

SHADOWRUN DIRTY TRICKS



DIGGING IN THE DIRT

Politics is only a dirty word when it's not working for you. For shadowrunners, politics aren't about debates and position papers—they're about taking some of the money people are throwing around. During election season, when power is up for grabs, people are willing to do just about anything to get a piece of the pie. If you can help them get what they want, they've got a job for you. It may be peeking in the windows of the rich and famous. Or finding dirt on the opposition (or making some up). Or, if things get really desperate, ensuring the other guy doesn't win because he's too busy taking a dirt nap.

How much money you take in and how dirty your fingers get is up to you and your desire to not see the stars above you when you sleep. You'll probably have to make some compromises along the way, but since when has life in the Sixth World—or politics—been any different?

Dirty Tricks provides details on the ins and outs of political shadowruns, as well as close-up looks at some of the electoral hotspots around the globe. From dragon attacks in the Caribbean to the long-awaited vote on making the Ork Underground an official district of Seattle, *Dirty Tricks* is full of news, updates, and game information players need to get deeper in the twisted world of *Shadowrun* politics.

Dirty Tricks is for use with *Shadowrun*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition.

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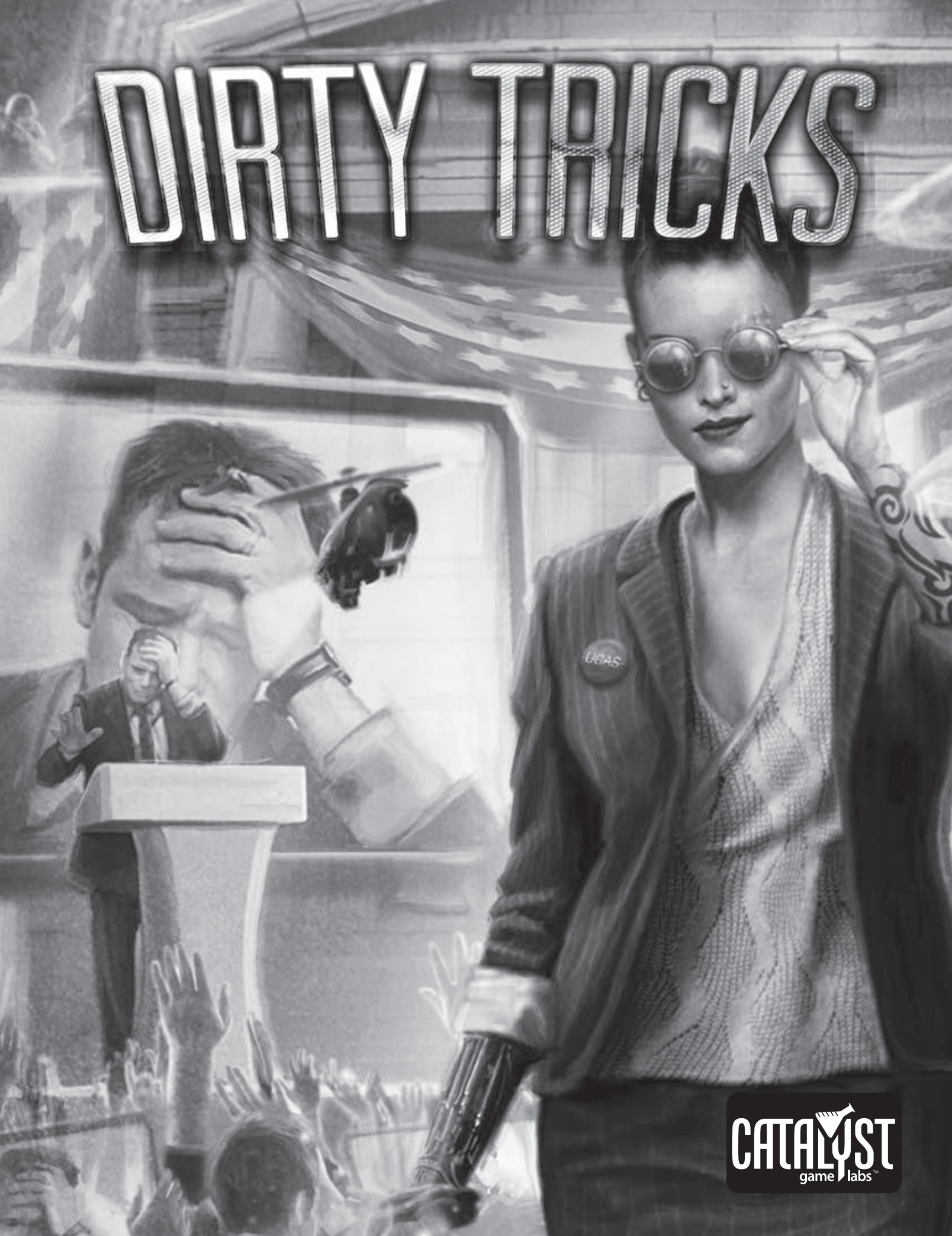
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SHADOWRUN

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DIRTY TRICKS



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Connecting JackPoint VPN ...
... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.
... Encryption Keys Generated.
... Connected to Onion Routers.
> Login

> Enter Passcode

... Biometric Scan Confirmed.
Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>

"Chicago ain't ready for reform." -Mathias "Paddy" Bauler

JackPoint Stats

132 users currently active
in the network

Latest News

* <110274> I know there has been a lot of maintenance lately. Get ready for more. I've been wanting to get the place absolutely ship-shape.
-FastJack

Personal Alerts

* You have 5 new [private messages](#).
* You have 1 [message](#) queued for anonymous re-routing.
* You have received 8 new Metalink Friends [add requests](#).
* 2 individuals have dropped you as [Metalink Friends](#).
* You have 18 new responses to your [JackPoint posts](#).
* PDA: Election Day is in four days. You are currently registered to vote in 5 different locales with 3 different SINs.

First Degree

You are hidden from all contacts.

Your Current Rep Score: 66

(58% positive)

Current Time: November 2, 2074,
08:22

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

LINKS

HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae; your last connection was severed: 8 hours, 20 minutes, 12 seconds ago.

Today's Heads Up

- * I miss my cyberdeck. Do you miss yours too?
[Tag: [Shadowrun 2050](#)]
- * Think you don't need to know about Awakened rocks? Have you never heard of orichalcum? [Tag: [Parageology](#)]

Incoming

- * Sammies need love too! [Tag: [The Way of the Samurai](#)]
- * You can't light as many fuses as the world has lately without getting some serious explosions. They're coming. [Tag: [Storm Front](#)]

Top News Items

- * Acting District Attorney Dana Oaks refuses pleas to go into seclusion. "The work I am doing is more important than my personal safety," she says. [Link](#)
- * MCT purchases manufacturer of Matrix infrastructure equipment for a whopping 130 billion nuyen. [Link](#)
- * In the wake of anti-Infected backlash, Queen Thema Laula of Asamando is welcoming Infected citizens of other nations to her land. "The campaign to be accepted by those who are not us was doomed from the start," she said. "We can only be truly accepted by our own." [Link](#)



CHAT

MESSAGES

FILES

POSTS

NEHUS

SEARCH

Active

ComStar Firewall

Active

Jack-in-the-Box Antivirus

Active

SpamWitch Filter

On/Receiving

CommMode

Excellent

Signal

Active

Hidden Mode



Local Map

DIRTY TRICKS

Posts/Files tagged with "Dirty Tricks"
Anatomy of a Scandal
Executive Entertainments
Taking the Bullet
Electoral Hotspots

CONTINUE

ADVANCED SEARCH

SAVE

[More]

... VOTER INTIMIDATION ...

It was a panel van designed for hauling turn-of-the-century steam-cleaning supplies, not people. The back benches had been torn out decades ago, so the current crop of passengers had to squat and lean against walls, using one hand to steady themselves while their others held their guns and clubs. It didn't help that the driver was obviously used to a smaller vehicle with better handling or that they were bumping and skipping from pothole to pothole on ill-maintained Puyallup roads.

I wish Torque was driving. Frostbyte's headware commlink piped the whine to the muscle, the triggerman the streets called Saber. Truth be told, he wished the orkish wheelman were there for his brawn and his combat shotgun as much as his driving ability, but it seemed ... impolitic ... to say so to his team's new heavy. The scrawny hacker might have planned to mentally send something more, but a particularly sharp turn sent him windmilling one arm to stay upright.

Saber, for his part, held himself steady effortlessly. One cyberhand was braced against the bare metal interior of their ugly van, and magnetic panels did the rest of the work. A half dozen other men—mostly white, like Saber and Frostbyte, and none of them metahuman—were jostled around in the van's cargo area, but Saber somehow stood steady and calm, with an aloof air. His slicked-back hair and matte-black cyberlimbs contrasted sharply with their shaved heads and white undershirts.

Hell, I take it back. I just wish this van was new enough we could let it autopilot! Frostbyte didn't fit in any better than Saber, but that had more to do with his skinny build than the dress code. The hacker was perfectly happy in faux-cotton, but out of sloppiness rather than conformity.

If wishes worked, we wouldn't have a political rally to go to, the street samurai sent back. And you know as well as I do why Torque is out.

Frostbyte almost dropped his baseball bat after they hit another pothole, and he started to open his mouth to complain. A stern glare from Saber kept him from doing so. Whether the pair were reasonably priced shadowrunner backup or not, sitting in the middle of a van full of Humanis Policlub thugs—the low-ranking and low-minded shock-troopers of the movement—wasn't a smart place to open your mouth and let something sarcastic out.

which way u boys going 2 vote? In the passenger seat, Jenny Q, known as Jenny Quick in breaking-and-entering circles, furiously typed away on her Hermes commlink. As an adept, she didn't have the implants the boys did, so her thumbs had to stay busy to keep in the conversation. As the van's sole female occupant, though, she also didn't have their comfort problem. She was securely seatbelted up front, her stubby little black HK submachine gun snug between her knees.

Which time? Frostbyte flashed a mischievous grin. Everyone knew the kid had a fake SIN for every day of the week, and probably more. He could probably cast a dozen votes if he wanted.

I'm voting for it. Prop 23 will do good things to the Underground. If they want to be part of the system, the system should let them in. Saber's implanted optic covers kept his features impassive, but it was easy enough to tell he meant it.

A compelling argument! Frostbyte gave Saber a thumbs-up, never mind the fact none of the Humanis thugs in the back of the van had any idea why. *Consider yourself having earned a vote.*

ya rite, Jenny's thumbs danced. system sux. brackhaven makes it suck more. orks will be pissed w/ it soon enuf. they only want in b/c they dont know better.

Once they're in, they can work to change it. Saber's reply was matter-of-fact, face blank as always. *They'll bring a lot of votes in. Votes Brackhaven won't have a handle on. The Underground's got a lot of people in it.*

mostly w/o sin though. no id = no vote. Jenny typed furiously. Frostbyte swung his head back and forth, watching the argument unfold like a tennis match.

If they can get enough votes to pass 23, they'll get enough votes to pass other bills. The system will work, if we let it.

even if u r rite, it sux tho. ork underground gets law & order, the shadows shrink a little more. 1 less place 4 people like us 2 hide out or do biz. Jenny glared into the rearview to meet Saber's eyes, daring him to keep arguing.

The samurai turned his head just enough to make it clear he was looking at her reflected eyes, his optic shields still in place. For all his obvious inhumanity, though, one eyebrow quirked as he sent a headware response.

Is that what your contact said when he offered you this assignment?

Jenny blinked first. She had to. Looking away, she pulled on some mirrored shades before glaring out the window and riding in silence. It had been her contacts who'd put them in touch with Humanis, though. Her business acquaintances had gotten the team the job, and her friends had offered them thousands of nuyen in exchange for dozens of bullets.

Frostbyte and his Fairlight commlink went to work, ignoring the sullen silence that had replaced the team-channel banter. Their whole Humanis crew had slaved their 'links to his, letting the Matrix specialist provide overwatch and security. A quick check with a pair of agents confirmed their timetable.

The other van's on location already. The gun crews are in place, he sent out to Saber and Jenny, thoughts transferred to text and displayed only to them. *Right where Saber told them to set up.*

They'd have a terrific field of fire from the rooftops the former Lone Star shooter had suggested. This Humanis chapter had a bold plan and a reasonable bankroll, but their tactics had been as outdated as their hardware. A drive-by shooting would have been ugly and not really effective. With the anti-Proposition 23 funds that had been funneled their way, they'd decided to invest in professional assistance. Jenny Q and her team of consultants had proven themselves to be a wise investment.

Jenny's contacts had helped them get an assortment of black market weapons and vehicles that would never be traced to the policlub, upgrading their firepower and confidence with crates of European rifles and cutting-edge smartgoggles. Saber's tactical acumen was better than anything the Humanis chapter had, and he'd personally overseen



INCOMING FEED.....

weapons maintenance and basic firearm training in the weeks prior to the attack. Frostbyte's Matrix wizardry supplied agents to handle security cameras, surveillance drones, GridGuide, and inter-team coordination for the assault itself. What would have been a haphazard display of brutish violence had been refined into a four-pronged assault, with a pair of elevated positions laying down plunging fire in mutual support of each other. The icing was the two vans full of assault forces—including the trio of shadowrunners, who'd volunteered simply to see their plan carried out firsthand, free of charge—who would lay down a wicked crossfire and sweep up any survivors, fanning out into a gunline and then simply advancing into the killzone.

The mostly metahuman crowd milling around at the Puyallup voting center wouldn't stand a chance. Heavily orkish and dwarven or not, the would-be voters weren't going to stand up to this kind of firepower. As the team's Humanis Mr. Johnson had put it after Frostbyte had shared the plan over a flashy AR display, they would be mowed down like wheat before scythes.

It wasn't a bad plan, all things considered. They'd make up for their erstwhile companion's lack of training with sheer firepower, overcome the civilians' numbers through brutality coupled with coordination. For a shadowrunning crew still without a mage, a team who'd recently lost two members, and a team leaving another regular on the outside for this job, it was pretty impressive work.

For the shadowrunners, it would mean nuyen in the bank. For the Humanis Policlub, it would mean a righteous massacre, a glorious body

count, the envy of other chapters, and every metahuman in Seattle thinking twice before going to any polling center or political rally for a long, long, time. Everyone would win, except the dirty metas pouring out of Carbonado to try and vote. And who wanted them to win?

I never got my jollies on the rooftop jaunts, like so many of the freerunner kids and adrenaline junkie courier-types. Maybe I'd smoked too much to enjoy a run like I used to. Maybe my shoes just weren't right for it. Maybe I worried about my fedora blowing off. Maybe it was this damned rain. My elven blood meant I wasn't getting old – physically slowing down, that is – so I knew it wasn't that, but the fact remains that I'm just not a fan of this sort of thing. Me, I liked keeping my feet on the ground, or failing that on the pedals of a fast car. Clambering over low walls, sidestepping around air conditioning vents, ducking clotheslines and stepping on tar and pigeon crap? No thanks, pal. Jimmy Kincaid would rather be on the streets than high above 'em. Be that as it may, though, here I was. Doing anything for a paycheck, even monkeying around jumping between buildings like some sort of action-trid star.

Ariana loved it, the silly kid. Why shouldn't she? If I could fricking fly, I'd probably have a lot more fun up here, too. For someone who is clearly from the elemental plane of earth, so much so she shines like silver and copper and red rubies even in the muddy grey sunlight



of Seattle, she sure does like being up high. Ally spirits. There's just no accounting for taste. She didn't care a lick about nuyen and rent and bills, she just liked looking at the city from a new perspective. She enjoyed seeing the people of our neighborhood determined and upbeat and happy, for once, all milling around and talking about exercising their rights as citizens.

Lon Campa himself, Seattle's only metahuman mayor, was footing my bill today. The ork had chucked my usual rates right out the proverbial window and offered me hourly pay in exchange for magically augmenting election-day security. Generous hourly pay. I was already on their books as a paranormal consultant, and I already had a solid rep with his office thanks to the work I did on their wards, but this was gonna be a big haul for me. It was gonna be a big day. It'd keep a roof over Ariana and me for months. That being the case, I could suck up having a roof *under* me for a little while, right?

I cupped my hands around a fresh Target and worked hard at an ignite spell to get it lit. Campa knew I got results. Campa knew I could handle mojo. Campa knew I'd been a cop (which made him trust me) but knew it had been a long time ago (which made his constituents trust me). Campa didn't know, though, that Ari did most of the magical heavy lifting nowadays, and he also didn't know how much I had to push to light a cigarette in the rain. Oh well. What Campa didn't know wouldn't hurt him. I'd get the job done. I always did.

Today's festivities promised to be something nasty. Word on the street said some Humanis punks with money to burn and a wish to be the next Alamos 20k were out looking for trouble. I'd heard mutterings from all over the place leading up to election day, natch, with every snitch and rat eager to pay for his next hit by telling you yesterday's news: this just in, metahuman agitation was high in the face of a Brackhaven re-election; news flash, Humanis doesn't like Proposition 23; we interrupt this broadcast to tell you that orks might get violent about Humanis harassment; and big screaming headline story, election fever makes people sweat nuyen. An idiot could see the trouble ahead; the tricky part was gonna be knowing when, where, and how it would come out.

No one knew exactly what was coming. No one but an old buddy from my Lone Star days, Sabelhaus. I'd been surprised when he came into my office, and even more surprised when he told me what he was up to. He'd never struck me as the plain old wetwork sort, but enough augmentation can change a man. I know what it's like to have a hole in you that just won't fill up, no matter what you throw in there. Mine had come from a vampire. His, maybe, had come from those gun-blued arms and legs of his, and the who-knows-what-else Lone Star had cut off and replaced with metal.

My Fast Response Team buddy filled me in quick. Sabelhaus had heard exactly what was going down, and exactly where, and exactly when. He didn't even charge me for the dirt. He just wanted the authorities alerted, and things nipped in the bud.

"Heh. The authorities," I muttered around my smoke, spitting my gum onto the rooftop as I huddled against a wall in the rain. My mentor spirit would'a gotten a good chuckle out of that.

Ariana had us good and hidden, so I wasn't too worried about a little grumbling giving us away. She spun circles just over my head, dancing in the rain and sometimes peeking off the rooftop to watch the shining auras of the hopeful voters down below. I smoked and flipped up my collar against the rain and shivered and glared over at a half-dozen ignorant Humanis thugs as they set up a pair of RPK HMGs overlooking the crowd.

Lining the courtyard were street vendors, their cries and AR advertisements mingling along with the scents of the foods they

offered. Ork Underground kids worked the crowd, selling gum and buttons and cheap t-shirts, AR badges and meat on a stick. The place was like a festival. A block party. Someone had linked up a half-dozen commlinks and their sound systems and had music playing. I heard the sharp, ugly, *chick-clack* of a skinhead machinegunner loading a belt of ammo.

"Yeah. The authorities. That's me." I flicked my cigarette away and reached for my Colt.

It was gonna be a big day, all right.

Frostbyte got a ping to his headware when the RPK machineguns, linked to his computer wirelessly, disengaged their safeties.

Almost ti—his update was interrupted by the pair of weapons opening up on the crowded square. The hacker couldn't help but jump; the reports were so loud as they echoed an hundred times off the brick and concrete of northern Puyallup. The screams started just a split second later, drowning out the roaring autofire. Frostbyte looked across the van at Saber, but the impassive street samurai just gave him a curt nod.

Everything's going according to the plan, the shooter reassured him.

Their van screeched to a halt, and Frostbyte planted the butt of his baseball bat on the bare metal floor to shove off and half-vault, half-scramble, out onto the sidewalk. The rear doors swung wide open and Humanis muscle came pouring out, fanning wide just the way Saber had drilled them. A dozen meters away, the first van opened and another eight thugs leapt out. Saber moved at a herky-jerk quick trot, augmentations making him the quickest man there as he moved toward the first team. Jenny stayed in the passenger seat of the van, twisting, catlike, to level her HK out the passenger window and toward the square.

Their contract was officially up. The fire teams were in place, the machine guns were the cue for the ground teams to start. As consultants, they'd fulfilled their duties.

Deadbolt is a go, Saber subvocalized to Frostbyte as he hefted his matte-black Ares Alpha. The samurai took in a deep breath. On either side of him, over a dozen Humanis punks shouldered their brand-new FN rifles and took up their shooting positions, matching smartgoggles in FN tiff, ugly smiles on their ugly faces.

"Fire!" Saber's bellow, in what Lone Star had used to call a "command voice," cut through the chattering autoguns and the screaming orks.

In the half-second between orders, Frostbyte worked his console-cowboy magic. Viruses, implanted weeks ago, were triggered and went to work. First, both vans' engines died. Then the hardware got hit. Every full magazine in the gunline dropped and clattered off the pavement, every bolt *snicked* back to send the remaining round glittering from an empty chamber, and every rifle shut down and rebooted for routine maintenance. Each set of smartgoggles whited out and dazzled their owners as their flare compensation protocols were reversed, then doubled and redoubled a dozen times over.

Several other things were also happening, all triggered by Saber's shout. Frostbyte tossed his baseball bat onto the sidewalk with a clatter and a grin. Jenny Q kicked straight backwards, both long, athletic, legs extending into their driver's ugly face. She held herself up by one hand braced on the passenger's side windowsill and her feet alone, smashing their Humanis escort's head away to spiderweb the impact-resistant glass of the driver's-side window. She twisted to line up her dancing

laser sight and triggered a pair of short bursts into the backs of the first two Humanis shooters she saw. The stick 'n' shock rounds sent them twitching and tumbling to the ground.

Frostbyte's bat rolled across the sidewalk until it stopped under the toe of a big, ugly, combat boot. 'Byte gave a cheery wave as a hulking figure bent over to pick the bat up; it was Torque, a wall of meat and tusks wrapped all in denim and leather who had materialized from within the scattering, screaming crowd of metahuman voters.

Torque gave the hacker a friendly nod and a toothy grin, giving the bat a practice swing as he advanced toward a half-dozen blinded Humanis punks. Strolling over discarded rifles and frantically removed goggles, the ork slipped into a practiced batter's stance and got ready to start bashing heads. Frostbyte scrambled backwards into the van, sliding the door shut to protect himself from blood spatters.

Saber, meanwhile, carefully set his gun on the sidewalk. There were only nine of them, and they were blinded and disarmed; he wouldn't need to waste any ammo. The street samurai flexed his cybernetic hands, tensed his cybernetic legs. Hydraulics hissed as he launched himself headlong into the middle of their rabid little pack, lashing out with hands and feet as heavy and unyielding as crowbars.

Ariana's barrier spell did its job perfectly. Mine wouldn't have held up against a single large-bore round, but hers, shining silver-white, sent the dozens, then hundreds of RPK shots ricocheting harmlessly away from the crowd. That didn't stop the metas from screaming and scattering, and it sure as hell didn't stop the Humanis punks from just laying on their triggers and shooting longer and longer bursts, but it kept people in one piece. That's what counted.

At a little nod from me, Ari flitted over to the nearest gunner/loader pair. Her hair shone as she placed a bronze hand on each of their shoulders.

"You are mean people!" Her voice rang out with a child's certainty and spite, and she poured mana through their physical contact. Their

auras were flooded with a raw power I couldn't come near to matching, and the pair of them slumped to the rooftop. That left me four, and every one of them was spinning to level their weapons—most of them big FN rifles, but another one with that other RPK HMG—right at my ally.

"Hey!" My Colt barked and a pair of rounds slammed into the back of the leftmost shooter's skull.

"You no-good skulls ..." Another double tap, another dropped skinhead.

"... are under ..." Another pair of shots.

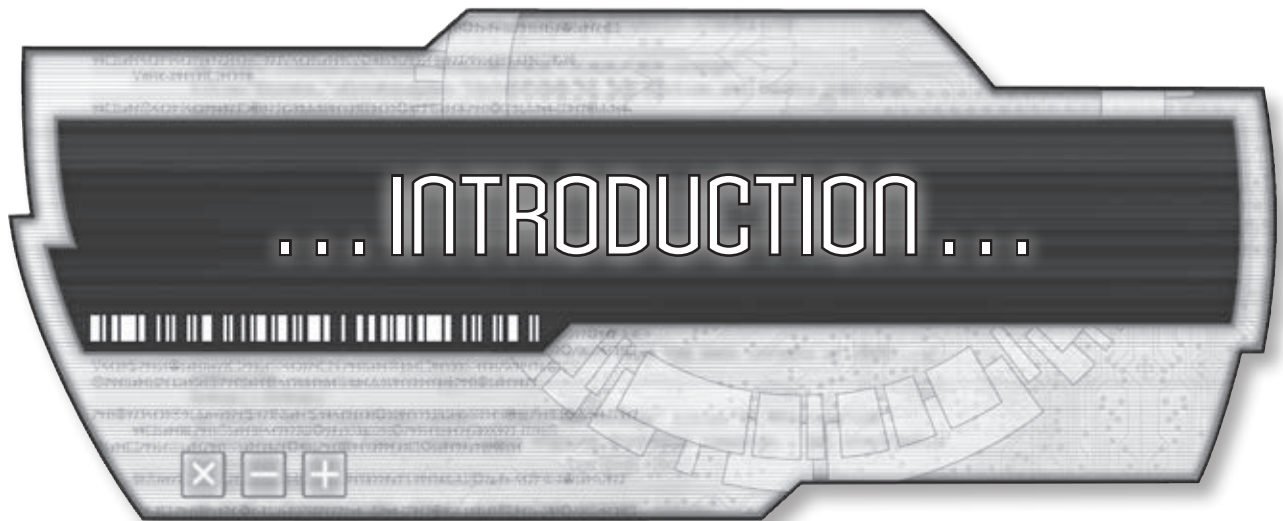
"... citizen's arrest."

The last of them crumpled to the rooftop along with my empty magazine. They'd been dropped by gel rounds, and I was eager to get a mag of grown-up bullets locked and loaded. I slung one foot up onto the rooftop's low wall and leaned casually on my knee, watching the ruckus downstairs. I saw Ari's barrier flicker and vanish. Beyond it was a huge ork playing tee ball with a handful of skinheads, and a blond lit by the muzzle flash as she unloaded on another shooter from inside a van. Meters away, my old buddy Sabelhaus—he went by Saber ever since Lone Star'd dropped him—tore through a pack of Humanis shock troopers like an unstoppable black wind.

The show was over awful fast. The team of shadowrunners all joined up in the rearmost van, with the big ork taking the wheel after pulling an unconscious lump of meat out. Sabelhaus climbed into the back and tugging the rear doors shut behind him, and the blond idly rolling her window up. Their van peeled away just as I saw Knight Errant's lights flashing a block away. Thank goodness, the police!

I holstered my Colt and reached for my pack of Targets. Far below me, Humanis punks groaned and struggled to get to their hands and knees, only to be kicked back down into the gutter by Knight Errant jackboots, right on schedule.

Maybe rooftops weren't all bad.



I hate to break it to all of you, but here's a sad fact: None of you is going to grow up to be president. Not even /dev/grrl. And especially not Slamm-0!

Not that I have anything against either one of them, or any of the rest of you. If /dev/ ran for office, there's a good chance I'd vote for her. But she won't, at least not for anything more powerful than maybe some school board somewhere down the line, and for a simple reason: There's an entire system dedicated toward stopping her.

There's a popular myth from countries descended from the old United States that says that anyone can grow up to be president. It's sentimental hogwash. The whole point of political parties, especially as they have developed in modern times, is to choose candidates who are loyal to the party and will help strengthen it. It is a system designed to prevent too many mavericks or independent thinkers from making it through. Instead, those who in large part think like the people who came before them move into positions of power, which helps power sustain itself.

Here in JackPoint, we're not the kind of people who fit into party structures. Freethinkers, rebels, radicals, and of course felons are not exactly what they are looking for. They would not deign to let us have access to their political machines,

And there's another crucial element a lot of us lack—money. Yeah, once there was a time when you didn't have to be rich to be president, but that time was about two hundred years ago. Since then, with one or two exceptions, it's been millionaire after millionaire making their way to the top office(s) in the land. Some of them may have had humble beginnings, but they managed to overcome that by the time they ran for office. They made themselves into people of means and responsibility, which means they were the kind of people party power brokers could trust. They accomplished that, and you who are reading this, all of you, have not. So they have a chance to become president, and you don't.

Now, I'm not saying all this to make any of you feel bad about yourselves. You didn't really want to be president anyway. It's a thankless job that doesn't pay enough to justify the grief it brings. I bring it up because elections are happening all over the place and are a good source of work, but if you're going to get involved in electoral politics, you need to understand the type of people you're dealing with. The candidates, to a person, have spent years preparing to lead people, and they are surrounded by people who tell them they deserve to lead. They are strong-willed and often self-important, which means subtly planting an idea in their head is easier than arguing with them. In fact, if you can master the art of leading them by indirections, you will never lack for work, because in the end, that's the true art of politics: Planting ideas that stick in people's heads. They don't have to be true ideas, and they don't even have to be good ideas. They just have to stay in people's heads long enough to make the act on them.

To give you a leg up on doing work in the political realm, we first have an overview on the type of work you can expect to do in this arena—the cons, the dirty tricks, the bribes, the voter intimidation, and all that other good stuff. Then there's a look at some specialty areas you should know about since they pop up frequently in political realms: crisis management, call girls, and bodyguards. Understanding all three will help you through some of the intricacies of political dirty tricks. Then we have a look at some of the major political hot spots and upcoming elections, followed by info on some of the power brokers—including those who often stay hidden—and how they affect elections.

Before we plunge into that wealth of mud-slinging goodness, let me leave you with the wisdom that has come to the minds of many a CEO and corporate executive: While it's true that you may never be president, or even a senator, that's no reason to stop you from making money off those people.



SLINGING MUD & STUFFING BALLOTS

"You're a son of a bitch."

The man was wearing a pin-striped suit that looked like it had been slept in. His hands were shaking, and X-Prime couldn't be sure if it was from weariness, anger, or both. If anyone else in the bar heard him, they didn't seem to care. They were too busy studying their own drinks, or sleeping while slumped on a tabletop.

X-Prime blinked three times rapidly. "I'm sorry? Do I know you?" He did—the guy's name was Turneiden—but he had no desire to admit that.

"It took me some time, but I put it together," the man said. "You were in the audience that night. You asked the question. The one where I gave my answer, and Marwan gave hers, and she agreed with me in a way that made us both look like fascist loons. That was you."

"Nah," X-Prime said. "That guy had a mole."

"Then I saw you again today, at the press conference, with your credentials floating in front of you like you're some kind of real reporter. But you're not. I don't know what you are, but you're not a reporter. What were you there for? To gloat?"

X-Prime shrugged. "To watch a show."

"So I followed you, because what else do I have to do with my time now? And I thought a lot while I was walking, and I figured you must have had something to do with the rest of it. The fake e-mails, the tearful 'confession' from that woman—everything, all of it."

X-Prime then offered an expression he had perfected since he had first been thrust out onto the streets—a beautifully composed shit-eating grin. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Turneiden leaned over X-Prime's table. He would have been casting a shadow over him if there had been enough light in the joint to make shadows. "You're lying, and I know it! It was a plot, a plot to bring me down, and you were one of the people pulling it off! I think you owe it to me to tell me who's behind it!"

"I'm pretty sure I owe you jack-shit," X-Prime said.

Turneiden stood up straight. Perhaps for the first time in the conversation, he was remembering that maybe he should carry himself with some dignity. He pulled his damp, wrinkled jacket a little straighter. "I'm not without resources, you know. I'm out of the race, but I still have some campaign funds. I could make it worth your while."

"Really? You could? Without violating any campaign finance laws?"

"Then I could use it to hire people. People like you. To get you."

X-Prime shrugged. "Sure, if that's what you think the best use of your money is. Like I said, I have no idea what you're talking about, but if you think you need to do that, go ahead."

Turneiden glowered for a moment, then turned and walked away without saying another word.

X-Prime waited until he was out of the bar, then spoke quietly into his mic. "Got someone on him?"

"Yes. We'll make sure he encounters the right fixer soon," Savini said in X-Prime's earbuds. That meant X-Prime's work was done for the evening.

Poor Turneiden, X-Prime thought. *Always a step behind.* If only he'd taken a minute to think about things, he would realize that a real pro wouldn't allow themselves to be noticed by the mark twice. Unless that was part of the plan. And now he was out there, in the night, voluntarily walking deeper into the web.



Posted by: Kay St. Irregular

One thing that happens to me a lot is I'm talking about what I do and someone breaks in and says, apropos of nothing, "Oh, I can't stand politics." I'm not left speechless that often, but I have trouble with that line because to me, it's like saying "I don't like life that much." Politics is a microcosm of everything humanity is about—sex, money, violence, and of course power. Always power. The spectacle of people chasing after these things, and their imagination in the means they develop to obtain their goals, is entertaining and occasionally breathtaking. There are so many characters, scoundrels, low-lives, geniuses, and buffoons that I find it hard to not love politics, and impossible to look away.

