TARGET: MATRIX ®

TARGET: MATRIX

FASA CORP

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INTRODUCTION

arget: Matrix features the sites, grids, hosts and unique personalities of the electronic virtual world known in *Shadowrun* as the Matrix. The Matrix is more than just bits and bytes of information; it is a social arena stocked with games, virtual meeting places and other forms of entertainment that are "more real than the real world"—or so the ads claim. It is also a deadly place full of counter-intrusion programs, Matrix gangs, grids that seem to be created to trap and kill intruding deckers and strange anomalies that get stranger and more numerous with each passing moment.

Target: Matrix walks players though these locations by presenting the information in a series of electronic documents compiled and posted by Captain Chaos, the sysop of the vast Shadowland archive—the number one source for shadowrunners to get the info they need to survive in the world of *Shadowrun*. The documents are written by various runners, each with their own prejudices and points of view, and marked up with a running commentary by other runners, each adding to, revising or contradicting the author. These pieces of black information, or shadowtalk, add innuendos, allegations, opinions, misconceptions, misinformation, lies and sometimes even the truth to the information presented. It is left up to the gamemaster to determine which facts are correct and which are just filling.

Target: Matrix opens with *Grids*, the massive networks that are the first link to the virtual world. Grids from corps, organizations and government agencies are covered, including what's left of the Chicago grid after the Bug City events.

The book then moves on to *Data Havens*, the giant clearinghouses of information that are crucial to shadowrunners and the underground shadow culture. This chapter details an assortment of data havens, their philosophical bent and their reasons for existing. Special attention is focused on the granddaddy of them all—the Denver Nexus and its Shadow Matrix.

The home to the busiest net on the grid is Seattle, so a little tour of *Virtual Seattle* gives us the scoop. From the Mitsuhama Pagoda and the Aztechnology Pyramid in the downtown local grid to Ares, Cross or Shiawase in the less-used neighborhood grids, everything that's important to the Seattle grid is in one place including the remains of the Renraku system.

Hosts, like *Grids*, covers some unique and important places to go while on the grid. From the decker's best friend—Hacker House—to the game parlors and virtual sex shops, these hosts are the stopping points of interest to anyone on the Matrix.

Personas and *Organizations* describe the deckers and users of the Matrix, from those that work the shadows to those working for the corps. The *Open Forum* that follows is a download of the weird, scary and indescribable things that may inhabit the Matrix.

The *Game Information* chapter gives rules for using all of the sections described in the book as well as adventure hooks using the Matrix as a prime "character" in your games.

Target: Matrix requires *Shadowrun Third Edition* (SR3) and the revised *Shadowrun Companion* (SRComp), as well as the advanced Matrix rules found in *Matrix*.

ENTER THE MATRIX

To some people, the Matrix is just a place to play games, shop for new toys, gawk at the computer graphics or maybe handle a business conference call. To this mindset, the Matrix is a place of business and play, but still completely secondary to the real world. To many of us, however, the Matrix is much more than a virtual realm. In fact, it's almost like a second home—or perhaps even our primary one. People live, work, love and die in the Matrix, and it doesn't get much more real than that.

Considering how much of my life I spend jacked in, I'm surprised I never thought to put together a file compilation like this before. When I assembled other *Target* e-books, my goal was to open up areas of the world that many shadowrunners knew almost nothing about. In my experience, foreign locales may be out of sight and mind but they still have thriving shadow communities, and events there may cause ripples that runners on the other side of the world may feel. You never know where your next op may send you, so it's useful to have accessible file collections so you can quickly learn what to expect. It may save your life.

Given that the Matrix spans the globe, there are more elements of it to describe than could possibly fit into a single *Target* file collection. There are hundreds of distinctive grids crossing the globe, and easily thousands, if not millions, of individual hosts. And then there would still be other aspects to cover—personalities, groups and gangs and all of the oddities. If I assembled data on twenty different cities around the world, I could easily compile a similar amount of data just in regards to the Matrix spaces that shadow those cities. So as I dug up information and solicited files for this e-book, I focused mainly on examples, to give the reader an idea of what such things are like. I also covered the unusual features that stuck out from the norm.

The purpose of this collection is to acquaint the reader with the Matrix at large, to give a feel for the sorts of things that can be found lurking in the electron depths. I asked a lot of different sources to dump a download to include in here, so the opinions are thick and varied. Despite the range of material, however, this e-book is by no means complete. There are more things in the Matrix than you or I will ever know, and that may be for the best.

❷ Captain Chaos
   Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 08:47:37 (EST)

GRIDS

Grids are the open realms of the Matrix, the self-contained planes of existence that users like you and I traverse to reach our destinations. Each grid is like a nation or state, home to hundreds or thousands of host cities. Each is a macrocosmic entity, with its own culture, unique denizens, exciting locales, attractions and dangers.

In many ways, Matrix users have become so accustomed to skating through gridspace that we no longer even see it. We forget that behind each grid (regional, local or private) lies a corporation or similar entity that operates it and provides the hardwired backbone—and as we all know, corps have agendas. This fact may be concealed on public grids, but private grids often take you inside a corporation's inner workings. Venture there, and you may quickly learn that the grid's corporate owner has an agenda quite different than yours.

Aside from the contents of various hosts, many grids have nothing that distinguishes them from other grids. They have roughly the same security, roughly the same features, and often use similar iconography.

However, a few grids stand out from the crowd. These grids differentiate themselves by their histories, structures, iconographies or special hosts they contain. Many of these grids are of special interest to deckers and other shadowrunners, usually because their content makes a potentially lucrative target.

The following pieces describe a small selection of notable grids—grids that are in some way special, unique or otherwise important to the criminal underclass. Some of these pieces I solicited from deckers who know the territory; others I happened across and decided to include. As always, I make no claims regarding the accuracy or truth of these accounts. I've verified what I can, but I only have so much time, and change occurs rapidly. So use the information at your own risk.

● Captain Chaos
   Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 08:52:12 (EST)

PRESCOTT

ANGEL SATELLITE CONSTELLATION

Security Code: Orange-Easy
by Orbital Bandit

Anyone who skates the electron stream knows that satellite constellations can be the hardest nuts to crack—worse than most PLTGs, in fact. But anyone who's actually dug around in a satcon knows that they can be way more interesting, both visually and resource-wise.

If you keep tabs on such things, you might've noticed that the Angel Satellite Constellation went through some major changes in the past year. The number of birdies in this particular satcon has more than tripled, and its data traffic has leaped exponentially. So who's been flooding our spacelanes with hi-tech gizmos, you ask? Why, none other than Yamatetsu.

Angel SatCon used to be an independent sat grid, running a bit behind the times in tech and service levels. Yamatetsu bought out Angel at the same time it was relocating its digs to Mother Russia and immediately began to sink cred into the project. Thanks to a sweet deal with the Red bigwigs, Yamatetsu also took the Svobodniy Cosmodrome under its wing. Before you could say Buttercup, Yamatetsu was launching new sats into the sky like no one's business.

❷ Yamatetsu also leases some of its satellite services to the Russian government.
❷ Red Wraith

The sweet thing about Angel SatCon is that it's actually several satcons rolled into one. Most of the satcons that you dirtside deckers like to hack are all comsats, specifically intended for communications only. But there's a lot of other birdies floating in the sky, too: weathersats, GPS sats, surveillance sats and research sats. Some of these cruise around the Earth in different orbital patterns, but it's not to hard too commlink them together, especially when you have space platforms such as Shibanokuji to act as relay nodes. In fact, Yamatetsu links all of their sats together under the Angel SatCon umbrella, no matter the sat's purpose.

ACCESSING

Uplinking to the Angel SatCon isn't as difficult as most. Locating one of its numerous birdies cluttering the sky is easy enough, and the security's not too tough. Unlike most satcons, the Angel SANs aren't protected by scramble IC, so you don't necessarily need to decrypt to get in. The imagery used within is standard sat iconography—your persona appears within a satellite, almost as if it was hollow. Big windows look out on the Earth, the Moon, space or some other interesting cosmological feature. In fact, the window views are feeds from cameras located on various sats. Note that the tridfeeds are not always live—Yamatetsu occasionally loops footage or replays interesting shots.

Once onboard, you have the opportunity to open a SAN leading into any of the dirtside RTGs. Most will also allow you to downlink into some of Yamatetsu's PLTGs. You can also find linkups to some of the orbital factories and platforms, but don't expect access to be easy. From those, you can sometimes find a link to the few lunar bases.

You also have the option of digging directly into the host controlling a particular satellite. Each sat within the constellation carries a host (or set of hosts) that controls its functions. Not all of these hosts are linked to the satcon grid at all times—a host may be protected by timed or triggered SANs, depending on how valuable Yamatetsu thinks it is. The security on these buggers is colder than a walk in space with a spacesuit—and only slightly less dangerous. Each and every one is also protected by a solid piece of scramble IC, so deck quietly and carry a big decrypt utility.

If you get in, though, you'll be set to have some fun. The options at your disposal will depend on what sort of birdie you're riding in. Here's a rundown of a few sats you're likely to find yourself in:

Comsats

Angel comsats appear as retrograde telephone operator's consoles, complete with plug-in wires and old-school monitors and keyboards. These birdies manage all kinds of cellular and Matrix traffic, so they can be used to tap and trace comcalls, intercept data and so on. Comsats are the most numerous sats in the constellation by far.

Weathersats

Weathersats are loaded down with instruments. If you crack one of these hosts, you can get shots of cloud formations, readings for temperature, moisture and solar radiation in the atmosphere and so on. You can also doctor this information before it gets beamed back down to Earth, though the doctored data won't correspond with data from other weathersats. Angel weathersats also monitor underwater currents and conditions near submerged Yamatetsu sites. They also carry gear that can be used to track and communicate with naval craft and aircraft for rescue operations.

Surveillance Sats

These birdies are fun. Want to get a close-up high-res shot of the streets around your squat or a nearby rooftop? Want to track a car through downtown streets from orbit? This is the place to be.

Surveillance sats carry high-resolution vid and trid cameras that can be controlled through the host. You can also get infrared/thermo pics. Yamatetsu also likes to eavesdrop on radio communications, so these birdies carry gear for intercepting, decoding and locating radio signals. Most of the time Yamatetsu has these trained on its competition, of course.

Be warned—Angel SatCon surveillance sats are glaciers, benchmarking at Red-8 and higher.

❷ Cloud cover and other weather conditions can severely hamper sat surveillance.
❷ Don't Look Up

Research Sats

Yamatetsu's research sats use satellite imaging to determine an area's chemical composition, plant cover, water levels and other data useful for mining, farming or fishing. Some

research sats are trained to look away from the Earth, zeroing in on sunspot and solar-flare activity, tracking meteors, spacecraft and spacejunk or gathering data on potentially exploitable sites, such as Luna or Mars.

◗ Yamatetsu's got at least two of their sats focused on Halley's Comet. As far as I can tell, neither has picked up evidence of comet-riding dragons, alien pods or materializing space spirits—yet.
◗ Bung

General Sat Controls

Satellites carry all sorts of electronics and gear that can be manipulated and controlled through their hosts. The exact gear depends on the sat, but typical payloads include antennas, transponders, telescopes, digital cameras, radar and other sensors and communication toys. From the host, you can also play with the sat's solar energy panels, power supplies and propulsion systems. In most cases, the critical systems are isolated on a sub-tier host that's even nastier than the main host. (Corps don't like to pay millions of nuyen to launch their toy into orbit, only to have some malicious decker spin it out of its orbital plane or lock its sensors on some wandering space rock.)

CHICAGO NOOSE NET

Security Code: Orange-Easy
by Hanged Man

Before I go into technicalities, let me give you some background. The same year the Crash Virus took down the worldwide telecom grid, an Alamos 20K bomb took down the Sears Tower—and half of downtown Chicago with it. Rather than attempt to clear out the financial center and rebuild it, the city and corps decided to just start a new financial center a few clicks south and west. The wrecked downtown area, once called the Loop, was left to the squatters. It quickly became a wretched hive of scum and villainy, now called the Noose.

When the Matrix was being rebuilt following the Crash, the telecom corps had no incentive to wire the Noose with upgraded technology. After all, squatters aren't known for paying their utility bills on time. So in the early days of the Noose, Matrix coverage was patchy at best, and in many places relied on leftover grid connections or wireless links to networks outside the Noose.

As the Noose attracted more shadowrunners and criminal types, this situation began to change. These folks needed working jackpoints to deck from or otherwise do business from. There was a lot of old hardware lying around the Noose, and various hackers and syndicate techies began salvaging gear and putting it to use. A few of the old private networks buried under the Noose were also dug up, rebooted and upgraded to current Matrix standards. The few Noose areas that did have Matrix links spawned networks of parasitical hosts, which connected to other hosts, re-wiring the 'hood.

When the bugs burst out across the city in '55, the Noose was hive central. The government's Containment Zone walled in a fair chunk of the city surrounding the Noose, including parts of the new downtown Core. The feds also physically cut the Matrix relay nodes leading in and out of the surrounding

LTGs and dropped viruses into the systems to finish 'em off. Those of us caught inside the CZ were left to rot.

The years that followed were a struggle for survival, but it was also the time that scruffy hackers like me came to shine. There was a strong sentiment to get some sort of network back online, to share data on the bugs and help each other get by. We started scavenging all the hardware that we could lay our mitts on and cobbled other parts together the best we could. Lucky for us, most of the bugs and looters weren't really interested in consoles, routers, trunks and beamcom interfaces.

It took some doing, but we managed to wire together the remaining operational networks in the Noose with isolated elements of the surrounding LTGs. We even patched together a grid emulator from some gear we found hidden away in the basement of an old MCT compound. About six months after the wall went up, we had a more or less stable grid put together, though it was small. Only a few hosts were maintained at the beginning, the most popular of which was System 05, the local shadow node. Gradually, we were able to hook more systems in. We had a few minor problems with some of the warlords who tried to claim the grid as their own, but after we hooked up Catherine the Terrible with a primo service deal, she declared the grid techies off-limits and backed up her proclamation with force.

◗ The first slag who messed with a techie group after Catherine's proclamation was strung up from a lamppost with fiber-optic cable. That's when the gridtech crew got the nickname "Lynch Mob."
◗ Bytesize

◗ There's more to the story than a group of dedicated geeks and a psychotic woman's backing. I know a group of chicks who went out of their way to assist the project and then made ample use of it to track down the bugs. They liked to hunt their own kind, if you know what I mean.
◗ Raid Array

◗ Get real. Mantid spirits don't have the techno savvy to know a mass optical storage unit from a trunk interchange, or the foresight to plan that sort of thing. The Lynch Mob's real backer was Jason Two Spirits. Who else had the foresight to store up the software and hardware that was necessary?
◗ Anna Log

Naturally, when the wall went down, we wasted no time reconnecting the Noose Net grid back to the Matrix. None of the SANs are official, of course, so you've got to know where to look to find your way in.

THE INNER WORKINGS

To a decker, Noose Net is both a dream and a nightmare. Like other grids, Noose Net is powered by the combined processing capability of a small army of computers. This distributed hardware is hidden around the Containment Zone, maintained and guarded by multiple paranoid administrators. As much as
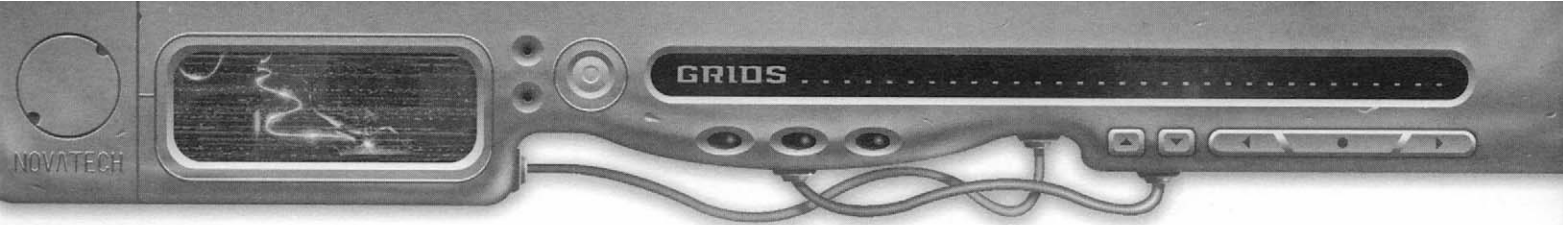
we cooperate to keep the grid online, we also keep many secrets from each other. This means the grid is permanently in a state of flux. System ratings may fluctuate, security triggers are randomized, and not even I can guess what sort of IC may show up. System sculpture is a menagerie of designs and leftover icons; you're as likely to see UMS or Fuchi icons as you are to see images from Renraku's new Buddha™ icon library.

The same haphazardness applies to most of the hosts you'll find on Noose Net. You'll find hosts running on tech so old that you're lucky to get sim biofeedback (much less sim), right next to a hot sculpted system recently scammed from Megacorp X. Most of the hosts are private and are oriented toward data storage for warlords, shadowrunners or the Mafia. Of note is the virtual presence for the Sanctum, an archive and discussion board of tactics and info useful in fighting the bugs. The Sanctum's a good place to hook up with hardcase bug hunters on neutral turf. It's also a good example of how these hosts tend to be a hash of old and new code—the Sanctum's still running the sculpting for the Field Museum of Natural History, but the virtual exhibits are significantly altered.

❷ A lot of salvaged hardware came with hot corporate data that went out of date during the CZ years—and some of that data is still buried on the host. For example, the folks who grabbed machines from Dream Park and the Truman Tech Tower have set them up as sim-parlors to sell wet records, edited BTL and normal Simsense files and even some aging skillsoft sourcecode at close-out prices.
❷ Grid Reaper

❷ Noose Net's not a legal, authorized grid, so there's no guarantee that the commcode of someone within Noose Net's coverage area is going to be reachable by someone from outside the grid. The Lynch Mob's done a decent job of hacking the proper relay nodes and datatrail redirection, but it's still a sketchy prospect.
❷ FastJack

We saw no reason to keep track of jackpoint registrations when we patched this grid together, so in most cases the physical location of a Noose Net jackpoint can't be determined. Even if the jackpoint has an ID number, the grid's not designed to acknowledge it. Some hosts do keep track of the jackpoints that access them, though, so they can be tracked from within that host.

❷ Wireless links are pretty common in the Noose Net, and several shadow operations sell cellular service to CZ residents.
❷ Wirehead

I'd be an idiot to think anyone's gonna take my essay at face value and not poke around on their own, but please be careful, for your own sake. In the Noose, idiocy is a capital offense. Treat it as you would any visit to Bug City, capeesh?

❷ How come no one has mentioned all of the otaku you see running around Noose Net gridspace?
❷ Bingo

❷ What's to mention? Otaku tribes tend to recruit hard-luck cases, and who's had more hard luck than a kid in the Noose?
❷ Raid Array

❷ I hear there's more to it than that. One of the net-brats told me that some otaku get some sort of "holy vibe" from certain parts of the Matrix, usually isolated systems that only they know about. Given Noose Net's jury-rigged nature, it seems to hold more than its share of these otaku hangouts.
❷ Z-Term

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Security Rating: Green-Easy
by NeoJudas

The PLTG maintained by the UCAS Department of Justice (DOJ) is a both a bureaucratic nightmare and a gold mine of data. With more than a hundred agencies, bureaus, departments and other federal entities under its wing (most of which are neck-deep in law enforcement) the DOJ's resources and records are impressive. Thanks to five separate Paperwork Reduction and Freedom of Information Acts, the DOJ is required to make all sorts of official documents available to the public. And the easiest way to do that was to archive the material online.

Every LTG and RTG within the UCAS has a SAN that leads to the DOJ PLTG. The portal drops your icon directly onto the top centerpoint of a massive set of scales. Each cup within the scales holds several scores of host SAN icons. One cup holds all of the public-access hosts—virtual offices, info desks, archives and so forth. The other cup holds all of the private hosts—accessible only to federal employees. The "floor" of this pocket universe is a massive UCAS flag, stretching off into the distance.

❷ They used to pump the National Anthem over the grid as background music, but those sound files became target numero uno for irritated deckers.
❷ Antiflag

❷ Back in '57 some clever prankster infected the grid with a virus called "Nuyen," which slowly altered the scale iconography. Hundreds of flashing gold nuyen icons began propagating throughout the private host cup. Before long, the scales were tipped off balance. It took the Marshals a week to fix the problem and switch the scales back to their "balanced" position.
❷ Wobbly

HOSTS
Ok, sit back and curl up with your blanket, you're going to need it. Here's a few of the more interesting and scary hosts within the DOJ PLTG.

Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS)

If you're a foreign citizen (national or corporate), this is the office you have to deal with for visas, work permits and so on. The public INS host is usually crowded with personas running the red-tape obstacle course. The private INS hosts are far more intriguing. Given the databases on resident aliens and the fact that this office issues SINs to immigrants who become citizens, it's a hot spot for groups that manufacture identities on the sly. It's an open secret that quite a few of the people who work in the databases are "influenced" by criminal syndicates. It's even suspected that some of these ID forgers have established their own back doors directly into the records.

❷ The INS has a portal that leads directly into the UCAS' main SIN Registry. If you can find the SAN and beat the IC, it's a wiz place to dig up names and numbers or plant your own.
❷ Slamm-0!

❷ Be warned—the feds protect the Registry behind at least one virtual host.
❷ Spook

❷ The INS is also in charge of border controls. If you look in the right hosts, you can find patrol schedules, names and home addresses of border guards, and other data that a smuggler like me could put to good use.
❷ Rigger X

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

The feds have never had much imagination, and the sterile UMS iconography of the FBI systems proves it. The FBI is responsible for investigating all the major and border-crossing crimes that shadowrunners are likely to commit: terrorism, kidnapping, conspiracy and flight across state lines. They also keep files on "subversive" elements within society, from Humanis to TerraFirst!. Most of the files on these cases are kept buried inside the FBI's own PLTG, though you can access it through a SAN on the DOJ grid.

❷ The FBI also runs the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), the master databases of every criminal record ever registered within the UCAS. These files contain personal details, fingerprints and other scans, not to mention the usual flattering mugshots. The NCIC records are as arctic as they get, with their remoteness and IC, but worth the effort.
❷ Cooper

UCAS Marshals

These feds focus on a few specialized areas, all of which are interesting to a datahound like me. First off, the Marshals are responsible for detaining and transporting federal prisoners. So if your chummer gets locked up after a run, a dive into the Marshals' records might help you liberate him. Secondly, these are the guys who run the Federal Witness Protection Program. In other words, they provide new identities and

homes to people who snitch on major criminals. They're smart enough not to keep the records for these witnesses online, but if you're on a witness' trail, there's no better place to start. Third, with the advent of the Matrix, the feds took computer crime out of the FBI's jurisdiction and handed it over to the Marshals. The Marshals are responsible for securing all federal grids and hosts, as well as investigating computer crimes committed in UCAS Matrix systems.

❷ When they're on duty, the Matrix Marshals are required to wear uniform icons that are styled after marshals from the Wild West days. They go all out: shiny badges, spurs, horses and six-shooters.
❷ Baxter

❷ Some of the Canadian Marshals use traditional Mountie icons to assert their Canadian identity.
❷ Passion

❷ The Marshals have a rivalry going with the Corporate Court's Grid Overwatch Division (GOD). The first time a GOD decker waltzed onto a federal grid, he was intercepted almost immediately and shown the SAN out. The Marshals have refused to cooperate with the G-men on investigations, despite pressure from the Big Ten. Could lead to interesting consequences in the future ...
❷ Turner

❷ I don't recommend tangling with Marshals if you can help it—they all sport BattleTac Matrixlink utilities and usually travel in pairs or squads.
❷ Bump

Other Agencies

The three above are just the beginning, but to be honest, there's really too much available from the DOJ grid to detail here. To whet your appetite, you might trying stopping by the hosts of the Drug Enforcement Agency (learn all about the latest in illegal BTLs!), the Bureau of Prisons (to find out when your archenemy gets out on parole), the Antitrust Division (to see what corp atrocities the feds are being bribed to ignore this week) or even the Office of the Inspector General (to view the internal affairs records on the rest of the DOJ's activities).

THE HALLS OF JUSTICE

Now, before you get the idea that the DOJ grid is a system where you can walk in and pull paydata off of a virtual tree, let me point out a few things.

As the primary medium for a monolithic bureaucracy, the DOJ uses a lot of operators to keep up its grid and records. These workers bumble around in the offices and archives, handling files and dealing with visiting icons. You could dump most of them just by looking at them funny, but they all carry panicbutton utilities that summon Marshals to investigate. So if you start mucking around where you're not supposed to, crank up your masking and hope you're not spotted.

PRESCOTT

❷ Most DOJ employees have basic UMS persona icons, so slot an icon chip that matches. If you waltz in with a high-res cyberknight icon, you'll look a bit out of place.
❷ Marty

Almost every private host in the DOJ grid is protected by a chokepoint. As a secondary precaution, very few of these hosts are actually linked to hosts from other agencies. (The divisions don't trust each other enough to allow direct access between their hosts, but the arrangement also ensures that no single passcode will work system wide).

One thing to keep in mind if you're searching for really old records—odds are you won't find them online. The Crash virus hit the federal grids pretty hard, and only a small percentage of the data that was salvaged was put back online. So don't expect anything to lead back further than '29. And if you're searching for a file from only a few years ago, odds are it's not immediately accessible. (To conserve memory space, most federal databases archive any material that's more than five years old.) When a file is archived, it's recorded onto a memory chip or unit and stored on a shelf somewhere—offline.

❷ In other words, to access it you have to convince a happy government worker to physically look it up, take it off the shelf, and re-load it into an online "viewing room" for your perusal. Better make sure you have all the right credentials and paperwork.
❷ Tuttle

If you're planning to delete a file—be careful. Many fed databases require superuser privileges to delete files. A decker can just do it anyway and risk triggering security, but odds are it'll be a bit more difficult than expected. The feds love their files.

Above all, when dealing with the DOJ, remember one word: bureaucracy. Just because your browse utility turns up a file address doesn't mean the file is actually there—it may have been shuffled to another agency, filed elsewhere as an "inactive project" or archived.

MAGICKNET
Security Rating: Green-Average
by Caliban

For decades the Matrix has been perceived as the province of deckers, a stronghold for the worshippers of technology. But the practitioners of magic recognized the useful-

ness of computer networks well before the Awakening. Where else can the ideas and concepts of strangers be brought to you in the blink of an eye? We have used these networks as a carrier for our ideals and will continue to use them until the last electron fades into the noiseless dance of time.

Magicknet exemplifies the fact that the Awakened in the Matrix are not entirely strangers in a strange land. The following excerpt from Causaczk's "Electrothaumic" (Magecraft, August 2059) details this network's humble beginnings:

> Magicknet is popular for those in search of hard-to-find references and free source spell formulae. It traces its inception to late last century, when it began as a BBS (Bulletin Board System) in the 1980s. Originally, Magicknet was simply an electronic meeting place for those interested in the occult. As the Internet grew, Magicknet became an underground site, regularly accessed by the "magicians" of the time, who spent hours on the various newsboards arguing over esoteric references and tradition viewpoints. With the return of magic in 2011, visitors to the site increased exponentially as they suddenly realized that all of the theories they had been bandying around for the past twenty years were potentially useable magical rituals and formulae.
>
> Magicknet was one of millions of systems to suffer under the lash of the virus during the Crash of 2029. All of the network's archives of irreplaceable information would have been lost had the participants not kept up the rather anachronistic practice of publishing weekly journals for those subscribers who refused to have truck with the "evils of technology." Recovery proceeded apace, and soon Magicknet was back online.

In its heyday after the Awakening, Magicknet was crucial to the acceptance of magic as a real force within the world. At the time, many magical theorists (they cannot properly be called magicians) were slow to recognize the return of *real* magic to the world. Many of the users who flooded the boards with posts saying "I just tried a lesser ritual of summoning from the *Lemegeton*, and *something* has appeared within the ward of the seal" were banned as pranksters or troublemakers. However, the evidence soon began to outweigh the voices of the skeptics, and the Ghost Dance settled the arguments once and for all.

After the dawn of the Matrix, Magicknet remained a series of unpublicized private hosts that each pointed to each other. It quickly became a favored spot for Awakened shadowrunners and others who wished to avoid the public nature of official magic-oriented hosts and newsfeeds. In an ironic twist, shamans actually outnumbered mages, simply because most shamans were less inclined toward establishment jobs and services and far more likely to have learned magic on the streets or from a tribe. Perhaps stereotypically, shamans also held much less proprietary viewpoints toward their personal magical research and spell formulas.

The various Magicknet nodes soon suffered numerous corporate attempts (both legal and extralegal) to shut them down for distributing copyrighted formulae and theses. One of the

few large magical interest groups of the time, the United Talismongers Association (UTA), stepped in as a white knight. Bringing their resources to bear, the UTA established a PLTG and either bought out the Magicknet nodes or offered them free space for their hosts. After a short transition period, the new improved Magicknet was born.

> ◆ One thing UTA doesn't publicize is that they leased most of the backbone for their grid from MCT. In return, MCT gets a first-peek at Magicknet's newsfeeds and street-research breakthroughs.
> ◆ Kensai

> ◆ Thanks to UTA's underhanded tactics, many old Magicknet nodes didn't fall into line easily ... perhaps stimulating the creation of the Magick Undernet.
> ◆ FastJack

UTA's Magicknet launched a publicity campaign and quickly became known as *the* place for online magic discussions, peer approvals and open-source formulae. A barter-and-exchange community also developed rapidly, as enchanters traded focus designs for lessons in new metamagical techniques.

The sudden exposure scared away many of Magicknet's old lurkers and shadow-users, who preferred more intimate dealings. Before Magicknet's new virtual shine had worn off, the Magick Undernet was born. Leeching almost entirely off of the Magicknet PLTG, the Magick Undernet is an accumulation of hosts that are hidden behind trap doors, private-access chokepoints and other secret SANs. Probably close to a dozen access points are scattered across the Magicknet PLTG, usually concealed within sympathetic hosts. Each of the Magick Undernet hosts is linked to one another, creating a maze of underground nodes.

> ◆ The Magick Undernet is where the real biz occurs. If you're looking for a pirate copy of Manadyne's just-released conjuring library or looking to hire a voudoun who knows his way around the Guinee metaplanes, the Undernet's the place to go.
> ◆ Silicon Mage

WHAT'S INSIDE

The passcodes to Magicknet may be purchased for a basic yearly fee, which provides access to all of the public hosts within the grid. Access to the Magick Undernet is an entirely different story.

The PLTG's iconography is very basic, sculpted to appear as a featureless white void. The host icons and their interior sculpture follow a bare-bones design scheme. Aside from the serenity and casual atmosphere it produces, this look appeases the thousands of patrons who run the Matrix with electrode rigs, cold ASIST or even in tortoise mode. There's just no need for full simsense—besides, most visitors come to research, not to observe the system sculpture.

The hosts within the Magicknet PLTG are quite eclectic. Whole hosts are devoted to archives and newsboards or filled entirely with gigapulses of free spell data, published theoretical
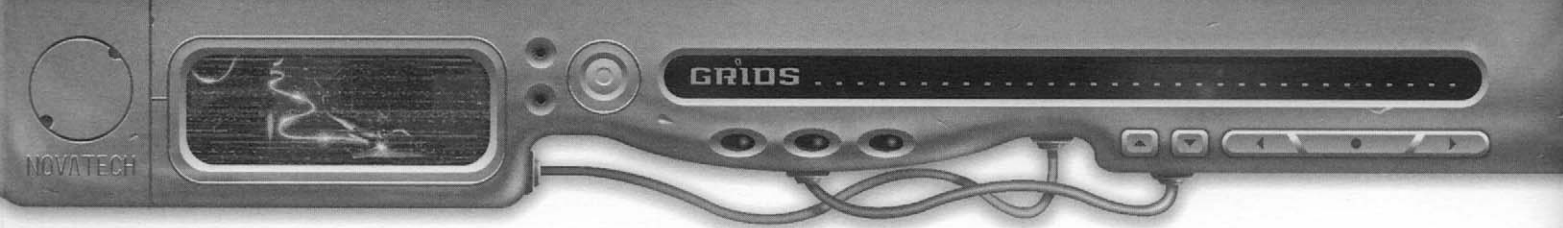
papers and reference texts. The UTA allows several talismongers to hawk their wares and also rents "virtual chapterhouses" out to several magical groups that use them for recruiting and socializing. The PLTG even includes a "virtual zoo" host, complete with sim records and data on every critter known to *Patterson's Guide*, plus a few more. A few of the hosts provide diversionary exercises such as fantasy environments for gaming.

❷ One series of hosts is home to a collaborative effort to map the metaplanes. Each host is designed as a different plane and linked to the rest according to travelers' reports.
❷ Sam Eddy

❷ Unfortunately, that project is perpetually in turmoil, as the participants can never seem to agree on how a specific metaplane is portrayed, or they provide conflicting reports of what metaplane is where.
❷ Talon

❷ Magicknet also offers a range of services for Matrix-phobic customers, such as magic-oriented newsfaxes and screamsheets, news pagers and even hardcopy journals assembled from online articles.
❷ Neddy

❷ You'll find that fully a third of the currently subscribed users to Magicknet are social historians looking for original data for their theses. The newsboards contain a history of the Awakening and the years preceding it, from a magician's point of view. And they didn't just keep the interesting posts ... they kept everything.
❷ AJTSS

The sysops and security deckers that maintain and protect the PLTG all operate with identical icons—a black-robed mystic wielding a staff, face hidden from view. These admins seem fond of using agents to help them out and field questions from visitors. These agents typically are represented by icons reminiscent of familiars from mythical lore.

MAGICK UNDERNET

To access the Undernet, you first must pass through a chokepoint node sculpted in the same white-void style as the PLTG. In this secure gateway, you will find yourself facing the hovering, horrific visage of the "Decker on the Threshold." Like its metaplanar counterpart, the Decker will ask your business and demand payment in knowledge or nuyen depending on what service you wish to access. If you fail to satisfy the Decker, prepare for a brutal purging. If you satisfy the Decker, it will activate a SAN, allowing you access to the linked Undernet hosts.

❷ The Decker models itself based on the icon you're currently wearing. For example, a user with a Mandarin icon is likely to see some horrific demon from the Thousand Hells.
❷ Lady Jestyr

❷ The Decker is an SK, allegedly programmed by a team of corporate deckers who needed to purchase some pricey magical assistance to cover up certain "indiscretions."
❷ 'Trixster

The Undernet's hosts tend to have more sculpture and design, though still less than you'd expect. It's here that you'll find pirated spell formulae, shadow newsboards, rare translated texts, deals for telesma that would be impolite to sell publicly, rundowns on corp magical assets and other such information—basically all the good stuff.

❷ A few Matrix gangs and con artists have been known to discreetly peddle "access" to the Undernet to gullible magicians. Inevitably, the dupe gets ripped off, occasionally attacked and dumped for the hell of it.
❷ Shetani

MATRIX SERVICE PROVIDERS
by Zoltan

There are literally thousands upon thousands of Matrix service providers (MSPs) in the world, from your local LTG vendor to monster-sized, world-spanning "online communities" to local mom-and-pop operations with user bases of a few dozen individuals in a single town. I know more than a few deckers who despise mainstream MSPs such as UCAS Online and wouldn't set their virtual foot in one if it was the last place in the Matrix. In my opinion, MSPs are an undervalued decker resource. Most of them have security low enough that deckers can romp through their core systems with ease, and others keep internal archives that are worth their bandwidth speed in meganuyen.

Now, granted, whenever you cram several million users into a worldwide virtual neighborhood, you're going to see the worst facets of metahumanity come to light. Just remember that such population sizes make a great screen behind which you can hide your persona, and they also provide a massive pool of gullible chumps—most of 'em don't know a sleaze utility from a smart frame and will fall for the oldest Matrix scams. You may think scamming these chumps is unscrupulous, but just remember how many of these suckers work corporate jobs. An inside connection can save you blood and sweat on your next run, and all you need to get it is a little confidence scheme, virtual romance or blackmail.

UCAS ONLINE (UOL)
Security Code: Blue-Average

UOL is by far the largest MSP in the world, claiming more than twenty million users and listed as an AA megacorporation. UOL has branches in most of the world's major countries (Aztlan, Amazonia, Pueblo and the Tirs being notable exceptions), usually under names such as Europe Online and Japan Online. The corp is headquartered in the Deecee sprawl.

When you get online with a UOL account, your local LTG will automatically route you directly into the UOL PLTG. This grid uses brightly colored but banal icons, slightly more stylized than UMS and loaded with cheery colors. Blech.

◗ Don't forget that every single icon has at least one, if not twenty, advertisements scrolling up, down or across it. It's enough to give you vertigo.
◗ Glitch

Naturally, the grid is choked full of basic or default persona icons milling about, zipping through the chat-room hosts or skipping through the "personal rooms" where everyone likes to spill out their life stories and favorite hobbies in mind-numbing detail. The live simsense feeds, newsfeeds and virtual chats with the latest pop celebrity are favorites. If you're looking for, um, "adult material," though, you're better off hitting a public grid. UOL security comes down fast and hard on the "three P's"—porn, piracy and "extremist policlubs."

◗ It's UOL policy to use sniffer utilities throughout their PLTG, searching for prohibited material. Anything they find will be deleted, and offending accounts terminated.
◗ Sam Spam

◗ This doesn't prevent all kinds of one-on-one flirting, dirty-talking and heavy breathing between icons in out-of-the-way chat rooms. Vanilla citizens really seem to get a kick out of "virtual encounters" behind faceless icons—makes up for their dreary real lives, I guess.
◗ TPY

◗ The real coup is when these rendezvous become real-world liaisons. I laugh my hoop off when I think of how many married suits I've talked into real-world affairs. The looks on their faces when they realize they've been conned for an extraction, a passcode or other inside info is priceless.
◗ Black-Eyed Suzan

So why should you care? First off, setting up a throw-away UOL account is so easy, it's practically an affront to my decking skills. In fact, there's a thriving underground of UOL script-kiddies that use utilities such as "UCAS Offline" to create fake accounts that they can cause trouble with. Granted, these accounts may only last a few hours, but that's usually more than you need.

Secondly, UOL is a business, and they make money by tracking their customers—particularly their buying habits. UOL operates several massive databases in its core hosts, correlating their customers' personal account details (including SINs, home addresses and account numbers) with a "purchasing portfolio." UOL sells this material to other businesses for marketing and advertising purposes. It also purchases databases from credit agencies, so it can incorporate its customers' offline cred-spending habits into the mix as well.

◗ If you can bypass that Orange-Average security, you've got access to a complete record of your mark's habits—hobbies, favorite restaurants, how often he buys his mistress a new present—you get the idea.
◗ Switchback

PLANETLINK
Security Code: Green-Hard

Perhaps the only major competitor to UOL, PlanetLink is headquartered in Sacramento, CFS but maintains affiliates and connection nodes throughout the UCAS and most of Europe.

PlanetLink is slightly less homogenous than UOL. Its highlight and biggest draw is its various services for Matrix gamers and the fact that it hosts the largest multi-player virtual environments in the world (available to subscribers only, of course). *The Crusade of Neil the Ork Barbarian* and *Virtual Denver* (a shadowrunner-wannabe game) are the favorites, with *Nosferatu* and *Dawn of Atlantis* close behind.

The game worlds make excellent private meeting sites, provided you're skilled enough to avoid getting dumped by a wandering monster. If you're an aspiring decker, these games are a good place to start honing your skills.

◗ Allegations that PlanetLink uses illegally boosted simsense in some of its games have been denied strenuously, and PlanetLink has so far settled all of its lawsuits out of court. Strangely, this actually led to an increase in the number of subscribers.
◗ S. Moon

◗ Occasionally, a Matrix gang invades one of the games and takes over. Before long, they elevate themselves to godlike status, dump all but a few victims and generally wreak havoc. Some of them start staging contests and decker dogfights, complete with pirated utilities and ringside gambling.
◗ 'Trixster

YAMATETSU METAMATRIX
Security Code: Green-Average

Yamatetsu's MetaMatrix MSP is primarily intended for Yamatetsu citizens (who receive free accounts and discounts for family members) but is also open to the general public in Russia, Australia, Europe, certain Asian and African countries, and the North American nations. Note that Japan is no longer included in the service area.

◗ Naturally, the MetaMatrix PLTG is a prime target for racist Matrix gangs. They particularly like to target icons with an obvious metahuman look.
◗ Motley

As its name implies, the MetaMatrix is geared towards services of specific interests to metahumans. If you want to view the latest in alternative troll trid-cinema, peruse zillions of hypertext catalogs for dwarf-modified gear or seek newsgroup advice on counseling a rapidly maturing ork teenager—this is the place.

◗ Don't believe the hype. Most of these services are oriented at assimilating metahuman culture into the mainstream and transforming all of us into timid little consumers like the norms. You won't find any solid advice, such as how to get a job from some human bureaucrat who's afraid of your appearance, or

how to form an armed self-defense group to protect your block's squats from Humanis thugs.
❯ Brick

❯ I hear Buttercup herself drops in on some MetaMatrix chat rooms, and keeps a close tab on the Meta Magic newsgroup.
❯ Sneed

PUEBLO CORPORATE COUNCIL GRIDS

Security Rating: Orange-Hard
by Sidewinder

Almost every decker's heard of the Pueblo Corporate Council's grids, but few are aware of their full complexity and beauty. So let me introduce you to a realm of the Matrix I find inspirational; one of the few virtual areas I enjoy visiting purely for pleasure.

THE DESIGN

From the top, the Pueblo architecture is hardly unusual. A single RTG covers the entire Pueblo nation, managing traffic over the virtual borders. Step down a tier, and the structure deviates from the norm. Below the RTG are a score of LTGs, far more than an RTG usually oversees. Each of these LTGs tends to be smaller than your run-of-the-mill LTG, but also more specialized.

❯ It's worth reminding everyone here that Pueblo is organized as a corporation. Each citizen is a shareholder, and the country is ruled by a Board of Directors. Likewise, all "civil" agencies are, in fact, divisions or subsidiaries of the corporation.
❯ Chromed Accountant
"It's all about dollars and sense"

Unlike other countries, Pueblo does not base its public LTGs on physical areas. Instead, Pueblo organizes its LTGs according to categories and corporate divisions. Each LTG is home to a number of hosts that are grouped together according to their function or purpose. For example, one LTG may be designated for public utilities (water, electricity, gas), another for municipal services (fire departments and hospitals) and yet another for the Pueblo Security Force (national police). The physical locations of these hosts' mainframes may be all over the country, but the hosts are clustered together in a single LTG.

Likewise, private hosts, both for the public and commercial concerns, are grouped into various categories, each with its own LTG. For example, the hosts of all the standard Pueblo media outlets, from trid shows to newsfax services, are crammed onto one LTG. Along the same vein, a single LTG contains all of the personal home hosts of all the citizen shareholders who bother to make one.

❯ Makes sense to me. Why organize a non-physical virtual space along real-life physical boundaries? Categorizing them by purpose makes much more sense.
❯ Kant

❯ Except that Joe Citizen doesn't think so abstractly and expects to find his neighborhood's Matrix cafe host just a few SANs down the dataline, not in an entirely different grid.
❯ Simple Simon

❯ Maybe elsewhere, but Joe Pueblo tends to be more Matrix savvy than Joe UCAS and is accustomed to his nation's grid layout.
❯ Holly

This layout really gets interesting when you take a look at the way the LTGs are linked together. Elsewhere in the Matrix, LTGs usually have only one SAN that leads to their RTGs, and occasionally a SAN or two leading to PLTGs. Pueblo breaks that mold, as each LTG has several SANs, each a portal to another Pueblo LTG. The trick is, not all of the LTGs are linked together—some are, and some aren't. To get from one LTG to another, you may be able to cross right over, or you may have to pass through a series of other LTGs first.

❯ These SAN connections tie the LTGs into a tight subnet. SANs can be closed and new ones opened, allowing the subnet to re-arrange itself. One minute the Sand Farmer LTG is next door, and the next minute it's no longer accessible.
❯ Dust Devil

❯ Given the overall design, the main RTG doesn't handle as much traffic as other RTGs—the LTGs "talk" directly to each other instead of through the RTG. The adaptive design of the LTG connections allows the subnet to restructure and distribute system load, avoiding data traffic blockages and slowdowns.
❯ Holly

❯ It also makes the grids easier to isolate and defend. It's hard to score paydata when you can't even find your way to the LTG it's on.
❯ Gila

THE LOOK

The Pueblo RTG is designed as a snow-capped mountaintop, high above a plain of desert and plateaus. Verdant pinewoods encircle the peak, blown by cold winds. Each tree contains a doorway, a path leading to another RTG or to one of the Pueblo LTGs.

The LTGs are also sculpted to reflect the natural beauty of the nation's landscape. Massive expanses of desert stretch away into the distance, strewn with rocky mesas. Gullies and arroyos wind between the outcroppings, each path leading to another LTG with a similar feel.

❯ Given the adaptive architecture, it's not uncommon to find that a gulch leads you toward a completely different LTG than it did a minute before. I've noticed that Pueblo also hides some LTG SANs behind trap doors, sculpted as secret ravines and hidden caves.
❯ FastJack

Most Pueblo hosts are stylized to fit the metaphor. They appear as clusters of adobe huts and rock dwellings, large cacti, canals, waterfalls and desert mirages.

THE DRAW

Aside from the breathtaking iconography, there's one solid reason to venture into the Pueblo grids: software.

Programming is Pueblo's top industry. Three of the world's top five software corps are based in Pueblo—Tablelands, Iris and Virtual Reality—as are a horde of other Pueblo software corps. The governing Pueblo Corporation itself is heavily invested in code and hardware design and has begun selling its services as a Matrix provider across the globe. Naturally, this thriving industry has spawned a stimulating black market. (Given the goods, it's not surprising that most trade in pirated 'wares occurs via the Matrix.) If you know who to talk to and where to look, a trip to the Pueblo grids can net you that hot utility you need. Or you can always pick a software corp at random to deck and see what you find.

❯ Chip-truth. I scammed a copy of the program plan for Tablelands' Recon™ scout IC variant a week before it hit the shelves from a shady pirate with an Apache warrior icon. Saved my hoop when I ran into some a short while later, cuz I knew what to expect.
❯ Net Dancer

THE DRAWBACKS

As you might expect, breaking Matrix laws in Pueblo can be a painful exercise. Most deckers have heard horror tales of Pueblo's famed party IC. You can find party clusters across the Matrix these days, but Pueblo did them first, and they still do them best.

❯ Pueblo tries to keep pace with the SOTA, so don't expect it to rely on bristling IC alone. Besides the mazelike and ever-changing subnet structure, most Pueblo Corporate hosts are "bouncers" and quickly leap to higher security codes at any sign of an intruder.
❯ FastJack

❯ Pueblo's security-force deckers are as tough and tricky as the vultures and coyotes they adopt as icons, and they make good use of wandering agents to help patrol and serve as backup in Matrix dogfights.
❯ Rott

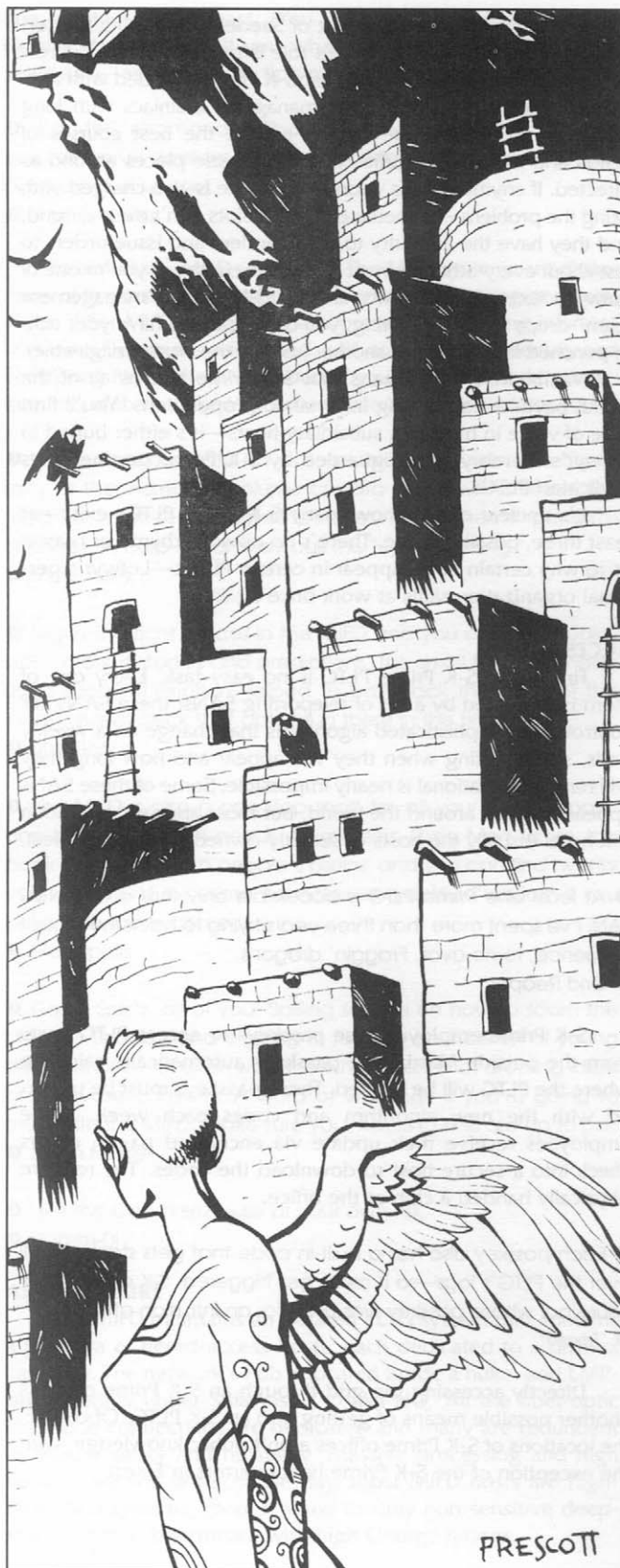## SAEDER-KRUPP PRIME
Security Rating: Red-Hard
by Felix

This one goes out to anyone who's ever tried to make heads or tails out of Saeder-Krupp's corporate hierarchy. As you've probably noticed, it's a mess, primarily because Lofwyr runs it all from memory and constantly re-organizes the mega-corp to fit some internal schematic inside his head. Dragon logic—what more can I say?

PRESCOTT

The only consistent element of Saeder-Krupp is its Saeder-Krupp Prime division. S-K Prime's role is to subtly direct the rest of the corp from behind the scenes. S-K Prime is loaded with analysts, market experts and other managerial brainiacs with long pedigrees. They help the dragon predict the best courses of action and then help shuffle corporate puzzle pieces around as directed. If anything goes wrong, S-K Prime is also charged with fixing the problem—immediately. These slots don't mess around, and they have the authority to commandeer and issue orders to just about every other element of the S-K empire. If you're one of Lofwyr's executive puppets and an S-K Prime "management team" drops by for a meeting, you can expect to have your ticket punched in one way or another (usually the worst imaginable).

Matrix-wise, this means that S-K Prime hoards all of the useful paydata concerning internal corp operations. You'll find little of value in most S-K subsidiary hosts—it's either buried in Lofwyr's memory or safeguarded by S-K Prime on one of its dedicated PLTGs.

It's unclear exactly how many S-K Prime PLTGs exist—at least three, possibly more. There's no obvious rhyme or reason as to why certain hosts appear in certain PLTGs—Lofwyr's personal organization skills at work once again.

ACCESS

Finding an S-K Prime PLTG is no easy task. Every one of them is protected by a set of teleporting SANs; these SANs are controlled by sophisticated algorithms that change on a weekly basis, so predicting when they will appear and how long they will remain operational is nearly impossible. Some of these SANs appear on grids around the world, but most appear only within S-K hosts (usually the hosts of secretly-owned shell companies).

❷ At least one Prime PLTG is accessible only thru a triggered SAN. I've spent more than three years trying to hack the trigger sequence, to no avail. Fraggin' dragons.
❷ Grid Reaper

S-K Prime employees use passkeys to access PLTG hosts from the outside Matrix; the passkeys automatically calculate where the PLTG will be located. These passkeys must be updated with the new algorithm and codes each week. Some employees receive their update via encrypted pager; others check into a secure host to download the codes. The rest are physically handed a chip at the office.

❷ Each passkey also has a built-in code that gets stamped all over the PLTG's logs—so if alerts get triggered, S-K can quickly figure out whose passkey was used for an intrusion attempt.
❷ 'Trixster

Directly accessing the grid through an S-K Prime office is another possible means of getting into an S-K PLTG. Of course, the locations of S-K Prime offices aren't public knowledge, with the exception of the S-K Prime headquarters in Essen.

❷ One surefire way to access an S-K PLTG is through an Orbital Dynamix satellite. S-K owns the constellation, and there's always at least one PLTG accessible through it.
❷ Orbital Bandit

ICONOGRAPHY

Lofwyr never passes up a chance to puff out his chest, and his Matrix systems reflect this bent for self-promotion. When you access an S-K Prime SAN, your icon is transported through a sculpted tunnel and into a cave's antechamber. A little farther back, the cavern opens up into an archaic city nestled within a cave of mammoth proportions—this is the massive pocket universe of the PLTG.

Before you step into the cave, however, you must pass under the penetrating, hungry gaze of a coiled, golden dragon. The wyrm clearly represents Lofwyr and is sculpted to impress new arrivals.

❷ Watch that wizworm icon. If it flaps its wings at ya, then you've already triggered the first trace routine. If it tries to breathe fire at you at any time, jack out while you still have a chance.
❷ Bump

Each structure within the grid represents a host. A stepped pyramid may represent the Prime stock transfer archives; a lofty spire, the Prime communications technology think tank. Most of the user interfaces within the grid are streamlined and utilitarian; S-K doesn't waste processing cycles on frills. The sculpting of IC in the grid varies depending on the programmer's whim, but tends to keep within the subterranean civilization metaphor. Falling stalactites, swarms of bats and probing searchlights are common sculpting.

FEATURES

The hosts within an S-K Prime PLTG are loaded with paydata. Each host handles a different division or project, and many contain tiered-access architecture complete with vicious chokepoints. Security for extremely sensitive hosts is bolstered with vanishing or triggered SANs.

Prime acts as a watchdog over other S-K divisions, slapping them around when they get out of line. Consequently, Prime may have more up-to-date and in-depth project information, production schedules and efficiency reports than the division they're monitoring. If an S-K subsidiary runs into any sort of business trouble or conflict with another corp, expect Prime to maintain a datastore of records on the matter. The personnel files kept by Prime are amazingly detailed and quite valuable in the wrong hands. Be warned, though—Prime often plants false or misleading data.

❷ To avoid picking up false data, look for linked datafiles. Typically, Prime files contain two elements—one data element and one template element. The template contains info that indicates which portions of the data element are true and which are

false. Elements of a single file are saved in different file locations. Prime workers know to grab both parts; intruders don't.
● Carterby

Prime PLTGs are also home to the hosts of an interesting array of think tanks and research teams. The contents of these hosts could provide an ambitious competitor with a good indication of S-K's likely future projects.

● Prime hosts also provide storage for data on S-K operations in countries where the corp is officially banned, such as CalFree or Aztlan.
● Sin Fronteras

● If you're looking for an uplink to an S-K satellite constellation, orbital factory or lunar base, you'll find them buried behind nasty IC and layers of tiered hosts. They're tough to access but can be interesting to explore just for their novelty.
● FastJack

SECURITY

S-K Prime PLTGs rely on their inaccessibility as their first line of defense. The challenge of finding the SAN for the right PLTG can be quite a headache and is usually enough to keep intruders out. To dissuade the more persistent deckers, Prime stocks its grid with a choice array of standard IC—nothing special, but enough to shred your deck if you get cocky. Usually, Prime loads the PLTGs with top-notch trace programs. Because S-K not only owns the PLTG but may well own the grid you're decking from, these IC routines may nail you more quickly than you'd expect.

● To make matters worse, Prime often throws scout IC at deckers right before a trace, enabling the trace to get a harsh attack in right away and lock onto your datatrail.
● Grid Reaper

SHIAWASE MIFD

Security Code: Red-Hard
by Spavin

To those of us who live and die by the Matrix, the Shiawase's Marketing Information and Forecasting Department (MIFD) is proof that Shiawase is not just a normal megacorp. Aside from Saeder-Krupp, Shiawase is one of the most information-hungry corps in the world, and all that information has to be stored somewhere, right? Most Shiawase systems are somewhat pedestrian, but the PLTG for the MIFD—Shiawase's black hole of data—is one of the most amazing computer nets in the world.

RAISON D'ETRE

When current Chairman Sadato Shiawase established the MIFD more than twenty years ago, the corp promoted it as a market research and demographics-analysis unit. In fact, the MIFD is a cleverly constructed intelligence division, tasked with the accumulation of any information in the global marketplace that might give Shiawase a leg up over the competition. Over time, the MIFD has refined its intel-gathering operations to a

fine art, to say the least. (You could probably find an MIFD datafile that would tell you what you ate for breakfast three years ago—as well as the tip you left your waitress.)

● The MIFD also handles Shiawase's black ops, so its records include runner dossiers, reports on previous operations and proposals for future ones.
● Brother Data

To sum it up, MIFD = paydata. The MIFD systems are datastores of impressive proportions. We're not just talking raw data, either. After MIFD operatives have processed incoming information, each file is cross-referenced, with analyses, commentary and correlating file markers appended. If you can get past the corporate bias of their analyses, they've done half your work for you.

● Unlike standard data havens, the MIFD evaluates the accuracy of the incredible volume of data it stores. This allows the MIFD to improve its "signal-to-noise" ratio when it performs analyses. In corp-speak they call this "value adding."
● Metropolis

● Dig in the right places in the MIFD and you can find quality stock market studies and predictions. The small fortune I made using such information helped to pay back the price of the sweet, sweet deck that got me in there in the first place.
● Manticore

● The MIFD is also a one-stop shop for all your psychotropic-conditioning tutorial needs. Shiawase's Grey Men wrote the book on playing with people's brains, and you can find twenty years' worth of experimental notes and distilled wisdom if you poke in the right corners.
● Metropolis

● Great Spirits, all of you! Spilling secrets on how to scam the MIFD on Shadowland is going to result in a whole lot of young dead deckers, or even worse, a whole bunch of drooling idiots or Shiawase converts. A word of warning—if you're going to mess with the MIFD, make sure your hacking skills are up to par.
● Neon Flower

● Like the Cap'n sez—use at your own risk.
● Slamm-0!

ARCHITECTURE

The MIFD maintains an isolated PLTG system that contains a plethora of tiered-access hosts, each dedicated to a distinct category. The network's hub is located inside a nuke- and EMP-proof bunker under Shiawase's Osaka HQ. All the fiber-optic backbone connections are dedicated and many are redundant to ensure safety and reliability. Massive processing and high security are the order of the day; most MIFD hosts are high-rated Red systems, though some (mainly non-sensitive deep-storage hosts) benchmark with high Orange ratings.

⊙ I was in an MIFD host when the system processing levels were suddenly and severely amped up to analyze developments in the Fuchi fragmentation. It was the most terrifying experience of my life—suddenly I was thrown into a different reality as the system peaked at UV levels. It'll take skyscraper heaps of cred to make me go anywhere near there again.
⊙ Neon Flower

⊙ Bulldrek. That kind of on-the-fly change just isn't possible.
⊙ Just Johnny

The MIFD PLTG can be accessed through mainstream Shiawase host locations, including San Francisco, Boston, Houston, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore and Shanghai.

⊙ Don't forget Seattle, Manila and Calcutta.
⊙ Red Wraith

STYLE

The MIFD network is impressively sculpted to reflect an ideal environment for a well-ordered corporation—a perfectly functioning, efficient and busy Japanese city center. Building (host) exteriors are ultra-modern chrome, steel and mirrored glass, surrounded by sparkling blue skies and huge, sunlit park-lands. Tasteful contrast is provided by building interiors, furnished in traditional Japanese styles. Walls are lined with rice-paper panels, floors are covered in tatami, and furniture and artifacts are recognizable Japanese antiquities.

The immense flow of data is represented by vast numbers of sararimen, bustling through a never-ending peak hour. The designers have paid wonderful attention to detail—the variety and distinguishing characteristics of individual icons is truly staggering, and the icons exchange polite, traditional Japanese greetings as they interact.

DATA-ANALYSIS STRATEGIES

To streamline its archival and analysis projects, Shiawase uses smart frames and agents to constantly sift the data pile, looking for correlations that can be used to organize amazing-ly complete profiles of subjects or derive accurate assessments. These summaries are then either filed or brought to the atten-tion of a metahuman analyst, depending on the program's assessment of priority or relevance.

On top of this, at least two dozen semi-autonomous know-bots (SKs) operate among the hosts, directing and tweaking the frames according to their own programming. Some of the frames also participate in data-sorting for major investigations.

⊙ What? More than twenty SKs? Not even Fuchi's HQ had that many!
⊙ Lo Rent

⊙ Most of these SKs are fairly tame, compared to what Renraku used to put out. Their programming is tailored to spe-

cific tasks, and most of them have been in use for years now without an upgrade.
⊙ FastJack

⊙ Shiawase saves their scary SKs for breaking into other corpo-rate systems to look for elusive info. These puppies are hard to find and harder to catch, combining stealth and speed to get what they want. I don't know about you, but it scares me that these SKs generate their own target priorities.
⊙ Glitch

⊙ Word is that Novatech or Cross will pay excellent nuyen for an intact copy of the source code for one of these critters. Good luck.
⊙ Fletch
"Be vewy vewy quiet, I'm hunting SKs!"

