct.

So why mention this? Well Arleesh showed up on a lot of radars recently. After helping Lowfyr win the so-called Dragon Civil War, she disappeared for a year. Then out of nowhere, she was all over the place. She met with several Salem Witch covens that managed to escape Boston. Then she and her Voice, Kendra de Santos, were present when several villages along the South American coast were "cured" of what was called "The Blood Rage." And then she was instrumental in helping the Draco Foundation secure some rogue artifacts that could have set off Yellowstone. Oh, and then she was spotted in Australia, apparently duking it out with some metaplanar ... thing. And the list goes on and on. And now, she's been seen making regular visits to the Draco Foundation HQ in DeeCee. What, if anything could this mean for her or the Draco Foundation?

- As already stated, Dunkelzahn promised DF assistance to Arleesh whenever she needed it. But things didn't originally go as planned and rumors speculate Arleesh was less than satisfied with DF's assistance, specifically stonewalling by Nadja Daviar herself. Arleesh apparently decided to simply take care of things herself. And by all accounts she's been quite successful.
- Wyrms Watcher
- So, what's changed then?
- Glitch

SHADOWCASTERS: ACTS OF INFORMATION FREEDOM

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

Knowledge is power, make no mistake about that. Everything in the Sixth World revolves around knowledge in one way or another, whether it's the specs on the latest uber-super-duper-weapon all the way down to who knows when it's the

right time to cross the street. In the right hands and deployed properly, any knowledge through information can be easily weaponized, in a manner of speaking. And of course the various powers that be, corps and governments at the top of that list but not exclusive, want the masses to remain completely unarmed and therefore under control. Even worse, knowledge that's diluted, slanted, or even altered is even worse. It gives the illusion of personal power and free will, but at the end of the day it's just another method of keeping people in their nice and comfortable sheep pens, behind walls (for our own good of course) completely dependent on our "good shepherds" to protect us from the wolves out there.

Of course, not everyone has let the wool stay over their eyes; some have gone a bit old-school to get the word out about, well just about everything and anything. You just need to know where to find them.

They call themselves shadowcasters. The term itself is a sort of shorthand for a combination of several terms and descriptors. Of course, the shadow part refers to the quasi-legal or outright illegal actions they undertake and in many ways are similar to modern shadowrunners.

- Ah, no. Sorry, but most of these jokers are posers to the extreme who wouldn't know a real spell or piece of 'ware if it smacked them in the face. And most of their "paydata" is just regurgitated drek from the tabloid screamsheets. No true professional would, or should, take any of these dip-dreks seriously.
- Clockwork
- As with scales, one must give weight to both sides in order to find the proper balance.
- Man-of-Many-Names

The "casters" part refers to the modern term Matrix-casters, which is derived from the old podcasters of decades past. While modern Matrix-casters are considered by the public at large to be the spiritual successors to old late-night AM talk-radio programs, something to satisfy a nostalgic craving for the offbeat or weird, shadowcasters take things to the next level. Shadowcasters are considered even more of a fringe element that has in recent years started to come into their own as more and more shadowcast programs are created. A scant five years ago, there were maybe a handful of shadowcasters and most of them had a very narrow focus. Now, there are dozens of new



'casts popping up all over the Matrix, each with their own distinctive style and focus covering a wide variety of subjects pertaining to the realities of the Sixth World.

More akin to pirate radio broadcasting programs from back in the day, shadowcasters today act as harbingers of truth, sending out whatever paydata they can get their hands on out to the masses about what their government and or corporate masters don't want to become known. Of course, when people know the truth, they're less controllable, more likely to ask pesky things like questions and want *gasp* accountability from their leaders! Okay, that may be stretching things a bit because one must never underestimate the apathy of the average person. But regardless, shadowcasters continue their work, hoping to spark something within metahumanity, or at the very least get data out there that could save lives. Of course, the good shepherds don't like it when someone pokes holes in their walls. They claim it creates weakness and could lead to chaos, up to the unraveling of civilization as we know it! But we all know that's a load of hellhound-drek.

So what exactly *is* a typical shadowcast or shadowcaster? Well, the answer to that is simple: there is no typical 'cast or 'caster; it varies depending on their focus. For example, some focus on current events and what's *really* going on in the Sixth World. Some 'casts give tips and tactics on how to survive when drek hits the fan, be it a gang attack or a rampaging spirit. Others give true historical facts while a few simply give accounts of those who're trying to scrape by on the mean streets.

Now, I'm not gonna lie, all 'casts aren't created equal. As is the case with any source of information, consumers needs to check the general reliability of any source and remember that all data has an expiration date. But their sources of information vary depending on the particular 'cast. Many of them are at least on friendly terms with various data dealers or have been able to set up their own network of contacts. More than a few 'casters are also accomplished hackers and/or shadowrunners in their own right!

But the one thing all the shadowcasters have in common is the burning desire to expose the masses to the truth of with what's really going on out there, good and bad. And may Ghost help us all.

SHADOWCAST EXAMPLE: LA VOZ DE LA VERDAD

Started shortly after the Az-Am War after Aztlan annexed the former free city of Bogotá, La Voz de la Verdad, or The Voice of Truth in old Spanish began broadcasting to what amounted to counter-propaganda. Their goal was to expose the various lies and schemes Aztlan was trying to shove down the throats of Bogotá's citizens and the world.

While their successes on that front were mixed, La Voz de la Verdad became a willing partner with the Bright Star insurgent movement within Bogotá, often sending coded messages and rallying supporters. In addition to opposing Aztlan, the shadowcast has in recent years begun to help people within still beleaguered neighborhoods to find aid and supplies via underground means.

Several times Aztlan has attempted to shut La Voz de la Verdad down. But for every broadcast point they terminate, three more pop up and continue the work.

- Okay, Blue, I know you're a major source of paydata for a number of 'casters, which is fine. But pro tip, you may want to have a bit more disclosure about it, especially here. Otherwise, you'll likely get called out for bias, and your data may not be taken seriously because it looks like you may be embellishing or hiding something.
- /dev/grrl
- Huh ... never thought about it that way. Data assimilated; domo!
- Electric Blue
- Oh for ... so basically, this guy—or rather *kid*—is confirming he's full of it, and this is a complete waste of time?
- Clockwork
- Yeah, anyway. It's becoming more and more common for certain runners to work with shadowcasters as a sort of quid pro quo in regards to paydata. It's also becoming more common for some 'casts with large pockets to act as Johnsons looking acquire specific kinds of paydata.
- Pistons
- Black Star and other neo-a groups are frequent patrons and allies of shadowcasters, who are more than happy to help with the cause. *grin*
- Old Crow



- On the down side, these 'casts need to start watching their backs more because GOD has started taking notice of them. Seven in the last year have been directly targeted and eliminated, while many others now have files on them. Tread carefully.
- Icarus

NEW UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: THE MORE THINGS CHANGE ...

Throughout history, there've always been persecuted groups within any given society. And most of the time, the average person is simply glad it's not them, until it is. But ya see, every so often people realize the wrongness of that and actually do something about it. And of course, those actions are extremely dangerous—people have actually died for their principles while trying to get the persecuted to freedom or protect them from annihilation.

One of the most famous of these efforts came during the United States' Civil War. Called the Underground Railroad, its purpose was to help slaves from Africa in the nation's southern states, where slavery was still legal, to find freedom in the nation's northern regions where slavery had been abolished. An elaborate system of waypoints, secret routes, and safehouses were established. Not all of them were successful, and the penalty for helping escaped slaves was just as severe as for those slaves who escaped. But, many were willing to take that risk.

Now, fast forward a couple hundred years and change and we have the Sixth World. And in some ways—actually many ways—things really didn't change that much. After the Awakening, persecuting metahumans became the new "in" thing to do for most of the world. In those early years, the recently goblinized would be ran out of town. At worst, they were killed outright or tortured for fun or part of some experiment. After things post-Awakening started to calm down a bit more and metahumans became a little more accepted by society, new groups kept taking their place; not that the racial bias and persecution against metahumans completely went away. Changelings victimized by SURGE and even technomancers found themselves in dire circumstances.

- A lot of new technomancers owe their lives to the New Railroad, which helped scores make their way to sanctuary areas such as Denver or Berlin.
- Netcat
- Protecting freaks? Traitors to metahumanity, if you ask me.
- Clockwork
- Funny, no one did. You really need to get a new spiel; this one's way past its expiration date.
- Bull

But as in the days of the Civil War, a select few banded together to help the persecuted get out of harm's way and start anew. This group of individuals started calling themselves the New Underground Railroad. Adapting their predecessors' methods and tactics, the New Railroad began setting up their own network of waypoints, secret routes, and safehouses. Only this time, they were able to better coordinate thanks to modern communications such as the Matrix.

Railroad workers generally fall into two categories. The first are conductors, the ones directly active in helping get individuals or groups. They're the ones to provide transportation, manage safehouses, or do whatever needs to be done. Basically, they're the ones on the front lines. The second are known simply as patrons. They're the ones who usually help finance railroad operations or act as logistical support. Like I said, doing the right thing isn't cheap. Sometimes, individuals or groups will act as both conductor and patron.

- Unsurprisingly, the usual suspects of the Draco Foundation and Black Star are known to work extensively with the railroad when they need to move large amounts of people or supplies. I also have it on good authority that several conductors are also members, or affiliates, of Technicolor Wings and Banzai's Battlefield Express. And when called for, the railroad also hires runners for various jobs.
- Turbo Bunny
- Do we have any data on how large or extensive the railroad is?
- Lyran
- No, they keep that a tight secret. But a couple of years ago, a large number of non-feral ghouls made their way from Chicago to Asamando in less than three days thanks to the Railroad. Take that for what you will.
- Hannibelle



Despite sounding like an actual organization, the New Railroad is more of a loose alliance of affiliated or like-minded groups coming together when the situation calls for it. Then, they contact other conductors to arrange assistance or to coordinate operations. Damn, that sounds so ... official. Otherwise, when not active, they're normal people that run the gamut of society ranging from the poorest of pour, to people in great positions of power and going about their daily lives like everyone else until they get a call to action or discover a need.

- Interestingly enough, this is a similar MO to a terrorist organization.
- Balladeer
- Walks like a duck, quacks like a duck ...
- Clockwork
- So here's a question—why haven't we really heard about them until now?
- Treadle
- I can think of more than a few reasons, chief among them is that they maintain a low profile and appear to act through proxies, or at least those who take the credit. I'd also wager that if they have this extensive of a network, they have patrons with sufficient power to cover up or deflect any inquiries about the Railroad. But ultimately, I think that they have always been there, hiding in plain sight because no one's really had a reason to look into them.
- Picador
- Well, *that's* gonna change ...
- Clockwork

WARREN'S WAVERIDERS: SAILING THE FRIENDLY SEAS

Yo-ho me hearties! Okay, we can all agree that the standard modus operandi of pirates is looting, pillaging, and plundering ... or was that the Vikings? I think it's both, but regardless, as we all know piracy is alive and well even today. Just ask anyone who frequents the Carib League, South China Sea, the African Coast, and so on, and they'll tell you the same thing. Things are so bad in some areas that anti-pirate specialists are paid premium prices for their services. And even then, it's not enough. Some pirate bands are on

par with some of the most successful mercenary groups who even government and corporate groups don't want to tangle with. True terrors of the sea they are.

And then there's Warren's Waveriders.

- Oh, these jokers can take a big frag grenade up the ass.
- Kane
- What? The great Kane is irritated? Is this an indication of some actual, serious competition? Color me extremely interested.
- Pistons
- You can take one, too.
- Kane

"We're privateers, not pirates!" is the first thing "Commodore" William Warren will say when describing his merry band of white-hat buccaneers. So what makes the Waveriders different than the average, run-of-the-mill cutthroats? In a nutshell, the Waveriders are basically anti-pirates. In many ways they operate, and look, like regular pirates, but that's where the similarities end.

First, the Waveriders are basically, in the loosest technical sense, a paramilitary unit that specializes in maritime operations. They first came on the scene about six years ago and quickly made their mark on the piracy scene, in all the wrong ways—or right, depending on your general opinion on piracy. The 'Riders are an honest-to-ghost legit security outfit in many regards. Commodore Warren is registered by the International Mercenary Association and has multiple security licenses with multiple government and even several corporations. This allows the Waveriders to operate just about everywhere on the planet if they wish. Or almost. Regardless, the Waveriders usually get a contract, which they call a "letter of marque" that keeps them from too many legal entanglements when they're sailing the deep blue seas and shooting drek up.

- Warren has licenses with all of the BigTen except for Ares, who still prefers to use their pet unit Team Zero in these situations, and Wuxing, who has their Marine Security Division and considers anyone else inferior.
- Hard Exit
- Or it could just be the beef they have with Warren himself.
- /dev/grrl



COMMODORE WILLIAM WARREN

A male human in his late forties, Warren is a former team leader in Wuxing's Marine Security Division. During a hostage rescue in the Sea of Japan, Warren went against orders and attempted to rescue an entire family instead of a single VIP. For his troubles, his second-in-command shot him in the leg and left him to the tender mercies of the pirates. Sold into slavery, he spent the next two years in captivity before leading a revolt on the ship which would eventually become his flagship, the *Better Deal*.

With a burning hatred for slavers, pirates, and Wuxing, Warren slowly, but surely, built the Waveriders into the force they are today. Now with a custom cyber-leg, Warren leads from his custom "command deck" of the *Better Deal*, monitoring and coordinating his ships in his never-ending quest to battle piracy.

Second, the Waveriders are basically pirates who hunt other pirates. Simple enough right? But while Commodore Warren has accreditation coming out of his ass, he's yet to take a single corporate contract (at least not directly). Instead, ninety percent of Waverider contracts are from parties aggrieved by, targeted by, or victims of piracy. Depending on the terms of the contract, these jobs often range from the quick and simple asset recovery, hostage rescue, or more long-term jobs such as escort or "asset denial" in which Waverider ships frag with a pirate crew or band's operations. Of the latter, one of the Waverider's favorite tactics is to convert their larger vessels into modern-day equivalents of "Q-ships," luring pirates in by looking like anything other than an armed vessel and then blasting the ever-loving drek out of them when they try to board.

- Some of these Q-ships use other tactics. Some purposely allow boarders and then trap them with a combination of security devices and magical traps. I've heard of at least one Waverider Q-ship that used special drones disguised as small cargo containers to re-configure the main hull's layout or to simply engulf intruders.
- Turbo Bunny
- Hey Kane, didn't your flagship take heavy damage last month from a Waverider Q-ship, forcing you to retreat?
- Stone

- Frag off and die.
- Kane

Third, the Waveriders are known to work for relatively cheap compared to other organizations of similar scope and size. As I've already said, most of the 'Rider's employers are victims of piracy, many of them without the means to pay large fees other outfits charge. There's one legend that Warren accepted a job for a single nuyen because it gave him the ability to settle an old score and bust up a human trafficking ring near the Arabian Peninsula. Frag, it's well-known that Warren often gives special consideration for his clients if the job entails geeking slavers of any kind.

- They're also known to readily work for or with the neo-a's, providing transportation and support for either dirt cheap or free.
- Old Crow

The 'Riders usually make up their costs by salvaging or flat-out taking whatever they can from their targets. Hey, do-gooding isn't cheap, and guns and ammo cost money. This is also how Warren has been able to expand his fleet so quickly. Granted, what they can't keep they usually have to sell their salvage through legit means. Most within the pirate and black-market communities would like nothing more than to keel-haul every 'Rider they come across. Oh! Almost forgot, Warren also isn't above claiming bounties on known pirates or pirate bands, which further endears them to their chosen enemies.

Currently, the Waverider's fleet was last known to contain at least twenty vessels of various types. Overall, Waverider tactics involve a combination of speed, surprise, and unconventional tactics. So most of the fleet is composed of fast-moving craft sporting plenty of arms and armor; the lone exception to this being Warren's flagship, the converted supertanker the *Better Deal*, which acts as a mobile HQ and floating repair dock. Depending on the job, it's not unusual for the fleet to split up into various flotillas as needed or work as a large unit. With the *Better Deal* able to carry every ship in the fleet, they can travel wherever necessary.

Individual ship captains and crew can come from anywhere—some are even former pirates, but all must swear loyalty to Warren and agree to operate under his rules of engagement. Those that



don't, can't, or re-engage in piracy are considered the enemy and treated accordingly.

- Rumors say that Warren has all of his ships equipped with special detonation devices that only he can access, should any of his people go rogue. If a captain steps out line, Warren expects the crew to take over. Otherwise, everyone goes BOOM.
- 2XL
- All RIGHT!!! WHOTHE FRAG DID IT! I KNOW IT WAS ONE OFYOU ONTHIS BOARD, ITRACKED IT! WHEN I FIND OUT WHO <USER: Clockwork, access limited by SysOP-01>
- Clockwork
- Okay, first, calm the frag down. Second, what are you talking about?
- Glitch
- Well ... remember when he got on my backside about being a head case at the beginning of this file and told me to "take your best shot"? For that, and because he's such a grade-A jerk, I made a donation to known New Underground Railroad affiliates to the tune of 1.5 million nuyen in Clockwork's name, which is only fitting because I used the money from several of his previously hidden Carib-League accounts. And I also ordered about one hundred pizzas for the local techno-tribe in my area—kept one for myself, which is a bit selfish I admit; my bad on that. But don't worry! I left him one hundred 'yen for basic living expenses.
- Electric Blue
- BUHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!
- Slamm-O!
- I like this kid, can we keep him?
- /dev/grrl
- Lookit that approval rating. You can practically feel the conflicted joy.
- Red
- Oh fuck me. Blue, we really need to talk ...
- Glitch

FIRST, YOU NEED A JOB ...

POSTED BY: BULL

Okay, I'm gonna step in here, too. So you oh-so-noble shadowrunners want to save the world?

Guess what? You still need a job. The world of hooding isn't that different from normal shadow-running, truth be told; you still have a team, you still have opponents, and believe it or not, you still have an employer. If you're lucky, you're getting a Mr. Johnson, but most of the time, you get Ms. Smith. More on that in a moment.

- Wait, is Bull actually contributing to JackPoint? I thought he was just puttering around the place in his housecoat and muttering about when he compiled code in Fortran, on a dial-up modem that rests on a tortoise!
- Slamm-O!
- What? Fred, I'm still south of fifty for frag's sake. The Matrix existed before I was born. I just, you can't ... *sigh*
- Bull

In a traditional setting, you have a few moving parts. You have the team, you have your fixer sniffing around to get you work, you have Mr. Johnson sniffing around for teams to do a job, and you have a client - the guy who has Mr. Johnson go out there and set the job up. Rarely, Mr. Johnson is the client (Some of us who have worked for Karen King know how that goes) but, more often than not, he's just a professional negotiator who's willing to get his hands dirty.

This separation is important; it keeps the runners from implicating the client, it keeps the client from knowing who the runners are so he doesn't feel the need to "deal with loose ends," and the Quiet Arrangement continues. What, you don't think the corps could shut most of us down if they didn't have use for us? That layer of deniability is vital. Those rare times when Mr. Johnson is the client is when you know it's going to be crazy. It either means that you're trusted enough to be folded inside the company, that the matter is so important to the client that they're personally getting involved instead of keeping a professional distance, or that you'll be capped when it's done, so come prepared.

- For me, it's usually the second. I had a streak of jobs for Ares a while back, and they tend to go through Johnsons more than anybody else. One job from this guy, three from that gal, two from this other chummer ... you get used to it. Twice, though, Mr. Johnson tracked the team down later for a personal run. They'd been let go from the company and wanted to pad their pockets with some bonus retirement funds in the first case, or had narrowly missed being eliminated (or "court-martialed," in Ares



MEET THE CODE-TALKER

He appears at the diner door in a trenchcoat, wearing a slouch hat and sunglasses while he looks around nervously. He manages to figure out your team's at one table, so sits at a nearby one, with his back to the group. He starts speaking out of the side of his mouth, using his collar to muffle the words. "You're the, uh, moving company, right? I have a job for you. It's just, uh, a refrigerator with, uh. Uh. A weasel. Yeah, it's a weasel in the refrigerator. I need you to go to the labraaaaghini factory, yeah, labraghini factory, winkwink open the fridge, and move the weasel to, uh. Jacket number seven. Yeah, number seven. When the weasel's in the jacket, then the cow will have jumped the moon and the asparagus will be fresh. Capiche?"

He wraps it up by sliding a briefcase from his table to yours, says, "The vegetables are now stewed," puts a finger to the side of his nose, and goes back out the door. Your team just stares at one another for a good three seconds before everyone breaks out laughing. Turns out that the briefcase had better information in it: Ms. Smith needs you to break into his lab, move a canister from one cold storage to his workspace's cold storage, then smash up some things to make it look like a burglary gone bad. Why didn't he just say so?!

parlance) and wanted to get some revenge so they could vanish. Got her out, hopped around the globe for a few months, thought about getting hitched, but then Ares got wind of us in Niagara Falls. She caught a terminal case of lead poisoning.

- Stone
- I'm sorry, omae. Did you avenge her?
- Beaker
- Nah. Turned out she was going to sell me out for a chance to come in from the cold, but the team that found her didn't know it. Ares: Where one hand has no clue what the other one's doing.
- Stone

There are several groups out there that both employ Johnsons and who do hooding-flavored work: The Draco Foundation, Mothers of Metahumans (Hi MOM!), and many, many more. If you stretch a bit, you can even find headspace to include groups like Greenwar or the Mafia in there. Just because you're helping out the little guy, it doesn't always mean doing the right thing. Just because you're doing a job for a corp, it doesn't

always mean that it's a bad thing. I've had Lone Star hire me to take out a child predator they couldn't reach due to jurisdiction, and I've been asked by a family in the Ork Underground to murder a bunch of dwarfs (didn't take that one, obviously) ... you can find immoral operators anywhere. As always, build a good relationship with your fixer to let them know what kinds of work you will or won't do, and they'll work to make sure that you get the right Johnsons.

- This is true. It saves us all time if you let your fixer know that you don't do wetwork, for instance. Saves those of us giving out jobs from wasting our time.
- Am-Mut

MEET MS. SMITH

And now for the other side of the coin; You're not likely familiar with the term Ms. Smith, so let me fill you in. Ms. Smith is the codename of choice for a client who is representing themselves. Yes, this applies to men, women, and everything in between, just like Mr. Johnson is often a woman. Ms. Smith sometimes knows the shadowrunning gig, but most of the time they have no idea what they're doing. They have a problem, they need help, they don't know who to turn to, so they launch a "friend of a friend" network plea for help and wind up sitting at a table across from you, desperate that you're the last hope. You've all done a few of these gigs as a favor to a contact, I'm sure. Sergei who gets you guns has a friend who need a hand. The bartender who lets you use the back room has a cousin deep in debt to the Yaks. Your uncle got his house robbed and you promise to find the jerks who did it, that kind of thing. Ms. Smith takes many forms but always asks the same question: Will you help me?

- I love these kinds of jobs. They're clueless. Promise them anything, take whatever money they scrape together, then bail ... quick cash, no risk, and it never impacts your professional rep. Bonus points if you get a lil' as part of the price.
- Haze
- Swear to God, just when I think you can't get any worse ...
- Pistons
- Bull's on the nose about helping your contacts. Too many runners think of it as a one-way street: What can you tell me about this? What can you tell me about that? They're people, you know? They have wants and needs, desires



and dreams, which means the care and feeding of your contacts is vital. If you don't toss them favors now and then, why should they help you? On the other hand, when you do them a solid, they'll have your back when you really need it. Yeah, the pay's lousy (Hell, most of the time it's gratis), but the pay *off* can be huge. You need to keep some room on your calendar open for short runs like this.

- Hard Exit

Most of the time, Ms. Smith doesn't know anything about the biz. All they know is that they need help, they were directed at you, and now they just sort of sit there and lay it all on the line. Occasionally, you get someone who thinks that they know and will try to play it cool but anyone with some experience can see through it. The worst are the ones who've seen too many trids and try to play it up like some kind of spy adventure.

I'll be honest; working for Ms. Smith is often a mixed bag. You're pretty safe with the no-betrayal thing, since they're only doing this because they need help. You can count on them to meddle rarely, since you know what you're doing and they don't. Sometimes they insist on going with you for part of the mission, but usually they know that they'll just get in the way. Pay isn't the best (but sometimes they pay way too much, having no idea of what the job's really worth), but the assets they can bring are different from the usual Johnson dossiers. Ms. Smith might have a legitimate account at a corporation, letting you slip in and look around without raising suspicion. They might have passcodes to doors, know where someone keeps the loot, or can tell you that the security guard goes off at 2:30 a.m. every Thursday to watch *Passion of the Luchadores* on Azziemundo. Just as likely is that they have no idea what's going on and can't offer you more than a doe-eyed smile.

- Do a few of these jobs and you'll be longing for the crisp, cool professionalism of Mr. Johnson. Sure, he always wears a black suit and doesn't tell you everything he knows, but at least he comes with a plan and a solid mission statement.
- 2XL
- In contrast, after too many blank faces and "It was adequate" comments, you'll long for Ms. Smith breaking down in tears when you save his daughter, watching them cheer when you blow up their former boss' favorite car, or just hearing a genuine "thank you" choked out through tears. To each their own.
- Chainmaker

YOU'RE MY ONLY HOPE

Ms. Smith is waiting for you at the only ork-sized table in the place. He's uncomfortable because even an ork-sized chair is tight on his troll-sized frame. He's wearing an off-the-rack suit ten years out of date and doesn't know what to do with his hands while waiting. His wife is there in a Sunday dress and has clearly been crying on and off for days. Once everyone's settled in, he tells a simple story:

"Three days ago, my son was savagely attacked. A bunch of human kids saw him walking along, picked on him, then started in with punches and kicks. You're a troll, it happens; you learn to just cover up, wait for them to get bored and leave. They can't really hurt you, but if you lash out you could kill them by accident. And the police are always on their side. Normally, you get a few bruises and shrug it off. It's life. This time, though? This time they went too far."

He pulls a dart from the pocket of his coat, saying, "Had enough juice in there to drop an elephant. Once my boy was down, they ..." He pauses for a moment, choking down emotion, before saying, "They took his horns." His wife breaks into a sob here. He pats her hand and continues. "It's all the rage in Humanis circles right now, taking a troll's horns as a sign of your domination. They maimed him for life. When we left the hospital, we went straight to the police, but ..."

He shakes his head. "Not as bad as the Star, but the Knights are still a business. A case like this doesn't make them profit, so it's moved to the bottom of the stack unless you have a premium account. I didn't stay as calm as I would have liked. Made a scene, but Mollie, my wife here, got me to calm down and leave. I know better than to lose my temper, but ..."

She nudges him, making him pull out an honest-to-ghost folder, saying, "This was on the seat of my car when I finally calmed down enough to leave. Had a note on it that read 'This is the best I can do, good luck.' I had a guardian angel in the station somewhere." He opens it, tapping a grainy photo inside. "Joseph Kizinski, nineteen years old, long history of racial hate. Our angel seems to think he's part of the group that got my son. I want you to get the truth out of him and then to find the rest. I don't want them killed! Or even hurt ... that won't grow my son's horns back."

Here, his eyes fill with tears, his fist clenches so hard that you can hear the tendons pop, and he says, "I don't want revenge ... I want justice." A bang against the table to punctuate the point rattles plates and draws more than a few turned heads. His wife quickly calms him down, talking low as she says, "If we can get enough evidence, we can get the media involved, shame the police into action, and maybe, just maybe, we can get enough focus to stop anyone else from having to endure what my family's gone through. Please, can you help us?"



THE WOUNDED WING

The classic Ms. Smith. She's a young widow who just lost her husband, a brilliant tech researcher on the verge of a major breakthrough who was found dead at his work station. Through the tears, she talks about his passion for helping people, how he'd poured his whole life into this project and how it would revolutionize the world ... and how someone in big bad Corporation X had him rubbed out. She knows his work was too valuable to destroy, so she needs you to find out who killed him, track him down, and recover her husband's lost work so that she can ensure that it gets into the right hands, people who can complete his dream. She doesn't have much, but, you'd be doing the world such a good service ...

How much of her story is true? What was he working on? Who killed him and why? Who does she plan on getting the great work to? Will she give it away or sell it? Was she really married to him in the first place? Is your team the only one chasing this particular McGuffin down and, if not, who hired the other guys? Are you really being paid enough for this?

This isn't always true, of course; in our line of work, no one's completely trustworthy. Ms. Smith has her own agenda, even if it's a positive one, and they're willing to pull some emotional strings to get you to go along with their ideas. Sometimes, you can agree to do a job that your head told you to stay away from because your heart got pulled too hard. I've made a mistake or two in my day, and the only advice I can give here is this: Trust your gut. If you feel like something's not right, there's probably a good reason. Never be afraid to say "No."

- Good advice that too many rookie runners ignore. You need to build a rep by doing jobs, but that doesn't mean that you have to take every job that comes across your desk. Learn how to pass with grace.
- Kia
- Not every Broken Wing is the real deal. I've had people break out the crocodile tears as they described the horrible things that had happened and how they had nowhere else to turn and, as soon as I started noticing holes in their story, they turned furious and stormed away. More than one person got into a relationship for money, not love, and after their partner died, they found out that the gravy train was cut off. Some of us might be comfortable with,

say, breaking into a law firm to adjust a will, but when the kids are left out while the twenty-something arm candy suddenly gets everything, things get ugly.

- Hard Exit
- You can also get a "Trojan Johnson," someone thinking that they can save money by roping a team into trusting "that sweet old grandpa" and getting away with paying a team far less than a job is worth, pocketing the difference. Fuchi had an old guy from Switzerland that they called the Clockmaker who pulled that scam all the time. He went with the rest of Fuchi's euro-assets to Shiawase back in '61, but I've not heard of him doing anything in a decade. Might have finally passed on.
- 2XL
- I don't say this often, but sometimes you have to put money aside and do the right thing. When a kid shows up with some information about an old friend of yours needing help, put some trust in humanity and listen to them. We all have a little karmic debt that needs to be paid off, after all.
- Icarus
- Well, who brought you a heart for Kwaanza, wings? It looks good on ya!
- Bull
- See honey? I told you! Santa *is* real!
- Slamm-0!

So, that's that. Just a short primer on how different it can be to work the softer side of things, a few of the people that you might meet across the table, and what to keep an eye out for while perusing the job offers floating around. Working for Ms. Smith brings a whole slew of challenges that you don't get from Mr. Johnson, but there are some upsides as well. It falls on each of you to decide if it's a field you're willing to enter or not. Just remember: Keep your powder dry, your friends close, and never, ever, deal with a dragon.

- Some exceptions may apply.
- Orange Queen

CRY FOR HELP

POSTED BY: FROSTY

Okay, listen. I have a big ask, and you know when I pull favors, things have gotten real. I need to be put in touch with a team of runners for a big



scary job. Emphasis on scary. On the surface, it's not a hooding job, but trust me, if it doesn't get done, many people will suffer I'm sorry to say. The bad part first. I need runners to head to a metaplane for a high-level extraction. The specific metaplane, Fauth-Doshgoi, is ruled over by shedim and other, more powerful, shadow spirits. They are the population there in the same way metahumans are here. Fortunately, this isn't their home plane, only one they've colonized.

- Which is essentially what they are hoping to do with our world as well—turn it into a world where they can thrive and rule. That never ends well for the colonized world.
- Red

The extraction is being sought by Lord Gwyn. Yes, that Lord Gwyn, of the Unseelie Court. He is apparently dying, and the target of the extraction is who he wants as his replacement.

- Ha. Gwyn is an idiot if he thinks she will go for that.
- The Laughing Man
- Frag me. Who let him in?
- Bull
- I did. Although you know he doesn't ever need someone to let him in.
- Frosty
- Heya, Bullsie. Long time.
- The Laughing Man
- **USER BULL HAS DISCONNECTED**

I am otherwise occupied, or I would do this myself. Laughing Man would do it, but the second part of this job is running interference with the Seelie Court. One of the Court's previous queens, Alachia, who tutored Lady Brane herself, is behind the imprisonment of the target. Ergo, if she isn't distracted while the run occurs, she'll most definitely attempt to stop it and imprison the target.

- You are being coy. Stop saying "the target" and get to the point. Who needs to be extracted?
- Butch

Lord Gwyn refers to the target as the Ebon Queen, an apparent dig at the "Queen of Light" in residence at the Seelie Court. Knowing what I



know now, it is an apt title, both for the darkness in her as well as her opposition and scorn for the Seelie Court. The Ebon Queen is none other than Aina Dupree.

- Holy drek. Are you serious? She's alive? Oh. Now I see why the clown is here.
- Thorn
- Right-o,Thorny old pal. I'm putting an awful lot on the line for this to work, so whoever takes the job better do it right, or after I dance with Alachia, I'm headed your way.
- The Laughing Man
- You knew she was alive, didn't you?That's why you called off your attack against Ghostwalker in Denver back in '74? Well, that and a great dragon was about to rip you apart ...
- Thorn
- Maybe so. Or maybe I was just done fooling around. Which reminds me, anyone seen a free spirit running around? Handsome devil, looks like me? If you do, tell him I'm looking for him, haha! Gwynplaine! Daddy's coming!
- The Laughing Man
- Knock it off. I can't believe you aren't taking this more seriously.
- Frosty.
- Oh, I'm taking this plenty seriously. But I've already set my part in motion. Nothing left for me to do than to wait for Gwyn and whatever team you pull together to get going. Alive or dead, they'll serve their purpose.
- The Laughing Man

She needs to be located on Fauth-Doshgoi, which is a city filled with shedim and a type of shadow spirits known as got. Gwyn has a decent idea of where she is once you arrive there. Get her and bring her to Gwyn.

- Or bring her to me. I'll pay better.
- The Laughing Man
- Don't frag this up, you bastard. Gwyn is decent. You're ... not. Let her go. She's had enough of your shadow up her ass. Deal with Alachia as your parting gift to her and let her find her own way.
- Frosty
- No.
- The Laughing Man.

- Sorry to interrupt, but "got" are not spirits. "Got" is a rank, sort of a "governor." In this case, it commands a group of shedim and other shadow spirits.
- Elijah
- Why doesn't Gwyn get the Unseelie to do this, or go himself?
- Thorn
- As mentioned above, Gwyn seems to be dying. He may not have enough strength left to ensure a good outcome. And as for the Unseelie, Gwyn already feels devastated at the number of Unseelie who have lost their lives trying to get information on Aina. He now steadfastly refuses to put any more Unseelie at risk, even for the Ebon Queen. But he is willing to offer ancient and unique methods of payment to runners who can pull this off.
- Frosty

FIDES, SPES, ET CARITAS

POSTED BY: FIANCHETTO

Though their name has come up several times in the past, particularly with reference to the magically inclined Order of St. Sylvester, it occurred to me that JackPoint has never been given details of the Catholic Church's humanitarian efforts. Given the subject of this download, it seems an appropriate time to correct that.

The Catholic Church has long held itself up as one of the moral pillars, if not *the* moral pillar, of the Western world. The Bible states that, at the Last Judgment, God will ask each person how they helped the poor and needy. Catholic canon law is the oldest continuously functioning legal system in the world. Even the (in)famous Knights Templar were founded to provide charity and protection to Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land before they turned to banking and conquest. Though the Church's activities have been more controversial in recent years—the Awakened Schism and the re-establishment of the Papal States within the Italian Confederation come to mind—many Catholics are still committed to working for the common good.

Of the Church's many and varied institutions, shadowrunners will no doubt be most familiar with the aforementioned **Order of St. Sylvester**. To avoid rehashing too much of our *Street Grimoire* download, I'll be brief. The Sylvestrines are chiefly



concerned with the Catholic practice of magic and the study of magical phenomena. This often includes missionary activity when the local authorities possess both a dislike of the Church and powerful magic of their own, such as Aztlán and Tír na nÓg. As a result, the Sylvestrines frequently hires runner teams for smuggling and protection work.

The **Sovereign Military Order of Malta**, while technically independent from the Church, is one of the largest Catholic charitable orders in the world. Known as the Knights Hospitaller when they were founded during the Crusades in 1099, and sometimes as the Order of St. John, the Order of Malta provides first-aid training, medical care, and humanitarian assistance in all corners of the world. Before the rise of corps like DocWagon and CrashCart, the Order of St. John provided ambulance services in multiple countries and even maintained an auxiliary hospital corps in the Italian Army prior to that nation's collapse.

- They still do. There's a registered merc outfit called the Knights of St. John that hires itself out as combat medics, operating field hospitals and running medevac and SAR missions in conflict and disaster zones. They're pretty proud of their heritage, too—one of their officers once told me the group had been around for almost a thousand years. Now I almost regret calling bullshit.
- Picador
- The Order of Malta pops up in American history, too, but not in the way you'd think. As the name implies, the SMOM is a legally sovereign entity. The lawyers in the Seretech and Shiawase Decisions cited the SMOM's existence as a precedent to support their arguments for corporate extraterritoriality.
- Kay St. Irregular

More of a movement than an organization, the **Gutiérrez Society** promotes social welfare through liberation theology: the belief in Christ as subversive and revolutionary, ministering to the poor and oppressed. The *libradores* draw on parables like the Cleansing of the Temple to agitate for social and political change, especially against the megacorporations. Unlike the Sylvestrines, Gutiérrez Society members are often wary of the Awakened. Their hesitation stems partly from the fact that Catholic magicians with no ties to the Sylvestrines are rare enough to be noteworthy, raising the question of *why* there are no links between them. Another reason is that in many of the areas in which the *libradores* operate, Catholic

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

Our *Street Grimoire* download describes the Knights Templar as a militant faction within the Order of St. Sylvester, dedicated to both combating supernatural threats and expanding the magical influence of the Catholic Church. In truth, their mandate goes beyond even that; the Templars' goal is to re-establish the Church's historical dominance over politics as well as religion. The creation of the modern Papal States was greatly facilitated by the Knights Templar, who took to the task of regime destabilization as well as any other intelligence officer. The Templars' activities in Aztlán, the former "Crusader Kingdoms" (including Jerusalem), and Tír na nÓg, among other nations, are all directed towards the same goal. (Shadowland's *Threats 2* download contains a great deal more information on the Templars' goals and methods of operation, which many of you may find interesting, if slightly dated.)

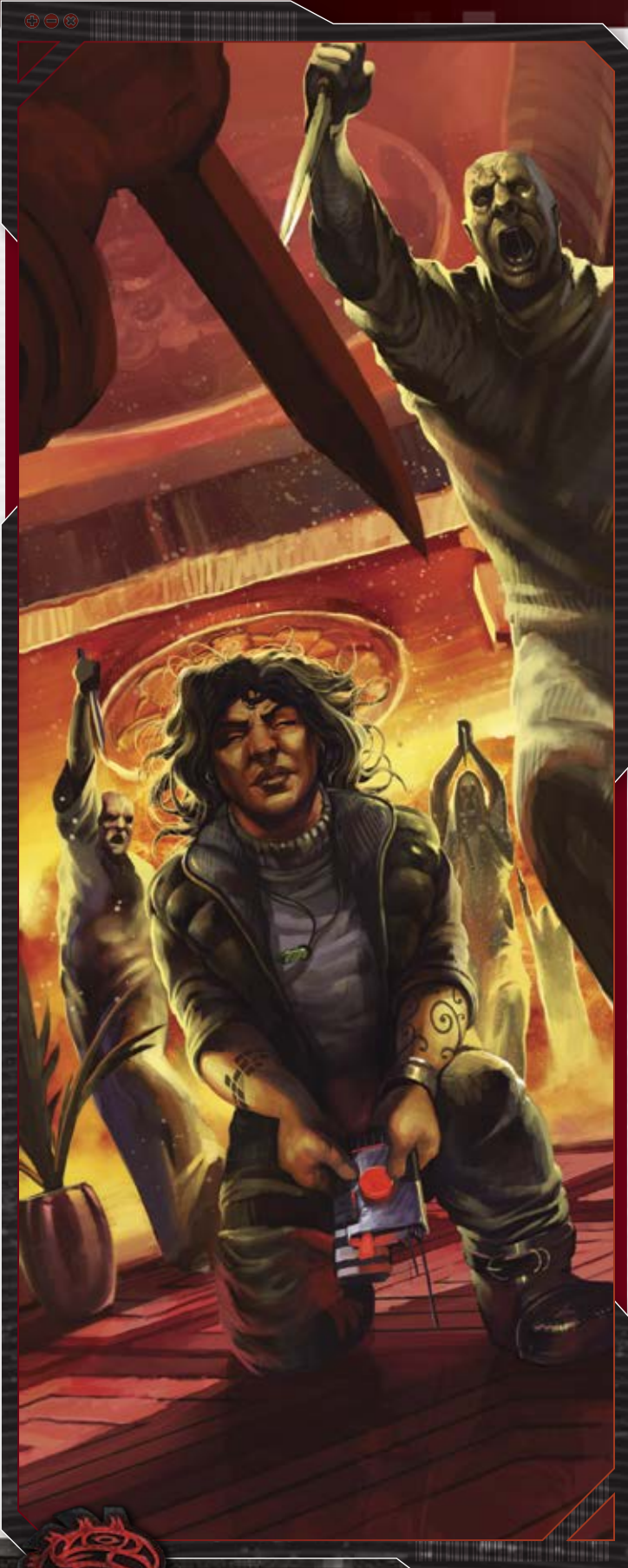
Thus, to save JackPoint's membership the trouble of commenting in each section, I'll simply say that most or all of the opportunities I present here are likely fronts for Templar operations, knowingly or not. Whether that fact outweighs their value in helping those in need is a decision I leave to the reader.

magicians draw a lot of unwanted attention to themselves and their associates. Instead, most *libradores* groups prefer to recruit deckers and technomancers, reasoning that subverting oppressors' communications and spreading their own message will produce more lasting change than Awakened who are all too often martyred.

- Technomancers in are highly valued in Aztlán in particular. The *libradores* there have a hard time getting decent Matrix hardware without Aztechnology finding out, but we can tackle high-tech problems like Azzie surveillance without needing a lot of tech ourselves. It's one of the few places where people are *happy* that you can use the Matrix with your mind.
- Netcat
- What, Clockwork, no snappy retort about how nice it is that the Azzies use technos for blood sacrifices?
- Pistons
- Why would I, when you're all so happy to do it for me? It's like free outsourcing!
- Clockwork

Thanks to our shared affinities for dangerous corners of the world, the Hospitallers, Sylvestrines,





and Gutiérrez Society are the groups shadowrunners will most likely encounter. I've included a list of potential opportunities below.

BOGOTÁ

After Aztechnology's victory in the Az-Am War, the conquerors quickly moved to suppress the Church in Bogotá as they have in the rest of Aztlán. The Primatial Cathedral in Bolívar Square was converted into an Aztechnology *teocalli*. The three Catholic-run universities in Zona Norte and Zona Centrico were forced to close, and much of their collections on Colombian history and culture were destroyed when the staff were unable to smuggle them out. Archbishop Diego Rodriguez—publicly a member of the Order of St. Sylvester, but rumored to be a Templar using the Sylvestrines as a cover—survived Aztlán's assault on the city, but he and the rest of the Catholic clergy were forced underground.

Despite these setbacks, however, the Church is still highly active in Bogotá. Rodriguez continues to coordinate with the various anti-Aztlán resistance groups, though he rarely meets anyone in person due to the bounty Aztechnology has posted for his capture. Instead, Rodriguez works through three deputies, who oversee the Church's operations in Bogotá on his behalf.

- Yeah, if I had almost two *million* nuyen on my head, I'd be hiding out too.
- Marcos
- Two mil? Hell, I oughta take a trip up there—how hard can it be to find one guy?
- Kane
- You haven't been to Bogotá recently, have you?
- Picador

Victoria Dominguez is an anthropologist by trade and was a professor at Xavier Pontifical University before its closure. She uses knowledge accumulated from many attempts on her life to teach combat skills to new resistance members, and organizes security for underground public activities such as free clinics and religious services. Dominguez's current objective is to unite the various insurgent groups in Bogotá into a true revolutionary front.

- Dominguez is tough as nails—she used to drive to work in an armored SUV with a Panther cannon in the passenger seat—and took a lot of her students from XPU into the resistance. Between all her teaching experience and her elven charisma, I think she’s a better inspirational speaker than the priests she works with.
- Glasswalker

Father Oscar Campos is the second of Rodriguez’s deputies. A priest of the New Society of Jesus and another former professor, Campos seems to know someone in every nook and cranny in Bogotá. He oversees the day-to-day cooperation between the Church in Bogotá and other resistance groups, like *Bogotá Libre* and the True Brazilians. Campos is also responsible for maintaining communications with the outside world, including smuggling in and out of Bogotá.

- Since Fianchetto neglected to mention it, the New Society of Jesus (or “New Jesuits,” as most call them) is the Vatican’s intelligence service. They inherited most of their field operatives from the AISE and AISI when Italy collapsed, and they historically got a generous amount of help from the American CIA, which had itself been nicknamed the “Catholic Intelligence Agency.”
- Thorn
- I think they’re still getting that help. The Catholic groups in Bogotá used to buy from me pretty regularly. They stopped not long after Aztlán invaded Denver, but they definitely didn’t stop operating, and my contacts say they’ve seen Campos meeting with some *gringo* from the UCAS.
- Marcos

The third of Rodriguez’s deputies is another Sylvestrine priest, Ignacio Franzone. Unlike Dominguez and Campos, Franzone only arrived in Bogotá after its conquest by Aztlán, accompanying the UN peacekeeping forces deployed to stabilize the area. Franzone’s primary mandate seems to be to protect Bogotá from magical threats, especially the extremely powerful shades that make their home in Bogotá’s Zona Norte. When not helping to evict them, Franzone spends his time helping Dominguez and Campos manage their operations.

- Franzone is well-regarded in academia, being one of the foremost experts in magical threats in Europe. Most of his research is published through the University of Florence, but he’s been invited to lecture at Charles University in Prague by Schwarzkopf. Whatever he’s got to say, it must

be interesting to warrant a personal invitation from a great dragon.

- Winterhawk
- Traveling on a Tuscan passport is a common ruse for members of the Knights Templar, and Franzone’s skill with combat magic further supports the theory. I wonder if the Templars are letting rumors of Archbishop Rodriguez’s membership spread to keep the attention off Franzone.
- Fianchetto

BOSTON

Thanks to its large Italian and Tír na nÓg expatriate communities, Boston has always been a major North American power center for the Church. When the lockdown around the NEMA Quarantine Zone was lifted, members of various Holy Orders on humanitarian missions were the first non-corporate personnel allowed into Boston since the debacle began. The newly appointed Archbishop Michael O’Malley has given the Holy Orders free run of the archdiocese, and the Hospitallers wasted no time in setting up clinics and shelters to care for those displaced by CFD. The Sylvestrines, in addition to lending their healing magic to their Hospitaller brothers, have offered the corps and the MIT&T faculty their assistance in repairing the astral damage to the area. Both have been hesitant to accept the offer.