If we're going to seriously talk about political dirty tricks and how they work, there are a few things we need to be clear on. The first is the nature of political power. Political power is like any other kind of power—at its core, it's about ways to develop reasons why people should do what you tell them. That's why people get money, so that they can tell people "Give me a massage" or "Give me a boat," and dammit, they'll do it. If you're going to hold political power, you have to convince a significant group of people that it's in their best interest to have you holding the reins. There are a lot of tools you can choose from to help you develop this effect, and savvy politicians use a healthy assortment. Here are the basic ones:

- **Fear:** The old standby. Machiavelli made it clear: "It is much safer to be feared than loved." Now, Machiavelli said this because he had a very cynical view of human nature, but if you're involved in politics long enough you tend to stop worrying about being too cynical and instead focus on whether you are cynical enough. The point is that fear is one of our most basic emotions, and if you can make people afraid of what will happen to them if they don't vote for you, you have the makings of a solid power base.
 - **Love:** The other half of Machiavelli's equation. To be fair, he said that ideally it's best to be feared *and* loved, but then he said that's a tricky combination to pull off. If you have to choose between the two, he recommended fear, because love is unreliable and human hearts are too fickle. People change who and what they like all the time, but they generally cling to the desire to stay alive. The other problem with this tool, of course, is that it's not an easy task to make people love you. Countless politicians, many of them not named Mondale, have tried and failed at this task. It's a peculiar, unpredictable alchemy that makes people fall in love with a potential leader, and it cannot really be planned in advance. As far as fear goes—well, anyone can pick up or aim a gun, no matter how uncharismatic they are.
 - **Rewards:** For a long time in the old United States, the gold standard question used to determine whether a sitting president deserved a second term in office was: Are you better off now than you were four years ago? There are a lot of ways of answering this question—Are you safer? Are your civil liberties better preserved? Are things more peaceful?—but for the most part, it's meant to boil down to a cold financial calculus, asking if you are making more money, or at least feel like you have more opportunities to make money, than you used to. Are more companies hiring?
- Is the government giving tax breaks or welfare benefits to people in your economic strata? If so, whoever is leading that government might have your support.
- I guess most governments have abandoned the idea of winning people over through welfare benefits, since so few of them are offered nowadays.
 - /dev/grll
 - Like so many other things, they outsourced it to the private sector. The corps hired on whomever they could exploit, paying them a pittance but generally giving them structurally sound housing. Those who wouldn't take jobs tended to be viewed with suspicion, and before long some excuse—maybe legitimate, maybe not—was concocted by the powers that be to explain why that individual was not working. Maybe the person couldn't work because they had their SIN revoked, which happened because for some reason or another they were deemed a menace to society, often due to their indolence or criminal nature. The great majority of governments, of course, feel no obligation to offer anything to people in these particular categories. And so Barrens are the way they are, and governments feel there is no group to whom welfare needs to be provided—the corps give jobs to those who need them, and those who don't have jobs don't, in their eyes, deserve any other help.
 - Aufheben
 - **Patriotism:** Even at this time when corporate power has eclipsed government power, people still generally think of themselves as being citizens of nations, states, and municipalities instead of corporations. Yeah, people in the Renraku Arcology may think of themselves (correctly) as Renraku citizens and not Seattle citizens, but ask them where they're from, and they'll still say "Seattle" instead of anything else. National identities are part of who we are, and that often means that if we feel better about our nation, we feel better about ourselves. Politicians often try to use this sense of patriotism to inspire affection for themselves and their plans.
 - **Morality:** I know that most of us might be a bit rusty on our ethics lessons, but I'm pretty sure that most of us, even Kane, are acquainted with the basics of morality, even if we tend to ignore those basics. While we find lots of wiggle room in our ethical systems, other people are far more stringent. They have a sense of responsibility not just for their own moral well-being, but for the morality of everyone else in their community, or even their whole nation. If a candidate can promise them that they will enforce the moral standards nearest and dearest to their collective heart, they'll have a good power base. Look no further than the New Islamic Jihad for evidence.
 - **Logic:** This one is so rarely effective that I had second (and third and fourth) thoughts about including it, but occasionally it works, so it should be noted. Some politicians manage to build a power base through the sheer force of their ideas, proposing sound policies and then backing them up with unassailable logic. They are able to communicate clearly and effectively, bypassing the emotional part of the brain and convincing people to operate on more rational ground. This rarely operates in isolation from the other tools, as the ability

to convince is often accompanied by a good dose of charisma, which inspires people to listen to policy remarks that otherwise might be considered overly dry. This, then, often makes citizens love the politician, which, as mentioned previously, is an impressive accomplishment.

Political activities, then, can be understood as efforts to build support for themselves in one or more of these areas, or to whittle away support for someone in the opposition. Calling your opponent a wimp? That means you're trying to exploit people's concern that their leader can't reward them with protection. Same with the implication that your opponent isn't paying Lone Star or Knight Errant enough for them to do their job effectively and keep criminals in prison for a decent period of time. Implying that a candidate is involved in an extra-marital affair? That means they're morally questionable, which also means they are in no position to help enforce your beliefs on others.

Now that we've got the tools politicians use to build support, we can talk about how they use them. This is where it gets fun, so let's go. I'll give you this warning—my background is UCAS politics and, before it, politics in the United States, but don't take that to mean dirty tricks don't take place across the world.

OPPO

This isn't really a separate category—it's an overarching category that will keep coming up time and time again in our discussion here. "Oppo" stands for opposition research, and any politician who is serious about what they do has an opposition team, or at least an opposition researcher, on staff. Maybe people running for the local PTA don't have one, but everyone else does.

The goal of opposition research is simple—find something about your opponent that you can exploit. People perpetually tend to think that it's a modern phenomenon, that political negativity is somehow a new thing, but it's been around for centuries, even millennia. It's just become more professionalized and sophisticated in the past hundred years.

In the early days of American democracy, opposition research was kind of crude. There were rumors about people that were floating about, and campaigns would look for some way to broadcast those rumors to a wider audience. So opponents of Ulysses S. Grant in 1868 skipped right over the whole Civil War hero thing and resurrected the accusations of him being a drunk, while Grant's people came right back and said the vice-presidential candidate on the other side had a problem of his own with the sauce. Grover Cleveland was taunted about having fathered a child out of wedlock, and Andrew Jackson's mother was called a prostitute.

- Note that the varying standards of morality among the electorate play a role in what traits opposition research focuses on. In a stricter society, it's easier to find something that will scandalize people, but these days, if you go around telling people that a political candidate is having sex with someone they're not married to and is fond of alcohol, they'll likely shrug and think that he still sounds better than average. In fact, they might decide the candidate would be fine company for an upcoming weekend.
- Winterhawk

As time went on, opposition research became more sophisticated. It became less about uncovering secrets and attempting to broadcast them to the electorate than about finding a few hooks in a candidate's life around which you could build the narrative of your choice. A prison furlough program and an unfortunate piece of video showing him in an unflattering tank helmet helped turn a presidential candidate named Michael Dukakis into a soft on crime, soft on war wimp who could not be taken seriously as a potential commander in chief; a series of out-of-context quotes and distorted remarks were used to make another candidate named Al Gore look like an inveterate and habitual liar. In the waning days of the old USA, presidential candidate Susanne Butler's banking career was used to make her seem like an absent mother who neglected her children and probably didn't like any children anywhere. And in the last election in Seattle, Kenneth Brackhaven exposed Josephine Dzugashvilli as an AIPS sufferer, leading her to drop out of the race.

- He also had the fact that she was a technomancer in his back pocket, and he was willing to expose that at the height of the technomancer scare.
- Sounder

Oppo research has changed in the past few decades, becoming easier in some ways and harder in others. On the downside, political parties have tried to become increasingly ruthless in their vetting processes, looking into every bit of a potential candidate's background and eliminating anyone with too much dirt before they get a chance to be exposed to the public. That results in a series of bland, cookie-cutter candidates (yes, as it turns out, they're all that way for a *reason*), but it blunts the effect of any oppo going on.

The upside, though, is that the modern world gives you more opportunities than have ever existed in history to find whatever dirt there is that might exist. As Robert Penn Warren's Governor Willie Stark says, there is always *something* (and if you haven't read *All the King's Men*, you're missing a critical part of your political education). Metahumanity is too corrupt for anyone to get out of this life clean, especially if they're involved in the machinations of power. Their are compromises, shady deals, and other unfortunate decisions in everyone's background; it is the duty of the oppo researcher to find them, and there's a mountain of data in which to look.

There's a real art to oppo that goes beyond just finding information. Don't get me wrong—that takes skill and finesse, but a lot of the art here is not so much about finding some magic piece of dirt, but rather knowing how to use the dirt you find. In 2004, Phillip Bester could have found any number of photos and videos of Martin Hunt in sexual indiscretions, and it wouldn't have mattered. That's not where the public's head was at the time. American military was on the decline, and citizens wanted some re-assurance that their nation would remain a superpower and that the government would be able to keep them safe. Instead, what they got was a video of Hunt taking a tour of a munitions factory and asking a series of clueless questions, most notably pointing to the tip of a missile and asking "Is this the part that blows up?" (his aides claim it was a joke). That snippet of video was replayed on a thousand commercials, and Americans decided they didn't want to face their military crisis



INCOMING FEED.....

behind the leadership of a man who didn't know how missiles work. Bester won, America traveled further down the path of corporate control (and eventual breakup), and the oppo researcher who found that video received a plum no-show job with a six-figure salary in the Department of Commerce.

What this means is you've got two ways to lend your skills to oppo researchers—either find paydata you can sell them, or share your creative ideas on how to destroy someone's character in ways that resonate with the voters.

- Resonating with the voters is all fine and good, but remember that it's corp support that can make or break a candidate. Convince the corps that a candidate will not complicate their business—or, on the negative side, that he will take steps that might attempt to intrude on their cherished independence—and you'll go a long way toward ensuring their electoral prospects.
- Cosmo
- If Brackhaven has a weakness in the upcoming Seattle gubernatorial election, it's his people. He's been skilled in the past at surrounding himself with competent, even-keeled individuals, but too many of them have moved on to lucrative corporate jobs, leaving him with third- or fourth-stringers. These guys are not as slick as his normal crew, and they're making miscalculations that his people normally wouldn't make. If you have a contact with any anti-Brackhaven forces, get out there and start digging—there's information to be found, and there's a host of people willing to pay for it.
- Sunshine

RENT-A-CROWDS

High school was a lot easier for people who learned one simple principle early on: If you want to be popular, look popular. That means you should carry yourself like you expect people to be looking at you, walk into a room like people want you to be there, and be where crowds are. That's the whole point of a political rally. It's certainly not to persuade those voters, as it's the loyalists showing up (though galvanizing them is a nice side effect). It's to show people who might catch footage of it that you're popular. When the undecided voters see the crowd that showed up for you, when they see their passion and excitement, then you hope they'll get caught up in it themselves, just a little bit.

Or instead of excitement, maybe you want to get people caught up in anger. A good, old-fashioned protest can get spectators mad about whatever the subject is, or it can at least motivate them to find out more about the subject of the protest.

It's best, of course, for both rallies and protests to be genuine displays of emotion, but politics is about nothing if not using a little artificiality to stoke some genuine fires. Sometimes, when you can't get the crowds you want to show up spontaneously, a little cash can goose the turnout to something of your liking. The British are the ones who gave us the official term of "rent-a-crowd" for this tactic, though it hasn't been especially effective over there. Gordon Brown, who led the Labour Party against the Conservative majority in the early part of the century, once held a series of pre-election debates in an effort to expose corporate ties to the Conservatives. Unfortunately for him, the public wasn't all

that interested in the topic, so they didn't show up until Brown started shelling out some cash. The sudden upturns in attendance were noted, and unfortunately for Brown, the payments his people were making were easily exposed. Brown's credibility took a nosedive, and the Conservatives held on to power.

Seretech had considerably better luck with this ploy. While this may seem like a stretch to those of us in the present, there once was a time when the judicial branches of governments were viewed as above politics. They weren't, of course—no source of power can truly be above politics, and judges wield considerable power—there was a certain restraint around judicial proceedings. People and politicians often stepped back a little and let judges do their thing, without the extensive lobbying and other persuasive efforts that occur in every other part of government. By the time the Supreme Court decided to hear arguments in *Seretech Corporation v. United States*, this had already started to change, with Seretech pushing these changes forward. They spent a lot of cash to move the judiciary into the political body we know it to be today.

- It wasn't their cash that did it, it was the decision itself. Once corporate superiority over governments was established, it was only a matter of time before judges became just another corporate division.
- Aufheben

There were pro-Seretech protestors outside the Supreme Court constantly, from the day oral arguments were heard to the time the decision was released. Now, Seretech had some decent PR people, because they didn't just go with some simplistic "Corporations Are Good" line, or attempt to fully articulate why corporations should have their own armies. That wouldn't have resonated. Instead, they focused on the twenty Seretech employees who died. They found three in particular who had very sympathetic stories: newlywed Ronnie Klein, single mother Esme Cordoba, and two-weeks-from-becoming-a-retiree Grace Dickerson. The faces of these three were everywhere, and the protesters dedicated everything they did to their memory. Seretech also made sure the protests were dignified and orderly—they had more of an air of a vigil than anything else. It was tough to watch the news for any length of time in those days without catching at least one image of a field of candles in front of the courthouse at night. Seretech found a way to keep the vigil in the news every night, right up until the decision went their way. And when they won, they didn't gloat or crow, but instead talked about how the decision honored the memory of the deceased twenty people (ignoring, of course, the two hundred New Yorkers who died in the riots that instigated the case), and how the decision would be instrumental in preventing further loss of life.

- If shadowrunning had been as robust back then as it eventually became, the Seretech-funded vigil would have been a prime opportunity to make some money. Tracking down the funding they were using to hire the protestors would have been a good first option, but there could have been some more creative options as well. Kay St. mentions how important it was that the vigil maintain a certain air of solemn dignity. A little research into the people involved, some choice bits of provocation, and maybe the right pharmaceuticals or magic subtly administered

at the right time could have turned the distinguished assembly into something raucous and/or violent, which could have swung sympathies against the Seretech crowd.

- Fianchetto
- But would the effort have been worth it? Would any of this pageantry have actually swayed the judges?
- /dev/grll
- Maybe, maybe not, but they were playing a longer-term game. If the vigil played a role in making the decision go their way, great. If not, they rituals would help them take a major step in building a groundswell of support for their right to protect their assets. They'd use this to start influencing politicians, or get their own candidates into office, and set about the work of getting what they want legislatively instead of judicially.
- Icarus

As should be clear, rent-a-crowd operations provide plenty of opportunities for the kind of work we do. From finding people for the crowd to digging up evidence of payments to messing around with the rented protestors, there are multiple ways to disrupt the appearance of a calm gathering of committed citizens. Since the whole thing is about appearances anyway, making that appearance change is a valuable service.

- Pro tip: Once you find out about a rent-a-crowd operation, immediately suggest to your employer that it would be good if that operation were infiltrated by a professional like yourself. Then find out who is doing the hiring and make sure you're on their list. That way, you get paid for being part of the crowd, and you get paid for watching the crowd. And really, it's barely unethical.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- There have been lots of accusations of rent-a-crowd shenanigans connected to Proposition 23 in Seattle—the one seeking to make the Ork Underground an official district, if you haven't been paying attention—but I'm pretty sure most of them are unfounded. Passions are high enough that all you have to do is put the word out that something is happening and people will show up. Still, there are some rentals going on, mainly to try to make one crowd or another look bad. People on the pro side are hiring individuals to infiltrate the anti-Prop 23 rallies and carry overtly racist signs, while the opposition is hiring hackers to disrupt communications at pro rallies.
- Sunshine

STALKING HORSE CANDIDATES

This is a great technique—simple, fairly easy to pull off, but effective enough that it has lasted for centuries. Its success comes from the fact that it depends on voters being superficial and ignorant, which often tends to be the case.

All you do is this: In an election where the competition is looking a little stiff, you pay a third (or fourth or whatever) candidate to throw his or her hat in the ring. The end goal might be simple—the candidate might have a name very similar—or even

exactly the same—as your chief rival. As long as the electorate isn't sure which candidate is which, a significant number of them will vote for the wrong one, making it easier for you or the candidate you support to get through. It may even be as simple as getting a candidate whose name has the right ethnicity. Back before its center got hollowed out and it was a relatively intact sprawl, Chicago had a great propensity for electing politicians with Irish-sounding names (even if they were not, in fact, of Irish ancestry), which led to all sorts of candidates running just because of their name, often with the backing of political machines who want to muddy the electoral waters a bit.

This sort of stalking horse only tends to work in local elections. In broader contests, where lots of money and advertising are involved, candidates have the ability to more clearly establish their identity and even run a few ads exposing imposters, so the name-confusion game has a limited effect. That does not, however, mean that stalking horse candidates don't have their uses in a large-scale election. It only means that political operatives need to be a little more sophisticated in how they use this tool.

One of the illogical underpinnings of decades of political discourse is the slippery slope argument. The basics of this argument, reduced to the simplest level, tell us that all modes of government, and possibly all legislative proposals set forth by a government, eventually lead to fascism. When attacking conservatives, the argument goes like this: Conservatives tend to like to project strength through the military and place a high value on patriotism. Building up a strong military while appealing to patriotism can make people feel that they should not question the military in any way. When the military is not questioned, it takes firmer control over the reins of government, and institutes all sorts of things in the name of military security, things that the public is encouraged not to question in the name of patriotism. Left unchecked, the military exerts full control of the government, and soon you have a military dictatorship buttressed by the reluctance of citizens to criticize it.

When attacking liberals, on the other hand, the argument goes like this: Liberals believe in government intervention in the private sector because they believe the private sector, left unchecked, leaves a number of injustices and other flaws that need correction. This clearly means that they put more trust in government to be fair and equitable than people as a whole; by extension, this means they believe the more control government takes over things such as the economy, the better and more fair it will be. Thus, the only conclusion is that the end goal of any liberal government is to exert total control over the economy, centralize authority, and then make decisions based on what the small group of people in charge think is fair.

What helps these arguments is that there are examples of fascism on each side. There really have been military dictatorships enacted in the guise of patriotism, and their really have been communist dictatorships centralizing all controls in the name of fairness for the people.

- tldr: No matter what position you take in politics, at some point someone is going to accuse you of leading people down the road to fascism.
- Netcat

So the slippery slope argument tells us that all sorts of political philosophies are the first step on the road to something bad. The “something bad” doesn't have to be fascism—that just happens to be an easy target. All it has to be is something that people instinctively dislike. This becomes a tool that, used well, can do more than discredit a single candidate; it might make voters look askance at an entire party.

This, then, brings us to the more sophisticated stalking horse strategy. What you do here is hire a candidate who is charismatic and appealing at first blush. You get them in a position where they can take part in some debates, and once they're in, they start to work their magic. Every time your rival sets out a position, the stalking horse says they largely agree with them, and then they take it one step further in some unappealing direction or other. So if your rival says they favor lesser prison times for some drugs, the stalking horse enthusiastically agrees, then makes an argument for outright legalization of an assortment of hard drugs (note that this only works in jurisdictions where such things are, in fact, illegal). Your rival says that limited subpoena power should be granted to government law enforcement when dealing with corporate officials, so the stalking horse stands up and says that would be great, then adds that giving the government the ability to outright arrest corporate citizens would be even better. In the distance, corporate feathers audibly ruffle. The goal is to tar your rival by association, to show that the things they profess to believe in are a short step away from things that could get them into a fair amount of trouble with some group or another.

- Oh come on. People don't pay attention to debates as is. Does this really work?
- Pistons
- It can. Look at something recent, like the election of Ramsay McMulkin as president of the CAS. Political analysts have been asking themselves for years now how a carpetbagger managed to win the hearts of enough southerners to take an election. Well, the answer is he didn't so much win them over as he reminded the voters how much they hated everybody else. That wasn't the case at the start of the election, though. The True American Coalition didn't have a chance, since everyone was too disenchanted with President Aaron Franklin's policies to pay any attention to his successor, the Southern Democrats were in their normal state of disarray, but the Southern Conservatives had a decent candidate, the friendly and smooth-talking Heidi Smallwater. But in the primaries, a well-funded candidate named Ted Crain emerged. Every time Smallwater started on the normal line about a strong defense, keep Aztlan in line, and building a strong international presence, Crain would jump in and talk about how all those proposals were great, and those things would really make the nation stronger, which would be necessary when war with Aztlan inevitably erupted, which certainly would, he said, if the CAS engaged in a concerted military buildup. CASians aren't dumb—they like their tough rhetoric, but they know an actual war with Aztlan would be exceedingly bruising. Making Smallwater seem like a candidate of war led to a steep drop in the polls, and a nice complement of negative ads finished the job. It was never proven that McMulkin had a direct connection to Crain, but there are plenty of suspicions.
- Traveler Jones



- CAS elections are two years away. There are plenty of people who would like concrete proof of a McMulin-Crain connection, if such proof can be found.
- Glitch

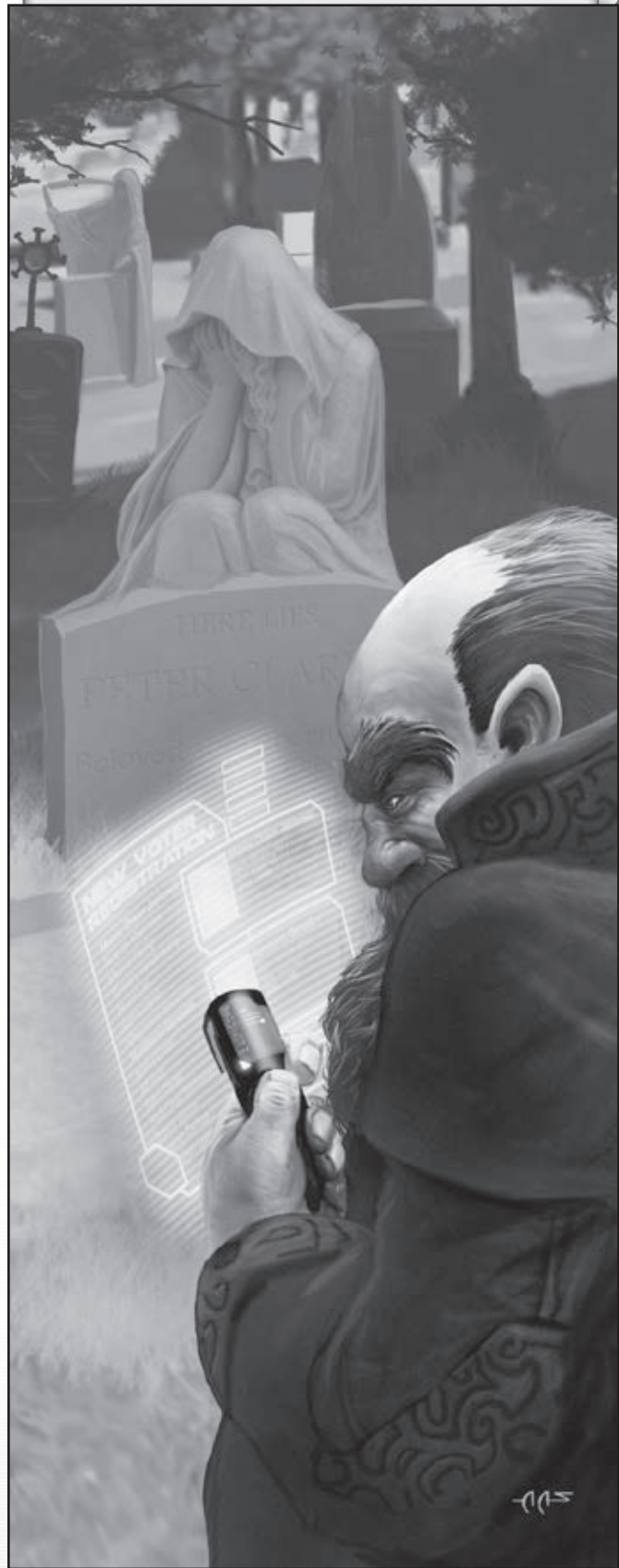
SUFFRAGE OF THE DEAD AND OTHER FRAUD

Ballot stuffing is one of the oldest forms of electoral fraud, and as its name suggests, one of the most primitive. Are people voting by writing a name on a piece of paper? Then write the right name on a bunch of pieces of paper and jam them in the ballot box. Simple enough. So simple that people have been doing it since the dawn of democratic voting. Votes in ancient Greece were inscribed on shards of pottery, and archeologists have found piles of shards with the same name written on each piece in the same handwriting. Was it fraud, or were people preparing ballots for the illiterate or for those who did not have time to inscribe a name themselves? I don't think it much matters—in the end, there were people who knew the value of having lots of ballots ready to go to help you get the outcome you want.

The first defense against ballot stuffing is voter registration. Each person gets their name on a list, they get to vote once, and that's it. Multiple ballots from the same individual are ignored. This has developed a need for good lists of individuals who can be registered to vote but will not actually cast a vote themselves. The easiest group in this particular category is the dead, though made-up individuals and pets can also be enrolled.

The Chicago political machine of the twentieth century was one of the most efficient fraud production mechanisms ever developed, and political bosses tended to have a roster of deceased individuals upon which they could call to sway an election one way or another. This had a lot of uses, from making sure the right people got into office on the local level to gaining favor with national politicians. Chicago bosses, in their prime, were skilled at delivering large margins in their city for certain (pretty much always Democratic) candidates, which helped make victorious national politicians indebted to the city. John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson have been reported to be two particular beneficiaries of this strategy. Federal funding and other benefits directed toward the city during their administrations was in part a repayment of the favors the bosses had done for them.

While voting technology has changed, there's still plenty of room for this tactic. Clerks occasionally perform checks and purges of voting rolls to ensure only living people are on it, but the rolls tend to be long (especially in large sprawls) and it's all but impossible to check on everyone. Names still slip through the cracks, which means there's still a group of voters who can come through as a unanimous bloc for the candidate who needs them.



- Remember that sometimes ballot stuffing is not about winning a close election; it's about building an impression of public support. This is why dictators like Iraq's Saddam Hussein occasionally submitted to sham elections, and then came through triumphantly with (and this is a real example) 99.96 percent of the vote. The outcome was never in doubt, and the results were patently false, but the regime went through the motions anyway to establish a pretense of continuing legitimacy.
- Fianchetto
- But come on—99.96 percent? Who would believe anyone came up with that result legitimately? I would think it would undermine your legitimacy, not enhance it. Wouldn't a more realistic landslide figure, like say seventy-five percent, have established his legitimacy better by being more believable?
- Butch
- Maybe, but there are other factors to consider. There are some psychological aspects to the 99.96 figure—even if you don't buy the actual number, it makes any opposition feel isolated and small. Since they can't openly talk about the results being fraudulent due to the fact that they could be killed if they did, they end up feeling insignificant and powerless. Which is exactly what the tyrant wants.
- Fianchetto
- And also what the typical CEO wants.
- Aufheben

Toward the end of the twentieth century, though, a new form of ballot stuffing hit the scene, and this technique has become more common in the twenty-first century. The vast majority of voting across the world is done electronically, which presents all sorts of opportunities for hackers. Whether they're inserting votes on the front end or tampering with the results on the back end, hackers have entered an ongoing war with security spiders that heats up with every election. Which means that hackers and technomancers can find work during any election on either side of the fight.

- You don't even have to wait for an election. Voting machines and tabulating software are being developed all the time, and if you can alter the code to put in a backdoor for later exploitation, or program it in advance to introduce certain oddities into the tabulations, you can scrape up a lot of scratch.
- Netcat

Mitsuhamas subsidiary Diebold is the world's leading producer of voting machines, and thanks to the fact that lots of powerful people are willing to pay to ensure the integrity of their machines, their hacking staff perhaps rivals GOD in their skills. The election of Dunkelzahn was their trial by fire, as multiple parties who didn't want to see a dragon in office sent out their big Matrix guns to defeat him at any cost. In some quarters, Dunkelzahn's victory was seen as proof that Diebold's security staff was up to the job.

- In other quarters, it was seen as proof positive that the Big D had some of the best hackers in the world under his wings.
- Plan 9

I think that the basic runs in this area should be obvious, but let me add one more that might not leap immediately to mind: manufacturing evidence of fraud. It doesn't even have to be the most convincing evidence, just enough to raise a question in voters' minds that a candidate or their people may have tampered with votes. Just as the illusion of popular support buoys the legitimacy of a candidate, the hint of a taint can be enough to get people doubting.

- So what? Maybe in places with actual functioning democracies that might matter, but in the rest of the world—the *real* world—popular opinion is way less significant than corporate opinion. If the corp wants you in office, you stay in office, no matter what the people think.
- Turbo Bunny
- That's one of those things that's not entirely true without being entirely untrue. Yes, corporations have more power than governments, but that does not mean they control governments in all cases. Popular will can be a funny thing, and electoral dissatisfaction can bring about some funny results (Ramsay McMulkin in the CAS being a notable recent example). Someone ascending to national office will be second in power to the various corporations, and they will often have to dance to a corporate tune, but generally they will have more power than they used to, and that's enough to make a variety of people throw their hats in the ring, and engage in various machinations to get what they want.
- Fianchetto
- That said, what Turbo Bunny said holds true for Kenneth Brackhaven. No matter how much the voters dislike him, he's not going to actually lose an election until he stops being useful to the corps.
- Sounder

VOTER INTIMIDATION

Just in case you more muscular types thought you were going to be left out of the electoral shenanigans, we come on the perfect job for you. Sometimes you win an election by getting more votes for your guy, other times you win by keeping the opposing vote from showing up. It's not a hard or subtle job—you show up at a polling place and you look threatening, especially toward people who don't fit the demographic to which your candidate appeals. Sometimes you just show up in an enemy stronghold and threaten to beat the hell out of anyone who gets within three hundred meters of the polling place. Just make sure you're out of sight when the authorities inevitably arrive.

While the basics of this are simple, it's a technique that can take on surprisingly sophisticated angles. In North America, the peak of organized voter suppression came in the Jim Crow era. As the segregationists knew, intimidating people at individual

polling places is all fine and good, but your efforts will be much more effective if you can carry them out in a systematic, widespread manner. Small-scale, individual intimidation still played a role in Jim Crow—it practically was the Ku Klux Klan’s *raison d’être*—but they also had weapons like the poll tax (a tax paid for voting that effectively kept indigent people from casting ballots) and literacy tests (which worked really well to keep the people they didn’t bother to educate in the first place from voting). To get a law like this passed requires legislative influence, and some of the tools of legislative persuasion—bribery, blackmail, and the threat of physical safety—fall squarely in our wheelhouse.

- At the moment, no one is better at using this tool than the Black Lodge. They have, of course, been engaged in a long-lived campaign to get their people into high offices, and they have multiple means at their disposal to keep people away from the polling place. Naturally, much of this is magic-based, featuring spells that control voters’ thoughts, actions, and emotions. Two years ago, when the UCAS House of Representatives was up for election, a precinct in the Republican stronghold in the Hamptons on Long Island recorded five votes out of a possible 1,500. People who were interviewed later said they left their homes all set to vote, only to get near the polling place and decide it really wasn’t worth the effort. As a result of this and other similar shenanigans, five-term incumbent Betty Sutherland was defeated, replaced by Archconservative Miller Copeland. If you’re looking for Black Lodge plants in the government, start with him.
- Plan 9
- I heard they made the walls of one precinct drip blood, while at another people drove around for hours, looking for parking, and then headed home without voting, even though there was a huge, empty parking lot next to the polling place.
- Pistons
- Seriously, what is with all the people actually going to a polling place? How old-fashioned are they?
- /dev/grll
- Voting over the Matrix has been slow to take hold in a lot of places for a host of security reasons. Even where it’s possible, lots of people want to make sure their vote gets counted, so they go cast it physically. And yeah, there are some people who are old-fashioned enough to think there’s value in a community gathering to vote.
- Sunshine
- Softie.
- Kat o’ Nine Tales

FORGERIES AND MISREPRESENTATIONS

Now we get to the really fun part, and the first opportunity to invoke the name I’ve been waiting to say: Richard Milhous Nixon. Anyone who loves the more entertaining, ethics-free side of political campaigns owes a debt of gratitude to Nixon and the

band of scoundrels gathered in Committee for the Re-Election of the President (officially known as the CRP, but colloquially known as CREEP). Even a hundred years later, their names bring a smile to my face. Sergetti. Hunt. Liddy. Colson. Mitchell (both John and Martha). They didn’t invent any of the dirty tricks in which they were involved, but the verve with which they executed them, and the complete enthusiasm they used to plunge ahead with their plans without sparing a thought about precious things like ethics, make them a cut above most political plotters.

This is the point where I have to work to restrain myself, because I could fill a book with all the stuff these guys did (and plenty of people have done just that). But I know this is not actually a Nixon Studies 101 textbook, so I’ll be good. It’s probably for the best if I just list the type of lies, forgeries, and other fun things the group was involved in.

- Money laundering: As long as there are laws about how people can use money, there will be people trying to get around those laws. So if there are restrictions on who can make political contributions or how much they can give, or even if there are donors who want to remain anonymous, then the money needs to be processed in a way that makes it untraceable. Organized crime has long been good at this, and that’s where the CREEP picked up the skill. Their favorite method was funneling money through Mexican banks to make it untraceable. This led to Nixon’s people having a slush fund they could use for various purposes, including funding candidates that would be strong allies and engaging in various sorts of favor trading. The cash also funded the other activities I’m about to discuss.
- Pranks: Ever order a pizza—or a bunch of pizzas—and send it to someone else? Yeah, well, so did CREEP. They ordered a bunch in the name of one of Nixon’s rivals, a guy named Edmund Muskie, and had them sent to a formal Democratic affair. By itself, that’s nothing more than an adolescent prank. But what if it’s part of a concerted campaign? Well, read on.
- False flag operations: You know how nervous some people are about different metatypes? Well, back in Nixon’s day, they put that paranoia on people of different skin colors. In the former United States, Caucasians got particularly worried about black people, and Harlem was a noted center of black culture, which also made the word “Harlem” into convenient shorthand for “black people.” So when phone calls started being made by the fictional Harlem for Muskie Committee to voters in a primary election, some of them got quite skittish.
- I was about to express skepticism about this sort of thing having a real effect on voters, but then I thought what would happen if, say, Technomancers for Brackhaven started making calls, and I decided maybe they were on to something.
- Netcat
- Forgery: There were some fake letters sent here and there on Muskie stationary, but that was still prank-level stuff. To do real damage, CREEP had to raise their game. One of their legendary tricks involved writing a fake letter to the editor that was published in a New Hampshire newspaper. In

the letter, the writer claimed to have heard Muskie refer to Canadians with an unpleasant smear. That perhaps would have cost Muskie some votes, but perhaps not enough to make a difference. They also needed a little ...

- Character assassination: Shortly after the fake letter to the editor was published, the same New Hampshire paper printed an editorial that made Muskie's wife sound like a drunken mess. That was it. That was the last straw for Muskie. He gave a press conference from the back of a pickup truck right in front of the newspaper's headquarters to forcefully denounce the publisher. During the speech, either snowflakes hit Muskie's face and melted on it (Muskie's version) or he let a few tears flow (press version). The early 1970s were a bad time to be a crying male in the United States, and it didn't help that Muskie's reputation was that of a calm, steady leader. The pictures and stories of the press conference critically damaged his campaign. The concerted efforts of CREEP had taken out the man who had been considered the front runner.

If that whole story doesn't get your creative juices flowing and get you thinking about some tricks of your own, then I don't know what to tell you. One of the important things the Muskie story tells us is that you don't need one big, sweeping trick to take down a political rival. A complete absence of ethics, a juvenile sense of humor, and the ability to inflict a hundred paper cuts does just fine.

Maybe, though, you need a more recent example so that you can be sure some of these techniques can be carried into the modern world. Well, for that let's go to the Louisiana gubernatorial election of 2007. By the time the general election was approaching, it was down to three leading candidates: Archconservative Francois Dugard, Republican Timothy Sutree, and Technocrat Emma Glasstone. Lots of people thought Glasstone had the inside track—Dugard and Sutree would split the conservative path, leaving her a clear path to victory. But then things started happening. Glasstone's Matrix site couldn't go more than fifty hours without crashing, which didn't look good for a party that liked to think of themselves as being on technology's leading edge. A recording of a 2006 speech by Glasstone showed up, in which she claimed that "our good neighbors to the north will soon be our fellow citizens." Glasstone claimed she never said those words and the footage was fake, which left her doing a variation of the old Chico Marx defense: "Who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes?" On the heels of the footage came a report listing all the votes Glasstone had made as a state senator opposing various state holidays for Confederate Civil War heroes, and that just added to the perception that Glasstone was a CAS politician with a UCAS heart. It was going poorly for her, and she did an interview to talk about her southern roots, and the interviewer got her so relaxed and comfortable talking about the south that she didn't notice until it was too late that he had her talking about the benefits that would have been realized if the South had won the Civil War. A certain degree of Confederate pride is acceptable in the CAS, of course, but the black voters of Louisiana did not appreciate Glasstone's sentiment, and in the general election she finished a distant third as Sutree moved into the governor's mansion.