These semi-autonomous programs do not possess any special iconography. Usually they appear as standard sarari-man icons, or as common urban fixtures such as turnstiles or even "bargain" and "sale" signs. A few of the SKs possess dis-tinctive icons, as they act as interface points for the human analysts and sysops.

⊙ The easiest way to identify a frame or SK is by the effect it has on the data flow. An agent moving down a street will leave a perceptible eddy in the sararimen. You sometimes also get changes of perspective and visual distortions, similar to those caused by big gravity wells, in the presence of the SKs.
⊙ Neon Flower

SECURITY

The MIFD's formidable Matrix defenses include high secu-rity ratings and predominately proactive intrusion countermea-sures set to respond to the lightest trigger conditions. Shiawase seems to view gray IC as "white IC with attitude," and discards it as unnecessary. The MIFD hosts pack enough punch that sim-ple white IC is scary enough for defense—they do take the gloves off, they don't mess around with warning shots.

⊙ Crippler IC—especially the marker and binder varieties—are used to weaken your icon for the trace programs that follow. As soon as you trigger an active alert, expect to see black IC intent on terminating your excursion.
⊙ Grid Reaper

Most of the raw data in the datastores is relatively unpro-tected. A few important files are protected by data bombs, and scramble IC is used to protect data-analysis reports. For really sensitive files, MIFD uses the old distributed-archive trick. The file is broken up into fragments that are stored on several different hosts. Thus, a hacker has to access multiple hosts—significantly increasing the risk of detection—to retrieve the complete file.

◐ If you can spoof one of the MIFD frames into searching for you, you're golden. I recommend steering clear of the SKs though, as they're often too specialized to fulfill your "request," unless you get lucky.
◐ Manticore

Many of the basic IC programs appear with the ubiquitous sarariman icons, making it very difficult to identify a threat. The more impressive countermeasures appear as fantastically sculpted Japanese mythological heroes and deities. Undoubtedly, the MIFD's security designers selected this scheme to deliberately thwart Westerner hackers who are unlikely to be acquainted with Japanese mythos and history.

◐ One thing this file doesn't mention is the MIFD's predilection for psychotropic IC. Like Metropolis said earlier, the MIFD lads are experts at brainwashing and conditioning, and they apply their knowhow to their IC design schemes.
◐ Manticore

◐ The file also doesn't mention Shiawase's propensity to use worms on their systems. Freelance deckers see a lot of high-quality paydata, so I suspect the MIFD of liberal worm-seeding wherever they can. Check your decks carefully after a run through the MIFD host, boys and girls.
◐ Metropolis

TRANSYS NEURONET

Security Code: Orange-Hard
By Neurosis

Transys is known in the shadows as the inventors of move-by-wire, and it maintains a solid rep for wicked neural cyberware and exceptional Matrix gear such as its Highlander cyberdeck. A double-A megacorp, Edinburgh-based Transys balances on the cutting edge of technology well enough to keep pace with the Big Ten. Most of Transys' tech developments come out of its Silicon Glen research facilities.

Like other corps, Transys wires together its far-flung offices, research parks and manufacturing areas with a sophisticated PLTG. A high percentage of Transys' programmers and researchers telecommute to their jobs, so the PLTG has dozens of SANs connecting to it. Most are within Transys hosts scattered around the Matrix, but access portals are provided on the British Telecom Grid and the North CalFree RTG as well.

◐ CalFree? What's the scoop?
◐ Orklander
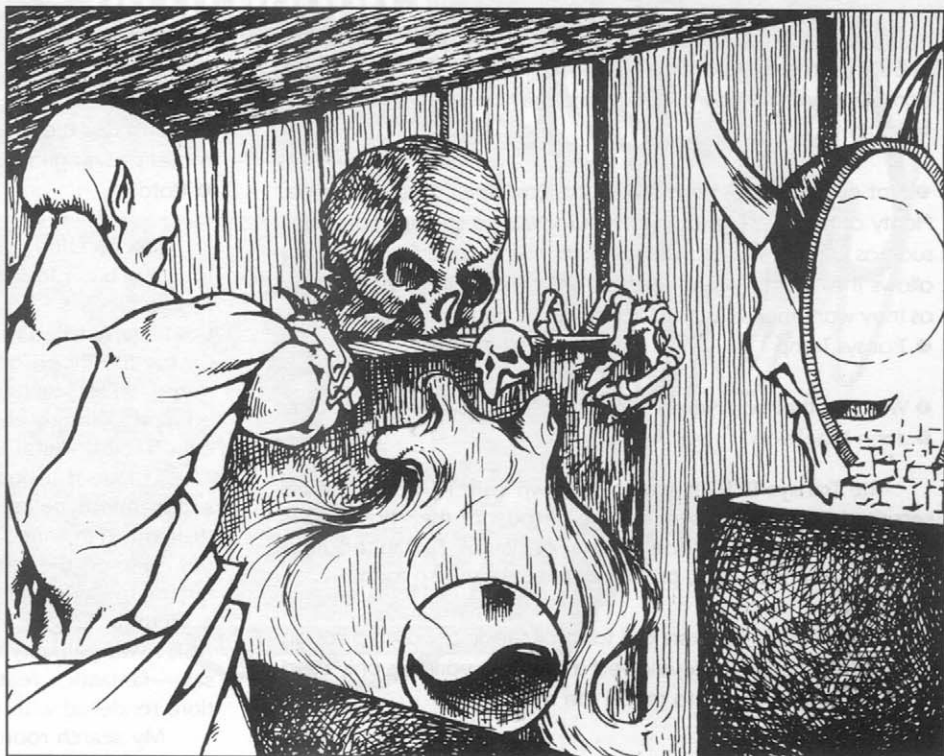
◐ I can hazard a few guesses. 1) Silicon Valley—despite Ares dominance, Transys has links there as well. 2) North CalFree is a haven for secret corp installations, and Transys probably has one just to keep its power player image going.
◐ Black-Eyed Suzan

◐ Neither of those guesses explains the SAN's persona traffic from around the Shasta Mountain area.
◐ FastJack

◐ If you look hard enough, you can also find a SAN linking the Transys PLTG to the deep dark private grid of Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal (HKB) Data Services. HKB invested so deeply into Transys that the current Transys CEO, Liam Riley, was appointed to the board through HKB shares.
◐ MesoStim

The iconography of the Transys PLTG is based on a neural system metaphor. Each host appears as a dendron or neuron or, occasionally, a magnified synaptic accelerator bundle. As an icon moves through the PLTG, it is fired through a quick chain of synapses and neural fibers, like a mental impulse. The illusion of speed competes with any real-life roller coaster ride.

Entering a Transys Neuronet host is like crawling under one's skin. Transys favors an organic metaphor for its system sculpture and doesn't shy away from the slimy, gooey and generally unpleasant underside of metahuman physiology.

❯ There's nothing quite like having your persona shunted through some programmer's concept of his digestive tract, complete with creepy cilia, oily enzymes and other gunk.
❯ Sammy

❯ Not all of Transys' hosts follow the Fantastic Voyage routine. Plenty of them just take on a natural wildlife setting metaphor, such as jungles, old-growth forests or rolling savannahs. Transys allows their system sculptors a bit of flexibility with their designs, as they want their virtual environments to be fun and enjoyable.
❯ Transys Temp

❯ Why? So their salarymen forget they're chained to the corp?
❯ John MacLean

The Transys PLTG is weighed down with IC, and software security is an omnipresent feature of most of their hosts. IC is typically sculpted to fit the visceral or natural metaphor: antibodies, bacteriophages, predatory animals and so forth.

❯ Transys security deckers are fond of seeding worms through their systems. They've developed a few new varieties only used in-house that have yet to reach the market.
❯ Cameron

THE CAERLEON SYSTEM

Transys' Caerleon research facility has long been a mystery. Until recently, the site's self-contained host network remained entirely disconnected from the Matrix. Physically accessing the sensitive system—an unlikely prospect given its protections—was the only way to get in.

For those of you who haven't heard of this site, start salivating. Transys has sunk more cred into projects at Caerleon than the rest of its projects combined. Everything that goes on here is protected by layers of top-notch security. Even more interesting, the facility is built around the remains of a Roman amphitheater reportedly owned by the Welsh dragon Celedyr. According to the buzz, Transys and Celedyr have some sort of deal worked out. That contract would be worth its weight in orichalcum, eh?

❯ There's a third party involved—a multiracial group calling itself the Knights of Rage. These slags claim to be "Nubians," and there's more than a hundred of them living around the Caerleon site (they also have a bunch of relatives hiding out in London's Squeeze). They've even built some sort of temple nearby. The Knights have a cadre of shamans who wield impressive mojo, and they also have a group of hoop-kicking samurai with fancy Transys betaware. The dragon does favors for them and in return, they guard the site and help Transys with magical research. What exactly Transys is giving to the wizworm is anyone's guess.
❯ MesoStim

❯ Perhaps you're mistaking puppets for partners.
❯ Shetani

❯ Don't ask me how I know, but inside the facility they use a maser power grid system, so pack the right interfaces.
❯ Roto

Just recently, a mysterious SAN started popping up on an irregular basis inside the Transys PLTG. After some digging, I pegged it as a SAN to the Caerleon system. The little probing I did nearly killed me—the SAN might as well be a black hole for the likelihood of decking it. The SAN's appearance is triggered (I'll let you figure that out for yourself), access is encrypted, and I thought the first chokepoint was the hardest host I'd ever hacked—until I reached the second chokepoint.

I made it inside, but I had all of twenty seconds max to snoop about before a freaky black IC mummy icon tried to drown me in sand. The hosts inside had exquisite resolution; not quite on the ultraviolet level, but damn close. The sculpting left me awestruck. Waves of sand dunes crashed up against a seething jungle; the sensation of dry heat picked up by my ASIST was palpably real. I can't even describe the other icons I saw—fantastic creatures dredged from someone's imagination, rendered with perfect detail and believability.

My search routines picked up pointers to a menu of juicy datafiles. Most were topics you'd expect to find: brainware, cultured biotech projects, specialized skillwires, new model cyberterminals and experimental communication systems. A few other topics were more distinctive: nanoware datajacks, biological processors and wiring, plus an extensive listing of datajack research on dolphins, satyrs, centaurs and—you guessed it—dracoforms. But the entry that really looped me was the gigapulses devoted to archaeological excavations, seismic research and transcriptions of "ancient" magical theses from languages I've never heard of.

❯ Big deal. So Transys is hoping to score money from Dunkelzahn's will. No surprise there.
❯ Bung

❯ It's more than that. Transys is playing both ends of the spectrum—advanced tech and ancient wisdom. Whether they simply view it as a way to cover all their bets or have other intentions isn't clear.
❯ Black Isis

❯ Hmm. This explains why the Atlantean Foundation hired me to extract a Nubian-identified fellow from a dockside area in Southwestern Wales.
❯ Feral

DATA HAVENS
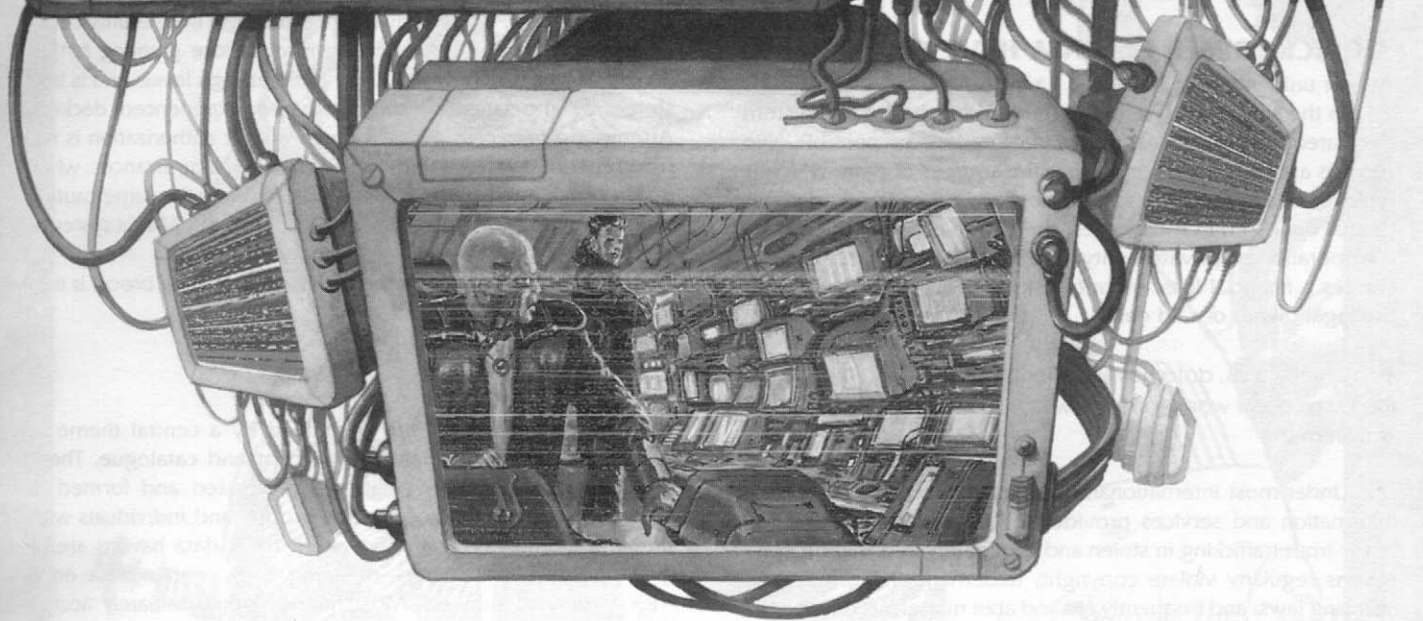
I f you're reading this, you've already figured out how to access the Seattle Shadowland node, so you're familiar with at least one data haven. I've often been surprised by how many of our regulars are relatively unacquainted with the other data havens out there, or don't even know the extent of the Shadowland network they're plugging into. The following files are intended to remedy this situation.

The first is a short primer on data havens, apparently written by a security decker for the higher-ups in his corp's security division. All of the file headers and markers were scratched of course, so it's not clear which corp authorized the report. In any case, the file provides an interesting perspective on data-haven ops from the viewpoint of the opposition a decker's likely to face.

The second file is an exposé of—you guessed it—Shadowland and the Shadow Matrix. I came across the file on the Manchester data haven. The file contains very little data that could threaten the security of our operations, so I haven't cut much from it. If you don't believe me you can always download the original from Manchester. The file contains some inaccuracies—I've corrected a few and clenched my teeth on the rest. As always, don't believe everything you read.

The rest of the files in this section come from a range of different sources and describe several other data havens. Take what you will, discard the rest.

◗ Captain Chaos
  Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 09:01:27 (EST)

7779&^%ERROR Access Denied

◗ Let me try this again, with a word of warning this time. Bash, you can do what you want with this file in the Nexus, but you mess with it again in our node and you'll regret it. Understood? The same goes for the rest of you out there.
◗ Captain Chaos
  Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 13:13:04 (EST)

> Cap doesn't level threats lightly. I recommend you heed his words.
> FastJack

A QUICK PRIMER ON DATA HAVENS

Author unidentified

In the simplest sense of the term, a data haven is a system dedicated to storing as much information as possible. No records are maintained regarding the sources of data, which is typically of a sensitive nature, almost always considered confidential or secret. In most cases, the data has been stolen from a corporation or private entity, and its availability usually constitutes a financial loss, security risk or operational concern to the legal owner of said data.

> In other words, data havens offer up all the dirty little secrets the corps don't want ya to know.
> Slamm-0!

Under most international, national and corporate laws, the information and services provided by data havens are illegal. Aside from trafficking in stolen and proprietary information, data havens regularly violate copyright, trademark and distribution licensing laws, and frequently aid and abet numerous other related criminal activities. Despite this, data havens thrive and generally operate free of legal prosecution; their value as a resource for organized criminal concerns ensures that they are well protected, and they possess ample funds to ensure their security. Additionally, data havens regularly attract powerful benefactors who provide financial, technical and security assets in exchange for privileged access to data havens' information stores.

FINDING A DATA HAVEN

Data havens are universally connected to the Matrix, but their operators typically employ elaborate precautions to obscure their presence from corporate and government authorities and other unwelcome visitors. In the case of many data havens, access is granted only to those individuals "in the know"—individuals recognized by reputation among shadowrunners or otherwise immersed in the shadowrunner subculture. However, a skilled undercover operative can usually gain access to such havens by employing well-timed charisma and selective bribes.

Data havens commonly relocate their SANs and change their access codes on a regular or random basis. Other common concealment measures include trap doors, vanishing SANs, virtual hosts and simple concealment. Furthermore, data havens are usually linked to grids and hosts illegally or employ cadres of deckers to thoroughly eradicate all system records. Consequently, determining the physical location of a data haven via its Matrix presence is virtually impossible.

> I wouldn't say impossible, but it's probably not worth the effort.
> FastJack

Typically, data-haven access nodes are encrypted, requiring a visitor to present the current access codes. In some cases, such nodes do not accept codes—the would-be visitor must possess adequate decking skills to defeat scramble IC or other precautions before entering the node. The SAN inevitably leads to a chokepoint host, which may be guarded by a live security decker or agent who will scan each visitor before granting further access. System security is usually rated at high levels and is bolstered by the latest IC programs and experienced deckers. Attempting to access a data haven without authorization is not recommended, except under the most dire circumstances; when making such attempts, deckers should employ the same caution used when performing operations against rivals' Matrix systems.

> Heh. Even corp deckers know which side their bread is buttered on.
> Grid Reaper

INSIDE A DATA HAVEN

Some data havens are organized by a central theme or motif that guides the data they accept and catalogue. These focus areas are usually politically motivated and formed in response to the needs of specific groups and individuals with similar interests. Typically, however, most data havens are of the "packrat" philosophy—meaning they contain data on a wide variety of subjects. Most havens indiscriminately accept information, then verify data submissions for accuracy and potential value before cataloguing and storing them. Typical criteria include relevancy to current events, potential financial value and important historical value.

In addition to their data-storage services, data havens frequently offer a variety of services including newsfeeds, pirate trid broadcasts, mainframe programming time, and sales of illegal utilities. Most havens also offer chat and privacy services, blind-relay email accounts, message boards, private hosts and more, without the restrictions imposed by typical MSPs.

Of course, the clientele attracted to data havens is unsavory at best and includes some of the most dangerous Matrix criminals known to the corporate datasphere. Consequently, operatives should prepare themselves appropriately before entering a data haven. Caution should be observed at all times, as these cyber-criminals commonly keep a wide range of scams and con games up their virtual sleeves.

> Ah, flattery will get them everywhere.
> Slamm-0!

USING A DATA HAVEN

Each particular data haven operates according to the criminal perspective and radical politics of its system administrators. By and large, data havens put forth a libertarian philosophy—"all information should be free" and "equal access for all." In practice, most data havens limit public access and offer different account privileges to different individuals and groups based on credibility or trust. It is not uncommon for some havens to deny access to security agencies and other groups that might threaten the haven's operations and liberties. Other system administrators rely solely on a haven's technical security systems to restrict access—sort of a digital "natural selection."
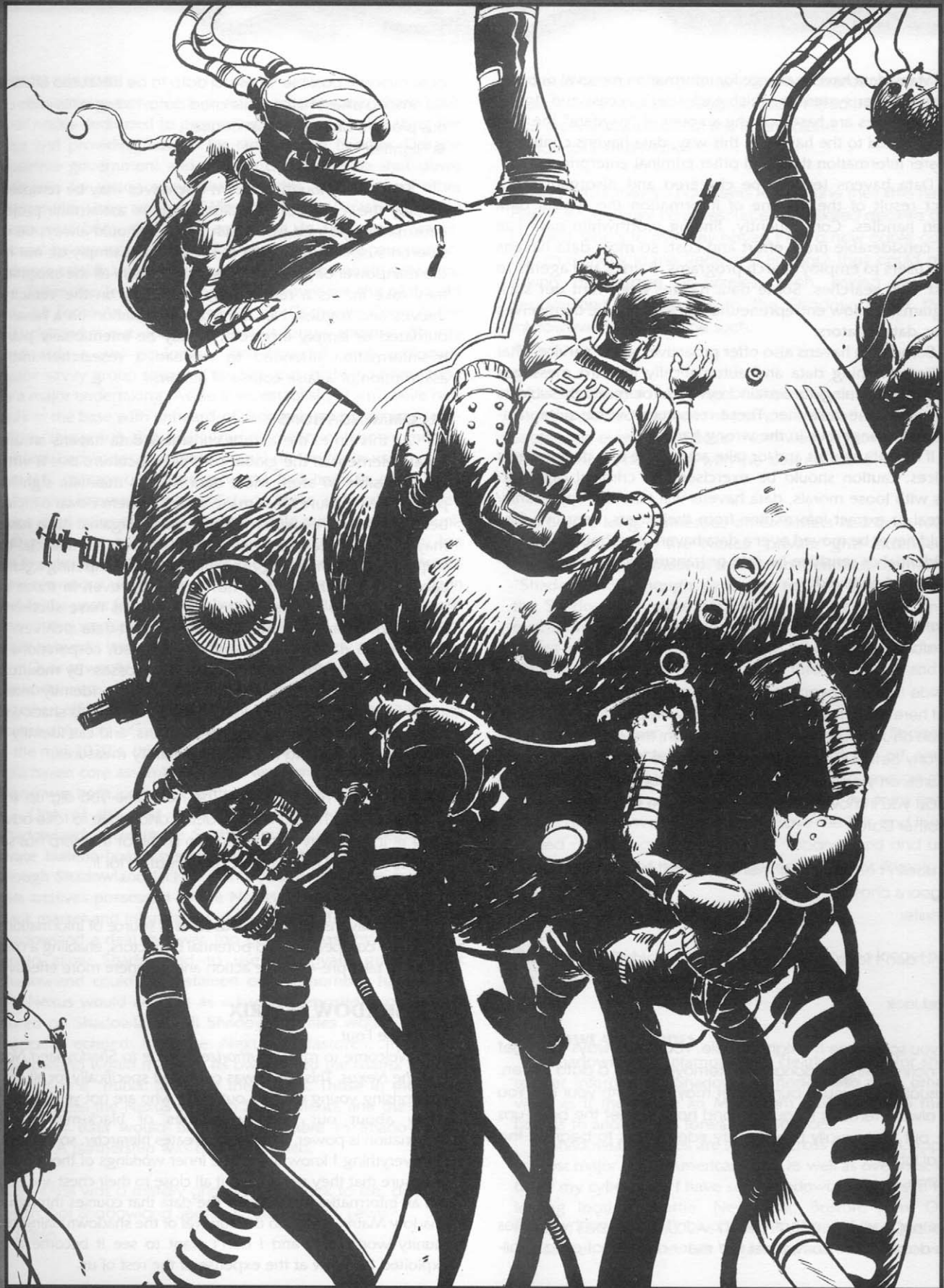
Many data havens charge for information retrieval or operate on a barter system in which each user's access and download privileges are based on the amount of "paydata" the user has uploaded to the haven. In this way, data havens continually foster information theft and other criminal enterprises.

Data havens tend to be cluttered and disorganized, a direct result of the volume of information the typical data haven handles. Consequently, finding worthwhile data can take considerable time, effort and cost, so most data havens allow users to employ search programs, frames and agents to assist with searches. Some data havens even rent out such programs or allow entrepreneurial deckers to hire themselves out as data locators.

Some data havens also offer proactive "alert" services that monitor incoming data and automatically forward messages and files pertaining to certain keywords or research subjects specified by the customer. These resources can be quite valuable—and dangerous in the wrong hands.

If operatives visit and/or take advantage of a data haven's services, caution should be exercised. As criminal organizations with loose morals, data havens will take the opportunity to steal or extract information from their users. Sensitive files should never be moved over a data haven, nor should anything confidential or sensitive be said or transmitted, lest it be intercepted and archived.

❂ Nothing is sacred.
❂ Profane Existence

❂ Aside from the hypocritical moralism, the corp decker has a point here: data havens are a two-way street. If they post information on Joe Runner and Jane Johnson, they sure as taxes will post any details they get on you. It can be disconcerting to do a search on yourself, but I recommend doing so periodically— at least you'll know what your enemies are digging up.
❂ Brother Data

❂ It doesn't hurt to plant misinformation on yourself and send the goons chasing their tails.
❂ 'Trixster

❂ And don't for a second think that the corps don't do that as well.
❂ FastJack

❂ If you schmooze the right people, you can always try to get any incriminating personal data removed from a data haven. It'll usually cost you a bundle but may be worth your life. You can always remove it yourself (and hope to get the back-ups too), but that usually brings nasty side effects to bear on the frontal lobes.
❂ Glitch

❂ I'm not convinced that you shouldn't leave worthwhile files on a data haven. Sometimes the sheer amount of data avail-able makes it possible for useful data to be obscured or encoded among piles of other unrelated data. Hiding a file in an obvious place is often the best course.
❂ Nightfire

Likewise, though our own operatives may be tempted to employ the resources of a data haven to assist their projects, information gleaned from such sources should always be considered suspect until verified. Data havens simply do not have the manpower or processing power to verify all the information they take in. As a result, they must rely on the veracity of thieves and rogues. Not only can information on a haven be outdated or simply incorrect, it may be intentionally planted misinformation intended to mislead a researcher into an assumption or a false course of action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At this time, the author considers data havens an unfortunate element of the global criminal subculture that is virtually impossible to stop. Most data havens maintain significant protective measures that make shutting them down difficult at best, disastrous at worst. Hostile action against such havens may result in retaliatory actions with significant financial consequences, and may trigger conflicts with competing agencies cooperating with the data haven. Finally, even in those past instances when strikes against data havens have succeeded, haven operators have quickly restored lost data archives.

Though data havens must be tolerated, corporations can use data havens to minimize their own losses. By monitoring data-haven contents, corporate deckers can identify internal and proprietary corporate information available to shadowrunners, criminal syndicates and competitors, and can identify and isolate data leaks and inadequate security measures.

❂ Keep this in mind, kiddies. The next time you dig up some gaping security hole in a corp facility and move to take advantage of it, you may be surprised to find that the corp has seen that file too and more than compensated for it.
❂ Argent

Data havens can also be used as a source of information on corporate competitors and potential detractors, enabling a corporation to take pre-emptive action and compete more effectively.

THE SHADOW MATRIX
By Figure Four

Welcome to my *Unauthorized Guide to Shadowland Nodes and the Nexus*. This piece was compiled specifically for all of you enterprising young deckers out there who are not yet fully in the know about our primary sources of black-market data. Information is power, and power creates hierarchy, so I'm revealing everything I know about the inner workings of these powers to ensure that they don't keep it all close to their chest and establish an information monopoly. The data that courses through the Shadow Matrix is vital to the survival of the shadowrunning community worldwide, and I don't want to see it become a tool exploited by a few at the expense of the rest of us.

A BRIEF HISTORY

For as long as we've had computer networks, there have been nodes dedicated to promoting free thought, breaking the rules and providing havens for radicals and hackers. Despite extensive government and corporate attempts to shut down such sites for piracy, subversive activities and a slew of other charges, they have survived. When the Internet crashed and the Matrix was born, this trend continued. In fact, many underground sysops were able to take advantage of the new restructuring to establish well-hidden connections and pirate networks.

When the Treaty of Denver signed over the site of the old U.S. Air Force Academy to the Pueblo Corporate Council, the PCC cleaned it out, locked it up and forgot about it. Shortly afterward, a well-equipped, well-financed, and extremely Matrix-savvy group squatted the site and made it a home base for a major undertaking. Aside from establishing a massive network in the base with unheard-of processing and storage capabilities, this group also revitalized elements of leftover military network backbones that were simply no longer in use.

U.S. military computer networks had been in place since before the Internet was established. These networks included miles upon miles of cable laid for the sole purpose of communicating between military installations—not just in America, but worldwide. Wherever military bases once stood (or wherever military operations were once commanded from) cables had been laid. In the years following the breakup of the U.S., the Crash and rest of the wackiness that's occurred in this century, many of these networks were disassembled or completely restructured.

Over a twenty-year period, the surviving fragments of these networks were secretly and extensively reconstructed and tied together, effectively creating a massive infrastructure that could conceivably host an entire grid, distinct from the Matrix at large. In the mid-2030's, this private grid went active, the host for the data-haven core assembled on the academy grounds. Thus, the *Nexus* was born, complete with its own physical private grid.

One of the first nodes appended to this grid was *Shadowland*, a renegade Seattle-based site that began as a pirate bulletin-board system (BBS) in the previous century. Though Shadowland lacked the technical resources and massive archives possessed by the Nexus, it was popular with the black market and information underground. The Nexus offered Shadowland a deal that was too good to pass by. The Nexus would allow Shadowland to use its private grid so that Shadowland could be sustained on autonomous hardwiring. The Nexus would also act as a backup repository for all data stored on Shadowland—all Shadowland files would be automatically echoed into the Nexus' datastores. In return, Shadowland would maintain its own link to the Matrix at large and act as a "public face" for the Nexus. Those in the know could access the Nexus through Shadowland, and the Nexus' wealth of data would be made available to Shadowland's sysops. A partnership was quickly formed.

> So if this was a military grid brought back to life, does that mean that Shadowland Seattle is run out of Ft. Lewis?
> Bump

> Could also be linking to the old Trident bases now run by the Makah. They're close, though it would mean that Shadowland was technically run out of the Salish-Shidhe.
> Dances-in-the-Matrix

> Given that they've had years to fine-tune their little network, and they obviously have resources and skilled deckers at their disposal, who's to say they haven't run a new cable connection to a shack in the Redmond Barrens? They could also be taking advantage of wireless tech, linking the actual Shadowland mainframes to the Shadow Matrix through microwave relays or some such.
> Switchback

> Let's not forget the power of distributed network processing. A decentralized network of computers scattered throughout Seattle or even the Pacific Northwest is going to provide Shadowland's hardware with the best protection.
> Syzygy

Before long, numerous other outlets had been found or created wherever the Nexus' private grid extended. For whatever reason, most of these also identified themselves as "Shadowland," though particular to their region. In effect, the Shadowland name became a franchise used by numerous, individually distinctive nodes, each acting as mini data haven and shadowrunner resource. Like Seattle Shadowland, each of these also backs up directly into the Nexus and offers direct access to it.

> Having their own landlines doesn't mean that Shadowland nodes are protected. Toronto's node was cut off one day, clear out of the blue. It turned out later that a sewage maintenance crew had accidentally cut through the trunk lines. The sysops didn't move fast enough to save the link, and the UCAS ended up ripping several miles of "abandoned and unregistered" fiber out of the ground. Needless to say, Toronto never came back online.
> Nightfire

> Sure it did, but under a different name and no longer hooked up to the Shadow Matrix.
> Agit

SHADOWLAND NODES

Shadowland is infamous as a clearing-house for shadow-market information. Shadowland nodes also offer other services as if they were an MSP, from chat rooms to message boards to anonymous forwarding services.

Shadowland nodes are spread across the world, appearing in most major North American cities as well as overseas. Off the tip of my cyberdeck, I have seen Shadowland nodes in the following locales: Seattle, New York, Boston, New Orleans, Atlanta, FDC, Oakland, LA, Dallas, Halifax, Denver, Quebec City, Vancouver, Cheyenne, Las Vegas, Havana, Merseysprawl (UK),

Frankfurt, Sicily, Kuwait, Okinawa, Honshu, Seoul, Sydney, Guam and Hawaii. And this list is by no means complete.

Each node is maintained by a different set of operators. Some of these sysops and admins have distinctive operating philosophies, and their particular nodes reflect these philosophies. While the infamous Shadowland Seattle has a laissez-faire access policy, Shadowland FDC prohibits government agents and police from using the haven (not that the Shadowland guys can really stop them). Likewise, Shadowland Oakland bans members and supporters of organizations that are openly racist toward metahumans and automatically deletes any uploaded Humanis propaganda.

❯ So much for free speech. It's good to know that information subversives will revert to censorship to squash viewpoints they don't like. Hypocrites.
❯ Pontifex

❯ It's not censorship, nor is it a free speech issue. Racists are free to spread their dogma on their own, Oakland's just refusing to do it for them. Why provide a platform for those who would take it away if they had their way? Might as well put a gun to your own head.
❯ Race Traitor

Shadowland nodes never connect directly to each other as a matter of security policy. Each Shadowland does mirror the contents of other Shadowland sites, however. All important data, from message boards to server software to uploaded files is passed to the Nexus, where it is stored and also bounced back out to each of the other Shadowland nodes.

❯ In other words, if you post a message in Shadowland Halifax, it will eventually get copied down to the Denver Nexus, and then bounced out to each of the other Shadowlands, where it will appear in their message boards.
❯ EyeSpy

❯ Not all info is mirrored. If it were, each node would quickly become bloated with data that is irrelevant to its locale and implode. Both the Nexus and individual Shadowland nodes filter the content of outbound and inbound feeds, picking the wheat from the chaff.
❯ Captain Chaos

Base Architecture

Each Shadowland node has two SANs. One connects to the actual Matrix, the other to the Shadow Matrix. In between these SANs is a conglomeration of hosts that make up Shadowland itself. The number and configuration of these hosts differs depending on the node, but each node features one host that serves as a chokepoint and architecturally separates the Matrix side from the Shadow Matrix side. This host is designed to keep unauthorized users out of the Shadow Matrix but is also rigged to physically self-destruct in case of an attack, so that the Shadow Matrix can be physically isolated if necessary.

❯ While the author has the basics correct, his description of the linking host is misleading. My understanding is that the chokepoint is in fact hemmed in by additional chokepoints on each side. These bookend hosts actually run virtual machines and serve as buffer zones for data traffic as well as a security screen. Am I correct, Cap?
❯ FastJack

❯ Officially, I'll drop a "no comment" to that query. Unofficially, each node handles the exact specifics differently. Some of us are more paranoid than others.
❯ Captain Chaos

❯ Even FastJack's not showing all his cards here. Not only do you need to break out of the virtual machine to find the linking hosts, in most cases it's also trapdoored. The standard setting for the chokepoint SANs is one-way—going in. To get out the other side, you have to pop a separate one-way triggered SAN. The Shadowland node I used to frequent had an agent sitting in a completely different part of the node. You were supposed to show the agent the correct passcodes, passkeys and icons, and then it would start the sequence to trigger the SAN out the other side for you while you rushed in there. If the agent didn't like what you fed it, you'd pop into the chokepoint and be trapped there. Thankfully, I never had to see the IC that host packed.
❯ HoodRat

❯ Sounds like quite a set-up to keep persona icons out, but that can't be the only route Shadowland nodes use to link to the Nexus. After all, they dump their archives into the Nexus regularly, and high security measures would preclude the traffic flow needed to dump archives.
❯ Red Wraith

❯ You're quite correct. We have other ways of permitting and facilitating non-icon data flow. I'll leave that to you to figure out.
❯ Captain Chaos

Staff

Each Shadowland node has a full-time staff, anywhere from three to thirty in number. These individuals perform system-administration duties, security shifts, crisis control and data management and organization. Some node staffs are small operations with just a few people working overtime to keep them online. Others are streamlined teams of professionals, covering the basics and even engaging in research projects for the shadow community at large.

❯ Shadowland workers don't necessarily have to physically live in the same locales as their nodes, though they often do—especially if they're hardware techs.
❯ Switchback

Shadowland nodes easily pull in enough cred to pay these drones a living wage, though most of them are dedicated enough that they'd probably do it for free. Given these convictions, they're usually not very vulnerable to bribes, though they routinely perform favors for their contacts and buddies.

❯ Being a Shadowland drone has other perks as well: you're first to hear the latest rumors and gossip, you have inside access to a treasure trove of data, and you meet all sorts of interesting people. It's hard work, but worth it.
❯ Juggler

❯ There are dangers as well. More than one Shadowland worker has been extracted and interrogated by an overzealous corp hoping to trace a security leak. We've also lost friends to invading deckers, lethal viruses, fanatical otaku, bombs—you name it. But it's still worth it.
❯ Captain Chaos

Though many Shadowlanders will deny it, each group of Shadowland node administrators is an organization, with positions of responsibility and rules. These groups certainly don't require their people to wear power ties to work, but they do adhere to certain communications and security protocols. Each worker is held accountable to the rest, and they may even have regular meetings. Some node administrators organize themselves using collective models, where the burden of work and its rewards are equally shared. Others adhere to various hierarchical models, with clear authority figures and channels of control.

❯ For the record, Shadowland Seattle is a representative democracy. A select few of us call the shots, but the staff must elect us to our positions annually. And when major decisions are questioned, a sufficient vote can overturn them.
❯ Captain Chaos

A few names associated with Shadowland have special significance and are described here.

The premier sysop of Shadowland Seattle for more than fifteen years now, **Captain Chaos** is a legend in his own time. I'm sure it's no surprise that his true identity is a secret as well-kept as Lofwyr's undie size. In truth, the Captain has earned his rep through shrewd planning, exceptional management skills and a strong independent spirit. He's probably the most well-informed decker on the planet and has connections to more big-name runners than Damien Knight.

Because of this, the Captain has become the ad-hoc spokesman for the entire Shadow Matrix, and most other Shadowland sysops defer to his leadership.

❯ The Cap'n ain't that bright and shiny. He's got his rivals and enemies, and I mean among his peers, not the corps.
❯ Turner

❯ Bash, that slag from the Nexus, can barely say the Captain's name without choking. He seems to feel the Captain's stolen

the spotlight a few too many times, and been a bit too open about Shadow Matrix security.
❯ Zoot

❯ This document itself would be a good example of Captain Chaos' recklessness.
❯ Bash

❯ I'll admit that my decisions have not always been popular, but I'll stand by each of them. I've always kept the best interests of Shadowland in mind.
❯ Captain Chaos

❯ The real reason Bash is ticked is because he wants the Nexus to have authority over each Shadowland node. The Captain's fought him tooth and nail, and so far has kept the nodes independent.
❯ Insider

❯ Enough innuendo. Let's get back to the news, shall we?
❯ Silvery K

Diabolique is a force behind the scenes. Back in the day, this chica used to rustle electrons for MCT, but she turned to the shadows when the cubicle walls started closing in. Diabolique now acts as Captain Chaos' right-hand woman and is in charge of maintaining Shadowland Seattle's network connections. She's also the one who gets sent out to help hook up a new Shadowland node or to bail one out if its administrators run into technical problems.

Inside Shadowland

The interiors of Shadowland nodes tend to be fairly mundane, as time and resources are devoted to data archives rather than system sculpting. Most hosts are sculpted as high-tech rooms appealing to the majority of their audience. Mileage may vary from host to host or node to node.

Compared to most data havens, the info archives on Shadowland nodes are a monstrous mess. Despite the best efforts, files are stored haphazardly, with incongruous icons and misleading file names. Node sysops do occasionally force their archives into some sort of order and categorization, but chaos is the norm, not the exception.

Shadowland nodes include several areas for personas to socialize, similar to the virtual bars that are hosted at many other nodes. These establishments are all run by the Shadowland sysops, and while they're full-fledged parts of the nodes, they're treated as totally separate entities inside of each node. This means that just because you have access to Shadowland itself doesn't mean you have carte blanche to act however you like in these venues.

❯ My favorite social gathering spot is Abraxis on Shadowland Seattle. Abraxis appears as a multi-level nightclub with a vaguely industrial theme, though it changes slightly on the whim of the designers. Each table consists of a big gear con-

PRESCOTT

nected to the floor with a single bolt (yes, the table top can be spun around to raise and lower it), the multiple bars are constructed of scaffolding, and the elevator to the second and third floors is a clunky freight elevator. The only difference between Abraxis and a real factory is Abraxis doesn't reek of sweat, garbage, and waste, like most factories do.
❯ Exceler 8

❯ I'd have to agree. The atmosphere of Abraxis is pretty relaxed, as deckers mingle with corporate folk who mingle with street samurai who can barely log onto the 'Land. It's not really a place for biz, though the odd deal goes down. It's intended purely as a gathering place, a place where normally paranoid and unfriendly shadow-ops types can hang without worrying about packing a gun.
❯ Hiro

❯ I prefer the Maze, a host on Shadowland New York. The Maze is sculpted as a never-ending room of mirrors. Every surface, including the floor, ceiling and furniture, is reflective. It's some stunning iconography, though it can lead to some navigation problems, like when you hail the smart frame barbot's reflection instead of the actual barbot.

The Maze is mostly a hangout for hot deckers, the movers and the shakers. It's mainly treated as a place to chill out, though sometimes folks like to show off their new tricks.
❯ NuDawn

❯ Sounds like a good place to "reflect" on the future, heh heh.
❯ Mirror

Features and Services

As mentioned elsewhere, Shadowland nodes offer a range of services and features that rival the offerings of some MSPs. In a typical Shadowland node, you can buy a subscription to a pirate trid channel, access Hacker House, jump into a virtual game, rent out a private node for a meeting, set up an anonymous forwarding service and much, much more. A few of the more popular features are described below.

ShadowWatch: The Daily Buzz

It would be trite to say that ShadowWatch is for all the news that fits in print, but that's what it is, chum. The Shadowland staff scours newsfaxes, trideo nets, and other Matrix news services to bring you all the latest news of interest to shadowrunners. Most nodes do more than just print the news, they also dissect it, correlate it with other recent news and help distill that down into useable information, rather than faceless press releases without a lick of useable information.

MegaWatch

As the name implies, MegaWatch is a newsfeed that focuses on the megacorps. You'll get everything from the latest stock prices and fluctuations to corporate press releases to profiles on all the major and minor corporations, including the various personalities that run and work for them. Great stuff.

◗ It's always fun to see who's hanging out to watch the MegaWatch feed so they can see the repercussions of their latest run.
◗ Grid Reaper

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Each Shadowland node has hundreds if not thousands of SIGs, each dedicated to a particular discussion topic. SIG topics range from the obscure (Hellhound Breeding) to the popular (Dunkelzahn's Will), and everything in between (the Otaku SIG is still high-traffic).

Each SIG is a combination of virtual chat room, message board and email list. SIGs can be accessed as virtual rooms, where the various postings and message archives can be viewed from touch-controlled viewscreens in various formats (text, audio, trideo). Conversation that takes place within these rooms is automatically recorded, converted and appended to the SIG's messages. Likewise, users can "subscribe" to a specific SIG so that new messages to it are automatically echoed outbound like an email list. Subscribed users can contribute remotely, also like an email list.

◗ Naturally, SIG messages can be easily sorted into discussion threads, filtered according to various criteria, searched for keywords, and otherwise manipulated according to various data-management schemes.
◗ Sim Antik

◗ Shadowland has the best anti-spamming 'ware I've ever seen, and they have a policy of tracing and burning spammers whenever possible. They don't mess around.
◗ Black Hole

Articles and Sourcebooks

In a sense, Shadowland treats itself as a virtual magazine and regularly publishes feature "articles." Occasionally, these are assembled or solicited by the Shadowland staff, but in most cases they are contributed by users. Shadowland does not exert much editorial control over these articles, though they will correct inaccurate information when they spot it. The writing and research quality varies according to the author, so the material is not always well-organized, well-articulated or accurate in its arguments or assessments.

◗ This doesn't mean that Shadowland nodes publish everything that drops into their inboxes. While articles by some posters are automatically approved and are available for readers to browse instantly, articles by unknown or new authors are typically subjected to an approval process, and if they are judged to have no redeeming value they'll be dropped into the bit-bucket.
◗ Zenk

Occasionally, research projects will involve multiple articles on related topics. In this case, Shadowland compiles the articles into a "sourcebook." Only a few of the nodes actually have the time to throw sourcebooks together, though Seattle usually manages to churn out three or four a year.

Articles and sourcebooks are usually presented in an interactive format that allows users to insert hypertext commentary directly into the piece. This "black information" is limited to a set ratio of feedback to original content, so that the original material does not get drowned out. When the threshold is reached, older commentary is archived.

Most articles and sourcebooks are usually directly linked to associated SIGs, so that users can expound at length on related topics in more of an open forum format.

Accessing Shadowland

So, how do you find a Shadowland node and gain access? That's a good question, chummer, and one you'll ultimately have to answer yourself. Each Shadowland node uses different protocols, and they constantly change them to fit the times. Some of them employ trapdoor SANs, others use teleporting SANs and others use combinations of the two. Heck, Shadowland sysops have invented half of those hidden-access tricks, so don't be surprised to find it involves some completely new hack.

The only advice I can give you is to make contact with people in the know. If you're a shadowrunner with a solid rep and the references to prove it, you shouldn't have too much difficulty finding access to your local node. And you don't have to be a decker to access Shadowland either. Like the rest of the Matrix, Shadowland is based on a virtual reality designed to be easy to use even for those who are computer illiterate.

THE NEXUS

The old saying "One man's trash is another man's treasure" holds true especially for the Denver Data Haven. Since its appearance in the latter half of the 2030s, the Nexus has been the premier repository for all types of shadow information. No other data haven can rival its size.

Heart of the Web

The Shadow Matrix PLTG maintained by the Nexus is the only way to access the Nexus. The Nexus itself is a separate PLTG, and at any given time there will be a few gateway SANs connecting the two. These gateway SANs can be difficult to find, as each and every one is a vanishing SAN. The SANs do not always appear within the Shadow Matrix PLTG, they have also been known to be hidden with trapdoors in Shadow Matrix-connected Shadowland nodes.

◗ That's a benefit of running your own PLTG. The Nexus folks move the SANs around constantly, so the PLTG's indexing records provide little or no help finding them.
◗ Red Wraith

The Killing Jars

The gateway SANs do not connect directly to the Nexus PLTG, but instead lead directly into specialized hosts known as *killing jars*. The killing jars are a homegrown creation, designed and programmed by the Nexus staff. Each killing jar is a simple host, typically sculpted as a waiting room, elevator or bus stop.

The host is loaded with active IC constructs. Each of these IC constructs is biting at the bit to attack newcomers, but is leashed with a "standby" command from the Nexus. They'll eye you hungrily, but they won't attack until ordered to do so by a command from the Nexus staff.

The SANs that bring you into the killing jar from the Shadow Matrix are one-way; once you're in, you're not leaving. Only one SAN leads out of the killing jar—to the Nexus itself. Naturally, this SAN is red-hot and ICed up more than Pluto.

The concept is that a Nexus visitor pops into the killing jar and politely waits for a Nexus security decker to wander down and scan them. If you've got the right codes, the right attitude or can otherwise convince that decker you're supposed to be there, she'll escort you in. Otherwise she unleashes the IC constructs and watches the gore splatter.

❂ In case it needs to be said, the security deckers carry a passkey that keeps the IC constructs from attacking them.
❂ Ward

❂ The Nexus people are pretty paranoid about their passcodes. Not only do they change the codes on a frequent but irregular basis, they even change the formats of passcodes and passkeys semi-frequently. Passcodes are always specific to a killing jar or user as well.
❂ Manticore

❂ I heard one smart chum whipped up a variant of a decoy utility that set the IC constructs against the Nexus security decker, gaining him time to hack through the SAN.
❂ Fetch

❂ In your dreams, friend.
❂ Silvery K

To exit the Nexus, you can bypass the killing jars completely and use one of a dozen one-way exit SANs that drop you back in the Shadow Matrix.

The Heap

Entering the Nexus is a breathtaking experience. The view is that of an entire solar system, with a massive black hole as the focal point—all the data in the haven being represented by the ever-growing central construct. Known as *the Heap*, the black hole is orbited by swirling tendrils of gas, hundreds of planets and hurtling asteroids, massive discharges of sheet lightning and more.

The planets and space rocks make up most of the important nodes, meeting rooms, virtual chat services and the like. The exterior of each planet is realistic—different surfaces and atmospheric phenomenon—but planet interiors may follow any motif their creators like. Many nodes, particularly those used as offices, maintain "viewing windows" that look out over the Heap, providing a distracting scenescape.

❂ The resolution of the Nexus is off the scale and hyper-real. Even at peak system load periods you won't find any de-rezzing or bleeding edges.
❂ Zoe

Physical Location

As I've said, the Nexus is physically located in Pueblo Corporate Council, in the abandoned U.S. Air Force Academy. Following the Treaty of Denver, the PCC stripped the academy of everything they deemed useful and fenced it in. They made a few meager attempts to sell the land, but all sales offers mysteriously disappeared into the void. As the years passed, the PCC just seemed to forget about the place, despite rumors of squatters and other activity. Slowly but surely, all records of the place were being doctored or destroyed, and anyone who showed interest quickly "forgot" all about it. Some rumors claim the Nexus struck a deal with the PCC, others claim the Nexus holds some doomsday viral weapon over PCC's collective head. Whatever the case, something is still keeping the corps at bay, though they surely know enough to locate and destroy the site.

❂ Backups and blackmail—nothing more is needed.
❂ Turner

❂ Not to mention that the corps benefit from the Nexus as much as shadowrunners do.
❂ Sidewinder

❂ Ok, it takes more than a scruffy group of deckers to compile enough paydata to start a data haven, rebuild a military network and make the whole operation invisible to The Powers That Be. Who, or what, backed the operation?
❂ Marco

❂ Dragons, chummer. It's got to be a dragon.
❂ Dragonslayer

❂ How trite. Who's going to stand up next and claim it was immortal elves?
❂ Orange Queen

❂ I will.
❂ Conspir-I-See

❂ Please. Can't anyone consider that it may have just been a well-organized private operation, run by professionals, who had the contacts, nuyen and blackmailing expertise to pull whatever strings were necessary. Doesn't anyone believe in the entrepreneurial spirit any more?
❂ Nuyen Nick

❂ I'm willing to consider it, but I'm inclined to think the founders of the Nexus had at least one major power funneling them

cash. And that raises some important questions, such as: Who was it? What did they get out of it? And are they still around behind the scenes?

◐ Chromed Accountant

"It's all about dollars and sense"

The academy site holds unparalleled amounts of computing resources, as well as a small army of sysops, deckers, security personnel and otaku. A decommissioned military training center, the academy's physical assets include a series of hangars, storage sheds, academic and support buildings, and perhaps most importantly, a Cold War bunker that houses most of the data haven itself. The site looks completely derelict from the outside, but inside the area is structurally sound (though the interior can't be accurately described as neat or orderly).

Even deckers may be interested in the site's physical security, as it may be easier to infiltrate and make an illegal tap than to hack in. The run-down look of the academy is carefully cultivated and misleading. Past the twisted fence and rusted razorwire, the husks of abandoned cars hide an assortment of high-tech sensors, cameras, and in some cases hidden weaponry. Metahuman guards keep a light patrol, but most of the work is done by a few security riggers and their sturdy mechanical allies. Magical security is almost nonexistent—just enough to keep out unwanted eavesdroppers.

The People

Though probably every single one of the deckers within the Nexus could be considered nova-hot and would be worth their weight in cred to a megacorp, a few of them stand out. These few are key either because of their leadership positions, their abilities or both. These folks function just like any other happy family—though they all work together, interpersonal rivalries are always simmering behind the scenes.

Once a Russian citizen known as Gennedy Polemov, **Shiva** had to leave his former country in a hurry when his politics fell out of favor and earned him a death sentence. He brought his considerable networking skills to the Nexus, where he has risen to become the master system administrator. Undoubtedly the best and most dangerous decker in the Nexus crew, Shiva has a generally calm and pleasant demeanor, though he should be regarded as extremely dangerous if aroused to anger.

Shiva doesn't particularly get along well with Bash, for unknown reasons. Despite their differences, the pair have worked together for years without a major split.

Shiva's icon is a tall, slender male with short light hair, clad all in black. It's programmed with a degree of resolution that makes reality seem fake.

Bash may be a protégé of Shiva, as he joined the Nexus around the same period, and the two seem to have a history. Bash is the Nexus' self-appointed guardian and enforcer. He's well-known for being a complete anti-social fragger; his temper is as legendary as his childishness. Bash doesn't have many friends, but he's kept the Nexus security locked tight since he came on board.

While not as perfect as Shiva's, Bash's icon is more … *disturbing*. He appears as an emaciated and extremely tall figure with pale white skin, vampiric teeth and gleaming red eyes. His persona also transmits a sensory feed that translates as a waft of decaying flesh.

Silvery K (a.k.a. Kimberly Robinson) was born an albino in the rural Midwest, at a time when mistrust of "strange births" was running high and the tensions leading to the Nights of Rage were brewing beneath the surface. Shunned and ostracized her entire life, Silvery found solace in the Matrix, like many social outcasts before her. She graduated with a degree in Computer Science from the University of Chicago, but rather than taking a corp job, she decided she wanted a life of her own, one she could live by night. (She's extremely sensitive to light.)

Working as a decker for hire, Silvery K soon developed a reputation as a quality programmer as well. In 2057, Silvery became the recipient of an IC-breaking program of unprecedented complexity, a bequest from the late dragon Dunkelzahn. Silvery K is widely suspected of having been part of a massive information network run by the dragon, though whether she worked for him knowingly is unclear.

In 2058, Silvery K joined the Nexus' team. It remains unknown what use and benefit she received from the dragon's can-opener utility. She has concentrated on programming work for the Nexus, using her designs and bleeding edge warez to shore up the data haven's defenses and features.

◐ Let me guess, she used that secret utility to crack open some top secret sites and line her pockets with paydata and nuyen, then she used that to buy her way into the Nexus. Did she score some juicy dirt on Shiva, you think?

◐ Omni

◐ It wasn't blackmail, but she did score with Shiva, if you get my drift.

◐ Core Warrior

◐ Bulldrek, it was all business. Shiva and Bash only let Silvery K join up under one condition—that she share the IC-breaker with them.

◐ Ghost

◐ Oh? And what did they do with it?

◐ Iridescent Ferret

Silvery K's icon is a woman made entirely from flowing, liquid silver. When she uses utilities, she pulls and shapes them from her liquid self.

Crystal (a.k.a. Maria Dancer) has been in charge of the Heap's data organization for almost ten years now. She's a wiz at file structures and can order things in ways that will make sense to even the lamest search routines. When you find that nugget of data that for once is actually in the right place, thank her.

◐ I'm always open to presents as well.

◐ Crystal

Crystal's background is as enigmatic as Bash's. All that I've dug up is that she was born and raised in Pueblo, and she may have spent some time designing programs for the Pueblo Corporate Council.

Crystal's also known as something of a "den mother" to some of the otaku living in the academy, though she doesn't seem to mind the burden. Many of the otaku speak to her only, refusing to deal with any other adult.

Crystal's icon is an animated mass of quartz crystal that grows and shrinks to form limbs. Reflected light, in all colors of the rainbow, is used as an element in most of her utilities and deck functions.

❯ What happened to Cap'n Kluge and Spirit?
❯ Heyday

❯ Spirit, also known as Nahid Mostafavi, jumped ship earlier this year. There are no official reasons why, but the scuttlebutt sez she'd had enough of Bash's winning personality. She's now a force behind the scenes at the Mosaic data haven.
❯ Sidewinder

❯ Kluge, a.k.a. Tom Kwan, was targeted by Fuchi for an extraction attempt right before that corp split. The run was foiled by Nexus security, but Kwan took a stray bullet to the back of the head. No more Cap'n Kluge.
❯ Dead Deckers Society
   "In Kibo We Trust"

❯ Sure. That's why I ran into a Novatech decker who used a bouncing rubber-ball icon, waddling along on flat feet and sprouting squeegee eyes. Just coincidence that Kluge's icon looked like that, right?
❯ Net Sum

❯ Well, Fuchi did make off with Kluge's cyberdeck, if not his body ...
❯ Dead Deckers Society
   "In Kibo We Trust"

The Otaku

The otaku tribes that live inside the academy number roughly between thirty and sixty total members. There are two separate large tribes, each with a different "outlook." One group talks like shamans, only they speak of "spirits of the machine." The other group seems to view themselves as mutants, or some form of advanced human evolution. A few smaller groups of misfits also exist, though they mostly keep to themselves.

Most of these otaku seem to stay busy doing whatever it is that otaku do. A number of them actually help maintain the Nexus systems, and they act as backup Matrix security patrols. A few of the older ones also work as part time 'runners.

❯ Why are so many of them drawn to the Nexus?
❯ Glitch

❯ There's something about the place that "calls" them. They seem to like to lurk about in remote corners of the data haven, communing with their Matrix spirits or something.
❯ Gorgon

Using the Nexus

The Nexus is open to anyone who can find their way in and who contributes to the Heap. Theoretically, every user is supposed to contribute paydata regularly, though in practice this is rarely enforced. The Nexus gets enough data pumped in via Shadowland nodes every day to keep it going for years.

The data within the Heap is stored on hundreds of hosts, each linked together in a massive weblike architecture. Like the Pueblo grids, this architecture is constantly being changed and re-arranged. Don't ever count on a datapath in the Nexus leading to the same place twice.

The Nexus also offers chat-room and message-board SIGs just like the Shadowland nodes, as well as a few nodes designed as virtual hangouts, private rooms, and so on. The Nexus doesn't act quite as much like an MSP as the Shadowland nodes do, because those nodes cover the job for it.

The Nexus makes a lot of cred by renting out search programs and compiling research for clients. Rumor has it that some of the Nexus' biggest clients are megacorps that prefer to have deckers do their dirty work.

❯ It's worth pointing out that the Nexus has a distributed back-up system. If the academy site were completely nuked, the Nexus would survive. The loss of human life would be much more damaging than any lost data or hardware.
❯ Red Wraith

OTHER DATA HAVENS

❯ The rest of these files detail most of the other data havens that I am aware of. Some of these files were solicited from people in the know, others were submitted to Shadowland, and a few were found while trolling the 'Trix. Given the secretive nature of data havens, verifying any of this data is virtually impossible, even with my connections. (Remember, some of these folks view me as the competition.) If you really want to know, embrace the shadowrunner DIY ethic and do it yourself.
❯ Captain Chaos
   Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 09:03:14 (EST)

ASGARD
by Orbital Bandit

Some of you may have heard of space scoundrels like me, cast-offs who make their livings in hostile environments by scrounging space scrap and taking odd jobs from corps with orbital projects. It isn't easy surviving up here, and the overhead of maintaining even a simple little spacescooter is astronomical. Seriously, we not only survive, but thrive, living in our jury-rigged stations and malfunctioning ships. How do we do it? How do we cover our costs? Simple: *Asgard*.

Asgard is our real breadwinner. In simple terms, it's an orbital data haven, though we run it a bit differently from other havens. In fact, it's not so much a haven as an auction house. We take only the best, freshest paydata, and sell it to the highest bidder.

Into Our Hands

So how the heck did a crew of astro pirates set up this operation? Well, officially Asgard started its career as a Fuchi low-earth orbit landsat (a geographical-imaging satellite). In reality, it was designed to perform optical reconnaissance and ELINT and provide secure communications routing. The satellite was launched by one of Fuchi Asia's Korean shell companies, and the Nakatomi faction used it to spy on all sorts of competitors.

> So Villiers and company, who ran Fuchi Orbital, never knew the sat was part of the family's fleet. Cute.
> SkyWatch

During the corp war and Fuchi's breakup, the shell company that owned the sat became vulnerable. Some competitors moved in and in a short and vicious frenzy the shell company was broken apart and devoured. Somehow the records regarding the company's satellite assets were conveniently lost ... and our poor little sat was orphaned. Luckily, a skillful group of orbital scavengers fixed it up and took care of it. They also gave it a new name—*Asgard*—in honor of its lofty position.

> Ah, I love happy endings.
> Bung

> For the detail-o-philes out there, it orbits the earth 6.4 times a day, has a mean latitude of +24° and oscillates ± 5°. Its orbit gives it coverage of different areas at different times of day, and its cameras can cover anything from +40° to +8°—which can be very useful indeed.
> Danger Mouse

Connecting

If you're groundside, connecting to Asgard can be a bit tricky. First, the orbital period of the satellite limits its direct accessibility from a ground station to short periods of time each day; each window is slightly less than two hours long. You can gain remote access via a limited number of geosynchronous public domain comsats, but doing so attracts serious lag for deckers. Second, the satellite was designed as a high-security spysat—the SAN is loaded with some serious scramble IC. So unless you know the protocols or have an account, accessing will not be easy.

❷ This means it's just as difficult for sysops and security deckers to stay on the system.
❷ Red Wraith

❷ Quick thinking, partner. Rest assured, though, we maintain an overwatch schedule using both dirtside and orbital deckers, each taking over when they have a window of access.
❷ Orbital Bandit

❷ Seems like a weakness to me. If some of those deckers were to be "accidentally" unable to fulfill their duties for a short period, the system would be vulnerable. I doubt the operation has that large of a staff to begin with.
❷ Grid Reaper

❷ Finding out who that staff is would be the tricky part.
❷ Nightfire

❷ One of the main sysops is a lady called Pandora. She's very possessive, calling Asgard her "box." There's at least a couple of other main security ops, including a kid called Cinnabar and a rather freaky guy called Heimdall (the "guardian of the bridge"). Cinnabar's a landlubber, but Heimdall seems to spend so much time on Asgard that I wonder if he ever logs out or sleeps. God knows how he avoids the connection limitations.
❷ Wehr

❷ If you really want to hack Asgard, you can always try physical access. Of course, you need to get into space ...
❷ Bung

❷ I'm sure Orbital Bandit and her crew keep an eye on the sat, just in case. I'll bet they've got at least one missile ready to protect it. And in space, one missile is all it takes.
❷ Rigger X

Asgard's Niche

Our little pet sat simply doesn't have the storage space onboard to haul massive archives of data across the sky. That precluded us from running it as a full-fledged haven, so we opted for the next best thing.

Asgard focuses on high-turnover, high-volume paydata relevant to "current affairs." Let's say you pull a file from some corp datahole that's so hot your undies are sticking. The corp in question has a rage on, and you know you've got to unload it fast. But if you start shopping it around the shadows, odds are you'll get a bullet before a paycheck. This is where Asgard comes in.

