# Blackjack's Guide To Bitter Gamemastering #4

## Some Things Just Don't Make Sense

I admit it, every once in a while I mug my PCs. Not every day, mind you, just the occasional beating to remind the character that general crime oriented scum does not exclude runners as targets. I also have to admit that my assailants usually lose, as would be expected, muggers are rarely equipped and skilled enough to take on a runner which is why they rarely do. But when one of these events falls far from the characters' favor, there's usually hell to pay. Unfortunately this hell usually manifests in reality.

"Why the (bad word) did you do that????" the player yells into my face, swinging their die bag in a menacing manner. "It had nothing to do with the run! It had no plot forwarding value! And it just didn't make any sense!"

I usually take this opportunity to remind the player of the concept behind a mugging, the fact that weird things happen, and that, yes, some things just don't make sense. From here the conversation usually turns into one of those "GM being an asshole" tirades ending with the player's character running around doing random and senseless things and eventually getting run over by a Citymaster. The simplest way of dealing with the problem is by showing how random and seemingly senseless acts of aggression can befall oneself in reality as well as in fantasy by spontaneously taking the actual player out back and beating the hell out of him. Unfortunately most localities prohibit such actions so you'll probably have to make a little speech. Here's mine:

Walk down the street. What do you see? Actions. Actions which from our perspective seem to be spontaneously and randomly occurring around us. Fortunately, most of these actions are rather harmless. Your characters live in a world where a much larger portion of these actions are not so innocent. Simply because you are a runner does not mean you are only in risk because of this profession. You also face the risks millions of other people face in their every day lives. You may not fall to an archenemy's bullet, you may fall to a child thief who's a lucky shot. You may not go out in a blaze of glory as a panzer round rips through your Wasp, you may have your throat slashed by a passing go gang as you're crossing the street. There's a lot more to be worried about than the corps and the cops. There is also reality. So don't be such a baby.

This usually results in either understanding or the random hurtling of pizza oriented food products in my direction. Either way I win. I like pizza.

## Fantasy Within Fantasy

Every once in a while I like to get a little weird. Ok, a little weirder. Even the world of Shadowrun with its glorious mingling of magic, electronics, and flesh can seem limited at times. You sometimes want to create a completely different shadowrun setting, where guns don't work, where there's no calling for backup, where the sky is always blood red, and the sand can talk.

Agreed, it is possible to do this on the planet Earth in the year 2055 but anyone who's tried it realizes that things can get kind of stupid. If your campaign exists in the world of Shadowrun it has to follow its rules. If your runner wants to make a cellular phone call you have to think of a reason why it won't connect. If your runner decides to walk directly West for days you'll have to figure out why they don't eventually run into a city they know is there. The situation can quickly get out of hand with the gamemaster having to

create some kind of excuse for everything. Realism is lost and the fantasy world is shattered with inconsistencies.

It's ten times easier to simply create a world away from Earth and 2050 and find a way for the runners to end up there. No longer in a world governed by any known laws or rules the gamemaster can state that green marbles roll up and not have to give an excuse why. It is a new world. A world of fantasy for the characters as well as the actual players.

I've created two of these worlds: One sort of D&Dish while the other closely resembled the world of Spacemaster. And it was fun as hell. Of course the runners had a goal while they were in these places and knew what they had to do to get back and, surprisingly, had very little problem with the fact that their pistols didn't function because, hell, no bad guy's would either.

But that isn't even the best part. It was a rush to introduce elements from the world of Shadowrun into these fantasy lands. In my D&D setting a local tribe worshipped a god they called "Pansaire". The runners eventually came into contact this god: A fully operational Banshee Panzer which had crashed into the alternative world years before. In the future they encountered a an Aztechnology nuclear satellite which had disappeared a few years earlier and which has in the process of being converted into a bomb.

The introduction of a fantasy campaign should be carefully planned, it being most accepted and enjoyed when the runners are in the middle of a rut of defeats or screw overs. But don't get too out there or you might never be able to switch back. A simple escape can do wonders for morale but it can also destroy the characters reality. And, most importantly, always make sure they have a way to get back home.