- They probably just don’t want the Sylvestrines making off with whatever bleeding-edge research they were doing before the lockdown.
- Elijah

Father Pietro Valenti leads the Hospitallers’ operations in the NEMA. His forays into the shadows usually involve smuggling; the cordon around Boston might’ve been loosened, but it hasn’t been lifted entirely, and the added security measures often delay the arrival of badly needed supplies. Father Francis Tran is the head Sylvestrine in Boston. He most often hires teams for security work, escorting the Order’s magicians around the areas of the QZ where the corps allow them to operate—and a few areas where they don’t, naturally.

- I know Fianchetto waved off the “everything’s a Templar front” comments at the beginning of this file, but I have something a little more concrete. Some contacts of mine in another “fraternal organization” in Boston tell me that there was an on-the-sly meeting between a couple of



Sylvestrines and Don Morelli's consigliere. Morelli's ties to the Knights of the Red Branch came up more than once, which makes me think those "Sylvestrines" were looking to recruit allies for their operations in Tír na nÓg.

- 2XL
- Given the Red Branch's ties to the Black Lodge over their shared hatred of elves, that's not really a surprise.
- Frosty
- Incidentally, don't refer to anyone as "Tír na nÓg expatriates" within earshot of South Boston. These folks are every bit the *Irish* nationalists their ancestors were a century ago, and some of them are just as willing to employ violence. Calling it Tír na nÓg or letting anyone see your pointed ears is as dangerous as wearing orange on St. Patrick's Day.
- Thorn

GEMITO

One of the Order of St. Sylvester's best-known institutions is the *Società Thaumaturgica*, a magic school in Turin that shares its knowledge with anyone willing to learn, at no cost. Young magicians and street witches who study at the *Società* give back to the community through free magical clinics as well as more mundane charity work—and lately, they have been extremely busy. With Almais' death in the Great Dragon Civil War, what little control he exerted over the area vanished. In the resulting power vacuum, the N'drangheta restarted their war against the Sacra Corona Unita, over the Alta Commissione's objections. The conflict quickly grew to involve the Camorra, sometime allies of the N'drangheta who stayed loyal to the Commissione.

Brother Dario and Brother Gianni still serve as the abbot and community liaison of the *Società*, respectively. They've taken it upon themselves to shelter as many innocent bystanders as possible from the inter-syndicate violence, but the *Società* simply doesn't have enough space to hold all of the nearby residents. In addition, each of the Mafia factions in the area is well aware of the value of even partially trained magicians. Any one of those groups might take the *Società* or its wards hostage to force Dario and Gianni to fight on their side, even if it means risking a battle with the other factions.

THE PHILIPPINES

Prior to the Awakening, the Philippines was home to the third-largest Catholic population in

the world, with over eighty percent of the country claiming the faith as their own. That number dropped sharply when the Imperial Japanese Marines arrived in 2021, especially once the Liberal Catholic Voters Party became the puppet of the Japanacorps. The Order of St. Sylvester was quick to offer its assistance in repairing the Philippines' damaged astral space after the Japanese occupation ended in 2067, which many Filipinos took as a tacit apology for Consuni's lack of backbone. Masaru seems to have accepted their contrition as genuine and has given the Sylvestrines a small but noticeable role in the astral cleanup, alongside Wuxing's geomancers.

- Expect that role to get a lot bigger, because Masaru's friendliness with Wuxing may come to an end in the not-so-distant future, thanks to the Astral Space Preservation Society. Hestaby's exile and the loss of her hoard put the ASPS on very bad financial footing, and they were forced to find outside help to keep their doors open. Wuxing made the most attractive offer, so the ASPS' board passed a motion that ceded control of the society to Wuxing as long as Wuxing was their primary donor, effectively "selling" the ASPS despite it not being a corporation. Now that Masaru seems to be stepping up as the "pro-metahumanity" dragon in Hestaby's stead, he's made a point of saying that he'd back the ASPS if they ever broke with Wuxing. Technically, there's nothing preventing the ASPS' board from voting to rescind the agreement—it's not like Wuxing can hold nuyen over their heads if Masaru's offered to finance them—so expect to see some runs targeting the ASPS' board members in the near future.
- Frosty
- Hey, what's with Hestaby and Masaru showing up together at so many public events? Are they an item or something?
- Kat o' NineTales
- Why not ask them yourself? It's not like they haven't been dropping in here anyway.
- Frosty
- Maybe she doesn't want to live up to the old saying about curiosity killing the Kat.
- Red
- That was awful. True, but awful.
- Kat o' NineTales

Cebu City is both the temporary capital of the Philippines and the home of Philippine



Catholicism. Maricel Tupas coordinates the Church's activities from her office near the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral.

HOODING RUNS FOR THE DISCERNING GAMEMASTER

It may seem like hooding runs could get old quick for runner teams. How many times can you possibly help a downtrodden neighborhood keep the beloved community center open? How often can you try and fail to take down a major corporation? So whether you use this chart for ideas or if you need a run idea on the fly, or your group decides to bail on the run you were planning, here is a resource to build a run from the ground up, and fast.

Of course, change the details to suit your table, re-roll, hand choose, or just throw out what you don't like. After all, you're the gamemaster!

To use the tables, roll once for each of the tables, using the indicated number of D6s for each and adding the totals together.

THE TEAM IS CONTACTED BY...

2D6 RESULT

- 2-3 A friend of the team or team member who's in trouble
- 4-7 Their usual fixer
- 8 No one makes contact, the situation just happens (skip table F)
- 9 A corporate Mr. Johnson
- 10 An Awakened/magical creature (spirit, metasapient, dragon in metahuman form)
- 11 A digital-based lifeform (sprite, A.I., e-ghost, monad)
- 12 An unknown or secret person

MOTIVATION FOR THE JOB IS...

1D6 RESULT

- 1-2 To save someone who is in imminent danger
- 3 To stop something bad from happening soon
- 4 To return a favor
- 5 To cripple or stop the growth of oppressive corporate/governmental power
- 6 To make a statement or point

THE MEET OCCURS AT...

1D6 RESULT

- 1 A place the team normally frequents (if one exists)
- 2 A part of the city that is comically opposite of their usual haunts
- 3 In a wilderness location (forest, mountain, refuge, park, etc.)
- 4 A different city
- 5 The Matrix
- 6 An unusual place where the runners would typically not meet (underground, in the astral, on a bullet train)

THE JOB INVOLVES...

5D6 RESULT

- 5 Recover personality from Matrix Foundation or Resonance realms (skip job location table)
- 6 Influence Seelie Court politics (skip job location table)
- 7-8 Distraction/Decoy
- 9-10 Vandalism/Sabotage
- 11-12 Investigation
- 13-14 Extraction/Rescue
- 15 Planting evidence or device
- 16 Security
- 17 Datasteal
- 18 Protect/Defend/Escort
- 19 Theft or reclamation of object
- 20-21 Smuggling
- 22-23 Blackmail/Influence
- 24 Roll twice more, using both results. Ignore any further results of 24.
- 25 Release damaging info to the public
- 26-27 Provide overwatch (Matrix/astral/physical) for another team
- 28 Assassination/intimidation
- 29 Help start/win a war



THE PAY OFFERED IS...

2D6 RESULT

- 2 Alternative payment (gear: free or discounted restricted/forbidden ok)
- 3-4 No physical payment offered, extra Karma given for run
- 5-6 Lower than normal pay
- 7 Standard pay
- 8 Higher than normal pay
- 9-10 Alternative payment (information)
- 11 Alternative payment (gear: free or discounted, not restricted/forbidden)
- 12 Very unusual in type: a rare item, magical gear, etc.

THE ACTUAL JOB IS LOCATED...

2D6 RESULT

- 2-3 In another city in the runners' home nation
- 4-8 In the runners' home city
- 8-9 In another city not in the runners' home nation
- 10 In a benign wilderness area (forest, mountain, refuge, park, etc.)
- 11 In a hostile location (space, moving vehicle, tundra, underwater, underground, etc.)
- 12 In an exotic location (Seelie Court, the Matrix, dragon's lair, metaplane, etc.)

THE PERSON OFFERING THE JOB IS...

1D6 RESULT

- 1 Honest; they are working for the people or genuinely needs help. They give the runners as much help as they can.
- 2-3 Mostly benign but may be hiding facts from the team due to embarrassment or minor selfish reasons.
- 4-5 Is not being honest; they lie or withhold information crucial to the run. They are either being coerced or have incorrect information themselves.
- 6 Is actively betraying/misleading the team. If successful, the run isn't a hooding run, but the team ends up "working for the man" on accident

THE DIFFICULTY RATING OF THE JOB IS...

2D6 RESULT

- 2-4 Low: easy for the team to perform
- 5-9 Medium: moderate security; neither a challenge nor easy
- 10-11 High: increased security, heightened alert, or unusual security measures (run is a trap, there are paracritters, requires gear not possessed by team)
- 12 Extreme: It is not likely the team will be able to complete the run. Retreat/admitting defeat/not taking run suggested



THIS UNFORTUNATE THING HAPPENS ON THE RUN...

2D6	RESULT
2	The planets align and the run actually goes smoothly.
3-6	The details of the run are much different than described.
7-8	An unexpected combat happens (random security, gang intervention, rival runner team)
9-10	The person who gave the run betrays the team. Either s/he or agents actively thwart the runners or try to kill them.
11	A personal enemy or undermined organization (gang, corp exec, gov. official) chooses now to take revenge/interfere.
12	A bizarre and unpredictable event occurs to a team member (runner becomes awakened, runner SURGEs, a mentor spirit claims the runner, HMHVV infection, dependent is in crisis, loss of limb)*

*Use judgment when using this result. If you and your player can tell an interesting story together using an extreme event, great! You'll have another great tale to tell! If it would lead to the player feeling angry or hurt, perhaps another choice would do better.

WHEN THE RUN IS FINISHED, THE PERSON WHO GAVE THE RUN...

2D6	RESULT
2	Attempts to kill the runners (may be coerced or mind-controlled, etc.)
3-6	Gives the runners the agreed-on payment, but suggests it is a hardship (give runners extra karma if they don't take the money, or take less)
7-9	Gives the runners the agreed-on payment, and spreads the word of their success (give runners extra street cred)
10-11	Attempts to deny the runners the full payment (give runners extra karma if they don't force the issue, or settle for less)
12	Does not answer calls or show up to complete the deal (may be coerced or in distress)

As we mentioned above, don't be afraid to change these details at any time. If certain options don't make sense together, you can roll again, take your pick instead, or try to shoehorn the options together for an even more interesting run. Do what you want, you're the gamemaster!



PRETORIA, HURRAH

PRETORIA-WITWATERSRAND-VAAL METROPLEX

POSTED BY: AFRIKAANER

Welcome to my introduction to the Premier Azanian Runner Sprawl.

Let me start by welcoming you to the hottest runner sprawl in all of Africa. You can try and argue for Lagos or Cape Town, maybe try to claim Cairo is actually the *real* Africa, but no place on the entire continent matches our sprawl as a genuine shadowrunner city. And I'm here to shed a little light on this patch of the the Azanian shadows. I'll give you an overview of the local culture and a little history, along with a quick geography lesson, before breaking it down in the most honest way to look at our glorious metroplex, and then wrapping up with some specific briefings on some select topics.

I'll warn you in advance, I'm pulling a few pieces from some tourist sites and adding a little of my

own views to keep it from being so drab, but I'm no professional writer and English is not my first language (it's actually my fourth, behind Afrikaans, Zulu, and German), so please excuse any glaring mistakes of grammar, but enjoy some of the flair for dramatic prose I picked up at Oxford.

CULTURAL OVERVIEW, OR PERHAPS CLASH

There's a war going on in Pretoria. Not a war of tanks and fighter planes, but a war for the heart and soul of this city. The fighters aren't soldiers, they're citizens (or sometimes the SINless). They don't fight to protect a place or a thing, but to protect an idea. To protect the history of this city, the traditions of its people, and a status quo that while not fair is the way of life in Pretoria and throughout much of Azania. They may not like that the rich get richer while the poor struggle every day, but it's their way of life. The people of Pretoria identify with the struggles that have got-

I'm going to do a quick bit of name clean-up and clear the air on this bad bit of business first thing here. We're talking about the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Metroplex, formerly identified as the Tshwane Province, and before that the Gauteng Province. Witwatersrand is a geological formation, Vaal is a river, and Pretoria is a district (formerly a city). The first and last parts form the northern and southern border, and Pretoria stayed part of the official name because of its political importance. The area has long been known as the PWV, or just PWV, but the V used to be for Vereeniging, a city in the southern area of the metroplex. When it came time to consolidate officially, though, the powers that be didn't want to alienate too many of the cities that were merging by

being selective of those included in the name. As you can imagine there was a whole boatload of shadow business around this, mainly because Pretoria wasn't the biggest or the only important big city included in the merge; it just happened to be the capital. The biggest issue came from Johannesburg, which is officially part of the sprawl and its largest district. The issue is so divisive that Joburg, as the locals call it, gets listed separately on any large-scale map. It's confusing and a little ridiculous, but hey, it's Joburg. More on that later. Overall, the current name is the PWV Metroplex, though the Tshwane Metroplex is gaining support in political and social arenas. In the end, while it's nothing but a name on the map, it's going to mean a lot of business in the shadows.

WHAT'S IN A NAME



ten them where they are today. So, for that, they fight a war.

Every war needs at least two sides, and this one looks like one of those dice from a virtu-tabletop RPG, with one side to represent the people, and the other nineteen being the forces arrayed against them. This war isn't against a single entity—it's against all the megacorporations that have turned their greedy eyes on the city. Sure, they've been here since they came into existence, but they just had business here. It was a place to make some money in Africa, thanks to the rich mineral fields all around. But now, they want more. They want to turn Pretoria into one of their corporate-run megasprawls. They want to make another corporate haven where they can house headquarters and fill the whole place with their boardroom battlefields and turn the people of Pretoria into herds of wageslaves, slaving over the next corporate release and working to repay their ever-mounting debt to the corporation.

But we won't stand back and let this happen. We can't go toe to toe, but that's not our style. We're guerrilla (or gorilla, for those who follow that particular totem) warriors. We're the justice that comes in the night. We're the force of good that sometimes has to do bad things. We're shadowrunners. We don't fight fair, but we fight to win, and we fight for a cause. No matter how many *indlovu* you meet who say it's all about the money, they're lying. Might be just to you, but probably to themselves too. We don't do this for the cash, we do this to make the world better, to stop the corporate subjugation from spreading, to give hope to those who think it's hopeless.

Today, tomorrow, and the next day, we will be fighting this war in Pretoria. Come to our city, join our ranks. Tell yourself it's just for the money, but know that you are saving a people, a city, and an ideal.

- That's a bit thick, but I've worked in Azania plenty, and while Cape Town is my port of choice, I've slipped inland to make visits to the Jacaranda City before. They do have a great culture and if what I'm hearing is true, even I can promote a unified effort to keep the corps from truly pushing the people of Paydubfau down, in the most literal sense of the word.

In fact, in honor of helping out the runner community of this sprawl, I'm offering half price transport to Cape Town, and access to my connections to get you over to the Pretoria sprawl.

- Kane
- I'm not keen on Kane, but for him to be promoting anyone going anywhere is strange. Take this offer with a grain of salt, but don't let his strange behavior keep you from coming to Azania. The shadows of Pretoria need help, even if Kane is part of that offer of assistance.
- Traveler Jones

I may have taken that a bit far, but I'm leaving it. I want you to know who I am and why I'm doing this. I don't just want people to know about my sprawl, I want people to come and help fight for it.

To make this easier on all of us, I'm going to not only clue you in on a little local culture, but also help give us a name to use, because Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Metropolitan Complex is too long and Pretoria alone is confusing. Any time I refer to the sprawl, I'll use PWV, but whenever locals see that, they pronounce it as pay-dub-fau. It's a merging of the more common local languages and their pronunciation and names for the letters, which varies drastically between Zulu, English, and Afrikaans. Want to sound like a local? Call it the Paydubfau. Want to sound like an outsider? Call it anything else.

PWV is most well-known for being the richest area in all of Azania, thanks to the massive mineral mining that has occurred in the region over the past several centuries. They maintain a boss-lev-



el per capita income of 49,653¥, over triple the national statistic for Azania. It's a solid figure by anyone's standards, and they maintain it through two methods. They count the income from all residents, including megacorporate citizens, and they have a ridiculous SINless population. PWV is the ultimate representation of the divide between haves and have-nots. The rich are exorbitantly so. The poor fall all the way at the other end of the spectrum, and most have no SINS, had them stripped, or have been given criminal SINS, which are also not counted in their statistics.

But the thing you need to understand about this is that it has been this way for hundreds of years. The people know the rich are ridiculously so, and that the rest of the people exist on their scraps, but it was a wise man who said, "Money cannot buy happiness." The rich often enjoy their lives far less than the poor, because they're always worried about someone coming to take it from them. Are they right? Hell, yeah! The rest of us are always looking to snatch a little piece, but we hunt more like mosquitoes than Mapogo lions, taking a little bit at a time, not pack-hunting elephants and wiping out prides of other mundane lions. They have far less to fear from us, the ones they actually worry about, than from those they work with and see every day, who are always trying to shift the decimals of their fortunes by taking from their peers. But, that's PWV.

HISTORY

Before I go too far, let me throw out some quick history. This area rose to power in the region in the late 1800s with the discovery of gold. Getting and keeping the gold was an unpleasant piece of history that, while dark, should not be shied away from. And most true Pretorians won't. They know full well that people in this region did awful things to each other. They really still do, but most people see it differently. The rose-colored glasses of living in it, versus viewing it as history where the bad actions were done by someone else, at a safe remove from us. But I digress. The region held on to power and riches through several booms and busts, eventually developing into a true city of the world, not just a city of Africa. I'm going to leave it at that, because this is like ancient history for most people because they can't see the value of any history outside the living generation. Besides, if you really want to learn about all this, you

can go to school, or search up a tutor program on the Matrix.

Things got a little more interesting around the turn of the last century. A powerful force for good was released after years of imprisonment, and he brought the dark deeds of the past and present into the light and shined the light of truth and, to the surprise of many, forgiveness on them. The early portion of this century saw a lot of unity and cultural bonding. It was a bright time in the history of Azania (South Africa at the time).

And then, that force for good died. Despite the obvious natural causes and the fact that he was ninety-five years old, conspiracy theories shot all over the country about his death at the hands of the rising corporations that were seeking to build a power base in Africa with this region as their focus. It didn't get any better after that.

The Awakening brought power to the Zulus. That power pulled them further from their fellow citizens and led them to isolate themselves from their fellow South Africans. The rise of corporate power and independence brought new forces to several of the cities in the region, and the cultural landscape shifted until the late 2030s, when everyone realized that they were better off together than separate. PWV was already a city of cultural and political connections, and it became the primary capital of the new Azanian Confederation in 2040.

Once that power was laid firmly in the region, the Shift began.

The Shift is how the locals refer to the era from 2040 to 2070. The moment PWV became a power center, the powers that be felt it needed some cleaning up and reorganizing. Despite the fact that it was obviously a method of cultural segregation and isolation, people went along with it because it was packaged nicely and offered some seriously interesting opportunities in the form of work and housing options for people who had long been struggling in both areas of their life.

The central districts—Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Ekurhuleni—were assigned as the political, corporate, and socio-cultural districts respectively. Tshwane and Kungwini to the north, now separated by the three central districts from the rest of the sprawl, were delivered into the hands of the rich and powerful. Mogale, Randfontein, Westonaria, Emfuleni, Midvaal, and Lesedi were used to culturally isolate groups of citizens and create a culture of competition in a place where all they were competing for



was survival. Lastly, West Rand is a strange little island of cultural progressiveness between Joburg and Mogale where the powers that be set up those who had a true hunger for real power but lacked the current resources to acquire it. It has changed a bit since then, but I'll cover each area in more depth later. The point is, by 2060, PWV was a thoroughly divided city, in both a physical and cultural sense. The separation was so thorough that you won't see a single wall or even any district checkpoints. Division is ingrained in the people to the point that they won't go to a place they don't belong without a damn good reason.

After 2060, two major events shaped modern-day PWV: Halley's Comet and the Crash of '64. Since the Witwatersrand Hills were already rich in magic and minerals, you can easily surmise that they became a target during the orichalcum rush that came with Halley's Comet. Fortunes were made and made bigger by the sudden arrival of this arcane mineral, but the hills weren't the only place orichalcum was found. The cityscape was redefined by the discovery of massive deposits of the arcane ore beneath the sprawl, which also led to the latest expansion and division of the social separation of the citizens of PWV.

Unwilling to strip-mine already urbanized regions (and they aren't keen on strip mining here anyway, just so you know), tunnels were dug down into the ground to reach the deposits beneath the urban centers of the sprawl. The tunnels were easy to support structurally, but the mining of these massive deposits left huge caverns beneath the metroplex. Yes, there was that much orichalcum under this place. Over the course of the span that came to be known as the Orichalcum Rush, before it all mysteriously dried up in 2062, the mining corporations of PWV pulled over thirty million metric tons of material from the Earth. It wasn't all orichalcum, but it left a whole lot of open real estate underground and it caused some stability issues on the surface.

Even though it looks obvious to us now, no one saw what was coming next. PWV went the opposite direction of every other sprawl in the world. Instead of building up and making skyrakers that disappeared in the clouds, the metroplex built down. They shored up the caverns and tunnels and turned them into buildings and roads that led down into the Earth. The underground city was built with connections to several mines still operating in the area to offer easier access for miners (and to cut transit time into the depths of the

mines from over an hour to under thirty minutes). The subterranean city became a strange combination of suburbia at its heart and dystopia on the fringes.

Our true problem arrived in the early '70s, and it's what we fight now. The megacorps have turned their eyes to the void below the sprawl, and they're sinking billions of the nuyen that came out of the Earth right back into underground arcologies, powered by geothermal energy and underground nuclear reactors. Combined and connected to facilities on the surface, the big boys are literally sinking their claws into the region and using this unprecedented ability to expand in order to settle in.

PRESENT

Let's talk a little about now. We're still a divided city. The rich stick with the rich, the poor with the poor, the Zulu with the Zulu, the orks with the orks, and every other separation this city can manage, it puts into place. Or more correctly, *we* put it in place. It's firmly directed by the political and corporate powers behind the curtain, but we enforce it. We're the ones who look down on each other for our differences, who ignore each other in the streets or pretend to not see each other, and who push each other down just to try to get ourselves a little higher in this shallow pool at the base of the sprawl. The city never bothered with walls, it just continued and amplified the processes of social segregation that have been in place for centuries. Occasionally someone breaks out and finds an inroad into the circles of another group, but most of the time these events are acts of rebellion, retaliation, or reparation as the youth try to defy the mores of their parents, the wronged seek to gain justice through injustice, or the overloaded conscience of the privileged must be satiated. It's important to point out that the region has a large Zulu population, who tend to sit in the exact opposite corner on every issue from the Xhosa, who are the majority in the rest of Azania. Their place of power here has settled much of the violence that was a result of their tumultuous past with the original settlers, but a small faction within the Zulu are not so quick to forgive past transgressions. This small but militant arm of the Zulu seeks a nation returned to the native tribes, and while they often fight the same forces, we don't fight for the same result.





The present geography of the region hasn't changed much since the early part of the century, as growth was always stagnated by a desire to retain the status quo. In order to understand this place, you need to know how it's laid out, because the age-old merits of "location, location, location" mean everything here. PWV comprises all of the former Gauteng province, which has had several names throughout history, but that's a different section, so let's stay focused. The metroplex is separated into twelve separate districts, each with a distinct place in the social hierarchy of the sprawl, but again, let's stay focused. Most of the region is relatively flat, sitting on the Highveld, but there are some low hills in Pretoria and Johannesburg, as well as the Witwatersrand Hills on the northern border. The whole place sits between 1,000 and 1,800 meters above sea level, but the region also has a large number of manmade hills and artificial elevation variations created with the displaced materials from all the mining in the region. Most of that occurs artfully in the northern districts as part of the work of the affluent to create the literal ability to look down on their neighbors, or occurs chaotically in the southern districts as part of the mining companies dumping the dirt wherever it's cheapest.

THE HAVES: TSHWANE AND KUNGVINI

I'll start talking about the regions here, not just because they're in the north, but because it's good to know the powers and forces that will be behind most of the work we have to do. First off, let's make sure you know the local vernacular. This area is referred to as Uptown for several reasons. First, because it's in the north; second, it's where all the rich people live; and third, because all those wealthy folks feel the need to build their houses and estates higher than the surrounding streets and roads. It gives a hilly feel, but most of the land is actually quite flat. Despite the separation within the districts, a lot of shadow work occurs in this region. The key is to blend in. Stick out and the social standards of this place will have you seeing blue and yellow or red. The former being the color of the Metropolitan Police Force—Metropol for short, a direct subsidiary of Lone Star Security Services—and the latter, the color of the blood that will be spilled by the numerous private security forces present in the re-

gion. Part of all that blending in here, is money, or at least the illusion of money. No matter how nice your Ares Roadmaster looks in all black and chrome, it's going to stand out in a place that values high-end brand names. It might (and it's a big might) pass muster as a local security vehicle, but even the security companies in the area tend to shell out the extra dough to get rigs like the BMW Teufelkatze or Stürmwagon rather than a Stallion or Roadmaster.

Even up here there is division among the rich and powerful. The social lines are drawn two ways: How rich are you, and where did your money come from? Tshwane is all about old money or big money. The richest of the rich and those who have been rich the longest have estates and properties in Tshwane. Kungwini is for newer money, corp money, and crime money, though several of the latter two have Tshwane levels of cash and move up by default. No one in either of these districts has a net worth under eight figures, and those who only reach the seven-figure mark have property along the border with Pretoria, Ekurhuleni, or the neighboring Mpumalanga Province. Nine-figure net worth will move you further into the district, with the absolute richest living at the center of Tshwane.

GETTING AROUND

Make sure you've got a nice car, or a private VTOL or rotorcraft—nothing else fits in. There are no busses or public transportation in this area, and most cabs draw way too much scrutiny for someone in our line of work. If you are going to take a cab, make sure to use one of the VirtuDrive cabs, because regular cab drivers often won't drive into these districts out of fear of catching some sort of trespassing charge (seriously). Even if the drivers or passengers are wanted, local kids have no problem making trouble for them and in fact make a game of it often, and angering a local can easily have a life-threatening detrimental effect.

- Several local Mr. Johnsons use meets in Kungwini to separate the wheat from the chaff. This is usually only an issue for Gold or higher runners, but an occasional test is put to a Silver team to see if they're ready for the big leagues.
- Traveler Jones
- Gold runner? Silver team? What am I missing?
- Chainbreaker

- Scanned ahead—you'll get the rundown later on. The basics: runners and teams are ranked by the credsticks they're generally paid in.
- Glitch

Be aware that on the streets of Tshwane and Kungwini, the robots are watching you. Every one has a camera, and they're constantly monitoring for erratic, illegal, or out-of-place behavior. Some even have facial recognition software and a database of local residents. Anyone who doesn't belong is flagged and monitored. They also connect to the vehicle registries and link vehicles to owners that belong in the richest neighborhoods. This doesn't work in common traffic areas of the district, but the moment you slip off into the realm of private residences, you're at risk.

- Rumor has it that the deckjockeys behind the cameras were all cross-trained with GOD and several came back from training with a few unregistered toys.
- Slamm-0!
- Anyone driving around this area had better have some sweet spoofing skills. They'll need it.
- /dev/grrl
- To clear up a common communication issue: Robots are traffic lights, not drones, though some areas have drones as their lights. If that helps.
- Traveler Jones

TOURIST TRAPS

There aren't a lot of places for tourists to visit in Tshwane and Kungwini, which is why the rich and affluent were shifted here. Anyone coming toward this region belongs and can't simply use an excuse about being there to see something. That doesn't mean there's nothing at all. Some places just couldn't be relocated. There are three spots of note in Tshwane and four areas to keep in mind in Kungwini.

Some places just won't play along with the plans of men. Take the former **Dinokeng Game Reserve**. Long a tourist mecca where you could see the animals of Africa in their "natural" habitat, along with staying in a cozy little cottage or bungalow, it had to make a major change shortly after the Awakening. The region became a focus of local mana based on the lines of power in the area. This nexus of mana led to an unexpected number of paracritter species expressing within



the reserve. The area was quickly abandoned as a tourist destination after half a dozen visitors lost their lives. Plans were made to go in and remove the paranormal species but it wasn't just the animals that had Awakened—it was the entire reserve, including animals, plants, insects, and even a few viruses. The area was left on its own and has been that way ever since. Its borders are monitored, but the animals inside tend to stay inside. There's a brisk local business in *telesma* gathering and even some paranimal poaching, but the risks far outweigh the rewards with most ventures. The periphery is commonly visited by tourists looking to catch a glimpse of something as well as locals there to watch the tourists get eaten when they wander too close. Quite a few runners operate protected trips along the outskirts of the reserve for rich people looking for a thrill.

- Those runner teams are Wuxing-sponsored, as they study the mana lines that helped give rise to such a strong concentration of paranormal growth. The mana also fuels plant growth, fueling the local food chain from the bottom up to maintain the apex predators that are present.
- Lyran

Far less thrill-oriented but still just as rich in a different form of wildlife is the **Kiloki Village Recreational Mall**. This massive shopping center is located at the corner border of Tshwane, Kungwini, and Pretoria, and is one of the few publicly accessible points in the Tshwane District. Housing over one thousand shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues, the place is always packed with people from all over the sprawl. It's one of the few places that gets traffic from almost every cultural group in the metroplex. Open all hours of the day and every day of the year, it's a common spot for meetings with Mr. Johnsons and fixers who want a public place to do their private work. Security is extremely overworked and certain dayparts, in particular all those zero-dark hours, have a reputation for looking the other way if they happen to find a stick full of rand laying around. Don't forget to pay it or take their lack of awareness too far, though, because they also have a habit of dropping bodies when the place is in danger. The shops in the mall sell everything one could ever want and several underground shops (sometimes literally) sell black- and grey-market goods if you know the right people.

- Hurlington, a local fixer, has the best line on genuine controlled arms in the sprawl. Make friends and work favors for him in order to get the best deals and access to the really exotic stuff that gets tested in such a free market.
- Stone
- Sticking with your own kind is important here. I know a lot of runner teams are generally cosmopolitan, but out in public spots like this you need to find your people or stick to being a lone wolf. Though a word to the wolves: Make sure you look capable. You don't need to look too tough—that usually gets you challenged—but work on a cool confidence to make sure other groups know fragging with you wouldn't be worth the trouble.
- Traveler Jones

Since Kiloki Village tends to be advertised as a place to shop and relax, those who are looking for more excitement head for the **Pienaars River Entertainment Arcology**. The "Pie Dome" (as most call it) is a massive dome-shaped arcology with a radius of over a kilometer. According to the ads, the ground level, which includes the actual section of the Pienaars River that runs through here, is over three million square meters, and that doesn't even count the sixteen levels above it. The higher up you go, the more exclusive the entertainment, and there are rumors of a secret seventeenth level that houses entertainment that is not of the legal variety. The center of the dome, over the river, is open to the sky, but it's not a straight line. The designers wanted to keep the original shape of the river, which has a large horseshoe bend here, and so they chose to build this erratic chasm in the center of the structure rather than modify the natural flow of the river. The chasm has beautiful clear staircases that look like loose stitching across various points. It's quite a marvel to behold.

- The seventeenth floor is real, it's just not on top. The place has four subfloors on current records, but the original construction docs had five. The first three subfloors are parking and some engineering, and the fourth is the primary engineering floor along with housing for staff that live on site. The fifth subfloor is the rumored seventeenth floor. To access it, you use the standard elevators with a special RFID keycard.
- Ire
- The area just to the west used to be an old aerodrome along the freeway. It was converted into a single-runway airport to serve the entertainment arcology, but now all the craft landing here are VTOL, and the runway was con-



verted into a holding pad for the aircraft. On weekends the place is like a showcase for the local rich kids to show off their rides. Whether people are displaying personal rotorcraft or a heavily customized Ares Dragon, this is the place to be for local grease-monkeys, modders, and riggers looking for the latest and greatest ideas or their next source of income.

- Rigger X

Kungwini doesn't just border other districts, it also borders the next province over, **Mpumalanga**. It's not a bad neighbor and only occasionally is this route used for smuggling or stealthy entry into Kungwini, as there are only a few towns along the shared division. This municipal setup is a shining example of the power of PWV, as they flexed their political power to prevent the surrounding provinces from building along their borders. But that didn't stop the affluent of Kungwini from adding a little extra assurance that no one would be wandering onto their estates uninvited. The southern border with Mpumalanga is lined with elaborately decorated fences. Owning property along this border is a sort of honor, and every year there is a judging of whose fence is the best. Some of the locals change up their fence each year, while others just make small variations on a singular theme. The place doesn't get a lot of tourist traffic until the Festival of Fences, but even then the tourists are forced to view from the Mpumalanga side, rather than from inside Kungwini. The locals host elaborate parties during the festival that work to one-up each other and attract the hottest guests from all across the sprawl and around the world.

- The fences aren't all just pretty. Most are electrified or topped with razorwire or glass shards to prevent climbing. The more violent defenses are always well-hidden and blend into the decorative motif of the fence.
- Traveler Jones
- That's true for everyone except Hans Blaukain. His fence looks like something that should be surrounding a World War Two death camp. The razorwire is tightly wrapped at the top of two close layers of electrified fence. So close, in fact, that they occasionally arc. I'm sure it's part of the overall design, since he enters into the contest every year, but doesn't change much from year to year except maybe the voltage on the fences.
- Slamm-0!

Some things just can't be budged, no matter how much political pressure you manage to apply. Though maybe, in the case of the **Nan Hua**

Temple, they instead let the problem flow around them like water around a rock. This Buddhist temple has been in the region for over a century and has stood against many adversaries, including being targeted by militants with a bomb near the turn of the century. It has always functioned as a bit of spiritual peace in the middle of a hectic and crazy world, and in recent years has drawn more and more corporate citizens to leave the rat race and join the simple and peaceful life of the monks. The temple welcomes tourists (and their donations) and offers a restful and quiet environment for those who wish to visit. They have a series of rules and tenets that must be followed by all visitors, and those who fail to follow these rules are asked to leave directly. Some are even escorted out in a rather brusque (but unobtrusive) way, as the order has several adept monks who use their abilities to temporarily silence violators and escort them to the doors.

- Those monks form the basis for the Mountain Blossom Society, an initiate group based out of the temple. They're also the heart of the fighting school that has been run out the temple for over a century.
- Mihoshi Oni
- The temple hosts an annual tournament for fighters from around the globe to come and challenge their best. They have a win streak that started in 2012 and has not been broken yet. Those who understand magic and mana have told me it is because the temple is theirs and others have their arcane gifts impeded by the mana there.
- Slamm-0!

Living alongside nature is common across the entirety of PWV, but actually living out in it is far less common, because in Africa, nature can very easily kill you. Though most of the rich and powerful consider a vacation to be somewhere with beaches and fruity drinks, some desire a trip out into the wilds of Africa, without all the risk of being trampled by a rhino or eaten by a hyena. For that, they have **Bronkhorstspuit Nature Reserve**. Built around the reservoir held by Bronkhorstspuit Dam, created from the river of the same name, this fenced-in nature preserve has all the floral wildlife of Africa without all those pesky animals that can bite, sting, trample, and maul you. The waters are stocked with game fish, and there are several antelope and ibyx species that have been brought in for a little sport hunting, though it's not much sport. Most of the animals here are doped by the



food they eat. The staff sets out food bins that are laced with a mild opiate to keep everything nice and passive so the guests can get pictures and often walk right up and pet them. Or shoot them.

- This guy likes to mention these off-handed places where runs often contract high-value targets away from their cavalcade of security. This place is especially common because of the reduced threat of nature. Problem is, this place has tech security that blends in perfectly, including more biodrones than any other place in Africa. If you see a critter, it's likely stirruped and monitoring you for ident and any possible weapons. Even the stuff intended to be hunted has some interface hardware that allows the staff to make sure everything on the hunt was on the up and up. The security grunts here are also top-notch huntsmen. They can creep up and take down most threats without ever disturbing the guests.
- Stone

Now let's get into a little advertising cut and paste:

Welcome to the land of peace and tranquility. **Rheensterpoort Spa Corporate Ultraretreat** is your destination for a break from the triggers and rigors of your stress-filled day of powerbrokering in the dog-eat-dog rat race that is today's corporate environment. Our retreat offers more than just a spa, with staff trained in various meditative arts, rigorous rapid-result fitness training, and our unique system of unobtrusive psychological repair aimed at fixing the damage done by the intense stress of daily corporate life without breaking your relaxation stride.

Take the first step and let the RSCU rescue you!

Ain't that a load of elephant dung? This place is beautiful, I'll give it that, but what the pictures just don't do justice are the underground tunnels and private residences out in the surrounding hills and mounds. On the brochures, they're meditative quarters, surrounded by the purest of Mother Earth, but for those who have taken a closer look, they're tiny chambers that tend to have a lot of mystical warding and protections on them. The shadow consensus says insect spirits, but confirmation is scattered. I'll hit the topic again when I talk about magic, but for now I want to focus on the other reason to visit this place: extractions and rescues (real ones).

Shadow ops head out to this place at least monthly to pull a corporate slag out of their clutches before he goes all "hive mind," "betterment of the colony" crazy, or to snag a wageslave who's

looking for a new doss that doesn't include mud walls and thousands of roommates. Sometimes runners head out to the place and hit it right and everything goes fine. But other times, the rumors spread. Runners claim to have faced spirit soldiers and massive insects. They might not realize it at the time, but after a few comments on the street, they pick up the vibe.

- With the local view on insect spirits you might find this place not what you expected. They don't hide what they are doing for those who sign up for the complete package. Joining the hive is better than dying of starvation.
- Traveler Jones

THE HAVE-NOTS

EMFULENI, LESEDI, MIDVAAL, MOGALE, RANDFONTEIN, WESTONARIA

Like all successful sprawls, this city was built on the backs of someone, and those someones now find themselves pushed out to the southern periphery of the sprawl. Well, the ones who are allowed to live somewhere the sun still shines. More and more of that will be changing in the near future if the corps get their way, but I'll cover that elsewhere. Here, I'd like to introduce you to the most eclectic mix of cultures, people, and mentalities ever to have been pushed aside and forced to fight for the scraps of their corporate and government warlords. I use "warlords" because it is a classically African term. Warlords running through a country and pushing their beliefs on everyone in their path, slaughtering any who refused to take their credos to heart. It's dark, but this is the dark continent, and we don't mince words here. We tell it like it is and work out our hurt feelings with violence, drink, or walls of silence.

Referred to by everyone in PWV as The Smile, this area consists of, from west to east, Mogale, Randfontein, Westonaria, Emfuleni, Midvaal, and Lesedi. All six districts had their own successful history, right up until local powers decide to enhance their segregative practices, separating the masses and choosing these places for those they saw as less valuable.

The areas are vastly different, and even within each district you will find the mix of persons and personas varying by the neighborhoods they inhabit. I'll give some generalizations later, when I talk about some specific spots, but overall these are the plac-



es where you'll find the rough-and-tough side of the sprawl, as well as the heart of its survivor mentality. These are the places where you make sure you belong where you're at, or you're traveling with someone who belongs and will vouch for you and stand up to the locals, because without that, you'll be fertilizing the local dirt in no time.

GETTING AROUND

Wheels! You're going to need them. Air traffic heading out into this area is often used for target practice by local groups—military, criminal, and just random guerrillas with guns. Not that wheeled traffic is always safe, but it's better to blend in and flow than to fly over and get shot at. Now, don't get me wrong—plenty of operators blast in with a helo or an LAV, or roll up with an Ares Dragon that's so armored you'd need an AV-loaded Phalanx to bring it down. They hit their spot, do their dirty work, then blast their way right back out, and it can work, but to me, four wheels and a little anonymity are still a better bet.

There are several taxi services that operate within these districts, but only a few will cross borders. There are no formal walls and the lines between the districts are often unmarked, but taxi drivers are well versed in places they should and shouldn't be, because mistakes made can be deadly. Several of the taxi services have agreements between districts, and they pass off clients near the borders with minimal disruption in their trip. On the other hand, these hand-off points are frequent targets for counter-operations against teams working across borders. Most of the people who live in these districts believe the border issues are intentional and just another way to keep us in check, down, and divided.

- Autocabs are an alternative to the manually driven models, but they have limited routes to follow because of the lack of a functional GridGuide system in these regions. These routes are targets for information-gathering agencies watching the movements of runners, government agents, and corporate operatives.
- Thorn
- Hackers use the autocabs in this region as a proving ground. If you're using the system and you have electronic support, use them to keep an eye on your ride and keep some punk hacker from scragging your run with an accidental proving ground hack.
- /dev/grrl

There are several criminal organizations around that also run transports that don't suffer the same issues crossing into such a variety of neighborhoods, but when they take a wrong turn or a border changes, being in their cab usually means helping the driver get out of a jam or just getting jammed into trouble along with them.

- Agi Kuragi is a rigger with a string of contacts across the Smile, thanks to his friendly disposition and ability to get just about anything for anyone. His ride is often jammed with junk that he hands out at stops along the way. I once saw him slide a rocket launcher out of the junk pile and out the window in the middle of Randfontein. Just went right on driving after the robot went green.
- Sounder

Since all of these places were decent towns only a few decades ago, streets are decent here. Repair is slowly going to the wayside as the city powers promote the great subterranean migration for the poor, so quality is fading. Vehicles with off-road capabilities are more desirable and several locals have taken to customizing their normal rides with lift-kits and larger tires, turning sedans and sports cars into off-roaders. Best mod I've seen is a yerzed-out Westwind running on a rally frame, with colors, lights, bells, and whistles, and off-road speed and maneuverability.

TOURIST TRAPS

Time to walk the Smile and take a look at each independent district. Up first: **Mogale**. Sharing boundaries with West Rand, Randfontein, Johannesburg, and North West (the next province over), the district has some variety along those edges, but the bulk of the place is split between two purposes: life and death. By life, I refer to the massive farms that occupy most of the region near North West. These are the primary food suppliers for this region of Africa, run primarily by Aztechnology and Saeder-Krupp subsidiaries.

While S-K isn't known for its agribusiness, Mogale gives them a field to play in. They have several research facilities in the region, with cutting-edge work going on. Thanks to several shallow mines that were dug in the area, they have a heavy focus in subterranean food crop growth. Aztechnology, on the other hand, operating primarily under their AfriGrow subsidiary, handles most of the local farming. They're targeted all the time by runners looking to score foodstuffs for their local support



network. Food goes a long way here; even though they grow more than enough for everyone in the region, they ship out tons of it for hefty profits rather than feeding the local populace at a decent rate.

As for death, patches all along the edges of Joburg and West Rand have been filled with some of the region's most dangerous cast-offs. When the locals were slowly being pushed to the periphery, this district got some of the worst of the worst. Their infighting worked like a Darwinian filter for lethal human garbage, leaving only the strongest. The problem was, it didn't leave the smartest—only the most violent and anti-social. They each run small gangs, rarely more than ten people, who fight for turf and status as the meanest hyenas in these wilds. Each gang has turf near the border, some in old farms, others in rundown buildings, even one in a traditional African village that was once a tourist spot. The territories have enough room between them to keep from constant border skirmishes and allow enough space for people to find paths between gangs if they're smart, though most of the gangs venture out to pick fights on a daily basis, wreaking havoc on local traffic. These spots are the worst because the traffic near them has the most value. The weaker groups operate near the border of Randfontein. Down there, the struggle is more intense, since these areas are full of survivors, but the payoffs are pretty much non-existent. Once a group feels they have what it takes to take some turf from the big boys, they go to war. These fights usually function like dominoes once the first group makes a move. The attacks weaken both sides, and the sharks smell blood in the water.

- Several of the smaller groups contract runners to join the fight in order to make moves without losing any of their own number. That way they can hold on after the fighting is done.
- Traveler Jones
- A few runner teams in town specialize in this. The top teams stay in contact and never run ops against each other. Unless the money is there to match, which rarely occurs with these gangs. A few of the border bands can afford the protection, but the moment they call in runners, their clock is ticking. Can't show weakness like that and stay on top.
- Ire
- These gangs are all tough, but they aren't all animals. Some of these border gangs are run by guys with good

hearts. They use the cash they snag to fund snatch runs against the farms and then give the food away. They're all about trying to protect their own, but they don't let food go to waste. If they have too much, they'll give it to anyone.

- Bull
- Those giveaways are tough spots. The scumbags among the gangs use them to steal food from locals and make attacks. This whole place is a mix-and-match of good guys, bad guys, and guys living in the grey area in between.
- Stone

Squished between the violence of Mogale and the rich/poor contrasts of Westonaria is **Randfontein**. This is, by far, the poorest district in all PWV. The eastern portion, nearer the border with Johannesburg, is filled with squatter towns. These desperate souls head into corp central, despite the restrictions, to beg or scrounge a living. The southern border with Westonaria is crowded with makeshift villages full of poor workers, and out-of-work miners who have started refusing to move to the new developments beneath the sprawl. Any miner unwilling to move into the new subarcologies under the region is fired, most are stripped of their SINs, and then they are cast out into this desolate region.

The western half is a little better off, as this area is being used by Grade A Farms, a subsidiary of Ares, that actually raises free-range cattle and sheep. The region is patrolled by an army of drones, all armed with AresArms weapons, but the cattle are cared for by real ranchers. Most are just hired hands who are trained to ride a horse or a four-wheeler and use a sonic herder, but it's work for thousands of the SINless in the area. Grade A uses SINless to keep pay low and make it easier to cover up the accidents that occur on their ranches. Between trampling, animal attacks, and exposure, they lose scores of workers each year. Displaced miners are starting to drift into the area and the move is causing some rifts among the usual workers and this new group. As you might suspect, they've begun settling issues with violence, and the job openings are popping up constantly, but the two groups are creating yet another schism in the people of PWV. I'm not saying this is a manufactured event, but it fits the way every other group has been slowly isolated.

The ranches are targeted just like the farms of Mogale, except it's a lot harder to run off with a few hundred kilos of living beef. The ranches all operate their own slaughter facility near North 14



so that processed beef can be transported to the main shipping hubs as easily as possible. Special shipments of certain prime cuts or specially raised beef are usually flown out to the international airport for worldwide distribution or transported directly over to Tshwane and Kungwini, the places that can afford those premium cuts. Every shipment that leaves this place is a potential target, and Ares secures most of them extensively. Their best security measures, though, are the empty transports. They send shipments every day and randomize when trucks are actually loaded and when they're not. With air shipments, they usually have three birds head out five minutes apart to play a little shell game with the prize.