Asgard will take incoming data from any source. To ensure the source's privacy, we assign every source a random ID code and establish a one-shot traceless cred account. We post a summary of the paydata (usually provided by the source, but we'll write our own if necessary), a starting price and a last bid date. Asgard's auction items are mirrored by most data havens and Shadowland nodes. Then the auction begins, continuing

until the bidding period ends. The basic bid period is 24 hours, though it's flexible (1 hour minimum, 1 week max). The data is sold to the highest bidder. Asgard takes a percentage of the profits, usually between 40 and 80 percent, depending on how spicy it is. The rest goes to the one-shot account, so whoever sourced the data can download it from any dataterm onto a certified credstick and walk away without any loose ends.

Those who wish to bid on data are also issued anonymous codes and accounts. The identity of the purchaser is also protected.

❷ So I'm supposed to trust my hard-earned paydata and anonymity with a gang of money-grubbing weightless wonders? I don't think so! What's to prevent Asgard from keeping the data and the cred? Or tracing the data back to the source and selling that info to the highest bidder?
❷ Sam Scam

❷ Reputation, *omae*, reputation. If Asgard were to backstab a client, they wouldn't have any clients, and then they'd be out of business.
❷ Argent

❷ Yeah, well, Asgard has to keep some records that could be used to either trace the ID of a source or purchaser. If you use them, you're placing your trust in their security.
❷ Tracker

❷ Any logs that could be cross-referenced for such tracking purposes are scrambled, heavily protected and securely erased after a short period. To date, not one of our clients has been compromised. Our operation's integrity has been 100%.
❷ Orbital Bandit

❷ That you know of.
❷ Skeptik

❷ What if the paydata doesn't sell? What if no one bites?
❷ Lo Rent

❷ Then it's either returned to the source or purchased from the source and placed in our temporary archives.
❷ Orbital Bandit

❷ I've known some corps to participate in the bidding to retrieve "errant" information. It must irk the hell out of them to buy their stolen property back.
❷ Repo Man

❷ What sort of stuff gets auctioned?
❷ Ral

❷ Just about anything that will snag some cred. Smaller items might include the travel itinerary of a certain mob figurehead, the current location of a magical artifact or the personal comm-

code of Mercurial. The pricier items could include the design specs of Ares' newest orbital station, transcripts of the private conversations between a Yakuza oyabun and an MCT veep, or the truth behind Juan Atzcapotzalco's service to Aztechnology.

Note that Asgard does not, repeat does not, vouch for the validity, accuracy or truthfulness of auction items. So the file you just dumped 50K on may well be outdated, full of holes, or filled with outright lies.
◗ FastJack

◗ We do attempt to evaluate the authenticity of auction items, as much as our time and available resources allow. Each auction item is given an "Authenticity Rating" that indicates our best guess as to how on-target the data is. Like life itself, you get what you get.
◗ Orbital Bandit

Asgard does maintain a small, temporary archive of data that users can search through. Most of the data here is material that didn't sell at auction or wasn't placed on auction in the first place for some reason (y'know, the kind of data that is given away by its very description). Users have to pay an access fee just to search the archive, and must also pay for each item accessed. In other words, even a quick search can quickly rack up a steep price, but it's usually worth it considering the timeliness of the data.

◗ This means you've got to know what it is you're looking for when you dig through Asgard. Get your terms of reference wrong or not precise enough, and you'll end up with countless Mp of expensive drek.
◗ Viol8r

Any data that is older than two weeks gets archived with the data havens that post the auction items, where they are free to the world.

Asgard also offers a few other services, such as an electronic drop-box. Confidential data may be privately and securely stored on Asgard for up to 48 hours, after which the data is physically overwritten unless it is refreshed. Any number of conditions can be built into the storage contract, including worldwide dissemination upon the source's expiration, or download to anyone with a passcode. Asgard's limited accessibility makes it hard to trace participants or delete the data involved, making it similarly popular for deadman's drops and time-bombs. Data uploaded to such storage is handled by pre-payment, with fees set per megapulse. Data storage can be refreshed beyond the deletion date by paying a periodic rental fee.

◗ Asgard has a few other functions that Bandit's keeping mum about. As an ELINT sat loaded with really sweet camera gear and other surveillance toys, Asgard can be used to take ultra-high-res pictures of anything in its footprint, in just about any part of the EM spectrum you care to name. The Asgard ops will sell you time on the gear for the right, appropriately stratospheric, price. They monitor you while you work, so it's a fair

guess they know who you're interested in. Access costs are cheaper for old pics taken in standard scanner passes, though again storage is limited.
◗ Manticore

The Gear
Should you pay us a personal visit, don't expect to be awed by our stunning system sculpture. Asgard was designed for grunt work rather than panache, and most of the iconography is UMS or Fuchi standard. When demand on the server peaks, the ASIST converter cuts out smell and taste, and during high demand the server will occasionally cut touch and auditory senses as well.

A final word of warning. Asgard's defenses rely heavily on nasty black IC—subtlety and restraint are not priorities. So if you're thinking of unauthorized access, think again. We protect our own.

◗ Most of the IC is ex-Fuchi, especially the embedded IC protecting the hardware of the satellite.
◗ Manticore

AZZIEWATCH
by Corona
That's it, chummies, take a trip out of the noise and the clutter of Seattle's Matrix. Head south, but dodge around the Tir. Make a left turn when you get to Albuquerque, mindful all the while of those nice boys guarding the Pueblo Corporate Council, and step out into the shadows of Texas and the Confederate American States.

We do things a little bit different here in the South, and if you want to learn what's what, who's who, and who's doing what to whom, you're going to need all the info you can get your grubby little electronic paws on. If it has to do with Aztlan or Texas, your best bet is the Azziewatch data haven.

Where We Come From and What We Do
Our little corner of the Matrix came online on 2 April 2059. Our debut was a bit unusual for two reasons: we didn't vanish as some new data havens have in the past, and we didn't pop up with just a couple of measly nodes and a big "Work In Progress" sign on our door. Instead, we stepped out fully grown, from the brow of Zeus, as it were. Our SAN opened to reveal a dozen fully stocked nodes loaded with data on almost everything shadowy in Aztlan, and a fairly decent overview of shadow activity in Texas as well.

◗ Well, that stinks of corp-backing something fierce. Who's pulling the strings?
◗ Rascal

◗ Some of us down here in the CAS had the same basic suspicions, so we went looking for the money trail. We found a drekload of cred thrown at the haven, but all eight digits came from private pockets. Sure, a few corps were linked to those names, but not enough to make it a specific corp's project. It seems the founders just approached the right people, pitched a deal based on anti-Aztlan sentiments and started collecting backing funds.

Two of the private donors did stand out. One was a guy named Goodman, the CEO of Cavalier Arms Ltd. He's an old-school Texan, but his corp is essentially the personal weapons company of Miles Lanier. The second was an enigma, some shipping magnate with a shadowy background. After some intense searching, I finally pegged him as a front man for Hualpa the feathered serpent.
❍ Delta Fox

❍ So it's Novatech and Amazonia? That's an odd mix.
❍ Rascal

❍ Our crew needed to get the start-up cash from somewhere. We hit up everyone we knew to have a rage on against the Azzies. In most cases we got the cred no strings attached. Azziewatch remains an independent operation.
❍ Midnight Angel

Our haven was started based on a single, specific need. For years, it was all but impossible to find reliable data about Aztlan and Aztechnology online, even in the data havens. Azzie deckers were exceptionally aggressive at hunting down and eliminating unwanted publicity. We decided to put an end to that and establish a single source of up-to-date hard Azzie paydata. We established Azziewatch for this purpose and hardened it against expected attacks and retaliatory strikes.

We were successful, and we've even started to branch out the scope of our operations and interests. Our primary purpose remains serving as a shadowsource on the Azzies, but we've also dedicated new hosts to archiving material on the CAS shadows (Texas in particular), Amazonia and other related subjects.

❍ I hear Azziewatch has been working out a deal with the Manchester haven to mirror each other's materials and serve as a backup. I'm sure Tir na nOg and Aztlan will appreciate being lumped together.
❍ Antifa

Our Staff

We've got a whole crew that tends to our hardware and physical security. I'll thank them here as a group, and just name the leaders of the pack, so to speak—those who have helped us push way ahead of where we probably ought to be.

If you've seen an angel in the Matrix with flowing silver hair, broad silver eagle's wings and an androgynous, athletic body made from the night sky, deepest midnight blue and spangled with stars, then you've seen the **Midnight Angel.** Midnight Angel's icon morphs, apparently at random, between three different states, appearing by turns as male, female, and something in between. I don't think anyone knows whether the person out in the meat world is a man or a woman, and the Angel seems to like it that way.

The Angel is responsible for establishing and maintaining the Matrix side of security. Given the frequent attacks we've received from deckers working for Aztechnology, the Humanis

policlub and a couple of other groups who aren't terribly happy with what we're doing down here, Angel does a damn fine job.

All our information had to come from somewhere; a lot of it was dug up and dumped into our system by the **Iridescent Ferret.** You've no doubt seen him scurrying around, looking like a Day-Glo rodent with lightning bolts shooting from his feet. He's got a knack for finding the weakness in any Azzie host, and I swear he can smell the paydata from a few nodes away.

Then there's little old me—**Corona.** I'm the one with the boring icon that looks like a librarian, because that's really all I am. I make sure everything here is where it needs to be, and I make a place for it if one doesn't already exist.

❍ Corona is being much too modest; our little data haven wouldn't be half of what it is without her organizational skills and her ability to ride herd on the Ferret and Midnight Angel. I can't say how pleased I am that she decided to take this job and stick with it in spite of some very daunting odds.
❍ The Old Man

Our Stuff

So you know why to come and what to expect, I've made a quick listing, with descriptions, of some of our important nodes and content.

The hosts that make up our primary Azziewatch archives get the heaviest portion of our visiting traffic. The data is most useful for smugglers and smuggler wannabes, as we have real-time updates on troop positions and movements along the Texas border (and spotty coverage of some other borders as well). We also include data on CAS troops and positions along the same border. (Smugglers tend to get it from both sides, which is one of their more annoying occupational hazards.) We supplement these listings with intelligence reports showing you what kind of weaknesses these particular units might be experiencing at any given time, as well as maps of frequented smuggler routes and bulletin boards for connecting with border jammers, fixers and way stations.

❍ With the increasing intensity of the action in the Yucatan, the number of people wanting out of Aztlan is rising dramatically. An "underground railroad" of sorts has been coalescing over the past four or five years for the express purpose of getting these people out of harm's way. While I personally find it distasteful to make excessive profit from human suffering, the fact remains that there is a substantial amount of money to be made smuggling people north (and arms south) of the border.
❍ Texas 2-Step

El Paso: Never surrender. Never forget. Never forgive.

Azziewatch also succeeds in drawing in visitors from outside the CAS. Our political discussion SIGs also draw in anti-Aztechnology factions within Aztlan itself, people who are risking their lives just by hooking up with us and trying to let the outside world know what's really going on in their country. Folks from the Pueblo Corporate Council and the California Free State chime in here, too, since they've got as big an issue with the Azzies (perhaps bigger, in CalFree's case) as we do here in Texas.

> All sorts of shadowy business gets discussed in these forums. You'll see Yucatan rebels shopping for merc units, eco-warriors looking for inside connections and shadowrunners doing their usual thing.
> Delta Fox

If you wander away from the Azzie-focus areas, you'll find that we also house files on interesting topics like Humanis' base of support in the CAS, connections between TerraFirst!, the Yucatan rebels and Amazonia, or even dirt on the Sons of the Alamo policlub. The section dealing with blood magic—from Aztlan to Amazonia—is quite illuminating and frightening.

> Given a few more years, Azziewatch may well break out of its specialty area and develop into a full-fledged data haven.
> FastJack

Access
To gain access to Azziewatch, you need to be vouched for by two others who already have access to our system. You also have to have a solid rep and a good reason for wanting in. Oh, yeah, and you can't ever have worked for the Azzies. This system is intended to weed out Azzie infiltrators. While not perfect, it serves as an adequate hurdle and allows us to backtrack when we investigate security leaks.

> Be careful who you vouch for. If you vouch for someone who turns out to be an Azzie spy, you'll be banned from the system as well unless you have a really good explanation. Whoever vouched for you will also be suspect, all the way back down the line.
> Sidewinder

Once we grant you an account, access is free, though we encourage everyone to participate in discussion and upload any useful data they stumble across. So if you've got the contacts, stop in and make yourself comfortable. And keep yourself alive, eh? We want you to come back.

> Azziewatch's SAN can be found hidden away in the public Matrix host of some unreal individual somewhere in the Texas grid. It teleports, usually about three times a week or more if Midnight Angel is feeling jumpy. Security is tight, but it's packed mostly with gray IC.
> FastJack

> If you're thinking of checking out the physical security, think again. Given Azzie attempts to shut it down (three in the last six months), the distributed comps that keep Azziewatch running are well-protected and quickly mobile if necessary. You're better off skating the IC.
> Groundskeeper

THE HELIX
by Jantje van Leiden <jantje@atomicgarden.helix.nl>

The man in charge at Shadowland asked me to write something about the Helix for the simple reason that it's currently the second largest quasi-legal data depository in the world. So, without further ado ...

Finding the Helix
This may be the most important part of this article—luckily, it's also the simplest. Just go to EU/NL-070-HELIX and log on to the PLTG as a visitor (or register for a user ID) and you're in.

> Clever. Either that's some sort of trap, or this is a data haven with the shortest life expectancy ever.
> Chuck

> A word of warning to first-time users: whenever you login as a visitor or with a new account, you get popped into the chokepoint and the Helix automatically runs a trace on you. Until that trace is complete, your icon won't be allowed to legally proceed through the chokepoint into the PLTG. If the trace happens to return a jackpoint or MXP address that's been blacklisted, the system automatically terminates your account, goes to active alert and nails you with proactive defenses. Otherwise, you'll be traced and then allowed to proceed.
   You can always crash the trace IC, but that's asking for it as well.
> ASDF

> What kinds of addresses are blacklisted?
> The Light One

> Those used in the recent past by people who tried to frag with the system and some belonging to, shall we say, unfriendly organizations. Also addresses of people the admins personally don't like.
> ik@wij.helix.nl

> ASDF didn't say it, but accounts that have been verified in some way by the sysops don't go through the trace procedure.
> Saltlander

What's Inside
In terms of size, the Helix is number two, right after the Denver Nexus. It's expanded tremendously over the past five years, and if it continues to grow at the same rate the Helix will rival the Nexus within the foreseeable future.
   For ease of use, the Helix PLTG has been designed to resemble a city, with streets, parks, buildings, kiosks and everything else a Euro-style city might contain. The main boulevard curves downward in a lazy spiral, with about a block of city on either side. If you step off the side, you'll see the entire grid is designed in a spiral shape, like the length of a screw. Each of the structures represents a host, with street signs, automated information booths and even public transport pointing users in the direction they want.

❯ "Ease of use," my output jack! The street plan off the main drag is deceptive, as quite a few of the streets are curved and they vary from wide to narrow. You can enter a side street near the top and somehow return to the boulevard several "twists of the spiral" below. It's not the easy-to-navigate, grid-like streets us Americans are used to, though it does resemble old European city centers.
❯ Nova

Meeting areas, chat rooms and other services similarly appear as features analogous to their real world equivalents: parks, bars, nightclubs and so on. (The laws of physics don't apply in the Matrix, so buildings can be larger inside than they are on the outside, and doorways can lead to systems in completely different areas of the grid.)

Over time, the Helix has evolved from a simple data-storage space into an entire virtual city where deckers come to enjoy themselves as well as take care of business. It's actually very similar to the digital cities that were popular in the Netherlands for a time before the turn of the century.

❯ How are these hosts secured? Can I just waltz on in and download what I want?
❯ The Light One

❯ That's up to the host's owner. Some allow anyone in, while others check at the door, so to speak. Entering the Helix is not the same as gaining access to the data it holds.
❯ Red Wraith

❯ The security levels of individual hosts range from Green to Red; some have higher levels, but you're not likely to get into those hosts unless you're supposed to. Most hosts have very low Index and Files ratings, allowing users to easily locate what they are looking for, while Control ratings are invariably high to prevent tampering with the systems. ˙
❯ ASDF

❯ Don't let the sculpting of a host fool you. A host designed as an airy, open-access garden villa may actually pack more IC and defenses than one that appears as an armored bunker.
❯ Black Isis

User Privileges
Individual users maintain most of the hosts within the Helix, but everything else is maintained by the Helix sysops, from the grid to the core archives. Aside from security and sysop account privileges, the Helix offers three different types of access: *visitor*, *registered user* and *resident*.

A **visitor** is anyone who logs into the PLTG using the guest account. Visitors are required to submit to a full trace before they are allowed access to the full PLTG. Visitors are limited in what they can do in the system—some buildings refuse them access, they are not allowed to upload anything (not even make comments in files like this one), they cannot download files intended only for registered users or residents, and so on.

◗ In simple terms, being a visitor in the Helix is like being in a museum: you can look, but you can't touch. Everyone can get in this way, though. Well, almost everyone.
◗ Lisa Cooney

Registered users are those who have applied for and received a registered user ID and account. This allows them to log onto the Helix no questions asked and without being traced, and they can do most of the things visitors cannot, such as upload or download data and comment on posted files with few limitations. Registered users can still be denied entry in parts of the Helix, as access to every host is controlled by the host's owner.

◗ Becoming a registered user is a matter of filling out the application form and handing over evidence that you are who you claim to be. The background check isn't intensive, but it's enough to weed out wannabes, posers and careless infiltrators. Street credibility applies, just choose your references carefully.
◗ Lisa Cooney

◗ Registered users can choose any account name they wish and can easily change it if they choose.
◗ Xp8owe78dfd

Registered users can upload any data they want to the public areas of the Helix, making it available for download. Registered users are also allowed to send and receive email and other transmissions through their Helix account or a "blind" email drop, and they can also take advantage of the Helix's anonymous forwarding services. The Helix also rents out "timed storage space" to registered users—if the data is not accessed by a certain time period by an authorized user, it will be either sent out to a specified location or erased, as per instructions.

◗ Rumor is that the Helix retains a copy of such data; of course, the Helix sysops strongly deny this.
◗ Tokus

Residents have more privileges than registered users. They can build house hosts and contribute in other ways to the maintenance and expansion of the Helix. Being a resident means having part or all of a host of your own, to do with as you see fit.

◗ You have to be at least a good acquaintance of the administrators to be allowed to set up shop in the Helix in the first place. The admins strive for quality, so having a strong rep as a good decker (and contacts to vouch for you) is important if you want to be a resident.
◗ Lisa Cooney

◗ The shadow decker community in the Netherlands is very small—quite literally, everyone knows each other—so Helix residents come from all over the world, though most are from western Europe.
◗ Hansje@helix.nl

◗ Each resident account is unique. Certain operations and access restrictions are tailored according to the person in question. In other words, some residents have more privileges and access to much greater resources in the Helix than others. Newer residents usually have only a small part of a host to call their own, with limited storage space and so on. If they prove their worth they receive greater access, more space, more important tasks—you name it. Eventually, they'll reach a point where they're invited to become security or administrators, though very few get this far.

Proving your worth can be done in many ways, and it's mostly a matter of impressing the administrators and the other Helix users with what you have and/or can do. This can manifest itself in many ways, like putting very good information up for download, having a knack for sculpting systems, being able to program watertight defenses or consistently creating hosts that are popular with other users.

The opposite also happens: consistently fail to meet the admins' expectations, or frag them off, and you'll be bumped down.
◗ ik@wij.helix.nl

Paydata
What can you find in the Helix? "Almost anything" sums it up fairly well. Its content is not as extensive as that of the Nexus, but *someone* in the Helix is bound to grab a copy of virtually anything that is sent across the European part of the Matrix, as well as data from other parts of the world that appears worthwhile.

Though the Helix is not part of the Shadow Matrix, the sysops have a good relationship with the various Shadowland nodes and the Nexus. Each haven makes a point of sending any really juicy files out to the rest. They'd rather share the wealth than sit on good paydata.

When a user retrieves data from the Helix, a small fee is charged per megapulse. Part of this fee goes to the user who uploaded the data, and part is used to keep the PLTG and its component hosts up and running. The fee is set by the user putting the data up for download and can range from 5¥ to 500¥ per Mp—the mathematical average is currently 127.3¥ per Mp—but may be higher for really good paydata. The cred is split 60/40 between the user and the Helix respectively.

◗ Take note of this system. Every piece of paydata has a unique ID code. Somewhere in the Helix there exists a database that links that ID code to the user who uploaded it. That can be a quick way to track down a datathief or info leak.
◗ Tracker

◗ Or a quick way to have your frontal lobes melted.
◗ Bump

◗ Despite the claim, a hefty chunk of data on the Helix is in fact available completely free. Sometimes this is because the data is already low value, or because the uploader wants to avoid

being connected to it or wants it distributed fast and far. Any priced data that's more than one year old is automatically downgraded to 0¥ as well.
❯ Scratch

❯ On the other hand, some users put up worthless data and charge a lot of money for it, in the hope that some deckers will grab a copy, thinking "expensive = good."
❯ ASDF

Selected Hosts

To give you a taste of some of the hosts that call the Helix home, here's a few noteworthy examples. Note that these are just a handful of the hundreds of hosts on the Helix.

Binary Dreams is a crew of deckers-turned-software merchants that writes and sells utilities at competitive prices. The crew's virtual store includes a "firing range" where utilities can be tested under realistic conditions.

❯ The Binary boys sometimes allow customers to take out a betaware version and test it against real systems. Course, the beta copies tend to be a bit buggy.
❯ Nova

boB's is currently the most popular virtual club in the Helix. It's a good place to hang out, have fun and meet the people who make the Helix tick. You can't get physically drunk here, but the bar's owners have written some special routines that will simulate alcohol effects down to the hangover you'll get when you jack out.

❯ All the frames and virtual staff in boB's look like brightly colored bouncing balls with smileys on them, and the rest of the décor matches this theme. The whole thing is apparently a very old in-joke.
❯ Connie Connoisseur

The host known as **Hecatombe** is an arena for the Matrix equivalent of gladiator combat. Deckers fight each other, frames or IC for money in a number of leagues, and betting on the matches can get pretty heavy. The actual arena is a separate host from the audience area, and the arena's security levels can be adjusted to fit the match.

❯ If you want to participate, be sure to enter yourself in the right league. You don't want to end up facing a black hammer-wielding opponent in your first match because you didn't read all the rules.
❯ Bargoyle

❯ I keep hearing that one of the Seoulpa Rings or Matrix gangs has an inside fix system going down in this place, and that they pull in a big chunk of the gambling profits.
❯ Lola

The **Rubble Heap** is a data-dump storage node. Residents who want to get rid of data to make space for something else are encouraged to dump it in the Rubble Heap rather than delete it. Here, it's available to others who may still find it useful.

❯ The Heap's user interface is very chaotic (UMS most of the time, with sculpted areas appearing seemingly at random), but you can find some real gems in this Matrix equivalent of a landfill. If you've got the patience to weed out all the junk, that is.
❯ Arclight

❯ New residents frequently search through the Rubble Heap for discarded bits of data, sculpting, routines, or IC to use in their own sites. I've been in several houses that had butlers or viewscreens that I wrote a few years ago, for example.
❯ ik@wij.helix.nl

❯ The Rubble Heap is also used by some deckers to leave messages where nobody will find them. There is so much junk here that you have to know exactly what to look for if you want to find something specific.
❯ 1000 Hours

Physical Location

Quite a few non-Europeans have made the mistake of thinking that the Helix is physically located in Amsterdam. Actually, the Helix's physical location is in the city of The Hague (*Den Haag*, as it's called in Dutch, or *'s Gravenhage* to give the full official name), some 50 km southwest of Amsterdam. Some of you may recognize the city as the seat of the Dutch government and the residence of the Queen.

Of course, the precise location is unknown to all but the sysadmins and a few other insiders, who don't talk about it.

❯ I've heard it's located in an old villa in Wassenaar, an upper-class suburb of The Hague.
❯ Fallen Out

❯ Really? A rumor I picked up says it's on the remains of the Scheveningen pier.
❯ Campbell@RVS.com

❯ My best guess is that the Helix runs on a large number of small hosts scattered throughout the city. This would also make sense as a precaution against attempts to shut it down, even though so far, nobody has tried (to the best of my knowledge, anyway).
❯ ik@wij.helix.nl

Legality

The Helix's operations are condoned by the Dutch government (often to the surprise of outsiders), despite the fact that large amounts of its data are obviously obtained illegally. This curious condition is a result of the liberal Dutch legal precedents stretching back to the late 20th century. As a result

DATA HAVENS

of these precedents, Dutch laws do not hold Matrix service providers responsible for the material their users make available for download.

As you probably expect, there are plenty of corporations, people and organizations that would like nothing more than to see the Helix shut down for good. Legally, though, they haven't been able to touch us, and direct action is made very difficult due to our security precautions. (Which, naturally, I can't go into here. Rest assured they'll have difficulty finding us, and even if they do, hurting the system is going to be harder still.)

◗ Bad news is that the legal status of the Helix may change in the near future. A law has just been proposed in Parliament that will change an MSP's status and responsibilities, making an operation like the Helix effectively illegal unless they go through some drastic reforms that would change the site beyond recognition. It certainly wouldn't be a data haven anymore.
◗ Money Man

◗ That won't be any time soon. Dutch laws only change after about a zillion voting sessions and public referendums, so it'll be a couple of years before it'll come into effect. At the earliest, that is—a few appeals might make it a whole decade.
◗ Hansje@helix.nl

KALININ
by Zarya

Let me introduce myself, so Captain Chaos doesn't have to do it for me. I used to work at Kalinin—the Konigsberg data haven—before Shadowland offered me a "better working environment." Rather than mince words, let me jump in and say my piece.

Origins

For those of you who left your geography skillsoft at home, the Free State of Konigsberg is a small city-state on the southern shores of the Baltic, just north of Poland. Known as Kaliningrad when it was owned by the Russians, Konigsberg was cast aside during the Euro-Wars. A number of old-money European families took refuge there during the wars and used their wealth to claim it as an extraterritorial corporate enclave. Officially, the state is controlled by the Baltic-East Prussian Recovery Corporation (BEPRC). Unofficially, it is the battleground of old-country gentry and their corporate allies, striving to achieve notice as the "Hong Kong of the West."

◗ Konigsberg drips nuyen. Anybody around the Baltic who had any kind of cash during the Euro-Wars either already lived in Konigsberg or fled there. Half of the residents are in-bred remnants of a dying breed who long to return to their glory days as royal, divinely ordained tyrants. The remainder recognize that corporations are the new empires and so play the corporate shuffle, though they probably wouldn't mind claiming a chunk of real estate somewhere as their own private fiefdom.
◗ Karl

The data haven itself started as the business enterprise of a group of renegade military intelligence and communications specialists in the employ of some unidentified ex-nobles. Amid the chaos, these privateers managed to steal a significant amount of Russian and NATO datastores *and* seize control of Konigsberg's grid. By the time Konigsberg had settled enough, the nominal owners of the haven had entrenched themselves too firmly to be ejected by the BEPRC. Instead, the data haven and the BEPRC have formed something of a mutually parasitic relationship. The Konigsberg grid runs smoothly and without a glitch, with some extra free Matrix services provided to residents; the haven also pays taxes and provides special access rates for the BEPRC. In return, the state provides military protection and economic leverage, and even provides the haven a voice on its Board of Directors.

◗ Of course the government would have been wary of ejecting the privateers; they were also sitting on a nuclear reactor. The people of Konigsberg still remember Chernobyl and the German meltdowns too well to be very keen on another "accident."
◗ Après Glow

Power Players

So who are the so-called royalty behind Kalinin? The current cabal numbers about a dozen blue bloods, but three of them clearly call the shots: **Princess Eitel** of the House of Prussia, **Duke Ludwig von Saxe-Coburg** and **Prince Otto zu Fuerstenberg**. These three have the money and influence to push the others around and are united in their goals of defeating the European Restoration, undermining Saeder-Krupp, squashing environmental groups and reclaiming their "heritage." They've recruited some solid corporate allies as well, including the likes of Zeta-ImpChem, RuhrMetall and Proteus.

◗ I don't know if I'd call Proteus an ally. Proteus plays ball with them when it feels like it, but it's really playing its own game.
◗ Risk

Each of these players takes advantage of Konigsberg's tax-haven status and exploits Kalinin to its full extent. By sharing information on their common enemies—whether the Klaubauterbund or Saeder-Krupp—they seek to combine their power in certain areas. Nonetheless, like typical capitalists they find themselves fighting each other as often as their declared opposition.

◗ The intrigue and backstabbing among the data haven's original owners has been truly Machiavellian. Thirty-three of the original forty-eight owners of the haven are missing, dead or in vegetative states due to "Matrix trauma." Thankfully the remaining people either work well together or have serious leverage—I don't think anyone has died suspiciously in almost a year.
◗ HeadKase

◗ Most of the sysops who run the day-to-day operations of Kalinin have managed to stay above the muck, though their

Target: Matrix 43

strings and loyalties are constantly being pulled. In particular, Phage, Annis, Tiburon and Nils have laced the system with some frosty IC, and shored up any system failures with ingenious patchwork connections.
> Smithers

Visiting Kalinin

As the Kalinin operators also run the Konigsberg RTG, Kalinin is treated as a simple LTG, though its existence is not publicized. Though most Eastern European grids are cobbled together from antiquated military hardware that's practically valve-driven, Kalinin has money behind it and so is a step above its peers.

> There are still some rough spots, especially where the grids connect to neighboring countries. Watch out for sudden power surges or drastic drops in sim peak levels.
> Leggy

> On the other hand, some of these servers were originally a military communication backbone, designed to function after nuke strikes and the like. Actually disabling them is not easy.
> Solo

The Kalinin grid has been sculpted to mimic Moorish Spain. Sun-drenched fields, olive vineyards, warm sunlight, Moorish architecture and attractively sculpted serving folk predominate. The gentried users of the grid expect the same kind of pampering they receive in the meat world, and so visiting icons are usually waited upon, carried about on carriages and so forth.

> All very elegant, and far nicer than the drizzly old Baltic coast that's the real-world alternative for most of Kalinin's deckers. Helps keep them marginally sane, I think.
> Sable

Quite a few corporate and independent deckers laze around the haven, enjoying the ambiance and socializing rather than conducting biz. In fact, most tend to be very displeased when outside intrusions threaten their enjoyment.

> Buzz has it that some of the more rabid European extremist groups have privileged access to Kalinin's sweetest data. I've heard rumors naming everyone from GreenWar to the Islamic Jyhad, but given Kalinin's political biases, most of those don't make sense.
> Smoke

> I'm sure at least a few of Kalinin's court have platinum membership cards in the Human Nation and the Siegriedbund. Most of them are also backing mercenaries and factions that are struggling to control Europe's Balkanized regions—the Marienbad Council, the Italian city-states and elsewhere.
> Kingdom Scum

> I hear the haven's actual computers are stored beneath the old House of Soviets. Any truth to that?
> Tunnel Troll

> The House of Soviets—also known as "the ugliest building on Russian soil"—was built on the site of the old Prussian Royal Castle, which was destroyed in World War II. It turned out there were too many underground tunnels underneath the site though, causing the House of Soviets to collapse. It was revamped just prior to the Euro-Wars, so who knows what's underneath it now.
> Napoleon

Specialties

Kalinin's primary agenda is unashamedly profit-oriented. If a proposal/service/data can make them any kind of money or be politically useful, they're at least nominally interested. Most of their profit comes from the services they provide to the Free State, but they're always on the lookout for new opportunities. Their data collection is Eurocentric, and biased toward corporate interests.

Kalinin's primary customers are the rich and well-to-do of Europe, including all of the European megacorps. While no corps are officially barred from the system, employees of Saeder-Krupp and most Japanacorps get the cold shoulder when they access the system. Doubled access fees, "accidental" excess charges and wrongly programmed searchbots are common tactics used against them. Rather than deal with the harassment *and* allow the haven to know what subjects they're interested in, most of these corps avoid it entirely.

> I would also say there's some good old -isms at work in Kalinin as well. Metaphobes abound, and anyone with an icon with a metahuman look will take some scorn. Even some old-school racism bleeds in—Jews aren't exactly welcome, and God help you if you're black. Classism is also rampant, so if you talk like a low-life squatter or street punk, you'll have a hard time getting help from anyone. And if you run into any of the ruling class types, they'll expect you to use all the proper honorifics and submissive drek. Users have been kicked out for not granting "proper respect."
> Sargent

Kalinin does house some of the best material on the Matrix regarding Saeder-Krupp's operations. Given its bias against the übercorp, Kalinin relishes any potentially damaging information.

> If they're out to sting Saeder-Krupp, why hasn't the corp done something about it by now? It hardly seems like Lofwyr's SOP to keep his claws off such an embarrassing thorn in his side.
> Bespectacled

Kalinin also has a large archive of information from the Euro-Wars in deep storage, as well as terapulses of Russian military archives courtesy of the datastores that started it all off.

PRESCOTT

◗ These files are pretty interesting. There are literally hundreds of disused and forgotten bunkers, installations, and toxic waste dumps in Prussia and Siberia.
◗ LoRent

The most interesting hosts are the private ones held by Kalinin's controlling cabal. These hosts are used for private virtual meets and the like, but they also house paydata on current schemes. If nothing else, they a great source for gossip items and paparazzi. While these hosts are undoubtedly beautifully sculpted and elegant, they are littered with remnants of the past and the marks of petty personal rivalries. They are clearly the last resort of a decaying and dying breed.

MANCHESTER
by Diamond Jack

Most of you will never have heard of the Manchester data haven—which is just the way its sysops like it. More than any other haven, Manchester likes to keep itself veiled in mystery. Why? Simple—Manchester has more enemies than Lofwyr has plots. You see, Manchester is extremely politically oriented,

much more than any other data haven. In fact, its stated goals involve "undermining fascists"—in particular, "taking down the elven fascist regime of Tir na nOg."

History

Manchester has its roots in left-wing street-oriented activist groups from the previous century, such as Anti-Fascist Action, Class War and Red Action. These groups were dedicated to smashing racist neo-Nazi groups such as the British Nationalist Party and Combat-18. Some of their members also participated in underground support work for Irish Republican groups. Over the years, these groups and others like them built up an impressive amount of data on right-wingers. The Merseyside area has a long history of working-class, labor-oriented activism, and both Liverpool and Manchester were strongholds for these direct-action groups.

Following the Awakening, these activists turned their attention toward anti-metahuman policlubs and groups, like Humanis and Alamos 20K. Merseyside had a high percentage of metahumans, particularly orks. Tensions in the area remained high, and nighttime attacks on metahuman council flats were common, as were pitched street brawls between Humanis goons and pro-metahuman groups such as the Black Ork Defense Collective.

The establishment of Tir na nOg in 2034 and the creation of the authoritarian elven state created all sorts of complications. As non-elven refugees flooded Merseysprawl, both anti-elven and anti-metahuman sentiment flared. Anti-fascists gave support to anti-Tir groups opposed to the elven fascist state, only to find themselves working alongside anti-elf Humanis supporters. This crossover created all sorts of antagonisms and effectively immobilized many groups for years.

In the early 2060s, several anti-fascist groups decided to put their heads and resources together. They established the Manchester data haven as a virtual gathering place and data clearinghouse for activists who were explicitly opposed to fascists, racists and the Tir na nOg government. Humanis, Protestant paramilitaries and other pro-fascist, anti-metahuman supporters are specifically barred.

❷ That doesn't mean Manchester keeps them all out. Some of these slags have worked their way deep inside anti-Tir policlubs without letting their own prejudices be known.
❷ Searchlight

❷ Some anti-Tir groups are too slack and forgiving of elf-haters. They don't see any contradiction in allowing racists in their groups, as long as they'll work to overthrow the Tir.
❷ Green Pixie

❷ I know quite a few elves who oppose the Seelie Court. But when they run into Humanis wankers who are "on their side," they start to wonder if they're doing the right thing.
❷ Trouble

Scandal

For years, Manchester operated smoothly with a low profile. The haven helped to bring together like-minded activists and provided a space where anti-fascists could share intel, hire shadowrunners and create joint operations.

❷ Though Manchester definitely focuses on Tir na nOg and fascists in the UK, they've attracted anti-fascists from around the world as well. You can sometimes find paydata about Tir Tairngire, the National Supreme Soviet or the Imperial Japanese occupation forces in San Fran and the Philippines.
❷ On The Prowl

Manchester eventually became almost too successful. The Tir finally took notice, as did some of the racist policlubs in Merseysprawl. For a few years things were rocky, as the haven dodged several attempts to crash its systems.

The big blow finally came—but not from a direction anyone expected. In early 2060, one of the haven's security deckers located a backdoor leading into the haven. After surviving an attack by a hostile decker, security passed word to the sysops, and an investigation determined the back door led into a Transys Neuronet host. Some sort of internal squabble resulted, and word was leaked that two of the sysops were in fact Transys infiltrators.

❷ Transys was using agents and dupes within anti-Tir groups to conduct its own operations in the Tir. When word got out, about half a dozen smuggling routes had to be shut down, and several cells imploded.
❷ Green Pixie

The purge that followed nearly killed the haven. The staff managed to clean house, but by the time the dust had settled, more than half of the haven's "customers" had bailed. Manchester's reputation had been heavily tarnished; its supporters didn't like to find out that a megacorp had been playing them for dupes. Paranoia was at an all-time high, and accusations of being a Transys agent were flying about almost indiscriminately.

The remaining staff was demoralized, but they hadn't lost sight of their goals. They've since re-organized the haven and have worked hard to bring their old visitors back and recruit new ones.

❷ Don't trust 'em. They only found the agents Transys wanted them to find. Who's to say the whole biz hasn't been a Transys setup from the beginning? Do you want to trust your life with data that's been doctored by a megacorp?
❷ Anthony

❷ Paranoid bulldrek. The Manchester sysops are dedicated, hard-working anti-fascists. They weeded out the corp lackeys, so let's get back to kicking some fascist ass. La lucha continua!
❷ 121 Centre

❷ Oh yeah? Explain how a bunch of underclass agitators scored enough computer gear to set up a fraggin' data haven. Need a clue? T-R-A-N-S-Y-S. It's a corp op through and through. The whole "purge" was orchestrated to cover the leak. The only deckers actually kicked out were the ones who weren't Transys operatives.
❷ Anthony

❷ And how are we supposed to know you're not a Transys or Tir agent seeking to keep the situation destabilized?
❷ Skeptik

Going Inside

To visit Manchester, you need to find the SAN hidden within one of the British LTGs. I'm not going to spoil your fun by telling you where to find it, but I'll warn you that the SAN vanishes and relocates on a daily basis. And even if I knew, I wouldn't spill the haven's physical site either.

❷ That's easy. Try the basement of the Transys Neuronet facility down by the university in Manchester.
❷ Anthony

❷ Verified it yourself, have you?
❷ Collins

Manchester is composed of about a dozen linked hosts. The iconography varies from host to host, ranging from the Liverpool dockside to the Giant's Causeway in Ireland. The place is covered with political imagery: black and red stars, antifa tri-arrows, raised fists, Irish tricolor flags and all that drek.

The system serves as a good place to meet 'hooding shadowrunners and direct-action activists. If you ask the right questions, you might run into an Irish National Liberation Army decker trading war stories with one of Boston's own Knights of the Red Branch, or a Celtic druid sharing spellcasting tips with a German Klaubauterbund pirate. If you're looking for a list of Humanis supporters in London's West End, a contact to smuggle you into the Tir, or a good weapons supplier who won't ask questions about your tusks, this is the place to go. There's also a host devoted to chat rooms, message boards and SIGs. Most of these focus on the Tir and other anti-fascist topics, but you'll find some forums dedicated to related political topics: feminism, ork communities, labor struggles, environmental issues and so on.

❂ Be careful checking out the enviro groups. A lot of eco-types are viewed with suspicion, as so many of them are linked to reactionary Deep Green groups and ecologically-minded fascists. (Even some Nazis know they need to breathe clean air.) Plus, it's an open secret that the Tir funds and supports eco groups worldwide.
❂ Alarm

Most of the archive data focuses on the Tir and other fascists, but a good chunk of it is propaganda for various policlubs and cells. A lot of it also deals with the endemic racism of British and Tir society and discusses how bigwig groups like the New Druidic Movement perpetuate it.

THE MORGUE
by Dances-with-Credsticks
If you are reading this file, you are likely a shadowrunner. If you are a shadowrunner, you are likely one of the SINless, the throngs of people lost in the shadows of the sprawl and living outside the system. The fact that we live outside the system makes us valuable, invisible and deniable. You may not dwell on this too much, but when you spend your hard-earned cred after a run, you usually maintain your invisible world by paying in non-traceable or non-tagged funds. You buy black-market goods through underworld channels, paying with a certified credstick without a name.

But you live outside the system. Think for a second about the billions of consumers who engage in capitalist transactions every day of every week of every year of their artificially lengthened lives. In the Sixth World, money is little more than data shifted back and forth between parties, an artificial symbol of value passed between buyer and seller. But if you think all this data just disappears into the virtual tide, chummer, you are in for a big surprise, because every time such a transaction occurs, a computer somewhere records it. Why? Because all those digital receipts can reveal a lot about the buyer and the seller.

Marketing researchers have recognized the value of such information since before the turn of the twenty-first century,

and such data is still a valuable commodity in itself. (You didn't really think the megacorps just shoot blindly in the dark and hope they reach their potential customers. They engage in months, sometimes years, of research to find the precise target demographic for their products and services, so they can direct their ads straight at those individuals who are likely to purchase their products.) In fact, one data archive—Singapore's Marketing Research Group (MRG)—has made a fortune compiling and selling this kind of information.

The MRG
For nearly two centuries, Singapore has cultivated wealth and power by performing financial transactions for foreign nations and investors. A tiny nation lacking in natural resources, Singapore has never had many options for making a buck. Early in its history, Singapore made its money as a popular port to the Orient for Western traders, acting as a seaside gateway between two worlds of valuable resources. Then, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Singapore shifted its strategy from trading goods to trading money. Singapore built a strong banking industry, establishing itself as a valued center for offshore banking and stock transfers.

Wealthy organizations often used Singapore banks to ensure that their records and transactions were private and outside the observation of nosy national powers. Singapore serviced an intriguing crowd with its powerful financial computing infrastructure; its clients ranged from shady corporations to corporate raiders to criminal cartels.

The Crash of '29 initially was a disaster for Singapore, but its corporate government soon recognized new opportunities presented by the Crash. After the Crash Virus devoured many of the existing corporate databases, Singapore's government established a new division called the Market Research Group (MRG) and began snapping up all of the market-research databases it could find and obtaining rights to new marketing data as it was collected.

❂ For those of you who aren't up to date on Singapore's government, let me fill you in. A few decades back, the city-state of Singapore incorporated itself, following the example of the Pueblo Corporate Council. Every citizen with a SIN is a shareholder, and the country is run by a Board of Directors and a CEO. Many Singapore-based corps are really just "divisions" or "subsidiaries" of the Singapore government.
❂ Socio Pat

The MRG began accumulating piles of records on people—primarily credit histories and purchasing habits—by shrewdly exploiting new technology that enabled it to easily track and log users and their Matrix activities and purchases.

❂ In other words, the MRG provided the data that allowed spammers to bomb your personal accounts, pocket secretaries, pagers and cellphones. It also allowed other Matrix services to personalize their advertisements to your icon.
❂ Black Hole
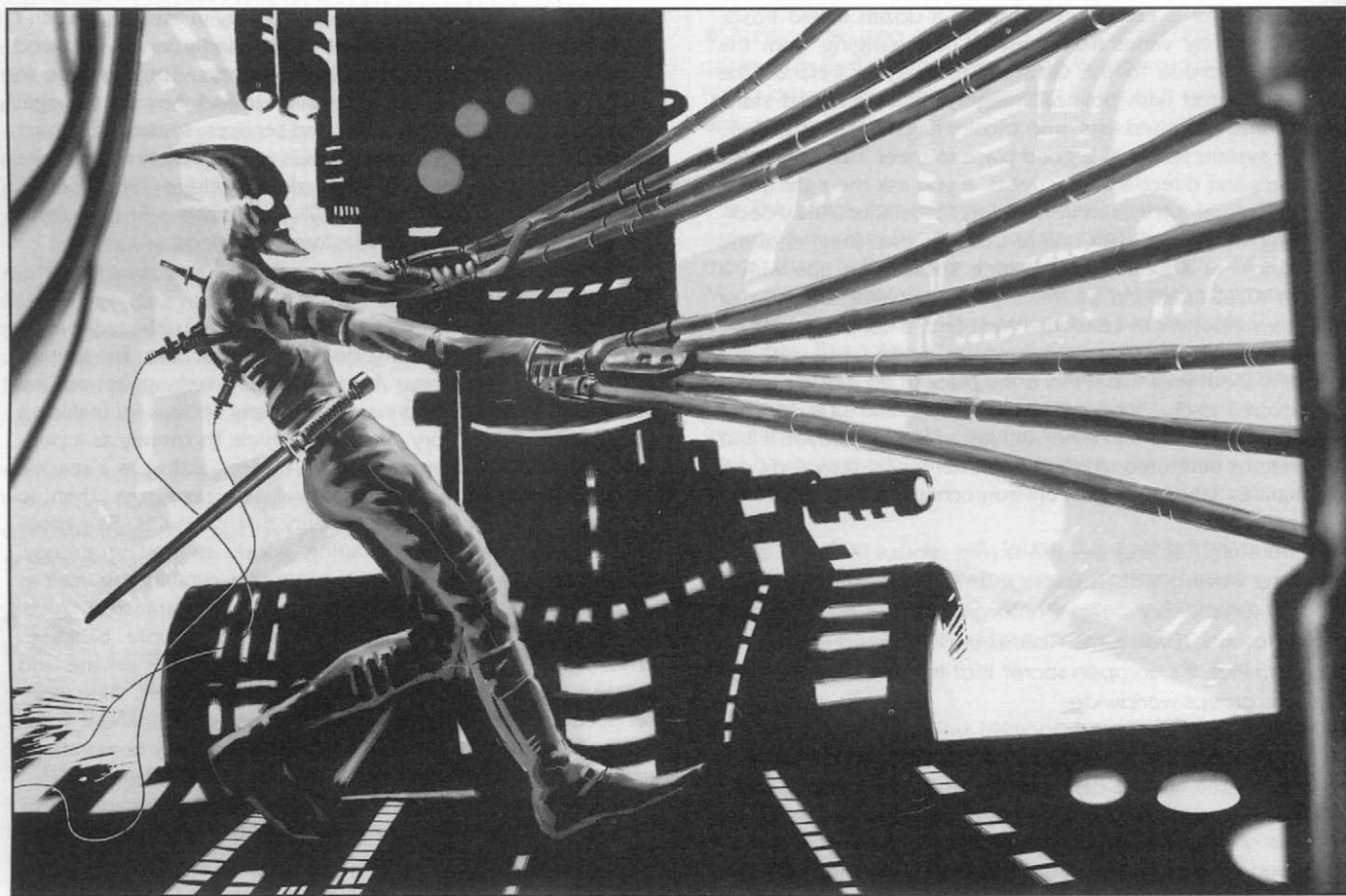
❷ So you can thank the MRG for all those little ads that pop up around the map on your car's computer screen when you get the munchies and ask your car's onboard comp to show you the nearest fast-food joint.
❷ Tyler

❷ Some countries have outlawed such marketing tactics as invasions of privacy, but the MRG made it so worthwhile that many companies could easily afford the slap-on-the-wrist fines they received.
❷ Krylon

❷ Hold a sec. Isn't Singapore's banking industry based on their offshore status, which guarantees that clients remain anonymous? Yet they also host a data archive that stores the buying records of most of the world's population, with complete disregard to their personal privacy?
❷ Cain

❷ You've just discovered one of the wonderful contradictions that define Singapore. They'll respect your privacy all right, if you are a wealthy client who is banking at least six-figure sums.

If you are just the average Joe Wageslave, Singapore is more than happy to make your complete buying history available to a veritable army of wealthy clients—namely the corporations.
❷ The Mighty Buddha

As the MRG grew, it also incorporated economic and market data, allowing it to build more complete demographic profiles of certain areas of the world. Many corps began to rely solely on the MRG for all of their marketing and customer profiling needs, rather than spending the cred to develop their own marketing-research departments.

❷ The MRG also incorporated info on what its corporate customers were buying and investigating into their files. So if Corp A hired it to investigate the possibilities of marketing a new type of product, the MRG could say: "For a small extra fee we can also correlate your data with Corps B, C and D's marketing forays in this field." Smarmy bastards.
❷ DoubleClick

❷ Need some paydata on an up-and-coming third-tier corporation that is furiously carving a niche in the high-bandwidth satellite transmission market? You can find it in the MRG. Looking

for the ingredients list of the latest chemical-stimulant fad that is huge among the teen-market demographic? Come to the MRG. Did you pull off a shadowrun last week that influenced the market in DNA sequencers? Guess what, you're in the MRG.
◗ Otomo

The MRG supplemented its archives with a few other data services as well. One of the more successful ventures involves purchasing the Matrix records of corps that were recently bought out by other corps. In many cases, the purchasing corp loots the files of its new buy for anything useful, then purges the rest. The MRG offers to buy up the leftovers, backing up the purchased corp's entire system into its databanks. The corp is assured that it can always reference the files in case it left behind anything important. The MRG then sells access to the backed-up files. While such records are usually scoured clean of paydata before being handed to the MRG, they usually contain enough interesting tidbits to lure competitors into paying to have a look-see.

◗ In a few cases, a corp that has been threatened by a hostile takeover has used the MRG as a combination "white knight" and "poison pill." The threatened corp archives its systems with the MRG, and the two sign a contract. The contract says that the MRG must keep the files sealed until a certain date and must allow the corp to repurchase them. The contract also allows the MRG to access and sell access to the files under certain conditions—such as a buyout. This usually "poisons" the corp in the eyes of the corp trying the takeover bid.
◗ Dot

◗ These archives are quite interesting for historical research. If you need to know why one corp was shagging another ten years ago, this may be the place to look.
◗ Genie

Bad News and Good News

Unfortunately for Singapore, the MRG became too successful. The Big Eight megas of the time decided they needed to make the MRG all their own and brought pressure to bear on Singapore. The Singapore Board of Directors held out for a full year before caving in and signing a deal. They didn't sell out, but they did sell each mega five percent and sign an agreement to purge their archives of all data pertaining to the Big Eight. Naturally, as partial owners, the Big Eight also received favored-client status and discount rates.

◗ When the recent corp war went down, Fuchi's shares were sold off—but not to Novatech. Wuxing pulled some strings and bought themselves in, which really slotted Villiers pretty good.
◗ HK Kid

◗ Of the current Big Ten, neither Cross nor Novatech have managed to buy into the MRG, though they've both been pressuring for a new deal to be arranged.
◗ Turner

Now, Singapore's directors weren't exactly pleased that they were forced into this deal, and quite a few of the MRG's sysadmins weren't looking forward to taking orders from foreign suits. Before the ink was dry on the contract, a small but significant chunk of the MRG's staff went AWOL, apparently taking a large chunk of the banned data on the Big Eight with them. Before long, the shadows in Singapore were abuzz with rumors about a new data haven, dubbed *the Morgue.*

The Morgue's virtual existence lies buried in the depths of the MRG system, where only deckers know where to tread. The MRG's defectors never really went anywhere—they took the goods and set up a "haven" hidden inside the old MRG. Officially, both Singapore and the MRG deny any relation to the Morgue, but unofficially they are silent and compliant partners in crime. The megas have undoubtedly caught on to the truth over the years, but their attempts to force the MRG to take action have been stonewalled. By now they've realized that the effort it would take to shut down the Morgue would be far more costly than the Morgue's continued existence.

◗ Which doesn't keep them from trying. A few of the megas have planted agents within the MRG, hoping to work them up to leadership positions where they can seize the reins and separate the Morgue from the MRG.
◗ Snow Tiger

A Trip to the Morgue

I suspect that after this file is posted a horde of hotshot deckers will be planning Matrix vacations over to this South Pacific Matrix glacier, so I'll give you all the information I can in hopes that some of you are bright enough to use it and survive.

Physically, the Morgue's computers could be anywhere in Singapore. The MRG itself is housed in a shining glass and steel jewel in downtown Singapore. The MRG is technically rated as an A-level corp, with the staff size that you would expect. Given its pan-corporate ownership, it should be no surprise that the MRG features skilled security (physical and virtual).

The MRG's PLTG maintains a public SAN on the Singapore City LTG, where clients who have leased browsing time to specific sections can log in and access the archives. Each of the Big Eight megacorps also has a dedicated SAN into the MRG from one of their own corporate hosts.

◗ Getting through the Singapore SAN might be tough, but it's far easier than risking going through the Matrix HQ of one of the megacorps.
◗ Telnet 25

◗ Make sure you clean up your icon before dropping in on the Singapore LTG. Singapore's leaders are crazy about keeping their city-state clean and tidy, and that also applies to their LTG. If you're confused, look up the Online Harmony Act. It states that if your icon is displaying material deemed offensive (which tends to translate to vulgarity, nudity, or violent images) Singapore's sysadmins can and will dump you from Singapore's

grids, I kid you not. Keep in mind that this is the government that considers chewing gum contraband.
❱ Noodle Boy

Inside the MRG, three massive white obelisks the size of skyscrapers dominate the grid, representing the MRG's offices and processing systems. These contain the personas of the MRG staff members, who spend their days conducting endless market research and quantitative analysis. Encircling these towers are multiple chrome toruses. (Toruses are three-dimensional donut-shaped rings for the mathematically impaired reading this.) The toruses contain the actual records and buying histories. These toruses sometimes move from obelisk to obelisk as research demands, and forks of blue lightning constantly flash between them as they exchange data. If you've ever played a game of Towers of Hanoi, you have an idea of what the whole scene looks like.

❱ Towers of Hanoi? Is that one of those first-person shooter games that Red Star Software puts out?
❱ Cracked

❱ Towers of Hanoi is a mathematical puzzle that consists of three posts. One post bears a series of disks ranging from large to small. You need to move all the disks to an empty post, without placing any disk upon another that is smaller than it and using the third post as intermediate storage while you move them. It's all an exercise in mathematical induction.
❱ Pi

❱ Sounds like a blast.
❱ Bung

The MRG hosts devoted to business are bright white and decked out in neo-modernist décor—each resembles an executive's office crossed with a sanitarium. The archive hosts appear as vast libraries, with computer-assisted shelving systems filing the unending and constantly increasing quantity of purchase records. The shelves are so high in some of the larger toruses that circular hover-platforms bear some icons up to their lofty heights.

Most legitimate icons are decked out in high-contrast power-suits and the like, cut with the sharpest and finest angles that polygon rendering allows. Keep this in mind if you're trying to look legit; colorful icons will stick out like a sore thumb. You will frequently spot icons with plain UMS features except for long, silvered robes. These are *the Guides*, smart frames that assist clients in finding, sorting and studying the massive amounts of data at their disposal.

❱ Quite a few of the IC programs used in the MRG sport the same icons as Guides, so be careful.
❱ Sim Antik

❱ The megacorps aren't stupid, they know that the Morgue's operators treat the MRG as their playground and that Morgue deckers regularly run off with valuable paydata. The Corporate

Court's G-men have formed a ubiquitous web around the MRG and keep their eyes open for freeloaders such as you and me.
❱ HoodRat

I'm going to do the Morgue a favor and not tell you exactly how to get from the MRG to the Morgue. After all, why should I help any megacorps, who undoubtedly have snoops reading this file, too. I *will* give you a few clues. At any given time, two or three SANS leading in and out of the Morgue exist. None of them is stationary; each shifts on a daily basis. And finally, the Morgue is sculpted almost exactly like the MRG, except for *Limbo*.

❱ Since the cat has someone's tongue, I'll tell you how to access the Morgue. Check the backwater datastores to see if they're running a virtual machine. Break out into the real host, and you'll find a SAN leading to the Morgue. Watch the IC, it's slippery and very, very cold.
❱ Danger Mouse

As data havens go, the Morgue has seen better times. When it first appeared in the shadows, the Morgue simply used everything that had been ripped out of the MRG (not to mention any MRG data easily obtainable by Morgue sysops and staff). The Morgue quickly grew until it was one of the largest havens on Earth, though it was still minute compared to the Nexus. Aside from its marketing and personal data files, the Morgue boasted the best inside dirt on the Japanacorps and Asian economics in general. Over the past few years, the Morgue has declined in importance, primarily due to increasing corporate pressure.

❱ The Morgue struck a deal with the Nexus and Shadowland to act as their primary backup site. A lot of their really juicy material automatically gets mirrored into the Morgue.
❱ Dead Deckers Society
  "In Kibo We Trust"

❱ The relationship goes deeper than that. The Morgue is actually hooked up to the Shadow Matrix.
❱ Clip

Limbo and the Sysops

Limbo is a virtual lounge hidden in the Morgue. Data pirates come here to trade, boast and conspire. Most of the hotshot deckers from around Southeast Asia have spent some time in Limbo, talking shop and telling tall tales. New faces stream into Limbo on a regular basis, and at times the atmosphere approaches one of a bandit camp. I'd drop some names, but by the time you read this document they will have likely already changed, with the following two exceptions:

Otomo is the most recognized face among the Morgue's decker crowd, and as the head sysop he's probably the only force that keeps things reliably running in the chaotic periphery that makes up the Morgue's secret world. Though he's a terrible conversationalist, Otomo is the eye in a storm of chaos down here, and the Morgue would have a hard time existing without him.

The Allochron, on the other hand, is someone most of us would rather do without. He fashions himself as some sort of cynical cypherpunk cyber-journalist (now say that three times fast!), which means he tends to get on people's nerves. He's made Limbo his haunt for years now and simply refuses to leave. The Allochron has some sort of chip on his shoulder when it comes to otaku and also thoroughly enjoys giving the finger to the Establishment, which is probably why he spends so much time in the Morgue. So if you see an icon with skin the color of parchment, covered in writhing multi-lingual glyphs, you'll want to keep a good distance unless you feel like engaging in a flame war.

❂ The Allochron isn't a person, it's a reprogrammed version of the MRG's Guides, maybe an agent or an SK.
❂ Snow Tiger

❂ Just because he lacks personality doesn't make him non-human.
❂ Sekhmet

MOSAIC
by Zmei

Most of you have long ago written off the Beppu data haven. Even before it was targeted by a megacorp strike force, it had difficulty remaining online for more than a week without crashing. Floating through a storm of crises and controversies, Beppu seemed lost at sea to many observers. In truth, the haven once called Beppu has found shelter in a safe port—Vladivostok, the San Francisco of the East—and it goes by the name *Mosaic.*

History

Mosaic was born as a little hacker haven in the Japanese resort town of Beppu. Beppu was where the rich and the corporate elite indulged in hot springs, leaving their kids and other bottom-feeders free to run amuck safely within the community's gated, guarded walls. With good educations in computer science, their daddies' credsticks at their disposal and free time to kill, several of these brats got together and created an online domain run by and for hackers. As they grew older, many of these undercover rebels remained a part of their hacker community. Taking advantage of the access their sarariman jobs provided them, these hackers disseminated corp secrets on the Beppu system.

As the paydata piled high, deckers from Japan's nascent shadow community were drawn to it like flies. Once the secret was out, Beppu became a hangout for deckers and corporate rebels alike. Japan lacked any other such data havens, so Beppu became the premiere archive and online shadow resource. By the time the Japanese authorities recognized the threat, Beppu was thoroughly in the hands of deckers who were committed to the free exchange of data.

While megacorps have generally turned a blind eye toward data havens elsewhere in the world, Japanese megas have proved unwilling to tolerate such a nuisance on their own turf. Beppu has been continuously plagued by corporate and government attempts to shut it down; these efforts have taken a variety of forms, ranging from worms and viruses to grid dis-

connections and outright shadowruns. Somehow Beppu's operators had managed to fend off these attacks, possibly because they still maintain inside connections with old-school hackers who now sport executive uniforms. However, these attacks and the efforts required to combat them caused frequent crashes and failures in Beppu.

❂ A high percentage of those old-chum hackers ended up in Yamatetsu. The way I scan it, Buttercup found out about 'em, but instead of shutting them down she encouraged them. Yamatetsu began passing hardware and software to Beppu on the sly. In exchange, Yamatetsu received special access privileges to some of Beppu's datafields.
❂ Yas

❂ This information edge may have been what kept Yamatetsu in the game with its rival Japanese megas.
❂ Ringside

The most serious threat to Beppu's existence occurred during the corp war. As Yamatetsu's attention was tied up elsewhere, Beppu lost a solid support link. Beppu's Yamatetsu connections also made it a prime target for those corps trying to take Yamatetsu down. To top it off, word got out that the individuals controlling Beppu hailed from the unwelcome segment of Japanese society—the *kawaru*, or "changed."

The idea of metahuman scum running an illegal den of mischief right under their noses was a bit too much for the Japanacorps, and in 2059, they assembled a joint task force to destroy the haven once and for all. A Yakashima suit named Hiro Senzeni ran the task force, which consisted of troops from a dozen megacorps. The force reduced Beppu's physical sites to smoldering piles of slag. Fortunately, Beppu's sysops had received advanced warning of the attacks and managed to move most of the data haven's hardware off-site before the task force struck.