- As you may guess, the interviewer was rumored to have taken a nice chunk of change from the Sutree campaign.
- Sunshine

So "forgery" is perhaps too light a word for the type of activities you could engage in here. It's creating a new reality and getting people to believe in things that never existed. If you can get good at that, you'll never want for work.

MATRIX JAMMING

The flipside of the voter suppression I mentioned earlier is the work campaigns often put in to get voters to show up. Campaigns spend all of election day—and a lot of the days beforehand—making sure as many of their supporters as possible get their votes in. This typically means commcalls, and lots of them. Campaign staffers and volunteers place thousands of calls to any voters they can find. If you volunteer for a campaign, chances are this is what you'll do, cold-calling a list of codes dropped into an ARO in front of you. Obviously this strategy has some success, which can be seen in the facts that people keep using it, and people keep looking for ways to block it. In the old days, the most primitive strategy to slow down the calling was to direct a boatload of phone calls toward the opponents' phone banks, thus jamming their lines. Alternately, opponents could go for brute force and cut any phone lines into enemy headquarters.

The same basic strategies remain alternatives in the age of the Matrix. Denial of service attacks remain a viable method of messing with other people's Matrix sites, and that's the modern-day equivalent of jamming someone's phone lines with a huge load of calls. This is an attractive option because it's relatively cheap—a good hacker with a nice botnet is all that's needed to pull it off. It's also low risk, since most political campaigns have neither the time nor the resources to track down a hacker sending a legion of bots after them.

Jamming the Matrix can also be done in a more sophisticated fashion. One fun way of doing it is through rerouting traffic, making calls look like they are going through when they're not. With a nice array of voice disguise programs, you can have a handful of people impersonate hundreds of individuals, and they can answer the calls going out and lie through their teeth. They promise they're going out to vote, they agree to whatever they're asked, then they end the call and don't do a thing. The campaign call center goes on with life, never knowing that they aren't reaching anyone and that all their efforts aren't doing a bit of good.

- It's always good to remember this simple rule: No one comes looking for you if they don't know what you did.
- Thorn
- Yeah, but it's so satisfying to see their faces when they know what you did to them.
- Kane
- Kane's mainly just being himself here, but he's got a point. Sometimes you want to be secretive, but other times it can be worthwhile to rub someone's face in what you managed to pull

off. The demoralizing effect can be a lot cheaper than staging another run, but just as effective. Just make sure you're timing it right so that you're hitting them while they're reeling.

- Stone

This is mainly hacker territory, though a good face is a useful asset if you go for the call re-routing strategy. If you go for cutting power, though, that brings in a whole other host of skills. First, get yourself someone who knows electricity—and I mean *really* knows it. This is not an area you want to try to pick up on the fly. A retail or office building of the type where campaign offices tend to be located will be served by power lines strong enough to arc electricity across the ground if you cut them, meaning you don't have to be touching them to die. You just have to be close. So don't think you can go in with a huge pair of bolt cutters, make a quick snip, and get away clean and unburned. Like I said, make sure you bring along someone who knows electricity.

If you don't want to deal with quite this level of danger, you can focus on the electric meter in the building. Most buildings, even if they are off the grid and generating their own power, have a device somewhere that measures just how much juice the building (or perhaps complex) is using. That's a choke point for the power flow. In buildings serviced by an outside utility corporation, there's usually a meter that's integral to the building's power grid. Pop out the meter, and the building's system goes down. This is not without hazards of its own, but it's not as rough as cutting a live power line. The real trick is finding and reaching the meter. Typically, but not always, it's in a basement. The meter itself may not be well guarded, but the areas you have to pass through might be. It should go without saying, but proceed cautiously.

If the building has its own power supply, anything monitoring the current flow might not be as integral to the electrical grid as a meter is. In fact, the individual construction of these systems might be highly idiosyncratic, so extra care is called for.

- Honestly, why monkey around with the physical power supply at all? A good hacker can shut down their power for you. It's not as easy as a denial of service attack, but it beats messing around with power lines by a wide margin.
- Glitch
- Because us non-hackers want to have fun, too!
- Pistons

ASSASSINATION

I had a long debate with myself about including this section. Some people would consider this to be the ultimate dirty trick; others say it's not a dirty trick, but rather the thing political enemies do when their attempted dirty tricks fail. But if I'm making the claim that politics is a blood sport—and I am—then I can't ignore the fact that a lot of people have tried to further their political ends through assassination, and that's exactly the kind of work we might be hired to do.

There are plenty of examples of political assassination on record. For my purposes here, I'm going to focus on the ones



with political motives, not the deaths from random wackos, like Lee Harvey Oswald's killing of Kennedy.

- Actually, that was a very political killing, and Oswald was far from a lone wacko. To understand this, we need to djt\$#%gjy
[More data than I want to tally deleted by sysop]
- Plan 9
- No, sorry, Plan 9. Not today.
- FastJack

If we want to look at an assassination that was perhaps the most successful ever in terms of political chaos caused, the winner has to be the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The killer, Gavrilo Princip, was part of a Serbian nationalist organization called the Black Hand. They wanted Austria out of Serbia, and killing the Austro-Hungarian heir seemed like a good way to make that point. The attempt itself is a comedy of errors—one assassin chickened out; another missed with his Molotov cocktail, swallowed an old cyanide pill, and jumped into a shallow river, failing to kill himself by either method; and the Archduke didn't get shot until he was traveling to see a wounded member of his entourage, made a wrong turn, than had his car stall while making a u-turn right where Princip happened to be standing. The end result, though, was that the Archduke died, Austria felt they needed to punish Serbia, while everyone who didn't like Austria felt they needed to be contained. The customary invasion of France happened in short order, and next thing you know all of Europe was at war.

The point being, organizations should be picky in selecting their targets. Pick someone who makes a difference, not someone like, say, James fraggin' Garfield. And help things along after the fact if you need to. Stage protests and/or riots, plant information about who might have been responsible, what they might do next, and what military action is secretly being planned. If you're going to take somebody out, put in the follow-up work to make sure it was worth it.

Sometimes, of course, assassination has no political purpose beyond revenge. These instances are important to know about, because if you understand who was wronged and who was angry, you might get the information you need to find a weak spot in a political leader's security apparatus. Take Indira Gandhi of India. Back in 1984, she made a series of moves that significantly pissed off the Sikhs of her nation, including an attack on a sacred temple that was being occupied by Sikh separatists accused of terrorism. The action claimed the lives of anywhere from 500 to 1,500 individuals and did a lot to make people think Gandhi was not exactly on the Sikhs side. As it turned out, Gandhi had some Sikh bodyguards, and they became the chink in her security armor. I suppose they could have been used to let assassins get close to her, but a more direct approach was used instead. The two bodyguards gunned Gandhi down at the gates of her residence. That was all they wanted—one of the assassins dropped his weapon and was killed on the spot, while the other was captured, tried, sentenced to death, and executed a few years after the killing.

- I promise to be brief on this one. Given how many Sikhs were killed in the aftermath in the assassination, it's likely the assassins were either plants or were framed by anti-Sikh forces who felt that no matter how harsh Gandhi had been to the Sikhs, it wasn't harsh enough.
- Plan 9
- The real thing to remember here is that whenever you have a conspiracy, people will be looking for more layers to that conspiracy. Once there's some degree of hidden information, people can't help but believe there's more (see the *Conspiracy Theories* posting for a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon). You can use this to your advantage. If people start looking to pin something on you, add another layer to the conspiracy and get them looking past you.
- Snopes

Sometimes, though, an assassination is not about making a political statement. It's just about getting someone inconvenient out of the way. Take United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld. In 1961, he was flying to what was at the time the Congo to negotiate a ceasefire between UN forces and troops from the secessionist State of Katanga, which happened to be one of the most resource-rich areas of the nation. He never made it—his plane crashed, killing all aboard. Without going into details, I can tell you that investigations into the crash failed to come to a definitive conclusion about the crash, but they raised a lot of questions. Two of the corpses were found to be riddled with bullets; the official explanation is that the wounds came from bullets that exploded in a fire after the crash, but many experts don't think wounds from a source like that are possible. Anyway, the point is that a lot of people think Hammarskjöld was assassinated to keep him from interfering in the fight for Katangese independence. No one claimed responsibility for doing it, though, and no one tried to exacerbate any tensions afterward. What they wanted was Hammarskjöld out of the way, and that's what they got. Sometimes, that's all an assassination job is. Get in, get it done, and get away clean.

- The assassination of Eliot Eyes-of-Wyrm of the Shasta Shamans is another category, though somewhat related to this one. It's a simple message, one where the sender doesn't need to be identified. It gives a two-part message to Hestaby: First, you've pissed off some powerful people; and second, those people know how to hit you where it hurts, and where you think you are safe. It didn't matter who sent the message—it just mattered that Hestaby received it.
- Thorn

The most famous post-Awakening assassination, of course, is that of UCAS President Dunkelzahn, but that one has been turned over so much that it's tough to separate fact from fiction, and it's even more difficult to shake people from their firm ideas on the subject. Instead, let's talk about the assassination of Francisco Pavón y Gueterrez in 2033. Pavón is the father of Aztlan. As founder of the Azatlán Party, he was elected president of Mexico in 2015, and his party claimed all of the other important national offices. Once he was in office, he gave the nation



its current name. He led the nation through a time of national growth, and built a critical alliance with the Sovereign American Indian Movement that helped both sides, and he led Aztlan into joining the Sovereign Tribal Council of the Native American Nations. He was popular, beloved, and one of the most important people in North America.

In 2033, Pavón y Gueterrez died, killed by palace guards. By 2034, Aztlan was no longer part of the NAN. So what happened? No one claimed responsibility for the death, and aside from Aztlan's exit from the NAN, no great political turmoil followed in the wake of his death. What was the point?

The simplest explanation is that Pavón outlived his usefulness. He set up a wonderful national structure and a powerful political party, but then he had the gall to want to use these things to his own ends. His assassination was a gentle reminder from those who had funded his rise that what he had done was not about him. It was about giving the ORO Corporation a structure in which they could operate. They renamed themselves Aztechnology during Pavón's administration, and they firmed up their ties to all parts of the nation. By 2033, they were ready to grow, to use their foundation to spread their borders, claim more resources, and gain more power. But Pavón insisted on focusing on problems close to home, on using resources internally, and that meant he had to go. So the real bosses of the nation, the ones with the military in their back pocket, took him out.

Sometimes someone just gets in the way. If you don't have any qualms about doing this sort of work, find out who's looking like a speed bump in the political world. Then reach out to their opponents, and they might be willing to pay you a decent sum to make that person what Pavón is now—an historical footnote.

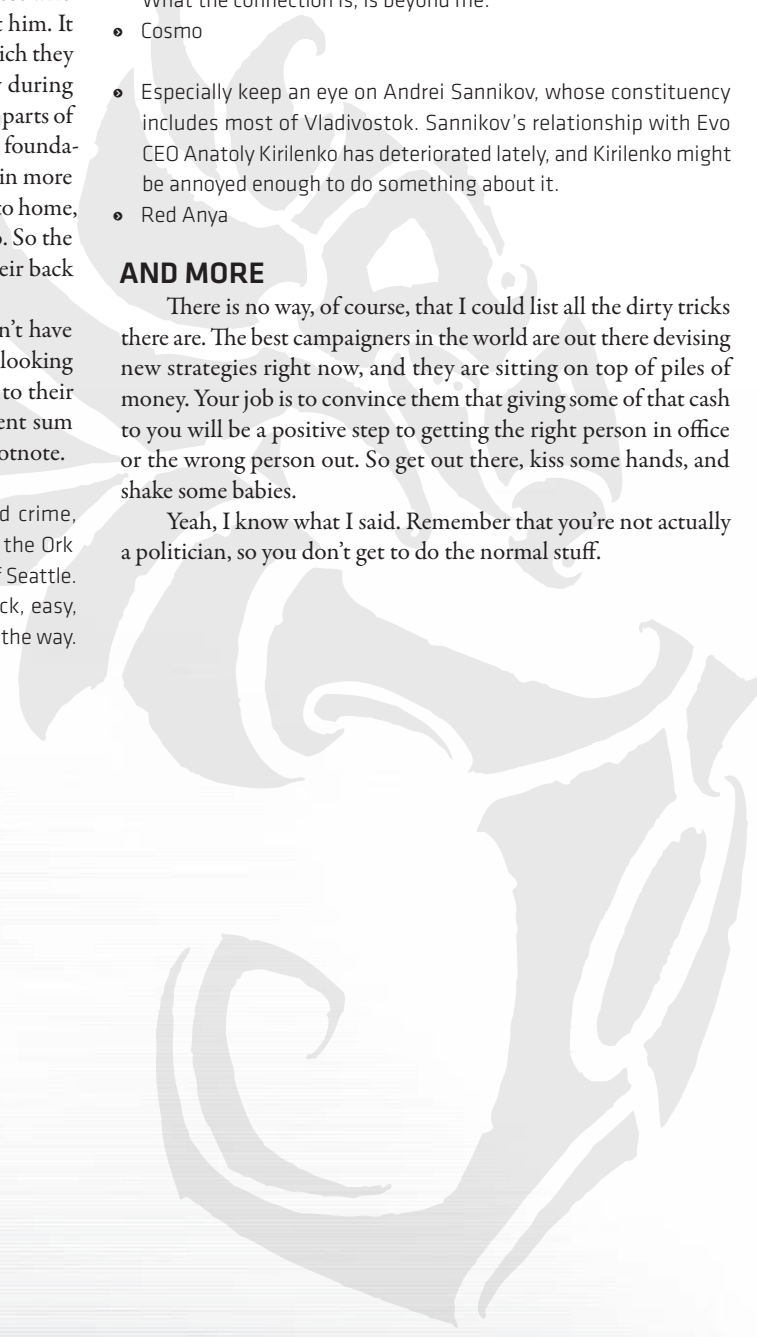
- Various organizations, from corporations to organized crime, are going to look for ways to make some money off of the Ork Underground if it becomes an official district of the City of Seattle. I'll guarantee you that some of them will look for a quick, easy, and relatively subdued way to get a potential rival out of the way.
- Sunshine

- He's right. Trust me.
- Riser
- There's certainly precedent, with the assassination of District Attorney David Beatty and the vast majority of his ADAs.
- Sounder
- Keep an eye on Russia's National Supreme Soviet. The National Soviet Reconstructionists have a majority in the NSS, but Evo hasn't been happy with them lately. There seems to be some schism within Evo and a lot of different stresses on high-level people. I've got sources looking into it, but it seems to have some kind of connection to the shenanigans surrounding the persona designed for the deceased Corporate Court Chief Justice Hino. What the connection is, is beyond me.
- Cosmo
- Especially keep an eye on Andrei Sannikov, whose constituency includes most of Vladivostok. Sannikov's relationship with Evo CEO Anatoly Kirilenko has deteriorated lately, and Kirilenko might be annoyed enough to do something about it.
- Red Anya

AND MORE

There is no way, of course, that I could list all the dirty tricks there are. The best campaigners in the world are out there devising new strategies right now, and they are sitting on top of piles of money. Your job is to convince them that giving some of that cash to you will be a positive step to getting the right person in office or the wrong person out. So get out there, kiss some hands, and shake some babies.

Yeah, I know what I said. Remember that you're not actually a politician, so you don't get to do the normal stuff.





Posted by: Sunshine

Scandal is to politics like bullets are to shadowrunners. They're deadly and precise ways to get what you want. Everybody has plenty of skeletons to dig up. The more power they have, the closer those bones are to the surface. The real operators have a sense of when to use what secret to get the most leverage on someone, and revealing that secret is one of many options they have to move their agendas forward. If we're going to be talking about scandals and how they're used in power plays, we should talk about the one that is still rocking the Sixth World with aftershocks: the rigging of the 2056 UCAS Presidential Election.

- So it's gonna be you and Bull talking about The Good Old Days and how kids these days suck?
- /dev/grrl
- The Old Days sucked, too. Trust me.
- Bull

It's hard to remember a time when politics were boring, but the 2050s were a time where that word could apply. Corporations and special interests shuffled candidates into positions of power and back out again. Some will say it's still the case today—I can't argue with that. But the UCAS 2056 presidential election initially passed into history as a sleepy contest. President Thomas Steele and Vice President James Booth were elected back into the positions they were given after the death of the previous president during his term. It seemed like even the political reporters of the day shrugged their way through the election.

Things changed when a story broke out of a small Matrix site that reported on Baltimore's decking scene. One of the pages was discussing the biggest nodes the members cracked, bandying about the usual suspects like Fuchi and the CIA. One of the users mentioned a secure node of an Ares electronics subsidiary, but most of the deckers laughed it off. The specificity of some of the code mentioned tipped off an undercover investigator monitoring the site for activity targeting important nodes. The decker and company name are lost to history, but the effects were not. The remote voting program used in the election was hacked.

The scandal started to leak through the cracks. Anonymous sources kept on pointing farther up the food chain. The bigger news organizations started digging. Networks care more about ratings than the truth, and what gets big ratings? Something that's never happened before. The rigging of an election was old news, except at this level. It had been decades since a sitting president was forced to resign. The ratings for President Steele's interview when he denied involvement in the rigging plot were the first non-sports related program to crack the top ten in years. Steele kept his cool during a live broadcast. It wouldn't last—he would be out of a job less than three months later.

The dam started to break two weeks later when a series of memos leaked to the Big Media networks simultaneously. The memos featured President Steele discussing the lead-up to the intrusion. He talked about the outcome of the election in terms of "when," not "if." He mocked the stupidity of the news organizations as they started to dig into the allegations. The final message was dated two days after Steele's much-watched interview.

- If you're going to come up with a plot that sounds like it belongs in a spy movie, don't send e-mails about it. They can be recovered even after you think you deleted them. Of course, if suits knew that, we'd be out of work.
- Netcat
- Steele was smarter than that. These emails were on an encrypted server that only linked to other computers in the White House. No Matrix access. The only way to get them was to know if the servers were going to be taken off-site, or physically remove them from the building.
- Kay St. Irregular
- There's always the Resonance Realms option, though it's the world's largest haystack.
- Netcat
- So which option did you take, Kane?
- /dev/grrl



The Quotable Thomas Steele

The release of the memos featured dozens of juicy quotes showing the disdain the President had for the electoral process. They were also an example of someone foolishly thinking they were untouchable, that they couldn't be bothered by a data trail. Steele stands as a cautionary example to anyone in power demonstrating how one has to be careful what they say or do at all times. He's also an example to runners who have motivations bigger than their wallets showing that anyone can be brought down with the right leverage. Here, for your reading pleasure, are some of his choice quotations about politics:

"Dealing with the media is training a guard dog. Starve it until it's ready to kill for the smallest morsel."

"Mistresses are like candy: sweet, enjoyed by the handful, and utterly disposable."

"Nobody in this town is clean. We all know it. That's why when someone gets caught red-handed, we all enjoy pushing their face into the shitpile. Because we know that, for a few days at least, no one will be looking into our own messes."

"Show me an undecided voter and I'll show you someone who drowns because they look up when it's raining."

"The network that created the Odd Coven? They need me more than I need them. They are lucky I didn't bring up what I saw their CEO doing at the club two weeks ago."

- I'm flattered, but this was a little before my time.
- Kane

To this day, nobody has claimed responsibility to leaking the memos nor has anyone been identified as the culprit. Everyone has their favorite suspect, as Steele had many enemies made during his rise to the big chair. A favorite theory is that all those enemies came together to bring him down. Others believe he was a dupe set up by corporate interests looking to destabilize the UCAS government. Everyone from the neo-anarchists to Alamos 20,000 has been suggested as composing part or all of the shadowrunners who got the memos out. You couldn't swing a dead devil rat in a bar without hitting a runner who claimed to be a part of that team.

The congressional investigation of the affair was brutal. It was a feast for runners in DeeCee. There is something of a "gentlemen's agreement" in DeeCee in regards to dirt. Everyone assumes that someone knows their deepest, darkest secret and that they are saving the revelation for the proverbial rainy day, which means that the real power players are the ones who know who knows their secret. Most of the time, runners keep busy passing these pieces between politicians. But during the investigations, not a day

went by when a new scandal didn't break. The standoff was broken, and suddenly everybody was pulling the trigger. Old skeletons were showing up, and new ones were popping out of the shadows by the hour.

The election that nobody cared about suddenly set families at each other. Dirty laundry was being thrown out of every window in DeeCee. Political careers rose and fell in a matter of days. Vice President Booth claimed innocence at first, but it was too late. Both he and President Steele were impeached and removed from office. Betty-Jo Pritchard became the first woman UCAS president by virtue of being next in line as Speaker of the House. Her first act was to declare special elections to be held in 2057 to allow a new, untainted leader into the office of president.

- How come ol' Betty-Jo didn't throw her pretty red hat into the ring?
- Turbo Bunny
- Take your pick; corrupt background, questionable sexuality, secret connection to the Steele scandal ...
- Bull
- All of the above?
- /dev/grrl
- Or none. One of the oldest tricks in the book is mudslinging. Make an outrageous claim about your opponent. If they ignore it, they look guilty. If they deny it, they look even guiltier.
- Kay St. Irregular
- If I were her, after the nasty time politicians had that year, I would be looking for an exit too.
- FastJack

With the abrupt election, the field was open to multiple candidates. But they never stood a chance once Dunkelzahn entered the race thanks to a citizenship loophole. Once the race began in earnest, the shadows were stuffed with runners looking for dirt, leverage, and anything that could be used to secure a seat in the White House. One of the candidates was connected to the bug spirits. Another helped make the Atlantis Foundation a household name. The scandal brought people back to politics, and the election didn't disappoint with its blood and circuses.

The echoes of the scandal are still unfolding to this day. The election of Dunkelzahn led to his assassination. His assassination led to his will, which still has bits and pieces being fought over. The Watergate Rift seems to have caused some tension between the remaining Great Dragons. Kenneth Brackhaven rebuilt himself from failed presidential candidate to Seattle governor.

BLOWING THE WHISTLE

What goes on in the mind of someone that breaks a scandal? There is plenty of dirty business going on all around. Where does the point come where someone decides to stand up and go against the flow? Most whistleblowers have a mix of motivations, with one or two being the most predominant. It's not something people go into lightly, as pointing out the bad things that happen in society can be quite hazardous to your health. Plenty of people in this position end up intimidated,

bullied, or killed. Many of the runs that pad our credsticks have some element of enforcing silence on individuals. Those who survive the experience will be the first ones to say that it's worth the trouble. If they are still able to speak.

The first motivation that touches any whistleblower is idealism. Life isn't fair, of course, but there are rules. The people who break the rules need to be pointed out. Of course, everybody claims to bring these stories to light out a sense of morality and responsibility. In truth, it's rare for that to be the only reason. People are still people, so while they may talk about doing what's right, there's a big chance that one of the other motivations is the real reason they're talking. It doesn't make the scandal any less juicy. It just means that when the target tries to fight back against the allegations, the other motives of the whistleblower are sure to come to light.

Being a whistleblower can be very lucrative. Plenty of reporters have ridden breaking a big story to network gigs, best-selling books, and appearances on quiz shows. Even those who step into the spotlight from other careers can spend a year or two as a media darling. Being part of a scandal is a quick way to make a name for yourself, so long as you don't end up taking the fall for it. Fame is a more indirect route to riches, but some people just want a payoff.

Linda Hurzing went from being a faceless Ares secretary to running her own little true crime empire after she was involved in the cover-up of her boss's wife's murder. She survived the short sentence she served for aiding and abetting and came out with a memoir. That memoir led to dozens of media appearances, which led to her Matrix series *Clear Eyes*. She's a sensationalist and an opportunist, but she's one of the most dogged journalists I've seen in years. She's well known enough that a disappearance is a tricky proposition and has had some success taking down some small to medium targets, including quite a few at her former employer.

Senator Barry Darling's mistress Noella got not one, but two recording contracts out of the deal. I'm not a music critic, but she didn't get those deals because of her performance on stage. Darling leaned on his connections with Horizon to help her get her first big release. The album was so bad, reporters started sniffing around Darling and discovered his connection to Noella. This claim to fame helped her land her second deal at a smaller media company. It was somehow worse than the first. Rumors swirl she might get a third shot, but only as a duet singer with Darling, who lost his re-election bid and is going through an unpleasant divorce.

- If you're so rich, why are you still working as a reporter? Most runners would retire after *The Big Score*.
- Kane
- Reading comprehension check: I said plenty of reporters, not all. Some of us want to stay out of the spotlight, lest we end up at the bottom of the river.
- Sunshine

When that first leak of information comes out, most reporters will look to the target's enemies. A scandal is a great way to strike at an enemy in a non-violent way. It's also a proven moneymaker for us in the shadows. Sure, it's fun to swipe prototypes and extract scientists, but how many times have we ended

up in some rich guy's house waiting for the hacker to melt some IC on a home commlink? Revenge is a dish best served on the front page of a screamsheet. Especially when the wronged party comes into the shadows looking for someone to dig up dirt on the other guy.

Sometimes the leak is the tip of the iceberg. A good blackmailer wants to make money directly from the information in their possession. Leaking a minor transgression is often the first step in a larger transaction. If somebody knows about the mayor's mistress, maybe he also knows about the mayor's card game with the local oyabun? The whistleblower and the blackmailer may be working hand in hand, each one trying to pull as much money out of the victim's pockets as quickly as possible.

WHEN THE LEVEE BREAKS

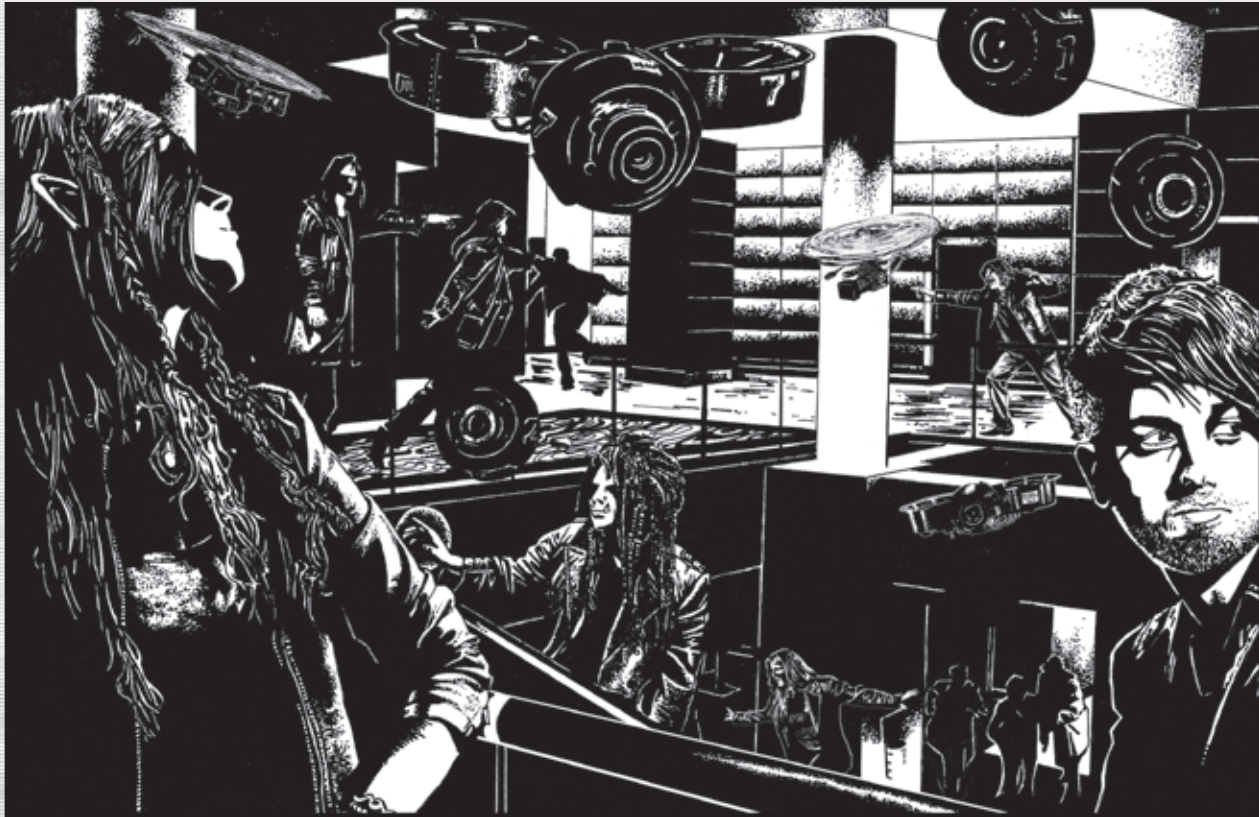
The cat is out of bag and vomiting on your shoes. The dirty little secrets that are the shadowrunners' stock in trade are used to gain leverage on powerful people. It's important to understand how the use of stolen data reflects on you. Sometimes the person behind a scandal doesn't want to get caught, as they fear reprisal. Sometimes, by contrast, they want the person who knows who they are because of a vendetta. The things we steal usually come to light at some point. Often, the victims of scandal will use many of these tactics. It's a tricky game. Using the right tactic at the right time can quash a bad report before it has time to take root. Using the wrong tactic can make whatever you did wrong seem so much worse than it is.

The first step any PR flack will make is to get out in front of the story. They have ears to the ground everywhere and know if something is coming along that will make their clients look bad. Some of the best times for runners to get involved is before a story breaks. The battle may be won or lost based on how the story comes out and how the client comes across. If they break the news themselves and then seem both contrite and forward-looking in a statement addressing the issue, they've got a good chance of surviving it. Helping get news out is an oddity for runners—usually they're most commonly the agents of suppression, but a spooked journalist will often call in some favors for a little protection until they can verify a big story.

If someone doesn't get ahead of the story, the most common tactic they adopt is to deny, deny, deny. It is often used in some mix with ignoring the problem. Even if a reporter is directly asking about an issue, it's easy to deny the target had heard anything. It doesn't matter if the vid of him with his mistress has a million views. It's not him. It's a fake done up by his opponent. Malicious neo-anarchist hackers are trying to sully his reputation. The evidence's validity doesn't matter during the denial phase. One video can be written off. Send the muckrakers back to their hole to dig up more bones.

The other major starting tactic is ignoring the problem. Small sins can be ignored, but the longer a story lingers in the air, the stinkier it gets. Ignoring also lets the press draw their own conclusions, which is bad, since those conclusions are usually far more lurid than anything that was actually turned up by reporters. Reporters will often choose the worst-case scenario when being ignored because it's attention getting. It also raises the ante for the subject. Are the allegations true that the senator is linked to Humanis? If he's innocent, why hasn't he denied the story? Soon enough, the senator's face is plastered next to scary stock footage of the Night of Rage and the ball is in his camp's court.





INCOMING FEED.....



ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL.....

- So no innocent until proven guilty?
- Aufheben
- In the courts? Maybe. Public opinion, though, is quicker, more capricious, and will turn on a dime. The public loves a redemption narrative, if you can survive the fall. Nero Bannister denied then ignored the claims he was taking payoffs from Horizon, and he's still in the CAS House. Linda Cashman did the same about her affair with her page and she's on *Celebrity Urban Brawl*.
- Kay St. Irregular

The public expects a certain amount of corruption in officials. They know that to get to the halls of power, people have to keep skeletons in closets, and those skeletons are going to surface. Keeping the skeletons faceless will keep a scandal from sticking. Revealing a hospital built on a toxic waste dump is bad. But it will only stick when people start wheeling out people affected by the radiation. "Victimless" crimes like gambling and prostitution are hard sells, unless there are anecdotes that the public can hold on to. A lot of payoffs happen during the denial and ignore phase to make sure those memorable stories don't surface.

Sometimes, when a scandal breaks, the target goes on the offensive. The kill-the-messenger strategy is a risky one but can be effective if used properly. The public will turn on a whistleblower if it comes out they had dealings with a rival corporation, or asked for money before revealing a deep, dark secret. Even if the motives are pure, it can be pretty easy to cast shadows on those motives. If the accuser has to spend time fending off

questions, that's more time for the accused to cover-up and get out from under allegations.

A similar tactic is to find a scapegoat. This happens in corporations all the time. Part of the unspoken job description is an executive is expected to fall on his sword in defense of someone higher up the food chain. It's easy to say that a senator should be aware of everything going on in his office, but I can tell you from experience that some politicians barely remember what day it is. They are only paying attention to the next free lunch from the next lobbyist.

- Watching what happens to the scapegoat after they get demoted is usually a good clue to what's really happening. If they get booted from the official's staff, it probably was their fault. If they quietly get rehired by some bureaucratic office nobody cares about, they just took one for the team.
- Kay St. Irregular

Players in this game usually have their own dirty deeds ready to roll out. If someone discovered your payoff from the logging industry, leaking the pictures of them with their mistress sends messages back at the whistleblower. First, it distracts the press to the newer, fresher scandal. Most reporters don't care who is under a cloud of scrutiny, just that there is a cloud in the first place. Breaking bad stories on public officials is a quick way to clicks, views and cash. It also tells anyone else who might be thinking of dropping their own dirt on you to think twice. Are they clean enough that they don't have anything to hide? Even if they are the rare squeaky-clean politician, can they reputation handle fending off a false accusation?



Much as a scandal begins in one of two ways, it usually ends in one of two ways. After the dirt comes out, there's often a press conference where the target stands with family at his or her side. They defiantly vow to stay in the race and seek out the perpetrators of the terrible lies that are trying to stain their very names. This end is usually used on scandals that didn't stick very well or where the target used some of the ideas discussed here to decent success. The news cycle is constantly hungering for better stories and the sooner this scandal is put to bed, the sooner it can start devouring the next one.

The other common end to a scandal is when the target begs for forgiveness from the public. It may be an exclusive interview, it may be a press conference, but the important element is an admission of guilt and the hope that everyone can move past the terrible mistake. This path is taken when the scandal has stuck and there's no real hope of shaking the bad press. Life in politics works in cycles. Even when a big scandal like this hits, it doesn't mean the end of a career. Canny politicians take some time off, regroup and try an alternate route to the power they crave. More often than not, it works.

- Case in point: Seattle's very own governor. It looked like he was done after the story broke during his presidential campaign about his parentage but he's looking like he's a lock for his second term.
- SeaTAC Sweetie

The CAS first-year representative Denton Hoggs (AC-TX) made the mistake of trying to convince folks that he felt their pain during the recent recession. He claimed his family was struggling on a low-six-figure salary. Newbury/Ross, his PR firm, responded with some damage control and set up a series of vignettes where he went to work at one of the members of the audience's farm for a day. It did a good job of humanizing Hoggs and showed that he was willing to step into the common man's shoes. That empathy is one of the hardest things a candidate can get but it's solid gold when it comes. Hoggs is already being mentioned as a possible VP candidate in the next CAS election.