- Ground crew are the soft spots for all of this. They know which shipments are real and which are fake. Hard part is getting them to sell out their job and getting the info out, since Ares doesn't allow commlinks to transmit from the slaughterhouse facilities.
- Stone
- The no-signal policy isn't even just about the shipment security. It allows accidents or cruelties to occur inside, and no footage ever gets out. The ground meat that comes out of Grade A isn't always just beef.
- Ecotope

The actual town that gave the district its name is about the closest thing to a thriving community the district has, though it's pretty much just a squatter city. Trade works a lot better there than nuyen, and it's one of the few places in the world where you aren't going to have a reliable Matrix connection. Food is the primary trade good, but anything that helps someone escape reality has plenty of value here as well. Even simple synthanol trades up here. As for the Matrix, the city never had its tech infrastructure updated, and the signal noise is so jacked up that even the Global Grid is a stuttering mess. One good thing: There are plenty of bolt-holes, and a few folks in the area maintain some decent (by local standards) dosses for runners to rent when they need to lie low or get off the grid, figuratively or literally.

- Some of those spots are nice. Best part was actually the lack of Matrix. It was nice to unplug from everything for awhile. Sure, I missed playing Jumble Wumble, but I didn't miss the spam, social media drivel, or all the other overload of junk that fills our average day.
- Balladeer

- I seem to recall you missed work during those few weeks, too.
- Fianchetto
- No matter the price, it was worth it to do some good for the locals for a little while.
- Balladeer

Westonaria is the richest slum you'll ever visit. Though the parts that are rich aren't really parts of the slums. Some of them are even separated by deep chasms and actual water-filled moats. We'll get to that stuff below, but let's start with the overview. As I said, it's the richest, but the money trickles down to the people while it pools up for the mining corps. This is the spot where you realize why someone wanted the DeBeers portion of DeBeers-Omnitech that falls under the Universal Omnitech megacorporate umbrella. The mining corp pulls up millions of nuyen from their mines daily, and several of those mines have their primary entrances here. Westonaria is at the center of the current fight to save the soul of this sprawl, because it's the heart of the mining industry and a symbol for the beginning of everything. For now, and for the past few centuries, miners have lived in these regions, filing to and from the mines on a daily basis. They head down into the mines for long hours of hard labor, then they file back to the surface world at the end of their shift, breathe the fresh air, and spread a minute fraction of the wealth they dug up to the rest of the sprawl.

DeBeers used the population transitions that segregated the city to gain control of several small communities around their mines. These became bulk housing for miners—to keep them close, yes, but more importantly to keep them under their megacorporate thumb. Now, don't get me wrong, the living conditions in these places are several steps above where the miners would otherwise be living, but that doesn't always make up for the minimal socialization, separation from their families and cultures, and complete lack of privacy they have in their company towns. It also keeps the money they earn from spreading around these poorer areas of the sprawl, and the subarc developments are only going to make that worse. This isolation also allows disappearances to go unnoticed, and that's good for the corp. It's a rare occasion where any locals can get enough nuyen together to investigate someone who has gone missing, but when they do, they hire run-



ners to sneak into the company towns to look for answers. Since the answer is almost always death, there isn't really a lot of return on this investment, but the runners who do it usually work pretty cheap, and you can't really put a value on peace of mind.

Outside the company towns you find the real inhabitants of Westonaria. Small villages and makeshift towns where the families of miners live and subsist while waiting for their husbands and sons to return. Yes, they do only hire men to go down into the mines. Megacorps can do whatever they want, sure, and most will usually create some kind of smokescreen for their segregation-al practices, but in this case they lay the truth out in the most direct and honest way possible. They leave women out to supply them with more men. It's about as primitive as you can get, but DeBeers doesn't care.

Westonaria is also the home base to PWV sprawl's most notorious criminal warlord, Agtashar. He runs his criminal empire from the slums of this district and gets a large chunk of his funding from DeBeers. They pay him to keep problems away from their shipments, and he does the job with a passion. His methods of deterring people from crossing him are the stuff of local legends—from pits full of ants to burning limbs in vats of molten gold, he has ways of making examples of anyone who crosses him by going after a shipment, or even just stealing from the mines.

As for the mines themselves, such as Mponeng Mine, they're armed camps with heavy security and zero tolerance for intrusions. Miners, a.k.a. slaves, are all tagged when they're brought on to work. Drones regularly buzz all over the compounds and scan for anyone who doesn't have the proper RFID broadcasting. They don't give them real warnings either. Most of the time, they use a spotlight or a laser sight to indicate a target and clear the background of collateral damage. The miners quickly scatter from anyone who's targeted. On the rare occasion someone chooses to shield someone who's not chipped, they quickly find out one of two things: 1. The drones are very good shots and fire around them, or 2. The drones don't care and fire through them. There doesn't seem to be a standard protocol for when it's one or the other, just the luck of the dogbrain. Miners claim the drones buzz by them down below as well, just not as frequently.

- Unless DeBeers installed a ton of repeaters, the drones would be all dogbrain down below. Signals aren't going to get far. That's a dangerous plan, though the odds of a miner sneaking a deck down there to hack a drone are pretty slim.
- Bellringer
- That's funny! You don't need a deck for the drones down there. They run on old tech, and an older-model commlink, running the right programs and scripts can snag control. Still tough to sneak a commlink down, but it's easier than a deck.
- AfroHack

Most sports fans have heard of **Emfuleni**. It's famous as the site of Vanderbijlpark Brawl Sprawl, one of the most famous brawl sprawls in all of urban brawl. The rearrangement of locals opened up this area, but several gangs in the region suddenly decided they wanted this turf. Their efforts were caught on vid, and Ares saw an opportunity. They bought up the property, enforced extraterritoriality, sent in heavily armed teams to sweep out the gangs, and then proceeded to set up the infrastructure for one of the few permanent brawl zones. This was back in the heavily wired days, so it took some time and money, but in the end it has paid off in spades. The zone is used for matches at least once a month, and it's hosted several international championships. The key to its success is the size of the area, which can field several different arrangements for a proper zone. Teams that have played at Vanderbijlpark before are constantly amazed at the difference a rearrangement or change of orientation can make, and often talk of it in the post-game wrap-ups.

The bulk of Emfuleni's western region was once farms but has gone barren after several incidents of mining product run-off flowing into the local aquifer. Rumors claim it was all part of a failed land grab by DeBeers so that they could expand mining in this direction, but someone wanted to stop them and chose to poison the water for thousands of people in order to keep DeBeers away.

- The aquifer isn't poisoned. It was the home of a dragon named Tashiki who lived in the caverns. Another dragon has been seen in the area of late, and no one is sure if this is about breeding or a takeover. Just know that this region is off-limits because you'll get eaten, not because the water will poison you.
- Drachenaug



The northern region of Emfuleni, near the southern edge of Johannesburg, holds some of the most important property in the entire region. At least important to those who like living with electricity and all the wonderful advantages it offers. The power plants of this industrial region provide one hundred percent of the sprawl's power and even sell excess to nearby provinces. Shiawase operates the facilities and uses a mix of geothermal, nuclear, wind, and solar energy, from a vast swath of urbanized earth to generate massive amounts of power. Along with Shiawase's own security forces, the Corporate Court arranged for a coalition of other megacorporate forces to be stationed and available in the region in order to keep this key site safe. The massive power park is broken up into one hundred separate sectors, each isolated in its power generation. This means you would have to wipe out the whole place in order to cut all the power to the region, and the different sectors can cycle down for maintenance while the others pick up the decreased output.

The presence of these plants has surrounded this region with living spaces but not all are created equal or alike. Shiawase uses a mix of SINless and SINned workers to operate the plants. The legitimate citizens hold most of the high-paying, highly skilled positions, while the SINless are paid to haul parts, clean solar panels, dig cable trenches, and all the other labor-intensive minimal-skill work the powers that be can talk them into. The workers are cheaper than drones and a lot easier to replace. They also can't get hacked, which was a huge problem several years back. Instead of upgrading their wireless security, they ditched wireless altogether and run everything via those cables and wires the laborers run. The coding is still the same—the transmission process just changed. They do occasionally have bandwidth issues, but it's usually due to a hack. To deal with this, their Matrix systems are like their power generators—they can shut them down independently and then reboot them. While they're down, other systems pick up the slack.

- Their system is a blend of old and new tech concepts put together by either a madman or a genius, or possibly a combination of both. While not usually known for their Matrix expertise, Shiawase seems to be testing a system here that could lead to another advancement in the world of the Matrix, especially in security. Some may see it as a bit of a backstep, but the move is definitely forward.
- Glitch

- The R&D tech got picked up from the collapsing NeoNET. Several of their Matrix tech minds got snatched with a power tech corp called VoltTech. They were peripherally attached to a project and somehow, when the digital ink dried, they went with the power company, rather than the Matrix R&D firm they originally belonged to. I smell a run, but I can't say for sure. If it was, there's some backlash probably headed their way once the remains of NeoNET get sorted. Being here in Africa might put them a little too close to Erika, who seem to be the ones who lost out, since they now own Digital Designs, the small-time subsidiary those techs belonged to originally.
- /dev/grrl
- The SINless are being used and abused, but they get paid. Not much, but it's enough to subsist on, especially since most of them are squatting in one place or another around the district.
- AfroHack

It's tough to say this about anywhere in my beloved sprawl, but no one should ever go to **Midvaal**. The other low-end districts at least have a few redeeming qualities, but almost nothing positive can be said about this place. The best I can really muster is that they aren't likely to be subjugated by the corps or government anytime soon. At least not without a lot of violence.

Midvaal maintains a modicum of civility along the northern edge, where it's forced to by its border with Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni. The key to this civility is also that it's held in place by the criminal powers that allow the rest of the place to be a wildland. The Edge of Insanity, as most call the part of town along the respectable districts, is the place to go in PWV for any and everything. The legal, illegal, quasi-legal, immoral, inconceivable, and downright unbelievable are made available to any and all comers. The place is regularly visited by many PWV citizens, both corporate and national, along with most of their SINless population at one point in time or another. Many of the SINless are seeking work or opportunities to earn the favor of the Vrye Mense, the local organized crime outfit that runs the underworld of PWV. I'll cover them elsewhere, because most people who aren't from this sprawl have no idea who they are—and that's not good when working in the PWV shadows.

Keeping my focus to Midvaal, the Edge is where all the mild action is—south of that, the true insanity starts. The Vrye Mense use their control of this place to run their operations from this dis-



trict. They have slave pens, drug labs, gear storage, interrogation sites, training facilities, private meeting sites, and just about any other kind of support for their criminal empire you could expect, all surrounded by those too loyal or too scared to betray them. Local authorities rarely enter this place, and when they do it's in no less than a trio of APCs with at least twenty heavily armed troops, and the targets have no more than one hundred bodies on their hands. The risk is just too great for anything less. Instead, local authorities often hire more expendable assets to acquire targets in this district. They don't issue kill orders, though, so if you take the job, you need a plan to bring your target out alive. And the Mense won't just let you walk if they know you grabbed someone.

- Midvaal has several megacorporate black sites. They pay a pretty nuyen to the Vrye Mense, and the Mense deny that anything in their territory isn't controlled by them, but they're there. The sites are tough to crack because you have Mense security all the way there and then corp security on site. Then Mense security on the way back out, especially if you got noisy. They don't like that kind of attention.
- StreetChic

The last district in the Smile is **Lesedi**, the breadbox of PWV. While other districts might have some farms, Lesedi has ultra-efficient, drone-operated, corporate-backed farms that produce more food per square kilometer than any other farm in the southern hemisphere. The farms are operated primarily by a conglomerate known as the Growers Union, funded through a local deal with Aztechnology, Evo, and Universal Omnitech. The three started out by devastating this area with a turf war over land rights, but someone got them together to settle their differences and work together. Their deal has been going smooth for half a decade, but the upcoming plan for a population shift is creating a wedge between the corps.

- These farms have recently gotten some new drones that are drawing a lot of interest from other megacorps. They're coming from Evo's facilities in Central Africa, rumored to be testing tech designed by the Monads. You can spot them because they lack any of the usual downthrust winds from turbines.
- Beaker

The sections of the district outside the farming enclaves are among the poorest in the sprawl.

Most of the locals eke out a living by stealing seeds from the farms and growing them in their own little rooftop farmsteads. They use the rooftops because anything grown on the ground in this district is considered the property of the Growers Union, but things grown in private patches above the ground don't. It's a local tradition more than a true necessity, because the Growers Union doesn't care that much about a few local farms, but it adds to the culture and charm of Lesedi. Plants, poverty, desperation, and desolation.

- There are several farms in the area run by local shamans who are rumored to be pushing these modded seeds and crops even further than the corps, blending their magic with corp genetic manipulations. These guys are being targeted by the corps, which means there can be protection work when the big boys come calling.
- Lyran

The farms along the northern edge have a secondary purpose and an extra set of drones operating along their rim. These drones have top-of-the-line sensors and a collection of non-lethal arms to keep the local poor from slipping over the borders and toward Kungwini. It's not a perfect system and unnecessary most of the time, but a few lean times have pushed the locals to action. Travel out of the area by roads or standard means aren't greatly hindered, as those in power know the forces that would cause trouble here rarely have access to motorized transportation.

- Don't trust that non-lethal line. Plenty of those drones have real ammo because they don't care about the types of people they're going after. The operations team that runs the drones along the border is also known to make sure no one survives the encounters with them. Even people who are just injured will get a few extra shots thrown their way to finish the job. I don't know if there's a real reason or just plain cruelty, but I know several people in Lesedi who have lost loved ones this way and have banded together to try to go after the corporate riggers behind the murders.
- AfroHack

THE MIXING POTS

PRETORIA, JOHANNESBURG, EKURHULENI, WEST RAND

The last four districts in PWV are collectively called "The Mixing Pots," because they're the areas where the middle, upper, and lower classes of the sprawl



might actually come into some sort of contact on a regular basis. The four districts are separately purposed and each has its own specific overtones, but in general these are the places that tourists are talking about when they talk about PWV, and the spots runners are talking about when they mention downtime or local legwork. Like the other sections, they'll each get a little individual coverage, but there are a few universal principles for the regions.

First, they are well-patrolled but don't appear to be police states. Local law enforcement doesn't make a daily show of force, but when things go south—and they occasionally do—they come in fast and hard. They end the problem, clean up, and get clear as quickly as possible, so regular life can go on for regular citizens. This normalcy is the status quo for these districts. The social level of the normal varies a bit, with the ever-present social segregation keeping anyone of differing status from violating the social circles of their betters.

Second, the borders are all wide open within these districts and there isn't a lot of regulation about travel among them. The standard issues with SINs and social circles can still cause a problem, but usually if you're welcome in one of these four districts, you're welcome in all of them. This changes a little when you're talking about the borders surrounding the districts, especially those going toward Tshwane or Kungwini, and the SIN-drones doing the monitoring can get quite picky even a full kilometer from a district border.

Last, these places are all becoming hotbeds for the latest sociopolitical debate about further developing the underground arcologies. Opinions on the matter are being recorded by the SIN-drones, and that data is being stored and analyzed by the corps and government. This is the place where decisions can be made and swayed because the views in these regions aren't always dust and gold. The Smile isn't going to want to be shoved underground. Uptown will have very little problem pushing their lessers down a deep, deep hole, never to be seen again, as they dig up more riches for them. The data on these views has been a prime target for runners. Seeing who thinks what is only part of the work. The bigger part is helping those who have differing beliefs keep them hidden while they work to do right in the world.

GETTING AROUND

The Mixing Pots have a round-the-clock buzz of traffic, both ground and air. They also happen to

be the location of the metroplex's international airport, as well as the main hub for its long-distance rail services, so getting around in these four districts is easy. On the ground, Renraku runs a full GridGuide infrastructure through all four districts that provides efficient and economical transit for anyone willing to pay the daily, monthly, or yearly subscription. There is no option for driving without GridGuide in the Mixing Pots.

If you want at least a semblance of transportation freedom, you need a VTOL. While Renraku controls the skies with its SkyGuide system, SkyGuide only controls the major travel lanes. It offers short-term access to the lanes for vehicles with the correct transponder codes and authorizations for approved landing zones. Taking off and landing from uncontrolled zones isn't generally allowed, though it happens all the time and needs to be arranged with SkyGuide and the local air-traffic-control office. Permits generally run a pretty penny and require the purchaser to verify their home take-off location along with up to ten landing destinations. Additional destinations can be registered for additional fees, and flight deviation fines are standardized and applied immediately to the user's account when they occur. Along with the fine, the Metroplex Transit Authority receives immediate notification, along with local security forces (depending on where the violation occurred). Metroplex municipal authorities respond to anything on public ground, and local security forces deal with anything on extraterritorial property.

- Don't think you can ditch one group for another, either. Most of the time, they're cooperating and just hand you over, but if anyone is feeling particularly feisty they will happily station themselves around a piece of property and wait for you to come back out. In order to avoid collateral damage, they tend to hack perps' vehicles. If they're protected or running zero emissions, they use a lot of non-lethal hardware to cause electronics failures and force the automatic guidance system to land.
- Sounder
- How do you keep the autoguidance up when you trash the electronics?
- Stone
- Different hardware requirements around PWV. All VTOL and rotorcraft are required to have a separate control system dedicated to emergency landing. It's a required feature for any craft that flies in PWV airspace. There are even



aerodromes outside the metroplex that cater specifically to swapping craft coming from other cities.

- Sounder
- Yup. Great spots to hit targets in transit.
- AfroHack

To help move people around town, the metroplex has invested heavily in their Bus Rapid Transit system. The system has been around for over a century, but as the city worked to relocate and adjust its population, the system got a major overhaul. Linked in with the GridGuide system, the BRT offers everyone a safe and fast method of public transportation around the central districts. Utilizing a series of self-driving busses and transport modules (basically wheeled boxes with seats), the system offers drop-offs no farther than two blocks from every location in Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Ekurhuleni. West Rand has a special system to fulfill their needs as a primarily residential community. Designated pick-up and drop-off locations are set up at the entrance to every subdivision or arcoproperty, but they use a pod system. Each pod can load up to eight passengers, and properties have a number of pods on site based on their local subscription numbers. The pods are picked up by a drive module that slows and pulls them into a train. While in transit, the pods, made with smart materials, merge into a standard bus. During peak travel times, the system works backward to drop off pods without slowing the train. This can be jarring for tourists, but it makes taking the bus system in PWV a must for travelers. Though it often results in some lost time, as tourists and non-locals rarely get it right the first try.

- The first time? Hah! I've been to PWV a dozen times, and I still miss stops when they're running pod drops. It's not the worst thing, since the next drop is usually less than half a klick down, but it can be a slitch if you're running a tail or using the system for precision work.
- Sounder

For people who want a little more privacy or just need door-to-door service, the city has one of the best taxi systems in the world. All part of that state-of-the-art public transportation system, the taxis are about seventy-five percent automated in these districts, and all of them are required to run on the GridGuide and SkyGuide systems. Yup, that means there are ground and

air taxis in PWV. The ground service runs out to West Rand, and as long as the passengers have the right SIN tags or ample funds, they'll run out to Tshwane and Kungwini. Getting a taxi to take you out to the Smile is going to cost even more than Uptown, and the automated ones won't even be able to, since the Smile lacks GridGuide and SkyGuide considers most of it a no-landing zone. The only exceptions are some spots along the northern edge of Midvaal near the power plants and several of the farms in Lesedi. Overall, the taxi services will get you where you need to go, but they tend to be pricier than the BRT.

- The BRT avoids megacorp property and the taxis will run SINs to confirm passengers should have access to the property. If they don't have a solid confirmation, they send a message ahead to the property and give the corpsec time to run a more thorough SIN check while you're in transit.
- Glitch

Though it's not as commuter-friendly as the BRT, the city's MetroRail system runs around the Mixing Pots and has a station in every district. The "Metro," as the locals call it, has a long history of maintaining a bad reputation. Several attempts have been made to clean up the system or disband it entirely, but the company operating the rail—MetroRail Inc.—has a collection of influential backers. Rumors abound as to what the rails are really used for moving, but on a standard day the trains move poor commuters and adventurous tourists around the metroplex. All the Smile and Uptown stations are right on the edge of the districts, and trains approaching Tshwane and Kungwini are frequently detoured from their scheduled stops and halted before they reach the affluent districts. Meanwhile, trains stopping in Mogale and Westonaria rarely miss a stop and often gain and lose cars while loading and unloading passengers.

- The Metro trains are deathtraps, in terms of both poor maintenance and the number of gangs and criminals that operate on them. They love out-of-town marks and will take a break from their turf war between the cars in order to take down a big payday. A single gang will operate one or two cars and charge a tax to ride in their car. Moving between several cars can get expensive, and paying too many of those taxes might make them think you have plenty of money to spare, so be careful.
- AfroHack



Getting into the sprawl via train is relatively easy and safe, especially when compared to train travel within the city. Direct lines run to MCT's Marlboro Station from Cape Town and Durban, while a pair of rails combine to connect to Port Elizabeth and East London. Pretoria shares much of the line from Cape Town, but their private line runs to Shaka Regional Train Depot in Pretoria, rather than off to Marlboro Station in Joburg. Coming from Cape Town, you have several options depending on your schedule and accommodation needs or desires.

Shosholozza Meyl, a wholly owned subsidiary of Mitsuhama, operates a trio of passenger train options running from Cape Town to the PWV Metroplex. The Voortrekker Run leaves Cape Town every morning at sunrise and arrives in the PWV Metroplex at sunset. The Cape Express reverses these times. Both runs then repeat the trek an hour after sunset and arrive an hour before, offering an overnight option for moving between the cities. The trains make the 1,500 kilometer journey at high speeds, making short stops in Beaufort West and Kimberley. One of the special attractions for tourists is the Orange River crossing when the two trains, both moving at over 200 kph, zip by each other on the bridge over the river. This is the fastest and least expensive option, running from Cape Town into Marlboro Station in Johannesburg.

- The bridge is a target for terror groups, but there is an elite cadre of operators that protect it called the Oranje Leeus (meaning "orange lions"). They thoroughly utilize MCT's zero-zone policy on the property around the bridge to keep it safe. They are ultra-paranoid with anyone who comes to do work or perform inspections on the bridge. So much so that they escort all personnel with their silenced pistol in their hand. They say intimidation and security all in one. I say paranoid wackjobs!
- Picador

For a few nuyen more, you can move up to the Premier Classe trains. These offer a more leisurely but luxurious trip between the Cape and PWV. The ride is just a hair over twenty-eight hours and offers the same stops as the Voortrekker Run and Cape Express. The Premier Classe only runs at noon each day. The reverse trip is called the Golden Ticket and leaves PWV every day at noon. These trains offer sleeper cars, dining cars, lounge cars, and even a gambling car on the weekend

runs. The trains come into and depart Marlboro Station in Johannesburg. The express runs and the Premier Classe are both frequently used by those who want to fly out of Witwatersrand International Airport rather than out of Cape Town.

- The problems in Cape Town have come a long way, but with a dragon nesting so close, people are still leery of flying in and out. The express trains to PWV were one of the biggest pushes to try to increase transit to the country.
- Turbo Bunny
- The dragon is probably the main reason Witwatersrand is the biggest airport.
- Clockwork
- I would agree, but likely not for the same reasons.
- Orange Queen

Once per week, the Azure Queen and Blau Koenig, collectively known as the Blue Trains, slip from their private train hangars and make a slow, luxury-filled trip between Pretoria and Cape Town. Notice I said Pretoria, rather than Johannesburg. These luxury liners operate out of Silverton Station rather than Marlboro. Silverton is located near the shared border between Tshwane, Kungwini, and Pretoria, meaning the rich and elite, the only people here with the means to take this train, don't have to go anywhere near the lower classes. The Blue Trains take a full three days to travel the distance. They could travel it faster, but they choose to take a leisurely pace for the smoothest ride while allowing their passengers the most time to enjoy the amenities and views offered by the trip. Food and alcohol are both real, as are the private entertainers, though there is a virtual-life car as well. The lounge and food cars have two levels. The lower is where everything is prepared, and the glass-walled upper level is where it's served. Security is top-notch but rarely encounters any issues, as the screening process for buying tickets is usually enough to prevent anyone who doesn't belong from getting on the train. They connect SINs to tickets and run SIN checks both when the tickets are purchased and when the passengers arrive for boarding.

- This train is the ultimate form of separation between the rich and poor. The rich can take a three-day, luxury-filled train ride across the country, while the poor huddle into fast-moving shuttles to get from one point to another.
- Traveler Jones



TRANSPORTATION COSTS

GRIDGUIDE SUBSCRIPTION

Hourly	5¥
Daily	20¥
Weekly	75¥
Monthly	200¥
Yearly	1,000¥

SKYGUIDE SUBSCRIPTION

Hourly	25¥
Daily	100¥
Weekly	400¥
Monthly	1,000¥
Yearly	5,000¥
VTOL Permit	10,000¥
Additional Destinations	250¥
Flight Deviation Fine	2,500¥

BUS PASSES

Single Ride	0.5¥
Ten Rides	4¥
Week Pass	5¥
Month Pass	15¥

COMMUTER RAIL

Single Fare	.5¥
Ten Fare Pass	3¥
Weekly Pass	4¥
Monthly Pass	10¥
Yearly Pass	50¥

LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS

Cape Town to PWV	
Commuter	25¥
Premier	250¥
Blue	3,500¥ – 7,500¥
Durban	85¥
East London	100¥
Port Elizabeth	100¥

MISCELLANEOUS

Taxi	5¥ + 0.5¥/km
Air Taxi	20¥ + 2¥/km
Airfare	~1,500¥
Semi-ballistic	~2,000¥

- Hey man, can't miss too much work time.
- Slamm-0!

- I wish that were a joke.
- Netcat

- Don't we all.
- Bull

The Durban train runs twice a day, while Port Elizabeth and East London only run trains once a day. They match the speed of the Premier Classe, but with the amenities of the basic lines. They also tend to be slowed down with cargo cars filled with goods coming from the ports to support the capital. All of these trains run into Marlboro, though several make a stop out in Midvaal in order to detach a few freight cars.

Witwatersrand International Airport is the largest airport in all of Africa. Recent expansions have allowed it to handle suborbital traffic, but only a few carriers are running those kinds of expensive flights down here. Located in the same place as the former OR Tambo International Airport, Witwatersrand has nearly tripled in size over the past three decades, growing more and more with each progressive step. It has a local tram that runs between Marlboro Station and the main terminals every fifteen minutes, allowing train and air traffic to integrate smoothly. And since Marlboro also handles all the ground taxi and BRT traffic while the airport handles air taxis, the trams need to run often enough to move ground traffic as quickly as it arrives.

TOURIST TRAPS

Pretoria is the political center of the metroplex. This isn't solely important for the metroplex itself. As the administrative capital of the Azanian Confederation, Pretoria gets visitors from around the city, the nation, and the world, each in possession of a different level of luxurious expectations to be filled. This is truly the center of the Mixing Pots, blending together the peoples of the metroplex alongside the varying partners within the Confederation and hosting the largest number of national embassies in a single city besides Washington, D.C., and therefore more foreign diplomats and citizens than any other city in Africa, and arguably the southern hemisphere. Many visitors who come to the PWV sprawl never leave Pretoria, which means the entire district is

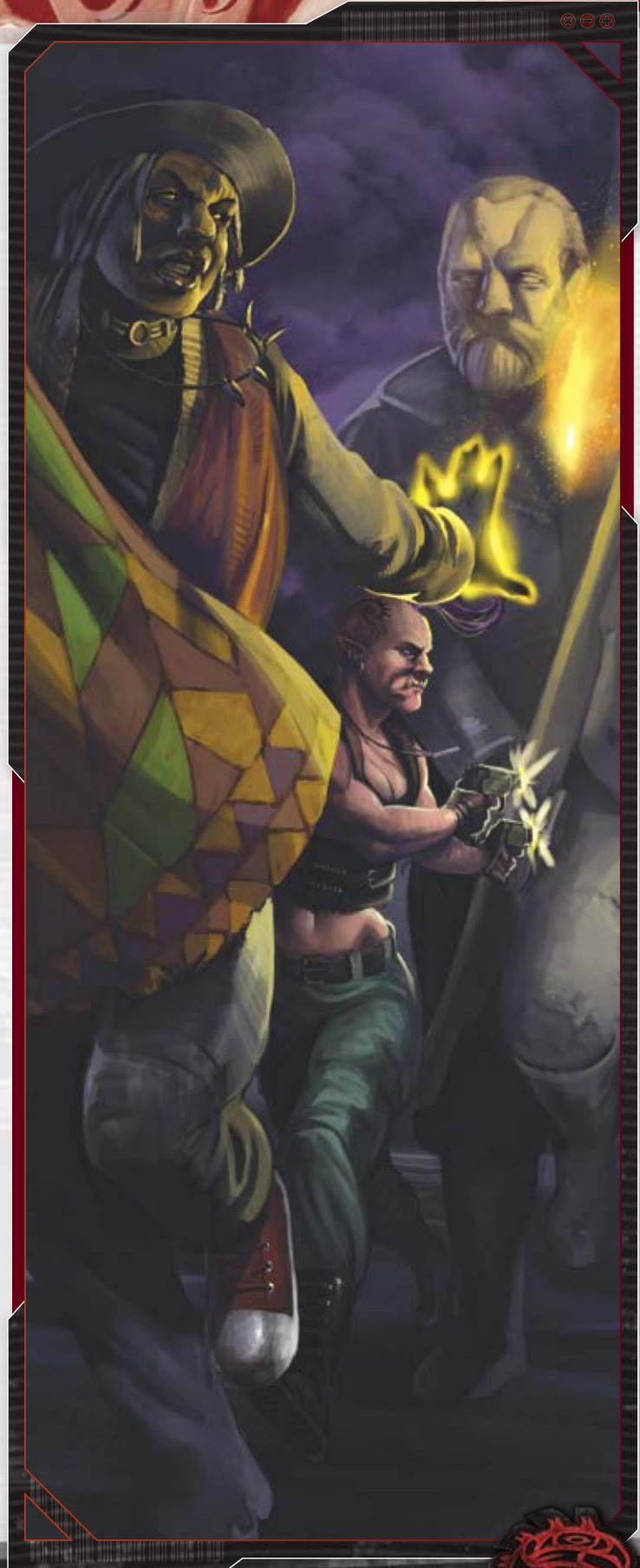


centered around making an impression with both its respect for history and vision for the future.

At the heart of that history is **Church Square**. Though more accurately, all the property within and touching Pretorius Street, Bosman Street, Madiba Street, and Thabo Sehume Street around the square. This entire area was reclaimed by the Metroplex and Azanian government in order to centralize a variety of city, district, metroplex, and national functions. The best part about the area is that all of this was done without sacrificing its historic charm. Internally, many of the buildings have been modified, updated, or completely gutted and restructured, but the metroplex set out rules for external modification. The materials used to construct facades and external structures could be changed, but the aesthetic had to stay the same. Several of the buildings, including the historic Palace of Justice, may look like something constructed in the late 1800s, but the external structures have been replaced with more modern materials, including reinforced ferrocete. Due to the number of high-value targets and important diplomatic envoys that come to the area, everything in the region has been rebuilt and reinforced. This area now houses the Palace of Justice, the Azanian Federal Reserve Bank, the Azanian Parliament, the Metroplex Council building, and thirty other politically valuable sites, all clustered into only a few city blocks. Restaurants and small shops dot the area, but almost every square meter of this section of the sprawl is dedicated to some function of the political system.

Not every important government building is located around Church Square, and one in particular is just as famous and just as historically significant: the **Union Buildings**. Located about a kilometer and a half east of Church Square, this historic structure and surrounding park now act as the executive seat of the Azanian government. Separated from the operational aspects held around Church Square, this area hosts large diplomatic events, formal protests (what few still occur), national festivals, and a myriad of other political and socio-political events throughout the year.

From the grounds of the Union Buildings, one can look southwest and spot our next attraction, **Voortrekker Monument**. Laws have been on the books and actually upheld that prevent any structure in this section of the city from obscuring the view of the monument from the Union Buildings, a reminder of where the nation came



from and the efforts put forth to survive this wild frontier. The monument itself still holds considerable historical significance, commemorating the Voortrekkers who left the Cape Colony in the early to mid-1800s, though it has seen a notable change in its visiting patronage over the past few decades. In the late '50s a group of neo-anarchists attempted to take over the monument as a political statement. They held it for three full months before local forces were able to remove them, mainly because of the efforts of three magicians: Teufel, Hund, and Baum, a trio of skilled mages. The trio, and every change-driving anarchist who followed subsequently, discovered that the monument is drastically aspected toward the magic of those who seek change. Teufel, Hund and Baum—all anarchists looking to halt the progression of the city's segregation at the time—were able to summon powerful aid, detect incoming threats, and even erect a massive dome of arcane energy that rose from the wagon wall and encased the monument.

Once the siege was over, the site was secured, and additional arcane security was put in place to prevent anything like that from happening again. Currently, all Awakened guests, no matter their claimed affiliations, are fitted with a FAB-bomb bracelet. It won't kill the caster immediately, but it will take off a hand if the bacteria inside detect the use of magic. Security for tourists is only present during operating hours—the real fun here occurs after hours.

- The bracelets are terrible. They don't care who cast the spell, so pitching a spell at someone wearing a bracelet will result in the loss of a hand. That kind of move is occasionally used as a distraction by a caster looking to get in without getting "banded," as the locals call it.
- Lyran

The location has become a sort of proving ground for neo-anarchists in the city. They sneak in after closing, place a few tasteful tags around the grounds, and then slip back out. The closer a tag is to the cenotaph (the empty tomb that's the focus of the monument), the more street cred the tagger earns. A few have even gone so far as to claim they tagged inside the cenotaph, but claims like that are extremely hard to believe, given the mass of the stone and the lack of any evidence other than their word. Regardless, the site is often used as a clandestine meeting spot for neo-anarchists

looking to test the stealth skills of their fellows who desire a large, empty venue for a meeting.

- No one has tagged inside the cenotaph or they would have found the tunnel that the trio used to help all their followers escape.
- AfroHack
- That's conspiracy drivel. The base of the monument is a massive slab. There is nothing beneath the monument but concrete and dirt.
- Traveler Jones
- There's enough speculation—and even some supposed evidence in old documentation—that the possibility of a tunnel, and even another structure beneath the monument, isn't out of the question.
- Snopes
- Evidence or take it to the conspiracy sites.
- Bull

Even though Pretoria is huge, and there are thousands of other places I could mention as important, I only have the time and space to cover one more, so I'm going to choose the **National Zoological Gardens**. This may seem strange, since we all know the audience for this project, but the NZG features the best example for this sprawl's ecological views, and thus needs to be discussed. Pretoria has long had the nickname "Jacaranda City" for its abundance of purple blooming trees. The name, the trees, and the desire to maintain a more natural setting for the city have long been part of the Pretoria culture, and as all the surrounding districts came together to form the PWV Metroplex, Pretoria's influence on the matter has spread. In fact, there is a yearly competition between the various sprawls to have the most artistic bloom, with several districts spending hefty sums of money to manipulate their trees into blooming across a specific window of time for full effect. While one would expect the richer districts to win the award more often, in fact Midvaal and Westonaria have earned the honor for the past six summers.

- This competition comes with a fair amount of accompanying shadow work. Genetic samples, bloom tampering, and even soil chemistry modification to change bloom colors or inhibit blooms have been employed. The district that wins gets a cash award, but never enough to cover the cost of runs to undermine the other districts.
- Fianchetto



- The one thing no one tolerates is directly damaging the trees. Even the most desperate to win district won't harm another district's trees. It's a major taboo.
- Ecotope
- And now all of us are thinking, "hmmm, how could I damage one district's trees while fabricating convincing evidence that another district was behind it?" We're awesome.
- X-Prime

The trees pulled us a little off-topic, but the NZG is full of them. It also has the largest collection of Awakened and mundane specimens in the southern hemisphere, with several specimens unique to their collection. The Big Blue is their oceanography exhibit, the largest in the world, and it features the only captive megalodon in existence. Massive bluefin tuna are dropped in daily to feed the creature, and the things look like snacks when they get eaten whole. Around the rest of the Gardens, you will find not only animal species but also plants native to Africa and regions associated with the various wildlife within the park. The park has expanded several times over the past century, and now engulfs the local high school, the rail station, and markets and urbanized area north of Boom Street. Much of the land was reclaimed, but a section was left to study the process of natural decay, and another is maintained as an urban garden that features urban wildlife.

- The zoo is frequently targeted for research data. Besides drawing millions of tourists each year, the zoo also hosts dozens of research projects, funded by government grants as well as private funds. One of the largest patrons of the local research community is DIMR, the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research.
- Lyran

Johannesburg is the central business district for the sprawl. While Pretoria has embassies for nations around the world, Johannesburg is dotted with extraterritorial headquarters and offices for the megacorporations that are looking to stake a claim in Africa, along with offices for all the up-and-coming corporations that want to either operate against the big boys for as long as they can or to shine bright enough to get pulled beneath their corporate umbrella. In a similar national com-

parison, Johannesburg houses as many megacorporate HQ buildings and arcologies as the entire Seattle Metroplex.

The thing is, corps don't like to look like the monolithic monsters that they really are, so this district also has several entertainment escapes along with a few preserved pieces of history in order to make it look like they actually care. Every one of these places is connected to a corp that sponsors it, and they use these places to wage a battle of prestige and showmanship, trying to show which corp is the best in Joburg. Most people don't know this, but the Big Ten (which are kind of the Big Eleven here, as Erika still reps NeoNET like a boss while SpinStorm struggles to overcome some inter-African squabbling) hold a quarterly challenge to determine who has the best site in Johannesburg. The winning corp is given a engineered jacaranda-bonzai hybrid to recognize their win for that quarter. The jacaranda blooms with company colors, and the prize trees are frequent targets of intercorporate sabotage and pranks, though the security to get to them can be quite intense.

Montecasino is a massive hotel and entertainment complex owned by Ares. The location is designed to look like an old Tuscan village and includes a quartet of hotels, varying in their levels of luxury, a trio of gaming centers, each catering to a different social circle, all surrounding the village full of restaurants, theaters, and shops. The place has little to no connection to Ares in its culture and style, showing that the megacorp is taking a hands-off approach to branding the place. The only connection most ever make is the security force, which wears armor crafted to look like Roman centurions, leading people to think of the Roman god of war—or the Greek equivalent, which is of course what the corp would prefer.

- This place hosts visiting VIPs on a daily basis, which comes with runners looking to extract said VIPs. It also happens to be one of Ares' largest social R&D facilities, with experiments and data being collected at all hours of the day and night. Lastly, several connected Ares citizens sell grey- and black-market goods out of this place. Arms, armor, tech, and even vehicles get sold out of those village shops, and the local security is there to keep any would-be buyers from doing anything stupid.
- Stone



Gold Reef City Amusement Park is run by Aztechnology and features some of the most thrilling real-life rollercoasters in the world, alongside VR rides that slide into the danger zone of biofeedback levels. It also operates several AR areas with games and attractions for those not wanting to fully immerse themselves or too paranoid to leave their body alone in a little locked box. The theme of the place is a mix of aquatic and subterranean, with cavern mouths surrounded by coral reefs that lead down into old caves and mines. They haven't been afraid to tackle scary topics, and several of their rides are themed after horrifying events in the Sixth World. Into the Hive features a mine-car ride with AR experience, where the riders have to fight off waves of insect spirits. Success and failure offer different endings to the ride experience, offering a reason to ride more than once and an introduction to the horror-filled world of a victorious bug spirit invasion. Others are themed on the Renraku Arcology in Seattle, the recent lockdown in Boston, the rise of the dead set in a fictional city on the Ivory Coast, and my personal favorite, a big-game hunt for some of the most feared paranormal animals in the world that varies the length of the ride based on how long your party survives.

- Several rides and locales offer quiet and safe meeting spots, though monitoring by Aztechnology is still rumored.
- Fianchetto
- The AR games offer interesting training and teamwork experiences for a team that needs to gel better. Some Mr. Johnsons even start job hires at this place, sending a team through one of the experiences before deciding if they can pull off a job.
- Stone
- Funny you mention that. Aztechnology actually brings their corporate teams here to run simulated ops on other corps before sending them in. They offer the service to other teams too, but it costs a chunk of the payment.
- Picador
- The magic system is funny and won't accidentally cast anything outward. The site's automated security systems consider it a terrorist attack and crack down hard.
- Lyran

Evo has avoided the glitz-and-fun route and instead supports the Apartheid Museum, a piece of history that many need to learn about to help

change things today. The only attraction intended for entertainment here is the virtual history tour. There are both AR and VR options, though the VR ones allow you to explore more of the regions and meet more of the people involved in the movement that ended the era of apartheid.

- The museum also houses a vast collection of artifacts from the apartheid era and the rest of this region's long history. Quite a few of those items are even artifacts from the previous age of magic, when this area was home to a warlike culture.
- Orange Queen
- Seems like things that should be of more interest to Mujaji than you. I bet you would love for someone to snag them and possibly get you a better look at them.
- Slamm-0!
- I am never opposed to gaining a chance to study items from the past.
- Orange Queen

The **Johannesburg Botanical Gardens** is one of the few Wuxing properties in the sprawl. They wanted in on the competition but have only minor interests in the region. One of the big reasons they chose this site is because of the mana lines that run into it. They're one of the few sets in the sprawl that have not been mangled, twisted, or destroyed by the mining and work being done beneath the earth. The gardens are home to over a hundred thousand plant species from around the world, including over one hundred Awakened species and two known Emergent plants. The collection is frequently targeted by corporations that desire samples but cannot publicly explain the research they are doing or cannot afford the price of a sample.

- The mana here is easily channeled toward growth and healing, which is why Wuxing operates a clinic on the premises. It's not public, and rumors abound that it's a delta-level facility, but no one who knows for sure has confirmed it.
- Butch

The fall of NeoNET allowed Erika to snag the bulk of the corp's resources in Azania, along with much of Africa, through some unpleasant back-room deals made with failing Novatech and Transys-Neuronet. While most corps hide their dirty dealings, Erika let a lot of dark details slip out in order to garner a stronger reputation in town. A



pivotal piece of that reputation involved the acquisition of the Carlton Centre, the tallest building in the sprawl, and its connected hotel. It contains a five-story mall beneath the ground floor between the tower and the hotel building and is home to offices for dozens of other corps as well as housing Erika's African HQ. The upper floor of the tower is an observation deck with a small restaurant, while the upper floor of the hotel houses a gourmet restaurant and two penthouses. Below ground, the tower has a total of ten floors, six of which have listed purposes while the other four are secured and private.

- Erika runs research labs down there. Nothing too dangerous to the public, but things that are definitely worth stealing, putting the public in danger when runners come a-calling.
- Snopes

Mitsuhamas has yet to take home a single jaccanda-bonsai with the **Museum of African Arcana**, but that is probably because their security turns away almost fifty percent of the visitors who try to enter. The security rules prohibit so many things that getting in is an effort in social engineering. Doing so is definitely worth it, though. MCT has the largest collection of regional artifacts on the continent. Arcanely skilled associates have told me that getting into the place is nearly impossible on the astral plane, and not just because of the wards. The items within create such a strong mana field that they blind most astral visitors and viewers.

- Astral space here is whacked-out because of all the mojo bits in this place, but that's part of MCT's plan. The museum is the top floor of a large underground research facility. The astral screen is intended to keep nosy mages from delving down into their labs and seeing what's going on beneath the surface. I'm not sure either, but I know runs have been contracted to head down there, and none of those runners have ever completed the job. Or at least, no one's claiming they did.
- Lyran
- The area around this place stinks of Dissonance. I have a feeling the research below has to do with technomancers. And TMs plus MCT equals a whole lot of nothing good.
- Netcat

Renraku knows how to please the people and offers the safest free market in all of Johannesburg,

Midtown Market. Visitors looking to experience the excitement of an open market without the fear of being killed or robbed come here to experience the noise, hustle, and bustle in a safe and secure setting. Vendors yell over one another, children pander to the sympathies of visitors, and well-hidden security guards slip through the crowd to quickly and quietly remove threats.

- The market has a dark side, with both black- and grey-market offerings, though deals are done in code, and 'wares are often delivered outside the market. The dealers who operate here do so with a strong code of honor because they know screwing someone over could lose them access to all that free Renraku security.
- Stone

Saeder-Krupp operates a museum dedicated to the Voortrekkers that settled the region. The museum is not what many expect, as they take a true and genuine look at the hardships and hard choices that the early pioneers of this region made, some of which were not what one would call civilized. The atmosphere of the place is very solemn, but there is a single bit of semi-lighthearted fun with V-cubed. The **Virtual Voortrekker Voyage** is an immersive virtual game where the player faces the difficulties of the Voortrekkers and has to make decisions on the journey to this region. It's supposedly based on some really old early computer game, but the VR feeds actually have a light biofeedback option so you can suffer the cramps of dysentery or the spears of the Zulu tribes.

- Surviving the trek isn't just about bragging rights. Anyone who manages to make it is given a VIP pass to visit the Voortrekker Monument, which includes access to the cenotaph room and several locked side chambers that house some very interesting artifacts, at least one of which should definitely be in the hands of the people of the Zulu Nation, not the PWV Metroplex.
- Ecotope

It didn't take long for Horizon to see the value in developing a stronger presence in Azania, and thus they picked up a series of cultural centers around the city that focus on the history of the various groups in the region. The centers are spread out, but Horizon operates a set of tours using automated buses and virtual tour guides along with immersive AR and VR sections of the bus ride. Throughout the tour, Horizon offers cultural-immersion activities, where guests sing, dance, and





interact with locals, all the while being monitored by Horizon for potential talent.

- That monitoring isn't just for talent. Horizon uses it as a tracking method for people in the city, recording voice, gait, and even retinal and fingerprint data when they interact with exhibits. Big Brother is watching.
- Plan 9

Shiawase doesn't quite play fair. Their entry into the competition only has its entrance in Johannesburg. The remainder of the tour, called Eternal Energy, travels through a series of their power production plants along the border but technically located in Emfuleni. The place is quite informative about power production in the region and offers a great advertisement for Shiawase's continued contract as the sprawl's primary energy supplier.

- It also allows a decent way to slip into their other facilities, which are all connected. You still have to get away from the tour security and out of the public space, but at least you've got a foot in the door, which is hard to do anywhere else around the facilities.
- Mika

Universal Omnitech has more pull in PWV than half of the AAAs and therefore gets to play in this competition. They operate the **Journey to the Center of the Earth** theme park that uses an old abandoned mine. The park offers a glimpse at the history of mining, as written by DeBeers, along with dozens of themed rides involving the various legends and myths around digging too deep into the Earth, including a land of lost dinosaurs, a battle against primitive furry people, and a terrifyingly real tunnel collapse. The tunnel collapse ride has actually been used by Johnsons to hire lo-



cal runners and talk while they're trapped. Since they're monitored, these Mr. Johnsons are almost always from UO. The aboveground section features mining equipment, along with several shops and restaurants.