❂ In my view, this op was a test run. Some of the corps wanted to see if they could eliminate a problematic data haven without repercussions. Unfortunately, they almost succeeded.
❂ Red Wraith

❂ I'd have to agree that we dropped the ball on this one. There should have been an organized response from the rest of us. We've discussed it in the meantime, so rest assured that if any of the corps decide to take another shot, we'll be ready for 'em.
❂ Captain Chaos

❂ If you're bluffing, Cap, I hope they don't call it.
❂ Turner

❂ Check this. Hiro Senzeni isn't just a Yakashima wageslave, he's a mover and shaker for the Human Nation.
❂ Brick

With the corps hot on their trail, Beppu's sysops managed to get everything piled into a boat. Some choice bits of misdirection gained them enough time to go into hiding aboard an abandoned oil rig. With the goods stashed, Beppu's crew began to scout out a new home and new business partners.

This is where things got interesting. Evaluating their limited options, Beppu's handlers opted to follow Yamatetsu's footsteps and relocate to Vladivostok. After shopping around a bit, a deal was struck with the Northern Star Seoulpa Ring. The Ring provided the data haven with the necessary tech and landline hook-ups, and in return it received a source of black information on tap. In a few short months, the data haven set up in a new home, with a new name: Mosaic.

❯ The Northern Star Ring is probably the most technologically proficient and close-to-SOTA syndicate in Vladivostok. They also have a near monopoly on the local black-information market. Acquiring Beppu was quite a coup for them.
❯ Nikita

❯ It certainly puts them in a strong position to compete with the Vory. I'll be surprised to find that they don't have their hands full fending off Russian mobsters.
❯ Boondock Brother

❯ Actually, Mosaic's sysops are playing both sides of the fence. They knew that they needed to strike a deal with the Vory to ensure themselves any sort of life expectancy. So they worked a deal to funnel any intel they get on Yakuza and Triad ops to the Byelmodin Vory faction. In exchange, the Vory keep their hands off. Unfortunately, neither the Northern Star Ring nor the other Vory factions (particularly Kovalena's strongly anti-Ring faction) are aware of these behind-the-scenes deals.
❯ Last Man

❯ Sounds like Mosaic's running a dangerous game. Tenchi's either brilliant or soon for the grave.
❯ Carpenter

The Players

Mosaic has two main sysops: **Tenchi** and **Oni.** Tenchi's a Japanese dwarf and he's the one who calls the shots. A lot of rumors have pegged him as really tight with TerraFirst! That's a load of jetwash passed around by the Japanese, to vilify him and justify the raid on Beppu.

❯ Tenchi's got connections in Yamatetsu itself; his second cousin twice removed, or some drek, is a muckety-muck in Yamatetsu Naval Technologies, and one of Beppu's old-guard hacker crew.
❯ Genie

Oni is also Japanese, but he's an ork—and a big one at that. Oni's not his real name, but he's taken to heart that whole idea about metahumans being like demons. He's in charge of

Mosaic's programming needs, architecture and security, and he's real good at his job.

❯ Whenever Tenchi needs to conduct a meet in the flesh, he usually brings Oni along just for the intimidation factor the ork provides.
❯ Moose

The rest of the Mosaic crew is a mix of leftovers from the Beppu site, new local recruits and Northern Star Ring techs. The crew is very racially diverse and works well together with very little tension. It's hard to tell who's a member of the Ring and who isn't.

❯ In a few more years, the Northern Star will run the entire operation. Expect Tenchi and Oni to be bumped out at some point.
❯ Tomashi

❯ Why do you think they have a side deal with the Vory going?
❯ Chiun

❯ Leave it to Yakuza lackeys to spread misinformation and try to create divisions where none exist.
❯ Tenchi

Mosaic also has its own burgeoning otaku tribe, called **Vox Populi** ("Voice of the People"). There's less than a dozen members of Vox, mostly metahuman children from Japan's *burakumin* class or the poor and disadvantaged of Vladivostok. They don't trust outsiders and keep their distance from anyone affiliated with the Northern Star Ring. The Ring members keep their distance, but it's clear that they feel uncomfortable about the Vox's presence.

❯ The Vox definitely follow a pro-metahuman agenda and go out of their way to mess with racists.
❯ Giselle

❯ I hear the Vox have done some free work for the kawaru-gumi, the so-called "metahuman Yakuza" clan that operates out in the slums of the Khasan Coast.
❯ Tomashi

❯ Spirit, who used to be a sysop at the Nexus, is a key Mosaic insider. She definitely has her pulse on the haven, and the Vox are wrapped so tight around her finger they may as well be diamond rings. If she really wanted to start swinging her weight around, even Tenchi would have to pay attention. But so far she's been content to hang back in the shadows, make friends with everyone and spectate.
❯ Weaver

Going In

Like other secretive Matrix sites, Mosaic must be found by tracking down a teleporting SAN. The SAN changes location

about once a week, just enough to keep ahead of the authorities that aren't trying particularly hard to find it anyway. If you need to find the current SAN, all you have to do is check the Personals section of a certain online newspaper and search for a keyword. You get the keyword when you register for an account, of course (which means you have to track them down the old-fashioned way to register first).

❯ The Mosaic keyword changes every so often too, just in case.
❯ Perry Stroyka

The Mosaic SAN usually floats somewhere within the Vladivostok grid. It leads directly to a chokepoint that is so black that it may as well be a sinkhole. Usually at least one security decker or guard agent hangs out here, scanning the visiting icons and keeping an eye out for trouble or first-time visitors.

❯ If you're new, you have to pay the Mosaic a fee and submit an application, complete with shadow references. Depending on your rep, the quality of your references and how much extra you "tip," the processing of your application can take anywhere from an hour to a week.
❯ Passport

Mosaic has its own PLTG, though it's rather sparse as grids go. The background of the grid is a colorful mosaic of constantly shifting patterns and shapes, created by some pattern-sifting software that analyzes incoming data to the haven and creates designs from it.

Hosts and Data

Roughly two dozen hosts occupy the Mosaic PLTG, each with its own unique icon. More than half of the hosts are devoted to pure archive data storage, roughly organized into various categories. The other hosts serve as chat rooms, message boards, virtual meeting spots, newsfeed centers and so on.

❯ If you're a gun freak, check out the host that Mosaic leases to APEC—the Asian Pacific Enterprise Cooperative. APEC is a shadow-market customized weapons designer and dealer known for supplying shadowrunners, pirate gangs and syndi-

cates around the Asian Pacific Rim. Their head designer—Kang—is a genius at rigging personalized weapons systems. He's also a little weird—the type who talks to his guns like they're pets or something. APEC keeps an interactive ordering system on its host, as well as a catalogue of special-order designs.
❯ Chaos

❯ The Northern Star Ring has a few hosts linked to Mosaic, but you need special access privileges to get in.
❯ Floyd

The archived information stored within Mosaic has changed to fit the new locale. Most of the files pertain to the Pacific Rim, but the archives show much less emphasis on Sino-Nipponese relations. Now, Mosaic's data leans more toward Russo-Nipponese interactions, from the boardrooms to the shadows. Mosaic is where you go if you want information on what's going on in the Pacific Rim. For example, you'll find data on the latest attempts by Ares to worm its way into Russia, as well the lowdown on how things are faring down in the Philippines since their elections. Did you want information about the Vory v Zakone? Mosaic has it. Want to get a line on Ring activity in the tech market? Got that too. Telesma smuggling? Dragon sightings? Interior Army troop movements? Secret Pacific Prosperity Group maneuverings? It's all in there.

Mosaic is also quickly becoming the online expert source for data on Yamatetsu's operations. The Mosaic regulars have put together some impressive dossiers on known Yamatetsu Johnsons, and they maintain entire nodes dedicated to subjects such as Yamatetsu's space facilities, launchpads, aqua-sphere projects and its joint operations with the Russians.

❯ Don't be surprised if you run into Russian UGB or MVD agents within Mosaic—they know all about the data haven and keep a close eye on it.
❯ Red Eye

❯ Paranoia is a way of life for us Russians. If the secret police take notice of you, make it profitable for them to turn their eyes and ears elsewhere. They will respond harshly to those who cannot afford to bribe them to look the other way.
❯ Novichok

VIRTUAL SEATTLE
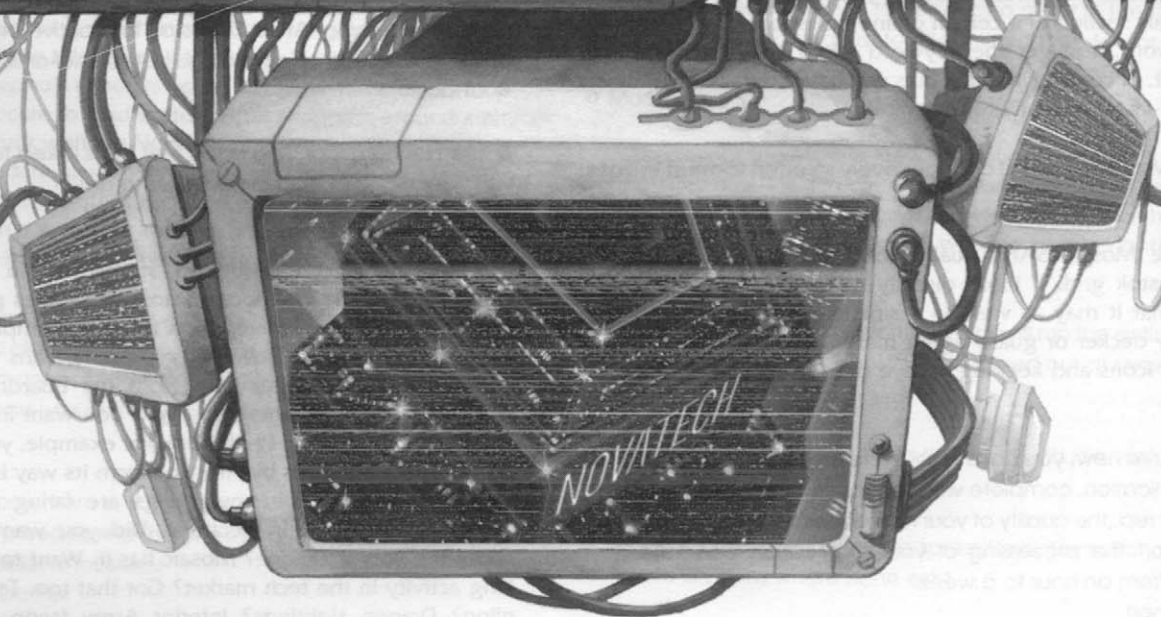
Welcome to Seattle. As the old song goes, "if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere." Okay, the song was talking about New York, but let's be honest, the NYC Grid is old news, especially since Fuchi took a header and broke up. But Seattle, that's a different story. When the Seattle RTG is running, (something of a rarity lately) we live in the virtual center of the universe. Sure, Denver has the data haven and Japan has a megacorp every third icon, but Seattle has it all and then some. In my opinion, you ain't a real decker unless you've clocked quality time on the Emerald City RTG.

So I got some real flesh-and-virtual-blood deckers to give you the skinny. From the bizarre shutdowns to rumors of AIs running rampant through its overladen datalines, the boys and girls over at the Dead Deckers Society can give you a first person POV of our little home known as the Seattle RPG.

These guys love the Seattle grid; they use it, know it and live it. So enjoy the ride from some people that know what they're talking about.

Trust me, some day you'll be here and be glad we broke it down.

> ◆ Captain Chaos
> Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 09:06:14 (EST)

OVERVIEW

Howdy. We're the Dead Deckers Society and we're going to take you on a tour of the shadow-side of the Seattle RTG. Let's learn some basics.

The Seattle Grid started out as a good idea, but like most good ideas, it's run into some problems along the way. In fact, the story of the Seattle Grid is like the story of the little grid that could.

Up until Seattle became the center of all things electronic in the late twentieth century, it was one of those rarely mentioned US cities, perhaps listed as the historical home of Jimi Hendrix but little more. That changed quickly when Seattle became the center of the electronic universe. It also became the center of the athletic footware and coffee universes, but we aren't qualified to talk about that.

Seattle became the undisputed home of all things software-related. It was only a matter of time before it became one of the first fully fiberoptic-accessible cities. It was a good time for those deckers-to-be (and hacker-wannabes).

So there you go, Seattle was king of the electronic world; all eyes looked to the Pacific Northwest with awe. Then the little grid that could was dealt a major blow. Oddly enough, it came from the real world—VITAS. It really shook a heavily traveled and international city like Seattle. In the wake of such an earth-shaking disaster, the last thing people wanted to do was buy the latest computer game or chat on-line with their friends. In fact, rumors spread that VITAS could be spread via e-mail. People can be stupid.

❯ I remember this fiasco. It was hysterical. People were tossing out their brand-new computers, thinking the hunk of machine would bring disease into their house. Of course, they didn't really notice that people were dying by the truckload in places that had never seen a computer.
❯ Octogenarian News

Like the rest of the economy, the Seattle computer industry took huge losses as segments of its consumer base were killed off or occupied with their disease-stricken families. The Awakening and the Ghost Dance war kept Seattle knocked off its feet. Then, in 2018, when news came out of Chicago about Dr. Hosato Hikita's ASIST interfaces, you could've heard a pin drop in Redmond. That was the beginning of the end of the Seattle software empire. The king was dead.

❯ The funny thing about Seattle: it prospered as this place of openness and cutting-edge tech. Free thinking reigned and nobody was ever stuck in a rut. Then it was like they got caught contemplating their navels. Out of Chicago comes ASIST. At first Seattle corps were the loudest protesters against ASIST, claiming it was worthless, useless tech and they, the tried and true, had the only worthwhile tech. Meanwhile, they were paying top bucks to industrial spies (what shadowrunners were called back in the day) to steal everything on ASIST. You've never seen so much panic and finger-pointing. It was great.
❯ Spyglass

On February 28, 2029, the famed Crash of '29 occurred. The companies that made Seattle their home were all but gone. Microdeck hung on strictly because of the Gates family wealth, a shell of its former glory. The others were bought up lock, stock, and microchip by the megas, absorbed into their gaping maws never to be seen again.

But then something amazing happened. The Awakening, the US breakup, the instability of the CFS and Seattle's decision to stay with the UCAS (and not join one of the many new Native American or foreign nations that begged, pleaded, and threatened) meant Seattle had become important to nearly everyone. Really fraggin' important.

The UCAS needed a Pacific port city. The Japanese megas needed a stable port in the lucrative UCAS/North American continent. Foreign megas wanted a place where they could drop an HQ and not worry about the glare from Washington, Detroit, New York or Boston.

Seattle's grid became a marvel again. It is now the busiest, most impressive and most elaborate grid on the marketplace, supported by at least six AAAs, about ten AAs and several smaller corps.

It's too bad the grid couldn't sit there in isolation, but with that many rivals crammed into one RTG, the drek would eventually hit the virtual fan. So even in all its glory, Seattle can't seem to get it right … shutdowns, blackouts, entire sections lost to the Renraku Arcology fiasco, rumors of otaku tribes and AIs running rampant. The world's most amazing grid is constantly under siege.

❯ Yeah, by us!
❯ EyeDon'tXist

❯ For the amount of use this single grid gets, I'm surprised it's not down daily. Remember this is a citywide grid, not a specific grid like the East Coast Exchange or the corp PLTGs. Everyone uses this baby. They say that Chicago used to have more data traffic, but I can't imagine that. Seattle must run their mainframes at the red line all the time. I say, if they can keep this baby running day in and day out, then they're doing a bang-up job.
❯ Bull
"The best ork decker you never met"

❯ It's funny. It's like Seattle has a big target on its virtual chest. I mean, does someone have it out for this grid? It seems to be the favorite target of every two-bit shadowteam or crazy in the universe. I was one of the few that spent two weeks in a psych ward when the grid froze that one time back in 2060. I still feel as if something's in my head. It makes me want to deck those safe havens like the Vatican or Aztlan just to have some stability.
❯ Dark Pawn

THE RTGS AND LTGS

The Seattle Grid covers the entire area of the Seattle Metroplex, which is considered part of the United Canadian American States. A number of private grids are connected to the local grid, most of which belong to corporations based in the metroplex, but some PLTGs belong to private organizations or even individuals. The system provides all the telecommunications needed in the metroplex: everything from data to voice to e-mail and entertainment. It's an ocean of data; most of it's completely worthless, at least in terms of street value. If you're looking to find the good stuff in the Seattle Matrix, you have to know where to go. That's where we come in.

First off, for those of you that want a virtual tour, dial up the Seattle RTG. Our multi-media tour begins now …

You're standing in a representation of the Seattle Space Needle's restaurant, the Eye of The Needle, except there are no tables, just an endless circle of windows. Each window represents either a connection to the various Seattle LTGs or to other RTGs from around the world. Each window is labeled, but you can usually tell which grid goes where just by its appearance.

The first ten are the neighborhood LTGs of Seattle. They

look as if someone laid a Matrix grid over the physical representation of the land area they cover. Downtown has the best view of them all.

After those ten, the windows are for the UCAS, the Tir, Salish, the rest of the NANs and the CAS. All the way at the other "end of the circle" (comprehend that for a second) you get to the foreign countries on the non-North American grids.

◊ I wouldn't linger in the Seattle RTG for too long. Lately, it's been known to fritz out and issue signals to the user's ASIST interface. This overwhelms the filters we all use to block out the background processes and other inconsequential Matrix flotsam and jetsam. One minute you'll be cruising along, the next you'll suddenly be bombarded with sensory overload. It only takes a sec to reset your ASIST, but damn, that's irritating.
◊ Casanova

◊ Some Matrix newbies who've been hit by this haven't known what it was or how to turn it off. Some of 'em have suffered actual psychological damage. Doctors are calling it Matrix Claustrophobia or Virtual Suffocation, since the victims usually react like they're drowning; many refuse to go back into the Matrix. Some deckers I know call it the Panics.
◊ Holden C.

We'll start our tour off with a trip to the Bellevue LTG. Dial up this number: 9206-74-2461. You'll notice LTG codes like this don't have any reference to the site's real-world location. For all you know, it could lead to a Ft. Lewis deckmeister or the Catholic Church's halfway house in the Redmond Barrens.

I hope you're still with us. You will notice you're standing right next to Ares in Bellevue. Take a look around … the Bellevue grid is a pretty good one just to look at. Like the rest of the Seattle Matrix, it conforms to the Universal Matrix Standards (UMS). The virtual landscape of the RTG looks like a vast area of blackness covered with a neon grid of datalines, with different host systems set up as icons. They don't have that nifty physical-world overlay like you can see from the RTG, but you wouldn't be able to see it from inside the LTG anyway.

The standard icons are pretty boring and run-of-the-mill: simple cubes and pyramids for the most part. Things get more interesting when there's some real programming talent involved (to say nothing of a substantial budget). So before we go on, take a look around. That gaudy host just over to your left is the Gates Casino. Further past it is Microdeck's HQ. Doesn't it look like all the datalines of the LTG flow into it? That little bit was a last hurrah for the ego of the Gates family.

So let's begin our tour.

MAJOR SEATTLE HOSTS

THE ARES SYSTEM
Security Level: Red-Hard
LTG Number: 9206-78-4730
Since we're here, let's take a look at Ares.
Ares Macrotechnology maintains a fairly low profile, com-

pared to a lot of the other corporations in Seattle, both in and out of the Matrix. Their Bellevue host system icon is simply a pyramid of burnished copper, tiny by comparison to things like the Aztechnology Pyramid and the Renraku Arcology system, so it's easily overlooked. The pyramid has one door, with the Ares logo emblazoned over it. It's right in front of you, go ahead and step on in. This is the public portion of the host, with all the usual PR drek. The Ares Catalog section draws plenty of people to check out the new toys and bang-bangs offered here. You can probably find as many shadowrunners there as you can on an average night at the Club Penumbra. Ares maintains a direct link to the Knight Errant host in Downtown Seattle, if you're looking for a shortcut.

Find the right door and you've got access to the first level of the Ares private host system. That's right, I said the *first* level. Ares takes a real distributive philosophy to the design of their hosts, using multiple layers, each progressively more sensitive and guarded by increasingly better IC. For example, the first private layer of the host is strictly for business related to the Bellevue offices—nothing too sensitive. For that stuff you need to dig further down. That's when you find things like shipping schedules, data traffic from the head office and links to the Ares PLTG and the main Ares host in Detroit. Though most of the system's IC isn't as sophisticated as what you might find in the Novatech or Mitsuhama hosts, Ares makes up for it with their strategic design. The private host system has a hair trigger when it comes to unauthorized intrusions; slip up and you'll have IC all over you before you can blink, plus a trace running down your jackpoint for the Knights Errant.

◊ The "shoot first and ask questions later" attitude of the Ares system has caused them problems from time to time when some corporate suit or programmer makes a mistake and gets the system all up in arms. The sheer number of false alarms and the time they eat up make it likely Ares will downgrade the sensitivity of the system in the near future. They can let the IC take care of any problems first before the system calls for outside help.
◊ Digital Dawg

◊ I picked up something interesting from the Ares system in Seattle last week (not work-related, so I can mention it here). Seems Ares is shipping a large number of weapons through Vancouver to a shell company. Haven't had time to track down who the shell belongs to, but you can be sure that Ares knows. Most likely it's some Pac-Rim client, or possibly even the NAN that's buying.
◊ Weaver

Now let's step back out of the host and head over to Microdeck. We aren't going to go to the Casino … you've probably already been there, but Microdeck is an interesting host nonetheless.

THE MICRODECK SYSTEM
Security Level: Orange-Average to Red-Hard
LTG Number: 9206-78-4730

The Microdeck host icon is a giant computer chip. You've heard of those, it's the precursor to the OCC's. Supposedly, they originally wanted the icon to be a giant head of the founder of the Gates Empire. People were disturbed by the idea of entering through his mouth, so they went with the chip design. Now you go in via the copper-colored I/O circuit connection on the end facing the casino.

Enter into the famous Microdeck "virtual campus." They make you believe all cutting-edge Matrix marketing, sales, tech, programming can be found here. But once you enter the Microdeck History host, your only comment may be "how far the mighty hath fallen."

There was a day when Microdeck could have been king of the Sixth World and every decker would be lined up outside the host just for a chance to sniff the virtual air here. But the Crash of '29 kicked them where it hurts, giving all the other little data-mammals scurrying around a chance to out-evolve the 20th-century computer dinosaurs. Microdeck is really a shadow of its former self, though it still has a strong presence within the computer industry. They turn out excellent mid-range and low-end hardware and software and it sounds like they've got ambitions to claw their way back to the top of the heap. (Though not if the big three computer corps, or any of the other megas, have anything to say about it.)

You won't find many runners here. The host is mainly for normal business and corporate sales, but don't let that fool you. Microdeck's private host system is clearly designed by people who are deranged and understand computer security, a great combination. It's a maze of complex, layered Matrix architecture—a little on the showy side, but it gets the job done. You really have to know where you're going in the Microdeck system. I'm willing to bet that at least some of the arcane nature of the system is a matter of job security. If you're the only one who understands how the system works, then the company can't fire you until it gets someone else who can figure out what you've done. There's nothing like a little departmental infighting to make a host system interesting.

You can find just about any kind of IC you can imagine on the Microdeck system, though they tend to stay away from the lethal stuff, preferring IC that disables, even permanently cripples, rather than kills. But the IC is really just the first line of defense for the company deckers that patrol and maintain the host system. They're willing, even eager, to handle counter-intrusion stuff personally. The company hires a fair number of decker wannabes raised on Matrix fight games and looking for a taste of the real thing by working Matrix security. A few of them are quite good at what they do.

> It's something of a misconception to say that Microdeck doesn't use black IC. If the data or system is sensitive enough, they have no problems with frying a decker's brain to a crisp. But the DDS is right that they prefer to keep intruding deckers alive. Part of it is so they can track them down and possibly get some information out of them, but I've always gotten the feeling that part of it was a desire on the part of Matrix security to keep the "game" between them and the outside deckers going.
> Neon Rose

> That impression may come from the fact that Microdeck has more than one little otaku-in-training living in corporate housing, carefully supervised by company specialists. I think Microdeck is planning on taking back the computer industry by coming at innovation from a new angle. Rather than trying to improve the hardware or software, they're looking at improving the wetware. After all, if they can figure out what makes the otaku what they are, and replicate it, well then nobody would need a deck or terminal, would they?
> Wiley

> There's no way Microdeck is going to figure out how to replicate otaku anytime in our lifetimes. Hell, nobody really understands how otaku do what they do.
> Brother Data

Now that you've left the Microdeck system, you can look back towards the Ares pyramid. Just beyond it is the Global Technologies icon. You can't miss it with the giant searchlight shining brightly into the virtual night sky. That's our next stop.

THE GLOBAL TECHNOLOGIES SYSTEM
Security Level: Orange-Average
LTG number: 9206-78-2193

Global Technologies isn't ready to play with the big boys yet, but they sure do have a lot of nice toys. Just check out this host icon. Their host is a movie palace with all the bells and whistles: searchlight, red carpet, even a variety of sims running on a pay-per-view option. I used to break into this host as a kid just to watch the latest sims for free. The corp specializes in simsense and skillsoft tech, real bleeding-edge stuff. The public side of their site is the theatre—now you'll probably end up seeing as many ads as new simflicks—but that's par for the course.

The private side is set up more like an office than you'd expect. The public thinks GT is a major sim studio when, in reality, they are the code crunchers and hardware guys that supply the sim industry. They don't usually leave cutting-edge sim files or skillsoft algorithms lying about; Global knows better than to store those within reach of curious deckers. The host does have information about Global's contact with other corps. Stuff like email and voicemail can give you some interesting ideas about where Global is going next and who's helping pay for some of the newest toys these days. (Novatech and Mitsuhama seem to be the big sugar-daddies lately.) There's access to personnel files, shipping information, and best of all, the security systems.

In fact, one of the best things you may run into in the Global system is their IC. Global writes a lot of their own IC programs and tests them out on their system. They go heavily for expert systems and decker-in-a-box type programs, along with psychotropics based on their simsense research. Getting information on the stuff Global is using right now can tell you about things that might show up in other systems next month. Other than the IC, the host is pretty standard. Global's contracts for their security are with Eagle Security, which includes on-call deckers who show up if the system goes on alert.

❯ Global's DINAB technology has gone way beyond what most people think of as SOTA. They're experimenting with some kind of "neural mapping" technology that allows them to actually encode entire personalities in digital form and run them on the Matrix. That's right folks, they've got baby AIs operating in their system.
❯ Tanner

❯ Let's not push the "they've got an AI" button quite so fast, Tanner. I'll grant that Global's DINAB stuff is good, but I don't think their host system has the kind of bandwidth or processing power necessary to support any kind of AI. Their expert systems may look intelligent, but that's all.
❯ Red Wraith

Now it's time to bounce to another LTG. There are three hosts on three different LTGs that you should know about. We'll start with Tacoma and Shiawase's Matrix presence. Plug in: 2506-00-16-0000.

THE SHIAWASE SYSTEM
Security Level: Red-Average
LTG Number: 5206-1-2608

Welcome to Tacoma. Look around. There are very few sculpted hosts in this area. You are standing at a Matrix host junction box that appears to be across the street from the Shiawase host. If you look to the left you should see a forest, the host for Britcher Paper Mills. They tossed a lot of cash into their icon to make it look like they are still a player. Just beyond that, you can see a giant gear structure that is the Fed Boeing metalworks host. To your right, you can see Pac Rim's host. It looks like a blue antique phone booth from the mid-twentieth century.

Shiawase's host icon looks exactly like its real-world counterpart —black steel and glass buildings that seem to reach the limitless sky and continue onward. A real sense of vertigo can affect a decker if he tries to take it all at once. This icon has been redesigned since Shiawase absorbed a third of the Fuchi corporate empire, boosting Shiawase's computer industry assets and giving them access to a lot of new toys. We won't actually go in because many of their systems are still getting worked out and they tend to be a bit picky about who actually enters.

Shiawase's paranoia is ironic, since most of Shiawase's Seattle branch projects don't use the Matrix, except peripherally. There are power systems (including their Glow City nuke plant), and public works for the metroplex, cyberware, and biotech. But all the other goodies that flow through those virtual corridors are what make it so tempting. The right paydata can be worth a new Fairlight Excalibur, if you can find it.

The interior of the host has a traditional Japanese look, but with a lot of high-tech elements to it. You get medieval rice paper walls protected by robotic samurai, and Shinto shrines spotted with display screens and monitors. The public sections of the host are mostly public relations and customer service stuff, though the customer service system can get you access to things like cyberware specs, provided you can overcome its protection.

Shiawase goes for a highly distributed architecture in their host system, as schizophrenic as the overall design of the company. The valuable and sensitive data is spread out in different directories and databases, forcing you to execute multiple searches and downloads to hunt it all down. Of course, each additional operation you have to perform on the system increases the chance you'll be detected and bring the wrath of Shiawase down on you. Shiawase nearly always starts out by sending some trace IC to sniff out your jackpoint before they send the nastier stuff to try and keep you there while a security team heads your way.

❯ Shiawase is buying some of their IC and software from MCT these days—solidarity of the big Japanacorps or something like that. Of course, they've got plenty of homegrown hardware and software too, as well as the deckers who know how to use it.
❯ Balthazar

❯ Shiawase also co-opted some of their current facilities and systems from Fuchi, meaning some of those old Fuchi back doors are still around. Shiawase programmers have closed off most, but not all of them.
❯ Slamm-0!

The tour of Tacoma is quick and easy—not much to see. There's even less to see on our next little stop, Everett. Log on with 00-3206-72-9528.

THE CROSS ELECTRONICS SYSTEM
Security Level: Red-Average
LTG: 3206-72-9529

Welcome to the Everett Community College. Not a lot to see or care about here. It's about as dull as the name implies— though you can usually find a student willing to trade his or her superuser account for some BTLs. A quirk of luck and bad planning by Pac-Rim Communications made the ECC address on the grid differ from Cross'by one digit. Supposedly there were so many mistaken host entries during the first week of opening that Cross had to open up a subhost that links the newbies back to the College. I can't wait to watch some newbie get confused in the Cross host by mistake and get busted for being a shadowrunner. Now, just enter the door marked No Exit on the left.

Bingo. Welcome to the Cross/ECC host exchange program. You're currently just inside the Cross host. The icon is from their logo. It's the letter O with a cross in it. It's white and seems to shine in all directions as if the sun was directly on it. It's really the host of note in the Everett LTG.

The Cross host system in Seattle handles all the data traffic for the Cross Electronics branch, forwarding information on to the head office in Quebec. There are also various electronics research projects underway at the facility, including some collaboration with Cross Bio-Medical in Boston on new cybertech. The system is fairly new, so it's got a lot of bells and whistles, but nothing as impressive as one of the big computer corps or even Ares. Still, there's paydata to be found if you're willing to dig a little.

The system uses a lot of IC, focusing heavily on tracers. Cross Corp. takes a quiet approach to handling counter-intrusion. Instead of coming after you with full-bore IC, they trace and report intrusions. You won't even know you've been tagged by the system until a couple weeks later, when a Seraphim agent corners you in a dark alley. They make it clear that Cross Corp. knows *all* about you, and if you expect to keep your wetware intact, you'll be doing them a little favor now and again. Still, cause enough of a ruckus in the system and the corp deckers on duty will come running.

❯ And they know their business, too. Still, the DDS is right, the biggest danger CATCo poses to deckers is the possibility of them tracking you down via the Matrix and putting the Seraphim on your tail. Those ops know a thousand different ways to make your life a living hell, but more importantly, they know how to use those techniques to turn you into an unwitting puppet of their employer. So if you think you got off clean from a run on a Cross system, make sure to keep looking over your shoulder for a while.
❯ Fallen Angel

We have one more remote locale to hit before we get to the motherlode. Our next stop is Renton and Knight Errant. Plug in 00-16206-45-4897.

THE KNIGHT ERRANT SYSTEM
Security Level: Orange-Hard
LTG Number: 16206-45-4897

Here we are, right at the KE system host itself. The giant blue Knight Errant badge is the only big sculpted host in this grid. The Fed Boeing airplane is also here, but no one goes to that site; the others are much more important.

We love this grid because it's huge and Ares seems to be whipping it out and saying, "Look! Ours is bigger than yours." The host icon is the biggest thing on the LTG, and the security is really overkill for the info they have here.

There isn't much in the way of valuable information in this host. The KE training academy consists of a Green public host with all sorts of PR drek about how macho and kewl Knight Errant is, including promos of the "American Knights" trid program Ares sponsors on NBS. Behind that is the secure Orange host that has the meat of the system, not that there's much there.

The Orange system is used to test new Matrix security measures and train KE combat deckers, so there are always at least a couple deckers online at any given time, eager to kick some intruder's virtual hoop. On the other hand, I once convinced a couple of KE rookies that I was actually a virtual "test" program sent to put them through their paces. By the time they recovered from the dump shock I was long gone, though the virtual recording of the encounter made the rounds of the Ares system for a couple of months thereafter.

The system also has virtual "training grounds" used by KE to run simulations of different combat conditions and security situations for trainees. It's interesting to watch (in a big-trideo game kind of way) but not that useful.

❷ Don't underestimate the potential value of this site. In many ways, its appearance is nothing but a front. Ares is smart enough to occasionally hide useful paydata "in plain sight" by placing it in a less sophisticated system protected by KE deckers-in-training, because nobody would think of looking for it there.
❷ Wilson

❷ And, conversely, some of those purloined letters in the KE system are nothing more than decoys created by Ares for the people who think the corp is going to hide something valuable "in plain sight." Wheels within wheels, chummers.
❷ Errant Knight

Enough of the neighborhoods. Let's head to Mecca—the Seattle Downtown LTG (or just the Seattle grid, as it's known to everyone else). We're going to the actual Space Needle to take a look at the full Seattle grid, plug in 00-206-52-6500.

The cool thing about the Space Needle host is that it looks like the Space Needle and it actually gives you a view of the entire grid. If you look straight ahead from where you appear you will see in a clockwise order:

THE FEDERATED-BOEING SYSTEM
Security Level: Red-Average
LTG Number: 206-52-5403

Federated-Boeing's host system in Seattle is a sprawling place, not unlike F-B's physical facilities in the metroplex. It is a series of black orbs linked together with glowing "habit-trails" type connections. There are so many ways to enter it, you'd think busting in was a joke, except that you can't tell where you are half the time. Most of the secure information is linked by "habit-trails" you can't see.

The ultra-secure system handles the corp's top-secret design specs, sensitive information on new projects and secure areas of their facilities. There's plenty of intel in there, usually guarded by IC designed to boot you out of the system as quickly as possible. The F-B system is also quick to scream for help if it can't get you offline in a hurry. So if you trigger any alarms, get out of there as quickly as you can before the company deckers show up.

A commonly overlooked opportunity can be found in the Green host that handles more routine company business, such as employee housing at the company-owned condoplex. That's where you can dig up all sorts of useful information on where F-B employees live, who lives with them, how long they've lived there, and drek like that. The system has IC, of course, but it's a cakewalk compared to the more secure Red system. Like a lot of hosts' security, Federated-Boeing is weakest when it comes to the human factor.

❷ Not as much as they used to be. F-B Seattle has been hiring freelance Matrix security consultants to beef up their security since the whole Renraku Arcology business went down. They've mostly been working with small consulting firms through the Pacific Prosperity Group, keeping things quiet while they build up the walls and fortify them with tougher IC. When you're decking

Federated-Boeing these days, expect the unexpected.
❷ Grid Reaper

THE AZTECHNOLOGY PYRAMID
Security Level: Red-Average
LTG Number: 206-Aztech

Next on the hit list is the Big A's pyramid. The Aztechnology host system in Seattle is a virtual replica of the main pyramid, complete with crystal carvings of Aztec and Mayan myths lit up from the inside. The host is heavily layered, with the Green-level, fairly accessible host on the outside. It's used for things like public relations, catalog shopping, non-secure telecommunications, and drek like that. Not too much here unless you're looking to find out what they're wearing in Aztlan this year.

The public host connects through a secure link to a private host that's Red as the blood on their altars. It has the real paydata on the system, protected by heavy IC and Aztechnology corporate deckers on call 24/7. Aztechnology tends to go for the brain-kicking type of nasty gray and black IC, probably figuring they'll question your corpse when it's all said and done. They're also big on trace programs to track down your jackpoint so some "company representatives" can drop by and have a chat with you about unauthorized access. The private host also links to the Aztechnology PLTG, so you can run an uplink to Tenochitlan (or pretty much anywhere else in the Aztechnology corporate empire), if you're feeling up to the ride.

The Azzies go in for sculpted systems. The public host is pretty tame: the same cross between Aztec temple and shopping mall you see in the lower levels of the pyramid and pretty much everywhere in Aztlan. The private host ramps the imagery up to full-blown representations of ancient Aztec stuff, in all its bloody glory, combined with a high-tech cyberspace motif. Aztech programmers are quite good at coming up with hideous-looking IC that can give you nightmares for years. The worst part is, they're probably basing it on stuff that really exists down in Aztlan. Personally, I don't want to know. You might want to do a little reading about Aztec mythology before trying to run their host. Knowing the symbolism of a blue hummingbird and the Aztec calendar stone can make the difference between getting the right file or setting off some nasty IC.

❷ Aztechnology really takes advantage of the culture barrier in their private host. All the labels and such are in Spanish, and some are in Nahautl. The whole cultural idiom is different in there, making strangers really stick out. Of course, it also somewhat limits AZT's deckers, since they have to work within the rules of the setting, but it doesn't seem to bother them much. The company deckers get to feel more elite, because they know drek everyone else doesn't.
❷ Neon Rose

❷ My favorite part of Aztechnology's corporate image is their weekly upload of coupons, discounts and other "hey look

how friendly we are" ad material to their public area. I've seen people check repeatedly to get the coupons first before the timer clocks them off. It makes me sick to think they can get away with all that.
❷ The Toluca Pirate

❷ Hey TP, don't knock it. I was holed up after a run that went bad and those buy-one-get-one-free coupons for Zapata Burritos kept me alive.
❷ LCD

THE NOVATECH STAR
Security Level: Red-Hard
LTG Number: 206-52-1027

As we keep moving around the sprawl, we come to the next member of the downtown hit parade—or one of the oldest, depending on your point of view. But you do have to admit one thing: Novatech really dressed up the old Fuchi star icon.

The host is a giant chrome five-pointed star, hovering in the blackness of space above the Seattle Matrix and rotating slowly as it looks down on all the other little systems below. The Star is an important Matrix site because Novatech produces so much Matrix hardware and software. A large portion of their public host system is given over to sales and customer service, so people can log on to the Novatech host to have their computer problems diagnosed and fixed right over the Matrix. You can also buy and download software off the Novatech Star (or simply download it, if you can get past the IC). I recommend the latest version of Novatech InTouch (formerly Fuchi InTouch 5.0), great for managing contact and personal info.

Behind the public host is Novatech's private host system. It's done up in a "hypertech" style of iconography, with lots of geometric shapes, contrasting chrome and black, and silver-skinned androgynous figures. A lot of it resembles the UMS standard (which is no surprise, considering how big a hand Fuchi had in setting those standards).

❷ I know Fuchi. Fuchi was a friend of mine, and you sir, are no Fuchi.
❷ Retro Bob

Novatech is no Fuchi, but its Matrix systems are still on the bleeding edge. Novatech takes a distributed and subtle approach to securing their host system, using cutting-edge IC like psychotropics, party IC, and lots of measures to degrade the functions of intruding cyberdecks. You deck Novatech, and their system starts decking *you*. Novatech also has plenty of company deckers on the payroll, and most of them are pretty good, better than the average corporate deck-head, anyway.

❷ The split-up of Fuchi left a fair number of disaffected programmers and people with access codes and other system information that's useful to the right people, if you know whom to ask. Just be careful, a lot of the intel people are selling about Fuchi is pretty outdated at this point.
❷ Far-Fetch'd

❷ Novatech is really going after drek in the Matrix, hiring a lot of deckers for various operations, especially involving the other big computer corps. The pay's good and you can get some great deals on new hardware and drek like that.
❷ Wiley

❷ Take the cred, chummer. The 'ware Novatech gives deckers such "great deals" on is company-loyal. It works fine, until you try to deck a Novatech system. Then your chips or your progs crap out on you and you're left swinging in the virtual breeze. I'm convinced many of the runs Novatech is hiring for are tailchasers designed to got a lot of their tech into our hot little hands.
❷ Psycher

THE MITSUHAMA PAGODA
Security Level: Red-Hard
LTG Number: 206-52-7411

Just below (from this point of view) but actually beyond the floating Novatech star is the famous Mitsuhama Pagoda. It's so famous, there's an anime sim about the Matrix sprites that live inside it ... God, we hate anime.

The Pagoda is just as ostentatious as their physical headquarters in Seattle, but with a different style. Where the MCT plaza downtown is all high-tech and chrome, the Mitsuhama host takes the form of a classical Japanese pagoda rising up over the virtual landscape. It's an impressive piece of work, based on the actual pagodas in Japan, though it's taller than any real pagoda has a right to be. MCT cleverly creates the illusion that the whole pagoda is publicly accessible. It includes their extensive multimedia archives (accessible for a small fee), their Japanese cultural exhibits (with a virtual walk-through of many famous Japanese artworks), the Virtual Tea Garden and of course, a view of the Seattle Matrix from high atop the pagoda. Lots of pure, clean fun that has families and kids visiting good ol' Mitsuhama.

Most people don't contemplate that things like space are mutable in virtual reality. The MCT Pagoda is actually two buildings in one. If you have the right access codes, you can step through one of the "secret doors" into the other pagoda, existing in the same Matrix "space" as the first. However, this is the Red host that contains all the really interesting stuff. It's modeled on the same medieval Japanese motif as the public pagoda, but this one is more like an armed camp than a friendly tourist attraction. IC roams the halls in the form of samurai warriors guarding the rooms that contain all kinds of data on MCT's operations. The courtyard has links to the MCT PLTG, which gives access to other MCT facilities around the world, provided you can sleaze past the IC.

Like their physical security, MCT's Matrix security is straightforward and lethal. They load their system with plenty of IC—the blacker, the better—and set it to kill any illegal decker it can catch. Fortunately for us, the layered nature of the system provides plenty of back doors from the public host into the private host. Mitsuhama finds some of them every week and closes them down, but deckers are always creating new ones. Once you're inside the private host, your best bet is to do the

job without tripping any alarms, or the host system will rain nasty IC down on your head. If any external alarms sound, you'll be dealing with corporate deckers as well.

◗ Mitsuhama has a tendency to keep a substantial amount of its data (including dirty laundry) online, trusting their lethal intrusion countermeasures to ensure security. That makes the system risky, but usually worth it in terms of the payoff.
◗ Silver Surfer

◗ MCT upped security at the pagoda recently due to the disappearance of some important data. Word around the campfire is, they'll pay handsomely for information on the whereabouts of the purloined data and the culprit's identity. Most likely the perpetrator was working for Novatech.
◗ Crimson Tide

THE SEA-TAC AIRPORT
Security Level: Orange-Average
LTG Number: 206-22-8906

The Sea-Tac Airport is well south of the downtown area, but its host icon is about as "downtown" as you can get on the grid. My guess is that it's all about perception. If it looks like it's on the outskirts of the grid, it may be considered less than what it is. Only in Seattle can people get grid envy.

Regardless, the SeaTac host looks like an airport hanger from the early days of flight; a big barn-style hanger covered with airline logos. Some of the airlines there have sculpted separate entrances through what look like boarding ramps, so the whole host looks like a barn with tentacles. It even has some giant windsocks. Of course there is no wind in the Matrix, but that doesn't stop them from moving around.

Don't let the icon fool you, the Sea-Tac Airport has a host system nearly as paranoid as their physical security. Inside the host they have re-created that feeling that you get in an actual airport—the feeling of "unobtrusive" security everywhere. The public layer of the host is wide open, of course, since Sea-Tac uses it to relay information to passengers. It contains flight times, departures, arrivals, and drek like that. There are also connections to the major airlines for things like booking flights and getting information. With a cyberdeck and a little effort you can easily book things under a false name; just make sure you've got an ID to go along with it, because airport security *will* check before you get onto the plane.

◗ Unless, of course, you slip some nuyen to the right people to make sure they look the other way.
◗ Wiley

◗ That's not quite as easy as Wiley makes it sound. Though corruption is rampant in places like Sea-Tac (and you've gotta love that) there are still plenty of people who will turn you over to airport security if you try to bribe them, especially if you don't offer enough. That'll usually lead to all sorts of questions you'd rather not answer, so best to know who to talk to in advance.
◗ X-Star

In the private host you'll find all kinds of good stuff, including the means to muck around with information that shows up in the public host. You can fool around with flight times or peruse passenger lists for current and future flights if you want to know if someone is planning on leaving, or coming into town. There's also information on the airport's physical security measures, alarm systems, guard rotation, and that sort of thing.

The private host concentrates heavily on keeping unauthorized people *out*, not fragging them once they're in. It has a lot of password protocols, trace IC and similar drek. If you can get in without setting off any alarms, you can have some fun with reservation computers, arrival/departure times, and passenger lists, but the longer you stick around the better the chances somebody will notice something's up. If you trigger an alert, you can be sure some hired guns will come in looking for you. Frag up, and you can also plan on Lone Star paying your meat-body an immediate visit.

◗ These days, that visit will come from a Lone Star mage with an elemental or two in tow. On the astral plane they can be wherever you are in less than a minute (usually because they have to hunt around a little). Sure, the mage might not be able to touch you from the astral, but he can have one of his spirit minions materialize and do the job for him. I know more than one decker who has triggered a trace one minute and found himself being choked by some elemental the next.
◗ Nightlife

◗ That's why it's good to have a mage buddy on hand when you deck, just in case.
◗ Caric

THE RENRAKU ARCOLOGY
Security Level: Red-Hard, possibly Ultraviolet
LTG: all public ones disconnected. Only the UCAS Military and Renraku have access at this time.

Welcome to the other side of the mirror, Alice. We leave all the normal virtual reality (can you use those words together?) and feast your eyes upon the so-called Black Tower of Renraku: the Matrix castle of terror: the virtual black hole.

The arcology's host system was the best. It had cutting-edge hardware and software, including experimental IC and drek like the Renraku semi-autonomous knowbots. It was considered the toughest egg to crack in the whole metroplex, which of course made it the most attractive to deckers looking to make their mark. That was all before the arcology got taken over by a rogue AI of Renraku's creation.

While Deus was running the arcology as its own little fiefdom, the Renraku system was sealed up as tight as a drum. Recently, the combined forces of Renraku and the UCAS military seem to have booted ol' Deus out of the system and taken back the arcology. Renraku is in the midst of dealing with the tremendous mess the AI left behind, including the arcology's computer systems. That's good news for all of us, because while Renraku's still getting their act together, there are holes in their normally formidable defenses for us to exploit.

PRESCOTT

Don't get me wrong, Renraku's still got some killer IC (literally) and they know what they're doing when it comes to host design and security. But now that the arcology's basic systems are up and running again, and they've done a thorough check of the computer cores, the arcology is back online. For the time being, Renraku is splitting their Matrix activity between the arcology and the temporary headquarters they've set up at the former Fuchi research facility. A lot of data-traffic flows between these two sites, and the security at the research facility is still spotty in places, making it a good path into the arcology system.

As for the arcology itself, the main host system is back online, but odds are you're not going to find anything good there. Perhaps Renraku's techs missed something when they were going over the system with a fine-toothed comb, but it's unlikely. Renraku doesn't put any part of the host back online until it's been gone over thoroughly. This means the real juicy stuff (data and programs Deus might have left behind, or drek Renraku lost when the AI took over) is in the off-line systems. To get to those, you need to get into the arcology itself, which is heavily guarded. Renraku security is always watching out for ex-Deus drones, so they're especially distrustful of deckers poking around where they shouldn't be.

❯ Take my word for it, chummers. Don't go mucking around in the Renraku host. I know it sounds fragged up, but the system is … well, haunted is the only word I can come up with. The AI left behind a Matrix minefield of unbelievable proportions—lingering programs and viral code like you've never seen before. I've heard horror stories about Renraku deckers who've been fried or worse while trying to clean up the systems. Whatever paydata might still be left in there just isn't worth going after.
❯ Mist

❯ Whatever. Like some ghost story is going to scare me off from a treasure house like that? I'm not afraid of anything in the Matrix. Whatever it is, I can handle it.
❯ Kid Krash

SEASOURCE

No virtual tour of Seattle would be complete without a visit to SeaSource, Seattle's free online public database. Once a living testament to the processing power and programming genius of Renraku, SeaSource has seen better times. When the Renraku Arcology went offline, it took the file archives

and operating power of SeaSource along with it. Renraku managed to restore SeaSource from backups a few months later, but only as a shadow of its former self. Looking up an entry in SeaSource used to be instantaneous; now it can take as long as a minute. On top of it, the restored SeaSource is missing entire groups of information, and even the complete areas are sometimes outdated, misfiled or corrupted.

> No doubt. Try finding a decent Japanese restaurant in Tacoma. "No such listing." Even though I know there's one just down the street.
> Kung-Pow

> That's not a SeaSource problem, that's the result of a Mafia decker showing the Yaks that they're not welcome there.
> 9-Finger Steve

However, if you're looking for public data on Seattle, there's still no better source, despite its faults. SeaSource has it all: white pages, yellow pages, reverse look-up, business and government listings, the latest news, entertainment info, community events and all that sort of drek. You can also get the weather, book transportation or post a public announcement. And if SeaSource doesn't have the data you need, they probably have a link to where you need to go. The SeaSource interface is quite simple and easy to use, designed so that even the most illiterate Seattle citizens can find what they need. An extensive help system will walk them through the process of using the system.

> Y'know, it amazes me how many deckers and shadowrunners don't bother to check public sources like this. Why head to Shadowland to find some slag's address when it could be in SeaSource's online phone book? If you need background data on Joe Corp, run a search through SeaSource. You'll get a nice file of every time he's made the news. Keep it basic, people.
> Dan-O

> I'd only recommend it if you can stand wading through advertisements. Personally, the constant bombardment of pop-up windows, flashing lights and attention-grabbing noises gets my goat pretty quick.
> Grid Reaper

Fortunately for all of us, SeaSource may radically improve in the near future. Renraku's contract to operate the database is up in 2062, and given their shoddy management of it thus far, they're unlikely to keep a firm grip on it. Several other corps have already submitted bids for the contract—including Brackhaven Investments, Ares, Cross, Pacific Rim Communications and the surprise entry, Pueblo Corp.

> Renraku has been scrambling to improve the SeaSource, attempting a last-ditch effort to make themselves look good. Word is they're trying to locate and restore the old SeaSource

files from within the liberated arcology, but they haven't had any luck finding them yet …
> Retro Bob

> Some of the corps have been looking for ways to lean on the Governor to make their bid "look better." It's a lucrative contract, so many of them are willing to go to great lengths to get it.
> Scoop

PAC RIM COMMUNICATIONS UNLIMITED
Security Level: Red-Hard
LTG: 5206-19-0532

Our final stop on this tour is none other than the phone company itself, the modern Ma Bell—Pacific Rim Communications Unlimited (PRC). The PRC owns the contract to run the entire Seattle RTG and its constituent LTGs. The PRC actually runs a lot of grids around the Pacific Rim (go figure), including Seattle and most of CalFree.

As you can see, the PRC's host icon is designed as a large, blue, retro phone booth—the kind those crazy Brits used to time travel with on those old BBC flatvids. They have one of these hosts in each of the grids they operate. Anyone can waltz into the public areas of these hosts; they're laid out like a real-life, clean and sterile walk-in service center. If you can trudge your way through the ads waxing poetic about all the wonderful services PRC can offers clients and the shiny, happy customer service rep personas, you may be able to locate the SAN that leads into the PRC's PLTG.

The PLTG is where all of the PRC's killer data is kept; customer data, billing and call records, including all the unlisted numbers and drek not available to the public. If you're trying to track down a number, or need to figure out who your chum's calling at 12:01 every night, this is the place to hit. If you're looking to hook yourself up with boosted service, you come here. Watch the IC, though, it's slippery and nasty, and backed up by security deckers who tussle with trespassing troublemakers on a daily basis.

> The PRC deckers are always on patrol. Slipping past them can be a pain in the hoop. I've heard of PRC deckers getting fired for looking the other way while somebody snagged a big cache of unlisted LTGs. I guess the pay isn't up to snuff.
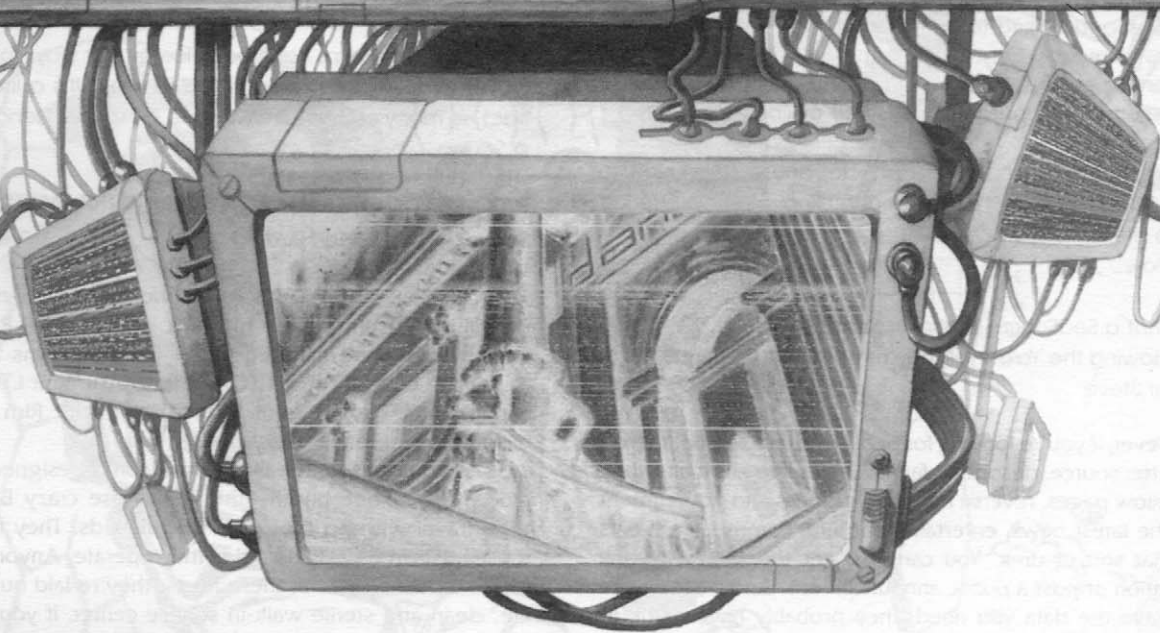> Agent 68

> It wasn't a pay issue; it was a well-planned infiltration. A decker who couldn't handle the IC had a fellow decker get hired at PRC. They synchronized a run during his shift and voila, they got the list. Getting fired was a blessing; if they'd found out he was in on the theft…
> Maus

> Then he'd be the one unlisted.
> Pragmaticus

HOSTS

What can you say about virtual constructs as diverse as hosts? There are an infinite variety of them, limited only by the creativity and skills of thousands of programmers. Many are virtual vaults that hoard paydata secured against prying eyes, while others are open sites used for socializing, public media or shopping. Hosts are the setting and the stage of the Matrix theater, and one never knows what one may find. There are so many to choose from, finding quality or discretion is sometimes difficult. Hopefully this will expedite your search for that glimmering needle in the endless rows of information haystacks.

I've selected a few hosts to describe in detail here, mostly because I feel that shadowrunners will benefit from knowing about them; a few are infamous, others are just noteworthy. I've also thrown in some descriptions about hosts that cater to specific needs or clientele, such as Matrix clubs, games and brothels.

> Captain Chaos
    Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 09:12: 49 (EST)

HACKER HOUSE

Security Code: Red-Hard
by Grid Reaper

Put simply, Hacker House is the best place to score killer code on the 'trix. If you need software—utilities, personaware, component logics, smart frames, whatever—Hacker House will have what you need. But wait, there's more. Hacker House is not just a software seller, they're also a programmer enclave, beta-testing group, fence, software pirate haven and shadow cooperative all rolled into one.

HACKER HEAVEN

Hacker House was the brainchild of Fred Corley, Erica Kunkel and Santiago Fernandez. The members of this trio were all top-rated code-crunchers, coveted by the top compcorps. After years of hard work in sterile computer labs and restricted-access Matrix environments, not to mention periodic extractions and whip-snapping managers, they'd had enough of the corporate life. By pooling their resources and piles of hard-earned cred, they were able to put their salaryslave-of-the-month skills to work. A few hacked databases and self-sponsored shad-

PRESCOTT

owruns later, the trio was set up outside of corporate walls, with new names and identities. They purchased a loft space in a bad part of town, hooked up their own server, and set to work cranking out their own code. While the other two whipped up new proggies, Santiago took the nice little cache of corporate wares they had walked off with to the shadow market. Before long, the three were in business.

❷ And we're supposed to believe their corps didn't track them down and off them?
❷ Peri

❷ These folks knew what they were doing. They had their old employers convinced that they either no longer existed, were extracted by a rival corp or were buried after a heart attack caused by job-related stress. The ruses were eventually noticed, but not until they had disappeared into the shadows.
❷ Grid Reaper

❷ The corps did catch up with Santiago. In 2058 a group of Cross Seraphim "invited" their former corp citizen to return home at gunpoint. He hasn't been seen since.
❷ Fallen Angel

Hacker House is now a full-fledged cooperative business operation, with close to twenty owners/employees. They still operate out of the same loft, nicknamed the L0pht after some turn of the century hacker-phone phreak outfit. I'll avoid naming the exact physical location, as unexpected visitors tend to get mauled by their pet bogies.

The group is mostly composed of ex-corp programmers and wizkid deckers off the street, with a sprinkling of techies and deckmeisters thrown in for good measure. They churn out a solid portion of the code they sell all by themselves, though the majority is purchased from other sources.

❷ This crew is ultra-nerdy. Any outside code that comes in is given a thorough overhaul. They prefer to debug anything they might sell, and if they get really excited about something, they'll spend months tweaking it to the point where it might not even be recognized by its original programmer.
❷ Raid

❷ What sort of rates do they pay for hot wares?
❷ Cam

❷ Depends on the source and the quality of the product. If it's a hot new SOTA icebreaker from Novatech's labs, we'll pay up to twice the street rate for an equivalent program. If it's a piece of Wuxing freeware with an interesting little option worked in, we may trade you an extra mapchip we have laying around for it.
❷ Hack Tech

❷ The HH crew has the know-how and capabilities to reverse engineer object-only code. They usually only bother if they're going to net a new killer app out of it.
❷ Sidewinder

THE CATALOG

Hacker House offers all of their software-for-sale through their catalog host. Given the frequency and quantity of times this host has broken various software piracy and copyright laws, they naturally keep it well secured and on the move. You can almost always find a SAN to Hacker House through your local Shadowland node.

If you find it, you can login using a guest account—paying customers receive private accounts for future logins. The host is sculpted like a museum. Each program for sale has its own display, complete with an interactive multimedia system for visitors to view the specs or watch a clip of the prog in action. The Hacker House crew plays it safe and doesn't actually store any of these programs on the host. If you want to buy one, you drop 'em the cred and they ship out a chip to you overnight. If you're really jonesing to test-drive a utility, they do allow customers to download a one-shot, self-erasing demo for 10 percent of the asking price.

❷ Hacker House carries it all, not just decker utilities. Need a knowsoft for your next run, or an autosoft to plug into your drone? How about the code for scramble IC, or maybe a wiz automatic factory control application? If you need it, Hacker House has it—or they can get it for you.
❷ Dead Deckers Society
   "In Kibo We Trust"

All of the really dangerous, highly illegal and nova-hot utility displays are kept in a secondary secure host. You have to pay a 100 nuyen fee just to access this host, and they pay really close attention to those who come inside. It's here that you'll find the black hammer and killjoy routines, the gray and black IC code, demolitions activesofts and even the occasional Black Death BTL sourcecode. And before you ask—no, you can't download demo copies of these puppies.

❷ What? They sell BTLs? Sign me up!
❷ Melter

❷ Think again, twit. These chummers aren't beetle-dealers, so you'll have to get your fix from the Yak on the corner. These chummers are computer geeks, though, so any bit of wiz programming will get their eye, and some of the finer BTL options do fall into this category. So, yes, you can score the occasional BTL program from them, but beware the side effects ...
❷ Hollow

Hacker House also advertises that they'll do custom programming—all you have to do is feed them the cred and the specs. So if you want that katana attack utility to spew little blood droplet icons around the Matrix when you whack something with it, they'll cook it up for you for just a bit extra.

● Whatever you do, don't buy the 'ware written by that Grid Reaper guy. It's so bug-ridden I have a hive growing inside my 'deck. <Grin>
● Hack Tech

● If you're low on cred, or just feeling ornery, you can sometimes arrange to beta-test a new program the Hacker House crew is working on. They like to receive field-test reports, and so sell such copies at a discount. Be warned, you may be placing your brain on the line.
● Zero

LONE STAR

Security Code: Blue-Average to Red-Hard
by Midnight Angel

Don't try to kid yourself: it's going to happen. Sooner or later, it always does. Maybe your partner got pulled in by the Star after a run gone bad, or maybe you've been framed and are in deep drek, or maybe you're getting paid a lot of nuyen to pull someone else out of deep drek. Whatever the reason, almost all of you deckers reading this will, at some point in the future, attempt a run against a Lone Star host. I say attempt, because unless you pay attention to what I'm about to tell you, most of you won't come out of it with all the neurons you went in with.

Right about now, most of the target audience for this doc is posturing dramatically and saying, "But Midnight Angel! I've got this drek-hot deck and gigs of bleeding-edge software and the exuberance of youth! What have I to fear?" Okay, I'll give you a quick answer, and then I'll start from the beginning. The short answer: GridSec.