Horizon's forays into PR have been the stuff of legend. They may be a new AAA, but they used one of the oldest tricks in the book in Seattle. They didn't build an area of business—they bought one. Robert Donohue was the genius behind Kenneth Brackhaven's (not entirely complete) public rehabilitation. Horizon gave "Blind Item Bob" a blank check. He proceeded to cherry pick the best and brightest from every firm he could contact. Looking at what they have accomplished, some people have come to believe Horizon uses subliminals to get their message across. I don't buy it—I think their PR people are just that good. Blind Item Bob worked his magic most recently when trid director Michael Hemmer left a Horizon-controlled studio for a bigger contract with Wuxing. Bob was ahead of the game on this one; he consistently leaked stories on Hemmer's bad behavior during his run at Horizon. None of these scandals was big enough on their own, but the steady stream of them soured public perception on Hemmer enough that his first big release for Wuxing tanked.

How well are they handling the evolution of the Consensus? Suspicion about the company had been growing for years, and it's still too early to tell what financial impact this will have. Stock prices have declined slightly, but it hasn't been the big fall off some predicted. Horizon has not only called in a lot of markers to clean up Vegas and the Blood Flood, they've made sure to film every second of one of their employees volunteering their time to do it.

It seems like they are trying to double the footage available of the Blood Flood and its aftermath.

The top firm at the AA level is run by Levi Werther. Werther worked as part of Saeder-Krupp for many years. While he was not Lofwyr's spokesperson, his department was in charge of making sure whatever media got to speak with the dragon portrayed him in a positive light. When Werther turned 65, he got his Léonization treatment and broke away from the dragon to start Werther and Associates. The majority of his business is still with S-K, but he represents many individuals who hold positions of power in Europe. Werther himself is often seen in photographs with several world leaders. He's the only one not smiling.

Werther is a master at finding scapegoats for bad behavior. This isn't unique in and of itself, but he seems to be able to convince clients to send trusted confidants, close relatives and even beloved spouses up the river to fit his narratives. The rumors about is that he's some kind of adept with social abilities. How else could he convince a dragon to let him go and powerful people to push people they love over a cliff?

Johnny Spinrad's episode with the future Queen of England started an unfortunate trend of scandals involving persons of high breeding and birth dallying with rogues. Werther personally visited anyone who was at all connected to Spinrad, digging hard to find evidence of romantic liaisons. Each and every time, the relationship ended within two weeks of Werther's visit. Is he just that good? Is he a mage with some potent charm spells? How can one man take down someone's social group one member at a time? Levi Werther intimidates his own clients into behaving. Now *that* is full service.

- I've never seen a picture of Werther and Lofwyr in the same room.
- Plan 9
- I've never seen a picture of me and Lofwyr in the same room, either. Big whoop.
- Pistons

With Blind Item Bob now leaving for greener pastures, the Seattle PR scene is up in the air. New Flash is an up-and-comer who just scored the Knight Errant contract thanks to their emphasis on local roots. KE has plenty of PR work lined up, from trying to convince Seattle that they are a better fit for the city than Lone Star to making sure the Ork Underground welcomes their patrols with open arms. That's a tall order, especially when the Star has local firm Diddley-Yeats on their payroll to try and win back some of the contracts they lost. This is one fight that won't erupt into open warfare, but expect this war to be one of words fought on every blank wall, node, and free scrap of bandwidth in the Seattle Metroplex.

One of the first cover-ups involved a vice bust at a local hotel. Quite a few VIPs walked out of the door in cuffs along with some joyboys, joygirls, and enough chips for a deck factory. Flash paid out a ton of hush money to the prostitutes and kept the VIP names under wraps. This also means there are plenty of people looking to find out just who was at the Palm Terrace that night. Anyone looking for some work in the next few days should drop me a message here. The pay is terrible, but at least I'll cover your tab at the meet.

- I can neither confirm nor deny my involvement in such a scandal. I can, however talk about how awesome my new Mitsubishi Nightsky is.
- SeaTAC Sweetie



... EXECUTIVE ENTERTAINMENTS ...

Posted by: SeaTAC Sweetie

Sex still sells. There are hundreds of better highs, thousands of easier scores and millions of ways to spend hard-earned cash. Sex is that one biological motivator that's the easiest to tap and the hardest to ignore. Nothing eases the pain of a deal gone wrong or celebrates the triumph of capitalism like an orgasm. The corporations know it too. There's a reason pretty girls have been wrapped around new product for decades. It's a classic trick. Associate that flash of lust with the product. Buy the product and the girl comes with it. Or, at least, one that looks like her.

My area of expertise shares a lot of similarities to shadow-running. Reputation is my weapon. Discretion is my armor. Infiltration is a necessity. Knowing how to recognize a bad deal is survival. What we can give clients is usually something they can't have otherwise. There are a few differences, too. I rarely get shot at or have to deal with anyone more rowdy than a client who thinks he can get a free ride if he tries to slap me around. But I've also been in scenes that would probably make a hard-case chummer throw up on their combat boots.

- Vids or get the frag out.
- Slamm-0!
- Ugh. Can we just ban him from this discussion now, please?
- NetCat
- I didn't realize joygirls practiced martial arts.
- Hard Exit
- The smart ones do. Muay Thai kickboxing keeps the figure trim and the clients polite.
- SeaTAC Sweetie

A LOOK AT THE MENU

Knowing about the different types of sex workers can provide shadowrunners with an advantage going into a run, especially when you are looking for information on who has been consorting with whom. Joygirls are the, excuse the pun, entry point for many into the sex work industry. There are many paths that put people

into that line of work. Sometimes you get strippers who take the next step. Or there are debtors who are forced into arrangements to keep loan sharks of their back. You'll also see joy girls are enterprising students looking for a way to pay off student loans. It doesn't matter what lifestyle, the reasons for getting into sex work are the same on every level. The money is good, the time spent on the job is minimal, and walking away is easy. Unfortunately, none of this is true, but most people don't find that out until it's too late.

- Shiawase is one of the bigger companies where openly gay relationships are still a big no-no. They still happen, but they are expected to be treated with the same secrecy as having a mistress, even if you are legally married to your partner.
- Kia
- The company has made some strides. Now, instead of being forced out, you simply get stuck at the level you are at until you quit or retire.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Isn't that essentially the same thing for a dedicated sarariman?
- Kia
- Things must be improving a bit, as the suicide rate amongst Shiawase employees forced out of the closet is way down.
- Butch

Escorts are joygirls and joyboys who have built a decent client list. They've gone beyond hustling in the streets or AR spam and mostly do business upon referrals from clients. This is the level where I operate. Satisfied customers pass my name on to other interested parties. Many of the people operating at this level are connected with some sort of organization for protection. I prefer to be an independent contractor, an attitude that I'm sure most of the members of JackPoint understand. I don't need the lay out the dangers of working like this, nor the importance of contacts to keep me informed of bad situations. Anyone looking for a price list in this post will be sorely disappointed. I come here to talk about work not advertise.

Some escorts become specialists in certain types of work. There is plenty of fetish specialties to go around. I've dabbled, of course, but the worker that can carve out a niche can get top dollar by finding clients who want to, say, be ridiculed by orks dressed as Daniel Howling Coyote. BDSM is one of the most lucrative areas of sex work to this day. I offer a light program for certain clients, but a dedicated dominatrix can command fees that would make bank executives cry (which, coincidentally, is sometimes just what happens). I wish I had the stomach for it but it's a mix of talent and experience I don't possess.

- For many in the lifestyle, it's not about sex. It's about power. A lot of subs that go to pro doms are powerful people who can crush corporations by day. Being ordered around at night lets them get some release from the burdens of command.
- OrkCEO
- Pity the poor rich people who have to pay to get beaten. There are so many people out there who would do it for free.
- Aufheben

Then there are the rumors and legends that exist around the industry. Donkey shows, snuff vids, and all the extreme stuff that can be found at the ends of the Matrix. I don't deal in those areas, but any industry has edges that push the boundaries of what happens. Most of these ideas are also firmly in control of syndicates. It's how they open up those parasitic relationships with public officials. The senator only likes young boys? The syndicate gives him what he wants. Then, when there's a government contract that the syndicate wants for a construction front, the senator gives them what they want. A lot of these exchanges happen for lesser moral infractions too, but if the extreme things truly exist, it seems a given that's how it would work.

Contacting an escort usually comes through a referral from an existing client. It's a good way to steer clear of legal entanglements since if you get busted, that client is also usually busted too. My record is not as squeaky clean as I would like it to be, but this policy has served me well for the past few years. There are some polite exchanges via email and messages, but any real business is conducted in person. This is another safety precaution. The lack of data trail means I can't blackmail him, and he can't be flipped by someone to take me down.

I usually arrange a first meeting with a potential new client where no transaction is involved. The first is to observe them and make sure they seem okay. This is usually a request to meet in a public place. I usually get there thirty minutes early to watch their approach. It's a good way to make sure they aren't cops or procurers for a syndicate. I also scan for active recording devices. The more off the record I stay, the safer I feel. If they don't tip off my alarms, I will make contact and make some brief small talk. If they pass that part of the interview, we can begin negotiations.

- At what point do you ask "Are you a cop?" They have to tell you if they are a cop, right?
- /dev/grrl
- You've been watching too much Seattle CyberSquad. Entrapment doesn't work that way. Entrapment only counts if the officer

convinced someone to do something they wouldn't normally do. If you're plugging chips in a static house, you can't really claim you weren't going to do that anyway just because the undercover vice cop next to you did it.

- Rigger X

DINNER FOR TWO, DESSERT FOR AT LEAST A THOUSAND TIMES THAT

Arranging a date is the easy part. At my level, you are booked for a whole evening. This is also known as "the girlfriend experience." You will be taken to some sort of social event and be expected to be polite, charming and just flirtatious enough to make the other men on the scene jealous. Highly rated restaurants are a common destination be it a first date or "first date." The ones I frequent are too numerous to mention, but they share several qualities.

Many high-end restaurants still discriminate against metahumans. Elves rarely raise eyebrows at functions. They are often accepted as token members of exclusive clubs and restaurants to prove these organizations aren't discriminatory. Dwarves are making inroads as well, but they still have an exotic air about them. Orks, trolls, and other metahumans are a rarity in the membership. Those who apply will often find their memberships taking months, if not years, to be processed. Meanwhile, the chiphead son of an Ares VP gets a table with no waiting.

The best way for obvious metahumans to stay close to team members is to pose as members of the service staff. A dwarf member of a country club is exotic, but one that's a bartender or caddy is barely noticed. Orks and trolls are usually placed in positions where they are out of sight and mind. Wear a cook's coat or a maintenance jumpsuit and members accept it as part of the scenery. Crawling around air ducts might work for an office building or research lab. Hotels have back corridors and freight elevators.

The date is expected to pick up the tab for dinner. Good manners for the girl is to order something not too expensive. Or anything heavy. Physical exertion and *fettuccine alfredo* do not mix. If something looks that good on the menu I make a note of it for another trip later. I also make a note of how the client conducts himself during dinner. First timers are all nerves and don't finish. Dinner, that is. Regulars dig into their favorite dishes. Knowing the distinction can come in handy later during the transaction.

- Here's a game for the hackers: One of the JackPointers has a foodie blog under a different pseudonym. PM me with the blog, who you think it is any why. The first one who does so correctly will win a prize.
- FastJack

BOYS OF ALL SEASONS

What's the point of securing the services of a stunning beauty if you can't show her off to the other boys? I often get booked for a day on the golf course. Yes, this means I often get paid to stand around in the clubhouse and look good in a sundress. But there are plenty of places out on the course where there is an excellent amount of privacy. Some courses have security drones, but they spend most of their budget on securing the clubhouse, not the grounds. They all have one thing in common. Executives have their guard down out on the course, and they expect an extraction team to look like heavy hitters, not account representatives. If you





INCOMING FEED.....



EXECUTIVE ENTERTAINMENTS.....

know the girl on their arm, you can lead them to be in the wrong place at the right time. I'll leave the hole-in-one pun for Slamm-0! to leave in the comments.

- Hey!
- Slamm-0!
- Was she wrong?
- Bull
- No, but that doesn't mean I like people stealing my thunder.
- Slamm-0!

Luxury boxes are another frequent stop on my tours of high-dollar locations. Nothing more sad that a man who owns an entire sports team sitting all by himself in his own suite, so they are often willing to pay for company, as it's easier than actually making friends. I'm not the only one who does business at these arenas, either; I've seen deals done by halftime that rock the financial sites the next day.

Little girls like horses. So do executives. Some of them prefer the track where they can fritter away a working stiff's salary on a few races. Others go old school, attending dressage, polo, or steeplechase events. Most of them eventually end up breeding and making big money off of their studs. This usually mean they have a cozy cabin near their stable where they can retire for some recreation. Sometimes this hideaway is only accessible by horseback. I usually don't like dates like this because I like to have multiple exit routes. Wandering around by myself in the dark woods is not a strategy. It's a one way ticket to a Jane Doe drawer.

The one thing rich guys love more than their boats is throwing parties on their boats. These gigs usually feature multiple girls. It's sort of like a BYOB party except with escorts. The security detail is usually very cranky because a lot of important people are trying to sneak off with the escorts to do things they'd rather have nobody see. Security details for these events often tack on a privacy fee to entice their top talent to sign on. A lot of the time, the client will pay one of these security fees directly for access to a more private area. Most of these guys hate public speaking. I can't imagine what would happen under that kind of pressure to perform.

Arts events are some of my favorite events. It's fun watching rich guys give back to the community, even if they are doing it for selfish reasons like tax breaks or a mistress who is a starving artist. Most of the time you walk the red carpet, hang out for ten minutes, and then you hit the hotel. This especially happens at media premieres. The producer has been sweating blood over the production for the last eleven months. The last thing he wants to do is see the damn thing. Plus these nights are usually shorter, since the client usually wants to hit the afterparties solo.

- Okay, now I understand why you're a JackPointer. Secluded spots where nobody can hear screams is practical knowledge we all can use.
- Kane

THE "US" IN TRUST

I've spent a lot of time discussing how the industry I work in and shadowrunning are similar. But let's talk about the differences as well. The media likes to portray us as people who can be shaken down for information or who are waiting for someone to swoop

in and steal our hearts of gold. This is about as realistic as the portrayals of shadowrunners on cop trids. I don't have nanotats, nor do I dream of someday running off to the NAN to start a microfarm with my son. I've built this life into a career. It's not a calling, but to have any sort of life this way, you have to build trust with several different groups.

The sooner a girl gets away from spam AROs and street pimps, the better she does. It's a hard climb; not every girl makes it. Pleasing everyone is important at this stage in the game, but so is clearly setting your limits. Girls get pressured into doing stuff they don't want to from all sides. Giving in means giving up. Specialists earn better money. Generalists wash out of the game.

Staying clean is also important. It's very easy to go from being paid in nuyen to paid in chips. Once the chips become more important, the string starts wrapping around the throat, and it's all over. So many girls have gone from young and pretty to scarred and desperate in months because they started playing with chips.

- Glad a hooker can feel superior to a drug addict.
- Haze

One way to get off the streets is signing on to a syndicate house. It's a tricky dance. Working for a syndicate brings in clients who pay more and treat girls better. But syndicates don't really offer retirement plans. Even after all the shares are bought out, those bosses have a way of asking for just one more favor. They invest time and money in the girl and her clients. Striking out solo is a rare thing. Even houses that appear to be independent usually have a string or two connecting back to the syndicate. That madam didn't get the nice house and police protection from a wish.

Word of mouth works for advertising as well as referrals. Girls watch out for other girls, so make friends with as many colleagues as possible. Before calls. After calls. In cells. At the local coffeeshop during the winter. Girls recommend good clients and rat out bad ones. The cops don't do much for escorts so getting justice usually means investing money in some runners. I've heard of girls pooling their money to hire runners to get back at a client that killed someone. It's how I started hanging out with shadowrunners.

The biggest group of people you interact with are the clients. A steady client list is a ticket to a stable income. Clients have to trust you enough to keep coming back, but not enough that they want to turn a girl into a mistress. These men (and women) are often married, so one of the best attributes to develop is to keep quiet. No matter how much the reporter offers. No matter how hard the cops lean. No matter how scary the gun is. That broken trust is the fastest way for all the air to rush out and send the balloon of your reputation crashing to the ground.

ROOM SERVICE

Most of the hotels I stay at are out-calls, where I travel to meet the client. Most hotels have some kind of lounge or bar where I meet the client for a final safety check. I usually let first contacts stew for ten to twenty minutes while I observe. If any signs crop up I don't like, I walk. Repeat customers usually only have to wait five minutes before contact. I prefer outcalls because it is usually at a neutral location. I never accept meetings at actual

houses or homes. That's a good way to walk into a sting, a jealous spouse, or worse.

Hotels that serve as the basis of in-calls are usually a little lower on the economic ladder. They are also usually a front for some sort of syndicate. The advantage lays with the escort during an in-call. This is their home turf, so they have all the security arrangements needed. They could also have a sting set up if they want to send a few incriminating videos to Mrs. John. That's a quick way for an escort to end up in the sound, but it's often the price paid to the organization the room belongs to. In-calls can also be tricky because it sets up a pattern. Patterns are how cheaters get caught, reporters get photos, and killers bust in at the completely wrong moment.

Seattle is my turf, so calling out hotels that offer under-the-table services such as these is not something I'm inclined to do. I will say that we are home to one of the most well-known dominatrixes in the world. Her client list reads like an Archconservative National Convention speaker list. Mistress Alachia is very discreet, professional, and well worth the money. I refer my clients to her all the time, and they always come back satisfied.

- Just remember that one thing that makes someone like Mistress Alachia so popular is that she is absolutely trustworthy and discreet. So don't waltz in thinking you can buy information from her or get her to do spying for you. She is not your mole.
- Sunshine

DeeCee's best hotel for in-calls is The Crowninshield. It's just two blocks away from the Capitol building, so senators looking for a quick romp after an all-day legislative session favor it. The rooms are rented by the day—no hourly rates—but that means you can luxuriate after business is concluded. Most of their business is done through the spa. It's what I use to meet clients before we head upstairs. It's public, it lets me show off a little, and they have an ork masseuse who is a black belt in three different martial arts. Plus their mani/pedi girl is amazing.

Hong Kong is home to the Glass Bastion. The blown-glass replicas of the famous Terracotta warriors is impressive just from a tourist standpoint. But they also have an unadvertised boat launch a half a kilometer down the river that's used exclusively to bring in personnel such as myself. I've been in plenty of back halls and service elevators, but even the tunnels leading to the hotel are gorgeous. The hotel has a history as a place where vices are indulged. People pay top dollar to have their wildest dreams brought to them in those gilded tunnels.

- Do these places cater to the vice crowd exclusively?
- Kia
- No. They are discreet to the point that they don't ask your business. If you want to rent a room for. Meet, or for a nice, quiet place to crash, you can. Just be aware that you'll be paying maybe one hundred times the rate for your normal flophouse.
- Jimmy No

The Thames is the conductor to the secret underneath section of the Barrington Hotel. The hotel was built on an old dock and originally used for smuggling. What once moved illicit cargo



now moves people in a similar manner. The Barrington boasts a legendary clientele from Johnny Spinrad to Ebran the Scribe. I can't speak to which of those names have enjoyed my work, but I will say that the hotel is the perfect mix of modern convenience and moneyed discretion. The staff parties are almost as much fun as the formal events in the Elizabeth Ballroom. Most places I leave after the transaction is complete. But the staff make me feel like family, even if I am just the crazy aunt that makes a big mess and then leaves.

Everyone is looking for some fantasy in Vegas. You can pick your poison from the hotels on the strip. I happen to like The Dragon's Hoard. Every hotel is connected, of course, but "Whispers" LaPizzi lets independent contractors like me in for a very nominal fee. I usually charge extra for dressing up and role-playing; when a client wants that option, I take advantage of the hotel's costume shop, which is top notch. Pretending to be a swooning princess here is easy and fun. All you have to do is inquire about the sword swallows with the concierge, and they will show you their private menu of services.

THE JOY OF UNOBTRUSIVENESS

One subtle difference between shadowrunners and escorts is how they go about not being seen. The runners I know talk about stealth suits and invisibility spells. These sorts of things sound a little too much for my line of work. We're supposed to blend in the background and not skulk about in the shadows. A good escort is like an accessory. It draws attention to the client but doesn't let anyone remember your face. Runners are good at infiltration, but sometimes the best place to hide is in plain sight.

Something that every runner should have as standard equipment is one nice suit. Or, for the ladies, a little black dress. Nothing flashy, but something that looks good even if it's off the rack. That same suit can be used to blend in to a high-society situation. If you want to move through a public space without drawing attention, it can do wonders. And being able to blend into the ballroom is incredibly important. Hotel rooms have high security, but ballrooms usually have to rely on fallible security personnel. Done right, you can get people in place throughout the room then pull off a public extraction before anyone knows what's happening.

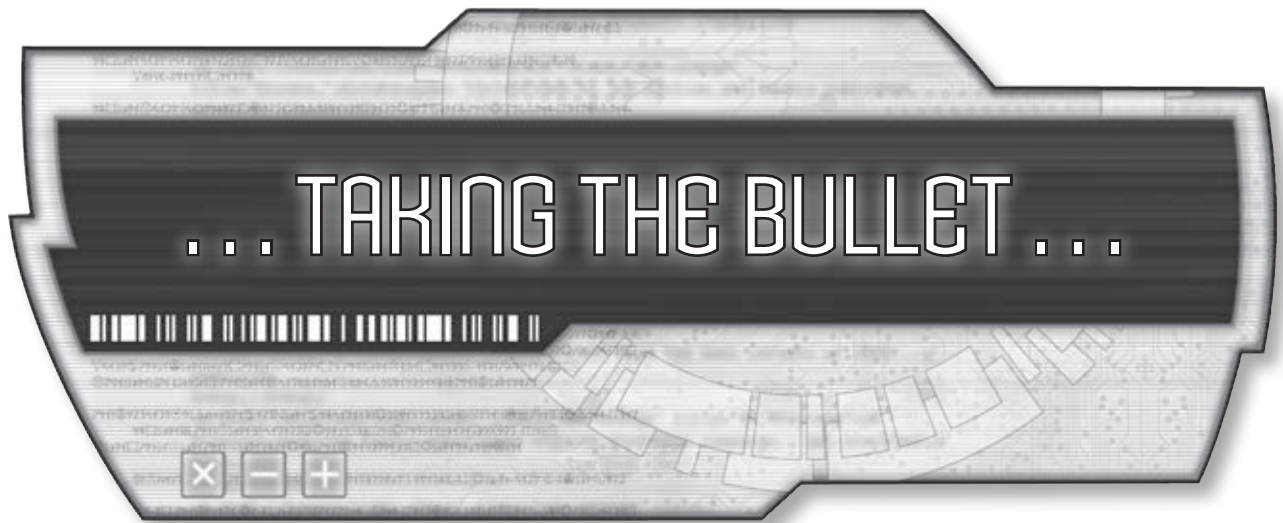
- Wake me when she stops talking about playing dress-up.
- Hard Exit
- There are billions of entries on JackPoint about guns, guns, guns, and you can't sit still for some advice on how to not look like you just geeked a Nigerian warlord?
- Pistons

A common method of disguising in-call appointments is to set up some sort of delivery business. A delivery uniform is also a great way to get the survey of a place. Few people pay any mind to someone wandering around with a package under one arm and a commlink looking for a bio-signature. It may sound like the ridiculous cliché opening to a porn trid, but sometimes I've gotten requests to show up as a pizza delivery girl or a plumber. Some people figure if you're going to drop nuyen on a pro, why not push into a fantasy realm and get naked with Jenny Pipelayer, Nymphomaniac Handywoman?

Remember that while dressing up as the help can be useful, getting inside these hotels doesn't require a ridiculous disguise. Changing one detail about your look is usually enough to shake any reporters or detectives long enough to plait some space between them and you. I usually keep a wig and some mirrored shades in my black bag for this very purpose. Checking out a building wearing these basics is a good way to keep security from recognizing you once the run begins. I've sat next to potential clients who didn't recognize me during the transaction because they weren't looking for me. It doesn't take mind-altering magic or expert hacking. Just keeping quiet and don't draw attention.

The trick is striking a balance between notable and forgettable. Trying not to be seen is just as bad as walking down the street with a rifle. A big detail that draws attention away from the face is a good start. Wigs work well to pull the eyeline away from the face. Drawing attention to a pink mohawk works two ways. Unless the witness is trained, they'll remember the big detail about you but not much else. That big detail is also more useful if it's easily removable. Ditch the wig in a safe place, and that person never has to exist again. Another cheap tactic is to be the annoying person talking loudly on their commlink. Everyone remembers that person but tries to ignore them, so their features often do not register.

- A guy I used to run with had eight different cyberarms for this very purpose.
- Bull



Posted by: OrkCEO

Old shadowrunners don't die. They cut out the middleman and go to work with the suits directly. I have been a private security contractor for almost ten years. Is it better than shadowrunning? The grass is always greener. It's nice to have a steadier paycheck and better DocWagon coverage. But there's no thrill of the big score or the feeling that when you're stealing you're sticking it to a broken system. Guarding VIPs is one of the big elements of my contracts, so I'm here to talk about what those poor bastards are thinking when you pour Panther Cannon rounds on to them, in case you get involved in those sorts of dirty tricks.

- Is that why he's here? Nostalgia?
- Haze
- OrkCEO is a rarity. He's gotten out of the business but is still close enough to provide valuable information. Not many others have seen a run from both sides and lived to tell the tale. He may not be everyone's favorite but I didn't start this as a quilting circle.
- FastJack

THE BEST OF THE BEST

Most of the elite teams that get press are corporate in nature. Government VIPs need special protections too, so there are a few units I would like to highlight as frequent collaborators with my company. One of the big differences between private squads and public ones is that the public squads devote more resources to tracking down threats. The Red Samurai are reactive; the Secret Service is proactive. So don't think these guys don't know anything about you even if you're not a prime runner.

The Secret Service has the distinction of being the longest running security team in North America. They handle everyone and anyone connected to the UCAS, from President Colloton to Governor Brackhaven. Most of the organizations here model their operations on the Secret Service in some way. The Secret Service has gotten tougher with age, dealing with a fractured nation and multiple homegrown threats to the officials that keep it running. Most of their agents come from military or intelligence backgrounds. They are primarily based in DeeCee, though they

have many unadvertised offices throughout the country, including Seattle.

- A good way to see if you have a friendly local neighborhood Secret Service office is to check out if your nearby federal building has offices for the GSA. The General Services Agency is what organizations like the Secret Service use for cover when they don't want anyone to know they're in town.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Runners who cross the UCAS government often end up in a GSA conference room with a fat rap sheet on one side of the desk and a deal to make it all go away on the other. Uh, so I've heard.
- Jimmy No

When the CAS forged their own path, protection of several of its most prominent citizens fell to an organization already highly regarded as some of the best law enforcement officials in the world. The Texas Rangers accepted their additional duties with pride. Rangers are probably the closest to private bodyguards since they usually only assign a single officer to protect an asset. The Ranger HQ is located in Dallas, though most officers rarely spend time there. The Rangers are either assigned to a VIP or are tasked with pursuing fugitives from justice. It might seem like the Rangers don't have the manpower for both these duties, but they'll be the first to tell you they can handle all of it and still want more. The Rangers aren't big on paperwork, either. They shoot first and figure they can blame it on someone later.

The Obsidian Jaguars are the unit that heads up protection of Aztlan officials. They are unique on this list because they are also responsible for high level Aztechnology executive protection. Often, these individuals are one in the same. In the rare cases when they have to share resources, the Smoke Jaguars side with the corporation. This leads to situations like the recent loss of a senior VP due to a scheduling mix up near Bogotá. The Obsidian Jaguars are deadly, but even they can't win fights against red tape every time. They often are made up of ex-runners that ran almost exclusively for the Big A. If you're lucky, you'll run into one that still believes in that honor-among-thieves crap.





The Moonlight Thorns may seem like an overly exotic name, but that's the T'ir for you. The stories say the name stretches back through the last cycle of magic, if you believe the tripe that the Scribe writes. Each Prince is assigned two Thorns. One is publicly known, and the other is secretly determined. Some say each public Thorn doubles as the secret Thorn of one of the other Princes. The T'ir loves to play at intrigue, so this doesn't surprise me much at all. I worked for the Princes once—and once only—and every time I think about it the headaches return. The interleaving secrecy is wearying, but you can also use it to your advantage, as playing Thorns against each other is a good way to get out of a jam. Pick a Prince and claim the run you were on is their doing. By the time whoever caught you verifies the truth, the run will be over. Of course, this is also a good way to get noticed by the Princes, so beware of doing it too often.

Each of the Native American Nations sends a handful of their best operatives to form the Coyote Circle. The Circle was initially in charge of protecting the many shamans that seized the lands for the nations. Now it protects the politicians dedicated to keeping Daniel Howling Coyote's dream alive. One interesting policy is that a Circle member is never assigned to protect someone of his own tribe. The purpose of this is to build unity between the tribes. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it buries the organization in politics. The Circle has a reputation for being excellent investigators of cases involving magic with a unit made up of a heavy mix of mages and mundanes. Going up against them without magical support is ill advised.

- It gets fuzzy when dealing with tribe and official loyalties. Add in totems and guardian spirits and the Coyote Circle gets downright opaque.
- Mika

London is the home of MI-5, which monitors all threats to the Queen's government. They do their jobs dutifully even if they aren't the most subtle of organizations. I was hired by Johnny Spinrad because he was being followed by two men in drab suits. I caught up with them, and after a few tense moments, we headed to the pub to sort things out. They had been put on Johnny's tail by the Queen herself. They gave up this information freely—they weren't trying to be secretive or undercover at all.

The ministers in this organization are more likely to assign an agent to watch a potential threat than to protect a VIP. They even gave me a case of the stout we drank when I deposited Johnny at the airport. These agents are, if anything, suspiciously kind. As long as the team checks in with their tail, they usually can get their job done and go home. Why the agents let runners get away with this makes a lot of people nervous.

The Dragon Dogs is the colorful name for the cabal of mages that protects the Executive Council of Hong Kong. They may or may not have been part of a Triad when they began. Rather than being absorbed into another gang, they formed an initiation temple and gave away their worldly possessions. They can be identified by their Shaolin-style shaved heads. They don't wear robes, but whichever man in a given entourage is the least flashy dresser is usually the member of the Dragon Dogs tapped for protection. Many of the magical healers in Hong Kong have some connection to the Dogs. Teams without their own healing hands operate at a disadvantage. Hong Kong healers will let their

old friends know who just stopped into the shop. If it's not a sanctioned Triad job, expect a visit for a bit of clarification.

- Wuxing, unsurprisingly, recruits heavily from these guys. They almost use the Dragon Dogs as a farm team, letting people get experience and hone their abilities with them and then recruiting the cream of the crop.
- Jimmy No

The warlords of Nigeria have an interesting method of making treaties using hostages. These are hostages in the traditional sense. The warlords exchange sons to dignify a peace and to ensure that one warlord won't attack another. Here, they take it a step further and train these boys to be the warlord's personal bodyguard. The logic is that if the men go to war, the boys will have to watch their fathers kill each other. No father would do that to their own son, so the peace is kept. These Last Sons grow up tough, mean, and conflicted—three traits you want in people that trust someone with their lives.

The rebirth of the Divine Emperor in Japan also brought back the tradition of the *yojimbo*. Most of the members of The Emperor's Right Hand are some combination of master swordsmen and physical adepts. The Emperor's Right have a unique system for selecting its members. Any of the seven men can be challenged to a duel at any time. Of course, if you lose, *seppuku* is expected. This often escalates duels of skill to duels to the death.

OUTLINING THE CONTRACT

Most VIPs already have some form of security. Executives are prized assets to companies and treated as such. Bringing in extra security usually means a threat is anticipated or has already expressed itself. That threat can be external, such as a failed extraction attempt, or internal, such as moving against a rival in the organization and expecting reprisals. The VIP often goes through the thought process of buying a firearm for personal safety, then realizing that purchasing someone trained in the use of that firearm is a better idea. Runners aren't going to be scared by a government official holding a Raecor Sting in their sweaty hands. They will think twice, though, if they know I have eyes on that official.

In most contracts I sign, I am being used to be an obvious added element of security. It ain't about network building—senators don't hang out with orks because we are country-club buddies. An ork in a suit conveys an intimidating, professional presence. Whether the contract is with the VIP or the organization they belong to, having an obvious security presence makes runners incorporate me into their plans. It's another step they have to take, and therefore another step where they can make a mistake that may be exploitable.

I also accept contracts where I am hired to stay out of the way and provide extra eyes on an asset. Sometimes the organization doesn't want the asset to know there is trouble. Sometimes the asset suspects his or her security has been compromised and wants someone watching the watchmen. These assignments are rare because of my orkish good looks, but they do happen. It's distressingly easy to go undercover as a ganger or a homeless member of society. When an ork fills a role most people consider traditional, they fade into the background. The VIP goes about their business, and I keep them safe.

Carrying a weapon requires proper licenses. I keep these licenses up to date, since without them my client flexibility goes down by a lot. That means that a lot of my fee is eaten up by insurance and red tape. It's worth it to know that I can draw a weapon in defense of a client and not have the attacker sue because I haven't filled out my paperwork. It also teaches me to make sure if the gun comes out that it is a situation that needs lethal force. I'm not pulling my pistol on an unarmed attacker.

Some situations require going in without any weapons. Society functions, secure meetings, and even private homes often require security personnel to leave weapons in a secure room. Sometimes it is the client's wishes, and since he signs the checks, he makes the rules. But in some cases having a weapon means it's something an attacker can control and make a bad situation worse. If a gun has six bullets, why stop at the wetwork target? Being hired to disrupt a meeting works just as well with everyone bleeding out on the floor in addition to the original target.

- Maybe because we're professionals? If we aren't going to steal extra paydata we certainly aren't going to geek executives because we have extra bullets.
- Aufheben

- Speak for yourself.
- Kane

My contracts usually specify the lethality of the force I can use in defense of myself or the asset. I err on the side of non-lethality for a variety of reasons. It keeps me free of liability. It keeps me free of criminal complaints and court time. It also allows the asset's regular security detail to detain and question the assailant. It's another reason I rarely use my gun. They don't have a stun setting. Even if I'm loading Stick 'n' Shock, there is a possibility that an attacker will be lethally wounded. The paperwork I have to do in these cases is enough of a headache that it's rarely worth it.