- UO has covered up several incidents over the past year, as their efforts at expansion have bumped into the underground excavations of some unfriendly bugs. They tried to contract Ares for help, but Ares refused. They've been using runners instead, though the survival rate is less than desirable, from what I've gathered.
- Snopes

Often overlooked due to the shadows cast by the politics of Pretoria or the megacorps of Johannesburg, the heart and soul of this sprawl lies in **Ekurhuleni**. As the social center of the city, this district plays host to many of the more diverse and integrated venues in the sprawl. That isn't to say that all the places in the district are accepting, but most have sections for members of every cultural and social circle in the city, as well as a section for outsiders. Of all the districts in the metroplex, this one is the most important to runners, as they need a place where they can bridge the shadows and the light without being glaringly obvious.

Ekurhuleni is home to all of the metroplex's sports arenas, with the exception of the urban brawl zone down in Emfuleni. Sports teams from around the globe come here to compete, while citizens from around the sprawl come to mingle at the fringes of their social circles. Many an illicit love affair has begun or been played out at the local arenas, along with the surrounding eating and drinking establishments and the hotels that dot the area.

- Blackmail and kidnapping are the name of the game around this district, but they aren't the only game in town. Long cons, hits, extractions, and just about every other kind of run take place around these streets because of the mix of people. It's not lawless, but it is a bit too large for maintaining total law and order without appearing oppressive.
- Stone
- Since when did anyone care about being oppressive?
- Ecotope
- Being oppressive and appearing oppressive are two very different things. Every megacorp is oppressive, but they work hard to not appear so to their citizens. We just happen to live outside all of it and see the darkness that spills

over in order to maintain that illusion. Though to be totally honest, many of us participate in maintaining that illusion. Still, we are not here to judge.

- Glitch

Runners find all sorts of useful information available here and get a chance to talk to anyone they want without having to acquire expensive passes to get into areas of Pretoria or Johannesburg. This also happens to be the area they will most likely find a doss with the right mix of acceptance and the ability to look the other way at where the money is coming from and even who's handing it over. Dosses in this part of town range from single-room apartments to single-family homes to single-block communal living habitats where everyone pays to live together while sharing the financial burdens. These last are unique to Ekurhuleni, at least in an urban and recognized setting. It's like paying to all squat together in the same area without being harassed by the local law or municipal authorities.

- These communes are great spots for a cheap doss, but you have zero privacy, and most of your neighbors are real peace-and-love types, so hauling in your arms or armor is going to be frowned upon. Sometimes to the point of calling local authorities and getting you pinched.
- Slamm-0!

I saved the tour of **West Rand** for last because it's different than the other sections of the Mixing Pots. West Rand has become the rare haven of the middle class in PWV. The massive wealth disparity of the sprawl's citizens, means very few people fall into what would be considered middle class. They aren't the opulently wealthy, nor are they struggling to meet their basic needs on a regular basis. West Rand is a collection of small neighborhoods and housing groups where single families live in relatively large homes with all their basic amenities met and many of life's luxuries at their fingertips, if they choose to partake.

The view of West Rand varies by your station. To some of the poor, this place is a goal—to some of the rich, it's a place to fall, but to the majority of PWV residents, it's a strange little piece of a foreign culture that was never able to develop in this massively dichotomous region. It's a picture of western suburbanization, a concept much of western civilization has even left behind, in a place where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer every day.



The district has a major tourist draw within its suburban utopia. There was a vast amount of discussion during the city's reconfiguration on how to redevelop the area around the site known as the Cradle of Humankind. The decision was made considerably easier when a group of Zulu shamans moved into the region and declared it theirs. They did not want to prevent people from continuing to seek the truth of humanity's origins, or worshipping an older world, or an older way; they were trying to protect the region from being overdeveloped and forced into the modern world, which was the direction everything seemed to be heading toward. They were able to manage the takeover without a single death, though they healed a large number of their own along with some of the city's forces during the skirmishes that occurred. The shamans have a large following, many of whom came to live at this site. They don't get paid to help maintain the park's facilities and security, but they are allowed to live there for free, though life within the Cradle is about 25,000 years behind the times. It's not exactly like that, but everyone who lives there has to live inside specific caves or small mud huts. They are allowed to use modern medicine and arms, but they get all their food from hunting and gathering in the area. Modern tech, such as commlinks and firearms, has to blend with their simple garb.

- The zero-death claim was all propaganda. The city PR group and the Zulu shamans agreed it would make the transition of power in the area easier if there was no reason for locals to retaliate. It worked, but not perfectly, though that was mostly because the city has such a strong level of ingrained racism and classism that even though the Zulu were said to have killed no one, some people still thought they shouldn't have this land.
- Traveler Jones

The center of activity for the area is **Wonder Cave**. The shamans have made a headquarters of sorts around the main entrance and limit access to guided tours, especially since caverns below are rich with reagents and several new species of Awakened life that are particularly keen on receiving visitors and eating them. A large predatory bat, with an incredible camouflage that gives it the appearance of a stalactite, has arisen as a top predator within the cave regions, even hunting the locals' goats. The shamans leave them be and occasionally send a goat or two down as food in

order to keep the creatures from expanding their predation range to people.

- Too late. Those things come out in force during their breeding cycle and tear into anything and everything they can find. The local authorities actually issue curfews and chase people off the street in the surrounding neighborhoods, even though the bats rarely venture that far. It only came after three kids were taken by the bats. Half a dozen more have been lost since then.
- Ecotope
- Sounds like a great cover for a kidnapping. Snatch a kid and blame it on the bats. I'm not saying, I'm just saying.
- Slamm-0!

BENEATH THE SURFACE

This is it. This is the part we are fighting against. This is the so-called "progress" that those in power see as the future of our sprawl. To that, I say no, but in order to fight it, you need to know why you're fighting it, and what it is. Let me just say that while at times in this I may sound like I find it to be a wonder, it's simply the engineer in me that appreciates the development and efforts going into it, not the end result or what they are trying to do with it.

I'll start with the beginning, nine years ago, with the first efforts by Universal Omnitech to develop an underground habitat for the miners in order to keep them closer to the mines and decrease transportation time. The structure was similar to an arcology, though it lacked many of the amenities those who have visited these structures around the world would expect. It was self-sufficient, generating its own power, growing food within specialized hydrofarms, and hosting several general stores to supply the inhabitants with basic necessities. It created no reason to return to the surface, and UO started restricting surface returns to once per week, then once per month, then only with special passes that were earned and paid for by the employees. It was the earliest of signs that these places would be nothing but another way to separate the rich and the poor, and in this case, stuff the poor underground where no one had to see their lives and misery. That took all of two years before they were fully operational and keeping Azanian citizens (as well as UO citizens and SINless) underground in perpetuity. Some people had never managed to earn enough to return to the surface at all during this



time. It's all part of why this dark effort cannot be allowed to flourish, even though several others are under construction and several are partially inhabited already.

All of this construction is occurring within the Earth below the entire PWV Metroplex. Well, almost everywhere; with the official exception of Tshwane and Kungwini, the various subterranean arcologies (or subarcs) are being constructed by most of the major megacorps under the city in order to not only create a space for the miners, as UO is doing, but to create a space where anyone who makes less than six figures can be stuffed away to allow the prime real estate above ground to belong exclusively to the rich and powerful. There will be a literal ladder to climb in order to move up if this initiative forces its way to fruition.

There are currently nineteen subarcs being constructed or expanded. This number includes the original UO subarc, which focuses on housing the miners on its deepest levels but is building more and more levels closer to the surface to house corporate employees of minimal value. Which, in the eyes of the corp, is most of them. As more space is filled, the miners will be pushed deeper, but since the mines are currently at a depth in excess of four kilometers, they have plenty of space to go down, though they have quite a bit of earth to remove in order to build that deep. The subarcs rarely build straight down, and most build their levels at stepped angles. If they do build straight down, there are rarely more than three or four levels together before a large rock expanse to separate them from the next set of levels. These in-between areas often hold a few smaller chambers for air scrubbers, water purification, and other engineering necessities, but as anyone who has spent time in the shadows here can tell you, they also have labs, data storage, research facilities, and several detention facilities that are sometimes little more than an office and a set of stone cells.

The largest subarc is UO's right now, but MCT and Saeder-Krupp have a lot of heavy-industry experience, and even though they lack the extensive mines UO already has in place, they have been snatching up older mines and underground property since shortly after UO got the city to clear the subarc concept. Those two have also started using everything they build immediately, whereas UO has several vacant levels and partially completed areas that could be put to some use but aren't.

GETTING AROUND

There are currently only three common forms of transportation around and between the subarcs: tunnel cars, elevators, and feet. Tunnel cars are tubes that move cylindrical canisters at high velocities between and through the various subarcs. Though UO started the process, they quickly lost control of the project to a co-op featuring Renraku and MCT. MCT is using their engineering know-how, while Renraku integrates the system with the rest of the Guide programs to appear as if they are keeping the surface and subarcs connected. These tubes have abundant stops that aren't on any map and are used for all sorts of illicit and nefarious purposes. Hackers are making good money setting up rides for criminals and thrill-seekers of all sorts, hacking into the Earth-Guide system in order to stop the cars at the right spots. It's a dangerous game, as the hacking usually only stops one pod, and dozens of others are shooting through the tunnels at all hours, each at risk of hitting the big metal tube during an unscheduled stop.

- That high-speed tunnel line isn't just here. Plans to alter the runs to CapeTown to go underground fell through because it took away all the scenery and required extensive digging for no reason. Those plans were used for something else, though, and very few people in the world know about it. A tunnel system was dug below ground from the UO mining facility all the way to Asamando to run what those in the know refer to as the Night Train. This underground tunnel uses refrigerated pods that are filled with the bodies of deceased miners that are sent to feed the ghouls of Asamando. They keep <1.8 Mp deleted by admin>
- Plan 10
- Censor much?
- Plan 9
- Only when my storage is being wasted on that garbage. This is complete dreck. No one could have built that, and the ghouls don't have the cash to support this claim.
- Bull
- Not to support this craziness, but they do have quite a bit of wealth.
- Hannibelle

The elevators are relatively simple and do the same things that elevators have been doing for over a century, namely moving people up and



down. The difference with these is that many have quite a bit of lateral motion involved that's not just going down on a slope. They also move sideways on several levels to make transit easier around the subarc. Because of the various directions these elevators go, users are required to sit, and occupancy is limited to the seats available. Not being properly restrained can lead to some serious injuries, and deaths have been reported, though rumors abound that they're always a cover-up for something else. Elevators usually stay within the same subarc, but a few facilities have been working on a system of sharing elevators that allows people to move between subarcs without walking.

- Be careful if you try and use the UO subarc's elevators for a job. Their security team has access to them, and several lead to incomplete zones of the project. With a few simple commands, the pod can be sent to tumble out the end of an incomplete tunnel. And by "tumble," I mean fall ten stories or drop off into a water-storage aquifer.
- Turbo Bunny

Going on foot is the worst way to travel down here, but it offers the most freedom and the best ability to avoid detection. It always requires technical expertise, because sections are zoned with security doors between each zone. Even the unfinished tunnels are heavily patrolled by dog-brain drones that might need a little creative reprogramming, and getting in and out of those unfinished areas usually requires accessing a security hatch or some kind of automated system. I should also warn you that many places down here have no lights, and the routes between places can be quite circuitous in order to prevent having too steep of a pitch or passage through a location that would leave it unstable.

- It can also get really hot when you get down to lower regions. The upper areas aren't too bad, but the geothermal gets kicked into higher gear the deeper you get. Habitation zones, as they call them, are thoroughly regulated, but the areas outside of that and most of the work areas are kept just this side of survivable.
- Traveler Jones

TOURIST TRAPS

There are no tourists down here, but that doesn't mean there aren't places I should mention for people interested in the subterranean life, or at least living down here long enough to bring it to

an end. I'm not going to bother to mention the corporate deathtraps or miner camps. You can slip in and get rowdy with them if you'd like, but they're heavily monitored, and everyone down there is tracked. Instead, let me cover some of the best shadow spots under the earth.

Mistakes work out to the unexpected benefit of some people. That was the case with **The Wedge**. A tunnel-tube construction project missed a patch of limestone beneath one of their sections. A leak in the cooling system and the pitch of the tunnel led to a little erosion, which in turn led to a sudden shift in the rocks nearby. The result was a large v-shaped split in the tunnel and a wedge of open space. The tunnel engineers decided to just patch the rail and tube, leaving the wedge in place. It wasn't long before the workers had managed to set up a nice little out-of-the-way hangout that eventually developed into one of the hottest tunnel bars around.

- Be wary of work picked up here. As one of the oldest gathering spots, it's also one of the most well-known, and the corps know what other business goes on down here.
- Fianchetto
- The design of the place is cool, with the dance floor on the top level, a stairwell down to a sitting bar, and then a series of pulleys and poles to drop into the private rooms.
- Traveler Jones
- Zero building code here, and no rules about people being able to get in or out in case of an emergency. Being down in those private rooms for a meet takes some serious trust in the system—something I don't have.
- Stone
- You don't trust the system. You trust Kwaesar, Istanbul, and Belial, the owners and operators of the place. They have zero tolerance for trouble, allow no active arms inside, and drop those who violate their policies into the bottom of the wedge, which is currently a limestone slush pool.
- Mika

This Too Shall Pass was named for the short-lived "accident" that opened up the real estate within which it is built. Once a side service tunnel, it was flooded during an unexpected aquifer breach, which happened when someone summoned a massive earth spirit that pulled from the dirt when it materialized. The tunnel ceiling collapsed and the aquifer flowed in, killing ten work-



ers. Well, that was what the news said. The real story involves a security team that opened up on the workers when they refused to work. One of the workers took a power sledge to some supports and brought down the roof, along with the aquifer above. The tunnel was put out of service, but it drained within a few weeks. The other workers started coming here to quietly pay their respects, which usually involved a few games of poker, which was that crew's favorite pastime. The poker game expanded to involve outsiders, the area slowly shifted to become a "T-bar" (as the tunnel bars are known), and it now operates as one of the top illicit gambling parlors in the subarcs.

- The news generated enough mental focus that the tunnel is aspected toward earth magic. Summoning earth spirits, casting manipulation spells that alter rock, and other such things are easier down here. It's one of the reasons why this place is about triple its initial size. The operator, a dwarf named Mufasa, hires local shamans to help expand the space. He's got the engineering know-how and they provide the digging tools. Namely, their mojo.
- Lyran

Downtrekkers is a bit of a hike, but it's worth it. Billed as "the deepest runner hangout," it's located a full two kilometers below the surface, and should also be called the hottest runner hangout, because the temperature regularly creeps up over 50 Celsius and never goes under 40, and that's with the place being cooled through a series of thermal venting and dissipation techniques that I don't understand. The name is obviously a play on the Voortrekker name, and they build that up with AR overlays, but the real genuine connection comes from the way people dress. No one wears much more than loose, light clothes, so most go with authentic-looking stuff to add to the atmosphere. The place is pretty big, as it was an abandoned forward construction base when the mines were still working primarily from this depth. Several of the subarcs have gotten to this depth, but most of the areas down this far aren't inhabited, meaning they are full of workers, construction equipment, and all too often, really pissed-off earth spirits. That is exactly what happened down here. Construction got to this area, and for some reason the spirits were not having it any more. They killed a few and ran off the workers, then just sank back into the earth. A shaman by the name of Obsidian hired a team of runners to bring him down there a few weeks af-

ter he heard about the incident. They met with the spirits, and Obsidian worked out a deal of some kind. It seems he asked the spirits to keep making problems for any construction efforts in this area, and in exchange he'd bring in people who might be willing to barter for help from them, since this is one of the only places I've heard of where a mundane runner can come get some spirit aid without a summoner acting as a go-between.

- They aren't spirits of earth. They're some kind of rock monsters that look like men. The construction disturbed something deep in the earth that should not have been awoken.
- Plan 9
- There's our guy! Conspiratorial *and* ripping off the classics!
- Slamm-0!
- It's not an unfounded concept. There are powers that exist and lie dormant within the depths of the earth. Disruptions have occurred in the past and been far more damaging than a few workers and a little construction delay.
- Red

The general motif of the place is construction chic. They slowly work on smoothing out walls, the spirits occasionally expose interesting formations and geodes, and the place is an ever-expanding haven. The kitchen staff offer some interesting options cooked in exposed rock areas where temperatures push a little higher, and all the drinks are served in little sealed, double-walled cups to keep them cool. Even the toughest of trolls drinks from a straw in this place.

Because of the distance down and the difficulty of getting here, the expansions have involved rooms for rent that can be used for meetings or sleeping, though they're still hot. A lot of runners who do extensive work in the subarcs use this place as a bolt-hole, and a couple have bought rooms here. It's one of the safest spots to hide out, because any time security comes looking, the spirits have been known to change or close the tunnels to prevent access, so they only know of its existence through rumors and spies. No large security force has ever made it there.

- That doesn't mean you're totally safe. The proprietors have no issues with scuffles on the premises, and plenty of deaths have occurred here from contract killers sent where security details can't go. They don't do anything to



keep your arms from you, and they even let in grenades. Only thing that's really frowned upon are commercial explosives, because they don't want the whole place coming down.

- Traveler Jones

The Den isn't very deep—it's actually located within one of the main operational subarcs and functions as a bar and hangout for local wage-slaves as well as miners up near the surface on leave. It's a mix of people in a place where everyone is just beginning to realize that the corporations they slave away for might not care about them at all. It's got a classic vibe, with a synth-wood bar, tables, booths, and chairs all in a deep mahogany, along with mirrors behind the bar and a set of ceiling fans on a belt system like some kind of antique. The bar itself is long and skinny, built at the end of a small retail area, and most people quickly notice that it extends farther back than its surrounding establishments. Ask the bartender, and they'll tell you it saves on cold storage, since they keep the liquor in the back. Get to know the local runner community, and you'll find out that the back area extends into an unused section of the subarc that was shut down for air quality issues. Fissures kept leaking methane into the area (according to UO), but the whole thing was an elaborate run, designed to get the area shut down so it could be repurposed.

If you get access, you're allowed into the back room of the Den, where an old fireplace opens up to a short corridor that leads over to the *real* Den. The area has sixty or so units, all used by runners who work almost exclusively down in the subarcs, and all of whom prefer their jobs to feed their golden heart rather than line their pockets. The place is paid for by a mysterious benefactor, though most rumors point to the Fox. Getting a spot requires you to know the right person, but each space isn't limited to one person and once you're in you can bring in whoever you want. The dosses down here range from studios all the way to ten- or twelve-room spaces that take up extra vertical space as well as horizontal.

- There are other ways into here. The section has quite a few maintenance entrances that don't get included on the tour when you pick up a spot.
- Stone
- As cool as this place is, the runner clientele are snobbish frags. They think because they're hooders, they're

better than everyone else. Hate to tell ya, but you're still a criminal. You're just a criminal who needs to lie to yourself to justify shooting people in the face for money. I can't stand being in the place for more than ten minutes.

- Clockwork

THE WILD SIDE

There's plenty of wildlife in Africa, and we could fill a whole host with all that, but I want to hit a few of the paranormal highlights that are common around PWV.

The entire area already had a thriving leporine population (that's a fancy word for bunnies) even before the Awakening, so it came as little surprise that this abundance led to several offshoots, though one of them didn't actually come about until the more recent rise of Emergent critters. Three interesting variants arose with the return of magic and a fourth with the emergence of technomancers and the insinuation of tech into our world. The three breeds have oddly increased their abilities in three different ways: strength, speed, and ferocity. And when I say "speed," I mean "borders on the ability to teleport." They are *fast*.

The **gun bunny**, as they call the stronger breed, is like the troll of the bunny breeds here, including some dermal deposits and horns. The horns are used to ram trees and shake free fruits, as well as ramming other gun bunnies for dominance and assaulting potential predators, including people. A few of the bunnies have mistaken vehicles for interlopers, and the largest of the breed can flip a sedan with a hit.

- Several local security firms, Parashield at the top of the list, have been using these things as security on sites around the sprawl for years.
- Stone

The **African zipper** is the moniker for the fast breed, and they can move! Touched with a bit of the power spirits use to move people faster in their domain, the little guys zip from spot to spot chasing food. They're not strictly herbivores, but their prey is usually bugs, small mammals, and lizards. Their speed allows them some unique abilities when it comes to climbing trees or getting to higher floors in buildings as they can run up vertical surfaces for short distances. Plenty of pets have been lost to an open window and a hungry zipper.



- I know a guy in Mogale who sells a pheromone cocktail that drives these buggers into a feeding frenzy. They go after it with abandon. He sells chem grenades that will draw every bunny in the area. Usually the stuff dissipates too fast for gun bunnies or Sir Monty's to arrive, but the zippers are fast.
- Ecotope
- Same stuff can be used to draw off gun bunnies being used for security, too. Though it has the problem of them attracting zippers.
- Mika

A ferocious bunny seems to be patently ridiculous, but **Sir Monty's hare** is nothing to laugh at, unless you are laughing maniacally as they eat your enemies, like famed crimelord Agtashar is frequently said to do. Named for the legendary creature in a cult comedy classic of the flatvid era, this bunny is no joke. It's slightly larger than its normal cousin and has an extended jaw and sharp foreclaws, along with a velociraptor-like hooked claw on its hind limbs. It is slightly stronger than its mundane cousin, but the key to its terrible reputation is threefold: razor-sharp teeth inside a jaw with comparable bite pressure to a large canine, a vaulting leap that is said to easily exceed twenty meters, and hind legs that can move in opposing directions, allowing those hook claws to eviscerate prey.

- If you were expecting to see any of this breed used by sec firms in the sprawl, put that fear to rest. These critters don't take to training, and there aren't many cages that can hold them. When they're set to duty, they have a tendency to attack their handlers or bolt from the premises to go find suitable prey.
- Stone
- There is a hefty market in capturing these things, and not just the Sir Monty's. The gun bunnies go well to the sec firms while the Monty's need to be sold on the black market to get the best price. At least one notable crime boss uses them for unpleasant things, while several fixers pick them up for local pit fighting clubs.
- Ecotope
- Those fights are crazy. The rabbits won so many of their fights against other beasts that the fight planners don't use them for that anymore, and instead always pit them against metahumans. According to whomever determines the odds for these fights, the rabbits are usually favored in metahuman matches. Unless the fighter is

augmented or an adept, they usually put heavy favor on the rabbit and bets are based on survival time rather than victory.

- /dev/grrl

When you breed a dog to specifically hunt lions, it tends to generate a bit of a mythos about it, and the Sixth World has been good at giving us some support for a few of our beliefs. The **Rhodesian razorback** is an Awakened canine, coming from a branch of regular old domestic dogs. Any breed that had a descent lineage of Rhodesian ridgeback can breed for these beasts, and purebreds tend to breed razorbacks at a one in three rate.

The razorback is larger than its mundane cousin. The hairs that mark and identify a ridgeback are replaced with thick spines on the razorback. The spines are sharp like needles and also hollow. They are used to attack an opponent by running under them and dragging the dog's back along the soft underbelly. The spines stick in and break off, but their hollow design does the real damage as the target bleeds profusely through the hollow tubes.

Wild packs of these dogs roam all over the PWV and surrounding wilds, and they have been known to take down large prey with coordinated attacks. The largest specimens have even been seen attacking elephants, with spines sharp and long enough to penetrate the pachyderms' thick hide.

- Trained razorbacks are common pets of criminal kingpins and warlords in the area. They like to let them gently brush against their victims and start the bleeding process before they have conversations with them.
- Clockwork
- The Awakened razorbacks have excellent night vision. Studies have shown they have structures similar to those that allow trolls and dwarves to see heat. Some have slipped down into mines to wreak havoc on the miners.
- Ecotope

Spend enough time mining massive underground caverns, and something is going to decide to move in. Scientists have yet to discover whether the **mine spiders** were down there before and just got bigger and bolder with the Awakening, or if they're a new species with the Awakening. Efforts to study them occur about once a year. Another is due soon, and the research teams usually hire on special assets in order to bring in specimens. The research thus far should have gotten the



name corrected, but somehow it stuck. The mine spider isn't a spider at all, but rather a hexapedal lizard with razor-sharp claws, powerful and sharp enough to penetrate stone. They grow to over six meters long, similar to larger crocodile species. They're a bit leaner in frame than crocs, but longer and more muscularly limbed, leading to a higher overall mass.

They travel the underground of the mines in packs during most of the year but pair up during the mating season. The mated pairs are ferociously devoted to each other for a span of about two months as they breed and set up a nest. Once the nest is set, the female stays close to monitor it while releasing a pheromone that attracts juvenile males to help her defend the egg clutch from other adult males, as her mate goes out to capture and destroy rival egg clutches. These times of year are dangerous in the mines, as the mine spiders battle for territory and survival.

- Those eggs are high-value targets during the breeding season. Several trainers have found that a mine spider raised from hatching can be very well trained. So well trained that they can be kept as pets, though only by someone who doesn't mind having a razor-clawed, wall-crawling reptile as a pet.
- Mika

GUN BUNNY											
B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	M	
5	7	6	6	2	1	7	5	6	9	4	
Physical Initiative	13 + 2D6										
Movement	14/56/+5m										
Condition Monitor	15/9										
Limits	Physical 8, Mental 4, Social 6										
Armor	6										
Skills	Gymnastics 6, Perception 8, Running 7, Sneaking 6, Unarmed Combat 8										
Qualities	Agile Defender										
Powers	Armor (6), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Hearing), Natural Weapon (Horns, DV 9P, AP -4), Toughness 4										

AFRICAN ZIPPER											
B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	M	
2	9	7	3	3	1	7	5	6	9	4	
Physical Initiative	14 + 3D6										
Movement	18/72/+10m										
Condition Monitor	5/10										
Limits	Physical 5, Mental 4, Social 7										
Armor	—										
Skills	Gymnastics 8, Perception 9, Running 10, Sneaking 4, Unarmed Combat 4										
Qualities	Agile Defender										
Powers	Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Hearing), Movement, Natural Weapon (Bite, DV 3P, AP -1)										
Weaknesses	Fragile (4)										

SIR MONTY'S HARE											
B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	M	
4	8	7	4	2	1	7	8	6	9	4	
Physical Initiative	14 + 2D6										
Movement	16/64/+5m										
Condition Monitor	14/10										
Limits	Physical 7, Mental 4, Social 8										
Armor	—										
Skills	Gymnastics 6, Intimidation 10, Perception 8, Running 6, Sneaking 2, Unarmed Combat 10										
Qualities	Agile Defender										
Powers	Deathlock, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Hearing), Natural Weapon (Claws/Teeth, DV 8P, DV -6), Pounce, Toughness (4)										

RHODESIAN RAZORBACK											
B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	M	
8	5	6	6	4	2	7	6	6	2	4	
Physical Initiative	13 + 2D6										
Movement	10/40/+3m										
Condition Monitor	16/10										
Limits	Physical 9, Mental 5, Social 9										
Armor	6										
Skills	Gymnastics 4, Intimidation 6, Perception 6, Running 8, Sneaking 6, Unarmed Combat 8										
Powers	Agony, Armor (6), Deathlock, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Smell), Natural Weapon (Bite, DV 6P, AP —), Natural Weapon (Spines, DV 8P, AP -8), Toughness (4)										



MINE SPIDER										
B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	M
6	6	4	8	2	1	5	5	6	2	4
Physical Initiative		11 + 2D6								
Movement		12/36/+3m								
Condition Monitor		13/9								
Limits		Physical 9, Mental 3, Social 6								
Armor		9								
Skills		Gymnastics 5, Perception 6, Running 4, Sneaking 6, Unarmed Combat 6								
Powers		Armor (9), Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision, Natural Sonar), Fear, Natural Weapon (Bite/Claw, DV 10P, AP -2), Toughness (2), Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: 1 Combat Turn, Penetration: 0, Power: 4, Effect: Physical Damage, Paralysis), Wall Walking								

ARCANE AFRICA

I don't have a lot of knowledge when it comes to magic, so I can't cover a ton of this, but there are three big points that I know everyone should know about when dealing with magic in PWV. There's what locals refer to as the "Urban Forest" effect; the major disruptions and arcane happenings around the Tswaing Crater; and last but not least, the massive ant and termite colonies in the surrounding regions. I can't go into arcane specifics on how these things work, but I can get you the gist and spout out all the rumors I've heard.

The Urban Forest effect is what locals use to explain why astral space here is so clean, even in the slums. The prevailing hypothesis attributes the effect to the strength of nature in the local area and the local culture. All of the region is still covered in dense patches of trees, buildings use hanging vines as part of their decor and as a cooling system, almost every rooftop has a garden or bushes and trees in order to insulate the home and provide additional food in a place where it's not easy to come by, and (probably the most powerful reason), is the belief of the people that nature is to be protected, respected, and preserved. One of the things that tripped up every corp that came to town was their desire to see the world flattened and towers raised to attest to their power. This place wanted none of that. The skyline hasn't added any ridiculous skyscrapers, and those buildings that do reach up are covered in external gardens and greenery.

- The ASPS did some research on the jacarandas in the area. They came back with some interesting information about an Awakened variant that not only processed carbon dioxide and swapped it over to oxygen, but also processed the "dirt" out of mana, in essence returning it to its purest state. They weren't able to discover where the "dirt" goes before the city government threw them out for failing to gain the proper permits for their study.
- Ecotope
- A few other groups are picking up the work because they're concerned that toxics could find a way to tap into this and gain access to the corrupted mana.
- Lyran
- I caught a glimpse of some data from a job that may have pointed to the flowering leaves as a physical storage matrix for this "dirt." The flowering process and the joy that flowers bring to significant numbers of people acts as a cleanser before the petals fall and the clean mana is released.
- Mika

Even though the bulk of the region is clean, the Tswaing Crater is a glaring exception. The crater is located in the Pretoria District and is surrounded by a small park. It emanates some serious mojo and creates occasional rifts between the astral plane and the physical. Mages have told me that spirits can literally step over from the astral rather than forming on our plane, and mundanes have been able to step over, slipping right out of their bodies. Some rifts shift and fail to let people get back to their bodies, which of course is a dangerous and deadly problem. The rifts are also rumored to lead to other dimensions, and some of the weird things that have come through seem solid enough proof of that. Research efforts have been attempted here many times, but the erratic and uncontrollable nature of the rifts makes work almost impossible. The area is constantly patrolled for trouble, but the crater offers so much material for talismongers, runners work on slipping in on a regular basis.

- Those "other dimensions" are obviously metaplanes. I know people who claim there is a way to predict where they lead and how to control them, but I've never seen proof. Just a lot of claims about ancient texts and rituals. I imagine spending the time in this place to do a ritual would be unpleasant, to say the least.
- Lyran



While most of the rest of the world panics with the discovery of an insect spirit hive, the people of Azania have long revered these insects as an integral part of nature. Massive mounds have been a staple of tourist visits to this region for over a century, and while ant and termite spirits aren't exactly the embodiment of these natural wonders, they still have earned a place of pensive reverence, rather than hysterical fear, around PWV. Their need for human hosts has been easily filled with people here willing to volunteer for this "better" life within the hive. Now, I get that it isn't them anymore, but I'd like anyone who judges them or looks at them like they're mad to walk a month in their shoes ... oh wait, most of them didn't own shoes and barely survived each miserable day of life among the poor of PWV.

- It's like the Universal Brotherhood back in the day. They focus on those who think this can't be worse than their already drektastic life. Difference here is that they're honest about what's going on up front instead of backending people. Doesn't make me want to wipe them from the face of the planet any less, but it certainly makes me look at those in power who let this situation occur as being almost as bad as the bugs.
- Ire

While we have this different view, it's not universal, and there are plenty of problems that arise when insect colonies run into corporate projects, which is occurring more and more with the effort being put into subarcs and the already abundant mining efforts that occasionally collide with the subterranean portions of the spirits' hives. Encounters like these are rarely pleasant and frequently cause conflicts and issues below the surface. Add on the inability of the corps to throw large amounts of assets at the problem due to the confined space, along with the obvious advantage that the bugs have in their native habitat, and you understand why they frequently subcontract work to runners.

- Bug hunts are big business here. The locals may not hate these things, but wageslaves from around the world don't see it as the same. The corps need to make this place look safe for their people, and that means taking them down hard and making a spectacle of it. Bug-hunt runner contracts usually come with a recording clause that requires the runners to record video and audio feeds for the corp to show to their people. They go through a lot of editing to make the fights look like the runners are really stomping them, or that it's corporate troops doing the stomping,

and they end up not using most of the footage they get. The really gritty stuff often gets slipped onto the BTL market for a heap of black-market cash.

- Fianchetto

CORPORATE BRIEFING

Every one of the Big Ten has a presence here, and most of them are rapidly expanding that presence in order to get in on the growing African market, and, let's be honest, unending exploitation of African resources. With the continent sitting on the edge of a potential growth explosion, everyone wants in on the deal, and corporate infighting has found its place in the shadows of PWV. Every Big Ten megacorp is trying to get into every market in town, but as one would expect, some are better suited or more skilled at getting in one place or another. These frontrunners operate with a big target on their backs, both from the other corps and from the elements within the sprawl that are sick of the status quo and want to see things become more balanced. Let's take a look at who's doing what so you can know where you stand when you take work here in PWV.

Ares is doing what Ares does best: arm the people. Between warlord crews, corporate security forces, gangs, runners, and average citizens, Ares has plenty of opportunity to sell arms in the area. The key to their success is managing to somehow get the local government to limit who can and cannot ship arms and ammo into the metroplex. Sure, there are other companies that simply skip Ares by using extraterritoriality, but if they roll onto public lands with a non-Ares imported weapon, they are in violation of the agreement and fined appropriately. The fines are split between Ares and the government, and they are actually enforced by the Corporate Court, who want to play nice with the city because of their political and corporate influence in the southern hemisphere.

- Smart runners run with Ares-imported arms, because once they tag a weapon and try to levy a fine and realize they can't because the weapon or user is unregistered or rocking a fake SIN, things go downhill fast.
- Traveler Jones
- Really smart runners just get fake tags for their weapons. Ares doesn't import only their own arms. Several other corps pay them to bring in their stuff so that they can make some cash in this market.
- Glitch



Aztechnology runs the agribusiness sector around here. Between the massive farms in the Smile and the number of underground growth facilities they are developing and testing, there are few corps with as much invested in feeding a place where most of the population is actually bordering on starvation. I don't like Aztechnology for that reason alone. They produce well in excess of need and ship all over Azania, Africa, and the rest of the world, while locals are constantly planning raids on their farms and shipments in order to get enough food to feed their families in PWV.

- Most of those raids aren't locals trying to feed their families, they're local warlords and gang leaders getting leverage to use on the poor to get them to work for them.
- Traveler Jones

Evo has the smallest presence but some of the biggest clout in the metroplex right now. The tech development and testing they are doing in another area of Africa is rapidly being integrated into life in PWV. The number of aerial vehicles in the metroplex that operate on systems that only Evo has techs to work on is growing by leaps and bounds. I've gotten some insider info on where this tech came from, or more aptly, who it came from, and while I'm leery, I'm like many of the rest of my fellow citizens and excited to be living in a city that is advancing toward the future so quickly, even if it is a struggle for most to survive.

- They're protecting their developments with self-destruct systems. Any attempt to remove or expose proprietary tech results in a meltdown. The parts inside are slagged and the corp is notified of the event and location. This includes accidents and attacks on the vehicles that damage the exterior and expose things they shouldn't. Even a single bullet hole is enough to make the system think it is being breached and initiate the self-destruct.
- Sounder

Horizon may be one of the worst perpetrators of perpetuating the social dichotomy of this place, but no one would ever see that or blame them because they are the face of media and entertainment in the city. Sure, the highly insightful may see their methods as a way to mollify the people, but most of the people of PWV don't have time to contemplate the reasoning or purpose behind Horizon's distribution of free inexpensive commlinks, free access to their grid, and unlimited access to their entertainment library. Instead, they just en-

joy it and escape the struggles through millions of hours of simsense, video, trideo, and audio files, all trimmed and laced with pro-Horizon subtext.

- Marring the face of this PR giant isn't about violence, it's about repurposing. Hackers in PWV are the key to bringing change through Horizon by hijacking their signal and showing the people the truth of the world around them. They bring images and feeds from the mines, the warzones, and the all-too-frequent food riots to those trying to escape on Horizon's feeds. Forcing these images before their eyes.
- Netcat

Mitsuhama is making the most of their position and the vast knowledge and resources at their disposal. When the metroplex's expansion plan began looking downward, MCT seized an opportunity to apply their engineering, construction, and mining experience to advance the sprawl's efforts toward fruition. Their work has advanced them to the top of the field here, and their companies are part of almost every subarc project. The rare exception occurs when MCT sets up most of the general engineering on the project but another mega doesn't want them knowing exactly what they have going on down below so they bring in their own assets to complete the work.

- MCT is one of the biggest users of SINless slaves in their work. They don't call them slaves, and sure, they feed them and give them barracks to live in while they work, but they aren't citizens, they have no say in their future, and their work continues right until death. That certainly sounds like slavery to me.
- /dev/grrl
- Rumors abound of MCT using them beyond death. Street rumors claim that MCT has made a deal with shedim in Africa to house and protect them in exchange for inexhaustible labor. Considering that MCT also leads the world's corps in metaplanar explorations and thaumaturgical research, I'd give some credence to the rumors based on that alone, even though the idea is entirely despicable.
- Lyran

NeoNET isn't operational anymore, but I add a section here because drek rolls downhill, and despite our lofty place in Africa, we're still far down the hill. The shockwaves of that megacorporate collapse haven't fully hit yet. Their collapse is leaving plenty of African resources to fight over,



and that's the day-to-day process involving them here. The sharks swim and take chunks out piece by piece while trying to keep an eye on the other sharks. They each work on taking on pieces they can handle, because biting off too much just gets them swarmed by the other corps, and they lose more than they gain.

- The shadows are flush with work taking care of pieces of their crumbling empire. The Corporate Court is playing like they're in charge of the asset redistribution, but the megas are taking every opportunity to vary those plans in their favor.
- Fianchetto

Renraku makes the city run. It's not only their slogan in the city, but it's true. They have taken firm control of all the Guide systems in the sprawl. Anything that moves anywhere is being directed, monitored, or rerouted by their operational systems. With control like that, Renraku is influential not only in public transportation, but also in commercial and private transport. Their service sector is using this transport access to work their way into several other surface venues and service areas, expanding their control of vital systems and services in the metroplex.

- Renraku and Evo are watching each other like hawks, as Evo has to allow remote command of their new vehicles but doesn't trust Renraku not to "lose" one for them to do some reverse engineering on.
- Plan 10

Saeder-Krupp has taken a more secondary role to control in the city by focusing their efforts in the financial sector. Controlling the movement and growth of money, especially that of the politicians and the other powerful citizens of PWV, is their main concern in the sprawl. While this sounds like it would have all the excitement of watching the grasslands grow, money and investment value are primarily influenced by corporate valuations and their reputations, which runners attack and protect at the behest of S-K all over the metroplex.

- S-K doesn't just get to spend time on the offensive. They spend just as much time defending themselves against attacks to weaken their image and convince their clients that their money would be better off in other hands.
- Ire

Shiawase has a stranglehold on the power and energy production market in the sprawl. Their focus would be to expand their control if they had any expansion to do. They hold control of the entire public power supply and operate all of the production facilities that aren't extraterritorial. Several megas have their own power sources attached to subarcs or private facilities, which seems accepted by Shiawase, but efforts in the shadows are often aimed at eliminating or subverting facilities that get too large.

- Shiawase's focus in the city is tighter than many of the other megas. It makes working against them substantially more difficult when their efforts and gaze are so narrow.
- Stone

As the newest AAA, **Spinrad Global** is just getting started playing against the big boys with that extra letter. They have plenty of assets in town but haven't cornered any single field as of yet. They're working on it by dipping their toes in everyone's pools. They actually cause far more trouble for the other corps and the political establishment than any runner or neo-A group in the metroplex with their efforts to destabilize other corps enough to gain strength in a market.

- The general feeling is that SpinStorm, as the shadows call them, could be a key to changing the status quo in PWV. They are undermining enough of the other corps that the entire system may change in order to make a place for them. That is, if the Court doesn't just step in and redistribute power in the city between corps and leave the way of life for the citizens the same.
- Orbital DK

Wuxing uses the interesting astral phenomena of the region and their extensive knowledge of mana lines thaumaturgy to work on their arcane research and development. They have so many research resources in the area it comes as no surprise that they also have a lock on reagent manufacture, talismongering, foci production, and every other field of magical production in the metroplex. That doesn't mean other corporations don't have their own resources, just that Wuxing covers the public sector and has control of the majority of the resources moving through town.

- At least we know who to go to to get the best deals. If they control the supply, they have plenty to be taken from their stores.
- Ma'fan



Three corps—either As or AAs—have a massive presence and level of influence in the region; Aegis Cognito, Erika, and Universal Omnitech. Their connections—and sometimes their owners—have massive connections that make them dangerous.

Pretoria is one of only twenty cities with **Aegis Cognito** offices, and the only one in Africa besides Cairo. They play a significant role in the city, not just as a local information broker, but also as an intelligence agency for the entire region. The most significant part played by this network of spies and agents is their neutrality. Their information is available to anyone with the funds to pay the price for the paydata, including elements within the metroplex that seek to upset the status quo and change over the balance of power and wealth.

- Aegis sells to anyone, and they don't change prices based on who they're selling to. Sure, this means corps have more access, but most of the dirt and data is about them, so purchasing it is more about keeping it out of the hands of others than it is about using it for gain. There is a premium for gaining singular access to the data that only the megas can really afford to pay, and harmful information is often purchased just to eliminate the rare case where the corp has to defend themselves.
- Orbital DK

Erika may have slipped down to AA status, but they took their chunk of NeoNET and then some when they left, and they have invested heavily in Africa. Most speculate it's part of a shift to move their base of operations to the underdeveloped continent, and their efforts in PWV seem entirely aligned with this plan. Between their infrastructure work on the metroplex grid and the investment in property they have been making both above and below ground, they've quickly surpassed all but UO in their local investment and ownership. They took control of what NeoNET assets they could via the Corporate Court and also have been battling for bits like the other corps.

- Erika has the largest number of Mr. Johnsons in the sprawl. They operate in every district and actually have some coordination and cooperation.
- Fianchetto

Universal Omnitech acts very much like an AAA in PWV. Since they control the bulk of the world's diamond- and gold-mining market, most of which occurs here in Africa, they hold a tight rein on several other fields solely based on their

wealth and the favors and influence developed over hundreds of years of mining. Not to mention the fact that they pull everything else of value they can find from their excavations. They've added to their wealth and influence by selling off rights to all these corps that are looking to make subarcs, while maintaining one of the few thorough maps of the underground region here. They're well-known to have backdoor access to most of the subarcs, and their teams, or teams hired by them, often get access to a little of that insider information in order to make the work a little easier.

- Aegis pays decently for that data. They're known to be developing a comprehensive map. It's not for sale yet, but they are buying. A team could make retirement if they can score the whole thing from UO.
- Traveler Jones
- Some will notice no mention of Izolo Inc., despite their power and influence in New Hlobane and around much of the African continent. It's not a snubbing by Afrikaaner, it's because they aren't allowed to operate openly within the PWV Metroplex. Top exec and regular Mr. Johnson for the A-rated corp Joseph Mnguni is persona non grata in PWV. A series of local charges laid on him by a series of locals need an answer from him, and he has no desire to dance to the tune of their fake frontier justice system and kangaroo court.

The real truth is the bounty placed on him to answer for these crimes. A stipulation of the collection clause states that it can only be collected if Mnguni is within the borders of the metroplex. That means he could visit other corp property, but he'd need to fly there, and airspace belongs to the 'plex.
- Old Crow
- That's exactly why I left them out. There's a job here, and they're trying to gain influence over the right people to get him cleared, but it will be difficult without Mnguni's connection and supernatural charms. People just don't want to look past the aquarium incident in Johannesburg. Or the mine tour accident. Or the aerodrome fire. And the list goes on and on. He tried to get in on the tough-guy market here and do the same thing he does in New Hlobane by playing both sides, but we have guys who are just as tough (and crazier than razorbat shit) and care a whole lot less about the etiquette of elven ass-kissing. If he wants to come help keep us from getting shoved underground, he's welcome to dip a toe back in the water, but he's gonna need a mobile bunker to operate here until he gets some chits in the game.
- Afrikaaner



- Speaking of a mobile bunker—whenever Mnguni comes to the capital, he has security out the wazoo. The need for them is also part of why he doesn't like coming to town. That much security makes you appear fearful and weak, which are two things he doesn't like to exude.
- Old Crow
- Sounds like an exploitable weakness. Get a need for him to come to town *and* show his strength, and then hit him when his security is weak.
- Mika
- It's never weak. He always operates with a squad of elite elven guards, similar to Tír specops but Zulu trained and Wakyambi, one and all.
- Picador
- How do wakyambi blend in?
- Slamm-0!
- Crouching?
- Kane
- Cut it, you two.
- Bull
- Grouch.
- Slamm-0!

POLITICAL BRIEFING

In the view of the average citizen, the political machine of PWV is simply a tool of the corporate machine that really controls the metroplex, but that's the simple man's view. As in most places that have a strong corporate influence, the politics of the area seems to take a back seat to profit, but that doesn't mean it's not operating and creating opportunities for runners. You can also find citizens looking to change the status quo, because votes still matter in PWV—you just need to make sure your vote gets counted.

The local political arena encompasses four levels: local, which consists of the district governments; regional, which is all about the actual governing of the metroplex; national, which is focused on the fact that PWV hosts the home of the Azanian Confederation's governing bodies; and international, which obviously involves Azania's connection to the greater world. All of them consist of elected officials making political moves to try to "better" the lives of their constituent groups, which usually involves deals with corporations, lo-

cal tribes and extra-political entities (like dragons), and other political groups. There are a lot of that last category in PWV—about one for every racial, cultural, metaracial, and socioeconomic group. Getting things done within the halls of government involves a lot of compromising, deal-making, and favor-trading. Best I just present a few of the issues for each of the levels and let you explore the rest, since the political scene in PWV changes with each sunrise and sunset.

Local politics are small potatoes overall, but they are also some of the wildest and most chaotic scenes for runners to get into or influence. Things change so fast in the local arena that a politician hiring you to get some blackmail on an opponent could be best friends with that person or not even slightly interested before you wrap the twenty-four-hour window Mr. Johnson gave you for completion. The landscape changes like the plains in the rainy season—one moment a dry bed, the next a torrential river, and then it shifts at a break on a rock or a cracked mine, and the waters are gone.