GRIDSEC

Some of you are scoffing, but when you're running against a Lone Star host, you have to understand that there are more security deckers per capita in one place at one time than you're likely to find anywhere else on the Matrix, and their only job at that point is to keep people like you from doing the things you want to do. Let's also remember that you're on *their* home turf.

● The Angel's right. At any given time, the local Star host will have a squad of GridSec deckers performing monitoring and security duties. Remember that a lot of these slags are "reformed and rehabilitated" (yeah, yeah, I know) deckers, and they know their biz at least as well as you know yours.
● Bicycle Racer

If Lone Star holds the local law enforcement contracts, GridSec will also be all over the city's municipal LTG and possibly the RTG. Depending upon the specifics of the contract, these deckers are usually authorized to track down computer criminals. Some of 'em take their job more seriously than others, and actively hunt deckers who are wanted or who they suspect of causing trouble. GridSec does "field" investigations for Matrix crimes in their jurisdiction, and they also tackle any Matrix checking that may be called for by other investigations (pulling phone records, hacking voicemail, tracking Gridlinked cars—you get the idea).

● These so-called deckers are loaded for bear with SOTA decks and utilities. They seem to be particularly fond of track and killjoy, and they've been known to whip out the black hammer when they don't feel like filing arrest paperwork.
● Dixie Hick

● If they trace you, expect to see a Strato-9 surveillance drone outside your crib by the time you unjack. A vanload of cops won't be far behind, so you'll have to ditch the drone to avoid getting picked up.
● Val

GridSec deckers are required to use a uniform icon. They basically look like standard Lone Star beat cops, maybe a bit more pristine. A lot of the deckers get away with adding slight modifications to their persona and utility icons, to give themselves a little unique flair.

INSIDE THE STAR

All right, now that we've got that out of the way, let me tell you what you'll find and what you'll be up against. The Star maintains a host in every city where it has a contract, whether that contract is for the whole municipality or just for a business within that city. These hosts all look basically the same—a simple façade depicting an Old West-style stockade, with the Lone Star insignia and name clearly emblazoned above the gate. How big they are depends on the size of the unit in the city. Seattle's, for instance, is quite an imposing structure, while the host in Dayton, Ohio (where they only contract as security for a pair of single-A corps) is a tiny affair hardly worth the effort to maintain. This façade is part of Clay Wilson's fascination with recreating the Texas Rangers. Apparently, the image of an old-time fort is supposed to be at once reassuring and intimidating. When he took over, Clay's little brother James apparently decided not to change it.

Getting inside the main gate is actually quite easy, because it leads to the public access areas of the system. Once inside, you're on the main street of a bustling Old West frontier town, complete with cowboys and horses and the occasional gunfight or saloon brawl. Here, a curious Matrix citizen can peruse the official history of the corp at the saloon, visit a virtual recruiter at the courthouse and see if they're actually Star material, or even go to the smart frame posing as a deputy at the sheriff's office and report a crime. These public areas see a tremendous amount of traffic; even though they're typically only a Blue security rating, they're generally high-powered machines capable of supporting dozens of icons at a time without skipping a beat.

● Just because it's public access doesn't mean that there's not a boatload of IC on the public nodes. Lone Star and GridSec have made paranoia their life's work, after all. It's all white tracer-style stuff in the public sections, and it only goes off if you do something glaringly stupid, but it's there nonetheless. Don't get cocky.
● Brer Rat

Now the target audience is going, "Get on with it, Angel. Where's the good stuff? Where are the criminal records, the investigation reports, the internal corp files?" It's there, but it's buried under more layers of IC than God put on the North Pole. It's important to realize that all the vital information that the likes of you or me are interested in wouldn't be on a local host at all if Lone Star had their way. They'd rather it all be on their own PLTG, insulated from the Matrix, to prevent enterprising deckers like ourselves from getting in and wiping out our criminal records, and all the rest of their central files, for that matter. However, they have to keep some of the data live on the Matrix in order to do their jobs. Therefore, they keep locally relevant information on a system in the local precinct house host, insulated, but not completely isolated, from the rest of the Matrix.

❷ The Star also has a slew of reciprocal data-access agreements with various national and international law enforcement agencies. Not only is it good for business, it lends them credibility as a real cop shop themselves.
❷ SPD

❷ While LS goons tend towards the slope-browed end of the scale, cops are cops. It's good police work to find out if a suspect is also wanted in another jurisdiction, and that works both ways. A guy who gets busted in Seattle might also be wanted by the Ghosts in the Tir, or vice versa. Whoever has him might not bother to extradite him, or even acknowledge that the crime he committed in that other jurisdiction is even really a crime, but they're going to want the information either way.
❷ Shadow Badge

❷ You can be sure that they don't share all their information. Especially when it's about runners that Lone Star itself has used on occasion.
❷ Nightfire

The files in question are typically buried near the PLTG SAN, several hosts down in Lone Star's system, requiring a talented decker to bypass at least two chokepoints to get there. If you start trippin' IC, you're going to find yourself in the middle of one of those old Clint Eastwood flat-screen spaghetti westerns, with no guarantee that you're going to be the hero.

❷ Even if you get to the files, you're only going to be able to erase the local copy of any records you find there. Local systems link up to the PLTG roughly every four hours, to upload new data to LSHQ and to sync local records with their central counterparts. The odds of you making it onto the PLTG and getting to the central system (which makes a local host look like a carnival ride) are very slim, but it can be done.
❷ Red Wraith

❷ You may not need to get all the way in. I heard a revenge tale of a decker that got stiffed for a fee. He posed as a GridSec decker, and created an arrest record for his ex-client, which was uploaded to LSHQ. The guy got picked up two

weeks later for the fake charges, but other evidence got him snared. Nice little personal run.
❷ Retro Bob

MALAYSIAN INDEPENDENT BANK
Security Code: Green-Average to Red-Hard
by Snow Tiger

Like the cosmic principles of yin and yang, elements of the magical tradition of wuxing, the Malaysian Independent Bank (MIB) has both a dark and a light side. As a member of the Pacific Prosperity Group, the MIB stands in the light, illuminated by media cameras and economic watchdogs. Yet the MIB casts a long, dark shadow behind it, hiding its underworld ties and pseudo-legal business operations.

The M!B humbly began its existence as a struggling financial institution, born from the remnants of other banks ruined by the Crash of '29. The MIB relied heavily on the growing Matrix, barely making itself competitive by selling itself as an offshore tax haven for foreign venture capitalists. The MIB's shady reputation quickly drew shady customers, specifically Triads who were looking for yet another haven through which to launder their money. In a few short years, the MIB's services fell deeper into the shadows. To protect itself from authorities, the MIB became singularly adept at concealing its operations and services behind false trails, anonymous transactions, fronts and shell companies.

❷ It wasn't just the Triads and black-handed corps who took advantage of the MIB. I know a lot of shadowrunners from this period who used the MIB for untraceable accounts and similar deals.
❷ FastJack

Over time, the MIB grew in size and influence, and actually began to act somewhat autonomously from its triad masters. The bank simultaneously took on more legitimate and more illegal activities. A number of non-Japanese corp clients who felt discriminated against by Japanese-controlled banks like the Pac Rim Bank turned to the cheap rates offered by the MIB for traditional banking services. The MIB was able to undercut its competition by relying heavily on its illegal services. Given its nature as a Matrix-oriented institution, the MIB easily adopted some services common to data havens, such as secure data storage, middleman paydata transactions and anonymous mail services.

In a surprising move, Zeta Ahmad Aziz, CEO and son of the MIB's founder, convinced the board to take the corp legit again in 2058. An "internal housecleaning" managed to shake away most of the triad elements, at no small loss. Despite setbacks from sabotage and criminal reprisals, Aziz led the MIB into a new era of opportunity.

❷ That Aziz fellow must have serious cajones to walk over the Triads like that. I'm surprised he's still alive.
❷ Kenjiro

❯ I suspect he used the MIB's copious financial records—detailing years of Triad shenanigans—as leverage. He took a calculated risk that the Triads would call his bluff, forcing him to take the MIB down with them. They took a few shots at him, missed, and decided to cut their losses before he made good on the threat.
❯ Jazz

❯ I heard that Aziz exploited an internal Triad conflict to get what he wanted. He cut one faction out of the picture, but the MIB's still pulling shady services for the other faction.
❯ Reid

❯ That would explain some strange anomalies I've turned up in MIB transactions. If it's true, the MIB's hiding that connection really well.
❯ Snow Tiger

MIB's new squeaky-clean image allowed it to squeeze right into position as financial backer of the Pacific Prosperity Group when it formed in 2059. MIB's special rates and opportunities for PPG members have pulled even more clients away from the Pac Rim Bank (PRB), increasing the PPG's power and MIB's wealth. This has developed into a low-level financial war between the MIB and PRB, being fought on all sorts of fronts, from insurance fraud to interest-rate slashing to stealing investment clients.

❯ This ugly business is great work for shadowrunners. The runs tend to be more strategic than tactical, and you usually have to face less security than if you were stealing a prototype. You may only have to tail a claims adjuster, or install surveillance equipment in otherwise unsuspecting offices. Primo ground for deckers, too.
❯ Prime Runner

The MIB's position with the PPG has also allowed it to gain a foothold on Wuxing's board. Wuxing offered small stock amounts as incentives for corps to join the PPG. The MIB has accumulated 8 percent of this stock through various deals.

❯ The man that represents the MIB on Wuxing's board is Zhang Shi Lin, whose uncle, Zhang Wen Po, is a Triad Lodgemaster from way back. Uncle Zhang sent him to Harvard Business School with his father's blessings in order to further the boy's education and bring him into the family business later on. He did join the family business as a legal financial advisor. Along the way, however, he made more than a few interesting friends. Take three guesses as to who one of them is. The first two don't count.
❯ HK Kid

❯ Wu Lung Wei?
❯ GnuB

❯ Give that boy a fortune cookie.
❯ HK Kid

INSIDE THE MIB

The MIB is an entirely virtual operation, meaning that the corp maintains no physical headquarters or similar physical assets—with the exception of their main servers. Every MIB employee telecommutes to work, including the board. All meetings are held in virtual conference rooms or via conference call, and the bank issues no corp scrip, just electronic cred.

❯ Where are the MIB's main computers located?
❯ Gray

❯ My traffic analysis indicates they're secured away somewhere in Hong Kong, but they keep a pretty tight lid on it. I suspect they keep backup servers in Bangkok of all places. Originally they were based in Kuala Lumpur, but they've moved around a bit to protect themselves.
❯ Snow Tiger

❯ Most of the MIB's fiber is provided by PacRim Communications Unlimited, a fellow PPG member.
❯ Optik

The MIB's main host is located on the Kuala Lumpur grid, and is a breathtaking example of skilled sculpting. From the grid, the MIB host appears as an elaborate palace built from ebony and teak. Inside, the host replicates a scene from the thick Borneo forest in an anime style.

Another PPG member, Mangadyne, provides the MIB's internal sculpting. Passive IC programs are rendered as adorable elements of the forest—usually fuzzy wide-eyed animals. Proactive IC takes on the much more ominous appearance of armored mechas, crashing through the forest to flatten intruders. Security deckers take on similarly stylized icons, as power-armor clad system defenders.

Like other online banks, the MIB's system architecture includes a layer of public-access hosts. These areas are filled with advertisements and service details, and stalked by shiny manga customer representatives. A second layer of client-access hosts provides a more secure environment for online banking and account transaction. Here clients can transfer funds, check their records, open or close accounts, make investments, cash out CDs, fill up certified credsticks and so on. A third layer, packed with security, offers a private area for top clients and non-advertised services: traceless transfers, virtual security boxes, anonymous accounts and the like. The fourth, ultra-secure level handles the behind-the-scenes business of the bank. This is where the detailed records and accounts are stored—but good luck hacking your way in. Both the third and fourth layers are separated off by chokepoints, and Mangadyne's IC is nothing to laugh at.

> If you see a mecha in silver armor, you've spotted a sysop. The sec deckers sport red mecha icons. At any given time you'll have about a dozen sec deckers in the system, keeping an eye on the high traffic flow and backing up the IC as necessary.
> BG

> Watch out for an icon with "Hong Shen" ("Red Ghost" to those of you who are Chinese-impaired) etched into his armor. He's the MIB's hotshot deck-puncher. He tows around a nasty smart frame loaded with hog, killjoy and track utilities. I hear he's just a nineteen-year old kid, but he's smoked more intruders than I care to admit.
> China Doll

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY
Security Code: Orange-Easy
by Groucho Marxist

Some of my chums here might come after me with torches and pitchforks for saying this, but a few years back I actually found myself wishing my homeland of California were part of the UCAS. Mind you, it was just a short and temporary dream inspired by the presidential campaign a certain large lizard was making on the other side of the continent. Over here in CalFree, "government" is a four-letter word, but Dunkelzahn appealed to a lot of the forward-thinking, free-wheeling radicals who worked with San Francisco's October 25 Alliance. The Japanacorps balked at the idea of a dragon for president, which immediately made us smile. It also seemed that Dunkelzahn was really intent on helping out the little people. Little did any of us know that even after his death, the sly old wyrm would find a way to level the playing field a little, and in our neck of the woods, no less.

Load up your online copy of Dunk's will and scroll to the end if you want to know what I'm talking about. "To the People's University of the California Free State, I leave the access code to a Matrix location I think you will find quite useful." How right he was.

It turns out that this location wasn't so wiz because of what was inside—the prize was the location *itself*. What we found was a powerful host system with plenty of storage room and processing power. Even better, the construction of the host made it ideal for an online educational institution. As a bonus, one of the "rooms" within the host was a file archive packed full of skillsoft source code and virtual instructor programs. Everything you might ever want to learn, or teach to a rebellious population was there in spades, from legal separation/secession methods to subversive means of opposing a government. Even better, the host was designed to create sim sessions based on these programs—the perfect VR teaching tool. A second "room" was a news archive that received up-to-the-minute news reports on both the Bay area and radical groups worldwide. As far as we can tell, there's a small army of searchbot agents out there grabbing the latest news and discussion and forwarding it our way.

All in all, we were handed the keys to a new level of self-education. It couldn't have come at a better time.

THE UNDERGROUND ONLINE

While everyone in the UCAS was caught up in campaign fever, life was tough for my friends at the People's University. The Japanese occupational government was trying hard to shut down the University as a result of the lie that it was "harboring known terrorists and encouraging acts of terrorism." The truth is that they were really offering an education to folks like you: shadowrunners, SINless and those who ended up with the short straw in life.

❯ Bloody red tripe. Groucho failed to mention the courses in small-unit tactics, rifle shooting or homemade demolitions. They didn't have those where I went to university.
❯ Terminus

❯ It's true, the People's University does teach paramilitary lessons in addition to other skills such as history, science and foreign languages. We exist to give oppressed people an opportunity to change their lives, and sometimes that requires the skills necessary for action.
❯ Upriser

Day by day, Japanese corporate spies got better at discovering the floating locations of our classes in the area, and they also got more violent about shutting them down. In a way, our own increasing popularity was to blame. As our classes grew and catered to more of the SINless community, it became easier for the Japanacorps to attack us. The folks at the People's University were stuck between a rock and a hard place: either reach out to more people and run the risk of more violent backlash or go underground for safety but leave behind all the folks who need our help. That's when the dragon stepped in.

❯ Things were looking real grim for the People's University back then. Mysterious "accidents" were plaguing class sites, and people who attended the classes were receiving threats, getting beat up or being rounded up as "terrorists" and never seen again.
❯ Bay Jewel

After a few weeks of strenuous internal debate, the main organizers of the People's University decided a new course of action was called for. The medical clinics and food pantries that the University used to control shifted into the domain of the October 25 Alliance's staff, while the bulk of the University's courses moved online.

Online universities have existed for decades as extensions of traditional brick-and-mortar universities. Students registered at MIT&T can take courses through their online university while away on a corporate research internship. However, those universities have always favored their traditional classes over their online ones, and most professors balk at teaching classes where their students are all icons. Old universities see online classes as a necessity to stay competitive but not as a radical way of re-examining education. It takes a revolutionary university for that.

❯ This is beginning to sound like an advertisement.
❯ Noodle Boy

❯ The crew at the People's University is a proud bunch. It comes from risking your life to help people with few opportunities. While some of their revolutionary propaganda gets a tad strong for me, I won't deny that they are some of the greatest people I've ever met. Always willing to help out a runner in exchange for a gem of knowledge or experience.
❯ Findler-Man

How it Works

The courses offered by the University come in all shapes and sizes. Some classes are formatted according to the old standby of a single instructor teaching a class, though class sizes are intentionally kept small (ten or fewer, usually) to increase the amount of attention per student. Quite a few have adopted more cooperative learning methods, either functioning as more of a shared-experience study circle or having the students alternate as instructor. (This is where those skillsofts and virtual instructors come in quite handy.) A lot of classes use the programmable virtual sims provided with the host to help teach, especially those that teach hands-on skills like electrical repair or home demolition. Radical pedagogy is the order of the day, and you won't find any of the hierarchical institutions prevalent in mainstream colleges. The staff is comprised of volunteers, there's no tuition or grades, no tenure and no competing for grants or name recognition. There's no such thing as a stupid question, and each of the students who benefits from our knowledge is encouraged to turn around and help us out later.

❯ Though most of the classes described are adult-oriented, the University also operates a substantial number of basic educational courses for children of all ages. The movement realizes that they need to prepare the future generation, and that means starting them off with a solid education in an encouraging environment.
❯ Dropout

❯ The University still offers a few real-world classes, mostly stuff that's hard to simulate. They also have a program to help those in the community gain Matrix access if they don't have it already. No point in having a virtual school if no one has the gear to attend it.
❯ Pablo

Attending a course is easy, assuming you at least know the Bay area underground. All you need to do is sign up, then attend the classes. Given the ease of access, classes tend to fill up fast, but there are no "semesters", so new classes begin every week.

As a Matrix institution, the People's University can now bring in instructors and students from around the globe. We've been quite successful at inviting revolutionaries from around the world to come and teach their skills and promote radical
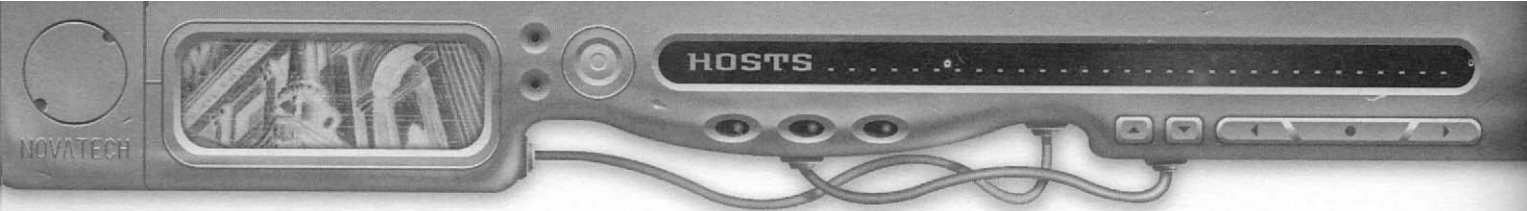
thought. We've had Huk pirates give courses on guerrilla warfare, noted anarchists discuss leaderless modes of organizing and resistance, and even a Yucatan rebel shaman give a seminar on using nature magic without harming nature.

Despite our accessibility, we only allow students from the Bay Area to sign up. If we were to open our doors to the world, our capabilities and resources would quickly be stretched to the limit. We are, however, willing to help other locales organize their own free schools, and allow them to use our learning resources.

❷ They can't keep this operation going without a budget. Where are they getting their funding?
❷ Pensive

❷ Mostly through donations, benefits and the occasional armed expropriation. We have also received a few large, anonymous cred donations. They came string-free, so we didn't question them. Anyone who wants to give us money and then expects to order us around can frag off.
❷ Slingshot

❷ I have it on good authority that Novatech slides some cash and support down the University's way. Not only is the University a good testing ground for new Matrix technology, but this relationship also allows Novatech to keep an eye out for new shadow-talent, which is something they've been in need of since bullying their way into the Big Ten. Not to mention that Novatech loves anything that puts a thorn in the side of the Japanacorps.
❷ Reid

THE HOST ITSELF

Our new site has kept us out of the reach of the Japanese occupational forces. We've shown them that our power extends beyond their geopolitical control and into a free online world. Once you log into the University's host, you are in a new world of liberated thought.

The University sculpting throws away the traditional architecture of physical universities, and instead is full of open-air amphitheaters and plazas where classes can gather under a digitally rendered sun. Everywhere you look, people are proclaiming knowledge and gathering crowds of supporters, or digital posters announce meetings or lectures. It radiates a cosmopolitan aura, with icons of every type and look imaginable mingling and learning. Unlike our early days in San Francisco, we no longer need to hide.

❷ They're not entirely free and clear. The occupational forces do their best to block Matrix access, and Japanacorp deckers have succeeded in the occasional intrusion and caused some damage. If you find a class cancelled because of system damage or host shutdowns, don't be surprised. It's the price of freedom.
❷ FastJack

❷ Where is the host physically located? Why haven't the Japanacorps nuked it yet?

❷ Switchback

❷ Word around here is that the computers are located on a private island that belonged to Dunkie in the Caribbean. The University sent out a small cadre staff to live on the island and run things there, while the rest oversee things remotely. If you ask me, living on a remote tropical island running a state-of-the-art host system doesn't sound like a bad gig.
❷ R. Caruso

A dedicated but entirely volunteer sysop staff monitors the People's University daily, maintaining it against occasional attacks by those who would like nothing more than to shut down one of the last free voices left in the Sixth World.

Very little of the sysop staff is made up of actual deckheads; we are a group of political idealists and activists, not console cowboys. Although we have one or two skilled deckers who act as sysops in the University system, most of the folks in charge here are a combination of revolutionaries and teachers. The community we've built is more important than a crew of nova-hot deckers. Anyone who messes with the People's University messes with all the people who support us and learn from us. That, chummers, is far worse an enemy to make than any decker.

❷ I'm sure the corps are wetting their pants.
❷ Bung

❷ The power suits know they can't hide behind fences and armed security forever. After all, they need people to build those fences and guard them—and more and more of those slags are on our side.
❷ Slingshot

ZURICH-ORBITAL
Security Code: Red-Hard
by RocketMan

Drop the words "Zurich-Orbital" within earshot of shadowrunners, and you know they'll stop and listen. Every runner worth his rep knows the basics of how the corps built their castle in the sky, but they won't know much beyond that. I say we open this can of worms and see what crawls out.

❷ If you need a refresher course on Z-O's history and occupants, check out the Corporate Court file in the *Corporate Download* e-book.
❷ Captain Chaos
   Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 09:13:32 (EST)

To hop onboard the Z-O Matrix system, one must first locate one of the dedicated satellite uplink nodes buried somewhere in the Matrix, usually within a black corporate host. Expect such nodes to be well-secured and layered in IC thicker than Lofwyr's hide. Z-O will only initiate a commlink with a ground station on their guest list, and it won't accept incoming

transmissions. The database listing these stations is isolated every time Zurich-Orbital goes online with the ground. This keeps unauthorized personnel (that's you and me) from waltzing in and making off with their list every time they hold one of their private parties. Full handshaking occurs at both ends of the link-up, and all communications are heavily encrypted. If somehow the miracle of coming this far has happened for you, you'd better know the parameters, protocol and encryption algorithms. If not, your chummers will be hosting a closed-casket funeral.

❯ Wow. It's even got a secret handshake.
❯ Agent 68

❯ Though Z-O is difficult to hack, it can be done. I wouldn't recommend it to anyone without the skills, the gear and a solid decade of decking under their belt; and even then I'd give 'em a stern warning. But it can be done.
❯ FastJack

To make it worse, all commlinks to Z-O are timed, meaning you'll only have a limited amount of time until the signal is dropped and you're dumped back to groundside. Depending on the ground station and the amount of traffic Z-O has to drop and pick up, this can be anywhere from half a second to half an hour.

❯ The way I scan it, when Z-O drops one connection they simultaneously open another with a separate ground station. Any "priority" transmissions that are still in progress—those old corp geezers can really get long-winded with their phone calls—get handed over to the new connection (just like cellular towers handoff cell calls from a mobile phone). Only transmissions connecting to certain accounts can be labeled as a "priority" —but if you can validate yourself as such a privileged user you're set.
❯ Red Wraith

❯ You can also jam open the uplink SAN, in the same way as you would a vanishing SAN. Z-O has specific safeguards against this, however, so it's not as easy as it sounds.
❯ Orbital Bandit

To avoid the need to haul even more computers into orbit, Z-O keeps their system pretty streamlined. Quite a bit of it sticks to basic UMS iconography to minimize system load; they really only sculpt the important elements. Besides, this allows them to reserve processing power to rip up Joe Decker if he sneezes near their data.

❯ That's how you know you're about to die—everything gets generic.
❯ Pancho Vanilla

According to some records I've scanned, the Z-O system is maintained by three sysops who collectively call themselves the Fates. Past the SAN and chokepoint, the system is divided into three separate and self-contained sections: The habitat, the

Corp Court and the Z-O Bank. Each sysop oversees a different section: Clothos watches the bank, Lachesis presides over the court and Atropos takes care of the habitat.

I dug myself several deep holes looking for data on this trio, but this is all I have. Clotho may be female, may be from Germany and may have a personal tie to Transys Neuronet. Lachesis may be male, may be from North America, reports directly to Jean-Claude Priault and has expressed an interest in designer label clothing (hey, I take what I can get). Atropos is male, may have a connection to one or two of the retirees aboard the Habitat, and more likely just in keeping with the name, has demonstrated an almost morbid fascination with longevity and death.

As far as I can tell, these three are also the only security deckers. They do keep a group of black hammer-wielding programs around, called the Maenads. No surprise, but they have icons appearing as a mob of drunk and temporarily insane, bloodthirsty women. These may just be smart frames or agents, or they may be hunter-killer SKs. Either way, they're deadly.

THE HABITAT HOSTS

Okay, anyone thinking of attempting to bring it down out of orbit via relayed commands or some drek like that might as well give up that idea right now. The habitat's command and control systems are on an isolated system, so there'll be no bringing down the establishment from within. The best you'll be able to get are some maintenance functions and a view through the habitat's internal cameras.

The real gold mine here is the datastores. There are a whole slew of them, each owned by slags possessing various levels of immense power. Each of the Habitat's retirees has one, as do a good number of sundry high-level executives from each of the Big Ten, half the Princes of Tir Tairngire, a smattering of top government leaders and even the late President Dunkelzahn (bequeathed to Hestaby in his will).

Each datastore is like a small world of its own, with iconography different from its neighbors. Most of 'em have security colder than Ehran's smile, though there are a few exceptions.

❯ I managed to get a crack at the datastore of Geraldo Solis, the newest habitat resident (ex-Aztechnology). The encryption was of an almost unheard-of quantum level. No way in Hell was I ever going to crack it.
❯ Clipper

❯ Speaking of Solis, I tapped a downlinked commcall between him and Aina Dupree, the vice chairperson for the Draco Foundation. They had (for them) a fairly long chat. Quite interesting, but definitely not cheap. Inquiring minds can e-mail me their bids.
❯ Black-Eyed Suzan

The only other host of interest here is the medical host, which is packed full of data on all sorts of quacky longevity experiments and medical documentation on the residents and their collective slide towards oblivion. If you find Atropos anywhere, it'll likely be here, skulking about in his cloak.

THE BANK

This could arguably be the most secure section of Matrix in the entire world. Why? Big Ten money. The Z-OG deals exclusively with data transactions, handling arbitrage, loans, transfers and a load of other financial operations. They use only the best encryption and extremely complicated redundant transmission schemes that only the world's think tanks can come up with and the megacorps can make or buy. I seriously doubt you'll ever find tougher IC to crack. That's also why it really isn't even worth attempting to deck. If by some wild chance you managed it and kept your brain from being lique-fied, a breach in security might actually cause the fragile Big Ten alliance and their bank to crash, dropping the world into a no-holds-barred corporate war to put the recent one to shame. No one would be safe.

From what I hear, Clothos patrols this section with a vengeance, and always has her nose to the grindstone. She's always available to report to any one of the Gnomes (the nine-person bank board) for any reason.

❷ A few nihilistic deckers have made it their life's ambition to break that great digital vault in the sky. Most of them are part of a very fraternal, and understandably clandestine group. They have no official name or organization, but I've heard them referred to as "Sky-Miners." They envision breaking the Z-OG Bank as a Zen-like level of decking. IMHO, they're fruit-cakes. It ain't gonna happen.
❷ Pragmaticus

CORPORATE COURT

If benchmarks for elite decking are swinging through Aztechnology or doing some light browsing through Mitsuhama's R&D, then decking the Zurich-Orbital Corporate Court nodes would be the ultimate prize. While the protections here are as nothing compared to what you might find at the Z-OG Bank, there's still more than enough here to put a serious cramp in your day.

You may yarf when you hear this, but the system is actu-ally sculpted to look like Mount Olympus. After the sterile wasteland of the bank, the Court's hydra and cerebus hound IC routines are a feast for the eyes. To compound their arrogance, many of the Court justices have taken to using icons resem-bling the Greek gods. Yves Aquillon, the Cross justice, takes great glee in the Artemis role, especially since Ares justices Paul Graves and Octavia Laux seem to get into their Ares and Athena icons, respectively. Jean-Claude Priault has cast himself in the role of Zeus, earning more than a few chuckles here and there from the smarter wags.

What can you find here? A lot, more than I could possibly describe. Secretly funded projects, black operations, pending Corporate Court mandates, internal investigations … you name it. There's even a bulletin board that lets authorized users keep up to date with decisions, post notices or report any problems. If you've made it here, you've gotten a glimpse of the inner workings of the halls of power. Put it to good use.

❷ Lachesis may not be very visible, but he's there more often then you'd think. It's difficult to determine when he'd consid-er it important to be there, making it hard to play while the cat's away.
❷ Maus

MATRIX CLUBS
by Pixie Thompson

As any net junkie can tell you, the Matrix has a subculture of its own. It works alongside the real world, but the rules and social mores are unique. The consequences of interaction through a virtual-reality medium have a significant impact on this subculture's trappings and methods of interaction. First and foremost, appearance is often quite distinct from reality. In an arena where anyone can appear as beautiful or disgusting as they choose, true social charisma and intelligence carry far greater weight. Likewise, the make-believe environment tends to jade people's appreciation of art, meaning that only the most creative elements can make an impact, and even that quickly disappears in the pursuit of instant self-gratification.

The various Matrix clubs are an example of this dynamic in action. Matrix clubs are not just simply places to socialize with-in the Matrix. Matrix clubs are also places to escape, to hold a private meeting behind anonymous masks, or to show off.

Most Matrix clubs have a nightclub motif, but all manner of settings are used: gothic cathedrals, space stations, alien landscapes, mushroom forests, you name it. Thanks to sim-sense technology, the environment is limited only by the pro-grammer's imagination and the amount of computer power that can be brought to bear.

Amongst these clubs, a few stand out as particularly inter-esting to shadowrunners.

THE CUBE
Security Code: Orange-Hard

A decker calling himself Jack[3] runs this place. Ironically, unlike other clubs with constantly changing and garish themes, the Cube strives to be ultimately bland and pedestrian. It appears as a simple, smooth, silver cube icon in the Matrix. The Cube does not offer accounts through its SAN—you have to hack your way in. This allows Jack[3] to secure a major decker clientele, keeping out the wannabes and making it a safe place to conduct biz.

❷ Pixie's pulling one over on us. Even if you get inside the Cube, you'll find nothing. That's cuz it's a virtual machine, and you need to crack through into the actual host to get in. Regulars love to watch the newbies hack in and look lost as they try to figure it out.
❷ Grid Reaper

The Cube's interior is more interesting—looks like some-thing H.R. Giger threw up after eating some mushrooms. The walls are covered with biomechanical designs and seats

emerge from the floor as you try to sit. The "drinks" are simply unreal. Because you're not actually drinking, it doesn't matter how grotesque they look, right?

If you ask nicely, side rooms are available for private meets. I hear that Jack3 also sells one-shot proggies under the counter, but don't quote me on that.

❷ Jack³ is actually three people. That's how he's there all the fraggin' time. And FastJack is actually one of them.
❷ DV8R

❷ Damn, my secret's out. I may as well retire now.
❷ FastJack

THE SCHWARZCHILD RADIANCE
Security Code: Orange-Average
The Radiance is quite popular, despite its underground status. Both conditions are a result of what the club peddles: BTLs.

The Radiance is only reachable through SANs in grids of areas that just really don't care, such as Berlin and Hong Kong. The club's main entrance SAN appears as the accretion disk of a black hole. Inside, the club's foyer is an area called the Freeport Station. The club is designed to resemble a space station from twentieth-century sci-fi movies, so most of the personas that pass through here adopt sci-fi icons to fit the theme. From Freeport you can hop a SAN into one of the club's three hosts: Planet Dance, Atlantis and the Event Horizon.

Planet Dance
As its name suggests, Planet Dance is the "dance" area of the club. It's full of heavy dance music and often uses more than a dozen DJs at once. Of course, no one is really dancing, they're just animating their persona icons from their seats at home. Personally, I prefer real dancing, but I guess people like to show off what they can do.

❷ This is where people go really wacky and strut their persona programming. You'll have icons that are twisting themselves inside out next to icons that are doing a three-legged jig or an aerial ballet. Neat to watch, pain to program. A lot of them incorporate visuals and other sensory effects, like the strobing girl who won the zero-g breakdancing contest, or the guy who crafted a prism icon that distorted whatever was "behind" him.
❷ Neon Wraith

Planet Dance is frequented by popular new musicians and record execs, and some companies view the club as a testing ground for new musical acts. Many popular DJs, such as DJ Keomi, Grand Master Flux and DJ Noize all started by spinning at Planet Dance.

Atlantis
While Planet Dance is the most popular, I prefer Atlantis because of its underwater theme. It takes a bit to get used to the sensory input of breathing water, but the warm water and slightly distorted acoustics make the place interesting to swim

around in. There tend to be few regulars at Atlantis—it sort of serves as the calm, chill alternative to the action and music in Planet Dance. Some of the young club kids come here to calm down if they can't handle whatever deviant BTL they're currently chipping.

❷ This is where most of the shadowdealing happens at The Radiance.
❷ The Dark Wight

❷ The Radiance runs a sideline VR prostitution racket here. The "mermaids" and "mermen" keep an eye out for any personas that are out for a swim on their own. Don't be surprised if you get solicited to visit their "seaweed patch" for a little virtual romp.
❷ Mack

The Event Horizon
The sculpting of the Event Horizon is simply staggering. Imagine you're on the edge of the universe, with everything collapsing in around you. Fantastic.

❷ You know, I've gotten vertigo from staring at that for too long.
❷ Sasha

❷ You have no idea how long it took to program that in just right.
❷ Charlie Schwarzchild

The Event Horizon is vice central. A bunch of smart frames designed as cigarette girls wander around and deal all of the latest BTLs, at steep prices. You make your selection, slot them the fee and get it downloaded into your brain right then and there. It's worth noting that the Radiance only deals out mood and tripchips that simulate old-school drugs such as ecstasy and LSD. For some reason they also have a strict no P-fix (personafix) policy.

❷ That's because people slotting P-fixes cause problems. Have you ever tried to deal with some cracker who's slotting the Evil Genius chip? P-fixes are just bad news.
❷ Jetdillo

❷ If you really want to get the full experience of the BTL, you'd better be running with a hot ASIST interface. Slottin' BTLs under a cold ASIST is like watching trid under water.
❷ Melter

❷ I can only assume that a syndicate backs this operation?
❷ Vince

❷ Bingo. It's a Yak-backed op. As far as I can tell, however, they merely provide the product and let the Radiance run autonomously.
❷ Pixie Thompson

PRESCOTT

MATRIX GAMES
by Kusanagi

There's nothing like slashing through an edge-of-your-seat adventure and coming out the hero without ever lifting your pinky finger. Matrix sim games are addictive because they simulate experiences that are either difficult to come by in real life, or outright impossible. Add on the thrill of conquest, the capacity to "kill" without wracking your conscience, and a high degree of techno-fetishism, and you've got yourself one alluring combination. Toss in the satisfaction of escapism, and you've defined why video games are an integral part of Matrix culture.

As most gamers will tell you, interactive online games played against live opponents are much more thrilling than standard games. For shadowrunners, these games can be stress-relief, a place to practice or test skills, or even an environment within which to arrange meetings or deals.

DAWN OF ATLANTIS

This game is produced by Brilliant Genesis and is currently the favorite of the online role-playing games. Despite the appearance of real-life elves, dragons and trolls, high fantasy games are more popular than ever. True, a lot of things have

changed within the genre. It is no longer acceptable to have all orks be evil, for example. But it seems that the appearance of things that existed only in fantasy novels has given fantasy fiction an influx of interest.

◗ Not all of the stereotypes have been eliminated. I'm a crass fraggin' elf in real life, but when I play one in a sim, I keep getting stares like I'm not playing my role properly. Dimwits.
◗ Roland

In this game, players take on a wide variety of roles, from troll wizards to human thieves. A few other races are available as well, particularly sprites, lizard-men and earth elementals. Though the bulk of the game is slaying monsters (not as easy as it sounds, as the DOA acronym holds to), DOA is also popular because it has an ongoing plot. Every fall the writers of the game line come up with new plot elements, which are (for the most part) continuous with the ones from the previous year. Players can look forward to a "new season" of adventure, as it were.

◗ A recent poll discovered that humans played most of the elf characters, while ork and elf players tended to play humans. It

also seems that dwarf players like to play dwarf characters and troll players like playing troll characters.
◗ Socio Pat

◗ I hear that Brilliant Genesis actually pays the Atlantean Foundation a consulting fee to help base their game in "historical reality." Can you believe those jokers?
◗ Ling

◗ There's a new hoop-kicking edition of DOA due out soon. Brilliant Genesis has already foiled at least one shadowrun attempting to steal the new subroutines.
◗ Lotus

PARANORMAL CRISIS

By far the most popular genre of Matrix games is the first-person shooter, survival-horror genre. It seems that people will never get tired of games that offer extreme amounts of gore and high-caliber weapons. In this category, Paranormal Crisis roars its supreme dominance.

The basis of this game and others of its type is very simple. The players are trapped in an underground research facility or some such contrived locale, which is filled to the brim with hordes of paranormal, genetically altered and cyber-enhanced creatures. The players must shoot their way through twelve levels of progressively tougher monsters in order to finally reach and defeat the biggest, nastiest creature of all at the end of the game.

◗ The kicker is that most of the paranormal creatures are based on real-life ones. If you ever wanted to see a blood kite or naga in action, slot this game for half an hour. It's a great way to brush up on your parazoology background.
◗ Cryptozoologist Carl

Paranormal Crisis is interactive in the sense that other players are also trapped in the setting, and they probably want to shoot you and take your gear. It's relatively easy to spot another player, because they're the only metahumans in the game. Players can also team up, increasing their odds of survival.

◗ You need to work on your shadowrunning team's small unit tactics under "real life" conditions? Play half a dozen rounds of Paranormal Crisis and you'll work together as smoothly as greased gears.
◗ Brick

This game is not just about obtaining huge guns and using them to splatter freakazoid critters. Along the way there are also puzzles that the players must solve in order to acquire bigger weapons with which to slay tougher monsters. The difficulty of the puzzles can be set in advance, from no-brainer mode to no-way-in-Hell-are-you-getting-out-alive mode.

◗ These games are highly addictive. Sure, it's not the same

feeling you get in a real fight, but having been in my share of gunfights, I've got to say that's for the best.
◗ Gunn Bunny

◗ Agreed, though the strangest thing I've found is that somehow video-game violence seems more "real" than real violence. I've been on a lot of real life runs that ended with shooting, and half the time I can't remember what exactly happened. I could remember the events leading up to it, and I could react to the aftermath, but the during part is usually kind of a blur. That never ceases to creep me out.
◗ Freeman

◗ It's called tunnel vision. Your psyche pulls back defensively, and your mind focuses on survival. Details become secondary.
◗ Vic

◗ That's one of the reasons I had cameras installed in my cybereyes, so I can play back events to see what actually happened.
◗ Argent

◗ No offense, Argent, but you aren't the kind of guy I thought would be reading a discussion on Matrix games.
◗ One-Eyed Jack

◗ Hey, all work and no play makes Argent cranky and bitter. Besides, I'm good at them.
◗ Argent

For players who made it through to the end of Paranormal Crisis, the same characters can be transferred to a range of spin-off games. One of these, with the brilliant title of "Shadowrun," takes the characters on a series of shadowruns to find out which corp was responsible for the Paranormal Crisis. Another spin-off called "Arcology Run" was recalled after Renraku threatened to sue, because the game was based on the events of the Seattle arcology shutdown.

◗ There are pirated copies floating around that are worth checking out, just for the morbidity factor if nothing else.
◗ Black Eyed Susan

THE KILLING FLOOR
Security Code: Orange-Average

The Killing Floor caters to competitors who are deadly serious. Some people won't settle for fake death and injury—they want the real thing.

The Killing Floor is an underground host that pits combatants against each other in a life-or-death dogfight using actual attack utilities. Most of the fights are contests of skill, or occasionally test the effectiveness of some new wares. Occasionally a grudge match will come along. But the real draws are the death matches fought with black hammer utilities.

❷ They now require competitors to keep a camera on their meat body, so paying clients can watch the fighters die in the real world.
❷ Snuffy

The sleazeballs who run the Floor subsidize two separate gladiatorial leagues. Naturally, there's plenty of opportunity here for bookies, loan sharks and other gambling parasites. Most of the deckers are newbies looking to make a name for themselves or Matrix gangers who are into the thrill. Occasionally you'll get the has-been who's looking for a last chance to grab the spotlight. There aren't any professional gladiators because, frankly, nobody stays on top long enough to make it worth the risk.

❷ The search for notoriety is sadly misplaced here. Corps don't generally hire gladiators when established runners are already field-tested. Occasionally independent hosts will hire these combat machines for a one-shot job, but the crossover to regular employment is limited.
❷ Agent 68

❷ The current champion of the Floor is a decker named Varg. His dire wolf icon has shredded every competitor he's faced, including three death match challenges.
❷ Mayhem

Despite the obviously grim nature of The Killing Floor, it is a very well-sculpted and designed system. The floor itself changes according to the whims of the ringmaster. The fighters might be on completely solid ground, or they might find themselves on a suspended floor hovering above molten lava. Often it will change whenever the ringmaster feels that the gladiators are boring the audience.

MATRIX BROTHELS
by Cyclops

The world will never want for lack of people who get off on dirty pictures and movies. Simsense and the Matrix may have added a new dimension to this venerable (or should that be venereal?) side of human nature, but the changes are largely on the surface. Underneath, it's the same as it's ever been.

Though you can still find the Matrix sites that offer up all sorts of porn via still pictures, video and simsense, the hottest wave of Matrix smut is definitely the cyberbrothels. Though cybersex isn't real, thanks to simsense and BTL tech, it certain-

ly seems that way, and that's all the incentive a legion of sex-starved customers need.
❷ On the positive side, it's the ultimate in safe sex.
❷ Troy

❷ Considering that the sex industry perpetuates the objectification of women, degrading their existence to nothing more than whores or sluts, I'd hardly say it promotes safety for women.
❷ Femina Ex Machina
❷ It's a living, babe. Doing runs for a corp slag is just another form of prostitution.
❷ Lady Fingers

❷ FEM's point is valid, since being a participant in your own oppression doesn't necessarily justify it. But who's to say that it's really a woman behind that female-looking icon? In modern virtual brothels, actual gender doesn't matter so much as performance.
❷ Fausto

Most Matrix brothels follow the standard routine established by pimps, madams and mob bosses around the world. You stop in, choose someone you like, and rent a private node for a little while. Thanks to iconography and sim-sampling, the range of choices is much larger and varied than in real life. You may have to pay a little extra for that special look or feel, or if you prefer a sim/BTL routine to a live "actor." If you're already paired off with someone and just need the right atmosphere, a number of nodes offer private sculpted environments to fit your sexual fantasies. These sites are also popular for bachelor and bachelorette parties.

Security on Matrix brothels is usually quite tough—they need to protect the privacy of their clients in order to stay in business, so they don't spare the cred on IC and security deckers. Having security deckers is a good idea anyway, as bordellos often have to deal with obsessed fans or other freaks who cause disturbances. Virtual sex sites are favorite targets of syndicate deckers who like to lace such systems with worms. They can then accumulate data on clients and use it for blackmail purposes. Some sites also keep files on preferred clients, listing their favorite sims, actors and fetishes alongside financial details, which can be juicy material in the wrong hands.

❷ It's good for runners to know the netiquette used in sites like these, as you

never know when a fixer, Johnson or contact may schedule a meeting in one. A target you're tailing or investigating may turn out to have some kinky fetishes, in which case some cred spread around to the right people or the right hacked file may give you quite an edge.
❯ Brick

❯ Be warned, a lot of the lower-class porn sites lace their own systems with worms, infecting you with endless pop-up advertisements or worse.
❯ Tripod

❯ The same goes for those "private nodes," some of which are fly-by-night operations that are really designed to snare people in syndicate blackmail operations.
❯ Sneaker

❯ I heard a rumor that one of these joints was siccing psychotropic IC on its clients that twisted them into sex maniacs. Can anyone verify that?
❯ Hoop

❯ As if anyone could tell the difference.
❯ Social Cynic

Aside from the run-of-the-mill cat parlors, a few stand out as unusual and intriguing.

MOONLIGHT HENTAI GARDEN
Security Code: Red-Average

A cyber-brothel with a distinct anime motif and a strict "members only" policy, The Moonlight Hentai Garden is an example of Matrix brothels at their best. Of all the sites I visited (purely in the interests of journalism, mind you), the Moonlight Hentai Garden was the most aesthetically pleasing.

While most sites just display lewd pictures and unoriginal captions, the Moonlight Garden is extremely tasteful. When you first enter, you appear at the entrance to an absolutely beautiful moonlit Japanese tea garden complete with pagoda. As you approach the gate, an anime-style geisha appears to verify your membership info.

❯ If you're not a member, expect that agent geisha to pull some anime martial arts and punt you out of the host.
❯ Mika

Once inside the garden you are treated to a beautiful landscape filled with painfully beautiful boys and girls, all of who are wonderful professionals, conversant in both Japanese and English, and ready to impersonate your favorite anime character for your sexual pleasure. The garden prides itself on being able to satisfy any sexual fantasy that is part of the anime/manga style of art. From little schoolgirls and -boys to tentacled-monster rape fantasies, they seem to be able to accommodate any fantasy in their chosen genre.

❯ Great. A place where gravity-defying body parts and teenage-boy fantasies become reality. Just what I needed.
❯ Kei

The actual cybersex is all done very privately. You are allowed to roam the grounds and proposition one of the working girls/boys or you can schedule an appointment in advance. After the preliminaries are done, you can then retreat to a private room in the pagoda.

NASTY HABITS
Security Code: Red Easy

There are times when you realize that the world in filled with people who have … unusual interests. Nowhere is this more evident than Berkeley-based Nasty Habits Studios. This small operation, run by a group calling themselves The Sisterhood, specializes in bizarre sims and cybersex with a blasphemous Catholic clergy twist.

If there's a strange fetish that can't be satisfied anywhere else, Nasty Habits has it. From the relatively tame mixed-metahuman options and orgy sims to the S/M and bondage crowd, you won't be let down if your tastes are different.

❯ Check out the "spirit sex" sims—out of this world!
❯ Chuck Chuck Razool

Unlike the Moonlight Hentai Garden, Nasty Habits has no pretty frills or window-dressing, aside from the usual routines to keep underage minors out. The people who come here know what they want and don't really need it to be prettied up.

❯ I just gotta say kudos to the sisters here. It's really nice to sim a skinflick that actually acknowledges that orks and trolls have sex drives without turning them into unstoppable barbarians who rape and pillage.
❯ Oscar G.

PERSONAS

I know most of you don't like to see your names and faces appear in print—shadowrunners tend to be shy that way. But we all know the corps like to keep records on us. After all, how are they going to know who to hire? Here at Shadowland, I'm amazed at how often we receive a data dump of dossiers lifted from the black pit of some corporate security datastore. Files like these tend to be a first choice when deckers raid a system. Face it, we're all voyeurs, and we love to take a look at the in-depth profiles of other people's lives. Especially when those profiles are about us or our close friends. Not to mention that it's good to know exactly how much the corps know about you.

When we receive dossier files, we drop them into the archives like everything else. If the dossier deals with someone we know, we usually try and give them a heads-up. After all, we don't want our comrades caught with their pants down. We may even delay making the files public for a few days, to give 'em some breathing time.

Recently, we received a whole mess of data that came straight from the personal files of Samantha Villiers. Seems someone was a little peeved at a prank pulled on them by Schroedinger's Cats—a Novatech-sponsored society of world-class deckers—and so repaid them by pulling a datasteal on their employer.

The timing of this coincided with the assemblage of this *Target: Matrix* package and it just seemed too good to ignore. I've selected ten dossiers of people who operate almost entirely in or through the Matrix to include here, as a small sampling of important personas. Each of these is a person you should know, or at the very least know of. They are players in the Matrix, from both sides of the spectrum—corporate and criminal. I've tried to choose dossiers that would represent the widest cross-selection of professions and specialties, to give you a feel of the variety that can be found. From deckers to sysops, info brokers to assassins, these ten are just a taste of those who live and die in the Matrix.

❷ Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 09:45:12 (EST)

ANUBIS

Real Name/Aliases: Anatoli Skonikov/Unknown
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: 20/Russian/Caucasian Human/Male
Distinguishing Physical Features: None
Area of Operation: Seattle, Worldwide Matrix
Specialties: Matrix Assassinations
Psychological Traits: Calculating, ambitious, reserved, detail-oriented

The decker referred to as Anubis was born Anatoli Skonikov in the slums of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy. When he was nine, his parents were killed and he was forced to live on the streets. His early years are connected with the Vory v Zakone, where he quickly advanced by following orders to the letter and demonstrating unwavering loyalty. His youth seems to have been the only impediment to his further advancement in that organization.

To overcome this disability, he arranged for a datajack to be illegally implanted when he was fourteen. He began to take on Matrix-based work for the organization, primarily data extractions at first. According to early sources, his performance was not all that the Vory desired, but his talent for cybercombat was undeniable. Rather than focus on the young man's shortcomings, they assigned him tasks more in line with his skills. In a short time, he became one of their most feared enforcers in the Matrix world, killing those who would try to compromise the Vory through the electronic world and making a lasting impression on others who might contemplate breaking the Vory v Zakone's operational directives.

In 2057, Skonikov performed a termination operation against a Vor in the Yunggart faction on the orders of his superiors, ostensibly to punish the transgressor for informing against the Vory. He was successful, but the faction denied the victim's guilt and Skonikov was forced to leave Vladivostok to restore harmony among the factions. He went to Seattle, where his superiors had contacts among the illegal Russian immigrant community. He was smuggled inside the UCAS borders and given false citizenship papers. He continued to work for the local Vory, soon making a name for himself in the shadow community. After only a few local hits, he was courted by

the group called Chimera to serve as their Matrix operative, and was trained accordingly following his induction. There is no verifiable information available on Skonikov's whereabouts or activities after 2058.

Anubis specializes in decker assassinations. His preferred methods use attack utilities that provide lethal levels of biofeedback, making them useful primarily against those running with a hot ASIST interface. For those occasional targets who run cold, he arranges a physical intrusion, replacing a commonly used skillsoft or simsense chip with a lethal "black death" BTL chip.

> ❷ That's not all he can do, either. A guy I used to run with got a little close to Chimera, so he switched to a cold ASIST until things cooled off. One day he goes to use his deck, and as soon as he powered up and jacked in, he's fried like a side order. When we checked his deck, there was a black chip hardwired into his MPCP with an ankh graphic on the top. Poor slot never knew what hit him.
> ❷ Rose Red

> ❷ It occurs to me that messing with assassins and then leaving your belongings unattended is kinda like paying money to have TARGET tattooed on your forehead. Real bright.
> ❷ Zephyr

Skonikov's personality profile shows an individual with signs of an antisocial personality disorder, commonly known as a sociopath. Interviews with former acquaintances describe a charming, cheerful individual who is capable of ruthless violence with no consideration of the moral implication of his actions. He does not express remorse for his conduct and is known to celebrate upon completion of successful jobs.

Skonikov is nondescript, with an average build, short black hair and black eyes. His only obvious cyberware is a datajack. His skill at blending into a crowd is masterful, and most witnesses of his work have been unable to give anything beyond the most general description.

Unimaginatively, Anubis' Matrix icon slavishly adheres to the 'standard' version of Anubis depicted in most Egyptian paintings. Specifically, a tall, thin man with a jackal's head, wearing the traditional white pleated loin cloth and a thick-banded pectoral, with bracelets on his right hand and an ankh

in his left. The one possible but unconfirmed exception to this is that the ankh is said to change in shape or size, depending on his actions. The ankh is obviously the graphic used for his attack programs, but we have no other information on what types of programs he prefers. The only outstanding feature of his icon is its amazing clarity and crispness of resolution, which suggests a very capable cyberdeck and high-end programs.

❯ This isn't any off-the-shelf icon suite, either. Anubis is a drek-hot programmer, and I'd be willing to sell off distant (or possibly close) relations to get my hands on his work. The man has a gift.
❯ Joey

Skonikov is a skilled termination specialist. Aside from his association with the group Chimera, he would be a valuable asset so long as he believes he can obtain something of value from us. His programming skills alone would make this an avenue worth pursuing, but his loyalty to the former Soviet Empire and his current associations could present complications.

FASTJACK

Real Name/Aliases: Unknown/Dozens (none used for extended periods)
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: 62/UCAS/Caucasian Human/Male
Distinguishing Physical Features: Unknown
Area of Operation: Worldwide (mostly UCAS)
Specialties: Decking, Programming
Psychological Traits: Dedicated, overachiever, cautious, confident expert

The decker known as FastJack has achieved legendary status within the shadows. One of the first deckers to make a name for himself, FastJack has survived the years to build a reputation that is simply unparalleled by any other shadowrunner.

Next to nothing is known about FastJack's true identity, location or history, and any relevant records have undoubtedly been altered or erased. He has been linked to dozens, if not hundreds, of shadowruns, though he has yet to be caught. By all indications, he should be near the top of the UCAS FBI's Most Wanted List, but like other agencies, the FBI seems unable to maintain a file on him.

Our sources indicate that FastJack never deals face-to-face, and rarely takes assignments that require physical intrusion. In all known circumstances, FastJack has dealt exclusively through his persona or through other indirect means. He claims to have custom-designed all of his own cyberdecks and written all of his own programs (The "Jack Hammer" utility is an infamous tool of destruction.)

❯ I once enjoyed the opportunity to witness FastJack in action. He cut through an icy Red host like nobody's business, swatting away security deckers like they were gnats. He performed an operation that I can barely even figure out how to describe, much less understand how he hacked it. Jack's the King, no doubt.
❯ Green Machine

Aside from open friendships with the heads of several data havens, a number of rumors also link FastJack to the Echo Mirage project and Ares CEO Damien Knight. In fact, some even claim that the two men are one and the same, though this is clearly ludicrous. If FastJack was indeed involved in Echo Mirage, his connections are so deeply buried that it is unlikely they will be unearthed at any point in the future.

❯ Some of those otaku fanatics really seem to have it in for Jack too. Guess he crossed their Big Daddy's path a few too many times.
❯ Neon Wraith

FastJack switches icons to fit his needs, but there is at least one that he favors. This ultra-resolution icon appears as a humanoid whose features and edges are blurred by constant accelerated motion, even when standing still, as if it was in fact vibrating dozens of times per second. An audible hum and the smell of ozone linger nearby, and when he moves he leaves tracers, trails and afterimages. A sharp wind also accompanies movement, and his actions are usually resolved with a whiplike snap.

FastJack is known to have several enemies and rivals, including Bash, a sysop of the Nexus. He is often forced to fend off unwanted challenges from up-and-coming deckers who want to make a name for themselves by taking him out. To date, each one of these challengers has not only lost, but also lived to tell the tale. There is open speculation that FastJack may be losing his edge as he ages, but since mental acuity counts far more than physical ability in the Matrix, that is unlikely.

❯ Well, that was enlightening. If anyone has questions, feel free to ask me myself.
❯ FastJack

GRID REAPER

Real Name/Aliases: Ev Downer/Ev Bathory, Ev Mortis, Reap
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: 23/UCAS/Black Human Ghoul/Male
Distinguishing Physical Features: Brown rubbery skin, unpleasant body odor, sharp nails and teeth common to ghouls. He uses cybereyes to compensate for his near blindness.
Area of Operation: Chicago, New Orleans
Specialties: Host penetration, software piracy
Psychological Traits: Passive-aggressive, morbid and unhealthy sense of humor, carries a chip on his shoulder about his infection

Grid Reaper was born a SINless human in Chicago's Noose. There is no documentation of his parentage, and it is assumed that they were killed or else abandoned Downer and his older brother early in his life. Until his early teens, he was raised by his brother in squats and gang hideouts. He achieved at least a rudimentary education, obtaining computer equipment and training by apprenticing himself to a "techie" following his brother's death in a gang battle. Our research shows that he began doing small-time decking jobs around the age of fourteen. It was at this time that he contracted HMHVV through a blood transfusion he was given by a local "street doc," following a gang attack which nearly killed him. He survived the trans-

formation, though acquaintances from his early days say his personality suffered from his physical change, focusing on survival to the exclusion of all else.

❯ Having to eat people every day will do that to you.
❯ Dark Father

The transition to his new lifestyle was smoother than normal, with Downer taking decking jobs for black-market organ sellers in exchange for food. During this period, he developed perverse behaviors that he still displays today, displaying his condition to others in order to frighten or provoke them. While this reckless behavior put him in jeopardy numerous times, it also served to build a reputation among other criminals and potential employers. His datajack and cybereye replacements were also added at this time.

❯ Reap used to pull this stunt where he'd catch a cab at night, and then stoke the cabbie's imaginations with ghastly street tales. Right when he arrived in the area he wanted, Reap would reveal his ghoul nature to the cabbie. Every time, the poor slob would hit the brakes and reach for a gun. But by the time they were ready, Reap was out the door and outta sight. "Free rides," he called 'em. He musta been a legend in cabbie circles.
❯ Brick

Prior to the enforcement of the Containment Zone, the handle "Grid Reaper" was becoming well known across the UCAS grids. His exploits were traced to a couple of large-scale Matrix intrusions before the CZ was created, but he disappeared for a time as the Chicago area was isolated. While many died or vanished during this period, Downer came out of the Chicago quarantine significantly more skilled than before. While there is no documentation of his life during this period, it can be assumed that his survival-oriented outlook and his reclusive nature served him well.

❯ Matrix work was pretty thin during that period, so I used the time to crank up my programming skills. It was actually a decent time, except for the bugs. At least there were always corpses available. Let me tell you, flesh-form sushi is really <.4 **MP deleted by Sysop**>.
❯ Grid Reaper
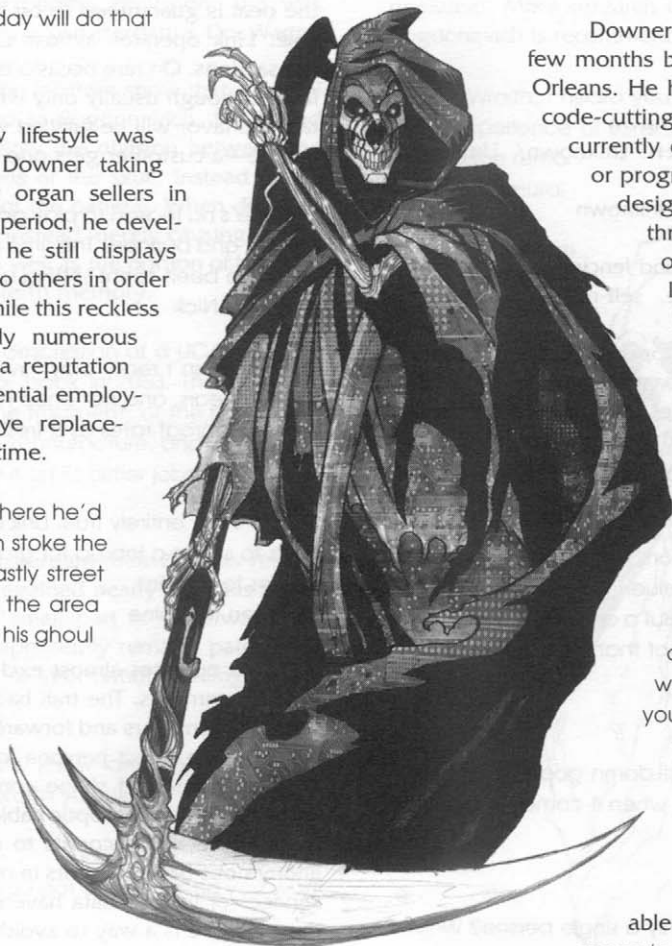
❯ Spare us the personal quirks and stick to the topic, Reap.
  ❯ Captain Chaos
    Transmitted: 2 August 2061 at 06:03:16 (EST)

Downer broke out of the quarantine just a few months before it ended and moved to New Orleans. He has moved further into the arena of code-cutting and software piracy, with his time currently devoted to stealing new beta-code or program plans and whipping up his own designs. He regularly sells his wares through Hacker House and other shadow markets. He remains largely isolated, though he does supplement his black-market income with occasional shadow ops.