What I'm saying is that while deadly force is always an option, it's not the first. If my client is in direct danger, or I am in the line of fire, then the weapon comes out. There have been a few situations where I've been hired and outfitted with a larger weapon and armor, but those are very rare cases. Once lethal action has been taken, most bodyguards reciprocate to protect their client. If the bad guys have shot and missed, don't press your luck and give them a chance to shoot again. Get the target to a secure location as fast as possible. If you wound a bad guy, that's good. But the goal of returning fire is to keep the asset safe long enough for proper backup to arrive, not to mow down everyone with a gun pointed at you.

Any actions taken are ones that should serve the client. A good bodyguard should be able to point to anything that happens in a tactical situation and explain why they did it. This doesn't mean you have to plan everything out. That's suicide. But every decision should make sense in the after-action analysis report. Yes, analyzing your combat scenarios is usually a good idea. How else can you expect to improve the next time everything goes south and the guns come out?

There have been occasions where I have terminated a client's contract. People looking for protection are usually loathe to explain why they need that protection. Willful deception is the



main reason I will quit a job. It's one thing to have someone show up with more firepower than expected, but if a client hires me and tells me to expect a jilted lover and I end up in a firefight with a Triad that wants their money back, that's quite another. And to me, it's unacceptable. I've been risking my life for over twenty years. I don't plan on losing it but if I do, it will be because of a mistake I made rather than a client trying to shave my rate.

- Have you ever quit the field, or do you wait until the client gets home before telling him you're walking?
- Hannibelle
- I've left early twice. One was the aforementioned Triad situation; the other one's something I prefer not to talk about.
- OrkCEO

SURVIVING THE LOCKDOWN

One of the classic bodyguard scenarios is protecting an asset during a lockdown situation. The asset is moved to a secure location because of threats and must be guarded until conditions become safe. The location can be anything from a remote cabin to a secure penthouse. It's just the security detail, the asset, and the ticking clock until the lockdown is complete. In many ways, it's the most challenging of contracts. The hostiles are coming at any time, but nobody knows where or when. At least when working a public appearance, there's a point when the security staff can go off the clock.

Nobody can be vigilant twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Most lockdown details feature at least three guards in a rotating detail. One is on active duty monitoring entry points and watching for signs of hostiles. One is on passive duty, eating, passing the time with the asset and reliving the first guard as necessary. The third is usually sleeping, relaxing or otherwise off the clock even if they are still on site. Some details stretch this into two guards each pulling twelve-hour shifts, but that method is a great way to let the asset get nabbed.

Most secure locations don't stay that way. Lights flicker, the trideo goes out, the PizzaHaus guy shows up to deliver. Each one of these is a potential opening for a hostile and should be treated as such. It's easy to get lazy and shrug off paying the pizza guy. Don't. The delivery driver could be bribed by a hostile. He could be a hostile in disguise. He could be there under duress delivering a pizza laced with sedative. Any time someone shows up to the location, reset security checks as if they were completely new. Because they are.

- And I thought I was paranoid...
- Plan 9

Don't get bored on the job. Staying attentive means avoiding sloppy spotting. The person on watch should be concentrating on the situation at all times. The person not on watch should be letting that part of the brain rest. Playing cards is a bad choice since it may lure the person on watch over to the table. Watching sims or any group activity can be too distracting. Pack some novels. Learn to knit. Pick something that is easy to pick up and to put down if/when attention is needed somewhere.

In a situation where an asset is in a secure location, it can be easy to keep thinking of it as secure, even if evidence is starting to show otherwise. This is foolish. If a location is compromised, have a fall back, and go there. Don't feel the need to engage an enemy if you've made precautions that aren't working. Sometimes getting the asset to a different location is a better call than getting into a fight. The team may be unfamiliar with the fallback point but so are the hostiles. It can level the playing field if used properly. This also can depend on the type of hostiles in the scenario. If the asset is targeted by a gang, moving them onto a rival gang's turf will give any pursuit pause.

Getting proper sleep is important. This also applies to showers, shaving and other common practices. It's easy to get lazy hiding out in a cabin somewhere. But if you aren't paying attention to yourself, how can you pay attention if someone makes a move on the asset? Eating healthy means the guard won't be in the bathroom dealing with fallout from a Zaprito Supreme from Bueno Rita when the bad guys come calling. Pack lunches. Keep ordering out to a minimum. If there's no delivery guy to follow to the hideout, the threats can't identify the asset. It's also a good idea to give up bad habits like smoking. Every time a guard heads out for a smoke, that's another chance to be spotted.

- What's next? "Shadowrunners always get a good breakfast and take their vitamins, little Billy." Give me a break.
- Turbo Bunny
- Am I the only one here that brings a gun with me into the toilet?
- Kane

Many lockdowns pass without incident. The threat is dealt with by external forces, or a more secure location is discovered. But sometimes the attack comes, and it's time to earn my salary. Security is usually operating at a disadvantage because it has to deal with every theoretical threat, while the hostile force only has to deal with security. Smart hostiles will have planned for anything the security team throws at them. Any experienced security professional will still have a few tricks up their sleeve. These tricks may be the difference between thwarting a hostile action, surviving to file a report, or having your next of kin cash in your insurance claim.

Attackers usually have an advantage in numbers. The sooner this can be dealt with, the easier it will be to engage in combat solutions. Get the asset to a defensible position where any hostiles have to attack in smaller numbers. Stairwells and alleyways are good examples, but this can even be applied in smaller situations. Forcing attackers through a doorway means they have to come through one at a time. That provides vital seconds to neutralize one threat before the next one comes. This doesn't just apply to unarmed combat scenarios. Setting up a sniping position that covers the main entryway into a building is just as effective.

Neutralize competitive advantages as quickly as possible. This often translates in street speak as "Geek the mage first," but also can be applied to other specialists like hackers, depending on the situation. Specialists are usually an important part of a hostile plan, so eliminating them is a priority. If there's no hacker to hack, the hostiles will have to adapt their plan. The seconds where a plan A shifts to a plan B are seconds you can use to get your asset to safety.



- Some runners I've worked with quote that maxim as "Geek everyone twice, because the first time don't count."
- Hannibelle

Part of setting up a lockdown is mapping out escape routes. Chances are the hostiles are using a single route to get to you and your asset. Having multiple routes out of an area is important for this very reason. I'd much rather have a location that was moderately secure with three excellent escape routes than one that was very secure with only one way in or out. The latter is just a bloodbath waiting to happen. A good mix is one route available by vehicle, one available by foot, and one route to a secure location where you can call for extraction. More is better, but three is a good number to expect an asset to remember as they run for their lives.

Astral security is one of the most challenging elements of securing a location. If the security team has a mage, leaving that element to them is the best plan. But there are things anyone can do to secure a location. Ask a shaman to converse with the spirit of the location to keep their eye out for watchers or spirit spies. Bring in living materials. Astral bodies can't pass through living matter. There are sprays and security tech that handle this.

Tactical objectives for a bodyguard are different than a hostile force. The hostiles are meant to be dealt with in a way that they can be slowed down. The objective is to get the asset to a secure location, not to pile up a body count. Dead hostiles can't attack but they also can't talk. They can also be traded if things get ugly and the asset is captured. Bodyguards are rarely expected to die for their charges. Their main goal is to interfere with a hostile group long enough for the asset to get away.

More often than not, bodyguards will have some sort of security force on their side. Be aware of response times. Lone Star and Knight Errant are there to keep the peace. If a bodyguard can hold out long enough to hear their sirens, they can make it out of a situation in one piece. Some lockdowns can actually benefit from a notification to security providers ahead of time. Knowing that a hostile extraction is a possibility will put their eyes and ears on alert as well.

THE HARD TRUTH

The most difficult part of being a bodyguard is thinking for two. Tactical situations are hard enough, but trying to keep someone with little tactical training from harm makes it almost impossible. The asset is what slows the bodyguard down but is also the reason for him to be in the fight. Any plans to get the asset to safety mean the asset has to be able to complete them as well. While most bodyguards keep in great shape, the assets often do not. It means little to protect a VIP from hired goons if they die from a heart attack jumping over a retaining wall.

Though you are hired to protect the asset, sometimes the best thing to do in the asset's interest is negotiate with the hostiles. More often than not this works well as an excellent delaying tactic. Keep the hostiles talking and the bodyguard can check off plan b, plan c and all the way down to plan q if needed. It's better to bring this up as a possible ploy with the asset beforehand, but sometimes springing it on them offers the genuine surprise needed to convince the hostiles that a sellout just occurred. Most VIPs will accept a later discount as a decent apology for this tactic.

If the hostiles guard is down, making the move on them can swing momentum back your way. The window of trust in this situation is very small. Do it too quickly and the guard isn't dropped much. Wait too long and re-extracting the asset becomes twice as hard as defending her. This also assumes the hostiles want the asset alive. Sometimes the only way to know if it is wetworks instead of an extraction is if they shoot at the asset as well.

When is the moment to drop weapons and surrender? It's a hard choice to make and one that divides the bodyguard community. Extractions are usually non-fatal, so knowing when to live to fight another day is important. Some bodyguards subscribe hard to the idea of dying for the job. I've seen too many good people bleed out for that. Protecting the asset is important, but so is going home. The asset wants protection, not to-the-death loyalty. It's one of the areas of shadowrunning I do not miss.

- You've got it wrong. They may or may not want us to die for them. In truth, they don't really care if we die, as long as they stay alive.
- Aufheben

The sad truth of the job is that at some point there will be injuries. Even the fights that end with the attacker neutralized will usually feature some sort of injury. It's something of a young man's game in this regard (though there are old bodyguards who get by on treachery and skill when their bodies begin to fail). The easiest way to stay alive is to make friends with a magician. Taking a Bear shaman out to a nice dinner in exchange for showing up at 2 AM is far cheaper than relying on a DocWagon contract. Magical healing gets the bodyguard back in the game. Magicians who work the bodyguard circuit can often charge double or triple the price of a mundane guard.

Going into the protection industry means taking a few first aid courses. Patching up the asset is a useful skill to have, but most shadowrunners have at least a modicum of knowledge in field medicine. Fixing any wounds inflicted by hostiles cuts down on overhead and medical costs.

Cooperating with authorities is another area that separates the pros from the pretenders. It's important to be in good standing and at least put on a convincing appearance of working with investigations. Both the law-enforcement companies and the asset's company will wrap up a lot of time with their inquiries. Play ball, and they generally overlook mistakes. Get cranky and it's time to go back to the shadows.





... ELECTORAL HOTSPOTS ...

Incoming Message

Believe me when I say that if I had the space, I'd clue you in to every single interesting election in the world (for example, the ailing health of Pope John XXV has made politics in the Italian Confederation quite interesting). But I don't. I've got to choose where to focus, and like anyone else in the world, the politics that concern me the most are the ones in my backyard. So we'll start with Seattle and its Proposition 23, which would make the Ork Underground an official district of the sprawl, as well as a gubernatorial election on tap. Both of those are keeping Governor Kenny Brackhaven busy, and it will be very interesting to see how he responds to the pressure. Some think he's beginning to crack.

Then we'll move on to the UCAS, which may also be looking for a new president imminently. That's not the only election in the nation where millions are being spent, though. Governors, congressmen, mayors, and more are being elected, too, and we have information on some of the most interesting races that deserve your attention.

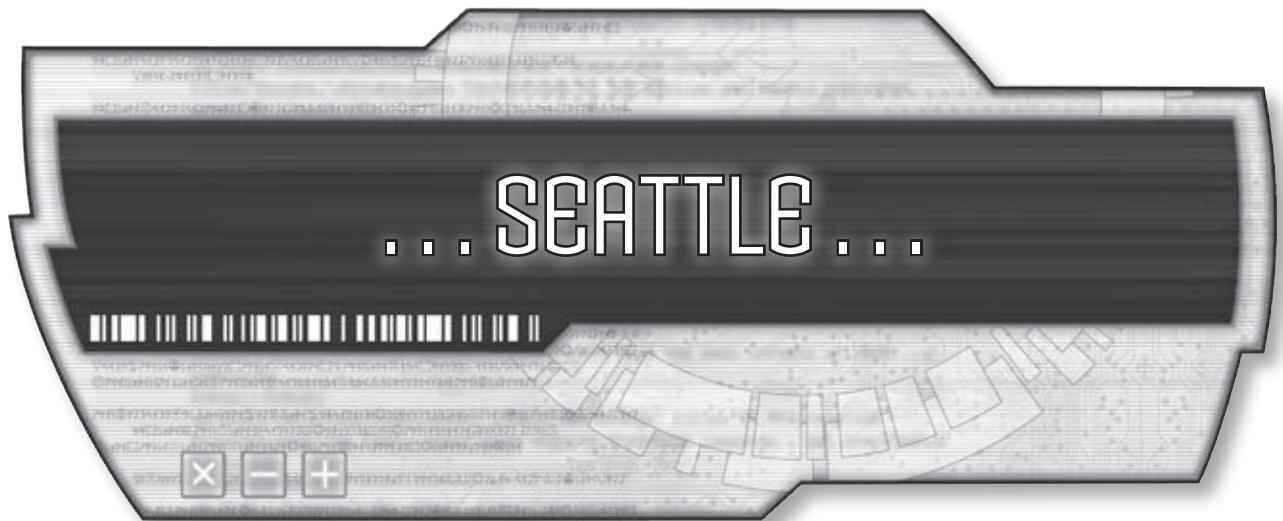
Then it's time for a turn south to the CAS, where recent events have made it possible for them to actually be even more angry than usual with Aztlan. As is the case up north, there's jockeying for power on the state levels, and good work can be found in those elections, too.

Then we'll take a look at the Tsimshian Protectorate and, among other things, its effort to become fully independent and free of their protectors. With the burden of poverty and pollution to carry, though, nothing is going to come easy for this nation.

Our final stop will be a hop across the pond to the United Kingdom, where the Pendragon has failed to re-emerge and they are looking at setting up their second post-Lord Protector government. Interested in who might be in that government and how they set such things up? That information is here.

I will absolutely refuse to be held responsible if you can't find work after reviewing the information in these sections.

—FastJack



Incoming Message

/Initiate private chat

/User entered: BULL

/User entered: FASTJACK

BULL: Thanks for coming Jack.

FASTJACK: You know, Bull, you're one of the few people I'd get up this early for. But you DO realize what time it is right? This'd better be good.

BULL: It is. I've been working on gathering information about Prop 23, and what I'm seeing worries me. Things are going to blow up.

FASTJACK: We've had copycat serial killers, multiple bombings, arsonists, international terrorists conspiring with government officials and gang bosses to successfully eliminate most of the key figures in Project Freedom and the Seattle District Attorney's Office, and continual violence in the streets. Are you saying we're getting something else?

BULL: How about someone going after Kenneth Brackhaven?

FASTJACK: That's not new. A lot of people are going after Brackhaven right now. Look, Bull, I know you've been through the wringer with the loss of Becca and getting blown up and all—are you sure you're up to this job?

BULL: Don't patronize me. Yeah, I still hurt mentally and physically, and I've got a pretty significant regimen of meds getting me by. But I'm not out of touch. I wouldn't come to you unless I had something.

FASTJACK: Fair enough. What do you have?

BULL: A G-man named Dietrich has been moving in the shadows lately. He's been kicking up a lot of dirt and made

some interesting connections between Prop 23 and our favorite governor. Apparently, he's gotten Brackhaven's personal attention in a not-good way. With this and a lot of other things I've been hearing, I think there's blood in the water, and sharks are moving in. I want your permission to use JackPoint resources to do it because this may be too big for one ork to handle, at least not properly. Are you chill with this?

FASTJACK: Maybe. What exactly does this got to do with Prop 23?

BULL: Everything. Prop 23 is out of Brackhaven's control, and he hates that. Then he's got this Dietrich sniffing around, and no one outside of his staff knows just what he's looking for—or what he's already found. I'll know more when I connect a few more dots.

FASTJACK: Fuckin-A, go for it hombre! Get that hoser!

BULL: OK, not exactly the response I was expecting, but...

FASTJACK: Huh? Oh, sorry, it's early and not getting enough sleep, yeah. What do you need on my end?

BULL: Better government sources than I've got. I need a little more about what's happening inside the Brackhaven administration than my sources can tell me.

FASTJACK: Piece of cake. I'll poke around, let me know what happens.

BULL: Thanks, omae. Sorry for getting you up so early. I know I'm not giving you a lot of solid info here, but my instincts are telling me something's brewing.

FASTJACK: That's okay. I trust you. If there's something, we'll find it.



PROP 23 HISTORY, THE MOSTLY SHORT-SHORT VERSION

Posted by: Bull

• Normally, this is where FastJack starts things off with one of his little spiels. But this time, you all have to deal directly with me because 'Jack's been a bit under the weather. As many of you may (or may not) know, the vote for Proposition 23 is a scant twenty-four hours away. Now, I hate politics and anything to do with it because I'm not some moral crusader willing to get his hoop shot off for some cause. But my daughter was and she was a far better person than I. Prop 23 meant something to her and I'll be fragged sideways if I don't do everything in my power to see this through to the bitter end, pass or fail. So, yeah, I've been in the middle of this drek-storm for a while now. But whatever is decided, Seattle will never be the same. Melodramatic, maybe, but it's the honest to ghost truth. Anyway, with all the ultra-fragged happenings in regards to Prop 23 going down, 'Jack asked me to cobble together a little primer for those of you who've been living under a rock for the past year or so. I was almost done with the damn thing when various sources began knocking on my virtual door telling me about some very interesting developments. And by interesting I mean things that could change the whole game here, even at this late stage. Lately, the Seattle shadows have been on fire (sometimes literally) and I have a feeling that the real drek storm is coming. And considering everything that's happened already, that's saying something.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Now, rather than see all my previous hard work go to waste, I'm going to post everything I have so far but I'm also going to include various updates as I get them. So forgive me if things are a bit jumbled—I had to hack up my original piece to shoehorn in the new paydata. Things are happening fast and I'm also doing a lot of this on the fly with data coming in from multiple sources. So bear with me because things are a bit chaotic. So if you have some important data or something to say, other than the usual peanut gallery comments and especially if you find some conflicting data, please let me know ASAP. Oh, and one more thing: this first part is about straight facts and history, so please keep the political commentary to a minimum for now. 'Jack loaned me the ban-hammer™ and I'm not afraid to use it.

• Bull

Like any movement or cause throughout history, Prop 23 started out as a simple idea. In this case the idea was that if the Ork Underground became a legitimate district of Seattle; it would finally earn some sense of equality and improve the lives of its residents. At least that was the theory. And like a lot of ideas before it; it wasn't entirely thought through. But it was enough for several metahuman rights groups, such as the Ork Rights Committee and Mothers of Metahumans, to rally around and form an honest-to-ghost movement. Without going into too many useless details, these and other groups banded together to form a coalition in order to meet their goals. This goal was simple: to get their idea on the ballot and then get it passed. Of course, nothing is ever simple in Seattle. Once the news about the coalition's plans broke, battle

lines were instantly drawn and both sides came out shooting, metaphorically speaking. At first.

The coalition's opening salvo was a big one and called for the Seattle Government to basically own up for several decades of oppression and inequality for those living in the Underground and grant them the rights and privileges they deserve. While the sentiment resonated with the more liberal-minded and radical elements within Seattle, the majority of citizens were less than enthusiastic. It wasn't until Helen Shaard, an extremely charismatic ork and resident of the Underground (one of the few with a SIN), took control of the coalition's reins that they started to gain momentum.

• Shaard was originally from the DeeCee area and graduated cum laude from Brown University as a poli-sci major. She had a bright future ahead of her but got pregnant while on vacation in Seattle by a local who turned out to be an enforcer for the O'Malley family. Whoops. Daddy went down a week later during a dust-up with the yaks, leaving Helen to eventually raise their daughter alone. She decided to settle in the Underground and hooked up with several political elements in Seattle, mainly the ORC, and worked as one of their chief organizers until the Prop 23 thing came along.

• Kay St. Irregular

• Just goes to show, even nerd girls love the bad boys.
• Kat O' Nine Tales

• Shaard wasn't simply one of the ORC's organizers, she was head of the Seattle chapter which was one of the more disorganized and most ineffective. She took over from the previous chapter head after he tried to get her into the sack. She said no to him by kicking his little buddies into his throat. Shaard had the right combination of guts and charisma and she eventually became the driving force behind the whole fragging thing. I didn't agree with her on a lot of things, but I respected her.

• Bull

• I think I like her ... Wait, you said "had"?
• Hard Exit

• Yeah, I'll get to that later.
• Bull

By changing the angle of their message that the Underground was "owed" something into one that painted the Underground's inhabitants as just wanting to be as prosperous as and part of the sprawl, the coalition not only made their message more palatable to the general public but also attracted several more followers as special interest groups and individuals flocked to their banner. Too bad arrogance and pride displaced common sense. While Project Freedom touted their message of equality, they never actually asked the residents in the Underground what they wanted. This little, but significant, tidbit would come back to haunt them later during the campaign and almost spelled the coalition's doom.

Almost immediately after the coalition's announcement, the Brackhaven Administration and the Seattle Government fired back and denounced Project Freedom's efforts. The government's



official stance stayed away from the metahuman rights issue and focused on financial and or legality concerns. Still, many pundits still couldn't keep their mouths shut and took a great deal of glee in demonizing the Underground's inhabitants, calling it and them, among other things, "nothing more than a wretched hive of lawlessness and villainy best sealed up to protect decent Seattleites." However, the government stuck with its primary stance and claimed that granting district status to the Underground would bankrupt Seattle because of the tremendous costs to bring its infrastructure (or lack thereof) up to legal specifications without a significant increase in tax revenue to offset such costs. Seattle's treasury office, in an "official release," stated that should the Underground become a district it would be an "almost certain disaster to the fragile Seattle economy." And for once, the government wasn't lying, at least about the costs to bring the Underground up to code. Seattle's economy had been teetering on the brink for years, and the bean counters saw financial Armageddon in the proposed measure.

- Yeah, kind of hard to tax the SINless, let alone the criminal element in the Underground. Never thought I would ever say this, but I kind of agree with the government on this one.
- Sticks

But according to early polls, a lot of Seattleites were surprisingly apathetic towards the sprawl's financial woes, and the government was forced to switch tactics. While they were careful not to directly play the metahuman race card, the "lawlessness" aspect of the Underground was prime fodder. Painting themselves as the "reluctant warriors," the government pointed out and argued that it would be better to contain the criminals, their organizations, and terrorists operating out of the Underground rather than needlessly risk the lives of good public service officers or Metroplex Guardsmen by trying to root them out. While the government didn't exactly come out and say that all the metahumans in the Underground were criminals, they didn't denounce that view, and many took that as their de facto stance on the subject. While this tactic worked with its target audience and poll numbers rose against the coalition's efforts, it had a slight backlash effect and galvanized the coalition and their allies.

- Yeah, I remember passing by one demonstration back then. Some government puke in a cheap suit pretending to be an "honest, working-class Joe" tried to chat me up. During his pitch he said that it was unfortunate, but statistics showed that a majority of the criminals in the Underground and the sprawl were orks. Too bad I was on my way to a face-to-face with a contact or I would have nuked his commlink into slag. Still tempted, though.
- Slamm-0!
- Wait, you showed discretion AND were outside? OK, who are you really?
- Pistons

While government spin-doctors worked overtime to put a positive spin on their stance, it's worth noting that not everyone in the Seattle Government was on the same bandwagon. The one powerful voice in the government that was at least neutral to the

proposed measure was District Attorney David Beatty. Despite warnings (both subtle and not) that such a stance would be political suicide; he called for an "honest and realistic study of the issue before dismissing it out of hand." A rarity in Seattle (an honest politician), Beatty used his influence to keep things at least civil and rein in several hawkish members of the Seattle Government, preventing them from sending Knight Errant against known members of ORC, MOM, et al.

- Despite his well-deserved reputation as a straight shooter, Beatty wasn't above using strong-arm tactics when necessary. Sources of mine say he collected a lot of dirt on several very powerful individuals within the Seattle government, and some of the local corps during his twenty plus years in the DA's office, which he used to keep them in check rather than for political gain.
- Sunshine
- Yeah, fat lot of good it did him in the end.
- Haze
- Speaking of which: Is there any truth to the rumor that Beatty's granddaughter goblinized into an ork a couple of years ago?
- Hannibelle

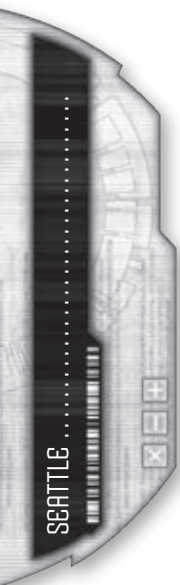
As both sides jockeyed for political position, initial polls showed that most Seattleites were starting to buy the government's arguments. For a time, it looked like the coalition's efforts would be in vain. Numerous petitions and letter campaigns were launched, but none could meet the requirements necessary to get the issue on the next ballot cycle. But in October 2073 a last-minute hail-Mary petition drive got the issue up on the November 2074 ballot as Proposition 23, a.k.a. Project Freedom. And while Project Freedom started out as the original name for Prop 23, the coalition happily co-opted the name after a KSAF junior reporter erroneously mixed the two up during a live streaming broadcast and the rest of the media continued the trend. Apparently Project Freedom sounded a lot better than "the coalition."

- Those last-minute petition drives were not as easy as they sound. Several times, petitioners were attacked in order to sabotage their efforts. I know of at least two Project Freedom petitioners killed by "unknown assailants." They were eventually forced to hire out bodyguards and escorts who kept the body count down, though they couldn't totally staunch the flow of blood. I was also hired by a Project Freedom rep to beef up some of their Matrix security for their nodes and servers after repeated attacks. Pay was OK if not great, but then I'm a sucker for a good cause.
- Pistons

THE BLOODY CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Now that Prop 23 was on the ballot, the next step for Project Freedom was to get it passed. If the effort to get Prop 23 on the ballot had been difficult and treacherous, the campaign to make it a law would send things into near-insanity levels of mudslinging, muckraking, and all-out violence.

Things started out as one would expect as the various media outlets filled airtime with the normal slander, attack ads, and general pundit chest-thumping that one would expect for such



a hot-button issue. But despite the overall tone and veiled threats in the beginning of the campaign, the battle was largely one of words and fought in the domain of public opinion. There was minor work in the shadows, mostly the typical data thefts, blackmailing, and general undermining, because the general consensus at this time was that Prop 23 didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of passing. However, little by little, day by day, and one poll percentage point at the time, Prop 23 started to gain some ground and things began to escalate.

The Seattle government still punched away with its financial ruin and anti-lawlessness stances by trotting out anyone who claimed to be a financial and/or legal expert on the various media outlets. Project Freedom instead opted for a more grass-roots approach. Pro-23 rallies became an almost daily occurrence in the sprawl as PF volunteers staged various demonstrations in just about every district. While there were the obligatory counter-demonstrations, Project Freedom borrowed from the playbooks of several famous figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi and kept their protests peaceful to take the moral high road should any violence be used against them. The approach worked as several rallies and demonstrations were attacked by anti-23 backers. By some miracle, there were few serious injuries and no deaths, but that didn't stop Project Freedom from milking the situation for all it was worth. They painted their members as would-be martyrs for equality, and when they were able to secure funding (and air time) for trid ads, they mostly featured "heroic" PF members standing up to jack-booted thugs secretly backed by the Seattle government. Or at least that's how they wanted it to look. The truth was actually somewhere in-between, but PF never let that get in their way. Project Freedom wasn't above using some misdirection and some slightly dirty tricks of their own to get their points across.

- No offence Bull, but we all know you've been working for Project Freedom. Isn't all of this a bit of a conflict of interest?
- Glitch
- I work with, not for, PF. I'm not on their payroll and I have my own opinions on Prop 23 that don't exactly line up with the powers-that-be. I'm doing this to honor my daughter's memory by giving them support and a fighting chance. My rep should be enough where I can be trusted to give chip-truth on this. Now, I don't dictate their policy and how they conduct themselves. What tactics they use are totally out of my control. Personally though, I have no problem fighting fire with fire.
- Bull

Officially of course, the government denounced the attacks and tried to paint Project Freedom as agitators looking to capitalize on the situation. This proved to be a very unsuccessful tactic, as poll numbers for Prop 23 increased dramatically, leading to the near fifty-fifty split among voters that would become the norm throughout the campaign. With things now so close and only a few percentage points separating success or failure for Prop 23, the gloves came off on both sides.

- And Governor Brackhaven must have been feeling the pinch, because he sent out feelers to various politicians in DeeCee through Brackhaven Investments to try to drum up support, both

political and financial. But with elections of their own coming up; no one in the capital wanted to attach themselves to the problems of Seattle, especially if there was no obvious advantage in it. Some had bigger fish to fry, others simply didn't care, and others saw potential blood in the water.

- Kay St. Irregular

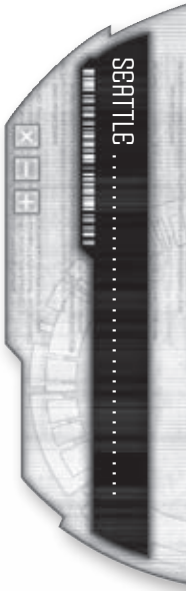
About three months into the campaign, things took a dramatic turn for the worse. While there were some injuries (only a few serious) in the beginning, the violence during demonstrations and rallies was mostly limited to minor assaults and/or property damage without any deaths. This changed when a sniper fired into a pro-Prop 23 rally in Tacoma. After the attack, three were rushed to local hospitals by DocWagon units with two listed in critical but stable condition while one, Henry Jameson of Tacoma, age 15, was pronounced dead on arrival. From there the violence level escalated as more and more lethal attacks were attempted on Project Freedom and their allies. This forced a fundamental change in PF's strategy; no longer were they able to engage in peaceful protests by allowing themselves to be attacked. This forced Project Freedom to become more proactive in defending themselves, beefing up security at their events by hiring what they called in the press "special security consultants," which is just politically and socially acceptable way of saying shadowrunners. But despite the beefed up security measures, the violence escalated on all fronts, and both DocWagon and Knight Errant became fixtures at both pro and anti-Prop 23 rallies and demonstrations as the campaign continued.

Incoming Message

>>KSAF STREAMING NEWFEED
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CLASH OUTSIDE UNDERGROUND TURNS DEADLY, SEVERAL KILLED IN SHOOT OUT OVER PROP 23

SEATTLE – Ten individuals are dead as Prop 23 proponents and opponents clashed yesterday outside of the Big Rhino Bar and Grill, a tourist entrance to the Ork Underground. According to Knight Errant Security officials, approximately fifty individuals in favor of the proposition were peacefully picketing outside the famous Seattle establishment when they were attacked by several small groups who employed improvised explosives and melee weapons while chanting "down with the tuskers" and "nuke the underground" among other things. Reports say that after the initial skirmish began, unknown persons opened up with automatic weapons fire resulting in an escalation where both groups engaged each other with gunfire. As a result, ten people were reported dead with several more individuals wounded. Several people were also witnessed fleeing the scene before Knight Errant officers could respond. According to reports, both groups claimed that the other shot first and that they were acting in self-defense. Detective Theodore Athack, head of Knight Errant Special Crimes Task Force, said only that the matter was under investigation. Damage to the Big Rhino was described by the manager as "minor."



Both sides blamed the other for the rise of violence and of course tried to use it for political gain. While protestors and volunteers battled it out on the streets, pundits fought like rabid dogs on various media outlets trying to sway public opinion one way or another. But for all the fighting and politicking, the polls remained in a near deadlock with the slight lead of no more than two to three percentage points changing hands based on which side had the better sound bite that day. While several NewsNET/Gallup polls conducted close to the middle of the election season continued to show a deadlock on Prop 23, several other independent polls showed that Prop 23 was starting to gain momentum and was threatening to take a significant lead. And of course, that's when things started to go from bad to totally fragged up.

As public opinion on the streets had shifted in Prop 23's favor, Project Freedom saw increases in support both financially and in volunteers, despite the continuing risks. Many speculate that it was because Prop 23 and Project Freedom got a major bump and international attention when music superstars Maria Mercurial and I.T. of Nine-One-1 came out in support for Prop 23 during their recent concert tours. After this announcement, news outlets reported that support had surged ahead and gave Prop 23 a ten point lead in the polls. Other celeb endorsements followed and the continued grassroots efforts by Project Freedom kept the poll numbers and public opinion in their favor for several weeks and eventually sent opposition groups into a panic. This forced them to enact new plans to regain lost ground and hopefully take the lead.

- Only partially true. There were many conflicting polls and surveys after the announcement, with several indicating a drop in Prop 23's numbers. But no one paid attention to those because everyone was gushing all over Mercurial, I.T, and several celebrities that hopped on the bandwagon.
- Sunshine
- It's also interesting to note that Mercurial is under and Nine-One-1 just signed a contract with Pathfinder Multimedia who, as we all know, is owned by Horizon, which hasn't come out in favor of Prop 23 per say, but has been relentless in its attacks against Governor Brackhaven of late. I could tell you more, but I don't want to steal Bull's thunder.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Oh, you mean the way every Horizon media outlet has been hammering the Brackhaven Administration with exposés and bad press every time one of his staff or cronies sneezes in the wrong direction? I know that they deserve it just for working for Brackhaven in the first place, but *damn!* Even I'm starting to think someone has a grudge because it can't be just about ratings.
- Slamm-0!
- You'd be surprised. But I also have it on good authority that Brackhaven was livid when the endorsements came out. He'd been trying to kill Prop 23 in various ways since day one and all of his plans failed. My favorite was when he secretly tried to order DA Beatty to issue arrest warrants for the Project Freedom leadership by labeling them domestic terrorists. Beatty politely reminded the Governor that there was no direct evidence of such and that trying to do so could be taken as slander which could open the metroplex up for a possible

lawsuit. It was also implied that if such a thing were forced on him, he would have to go straight to the UCAS Attorney General's office and thereby make the entire situation public.

- Sunshine
- Damn, someone has brass ones.
- Beaker
- Had ...
- Sticks

The opposition groups quickly realized why they were losing the fight after the endorsements came out. With celebrity backing, Prop 23 had become the "in" cause of its time. The apathy normally associated with election issues was not present, and the issue had become a full-blown symbol and proxy fight on all metahuman rights issues. Getting injured for Prop 23 was becoming a badge of honor among some circles in the sprawl. Those media outlets and trid shows that started showing pro-23 stances also saw their ratings increase. Anti-23 backers and organizers realized that there was no way they could fight a symbol successfully, unless they destroyed what that symbol represented or how the public perceived it.

Also, opposition groups realized that it didn't help that they were being found guilty by association with the Seattle government. Despite Governor Brackhaven personally enjoying high popularity and poll numbers, several of his staff members became linked to various scandals that hurt the government's credibility.