The biggest current issue for them is the ongoing battle for subarc rights and the work to get their citizens the best position in the new subterranean hierarchy. The various districts are trying to get some of the levels closer to the surface, and politicians are trading favors and secrets to be able to move their best and brightest (read: wealthiest, though it's not very wealthy compared to the real wealth here) to a spot within the first fifty sub-levels. No one from Tshwane or Kungwini will be living in any of the subarcs, but all of the Smile leaders and even those from the central districts are seeking damaging data on their enemies to better the position of their own people.

With Pretoria being the capital of Azania, politics don't end at the local level. Political figures from every member of the Azanian Confederation come to PWV to work and put together behind-the-scenes deals. It's one of the few places in the Confederation where they can be in the same place without any observers getting automatically suspicious. This means a lot of work for and against these individuals, and stopping their machinations is essential if we want to keep our sprawl from becoming an aboveground paradise supported by the wreckage of humanity below.

Each member state has an independent consulate in the metroplex, all of which are located in the Pretoria District (usually just referred to as



Pretoria). These consulates are sovereign governmental property of their owner nation, and while they have all agreed to get along, the nations of the Confederation still understand that they are banded together out of mutual benefit, not out of some great love or greater cause. There is no love lost between these nations.

Along with the Confederation consulates, the majority of the world's sovereign nations also have official embassies that function as extraterritorial national properties. The smallest are small office spaces with only a handful of rooms, but those rooms are the property, and considered the national soil, of the occupying nation. The largest, belonging to the CAS, is a sprawling complex that usually looks like a ghost town because they don't have a large staff. There's a history behind the place and a reason it is so large, but I don't know it. The point of the matter is there is plenty of political intrigue to get yourself involved in down here, and with the issues that have occurred elsewhere in the world—namely the Front Range Free Zone, PWV, and Pretoria—spy networking here has only increased. Another wonderful growth factor for the metroplex.

No political conversation on PWV can be complete without a mention of Cape Town, as the pair exist in a strong symbiotic relationship. It must be noted, though, that this symbiosis has been growing less and less necessary for PWV as it grows as a corporate and political hub for this area of the world (meanwhile, Cape Town seems to continuously fight tooth and nail to stay one step above a pirate haven). Despite years of government and corporate support to protect transportation interests between Azania's two largest sprawls, Cape Town remains a troubled town, where shipments from PWV interests still need amped-up security just to make the final stretch of a long haul. These problems have led to an increase in shipments going to other Azanian ports, along with a shift in transport contracts over to Evo, as they use some of their newest tech for logistics and long-haul transportation to offset the development costs.

- How can you have development costs when you're basically using slaves to make your designs?
- Plan 9
- There's always the security cost of keeping them in line.
- Clockwork



The saving grace for keeping the relationship between PWV and Cape Town going is Mujaji. The dragon's influence in almost all matters regarding Azania is keeping the connection thriving. Mujaji's influence keeps things primarily headed out of Cape Town because it makes monitoring the flow of goods easier when you only have to watch your own backyard and not trust the word of underlings who could be bribed in other regions. With the issues between the dragons settled down, Mujaji has been more focused on local issues and has been and will continue to crack down on all this shifting shipping. Expect efforts to be directed at hindering transportation to other ports with little more apparent reason than stopping the train.

- Train robberies are a lot easier when you don't have to worry about damaging the train. And the looters and scavengers who come out to pick the carcasses clean are a sight to behold.
- Kane

SECURITY BRIEFING

As you look all over the region, there is one thing that hasn't changed in the last century. Everybody loves electric fences. Since the earliest days of the electrified fence, the people of PWV have been using them to protect what's theirs. The fact that most people also find it to be a source of unending entertainment probably helped keep them around as well. It's the single most abundant form of security in the city, and most include some form of video or drone monitoring. Originally the video monitoring was just to post videos of people getting zapped, but as systems became more integrated, the monitors were tied into advanced electronics that determine whether or not the fence can decrease or increase power in order to prevent overloads and cooking small local wildlife, or up the juice to stop a troll trying to hop a fence.

- I'd say nonconductive armor mods must be all the rage, but then I realized this is Africa so no one in their right mind would wear armor in that heat.
- Killian
- This is not the jungle. The temperatures here are fine for wearing armor. Try to remember that Africa is large and not uniform.
- Traveler Jones

More important to runners is the local security that you can't bypass, the kind that chases you. The municipal contract for PWV is operated by the Metropolitan Police, politely called Metropol but referred to as the Hammer by most criminals and runners in the sprawl for the intensity with which they come down on problems in the affluent districts. They rarely venture into the Smile, even in force, and when they do it's with an announcement leading them that all citizens need to be off the street, and they shoot anything that moves. Literally. They tend to operate heavy on drones, and the drones really and truly are programmed to shoot anything that moves. Metropol is operated as a wholly owned subsidiary of Lone Star, as I've said before, and they have no plans to lose this contract anytime in the near future.

The force is easily identified by the fluorescent orange chevrons painted on their vehicles and worn on the shoulders of their dark-blue fatigues with yellow accents. Patrol officers wear black baseball caps. Special response officers wear black berets. Tactical operations officers wear maroon berets when in uniform, though most of the time they are either in street clothes or full tactical armor, so the berets are usually just for show at events.

Metropol is responsible for all aspects of local policing, from traffic duty to anti-terrorist actions. They run the show and, as their nickname indicates, they run it hard. That doesn't mean they don't know how to keep things quiet—it just means that they aren't going to ask nice more than once, and often not even once. The force has plenty of boots, since it's one of the best jobs in the city, but most of the patrol and monitoring work is done by drones, leaving those boots plenty of extra time for training exercises.

Story time: I had a group of acquaintances operating a little intel gathering op in Joburg. Most of them had clean idents, so no problem, but one of them did a SIN swap inside the team's van at the wrong moment and got tagged by a local drone. Under a minute later the van was getting hacked. The team's hacker was busy tracking the deer, and the rigger didn't stand a chance. They locked the van down, reversed the EnviroSeal system, and sucked out all the air. Several hours later, they towed the van. They can keep it quiet, but it's still almost always lethal when they do.

The city also has its standard share of megacorporate security firms operating private and corp contracts all over town. Minuteman is grow-





ing, Knight Errant is shrinking, and Desert Storm is working its way in all over town. The standard rules apply, and corp forces are the kings of the hill on their turf, but Metropolis doesn't offer a whit of slack on city grounds.

The things that make every Metropolis and corpsec officer's job a whole lot easier are the SIN color codes. Everyone in town has a color code attached to their SIN that identifies their various cultural associations and economic status. Certain colored SINS aren't welcome in certain parts of town, and having the wrong color earns an instant visit from Metropolis or corpsec. Usually the visit is polite enough—you're just asked to immediately relocate, but if you get far enough outside of allowed borders, you may just get tased and dumped back in the Smile. Or shot and dumped in a mine if they notice other violations on your person. See **All the Colors of a Deadly Rainbow** below for more info.

UNDERWORLD BRIEFING

Let's talk about the local outfit first, Vrye Mense. They began here in PWV and operate only within the borders of Azania. As the local organized crime outfit, they run the underworld of PWV and have enough local pull to keep the worldwide crime syndicates in check through a brutality that would make the Vory proud. With the Hammer that is the police force in town, you know the criminal syndicate has to operate on their wits, not just their reputation for brutality. Part of those smarts is keeping the bulk of their operations in the Smile and the periphery of the Mixing Pots, and only venturing into the depths of the Mixing Pots and Uptown when it's absolutely necessary.

The Mense control the black market, gambling, and flesh-peddling, and they have connections to smuggling, drug trafficking, and pretty much every other illegal operation in town. They take a piece of



everyone's pie and employ runners to help in collections and provide pointed reminders of exactly who clients are dealing with on a regular basis.

What they are most famous for is their use of drones in Midvaal, where they regularly turn chases into survival entertainment by taking out transportation and forcing people to fight their way to the border on foot when they get in trouble out in the rough.

- Runners have tried to hole up, and it always turns out bad. The Mense build up forces and then take them down hard. If the runners are really tough nuts to crack, they'll bring the building down on them or burn it around them.
- Stone

Also local are the Zulu Gangs that operate most of the smuggling in the sprawl. Their tribal connections are the key to their success, and the fact that most fear their legendary fighting skills keeps them out of perpetual conflicts over moving specialized goods. They have a larger-than-expected percentage of Awakened members, though most are adepts rather than spellcasters. The Zulu shamans within the gang are rumored to use blood magic, which adds to their fearsome reputation. Runners come up on both sides of conflicts with the gangs as hired help both to bolster security and to crack it. I've seen them in action and respect the reputation the Zulu adepts have earned, but I also know what it takes to survive in the shadows of PWV, and my money goes to the nut-cracking runners in a scuffle. Though keeping clear of the Zulu gangs is the smart play once you've worked against them. They don't care if biz is biz to you. Everything is about honor and warrior pride to them.

- The Zulu don't own the tribal gang market. Plenty of other smaller tribes have gangs, but none operate on a large scale like the Zulu. Many actually have deals with the Zulu and work with them like subsidiary gangs.
- Mika
- Several "unaffiliated" gangs operate to hinder the Zulu gangs and try to diminish their power. Every one of these can usually be traced back to the actual Zulu Nation, because they don't need the criminal outfit reflecting poorly on them.
- Traveler Jones

All along the edge of the Smile, and within eight to fifteen kilometers of the border, you'll find what

we collectively call the Border Gangs. All of these gangs operate with some kind of collective theme, covering the spectrum of ridiculous to horrendous. On the ridiculous end you have the X-Mas Club, a go-gang themed around Christmas with reindeer heads on their bikes and cars fashioned after sleighs, and Sukie's Seven, a gang of seven mages all decked out in Sukie Redflower cosplay. The latter gang uses a ton of spirits to supplement their forces, but every bit of their pageantry screams Sukie. At the horrendous end you have the Sons of Blood. The Sons adorn their vehicles in fresh corpses and are most famous for their bone cannon, a modified artillery piece that gets loaded like an old-fashioned cannon but uses the bones (and bits of flesh that remain) of their victims, once they decay, as ammunition. The load carries more risk of infectious diseases than ballistic trauma, but that doesn't make it less terrifying. These gangs fight amongst themselves for territory nearest the borders of the Smile in order to have better access to the richer parts of town, but as you might guess, gangs like the Sons of Blood don't try too hard, instead being happy stealing from the other gangs around them.

- These gangs are tools of those more powerful than them. Corps, cults, government groups, dragons, and other crime syndicates play these gangs against each other on a regular basis. Sometimes they're looking for a distraction, sometimes they need a scapegoat, but every time they manipulate these maniacal masses, they hurt the city by making it look less safe from an outsider's perspective.
- Traveler Jones
- Image is a huge issue here. Most people don't know a thing about PWV and just base their views on these crazy gangs. It's like avoiding Seattle because the Halloweeners are there.
- Snopes

Last piece of the underworld to talk about is probably the most important, but I saved it for last so people would read everything and not just skim for the good bits or catch this and move on. The shadows of PWV themselves are divided. Runners in town understand where they stand and get an unofficial rank based on the credsticks used to pay for their services. It's part of the system and tradition in the sprawl that runners get paid via credsticks. It's sometimes considered out of date, but it isn't changing anytime soon, especially since no one had any issues when the Matrix changed over,



unlike other spots that rely on electronic transfers that found their money being tracked. Now, currency goes on the sticks, slips into the shadows, and slowly finds its way back into the pockets of the rich, but that's the status quo everywhere.

My point is that runners know whether a job is appropriate for them based on the color of the cred-sticks offered. Teams that are on the border sometimes play up and down levels, but usually a team doesn't want to risk getting downgraded in the eyes of the city's Johnsons by taking work that is beneath them. Once you've gotten some street cred and worked your way up, you don't want to backslide.

The rating system is pretty simple—it follows the Olympic medal scale, with a few additions to cover a bigger range of jobs. White sits at the bottom, followed by iron grey. Then you get into your precious metals—bronze, silver, and gold. Then comes platinum, with diamond at the top.

- How the hell do you tell silver from platinum on a casual glance?
- Stone
- They anticipated you on this one. Platinum is given a light rose tint for just that reason.
- Mr. Bonds
- Since we're talking about runners here, I'll point out one of the biggest negatives of getting nabbed in this sprawl. The first thing you get is a criminal SIN and any other associated SIN is linked to the criminal one and ruined if it's fake, but that's not the bad part. The bad piece is the growing market of criminal SIN holders being sold to mining companies or other heavy labor, poor health positions. Runners are getting dumped into the mines to work as slave labor. Means that when you are down below you can probably find a few skilled associates if you need to, but it also means getting pinched is extra risky.
- Ire

ALL THE COLORS OF A DEADLY RAINBOW

Colors have long been used to separate one group from another. Whether it's your favorite urban brawl team, the gangs colors of your local sprawl, or the flag that flies over your nation or corp, colors identify differences. In PWV, they separate the rich from the poor, one tribe from another, one corp from another, and the locals from the tourists. They're a caste system painted in all the colors of the rainbow.

CORPORATE AFFILIATIONS

COLOR	CORPORATION
Blue	Ares
Red	Aztechnology
Pink	Evo
Purple	Horizon
Green	MCT
Neon Blue	Renraku
Silver	Saeder-Krupp
Neon Green	Shiawase
Light Blue	Spin Global/Formerly NeoNET
Yellow	Wuxing
Neon Pink	A or AA corps

RESIDENCY/EMPLOYMENT/STATUS

COLOR	ACCESS/IDENTIFIER
Gold	Kungwini
Gold	Tshwane
Black	Ekurhuleni
Black	Johannesburg
Black	Pretoria
Black	West Rand
White	Emfuleni
White	Lesedi
White	Midvaal
White	Mogale
White	Randfontein
White	Westonaria
Maroon	Foreign/Visitor
Grey	Criminal

TRIBAL AFFILIATIONS

(ANIMALS ADDED TO COLORS FOR DIFFERING TRIBES BASED ON SIZE/INFLUENCE)

COLOR/ANIMAL	TRIBE
Orange	Zulu
Brown/Lion	Sotho
Brown/Rhino	Xhosa
Brown/Zebra	Tswana
Brown/Elephant	Sepedi
Brown/Monkey	Ndebele
Light Green/Gorilla	Tsonga
Light Green/Phoenix	Swazi
Light Green/Gazelle	Venda



These separations are enforced with a vengeance in PWV. All authorities in the region are trained on how to determine what colors are allowed where and who they identify. That, along with a few simple programs on their 'link, is all they need to generate a few quick questions that will blow the cover of most fake SIN users, unless they did the research on what goes into their cover. You might want to actually do a little training along with buying that fake SIN in this sprawl.

For those new to town looking for a quick overview, the major color coding categories are on the previous page. There are a few other codes, usually color mixes or temporary in-between options (because trying to tell the difference between taupe and beige is a security nightmare), but those are rarely used. The most common divergence from the norm are citizens having multiple color codes if they are affiliated with both a corp and a tribe.

Corporate Affiliations include individuals who are megacorporate citizens, contractors in town on the megacorps' business, and megacorporate employees who are not citizens of the corp, but instead citizens of the nation. These colors make up the solid background of the SIN ARO and are only broken up by a tribal affiliation color if the individual has one.

Residency/Employment/Status associates the individual with a particular level of district in which they either live or work. The color acts as a border around the SIN ARO for individuals with megacorporate or tribal affiliations, or it might be the background for non-affiliated citizens. It can be solid, if a citizen lives and works within the same district, or split if the citizen lives in one area but works in another. This is most common for low-wage workers in the gold districts. The mixed border offers only slightly less scrutiny than the lower color.

Special consideration is given to foreign visitors, as they may tour many areas and local authorities don't want to damage the tourism industry. Their maroon border allows them to visit any part of public PWV, but that brings clandestine scrutiny by local authorities.

Criminal SIN classification follows you everywhere. The grey-bordered SIN ARO is scrutinized everywhere, and no individual residency or employment colors override it.

Tribal Affiliation offers yet another way to identify with a group, but also for other groups to identify you. Only the Zulu have their own color, which shares the background of the SIN ARO with megacorporate affiliations or stands alone for those unaffiliated with a megacorporation. The mid-size tribes and small tribes each share a color but add an animal logo to identify their individual tribal affiliation. Occasionally new animals pop up as tribes seek recognition, but they're usually hacker or forger efforts. Until recognized by the PWV government, no color or animal is given to an unrecognized tribe.

GETTING AROUND

District clearance runs top down. This means anyone with a gold SIN can enter into any district. Limitations on their access will be applied to megacorporate areas. If they don't have the affiliation or extraterritorial access, it doesn't matter whether they have a gold SIN in a white zone—they aren't getting into a blue extraterritorial location.

The district colors—gold, black, and white—are always used as border colors for megacorporate SINs to show residential or vocational district access along with extraterritorial access. This is one of the most common forms of color mixing. If an individual also has a tribal affiliation, the tribal affiliation color joins the SIN ARO in the form of stripes.

- SIN access often limits you just as thoroughly going down as it does going up. Roll into a white zone (pretty much anywhere in the Smile) with a gold SIN and it may not be local security coming to usher you out impolitely. Instead, it's a local gang or warlord coming to ransom you back to your zone cronies or just rob you.
- Stone
- Local fixers and forgers charge a premium for fakes that offer more access. Most shadow work is done in the Black and White zones, but Gold-zone work is out there. Getting access to the Gold zone is going to cost you. Maroons offer the greatest premium because they offer the most access, but the tradeoff for that is you get more scrutiny, and ... well, we are *shadowrunners* after all.
- Traveler Jones
- Those Foreign/Visitor options are great, but people can gain a local color if they're properly vetted and vouched for by a member of the culture or megacorporation. Good to know, even under a fake SIN.
- Pyramid Watcher



- They're serious about doing a little research. Local authorities can blow a fake out of the water in less than three questions. It's usually all they ask, but if you miss one, you're dead in the water. With the sharks circling.
- Thorn
- Speaking of sharks. Azania is like the Carib League, so don't call people chummer. They use the slang a little differently, but it's still not a good thing. Here, they call certain cops "chummers" as they try and catch the local sharks ... a.k.a., us.
- Kane
- Having a local cop blow your SIN isn't the end of the world unless you look like you're about to commit a crime. Most of them will take a bribe and let you slide as long as you're sliding away from where you're not allowed.
- Picador

GAME INFORMATION

When examining a color-coded ID, authorities make an Intuition + Perception [Mental] vs. Charisma + Con [Social] or Acting [Social] Opposed Test. If they succeed in this test, the authorities are suspicious. If the runners have a valid cover and are heading away from trouble, consult the Bribe Table on what it's going to cost each of them. If they look ready to rumble, the authorities go on alert, local security drones are dispatched to monitor the individuals, and a threat-response team is called in that includes physical, astral, and Matrix forces. Tailor it to your table, but remember, PWV is a harsh and unforgiving place.

BRIBES

NEEDED ACCESS	COSTS
Gold	1,000¥
Black	500¥
Megacorporate	250¥
Tribal	100¥

BUYING A FAKE

With all the variations in this place, fake SINs are a big market and certain access is costlier than others. The Fake SIN Cost Modifiers table offers the basic variations on cost, and it also opens the door for gamemasters raising and lowering fake SIN costs based on the activities in their campaign.

As a general rule, assume that each fake SIN includes only what is on the What's In A SIN table below based on their rating. If a character desires a SIN with backup info but only wants to pay for a Rating 1, that's not going to fly. This table also helps a gamemaster determine what might go into a run to help build a fake SIN if characters want to do it themselves.

WHAT'S IN A SIN

RATING	DATA
1	Just the SIN ARO; no backup data on the link or Matrix
2-3	SIN ARO and local backup info
4-6	SIN ARO, local backup info, and major database info

FAKE SIN COST MODIFIERS

IDENTIFIER	COST VARIATION
White	-10%
Black	N/A
Gold	+10%
Maroon	+25%
Tribal	+10%
Megacorporate	+15%
Criminal	-50%





MINING FOR GOLD

Liyana wanted to pounce, but she had learned how to open her mouth, stay still, and wait for the prey to crawl in. She watched Visser study the front of the mall.

“What about subterranean levels?” Visser said.

“Nothing serious,” Liyana said. “Some storage for a few stores. Nothing more than a level.”

Visser stared again at the padlocked grate. Padlock. How quaint. A clear statement to any passers-by that says, “Go ahead and break in! That’s how confident we are that there’s nothing valuable inside!”

Visser rubbed the top of his blonde head. Not a single hair moved. “Still, they had to move a lot of earth to build this. How did they miss thousands of kilos of gold coins? If it goes down too deep, the miners would have found it by now.”

Liyana popped up the collar of her jacket. “How thick you think a coin is?”

“It’s not just one coin! It’s thousands! Maybe millions! That takes up space.”

“Why you telling me what I already know? Space is only a few square meters. Depends on how you spread the stuff out.”

“Even if it’s three meters by three meters by three, it might cause some problems in the caverns below. Collapse a ceiling.”

“Then flatten it out.”

Visser stared. Liyana was pretty sure he wasn’t aware of how open his mouth was. Good.

“Stack up. Make them only a centimeter thick. You need about 167,000 stacks. That’s about four hundred stacks by four hundred. So the vault has to be around eight meters by eight meters.” She pulled on her jacket lapels. Honestly, the jacket was to give her something to gesture with as much as it was for warmth. “I know it. I’ve thought about it. *I know.*”

Visser looked at the grate again. It had been put up decades ago. She couldn’t be sure which would give first if you put some effort into it, the cheap padlock or the rusted metal.

“Hundreds of millions of nuyen worth of coins. Separated from us only by this flimsy gate and a meter or two of concrete and rock.” He waved his arms at the surroundings. “This place should be mobbed. Packed with people carrying jackhammers. How can you know about the gold without it being unearthed already?”

A lesser artist might have only heard doubt from Visser. Liyana heard a man who wanted to be convinced.

“You ask exactly the right question.”

They were on the roof. It wasn’t hard to find a place where you wouldn’t be seen up there, especially as daylight faded to purple and orange. There was a kind of pipework lattice forming a gateway into the mall, and it provided all the cover Liyana needed. She led Visser to the right spot, then she sat down, pulling at her baggy olive pants to keep them from bunching





BY JASON M. HARDY

too much. She sat cross-legged and rested her wrists on her knees, palms up. Non-Awakened folks love that shit. And when he referred Visser to her, Wolfgang had said he would eat it up.

“Please be patient for a moment,” she said, then tightened her face into a mask of focus, as if she were laboring to call spirits from the depths of the astral. In reality, she was sending a command to a spirit she had summoned before the meet. Good thing the sun wasn’t all the way down yet.

She told the spirit not to rush anything, so she was able to make beads of sweat rise on her forehead before it appeared. It was a pile of grey gravel that was somewhat octopus-like in the way it scurried across the roof. It raised its head as it came close, eager to help. Liyana almost rubbed its head.

“Go straight down. Go beneath the floor of the building, about two and a half meters past. There is a thin chamber there, full of coins. Grab one and carry it up through the rock.”

The spirit almost bounced as it dematerialized. It was gone only two minutes or so, and when it came back, it scurried over the edge of the wall instead of coming up through the ceiling. It dashed over with surprising speed and grace. And it laid a gold coin at Liyana’s feet.

Visser leaned forward to touch the coin, but Liyana extended her hand.

“No. Don’t touch it. Look at it, and look quickly.”

He leaned forward and stared. The words “Zuid Afrikaansche

Republiek” curved around the portrait of a stern, bearded man. There was no date on the front, but Liyana knew the reverse would display a date in the 1890s.

Visser’s face was unimpressed, but his aura told a different story.

“If I could pick it up, I’d have a better chance of knowing it was real.”

“Wait.” It didn’t take long. The coin twitched, then jumped two centimeters in the air. When it hit the roof again, it started sliding, quickly, back in the direction the spirit of earth had brought it from.

“What’s doing that?”

“Wish I knew.” Liyana tilted her head. “Or maybe I don’t. Some things should maybe stay hidden.”

Visser watched the coin hit the parapet, slide up its quarter-meter length, go across the top, then disappear over the edge.

“Where will it go?”

“Back to the vault. Whenever I ask a spirit what it sees, it says all the stacks are full and complete.”

Visser rubbed his chin, still looking at the spot where the coin had disappeared. Liyana didn’t have to look at his aura to know what he was thinking. Same thing as all the rest.

That’s the kind of money that sets you up for life.



After the first meet, Visser played it cool. He made no commitment on the spot. He asked for three days to think about it. Liyana gave him two. He took three anyway. But sure enough, just as the seventy-two hours was coming to an end, he rang her up. He started talking terms immediately.

"Finder's fee is five percent," he said.

He probably thought he was stiffing her, but the ones who really wanted to short her didn't offer a percent. They'd just throw out a number in five figures, six if they were feeling generous. Definitely not a percentage that could bring in eight figures. Still, only a sucker accepts the first offer.

"I've seen finders fees over twenty-five percent."

"I don't care. You're not getting anywhere near that."

In the end, she only got him up to seven. Her heart wasn't really in it. But he sounded satisfied at the end of the negotiation, and that was probably good for her. Happy marks act faster.

Which meant she could work on getting the next operation started, reaching out to Wolfgang to find the next target. Downtime served no one. With Visser, it was all over but the crying.

Which, after some scheduling and commcalls, was scheduled to happen ten days after their first visit to the mall. He hired some people, consulted some experts, developed a plan, and prepared to launch. He shared some details with Liyana, kept back some others, but it didn't matter. She had done this enough. She knew basically what they would try.

She knew how well it would work.

The days rolled on, the time came, and Liyana found herself back at the mall at twilight. She would rather have not come, but Visser wanted her there to witness his triumph before he paid the finder's fee. So she came. She would watch.

Two mages. That was Visser's team. But she knew he had done his homework, so they wouldn't be pushovers. One was hermetic from central casting—straight-laced, collared shirt, creased trousers. The other was a shaman, Zulu by her looks, red-and-black beads in her braids and red-and-black flowing fabric most other places. Both held themselves in that relaxed and poised way of people who had met many challenges before and knew they'd meet plenty more. Liyana had no desire to mess with them. They were innocent, as far as she could tell. Plus, if there was a fight, she would likely lose.

Fortunately, this was not her fight.

The hacking she needed was finished before Visser had completed introductions (the mages, Liyana's hidden nearby hacker informed her, were named Lefa and Itshe). The two runners retreated to their own corners and got to work, not asking a thing from Liyana, which was both convenient and annoying. Really, she didn't look like she could be useful? But she knew what she was supposed to be doing, so she swallowed her pride and watched.

If Liyana did some dedicated assessing, she might be able to figure out what they were up to, but it wasn't necessary. She'd know soon enough.

The shaman was still when she worked, but the mage was the type who liked to do all sorts of precise hand motions. That sort of thing had irritated Liyana in her younger days—it seemed

showy—but she had become more accepting as she learned how different minds worked. She stood watching, peacefully and calmly.

She couldn't be entirely sure, but she thought he did at least two things, based on a clear pause in his hand movements. The same, then, was likely true for the shaman. That was fine. Spells were dangerous, sure, but less likely to go off randomly than, say, grenades. They could set up whatever they felt they needed.

The light was almost gone, and any spirits the pair of spellslingers summoned stayed out of sight. Wise, because that unearthly spirit glow was more noticeable in the dark and tended to attract attention. Something had been set in motion—the mage had stopped his hand motions, and the shaman looked more relaxed. Visser was tapping his thigh with an open palm. Liyana would bet any amount of money that he could pull a gun from his waist within a second with that hand. She was not anxious to see it come out.

Not much changed for a while. The waiting continued. Whatever was going on took a lot longer than the spirit Liyana had sent the last time she had been on the roof. Which was probably good. Meant they were being cautious. Wouldn't change much, but it showed they were smart.

She imagined the spirit (or spirits) down below. Looking for the gold. Finding it. So much of it. Looking for signs of danger, warning, anything telling them that they shouldn't do what they wanted to do. And not seeing any of it. There was nothing to stop them from doing what they wanted to do. The only question was how much they would grab on the first try.

Visser had a briefcase. It could hold maybe fifteen hundred, maybe two thousand coins. Could be worth as much as a million. It would be a good start, and it would be haulable. That's how they'd start.

And so they did. One second, it was just the four of them standing on the rooftop. The next, a pile of gold starting dribbling down between them, seemingly materializing out of the purple nothing of near-night. In reality, it was dropping out of the arms/tentacles/whatever of the hidden spirit that had carried it up.

Visser's reaction was immediate—a broad smile and quick steps forward. His briefcase opened as he walked, and he slid smoothly to his knees. His coin stacking, Liyana noticed, was impeccable. People who knew how to handle money that well were rare in a mostly cashless society. The coins went in smoothly. Nothing disturbed the process. But she knew how this went. She didn't know exactly when it would happen; she just knew it would.

It actually took a long time. Visser had the briefcase fully packed, and he was closing it with the exact expression of a man walking off with a million nuyen. He clicked the clasps into place. Then it happened.

The briefcase thunked to the ground. Visser looked surprised. That didn't stop the case from rasping across the roof and dragging Visser after it. The spellslingers moved. The shaman fired blue energy at the likely spot where someone pulling the case would be—apparently not noticing that the handle of the case sat limp as it moved. The spells trailed off into the night, hitting nothing. Lefa was doing his hand motions again—Liyana guessed he was summoning something. All their preparations were going off. None of them were working.



Visser was shouting as he dragged across the roof, sounds without words. He was struggling to hold on to the case without a good spot to grip it. Then whatever was pulling the case tried the oldest trick in the book. The case stopped, remained in place for a two-count, then suddenly jerked forward. Visser's arms didn't react quickly enough, and the briefcase sprung from his arms.

His shouts of wordless exertion turned to wordless rage. He leaped to his feet, running after the accelerating case. The case went over the edge of the roof. Liyana could practically feel the mana surge of spells activating around her, but they had no noticeable effect on the case's movement.

Visser finally said something intelligible. "Float me!" he shouted. Then he dived off the roof.

That didn't leave a lot of time to react. Luckily, Liyana was ready, so she didn't take long to send the needed spell toward Visser. He'd never know where it came from. Lefa or Ishte might have gotten a spell off in time, too, but better safe than sorry. He had to live long enough to hit the ground. If he died too soon, things would go wrong—she knew the gold demanded sacrifice on its particular terms. She ran toward the edge of the roof with the other two close behind. Visser was on the ground, running ahead, looking up at them as they reached the edge.

"Follow me!" Visser yelled.

"Right behind you!" Ishte said.

Visser dashed into the mall.

No one on the roof moved forward. They all looked down for a moment. Then Ishte looked over at Liyana.

"What now?"

"It's over," Liyana said. "Go home."

"That's it?" Lefa said. "No pay? Nothing? We just walk away?"

"Payment is the responsibility of Mr. Johnson," Liyana said. "Take it up with him."

Neither of the two seemed satisfied with this. They looked down, then looked at each other. Ishte nodded briefly. Lefa went through some hand motions, and an ethereal glow resembling streaks of wind appeared before him. The glow stayed in place briefly while Lefa conferred with it, then it ran away.

After it was gone, they both turned to Liyana. Neither of them looked happy.

"If he's dead, you just cost us five thousand nuyen each," Ishte said.

"I just saved your lives."

"But not his."

Liyana shrugged. "I thought maybe he might pull it off. I was rooting for you."

Lefa looked like he was going to bark some angry words at her, but Ishte held out a hand to slow him and spoke first.

"You made your play. I understand that. And you kept us out of harm, which I appreciate. But we've all got bills to pay.

It was too easy. "Then bring me someone else. Find another Visser. Bring him here. Do it intentionally, and you'll get paid."

"How about paying us for wasting our time?"

"If I was Visser, I might give you a speech about not being paid what you didn't earn. But I'm not him. This is a different way to think."

She waved her right hands. If they were monitoring AR—and she knew they were, because they had both seen the warning message her hacker had slid to them while Visser was packing the briefcase—they would see 1,000 nuyen appearing in their

accounts. Both the message and the money came with the sigil of the Fox, which carried a fair amount of weight in the PWF shadows.

"That's hardly what we were promised," Lefa said. So yes, they were watching AR.

"You weren't promised anything by me," Liyana said. "And it's a sad fact of the world that virtue pays less than vice."

"Virtue?" Ishte asked.

"What did Visser tell you about the job?"

"That there was a fortune in gold here, and we could help him get it out."

"How large a fortune?"

Lefa and Ishte exchanged glances.

"He was not specific," Ishte said.

"Half a billion nuyen," Liyana said. "He would come here, take the gold out of our community, become ridiculously wealthy, and leave nothing for us. Do nothing for us. Tell me—is that something the world needs more of?"

"Oh ghost, she's a runner with a *cause*," Lefa said.

"So am I," Ishte said. "The noble cause of staying alive and fed. And honestly, this was an easy night, so you want to pay me for more nights like this, I might take you up on it. I'll let you know."

Lefa made no such offer, but he also didn't object. There wasn't much else to say, so the two of them turned to leave.

They stepped over the edge of the roof and drifted down to the ground, because every single spellslinger, Liyana included, was a terrible show off. Liyana watched them land, then saw Ishte look up.

"Visser," she said. "What happened to him?"

Liyana thought about pleading ignorance, but this seemed like a good time for honesty.

"My understanding is that people like him are carried down into the earth and embedded there."

Ishte's expression was unreadable at this distance in the dark. She stood below Liyana for a moment, then walked away.

It was good that she didn't have any more questions, because Liyana had precious few answers. She knew the gold was there—all of it, a million coins. Every time she thought about it, and thought what that money could mean to her and her community, she was overtaken by dizziness. It was so close. She had seen pieces of it, touched them. She knew how to bring out a piece. But she didn't know how to keep it. Her secret hope, when she brought her victims here, was that they would succeed. That someone would figure out what was going on with this gold, and get it out of the ground, and keep it. And then she would steal it from them.

But it stayed under the ground, protected by whatever curse or magic was at work here. She had stared, she had gone astral, studied, and she had no idea what was going on underground. Her visits here kept her in touch with the unknown, helping her better understand the depths of what she didn't understand. It kept her in touch with a fortune that might one day transform her entire community. And with the unknown that could easily destroy her.

And each time she brought a new carpetbagger, it put one more person who was looking to exploit her and her people deep in the ground.



JACARANDA CITIZENS

- We've spent some time looking at the PWV sprawl, not time to look at some of the players in the area. The emphasis, of course, is on runners and associated personnel, with a particular emphasis on hooders. Use the information in good health.
- Glitch

AIKSHE

POSTED BY: CONTRACTOR

- **Gender:** Female
- **Metatype:** Elf (wakyambi metavariant)
- **Birthdate (Age):** January 12, 2044 (36)
- **Height:** 2.52m
- **Weight:** 95.3kg
- **Hair:** Black
- **Eyes:** Green
- **General Description:** Tall and slender, Aikshe normally wears her hair split, half in tight cornrows and braids decorated with colorful beads, the other half picked up into a thick afro. Her rich complexion is often contrasted with make-up in deep golds, rich blues, or bright reds. She dresses distinctively, with a touch of street, and carries herself with an approachable air despite her formidable physical presence.

To talk of Aikshe (pronounced like "ache-she") is to comment on her individual sense of style—she has a foot in high fashion (she owns every piece of the Aces collection from Vashon Island), but she also reflects pop culture shadowrunner-wear, merging that with African street styles. While her sense of fashion may be a topic of small talk, her work and connections are what truly deserve the spotlight.

Aikshe is best known as a fixer for electronic hardware, especially items with the logo of MCT or one of their myriad of subsidiaries. While the branding of her primary products may not defin-

itively connect her to the world's top megacorp, her work as a Johnson tends to have a real pro-Mitsu-hama feel to it. She obviously operates on the electronics side of the corp, but I have heard of magic types getting access to some of MCT's mo-jo-ware as part of payment deals. It's a common negotiation ploy used by Aikshe to counter runners who think having a spellslinger on the team makes all of them special. Aikshe tosses a little extra incentive for the mage, and everyone else can just be happy to have the work and a magical asset to make it easier.

- A lot of Mr. Johnsons are going this route—offering a little something extra for the spellslinger but nothing that would be of use to everyone else. I've never known of magic to be hard to come by in the shadows, but this still seems to attract people who are anxious for more mojo. Note that adding an item for a mage may not make them a better runner in the long run—the power may go to their heads, or the study effort they need to put into mastering the item isolates them, and their social skills go the way of the black rhino, leaving them too awkward for regular employment or too mentally scarred for normal life.
- Ire
- I wouldn't say "a lot" of Johnsons. Plenty are telling runners who use their spellslinger as a negotiating point to deal with internal politics on their own. Magic is rare and powerful, but so are high-end wired systems. The point is, think carefully about the negotiation technique you decide to use in the region.
- Fianchetto

Over the last two years, her work has focused heavily on adjusting the balance of power between the megas operating in PWV. That means plenty of jobs pulling data and prototypes from labs in the southern districts, hitting office files in Joburg, or extracting high-value personnel from Uptown. She doesn't have issues using the same





teams and has a solid rep as a Johnson, but don't talk about your work. She can use the same teams because they know to keep their work confidential. By limiting communication between runners, she can compartmentalize the overarching point of a series of jobs without the need to eliminate loose ends who know too much. Each team of shadowmushrooms is kept in their own dark cell and fed a slightly different blend of drek. This is good for both her and the runners in her stable.

I can't confirm what she's currently involved in because of this, but I have plenty of other connections at MCT who know their interests in PWV are shifting with the populace. They know the regular citizens need to remain contained to keep profits up. Efforts are underway in MCT's heavy-industry division to make progress on the contracts they signed at the beginning of the year for several enhanced subterranean arcologies featuring geothermal power, a natural connection to the existing aquifer, and most importantly, easier access to deeper mines. To make this work, they need to pry some local control from Erika, who has been accumulating power all over Africa for the last few years as an effort to distance themselves from the sinking NeoNET. As a part of the tech-savvy arm, Aikshe is going to play a role in MCT's efforts here, and she'll be pushing jobs that put runners in Erika's crosshairs.

- MCT played a big part in getting the local urban brawl grounds set up and maintained. As is the case in most brawl sprawls, a few sneaky squatters manage to stick around, but Aikshe contracts runners to clean up the sprawl before match days.
- Slamm-0!
- She's even contracted them to be in the zone during the matches to catch stragglers. They need to be stealth pros, and most are required to wear monitoring gear to make sure they don't interfere, but it's a good gig.
- Mika



AIKSHE



- PWV matches get a lot of special shots out of this. Runners are cammed up or run a full simrig system, meaning they can offer some extra footage, including some from inside the action if the brawlers get too close.
- Slamm-0!

What the streets do know is that Aikshe has a deep love for runners and, in particular, the culture of runners as the antihero, the lost soul seeking to redeem themselves through fighting the good fight and battling the greater powers of the world. Even though she represents one of those greater powers, she enacts her deep-seeded desires against her myriad of opponents in the sprawl. This means she has a tendency to hire runners with a jaded past but a heart of gold, usually discovered by her agents working within a runner team on a smaller, less-vital job.

- This goes south on a regular basis. Agents get pegged as spies by runners without a heart of gold. Aikshe ends up sending runners after runners to get her eyes out of trouble.
- Fianchetto

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
	3	4	3	3	5	3 (5)	4	8	4.9	2
Condition Monitor	10/11									
Armor	6									
Limits	Physical 4, Mental 5(7), Social 11									
Physical Initiative	7 + 1D6									
Skills	Blades 2, Computer 5, Con 4, Etiquette 6 (Corporate +2), Negotiation 8, Palming 3, Pistols 4, Unarmed Combat 3									
Knowledge Skills	Afrikaans 4, Business 4, Corporate Business Practices 4 (Mitsuhamma +2), Corporate Culture 6 (Mitsuhamma +2) Corporate Politics 5 (Mitsuhamma +2), English 4, German 4, History 3 (Azania +2), Japanese 4, Literature 4, Magical Theory 3, PWV Politics 4, Shadowrunners 5, Zulu N									
Qualities	Analytical Mind, First Impression, Linguist, Perfect Time, Photographic Memory, Social Appearance Anxiety									
Augmentations	Cerebral booster 2, cybereyes [Rating 1, w/ image link, low-light vision, vision enhancement 2], datajack, tailored pheromones 2									
Gear	Armor clothing [6], MCT Kamishi commlink [Device Rating 7, w/AR gloves, biometric reader, sim module, trid projector]									
Weapons	Nitama Sporter [Light Pistol*, Acc 6 (7), DV 6P, AP —, SA, RC —, 18 (c), w/ regular ammo, laser sight; *uses Heavy Pistol ranges]									

HASHTU OJIMBWE

POSTED BY: AFRIKAANER

- **Gender:** Male
- **Metatype:** Human
- **Birthdate (Age):** August 27, 2051 (28)
- **Height:** 1.79 m
- **Weight:** 101.4 kg
- **Hair:** Black
- **Eyes:** Green (right eye)/cybernetic (left eye)
- **General Description:** Muscularly built but not to any extreme, Hashtu doesn't stand out in a crowd. He is generally found in his fatigues, which feature a mix of tiger stripes, digital, and patches of ruthenium that swap between transparency during dangerous situations and bright patches with local symbols and native sayings the rest of the time. His deep ebony skin is a feature of his Zulu heritage, but his green eye shows some influence from other demographics, including those within and without his nation. His youthful energy and the bounce in his step are a perpetual source of inspiration and excitement for those who get a chance to meet and work with him.

As a local hero of the people, Hashtu is a larger-than-life figure who plays the part to the extreme but can fade into a crowd in a heartbeat. He greets everyone like a friend, travels with a small cadre of his closest sycophants, and makes a big show of everything he does. He has the largest P2.0 following in all of Azania (that's not saying much, but it's something), makes frequent appearances at local demonstrations (the rare few that manage to last more than a few minutes), hosts a Matrix show about life in PWV (even though he doesn't have the clearance or the street rep to visit half the sprawl), and does all of this while hiding the fact that he is a puppet for Horizon.

That's not saying he doesn't do good things. He makes a lot of quiet cash from Horizon and uses most of it to hire runners to hit other megacorps. You just won't ever find his jobs operating against Horizon interests in the sprawl. Aztechnology has been a major target, especially by going after their food-production facilities and being able to bring out or redirect foodstuffs into poorer areas. His jobs often have multiple layers as well, especially



if a shipment gets redirected and he then needs to keep it from being taken by a local warlord or destroyed by one of the sprawl's psycho gangs. Overall, Hashtu is a good guy to know—just make sure you understand who you're working for if you're trying to bring down all the corps, and not just foster one.

- If you're going to pick a mega to foster here, Horizon isn't the worst choice. They don't have a strong physical force in the area, so once the other big boys are brought down, they're still vulnerable. They'll have a lot of political and social capital, but none of it will be with the masses of downtrodden in this sprawl, who are well known for rising up and successfully overthrowing corrupt powers.
- Mika
- Have you noticed the number of contracts in town being picked up by Minuteman? Horizon's forces moving in.
- Stone
- And Horizon owns the locals with their free 'links and entertainment packages. This guy is backing the people's horse, even though none of the horses in the race would think twice about drekking on the people.
- Bull

Hashtu likes bucking the credstick system the city uses for its runners, often hiring runners above their paygrade to mess with the local vibe. Out-of-town runners are the best example, especially when he negotiates to include travel and incidentals in the payment and bumps them up a category. There are a lot of hooders in this town with ratings higher than they should be, or they think their rating deserves to be higher because of Hashtu. It's good and bad, but it leads to more problems for the runners and other Mr. Johnsons than it does for him.

**HASHTU
OJIMBWE**



	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
	5(6)	4	5(6)	4	4	3	4	5	1.6	3
Condition Monitor	11/10									
Armor	6(7)[9]									
Limits	Physical 5(7), Mental 5, Social 6									
Physical Initiative	10(11) + 1D6(2D6)									
Skills	Blades 4, Con 4, Disguise 4, Etiquette 6 (Street +2), Firearms skill group 4, Gymnastics 3, Intimidation 4, Negotiation 5, Palming 3, Perception 5, Running 4, Survival 3, Unarmed Combat 5									
Knowledge Skills	Afrikaans N, Business 4, Corporate Business Practices 4 (Horizon +2), Corporate Culture 6 (Horizon +2), Corporate Politics 5 (Horizon +2), English 4, History 5, Literature 4, PWV Politics 2, Shadowrunners 3									
Qualities	Blandness, Fame (Local), Poor Self Control (Braggart, Thrill-Seeker)									
Augmentations	Cybereye (left) [Rating 2, w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 2], dermal plating 2, plastic bone lacing, toxin extractor 3, wired reflexes 1									
Gear	Armor clothing [6], Transys Avalon commlink [Device Rating 6, w/ AR gloves, biometric reader, sim module, trid projector]									
Weapons	Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5 (7), DV 8P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ regular ammo] Fist [Unarmed, Acc 7, DV 5P, AP —, Reach —]									

SARU OWEMAWAI

POSTED BY: TRIBULL

- **Gender:** Female
- **Metatype:** Human
- **Birthdate (Age):** April 12, 2037 (43)
- **Height:** 1.52 m
- **Weight:** 53.1 kg
- **Hair:** Red
- **Eyes:** Gold
- **General Description:** Saru is stunningly beautiful in an exotic and almost otherworldly way. Her red hair isn't a natural red and neither is the shade of her golden eyes, but both are features with which she was born. Her business-casual style blends aspects of her Azanian blood and the time she spent getting a British education. Her sharp features could pass for elven, while her height could pass for a dwarf, but she is entirely human. She wears her hair in a mix of ponytails and hung long over her shoulders, and she has even been spotted in a ball cap on rare occasions she is out for fun in public.

As megacorporate executives go, Saru is on the more pleasant side, despite her employment by Universal Omnitech, who are famous for callous treatment of local employees. She makes fair deals, avoids double-crosses, and has worked her way up the corporate ladder by exploiting the weaknesses of others rather than creating those weaknesses or employing more forceful means. She is a corporate shark, but not a great white—more of a quick mako, taking advantage of mistakes with a lightning-quick mind and a stable of equally adept shadow resources, pun intended.

Saru focuses on using adept runners and is rumored to be the head of a initiatory group in the sprawl. Adepts who work for her are almost always initiated into the deeper aspects of their arts, and most believe she is the reason for that. The problem is, one of the edicts of their group is secrecy, so members can only talk to other members about the group and can never openly declare membership to someone who is not a member. Even prospects aren't told the truth of the group until they make their first vows.

I actually know a former member who lost contact with the group when he was taken and interrogated by an enemy of Saru. He was saved by fellow members but had already lost his connection to their power. They only let him live because Saru doesn't condone murder. He still keeps most of their secrets out of respect but was willing to say that the membership is around two dozen, all adepts, and all runners who work for Saru. He wouldn't confirm Saru as a member—or point out anyone else, for that matter—but all the other info points straight at her being at the head of the group.