❯ Hey, Reap. I hear you've been funneling your extra cred to projects in Asamando. That true? You planning on moving to the ghoul homeland?
❯ Buzz

❯ Drek no. Those *sasabonsam* creep me out with their long legs, walking around like spiders. Yech. I tell you what, though, Buzz: I'll happily send your Humanis-supporting hoop over there for free. I'm sure they love white meat like you.
❯ Grid Reaper

Grid Reaper's persona is identifiable by a long, deep hooded cloak that seems to be woven from black circuit boards. He carries a huge scythe area-attack program, and the arms that emerge to hold the scythe are wire-and-fiberoptic in appearance. Glowing red LEDs blink out from inside his hood, and he floats over the ground when he moves.

Grid Reaper does not regularly work with any shadowrunner teams, preferring to take one-shot jobs. He communicates with teammates through the Matrix, and will avoid meeting in person so that his ghoul nature is not revealed.

Grid Reaper should be considered an acceptable deniable asset for certain Matrix-oriented tasks. His expertise at obtaining software could also work to our advantage. Caution should be exercised when dealing with him, however, given his status as one of the Infected.

❯ Well, my secret's out now. If you don't mind a cursed flesheater who can sling code and cut IC with the best, I'm your man. If you got a problem with my diet, then steer clear or I'll mark you as my next meal.
❯ Grid Reaper

NOVATECH

● I've worked with Reap in the past, and I'd recommend him. He has a tendency to try and get your goat, but if you play it straight with him he'll cut you slack. And he writes some damn fine software.
● 'Trixster

LINK

Real Name/Aliases: Unknown/Unknown
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: Unknown/ Unknown/ Unknown/ Unknown
Distinguishing Physical Features: Unknown
Area of Operation: Worldwide
Specialties: Info brokerage, fixing and fencing
Psychological Traits: Unflappable, self-reliant, resourceful, extremely private

The person known as Link first appeared in the shadow circuit in the early 2050s. Over the past decade, he or she has built an impressive web of resources and contacts, becoming one of the Matrix's most successful info brokers. In fact, Link has become so legendary that many are convinced that she or he is backed by a powerful organization or entity.

● I'm convinced that Link's a dragon. No one else could possibly maintain the network and influences he has, with the exception of a megacorp or an AI. But a corp ain't going to sell the secrets that Link does, I'm sure of that. And he's too people-savvy to be an AI.
● Dragonslayer

● Maybe he's a she, and she's just damn good at what she does. Some of us girls are pretty wiz when it comes to resource management.
● Zephyr

● How does anyone know Link is only a single person? What if it's a group of people, all using the same name and icon?
● Datafeed

 ● Good question. Anyone ever known Link to be in more than one place at the same time?
● Fro

Link is suspected to have contacts in most of the megacorps, as well as numerous syndicate, government and shadow connections. For the most part, these contacts merely sell the data they come across to Link, who pays well and promises to sell it anonymously. Link seems to have a knack for who might be interested in certain data bits, and those within Link's sphere of connections regularly get calls to see if they're interested in the latest item to come down the pipe.

● If you can worm your way into Link's address book, I recommend it. There's nothing like having someone bring data you might be interested in directly to you. Link's like a private shadow datafeed, filtered for your preferences.
● Neon Wraith

Link will buy and sell almost any data that will net a profit. Corporate secrets, syndicate deals, juicy news items, personal data, you name it. A number of sources prefer to use brokers like Link rather than an auction-house like Asgard because the deal is guaranteed to be private, anonymous and personable. Link operates almost exclusively via mercenary credit transactions. On rare occasions, Link has been known to accept favors, though usually only when he or she is completely certain the favor will be fulfilled when called in. Link also doesn't haggle—a customer gets one offer, maybe two if she's lucky.

● There's no reason to play games when you've got Link's reputation and business. The time he or she might lose on haggling could've been spent setting up a profitable deal elsewhere.
● Nuyen Nick

● Link doesn't really play favorites either. I've known the bastard for years, and not once have I been cut a deal. I get the same cutthroat rates as a fresh contact.
● Hood

● That's not entirely true. Link does play favorites when he has data to sell or a job up for grabs—consider yourself lucky if he comes to you first.
● Green Machine

Link operates almost exclusively through email and icon-based commcalls. The trail back is usually well protected by a screen of remailers and forwarding services. Link has occasionally dealt via direct persona icon with regular clients, appearing as a humanoid shape constructed of chain, barbed wire, and interwoven fiberoptic cable. Link uses hundreds of anonymous or hacked accounts to do business, has several dozen anonymous bank accounts in offshore tax shelters and uses the services of various data havens to privately store and receive data. If there is a way to avoid being traced, Link uses it.

Though data exchange is Link's primary trade, he or she also sidelines as a fixer. Link has the connections to obtain or fence all sorts of gear, all over the world. Link also occasionally acts as an intermediary for Mr. Johnsons, hiring mercenaries and shadowrunners to take on certain tasks.

Link's commitment to anonymity and the privacy of clients makes him an ideal contact for our own Mr. Johnsons, especially on assignments where the secrecy of our involvement is critical.

RED WRAITH

Real Name/Aliases: Daniel Bogdonavich/Unknown
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: Unknown/UCAS/ Caucasian Human/Male
Distinguishing Physical Features: Unknown
Area of Operation: Worldwide
Specialties: Physical and Matrix penetration
Psychological Traits: Persistent, survival-oriented, resourceful, thorough

Daniel Bogdonavich, also known as Red Wraith, has no documented existence before 2053. The first record of him from that time is found in Amsterdam, in an incident involving an explosion at a bar. Authorities indicate that a caucasian male suffered a near-fatal cranial microbomb explosion, and was taken by the Daf Traumma Vaggon (Amsterdam's DocWagon equivalent) to the local hospital.

The medical records from the incident show that a cranial microbomb had been implanted in Bogdonavich, but it had been placed improperly just below the division between the occipital and the parietal sections of the skull, instead of the standard position in the center of the parietal. When detonated, it failed to kill Bogdonavich, instead merely causing severe damage to his skull and spine as well as the portion of his brain that is believed to control long-term memory.

❯ Wraith matches the physical description of a UCAS assassin that the CIA tried to rid itself of back in 2053. The UCAS, of course, has no comment, but the fragments of the bomb that were recovered mark it as UCAS manufacture, and of the type typically used by the government on its dirtier jobs.
❯ Spook

Bogdonavich settled in Amsterdam following his release from the facility. While he has regained nearly all of his motor skills and mobility, due in no small part to cyberware and bioware implants, his memory apparently remains patchy. He has a standing reward offered for information leading to one Lydia Bogdonavich.

❯ That's no joke, either. If you know anything about this woman, let me know. It will be worth your while.
❯ Red Wraith

❯ What is this, lost and found? You got a milk carton you want me to look at too? Sheesh.
❯ Cutter

❯ Another charming example of the shadows at their finest.
❯ Zephyr

❯ Wraith, I think I have some information you'd be interested in. I'll be in touch.
❯ Spook

Red Wraith's persona appears as a ghostly red mist topped by a grinning, flaming red skull. To utilize his attack programs, Red Wraith removes his head from his ghostly form and hurls it at his target, with the skull cackling wildly as it approaches impact. When the skull hits, it explodes and the program executes.

Bogdonavich's personality profile shows strong survival instincts. He is very intent on finding information pertaining to his past and the woman in question, believed to be his wife. He is

cheerful, to the point of joking about his mishap. He is also proud of the fact that he lives on despite his enemies' best efforts. These two aspects together, combined with his search for information, could make Bogdonavich an attractive freelance operative. More research on his background and that of Ms. Bogdonavich is recommended, however.

❯ Hey Wraith, I heard you had a ... religious experience of sorts. Any truth to the rumor?
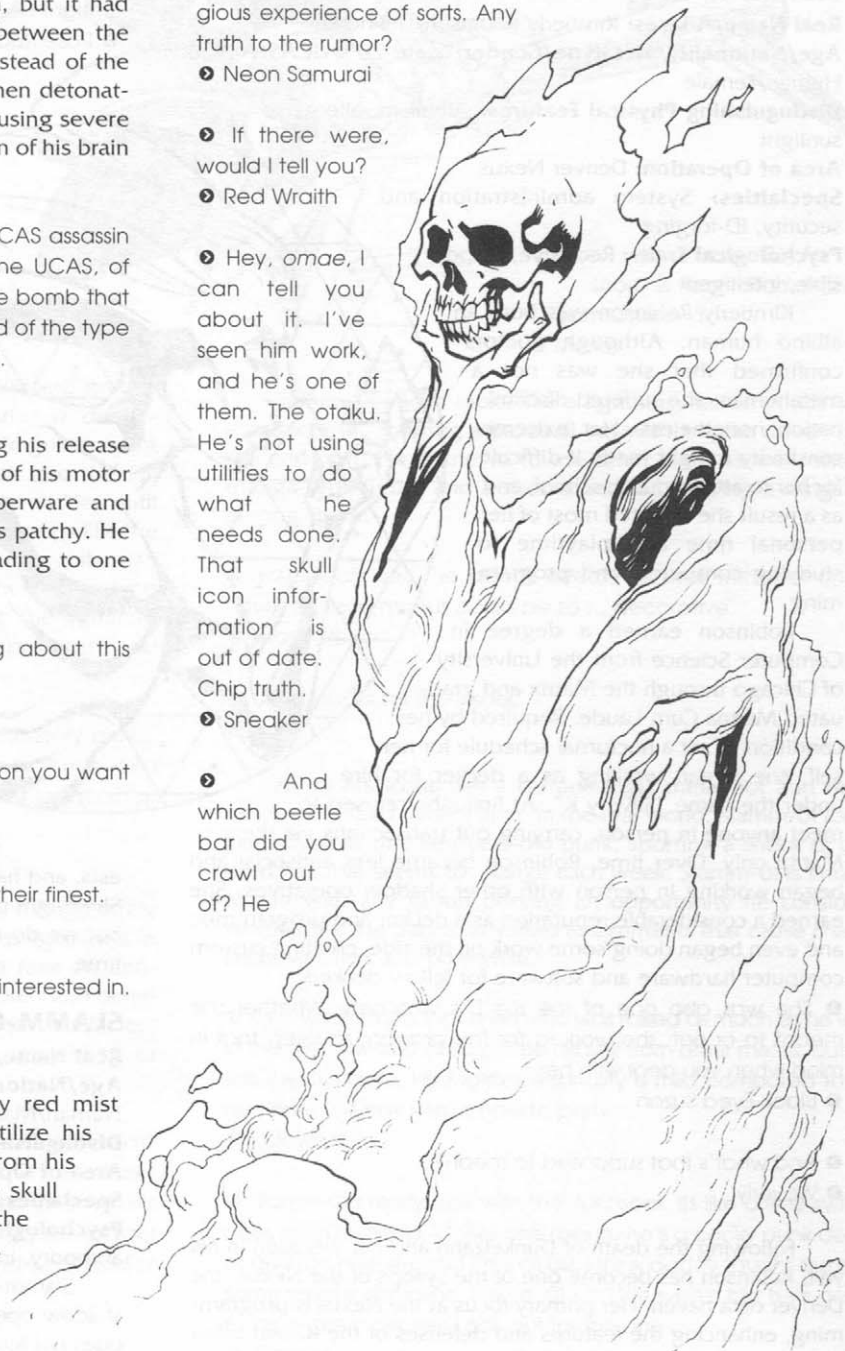❯ Neon Samurai

❯ If there were, would I tell you?
❯ Red Wraith

❯ Hey, omae, I can tell you about it. I've seen him work, and he's one of them. The otaku. He's not using utilities to do what he needs done. That skull icon information is out of date. Chip truth.
❯ Sneaker

❯ And which beetle bar did you crawl out of? He

was a grown man when they found him. Otaku are kids, not middle-aged assassins-turned-decker. It's not possible.
❯ Green Machine

❯ You just keep telling yourself that if it helps you sleep better.
❯ Sneaker

SILVERY K

Real Name/Aliases: Kimberly Robinson/Unknown
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: Late-20's/UCAS/Albino Human/Female
Distinguishing Physical Features: Albinism, allergy to sunlight
Area of Operation: Denver Nexus
Specialties: System administration and security, ID-forging
Psychological Traits: Reclusive, responsible, intelligent

Kimberly Robinson was born an albino human. Although doctors confirmed that she was not a metahuman, she suffered discrimination nonetheless. Her extreme sensitivity to light made it difficult for her to attend public school, and as a result she devoted most of her personal time and playtime to studying computers and programming.

Robinson earned a degree in Computer Science from the University of Chicago through the Matrix and graduated Magna Cum Laude. Required by her condition to set a nocturnal schedule for herself, she began working as a decker for hire under the name "Silvery K". At first, she refused to meet anyone in person, carrying out transactions via the Matrix only. Over time, Robinson became less antisocial and began working in person with other shadow operatives. She earned a considerable reputation as a decker and programmer, and even began doing some work on the side, creating custom computer hardware and software for fellow deckers.

❯ She was also one of the Big D's watchers. Whether she meant to or not, she worked for the dragon, so keep that in mind when you deal with her.
❯ Black-Eyed Suzan

❯ And what's that supposed to mean?
❯ Waverly

Following the death of Dunkelzahn and her inclusion in his will, Robinson has become one of the sysops of the Nexus, the Denver data haven. Her primary focus at the Nexus is programming, enhancing the features and defenses of the IC and other constructs in use. As a sideline, she is well connected with, or possibly in charge of, at least one identity-forging crime ring.

❯ Silvery K and her people do good work, btw. The cost is a little above the going rate, but the work you get for it is well worth the purchase price.
❯ Red Wraith

❯ I heard she'll also do a little charity work from time to time. If you know someone who really needs a new life made for them, it might be worth the time to talk to her about it.
❯ Rose Red
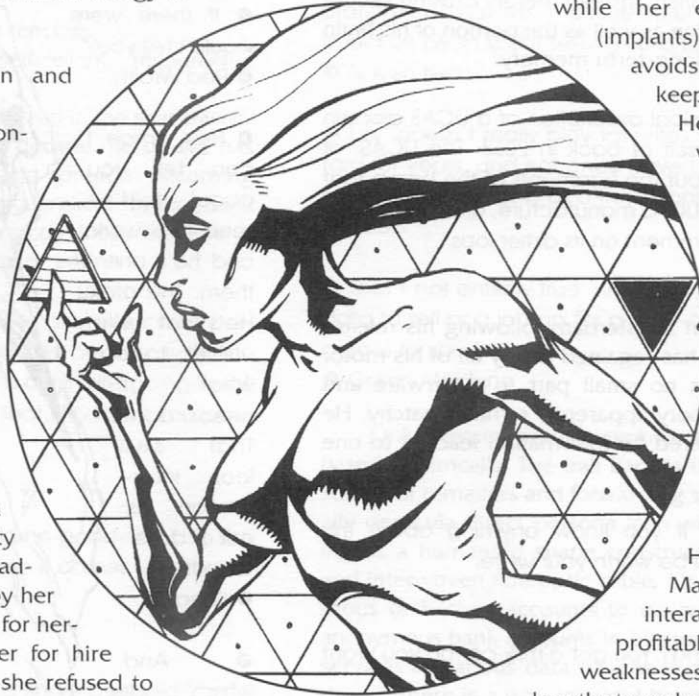
Robinson's skin and hair are chalk white, while her eyes are sapphire blue (implants), a striking combination. She avoids daylight due to her allergy, keeping a nocturnal schedule. Her Matrix persona is a woman made out of liquid silver, with long, flowing hair. She "pulls" program icons out of her form, the silver morphing into whatever shape is appropriate for that utility.

Robinson's profile suggests deep abandonment and insecurity issues, possibly paired with a naturally introverted personality. Her dependence on the Matrix as a crutch for human interaction could be manipulated profitably, but she is aware of her weaknesses and has gone to great lengths to make sure she is adequately protected. Robinson does not work for corporate interests, and has begun to remove herself from the freelancer life. She might prove a valuable target for extraction at some point, but we do not recommend her for use as an operative at this time.

SLAMM-0!

Real Name/Aliases: Unknown/None
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: 19/UCAS/Caucasian Human/Male
Distinguishing Physical Features: None
Area of Operation: Seattle, Worldwide Matrix
Specialties: Intrusion, system crashing
Psychological Traits: Renegade, rebellious, problem with authority, immature

Slamm-0! is one of a few active second-generation freelance shadow operatives in existence. The life of a shadow operative does not lend itself toward a constructive family life, but Slamm-0!'s mother and father, known in the shadow community as Fury

and Brickbat respectively, chose to commit themselves to raising a child in that environment. As they are SINless, there are no records of their child's birth that can be confirmed.

Both Fury and Brickbat were associated with a number of anarchist groups beginning at least a decade before Slamm-0!'s birth. They met while living in a communal setting with other members of *Das Neu Gesellschaft*, a group responsible for numerous acts of corporate Matrix terrorism, and they stayed with that group through Slamm-0!'s childhood. The members of the commune began teaching him Matrix and programming skills at an early age, and it was discovered that he had inherited a natural affinity for the virtual world. With such an accelerated program of learning, he entered the professional world of shadow operatives at the age of sixteen.

Gesellschaft was performing runs against Humanis groups across the UCAS. It was on such a run that Slamm-0! discovered a datafile that seemed to indicate a possible government connection. On a hunch, he managed to break into the FBI hosts and trace back through personnel and payroll files until he uncovered a document describing the use of groups like the Humanis Policlub for the control and repression of metahuman radicals. Slamm-0! downloaded these files to the Shadowland community, as well as to NewsNet, causing the Haeffner administration no small amount of initial embarrassment and leading to a high-level shakeup at the FBI.

❍ And weren't those an ugly few days when the story broke. It's a good thing Haeffner acted quickly, because the tension in the Underground was so high it would only have been a matter of time before the riots began.
❍ Raze

Since that time he has handled many runs, though rarely for large corporations. His primary choice of assignments is vandalism, with his *modus operandi* being to take an anti-metahuman group, obtain information on its backers and benefactors, then hit the hosts and holdings of those benefactors looking for any damaging paydata available, scrambling or crashing essential systems as he does so.

❍ Yeah, this little bleeder is the one that runs the "Matrix scavenger hunts." There hasn't been one in a while, which is lucky because the Matrix is still recovering from the last one. Whole databases and operating systems were fragged, almost beyond recovery. The kid's a damn menace. And what kind of a name is Slamm-0!, anyway!
❍ Buzz

❍ Half the reason the hunts even occur is Slamm-0! has a huge chip on his shoulder for otaku. He thinks they think that they own

the place. So far the score is Team Slamm-0!—2, Team Otaku—1.
❍ Marko

Slamm-0!'s icon looks like a lightning-haired youth with a manic grin, sporting a baseball bat with a spike driven into the end of it. He is known to use other icons as well, with a manga-type figure and a snot-nosed kid carrying a slingshot among them.

❍ You should see the attack effects he uses with that one. I never realized mucus could be so … decorative.
❍ Class Clown

❍ Ugh. Thanks for the visual.
❍ Nitro

All of his icons use a cartoon-logic metaphor and he is believed to use a reality filter. In the real world, Slamm-0! looks like a typical nineteen-year-old punk, sporting a shock of colored hair that seems to change each week. Slamm-0! is known to run with any group offering an opportunity he considers worthwhile. He particularly likes assignments that cause chaos, both harmless and otherwise.

❍ One would think that a kid who was raised as much as he was in the Matrix would disassociate himself from other metas, but it's just the opposite. His Matrix personality is mild compared to his real one. The boy knows how to party.
❍ Sidewinder

❍ Slamm-0!'s really slick with the Johnsons. Its like a little switch goes off in his head. It's like one minute he's a cocky punk decker and the next second he's all biz. I think daddy taught the boy some serious discipline. Slamm-0!'s a little weird, but he's going to be a great decker. Look out for this one.
❍ Caliban

❂ I heard of a time a Johnson tried to double- cross a group that Slamm-0! was running with at the time, and he made him pay. In a matter of months, the Johnson was ruined electronically, from finances to SIN. The Johnson was a nobody. This one has the "honor among thieves" thing big.
❂ Crazy Jane

Slamm-0! is the product of his upbringing, with a strong sense of social conscience and a rebellious streak. While he does possess some business communication skills, his goals and views are unlikely to be brought in line with ours. We do not recommend using Slamm-0! as a shadow operative at present.

THE SMILING BANDIT

Real Name/Aliases: Unknown/B. Traven, Professor Frink
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: Unknown/Unknown/Latino Human/Male
Distinguishing Physical Features: Unknown
Area of Operation: Worldwide Matrix
Specialties: Matrix exploration, scientific research
Psychological Traits:

Little is known about the decker known as The Smiling Bandit, as he has successfully removed almost all traces of personal identity from the Matrix.

❂ Let this one fry your noodle. If I've successfully buried my ID, is this file real or fake?
❂ Smiling Bandit
  Strikes Again! Ha Ha Ha!

❂ Nice bluff, chummer. Not even FastJack can break into every corp system and cover his hoop.
❂ Cutter

❂ That doesn't keep folks like Bandit and me from trying.
❂ FastJack

Bandit is nonetheless well known as a Matrix explorer and prankster who is unusually well-versed in current scientific research and trends. It is unknown whether The Smiling Bandit has a formal education or if he is just incredibly gifted and self-taught. Whatever the case, his grasp of modern scientific techniques and projects, particularly in the fields of genetech, biotechnology, chemistry and cybertechnology is impressive. He has proven himself able to debate top scientific

minds on esteemed peer review message boards, and his choice of targets for his Matrix excursions has been uncanny.

❂ Bandit really likes to get the goat of those high-science schmucks. Outta the blue he'll post some snide commentary to one of their "private" or "secure" chatlists, throwing them into an uproar. He's even forced a few of them into debates, and he's held his own against them. He's like a one-man watchdog machine dedicated to holding renegade or stupid scientists responsible for their experiments.
❂ Sidewinder

❂ I used to know a guy at UCLA, a wizkid who was top of all the biotech and genetics classes. He was real smart with computers too, he did a little side hacking under the handle El Bandito. Both Shiawase and Yamatetsu were throwing recruiters and all sorts of job offers at him, but he couldn't stand their corporate stink. Then—BAM— one day he went missing. All he left was a broken window in his room and a bloodstain (not his) on the carpet. Rumor was he had been extracted, but a few years later I was skirting through the Sierra Nevada mountains (doing a run on a back country corp site) and I came across a hermit who was jacked in through a cyberdeck with a satellite link. I swear to Ghost it was the same joe, living his life out like some crazy high-tech mountain man.
❂ Ginsu

❂ So you think that fella was The Smiling Bandit?
❂ Black-Eyed Suzan

❂ I'm not saying drek, except what I saw. Put it together yourself.
❂ Ginsu

The Smiling Bandit does not take shadowrunner jobs in the same manner as other deckers. He will only accept a job if the target is of particular interest to him, and if he expects to find interesting data. If the opportunity presents itself to steal research data, project descriptions and the like, he will. In many cases he seems to steal only for personal edification; he clearly reads up on all of it. On occasion, he does also sell the info to fixers and data brokers for supplementary income. He has also been known to distribute data widely and freely through data havens when he feels public (or, at least, shadow community) notice is important.

It is suspected that The Smiling Bandit uses multiple icons, but he clearly favors one. This icon is designed as a cartoonish figure wearing a black cowboy hat and black bandana over its

mouth. Above a sharp, pointed nose are a pair of mischievous, darting eyes. The character has a large, wicked grin, and is constantly darting about and reaching out elongated arms to snatch away datafiles and other icons.

For our purposes, The Smiling Bandit should be considered an excellent unofficial source of data on the most recent scientific efforts and achievements of our competitors. We should avoid hiring him except in cases where any data he might come across will not be compromised by his hunger and curiosity. Caution should also be exercised as he has been known to play "pranks" on both targets and clients, ranging from small comedic acts to tricks that have cost nuyen and compromised operations.

> Hey Bandit, sounds like you're quite the joker. Tell us a good story.
> Bard

> Well, a few jobs back I was approached by an aquacorp that was interested in some genetically engineered strain of sea algae being developed by a chemcorp. The aquacorp told me they were interested because the algae was designed to filter contaminants from the water, and they wanted to use it in their aquafarms to keep them clean. So I worked my magic on the chemcorp and came away with research specs and several drum barrels of product. (I love automated delivery drones.)

Sure enough, the aquacorp dumped the algae in their aquafarm. What they hadn't told me was that the algae was actually delicious but poisonous to merrow, and they were hoping it would get rid of a tribe of merrow "contaminants" that had been nibbling on their expensive sea crops.

Luckily, I'd done my homework, and had arranged to have a few extra chemicals bonded to those particular barrels full of algae. Now the algae not only tasted bad, keeping the merrow safe, but it also transferred the chemicals to the crops. Within a week, whole crops of seaweed originally destined for food production suddenly tasted like the distilled remains of well-worn combat boots. Now that was a job well done.

> Smiling Bandit
  Strikes Again! Ha Ha Ha!

SNOW TIGER
Real Name/Aliases: Song Min/Unknown
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: 28/Chinese/Asian Human/Female
Distinguishing Physical Features: None
Area of Operation: Hong Kong, Worldwide Matrix
Specialties: Data collection
Psychological Traits: Cautious, acquisitive, suspicious

The decker known by the handle Snow Tiger was born Song Min, the child of a corporate middle manager and his wife in the Hong Kong Free Enterprise Enclave. She was raised in the corporate culture of Hong Kong, a situation that Song found not to her liking. Her marks in school were always good, but she ran with a rebellious and subversive element that concerned her parents. They encouraged her to focus on computers and Matrix studies in

her spare time instead, in an effort to distract her from the more dangerous influences around her.

By the time she was in high school, Song was already programming and working with computers at the post-graduate level. She began showing up on the Hong Kong Matrix in earnest at that point, making shadow operative contacts and breaking into her school's host systems. She was trying out her skills on the system of her father's employer, Lotus Multimedia, when she stumbled upon and downloaded a highly restricted file. Realizing what she had done, she ran away from home, with corporate law enforcement following her closely. Before they could retrieve her, however, Wuxing arranged an extraction for her parents, hoping to convince Song to hand over the stolen data to them. During the course of this extraction, her parents were accidentally killed. Wuxing attempted to carry out the operation without the leverage they had hoped to obtain from her family, but Song had already learned of the deaths of her parents through the help of a group of independent shadow operatives. She foiled Wuxing's plans and disappeared.

> Hmm. Sounds familiar. I guess these corps never learn.
> Sidewinder

Song sold the Lotus data to finance the start of her career as a shadowrunner, and has operated out of Hong Kong ever since. She took the street name Snow Tiger (her father's nickname for her as a child) and built a reputation for herself as a decker. Over time she came to work with the shadowrun team known as the Sons of Thunder, run by the street mage Lei-Kung, who became a good friend of hers.

Song and the Sons of Thunder are ardent enemies of Wuxing and engage regularly in activities designed to damage or inconvenience that corporation. In the late 2050s, the Sons of Thunder were involved in a run against Wuxing to turn up information about the corporation's plans in the wake of Dunkelzahn's bequest of a large sum of money to them. Later, the team was also involved in shadowruns tied to the Hong Kong Triads. With the rise of Wuxing to the Corporate Court and the subsequent increase in shadow activity along the Pacific Rim, Snow Tiger and the Sons of Thunder have found plenty of things to keep them busy.

> Snow Tiger has found her way onto Wuxing's "Most Popular" list as well. The Sons of Thunder are a frequent topic in corp security circles, and there's rumor of a standing bonus offer to the security decker who can take her out.
> China Doll

Song has long black hair and dark eyes. She dresses simply, favoring practical street clothing. Her Matrix persona is a silvery-white tiger with black stripes and neon-blue eyes. She can "shapeshift" in this form to become a tiger-woman in order to more easily interact with other personas. Some of her utilities cause her tiger form to change shape or color to blend in with its surroundings, while her attack programs take the form of her tiger's claws and teeth. Her smart frames also look like white tigers, although smaller than her persona.

PRESCOTT

Song's profile suggests a deeply seated need for vengeance against Wuxing, possibly driven by feelings of guilt or inadequacy which were magnified by her family's untimely death. She is extremely cautious, possibly exhibiting a degree of paranoia uncommon in people her age. She collects and hoards data, including data on possible employers. She would be an excellent asset against Wuxing, but her interests are specific enough that it is unlikely she would take unrelated assignments.

❯ I hear the woman has gigapulses of data tidbits stored in her digs. Datachips as far as the eye can see ...
❯ Cleo

❯ On the same topic, she knows nearly everything there is to know about both Wuxing and the HK Triads. If you end up needing info on either of those organizations, she's the lady to call.
❯ China Doll

MICHAEL SUTHERLAND

Real Name/Aliases: Michael James Sutherland/Unknown
Age/Nationality/Metatype/Gender: 36/British/Caucasian Human/Male

Distinguishing Physical Features: Lower back injury forces him to wear a back brace for support
Area of Operation: Worldwide Matrix
Specialties: Corporate Matrix security, cybercombat
Psychological Traits: Control-oriented, fastidious, loyal

Michael Sutherland was born in 2025 to a wealthy British family with no aristocratic ties. It became obvious early on that he was gifted with a high degree of intelligence, so his father invested money in his son's promise by buying the boy computers and encouraging Michael to learn Matrix skills. As a youth, Michael experienced a degree of societal displacement; due to his extreme wealth and lack of aristocratic heritage, he fell between social circles. His sense of alienation further pushed him into the virtual world, honing his skills.

Michael attended Oxford, where he made a number of important friends and contacts. He was well liked there and graduated at the top of his class. Upon graduation, he began a career as a corporate freelancer, building a reputation for near-miraculous results. It was during his freelance period that he suffered a shotgun blast that caused extensive damage in the lumbar region and left him nearly paralyzed. He regained the ability to walk, but he now wears a full back brace, or "corset," constantly.

PRESCOTT

In 2057, Sutherland vanished from the corporate scene. His whereabouts were unknown until mid-2061, when he resurfaced as the head of Matrix Security for Wuxing, Inc. He has ceased taking freelance assignments and seems uninterested in doing so in the future.

❯ They must have paid him with Wu's first-born child to get him to take that gig.
❯ Joey

❯ Not quite, but close. He doesn't have enough stock to earn a seat on the board, but his portfolio is pretty impressive now.
❯ Nuyen Nick

❯ Also, whereas Wuxing hosts used to be adequate as far as Matrix security, now they're practically glacial. An initial foray can appear deceptively simple, but once you hit the right areas the host will lock down tighter than the Arcology.
❯ Sidewinder

❯ I haven't noticed any changes.
❯ Buzz

Sutherland is just over two metres tall and very lean, with blue eyes and a mop of bleached blond hair. He is always immaculately dressed, and keeps accounts with the best haberdashers and tailors in Britain, as well as maintaining close friendships with some of the leading New York designers. Due to their considerations, his back brace is practically invisible to the casual observer. Sutherland does not prefer any single Matrix persona. He changes his icon regularly, with his current favorite being a stylized Chinese noblewoman from the Han dynasty carrying a lotus flower.

❯ I hear his closet alone is big enough to house a troll family of four comfortably. Sartorial smartness is his only vice, it seems.
❯ Benny

❯ He is quite the clotheshorse. He also has an interest in fine artwork, though his collection has apparently also taken an oriental turn of late. He's building up a nice display of porcelains and ceramics from the Han dynasty, appropriately enough.
❯ Sotheby

Sutherland's personality profile suggests a manic personality, manifesting itself in a high degree of required control over his surroundings. He sleeps very little, though this has also been attributed to chronic pain from his back injury, for which he refuses to take any form of pain medication. He is an introvert, with very few social interactions. His discretion is beyond question, as is his loyalty to his employer of the moment. Unfortunately, this means it would be next to impossible to induce him to leave Wuxing's employ, or to betray their interests. For that reason, we recommend against attempting to hire or extract him.

No overview of the Matrix would be complete without a discussion of the groups, gangs and forces of law and order that shape it and make it. Some of these groups merely operate primarily through the Matrix, much like the businesses and personas described earlier. For others, their business is the Matrix, and they exert whatever power and influence they can over it.

This is, of course, by no means a complete listing. There are thousands of Matrix-oriented organizations—the ones below are just the most interesting or the ones I could get write-ups on. There are many more that may have just as much of an impact on the Matrix and personas within it, so watch your step.

> Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 09:59:58 (EST)

CORPORATE COURT MATRIX AUTHORITY
by CopWatch

You'll notice that things in the Matrix haven't exactly been quiet lately. First, there was the corp war, and the subsequent Matrix raids, worm-seeding and data-pilfering that such things bring. Then there was the otaku religious strife, where rabid kid deckers tore up a few nodes in the name of some deity or another. Then something weird hits the Seattle grid, scrambling a few users' brains and dropping it offline for ten minutes. We still don't know what the hell that was. Then a mad AI takes the Renraku Arcology offline, and a year later the Seattle grid goes down again when Seattle suffers a major blackout. And this is just the stuff out of the headlines.

> Don't forget the popular "I Hate You" worm that was downing corp systems for weeks in mid-'61.
> Melissa

Now, in today's world of corporate empires, the megacorps do a very significant chunk of their business through the Matrix. When grids go down, worms corrupt files and AIs eat brains, these corps lose money. When a lot of corps lose money or worry that they *might* lose money, the Corporate Court hears about it. Naturally, the attitude of the Court from their position on high is that the rest of us ants really just don't have our drek together, and that we need someone snooping around to keep an eye on things and smack people around when things go bad.

❷ Typical authoritarian capitalist thinking. Don't address the causes, just send more cops in to bust heads.
❷ Dhoruba

Well, it just so happens that the Corporate Court already has a subdivision that handles such things—the Corporate Court Matrix Authority (CCMA). You've probably never heard of it, but it's been around for years. The CCMA is responsible for regulating the Matrix, determining jurisdictional issues, governing e-commerce and generally making sure that the corps don't pull any Matrix tricks that would cause complications for the normal functioning of capitalist exploitation in general. With the weight of the Corporate Court behind it, the CCMA steps in whenever corps get too aggressive with their Matrix black ops, pull the plug on grids to hurt competitors or otherwise disrupt the "positive business environment." The CCMA also negotiates with nation states whose regulatory notions are either too strict or too liberal for the Court. It even harasses grid providers who are too lax on their grid maintenance and upkeep.

The CCMA is mostly a bunch of bureaucrats who shake hands with leaders and send threatening email—they've never had a need for more hands-on type work. Until now, that is. When the Corporate Court told the CCMA to adopt a more aggressive and pre-emptive stance towards Matrix terrorism and threats, the bureaucrats created a new division: Grid Overwatch.

GRID OVERWATCH DIVISION

The official mission of the Grid Overwatch Division (GOD) is to police the Matrix at large and investigate crimes and disputes that cross jurisdictional boundaries. This means the "G-men" of Grid Overwatch are confined mostly to public grid-space, except when the Court authorizes them (with a warrant) to cross into private Matrix areas.

The G-men are, for the most part, talented security deckers recruited from the ranks of the Big Ten. In most cases, they are transferred over from the corp and assigned to work for GOD for a year, then transferred back. They are passed through a week-long training to accustom them to G-men SOPs and issued a standard G-man icon. As you may expect, the icon plays upon the G-man name, incorporating a brimmed hat, bad shoes, trenchcoat, badge and tommygun iconography. Most G-men are issued a standard suite of utilities, though they are allowed some discretion for wielding their own private 'grams.

❷ I hear some of the G-men have fallen so in love with the power they have that they've signed on for an extra-long tour of duty. Instead of going back to work at their megacorp after a year, they're signing a contract to work an extra year (or possibly longer).
❷ Neon Wraith

❷ It's causing some contract disputes between the Big Ten and the Court, as some corps are fretting that they're losing their best deckers. Expect the corps only to transfer over new recruits and untested deckers in the future.
❷ Workforce

❷ Not all of the G-men use the standard icons. Most of 'em keep "undercover icons" on hand so they can enter data havens and the like without falling under immediate suspicion.
❷ Dancer

G-men are issued "patrol areas"—public grids that they're supposed to loiter in to scan icons and foil any Matrix crimes in progress. Coming across a crime in progress is a rare event, though, so most G-men seem to prefer hangin' in the RTG and scanning for deckers making illegal logins. If they do run afoul of a decker, their standard SOP is to run a track utility and to keep 'em occupied with any attack utilities that work. If they get a trace, you're hosed.

The G-men also attempt to investigate crimes that affect multiple jurisdictions. In this respect, they tend to act more like a liaison between security groups. For example, if Joe Decker rips open a Novatech host but is traced back to a jackpoint on a Yamatetsu PLTG, the G-men can be called in to facilitate a joint Novatech-Yamatetsu investigation. The G-men can, with the authority of the Corp Court, also investigate such things directly rather than act as intermediaries. Most of the Big Ten, Japanacorps and other AA megas will aid (at least on the surface) G-men investigations and meet their requests. Most nation states, PPG corps, and a host of smaller corps who generally feel that the Big Ten are out to screw them will refuse to cooperate with the G-men. So far, the Corporate Court hasn't pushed the issue, but you can bet that if an investigation comes around that it "feels strongly" about, it'll put major pressure on whoever is balking at the time—possibly making an example out of them.

❷ It's never pretty when the Corporate Court makes an example out of someone. Remember Ensenada?
❷ Argent

❷ Ensenada?
❷ Cleo

❷ The site of a pan-corporate military strike against Aztlan and Aztechnology, after they started seizing all corporate holdings within their borders and "nationalizing" them. The Corporate Court was the authority that gave the go-ahead for the strike, since Aztechnology wouldn't listen to their demands and play nice.
❷ Chile Pepper

Because the G-men are pulled from duty in the Big Ten, there's a lot of tension developing between them on operations and in the field. Some of them have been withholding information from G-men from other corps, as well as intentionally getting in each others' way and messing around. Some of the corps get smug satisfaction out of showing how *their* deckers are doing hard work on behalf of the entire Big Ten, and so subtly egg it on.

❷ Some of the Gs have begun to engage in serious pissing contests. They've been pulling a lot more cowboy maneuvers and

stepping on a lot of toes. The higher-ups have reprimanded a few, but as long as none of them cause a major incident, they look the other way.
❯ Link

❯ That means if the Gs are on your hoop, the more of a threat they think you are, the harder each of them will try to take you down to lord it over the rest.
❯ Red Wraith

❯ It also means that some of them are willing to cut deals if it makes their competition look bad.
❯ Findler-Man

The G-men have a few home hosts scattered about the Matrix, placed according to some system that only they seem to understand. They have roughly one host per continent. They've started amassing a solid database on deckers, Matrix crimes and other Matrix naughtiness. Of course, the really good dirt is locked up tight onboard Zurich Orbital.

THE DEAD DECKERS SOCIETY
by Neuron Basher

I'm sure you've heard of them. For over a decade, the Dead Deckers Society has been scrawling their name across the Matrix, making themselves known. So who the hell are they? Let me tell you the facts as I know them, and feel free to stop me if I start waxing commercial.

Simply put, the Dead Deckers Society is a group of mercenary deckers who are just damn good. Their actions speak louder than words, which is especially relevant in an age when our actions can influence bank balances, stock markets and the price of tea in China within minutes.

❯ Stop. You sound like a damn infomercial already! If I want to read self-promoting posts I'll log onto the Gingerbread Man's home host.
❯ Chatty Kathy

Beginnings

The Dead Deckers were founded by a well-known Seattle decker called the Dentist. The Dentist spent as much time in bars as he did in the Matrix, and he dragged along a lot of fellow deckers on boozing excursions. This group of social drinkers picked up its own identity, eventually adopting the name of Drunken Deckers Society (DDS).

❯ DDS? Dentist? <Snort!>
❯ Nursie

❯ These geeks could really pack the synthahol away. One night they hit up some ork bar in Puyallup, and in order to walk out unscathed they had to prove their worthiness. An hour and two dozen shots later, most of the orks were sauced under the

table. The Dentist and his crew stumbled out, though half of them were put up with alcohol poisoning.
❯ The Keynesian Kid
    "Greed I$ Good"

❯ Drinking and decking don't mix.
❯ Killjoy

Sadly, the Dentist missed roll call one evening, and the group later learned that their prime socialite had met his end, fried by a Fuchi black IC construct. The Drunken Deckers mourned his passing over several raucous nights, drinking themselves to oblivion in his honor. Shortly thereafter, they changed their name to the Dead Deckers Society, to honor all those deckers who have fallen in pursuit of mastery over the machine.

The Dentist's Philosophy

To most of the DDS crew, the Dentist was more than just a friend, he was a mentor. And the Dentist had a very defined attitude about the Matrix and its role in daily life. He was often known to espouse this creed loudly from his barstool, and its tenets have stuck with the Dead Deckers Society to this day.

To quote the Dentist from the archives of Shadowland:

Let's go back to the Internet of old. Before ASIST, before cyberdecks, before sculpted systems, before the Crash of 2029. How many of you remember that? Not many. How many of you even have a basic understanding of the networks that shaped a previous generation's world? Not many. And that's a damned shame. Too many people nowadays take the global Matrix for granted, and its prevalence in everyday life is something that not all of us think is progress. There was a time when people actually had to have a functioning head on their shoulders in order to get "online," and I believe those were better times.

❯ Frag you, gramps. I know a little about the Internet. Command lines? Programs with names like "smrsh?" Twenty minutes to download a song? You call that better, when I can reach out and pull a album off the shelf of a virtual store and have it within thirty seconds? Luddite.
❯ Technocrat

❯ And here we present Exhibit A. Should convenience always outweigh learning? Should we always appeal to the lowest common denominator? Or should we strive for creativity? To exercise our intelligence?
❯ Dead Deckers Society
    "In Kibo We Trust"

❯ Okay, question one on the Dead Deckers Society FAQ should be: "Who the hell is Kibo?"
❯ George

❍ Kibo was somebody on the Internet, before it was a big buzz-word-based corporate cesspool. He made creative use of the skills and tools he had, and for that he earned the respect and admiration of many.
❍ Gemini

❍ And that's what we aspire to do—make creative use of our skills and tools to achieve our goals.
❍ Dead Deckers Society
   "In Kibo We Trust"

The Dead Deckers Today

The death of the Dentist actually inspired the group to pull their act together. They stayed tight as a unit, started working together on jobs and actually began to put their money where their mouth was. They retained their elite attitude, and continued to carry the Dentist's torch.

Over the years, some of them have dropped out or passed away, and they've recruited a few new drinking buddies and partners in crime. Each of them is a qualified virtual burglar, specializing in Matrix B&E. The group currently has about fifteen members, most of whom live in Seattle. A few are actually NAN denizens, though they spend a lot of time in town.

❍ By no means should the Dead Deckers be thought of as having a "white hat" mentality. They'll hack any system if somebody waves the right credstick at them, and they don't have loyalty to anything other than the almighty nuyen.
❍ Argent

❍ They do judge jobs based on how challenging they are. As a group that promotes themselves as smart and confident, they enjoy having to actually work to succeed.
❍ Fro

❍ Don't ask them to do piddly stuff that the decker wannabe down the block can pull—they take offense at offers for jobs that are "beneath them."
❍ Silly Lizard

The Dead Deckers keep their group very tightly knit. Though they're very business-like on the exterior, they're good buddies on the inside. This is a necessity, as they often pair off into groups of two or three for an assignment. During this time, they live, work, eat and breathe together in close proximity, usually in one of their multitude of safehouses across the Seattle metroplex and elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest.

The group doesn't keep any public nodes or sites. In fact, they keep all of their precious files offline in hard storage. As data thieves, they're well aware that even the best defenses they could place online would be vulnerable, so they keep their secrets safely off the Matrix.

❍ I hear they keep a stash of datachips in each safehouse, and try to back them up to other safehouses on a regular basis. I've also heard that they keep these stashes booby-trapped—if you don't say the right phrase, enter the right code or otherwise pass whatever test they invented—boom.
❍ Buzz

The Dead Deckers offer their services to any paying client in the shadows. They can be reached via dozens of virtual drop boxes, and will take any job that is both financially rewarding and personally challenging. Almost all of them have a rabid desire to explore what they're not allowed to, but make no mistake, these guys are not just a bunch of punks with attitudes. They're a multi-million nuyen operation with members that could be drawing fat salaries at any megacorp worldwide, and they get paid and treated accordingly by the people that do employ them. They work not only to fulfill the contract quickly, but also to do an extremely thorough job. Any extra information that they happen to snag while working is offered to the original contracting party, and if they don't wish to pay for it, it's dumped onto Shadowland.

❍ As always, Basher of Neurons, your discretion is appreciated. Drinks at the usual place, say, next Friday?
❍ Dead Deckers Society
   "In Kibo We Trust"

THE EXCHANGE
by Serendipity Jones

I was gifting the good Captain Chaos with a tale about an odd little Matrix group I came across, and he asked me to write it up for the public at large. I'm not a gifted writer, and I can only tell you what I experienced. What you do with the information is your concern.

My story begins with a flight I took to Detroit last summer. I was there on business—I'd been hired on as an extra bullet sponge for a wealthy patron who shall remain nameless. I got off the plane, grabbed my two suitcases from the baggage terminal and hit the hotel that had been booked for me. It wasn't until after I showered that I realized one of the suitcases I'd picked up wasn't mine—it just looked like it. Same color, same make and design. But the clothes inside weren't mine, though oddly they were a style I didn't mind sporting and actually fit.

On top of the clothes was a pocket secretary. It was a model that I wasn't particularly familiar with, and it seemed to have a few extra features to puzzle out. It also had a big, red, stylized letter X etched into the main casing. I turned it on, hoping to get a clue as to who the suitcase actually belonged to, but its storage memory was completely empty. I called the airline and reported the mix-up, but they never had anyone else call in with a wrong bag. I even paid a decker to check the registration of the secretary's MSP account—turns out it was using a fake account that was pre-paid for the next year. No names were attached, and no records existed of its use.

❍ Hey, I've got some pals with that model of secretary. That red "X" is pretty distinctive.
❍ Castor

PRESCOTT

Life went on. About a week later, just after a briefing with my new client, my own pocket secretary was lifted off a restaurant table while I was using the toilet. I didn't lose much besides the numbers to some ex-girlfriends and clients, luckily. In any case, I needed to pick up a new one to keep track of my client's schedule. The red-X secretary was still sitting at my hotel room, and it worked, so I said what the heck.

I'm not much of a computer person, so I really get the mileage out of voice recognition software. I'd much prefer to talk to my p-sec than tap keys, so I usually do. And like all good p-secs, it speaks back to me on occasion. But it really freaked me out the first time Red-X spoke to me without prompting—and used my name. I was driving down the highway, when clear out of the blue it said: "Welcome to the Exchange, Mr. <my name here>. Please give the hitchhiker in the yellow jacket a lift. You will be karmically rewarded." I nearly wrecked my vehicle. In fact, I was so preoccupied by the event that I nearly missed the hitchhiker. I damn near gave him a ride, but paranoia won out over curiosity, and I hit the gas.

I had a tech friend run some tests on little Red-X, and he had some interesting results. First, he told me that it was running a surreptitious surveillance suite. The entire time I'd had it, the damn little thing had been recording audio and low-light video, scanning and counting nearfield radio frequencies and transmitting it all to a blind relay node in the Matrix. My little pocket spy had documented several weeks worth of my life and put it in the hands of … someone. The p-sec also had a built-in remote-access application, allowing someone with the right codes out there in the Matrix to connect to it and either upload or download data.

I had the tech disable the recording devices, but I kept the little spy around. I was interested in whoever was setting me up, so I kept it around in hopes of luring them out. The very next day, Little Red-X speaks to me again. I got the same bit about the Exchange and karma, but the task this time was different. I was told to go to a nearby park and take a picture.

Curious to see where this would lead, I followed the instructions this time. I re-enabled the video, and captured a nice zoom image of some corp suit feeding pigeons. I was expecting something to happen—gunfire, magic, or maybe just for the guy to notice and throw a fit. But nothing did. I turned Red-X off and went home.

The next day I was escorting my newest client to breakfast. This client happened to be a mid-level syndicate boss who'd crossed a line or two he shouldn't have. He was worried about repercussions and hired me to protect him, since he wasn't sure if he could trust his own men. Our food had just arrived when little Red-X played a little tune to catch my ear. I checked the screen, and was greeted with a copy of the Lone Star APB that had been issued just minutes before on the man sitting across the table from me. I later learned the Star had heard about his predicament, so they had dug up some dirt that they could use to lean on him and get him to squeal on his fellow made men. At the time, I put the warning to good use, and informed my client that for a significant bonus I could escort him out of the Star's jurisdiction. My client got away safely, and I was paid handsomely.

I could only guess that the Red-X's warning was my "karmic reward." So when the next set of instructions came along, I followed them. Again, I was paid back in kind. Occasionally, Red-X would query me about certain details about my life. I avoided answering anything that could compromise my life or job, but answered the rest. This continued for almost a full year. Sometimes the tasks were as basic as delivering penicillin to someone who was sick in bed. Others were as esoteric as scanning pictures from a physical book out of an occult library. A few times I even asked Red-X to do something specific for me. On two of those occasions, the things were done. Eventually, I just came to accept it as some sort of anonymous free exchange network, facilitated through the Matrix. People contributed favors, goods and services, and in return some of their needs were met. It was still sketchy, but seemed benign.

More than once, Red-X's instructions brought me into contact with people who had Red-Xs of their own. When this happened, we would exchange wary looks. I asked a few questions, but the answers I received told me little. They all claimed to be as ignorant as I was about how they got the p-sec and who or what was really behind this Exchange. Most of them had come to accept it as a gift horse, and didn't care to question it much. So I paid a decker to trace the Red-X's transmissions to the source, to the Exchange itself. His brain-fried corpse was found a week later, half-eaten by devil rats.

After that, one day Red-X presented me with a gift box of APDS ammo. I was so glad to score some I loaded up my handy Predator immediately. Later that day, a hit man pulled a gun on the client I was guarding. My reflexes were jacked high enough that I was able to pull out my Predator and fire before the assassin could pull the trigger. The hammer fell, and nothing happened. I pulled again, same result. Then the assassin got his turn, and I lost my client.

The Exchange had set me up. After a year of playing the game, I had been duped. Maybe I was supposed to receive a hefty karmic reward for that, but I wrecked the thing before it could ever speak again.

I don't know who runs the Exchange, but it's clearly someone with Matrix savvy and plenty of resources. You may become part of it, and it may be good to you. But beware the price you may pay.

❯ I've been a participant of the Exchange for over two years now, and I have no complaints. I sometimes have to go out of my way for it, but it's been a great personal convenience and saved my hoop a number of times. I'd swear it knows what I need before I do.
❯ Bart R

❯ That's scary. Do you really want someone you don't even know having that much control over your life?
❯ Spike

❯ You're right! I'll just stick to my megacorp job instead. Oh, wait …
❯ Aunt Acid

❯ Maybe Serendipity Jones did something he's not telling us about. Maybe he refused to do something important, or just refused a few too many times. Or maybe that decker he hired got closer than they liked. It would explain why the Exchange reamed him …
❯ Sidewinder

❯ Does the Exchange only recruit shadowrunners?
❯ Hawkwind

❯ In my experience, it's been people from all walks of life. Janitors, schoolteachers, executives, security guards, even cops and criminals like us.
❯ 'Trixster

❯ I've even seen a kid with one of these things. I remember the incident, because the p-sec was schooling the brat in magic theory!
❯ Blackstone

❯ Has anyone assensed one of these pocket secretaries? How do you know it's really technologically based? Maybe each p-sec is possessed by a free spirit, using its powers to draw out the user's desires and warp them into reality.
❯ Rhiannan

❯ On the surface, it seems that only a small chunk of the Exchange's operations are shady. Like Serendipity Jones said, a lot of the tasks he was requested to do were relatively mundane. I get the impression, though, that some of these tasks have results that aren't exactly expected. For example, a participant asked to carry a bouquet of flowers into a building may actually be unknowingly smuggling a concealed weapon inside. Or a security guard asked to leave work early may be helping to set the stage for or cover the tracks of a shadowrun.
❯ Socio Pat

❯ A few years back, I was privy to a conversation between two fixers about something they called "The Exchange." They treated it as some sort of private joke between the two of them.
❯ SPG

❯ If it was a fixer joke, it's spiraled out of control and achieved a life of its own!
❯ Daedelus

❯ No way is this just some prank blown out of proportion—the Exchange makes actual, concrete changes in people's lives. And it isn't all just random, there's a definite pattern to what it has people do. The results are planned. I'd guess there's some major criminal syndicate behind it. They use it to recruit unknowing people into aiding and abetting criminal operations. Sure, the Exchange may seem friendly at first, maybe even helpful, but in the long run it uses you.
❯ Pollux

❯ You're saying that there's some sort of agenda to the Exchange?
❯ Rose Red

❯ That's what he's saying. I think this is beyond the scope of the Mafia or Yaks, though. Plus it's too original for them. They tend to stick to vice rackets that are tried and true. If anything, this Exchange network sounds like the work of an AI. Who else would be able to sort and correlate data well enough to run this sort of thing?
❯ Lone Gunman

❯ An AI is just a self-important computer program, so if an AI could do it then any mundane techs with enough processing power and programming skill could do it as well.
❯ Skeptic

❯ It could just be an interesting experiment in manipulating probability. Causality and effect, that sort of thing. Brainiacs get their clipboards all in a bundle over that sort of stuff.
❯ Schröedinger

DIE SCHOCKWELLENREITER
by Die Geisteskrankheit

The group known as die Schockwellenreiter (Shockwave Riders) began its existence as the infamous Chaos Computer Club, founded sometime in the 80's of the last century. A loose-knit association of hackers and technophiles, the CCC refused to work closely with sponsors and corporations, preferring to keep an independent, clear point of view and not be manipulated by financial matters. As a result, they rejected various offers of financial backing and attempts by businesses to buy or recruit their members and expertise. As a group, they stayed as committed as possible to their "hacker ethics"—that all information should be free, that everyone should have access to the worldwide data networks, and that a hacker should be rated by his deeds, not by look, nationality or social status. This ethic remains the group's guideline to this day.

As the Internet boomed, so did the CCC. Members of the club consistently sought out holes and bugs in computer systems and developed methods to take advantage of them. Many of these vulnerabilities and exploits were publicly posted, alerting the world at large to the risks. In many cases the hackers even developed patches and solutions. Despite this public service, the CCC and similar hackers continued to be labeled as criminals, and were occasionally condemned for allegedly taking advantage of the bugs for months or years before acknowledging them.

❯ As well they should have!
❯ FastJack

❯ The CCC was accused of having a hand in an electronic transfer scandal in 2013, where it was discovered that a group of malicious hackers had been skimming thousands of Ecu (European currency) and transferring it into hidden accounts. Several banks nearly went out of business, and a lot of people lost money. Some CCC members were actually brought up on charges, though they were never convicted. Turns out the evidence indicated that they had been responsible for discovering the leak, and that they not only warned many of the individual victims but helped with damage control.
❯ Nuyen Nick

The CCC also continued to promote a hacker culture through regular articles and papers, online forums and interviews and so on. They also organized workshops and conferences, tested the security and possibilities for abuse of electronic systems and created programs to aid inexperienced users and protect them from criminal schemes.

❯ Some shadowrunners these guys are. They condemn corps and promote hacking, but then they hypocritically turn around and help create defenses and solve crimes. What's up with that?
❯ Lazy J

❯ That's the hacker ethic for you. They have no sympathy for corps because they feel that if someone penetrated the corp's security systems, the corp is at fault for not having fixed their vulnerabilities, and that in fact the hackers did them a favor by showing them their weaknesses. Sorta like blaming the victim, if you ask me.
❯ Thumper

❯ Even the corps have to own up to their responsibilities and weaknesses. Given that they're in the business of exploitation, who's going to shed a tear if they get exploited themselves?
❯ Neon Wraith

❂ Hackers like this also uphold the privacy and security of individual people as much more important than the privacy and security of corporations.
❂ Joey

❂ Seems like shaky ground to me. They'd be better off stating that they see capitalism as an unjust system and so find no fault with crimes committed against the foundations of that system.
❂ Karl

And so it went until the Crash of '29, when the virus that destroyed much of the Internet also devastated the memory banks, secure hosts and virtual meeting spots of the CCC. Struck hard, the CCC sank into chaos during this time. It is suspected that many of the core members of the CCC actually played a key role in resisting the effects of the virus, as well as rebuilding afterwards. Unconfirmed rumors claim that some members of the club were actually killed while fighting the virus.

❂ I heard some of the CCC guys were actually recruited into Echo Mirage. Sadly, none of them made it.
❂ Technocrat

❂ Yeah, the UCAS was in the habit of recruiting German cyberpunks into its secret military outfits. All part of the Illuminati conspiracy, I'm sure.
❂ 'Trixster

❂ Those hackers didn't die fighting the virus. They were killed because they got a little too close to the source of the virus. They wanted to know who was responsible, and as a result they were terminated.
❂ Anonymous

In the turbulent years that followed, many of the old CCC members committed their lives to building a new, secure Matrix, as well as exploring it and learning its secrets while it was still in its infancy. These members renamed their group the Shockwave Riders, a reference to their struggle against the virus and reclamation of the world's networks. But with several key figures gone and a whole new virtual world at their door, the organization itself fell by the wayside. Its members moved on, some "selling out" and becoming Matrix security specialists, others continuing to live in the hacker fringe and becoming some of the world's first deckers.

❂ Nice try, freunde. The Riders didn't disband, they went underground and restructured their group. They realized that the Matrix was a new frontier and called for a new outlook and strategy. In those early days, they needed to get close to the source to gain access to the cyberterminals and other prototype gear that would make decking possible. That required infiltrating the corps. Trust me, I was there when they made the decision.
❂ FastJack

❂ Remember also that this was the period of the Euro-Wars and other troubles. As a result of the crises that constantly befell Germany, many German citizens simply had their hands full surviving.
❂ Socio Pat

Over fifteen years later, the Shockwave Riders publicly resurfaced, claiming responsibility for a wave of ingenious computer escapades. Like the CCC of the past, the Shockwave Riders pushed forward a hacker ethic on which they refuse to compromise. It is suspected that many of the core members may have been involved with the group's previous incarnations, but lack of available records makes this impossible to verify.

❂ I hear the Riders don't allow otaku in their group. This true?
❂ Zephyr

❂ That's right. They only recruit old-fashioned hackers, and they're definitely turned off by the puritanical viewpoints some of the otaku seem to espouse.
❂ Technocrat

To this day, the Shockwave Riders continue as a hacker club composed of some of Germany's most elite deckers. Aside from the core group of fifty or so deckers, hundreds of technophiles and other wireheads support the group. Though they get many requests, the group keeps its numbers down in order to maintain a semblance of privacy. All of their meetings take place in secure nodes; they never hold meetings in person. They continue to offer a range of services to the public, such as data storage and encryption, anonymous remailers and anti-viral software. Some of the members take on custom programming and deckmeister jobs, and the group has a reputation for aiding deckers who are being hounded by corps or security forces. They also continue to plague the megacorps and other Matrix monopolists. The Riders have developed a reputation for exposing corporate crimes and other injustices, which they've invariably uncovered through data theft and host penetrations.

❂ The Shockwave Riders have already had a few run-ins with the G-men, and the corp stooges really had their noses bloodied. A strong rivalry is already building up.
❂ Joey

MATRIX GANGS
by Shorty

No one knows the insides and outsides of Matrix gangs like I do—and most people wouldn't care to anyway. I'm here to give you the data dump on the scourges of the electron seas, those pesky little net buggers that just love to frag things up.

Your traditional street and go-gangs are largely composed of underprivileged youth who band together for self-protection and survival, often in reaction to the harassment by nearby gangs. Unlike society at large, these gangs give the kids a sense of belonging and a social support structure, often
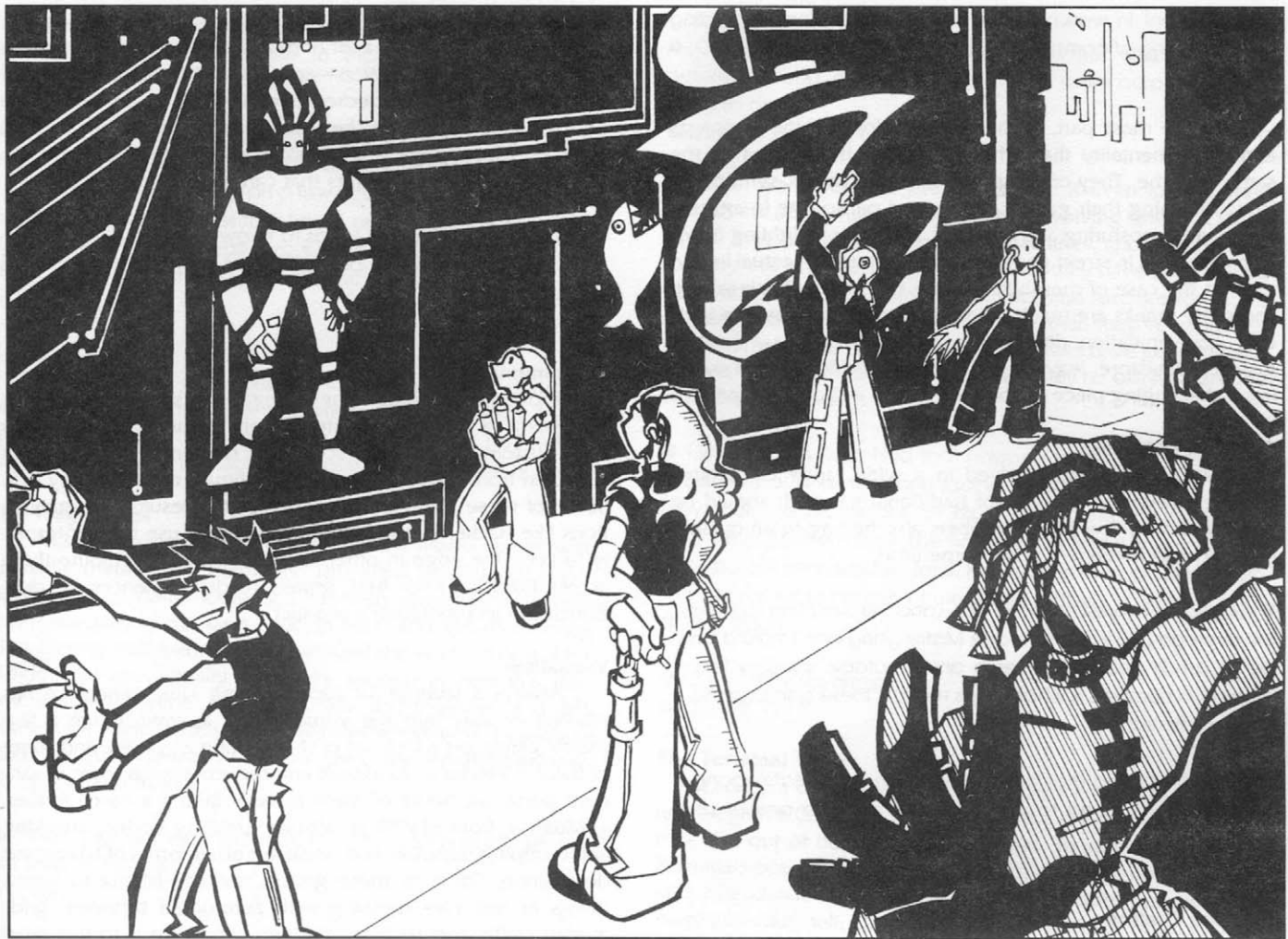
even providing them with a living through criminal activities and the underground economy.