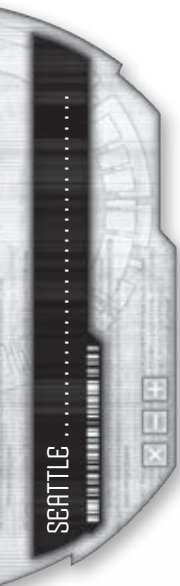
Incoming Message

>>KSAF STREAMING NEWFEED
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GOVERNOR BRACKHAVEN APPOINTS NEW CHIEF OF STAFF AFTER FINANCIAL SCANDAL

SEATTLE – Four days after firing former chief of staff Marin Parker amid a massive embezzlement scandal that cost the Metroplex more than sixty million nuyen, Governor Kenneth Brackhaven announced that long time business associate and close friend Emile Corrigan will replace Mr. Parker as his new Chief of Staff starting immediately. While new to the Seattle political scene, Mr. Corrigan is not new to the politics in general. Before accepting a position with Brackhaven Investments ten years ago, Mr. Corrigan worked as a political consultant and corporate liaison in the Federal District of Columbia for several known congressmen and senators. When asked how he felt about taking over such a demanding position amid a highly charged political campaign, he replied "I have no illusions about the challenges facing the governor's office and the city-state of Seattle, and all I can do is promise to do my best to serve the governor and through him the citizenry to the best of my abilities."

In a related story, formal charges for Marin Parker and his accomplice in the alleged embezzlement case, former Seattle Assistant Clerk Joshua Quinn, have been filed, and a preliminary hearing is scheduled for next week in Seattle District Criminal Court. <link>



The opposition decided that the old tactics were no longer working and decided that it was time to get truly serious. Not only did they turn to like-minded individuals, groups, and corporations for aid; the opposition also turned to the shadows when things weren't getting done. They figured that the only way to kill a symbol was to compromise what it stood for by shattering the perception the public may have had about Prop 23, Project Freedom, and the Ork Underground in particular.

Part of that plan was to use hackers and or private investigators of every variety. Tauren, various associates, and I spent a lot of time fighting and undoing the damage they tried to unleash on Project Freedom. A lot of hackers got their comms fried extra crispy by yours truly and son, while the Skraacha bashed in more than a few heads of those snooping around the Underground uninvited.

- More than a few smugglers I know were approached to spill paydata for these parasites to try to discredit Project Freedom. I know of at least two who are currently feeding the fish in the sound because of it. Unfortunately, some got away with a nice payday. Hope it was worth it, because they'll be joining the others if they ever show their faces here again. Never fuck with a smuggler's pipeline.
- Sounder
- A-fuckin'-men. BTW, Sounder, I did find one of those skraggs. You'll be happy to know she's now in many tiny bits spread all over the Gulf. You're welcome, and tell Harry I'm calling us even for my troubles.
- Kane

GETTING DIRTIER

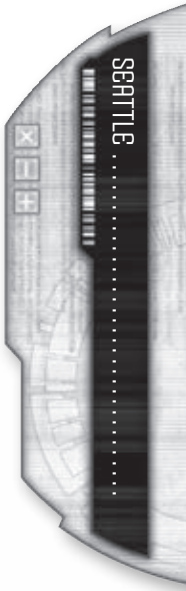
The Underground had a few things going for it with regards to the campaign. First, the public didn't know much about it. Despite what the pundits said and thanks to the early grassroots efforts and limited contact with the rest of the sprawl, many came to see the Underground as just another neighborhood where a lot of Seattle's orks and other metahumans lived with their own special and unique identity and customs, much like other ethnic-centric neighborhoods. For all of what the majority of the public knew, the Underground was just another quaint and exotic place that was good for tourism. How could something be as bad as they say when it has a tourist highway and guided tours from famous places like the Big Rhino?

Second, because of the general public's relative ignorance, Project Freedom was more than willing to exploit this perception and it was fairly easy (for the most part) for Project Freedom and their supporters to paint whatever picture about the Underground they wanted. Anyone trying to do otherwise was often denounced as a bigot, racist, government stooge, or just flat-out lying for political considerations. This became the focal point for the opposition as they decided it was time to truly expose the Underground's darker sides. Project Freedom got a taste of its own medicine as it and the Underground became the spotlights of their own exposés.

Several news agencies, some aligned with opposition interests while others just muckraking for ratings, started targeting several members of Project Freedom, and in particular Helen Shaard. Various news programs and two highly-rated specials focused on her and played up her "underworld connections" through her daughter's father, even though she had no such contact since before her daughter, Kathleen, was born almost twenty years ago. They even went after known associates of Project Freedom, working to make any connection, however minor, with the "rampant criminal element" that was supposedly thriving in the Underground.

- I saw that one! I especially liked the segment about Helen and her *new* criminal lover, a shadowrunner known as Willie "Bullet" McAlliston. I mean the digital composite sketch they showed was SOOOO right on the 'yen. But, I never knew your tusks were that big, Bull. I guess the programs do add at least two inches to them. Looking GOOD though! *Thumbs Up*
- Riser
- Frag off and die.
- Bull
- There's a reason Ares (until they lost Truman and his network) in particular had no problem using its media holdings to do a number on the Underground for the government's interests. If Prop 23 passes, KE will be legally obligated to go down there in force at some point. Flushing out an entrenched enemy with equal, if not in some cases superior, firepower is a bad situation for any military force, let alone a "security provider." Going into the Underground is something they do *not* want to do. Guess getting the Seattle contract isn't looking so good anymore. I bet Lone Star is laughing their asses off right now.
- Hard Exit
- Yeah, Ares knows exactly what firepower is down there because they've been using the Underground as a smuggling pipeline for decades!
- Kane

Showing just how fickle the average voter can be, the attack ads and exposés had their desired impact as poll numbers shifted yet again, but Prop 23 managed to hold on to a slight lead. And while the political battle was being fought in the media and public opinion polls, the situation on the street got worse as violence continued to escalate and threatened to tear the city apart. The shadows also became more active as each side became increasingly desperate and was forced to counter the moves of their opponents. Opportunists who didn't care one way or another also threw their hats into the ring to take advantage of the situation. For the first time in the campaign, Seattle citizens feared that their home was about to turn into a full-fledged warzone. Unfortunately, their fears came true.



>>Truman Network News
STREAMING NEWFEED
 @15:02:55/07-20-74

KNIGHT ERRANT OFFICERS END SERIAL RAPE, KIDNAPPING RING LINKED TO ORK UNDERGROUND

SEATTLE—Heroic Knight Errant Security officers earlier this morning stopped what could be the beginning of a new human trafficking ring through the Ork Underground area of Seattle. Seven individuals, all orks and suspected members of the Skraacha gang, were arrested in the act of trying to lure several females into the underground for purposes of selling them in one of the Underground's slavery rings following a night of revelry at the famed Dante's Inferno Club. Knight Errant officers were alerted to the situation when they received an anonymous emergency call from a concerned individual who saw the gang members approach the group of three women, two humans and one elf, at the club. According to the witness, the gang members gave the women several drug-laced drinks before attempting to take them to the Ork Underground. Knight Errant officers responded and trailed the would-be kidnapers to a known entrance of the Ork Underground before making the arrest. After a brief engagement where the officers had to result to lethal force to end the confrontation, all seven of the SINless gangsters were taken to an undisclosed Knight Errant facility where five are now being treated for their wounds as formal charges are filed with the District Attorney's office. The victims suffered no injury and were so confused by their intoxication that they did not even realize they were about to be abducted, despite their claims that the gangsters were friends. Assistant DA Mark Blackfern, speaking outside of the DA's office earlier today said "Despite the current political situation, the DA's office will focus on its mission to prosecute criminals to the fullest extent of the law and not let any fickle political considerations influence how it operates. These individuals will get exactly what is required by law."

FROM THE SHADOWS INTO THE LIGHT

- OK people, here is where things start to get a bit more dicey. Up until now, this file was a pretty straightforward, bare-bones history lesson. Well, now we're getting into the good stuff, the shadow stuff; the things that John and Jane Q Public never got the full story on. The next bloc of info may not have as much politics as one may expect, but it's essential to what's been going on of late. This is also the point where I'm starting to cobble this together as we speak, so if I repeat myself and things read rough, well tough drek. At this point you're reading a file that isn't more than an hour old at most. Now, I think I've done a better than

average job in compiling the next few files, because frankly for a lot of it; I was there and I wrote a lot of it as such. But I'm not omnipotent and if anyone has anything to add, please do so because I still have some holes I need filling for my own personal ... projects. One ground rule however: do NOT ask me about my daughter. I'm already gonna be spilling my guts and telling *everything* I have concerning the incidents she was involved in, but I'm only gonna do it *once*, scan? Remember, keep it professional and on topic because I still have that hammer.

- Bull

HOW WE GOT HERE

Much of the information presented in this section is from the *Shadowrun: Missions* products: CMP 2010-02 *Copycat Killer*, SRM 04-01 *Hiding in the Dark*, SRM 04-03 *Rally Cry*, SRM 04-05 *On a Silver Platter*, SRM 04-07 *Burn*, and SRM 04-09 *Assassin Nation*. As such, there are spoilers from those adventures. It is recommended, but not necessary, to review these adventures before reading the rest of this section. Alternately, if reading this section interests you in running or playing in some of the described events, the Missions are available resources to help you organize various plot points into adventures.

SHADOW HISTORY: EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

History will undoubtedly say several things about the campaign for the Prop 23 and I have no doubt that it will be remembered as one of pain, sacrifice, and bloodshed. And that's just based on what the public knows about. For those of us in the shadows or living in the Underground, we know a bit more. No matter which way Prop 23 goes, things will never be the same in Seattle. Events have been set in motion for the past few months that many people won't be able to just explain away. It may not happen soon, but eventually everything that's happened during this campaign will come back to haunt them, myself included. I'm positive on this. I know of one specific person in particular, but more on that later, I'm still sifting through the data and don't want to get ahead of myself.

While the public and political-types continued with their little media games, people continued to battle it out on the picket lines, polling stations, and Matrix chat-sites. We in the shadows however have bigger concerns, such as getting paid and not getting caught in the various crossfires. When the campaign started, it was business as usual in the shadows. There were jobs a plenty for anyone willing to work for either side of Prop 23 as long as you didn't mind the political stuff, but it wasn't anything out of the ordinary and things were kept where they should have been, in the shadows. That was until several notable events that started in the shadows and were connected to Prop 23 blew the lid off everything and catapulted the sprawl into the chaos we've been enjoying oh-so-much lately.

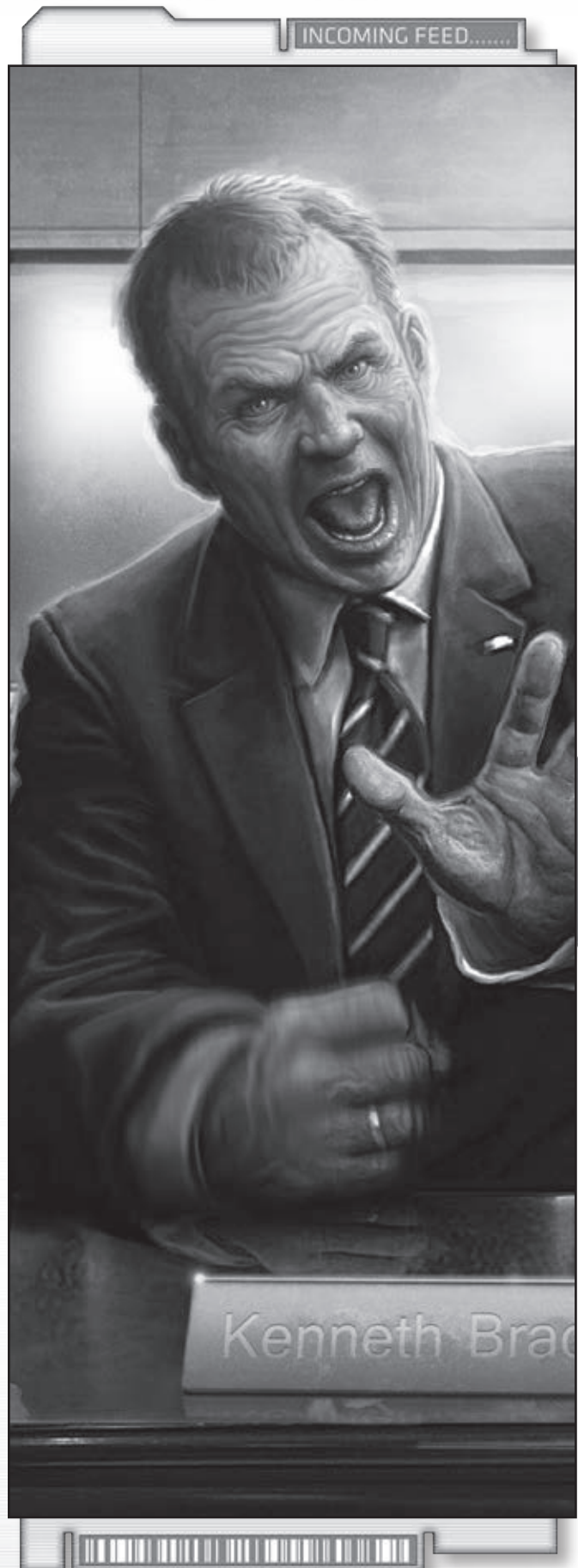


In a perfect world, it would be easy to paint a nice, neat, linear picture of events so everyone will easily be able to see what was going on and all the connections. But, obviously nothing is ever perfect let alone easy so here is what I have so far.

Almost two years ago, when Prop 23 was nothing more than an idea being tossed around various Seattle kaffhouses, two drekheads started something that not only affected the future campaign, but also brought yours truly into the mix—and I hate them for it with every fiber of my being. Drekhead number one was George Mathers, a former VP with Knight Errant who ran the records department, Seattle Division. Drekhead number two is Edmund Jefferies, press secretary of none other than Governor Kenneth Brackhaven. You see, these two were old college chums who thought it would be an absolute hoot if someone like the Mayan Cutter (the serial killer who liked to carve up metahumans, mostly orks, from back about '71 and helped facilitate Lone Star's departure from Seattle and Knight Errant's ascendance) were to come back and continue the work to help solve the "metahuman issue." So Mathers decided to impress his friend and hire some psycho to pose as a copycat killer to stir things up. One of his first victims was a college girl who was doing nothing more than researching the Underground for her thesis. Eventually, runners were brought in and the killer was found and taken care of. It would take a year of searching before I discovered Mathers' identity, and by then the campaign for Prop 23 well underway with me balls-deep in the middle of it. But hold that thought for now.

More foreshadowing to the coming storm came up when the District Attorney's office (specifically a spunky, do-gooding, crusading ADA named Dana Oaks) decided to try to clean up Seattle's streets by going after some of the criminal elements in the Underground. One of her first targets was Johnny "Junior" Torinni, a high-level gangster and all-around bad guy associated with the Finnegan operation. The truth was, while Torinni was a ruthless mob boss, he was also a benefactor for the Underground and used most of his ill-gotten gains to improve conditions for his fellow orks. This gained him not only a lot of wealth and influence to throw around, but a great deal of loyalty from the Underground's inhabitants. Still, Oaks wanted to take Torinni down because of the havoc he was causing topside (murders, vice, rackets, the usual stuff). Knight Errant was tasked to take him down, but after several failed attempts to infiltrate Torinni's operation (which resulted in at least one officer's death), Oaks was forced to turn to shadowrunners to deal with Junior. Now, no one is truly sure of what happened, but Junior eventually disappeared and left a power vacuum in the Underground's criminal scene. Hold this thought too because it'll also come up again.

- Oh, come off it Bull, quit jerking us around. You know exactly what happened to Torinni. I know for a fact you tried to influence the runners who were going after him. I don't care about that mind you, but you said you were going to, how did you put it, give us the "chip truth." So what really happened?
- Riser
- Still chasing rumors I see. Well, give it up, Riser. It's not worth your time and Torinni's gone. That's all I'm gonna say about it.
- Bull



When Prop 23 made its way onto the ballot, both sides knew that very unconventional tactics would be needed if Prop 23 was going to have any chance of passing. People were simply going to have to be convinced that it was the right thing to do, but also various detractors would have to be removed from play to weaken the opposition's ability to rally against it. The decision was eventually made to target one of the opposition's key figures: Congressman James Grey. Again, runners would be used to help slightly ding the distinguished gentleman's image just slightly by making sure that he was spotted at a Humanis rally.

Incoming Message

>>NewsNET STREAMING NEWFEED
@18:00:01/10-14-74

POSSIBLE PROBE INTO CONGRESSMAN GREY'S CONNECTIONS TO HUMANIS POLICLUB

SEATTLE – Earlier today, a government press release announced that Congressman James Grey of Seattle is scheduled to face a congressional inquiry panel in DeeCee later this month to answer questions regarding his attendance of an anti-Proposition 23 rally sponsored by the Humanis policlub last week. The purpose of the inquiry is to determine any wrongdoing and if any official government action or sanction is to be taken against the three-term Seattle congressman. Congressman Grey's office issued its own release soon after the announcement that asserts the congressman's position that he was "kidnapped and forcibly coerced" into attending the rally in question by a group of unknown individuals. Since the alleged incident, Congressman Grey has not made any public appearances and his legal representatives maintain his claims of innocence and have stated that this is a witch hunt because the FBI is still investigating. They also stated that the inquiry was a "desperate and deliberate act to slander a public official for political gain." FBI Special Agent Seth Dietrich, in charge of the initial investigation, has stated that the case is still "ongoing" but did not make any further comments.

The run went off without too many hitches and Congressmen Grey found himself spending quality time not with his mistress but with a whole lot of unwanted attention from the public. Before any formal charges were brought against him, the distinguished gentleman decided to withdraw from public service and retire to an undisclosed location in the Carib League. The plan worked a bit too well. Darn.

- And of course you had nothing to do with that, huh, Bull?
- Netcat
- Oh frag yeah I did. Who do you think hired the runners in the first place? Now I had nothing against Grey per say, but the man was a cheating, backstabbing, hypocritical political scum. Sooner or later

he was gonna get pinched. Might as well get it over with and serve a higher purpose at the same time. It was all biz.

• Bull

By the time the Grey scandal was winding down and things were heating up topside, other events in the Underground were starting up. It never got any press, and even few in the Underground really knew what was happening at the time, but certain individuals and groups were on the move. Because of Torinni's abrupt departure, several contenders to the throne rose up and tried to take his place. Now, infighting between various criminal elements in the Underground is nothing new. With all the various criminal empires making use of the Underground's unique status, it's inevitable, even accepted to a degree, that there will be occasional flare-ups. As long as overall business isn't affected and chaos stayed under relative control, no one cared. For months, various factions went at each other to take a piece of the Torinni pie, until Gordo Buck, Torinni's former lieutenant and head leg-breaker/skull basher/dead-people-maker achieved a pyrrhic victory and finally took control of what was left of Torinni's operation.

And while the criminals of the Underground took five to lick their wounds and prepare for various reprisals, I was busy trying to help Project Freedom despite themselves. About this time, the celebrity endorsements came out, and while it gave PF a needed boost of confidence, it gave too many an unhealthy dose of arrogance and sense of invincibility, especially among the younger, more radically minded elements. Helen Shaard was too busy with overall strategy to deal with everyone and every problem, and my words were falling on deaf ears. Too many were convinced that they knew what was best for the Underground and became oblivious to the undercurrent of discontent that was brewing among the Underground's residents and from threats both outside and within.

- Fun fact: the majority of Project Freedom; meaning the ORC, MOM, and so on, were not residents of the Ork Underground. And none of them bothered to actually ask anyone in the Underground if they wanted to become the focal point for a cause on metahuman rights. Project Freedom just assumed they would and off they went. So there's no surprise at some of the things that later happened.
- Sunshine

Unfortunately, I was unable to do much about the situation as previous personal issues got my attention. After a year of digging and kicking over rocks, I hit paydata and found out about George Mathers and how he hired the copycat killer. But because I was caught between personal justice and Project Freedom, I turned to my virtual book o' runners to hire a few trusted names to go retrieve Mathers. But before the meet, I got blown up (again) by what I found out (after I woke up) was a Humanis agent at my (used to be) new base of operations, the Gold Mine Bar, which had been owned by Junior Torinni. Ironic. Damn shame though—I liked the place while I had it. Thankfully, a good chum of mine (despite being a cop), his team, and the runners picked up the ball and ran with it for me while a street doc kept my hoop together. Eventually, Mathers was taken care of and evidence proving he was responsible for hiring the copycat killer was recovered from a group of Humanis slags along with several other pieces of information.

SEATTLE



First was — surprise, surprise — that he had ties to Humanis (as if the slags guarding him wasn't a clue). I also got evidence linking him directly to Brackhaven's press secretary, Drekhead Two (a.k.a. Edmund Jefferies) and peripherally to the governor himself. Seems Mathers wasn't only a racist (surprise, surprise again), but was also a member of Humanis with access to their upper echelon, and he was also a major Brackhaven re-election donor. I also found out I wasn't as clever as I thought. Apparently there was a mole among the people who were helping me track Mathers down, and he alerted him to my plans to hire runners. Yeah, that's why I got blowed up. All was taken care of though; my cop chum took care of the mole with extreme prejudice during a raid with the runners to recover Drekhead One and bring him to me. And yeah, my son and I got exactly what we needed from that scum. Unfortunately my wounds took me mostly out of the action—just when things got really bad.

- In case anyone wants to know, his cop buddy is Detective Theodore "Tosh" Athack, head of a special crime task force made up of former runners known as the Black Knights. They do a lot of things we shadowrunners do, but for a KE paycheck. Tosh also has a good working relationship with Dana Oaks, and the two have closed a lot of cases together. They're as good as any elite runner team, and they have their parent corp's backing. But then, Tosh is known to accept a little on the side, especially for assistance. So if you find yourself on the other side of them, maybe you can use that as some leverage. That and the fact that one of them was the mole. I wonder what DA Oaks would think about that, with her precious rep for being clean and all ...
- Riser
- Damn you to hell, Riser! I kept his name out for a reason! I think the rest of this discussion would be better off without you.
- Bull
- Stop right there, Bull. I may a little be out of it, but I can still take the hammer back. Don't squander the trust I put in you.
- FastJack
- *growls* Fine, but this isn't over.
- Bull

About six months after Junior Torinni's disappearance from the Underground, a rash of firebombs destroyed several chunks of the Underground. Had it continued, Prop 23 would have been a moot point. Nobody seemed to know who or what was responsible. Normally, no one would risk pissing off the various elements from the underground because there would be swift and massive retaliation. But with the Underground's criminal operations in bad shape, their information gathering networks and their overall strength were gutted after their little "civil war." And the Skraacha were good at keeping the peace but not much else. They too had taken hits in recent months helping with Project Freedom's efforts and several were lost in the first round of fire bombings. The Underground was wide open.

No sooner had I gotten some trusted associates looking into the situation than the next round of attacks hit. This time, a schoolhouse was the target. Several children were scarred and maimed while several more were just gone. My associates were

able to get some information from a smuggler named Cap'n Jack Turner after they were able to expedite his check-out from the local KE hotel. Long story short, he knew how and where to find those responsible for the bombings. But in the ensuing fight to get the firebombers, none were taken alive. It wasn't that my people got sloppy or anything, from what I've been able to determine, none of them let themselves be taken alive. Worse yet, I still don't know who was ultimately responsible for this. All I have to go on now is a few busted commlinks that were stolen from a KE evidence locker. My son and I did a lot of legwork trying to run down anything we could learn about these links, but we found zip.

Things were already damn bleak in the Underground and we were about ready to pop in anger and frustration. So of course things got worse. But this time, it wasn't just the Underground that got the drek sandwich—the topsiders got a nice big bite as well.

THE PRICE OF ARROGANCE

I was recovering in my son's doss and on a healthy regimen of slightly illegal pain meds when I heard the news from him that most of Project Freedom's leadership, including Helen Shaard, and several PF members had been gunned down during a planning session by a group of assassins. The funny thing was, I wasn't surprised. Furious, but not surprised. Honestly, I wondered why it took someone so long to try something like this. I tried to warn them, but none of them, not even Helen Shaard, would listen. They placed too much faith in the goodwill of their fellow orks and the righteousness of their cause to keep them safe. Damn fools. They were good people, but they were blind to the stakes and a lot of the realities of this world. They also didn't want to see that some in the Underground didn't want to go legit. Biz in the Underground takes in *millions* every year and there is no way that any one of several possible individuals or groups would jeopardize that by letting KE or anyone else get in their way if Prop 23 passes. Money trumps a cause every time.

But there wasn't anything I could do now except find out what happened and who did it. I had to work fast because this one put the Skraacha on the warpath and planning reprisals. It wasn't that hard, thankfully, we had a witness. Kathleen Shaard, Helen's twenty-year-old daughter, was at the meeting with her mother. When the assassins struck, she had been saved when her mother's body fell on her, shielding her from view. Thankfully, the lead assassin was either in a hurry or got sloppy because he didn't check to see if the job was finished. After getting a description of the lead assassin, I tried to get a hold of my KE contact but found out he was already buried in his own drekstorm.

Project Freedom weren't the only ones hit; DA David Beatty, most of the ADAs, and several associate attorneys were also murdered in similar fashions. Knight Errant was put on high alert, and people topside went a little crazy. Government officials and private citizens were panicking amid rumors and accusations flying around as to who was responsible. Of course, Project Freedom was being blamed but no one outside of the Underground knew that the project's leadership had been shattered.

I continued to look into things as best I could, and with the help of my son and a trusted associate, a former Skraacha named Ca'Kal (formerly Ca'Tan, but I won't go into Or'zet naming traditions) who I've taken under my wing, made some startling



/repost from: KSAF homepage, 09-12-74

MURDER ROCKS THE SEATTLE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE!

DA David Beatty, ADA Dana Oaks confirmed dead along with several others; ADA Mark Blackfern named interim DA, vows to bring perpetrators to justice

By Athena Totopolous, KSAF EIC

SEATTLE, UCAS – Fifteen minutes ago, Knight Errant security services confirmed that six members of the DA's office are dead today following a bloody killing spree that claimed the lives of not only those working with for the DA's office, but at least ten of their family members as well. Detective Theodore Athack of Knight Errant Special Crimes Task Force said "I can't reveal what little details we have at this time, but we have reason to believe that a single group of individuals is responsible for the attacks and that we have solid leads we are following up on." Newly appointed Acting District Attorney Mark Blackfern also had this to say. "This is simply a needless tragedy. Those killed were nothing but loyal servants to the citizens of Seattle, committed to the highest ideals of justice. I'm both shocked and disgusted at the brutality of these murders, but not surprised considering the current political climate and the upcoming issues in the next election cycle. The DA's office will do everything in its power to see that the full weight and measure of the law be brought down on those responsible for this."

click [here](#) for more

discoveries of my own. First was that several members of the Skraacha had turned against Project Freedom and had been lured into working for gangster Gordo Buck with promises of money and power (isn't that always how it goes?). From what we learned, Buck used the frustration and growing resentment many of the gangers felt for Project Freedom (blaming them for all the recent trouble) to get them working for him. Even I was surprised to learn that almost half of the Skraacha had signed up with Buck and Ca'Kal was furious.

Eventually, I was able to make contact with my KE contact and we compared notes. Not only did I find out that Dana Oaks was alive, but we were able to determine that the lead on both the hits on the DA's office and Project Freedom was a burn-out adept known as Harbinger, who in turn worked for an international terrorist-technomancer known as Anarchy. This entire cluster-frag was all Anarchy's plan. Seems the sick psycho gets off on death and chaos and approached not only Gordo Buck, but also ADA, or should I say, acting DA Mark Blackfern with a plan to put them both in positions of power no matter which way Prop 23 went. To make the plan stick, Anarchy's boy Harbinger framed an unwitting group of runners for all the murders in hopes that either KE or the Skraacha would take them out and case closed.

But no plan survives contact. My KE contact was able to get to the runners first and we were able to convince the them (funny how easy it is when the payment is getting multiple murder charges off your head) to deal with Anarchy. The technomancer-terrorist was eventually captured, Blackfern was outed as a conspirator, Oaks turned up not dead (thanks to a detective who got her into secret protective custody) and the runners were able to clear their names and lived to run another day. Unfortunately, Gordo Buck is still at large. But not for much longer.

- Anarchy—I never knew he was real. I thought he was a rumor. I'm glad he's been taken care of. His kind give all technos a bad name.
- Netcat
- You all know what I'm going to say, but it doesn't make it any less true. Prime example of what I've been saying for years! Now maybe people will fucking *listen*!
- Clockwork
- Anarchy is the exception, not the rule. But they are not put out of play so easily.
- Puck
- They? WTF? Now Puck sounds like Man-Of-Many-Names. Why do I suddenly have a tight feeling in my gut?
- Snopes

CURRENT EVENTS: A SPRAWL ON THE BRINK

Of all the events that have happened, the Anarchy situation has had the greatest impact on the city thus far. The copycat killer and the fire bombings were largely contained within the Underground and the general public knew little about it at first, didn't care, or saw only facts mangled in the name of politics and or ratings. But the DA Murders, as it became known, shook the public in a way not felt since the Mayan Cutter. This was not something that could be hidden away, it was out there for the entire sprawl to see, naked and raw. Suddenly, people in power felt scared and predictably overreacted, calling for the Metroplex Guard to augment KE patrols. Gun sales went up almost two hundred percent and just about everyone was walking around with itchy trigger fingers.

- Oh dear ghost, I can't believe this happened to me. I had just finished an easy run and gotten a nice payday from Mr. Johnson so I decided to hit up a bar and have a few. On my way in, a truck carrying a lot of scrap takes a corner edge and bounces the stuff in the back; it sounded like a gunshot. At least seven people on the street suddenly draw at nothing, and one actually cranks off a round ... which got me right in the ass! Had to spend a good chunk of my payday to a street doc to get the slug out! Good thing it was only a light pistol round; otherwise someone would have died.
- Stone
- Get better armor for your ass.
- Picador

- There were other reasons people were afraid. While it wasn't talked about in the mainstream news much, word of mouth about the events in the Underground got out to the general public. Rather than uniting in misery to end the violence, it polarized many and further entrenched the belief that Prop 23 was the cause for all the current problems.
- Sunshine
- Do you honestly believe that people are ever going to do otherwise?
- Black Mamba

People were scared and on edge. Knight Errant stepped up their patrols and a limited deployment of the Metroplex Guard was called up, mainly to guard key infrastructure sites like Sea-Tac Airport, the Everett shipyards, and power facilities. But in certain areas, Seattle was almost like a ghost town. No one wanted to venture out for fear of what else may happen.

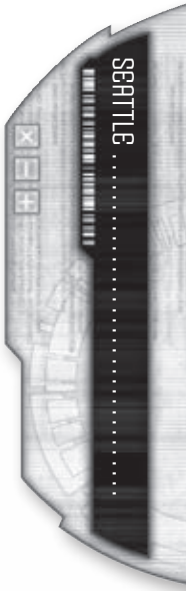
- I wonder why no one has hit on this yet, but the corps had already taken notice. Because of the violence, business was down across the board. Sales figures in all categories dropped by at least thirty-seven percent by the time of the Anarchy incident and fell another six percent right after. Non-corp citizens were also calling in sick more often and general services were down, which also impacted business. Needless to say, when the consumers are not consuming, the corps are not happy.
- Mr. Bonds

The Seattle Government was also hampered in its operations. The courts were especially hit hard as cases backed up, with several defendants going free because of court deadlines and loss of evidence. The government was also unable to function properly with the courts backlogged. Dana Oaks was made Acting DA and given the herculean task of getting things back on track. Thankfully for her, new temporary federal attorneys were brought in from DeeCee and Boston to help, but all over the city things were still a mess.

Meanwhile the campaign for Prop 23 continued. On the pro-23 side, Kathleen Shaard stepped up and took the reins for Project Freedom from her mother. Although she had a lot of courage, she didn't have the political savvy and the sheer force of will to keep things going. As much as I hated it, I was forced to step in and lend more of a hand and because of it, somehow, people started thinking I was in charge. Dammit. But with the public too focused on the DA murders (and their own well-being) and convinced that Project Freedom was directly responsible, the lead we enjoyed in the polls dropped. If not for an impassioned speech by Kathleen on an episode of *NewsNET Tonight*, I think we would have tanked completely, and we're actually grateful for a tie again in the polls. But by now people were tired, and both sides wished that the entire thing was over with, despite having to keep fighting for any advantage to push us over the top. Violence is still continuing, the rallies, counter-rallies, and demonstrations are still happening. Pundits are still slinging mud like a Vindicator spits out lead. Everything has changed, yet nothing has changed. The fight for Prop 23 is going to go to the bitter end. At least the end is in sight; I hope we won't lose too many more people before we get to it.

CURRENT EVENTS: LIFE SUCKING IN NEAR-REAL TIME

- I posted that last part about four hours ago and thought I had just enough time to get some sleep, but I had to deal with something at the same time. Biz, gotta love it. I'll give the facts as I know them after I've had time to take my meds and get some kaf going. But, just like the heading says, we've finally caught up to now. I've also got a few more tidbits about some other things to share but before I post those, I wanted to check out the election news updates. The polls opened an hour ago and already speculation is running wild, and so are the people. Last night I found out that a group of runners got into it big time and stirred up a whole lot of trouble that could lead to trouble for the government later. I had a feeling that things were going to be a circus, and goons really I wish I was wrong. Brackhaven prepared for something like this, and not only has Knight Errant put anyone with a badge out on the streets, but so has the entire Metroplex Guard and Joint Task Force: Seattle has been mobilized! Nice to see President Colloton cares enough to authorize *that* for us. So far, things have been contained and no one has done anything radically stupid, but give it time. None of the law is putting up with any drek, though. Already the area around two polling stations had to be emptied of everyone but workers and voters after a potential situation developed. And if you don't have your PAN active for ID, look out. But it's only the first hour—several more to go before Prop 23 is decided. I've left the file open so feel free to keep commenting but right now, I'm just gonna sit back, drink my kaf, have a couple breakfast burritos, post anything relevant that may pop up, and pray to ghost ... wait no, scratch that, I'm not gonna invoke Murphy at this point.
- Bull
- Speaking of, was anyone else at or at least saw the rally Brackhaven popped up at last night? Made some "surprise" speech and managed not to make a single racist or racial-leaning remark. It was all about how the Underground should follow the rest of Seattle's example and bring themselves up and not on the backs of the rest of "us." Was a real rah-rah kind of thing and had the crowd going. Until someone, I'm still trying to find out who, got up and asked the governor a few questions and fired back about the "hard-working souls of the Underground who just want their fair share." Heh, her little question turned into a speech of her own and made Brackhaven look like one hell of an elitist snob, if not a racist. Bravo to her. I just wish I could find out who she really is.
- Pistons
- What, can't find the identity of one meager person anymore? You slipping, Pistons?
- Slamm-0!
- Whatever, see if I ever babysit for you again. I've run every data search and facial recognition program I have and nothing. I've even tried to find out who she was with at the speech and nothing. With the way I'm not finding anything, I think that she may have been a runner.
- Pistons



- One hell of a run if that's the case. I'm surprised she didn't get shot during her speech. Maybe after ... check the local morgue's records, Pistons. You may find her there.
- Glitch
- Hey, you know who we haven't seen? Aufheben. I definitely would have pegged him as pro-23 and figured that the dipshit anarchist would have said something anti-establishment by now.
- /dev/grrl
- Aufheben won't be saying much for a while. Remember how he ran his mouth in the Bogotá write-up about his people going after pro-Azzie mercs? Well he didn't find any, but he did finally mouth off to the wrong person and now he's cooling his heels in a MASH near the Yucatan with a shattered jaw.
- Marcos
- Can still type though. When I get time.
- Aufheben
- Got an election update! Check this out...
- Netcat
- HAHHAH!!!! That's soooo going in my home node somewhere.
- Slamm-0!
- Too bad that dwarf is likely in KE custody right now for assault.
- Glitch
- I recognize that voice—both of them actually. I wouldn't worry about them.
- Bull
- Hey, before I go to bed, I have something to run by everyone. The guy Bull called Drekhead Two, Edmund Jefferies—I just got some intel that someone's looking for him. I've gotten some offers to go after him myself but I have something else I could be working on. Money is good, but I need to know if it would be worth my time.
- Sticks
- Damn. I know a few things, but I'm still putting it together and it's nothing I can say here, not yet. I'll IM you what I know, Sticks.
- Bull
- Hey, does that have anything to do with a bowling alley, because I just found out that my favorite one just got trashed! Someone's gonna pay!
- Slamm-0!
- Oh no, it looks like someone finally snapped. Here we go!!!
- FastJack

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ANNOUNCER: This is a NewsNET special report! At the election coverage control center in the heart of Seattle, here is anchor Shelby Sweet!