Jobs that she hires runners for often include some level of scouting for new prospects. She'll often insinuate a member of her group onto the team to check out other adepts. The scouts aren't looking for raw talent—they're looking for a certain moral code and style of thinking. She doesn't want killers, since there are plenty of those in the sprawl. She is looking for runners with a heart and a desire to make the world a better place, not just get rich off the chaos, and she has no desire to recruit runners who get off on the killing and the rush of life in the shadows.

- Saru's Shades is what the shadows call them. It also might be the name of the initiatory group but no one can say for sure. They're hooders to their core, and based on



their rep and record, killing is a violation of their tenets. They've never killed a single person on a run. Not even by accident.

- Mika
- Murder mars the soul.
- Man-of-Many-Names

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	M
	5	6	5	4	6	5	5	5	6	8	8
Condition Monitor	10/11										
Armor	6										
Limits	Physical 6, Mental 7, Social 8										
Physical Initiative	10 + 1D6										
Skills	Arcana 5, Assensing 6, Clubs 8, Computer 3, Con 4, Etiquette 6, Gymnastics 7, Leadership 6, Negotiation 8, Perception 5, Pistols 6, Running 5, Sneaking 5, Unarmed Combat 6										
Knowledge Skills	Afrikaans 5, Business 9, Corporate Business Practices 8 (Universal Omnitech +2), Corporate Culture 6 (Universal Omnitech +2) Corporate Politics 7 (Universal Omnitech +2), English N, German 4, History 5 (Southern Africa +2), Japanese 4, Magical Theory 4, PWV Politics 5, Shadowrunners 4 (Adepts +2), Zulu 3										
Qualities	Analytical Mind, Lucky, Initiated 2										
Adept Powers	Astral Perception, Analytics 4, Cool Resolve 1, Kinesics 4, Kinesics Mastery, Rapid Healing 4, Sustenance 1, Temperature Tolerance 1, Voice Control 2										
Metamagics	Power point 2										
Gear	Armor clothing [6], Transys Avalon commlink [Device Rating 6, w/AR gloves, biometric reader, sim module, trid projector]										
Weapons	Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5 (6), DV 8S, AP —, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ gel ammo, laser sight]										



SARU OWEMUVAI

KURT KOENIG

POSTED BY: LIONESS

- **Gender:** Male
- **Metatype:** Human
- **Birthdate (Age):** July 10, 2045 (34)
- **Height:** 1.72m
- **Weight:** 68.1kg
- **Hair:** Brown
- **Eyes:** Blue
- **General Description:** Angular facial features reveal his Germanic ancestry as readily as his name. Broad shoulders and a narrow waist cut quite a figure in his sharp, fitted



suits. He's rarely seen without a collection of gadgets that he uses to keep up on the business world of the PWV Metroplex.

Kurt works for whichever megacorp wants to pay his exorbitant fees. The man is an absolute genius when it comes to market analysis and seeing the ups and downs of local markets and knowing how best to exploit them. He hops from mega to mega, often building up and taking down the same projects with his efforts from different sides. He's been part of so many megacorporate projects and had access to so much of all of their data that he's becoming a growing security concern for every corp who isn't currently contracting him, but none feel they can go after him because he may have failsafes to reveal their secrets if he were to fall, which also means he's protected by corps that aren't even contracting him to prevent someone else from trying to use that failsafe against all of them. Unwanted extractions are frequently directed at him to obscure his corporate movements, with the side purpose of pulling him on and off projects between corps.

It's a great catch-22 situation with no one able to solve the problem but everyone just making it worse and worse as they hire him to make them more and more money. The biggest threat he faces is actually from the shadows, or more accurately the neo-a's, who want the whole system to burn. He's been smart enough to mitigate that with friendly data drops on high-value targets. The man is playing every side of the game and somehow managing to get away with it.

- Fucking technomancers.
- Clockwork
- What? Where'd it say that? What are you trying to do?
- Netcat
- Reveal the darkness to the light.
- Clockwork

He occasionally needs help gathering insider data for his amazing market analysis, which means hiring runners for data steals and the like. He also uses us when things don't seem to be panning out as he planned. He initiates a few properly directed runs, occasionally using inept teams intentionally in order to get the run out in

the public, or within a corp's view, to help generate the proper blowback and create the proper effect. He pays well, and the work is usually simple enough and rarely poses any real danger, so it's ideal for newer teams or teams who just like to keep the risk low. Whether it's success or failure he seeks, doing something wrong can get you blacklisted, or worse double-crossed. He doesn't like leaving loose ends out there to be snagged up and used against him.

- Since Clockwork tossed it out there, I'll confirm it and add some extra points. He is a highly skilled technomancer. He specializes in using his sprites to operate and enhance his gear and data-analysis skills. He's pretty much the equivalent of six brains running all at once. He's a huge friend to the technomancer community in PWV and would love for Clockwork to come down for a personal meeting so he can explain to him why hating technomancers is the mentality of a simpleton.
- Lioness

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	R
5	3	3	4	5	5	7	4	6	5	9
Condition Monitor	11/11									
Armor	6									
Limits	Physical 6, Mental 8, Social 7									
Physical Initiative	10 + 2D6									
Skills	Compiling 8, Computer 5, Con 6, Decompiling 2, Electronic Warfare 5, Etiquette 5, Hacking 6, Perception 5, Pistols 3, Registering 8, Software 8, Unarmed Combat 2									
Knowledge Skills	Business 4, Corporate Business Practices 8, Corporate Culture 9, Corporate Politics 7, English 4, German N, Japanese 4, Politics 5, Shadowrunners 2									
Qualities	Exceptional Attribute (Intuition), Lightning Reflexes, Submersion 3, Technomancer									
Complex Forms	Cleaner, Editor, Infusion of Attack, Infusion of Sleaze, Infusion of Data Processing, Infusion of Firewall, Static Veil, Pulse Storm, Resonance Channel, Resonance Spike, Stitches, Transcendent Grid, Tattletale									
Echoes	Mind Over Machine 2, Sleaze Upgrade 1									
Gear	Armor clothing [6], Transys Avalon commlink [Device Rating 6, w/AR gloves, biometric reader, sim module, trid projector]									
Weapons	Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5 (7), DV 8P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ regular ammo]									



WOLFGANG SCHMIDT/THE FOX

POSTED BY: LYCUS VULPIN

- **Gender:** Male
- **Metatype:** Elf
- **Birthdate (Age):** December 19, 2052 (27)
- **Height:** 1.98m
- **Weight:** 109.1kg
- **Hair:** Dark
- **Eyes:** Hazel
- **General Description:** With an athletic build that strikes quite the figure in anything, he is a visual focus in any room. Broad shoulders narrow to a sharp waist over thick-muscled legs, usually on display whenever possible. His charming smile leads every interaction with him, and his sense of style always directs plenty of eyes in his direction.

To speak of this man, one must split the personalities as neatly as he has. In the light, he is Wolfgang Schmidt. In the shadows, the Fox. The two never mix, and those who know the connection could be counted with less than a single hand until now. Those who could prove it number a single soul—the man himself. The very essence of the efforts and endeavors of the pair often appear at opposing goals, yet in the end, a single goal is the intention. Let me first make my introductions of the sides of the coin, and then we shall discuss the final destination of this umbral socialite.

Wolfgang Schmidt, called Smitty by most of his circle, is the epitome of rich-kid, dim-witted party boy reaching that age where it's no longer seen as frat-boy cute, though that doesn't mean he still doesn't try. His efforts are spent working out to maintain his athletic physique while avoiding every possible responsibility his parents ever tried to saddle him with. The pair died in an unexplained fire and left their considerable inheritance to him along with enough stock in several megacorps with local power to allow him some voting rights and influence. Rather than visiting the boards or reading their briefs, he spends his time poolside, usually with a few young ladies whose ages one might question if they showed up at a polling place to vote. I wish there were more to include on this side of the report, but the vapid visage has prevented anyone from even considering the idea that Smitty might spend other parts of his ample

free time operating as a shadowrunner, often in his own employ.

The Fox is the shadowy moniker of the same man and is far from shallow or vapid. The Fox operates as what most call finesse muscle. He's not a big axe or LMG-wielding thug, but instead something more akin to the classic street samurai, preferring skill and precision over brute force and power. His favored style is the long trench and silenced pistols of classic runner lore, though in the frequent heat of Azania the trench is a silksteel weave, lightweight but protective, rather than heavy cotton and kevlar. He covers his face with a ballistic mask emblazoned with a grey and black shadowy fox. Assuming the mask may at some point come off, the Fox wears a bland face using nanopaste beneath it to protect his identity. He's shown skill with fists, short steel, and small arms on the martial front, and he brings solid infiltration skills with the ability to bypass a myriad of electronic and mundane locks. All of these abilities and skills pale in comparison to the connections and money he brings, though. While acting as "dim" Smitty, he has gained the trust and spied on hundreds of the rich and powerful of PWV, all while seducing their staff. All this leads to the Fox having large amounts of paydata to dangle over their heads for leverage when seeking information.

Now that I have introduced the man, let me explain his end game as far I understand it. Smitty Fox, as the dual man can be called, has a grand plan for all of the PWV Metroplex, and it involves what the rest of the world refers to as a Free City. He desires a city free of the influence of the megacorps, the corrupt local government, and most of all, the rich ruling class of the city. Some may see it as self-hatred; others perceive a desire to undermine his equals to become their better; but most see it simply as an honest quest to change the world for the better. I say "most" there because more of the world is poor than not, and they want to see balance restored.

To these ends, the Fox has created a small network of runners who operate as his intelligence network, keeping him up to date on what other Mr. Johnsons are doing in the sprawl, along with getting him some insider info on other potentially valuable runner allies. He looks for runners with high ideals and avoids those whose morals seem too base or corrupt. He understands that what runners do is illegal, but how they commit those crimes can still fall within the public view of heroic,



or at least just. Getting tagged to be one of these runners is an honor in the city, though it doesn't always match or coincide with one's standing among the credstick rating system, though the Fox probably gets a kick out of bucking that system.

- You can't operate like the Fox and not generate a lot of enemies. Every corp has at least one Johnson, sometimes two or three, who are putting out feelers and paying good nuyen for info on this guy. He's got a great shadowrep, pretty much legendary, and he's avoided the public spotlight, but corps don't always care if you're the most notorious. They care if you are messing up their carefully laid plans, and the Fox does that.
- Fianchetto
- Not for long, after getting outed on this den of spies and sellouts. Hey /dev/, you ready to start another pool? How much time does this guy's secret have now that it's on JackPoint?
- Clockwork

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
6(+4)	6(10)	6(9)	6(10)	6	5	6	7	1.55	7
Condition Monitor		14/12							
Armor		14(+6)							
Limits		Physical 8(12), Mental 8, Social 8							
Physical Initiative		12(15) + 1D6(4D6)							
Skills		Automatics 8 (SMG +2), Blades 6(7) (Swords +2), Computer 5, Con 9, Etiquette 6, Escape Artist 5(+2) [+1], Gymnastics 7(+2)[+3], Hardware 8, Intimidation 4, Lockpicking 6, Negotiation 6, Palming 5, Perception 7, Pilot Groundcraft 5, Pistols 13(14) (Semi-automatics +2), Running 6(+2), Sneaking 6(7)[+2][+3], Swimming 4(+3), Unarmed Combat 7(8)							
Knowledge Skills		Afrikaans 4, Building Layouts 5, Corporate Security Systems 7, Corporate Business Practices 1, Corporate Culture 2, Corporate Politics 1, English N, German 4, Infiltration Techniques 8, Japanese 6, Law Enforcement 6, Politics 1, Psychology 5, Shadowrunners 6 (Hooders +2), Sociology 4, Spanish 4, Zulu 4							
Qualities		Ambidextrous, Analytical Mind, Aptitude (Pistols), Catlike, Code of Honor (Semper Paratis), Double-jointed, Guts, Linguist, Natural Athlete, Exceptional Attribute (Charisma), Photographic Memory, Tough As Nails (3 Physical, 1 Stun)							
Augmentations		(All deltaware) Bone density augmentation 4, commlink [Custom, Device Rating 8], cybereyes [Rating 3, flare compensation, low-light, smartlink, thermographic, vision enhancement 2, vision magnification], dermal plating 6, enhanced articulation, muscle toner 4, muscle augmentation 4, platelet factories, reflex recorder [Blades, Pistols, Sneaking, Unarmed Combat], sleep regulator, synaptic booster 3, synthcardium 3							
Gear		Ballistic mask, Transys Avalon commlink [Device Rating 6, w/AR gloves, biometric reader, sim module, trid projector], Cellular glove molder (Rating 6), chameleon suit [w/ thermal damping (Rating 4)], climbing gear, crowbar, Erika Elite commlink (Device Rating 4), fake license (gun, Rating 6), grapple gun (with stealth rope 500m, catalyst stick, micro wire 200m), maglock passkey (Rating 6), micro-transceiver, rappelling gloves, sequencer (Rating 6), tag eraser, earbuds [audio enhancement (Rating 1), spatial recognizer], 4 fake SINS [Rating 6, each with fake licenses (Rating 6, concealed carry, possession of firearms, possession of augmentations)], Hermes Ikon commlink (Rating 5), jammer (area, Rating 6), Armored long coat [12, chemical protection 3, fire resistance 3, non-conductivity 6], medkit (Rating 6), 5 stim patches (Rating 6), 2 trauma patches, white noise generator (Rating 6), nanopaste disguise							
Weapons		Katana [Blade, Reach 1, Acc 7, DV 13P, AP -3] Fist [Unarmed, Reach —, Acc 13, DV 13P, AP -] Ares Light Fire 75 [Light Pistol, Acc 6 (8), DV 6P, AP —, SA, RC —, 16 (c), w/ 3 spare clips, 100 rounds regular ammo] Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, SA, Acc 5 (7), DV 8P, AP -5, RC —, Ammo 15 (c), APDS ammo (100 rounds), 3 spare clips] Ares Executioner [SMG, Acc 4 (6), DV 8P, AP -2, SA/BF/FA, RC (1), 30 (c), w/ 3 spare clips, 100 rounds EX-explosive ammo]							



LINCOLN THOMAS ASTERMOORE IV

POSTED BY: JAKKALS

- **Gender:** Male
- **Metatype:** Human
- **Birthdate (Age):** December 12, 2012 (67)
- **Height:** 1.84m
- **Weight:** 82.4kg
- **Hair:** Black/Grey
- **Eyes:** Blue
- **General Description:** Astermooore is the picture of sophistication in the upper crust of Tshwane society. His age is not apparent as leónization is his friend, and he has kept himself in excellent physical shape. Despite the anti-aging treatments, he still carries heavy grey at the temples and speckled through the top of his perfectly coifed hair. His chiseled features offer a stern countenance, though it is often broken by his sly grin.

There is no single individual citizen in all of Azania, who is as wealthy as this man, and only a dozen people around the world who have a greater personal net worth. Generations of money and family wealth have grown, merged, and accumulated into this man's portfolio of wealth, and there is nothing he prizes more than his place at the top of Tshwane's richest. Because of that, he has had extensive contact with runners and other illicit operators in order to ensure no one in the city approaches his vaunted position.

Astermoore operates as his own Mr. Johnson. If those he is going after discover his efforts, it only furthers his legend among them and the fear of approaching his level of wealth. He brings a security force of at least a dozen to every meet in order to protect himself from rivals and always puts a protection offer up to runners he's hiring so they'll fight on his side even before they agree to the contract.

Working for Astermooore is some of the best-paying work in the city. Runners can work in the city for years and never get a shot at his money. He pays the best and hires the best, but he also sends them against some of the best security and protection services in the sprawl. The money is good, but survival isn't always guaranteed. Plenty of runners lose their lives trying to protect As-

termooore's position. He's rumored to be the one who started the credstick rating system in order to help him identify runners of the proper caliber. He certainly uses it and makes sure that runners he hires know how important success is to maintaining their spot.

- There are several Astermooore impersonators in town. They've designed nanopaste disguises to get them to look like Lincoln, but they don't have the resources he does. They'll usually have a comparable security force around them, just in case they trick the wrong people, but payment usually comes as a double-cross or as a quick detour into a deathtrap.
- Fianchetto
- The best part about working for Astermooore is the redistribution of wealth. He puts a lot of money into the shadows that finds its way into the pockets of the poor. But almost as much flows right back into the pockets of the rich as they rob the poor of everything they have on a daily basis.
- Mika
- Not to mention the fact that the rich still really control the flow of arms and high-end gear in the city, which means all those black-market purchases you make with those ill-gotten gains are going right back into the pockets of the rich. No matter how hard you try, unless you can upend the whole system, this place is going to stay thoroughly divided.
- Snopes

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
	4	4	4	4	6	5	5	6	5.0	5
Condition Monitor	10/11									
Armor	6									
Limits	Physical 6, Mental 7, Social 8									
Physical Initiative	9 + 1D6									
Skills	Computer 2, Con 5, Etiquette 8 (Social Elite +2), Negotiation 10, Perception 4, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 2									
Knowledge Skills	Business 8, Corporate Business Practices 8, Corporate Culture 9, Corporate Politics 7, English N, History 7, PWV Politics 6, PWV Socialites 9, Shadowrunners 4, Sociology 6, World Geography 4									
Qualities	First Impression									
Gear	Armanté Armor clothing [6], Transys Avalon commlink [Device Rating 6, w/ AR gloves, biometric reader, sim module]									
Weapons	Sword Cane [Blade, Reach 1, Acc 5, DV 6P, AP -1]									



LEEKA MONTCLAIR

POSTED BY: LOOKING GLASS

- **Gender:** Female
- **Metatype:** Elf
- **Birthdate (Age):** August 18, 2051 (28)
- **Height:** 2.04 m
- **Weight:** 78.18 kg
- **Hair:** Strawberry blonde
- **Eyes:** Brown
- **General Description:** Montclair is an athletically built elf with a style influenced by her Nordic corp and her native Azania. Her mixed heritage offers her an distinctive look, accentuated by her cosmetically altered ears that sprout a good ten centimeters above her head, making her look distinctly elven, but in more of the trashy fantasy novel way where every feature is exaggerated.

Montclair is a regular face among the Johnsons of PWV. In her daily life she acts as an Erika executive in the sprawl. Her focus, according to the corporate info site, is Matrix infrastructure development and deployment. It makes sense, since Erika (formerly part of NeoNET) owned the Matrix infrastructure and development rights for the sprawl and had to watch as others have horned in on the market since NeoNET's fall. Back in the initial testing phases of the modern ultra-secure wireless system we have now, the PWV Metroplex was one of NeoNET's earliest testing and development sites. That makes Montclair one of the most senior and secure of any Erika employee in the sprawl.

- It also makes her privy to all the dark drek that went down during testing, including the dozen or so Dissonance Pools that developed all over the sprawl. She and her team have worked hard to cover it up, but nothing like that stays a secret for long. The real question is, how long can they contain and maintain them?
- Mika
- They do neither. Those pools corrupt everything they touch. This whole sprawl would be better if someone put in the effort to close them all, or at least bury access until they dissipate. Without support, they will fade away.
- Netcat

In the shadows her interests lie a bit closer to the realm of philanthropy. She isn't entirely altruistic, but she is not a cold-hearted mercenary, either. In general, her efforts are simple—she looks to undermine the other corporate interests in PWV in order to advance Erika's expansion efforts, but her methods are what make her valuable to us. You see, Leeka actually values the lives of the runners she hires. I'm not saying that she builds in death benefits into our non-existent contracts, but she works to make sure that every asset she hires makes it home. The philosophy is not unheard of, just extremely rare in this throwaway society where the corps know runners are a dime a dozen. It's weird and rare enough that you have to ask why she does it.

The answer lies in her past. You see, Leeka Montclair is not her birth name. Leeka was born to a pair of runners who worked hard to get out of the shadows and build a new life around their children and family. She has two siblings, both younger, who followed in mom's and dad's footsteps after their parents died. Even though she and her siblings don't speak much, Montclair knows that any runner that gets hired could be her family, and while she may want them to fail against Erika, she has no desire to see them dead.

- Her parents were Echo and Finder, a pair of well known success stories in the PWV shadows. They never got the big score but scrounged enough from the little ones to get mostly out. They did occasional milk runs and contracted as experience for new teams to the Mr. Johnsons they trusted. Finder died when one of the runners on their team turned out to be a member of the Haku Cheka, a gang from Mogale, and they ran into a group of Great Whites, a rival gang. They were supposedly talking their way past when one of the GWs recognized the HC and opened fire. Echo had to put in more shadow time after that to make ends meet, and she met her end thanks to rookies with more attitude than skill.
- Snopes



B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
3	2	3	2	6	5	5	8	5.7	4
Condition Monitor	10/11								
Armor	6								
Limits	Physical 4, Mental 7, Social 10								
Physical Initiative	8 + 1D6								
Skills	Archery 5, Computer 4, Con 5, Etiquette 6, Hardware 3, Negotiation 9, Palming 4, Running 4, Software 3, Unarmed Combat 5								
Knowledge Skills	Afrikaans 4, Corporate Business Practices 4 (NeoNET/Erika +2), Corporate Culture 6 (NeoNET/Erika +2), Corporate Politics 5 (NeoNET/Erika +2), English N, Matrix History 5, Japanese 4, Matrix Infrastructure 6, PWV Politics 7, Shadowrunners 3								
Qualities	Combat Paralysis, Distinctive Style, First Impression, Phobia (killing her family accidentally)								
Augmentations	Cosmetic ear modification, cyberears [Rating 2, w/ audio enhancement 2]								
Gear	Trés Chic armor clothing [6], Transys Avalon commlink [Device Rating 6, w/AR gloves, biometric reader, sim module]								
Weapons	Shock Gloves [Unarmed Combat, Reach —, Acc 4, DV 8S(e), AP -5]								

GARIK "HEAVY" BRECKWORTH

POSTED BY: LIONESS

- **Gender:** Male
- **Metatype:** Ork
- **Birthdate (Age):** July 4, 2052 (27)
- **Height:** 2.24 m
- **Weight:** 124.6 kg
- **Hair:** None
- **Eyes:** Cyber
- **General Description:** Heavy is a robust ork with as much gut as swagger, and that's a lot. His bald head is covered in Zulu scarification patterns that carry down as a series of dots on both cheeks. Both of his tusks and all of his teeth are jet black and match his matte-black cybereyes. He tends to dress to fit the occasion but is usually wearing patchwork armor in order to protect himself from the corporate reprisals for his efforts in the sprawl.

Heavy is in charge of a hooding ring in the Pretoria sprawl called New Jac City. The members of his outfit vary by the week with only a few being consistently close, because hooding

in PWV is a dangerous game. The corps know the history of the place and know full well that if the locals decided they're done with the corps, they will all gladly go back to living in thatched huts and eating bugs. It's a fine line to walk, trying to keep the citizens of Jacaranda City from taking up arms after dropping their picks and keyboards.

That's where Heavy comes in. He's all about pushing the corps to show how little they care about the people of the sprawl. Despite the number of Azanian citizens and SINless that go missing in their mines and underground complexes, it's an uphill battle to show the darkness going on below ground. Most of Heavy's ops involve exposing exploitive work environments, though his jobs come with a lot of stipulations. The biggest is zero death count. No one dies, or no one gets paid. This includes accidental overdoses, errors using stun and gas grenades, even accidents like a tumble down the stairs while chasing subjects. If any deaths are reported on a site where Heavy has sent a team to work, they'd best have proof they weren't involved, even in parallel, to the cause of death.

A few runners have argued this as unfair, only to be shown the limits to which a person can be pushed and survive. Sometimes targets are brought to the brink of death (and beyond), then treated, recovered, and injured again so they can learn the lesson. Heavy has a few enemies who didn't learn the proper lesson from this treatment, but he's not without skills at protecting himself, and those who stay close to him are some of the city's most competent shadowrunners.

- Heavy is a solid dude to know in the sprawl and around Azania. His reach stretches all over the nation as he draws in talent to PWV that can work within his parameters. Several teams that came into Cape Town looking for work, found themselves contracted and on a train across the Azanian countryside because runners skilled at avoiding killing are a commodity.
- Fianchetto
- Not just a fixer, Heavy is a decent street doc. Not sure if the doc talents came before or after the desire to keep people from dying only to push them over the line again, but if you're on his good side, it doesn't really matter.
- Butch



	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
	7(+1)	4	4	7	4	5	5	5	5.7	3
Condition Monitor	12/10									
Armor	12									
Limits	Physical 9, Mental 7, Social 7									
Physical Initiative	9 + 1D6									
Skills	Athletics skill group 4, Blades 5 (Knives +2), Computer 2, Con 1, Cybertechnology 4, Etiquette 3, First Aid 8, Intimidation 7, Medicine 6, Negotiation 5, Throwing Weapons 4, Unarmed Combat 5									
Knowledge Skills	Anatomy 5, Biology 3, Chemistry 4, Corporate Operations 4, Corporate Security 4 (Aztechnology +2), Corporate Politics 5 (Aztechnology +2), English N, Azanian Literature 4, PWV Politics 4, Shadowrunners 7									
Qualities	Pacifist, Quick Healer, Toughness									
Augmentations	Cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 2],									
Gear	Piecemeal Armor [12], Hermes Ikon commlink [Device Rating 4, w/AR gloves, trid projector], medkit (rating 6)									
Weapons	Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5 (7), DV 8S, AP —, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ gel ammo] Shock Gloves [Unarmed Combat, Reach —, Acc 4, DV 8S(e), AP -5] Combat knife [Blades, Reach —, Acc 4, DV 8S(e), AP -5]									

HESHAM "ACHE" KURGTOREK

POSTED BY: DIAMOND

- **Gender:** Male
- **Metatype:** Ork
- **Birthdate (Age):** unknown (approx. 30)
- **Height:** 2.21 m
- **Weight:** 134.4 kg
- **Hair:** Black
- **Eyes:** Cybernetic
- **General Description:** Always seen in his black fatigues, thigh holster, and tactical equipment, Ache is like a cliché of African warlords throughout time, with his red beret topping it all off. He's built like a brick wall, and his face is covered in burn scars. His right hand is obviously cybernetic, and he uses it to hold and light his signature cigars.

Even though we want to focus on the good here, I think covering a bad guy that we may run across on a regular basis is a good idea. Kurgtorek is the epitome of anti-hooding. His efforts only work to better himself and his crew. To top it off, he actively hunts down runners who act out of any sense of benevolence or social justice. His cadre of followers are socio- and psychopaths one and all, who think their leader's ideals are the best way to make the shadows of the sprawl more efficient and successful for bringing down the corporate establishment. I can't understand or see the logic in that, and none of them, including Kurgtorek, are capable enough communicators to explain the concept eloquently, so don't even bother trying to figure out whether or not he's right. Just know that if you develop a rep in the city for being a "good" guy, they are putting you on the list. Luckily, Kurgtorek doesn't have expansive influence. He and his gang control a section of Randfontein and focus most of their efforts there, though if your legend grows too great, they have been known to venture out for house calls all over the Smile. They usually don't work in the Mixing Pots, and security won't let a single one of them into Uptown, so if you can afford the ID and cost of living, you can escape them by living among the rich.

- Ache is a grade-A badass with the 'wares to back up running his mouth. He's like a shadowrunner's bogeyman. Rumors abound as to how he ended up like this, but the most likely explanation is simple cyberpsychosis. He has so much metal in him, the man got stuck on some twisted concept and can't break free from it.
- Butch
- There are several bounties on his head, but one requirement for collection is actually bringing in that head. Which will be difficult, as his followers devoutly protect him. He has twice been dropped by skilled snipers and twice recovered thanks to his body being dragged off by his gang instead of being left for dead.
- Balladeer
- Lose out on a contract one of those times?
- Slamm-0!
- Seemed like easy money until I got to town and learned how wild this place really is. I appreciate it now and may take another crack at him if I can find a solid team.
- Balladeer



B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
8(+1)	5	5(9)	8	3	3	6	5	0.05	3
Condition Monitor	16/10								
Armor	22								
Limits	Physical 10 (11), Mental 5, Social 5								
Physical Initiative	10 + 1D6								
Skills	Aeronautics Mechanic 3, Armorer 4, Automatics 7 (Assault Rifle +2), Automotive Mechanic 5, Blades 5, Clubs 4, Computer 2, Con 5, Demolitions 4, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Lasers) 6, First Aid 4, Gymnastics 4, Heavy Weapons 7, Industrial Mechanic 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4, Locksmith 2 (Mechanical +2), Navigation 4, Negotiation 3, Palming 3, Perception 5 (Visual +2), Pistols 6, Running 4, Sneaking 5, Survival 6(+1), Swimming 3, Throwing Weapons 4, Tracking 6, Unarmed Combat 8 (Cyber Implants +2)								
Knowledge Skills	Afrikaans N, English 2, Gang Cultures 6, Gang Identification 4, Law Enforcement 3, PWV Politics 4 (The Smile +2), Runner Hangouts 4, Security Corps 3, Shadowrunners 5								
Qualities	Cyberpsychosis, Poor Self Control (Braggart, Thrill-Seeker, Compulsive, Vindictive), High Pain Tolerance 3, Home Ground (Street Politics), Magic Resistance 4, Quick Healer, Resistance to Pathogens/Toxins, Toughness, Tough As Nails (Physical 4), Wanted (50,000¥), Will to Live 3								
Augmentations	Cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 2], cyberlimb [hand, obvious, w/ retractable spurs, blowtorch], dermal plating 6 (alphaware), reaction enhancers 3, wired reflexes 2 (alphaware)								
Gear	Ares Victory Big Game Hunter armor [14, w/ Custom Protection (Desert/Heat) 6, holster, gear access, nonconductivity 6, fire resistance 6], ballistic mask (+2, customized look (skull)), Renraku Sensei commlink [Device Rating 3, w/ AR gloves, sim module, trid projector]								
Weapons	Spur [Unarmed, Reach —, Acc 11, DV 11P, AP —] Ares Redline [Exotic (laser), SA, Acc 9, DV 5P, AP -10, RC —, 10(c), w/ 3 spare power clips] Ares Alpha [AR, Acc 5 (7), DV 13P, AP -3, SA/BF/FA, RC 2, 42(c), w/ 3 spare clips, 130 rounds EX-explosive ammo] Grenade Launcher [Heavy Weapons, Acc 4 (6), DV Grenade, AP Grenade, SS, RC —, 6(c), w/ 3 spare clips, 6 high explosive (DV 16P, AP -2, Blast -2/m), 6 Fragmentation (DV 18P(f), AP +5, Blast -1/m), 6 flash-bang (DV 10S, AP -4, Blast 10m radius)] Stoner-Ares M202 [Heavy Weapons, Acc 5, DV 12P, AP -4, FA, RC —, 50 (c), w/ 3 spare clips, 150 rounds EX-explosive ammo] Ares Archon Heavy MP Laser [Exotic (laser), Acc 7, DV 10P, AP -10, SA, RC —, external source, w/ power backpack with 15 shots]								

THE RUBY SLIPPER NETWORK

POSTED BY: OZ

- Slight change of pace here. These guys have worked in Pretoria, though not exclusively, but they certainly fit the theme of this posting, and their leader was willing to provide some data. Check 'em out, and of course add any intel you might have.
- Glitch

OZ

"DO NOT WORRY. YOU WILL NOT REMEMBER A THING."

When the rich look out their penthouse windows at the world laid out before them, they see that world in terms of exploitable resources. In those quiet moments as I count my breaths and listen to my heart beat, I feel the pain and anguish of a population that is being systematically destroyed.

I am the man behind the curtain. I am Oz. I have a solution.

But before I tell you about me and my network, let me assure you of one thing: I will not give you the details that will help find me. I have millions in bounties on my head. One of you nekulturny [auto-translate: uncultured, typically used in derogatory manner; source language: Russian] on here is going to think you can collect it. Think again. I'm smarter than you. I will not lead you to my door. I have survived the past twenty years precisely because I blend in. Everyone sees me. Nobody knows me. And if you come close, this is my guarantee: I am a doctor who works and has contacts all over the world. I will wait until you install the next piece of ware or patch a bullet wound. You will not wake up. This is my guarantee. Do not think I am some helpless, rich, do-gooder doctor. That is a mistake. My compassionate nature does not extend to fools who try to hurt me and mine.

Enough.

There are several steps to a quality hooder job. The first is to identify your target. My father once told me when we were visiting our island in the Med, "Don't be one of the rich that brags about his business to the world." My victims fall over themselves, regaling me with tales of their corporate exploits. They tell me just as much about their business conscious as when drugged.

Which brings me to the second step: gather intel. During the day, I work as an anesthesiologist. I have



a gift for chemical interrogation. When my patients are in that place between consciousness and unconsciousness, I empty their minds of paydata. I can also gather biological samples. Perfect for beating certain security measures. Never underestimate good intel. It is why I remain uncaught and highly successful.

- I've heard of this doctor. While I'm a fan of his results, his staggering disregard for the Hippocratic oath cannot be justified.
- KAM
- It's risky for both patient and doctor. He's using a drug called speakeasy. Very rare drug. Expensive to make and remains effective for only a few hours. If you get the dose wrong, the subject can suffer permanent dissociative symptoms.
- Beaker

The third step is the run itself. Bianca hires the runners and Reaper ensures they stick to the plan. I provide detailed information and biological samples to beat security. I expect my runner teams to follow my instructions to the letter. If they deviate, they can discuss the issue with Reaper.

- Reaper doesn't have much of a rep as a talker.
- Cosmo

The final step is redistribution of assets. When I finished med school, I learned I was broke. With less than ten thousand nuyen to my name, I took what I learned from my patients and engaged in some insider trading. I use the resulting network of wealth to benefit those society looks down on. I also have numerous sources that can get the money where needed.

I grew up a child of wealth and privilege, but I could always sense the pain of those around me. Several years into my medical practice, my mentor spirit Guanyin spoke to me for the first time. She told me to stop indulging in excess and to respond to all who are in pain. I started working the free clinics, putting my education to good use. I experienced the pain I felt firsthand. I knew who needed to benefit from my life's mission of freeing up all that corporate wealth. Do you want to understand the consequence of not caring for the people in the barrens? Watch dozens of children die from an illness that could have been cured by fifty nuyen worth of medications.

From that moment, I stopped gathering wealth for myself and started healing the world. I have put together runs to release pharmaceutical formulas into the public domain. I outed several megas that

were dumping toxic sludge into various barrens. My favorite was identifying Franklin Hoeflinger from Pretoria who was conducting tests on baby trolls and orks, inducing mutations.

- Ah, so that's where some of the Denver troublemakers ended up.
- Traveler Jones

And just so we are clear: You will know my runs by the ruby slippers marked on all electronic documents generated for the run. Those marks are my personal guarantee that this is my hooder run. If you work with a Mr. Johnson claiming the run is my work, look for the ruby slippers for confirmation.

Hooding can be a life that you are both driven to and take immense satisfaction from. Working in black clinics offers me a wealth of opportunity to gather intel. Good luck in all your hooding enterprises. May compassion be your guide.

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	M
	3	3	3	3	5	6	4	5	6	4	8
Condition Monitor	10/11										
Armor	8										
Limits	Physical 4, Mental 7, Social 7(9)										
Physical Initiative	7 +1D6										
Skills	Biotechnology 6, Chemistry 7, Computer 5, Con 6, Cybertechnology 6, Etiquette 8, First Aid 6, Intimidation 8 (Chemical Interrogation +2), Leadership 2, Medicine 6 (Anesthesiology +2), Negotiation 4, Perception 6, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Pistols 2, Unarmed Combat 6										
Knowledge Skills	Fine Liquor 4, Medical Practice 6, Pharmacology 6, Shadowrunners 3, Stock Market 5, Who's Who 4										
Languages	English (N)										
Qualities	Adept, Analytical Mind, Blandness, College Education, Driven (Hooder), Mentor Spirit (Guanyin), Photographic Memory, Signature: Ruby Slippers, SINner (Corporate Limited SIN): Evo, Social Chameleon										
Initiate Grade	2										
Metamagics	Power Point x 2										
Adept Powers	Analytics (4), Cool Resolve (5), Empathic Healing, Kinesics (4), Nerve Strike										
Vehicles	BMW i8 Interceptor [Handling 5/3, Speed 8, Accel 4, Body 12, Armor 8, Pilot 4, Sensor 4, Seats 3]										
Gear	Armanté Suit (Increase Social Limit by 2), Fairlight Caliban										
Weapons	Cavalier Deputy [Heavy Pistol, Acc 6, DV 7P, AP -1, SA, 7(cy)], w/ regular ammo Fichetti Tiffani Needle [Hold-out, Acc 6, DV 8P(f), AP +5, SA, 4 (c)] w/ cybersafety RFID detector										



COUGAR

“WHAT’S MEAT SPACE?”

I remember the first time I saw him. Laid out on the extra large operating table, his massive bulk nonetheless looked shriveled and vulnerable. Hooding is not just about helping the masses. It is also about helping individuals who cannot help themselves. This shattered hulk before me was going to need a lot of help. This was to be the first of many surgeries. None would ever be successful in repairing his damaged spine. He was destined to live out his life in a hospital bed. He would never do more than flex his right index finger ever again.

After eighteen months, he was returned to his luxurious apartment. He came from money. Not quite at my level, but sufficient. I became his personal physician, confidant, and mentor. You see, under that massive troll physique was an even bigger brain, one that could engage the Matrix unaided. Our Cougar was a technomancer.

Cougar started this journey as a human boy. At age twelve, he goblinized into a troll. Not the right look for a young man spending most of his free time at the local country club. His parents attempted to hide this monstrosity. They purchased a huge property, and tutors educated the young troll behind tall walls. Out of sight, out of mind.

Life turned even uglier. First the body had turned on him, then his mind followed. He fell into deep bouts of depression with periods of suicidal tendencies. He would then be subjected to intense highs. He would stay awake for days and engage in destructive fits of rage. His parents consulted the most expensive psychiatrists. They tried various medication regimens. His troll body rejected these efforts.

By age seventeen, his condition worsened. He began to hear voices. His parents despaired. They purchased an expensive condo. Turned it into a fortress to protect him. Hired keepers. All this failed. At age nineteen, he escaped from his handlers and walked off an eighth-floor balcony.

Cougar never gave up. Under the tutelage of some great deckers, he developed into a superb

technomancer. He displayed a finely tuned, innate ability to ferret out data and protect my networks. He uses the info I gather to strip information from the targets.

I have talked to several people over the years who know Cougar in the Matrix. He is different in there. More focused. One person described him as funny. They told me that he has a gift for data stores. He can find information in the Matrix that nobody even realized was there. But a straight-up fight or a dust-up with IC is not his thing. They say his icon is of his namesake running. He lives in the Matrix now. That collective hallucination is the only place he can be free from his damaged body.

COUGAR

METATYPE: TROLL

AGE: 28

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	R
	5	0	0	0	6	5	5	4	6	4	8
Condition Monitor	11/11										
Armor	1										
Limits	Physical 2, Mental 7, Social 7										
Physical Initiative	5 + 1D6										
Matrix Initiative Skills	12 + 4D6										
Knowledge Skills	Computer 10 (Matrix Search +2), Con 5 (Fast Talking +2), Cracking skill group 4, Etiquette 3, Perception 4, Software 4, Tasking Group 7										
Qualities	Data Havens 4, Matrix Personalities 3, VR Games 5, VR Hangouts 3										
Submersion Grade	4										
Echoes	Data Processing Upgrade (x2), Resonance, Baby Monitor										
Contacts	Flex (Data haven operator, Connection 5, Loyalty 3) Lallana (Matrix club owner, Connection 4, Loyalty 3) Natalya (informant, Connection 3, Loyalty 2) Terram McGowan (Infobroker, Connection 4, Loyalty 2)										





FULL THROTTLE

"DRONES ARE PEOPLE, TOO."

You never quite get to see him. He is quick and elusive and likes to operate through his "minions," as he calls them. I knew him before he became a first-class rigger. He started as a scrappy kid trying to make ends meet stealing cars. The old fashioned way. This was twenty-odd years ago before everything became wireless.

I had just graduated from medical school and bought myself a Bentley 569xi from the factory near my villa. I know it lacked discretion, but this was in the days prior to my network.

One night, I could not sleep. I opened the garage door and there he was, all beady eyes and bad attitude. The car was running, and he had me dead to rights. He could have run me down. He did not. I was curious about this street kid and what he could do with that car. So he took us for a ride. Smooth. Fast. Terrifying. The ride was all this and more. He could drive!

Classic Full Throttle. There's a story about him that goes like this. He was running a T-Bird out of the Ural Mountains. Full of contraband, he was running slower than usual. This was a big run for him. He had sunk all his savings in the cargo.

Cruising low through the middle of nowhere, his Lockheed X2 picked up some ground activity. Curiosity got the better of him. He tasked the drone to take a closer look. A squad of Evo troopers were beating the bushes. Since he was close to a conflict area, he knew refugees were probably hiding nearby. Full Throttle tried to ignore his conscience and failed. He released four Roto-drones rigged with AK-98s. After incapacitating the squad, he landed the t-bird. A family emerged from the bushes, leaving him a choice: Save his contraband, or save a family. Not really a choice in his book. You cannot put a price on human life.

His name came up in an interrogation as the spider protecting a target. What a waste, I thought, a knight templar guarding an outhouse. A poor use of talent. He proved very helpful to the runners on that data heist. He has been with us ever since.

Full Throttle would tell you he hears the machines whisper in his ears. He grew up an orphan, so I think he is desperate to not feel so alone. His parents died when he was five in an industrial accident. That accident created a lot of orphans that night.

FULL THROTTLE



FULL THROTTLE

METATYPE: ORK

AGE: 37

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
	5	5	6(9)	4	3	4	5	3	3.27	2
Condition Monitor	11/10									
Armor	9									
Limits	Physical 7(8), Mental 6, Social 5									
Physical Initiative	11(14) +1D6									
Skills	Armorer 4, Automatics 5, Automotive Mechanic 5, Con 2 (Fast Talking +2), Electronic Warfare 4, Etiquette 3, Gunnery 6, Perception 6, Pilot Aircraft 6, Pilot Ground Craft 8, Sneaking 5									
Knowledge Skills	Auto Mechanic 4, Comic Books 4, Drones 6, RPGs 2, Smuggling 5, Vehicle Mounted Weapons 3									
Languages	English N, Russian 1									
Qualities	Low-Light Vision, Chaser, Dealer Connection (Drones), Driven (Hooder), Erased, Gearhead, Incompetent (Close Combat skill group), Lack of Focus, Speed Demon, Steely Eyed Wheelman, Stunt Driver									
Augmentations	Control Rig (Betaware) (3), Reaction Enhancers (Betaware) (3)									
RCC	MCT Drone Web									
Vehicles	Ford Percheron [Handling 3/3, Speed 3, Accel 2, Body 15, Armor 6, Pilot 4, Sensor 3, Seats 6]									
Drones	Lockheed Optic-X2 [Handling 4, Speed 4, Accel 3, Body 2, Armor 2, Pilot 3/5, Sensor 3 Gear: Clearsight (5), Linguistics: English (local language), Linguistics: Japanese (Manufacturer's Language), Pilot (5) Rigger Interface, Signature Masking, 6 x MCT Fly-Spy [Handling 4, Speed 3, Accel 2, Body 1, Armor 0, Pilot 3, Sensor 3] Gear: Linguistics: English (local language), Linguistics: Japanese (Manufacturer's Language), Realistic Features Rigger Interface 6 x MCT-Nissan Roto-drone [Handling 4, Speed 4, Accel 2, Body 4, Armor 8, Pilot 3/4, Sensor 3] Gear: Armor Upgrade +4, Clearsight (4), Linguistics: English (local language), Linguistics: Japanese (Manufacturer's Language), Pilot (4), Rigger Interface, Targeting: Ingram Smartgun X (4)									
Gear	Armor vest [9], Fairlight Caliban, goggles (6) w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement (1), Fake SIN (6) [name: Krillon Knopfer, w/ Fake License: Submachinegun (6)], High Lifestyle (1 month), Shop (Armorer)									
Weapons	Ingram Smartgun X [SMG, Acc 4, DV 8P, AP —, BF/FA, RC 2(3), 32 (c), w/ folding stock, gas-vent (2) system, silencer/suppressor, smartgun system (internal)]									
Contacts	Chug McGovers (Connection 3, Loyalty 2) Dillboy (Connection 2, Loyalty 5) Fred Dern (Connection 2, Loyalty 4) Growl (Connection 3, Loyalty 4) Nolan Gilfreys (Connection 5, Loyalty 3)									

REAPER

"MAKE 'EM BLEED. WATCH 'EM DIE."

"I didn't know it would be you," she said suddenly, so unsure of herself. She let her scythe dangle by her side.

I could see she was torn. I had met this ballerina of death at her father's funeral service three years earlier. I do not imagine many had ever shown her kindness. She was a cleaner, like her parents. I had known someone was coming. I just never imagined it would be her.

That was the only time I ever saw doubt cross her grim features. In fact, the only time she showed emotion at all was when her targets expired. According to the Horizon dossier, she lived a childhood bathed in other people's blood.

We all have a pivotal moment in our lives. A moment that is the epicenter of change. Her father's death was just such a moment. Two choices. A fork in the road. One choice: help her old man out on a job. The other choice? Follow through on her own contract. Her father died on that job, and something died in her.

I had remained calm in the face of death. It was not my time. I still had much to do. She later told me that as we stood there, so still, she watched my pulse beat in my throat.

"You have a choice," I whispered.

"There are no choices," she had said.

I focused on my breath and the moment. I wondered if she was freelance or still with Horizon. I wondered exactly who I had slotted off. I realized these things did not matter. It was all Reaper's choice.

"You never said just how you knew my father."

"You did nothing wrong." I had called her by her birth name. In the language of her father it meant "the forgiving one." Such irony.

She gave her scythe a few practice swings, but I knew I was safe. She still had eyes back then. I saw something alive in them suddenly. She turned and disappeared. Six months later, she worked for me.

If you want to know why she did not kill me that night, you have to ask her.