Matrix gangs throw off the curve. Most Matrix gangs are made up of overprivileged youth who have nothing better to do with their time. Usually these are insecure, rebellious, alienated kids who are drawn to the impersonal and fantastic realm of virtual reality, and who delve into computer crimes as a way of indulging their technophile obsessions and striking back at authority. Rarely, Matrix gangs will develop in more socially depressed areas, though usually this requires some resource that allows poor gangsters-to-be to acquire otherwise expensive and hard-to-get computer hardware and programs.

❯ Given how much computer drek corps throw out on a daily basis (gotta keep up with the SOTA, after all), underclass Matrix gangs are becoming increasingly more common. These street urchins cobble together decks from dumpsters and trashyards and boost access through illegal junction box taps and wireless links.
❯ Technocrat

❯ A lot of poorer youth that might otherwise be drawn to Matrix gangs are drawn into otaku tribes instead.
❯ Anthony ANSI

Unlike traditional gangs, most Matrix gangs don't have a territory, per se. They often focus on particular activities or particular targets, but not on any one "area" of the Matrix. In fact, the members of many Matrix gangs don't even live in physical proximity to each other, having met in the Matrix. The exception to this rule are the gangs that sideline in building and repairing cyberdecks or selling pirated software, skillsofts, BTLs or data in physical form.

❯ Another exception would be the "Matrix divisions" that some of the larger gangs have. These sub-gangs are usually responsible for keeping internal communication channels open and for arranging private communication with other parties as needed. They're also put to work monitoring the Matrix for any information that may be of use to the gang, keeping electron-

ic equipment in working order and "consultation" regarding the smuggling of computer or cyberdeck parts.
> Jet

For the most part, Matrix gangs adopt all the trappings and gang mentality that other gangs do, though not to the same extreme. They often sport distinctive colors, symbols or icons matching their gang's image, and participate in aggressive, macho posturing and behavior. However, infighting is not as common as in street gangs and rarely results in actual injury, even in the case of members leaving the group. Trash-talking and petty pranks are much more common. Matrix gangs typically have initiation rituals such as breaking into a heavily guarded datastore, leaving graffiti on a specific node or cracking a challenging piece of software within a short time period.

GANG OPERATIONS

Matrix gangs are involved in a wide range of criminal activities, beyond the scope of traditional gangs. It should be noted that very few gang members also belong to an outside team of shadowrunners at the same time.

> Conflict of interest, y'know. Plus, (and this is putting it politely) the average guy in the average Matrix gang can't hold a candle to a half-decent decker in any reputable shadow team. Strength in numbers is what keeps most of these gangs going.
> Circuit Bored

> It's worth noting that gaining notoriety as a Matrix ganger is usually detrimental to any hopes of a future career as a shadowrunner.
> Pedigree

Software Pirating

This is likely the first activity that any Matrix gang takes part in, and is in fact the primary activity for many smaller gangs. Most gangs choose to specialize in either obtaining software and removing the copy protection or actually distributing the software once the copy protection is removed. Some gangs also go further, selling the pirated "warez" to individuals and unwary businesses. Once gangs move into this realm, the authorities become much more interested in their activities—poorly managed piracy results in many small-time gangs getting busted.

> If you're going to take the risk of downloading cracked software, make sure that you're getting it from a gang with a decent rep. Many of the "release groups" don't bother to extensively test or evaluate the software, and users of pirated copies may be nailed with time-delayed worms, data bombs or other surprises. Also, if the software hasn't been properly "cleansed" of anti-piracy code, it may take it upon itself to authenticate with a server on a random basis a few weeks or months after it's installed. If this occurs, the software corp may track the user down or remotely disable the program.
> Lita

Datasteals

In the Sixth World, a lot of people need to get their hands on confidential information—and a lot of those people can't afford to pay a hotshot decker to retrieve it. This is where some Matrix gangs find their niche as low-cost, low-quality data theft services. Most gangs lack the skills and leadership to do this effectively, so the few gangs that can are in high demand.

> Some gangs will go so far as to throw together a legitimate-looking "data-collection business" front to mask their activities in this area.
> Face

Programming

Though most Matrix gangs engage in some level of programming, a few concentrate entirely in this area. They may build custom utilities from scratch, or de-compile programs or IC stolen from the Matrix to try and figure out how they tick. Some of these groups end up selling the results to organizations like Hacker House, some of them just use them internally to keep the edge in other areas, and some distribute them across the Matrix for free, usually to draw attention to deficiencies in a corporation's product.

Vandalism

Always a favorite for ruckus-raising kids, vandalism has worked its way into the virtual world as well. Quite a few Matrix gangs get a kick out of re-sculpting a system, and some of them go so far as to assault and redecorate the icons of random personas. Some of them actually take it a notch further, graduating from graffiti to actually crashing nodes, attacking and dumping personas and wreaking other forms of havoc and destruction. Some of these groups use the Matrix to wreck things in real life—messing with automated factories, grid-guided traffic and so forth. Gangers who take it to this level usually don't last long before being arrested or taken out.

> Some of these vandals are actually accomplished artists. When they "redecorate" a node, they usually leave it looking much more lively and interesting (though many straight-laced vanilla corp-types would doubtlessly disagree).
> Van Gogh

Other

The list of crimes and misconduct doesn't end there, of course. Matrix gangers are some of the most creative gangers out there, and so come up with complicated and interesting schemes. These include credit theft and fraud, running protection rackets on small-time virtual stores and companies, blackmail operations and so on. Quite a few gangers make passable incomes by boosting Matrix services for down-and-out residents of the Barrens, arranging secure commcalls or even setting up jackpoints and leasing them to fixers (who go on to lease them to deckers for one-shot uses). Sometimes gangers have run dual-world robbery scams, first tracing or jumping a persona in the Matrix, and then ransacking their home or business in real life. Top-notch Matrix gangs often work their way

into the underworld of identity theft and creation, though their products are typically inferior to those produced by more established syndicates.

❯ At a certain point, quality Matrix gangs tend to be noticed and subsumed into a larger organization. Typically a syndicate swallows them up, though on a few occasions corps have hired on gangers en masse as raw talent and Matrix fodder. A few Matrix gangs have actually graduated into becoming Seoulpa Rings, carving out their own niche within the underworld.
❯ Argent

GANG PROFILES

Now that I've given you the lowdown on the whats and whys, here's a sampling of the whos. There are many Matrix gangs out there in the world. This small listing is just to lend some credibility to the fact that I know what I'm talking about.

The Troglobytes

This gang sticks out as one of the few Matrix gangs with primarily metahuman members. This crew tends to be unsophisticated as Matrix gangs go, primarily engaging in vandalism (especially of Humanis Policlub sites) and software piracy. Though they pull members from around the world, many of the Troglobytes are actually physically located in Boston's Rox, where they sideline as budget-rate deckmeisters and BTL abusers (or "field testers," as they call themselves). Troglobyte icons are quite distinctive in their fierce and flattering portrayals of orks and trolls.

❯ These guys get work from pro-metahuman armed cells like the Sons of Sauron.
❯ Tulkas

The Architects

This otaku tribe functions much like a gang, so I've counted them as one. More than many other otaku, the members of this gang seem to believe they have a mission to redesign the world at large to fit into some mysterious sort of new order. The technoshamans among their group are dedicated to reformatting the Matrix according to some Master Plan. To this end, they intentionally vandalize nodes, altering the iconography and system sculpting. If they get really deep inside a system, they'll even try to reconfigure tiered host structures, SAN addresses and the like. Like some sort of Matrix feng shui fanatics, they feel the need to alter the flow of the data streams to satisfy their whims.

❯ Of course, the changes they make get changed back before too long. It just wastes a little bit more corp money for them to do so.
❯ Monkey Puzzle

The cyberadepts of the group take it even further. They hold to the belief that metahumanity is evolving toward a stage where they will become one with machines, and so they seek to hurry this process along. To this end, they have been known to invade the hosts of implant clinics and arrange for future surgery patients to receive a little more than they've bargained for. In some cases, victims of these schemes have gone months or even years without realizing that they're carrying around extra components …

❯ I knew a guy who had that happen to him. He went in for cybereyes and kevlar bone lacing. Imagine his surprise when they took the bandages off his eyes and he discovered his shiny new cyberarm too. The hospital claimed it was a clerical error, but still charged him for it. He was less than pleased. I told him he was lucky he wasn't magically active.
❯ Van Gogh

❯ Ouch. How dis-arming.
❯ 'Trixster

The Terminal Cases

Led by a duo of second-rate deckers known as Terminus and Negative Gain, the Terminals (as they're called) get a definite rise out of being Matrix bad boys. To some respect, the Terminals operate like Matrix nomads, cruising into a different area of gridspace each day on their virtual motorcycle icons to party and raise hell. Quite a few of the Terminals seem to have an unhealthy obsession with human misery and suffering; they're well known for creating, dealing and abusing "snuff" BTLs and nasty psychotropic IC coding. Their icons take the leather biker look deep into the realm of S/M and bondage fetishism, and many of the Terminals have paired off into "master" and "slave" relationships.
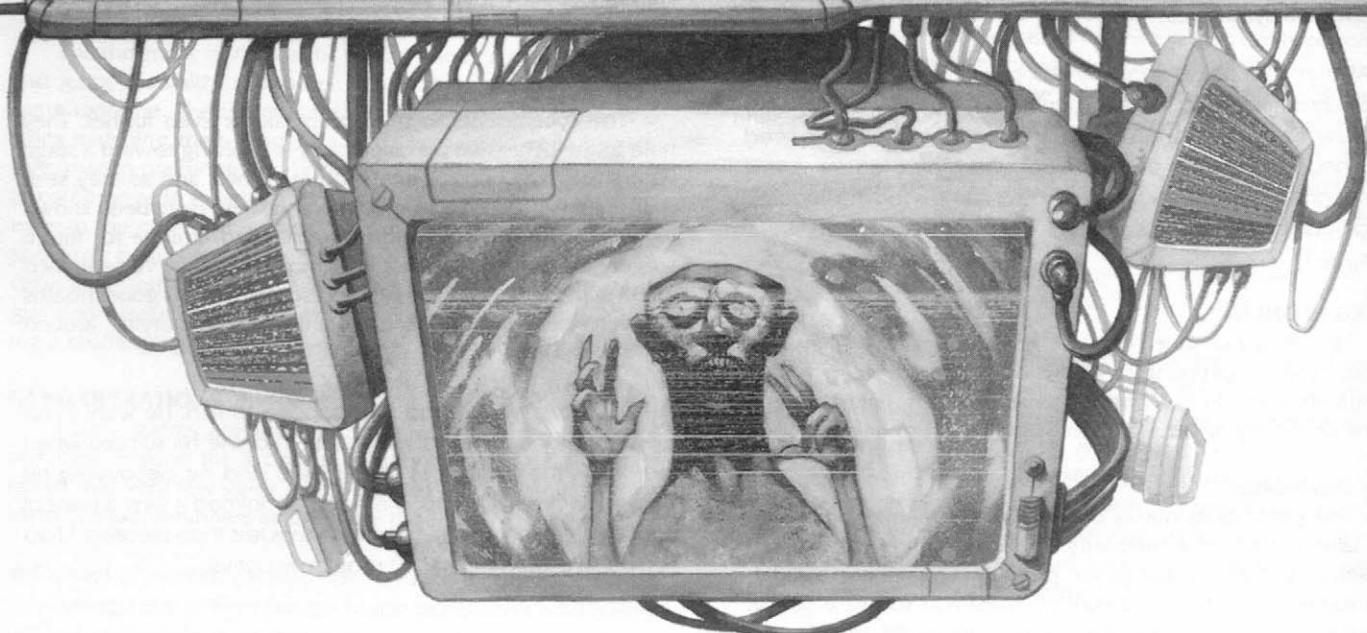
❯ Well, I guess now we've seen everything. I mean, what can you say to sickos like that?
❯ Rose Red

❯ How about, "Thank you sir, may I have another?"
❯ Poseur

OPEN FORUM: ANOMOLIES

had originally hoped to get write-ups from several different sources on information they've dug up regarding certain "Matrix anomalies." Unfortunately, in most cases these data-diggers were unable to uncover much more than simple accounts from deckers who had "encountered" something. So instead, I've decided to just open up a SIG on the topic and let you all spill your stories. Try to keep the raving lunacy to a minimum.

> Captain Chaos
    Transmitted: 1 August 2061 at 11:14:02 (EST)

> So, anybody have any good Ghost in the Machine stories? I mean aside from this Resonance drek that the otaku babble about?
> Instigator

> I do. I was hired once by Universal Omnitech to steal some research files from some weird outfit called Recyclone. I grabbed the data, which was some strange drek about reformatting the brains of vat-clones via the use of programmable bio-ASIST feedback conditioning and personafix feeds. Before I handed it over, though, I decided to run the UO system and see who exactly I was handing it over to.

It took more effort than I expected, but I penetrated the Omnitech host. As I was sniffing around, I kept getting these weird sensory feeds. First I was hearing noises, like the kind someone makes when they're having bad dreams. Then I started getting visual flashes: stuff about body parts melting and falling off. Then I started feeling like I was suffocating, like I was trapped underwater or something. It was fraggin' creepy. It felt like the host was alive, like I stumbled in during a nightmare.

Then I came across a video feed that really put the fear into me. The screen showed this vat, full of some kind of mad scientist cocktail, like the ads of those gene-therapy clinics, only bigger and scarier. And I swear to Ghost there was this—this thing—floating in the vat, some massive goober of flesh with various parts and limbs sticking out here and there. I nearly yarfed all over my deck.

NOVATECH

Even worse, I could see that the vat blob had some sort of jack into what I guess was its head area, and the thing seemed to be plugged directly into a mainframe. And I knew—I *knew*—by the way it was thrashing, that its nightmare was filtering out into the host, triggering all those whacked-out feedback sensations.

So I decided to bust the hell out of there, screw Mr. Johnson and his floating blobs, when all of a sudden this hole opens up underneath me. I'm thinking that I triggered some new IC, but no, it was worse. Next thing I know I'm sucked through some tunnel and then I'm suddenly standing in this weird, empty city. I thought for a minute I'd woken from some kind of dream ... it didn't seem like I was in the Matrix anymore. It was too real. I start running around, screaming my head off, but the entire city is devoid of life, just glass and metal.

Then I spot this pair of eyes, followed quickly by a wide grin, and then the rest of this woman fills in. She just stands there, dragging on her cigarette, giving me a lookover with a face that says she's not chewing on eye candy. Then she says, "Welcome to Wonderland City. I'm Alice."

Now I'm thinking this must be some AI, or maybe some Awakened critter died in my pipes and spiked the tap water again. She starts in on this spiel about how I should be more careful when working for "scumbags like Rocks Burrow," cuz he's just using me for evil purposes. Then whoosh—I'm bumped offline, and I pull my head out of a nice puddle of drool I'd accumulated on my desk.

I checked my deck, and sure enough—the files I liberated were gone. I never heard back from Mr. Johnson and I decided it was best to avoid contacting him. And I'm certainly glad I haven't seen that Alice girl, or whatever, again.
❯ Elci

❯ Typical, run-of-the-mill, "I ran into an AI" claptrap. Can we have something original, please?
❯ Instigator

❯ Hmm ... "Rocks Burrow," eh? Sounds like that's actually Thomas Roxborough, the vat-case on the board of Aztechnology and Universal Omnitech. He's victim to some experimental gene-therapy that cured him of a nasty flesh-rotting autoimmune disease but causes his tissues to dedifferentiate. I wouldn't be surprised if he was looking for some crazy method to transplant himself into another body. He's got the money and power to do it.
❯ Pyramid Watcher

❯ Roxborough lives through the Matrix. He's got the best gear, software and systems money can buy, and he's had a decade of forced Matrix imprisonment to hone his decking skills. He's one bad-ass mo-fo in the 'trix, so watch your step when you're in his 'hood. I'd say Elci got lucky, caught him asleep.
❯ Jane-in-the-Box

❯ I've heard other rumors about this "Wonderland" place before. So who's this Alice supposed to be then? Another AI?
❯ Spades

❯ One of the casualties of the Echo Mirage project was named Alice.
❯ Anonymous

❯ Check that. One Alice Haeffner—that's right, deceased wife of our current prez Kyle Haeffner. Died in action against the Crash Virus.
❯ Tom-Two

❯ It's been postulated in some forums that the Crash Virus may have been, or may have mutated into, an AI. It's not inconceivable that a proto-AI could have replicated the personality of someone who died in cybercombat against it. The AI may have absorbed the consciousness of Alice Haeffner, killing her in the process. Even now it may move through the Matrix, impersonating her.
❯ HeadKase

❯ That's one possibility. Another is that her consciousness was somehow copied into the Matrix and given a life of its own.
❯ Dixie

❯ That's impossible! Consciousness can't exist without some form of holographic neural network to support it, and I sincerely doubt such a process could have spontaneously come into existence. What software would be running it? Where does the processing power come from? Why haven't the sysops of these systems noticed these errant processes and killed them? It just doesn't add up.
❯ Jold

❯ How do you explain AIs then?
❯ Spades

❯ I don't believe in Artificial Intelligence.
❯ Jold

❯ Tell that to the thousands of Renraku Arcology victims.
❯ Redline

❯ Why doesn't someone ask Prez Haeffner if he ever gets calls from his dead wife?
❯ Gangrene

❯ So, putting aside the question of whether this Alice is an AI or not, why would she care about this Roxborough fellow?
❯ Spades

❯ Roxborough is guilty of crimes committed not just against me, but against the world. I intend to ensure that he suffers through the rest of his demeaning existence and never reclaims a body.
❯ Alice

❯ Very funny. Before the practical jokers and conspiracy wingnuts dominate this board, I'd like to talk about unusual nodes, like this Wonderland space. I've heard similar rumors regarding places like this, so-called ultraviolet hosts or places within the Matrix that "come alive." I always thought they were bunk, until just last week.

I was cruising through a backwater Polynesian grid, looking for some low-security hosts to pillage, when I noticed an icon that seemed out of place. The icon looked distorted, which I thought at first was just a fancy piece of chic programming. After a quick sensor pass, though, I realized that it wasn't just the icon, but the gridspace around it. My curiosity got the better of me, so I sleazed through the SAN—biggest mistake I'd made in years.

My first impression of the system was that it was cold and silent. It was a typical mom-and-pop corp host, sculpted in that blasé Renraku Gracious Host Suite style—except that nothing was moving. There was no activity—no data transfers, no commcall links, no apparent system processes. I amped my ASIST to reveal the background processes and I got nothing, aside from the ones my persona was spawning. Then I started to get an itchy feeling in my legs, like they were falling asleep. I whipped out an analyze routine, but the response was so sluggish that I might as well have plugged the code in line by line. Then it crashed.

By the time I realized what was happening, it was too late. All of my utilities starting crashing, and as I bolted for the SAN, my Response Increase bottomed out. Before I could escape, my persona hung—frozen dead in place. The kicker was that I was also being fed some sort of amped biofeedback, like the kind black IC nails you with to keep you from jacking out.

Luckily, about four days later, my pals kicked down the door to my crib as I was about to die from dehydration. They hadn't heard from me and had assumed the worst—which was nearly true. They found me crumpled over my deck, my body contorted and my mouth open in a silent scream. They unjacked me and rushed me to a street doc, and after a few days of fluids and muscle cramp relief I was released. I tried to find the node a week later, but I didn't have a record of its LTG code. I never found it.

The worst part is that I can hardly remember a thing from the whole time I was frozen. I remember a buzzing sensation, like a fly in my ear, and I remember some crazy dreams that would probably get my hoop committed if I were to repeat them publicly. But if I ever see that distortion field again—I'm jacking out.
❯ Island Orchid

❯ You know, I had the same experience! After four days, I was nearly dead from dehydration and hysteria. My roommate made me promise never to chain-pop amphetamines so I could finish a piece of code again. Sleep deprivation is a wonderful thing.
❯ Slamm-0!

❯ I had an experience that was almost as scary. I was doing a run on a third-tier software corp that excelled in IC-crafting. I had just pulled the files I needed when I was jumped by a frisky little piece of black IC. It was a real struggle, and it nearly had the best of me. At the last sec, I managed to jack out. Still, once I recovered from the dump shock, I was clear to go—or so I thought.

I go on with my life, meet my Johnson, pass over the files he wanted, collect my cred and celebrate another night's work on the town. Then I sink into my daily routine—chill with my girl, watch some trid, even chat with Mom on her birthday. Next thing you know, it's a few days after the run and I'm having some drinks with an old chum when I notice he's behaving a little oddly. I'm asking him normal questions about his job—he's some sort of biologist at Ft. Lewis—but he keeps trying to evade them. Normally I can't shut the guy up, and all of a sudden he can't even give me a decent outline of what he did at work that day. I'd had enough to drink that I was feeling a bit aggressive, so I started getting pushy with my questions. That's when things really got weird.

Over the guy's shoulder, I started noticing that things in the room were getting a little blurry. I tried to focus on a poster hanging on the wall, but it was like my eyes weren't working right. Then I started noticing trailers, like I'm tripping on acid or something. Then this noise came over the bar's sound system, like someone snoring in their sleep. I started freaking out, wondering what the heck was going on, when I realized my chummer's just standing there frozen, like a statue. Then I realized that I was listening to me snoring.

That's when I woke up with the worst case of dump shock of my life. I feebly managed to look at my watch and saw that I'd been under for a good half an hour. As I grabbed my deck and headed out the door, I tried calling my Johnson, but he didn't pick up—and that slag always answers his phone. On the way down my stairs, I peeked out the window and spotted a shady-looking sedan parked out front. Then I suddenly got a call—from my mom. Her little blue-haired head is looking at me with these sad eyes over the vid-screen, and she starts telling me to stay where I am cuz she's coming over and we have things to talk about. Well, my mom hasn't left the Home in over two years. Whoever it was on the phone certainly wasn't her.

I made it out a rear window and scraped outta town without getting picked up. I laid low for a week, then made a few tentative calls. Every one of my friends and contacts who I had dreamed about suddenly wasn't taking calls or showing up to work.

After that, I cut my losses and relocated. It was easier to start over.
❯ Looking Glass

❯ Hmmm. Black IC that stimulates your brain into REM sleep and records the memories? Sounds like a wicked piece of programming to me.
❯ Sandman

❯ Bulldrek, there's no way the IC could record his dreams like that. He ran into psychotropic IC that cranked him high with paranoia and delusions, that's all.
❯ Tweaker

❯ Step aside, chummers, I got a tale to tell.

You may discount this post out of hand—if so, then frag you! If you're stupid enough not to recognize a gem when it smacks you between the eyes, then the gene pool is better off without you. For the rest of you, congratulations on having more then a teaspoon of gray matter upstairs. Read on and you'll see why I've taken the time to bang out this post.

A few weeks ago I was loitering on Shadowland, thumbing through the incoming file dumps, when I spotted something interesting. The file was a copy of an internal corp memo, pointing out the address to a vanishing SAN and the times it would be open. The kicker was the datastore protected by the SAN, which screamed "loot me now!" in bright neon letters. I smelled something fishy, but I figured that even if it was a corp set-up, I could use the distraction and practice.

So at the appointed hour, I skated over and popped into a private grid, hitting the SAN shortly after it appeared. I cracked it easily and sleazed through the chokepoint without breaking a sweat. Sure enough, the promised paydata was there, ripe for the taking. Before I started scooping bits, though, I decided I had better cover my hoop and scope the place out. A quick glance around told me that the rest of the host was completely barren files-wise—there was nothing except the bait. I scanned for VMs and IC constructs and other dirty tricks, but got negative results. I must've triggered something, though, cuz the system suddenly bounced to red alert and the sculpting went from base UMS to this high-rez steamy jungle setting. I started picking up sensor hits and decided it was time to bail.

That was when your gallant hero discovered that the Access subsystem had been jacked through the roof, so leaving wasn't going to be quite that easy. I wasn't in the mood for a dumpshock sandwich, so I decided to scope out a different exit. As I started crashing my way through the rainforest sculpting, I got the distinct feeling that I was being hunted. The icons on my heels were feeding "howling" transmissions to my ASIST and they didn't even bother to hide the fact that they were toying with me, herding me through various tiers of the system.

I finally turned and made a stand against the hounds, which turned out to be nasty little agents. I picked off a few, but realized they were just trying to soften me up for an icon that was hanging back at the moment. So I called the bugger

out, expecting him to be some smarmy corp bootlicking sec schmuck. But instead, the fragger steps up and gives me this spiel about how he paid top cred to hunt down little Matrix vermin like yours truly and he's going to savor my braindeath for all it's worth. Then he pulls out this mondo black hammer utility and starts whalin' on my ass. Then I died.

Heh, had you going, didn't I? Okay, I didn't die, but he did tool on me for a while. I could tell that he wasn't exactly skilled at slingin' code, but he certainly had top-of-the-line gear, and his hunting pups had wrinkled my persona and generally cramped my style. After a few rounds of bat-'n'-hammer, I decided to skip out of this B-movie thriller, and popped my plug.

I cleaned up my nosebleed, grabbed some shut-eye, regained my confidence and dove back in with a vengeance the next morning, carrying a few new SOTA 'grams at my side. Of course, the bloody SAN wasn't there, and hasn't been back there since.

So, was this adventure the delusion of a mad-eyed Matrix terrorist? Or did I really nearly get capped by some suit who paid cred to hunt a live decker like he was on safari? You decide.
> Slamm-0!

> Hey Slamm-0!, was your "hunter" decked out like some medieval British royalty, weighted down with chainmail and longbow iconography? Did he have an accent?
> Glitch

> Nope, he had this "great white hunter" look going, with a pith helmet and elephant gun. He had a CAS accent, though. Why do you ask?
> Slamm-0!

> A few months ago, I fell into the same trap. I came across a juicy pointer that was anonymously left in a decker hangout, and checked it out. The set-up was the same: vanishing SAN, paydata bait, bouncing host, jacked-up Access to prevent logoff, and an unskilled but well-equipped "hunter" aided by agents. I fared a bit better, though, and actually picked up the paydata and took out the hunter with a killjoy routine. He had a distinctly British upper-crust style of speech.

Anyway, the data sold well, and I pulled some favors in and traced it back to some snotty upper-crust British lord. I caught a record of a speech he gave to some social club and recognized his accent, so I knew it was him. I checked his background, and it turns out the guy didn't have the skills to be a decker. After ripping through his bank records, I came across a series of large financial payouts he made in the weeks before and after I walked into his trap. The trails were convoluted, but each payment ended up at the same anonymous account.

My conclusion? This snot paid a whole lot of cred to some agency that sets up "Matrix hunting." The rich suits who shell out the cash get to use the best deck and programs available. Whoever it is they pay hooks up the little trap host and seeds the Matrix with bait, hoping a scrounging decker will pick it up

and check it out. Then the rich fragger gets to take out his frustrations at kissing hoop all month and tries to snuff the decker out.
> Glitch

> What better way for a stiff-as-nails board member to blow off steam than to come a-huntin' the hated shadowrunner/decker from his comfy chair? Makes perfect sense.
> Paranoid42

> What about the paydata, though? Why would they actually leave valuable info to be carried away?
> Stitch

> I can think of two reasons. One, they have to use actual bait. If a decker gets in and finds nothing, he may bail before the bouncing host is triggered and/or the "hunter" even knows he's there. Two, it gives an incentive to the "hunter" to actually kill the decker before he gets away with the goods. I imagine a lot of these bastards like the idea but balk at the actual combat—putting their wallet on the line undoubtedly increases performance.
> Sidewinder

> It's possible that the paydata could be part of the payment to whoever sets this operation up. If the decker doesn't get it, the provider does. If the decker does get it, the "hunter" has to pay extra.
> Antionem

> Maybe whoever's idea this is has a good sense of humor, and thinks the decker/prey should be rewarded if they get away?
> Maleficent

> Man, the things rich people will do for fun.
> Prole

> You think that's bad? Scan this, then.

About half a year ago I was drowning my sorrows at the Cube, lamenting over another failed relationship. This persona idles up to me, looking for all the world like an exact re-creation of Humphrey Bogart from his Maltese Falcon days. He introduces himself as Bogie, and starts chatting me up. He was good, a real ladies' man. A smooth seducer with the mind of a poet and the savvy of a hard-nosed noir PI.

I actually find myself sorta liking this guy, because he really seems to know how to make me laugh and smile, despite my peevishness. When he suggests we go hit another virtual club, I say sure, why not. Then Bogie takes me over to the Bouncing Betty, which just happens to be my favorite Matrix club. Hey, I think, I might actually have something in common with this guy. Sure enough, we hit the dance floor and Bogie's icon is programmed to swing like you wouldn't believe. He sweeps me off

my feet, figuratively and literally. I actually had to work to convince myself not to take him for a little virtual romp at the end of the night, and we parted ways.

I end up spending a big chunk of my next week in Bogie's company. I'm floored at how similar our interests are. He could debate me on my favorite social and political topics, he'd read most of my favorite books and chipped my favorite sims, and he was a fan of the Seattle Seahawks. He even helped untangle a piece of code that was causing me problems. At the end of the week, I wake up one morning to find that he's had a dozen red roses delivered to my flat—I'm a sucker for red roses. I was falling so hard for the guy that it didn't even creep me out that I had never given him my address.

I went to meet him that night, planning on arranging a meet in the flesh. Before I could gush out the idea, he tells me off. That's right, the bastard dropped me right there on the spot. Cold and cruel. He tells me that a "broad" like me isn't worth the chrome on his jack.

I lost it. I tried to nail him with an attack prog, but he easily dodged. I went for the killjoy, but he beat me to the draw. He was good—I got the impression he didn't even use his full talent. He wrapped me up with a blind/restrict combo, and left me in heart-broken tears on the virtual floor. Then the bastard spent the next week spreading rumors and my personal data across the 'trix.

No one—I mean no one—does that to me and gets away with it. It took me a few months, but I tracked him down. I didn't go for Bogie, though—I went for the man behind the icon. I finally tracked him down to a condo in Bellevue owned by Microdeck. I went in on my own, armed with a Viper, a bottle of gin and a piss-drunk violent temper. I slipped by security and kicked in his door. I was ready to kill the slot, or at least severely bruise him. But when I found him, I didn't feel anything but pity.

You see, Bogie wasn't a slick seducer. He wasn't even a hard-boiled tough guy. He was a kid. Alexander Tyrell Gates. That's right, the seventeen-year-old Matrix prodigy and heir to the Microdeck Gates fortune. His skin was pale as a cavefish, except for the bad complexion. It would be generous to call him a weakling. He was nothing but a pathetic, whiny kid, and he had played me like a bad drama-sim. I probably should've put the bugger out of his misery, but instead I just left in disgust.
❯ Siouxzi

❯ How the heck could some snot-nosed corp brat have done all that? Sounds like you were a bit too gullible, Siouxzi.
❯ Earl Grey

❯ Alex Gates ain't your standard corp brat. Brian W. Gates III, the chairman of Microdeck Industries, decided it would be a neat idea to start hooking his kid, Alexander Tyrell Gates, into the Matrix when he was only three months old. The kid's spent seventeen years of his life more inside the Matrix than out of it. The kid's screwed up now, believing the Matrix is closer to a true reality than the real world, and it shows.

❯ Dr. Spock

❯ Why, can't the kid distinguish reality from fantasy?
❯ Keanu

❯ In my opinion, yes, he can. However, he's become so accustomed to the "false front" inherent in all Matrix interactions that he has no moral qualms about lying to your face or misrepresenting facts. Tie that in with the fact that the kid is in the throes of hormone-hell puberty, and that he's probably never even talked to a girl in the flesh, and you've got a kid with serious issues.
❯ Dr. Spock

❯ Aw, give the brat a break. He can't be that much of a terror.
❯ Chem X

❯ Oh yeah? Well let me fill you in on the rest of the story. Before I left his flat, I made the kid hand over all the files he had on me—enough to fill a couple of chips. He had spent several months trailing and tracking me, learning everything he could about me. He's a top-notch decker, so his stalking skills are superb.

Then the bugger used the dossier he had compiled on me to plan out his approach. He had sketched out all the right things to say to me. He knew how to pique and keep my interest, and he knew what I like and when I like it. He did his research and put it to damn fine use.

Oh yeah, remember how I said I was on the rebound from my previous lover? Well, it just so happens that the events leading up to that relationship's downfall were not exactly accidental. I had been convinced my previous pal was lying through his teeth, but it turns out to have been a carefully orchestrated Bogie campaign to break us up.

I guess I should be happy about one thing. He had me hooked, but he didn't know what to do with me. He can't score without showing his cards, and I get the feeling he's too insecure to try his hand at cybersex. His obsessions will only take him so far …

Keep this in mind, girls. Bogie's still out there.
❯ Siouxzi

❯ Isn't it great that today's youth are taking to technology in such healthy and productive ways?
❯ Zephyr

❯ Speaking of techno-brats, anyone know what's up with the otaku squabbling? Most of the open warfare between tribes seems to have quelled, but there's still some conflict afoot.
❯ Tribal Counsel

❯ Now that Deus has been crashed, most of its supporters seem to be in disarray. Some of them seem to be regrouping, and either claiming that Deus lives on or finding some new cause to raise trouble about. I hear Deus' right hand-otaku,

some slitch named Pax, escaped the arcology and is rounding up a new tribe. I'd watch out for her.
> Neon Wraith

> Deus lives on, even in death. The Matrix will be cleansed and folded under his will!
> Gabriel

> Wow! Zombie programs that do the laundry! Let me guess, otaku brains were too scrambled, so he had to start eating real deckers?
> Slamm-0!

> Hey, I hear Deus is being held against his will with Elvis, L. Ron Hubbard, Bob Avakian, David Gavilan and Dunkelzahn in a secret Ares installation hidden away in the jungles of Madagascar! Anyone want to join me in a run to rescue them?
> Bung

> Fool, Deus controls the Corporate Court! Why do you think they named their new Matrix policing force the Grid Overwatch Division—G.O.D.!
> Tom-Two

> <Groan!> In an effort to save this thread, I humbly ask—has anyone ever seen one of these otaku resonance wells? Someone who's not otaku, that is?
> 'Trixster

> Resonance wells?
> Elemental

> Supposedly a place where otaku go to "communicate" with the Deep Resonance, whatever that is.
> Cleo

> Resonance wells are places of power, where the spirits of the machine whisper to the chosen ones. We bathe in their voices, and their words enter our minds and echo with the power to manipulate the Matrix.
> Syzygy

> I was taken by an otaku to one of these wells. It was off to the "side" of a grid. I just took myself to the furthermost icon on the grid, pointed my persona in the direction of nowhere, and "headed" that way for a few cycles. Normally when you do this sort of thing you don't go anywhere—but this time, following the otaku in front of me,I did. We came across a small group of otaku who'd been out of sensor range at the grid's edge. They were all just hanging there in space, with zoned-out looks. Occasionally, some of them would move around and whisper to another, and they all acted reverent, like they were in a church. I didn't see a damn thing, and I tried every scanning program I had. Eventually, the otaku I came with turned

around and said he had found out what he needed to know. He hadn't communicated with anyone that I could tell, so I asked who told him. "The Deep Resonance." Of course.
  I tried scoping that well out at a later time, but I couldn't get past the edge of the grid. Weird.
> Thumper

> Is the Renraku Arcology PLTG a resonance well?
> Tres Belle

> The SCIRE Matrix is cursed. Those who ride the wires of the False One are doomed to shatter under the true Resonance and fade before their time.
> Syzygy

> Yeah, sure, whatever. To answer the question, I don't think the SCIRE system itself is an otaku well, but some areas within the grid or the hosts might be.
  I hear the SCIRE PLTG is not a fun place to visit these days. One decker told me that there's still a few UV systems hidden away, though they're destabilized and falling apart because the AI isn't there to control them.
> Black-Eyed Suzan

> So if everybody accepts the existence (or former existence) of this big bad Deus AI, that means there's bound to be more of the code monsters out there, right? So where are the real ones? Like this Morgan AI I heard about, what happened to her?
> Rose Red

> Morgan died long ago, in the clutches of Renraku's Sherman Huang. It was the re-animation of Morgan's corpse that brought Deus to life.
> Redline

> Just because there's been one or two AIs doesn't mean there's a whole species of them running rampant through the 'trix. From the studies I've read on the AI phenomenon, the pre-requisites for the creation of one are incredibly difficult to establish and even then, it's unlikely an AI will be produced. I can think of a few other systems—Shiawase MIFD, Fuchi/Novatech HQ, Pueblo—that have more or less replicated the Renraku SCIRE Matrix environment that allegedly spawned Morgan and Deus, yet despite unsubstantiated rumors, none of these systems show any signs of having produced an AI.
  Most experts agree that some sort of unknown process sparks the leap from an advanced semi-autonomous knowbot to an AI. Since no one knows exactly what this process is, it can't be replicated under laboratory conditions. We can each be secure in the fact that every corp that can is busy trying all of the possibilities they can think of.
> The Smiling Bandit
  Strikes Again! Ha-Ha-Ha!

❯ I don't know anything about Als, but I do know of a tribe of independent programs that calls itself the Code Clan.
❯ Brother Data

❯ Code Clan? That's hardly original. Sounds more like a programming team.
❯ Gif-e-Pop

❯ Well, computer programs aren't exactly known for their creativity.

Hey Bro, if it is a group of independent programs, aren't they going to go extinct soon? I mean, they're going to run afoul of a programming glitch or a processing problem somewhere and either freeze or crash. End of tribe.
❯ Technocrat

❯ Actually, I think they've found a way to sustain themselves.

From what I understand—and this info comes straight from the program's output, so to speak—the core group of the Code Clan is a bunch of SKs written by some group of top-notch compsci grad students at a prestigious university. The SKs were based out of a host the students secretly patched into the university grid. All the SKs seem to know is that one day they stopped receiving orders. So they continued on with their programmed routines.

They won't tell me exactly what their programmed mission is, but I do know it involves programming and re-programming agents, which are then sent out into the Matrix to search for something, and perhaps more. These agents make up the bulk of the Clan, and they're pretty solid pieces of code work. So as long as they keep churning out new and improved agents, the Code Clan should thrive.
❯ Brother Data

❯ Until something happens to the SKs.
❯ Sync

❯ So what happened to the grad students? It doesn't make sense to spend years programming such things just to abandon them.
❯ Frat Boy

❯ Who knows? They may have been run over by a bus, or extracted to some paranoid corp that doesn't let them out much.
❯ Joey

❯ Maybe they actually set the whole thing up as an experiment, to see how the Clan would survive on its own? Maybe they're hoping the Clan will evolve into a society of Als.
❯ Sync

❯ From my interactions with the Clan, some of the SKs and agents seem to be taking liberal and broad interpretations of their programming orders—they're a bit more "open-minded" than you'd expect a program to be. That could just be how they were programmed … or maybe they are evolving.
❯ Brother Data

❯ I don't like the sound of that.

That reminds me, though. I once had an otaku friend, and I remember she had these things that she called "sprites." They were sort of like a smart frame, only with more personality and … intelligence? She said all otaku could create them. A year later, she introduces me to "her daemon Gothmog," without actually explaining what it is. My scan of Gothmog showed that it was similar to her sprites, only more … potent? It had even more character than the sprites did.

A few months later, I'm waiting to meet some contacts in a Matrix lounge when Gothmog whips up to me. It informs me that my otaku pal is "no more," and that it wished to convey her final farewell before it went on to "serve the Deep Resonance." I wished I hadn't been so stunned, or I'd have questioned it more before it left.

Sure enough, my otaku friend had been killed earlier that day. It spooks me out that Gothmog was still around to tell me about it … and that it may still be out there in the Matrix.
❯ Bit Boy

❯ I doubt it. I've seen otaku die, and their sprites died with them.
❯ Joey

❯ Maybe the Deep Resonance keeps these "daemons" alive?
❯ Cleo

❯ You know, I hear that mad scientist creep, Dr. Halberstam, has moved on from torturing the brains of normal kids to kidnapping otaku, plucking their brains out and studying them. Considering how much of a headache otaku give me, I say more power to him.
❯ Totkopf

❯ Totkopf, you're one sick fragger.
❯ Zephyr

❯ Well, aside from these last remarks, this conversation has definitely been enlightening. There's definitely more to be found in the Matrix than the standard user can explain or expect … and who knows what the future will reveal? It's a strange virtual world out there …
❯ Instigator

GAME INFORMATION

This section provides details for using the previously described grids, hosts, personas and other entities in *Shadowrun* campaigns. Gamemasters will find many of the Matrix rules presented in *SR3* (pp. 199–230) and the *Matrix* rules expansion necessary to use this section. Additionally, the rules for *Creating Prime Runners* given on pp. 83–84, *SRComp*, are also useful for defining the power and threat level of non-player characters.

USING THE MATRIX

This book describes a number of places, people, groups and other undefinable things that operate primarily in or through the Matrix. To use these properly in a *Shadowrun* campaign, gamemasters should keep the following points in mind.

First of all, the Matrix is just like any other location in the real world. There are good, bad and ugly people to be found there, just as in any physical street corner, store or hangout. In the world of *Shadowrun,* almost everyone uses the Matrix, and that should include most of the characters in your shadowrunning team. The Matrix should not just be the realm of deckers—they're merely the ones who know how to use it best. Any character should be able to access the Matrix to search for information, shop around, play games or meet with others. Making the Matrix applicable only to deckers limits the game unnecessarily and creates more work for the gamemaster.

Second, remember that although the Matrix is simply a place, it is a virtual place. Imagine wandering around in a cartoon universe and you'll have an idea of what it's like inside a virtual bar or a data haven. No one is as they appear. You only have face value and reputation to go by, something which ought to make even the most trusting of characters a bit nervous.

By the same token, since the Matrix exists outside the physical world it can be a truly international meeting place. If you'd like to take the runners on a run through Siberia, have them run into a Russian cruising the Matrix for shadowrunners. The Matrix is a perfect place to drop hints or arrange for unusual run-ins and meetings. Data havens are especially useful for this, given their importance to the shadows and shadowrunners. Take advantage of the locales that are made available when the game needs a change of pace.

Like the physical world, the Matrix is full of groups who interact, gossip, hang out and work together. Because the people who form these communities can originate from anywhere in the world, they tend to be more extreme—either they're focused on a particular common interest or

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they're an eclectic, mixed bunch drawn together by happenstance. These communities can be the source of tension, friendships and, of course, shadowrunning opportunities.

To put it briefly, the Matrix is a realm without horizons. Its uses and possibilities are limited only by the imagination, so gamemasters should use the Matrix to its full potential.

GRIDS

If the Matrix is a world unto itself, then the grids are its body and soul. Each grid is as unique in function and form as one organ of the body is to another, with personas and information flowing from one to the next, the lifeblood of one world-spanning organism.

There are thousands of grids available in the Matrix, each with its own quirks and appearance. This section provides information on how to use the grids to bring more personality to the electron world in your game. In addition to special rules for running in each grid, typical security sheafs have been included as well. See p. 210, *SR3* and p. 114, *Matrix* for more information.

ANGEL SATCON

The Angel SatCon RTG follows all the standard rules for satellite grids and satellite uplinks, as detailed on p. 47 and p. 34 of *Matrix*, respectively. The Security Code, ACIFS ratings and Density modifiers for the Angel SatCon RTG are also listed on p. 47, *Matrix*. Note that the SANs for Angel SatCom satellites are always protected by scramble-5 IC, requiring a successful Decrypt Access operation to gain entrance.

Among satellite RTGs, Angel SatCom is unusual for the variety of satellites in its constellations, ranging from comsats to research sats. The controls for these satellites reside in hosts connected to the SatCom grid. Each satellite host has its own security ratings, which can vary greatly depending on what that specific satellite does. The Satellite Host Rating Table above provides typical ratings based on function. The gamemaster should feel free to alter these ratings as appropriate, as well as use the timed and triggered SAN effects detailed on pp 120-1, *Matrix*.

Yamatetsu's satellites carry a wide range of instrumentation and communication/surveillance equipment—from hi-res cameras to radio receivers and thermal imaging sensors—that can be exploited by a decker. It is the gamemaster's call as to how effective these devices are. It is not uncommon for atmospheric conditions to interfere with this equipment's functioning. When such devices are used, roll 1D6. On a roll of 1, conditions such as cloud cover, sunspots, solar flares and so on interfere with any attempted use of these devices.

The security sheaf for the Angel SatCon grid is given on p. 132.

SATELLITE HOST RATING TABLE

Satellite Host	Security Code/ACIFS
Comsats	Orange-8/9/12/9/7/7
Weather Sats	Orange-7/6/10/7/7/9
Research Sats	Orange-9/7/10/9/8/9
Surveillance Sats	Red-10/12/14/12/12/12
Sat Control Systems	Red-9/10/14/12/9/11

CHICAGO NOOSE NET

The interesting thing about Noose Net is that you never know what you're going to find. On the other hand, that's also what makes it so dangerous. Systems go down, others come up in their place. As a result, security is a little unpredictable.

Each time a character logs on to Noose Net, the security rating for the grid itself is randomly determined using an Easy difficulty level (See *Intrusion Difficulty*, p. 205, *SR3*). The trigger steps and security sheafs are also random, and should be determined at the beginning of each session in Noose Net, using Orange as the base security level (see pp. 112–16 of *Matrix*). Note that different users logged on at the same time may have different security sheafs. There is no such thing as a typical security sheaf for Noose Net.

If a character is jacked in from inside the Noose Net, any tracing attempts receive a +4 Trace modifier. At the gamemaster's discretion, they may be unable to be traced at all.

Given its jury-rigged nature, strange and unusual occurences are common in the Noose Net. Whenever a character performs a Logon to RTG operation to access the Noose Net, roll 2D6 and add the results. On a total of 10 or greater, Noose Net will be exhibiting strange features for as long as the character accesses it. Roll 3D6 and consult the Wild Matrix Table (p. 117) to determine what effect occurs, or the gamemaster may choose to invent something appropriate. Keep in mind that Noose Net is unpredictable, with a significant portion of the network and the hosts it supports having been cobbled together from archaic systems.

The chaotic nature of Noose Net makes it fertile ground for Resonance Well discovery and creation. When founding a tribe in the Noose, attempts to create a well receive a –2 target number modifier.

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

The security sheaf for the DOJ grid can be found on p. 132.

Despite the sheer amount of public-access information that abounds on the DOJ grid, the UCAS government knows where they want to draw the line. While each host has its own quirks, there are a few rules the DOJ has kept across the board.

The DOJ values its files and so has made it more difficult for unauthorized users to change or eliminate records. On any DOJ host, the Edit File operation is at a +4 modifier, unless the decker is using a superuser account (see *Account Privileges*, p. 37, *Matrix*).

The DOJ would rapidly run out of storage room if they kept all of their data online forever, so standard DOJ policy is to copy material more than five years old onto offline storage chips, stored away in physical warehouses. To view a file in offline storage, a DOJ worker with access to the warehouse must be

WILD MATRIX TABLE

3D6 Roll	Result
3–4	Incompatibility. See *Archaic Systems*, p. 51, *Matrix*.
5	ASIST feedback. See *Archaic Systems*, p. 51, *Matrix*.
6	A particular subsystem has been infected with worms. Roll on the Worm Table, p. 116, *Matrix* to determine the type of worm. Roll an additional 1D6 to determine what subsystem is infected: 1–2, Access; 3, Control; 4, Index; 5, Files; or 6, Slave. For more details, see *Worms*, p. 92, *Matrix*.
7–8	System delays. Lose all bonuses from Response Increase (but not reality filters or pure DNI).
9	The grid is temporarily incapable of handling the processing required to keep full simsense support. As a result, the visual component has been stripped down to high-resolution line drawings and other sensory input has been dropped entirely. Apply a +1 modifier to all target numbers for Matrix activity.
10	Overlapping security. Two grid security processes are being run independently from each other. The gamemaster should either cut all trigger intervals by half (round up), or else generate two security sheafs and compare the character's security tally against both.
11	Weak interface. See *Archaic Systems*, p. 51, *Matrix*.
12	Power fluctuations cause the grid to be unstable. Once every minute, personas must succeed in a Bod (6) Test or be temporarily stalled and hung up. Failure indicates that the persona can take no actions for the next Combat Turn. A result of all 1s means the user is dumped from the system and will suffer dump shock.
13	The grid's file system has become partially corrupted. Apply a +2 modifier to all Index and Files Tests.
14–15	Stray signals and feedback create static that interferes with sensor readings. Apply a +2 modifier to all Sensor Tests.
16–17	Weak bandwidth. See *Archaic Systems*, p. 51, *Matrix*.
18	The character will run across an IC construct that identifies him or her as an intruder and attacks. The construct carries cascading blaster-5 and tar pit-5 IC. See *IC Constructs*, p. 91, *Matrix*, for more information.

DOJ SEARCH TABLE

Database	Search Modifier
INS	+2
FBI	−1
UCAS Marshalls	+1
DEA	+1
Bureau of Prisons	+2
Anti-Trust Division	+0
Office of Inspector General	−1

convinced to physically locate the chip and upload the requested data. This requires the requesting character to either fill out all the proper forms and pass an ID check or successfully bribe the worker.

Within the grid, each host will have its own distinctive security and ratings. Given the massive amounts of data, bureaucracy and red tape, searching such systems can be difficult. If a character is searching any of the specific databases mentioned on pp. 10–12, use the modifiers given on the DOJ Search Table. (See *Information Searches*, p. 124, *Matrix*, for more details.) Given the confusing nature of the government bureaucracy and the fact that files are often being shuttled between different agencies and departments, the gamemaster can apply additional target number modifiers to Computer (Search Operations) Tests as he sees fit.

UCAS Matrix Marshals

The UCAS Marshals are the official policing agency responsible for protecting UCAS Matrix systems and countering Matrix crimes. The Marshals are no slouches when it comes to Matrix combat, and should be considered Equal NPCs. They usually travel in pairs or squads, and will carry an array of quality utilities, including the BattleTac Matrixlink (p. 71, *Matrix*), track (p. 221, *SR3*) and several attack and defense utilities.

MAGICKNET

Magicknet is a good resource, if a little costly. The benefits far outweigh the cost for most members, though. Users of the official Magicknet are charged a yearly fee of 1,000¥. In return, they receive access to everything Magicknet has to offer: online talismongerers, magical group chapterhouses, lore stores and archives, discussion forums and much, much more. The Magicknet also hosts several dozen magical libraries of varying ratings and focus, though these nodes charge extra for research time. Awakened characters will find spell and foci formula for sale here, as well as other oddities and goods.

To find the Magick Undernet, a character must find someone "in the know" and convince them to provide access details. This may require a successful Etiquette (Matrix), Etiquette (Magic) or Negotiations (Bribery) Test (or Tests).

Even then, the character may run afoul of Matrix gangers or con artists looking to rip him off. Alternately, a character may purchase the Magick Undernet as a contact during character creation (see *Shadowland and Data Havens*, p. 128, *Matrix*).

Finding the Undernet is one thing, getting past the Decker on the Threshold is another. The Decker is a semi-autonomous knowbot.

Magicknet is a fairly standard grid, so searches on it are unmodified. The Undernet, however, survives by making sure its patrons can find what they want, when they want it. Searches in the Undernet have a Search Modifier of –1.

The security sheaf for the Magicknet PLTG is given on p. 132. The hosts on Magicknet as well as the hosts of the Magick Undernet will all have varying security codes and ratings, according to their purpose and design.

USING MATRIX SERVICE PROVIDERS

The big Matrix service providers are rather like Stuffer Shacks—everybody goes there at one time or another, but no one likes to admit it. Still, in crowds there is anonymity. The guidelines below may apply to other MSPs as well. (For more info on MSPs, see p. 36, *Matrix*.)

A typical Matrix Service Provider security sheaf is listed on p. 132. It should be noted that the sheaf shown is for a Green-Average security level. For a Green-Hard system, the gamemaster may raise the ratings of the IC at his discretion.

UOL

UOL is designed to get the largest number of technology-clueless people possible jacked in to their service. In light of this dumbed-down system, all Computer (Search Operations) Tests on UOL get a –1 Search Modifier. The low security level, as indicated on the UOL security sheaf (p. 132), makes UOL a prime target for deckers and hacker wannabes.

UOL routinely intercepts data and spies on the activities of its users in an attempt to root out deckers, porn dealers, software pirates and politicos. The gamemaster should determine when and if this occurs, according to the needs and flavor of his campaign.

PlanetLink

PlanetLink is designed to meet the needs of the lowest common denominator, just like other mainstream MSPs. It has developed a reputation for the quality games it offers to subscribers, however, including several of those described on pp. 78–79.

The games on Planetlink are pretty addictive at normal levels, and it has been rumored that some

THE DECKER ON THE THRESHOLD	
Statistic	**Rating**
Core Rating	8
MPCP	8/6/6/4/8
Pilot Skill	8
Initiative	8 + 4D6
Utility Pool	8
Hacking Pool	8
Utility Payload	23
Attack-S	8
Armor	4
Scanner	6
Lock-on	5

game operators occasionally run their games at BTL levels. To get the full effect of this, a character must be running with a hot ASIST interface. At the gamemaster's discretion, a character who plays such games for extended periods runs the risk of BTL addiction. Treat these games as the equivalent of a Rating 4 BTL dreamchip, using the *Substance Abuse* rules on p. 108 of *M & M* and the *BTL Addiction Table* on p. 69, *CC*.

Yamatetsu MetaMatrix

Yamatetsu has become the corporate friend to metahumans, or at least it would like to be. Reduce the cost increase for meta-modified gear (see *Racial Modifications*, p. 272, *SR3*) by 5 percent if obtained through the MetaMatrix.

The MetaMatrix contains a large amount of useful information that is of interest to metahumans in order to keep step with the tastes of their customers. Searches for metahuman topics are at a –1 Search Modifier.

PUEBLO CORPORATE COUNCIL GRIDS

The security sheaf for the Pueblo RTG is given on p. 133. This sheaf may also be used for PCC LTGs, though some may have higher or lower security. Remember that security tally incurred on one LTG or the main RTG will carry over to the main RTG and any LTGs underneath it.

Since party IC was first developed by Pueblo, the party IC used in Pueblo grids continues to be a step above that of party IC elsewhere. Party IC used in PCC grids and hosts does not suffer the normal penalty to-hit (p. 86, *Matrix*); instead reduce the to-hit penalty by –1. For example, a three-piece cluster of party IC will only receive a +1 To-Hit modifier instead of the standard +2 modifier.

Pueblo uses a unique grid design to passively increase their base security levels. The RTG covers a series of LTGs, not

PUEBLO GRID NAVIGATION TABLE	
1D6 Result	**Effect**
1–2	The path leads to a "dead end" LTG. The character can either backtrack and try a different route or perform a Locate Access Node operation to get directions.
3–4	One of the SANs along the trail leads to a completely different LTG than expected (perhaps of higher security than expected as well). The character can either try a different route or perform a Locate Access Node operation to get directions.
5–6	The path leads where the character expects it to.

all of which are connected to the RTG at the top level. This forces an unauthorized user to find her way through a constantly-shifting maze of LTGs organized by purpose, not by real-world geography.

In light of the fact that the LTG connections in the PCC grids are rearranged on a semi-regular basis, you can never count on using the same path twice when trying to reach your favorite corp's host. If a character is heading towards a host to which he has the LTG code, or he has successfully performed a Locate Access Node operation, roll 1D6 ÷ 2 (round up). The result is how many grids away the host is. If a character is traveling towards a host via iconography navigation (he's been there before and so thinks he knows the trail), roll 1D6 and consult the Pueblo Grid Navigation Trail (p.118).

Due to the high concentration of software companies in Pueblo, the black market for software flourishes here. Reduce the Availability of programs obtained through this source by −2.

SAEDER-KRUPP PRIME

The security sheaf for S-K Prime PLTGs is given on p. 132.

Because S-K Prime takes no chances with their security, the odds of simply happening across an S-K Prime SAN are almost nil. In order to locate one of their SANs, a character must do a lot of legwork or Matrix investigation.

The best way of accessing an S-K Prime PLTG is by obtaining a passkey, but that is no guarantee, given the speed with which S-K rotates them. Once a character has obtained a passkey, roll 1D6. The result is the number of days the passkey will remain valid. After that time, it will no longer work and the character will have to obtain a new one.

Trace IC on S-K Prime grids is especially efficient. Increase the ratings of S-K trace IC by 2 when attempting to locate an

SHIAWASE MIFD PROGRAMS

Program Statistics	Ratings
Smart Frames	
Core Rating	9
Initiative	9 + 3D6
Pilot Rating	5
Bod	3
Evasion	0
Masking	0
Sensor	6
Utility Payload:	
Attack-M (Sensitive)	4
Armor (Sensitive)	4
Sniffer (Sensitive)	6
Browse (Sensitive)	6
Agents	
Core Rating	6
Initiative	6 + 3D6
Pilot Rating	5
Hacking Pool	6
Bod	6
Evasion	0
Masking	0
Sensor	6
Utility Payload:	
Attack-M (Sensitive)	4
Armor (Sensitive)	4
Sniffer (Sensitive)	6
Browse (Sensitive)	6
Semi-Autonomous Knowbots	
Core Rating	6
Initiative	6 + 4D6
Pilot Rating	6
Hacking Pool	6
Utility Pool	6
Bod	6
Evasion	6
Masking	0
Sensor	6
Utility Payload:	
Attack-S (Sensitive)	4
Armor (Sensitive)	6
Track (Sensitive)	5

intruder originating from within the PLTG or from within a European, Russian or Middle Eastern grid.

SHIAWASE MIFD

The security sheaf for the Shiawase MIFD PLTG can be found on p. 113.

The Shiawase MIFD is devoted to the organization and sorting of data. Most of the grunt work is done by smart frames and agents, with dedicated SKs overseeing the process. For more information on frames and agents, see p. 88, *Matrix*. For SKs, see p. 147, *Matrix*. All of these frames, agents, and SKs add their rating to the decker's security tally when crashed, just like IC.

The MIFD's primary function is the sorting and evaluation of data, so Computer (Search Operations) Tests made in its databases have a −3 Search modifier.

TRANSYS NEURONET

The security sheaf for the Transys PLTG can be found on p. 133, as can the sheaf for their Caerleon system. The Caerleon grid uses a maser power grid system, so if a character is physically accessing it he needs a maser power grid interface.

As a whole, the Transys Neuronet PLTG is a typical grid, not counting its sculpture or its predilection for worm seeding. Transys develops new worm designs constantly. The Boreworm is their latest effort.

Boreworms
Size Multiplier: 4

This worm tries to "bore" through the hardening and MPCP of a cyberterminal. Whenever the character's icon takes damage, have the worm make an Attack Test using its rating against a target number equal to the cyberterminal's MPCP + Hardening. Success indicates that one level of Hardening has been permanently lost. Once the Hardening is gone, the worm proceeds to strip levels from the MPCP using the same rules. The only way to fix the damage is to replace the MPCP.

PRESCOTT

DATA HAVENS

Data havens are the ultimate source for information. From the merest whisper to the broadest hint, any piece of information that a gamemaster needs to pass along can be reasonably found there, with prices to suit any shadowrunner's budget. The sections that follow will give some rules-specific information regarding the data havens detailed in the *Data Havens* chapter of this book.

As described on p. 128, *Matrix*, data havens can be purchased as contacts during character creation. The cost of contact upkeep represents the time and costs associated with knowing how to and being able to access the haven.

Data havens present a wide range of opportunities for both characters and gamemasters. The sheer number of services offered by data havens is impressive—false identities, software, news, jobs and (of course) information. For gamemasters, data havens are a wonderful way of disseminating critical in-game information that somehow the players haven't discovered. This data doesn't have be given at no charge, of course. While many data havens do post information for free, most also have certain conditions to their membership, and others sell certain data outright. Also, since any self-respecting Shadowland node has more than its share of runners looking to buy, sell, or trade data,

a gamemaster can ensure that her players remember to check their less-costly sources a little more closely next time. Not all information is true, and some of it is even purposefully misleading. With this in mind, however, data havens can be a useful and enjoyable addition to any game.