SWEET: Good morning and thank you for tuning in for our Proposition 23 vote coverage! The polls have been open for almost two hours now and we've started to receive results from the various districts. Now bear in mind that the polls are still scheduled to be open until 1900 PST tonight which leaves several hours left to get your votes in! Now, let's look at our NewsNET Vote-Tracker 3000 system to get a update on the current exit poll results. *pause* Based on early estimates, it seems the numbers are not favoring Proposition 23, but only by a slim margin of two percent. To give us some perspective on this vote, we now go live to reporter Joe Martin at one of the voting centers in Downtown. Joe?

MARTIN: Thank you, Shelby! As you can see behind me that the lines to get into the voting center are extremely long. Most of the people you see here have already been waiting at least two hours, and many arrived at least three hours before the opening of the polls. Thankfully, the polls have been quiet so far with no real indications of violence reported in the city, no doubt thanks to the vigilance of Knight Errant Security forces. But with the events of the past few months, the government is taking no chances. Still, there is a kind of tension in the air, likely from the fear of the past few month's events. But this has not stopped several from coming out and doing their civic duty, like this gentleman here. Excuse me, sir, Joe Martin, NewsNET. May I ask you about ...

CITIZEN (male ork): *CENSORED* off.

MARTIN: Fair enough. How about you ma'am?

CITIZEN (female dwarf): What he said.

MARTIN: Are you sure you don't want to say anything about not only the historical importance but the relevance this vote will have on Seattle? Not to mention how Proposition 23 has become a symbolic proxy vote on metahuman rights? Or how it will affect the financial situation of ...

CITIZEN (female dwarf): No, now get out of my face before I tas ...

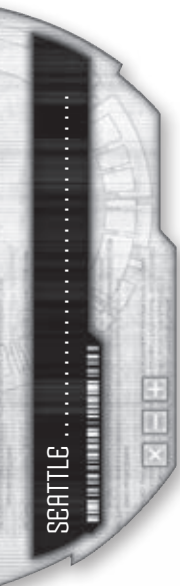
MARTIN: Surely you must have some comment?

Sound of electrical discharge

MARTIN: AHHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!!

microphone disengages due to high volume

SWEET: We seem to be experiencing technical difficulties. We'll try to get back to Joe Martin late today. With the polls now open, citizens are reminded to take extra care on their way to vote today. This includes having your PAN active at all times and staying out of the designated "no entry" zones. Citizens are also encouraged to use public transportation today and stay off the roads as much as possible. For more information on how to get to the nearest polling centers and to review the special rules for today's voting visit the NewsNET matrix homepage for all your news, and information needs. From the election coverage control center, I'm Shelby Sweet!

/end data feed/



INCOMING FEED.....

Incoming Message

/streaming feed/KSAF: enabled/transcribing/

TOTOPOLOUS: This is Athena Totopolous, coming to you live from the KSAF headquarters somewhere in Seattle! I've just received word from KSAF field reporter Travis Ryder that violence has broken out at a polling station between anti- and pro-Proposition 23 supporters. We now go live to Travis in Everett!

RYDER: Athena, about five minutes ago <sounds of fighting in background, loud screams, heavy engines> an unknown group of individuals started opening fire with a heavy machine gun, small-arms fire, and improvised incendiary devices on the polling station here in Everett! <explosion sounds> Knight Errant units were quick to respond, but patrols were overwhelmed by the initial attack and had to take cover until KE High Threat Response officers could respond but now it seems ... **get down!!!** *microphone cuts out, loud explosion* **/transmission lost/**

TOTOPOLOUS: Travis? **Travis?! Are you still there!** Damn. Here at KSAF, we are receiving reports of attacks breaking out at voting stations in Auburn, Renton, and Tacoma. Knight Errant officers are currently responding. We'll have more as information becomes available. Meanwhile, stay tuned to KSAF for all your news needs! **/feed terminated/**

- Looks like it's gonna be a long day in Seattle.
- Snopes

/File edited,4.1mp deleted/authorized admin: Bull/

- OK, it's now 2054 PST and the polls are closed. I deleted the last several hours of chatter because, well, it was idle chatter that didn't really have anything to do with the topic at hand and frankly some of it freaked me the frag out. I have to say: What the frag is wrong with you people! But back on track. Despite various outbreaks of violence throughout the day, things were relatively calm and no one died. But then I guess when you have UCAS military armored vehicles moving through Downtown and other areas, it puts a dampener on any plans of civil disobedience. According to the news outlets, all the votes have been cast, and an official announcement for the results is scheduled at 2100. No one is sure how it's going to go because the polls have been predicting a damn near tie all day, just like it was before the vote. OK, I've rambled on enough, looks like the announcement is starting.
- Bull

SEATTLE



/streaming feed/KSAF, NewsNET, Truman Global News, Pathfinder Multimedia Studios,* various unknown sources*: enabled/transcribing/

ANOUNCER: Ladies and Gentlemen, the head of the Seattle Board of Elections, Michael Greensprings.

GREENSPRINGS: Thank you and good evening. I would remind the press that I am not here to answer any questions, so please act accordingly. Any questions after the announcement will be directed to the Board of Elections Press representative. Tonight, on behalf of the Seattle Board of Elections, I am here with the results for the special election on Seattle House Proposition 23, the so-called "Project Freedom" resolution. This resolution, as it was proposed, ratified for vote by the city-state of Seattle, and as written if passed will grant the Ork Underground status as a legally recognized district of the city-state of Seattle with all the rights and responsibilities such a designation grants and requires under current law. We have confirmed the results of each individual authorized voting station, tabulated the total votes, and then re-tabulated to confirm the results because of the extreme narrow margin between said results. As of November 4, 2074, the final results on the vote for Proposition Twenty Three is: 6.5 percent of the total vote was deemed invalid because they did not meet legal ballot standards, 47.5 percent for ... and 46.5 percent against. Proposition Twenty-Three has passed.

microphone cuts out, excessive noise from audience

/feed terminated/

- Holy ... fucking ... Ghost ...
- Slamm-0!
- They did it, I can't believe the fucking sons of bitches did it.
- Pistons
- There goes the neighborhood. Or is that now, here comes the neighborhood?
- Glitch
- Everyone smell that? That's the smell of the Seattle Government shitting themselves all at once. And the worst of it is coming from the governor's mansion.
- Kane
- Sure it's not coming from KE's main offices?
- Hard Exit
- Damn, even I don't have anything to say.
- Clockwork

/streaming feed/KSAF, NewsNET, Truman Global News, Pathfinder Multimedia Studios,* various unknown sources*: enabled/transcribing/ featured audio: ATHENA TOTOPOLOUS

TOTOPOLOUS: ... and now the Governor of Seattle is making his way to the podium in front of the Governor's Mansion to begin his statement.

BRACKHAVEN: My fellow citizens of Seattle ... I shall be brief. According to the Board of Elections, the ballots for Proposition 23 have been counted, recounted, and verified in accordance with the law. I have no desire to contest these results, but as governor, I am responsible for the legal citizens of Seattle. And therefore, I am ordering an official recount. This order is not based on any personal feelings, despite what many may say, but is mandated by UCAS law in all cases where votes are decided by such slim margins. This is not an attempt by myself, or my administration, to alter the results but rather to confirm that this is indeed the will of all the legal citizens of Seattle. And if it is indeed their will, then so be it. But, in anticipation of integrating the Ork Underground into the infrastructure and legal system of Seattle, I will initiate, in earnest, plans to do so as soon as possible. And despite rumors about my personal feelings and beliefs, I welcome the legal citizens of the Underground and hope to make this transition as easy as possible. The real work is yet to come and my administration will work diligently to make sure that this new addition to our home city-state is a smooth one, but one that will not hinder, but enhance us through cooperation and hard work. I will also do my own due diligence to see that all the rights the citizens living there get what they are now entitled to.

TOTOPOLOUS: That was Governor Kenneth Brackhaven outside of the governor's mansion, hurrying off the stage after giving his first address about the passing of Proposition 23. We're having problems with our audio systems, but it appears that the governor handed off questions to his Chief of Staff Emile Corrigan, who appears is not going to answer any questions and is now also heading back to the governor's mansion himself after a somewhat surprising statement. Please stay linked to KSAF; coming up next we will have expert analysis from our political panel following some words from our sponsors.

/feed terminated/

- W0000! Prop 23 party at my place tonight!!!
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Well, the Underground better get ready. The fun's just getting started. Media outlets are going nuts right now. Several

politicians and businessmen are already calling for another recount and an independent investigation. Accusations of fraud and ballot tampering are already flying. Anyone know how the markets are doing?

- Sunshine
- Yes, it's already having an effect. Local stocks just dropped twenty points, and international markets just dropped six. It's not just people in Seattle that are panicking. Boston, Hong Kong, Neo-Tokyo ... all over, everyone is going nuts right now.
- Mr. Bonds
- Holy! I can see a fuck-ton of lights just go up from here! You guys at war or something?
- Orbital DK
- Not yet, but maybe. Either way, there's gonna be a lot of work for us REAL soon. Hey, Brackhaven's coming on to make a statement.
- Sticks
- So Brackhaven's strategy becomes clear—legal obstruction. If you think this is going to end after a simple recount, I want some of what you're smoking.
- Cosmo
- It's going to go beyond that, yeah. Here's the thing—if they just throw out the bad ballots, then Prop 23 actually gets more than fifty percent of the votes, and it passes. If they find some way to count them, even as abstentions or votes for a third candidate, then Prop 23 is under fifty percent, and you can bet that Brackhaven's people will argue that the prop needs more than fifty percent to pass.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Does it?
- Nephrine
- It's too late to go delving into election law. Ask me tomorrow. I'm sure the issue will still be around then.
- Kay St. Irregular
- So Bull—you haven't commented yet. Are you OK?
- FastJack
- Bull?
- Netcat
- Yeah, I'm here. Just in a bit of shock I guess. Needed a moment to take it all in. I'm closing the file for now, I have a lot of work to do and I need time to get things straight.
- Bull
- Hey, why is Corrigan answering questions, not Edmund Jefferies, Brackhaven's press secretary?
- Plan-9

AFTERMATH AND CONSEQUENCES

Posted by: Bull

All right, I've had a little time to dig out, rest, and put my head together. The Ork Underground has been a Seattle district for exactly one day now—okay, not really, it doesn't become official until early next year—and well, it's hard for something to change overnight although everyone knows it has. It just hasn't sunk in yet. I'm still not sure this was a good idea, but for better or worse, this is what we have to work with. Still, I find that it's not all bad. Some orks are walking just a bit taller now, but for the most part it's still business as usual. Brackhaven is a walking scum-pile, but he was right about one thing: There's a lot of work to do. Everyone's been holding their breath for the past day, expecting some doomsday attack or something like that. But, so far nothing. Doesn't mean a drekking thing though. Mark my words, there will be a reckoning.

But like I said, for now Seattle is going on with business as usual. The past year or so has been hard, and everyone is wondering where all this will go, but at least now everyone can take a breath. There were no more attacks, at least not the normal kind. No legions of Humanis or Alamos 20K or bug spirits, or Dunkelzahn's pissed off toxic spirit to try to smite us. But hey, it's still early in the week. I think everyone is just too damn exhausted mentally and physically to do anything right now. Like on an old 2-D show I once saw when I was a kid, "No boom today, boom tomorrow ... always boom tomorrow."

For the Underground especially, it's time to recover. The victory party was one to remember, at least for those who were for Prop 23. The rest, well they're keeping their mouths shut, heads down, and bracing for the worst. They know what's going to happen eventually and already I'm hearing talks of a mini-exodus. Many think Project Freedom was a big mistake and that their souls were sold out from underneath them. Can't say I blame them. Had it not been for my own unique situation ... well that doesn't matter now. Where they plan on going, who knows. Most are staying to see this district thing through, like Kathleen Shaard. I don't know if this is really what she wants to do, but she's determined. Let's see if she has what it takes because there's talk of her being nominated for our first mayor. I'd say that's fifty-fifty at this point; she's been through so much lately that I wouldn't be surprised if she turned any nomination down. But I've been wrong before and if she does go for it; she has my support and respect, unlike the rest of Project Freedom. They packed up as soon as the vote was announced. They saw this as nothing more than a notch in their belt, nothing more than a damn cause and never stopped to think about what their actions may cause before trucking off to the next one. Good riddance, may karma chow down on your hoop someday.

And with the criminal element nice and pissed off right now, that wish could come true sooner than later. Careful what you wish for, chummers, you just may get it. But for now, they're too busy figuring out how to keep business going with KE snooping around. I'm fully confident they'll find a way. They always do.

To be honest, the government took things a lot better than I expected it to. Sure, there were the obligatory firebrand politicians and community leaders vowing to fight Prop 23 and get it overturned; good luck with that. I have had several conversations with





INCOMING FEED.....



SEATTLE

some of my associates in KE and know that they're already gearing up for their first rounds of regular patrols and cleanup sweeps. I even hear that there are plans to re-build the Gold Mine into a KE substation. Ironic. It's gonna get a lot worse before it gets better, but at least I'll get a heads-up before anything heavy is dropped on my head. The Skraacha aren't happy with the new order of things, but they have their own problems. With several of them siding with Gordo Buck and in the eyes of many betraying the Underground, I won't give them odds on their continued good health, Ca'Kal is seeing to that and he's becoming one hell of a runner.

I even heard that Dana Oaks was officially given the DA's job, at least until the next election. She has no love for the Underground, but I think now that she has some authority to use down here, she'll be honor bound not to abuse it, which is good for us. But that doesn't mean she won't refocus on us for her next crusade on crime. Good luck with that too. Business in Seattle is also picking up. Without a Prop-23-inspired shot being fired in the last day, people are slowly testing the waters of what passes as normalcy in Seattle again. The recount is still ongoing, but by all accounts it looks like it will pass. That's not stopping the anti-23ers from trying to kill the results, which are expected to be upheld. Already plans are being made and injunctions have been filed in circuit courts with the lawyers lining up on both sides to take their shots. Pundits have also been silent on the issue and have been busy circling the wagons around the loose-lipped governor. They're bloody, but not beaten.

And speaking of Kenny, there are ripples that will continue to be felt in the months to come. Yeah, he's in a spot. There are a ton of people lining up to take their pound of flesh from him, from fellow politicians, to feds, to even the corps. Most blame him for

Prop-23 passing, and that's not a good thing to have hanging over your head during what's now an election year. For the first time, his approval numbers have fallen below fifty percent. And now that I've gotten past the vote drek and gotten some much needed sleep, I can share a little thing with everyone I've been holding on to for the right time, which is now. Yep, I saved the best for last.

KENNETH BRACKHAVEN: CRACKS IN THE DAM

Posted by: Bull

- OK, a little set up here. While this entire Prop 23 thing was going down, there was someone in the background flying under everyone's radar who's now in a position for what I think is a good shot at putting a few more nails, if not the final one, in Brackhaven's political coffin. He was smart and using all the drek as a smokescreen to hide his movements. But now, that's not an option. For almost the past year, FBI Agent Seth Dietrich's been working in and out of the shadows, collecting dirt on Brackhaven during an off-the-books investigation. The day before the vote, Dietrich disappeared, and no one's seen him since. I'm almost embarrassed that I never knew what was going on. Thankfully my son did, because he helped Agent Dietrich with some of his investigation, which is how I now have a copy of his personal files. If this doesn't qualify as something that needs to go on JackPoint, I don't know what does. I've gone through and posted the highlights; if you want the technical in-detail stuff, let me know.
- Bull



If you're reading this then something has gone wrong with my investigation. Also if you're reading this, then hopefully you are someone who can be trusted to use the information in this file wisely, or at least you can get it to someone who will. Forgive me if I ramble—I have a lot to cover, and very little time for organizing it. My name is Seth Dietrich, special agent, UCAS Federal Bureau of Investigation, Seattle Office. For the past nine months I've been conducting an off-the-books investigation into a man known only as "Bill." I don't know exactly who Bill is, but I know who he works for: Governor Kenneth Brackhaven of Seattle and Brackhaven Investments.

Over the course of my investigation, I have discovered that Governor Brackhaven is linked through Bill (his main covert or shadow operative) to various crimes such as conspiracy, murder, and domestic terrorism as part of a coordinated effort to undermine and/or cause the failure of Proposition 23 and Project Freedom. I have also found evidence that links Governor Brackhaven to various terrorist groups such as Alamos 20,000 and the Humanis Policlub. I also have evidence that specifically links Bill to the murder of FBI Agent Jennifer Kowalski, with whom this investigation originally began.

I took over from Agent Kowalski on March 25, 2074, when she requested my assistance. My previous case, investigating Congressman James Grey, was terminated when the Congressman died in an unexplained plane accident in the Carib League. I had not been assigned anything new, so I decided to help Agent Kowalski. When I was unable to find her at her apartment or through her commlink RFID system, I alerted my section chief at the Bureau. Two days later, Agent Kowalski's body was found hung from a flagpole on Renraku Corporation property near Downtown Seattle. An official investigation was launched, but I was not assigned to it. When I returned to my office station, I found that an encrypted file had been left for me. The encryption was good, but my hacking skills were enough to break it. I discovered that Agent Kowalski had done the very thing I am doing now, leaving a trail for someone to follow should it become necessary.

- Bit of backstory. Agent Seth Dietrich is one of the fed's best undercover hackers—sorry "Matrix Specialists." Graduated from Columbia University with a Masters in Matrix Technologies after a stint with the UCAS Army's CID. His normal job profile is either crack various organizations and group's information from the outside, or when the situation requires it to go undercover to infiltrate within. His hacking skills are some of the best in the Bureau, and his homemade combat utilities are known to be nasty. He's also not too bad with his fists and a gun.
- Glitch
- Pffft, please. No mere fed can compete with us.
- Slamm-0!
- Remember the Code-Snatchers gang? He infiltrated them and later tore them apart when they tried to remote-hijack those airliners out of Sea-Tac back in '70? They were using top of the line MCT attack utilities with rating-seven agents with adaptive algorithms. Rumor is that GOD tried to recruit him just to get a look at his code. Still think he's nothing?
- FastJack

- OK, so he's got some skill. A little.
- Slamm-0!
- He's also a white knight, a do-gooder who honestly believes in honor and country. No wonder he works for the feds instead of having a ridiculously high-paying corp gig.
- Sticks
- I met him once and didn't even know it at the time. His favorite handle is Corsair, and his avatar looks like a Spanish privateer. The cutlass and pistol he carries are damn lethal.
- Bull

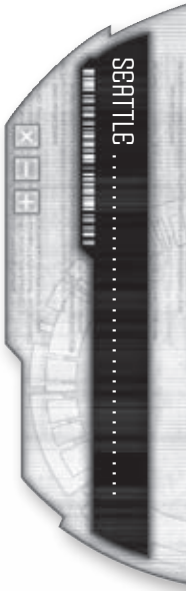
I had considered informing my superiors, but I realized that they had no interest in finding Agent Kowalski's killer. Other suspicious activity led me to believe that there was a cover-up underway. For details, see file #4455-Echo.

On my spare time, I began looking through the files. The main focus of the investigation was a man known only as Bill. Different names were listed, but ultimately they were all dead-end aliases. The file also indicated that Bill was currently working as a covert operative for Brackhaven Investments and specifically for Karl and then later Kenneth Brackhaven. Various clues and leads listed in the file suggested Bill was involved in several ongoing operations. His current suspected identity was William James, supervising corporate liaison of the Seattle Public Works. These operations covered a multitude of federal crimes that included blackmail, theft, fraud, and murder. And while the files never indicated any direct link between him and Kenneth Brackhaven, there were recordings of several meetings between him and the governor. It wasn't much, but it was enough for me start with.

The beginning of my investigation was an exercise in frustration. Despite my best efforts, both in the Matrix and on the streets, I could not find evidence of any solid connection between Brackhaven and Bill, other than they both "work" for the city/state. I was about ready to give in and go to my supervisor when my suspicions were confirmed about a cover up in Agent Kowalski's death. Her autopsy reports were altered to make her death look like a suicide, but the originals indicated carefully hidden trauma to the throat, consistent with a mono-garrote, see file #4459-Beta. Complicating matters was my supervisor began to suspect I was looking into the case. I was promptly suspended on falsified charges and placed on administrative leave. With no further recourse, I was forced to enlist help from less than conventional means—shadowrunners.

- Not so badass then, huh? Having to come to us poor shadowrunners for help.
- Slamm-0!

Using a previous undercover identity that the bureau did not know about, I began masquerading as a new-to-Seattle hacker looking for work. After participating in several low-key runs for a month to prove my skills and to enhance my reputation, I was able to make several contacts, including a young hacker going by the handle of Tauren. In a roundabout way, it was this association with Tauren and through him Project Freedom that gave me my first break in the case. Using Tauren to network with other hackers and



others in the shadow community, I was able to locate a secret node in the Seattle Public Works server that Bill was using for his private files. My attempts to hack the file were largely successful, and I was able to secure several files written in code. This was not the normal code that a decryption program could deal with, it was an old-fashioned code that had to be de-cyphered with a key. Still, I put my best agents on the task in hoping I could get lucky. Two weeks later, I got a break. The files were incomplete but had enough information that indicated that Bill was indeed working as a handler and liaison between Brackhaven, Alamos 20,000, and Humanis. There were references to things such as Firefly and Stonewall, but at the time I had no clue what they really were. I wished that I had, because it may have saved several lives. Firefly referred to the operation by Alamos 20K that firebombed the Ork Underground. While Bill was not directly involved, he provided the logistical and intelligence support that had made the bombings possible. Had I only been better at my job, then perhaps those children would be alive today.

When I wasn't helping Tauren with Project Freedom business, I kept myself sane (mostly) by focusing on what I could while also investigating possible persons of interest indicated in Jennifer's file as either possible Brackhaven collaborators, potential allies, or possible threats. See file #4462-Romeo for my notes.

- I'm gonna do a little cut-and-paste here; this is a file you all definitely need to see. I'll resume the file at the end of this section. Just no comments when you get to a certain name.
- Bull

As my investigations continued, I also found myself swept up into the various events surrounding Prop 23 in both the Underground and on the regular streets of Seattle. As the situation became more and more desperate for Project Freedom, I found myself becoming less and less objective and drifting away from my own investigation. Granted, if my investigation were to pan out, then it would benefit everyone. But still, I made the decision to temporarily break with Tauren and his crew and strike out on my own. I knew where I was going could backfire horribly and I didn't want it to blowback on Project Freedom. At least, that's what I kept telling myself. In reality, with everything going on, I didn't quite know what I was doing.

To regain my focus, I went back to my legwork, chasing down anyone, any lead I had to try to find Bill. Ever since I found his original home node, I had hoped he wouldn't realize that he had been compromised. But I was wrong again, and by the time I cracked his code, he was long gone and I was back to square one. While I was busy beating my head into a wall, my friends back at Project Freedom were facing their own troubles. Tauren's father, another hacker named MacCallister, who went by the handle of Bull, had been doing his own investigation into Brackhaven, specifically in connection to his daughter's murder. He had found a connection to Edmund Jefferies, Brackhaven's press secretary, through a man named George Mathers. Mathers had secretly contracted the copycat killer that murdered MacCallister's daughter, and now he was going after him. But someone was out to take care of MacCallister before that could happen. Another bomb ripped through the Underground and almost killed MacCallister.

When I heard about this, something clicked in my mind, and I went back to my notes and realized what Stonewall was—it was

/Open/file:4462-Romeo/execute

PERSONS OF INTEREST

SEATTLE GOVERNMENT

Emile Corrigan: Despite being relatively new to the Brackhaven Administration as Chief-of-Staff, Emile Corrigan and Kenneth Brackhaven have an extensive history together. Both attended and met at the University of Washington and eventually joined the same fraternity, Alpha Kappa Sigma. Brackhaven was a business major while Corrigan studied political science. Their relationship would mirror their current relationship when Brackhaven ran for and won Student Body President. Corrigan was instrumental in Brackhaven's campaign, helping organize and deal with potential rivals. Records also indicate that Corrigan also took the blame for several of Brackhaven's discretions and keeping the family name free of scandal. This loyalty would later be rewarded when the Brackhaven family arranged for Corrigan to intern and later receive employment with several influential politicians in DeeCee, where he worked for ten years before eventually accepting a position with Brackhaven Investments. During his time in DeeCee, Corrigan amassed a vast network of political contacts that proved to be invaluable to his new employer. It is a likely scenario that this was part of a long-term plan designed to put Corrigan exactly where BI wanted him to be. Corrigan took over as Chief of Staff for Governor Brackhaven earlier this year after the previous chief became involved in a money fraud scandal. Corrigan is 57 years old has one wife, Sally, and no children. He is a very loyal and has a very goal-oriented personality with the uncanny ability to organize and coordinate several tasks at once. He is also known to have a photographic memory. Evaluation: If the Governor is indeed in league with various criminal elements, it is highly likely that Corrigan at least has knowledge of such activities. Based on previous behavior, he is also likely to take point on any effort to protect the governor and remain loyal no matter the situation. He is also highly intelligent and observant. Approach only if necessary.

Edmund Jefferies: Current press secretary to Governor Brackhaven, Jefferies is another long-time associate. He started out as a speechwriter during the governor's failed presidential campaign in 2057. It is known among insiders that he was the one who wrote the famous speech when it was revealed that candidate Brackhaven was not the original Kenneth Brackhaven. Jefferies was instrumental in crafting Brackhaven's speeches and helped him win the Seattle governor's election in 2070. As a reward, Jefferies was given the position of press secretary. Jefferies hails from a small rural town in northern Kentucky near the UCAS/CAS boarder. He attended the University of Michigan in 2050. It is a well-known among insiders that Jefferies is a closet bigot who hates metahumans, especially orks and trolls. It's also an unproven rumor that Jefferies has connections to various anti-metahuman groups. This

association began when he was a teenager after his sister attempted to date an ork boy and “shamed” his traditional family.

- Ah, a good old-fashioned bigot, YEEEEEE HAWWWWW!
- Slamm-O!

Jefferies is a short human in his late thirties who is going prematurely bald. He has a very vain and insecure personality. He is known to constantly go out of his way to try and impress people with his skills and initiative. Evaluation: With the current political situation regarding Prop 23 and known ties with various metahuman hate groups, it is very likely that Jefferies has ties and is likely working with said groups, maybe on behalf of the Brackhaven administration. UPDATE: As of 11/03/74, Jefferies' current whereabouts are unknown.

Dana Oaks: Current DA following the assassination of former DA David Beatty. Oaks life has been an open book. She hails from a middle-class family and attended Yale University where she earned her law degree. In 2070, she became the youngest ADA in Seattle history, and because of her fearless attitude and dedication became the de facto “right hand” of David Beatty. She was entrusted with many sensitive and high-profile cases. Her conviction rate remains one of the highest in Seattle history, second only to Beatty himself. Despite rampant corruption in the Seattle legal and political system, Oaks has managed to stay above it and continues to build on her reputation as a straight-arrow DA looking to make an honest difference in putting a dent in Seattle's crime rates while remaining within the law. Despite this, she is not above hiring irregular assets (shadowrunners) when the situation calls for it, but she puts very tight restrictions on their behavior, and she has more than once put the people she hired into prison for unacceptable behavior and blatant violations of the law. She is especially despised by Seattle's criminal elements, specifically those in the Ork Underground, and the feeling is reciprocated. Unlike several in the Seattle government, Oaks' dislike for the Underground does not come from any racial bias; she simply hates criminals and sees the Underground as a blight that needs to be removed, not embraced. As such she is a vocal opponent of Prop 23. Evaluation: I have personally worked with DA Oaks several times in the past on joint investigations. She is a driven, honorable person who is a true servant of the law. I already consider her an ally and should anything happen to me, anyone who reads this should make sure this file reaches her.

PROJECT FREEDOM

Kathleen Shaard: Twenty-year-old daughter of slain ORC/Project Freedom leader Helen Shaard, Kathleen has had a rough but fair life. Research indicates that Helen raised Kathleen alone when her father was killed in a gang shootout before she was born. A product of homeschooling, Kathleen lived a relatively quiet and sheltered life in the Underground and had little care about the city above. That changed when she met Rebecca MacCallister, a grad student from the University of Washington who

came to the Underground to complete her graduate thesis on ork history. According to witness accounts and testimonials, the two became fast friends with Rebecca teaching Kathleen about “topside” and Kathleen playing guide to the Underground (and teaching her “proper” Or'zet). When Project Freedom formed, Kathleen was more than willing to support her mother and friend, but preferred to do so quietly from the background. When Rebecca MacCallister was killed, she was grief stricken and sunk deeper into the background. When her mother was slain, Kathleen was a witness and near victim herself. Since then, she has been thrust into the leadership role as people looked to her to take the reins for Project Freedom. Reluctantly she did and in public she was as fearless as her mother, but in private, she became withdrawn. Evaluation: A victim of two attacks by anti-metahuman groups, Kathleen has shown remarkable strength to carry on in her mother's name. However, there have been signs of breakdown as the campaigning for Prop 23 continues. She has been relying more and more on other members of Project Freedom to get tasks accomplished. Given her status, and if approached correctly, Kathleen Shaard would make a good, if fragile, ally.

- Hold the comm. I'll be the first one to put a bullet into a Humanis bigot or some similar flavor, but let's get the facts straight. Helen Shaard did not die because of a bigot, she died because of a technomancer terrorist and his attack dog. Let's keep the facts straight, please.
- Clockwork

William “Bull” MacCallister: A semi-retired shadowrunner of twenty-plus years, William MacCallister is the father of Rebecca MacCallister and fixer in the local shadowrunning scene. When his daughter was murdered by the copycat Mayan Cutter, he offered his services to Project Freedom and the Ork Underground as a way to honor his daughter's memory and last wishes. FBI files indicate that MacCallister is a hacker of some skill but also has a tendency to carry heavy weaponry. He is also known for being somewhat old-fashioned and will often use older terminology in stressful situations. In the current campaign for Proposition 23, MacCallister has been instrumental in recruiting, orchestrating, and executing all shadow activity on behalf of Project Freedom. Like Kathleen Shaard, MacCallister has also found himself more in the public spotlight. While not as influential as Shaard, he has become another of Project Freedom's public faces. While normally such things are frowned on by the FBI, MacCallister has a rep for engaging in “hooding” (shadowruns that benefit their respective dependents) and is considered to be a reliable asset if approached correctly. Recent events, however, have shown that MacCallister possesses a ruthless streak, and he will not hesitate to eliminate significant threats. Evaluation: MacCallister's recent dark turn could be considered a liability, but he still sees and conducts himself as a professional, provided his family is not at risk; in those cases, all bets are off. Still, MacCallister can be considered an ally because of his dedication to the Underground and eliminating anything that threatens it. MacCallister is also an acceptable recipient of this file should anything happen to me.



a reference to a plan to remove MacCallister from play. Again, I was figuring it out, but too late to do any good. Thankfully, MacCallister survived. I tried to go back to the Underground, to spill my guts and tell them everything hoping it would prevent more tragedies. Too bad I never made it there. MacCallister wasn't the only one who had gotten someone's attention. On my way to the Underground, my car was ambushed, and I was taken prisoner.

I don't know how long I was out, but I woke up in an old meat locker in Tacoma. Of course I didn't know that at the time, but it was a trivial detail compared to the beatings I received. For two days, a troll and an ork used me as their personal punching bag as they tried to get me and talk. I almost did—no one can take beatings like that forever. I honestly thought I was going to die, but on the third day, I arose ... sort of. More like I was picked up by some runners hired by Tauren to find me.

During my convalescence, Tauren and I talked. I came clean about who I was. I expected him to be furious, but he just laughed and said I was "One crazy fucker." Two weeks later, I was well enough to leave under my own power, albeit a little slower. I contacted the runners who had saved me, a street sam named Bingo, a rigger named Dice, and a shaman called Three-Feet (don't ask, I wish I hadn't). I had grown tired of playing defense and decided to go on the offense. Two weeks of kicking down doors amid the chaos of the DA murders got us some solid leads, which led us to a small warehouse in Renton. I don't really recall those few days very well, mostly because I don't want to. I was in a rage, over what was happening in the Underground, what happened to me. All of it. I did things I never thought I would do. I beat information out of people, just like it had been done to me. I lied, not the usually tricky law officers often use, but I lied and stabbed people in the back. I knew that I was slowly becoming that what I hated in order to get those who were hurting others. That didn't bother me so much, as I was starting to like it.

After a few bashed-in heads, we got a solid lead to Bill's location. The source had it on good authority that it was one of Bill's safe house/staging areas. There was no guarantee that Bill would be there, but I had nothing else at this point. So my team and I (yeah I was a real shadowrunner now) did what all runners do, we scouted the place, did our legwork, and then blew open the front door. After a quick little firefight with a few gangers hired to watch the place, we hit paydata. Located in a vault in the back of the safe house were several data chips with not only detailed plans about the fire bombings and the attempt on MacCallister, but about an upcoming operation labeled Daybreak, sec#4471-Charlie.

What I read among the files made me sick. This was an order for wholesale murder and wanton destruction. Also contained on the chips were several correspondences between Brackhaven's chief of staff and Bill. Most of them were direct orders from Brackhaven to begin various stages of the plan as soon as Bill was ready. Also included were account numbers for funds, preferred targets both living and locations. It was all laid out. But I also learned something else, Daybreak was also a plan that would never happen.