REAPER

METATYPE: HUMAN

AGE: 43

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
	4	5(8)	3(5)	7(10)	3	2	4	2	2.3	4
Condition Monitor	10/10									
Armor	9									
Limits	Physical 7(10), Mental 4, Social 4									
Physical Initiative	7(9) + 3D6									
Skills	Athletics skill group 3, Blades 1, Demolitions 6, Etiquette 3, Exotic Melee Weapon (Collapsible Scythe) 8(9), First Aid 3, Locksmith 4, Longarms 2 (Shotguns +2), Perception 4 (Visual +2), Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pistols 3, Sneaking 5									
Knowledge Skills	Corporate Security 4, Forensic Cleaning 5, Melee Weapons 3, Security Tactics 5									
Languages	English 4, French N, Portuguese N									
Qualities	Agile Defender, Antipathy, Big Regret, Bilingual, Exceptional Attribute: Strength, Impassive, Natural Athlete, SINner (National SIN: EU), Toughness									
Augmentations	Cybereyes [Capacity 4, w/ eye protectors, flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 3], muscle replacement 3 (betaware), reflex recorder (exotic melee weapon [collapsible scythe]), synaptic booster 2									
Gear	Autopicker (6), Fairlight Caliban, keypad Copier (6), Lockpick Set, Maglock Passkey (5), Rosalina Emilene Aldencamp Perrault Elbarari Rodrigues w/ (2 months) Middle Lifestyle, Sabine Martin w/ Fake SIN (6), Sequencer (7), Tool Kit, Locksmithing, Urban Explorer Jumpsuit w/ Chemical Protection (3), Fire Resistance (3), Nonconductivity (3)									
Vehicles	Yamaha Kaburaya [Handling 5/3, Speed 6, Accel 3, Body 5, Armor 4, Pilot 1, Sensor 2, Seats 1]									
Weapons	Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 8, DV 8P, AP -5, SA, 15 (c), w/ (40x) APDS, personalized grip, smartgun system (internal)] Auto-Assault 16 [Shotgun, Acc 7, DV 13P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 5(7), 10 (c), w/ foregrip, gas-vent (3) system, personalized grip, shock pad, smartgun system (external)] Ceramic/Plasteel Knife [Blade, Acc 5, DV 11P, AP -1] Collapsible Scythe [Exotic Melee Weapon, Reach 2, Acc 6, DV 12P, AP -2, w/ personalized grip]									
Contacts	Blade (Connection 4, Loyalty 1) Mom (Connection 3, Loyalty 6) Shaggums (Connection 3, Loyalty 2) Squizzell (Connection 3, Loyalty 1) Wezel Warrens (Connection 5, Loyalty 1)									

BIANCA

"YOU KNOW WHAT'S THE BIGGEST RUSH? MAKING SOMEONE LOSE THEIR WILL TO LIVE."

Reaper will kill you. Bianca will make you wish you were dead. Each has their uses. Understand this—we hood because we are compelled to do so. Each of us is a tool with specific uses. I am the mastermind of it all. All of us play this game willingly.

Bianca once told me her mom was always scolding her for playing with her food. That's what it is for, the cat shaman always replied.

She is our face, and a beautiful one at that. A fire burns inside of her. She protects the world like a mother protects her young. She was unable to protect her own. I saw holo projections of them once. I could see their mother in their sculpted elven feature. Ares never took responsibility for the stray rounds fired by Knight Errant security. She left two security agents dead. She has since sworn off killing—she drives her targets to it instead.

I watched the fight through one of Full Throttle's drones, though it was not really a fight. I could see the St. Louis arch in the background. The target writhed on the ground. She had softened him with a Stunbolt spell and followed it up with Agony. He felt a great deal of pain but was at no risk of dying. The target had taken my data for a run and used it for his own purposes. Unforgivable.

- This is a good time to point out that running for Oz and his crew won't make you rich, but usually you'll stay safe. He plans runs to the finest detail and provides biological samples to beat security. Just don't betray him or his people.
- Cosmo

Bianca approached him, the crowds flowing around her. No blood had been shed. She bent over the target. A scalpel—one of mine, no doubt—appeared in her hand. She cut a slash mark on his face, the third such one, and finished off with a vial of fluid dribbled on the cut. Maximum scarring. There would be that whispered warning. "Have these marks removed, and I will add more. Two more, and you're done."

- Those marks serve as a warning to others and a reminder to the victim. And I do mean victim. I met a troll with those marks. She broke him. He was a quivering mess.
- DangerSensei
- Then the rumors are true.
- Kia



She watched him twist in pain. I did not like how much she enjoyed herself, but who was I to judge? I had ordered this, after all. To my surprise, he stood up. Bianca just watched, eyes dancing with fire. The target stumbled toward the Mississippi River, which raged in front of him. Bianca could have released the spell at any time. Instead, she walked behind him. When he leaped into the river, she dropped the spell. A further act of cruelty. Now he would drown when the pain was gone. But I underestimated her. Before he took his final breath, she levitated him to safety.

“See you next month,” she told him.

Forgive her. Fifty-three orphans died as a result of the target’s actions.

BIANCA

METATYPE: ELF

AGE: 55

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG	M
	4	3	4	3	5	3	4	8	6	4	8
Condition Monitor	10/11										
Armor	12										
Limits	Physical, 5 Mental 5, Social 11										
Physical Initiative	8 + 1D6										
Astral Initiative	8 + 3D6										
Skills	Acting skill group 4, Assensing 4 (Aura Reading +2), Etiquette 5, Gymnastics 4, Intimidation 7 (Torture +2), Negotiation 8 (Bargaining +2), Perception 5 (Visual +2), Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 2, Sorcery skill group 8										
Knowledge Skills	Cool Locales 4, Corporations 5, Gourmand 4, High Fashion 4, Psychology 4, Shadowrunners 6										
Languages	French N, Sperethiel 4, German 4, Russian 3, Dutch 2										
Qualities	Shamanic Aspected Magician (Sorcery), Bad Luck, Dependent(s) (1, Husband), First Impression, Gremlins (2), Mentor Spirit (Cat), Poor Self Control (Sadistic), Too Pretty to Hit, Trustworthy										
Initiate Grade	4										
Metamagics	Astral bluff, centering, flexible signature, quickening										
Vehicles	Saab Dynamit [Handling 5/1, Speed 9, Accel 3, Body 10, Armor 3, Pilot 2, Sensor 3, Seats 2]										
Spells	Agony, Bugs, Chaos, Confusion, Fireball, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Increase Reflexes, Influence, Levitate, Mask, Mass Agony, Stunball, Stunbolt										
Gear	Contacts [Capacity 3, w/ image link, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 1], Fairlight Caliban, Heritage AR 12 (w/ Custom Fit), High Lifestyle (2 months), fake SIN (Rating 6, name: Linda Juellen w/ fake license: magic (Rating 6), fake SIN (Rating 6, name: Roolonda Svetloff w/ fake license: magic (Rating 6)										
Weapons	Tiffani-Defiance Protector [Taser, Acc 7, DV 7S(e), AP -5, SA, 3 (m), w/ laser sight]										
Contacts	Berit Fischer (Connection 6, Loyalty 3) Camila Lopez (Connection 7, Loyalty 3) Chang Zhou (Connection 2, Loyalty 2) Oz (Connection 6, Loyalty 5)										



BIANCA



LIFER

"SOMETIMES THE BEST REVENGE IS A LIFE WELL LIVED."

He knew where I lived. No one knows that. I live invisibly, so how did he know? But the evidence was right there in front of me. He had snuck past my guards, sat at my patio table, and begun eating one of my bran muffins. The gun he pointed at me never wavered. Curiously, it was an old, unmodified chrome revolver. The suit was excellent quality but faded and more than thirty years old.

"The bullets still work in that thing?" I asked. I flipped a switch on my 'link, alerting the rest of the network. I was more shaken that this was occurring at one of my houses than I was by the presence of the gun.

"They worked just fine an hour ago."

That gave me pause. "Who are you?" I asked and poured some orange juice.

"Nothing fazes you. They call me Lifer. I'm looking for work."

At that moment, Cougar texted me Lifer's name and said he had just been paroled after thirty years for murder. "Just who do you think I am?"

He spoke my real name. "How do you know that?" I asked. He smiled, and I knew I had given myself up. He pocketed the gun. Prison had not been kind. He was gaunt and pale even by elven standards. Lines had started to etch their way across his face. But despite the obvious tensions of the situation, he remained calm, focused.

"What is it you think you know about me?" I asked.

He smiled broadly, and I could sense the weapon he used to survive prison. Charm. He had lots of charm. That smile and his name finally clicked. He had been a corporate CEO convicted of killing his business partner.

"You are Oz," Lifer replied.

Killing Lifer would be easy. But I had to know how he knew. Had I made a mistake I was unaware of?

"I watched all these years and saw the pattern. The shadows move around you. They dance to your tune," Lifer said this as if he were listening to my thoughts. He nodded and happily ate his muffin. "My only pursuit was to study you for the past twenty years."

"You can't be the only person to have figured it out."

Lifer picked a crumb off his suit. "I'm not after anything here. I have told no one and won't sell the information. This is not about a payday."

Oz slowed his breathing and reached out with his senses. The man was not a threat, but he was in deep emotional pain. He took a sip of juice and thought about his course of action. How to relieve the elf's suffering? "You want to be a part of this network." It was a statement.

"I need to be part of something."

The elf's pain lunged at me. "You seek meaning in vengeance," I said.

"Yes," he whispered.

Knowing when to listen. Knowing when to not pull the trigger. Knowing when to hand over trust. This knowledge is the heart of wisdom. I gave Lifer what he wanted, a place in this network. He gives me what I want. He watches my back. He covers my tracks and ensures no one eats my bran muffins without permission ever again.

NAME: LIFER

METATYPE: ELF

AGE: 65

	B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS	EDG
	3	6	4	3	5	4	5	8	6	3
Condition Monitor	10/11									
Armor	7									
Limits	Physical 5, Mental 6, Social 9(12)									
Physical Initiative	9(10) + 2D6									
Skills	Computer 5(Matrix Search +2), Con 9(Fast Talking +2), Etiquette 2, Intimidation 7(Mental +2), Longarms 3, Negotiation 5(Bargaining +2), Perception 7(Visual +2), Pistols 4, Sneaking 6, Tracking 5(Urban +2), Unarmed Combat 3									
Knowledge Skills	Corporate Politics 6, Corporate Law 4, Local 3									
Languages	German N, English 4									
Qualities	Big Regret, Ex-Con, First Impression, Hung Out to Dry, Infirm (1), Lightning Reflexes, SINner (Criminal SIN: Cornelius Walters), Too Pretty to Hit									
Gear	Ace of Coins w/ Increase Social Limit by 3, Cornelius Walters, Fairlight Caliban, Synth Flanders w/ Fake License: weapons (6), Fake SIN (6)									
Weapons	Fichetti Security 600 [Light Pistol, Acc 8, DV 7P, AP —, SA, RC (1), 30 (c), w/ folding stock, laser sight, personalized grip] Remington 950 [Sniper Rifle, Acc 8, DV 12P, AP -4, SS, 5 (m), w/ imaging scope, personalized grip, smartgun system (external)]									



RULES

SOCIAL CHAMELEON (POSITIVE QUALITY)

COST: 7 KARMA

Some people have the knack for staying out of sight completely. Not you. You mix it up while still managing to remain part of the crowd. You have learned how to never make that false move that causes people to question your presence. You always say the right thing at the right time. This quality confers a +2 dice pool bonus on all Etiquette tests.

QUADRIPLLEGIC (NEGATIVE QUALITY)

BONUS: 25 KARMA

You have been a victim of both a horrible trauma and terrible luck. Whether from an accident, combat damage, or something worse, you have no ability to move more than your index finger. The bad luck is that despite modern medicine, the condition is irreparable. You require assistance for some essential life tasks. All your phys-

ical stats except Body are reduced to 0, and you receive a thirty percent increase in Lifestyle costs to reflect your particular needs. Your movement is 0 or in accordance with a chosen mobility device. You can't benefit from any enhancements to physical attributes. Clearly, you must choose your career carefully.

GUANYIN (MENTOR SPIRIT)

Guanyin is the goddess of compassion and mercy. She sees people in need and swoops down to protect them. She hates those who cause misery. She is the doctor who helps the poor and the street samurai who kills the gangers preying on the SINless. She is strong and her mercy swift. She confers a +2 dice for all First Aid tests.

Magician: +2 for Healing spells, preparations, and rituals.

Adept: Empathic Healing power.

Disadvantages: A Guanyin magician is highly motivated to save other beings. If the Magician is offered a run that doesn't involve hooding, she must make a Charisma + Willpower (3) test before she can accept the run. Failure on this test means she turns down the job.



BEING LESS BAD

THE FINE ART OF HOODING

POSTED BY: FREYA

Hooding: one of the few times you can say “I’m doing good” without grammar Nazis jumping down your throat.

- My inner editor hates this person already.
- Sunshine

I’m sure that Old Crow—he’s the one who passed my name to the JackPoint admins—has already trotted out an inspiring speech about how every shadowrunner can be a force for good unto themselves. There was probably a call to action, a reminder that the battle isn’t yet over, and an emphasis on the need for solidarity; exactly the kinds of things that get idealists’ blood pumping. Whether you agree with him or not, you have to admit, the man’s good at getting people fired up. I, on the other hand, am here to tell you how hooding works in the real world.

- Suddenly I feel like I’ve made a terrible mistake.
- Old Crow

If you’re reading this, you’re probably new to hooding. You’ve probably also been exposed to quite a few half-truths, misconceptions, and outright lies about what hooding really is. If not, consider this one of the few times where knowing less is actually an advantage; you’re better off hearing it from someone who actually knows what she’s talking about. Speaking of which, I should probably tell you a little about myself, both because it’s one of my favorite subjects and so you know why you should care about what I have to say.

Seattleite runners know me as Freya, the hard-drinking, swashbuckling combat mage from Tír Tairngire. Before I stepped into the shadows, I was a spy and assassin—one of the Tír’s Black Daggers, specifically. I did their dirty work for longer than I like to think about, oppressing the citizenry at home and extending the reach of the “sinister elven conspiracy” abroad. When the good people of the Tír used the chaos of the last Crash as an opportunity to give Surehand and the rest of the Council the boot, I left the country to avoid the *Rinelle ke’Tesrae’s* “revolutionary justice.”

- You might even say the *Rinelle* were her nemesis.
- Thorn
- Rory Caolain. I suppose I should congratulate you and your comrades on a job well done, you justifiably smug bastard.
- Freya
- Everyone likes to be appreciated.
- Thorn

Ironically, when the JackPoint admins contacted me, I agreed to write this guide as much out of selfishness as altruism. Posting a hooding guide somewhere like JackPoint, where others can see it and possibly take up the mantle themselves, will do more to make the world a better place than I ever could working alone—which is fine by me, because frankly, fighting the good fight is a lot of work. I also did it because there’s nobody more qualified to write about hooding. I’ve been both Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham, or at least Sir Guy of Gisbourne. I’ve walked the moral tightrope of hooding for a long time, and fallen from it enough times that I can help others avoid doing the same. Besides, it’s almost impossible to talk about “the greater good” without sound-





ing self-righteous, and nobody does self-righteous better than a Tír elf. Why settle for less than the best?

- Never thought I'd say this about a bleeding heart, but after seeing her turn a file on how to help others into talking about herself, I'm actually impressed.
- Clockwork

- I really do put the "elf" in "self-centered," don't I?
- Freya

- Crow ...
- Bull

- Not my fault, chummer, it's easier to tell she doesn't take herself seriously in person. Plus, after Hong Kong, there's nothing I wouldn't do if it means annoying the hell out of you.
- Old Crow

- <grumble>
- Bull

DOING GOOD

Working as a hooder is more or less like working as any other kind of shadowrunner; sometimes more, other times less. Many so-called hooding runs, especially ones that come from activist policlubs, are nothing more than typical shadowruns with an added moral dimension. A datasteal becomes "whistleblowing" when it's done to expose misconduct. A "hostage rescue" is just a high-risk, short-timetable extraction by another name. I call myself an "Awakened security consultant" when I'm in front of "clients", but in the shadows I'm an assassin who specializes in "dark magic" contracts—toxics, bugs, shadow spirits, whatever. My Mr. Johnsons are usually government or corpsec types who have a threat

to neutralize and no magician who can deal with it on their payroll.

The other kind of hooding is more like a gradual ascent into legitimacy. A neo-anarchist-run free clinic in the Barrens isn't really "shadowrunning" so much as community service that happens to be done by runners, especially if it happens enough that said runners start getting recognized around the community, which defeats the purpose of hiring *deniable* operatives. This kind of hooding still tends toward one-off jobs, like clearing a devil rat infestation out of an apartment building or "encouraging" a neighborhood gang to stop tagging the local Stuffer Shack with AR graffiti. Some hooders end up settling and working primarily in one community, but at that point you might as well just call yourself a private investigator.

Since I'm sure none of you need an explanation of how the first type of hooding works, let's look at the primary difference between hooding and regular shadowruns: public interaction.

EXPOSING YOURSELF

Shadowrunners are used to operating in a world where secrecy is the norm. We know the value of a well-kept secret, and we use that value as currency. We keep our mouths shut because saying the wrong thing to the wrong person can scuttle a job, blow our cover, or even get us killed. Our Johnsons keep their mouths shut because they don't want their targets to find out what they're planning, and our Johnsons' targets keep their mouths shut because they don't want to be seen as weak when they fail to stop us from doing our jobs.

As a hooder, though, everything turns on its head. Hooding runs often involve dealing with "normal people", whether it's the neighbors down the hall, the kids down the street, or the average Joes and Janes standing in line with you at the Stuffer Shack. They all live in a world where para-



noia is the exception rather than the rule, where their livelihood doesn't depend on them being able to keep a secret, and where it's normal for people who know you to know something about you.

- That place sounds terrifying.
- Mika

A large part of the reason for this is the nature of hooding. Hooders make good things happen. People get excited when good things happen to them, and when they get excited, they want to talk about the good things—and who was responsible for making said good things happen. It's very common for a hooding Mr. Johnson to insist on utter secrecy while the job is underway, only to brag to everyone in earshot that they were the one who organized it all the second you step out the door. The enthusiasm spreads, people gossip, and before you know it, everyone knows your name. Whether that publicity is good or bad depends on the runner, but since most runners maintain a "security through obscurity" policy to avoid blowback from our runs, we normally see it as a bad thing. Some hooders go to extreme lengths to avoid any kind of publicity, conducting all of their meets in disguise and taking extra care not to be spotted during their legwork or the run itself.

- Freya's exaggerating a little. In my experience as a fixer, names and stories of runs don't spread significantly slower or faster among "normal people" than they do in the shadows. The main difference is that in the shadows, you usually get that info by asking or being told directly about it, instead of overhearing it being discussed by people you've never seen before, let alone met.
- Kia
- Just another reason hooding isn't worth the effort. Easier to keep from being ID'd if you skip "security through obscurity" and go straight to, "there will be no survivors!"
- Kane

On the other hand, more sociable hooders might enjoy meeting people in the community they're helping, and word-of-mouth advertising can be great for newer runners who are still trying to build a rep. It can even be a main source of work for hooders who operate legally or semi-legally, like modern folk hero Jimmy Kincaid.

- Would you knock it off with the "hero" crap?
- Kincaid

- But you're funny when you're ornery, Mitch.
- Hard Exit
- Oh, for... remind me never to introduce you two.
- Kincaid

COPS ARE PEOPLE, TOO

Most shadowrunners avoid law enforcement scrutiny like the plague, for obvious reasons, but it's not uncommon for hooders to find themselves working for or with the same badges they normally dodge. When the police are looking to hire you for official business, they'll normally send a detective—they're the ones most likely to be investigating crimes where you'd be useful as a "consultant."

Detectives rank pretty high on the list of Mr. Johnsons for unofficial police jobs, too. They'll often ask for help retrieving, planting, or "producing" evidence they can't get a warrant to seize. If you have a decent poker face, they might even recruit you in a more active role, like helping with sting operations and other means of getting unreasonably dangerous criminals off the street.

- Remember, kids, "it's not what you know, it's what you can prove" is just as true about entrapment as anything else.
- Hard Exit
- If you take a job as a snitch, be extra, *extra* careful to conceal both your identity and your involvement with the police. There's always a chance that word will get out, and if it does, you'll be lucky to survive long enough to worry about never working in that city again.
- DangerSensei
- I've gotten quite a few "avenging angel" contracts from various law enforcement agencies. The story is virtually the same every time: genuinely horrible person gets nailed for a crime, but goes free on a technicality because someone made a mistake on one of the eight million forms they had to fill out. Like most hooding runs, the pay is usually terrible, but having one less serial killer or sexual predator on the streets can be pretty satisfying.
- Balladeer

I know most shadowrunners, hooders included, aren't big on the "deference to authority" thing. As tempting as it might be to take a cop's need for your help and rub it in their faces, acting like a professional instead of a smug elven princess (even if



you *are* a smug elven princess) will turn out better for you. Remember that “deniability” doesn’t just mean the target can’t connect you to the Johnson—it means *you* can’t connect you to the Johnson either, and when the Johnson happens to be a cop, there’s nothing stopping them from tossing you into a cell and claiming you were the real target all along.

GOOD DEEDS

Earlier, I said that hooding runs work in much the same way as “regular” shadowruns, because... well, they do. Some hooding runs differ slightly from their more conventional versions, though, so let’s take a closer look.

Freelance Vigilantism: Also known as the Avenging Angel, Big Game Hunting, or Taking Out the Trash. This is one of the easiest forms of hooding to get into, but one of the hardest to do successfully in the long term. Why? Well, consider the kinds of people that get labeled as liabilities to metahumanity: megacorporate executives, organized crime bosses, smaller-time criminals of various disgusting stripes (especially sexual predators), and an array of twisted magic-related threats. In other words, most of them stand a good chance of getting you killed—either the targets are just that dangerous in their own right, or they know people who know where you sleep. If you pursue this line of hooding, be extra careful about chasing down your targets’ connections, because bad people have friends too.

- Or at least people who find their existence valuable enough to ensure it continues.
- Icarus
- The “vamping” thing I do—the one I talked about in our *Cutting Aces* download, I mean—is essentially this. Circumstances being what they are, I might as well find a way to do something productive with them.
- Red
- So, the vampire equivalent of only eating out of dumpsters, then?
- Kat o’ NineTales
- No, it’s ... okay, you’re not wrong, but did you have to put it that way?
- Red

NO-COLLATERAL CONTRACTS

Not just for shady loan brokers anymore, a “no-collateral” run is when the Johnson wants the job done with a minimum of collateral damage—and ideally, none at all. They usually come from groups who are in the public eye and can’t afford to be tied to any criminal activity at all, even vandalism.

- The no-kill contracts from Mothers of Metahumans that I mentioned in the *Complete Trog* download can fall into this category.
- Butch

Frankly, these jobs are a pain in the ass; lots of extra work, low margin for error, and unless you’re working for a big name like Dunkie’s House of Shady Deals, they don’t usually pay any better than any other hooding run. Still, if you’re looking for bragging rights and don’t mind putting the extra effort in, no-collateral contracts can be a great way to show that you’re as good as you like say you are.

Theft: This is the classic that gives hooding its name: robbing from the rich to give to the poor. Bags of gold coins aren’t exactly common nowadays, but there are still plenty of opportunities for a little benevolent larceny. Medical supplies are always popular, both for communities and in the shadows. I’ve volunteered at *Deireadh an Tu-artheil* for years, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen a time where we weren’t short of one thing or another. I’m sure it’s no different for your local street doc.

- I’ve been known to give patients a discount if they’ve helped me with supplies in the past. Just sayin’.
- Butch

Food is another good target for noble thievery, if you ever find yourself with the address of a Stuffer Shack distribution center and some time on your hands. For that matter, if you’ve ever had to steal to take care of your family, that’s just as much hooding as anything else. There are also sturdy clothes, educational textchips for kids, furniture and other household items—basically, the things you always see charities asking people to donate. Really, any of the “basic needs” items are great for communities.





- They have “basic needs” stuff at places like the Crime Mall in Puyallup and Bargain Basement in Redmond, too. Nothing’s stopping anyone from going there.
- Clockwork
- And paying with what? Those assholes gouge so bad on the prices that in the long run, it’s probably cheaper to just buy a fake SIN you can use at the Stuffer Shack in the not-quite-Barrens neighborhood next door.
- Riot
- If you decide to try stealing directly from the corps, hidden or little-used slush accounts are great options—you can be long gone before they notice anything’s missing.
- Mr. Bonds
- And if you can’t find any of those and your decker knows what they’re doing, try whipping up a forged invoice for a recurring expense like utilities or office supplies and spiking it with a salami-slicing trojan. Corps have so many transactions going in and out of those accounts that a hundredth of a nuyen on every one adds up quick, and even if the target finds the trojan, it’ll be some accounts payable clerk who assumes a supplier double-billed them, not a Matrix security specialist who knows to shut the transfers down right away.
- Slamm-0!
- Slamm-0!, that was unusually helpful. Are you feeling all right?
- Glitch
- No, actually. I think I caught whatever Sprout-0! has.
- Slamm-0!

Training: Most hooders see each other as extended teammates instead of competitors, so we’re far more likely than typical shadowrunners to share useful tips and tricks. Hooders with different aims but similar skills often organize training camps, some of which offer the instructors decent cred. Say what you want about hooders being broke, but these groups will find a way to pay for specialists, and you might be surprised at just how much expertise some of them have.

- I first met Freya at one of those events, when the Association of Awakened Anarchists asked her to teach combat magic—not usually my thing, but I’ll admit that it’s nice to know when the drek hits the fan. That was one of the most exhausting weeks of my life, but boy, did we learn a lot.
- Old Crow

- Networking is big at hooder conventions, too—that’s one of the ways we stay in the fight. I’ve seen plenty of jackbooted thugs’ days ruined when they showed up expecting a handful of “upstart anti-corporate radicals,” only to find they’ve invited their antifa and eco-terrorist mates to the scrum.
- Chainmaker
- Collaboration can easily turn into standardization, though, which carries all the same risks for groups of hooders as it does for corporations and governments. The more widely a method is used, the more likely it is that someone will develop a counter.
- Fianchetto
- The Sprawl Scouts are all about this kind of thing, but with Barrens kids. I talk more about them in the *Hooders for Hire* download.
- Borderline

Volunteering/Community Service: Believe it or not, some people do community service even when they *aren’t* serving a criminal sentence. Beneath the veneer of legitimacy, a lot of non-profit groups don’t really care whether your SIN is real or what you do when you’re not volunteering—if you’re able and willing to help, they’ll take you, which makes it a great way to keep fighting the good fight without worrying about scrutiny from the law. I’ve mentioned my work down at *Deireadh*. The Anarchist Black Shapes (I can never remember which is which, I’m sure Old Crow will tell you) hold their free clinics in Redmond at least once a month. I’m sure those of you outside the Seattle Metroplex can find similar events in your own sprawl, if you’re willing to ask around.

One thing that each of these runs have in common is that they’re exactly that: individual runs, the kinds of jobs where, once Mr. Johnson’s cred hits your account, you can wash your hands of it all and move on. It would be a mistake to think that one-off runs are the only way to hood, though. There are plenty of people who act more like caretakers, putting their time and effort into maintaining their own section of physical or virtual turf. As much as it pains me to admit it, I’m not the most informed person when it comes to playing the hometown hero, so I’ve let an expert handle the next section of this file.

NEIGHBORHOOD, WATCH

POSTED BY: JAMES KINCAID

Right off the bat, good on ya. If you’re reading this, it means you’re at least halfway curious about how to use your no-good, dirty, stinking, scofflaw, troublemaker skills to help other people instead of hurt ’em. That’s not nothing. There are a lot of shades of grey between the neon, the chrome, and the shadows, and if you’re looking to break society’s rules to make your neighborhood better instead of worse, my hat’s off.

- Aww, your approval means so much.
- Marcos
- Maybe it should.
- Hardpoint

Now, specifically, I’ve been asked to talk about localized improvements, instead of bigger-picture, macro-scale work, which suits me just fine. A city district, a neighborhood—hell, even just one block or a big apartment building? That’s a lot of work. Every apartment window in the Metroplex has someone living behind it with their own dreams and nightmares and friends and enemies all bundled up behind light-sensitive glass, and each and every one can take a lot of looking after.

First off, recognize you’re not putting out fires, you’re spinning plates. You’ve seen those old-timey tridshows, maybe, with the entertainers from a hundred, hundred fifty years back? Jugglers and circus folks, that sort of thing? One of the tricks they’d do used sticks and plates—stay with me, here, it’s nothing like the Neil the Ork Barbarian “sticks and plates” shtick—and their gig was to give the plates a little spin, then use the gyroscopic effect to make the plates or bowls or whatever stay balanced way up on the end of these flexible poles. Science is crazy, ain’t it? They’ve got a bunch of these plates going on a bunch of these poles at once, and to keep ’em balanced, they’ve got to run from one to the other every now and then to keep things spinning.

That’s you, keeping your neighborhood afloat. You’re not putting out fires—a fire stays put out. Instead, you’re spinning plates; they require work, then they require upkeep, they require keeping an



eye on, and then they require *more work*. Forever. Wrap your head around that, grok to the idea that it's a never-ending gig, that the best you can do is probably put problems off for later instead of solve problems forever, and you'll maybe not geek yourself from stress.

- He's so cheery. I like him.
- Slamm-0!

"But Jimmy," I hear you saying, "if I kill someone, they stay dead. Why not wipe out the local chucklehead gang if they're causing trouble for folks? How isn't that long-term problem solving?"

- It's worked for me, but then it all comes down to how specific the contract is.
- Thorn

Yeah, wiping out one troublemaking gang means *that gang*, ideally, is gone. But that turf's still there, and now it's up for grabs, *capisce*? The streets abhor a vacuum, so some new outfit has to move in on that turf, sell stuff, take stuff, break stuff. That gang has to make a statement to take that territory—it ain't just about the AR graffiti—and that causes problems for the locals, for starters. What's more, that new gang has to spread themselves thin to take over that new turf, and maybe that creates an imbalance somewhere else, and some other outfit thinks now's their chance. Next thing you know, you've got a daisy chain of chipped-up psycho teenagers all moving on the next gang's turf, all out to be so brutal they make the right statement to end all this, and you're left standing there looking like a chump 'cause you started it all.

You're not putting out fires, you're spinning plates.

Instead of calling up some chummers with big guns and going on a murder spree to take out a local outfit, you look into the type of trouble they're causing, how long it's been going on, and why it's suddenly a problem. Figure out new angles. Think with something besides your gun. Collect favors, not corpses, when you can.

Figure out when you can smooth things over by just giving a good beating and a warning, or if the problem might be a new lieutenant getting hungry (in which case you talk to the gang boss about the brewing trouble and let them do their own dirty work), or if the issue is external pressure requiring that gang to look tough (in which case you maybe

do them a favor to ease that pressure, and they owe you one). Instead of going in guns blazing, hell, loose Knight Errant on a couple of their higher-ups, and see if cooling their heels in the can and coming out to their own problems doesn't keep them too busy to be a new nuisance for a while. Give 'em their own plates to spin, and you maintain the balance of the sprawl.

So, that's lesson one—well, let's call it one and a half: you can't solve all your neighborhood's problems forever, and you can't solve many of 'em with a smartgun.

- Though, in fairness, the ones that need a smartgun *really* need a smartgun. Or six.
- Hard Exit

Second? Learn the neighborhood, use the neighborhood. It's not just a *thing* you're fighting over; you ain't a gang taking turf or a mob claiming territory, you're a part of the neighborhood, right? So act like it. Don't just think you're some grim defender striking a pose like a friggin' gargoyle, be an organic part of a living, breathing, thinking, eating, shitting *thing*. Never forget that a city's as alive as a jungle, and you're just one more shaved monkey making a living within it.

- Whether he knows it or not, this Mr. Kincaid seems to be a believer in communal spirituality, recognizing that natural energies can gather, and even multiply, over time, in order to create a life-affirming sense of self for all involved. Cities have spirits all their own, and it's we who breathe life into them.
- Axis Mundi

Cultivate informants in the unlikeliest places. Everyone's got a fixer, but you know what? Fixers are shit at actually fixing things—they're of the "I'll fix you up with someone" variety of the word, not the "Sure, let me fix that problem for you" variety—and fixers are shit at knowing what's actually going on around them, too. Don't trust them to know what's happening in back alleys, they're seeing what's going on in boardrooms, back rooms, bunkrooms, and bedrooms. They track corporate and criminal behavior, not civilian. The civilians are the ones you're worried about, and nobody can tell you more about a civvie than a civvie.

- He's tough on fixers, but fair.
- Mr. Bonds



Talk to your bartender. Talk to your waitress. Talk to the noodle cart guy, the hot dog vendor, the doorman at the hotel. Talk to the prostitute or his John. Talk to dealers—small-time ones, the corner boys, not the bosses—and talk to the buyers. Talk to the cabbies, the cashiers, the street racers, the delivery schmucks about to lose their jobs to drones. Learn from all the people who suits and criminals alike think are invisible, pay attention to them, care about them, and they'll do the impossible for you. You want to know what your streets have to say, you've gotta talk to *your streets*, not just your shadows. Know the difference. Talk to the people that live here, not just the ones that work here.

Third? Yeah, talk to the shadows, too. Keep an ear out as much as you can inside organized criminal outfits, shadowrunner circles, fixers, and their stables of hired guns. Do palatable favors for mobsters and gang leaders when you can, collect favors from low Knight Errant management, stuff like that. They'll give you big picture info instead of the micro-scale it's best to work at, and they'll often be the exact same motherfuckers—Knight Errant included, they ain't off the hook—*causing* your problems instead of solving them, but don't kid yourself. You need to pay attention to the movers and shakers, too. Just don't forget they're your headaches, not your painkillers, more often than not. You might do gigs for them, but the reason you're doing those gigs is the smaller folks, the work-a-day schmucks who sleep down the block.

Fourth, put it all together. Now that you've wrapped your head around the problems you can fix and the ones you can't, and now that you've got a network in place to help you, the next thing to do is identify what needs work *before* it's a crisis. Any mook who spends a lot of time on his feet can tell you, before you get a blister, you get a hot spot. Find the hot spots.

Look for where there's trouble brewing, look at the assets you've got, and nip that shit in the bud before bullets get fired, spells get slung, and bodies drop. It's a whole lot easier to stop two gangs from scrapping than it is to get them to stop, right? You're more likely to talk someone down before they've lost a buddy or a sister or a brother to something stupid, right? You've got better odds of getting your cop buddies to look the other way *before* headlines get made and they get pressure from middle management, right?

Build up a rep as an impartial third party. Get this gang to trust you *and* that gang to trust you,

and suddenly you can play ref between them, maybe get 'em to sit down and talk stuff over instead of going for the throat, chop-chop. Once you do that, maybe word spreads, and you've got bigger fish doing the same thing. Shoot straight. Deal fairly with everyone, keep your word even with the worst shitbirds out there, and you'll open up options for yourself and your neighborhood.

Start spinning plates.

- Whether it's looking for Mr. Johnson or this sort of do-goodery, your rep is all you're worth.
- Pistons

Fifth, be proactive. If your neighborhood's running smoothly and nobody's killing each other—at least not any more than a normal night—it's time to work on community improvement. Not just troubleshooting, not just problem solving, but *making it better*. This is the rewarding part. This isn't plate spinning, if you do it right (but the investment can give you other plates that'll need spinning, later, so be ready).

Find the good stuff in your neighborhood and pour more life into them.

Got a community clinic being run by a less-than-crazy street doc? Look into who can hook her up with medical supplies or cyber-bits for patching folks up. Cut your local mobster a deal where a percentage of his feel-good chems go to the doc—in moderated doses—for her to use on patients who need anesthetic, maybe, or talk to your local highjack-happy go-gang so they know where they can divert any bio-supplies they grab. Neighborhood kids getting into a little trouble and parents don't know what to do with 'em, make 'em help out at the clinic. Mopping up blood all day might get the kid's head on straight. Hell, talk to some local ghouls and see if the doc can hook them up with waste material so they can get by. Well-fed ghouls mean less trouble for everybody, right?

Find your win/wins, bring people together, and keep the good mojo coming.

Your job ain't to do everything yourself—you can't, you're just (meta)human—it's to bring people together and get them to do things for each other. Get your civvies, your streets, your shadows, and a couple of suits working together to keep the neighborhood on an even keel, and everyone lives better. Get neighbors acting neighborly, and, I swear, half the problems in the world go away.



Sixth piece of advice? Understand it ain't never gonna work out all roses and sunshine. In the world we live in, there's, eventually, always gonna be somebody that's gotta fuck it up, no matter how hard you try to keep everyone happy. Someone with a bit too much chrome that goes psycho, someone listening to all the nastiest spirits whispering all the worst advice, someone who thinks they can run that gang or take that turf, someone who thinks metas or changelings or whoever ain't real people, someone who just wants to watch cops or crooks fry, someone who wants to pave over your whole damned world and put up an office building.

Be ready.

Be ready to call in those favors, and to owe favors, yourself, in order to mobilize the troops. That last bit, a corporation moving in and screwing everybody over, let's say? Get those local cops to look the other way (and engage in a rivalry with inbound corporate security) while your local low-level bangers vandalize their construction sites, your local go-gangs intercept incoming supplies and divert those resources to the neighborhood, your local hackers make all those problems ten times worse, your local street docs are ready to patch everybody up after the scraps with corporate security, and your local fixers start to arrange runs against that corporation to change their mind about the profitability of the whole thing. Right? Use the neighborhood, together, against the outsider, or use the neighborhood, together, to cut out the cancer that you let grow up inside you.

- Didn't Kincaid recently complain about businesses *not* wanting to move into certain neighborhoods? Now he's playing out some crazy hypothetical where he circles the wagons to keep businesses away?
- Mika
- Depends on the business and how they want to move in.
- Kincaid
- It shouldn't. Frag 'em all!
- Marcos

You can't ignore anybody. First, you use them all together to get jobs done. But then you pay attention in the aftermath—you make sure they get a slice of whatever profits are coming in, make sure they can all benefit afterwards, you offer a reward to offset the risk. Don't lean on your local gang

over and over again until they feel taken for granted, don't assume your local union guys can risk their jobs without being taken care of when things go wrong, don't keep thinking your cop contacts can keep lieutenants happy without sometimes being fed a few good arrests.

Spin plates. Even in a crisis, and especially after one, you've got to keep everyone happy.

So. Welcome to your neighborhood. Wherever you call home, you want it to be better, and I'll lift a glass for it. But be ready to do work, be ready to treat people right, and be ready to handle it—own it—when life throws you a monkey wrench or two.

And, if you're near Puyallup, call if I can help.

BEING A BETTER PERSON

POSTED BY: FREYA

Now that we've talked about the good fight, let's talk about the people who fight it. Whether you like hooders or not, I don't think anyone would argue that we are a different breed from other shadowrunners. The moral high ground isn't profitable most of the time, and as I've already complained, promoting the greater good can be a lot of work. So, why do these nutjobs go to so much trouble for something that doesn't benefit them? We'll find out in this section.

LIVING THE HOOD LIFE

Hooding isn't just a job—it's a way of life. (Insert corporate trid-commercial soundtrack here.) But seriously, hooding can shape your life in any number of ways, not all of which happen during runs.

IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE

Within the shadow community, one of the biggest reasons hooders tend to be more sociable than other shadowrunners is that we rarely see each other as competitors. We're all out to make the world a better place, and it's easier for us to do that if we share the workload, even if it means getting paid less for a particular run. That spirit of cooperation makes us more willing to team up with other hooders for difficult jobs, and a larger network of relationships forms as a result.



- If there's one thing I occasionally miss about Knight Errant, it's the camaraderie. Groups of good people who stick together are hard to find nowadays, on either side of the law.
- Pistons
- Wait, since when are you ex-KE, Pistons?
- /dev/grrl
- Since always? I just don't bring it up often—there wasn't any reason to when Sticks always had better contacts inside Ares. When he went off the grid, I figured I'd see if any of my old co-workers were still around, and it got me all nostalgic.
- Pistons

Those relationships pay off in any number of ways. One of the biggest is having a pool of fellow hooders you can call for help in sticky situations, who you can be reasonably sure won't abandon you mid-run or sell you out to a rival. Stop by the "LFM/LFT" section of ShadowSEA's hooding forums and you'll see plenty of people asking for and offering help, even on little or no notice. That also goes for groups who specialize in a particular field. I regularly travel to help train hooding magicians, especially my fellow Dragonslayer disciples, like that Blazing Swords group down in Houston.

- I trust you view your mentor spirit in the figurative sense, Paladin.
- Orange Queen
- Yes, ma'am.
- Freya

A less obvious benefit of those networks is that hooders are a pretty welcoming bunch to hang out with. As a shadowrunner who appreciates having a social life, it's nice to know there are people who won't give you funny looks for checking sightlines and insisting on a table close to a wall whenever you go to the bar, or who's there to listen when it's 0300 and you can't sleep because memories of That One Run keep going through your head. Which segues nicely into...

HELPING YOURSELF TO HELP OTHERS

The popular image of a hooder is the selfless soul who would give their bottom nuyen to help someone in need, even if it means taking their

place sleeping in alley. Half the reason hooding gets such a bad rap over hooders constantly being broke is that many neophyte hooders I've met seem to think that they have to take a vow of poverty or something to be a "real" hooder. After all, if you have something left to give, you're not doing all you can, right? Pop quiz: Why do shadowrunners clean their guns? Because if they don't, it stops cycling and blows up in their hands in the middle of a firefight.

- Even that won't make the really lazy ones do it. They just buy new trauma plates and cyberhands.
- Cayman

The same logic applies to hooders themselves. Most of the dedicated hooders I've met plan to be hooders for the rest of their lives. Even the most satisfying aspects of hooding will wear you down eventually if you do it for long enough, and the only way to prevent that is to take a break before burnout catches up with you. Yes, it might mean you feel bad for letting someone down who needed your help, but if you let yourself reach the burnout phase, it might take weeks for you to recover, if you ever do. Would you rather say no to one or two people now, or dozens later?

Sometimes, it's outside circumstances that force you to take a break from hooding, like your landlord threatening to put you out on the street because your last three jobs involved helping the penniless needy for "good karma"—or your teammates getting a bit tetchy when *their* landlords do the same. There's nothing wrong with alternating between hooding runs and money runs, or even taking a break from hooding entirely. Don't let the purists tell you otherwise.

Another reason we hooders should take time for themselves is that quite frankly, we deserve it. Not many people do what we do, and many of those who can would rather put their skills towards their own benefit. Thus, in my obviously biased opinion, those who are willing to put others first should be recognized and commended for it.

- Holy entitlement complex.
- Borderline

A GOOD START

Clichés about how everyone's different aside, hooders fall into one of three categories: idealists, penitents, and survivors. **Idealists** are the



GIVING 'TIL IT HURTS

The compulsion to help others that drives every hooder makes it hard for us to tear ourselves away from our work—there are always more wrongs to right, more problems to fix, more people to save. Our inability to say no to people in need makes hooders prime candidates for burnout, in the form of a nasty condition called compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue first developed in emergency responders, front-line health care workers, and journalists in crisis zones—people who spend large portions of their lives witnessing metahuman trauma firsthand.

Seeing so much fear, pain, and suffering day-in and day-out burns through your emotional resilience until there's nothing left, which combines with all the stress of putting up with the worst teammates you've ever had, whether or not they're actually the worst teammates you've ever had. The result is this twisted mindset where you both hate and are haunted by your work. You start hating people for taking you up on your offers of help. You get snippy with your teammates because you're just so fucking tired of this shit. You drink yourself into a stupor to avoid the crushing realization that life is just a hellhole of misery and suffering, and when you finally drag yourself into bed to rest up for a run you both resent and dread, you can't sleep because you keep having nightmares about the people you couldn't save.

- Butch always says that compassion fatigue happens when you've literally run out of fucks to give. She'd probably never admit it, but I think that was part of the reason she brought me on to help at the clinic. When she was sure I could handle the basics without accidentally killing any patients, she'd vanish for hours at a time. I think it was just to get away from so many people needing something.
- Riot
- Dammit, Riot.
- Butch

Compassion fatigue is the reason I make a point of taking downtime, and why I insist other hooders do the same. If you let it get its hooks into you, the best-case scenario is that you're out of the hooding action for weeks or months. At worst ... well, every year, I hear about at least one hooder who takes their own life because they were too proud or stupid to admit they were burning out.

- Everything I said in the *Chrome Flesh* download about how to deal with PTSD applies just as much to compassion fatigue. Same goes for Quietus' tips in *The Assassin's Primer* and Blackwing's lecture in *Hard Targets*.
- Hard Exit

rarest type of hooder. (Think of how many people you know who have managed to get through life without their dreams being crushed, and you'll understand why.) All hooders are idealistic to some degree—if we weren't, we wouldn't be hooders—but unlike the penitents and survivors, idealists have neither done horrible things nor had horrible things done to them. They've chosen to be hooders purely on principle, which makes them some of the hardest to dissuade. That can be an advantage when morale is flagging, but their naivete can get them and their teammates into trouble.

- Ex-cops who become hooders are usually what Freya calls idealists. They're the ones who've figured out that most cops nowadays aren't interested in justice, and decided to go their own way (or were forced out) instead of falling into the same trap.
- Hard Exit
- Talking about yourself in the third person again, Jess?
- Pistons

In contrast to the idealists, **penitents** do horrible things for the greater good to atone for the horrible things they did for other reasons. Sometimes the penitent becomes the born-again fundamentalist of the hooding world, utterly committed to never doing anything resembling “those things” again—and making sure nobody else within their line of sight does, either. Other penitents will happily commit all sorts of dark deeds in the name of the greater good, which makes everyone else wonder whether they've gone too far.

- If you think doing whatever is necessary is “going too far,” you're not dedicated enough.
- Clarion

Survivors become hooders because they don't want anyone else to have to endure the same suffering they or those close to them did. (In the more tragic cases, people become “survivors” to honor those who didn't.) They're the ork and troll runners who run for ORC after being attacked by Humanis, the formerly homeless barrens rat who volunteers at a homeless shelter, the eco-activist whose family was sickened by chemical runoff from a corporate factory. Few hooders are more dedicated to their cause than survivors, but some have trouble separating their cause and the greater good when



PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

I'm sure you've all heard hooding described as, "doing bad things for good reasons." A great deal of this guide has focused on how "good reasons" differentiate hooders from other shadowrunners, but it's important to pay attention to the "bad things," too. People don't hire hooders to work the counter at soup kitchens or pick up trash in the park down the street; they hire us for what one old flatvid infamously called, "a very particular set of skills." The longer you spend in the shadows, the further you'll slide down the slippery slope of moral acceptability. If you have any kind of conscience—and if you're a hooder, you do—the weight of all the wrongs you've committed will start to smother you from the inside.

Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two conflicting ideas simultaneously. As the cognitive dissonance between "I'm a good person" and "bad people do bad things, I'm doing bad things, so I'm a bad person" ratchets up the psychological pressure, hooders tend to go in one of two directions. Moral injury, as I describe below, happens when the hooder reaches their breaking point and realization hits them like a plasma on betameth. Some hooders never really get over it, having to deal with the guilt, shame, anger, and disgust for the rest of their lives—which all too often end prematurely.