Because it is unlikely that player characters will be hacking into data havens (why hack when your rep can get you in?), and because data havens are infamous for constantly shifting and upgrading their security, no security sheafs for data havens have been included. Given the important role data havens play, individual gamemasters should determine how secure these sites are in their campaigns.

THE SHADOW MATRIX AND SHADOWLAND NODES

Each node in the Shadow Matrix is different, with different services and a different informational focus. They are linked together through the Shadow Matrix, built on the remnants of an old U.S. military network backbone. The Shadowland nodes have a complex redundancy system built in, with local information being backed up to the Nexus, which acts as the heart of the Shadowland network. Information is also mirrored to other nodes at the same time, insuring that the loss of one node will not affect the availability of the information presented there.

Finding a Shadowland node is just like finding any other underground organization. Finding a Shadowland SAN by chance will be rare. Having the same character succeed in getting to the system inside by sheer decking skill should be nearly impossible. The best way for a character to find a node is to build up a reputation in the shadow community, ask around to people who would likely know, and wait to recieve instructions and passcodes for entrance.

Shadowland security is extremely tight. While each node handles security independently, chokepoints are a common theme, sometimes in conjunction with trapdoors or vanishing SANs. Security deckers are constantly at the ready, and the IC is almost always used in the nastiest configurations possible. The Shadowland nodes are serious about keeping intruders out, ready to do whatever it takes to ensure that no one forces their way in.

THE NEXUS

The Nexus is the largest and arguably the most important of the data havens. It acts as the central data repository for the Shadow Matrix, running on its own PLTG. The Nexus is the primary source for information in the shadow community, and as such it has a place of high importance in any game.

Using the Nexus in a campaign not only gives the opportunity for all sorts of data to be used in a game, it also allows for any number of plots involving the Nexus itself. If the players choose to get involved in the day-to-day operations of the Nexus, they could fend off government snoops, battle with feuding otaku, rebuff attacks from outside and even deal with dragons, all during a menial shift at "guard duty." The Nexus can provide almost any story hook needed in a campaign, making the haven a useful addition.

A character wishing to access the Nexus must first go through one of the other Shadowland nodes. She must enter the killing jars and wait to be approved, showing the proper passcodes or otherwise convincing the security decker on call to allow her access to the node. Attempting to circumvent these procedures will result in active alerts and aggressive IC ranging from grey to black, along with live security deckers. Attempting to crack into the Nexus using brute force is not recommended.

ASGARD

Asgard is a boon for runners who are desperate for data but who may not have the connections to get the information they need. It can be expensive, but data purchased through an online auction house is better than no data at all. Asgard can serve as an introductory device for data involving "current affairs" in the *Shadowrun* universe. It can also serve to drain characters of extra cred or to alert characters that information about them and their exploits is up for the highest bidder.

Asgard makes its home on a satellite orbiting the Earth. In order to log on to Asgard, a player must follow the *Satellite Uplink* rules (p. 34, *Matrix*). Asgard has a Density modifier of +4, and a character will only have a two-hour-long window of opportunity to access the satellite each day.

Once connected, a character may either buy or sell data, both of which are done through traceless anonymous accounts assigned by Asgard sysops. Asgard keeps a percentage of the profits, somewhere between 40 to 80 percent of the purchase price.

Asgard doesn't keep any data more than two weeks. However, if the data doesn't sell or can't be placed on auction without giving its content away, it is placed in an archive which its users may search for a fee. Also, Asgard offers electronic drop-box services and satellite surveillance using the cameras and other equipment it has onboard.

AZZIEWATCH

It's rare to have a data haven set up primarily to store data on just one corp or country, but that's what Azziewatch does. If a team needs to know about Aztlan in specific or Aztechnology in general, then Azziewatch is the perfect way to present that information. Azziewatch also keeps info on the Texas shadow life as well, so campaigns set in the CAS and specifically in Texas could use this as their primary data haven.

Azziewatch's tight focus means that it keeps data on Aztlan that no one else could come close to. Its ability to put real-time troop movements and border patrols on site means that smugglers in and out of Aztlan have an extra edge they would not otherwise have.

Azziewatch's ability to stock hard useful paydata on Aztlan has made it unpopular in some quarters. When including Azziewatch in a game, remember that there are a number of groups, including the megacorp/nation, dedicated to wiping the data haven out completely. Attacks are frequent, if thus far unsuccessful, and they provide a very good story hook to get characters involved.

HELIX

The Helix is the second largest data haven in the world. It serves as the primary data haven for most of Europe, much like the Nexus does for North America. Access is easy and there are no fees. For characters who want to learn more about European job opportunities or the European interests of their favorite megacorp, the Helix is the place to be. For gamemasters who have either set their games in Europe or are thinking of sending the characters on a "working vacation," the Helix can provide an easy method of luring them where the gamemaster wants them to go.

Access to the Helix is simple, all things considered. A character simply logs on to the Helix's address just as she would with any other public host, and waits in the chokepoint while a trace is completed against her persona. If the address is approved, the character is issued visitor authorization and allowed inside.

Inside the Helix, however, there are a number of different levels of permission available. The average user who simply logs on is allowed visitor-level account privileges (a limited version of personal accounts, see p. 37, *Matrix*), meaning that they can read files, but their access to some hosts may be restricted. Users with visitor privileges do not automatically succeed at Upload Data operations, and will only succeed in Download Data operations for items that are made available to them.

Registered users have normal personal account privileges. Registered users are not traced when they log on, but registra-

tion itself requires a background check and good references. The only limits to their uploads and downloads are set by the owners of the individual "hosts" that make up the Helix.

Resident users are allowed to build a house "host" and have almost no restrictions on their actions. Before the administrators will grant a user resident priviledges, they have to know the character, be sure of his decking skills and trust his reputation.

Characters downloading data from the Helix are normally charged somewhere between five and five hundred nuyen per megapulse, with the price set by the person who put the data up originally. Some files could be even more expensive. Some data is available for free by choice of the original poster, and any data more than a year old is available for free as well.

One of the most popular hosts in the Helix is the Rubble Heap. This host acts as a repository for old data that the original holders no longer need. The information is free, with the cost being extracted in the hours it can take to find exactly the piece of data the character wants. The Rubble Heap is not organized in any particular fashion, so unless the characters are looking for something very specific, it could take quite a while to find what they need.

KALININ

Kalinin is the center for many of the power players in Eastern Europe. Both the city of Konigsberg, where the data haven is physically located, and the Kalinin grid itself look like a who's who of displaced European nobility, intent on scheming and backstabbing their way to the top once more. For gamemasters who wish to embroil their players in Machiavellian schemes, noble titles and ruined lands, Kalinin is the first place to go. When using Kalinin, keep in mind that this is not an average data haven. Social class and wealth are catered to and prized above all, and anyone who doesn't fit into those molds will have a rough time. Be sure to portray the darker sides of Kalinin as well.

The sysops of Kalinin are some of the most powerful people in Konigsberg. They not only run the data haven, but also the Konigsberg RTG itself, ensuring that it remains a cut above the average grid in Europe. The haven even has a place on the Board of Directors of the BEPRC. Characters who go out of their way to anger the sysops of the board might well find themselves out in the cold in this area of the world.

The blue bloods behind Kalinin want to defeat the European Restoration, undermine Saeder-Krupp, squash environmental groups and reclaim their "heritage." They have some corporate backing as well, and to this end they fund Kalinin and determine its informational focus. Kalinin has some of the best hard paydata to be found on S-K and environmental groups. It also has sole access to terapulses of once-classified data compiled by the Soviet Empire in its heyday, much of which is still valuable. Another useful facet of Kalinin is the private hosts maintained by the inner cabal of Kalinin supporters. They are used for private meetings and contain data on current events and plans by those in charge.

MANCHESTER

Manchester is a small, out-of-the-way data haven that fairly bustles with activity. It keeps a low profile for the most part;

engaging in subversive activities with your enemies right next door is not something that should really be advertised. If a gamemaster is looking for a way to introduce a political bent into her campaign or throw the team into the political quagmire that is Great Britain, the Manchester data haven is a very good way to do so.

Manchester is a recovering site, its reputation badly tarnished after a high-level infiltration by Transys Neuronet operatives. While the staff running the haven purged all known operatives and began anew, over half of the user base deserted the ailing data haven during the crisis, afraid that their information and interests had been fed directly to a corp and would be still.

Manchester's focus is on politics. Specifically, the data haven exists in order to provide a virtual gathering place and data clearinghouse for anti-fascist, pro-metahuman runners and groups. Their primary target is the fascist Elven government of Tir na nOg. They oppose fascism wherever it may appear, and so collect information on Tir Tairngire, the National Supreme Soviet, and the Imperial Japanese occupation forces in San Francisco and the Philippines.

THE MORGUE

The Morgue is a relatively important data haven located in Singapore. It was formed from the MRG, a gigantic pan-corporate marketing database which is co-owned by the nation of Singapore. The Morgue was created when a group of sysops broke off from the MRG when the top megacorporations were given a share. They took a good chunk of the MRG's data with them and created the Morgue. If a team is in desperate need of credit histories or purchasing habits, or information on a corp, especially one that has been bought out by someone else, the Morgue is the best place to obtain that information.

The Morgue is *the* source for marketing data. Nowhere else even comes close, aside from the MRG itself. Aside from the data the founders took when they left the MRG, they also constantly raid the MRG for new, fresh additions to their datastores. The Morgue also acts as a mirror for the Nexus and Shadowland, making it one of the primary virtual centers for shadowrunners in Southeast Asia.

Singapore in general and the MRG in specific (since the Morgue is located within the MRG) are very particular about appearances. Icons that look substantially different from the ones described on p. 50 will attract unwanted attention. Also, throughout the MRG are the Guides, smart frames who have standard UMS features except for their long silvery robes. The guides are designed to assist legitimate MRG clients in finding, sorting and studying the data at their disposal. Mixed up among the Guides, however, are IC constructs with identical icons designed to deal with illegitimate users, such as shadowrunners trying to access the Morgue.

The Morgue is accessed by finding a remote datastore and ascertaining if it is actually a virtual machine (see p. 121, *Matrix*). The character then has to break out of the virtual machine and find the SAN leading to the data haven. Without the right passcodes, the only way in is by force. The passcodes can only be obtained by a current Morgue user vouching for the applicant, a process which also requires a stiff background check before being okayed.

MOSAIC

More and more, the city of Vladivostok is becoming a center of commerce, industry and shadow operations in the Pacific Rim. That includes the birth (or rebirth) of the data haven known as Mosaic, formerly Beppu. If a gamemaster is interested in organized crime in the Pacific Rim, Yamatetsu, prometahuman activism or Japanacorps, then Mosaic would be a good data haven for inclusion in his game.

Mosaic stays in business by making deals with both the Vory v Zakone and the Northern Star Seoulpa Ring. By playing the two off against each other, Mosaic manages to get the breathing room and equipment it needs to grow. There is the potential to have an explosive situation occur between the two groups, which would provide the fodder for any number of story arcs.

The other area of interest at Mosaic is the otaku tribe *Vox Populi*. Like tribes in other locations, the otaku are very protective of Mosaic and would not hesitate to attack if Mosaic were threatened. The tribe is small at this time, but there's every indication that it will continue to grow.

VIRTUAL SEATTLE

The Seattle grid is home to a number of juicy corporate systems, each a potential target for shadowrunners. Because the security level of these hosts should be tailored to fit your specific campaign, gamemasters should generate their own security sheafs for these systems. The descriptions of the hosts that are given beginning on p. 57 also provide a slew of details and rumors that can be used to flesh out a specific host's look, contents and security features.

The Seattle RTG itself has a Security Code of Green-5/6/9/6/6/6 and uses the Green Grid security sheaf given on p. 114, *Matrix*. The various Seattle LTGs will have roughly the same ratings and security.

THE SEATTLE RTG

The Seattle RTG is easily one of the busiest grids on the Matrix. Combined with the fact that the Seattle grids have also undergone some rough times lately with shutdowns and power failures, the RTG and its sub-grids have been experiencing some technical difficulties. Two problems in particular seem to be plaguing them: ASIST filter overload and gridlock.

ASIST Filter Overload

As described on p. 40, *Matrix*, the ASIST interface normally filters out all of the nonessential background clutter of info packets that float through the grid, from e-mail and trid feeds to commcalls and faxes. Recently, the Seattle RTG (and occasionally its LTGs) has been known to transmit signals that force some users' ASIST interfaces to "reset" and drop all filtering of background processes. The result to the users is a sudden sensory overload, an explosion of white noise and static that disorients, blinds and deafens.

To determine if this occurs to a character, roll 2D6 each time a character logs onto the Seattle RTG or 3D6 each time they log onto an LTG. On a result of all 1s, sometime during the character's time on that grid (whenever is most dramatically appropriate), they are stricken by ASIST filter overload.

A character stricken by ASIST filter overload suffers a +4 (cold ASIST) or +6 (hot ASIST) modifier to all target numbers until the ASIST interface is reset. Resetting the ASIST only takes a Simple Action, but characters may not know that this is all they need to do. Have the character make a Computer (Hardware) (4) Test to identify the correct course of action.

If a character is bombarded by ASIST filter overload for more than a full Combat Turn, they may succumb to "the Panics." The character must make a Willpower (5) Test; if they fail, the massive amount of minutae being input into their brain makes them feel like they are suffocating or drowning. The character will enter a panic-driven state of fear and hyperventilation until they are jacked out. The character will be unable to access the Matrix or any other simsense device without succumbing to the Panics again until he has recovered. To determine how long it takes the character to get over it, use the rules for *Recovering From Psychotropic Effects*, p. 109, *Matrix* (as if they were affected by Rating 5 psychotropic IC).

GRIDLOCK

Given the amount of traffic on the Seattle RTG and downtown LTG, users on these grids sometimes suffer minor effects from "gridlock." The gamemaster should feel free to apply a single one of the following effects whenever he feels traffic in those grids may be high. These rules may also apply to other high-traffic grids around the globe (Hong Kong, London and Tokyo, to name a few).

- The character's I/O Speed is reduced by 1D6 x 10 percent.
- The character's base bandwidth is reduced by 1D6 x 10 percent.
- Sensors and/or Evasion only work at half their value (round up).
- Response Increase, hot ASIST and/or reality filters seem to work but grant no Initiative modifiers.
- The character suffers a +1 modifier to all System Tests due to the difficulty of getting commands through.
- Black- or brownouts hit a section of the grid, causing users to be trapped, dumped (suffering dumpshock) or bumped into a nearby random host.

HOST RULES

This section provides game information on using the systems described in *Hosts*, p. 66.

HACKER HOUSE

Hacker House is to the decker what Magicknet is for mages or the Ares Catalog is for street samurai. All the code you could ever want is in one place. Some of it is home-cooked, some is stolen from the corps that create the cutting-edge scripts. All of it can be purchased for the right price.

Hacker House can be accessed from any Shadowland node. They also have other means of accessing their display nodes, but these are secluded and well hidden, reserved for exclusive clientele. Anyone who finds the node can log on as a guest user with extremely limited privileges.

The bulk of the programs that Hacker House offers are free to browse. Characters can purchase one-shot demo

copies of the programs for 10 percent of the asking price. The catalog for programs that are exceptionally dangerous (killjoy, black hammer, sparky IC, black IC), illegal or extremely hot (stolen yesterday from Novatech's programming labs) is kept on an isolated, secure host. Characters must pay 100¥ simply to access this host, and cannot purchase demo copies of the programs listed there. A specially-programmed agent will guide a customer through the catalog, answering questions and pointing out helpful catalog entries. Once a character purchases something from Hacker House, they are issued a personal account for future login purposes.

To determine if Hacker House has a particular piece of software, the shopping character must make a standard Availability Test. If Hacker House has the program available, the base time it is available is reduced to eight hours and .5 is subtracted from the Street Index. Otherwise, the cost of software offered by Hacker House is standard, as outlined on p. 94, *Matrix*.

Deckers can ask Hacker House to write the code for something they don't have. In that case, increase the Street Index by 1 for determining the final cost. It is up to the gamemaster to determine how long the programming will take, based on the programming rules given in *Matrix*.

If a gamemaster is using the optional Bug rules (p. 81, *Matrix*), then software purchased from Hacker House may very well have bugs. Hacker House does use its own programming language to create code, which provides a Bug Test Modifier of –4 and a Glitch table modifier of –2.

LONE STAR

Many deckers fear going into a Lone Star host, not because of the difficulty in hacking the system, but because there are so many active security deckers there. Hacking into Lone Star is roughly equivalent to walking into a physical Lone Star office with guns drawn—see how many guns are pointed at you before you can blink.

GridSec deckers are mostly concerned with tracing and disabling. They find information much more important than chalking up kills. Most are rated Equal and Trained, and usually carry black hammer, killjoy and track utilities at a rating of 6 or better. Any other utilities are left to the gamemaster's discretion.

Novatech has an agreement to supply Lone Star with cyberdecks. Any Equal-rated GridSec decker will have a Novatech Hyperdeck-6. Superior or Superhuman-rated GridSec deckers will have a Novatech Slimcase-10. Rookies train on Novatech Z-Terms.

Critically important Lone Star files are usually protected by worms, data bombs or Pavlov data bombs. If a file is altered on a local Lone Star host, take careful note of the Control Test to authenticate the headers (see the Edit File operation, p. 216, *SR3*). If the file was not authenticated, the fact that it has been tampered with will be noticed when the host syncs its files with the main office once every four hours. GridSec will be called to investigate, and may watch the file or attempt to set up a trap using it.

The security sheaf for a typical Lone Star host can be found on p. 133.

THE MALAYSIAN INDEPENDENT BANK

Unlike many online banks, the MIB does not require a SIN to open an account and goes to great lengths to retain its clients' privacy. This makes the bank popular among many shadowrunners and underworld types, even though the bank has made an effort to distance itself from too much underworld involvement. The MIB now requires its more anonymous clients (passcode only) to retain minimal balances, starting at 10,000¥. The more identification used (whether retinal prints, SIN or so on), the lower the minimum balance is. The MIB also offers other virtual privacy services at steep fees, such as electronic lock-boxes, anonymous remailing and so on.

Aside from being clients, shadowrunners may be attracted to the MIB because of its connections to Wuxing, the Triads or the Pacific Prosperity Group. The MIB plays an important role in the PPG and so is a prime target for the PPG's enemies. Likewise, the Triads that formerly held much control over the MIB are now quite eager to regain that hold, considering the MIB's new role. The security sheaf for a typical MIB host can be found on p. 134

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

The People's University can be a great boon for *Shadowrun* characters, especially if they're from the Bay Area. Any character that is from that region of California and part of the Resistance can sign on as a student for just about any course imaginable, from botany or community organizing to sniping or combat driving. Aside from live instructors, students can also take advantage of the university's library of virtual instructors (see *Instruction*, p. 95, *SR3*) and simsense learning simulations. The gamemaster should determine how skilled these instructors are for purposes of teaching new skills.

Characters can also become involved with the university in other ways. They may be approached as potential instructors, if they are willing to share their experiences as skilled professionals, or they may be enticed to hunt down a revolutionary somewhere in the world with an offer to come and teach. They may be hired by the Japanacorps to sabotage the university, or perhaps hired by the university to protect against such attacks. The People's University offers a place where characters can meet a wide range of new people, develop contacts and potentially do some work for a good cause.

The security sheaf for a standard People's University host is given on p. 134.

ZURICH-ORBITAL

Though perhaps one of the most tempting targets, Zurich-Orbital is hands down the hardest host to actually deck in the world of *Shadowrun*. To even find one of the dedicated satellite uplinks, a character must delve deep into a glaciered corporate host and find the vanishing SAN. The SANs to access Zurich-Orbital are loaded with scramble–13 IC, and the SAN only stays open for a timed period before closing. Theoretically, a character could perform a Freeze Vanishing SAN operation (p. 99, *Matrix*), but Z-O guards against this, so attempts to do so suffer a +4 target number modifier.

Characters can also use the Validate Account operation to label themselves as priority users (so that their connection signal will be handed off to the next uplink rather than disconnected), but this operation suffers a +6 target number modifier.

The sysops of Z-O, known as the Fates, should be considered Superhuman and Professional deckers using modified Fairlight Excaliburs. Their exact utilities are left for the gamemaster to devise, but they each have the Zurich-Orbital System Familiarity Knowledge skill (see p. 24, *Matrix*). The gamemaster should decide whether the Maenads are SKs, agents or merely smart frames. Each carries a black hammer utility with a rating of 1D6 + 6 that includes the targeting option.

A typical security sheaf for a Z-O host can be found on p. 134.

OTHER MATRIX HOSTS

The Matrix is just as important as a social/entertainment venue as it is for business. A good decker knows the places to go just like the other runners know where to get the street-level word.

Matrix Clubs

Matrix clubs have as much personality as their physical world counter parts. The gamemaster can create Matrix clubs that cover nearly every personal preference, fetish or sub-genre. Also, due to the fact that clubs are nothing more than programmed code in a secure host, many have multiple "looks" within one area. The standard laws of physics don't apply to virtual reality, so clubs can take on all kinds of virtual and perceptive oddities.

Matrix clubs make ideal places to meet, negotiate, check up on contacts or just have a random social encounter. The Etiquette (Matrix) skill (p. 124, *Matrix*) will come into play quite frequently, as people dealing with faceless icons must rely on things other than the standard visual clues and tells.

Matrix Games

Matrix games are mostly popular with non-deckers, as deckers tend to get all their thrills fighting things that can really kill them. Also, the games are usually set up for those with cold ASIST interfaces (most of the legal Matrix-using public). That tends to make deckers both impatient and bored.

There are "games" that are designed for hot ASIST interfaces (such as the Killing Floor, described on p. 79), but they are illegal and more expensive. Many of these involve actual decker-versus-decker or decker-versus-non-lethal-IC fight clubs. These "games" tend to recruit among decker wannabes, bored corp deckers or in some cases, BTL addicts that want to push the experience past the "baby games."

Matrix Brothels

Matrix brothels are a seedy but pervasive element of the Matrix underground. Characters may come across brothels in the course of trailing a target, investigating a data trail, meeting a contact or even chasing an enemy through the Matrix. It is up to the gamemaster to decide how far to push the technology, imagery and content of such sites based on his or her group's composition.

PERSONAS

The *Shadowrun* universe is full of interesting personalities, many of which have been enriched and developed over the years through storylines and fiction. Introducing these characters into your game can help your players to feel connected to the larger game universe, giving them allies or nemeses that are known throughout the *Shadowrun* world. Try to keep the power levels of the players in mind when choosing NPCs. The NPCs listed here are intended to facilitate the game play in a campaign, not impede it. Also, when using these characters, try to keep in mind their motivations and reasons for appearing. The information presented throughout past *Shadowrun* sourcebooks, along with the material presented here, can help provide additional background and motivations if needed.

The following section gives some game information for the individuals described in the *Personas* chapter, p. 82. For each character, NPC Ratings are provided (see p. 83, *SRComp* and p. 248, *SR3*) Those ratings will help the gamemaster to determine the strengths of the persona relative to the characters in his campaign. Also, any exceptional skills, programs, talents, or gear are also noted.

ANUBIS

NPC Ratings: Superior and Trained
Notes: Anubis' best skills are Computer (Programming) and Computer Build/Repair. His favorite utility is a black hammer variant.

Anubis is a perfect foil for a team of player characters. Whether used as an adversary or an ally, he should never leave the players one hundred percent sure of his intentions. He is cheerful and charming and socially agreeable, and yet he can kill even those close to him without a moment's remorse if he feels it necessary.

Anubis might be encountered through the Chimera, Vory v Zakone, the illegal Russian immigrant community or the programming SIGs on Shadowland. He always works alone, and will not allow the characters to accompany him on an assignment. Anubis never alerts his targets prior to an assassination attempt, and for this reason it is recommended that he not be sent against the players directly. This is, of course, left to the gamemaster's discretion, but his skills should make him more than a match for any single character.

Used as a "lone gunman," Anubis can strike at any time, from anywhere, leaving his target either dead or fragged up and completely unaware of what just happened. One of his preferred methods of assassination against targets he cannot encounter in the Matrix is to insert custom-programmed Black Death BTL code into modified knowsofts, which he then inserts into his target's personal collection. If he can encounter the target in the Matrix, he will bombard the victim with high-rating Erosion utilities mixed with black hammer attacks.

If the runners are getting too cocky and breezing through a run, then Anubis might be the perfect wrench to throw into their plans. He is an excellent nemesis for any wiz decker, and can keep previously careless characters on their toes. If nothing else, just the rumor that such a powerful "killing" decker might exist, should give any electron-slinger pause.

FASTJACK

NPC Ratings: Superhuman and Professional
Notes: FastJack's utilities and deck are all custom-made, unique, and top-of-the-line.

Among Matrix legends, FastJack is one of the first names that springs to mind. Using him in a game can bring a wealth of possibilities into play. As a teacher or mentor, he can be a great way to push the characters to "prove their worth." As a source of information, he can reasonably be expected to know about almost anything in the Matrix. As an adversary, he can effectively slice through the persona of any decker on the Matrix. He is the best. Period.

FastJack is most likely to be encounted through one of the Shadowland nodes, specifically Shadowland Seattle or the Nexus. While he does still act on behalf of an employer from time to time, by and large he runs for himself these days. It is not out of the question to "run into him" when in a particularly difficult or out-of-the-way corner of the Matrix. Finding him without the proper introductions, however, is unlikely to convince him to give the characters any extra consideration.

FastJack never meets in person, nor will he physically go on a shadowrun. If it can't be done from the Matrix, he has no part in it. If challenged, he uses non-lethal methods to disable his opponent, preferring not to kill unless absolutely necessary. He built his own deck and utilities and invented many of the conventions used commonly in cybercombat today. He is the best decker in the Matrix, and he should be played as such.

FastJack should be used with care. There is nowhere he can't go, and almost nothing he can't do inside the Matrix. At no point should he be allowed to do the characters' dirty work for them. As with any strong NPC presence, a little goes a long way.
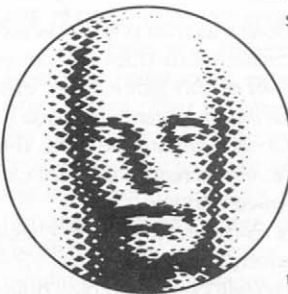
GRID REAPER

NPC Ratings: Superior and Trained
Notes: Grid Reaper's Computer (Programming) and Computer (Decking) skills are excellent.

Grid Reaper is a prime example of the level of skill and competence that can be achieved after a few years of shadowrunning. The old saying that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger is practically a shadowrunning mantra, and Grid Reaper is the living proof of it. If you want to show your players the value and rewards of survival against all odds, then Grid Reaper is a good NPC to use.

Grid Reaper can be encountered in Shadowland nodes throughout the UCAS, the CAS (specifically New Orleans), the Chicago Noose Net and Hacker House. Reaper normally remains physically isolated due to his condition. If the runners want to talk to him face-to-face, they will have to go to him. He does not have any shadowrunning teams he regularly works with; he prefers one-shot assignments. While he can be used to aid characters in need, it should be made clear that he will not be around every time they get into trouble.

Reaper is remarkably sane given the life he's been forced to lead. Still, like many others who have had to make their own way through difficult circumstances, he can be a little abrasive. Grid Reaper should be played with a chip on his shoulder the size of the Space Needle, constantly throwing his condition as a ghoul in the faces of the characters in an attempt to provoke them, testing them to see if they will turn on him later. If the characters are getting really annoyed with Reaper's attitude, then he is being played correctly. He will not, however, take any direct actions against the characters unless they act first.

Grid Reaper regularly sells stolen beta-code and program plans through shadow markets, along with his own programs, making him an excellent source for programming-impaired characters. He also specializes in code-cutting, or cracking programs and sectioning the code. While he is a skilled programmer and his own work is likely to be clean, he makes no guarantees regarding the pirated code he sells. While it is rare to have a problem with the pirated code he offers, the gamemaster can feel free to use the optional bug rules (p. 81, *Matrix*) with it, just as with any code not written by the characters themselves.

LINK
NPC Ratings: Superhuman and Professional
Notes: Link's connections, methods and resources are such that s/he cannot be traced.

Link is one of the foremost sources for data in the shadows. He (or she) is also one of the most mysterious. Link has contacts in most of the megacorporations, as well as government, syndicate, and shadow contacts. Using Link in a campaign provides an excellent story hook, as well as a way to disseminate information to the characters in a no-nonsense fashion. Link also sometimes provides fixer services to good customers, not only brokering data but also fencing goods and acting as an intermediary for Johnsons.

Link cannot be encountered except by special appointment. In order to get an appointment with Link, characters must be vouched for by one of his current customers. A background check is performed and, if they have an appropriate line of credit as well as a good reputation, they will be added to Link's address book. Once in Link's address book, characters will be contacted via email or icon-based commcall with an offer for information that Link believes would be of interest to them based on their reputation and history. Link is always the initiator in these exchanges. Link never gives out his contact information to customers, who must instead rely on leaving a message at an anonymous email drop. He is not a "search-and-retrieve" service, and those who attempt to use Link as such will find their efforts ignored.

Link never meets in person. With regular clients, he will agree to deal via direct persona icon, but that's the absolute limit. Play Link as the ultimate professional—completely businesslike, refusing to engage in idle chit-chat. Link is direct when asking questions and expects the same from clients. If someone attempts to waste his time, he will have no qualms in ending the conversation and moving on to the next prospective buyer. Link's conversational style is gender-neutral, polite and efficient. He does not haggle, and he only accepts favors from those runners he is certain will pay.

RED WRAITH
NPC Ratings: Equal and Professional
Notes: Red Wraith is an otaku, with submersion grade 3 and the echoes Info Sortilage, Ghosting and Improved Reaction.

Red Wraith is practically a plot unto himself. If the players are showing signs of "been there, seen that" syndrome, then Wraith is an excellent way to shock them out of their complacency. His primary motivation is to uncover his past, specifically the fate of his wife. Given that goal, he can appear in the campaign in almost any role, from adversary to employer, target to ally. Additionally, his status as an otaku (a result of his encounter with the AI Mirage in the novel *Psychotrope*) can either introduce the "children of the Matrix" or serve to throw a wrench into the beliefs of a group already familiar with them.

Red Wraith is encountered primarily in the Helix data haven primarily, but also in Shadowland nodes worldwide. One of Wraith's common targets is the UCAS government hosts, so runs on the federal government's grids could find him as well. Also, his ability to exercise otaku complex forms & channels despite his advanced age, with no signs of the Fading (yet), has caused waves throughout the otaku community as he queries different tribes about their beliefs and seeks access to resonance wells. Wraith himself may be ambivalent about using his otaku abilities, perhaps preferring to use his old, reliable decking skills on occasion (which he may also do to hide his true nature).

Red Wraith should come across as a highly intelligent, capable person. Unless asked about his past, he won't bring it up, instead focusing cheerfully on the future. If asked, he downplays the event, stating simply that he was fortunate. At the same time, however, he's proud of his survival and determined to uncover his past and the identity of his former wife, Lydia. As long as that is his primary motivation, Red Wraith will place that goal above all others. The characters should not count on him for any sort of long-term commitment.
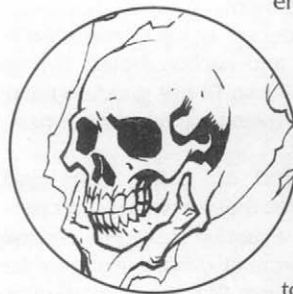
SILVERY K

NPC Ratings: Superior and Trained

Notes: Silvery K uses a custom-built cyberdeck that is state-of-the-art. All of her major programs are Rating 5 or higher.

Silvery K can sling code and tweak decks with the best of them. That's one of the reasons she's a sysop at the Nexus. As a person with those contacts and influences, she can be a powerful NPC addition to any game. Silvery K generally makes a great contact with her ID-forging connections and information. For decker characters, she can also function as a deckmeister.

Silvery K is known to appear on Seattle Shadowland now and again, but her base of operations is the Nexus. As one of the administrators, she can be encountered there practically any evening or night, given her nocturnal schedule. Aside from lurking, she also participates enthusiastically in the Nexus' programming SIGs. Silvery K has connections to both organized crime and the Draco Foundation, as part of her connection to Dunkelzahn. Runners involved with either organization could run into her as a result of those obligations.

When playing Silvery K, be sure to emphasize that she is very skilled and very distant. She is nice, but she doesn't let people near her that she isn't sure she can trust. Her attitude, unless the runners have a very good reputation, will be strictly professional.

SLAMM-0!

NPC Ratings: Equal and Semi-trained

Notes: Slamm-0! designs and codes his own icon and utility programs and is constantly refining them.

Slamm-0! is a good peer for decker characters in a campaign. He's a skilled programmer and hacker, though not as good as he will be if he survives. Slamm-0! has good contacts in the shadow community from growing up among runners, and could prove to be a useful ally.

Slamm-0! can be encountered on game hosts and Shadowland nodes across the Matrix, though his base of operations is in Seattle. He works with a number of teams on and off, and is an experienced shadowrunner despite his youthful attraction to chaos and mayhem. Slamm-0! has a reputation as a Matrix troublemaker, which he works hard to maintain. Skilled deckers who dislike otaku or are strongly anti-Humanis might find themselves contacted by Slamm-0! the next time he organizes one of his infamous scavenger hunts.

Slamm-0! finds the attitudes of many otaku annoying. In response to an argument about whether otaku or regular deckers were more skilled, Slamm-0! organized the first Matrix Scavenger Hunt. Two teams were allowed, one of otaku and one of regular deckers, and they were assigned identical lists of files to obtain, feats to accomplish and acts of vandalism to commit. The team that completed the most items on their list within an allotted span of time won. Generally speaking, these events occur every eight to nine months or when Slamm-0! gets into an argument with an otaku, whichever comes first.

When playing Slamm-0!, portray him as a hell-raiser, with a wickedly funny sense of humor and a strong social conscience beneath it all. He doesn't believe in preaching about his beliefs to others, but he'll use his actions to try and convince others to join him. The more trouble and confusion he can cause in a situation, the happier he'll be, so long as it doesn't endanger himself or others. Regardless of his feelings on society at large, however, he'll leave his inclinations behind if they get in the way of a job. As a result, he's very careful about the employment he's willing to take.

SMILING BANDIT

NPC Ratings: Superhuman and Professional

Notes: Bandit is one of the best deckers around. His computer and science skills, expecially in genetech, biotechnology, chemistry and cybertechnology, are unsurpassed.

The Smiling Bandit has been one of the stand-out figures in the Matrix scene for some time now. His wealth of scientific knowledge combined with his formidable decking skills make him the shadows' resident expert on all things scientific. Unlike others who will only work with teams after they get to know them personally, the Bandit will act as a "consultant" on matters that interest him as long as the team has a decent reputation.

The Bandit can be encountered in online scientific peer groups and SIGs across the Matrix. He is often found in the Seattle Shadowland node, but rarely goes into the social areas. He works only on jobs that interest him, spending the rest of his time investigating corporate projects, liberating research notes and making information public to the Shadowland community when he feels it necessary. He delights in playing practical jokes on those he feels have earned it by flouting ethical scientific practices, and he does not hesitate to publicly embarrass corporations that he feels pose a danger to society. He is also a sort of "Matrix explorer," traveling to different grids in offbeat places just to see what's there.

The Bandit is well-mannered and extremely knowledgeable, with a dry, mischievous sense of humor. He is friendly unless he has reason not to be, but he is no fool. While he avoids killing unless necessary, he will not hesitate to use his skills to severely cramp a person's style with practical jokes.

SNOW TIGER

NPC Ratings: Superior and Trained

Notes: Snow Tiger is fully fluent in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English.

Snow Tiger is a good example of a quality decker in the shadows. She is skilled, intelligent and knowledgeable about her surroundings, all traits that good deckers have to develop to stay alive. She can be a good contact if the team has run against Wuxing or the Triads, and could also serve as a deckmeister or programming source for deckers.

Snow Tiger can be encountered in Shadowland nodes worldwide, though her primary area of interest is in the Pacific Rim. She focuses on the Triads and Wuxing, with her base of operations being the Hong Kong Free Enterprise Enclave. Snow Tiger can show up in any shadowrun concerned with Hong Kong. She knows the Free Enterprise Enclave better than most deckers and has many contacts throughout the area.

Snow Tiger's recent experiences have garnered her a lot of information about both Wuxing and the Triads, which runners might be able to get from her at a reasonable price. Her pack-rat habits mean that Snow Tiger could have almost any small bit of information a runner might be looking for, especially if it's something obscure or likely to be overlooked in most cases. Play Snow Tiger as a little stand-offish, with a cautious attitude. She is polite, even to those she doesn't know, but she doesn't allow anyone unfamiliar to her closer than arm's length, figuratively speaking. She is extremely loyal to the Sons of Thunder and Lei-Kung and will not betray them.

MICHAEL SUTHERLAND

NPC Ratings: Superhuman and Professional

Notes: Michael Sutherland has made a reputation for being wholly loyal to his employer, whoever that may be at the time. He never talks about previous jobs and will not betray the company paying his check at the moment. Extraction or bribes will not work against him.

Michael Sutherland is the perfect example for complacent runners who believe the only really talented deckers out there are shadowrunners. Sutherland was a runner for many years, though he nearly always worked for major corporate interests. As a result, he already knows the tricks that deckers use and how to beat them. Because of his position as the Head of Matrix Security for Wuxing, he will most likely fill the positions of employer or adversary in a campaign. If he is an employer, he could turn into a contact over time, but only if the team does not run against Wuxing.

Sutherland can be found at Wuxing, primarily. Although he occasionally vists Shadowland nodes, he does not spend any large amount of time there. Play Michael as the James Bond of decking, with upper-class British sensibilities and bucketloads of charm. He is always perfectly dressed and enjoys the finer things in life. He is extremely intelligent and has little patience with anyone who can't keep up.

ORGANIZATIONS

The organizations described starting on p. 94 of this book can be used as allies and adversaries, or merely as plot devices. Each of these organizations has had some impact within the Matrix, and their existence and operations may well be clouded with as many rumors as facts.

CCMA/GOD

All the disaster and chaos that has stricken the Matrix in the past few years has not been good for business. In order to rectify the situation, the corps have decided to get a better handle on the Matrix as a whole. Their tool of choice for doing so is the Corporate Court Matrix Authority and its Grid Overwatch Division.

The CCMA is primarily an institution of business law, investigations and audits. It can be incorporated into campaigns as the source of a Mr. Johnson, hiring the runners to investigate some corporate Matrix shenanigans, or as the target the runners are hired to strike in order to eliminate evidence of corporate wrongdoing.
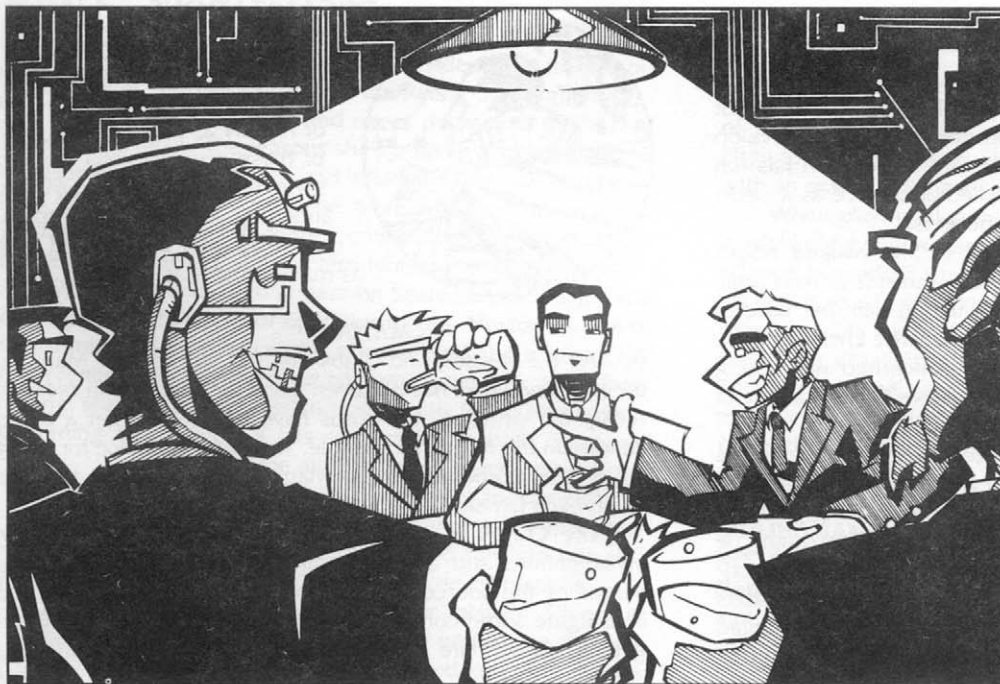
The Grid Overwatch Division is essentially the CCMA's policing arm, and so is more likely to run afoul of shadowrunners. The G-men are the perfect Matrix threat for deckers, embodying the law across international borders. Deckers may cross paths with patrolling G-men, or they may find themselves being hunted down in the course of a GOD investigation. Each of these deckers should be considered Equal and Trained, though some of them may vary from the norm.

Though the G-men deckers all work for the CCMA, each has been pulled from duty at one of the Big Ten megacorps and so may still carry the appropriate biases and attitudes. This situation may lead to split loyalties on the part of certain G-men, or may simply be a source of internal conflict and competition. Smart deckers may be able to take advantage of this weakness by turning G-men against each other, making allies with some and enemies of others.

DEAD DECKERS SOCIETY

The Dead Deckers Society is a group of hacker drinking buddies that have consolidated into a well-trained, professional criminal enterprise. Though any one of the fifteen or so deckers who are part of the group could make a living as a top-notch corp decker or even a lone shadow decker, they have instead chosen to pool their resources and work as a unit.

The group's unity is based on the philosophy that the Matrix isn't for everyone, and that its true purpose as a network for exchanging information and ensuring communication has been co-opted into a dumbed-down cartoon shopping network. To the Dead Deckers, only those who are familiar with the uses and abuses of Matrix technology (such as themselves) should be making decisions and controlling what goes on there. They view themselves as an elite group, and charge accordingly for their services.

Exchange seems beneficia to the memberl, though the actions a person takes may not always be what they seem. In some cases, the Exchange seems to take advantage of people, though this may merely be their "karmic reward" for turning their backs on the Exchange or otherwise causing problems for it.

The pocket secretaries used by the Exchange are a unique design, and carry no trace of their manufacturer. Each of them is connected to the Matrix (through a forged MSP account) and regularly transmits data to the Exchange through a series of well-protected relays. The pocket secretaries each carry a low-light video camera, an audio recorder and a Rating 6 scanner; they often incorporate other surveillance items as well.

For now, the truth about what is behind the Exchange and its ultimate agenda remains unknown. Gamemasters are free to develop their own answers to these questions, but it is recommended that the mysterious and sinister nature of the Exchange be upheld for as long as possible.

Ultimately, the Dead Deckers Society is a mercenary outfit, willing to perform Matrix penetrations for steep fees. The more challenging the job is to their skills, the more likely they are to take it. With over a dozen deckers, top-quality gear and a network of safehouses and contacts at their disposal, the Dead Deckers are a formidable force.

The Dead Deckers may become rivals to the player characters, or they may be potential employees if the characters need a hand in the Matrix (though their services do not come cheap, and they should not be the answer to all of the characters' problems). It is also possible that a drinking-buddy contact is secretly a member of the Dead Deckers, who may one day invite the character out to get drunk with the rest of the Society.

THE EXCHANGE

The Exchange is an open-ended plot device, useful for drawing the characters into just about any situation imaginable. The easiest way to describe the Exchange is as an anonymous barter system coordinated through the Matrix. No one knows how many people are involved, how all the information is coordinated, or who's behind it.

Involvement in the Exchange starts the same for most people—they somehow (usually through suspicious circumstances) come into possession of an unusual pocket secretary bearing a stylized red letter X on its casing. After spying on the person's life for a short period, the pocket secretary begins recruiting them into taking actions on behalf of the Exchange. No explanation for these actions is given; the secretary merely explains that the person will be "karmically rewarded." Once people begin following the instructions, they will discover that things are apparently being done on their behalf by others who are part of the Exchange. For the most part, being part of the

DIE SCHOCKWELLENREITER

The Shockwave Riders are an extended group of deckers and supporters with a long tradition of supporting the hacker cause. The basic tenets of the Shockwave Riders are those that the hacker underground have been espousing for decades. They believe that information should not be restricted, that access to communication networks should be universal and that corporations have too much control over the world and should be held accountable for their own actions and security (or lack thereof).

The deckers who are part of the Shockwave Riders take jobs in the shadows just like other deckers. Sometimes they work together, other times alone. In any case, they back each other up, and have a host of techs, deckmeisters, programmers and other tech-oriented individuals who support them.

The Shockwave Riders make a concentrated effort to act as a support service for deckers and other everyday users of the Matrix. They will provide aid to deckers in need, investigate crimes on their own and occasionally take on decking jobs for good causes for free. They also write freely-distributed encryption and anti-worm software.

Gamemasters can use the Riders as the cavalry in the Matrix, the good guys who arrive to save the day. Their actions should stay in line with their philosophy. For example, they may prevent a hostile takeover of a small innovative programming corporation by one of the Big Ten, or crash a host of a racist policlub. On the other hand, they may refuse to stop a money transfer intended to back up a civil war somewhere in

the world. The deckers who make up the Shockwave Riders should be considered Equal and Trained, though their group's organizations and resources should be impressive.

MATRIX GANGS

Like gangs in the real world, Matrix gangs can be used in many ways in *Shadowrun* campaigns: as random encounters, ongoing threats, allies, contacts or archenemies. For suggestions on using gangs in gameplay, see p. 120, *SRComp*. The following section gives details on the gangs described on p. 105, using the gang format presented in *SRComp*.

The Troglobytes

Gang Focus: The Troglobytes are a metahuman-oriented third-tier gang, made up primarily of orks and trolls.

Leader: Lord Bunny, a troll who uses an icon of a monstrously scary troll adorned with bunny ears and whiskers. Incredibly shy in real life, Lord Bunny is a terrorizing machine in the Matrix.

Lieutenants: None.

Gang Rating: Inferior

Head Count: Approximately 12–15 members.

Initiation Rituals: New recruits are tested by being forced to penetrate and vandalize a Humanis Policlub host.

Uniforms: Most Troglobytes sport icons that look like larger, fiercer, better-endowed versions of their normal selves.

Symbol: A troll chewing on a cyberterminal.

Territory: None. They roam the Matrix at large.

Operations: The Troglobytes dabble with selling pirated software that they buy wholesale from various fixers. They also repair and construct low-end cyberdecks. Occasionally they hire themselves out to pro-metahuman groups for Matrix vandalism jobs or easy decking jobs.

Foes: Humanis members and other racists.

Uniqueness: The Troglobytes actually encourage orks, trolls and other metahumans to get online and make their presence known—and they encourage disruptive means of doing so. A few Troglobytes have, in the past, actually moved on to become qualified deckers.

The Architects

Gang Focus: The Architects are a third-tier gang of otaku who are trying to create a brave new world through manipulation of the Matrix and (meta)human bodies.

Leader/Lieutenants: None that are known. Unusually, the otaku do not claim to be following the will of either the Deep Resonance or Deus.

Gang Rating: Equal

Head Count: Approximately 20–30 members.

Initiation Rituals: None, other than being an otaku dedicated to the Master Plan.

Uniforms: None.

Symbol: None.

Territory: The Architects believe the entire virtual world is theirs to shape, as are the bodies of metahumans who use the Matrix.

Operations: The Architects are primarily known for extensive vandalism sprees and attempts to restructure the Matrix according to some design they claim to follow. They also frequently penetrate hosts of hospitals and cyberware clinics and alter surgical plans to create more "evolved" humans.

Foes: They will take action against anyone who interferes with their work.

Uniqueness: The Architects are an otaku gang who follow a different path from most otaku, yet clearly with no less fervor or fanaticism.

The Terminal Cases

Gang Focus: The Terminals are a third-tier gang that revels in extremism, especially pain and death.

Leader: Terminus, an egomanic freak who is addicted to snuff BTLs. Terminus is a sadist and gets a thrill out of causing pain and experiencing death.

Lieutenants: Negative Gain, Terminus' slave.

Gang Rating: Inferior

Head Count: Approximately 15–20 members.

Initiation Rituals: New recruits get to be the "whipping boy" at a Terminal Case party in the Matrix. There they are subjected to all manner of torture and abuse, from BTL feeds to psychotropic IC.

Uniforms: Icons decked out in black leathers and bondage gear.

Symbol: A single, flat black line.

Territory: The Terminals roam the Matrix, claiming no particular area of it.

Operations: The Terminals have recently started to stalk victims, tracing their icons and locating their physical homes. They then stage a Matrix attack, allowing the victim to jack out—only tofind themselves held captive in their homes. These victims are usually tortured and made the subjects of home S/M and snuff BTL wet records.

The Terminals also make a living by distributing hardcore BTLs, and a few of the Terminals are specialists in psychotropic programming.

Foes: Anyone they don't like.

Uniqueness: The Terminal Cases are sick and twisted, and their obsession with pain and death is leaving behind a growing list of victims.

SECURITY SHEAFS

ANGEL SATCOM SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Orange–4/10/8/8/8/7

Trigger Step	Event
5	Probe-4
9	Probe-6
14	Scout-6
18	Trace-6
21	Passive Alert, Equal Security Decker, Ripper (bind-rip)-6
25	Tar Pit-6
28	Blaster-8
32	Active Alert, Sparky-8, Trace-8
37	Construct-10 (Scout-8, Blaster-7, Probe-5)
40	Non-lethal Black IC-8
43	Construct-10 (Black IC-8, Blaster-7, Probe-5) every Combat Turn

DOJ GRID SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Green–6/9/10/9/9/10

Trigger Step	Event
5	Scout-7
9	Probe-7
15	Scout-5
21	Passive Alert
25	Trace-9
31	Construct-7 (Blaster-7, Scout-3 with trap Tar Baby 4)
37	Scout-6
41	Blaster-7
46	Blaster-7
51	Active Alert, Matrix Marshal
57	Crippler (Bod)-9
63	Killer-9
68	Blaster-10
73	Matrix Marshal every Combat Turn

MAGICKNET SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Green–8/14/13/15/15/12

Trigger Step	Event
4	Probe-6
9	Scout-6
13	Scout-8
18	Trace-6
23	Passive Alert
29	Tar Pit-6
35	Trace-8 with trap Ripper (Evasion)-6
39	Blaster-8
45	Active Alert
50	Construct-10 (Blaster-8, Ripper (Bod)-6, Trace-6)
54	Blaster-10
60	Construct-10 (Sparky-10, Ripper (Evasion)-10) every Combat Turn

TYPICAL MSP SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Green–6/9/10/10/8/9

Trigger Step	Event
5	Probe-5
9	Probe-7
14	Scout-7
18	Scout-8
22	Trace-7
27	Passive Alert, Inferior Security Decker
33	Scout-7 trap with Ripper (masking-rip)-5
37	Scout-8 trap with Ripper (evasion-rip)-6
41	Trace-9
47	Active Alert
51	Construct-12 (Blaster-8, Scout-6, Trace-6)
57	Sparky-10
61	Sparky-12
65	Inferior Security Decker every Combat Turn

UOL SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Blue–7/14/12/13/13/14

Trigger Step	Event
6	Probe-9
13	Trace-7
20	Scout-10
25	Probe-5 with trap Blaster-9
31	Killer-7
36	Passive Alert
42	Inferior Security Decker
49	Killer-5
54	Blaster-7
59	Ripper (Evasion)-5
65	Active Alert
70	Ripper (Bod)-7
75	Blaster-7
81	Construct-7 (Ripper (Evasion)-7, Killer-7) every Combat Turn

S-K PRIME SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Red–12/16/15/16/13/13

Trigger Step	Event
2	Scout-10
5	Trace-10 with trap Crippler (Masking)-10
9	Scout-10 with trap Crippler (Masking)-10
13	Passive Alert, Equal Security Decker, Ripper (Masking)-10
15	Construct-14 (Trace-12, Probe-6, Scout-8)
19	Trace-14 with trap Sparky-12
22	Active Alert, Non-Lethal Black IC-12
26	Cerebropathic Black IC-12
29	Lethal Black IC-14 every Combat Turn

SECURITY SHEAFS, CONTINUED

PUEBLO RTG SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Orange–10/14/15/17/15/13

Trigger Step	Event
3	Probe-10
7	Scout-10
12	Trace-10
15	Party IC with Crippler (Evasion)-8, Crippler (Masking)-8, Scout-8
18	Passive Alert, Equal Security Decker, Scout-10
22	Party IC with Ripper (Evasion)-8, Ripper (Masking)-8, Blaster-8
27	Trace-10
30	Active Alert, Scout-10 with trap Blaster-10
34	Party IC with Sparky-8, Ripper (Bod)-8, Blaster-8
39	Party IC with Trace-12, Non-Lethal Black IC-8, Sparky-10
43	Party IC with Non-Lethal Black IC-10, Non-Lethal Black IC-10, Psychotropic (Positive Conditioning) Black IC-10
48	Party IC with Lethal Black IC-10, Psychotropic (Judas) Black IC-10 every Combat Turn

SHIAWASE MIFD PLTG SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Red–8/15/15/15/13/15

Trigger Step	Event
2	Probe-10
4	Scout-10 with trap Crippler (Evasion)-8
6	Scout-10 with trap Crippler (Masking)-8
8	Trace-10 with trap Killer-8
10	Passive Alert, Crippler (Sensor)-8
12	Construct-15 (Crippler (Evasion)-10, Crippler (Masking)-10, Scout-8)
14	Party IC with Trace-12, Crippler (Bod)-10, Crippler (Sensor)-10
16	Active Alert, Inferior Security Decker, Psychotropic (Positive Conditioning) Black IC-8
18	Psychotropic (Frenzy) Black IC-10
20	Cerebropathic Black IC-10
22	Equal Security Decker every Combat Turn

TRANSYS NEURONET PLTG SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Orange–11/14/17/14/17/18

Trigger Step	Event
4	Tar Pit-10 with shield
6	Trace-8 with trap Killer-8
8	Passive Alert, Equal Security Decker, Scout-8 with armor
11	Blaster-11 with shift
14	Tar Pit-11
16	Construct-11 (Sparky-11, Blaster-11)
18	Sparky-10
20	Blaster-10
23	Active Alert, Scout-10 with trap Sparky-12
27	Ripper (Masking)-10 with cascading
31	Sparky-10
34	Psychotropic (Judas) Black IC-10
36	Equal Security Decker every Combat Turn

TRANSYS CAERLEON SYSTEM SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Red–10/14/18/16/17/17

Trigger Step	Event
2	Scout-12 with trap Crippler (Evasion)-10
4	Trace-12 with trap Killer-10
6	Passive Alert, Equal Security Decker, Blaster-12
8	Construct-15 (Sparky-10, Tar Pit-10, Ripper (Bod)-10)
10	Active Alert, Non-Lethal Black IC-12
12	Non-Lethal Black IC-12
14	Cerebropathic Black IC-14
16	Lethal Black IC-14
18	Superior Security Decker every Combat Turn

LONE STAR SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Red–8/13/11/12/14/12

Trigger Step	Event
3	Probe-10
7	Equal Security Decker
12	Trace-10
15	Equal Security Decker
18	Scout-10
22	Passive Alert, Security Decker (Roll 1D6: 1–5 Equal, 6 Superior)
27	Construct-8 (Sparky-8, Blaster-8)
30	Security Decker (Roll 1D6: 1–4 Equal, 5–6 Superior)
34	Non-Lethal Black IC-10
39	Active Alert, Security Decker (Roll 1D6: 1–3 Equal, 4–5 Superior, 6 Superhuman)
43	Non-Lethal Black IC-10, Psychotropic (Positive Conditioning) Black IC-10
47	Shutdown

SECURITY SHEAFS, CONTINUED

MALAYSIAN INDEPENDENT BANK SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Red–9/17/18/18/15/14

Trigger Step	Event
2	Scout-8
4	Tar Baby-10
8	Killer-10 with Expert Offense-3
12	Construct-10 (Trace-10 with armor, Killer-10 with expert defense-3)
15	Trace-12 with trap Killer-10 with expert offense-3
19	Probe-14 with trap Sparky-12
22	Passive Alert, Blaster-12 with Armor
26	Equal Security Decker
29	Active Alert, Lethal Black IC-14
33	Superior Security Decker
37	Lethal Black IC-14
40	Shutdown

PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Orange–6/9/9/8/9/9

Trigger Step	Event
4	Tar Pit-5 with shield
8	Scout-9 with trap Sparky-7
12	Probe-5 with trap Killer-5
16	Construct-8 (Scout-8, Sparky-8)
19	Passive Alert, Trace-5
24	Killer-5 with expert offense-2
27	Ripper (Masking)-7
31	Blaster-5
35	Active Alert, Inferior Security Decker
39	Blaster-5
44	Psychotropic (Positive Conditioning) Black IC-9
47	Lethal Black IC-5
51	Shutdown

ZURICH-ORBITAL SECURITY SHEAF
Security Code: Red–13/20/20/18/18/18

Trigger Step	Event
2	Construct-10 (Trace-10, Tar Baby-10)
4	Construct-10 (Tar Pit-12, Probe-8)
6	Construct-12 (Scout-12, Killer-12)
8	Construct-12 (Killer-14, Ripper (Masking)-10)
10	Passive Alert, Maenads
12	Construct-14 (Ripper (Bod)-10, Ripper (Evasion)-10, Ripper (Masking)-8)
14	Construct-12 (Blaster-12, Sparky-12)
16	Maenads
18	Construct-14 (Ripper (Bod)-10, Ripper (Evasion)-10, Ripper (Masking)-8)
20	Construct-14 (Blaster-10, Sparky-10, Killer-8)
22	Active Alert, one of the Fates
24	Construct-15 (Lethal Black IC-10, Psychotropic (Frenzy) Black IC-10, Ripper (Bod)-10)
26	Construct-15 (Lethal Black IC-10, Psychotropic (Frenzy) Black IC-10, Ripper (Bod)-10)

CAN YOU HACK IT?

THE MATRIX IS FOR EVERYONE: A WORLDWIDE COMPUTER NETWORK MADE UP OF POCKET UNIVERSES AND VIRTUAL REALITIES. YOU CAN MAKE DEALS IN VIRTUAL BARS, SHARPEN REACTIONS IN GAME SIMULATIONS OR SCORE NEW GEAR FROM AN ONLINE STORE. DECKERS AND NON-DECKERS ALIKE BASE MOST OF THEIR LIVES IN THE MATRIX, THE PLACE WHERE INFORMATION LIVES AND BREEDS, BOUGHT AND SOLD LIKE TRINKETS ON A STREET CORNER. IN SHADOWY DATA HAVENS AND BEHIND THE BRAIN-FRYING DEFENSES IN THE MEGACORPORATE DATA ARCHIVES, INFORMATION IS POWER.
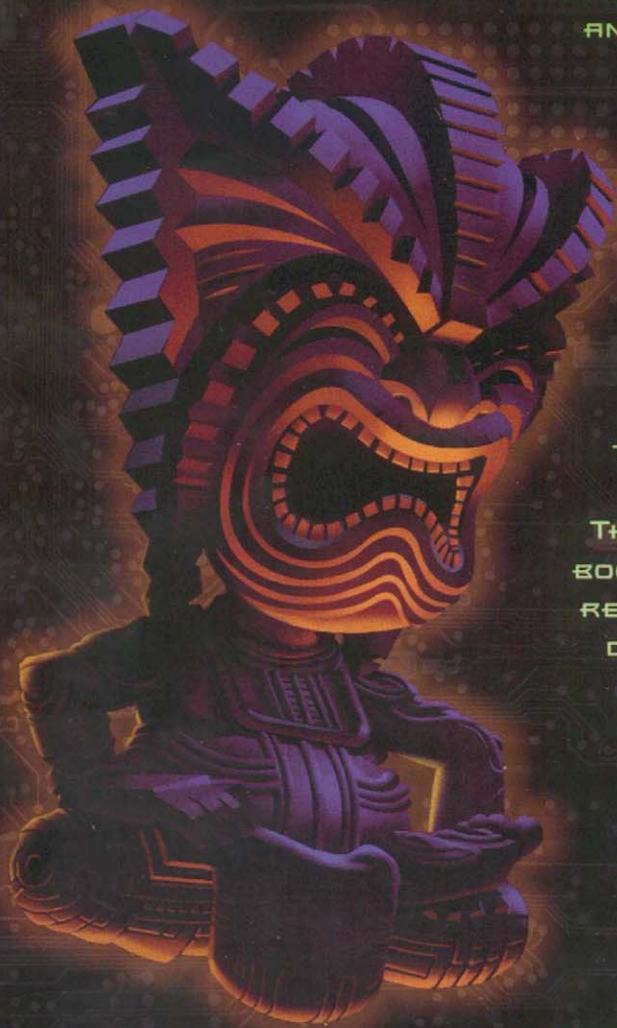
THE *TARGET: MATRIX* SOURCEBOOK OPENS UP THE EXCITING REALMS OF THIS VIRTUAL WORLD, DETAILING OVER TWO DOZEN GRIDS, HOSTS AND DATA HAVENS. IT ALSO PROFILES INFAMOUS MATRIX ORGANIZATIONS AND NOVA-HOT PERSONAS, HINTING AT UNDISCOVERED ENTITIES THAT LURK DEEP IN THE DATASPHERE. *TARGET: MATRIX* IS INTENDED FOR GAMEMASTERS AND PLAYERS OF ALL EXPERIENCE LEVELS. FOR USE WITH *SHADOWRUN, THIRD EDITION* AND *MATRIX*.

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