If moral injury is what results when the hooder chooses the "I'm a bad person" option, particularly stubborn or well-indoctrinated hooders who prefer the "I'm a good person" option may develop a martyr complex to support their belief in their own goodness. They're usually driven by beliefs like, "Better that I commit these

evil acts than allow an innocent person to stain their soul." They start to believe that every wrong they commit makes them more virtuous—nobly sacrificing their soul for the greater good—until they become full-blown megalomaniacs who can do no wrong. A switch flips from "I'm doing what I'm doing because it's right" to "what I'm doing is right because it's what I'm doing," and they unblinkingly commit heinous acts that no reasonable person could ever justify. (That doesn't mean they can't suffer a moral injury later, mind you, just that their sanity probably won't remain intact afterward.)

- That doesn't just happen to individuals. It was the same thing when Horizon's Consensus slipped a gear a few years ago, too, and we all saw how that went.
- Sunshine

When you're a hooder, you inevitably reach a point where you have to decide how much of your soul you'll give away in pursuit of the greater good. I strongly suggest you spend some time thinking about the answer before that day comes. Set boundaries for yourself; what they are doesn't matter, as long as you take them seriously. The point is to make sure you'll always be able to face the person in the mirror. Get some kind of external reference point, preferably someone who's outside the shadows and unconnected with any interests you advance. If you ask them whether your actions are reasonable, and they look at you like you're insane, reconsider your life choices.

the two diverge, and others are more interested in revenge than justice.

- Some would argue that Ex Pacis began as this, when Pax still claimed she wanted to free other otaku from their enslavement to the Deep Resonance.
- Puck
- Only if they're trying to soothe their guilty conscience.
- Slamm-0!

Naturally, it's rare for a hooder to fall exclusively into one category or another, and hooders' perspectives can change over time. A penitent who learns to forgive themselves, for example, could continue hooding simply because it's the

right thing to do. An idealist whose optimism is crushed by misfortune might continue as a survivor, and a survivor might become a penitent to make up for harm they inflicted in their quest for justice.

GOOD PEOPLE

No matter what their reasons for hooding, hooders tend to share a few key personality traits. Which one is the most important is the subject of constant debate in the hooding community. Is it compassion? Empathy? A sense of justice?

- Guessing modesty isn't on that list.
- Rigger X



You'll find all of those in spades among hooders, but none of them are the most important trait for a hooder to have; that honor falls to integrity. My dad always used to say that integrity means doing the right thing when you think nobody's looking—not out of a desire to impress anyone, but because it's the right thing to do. If there's a better way to describe hooding, I don't know what it is.

- No guide to being a bleeding-heart sucker is complete without a sickeningly "sweet" family anecdote.
- Clockwork
- You can just say you're jealous, you know. I won't judge you any more harshly than I already do.
- Freya
- Fuck you.
- Clockwork

Number two on that list is honesty, more so with yourself than others. Lying to oneself is never really a good idea, but for hooders, it can be downright dangerous. The overly idealistic hooder who thinks they can end a mob war with a gentle-yet-firm admonishment might convince the two sides to call a ceasefire, but only for long enough to turn the offending goody-two-shoes into a smear on the sidewalk before going back to their regularly-scheduled bloodshed. A less visible, but potentially more harmful, risk is moral injury. Also known as the "my God, what have I done?" moment, moral injury is what happens when a hooder realizes that all the awful means they'd tried to justify with their noble ends were never actually justified. That generally means having to deal with the guilt, shame, anger, and disgust that comes with discovering they're no better than the evil they fight. Some hooders can't handle the revelation, and the results can get messy quickly.

- Does that include their teammates getting sick of their mopey bullshit and beating some sense into them?
- Stone

The third danger in self-deception isn't quite as melodramatic, but it starts in much the same way. Hooders who are also dedicated to a particular cause have a bad habit of equating that cause with the greater good, as I mentioned in the section on "survivor" hooders. In fact, that reminds me of a point I'd intended to make earlier ...

WHAT HOODING ISN'T, OR "WHY OLD CROW IS WRONG"

- Oh come on, seriously?
- Old Crow

For the record, I like Old Crow as a person, and I have nothing but respect for his dedication to his beliefs. I'm only calling him out here because he's a perfect example of the worst mistake a hooder can make. We've had many a "friendly flame war" (as he calls them) on this topic already, so to save us time and the admins a headache, I'll just give you all the short version.

Hooding doesn't go hand-in-hand with any other philosophy, whether it's neo-anarchism, eco-protectionism, meta-empowerment, or anything else. That doesn't mean that hooders and neo-anarchists will never cooperate with each other; many neo-anarchists are also hooders, and with "the system" being responsible for so many of metahumanity's problems, groups like the Anarchist Black Cross/Crescent and Black Star often get help from hooders without any neo-anarchist leanings of their own. The problem is that because the two philosophies have different goals—one wants to create an anarchist society, the other wants to create whatever circumstances will provide the best possible life for everyone—the neo-anarchist hooder might end up in a situation where the two goals conflict with each other. If hooding and neo-anarchy were really one and the same, that conflict would never happen.

Incidentally, I do think that if Old Crow were ever in that situation and there was genuinely no way to reconcile the two, he'd choose compromising for the greater good over anarchy at all costs. That's just another reason I respect him; that kind of honesty is rare enough that you might as well call him Old Unicorn.

- Okay, Bull, I can see why you'd be grumpy about her being here.
- Old Crow
- I don't know, "Old Unicorn" has kind of a ring to it.
- Bull

That problem isn't limited to neo-anarchists, of course. Any ideology, no matter how well-mean-



ing, can do more harm than good when taken to extremes. Eco-activists like Sierra Inc. and the Astral Space Preservation Society are doing the right thing by fighting to protect the environment, but eco-extremists like TerraFirst! and GreenWar have repeatedly shown their willingness to sacrifice metahuman lives for the same cause. In the meta-rights arena, the Ork Rights Committee is doing good and necessary work towards ork and troll empowerment, but even the most pro-meta of us might have second thoughts when the Sons of Sauron roll up and “encourage” your support (if you’re a fellow trog) or take their “compensation” (if you aren’t).

- There are a few scumbags in the Ork Underground who pull this drek, using “troggs gotta stick together” to pull good kids into the wrong crowd and hang ‘em out to dry when KE or Neo-PD shows up. It’s one thing when they choose that life for themselves, but seeing some fragger ruin a kid’s future like that makes my blood boil.
- Bull

Speaking of the Sons of Sauron, here’s one of my least-popular opinions about their place in the hooding world: They simply don’t have one. The Sons of Sauron are trog-supremacist terrorists, not hooders. I won’t say violence is never a useful tool in their fight, but I guarantee that if they have to choose between the greater good and the good of trog-kind, they’ll make sure to look out for number one.

- Hypocrite much? It’s not like your pointy-eared fascist friends in Magical Elfy-Land were any better.
- 2XL
- I think that was her point, actually.
- Frosty

For the sake of argument, though, let’s say we do accept them as hooders. Presumably, we’d be doing so on the basis of their ... *enthusiastic* efforts to gain equality for their metatype in places where the system is undeniably stacked against them, politically, socially, and economically. Any violence on their part is justified as being the only way they can draw attention to their plight under the weight of the establishment’s censorship. Fair enough; I can understand where they’re coming from, and in their circumstances, I can’t say I wouldn’t do the same thing.

Oh, you thought I was still talking about the Sons of Sauron? I actually meant Humanis.

- How the fuck— <0.1Mp deleted by sysop>
- Butch
- I hate myself for saying this, but at least hear her out before telling her she’s wrong.
- Glitch

I’m sure many of you disagree with my views, and I won’t be offended if you say so; after all, admitting you have a problem is the first step to recovery. That doesn’t change the fact that by the very same logic that claims the Sons of Sauron are hooders, Humanis is every bit as much a “hooding organization” in Freiburg im Breisgau as the Sons are in Bellevue. What’s more, if that wasn’t bizarre enough, those two groups work *together* in Tír Tairngire. I’ve seen blood drop- and burning eye-badged “activists” stand shoulder-to-shoulder at *celé*-rights rallies in Cara’Sir with my own eyes. (Truly, the End Times are upon us.)

- You’ll have to do better than that, Freya. I’ve seen more credible rumors from Plan 9 on a bad day.
- Snopes
- Hey!
- Plan 9
- I can provide proof of that, actually. I kept a fair few surveillance photos from my stint in Portland in the early ‘60s. They should be reaching your inbox now.
- Thorn
- That ... makes me uncomfortable.
- Sunshine
- Now you know how I felt when I realized that the only difference between either of those groups and elven supremacists is that in the Tír, we were the ones in power.
- Freya
- Former tool of oppression admits oppressive regime was wrong, news at 11!
- Slamm-0!
- Dammit, I was hoping nobody would notice.
- Freya

To be perfectly honest, it doesn’t matter to me whether you call groups like the Sons of Sauron and Humanis hooders or terrorists. What’s important is being able to recognize that the two aren’t so different from each other, and that choosing



to support one but not the other is a double standard—exactly the kind of thing that honest hooders are supposed to tear down, not enforce by limiting their support to people they like.

Happily, that dovetails nicely into my next topic: moral dilemmas.

GOOD DECISIONS

You can't have strong morals for any length of time without running into a moral dilemma or three. That's especially true for hooders, who sometimes wonder if some omnipotent sadist is manipulating events around us to ensure exactly that. (One hooder I know insists that these dilemmas pop up on the same night every week.) I can't give you an exhaustive list, obviously, but here are a few of the more common ones you might face.

Hooders are by no means immune to the typical shadowrunner dilemmas that crop up during a run, whether it's having to finish a job against more opposition than you can handle, an extraction target trying to bribe us into giving them to a different corp than Mr. Johnson wants, or discovering that the cargo we were supposed to smuggle is far more sinister than we first realized. We rely on our reputations to get work like any other runner, and having word go around that you're too picky to be reliable is a quick trip to sleeping in an alley. Ideally, a hooder will decline a job offer that offends their sensibilities instead of accepting and then bailing on it. If we don't have that luxury, like only discovering the dilemma mid-run, we handle it the same way as any other runner.

Every hooder who's run against other sentient beings has at least one story about how the target tried to bribe them, or offered to roll on a bigger fish in exchange for their own freedom. I call these trid-villain dilemmas, because they always make the run feel like the end of the climactic battle of an action trid. The bribe attempt is simple enough to handle by refusing. I usually tell a target who's offering paydata to work it out with the Johnson.

- When you turn the slot over to the Johnson, mention that they have extra information—and that you're available for follow-up work. Besides the obvious potential job offer, it also endears you to the target you just retrieved by making it look like you're going to bat for them, which gives you leverage against them for later.
- Jimmy No

A more typical moral dilemma is having to choose the lesser evil. A significant amount of hooding work comes from Johnsons in situations like this, who know what the lesser evil in their situation is but are unable or unwilling to take action themselves. One example, again from the trid-villain category, is deciding whether a target is too dangerous to be left alive. Hooders commonly find themselves on both sides of the argument, being equally likely to be offered network contracts on people who don't really deserve to die, and runs to "just scare" people who really do. That's before you include dealing with pacifist team members who refuse to participate in such blatantly immoral acts, even when the target *does* deserve it and the team's three months behind on their rent.

- Why the fuck are they even a runner if they can't handle the sight of a dead body?
- Clockwork
- I know this might surprise you, but some people actually prefer approaches other than violence.
- Ma'fan
- "Some people" must be allergic to fun.
- Kane

The most difficult dilemmas for hooders to solve are often of their own making. An anti-corp activist discovers an unsanctioned corporate project in a remote area and has to choose between keeping quiet and allowing the impoverished locals benefit from an infusion of badly-needed investment and jobs, or exposing the corp's activities on principle at the cost of the locals' continued suffering. A MOM-hired hooder infiltrating a Humanis chapter has to decide whether to commit the very hate crimes they're trying to stop for the sake of maintaining their cover, or refuse and blow the entire operation. A pillar of the community gets their third or fourth call from a too-timid client asking for help they don't really need and has to choose between coming to their rescue and letting the dependence grow, or declining and forcing the client to learn how to deal with their own problems.

In each of these examples, the dilemma is rooted in how narrowly you interpret your own code. If you base your ethics mainly on rules, does your definition of "help" include allowing short-term pain for long-term gain? If you base them main-



ly on results, will the long-term benefit outweigh the short-term harm? Don't forget to include how Mr. Johnson's probably paying you for the option you wouldn't choose on your own, and worrying whether you can still call yourself a hooder if you compromise your principles for nuyen.

- Hooders really worry about stuff like that?
- Rigger X

- It isn't so different from how you worry about whether you've accidentally turned down an opportunity to make nuyen.
- Fianchetto

CONCLUSION

Everyone reading this knows the truth: shadowrunners are criminals, and we make our way through the world by hurting others. Anyone who says otherwise is living in some utopian fantasy world that has no basis in reality. I don't hood because I think that world is real—I hood because I *want* it to be real someday. I know it might not happen in my lifetime, or maybe even at all, but I refuse to bury my head in the sand like a nihilistic ostrich just because I might fail.

Besides, how stupid would you feel if you went through your entire life being miserable only to find out that you could've prevented it, if only you'd tried?

I'm only one person, though. I can't save the world single-handedly—which is what brings me to you, JackPoint. I know you have your share of cynics and egotists, people who will absolutely never jump on the better-world bandwagon, and I don't expect them to change their ways just because some pointy-eared prima donna nagged them about it. This guide is for the fence-sitters, the ones who weren't sure or had never thought about whether they could make the world better.

The answer is, you can. What are you waiting for?



BUILDING A HOODER

IF YOU CAN'T GET WHAT YOU WANT, TRY FOR WHAT YOU NEED

In *Shadowrun*, there is an excitement that comes with running from the bottom up. Not every runner has access to the best, most expensive, or newest options, but they may have grit, spunk, gumption, chutzpah, moxy, and a sense of righteous anger at the system. That can, and should, go a long way for our PCs, who are supposed to be exceptional (if they're not, why play them?).

Like player characters, the following options slide into the cracks of existing rules, empowering and encouraging PCs to explore new and exciting ways to play their characters in general, or hooders in particular!

NEW GEAR

NEW ARMOR MODIFICATIONS

Grey mana integration: Not actually made of any sort of mana, Grey Mana is the product of research by the so-called Grey Brothers, formerly of Manadyne and Boston Manatech. Experiments with orichalcum, reagents, paracritters, and Awakened plants and minerals yielded technology which, when integrated with armor or clothing, severely dampens magic around it. This affects the ability of the wearer to use magic as well as affecting any magic cast at them.

Add 1 bonus die per rating of Grey Mana integration to resist any targeted magical attacks or effects, including area of effect and beneficial magic. Any Awakened character wearing armor or clothing with grey mana integration suffers a dice pool penalty to any skill test involving their Magic attribute equal to the rating and permanently reduces the Force and hits of any spell the wearer

is currently sustaining by 1. Note that Grey Mana modifications cannot be hidden from Astral Perception and are quite distinct from mundane and Awakened objects.

For Grey Mana integration ratings 4 and above, armor with a chemical seal is required. Grey Mana integration cannot be improved or reduced once installed; for example, an armor jacket with grey mana integration rating 3 cannot be improved to Rating 4, neither can it be reduced to 2.

- The research and development isn't complete on grey mana, but these unfinished prototypes keep leaking into black markets through Grey Brothers Auction Houses in most major cities. Corporations hate this stuff, but the brothers are making a killing by passing their inexpensive but powerful tech on to streets everywhere. These auction houses don't last long and often get compromised, but they keep popping up like bad pennies—or in our case, very good pennies.
- Nephrine

ARMOR

MODIFICATION	CAPACITY	AVAIL	COST
Grey Mana Integration 1–3	[Rating]	6F	Rating x 1,000¥
Grey Mana Integration 4–6	[Rating]	9F	Rating x 2,000¥

GREY MANA TATTOOS

An interesting unintended consequence of leaking Grey Mana tech into the black market is how the maker movement started stripping the Grey Mana integration from armor and experimenting with it. So far, the only stable application has been the Grey Mana tattoos (or GreyMans) gangs are inking themselves with. They have similar effects





as Grey Matter integration on armor but are more obvious than regular tattoos, both because of necessary coverage and their dull coloring. If a character has a Grey Mana tattoo, it affects their ability to use magic as well as be affected by magic cast at them.

Add 1 bonus dice per rating of Grey Mana tattoo to resist any targeted magical attacks or effects, including area of affect magic. Counter-intuitively, beneficial magic targeting the wearer works as normal.

For all intents and purposes, any character with a Grey Mana tattoo suffers Essence loss of 0.1 per rating. Any Awakened character with a Grey Mana tattoo suffers a dice pool penalty to any test involving magic equal to the tattoo rating and permanently reduces the force and hits of any spell the wearer is currently sustaining by 1. As easily removed as an ink tattoo of an ex-lover's name, any Essence loss is reversible if the Grey Mana tattoo is removed, immediately returning to the character

Tattoos are only available in ranks 1-3. If a character has a Grey Mana tattoo and is wearing armor with Grey Mana integration, these effects do not stack. Use the highest rank of the two. Note that Grey Mana tattoos cannot be hidden from Astral Perception and are quite distinctive from mundane and Awakened objects.

- A ganger contact of mine in St. Louis had this to say about GreyMans: "When I got my GreyMans, how can I say it? They just felt right. It was like they were affirming my body's own defenses on a cellular level—like my soul was telling me I didn't need magic to be special, because I was already just fine. That was three months ago. Since then, all my non-Awakened gang fam's getting them. Good magic works, bad mojo don't. GreyMans are like smart ink. Much love."
- Pistons

TATTOO

GEAR	ESS	AVAIL	COST
Grey Mana Tattoos (Rating 1-3)	Rating x 0.1	7F	Rating x 500¥

NEW TOXIN

BLIGHT

- **Vector:** Injection, Special
- **Speed:** Immediate
- **Penetration:** 0
- **Power:** 12
- **Effect:** Awakened injected with blight lose their connection to the manasphere for [12 - (Body or Magic, whichever is higher) hours, minimum 1 hour]. During this period, the target loses the ability to perform any task associated with magic. Adept powers are turned off, spells cannot be cast, etc.

Blight was discovered by scientists attempting to dispose of manufacturing byproducts from Grey Mana production. The Brothers Grey Auction house holds this "happy" accident much closer to their vests, instead of flooding black markets with this brutal toxin.

When combined with DMSO, blight gains a contact vector. When an Awakened character is exposed to this combination of DMSO and blight, they must make a Drain Resistance test in place of a Toxin Resistance test vs. the power of the toxin. Damage taken is treated as Stun Drain. Any spirits exposed to this combination cannot apply immunity to normal weapons to the damage dealt by these weapons.



*Dual-natured creatures injected with this drug are affected similarly in that they also lose connection to the manasphere. They suffer a -4 dice pool penalty to all actions while under the effects of blight. Prolonged exposure results in increasing discomfort. Continued and constant exposure beyond twenty-four hours has been observed to result in horrible mutations followed by death.

- With a name like “blight,” you’d be forgiven for thinking this is some sort of Awakened torture device. This is far from it, however. In December, when a group of terrors were harassing the small town of Victoria, just outside of San Antonio, the Order of St. Sylvester saved the day. Not only did they rush to help, despite the clear prohibition of Catholics operating in Aztlan, but they shook down the local dealers and armed the community with blight, so they could fight back.
- Fianchetto

TOXIN

TOXIN	AVAIL	COST PER DOSE
Blight	8F	250¥

NEW CYBERWARE GRADE

GREYWARE

The Brothers Grey Auction House is determined to make its presence known in the underworld. As such, they are undercutting competitor’s prices and flooding crowded markets with relatively cheap, slightly altered versions of cyberware. This new grade of cyberware, called GreyWare, has a style reminiscent of cyberware of years past, but much sleeker. It is cheaper, more readily available (at least for now), and costs less Essence than alphaware, at the expense of having no wireless capabilities, being very obvious, and being incompatible with Awakened individuals’ physiology. As it becomes more popular, more and more vendors, like street docs in poor areas, are offering GreyWare or comparable knockoffs.

Consult the chart below to compare GreyWare with standard cyberware. Note that only cyberware, and not bioware, geneware, or nanoware, can be taken as GreyWare. In addition, critter cyberware, genetic restoration, cybersuites, aug-

mentation bundles, nanocybernetics, cyberdecks, and commlinks cannot be taken as GreyWare. GreyWare is available at character generation.

- This drek is popping up all over the place. It’s obvious, but not clunky like ‘ware from the ‘50s. It doesn’t compare with higher-end bodyshopping, but the ganger kiddies, street punks, neo-a’s, and wanna-be runners all have their eyes gleaming for this retro-future crap.
- Bull

GREYWARE VS. STANDARD CYBERWARE

GRADE	ESS COST MULTIPLIER	AVAIL MODIFIER	COST MULTIPLIER
Standard	x 1.0	—	x 1
GreyWare*	x 0.75	—	x 1.3

*GreyWare always counts as obvious cyberware when applicable and never provides wireless bonuses. If a piece of cyberware cannot be obvious and has no wireless component, it cannot be taken as GreyWare. Further, in addition to Magic lost due to decreased Essence, Awakened characters lose an additional point of Magic, as well as a one-point reduction in their maximum Magic, per item of GreyWare installed.

NEW SPELLS AND ADEPT POWERS

NEW MANIPULATION SPELLS

ASTRAL DISRUPTION

(MANA)

Type: M

Range: LOS

Duration: S

Drain: F-2

MASS ASTRAL DISRUPTION

(MANA, AREA)

Type: M

Range: LOS (A)

Duration: S

Drain: F

Astral Disruption, and its area equivalent Mass Astral Disruption, allow the spellcaster to wreak havoc with the astral forms of magical creatures, damaging their defenses. The caster must win an Opposed Test pitting her Magic + Spellcasting against the target’s Willpower (+ Counterspelling). Additionally, the spell’s Force must equal or exceed the target’s Willpower. For every net hit, the spellcaster may disable one of the creature’s pas-





sive powers for as long as the spell is sustained. The powers this spell can affect are limited to: Immunity to Normal Weapons, Concealment, Energy Aura, Guard, Regeneration, Magical Guard, and Innate Spell (only one per net hit). Dual-natured creatures may also have their astral perception affected. If they do, they suffer a -4 dice-pool penalty to all actions while the spell is sustained.

- The Detroit Missionist Community stumbled upon this one. There was an escape of some bug spirits a year or so back, and the poor communities of Detroit were hard pressed to have anything that could stand against them. The Missionists, of course, are largely pacifist, so they weren't going to be of much help either. Before the bugs did too much damage, a young Missionist, a devoted and studious college student visiting from university in Denver, cast a spell that allowed the normal people to fight back against the bugs. Other Missionists joined in and performed a ritual shredding the bugs' resistance, and the righteously angry mob became exterminators for

a day, with exactly zero help from Ares.

- Ethernaut

NEW ADEPT POWERS

MYSTIC APTITUDE

Cost: 0.75 PP per level

Activation: Simple Action

You call upon inner mana strength to perform amazing physical feats beyond your normal abilities.

When you activate this power via a Simple Action, you substitute your Magic + (Rank in this power) for any one Physical Attribute (choose when activated). This affects dice pools, limits, Strength-based damage values and Initiative ratings.

The boost lasts for a number of Combat Turns equal to your Magic rating. When the boost runs out, you take Drain equal to (rank of this power x 2).



At Rank 1, this power can be used once per thirty minutes; at Rank 2, once per fifteen minutes, at Rank 3, once per minute. It does not stack with Attribute Boost or Supernatural Prowess. Power foci do not increase your Magic when determining the effect of this power. This power may be taken up to three times.

STATE OF PURITY

Cost: 1.5 PP

Prerequisite: Essence 6

Activation: Complex Action

This power allows the adept to harness the innate power within them. When activated, it permeates every cell in the adept's body, breaking down the separation between flesh and spirit until the two are one.

Activating State of Purity is a Complex Action. It replaces the normal DV of the adept's unarmed combat attacks with a DV of (Magic + Strength) (P or S, adept's choice) and AP -(Magic x 0.5).

State of Purity lasts for (Magic) Combat Rounds until deactivated with a Complex Action, or until the adept becomes dead or unconscious. Once it is deactivated, the adept must resist Drain Value of [(Magic x 0.5) + number of Combat Rounds active]. Elemental or other effects from various sources may stack, but no additional DV may be added.

- "This is something the corporate wageslaves will never understand. There is a purity that comes from knowing who you are and being at peace with it. Approving of yourself, flaws as well as strengths, and accepting them completely, allows a unity of body and spirit that can overcome any obstacle." A quote from Hapsun-Do Grandmaster "Barghest" Knorr. Agree or not, it's hard to argue with his results.
- Thorn

NEW QUALITIES

NEW POSITIVE QUALITIES

HAIR TRIGGER

Cost: 2 Karma

Prerequisite: Technomancer

You are the jump-first type in every area of your life. But when it's time to jump back into the Matrix, a place where you have power unlike your normal life, your excitement can't be con-

tained. With anticipation, your mind is already making the switch.

With this quality, you can enter hot-sim as a Free Action (or cold-sim, with the appropriate Echo). If you have a control rig, either implant or Echo, you may choose to jump into a drone as with a Simple Action, as if you were already in VR.

HI-REZ

Cost: 4 Karma

Prerequisite: Technomancer

Your life hasn't been kind. As a result, the Matrix is far more real to you than meatspace. In the real world, you see your surroundings through a haze of fear, boredom, and apathy. In the Matrix, however, you are eagle-eyed. You perceive further, quicker, and sharper than everyone else.

Your technomancer bonus to Matrix Perception is increased from +2 to +4. You may also make a Matrix Perception test to detect hidden icons as a Free Action once per Combat Turn.

INSTINCTIVE HACK

Cost: 2 Karma

You haven't lived this long by treating hacking as a luxury. You use it to survive. When you see life going lopsided, your gut reaction is to hack for your life. Most of the time, you don't even need to think about it.

Unless surprised, you can make one of the following actions before Initiative is rolled for the first time in a combat (Physical or Matrix): Brute Force, Data Spike, Hack on the Fly, or Matrix Perception. If two or more characters have this quality, use ERIC (Edge, Reaction, Intuition, Coin toss) to decide who goes first.

PROTOTYPE MATERIALS

Cost: 5 Karma

Prerequisites: Mundane and Gamemaster approval

It wasn't easy getting cutting-edge prototypes from that corporate facility, but you managed it somehow. Furthermore, you had the free imagination and resourcefulness to upgrade your trusty weapon with those parts. This quality allows the player to take another rating of the Special Modifications quality, even if they already had reached the max rating of 2. Gamemasters may allow a player to take this quality after finding data or prototypes in a research lab, as alternative payment for a run, or for similar reasons.



RABBLE ROUSER

Cost: 6 Karma

The main difference between leading a march and going out for a walk is the number of people behind you. Fortunately, you've never had a problem wrangling followers to your cause. You have always been able to influence others, but when you get in front of a crowd, you shine. This quality gives the character a +2 bonus to skill tests using social skills when attempting to influence a crowd of ten or more people. Normal social modifiers still apply.

SHOOT FIRST, DON'T ASK QUESTIONS

Cost: 2 Karma

Your lifestyle doesn't always afford you the luxury of checking all the facts before diving right in. As a result, you've honed your reflexes in order to survive and no longer allow yourself to think before you shoot; you just go for the kill.

Whenever you succeed at a Surprise test, increase your initiative score by the number of total hits rolled on the test. This bonus only applies to the first turn of combat. If additional Surprise tests occur later in combat, the bonus will trigger based on this new Surprise test, on the next turn after that Surprise test. This quality also reduces the threshold for quick drawing a weapon by 1.

SPECIAL MODIFICATIONS

Cost: 5 Karma per rating (max rank 2)

Prerequisite: Mundane

It may not be the shiniest gun around, but it is yours, and you've put a lot of street R&D into it. Awakened folks spend time increasing their knowledge or connection to magic, but you only have your gear to rely on, and you spend your time and money making it count. Whether it was through engineering genius or illicit acquisition of bleeding-edge tech, you have turned your favorite weapon into the best jury-rigged version around. For each rating of Special Modifications, you can add either +1 damage* to the weapon, or choose two of the following (may be chosen more than once): an additional -1 to Armor Penetration, an additional +1 Accuracy, an additional 1 point of Recoil Compensation, ammo capacity increased by half the weapon's original capacity, -1 Concealability modifier, or increase the weapon's Reach by 1. Special modifications cannot add attributes to

a weapon that it does not already possess. Due to the idiosyncratic nature of the modifications, any special modifications to a weapon can only be used by its owner (the one who paid the Karma for the Special Modification quality). If a weapon with Special Modifications is lost or destroyed, Ranks in this quality are not lost, but it requires 1 Lifestyle payment cycle to replicate the modifications on a new version of the same weapon.

Alternatively, the player may choose to alter not the numerical attributes of the weapon, but its characteristics instead. For example, a player may wish to jury-rig his flamethrower to throw "cold" instead. As long as the base statistics are the same, thematic, elemental, or other characteristic changes like this could be fun.

*If damage is Strength-based, you may add or subtract 1 from base damage per rank. If there is no damage attribute, either choose another attribute to shift, or with the gamemaster's permission, add 1 to the damage.

NEW MASTERY QUALITIES

ELEMENTAL ATTUNEMENT

Cost: 5 Karma

Prerequisites: Adept Powers: Killing Hands, Elemental Strike, and Elemental Body

Dedicating yourself to channeling the raw forces of nature through your body, you have become one with the world's primal forces.

Change the drain from Elemental Body to function as follows: At the start of the Combat Turn after this power is activated, suffer 1 unresisted box of Drain. The adept may choose Physical or Stun each time they suffer this damage.

RESONANT DISCORDANCE

Cost: 13 Karma

Prerequisite: Submersion grade 1

Being emergent in the Sixth World is dangerous. Outside the Matrix, there isn't anything you can do about that. Inside the Matrix, however, practice and dedication have given you the ability to protect yourself from the worst of the Matrix by creating a discordant partition in your mind.

You may now enter cold-sim.

Due to the closeness of your being with the matrix itself you retain the +2 dice pool bonus to matrix actions. If you choose to use hot-sim,



you receive +2 bonus to the following Resonance skill rolls: Compiling, Decompiling, and Threading complex forms.

NEW NEGATIVE QUALITIES

DEAD SIN

Bonus: 20 Karma

Dead men tell no tales. But in the Sixth World, cheating death has become an art. Whether you faked your own death or miraculously recovered from something that should have killed you, everyone thinks you've passed on. Being "dead" may have advantages, but it has problems as well.

Add a Rating 3 Fake SIN to your inventory, with four Rating 3 fake licenses. The SIN and licenses aren't fake because they aren't you, they're fake because you are supposed to be dead. If this SIN is ever flagged as fake, you must immediately buy off this quality, spending any Karma you have available first, then going into Karmic debt if you don't have enough. In addition, a SIN scanner will report this SIN as fake on a tied roll vs. the threshold of the SIN.

HARD LUCK

Bonus: 5 Karma

No matter what you do, you can't get ahead. Life never treats you fairly, and you seem destined to live in poverty and destitution. This character suffers from chronic hardship. As a result, they must pay lifestyle costs 1 level above the one they have chosen to reflect those unforeseen costs that plague the character throughout their life.

NEW LIFE MODULES

NATIONALITIES

AZANIAN CONFEDERATION

Formed in 2040, the Azanian Confederation is the amalgamation of the Cape Republic, Oranje-Vrystaat, Trans-Swazi Federation, and the Zulu Nation coming together to form one nation. The largest and strongest industrial nation in Africa has broad and often opposing viewpoints, but each state is equally represented in their parliament. Each state must abide by a national constitution, but also en-

joys limited sovereignty. The Azanian Prime Minister is elected by the people for a single five-year term; and consecutive PMs may not come from the same state as the previous one. The Xhosa tribe is the most influential and populous group in Cape Republic and also home to the great dragon Mujaji. The Trans-Swazi Federation has some of the most picturesque scenery in Azania, but its larger cities are plagued with poverty and crime. The Zulu Nation, and its capital, New Hlobane, functions much like its nickname, the Tír of Africa. Elite elves, with Awakened allies, control much of the government and have unbalanced influence in Azania as well. The Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Sprawl (Pretoria Sprawl, PWV Metroplex, or PWV) is the seat of Azanian government and its largest city.

AZANIAN CONFEDERATION DETAILS

Primary Language	None, choose from Secondary languages
Secondary Languages (choose one language with 1 rank)	Afrikaans, Bantu, English, German, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga
Universal Skills	Knowledge: History +1, Knowledge: Azanian Confederation +1
Regions	
<i>General Azania</i>	Willpower +1, Survival +1, Negotiation +1, Knowledge: [City] +2, SINner (5)
<i>Pretoria (PWV Metroplex)</i>	Body +1, Perception +1, Etiquette +1, Knowledge: Pretoria +2, SINner (5)
<i>SINless</i>	Reaction +1, Knowledge: [City] +2
<i>Zulu Nation</i>	Charisma +1, Etiquette +1, Knowledge: [New Hlobane or City] +2, SINner (5)

FORMATIVE YEARS

DEVOUT

Whether it was in Mecca, Tenochtitlan, or at your mama's Baptist church in rural Alabama, you were all in. From day one, your identity was tied in with whatever your beliefs were. Whether you



still hold them today is irrelevant. When you were a kid, you were as faithful as they came.

- **Attributes:** Charisma +1, Intuition +1
- **Qualities:** Trustworthy
- **Skills:** Knowledge: [Religious Text] +3, Etiquette +1, Performance +1, Artisan +2

PASTOR'S KID

You weren't a perfect kid, far from it. But that didn't stop everyone at your place of worship from thinking you should be. As a result, you learned to fake it. Whether for family pride, self-preservation, or because you learned life was easier if you became what people wanted, you know how to handle people and play the part.

- **Attributes:** Charisma +1, Intuition +1
- **Qualities:** First Impression
- **Skills:** Con +1, Etiquette +2, Perception +1, Performance +1, Artisan +1, Knowledge: [Religion] +2

POOR KID

You had a home, but not a nice one. You had clothes, but they were hand-me-downs. You had food, education, and just enough other necessities taken care of so you didn't have to worry about living or dying, but instead asked why everyone else seemed to have more. Whether this made you bitter and envious or not, you learned the hard lessons that can only come to the poor in a world dominated by money.

- **Attributes:** Intuition +1
- **Qualities:** Home Ground (You Know A Guy)
- **Skills:** Survival +1, Etiquette +1, Perception +1, Unarmed +1, Knowledge: Food Banks +2

RAISED BY HOODERS

Was it one parent, both, or the whole tribe of them who were activists? Not just activists, but law-breaking, chaotic do-gooders who just wouldn't let a silly thing like the law get in the way of doing the right thing or tearing down wrong. No matter which parent it was, they had a profound influence on your worldview, and you've picked up the bug. You have learned not to trust the powers that be, and you are suspicious of their lackeys.

- **Attributes:** Intuition +1, Willpower +1
- **Qualities:** Cynic
- **Skills:** Escape Artist +1, First Aid +1, Perception +2, Running +1, Sneaking +1

TRIBAL

Life wasn't idyllic for you, but neither was it particularly tough, cruel, or soul-crushing. You and your tribe carried on the traditions you could in your homeland while adjusting to life in the late twenty-first century. Some things, like technology, metahumans, and magic have changed your way of life dramatically. Other things, like family, shared practices, and your traditions, provide a continuity with everyone who has come before you.

- **Attributes:** Body +1, Intuition +1
- **Qualities:** Favored (3 Karma): Biased in favor of [Tribe]
- **Skills:** Throwing Weapons +1, Outdoors skill group +2, Perception +1, Running +1, Survival +1

FURTHER EDUCATION

The following may be chosen as Vocations for the Trade School/Technical School Life Module.

DIVINITY SCHOOL/SEMINARY

- **Skills:** Etiquette +1, Academic Knowledge: [Ancient Language] +2, Academic Knowledge: [Religion] +5, Negotiation +1, Performance +1

DIVINITY SCHOOL DROPOUT

- **Qualities:** Cynic
- **Skills:** Academic Knowledge: [Ancient Language] +2, Academic Knowledge: [Religion] +4, Performance +1

COUNSELING/ BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

- **Skills:** Etiquette +1, Negotiation +1, Professional Knowledge: Psychology +4

REAL LIFE

FRAMED

Did you kill your brother? Of course not. But everyone thinks you did—especially the law. Whatever your alleged crime was, you were unjustly accused of it. You are on the run, trying to stay hidden in the shadows, and are always looking over your shoulder.

- **Attributes:** Reaction +1, Intuition +1
- **Qualities:** Criminal SIN (10)
- **Skills:** Disguise +1, Sneaking +1, Perception +1, Running +2, Survival +1



DEAD

You are dead. At least that is what everyone thinks. They saw you die, didn't they? You had no idea how complicated life could be once you faked your own death. Still, you avoided the heat that was coming down onto you. "Death" was easier than facing the music. Now, you need to be careful. Someone scanning your DEAD SIN means a world of headache.

- **Attributes:** Reaction +1
- **Qualities:** Blandness, DEAD SIN
- **Skills:** Con +2, Escape Artist +1, Negotiation +1, Running +1, Sneaking +1, Survival +2, Street Knowledge: Police Hangouts and Checkpoints +3

NEW USES FOR KARMA AND STREET CRED

When you run the shadows with principles, not just for greed or glory, the nuyen tends not to flow nearly as freely. Sure, even easy wetwork jobs pay well, and hostile extractions can rake in big bucks, but no one is going to pay you to stick it to the man or save the community center. If they do, it won't be much. So clever runners learn to get by without the nuyen other runners seem to consume like soyburgers. Hooders often leverage their reputations and integrity in order to keep themselves not just alive but improving.

In addition to the other ways Karma and Street Cred may be used, they may also be used in the following ways:

- A character may buy an additional point of Loyalty with a contact by permanently sacrificing points of Karma or Street Cred in any combination equivalent to the new Loyalty Rating. A character may not increase Loyalty this way above Rating 4. Additionally, when the Karma/Street Cred is sacrificed, it takes a number of months equal to the new Loyalty Rating for the Rating to change, during which time no other Loyalty Ratings may be changed in this way.
- A character may permanently sacrifice any combination of 10 points of Karma or Street Cred to increase the Connection rating of one of their contacts by 1 point.

The character must already have a Loyalty Rating of at least 3 with the contact to use Karma/Street Cred in this way. Additionally, characters cannot increase the Connection Rating of any contact in this way more than once.

- A character may permanently sacrifice 1 point of Karma or Street Cred to add 1 die to any Skill Test using the Influence skill group. This may be done a maximum of three times per test.
- A character may increase their Reputation Score with a faction by 1 by permanently sacrificing points of Karma or Street Cred in any combination equal to the new Reputation Score. A character may not increase their Faction Reputation Score above Rating 3 this way. Additionally, when the Karma/Street Cred is sacrificed, it takes a number of months equal to the new Reputation Score for the Score to change, during which time no other faction Reputation Scores may be changed in this way.
- A character may decrease their lifestyle payment cost by one lifestyle level by permanently sacrificing 1 point of Karma or Street Cred in any combination for every 1,000¥ this would decrease from the cost. This lasts as long as the character maintains that lifestyle; if they change lifestyles up or down, the savings go away and do not come back if the character returns to that lifestyle level.
- Subject to gamemaster approval, a character may permanently sacrifice points of Karma or Street Cred to call in a favor. Use the Favor Rating Table (p. 389, SR5) to determine the rating of the favor. The total amount of Karma or Street Cred permanently sacrificed is equal to 2 times the rating of the favor. The rating of the favor is capped by the Loyalty of the contact being asked. Additionally, this will cause the character to owe a favor to the contact equal or less than the rating of the favor requested. If the contact calls in the favor and the character does not reciprocate, the player loses Street Cred equal to the amount spent on the original favor.



HOODER RUNS

HOODING RUNS FOR THE DISCERNING GAMEMASTER

These pages duplicate the tables for generating a hooding run found on p. 65-67 of this book. Use them to quickly build a run from the ground up.

You can always feel free to change the details to suit your table, re-roll, hand choose, or just throw out what you don't like. After all, you're the gamemaster!

To use the tables, roll once for each of the tables, using the indicated number of D6s for each, adding the totals together.

THE TEAM IS CONTACTED BY...

2D6 RESULT

- 2-3 A friend of the team or team member who's in trouble
- 4-7 Their usual fixer
- 8 No one makes contact, the situation just happens (skip table F)
- 9 A corporate Mr. Johnson
- 10 An Awakened/magical creature (spirit, metasapient, dragon in metahuman form)
- 11 A digital-based lifeform (sprite, A.I., e-ghost, monad)
- 12 An unknown or secret person

MOTIVATION FOR THE JOB IS...

1D6 RESULT

- 1-2 To save someone who is in imminent danger
- 3 To stop something bad from happening soon
- 4 To return a favor
- 5 To cripple or stop the growth of oppressive corporate/governmental power
- 6 To make a statement or point

THE MEET OCCURS AT...

1D6 RESULT

- 1 A place the team normally frequents (if one exists)
- 2 A part of the city that is comically opposite of their usual haunts
- 3 In a wilderness location (forest, mountain, refuge, park, etc.)
- 4 A different city
- 5 The Matrix
- 6 An unusual place where the runners would typically not meet (underground, in the astral, on a bullet train)

THE JOB INVOLVES...

5D6 RESULT

- 5 Recover personality from Matrix Foundation or Resonance realms (skip job location table)
- 6 Influence Seelie Court politics (skip job location table)
- 7-8 Distraction/Decoy
- 9-10 Vandalism/Sabotage
- 11-12 Investigation
- 13-14 Extraction/Rescue
- 15 Planting evidence or device
- 16 Security
- 17 Datasteal
- 18 Protect/Defend/Escort
- 19 Theft or reclamation of object
- 20-21 Smuggling
- 22-23 Blackmail/Influence
- 24 Roll twice more, using both results. Ignore any further results of 24.
- 25 Release damaging info to the public
- 26-27 Provide overwatch (Matrix/astral/physical) for another team
- 28 Assassination/intimidation
- 29 Help start/win a war

THE PAY OFFERED IS...

2D6	RESULT
2	Alternative payment (gear: free or discounted restricted/forbidden ok)
3-4	No physical payment offered, extra Karma given for run
5-6	Lower than normal pay
7	Standard pay
8	Higher than normal pay
9-10	Alternative payment (information)
11	Alternative payment (gear: free or discounted, not restricted/forbidden)
12	Very unusual in type: a rare item, magical gear, etc.

THE ACTUAL JOB IS LOCATED...

2D6	RESULT
2-3	In another city in the runners' home nation
4-8	In the runners' home city
8-9	In another city not in the runners' home nation
10	In a benign wilderness area (forest, mountain, refuge, park, etc.)
11	In a hostile location (space, moving vehicle, tundra, underwater, underground, etc.)
12	In an exotic location (Seelie Court, the Matrix, dragon's lair, metaplane, etc.)

THE PERSON OFFERING THE JOB IS...

1D6	RESULT
1	Honest; they are working for the people or genuinely needs help. They give the runners as much help as they can.
2-3	Mostly benign but may be hiding facts from the team due to embarrassment or minor selfish reasons.
4-5	Is not being honest; they lie or withhold information crucial to the run. They are either being coerced or have incorrect information themselves.
6	Is actively betraying/misleading the team. If successful, the run isn't a hooding run, but the team ends up "working for the man" on accident

THE DIFFICULTY RATING OF THE JOB IS...

2D6	RESULT
2-4	Low: easy for the team to perform
5-9	Medium: moderate security; neither a challenge nor easy
10-11	High: increased security, heightened alert, or unusual security measures (run is a trap, there are paracritters, requires gear not possessed by team)
12	Extreme: It is not likely the team will be able to complete the run. Retreat/admitting defeat/not taking run suggested



THIS UNFORTUNATE THING HAPPENS ON THE RUN...

2D6	RESULT
2	The planets align and the run actually goes smoothly.
3-6	The details of the run are much different than described.
7-8	An unexpected combat happens (random security, gang intervention, rival runner team)
9-10	The person who gave the run betrays the team. Either s/he or agents actively thwart the runners or try to kill them.
11	A personal enemy or undermined organization (gang, corp exec, gov. official) chooses now to take revenge/interfere.
12	A bizarre and unpredictable event occurs to a team member (runner becomes awakened, runner SURGEs, a mentor spirit claims the runner, HMHVV infection, dependent is in crisis, loss of limb)*

*Use judgment when using this result. If you and your player can tell an interesting story together using an extreme event, great! You'll have another great tale to tell! If it would lead to the player feeling angry or hurt, perhaps another choice would do better.

WHEN THE RUN IS FINISHED, THE PERSON WHO GAVE THE RUN...

2D6	RESULT
2	Attempts to kill the runners (may be coerced or mind-controlled, etc.)
3-6	Gives the runners the agreed-on payment, but suggests it is a hardship (give runners extra karma if they don't take the money, or take less)
7-9	Gives the runners the agreed-on payment, and spreads the word of their success (give runners extra street cred)
10-11	Attempts to deny the runners the full payment (give runners extra karma if they don't force the issue, or settle for less)
12	Does not answer calls or show up to complete the deal (may be coerced or in distress)





NICORP

FIN

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FAIRLIGHT

RIGHTEOUS FIRE

Kill or be killed. Eye for an eye. Get yours while you can. Shadowrunners—and most of the other residents of the Sixth World—are told from birth that those are the principles you must follow to survive. Thinking of others is for suckers. Take care of your own and hope you don't die early.

But some runners think that's no way to live. They know the world is stacked against them, and they've decided they like those odds. They choose to fight for what they think is right. They use shadowruns to take from people who don't deserve what they have and give to those who need it. They seek hidden information that can right wrongs. It's not easy, and it doesn't always pay as well as outright theft, but who do they tell stories about centuries later—Robin Hood, or the jerk thief from a few forests away who only thought of himself?

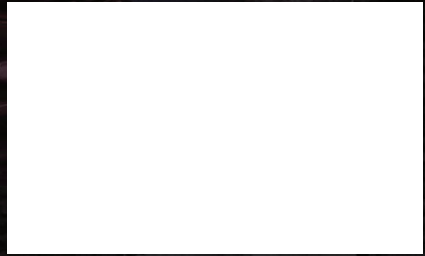
Better than Bad is a shadowrunners' guide to hooding, the art of committing crime to help those in need. With plot information, shadowrunning techniques and tactics, and advice to help runners work to bring good into the world, the book is the first definitive guide to shadowrunning with a conscience. It also includes information on a hot spot for working to right wrongs—Pretoria, in the African nation of Azania

Better than Bad is for use with **Shadowrun, Fifth Edition**, and most of the material can also be used with **Shadowrun: Anarchy**.



SHADOWRUN
FIFTH EDITION

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