According to the various letters, Brackhaven was pissed. Thanks to meddling and operations behind his back by his own staff, Daybreak was scrubbed and new objectives were ordered. These objectives corresponded with several of the incidents that had already occurred in the underground. It was all there, ready to go. There was only one problem: While I knew who Bill was

Incoming Message

/Open/file:4462-Romeo/execute

OPERATION DAYBREAK

Purpose:

1. To prevent the passing of Proposition 23 by highlighting the dangers of Ork Underground. This will be achieved by hiring operatives to commit random and various crimes and plant evidence they are from the Underground/Project Freedom.
2. To prevent the truth from coming out by eliminating members of Project Freedom.
3. To increase the public level of fear and hatred against Project Freedom and the Ork Underground.
4. To increase the level of public admiration of the Seattle government by allowing them to "succeed" in dealing with the new "ork menace."

General Plan:

Step One: Hire various deniable assets using funds from emergency accounts.

Step Two: Leak specific information to various media outlets in exchange for favorable press and public support. Bonus if opportunity is presented to government to kill Prop 23 on grounds of "public safety."

Step Three: Begin elimination of key figures in Project Freedom.

Step Four: Using Knight Errant and/or Metroplex Guard, assault and/or seal up Ork Underground.

Step Five: Create siege of Underground, cut off all power and food supplies and starve them.

Step Six: Send in various forces to take control of the Underground.

Notes: Steps one and two should begin no later than 02/01/74 and be completed by 04/01/74. If unsuccessful, proceed directly to step three and then four. Key leaders of Project Freedom should be eliminated by no later than 06/01/74. Total completion expected on or about 09/01/74. If vote for Proposition 23 goes forward, and is passed, adjust plan/timetable as necessary but keep overall mission parameters.

talking to, there was no way for me to prove it. These files could easily be forged. I needed to find a witness, I needed to find someone to verify these files were real. I needed someone to testify.

As my grandfather use to say, the Lord works in mysterious ways. Two days before the vote, I received a comm message from Edmund Jefferies. He didn't come out and say it, likely for fear someone was listening in, but he indicated that he would be willing to testify against Brackhaven in exchange for protection and immunity.

I am now on my way to the meet to speak with Jefferies. I'm taking along backup, my "crew," and we're going to see if we can convince Mr. Jefferies the benefits of doing the right thing. I

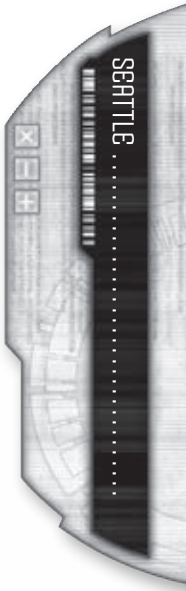
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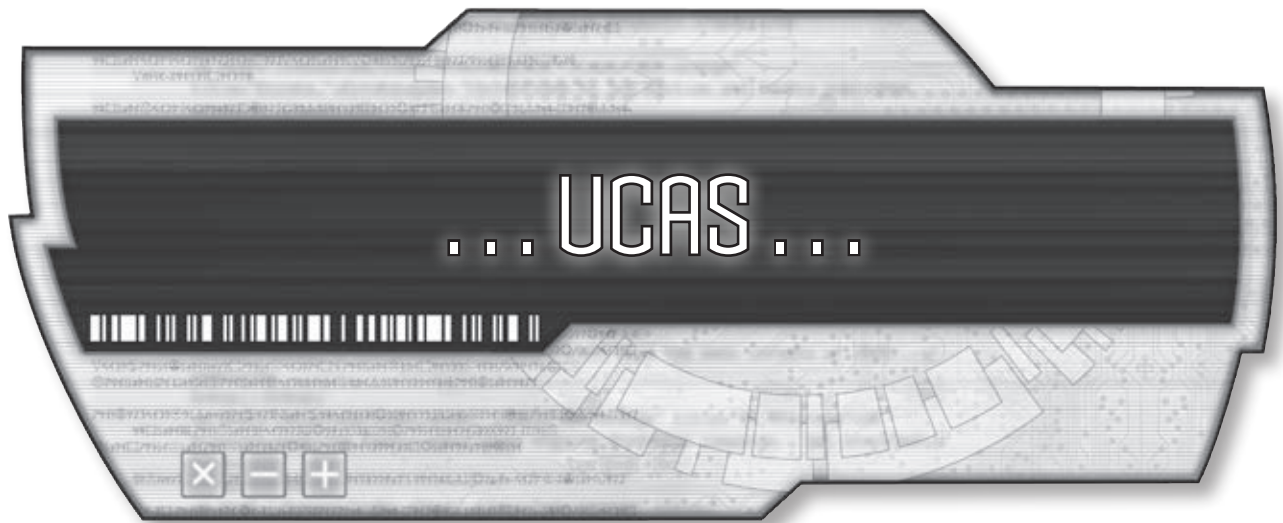
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don't know how this will end, and in case this goes badly or this is a set up, I am sending this out in the hopes that it will find the right hands.

- I received this the day before the vote. As far as I know, Dietrich never made the meet and his car was found half submerged in the sound near Tacoma. The bodies of several individuals, all identified as members of Dietrich's group, were found nearby. Dietrich and now Edmund Jefferies are both missing. I've been making inquiries into both of their locations, but so far nothing. Despite our past history, I've also forwarded everything I have to DA Oaks. I know someday she may come for me, but today, I know she will do the right thing with it like Dietrich would want.
- Bull
- As of 1900 hours today, Agent Seth Dietrich has been officially declared missing by the FBI. Funny enough, that was as far as they've taken the investigation. Not even so much as a comm call to his friends or family to see if they know where he was.
- Netcat
- Wow, so all this time, despite all we've been able to dig up, all of our sources, and we all somehow missed the fact that Brackhaven had some secret operative working parallel to everything that was going on under everyone's noses on various shadow projects? Sorry, I don't buy it.
- Plan 9
- Hate to say it, but he does have a point. How could we miss something like this?
- Glitch
- I'll tell you how. We've become too closed off, too insular. We keep battling in circles and dealing with our own petty shit. We're also too few at this point and can't possibly be expected to see, know, and discover everything. Not anymore.
- FastJack
- So, recruitment drive?
- Marcos
- OK, discussion for another time and place. So what about Brackhaven now? I mean, even without all of this, he's in deep. Everyone's blaming him for blowing the vote, the corps are blaming him for the bad business atmosphere around the sprawl. Hell, stocks are still down worldwide! What else do we need at this point?
- /dev/grrl

- Are you kidding? Give any decent spin-doctor a good turn and watch Kenny walk away with a ten point boost in the public opinion polls.
- Beaker
- Well they better be really good. I've been doing some digging and I found out that Brackhaven has been a topic of conversation in the Corporate Court. Seems that Ares, Horizon, and Wuxing are veeeery unhappy with him. Ares is mad because they think that Brackhaven is unnecessarily putting KE officers at risk—they do cost money after all. Horizon just seems to hate him something fierce because they still haven't let up on him. And Wuxing, well here's the interesting thing. Seems Brackhaven took out a massive loan with Wuxing to keep the city going through Brackhaven Investments. Now, with the added expense of the Underground, it seems that they may default. Whoops!
- Mr. Bonds
- Ohhhh snap! What's next? Did he piss on an Azzie blood mage?
- Slamm-0!
- Well, I don't know about that, but the election is going to be fun. Already two candidates have announced they will be running against him in the election. Eliza Bloom and Admiral John Leinhard of Joint Task Force Seattle. The latter just announced his retirement from the Navy and has already been endorsed by President Colloton. I hear that people are also trying to get Dana Oaks to run.
- Kay St. Irregular.
- Not gonna happen. She's a good prosecutor and all, but she's not superhuman, despite what a lot of people are saying.
- Sticks
- I'm not saying it!
- Kane
- Well, speaking of, this just in. Apparently the files I sent got someone's attention. Oaks said that she has turned them over to the UCAS Attorney General's Office for consideration. She also said she would be initiating her own investigation, though for the time being it will be kept very hush hush.
- Bull





Posted by: Proud UCASian

Let me start with a quick disclaimer. I hate politics. It's not a hatred based on my ignorance—I know politics—it's a hatred based on the corruption and manipulation that fills the political arena. That being said, when Jack asked me to put something together, instead of writing up a scathing series of exposés on every politician in the UCAS, I decided to do a little outsourcing and info gathering. Better a variety of opinions from others than me bitching for a few pages.

I pulled together work from a bunch of different local runners/fixers/general in-the-know folks and generated this little political hotspot review. This isn't every political hotspot in the country, just the ones I could get a rundown on in such short notice. But if you're looking for work and you don't mind being a political bagman, make some moves in these areas. Just make sure to do a little extra homework when you hit the ground to be certain the scene hasn't turned.

Let me start with an entertaining little interview I watched. It ends abruptly because the episode got the thumbs down from the network owners. Give it a little read and guess who owns the network.

incoming Message

25/10/2074, The Political Arena, episode 352
Cynthia Blanc: Good afternoon everyone, I'm here today talking with incumbent governor of Illinois, Anthony Presbitero. He has been so kind to take a little time out of his busy schedule to chat with us on some of the current issues facing his state and this nation. Governor Presbitero, welcome to the show.
Governor Anthony Presbitero (Ind, IL): Thank you Miss Blanc. Pleasure to be here. May I call you Cynthia?
CB: Of course Governor.
GAP: Call me Tony.
CB: Certainly. Now Tony, tell the viewers unfamiliar with you a little about yourself.

incoming Message

GAP: Oh lord, sounds like the opening for a really bad dating show. What would your viewers want to know?
CB: Give us the quick, bad dating show bio.
GAP: Well, I'm a Libra, like long walks in the Zone, hate pushy ghouls, and can't wait to revitalize the city of Chicago.
CB: Libra, huh. All about the scales and balance.
GAP: Always. That's why I got into politics. Well, that and the attractive talk show hosts.
CB: Quite the charmer. Speaking of charm, how it is you plan on charming the nation into believing that Chicago isn't still full of insect spirit hives and can become a vital city again?
GAP: And the flirtatious introduction ends! First let me address the issue of the insect spirits. The bugs, as most Chicagoans call them, aren't the issue in Chicago anymore; Ares took care of that. What currently plagues Chicago is almost two decades of neglect that has forced many of the city's residents to become all but feral. They live by the rule of might; many struggle day to day just to survive. Even though it's in the heartland of America, it can be as wild and dangerous as Lagos or war-torn Bogotá. As for making it vital again, that's all about inviting business back into the city.
CB: Okay, you mentioned Ares. How do they fit into Chicago's future?
GAP: Honestly, I don't know if they do. We are grateful for the assistance Ares rendered through the federal government, but the city has taken too many hits from the megacorp to see Ares as a big part of the future. For years there were Ares logos on the food supply drops that hundreds, if not thousands, of citizens died fighting over, on the uniforms of the guards watching the walls, and the Firewatch teams coming in to clean out hives. All of those were beneficial, but





each is a reminder of being trapped, helpless, and dependent on another for your survival. We want a self-reliant Chicago with new hope on the horizon.

CB: Those sound like honest truths; rare from a politician.

GAP: I've only got one more election. My days of politicking are coming to an end as soon as the votes are counted. One way or another I get to speak my mind on the issues. I should worry about it now but most of my voters know this is me. They know they vote for one of them who just put on a suit and started knocking on doors.

CB: Good to know. We have plenty more questions for you.

GAP: What's next? I love talking Chicago but I know there are bigger questions you are dying to ask.

CB: True, but there are few more close to home before we hit any national news. Illinois has always been known for its abundant farmland. What's your take on this world food shortage we keep hearing about?

GAP: A positive one. I don't see the loss of a single food processing plant and some crops in Aztlan really hitting the world as hard as the media is spinning it. I'm sure Aztlan is going to be hurting for food and Aztechnology may take a little hit in their profits, but they'll pull through and probably come out better for it in the end. Meanwhile, Illinois farmers will be increasing production and looking at ways to maximize yields and make up some of the difference. All over the UCAS, farmers will be pushing their lands a little harder in an effort to help out the rest of the world. Especially our cousins to the south who may still be affected by the aftermath of Aztlan's crop issues.

CB: An experienced interviewee, you lead conversations smoothly onto other topics. In this case, "our southern cousins" refers to the CAS?

GAP: Of course.

CB: I'm sure you've got some insight into the efforts of St. Louis to become a dual-nationed free city?

GAP: Insight? Maybe not. Opinions, on the other hand, I'm full of. Most of them aren't good. St. Louis' desires look like a soft version of the New Revolution. They're trying to create a shared city as the first step in reunification, but what they fail to realize is these two nations don't want to reunite. If they did, they would. St. Louis is that child of divorced parents that doesn't realize his parents are better off apart, so he still tries to set them up.

CB: Interesting analogy. To stick with national politics, where will you be standing on national border issues?

GAP: I'm really more of a local politician. I meet a few times a year with the governor of Missouri but that's about the extent of my border cares. I've heard the same rumors as everyone else, and all I have to say is that we are not ready, as a nation, to go invading our neighbors. This is not the day and age to be trying to take land from another country. I know the PCC has gained in recent years, but none of it was based on invading a neighbor. They went to help the CFS, the Ute Nation imploded, and Aztlan needed less headaches so they gave up a piece of Texas. There's no reason to push into the CAS or Sioux Nation, and no real evidence that's anyone's intent, so I have to say the rumors are just that: rumors.

CB: I notice you didn't mention the AMC border issues.

GAP: I didn't realize there were any. The AMC is a pretty quiet neighbor. While relations are not as warm as those with Canada were, most of our trade agreements are beneficial to all concerned. I know this whole water rights rumor has people riled up thinking we should go grab their lakes, but an attack on any one of the NAN members is really an attack on all of them. It's not worth heading north for water when the Sioux could just cross the border and salt the fields.

CB: Remarkably candid; your reputation for plain talk is deserved. We have time for one more question and I've saved the best for last. Governor Presbitero—Tony, sorry—what happened during those three weeks you got trapped in the Chicago Containment Zone when your survey helicopter crashed?

GAP: Real life Cynthia. That's what happened. I spent three weeks living as a Zoner. I'll admit the first two or three days were pretty cozy with the rations and ammo we had from the copter, but the ammo burned off fast once the locals knew we had food. It's one of the main reasons I feel so connected to the city. I got a tiny taste of the life they've been living for twenty years. They deserve better.

CB: How did you get out?

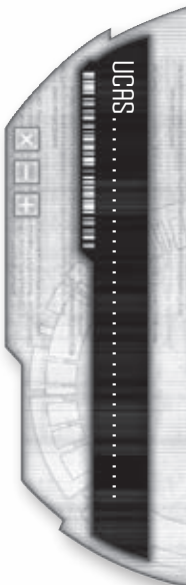
GAP: Ares sent in a recovery team.

CB: You mean shadowrunners?

GAP: They said they were working for Ares.

CB: And even though Ares saved your life you still feel they don't have a place in the future of Chicago?

GAP: Three weeks is a long time to mount a rescue.



UCAS: POLITICAL OVERVIEW

Okay, let's start off by laying some basic groundwork for the street grunts out there who dropped out of school before they started learning multiplication. I'll keep it simple and try to avoid opinion statements. The document is open comments so others can feel free to make their own snide remarks.

The United Canadian and American States (UCAS from this point forward) government is a democratic republic. Instead of voting directly on every issue, we elect someone else to vote on all those issues. The only time this really changes is on a local level where some things are voted on directly by the people, but when was the last time any of you used one of your fake UCAS SINs to vote on the local school funding referendum? I added that little point about UCAS SINs because that's who gets to vote. Corporate citizens of extraterritorial megacorporations are not allowed to vote in the UCAS system, and dual citizenship is rarer than one might think. There are two exceptions to this statement, and those are Ares and NeoNET citizens assigned to UCASian offices. Many of these employees can get voting rights with dual citizenship.

- Always irked my parents that they could trace their lineage back to the Mayflower but as soon as they went to work for Renraku NorthAm they had to give up voting rights. Even goes all the way down to any subsidiary that offers corp citizenship.
- Pistons

Voting is done through a public node accessible for 24 hours on Election Day. Anyone with a commlink or home term can just log in, fill out their ballot(s) and send them off. If someone doesn't have a comm, or if they don't like wireless voting (and a lot of them don't, even today) they can stop by certain local polling spots and use a public dataterm. This only works for folks with SINs. The SINless have no voting rights, but every political party opens up registration offices in areas with a high concentration of unregistered voters. They register these folks, get them SINs, and then keep lists and do all their voting for them.

- Sometimes people get uppity and demand the right to use their own vote. They tend to get bought off.
- Kay St. Irregular

Now this is the first place I'll mention some work opportunities. The lists and all the data are in the hands of someone in those registration offices, and members of other registration offices, especially those of other political parties, love getting their hands on those IDs. This stuff is going on all the time because elections are going on all the time. Presidential election time is the worst and jobs can span the country. Senate elections are usually hot too and work can run you all over your state. Representative voting time is usually tight and brutal since SINs need to be registered in their district. Tech-savvy folks and good talkers get some nice easy work if they can join up with a political party and start pulling those SINs into their districts. See why I hate this shit?

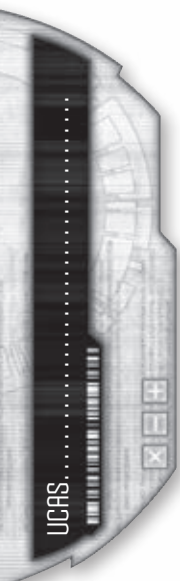
- Here's a little advice for any hacker who gets an offer to change the votes. Don't take the gig. The UCAS voting system uses a private node that downloads voting data stored on individual commlinks and terminals for about six seconds of every minute. Then the node goes offline, dumping anyone not directly logged in to the host system. The data is then sorted and compiled in the node and sent off to another node for storage. All the data is deleted before the node reconnects and does its next download. This means a brutally short window of opportunity for anyone trying to edit the data. Oh yeah, and the sorting node also runs some serious IC that actively hunts for any presence in that node. There's a reason voter fraud still tends to focus on the front end of things.
- Glitch
- Just a point of correction here for those hackers that don't need a link to hack. You know who you are. The compiling node doesn't shut down, but it will trap you for thirty seconds or so while the data compiles. Those are a long thirty seconds while IC programs hunt for you before access to the remote storage systems come up. Then you have to find your way back through the same system. Sucks, but at least you might have a chance without breaking into an underground government bunker to access the node directly.
- Netcat
- Reason number 1.23x10¹⁵th not to trust technomancers and AIs.
- Clockwork

Now this open voting system could have some serious issues if people all just voted for themselves or a neighbor they really like, all write-in style, so they still have a political party system in the UCAS. Politicians have to get endorsed by a party in order to get on a ballot. Even Independents are considered a political party if they can afford the registration. Yes, I said afford. It costs two thousand nuyen to get on the registry for a party. May not sound like much, but for an average Joe it means spending hard-earned money to get into a party, and the only party that guarantees a spot on the ballot is the Independents, which means you get your name on the ballot with dozens to hundreds of other similarly civic-minded individuals. The UCAS currently has six major parties

ARCHCONSERVATIVE PARTY

The Archconservatives sound all nice and, well, conservative, right? Except conservative to these guys is a very narrow view of humanity, emphasis on the "human" part. They promote good old-fashioned American values like hard work, paying taxes, believing in God, and hating anything that isn't like you.

- So much for not putting your opinion in there. Let's do this with a little less bile. The Archconservatives are all about old-time values and a smaller government like their Republican forefathers. They have a few bad apples that get all the press and can make the whole party look bad. They are not a bunch of evil masterminds looking to make America the land of the free, white human.
- Kay St. Irregular



- For a good example, take a look at Brackhaven in Seattle. He isn't against Prop 23 because he hates metas, he's got numbers to show how economically damaging the Proposition could be if it passes.
- Cosmo
- I got some numbers for you too, if you are willing to look at both sides of the argument.
- Bull
- No reply. Guess that answers that.
- Bull

DEMOCRATIC PARTY

These guys have been around since the United States only had thirteen states. They present themselves as the “for the people” party and promote all sorts of government-funded projects to help the everyday citizen. They like to appear as if they are helping out the little guy. Problem is the little guy is usually a lazy piece of shit welfare recipient that doesn't do a damn thing for anyone except suck up government funds and vote more of these image-sensitive bleeding hearts into office.

- At least he's an equal opportunity hater. The Democrats are all about the government working for its people, and since most of the people in the UCAS are average folks they do a lot of average folks projects. A lot of recent efforts have been working to disband the image of welfare recipients as lazy with programs designed to put them to work. These efforts do not make a lot of corporations happy since they are cutting into their business in areas like city cleaning, construction, and agriculture.
- Kay St. Irregular

LIBERTARIAN PARTY

This party is a contradiction. They are anti-government but yet work for the government. Now I understand they are anti-BIG-government, but it still seems kind of self destructive to work toward getting rid of your own job. From our point of view these fellows are a great choice since a lot of our issues with the government (like federal authorities) would be gone if they had their way. You run into a larger number of these guys the closer you get to local politics.

- Federal authorities are not high on these guys' agenda to remove power from big government. Most of their current focus is on redundant authorities and government overspending by the politicians.
- Kay St. Irregular

NEW CENTURY PARTY

Having mages in power is something no one in their right mind would ever want. Our democracy would become a magocracy, and then the little guy really loses out. These guys are pro-meta and pro-magic, but a lot of them feel as disconnected from reality as you would expect from someone who can call on all sorts of unseen and unknown forces. Overall they don't have a lot of power in the government, but they manage to get folks elected, especially from areas with a large and tight magical community.

- The hate level seems low enough I'd almost think Proud UCASian is a member of the party. He also doesn't mention this party's major backer, the Illuminates of the New Dawn, a political/magical organization interested in moving the world forward to accept magic as a part of everyday life (check out the *Power Brokers* section for more info on them). Not sure how that will ever happen with the rarity of magic, but they still try. This party has lots of problems with membership since many of the world's arcanelly gifted take up positions with megacorps and lose their voting rights in the UCAS.
- Kay St. Irregular

- I'm not, just so everyone knows.
- Proud UCASian

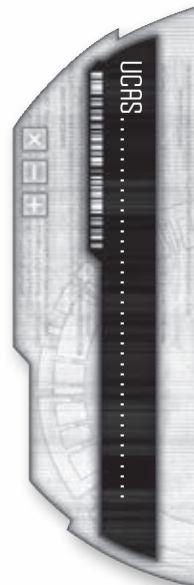
REPUBLICAN PARTY

Like the Democrats, this political party has been around and wreaking havoc on the American (and foreign) populace for almost three centuries. Where the Dems tend to make a pitch for government intervention to help the little guy, the Republicans are about tax cuts and getting government out of people's way. They believe the private sector can get things done on their own, so it should generally be left alone. Many Republicans still feel the UCAS should reclaim everything that once belonged to the C and A portions of their name. This “re-expansionist” idea is especially popular around the borders where citizens are constantly reminded of what was once theirs.

- I think we have a winner. Proud UCASian's a Republican! And as such I'll need to knock these guys down instead of lifting them up. The Republican Party can best be belittled by calling them corporate lackeys. Most are in bed with one corporation or another (sometimes more than one, but that's a dangerous game to play). These corps pull their strings, meaning that even though you vote in Politician X because he said he'd do Y, when corporation Z tells him to do W, the voters get F'd.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Wrong again. I'm one of those rare UCASians who votes based on the candidate not the party.
- Proud UCASian

TECHNOCRAT PARTY

The Technos took a hit in their image when the technomancers appeared on the scene. They're why most UCASians call technomancers “electrokinetics” and “electros” instead of “technos.” As for their politics, they are kind of bland. They started out pushing the concept of progress, usually through technological advance or social engineering, but kind of got sidetracked once the other politicians got a hold of the idealists. Now they mostly promote progress through programs with corporate support. Horizon has been a major Technocrat backer since they made the big leagues, and many Technocrats have gotten a lot of Horizon re-imaging services to help garner votes.



- I gotta say something now, mainly out of habit, but Proud UCASian pretty much hit the nail on the head here. The Technocrats are really just the megacorporations' way of staying in the political game since their citizens can't directly vote.
- Kay St. Irregular

My blood pressure is starting to reach unhealthy levels so I'll stop dictating and toss in some other folks' work. Feel free to comment as usual but be ready to get edited if you start ranting, get rude, or if I generally feel your contributions are worthless. Welcome to working around the government.

THE TOP SPOT: ELECTION 2076

Posted by: Eye on the Oval

Even though the election is still a full two years away, there are already whispers as to who might take the top seat next. Or how Colloton plans to hold on for another four years. None of us will ever run for office, but every time the election comes around we play a big part in the outcome, which is something the average citizen never realizes. We do business for the parties, the news corps, megacorps backing candidates, the lobbyists, and even directly for the candidates if we have a solid enough rep.

Right now the top office has about two-dozen hopefuls looking to be the next president. Most of these folks have about as good of a chance at taking a seat behind the desk in the oval office as I do, but that does not mean they won't throw a whole lot of money into some really dark places to try to better their chances. I really want to focus on these dark horses since they'll be putting the most money our way, but to be fair I'll hit some of the regulars first.

THE REGULARS

Angela Colloton: She's the incumbent and coming off some strong years. She's had her share of shake-ups (bugs working with the CIA, distancing the UCAS from Ares, accusations of New Revolution involvement) in her terms, but she has enough positive appeal (distancing the UCAS from Ares, rebuilding the military, dealing with the New Revolutionists, closing the Watergate Rift) to push for another four years to continue her current momentum. Work coming out of her office will mainly focus on keeping her weak spots shored up. The big issues here will be from corporations, most notably Ares and Telestrian, looking to dig up (or make up) dirt on the former general, and the other political parties that fear the power the Republican party has developed. Don't expect any other Republicans to be getting a lot of push unless Colloton's popularity really takes a hit.

Rozilyn Hernandez: A New Century candidate on nearly every ballot since the days of the late President Dunkelzahn, she's still looking for a chance behind the big desk. Her party doesn't have a large demographic backing, but if enough candidates run they have a chance of pulling off a plurality in a six-way runoff due to their loyalty.

- This is as good a place as any to point out the flaw in this system. If elected in one of those close races where the vote is split six ways, or any other split in this case, you are looking at a person in power

who was elected by just a hair over 1/6th of the population. Though this is still a slight improvement over the days of an electoral college when presidents could be elected and still manage to lose the popular vote, because at least the winner got more votes than any other candidate. Though not more votes than the people who didn't vote for them. That's only about 17 percent of the voters. Add in that voting rarely reaches the 75 percent mark, you are looking at a person who holds the highest seat in the nation being put there by 12 percent of the population, while 88 percent wanted someone else. Sometimes it's not the greatest system.

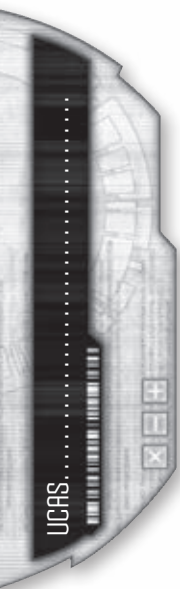
- Kay St. Irregular

She has a stern and somewhat intimidating demeanor but I'm not sure any woman who seems all nice and cuddly is going to make the Oval Office. Her image isn't going to change any time soon, which means the party needs some better PR to put around her. As the time draws closer, look for work aimed at shifting the public's views on magic. If you take it, you'll probably be working for Hernandez and the New Century party as they try to take the fear out of magic.

Senator Branigan Dane: It's been a while since the Democrats have managed a solid Presidential hopeful. It's still quite a ways off but Dane, currently a senator for Illinois, is their best shot at the big desk. He's handsome, charismatic, an MIT&T graduate, a smooth speaker (both prepared speeches and debates), a skilled diplomat, and a rare mind in his political opinions.

He has a very small office staff because he does all of his own research, attends his own meetings, and writes his own speeches. This makes him seem more personable; he always has that personal touch when dealing with his constituents and his fellow senators. He's genuinely likable and has built up a lot of favors from both those in his own party and members of other parties mostly by being a solid listener and a voice of reason. When it comes time for nominations, expect him to not only be at the top of the Democrats list but to also have extensive support from members of the Technocrats and Libertarians with a few New Century members tossed in for good measure. He's actually likely to get support across the board.

- Dane's small office staff allows for a security staff unmatched in the senate. He has his regular Secret Service detail but supplements those with an eight-man team from Paratis Personal Protection Services, Inc. Paratis PPS is a small but highly proficient personal-security firm that has earned its reputation for providing high profile clients with the best protection. Beware.
- Riser
- Question is, why does he need their services? If he was as squeaky clean as the newsnets make him out to be there's no reason for such an extreme (and expensive) measure.
- Sticks
- If you get a contract looking into his past, be warned. Paratis is high profile on paper but low-life on the job, and the grudges built up against the company over the years could come back to haunt anyone who's working for them. The company founder, a runner with the handle Paratis (of all things), knows both sides



of the coin and hires from a pool of former running mates. This also means possible work for the company if you can get Paratis' respect and he comes to your town looking for a little extra talent to supplement his staff.

- Thorn

Dane will likely be heating up the scene in the upcoming year looking for some national publicity. That means trying to play a part in something big. Expect Dane to throw some serious support behind the efforts in Chicago both in front of the camera and behind the scenes. Those efforts could mean a competition for top glory hound between Dane and Governor Presbitero (if he holds on to his office), which could mean business for us as they use shadow-ops to make an impact.

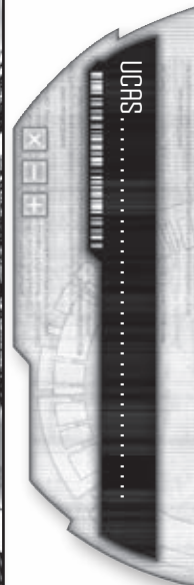
- I don't know if Presbitero realizes what Dane may be planning, but if he does he's going to need to step up his game. Dane is likely to throw support behind Presbitero's opponent just to better his own chances of getting all the kudos for Chicago. Plus, if things go wrong it's easy to pin the blame on a new governor who just doesn't know how these things work.
- Sticks
- Thinking Cosenza is a lamb for the slaughter would be dumb on Dane's part. Better to have an overeager governor to blame for problems than a street-savvy former State's Attorney. Politics in Illinois. Gotta love 'em.
- Dr. Spin

Nadja Daviar: She's back and everyone is wondering if her time in the second seat gave her a taste for the top spot. Even if she doesn't have any political aspirations, many other politicians would get a nice popularity bump if they could get an endorsement from the former VP. And a lot of them don't care if they get the endorsement by actually being liked by Daviar or if they just get enough dirt on her to make her smile in their direction. Be careful playing in this snake pit. Any endorsement gained through skullduggery against Daviar is likely to be short-lived, or at least the person trying to pull it off will be.

- There's no way she's getting back into politics, but that doesn't mean she shouldn't be kept in sight during the election season. Her actions, both direct but more likely indirect, could very well shape the whole election.
- Frosty

DARK HORSES

James Booth: They say the cream rises to the top; so does shit. Honestly I don't know where I stand with this guy. He really does seem like a good guy, but there seem to be way too many bad clouds floating over his head. He's experienced and he hasn't completely lost the support of his party, but he's definitely not their top choice. Being an impeached former veep will do that to a guy. Expect him to make some key appearances in the next year or so trying to gauge popular opinion. If he has any draw at all I'm sure he'll at least take a short run at the election, even if he drops out in the primaries.



- Booth may be getting some extra help for his campaign from an unexpected source. Recently released photos show Booth being escorted into a meeting in Jefferson City by a squad of Jaguar Guards from Aztlan. His PR machine might be getting a bump from one of the best on the planet.
- Marcos
- Are you sure that meeting was related to his campaign and not AZT/Aztlan's recent troubles? The Azzies could be looking to put Booth, and his relationship with CAS President McMulkin, in place as a soft voice for non-aggressive actions after this whole, PCC, CAS, Texas debacle.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Do we not recall Booth having a relationship with Horizon and Charisma Associates? Why would he need the Aztechnology PR machine when he has the other connections. His meeting was most likely coerced. Notice that his Secret Service detail wasn't in the picture and that he has a whole new staff of them even though he wasn't due to rotate teams until November.
- Dr. Spin

Robert van Forester: This Technocrat rising star is a long shot for the Oval Office, but he's still a horse in the race. His people are doing extensive work to keep recent unfriendly publicity from destroying his reputation. Forester is a family man with a wholesome image and a clean reputation. Last month his reputation was marred by discoveries, made by his own wife, inside his home. Discoveries of the two-tarts-with-handcuffs variety. The media was on the story faster than his office could cover it up, amazing for a politician of his years. Maybe they just aren't well practiced or maybe they were tipped off. Either way it's going to be interesting seeing how he gets through this and continues on a road to the White House.

- Word is the work at his house was a plant job. Runners were hired by a Brackhaus. I don't know if it was the Brackhaus, but it's a lead.
- Fianchetto

Samantha Payne: The former House Majority leader has not announced a re-election campaign, and speculations are running rampant as to what this means. Rumors abound that she'll be making moves to get a shot at the presidency, but this seems like a really early time to step down. There are also rumors that she's stepping down for medical reasons, looking to retire to take a job with Ares, and being forced out by other powerful forces in the Congress. If Colloton loses face and no other strong contenders pop up, she's got a chance, especially considering the connections she's built on the hill and back home.

- Sometimes it's nice to get reports from folks who don't live on JackPoint. They remind us of what the rest of the world believes. We all know Payne is part of the Black Lodge and she's getting booted out of the House for her failure in some artifact disaster back in July. Let's just hope that if she does somehow get the nod to run for office that she gets outed and/or we do some serious pro bono work to keep the UCAS from becoming a greater puppet of the Lodge.
- Kay St. Irregular

- How is Payne thinking of running for the top seat if she just got slapped on the wrist and removed from the House? I wonder what she's up to that she thinks she can pull off a move like that.
- Fianchetto
- It all could just be rumors. That's that nice thing about hearing from the street-level folks.
- Slamm-O!

CONGRESSIONAL CONFLAGRATION

Posted by: Proud UCASian

SENATORIAL SCRAMBLE

Each state/territory sends two Senators to DeeCee for six-year terms. The elections are held every two years with about a third of the seats up for grabs in each election. That means there is lots of work for those runners willing to move around the country since it is election season pretty much all the time. Check out the chart for who's up in what years. The breakdown is into thirds with no state putting up two seats in the same year.

Incoming Message

Senatorial Elections by Year

2074: Class 1: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Manitoba, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Brunswick, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, North Missouri, North Virginia

2076: Class 2: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Manitoba, Maryland, Nova Scotia, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Saskatchewan, Seattle, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin

2078: Class 3: Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Brunswick, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, North Missouri, North Virginia, Nova Scotia, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Saskatchewan, Seattle, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin

Some major developments have made quite a few spots worth watching. It's not readily apparent yet, but each of these spots involve interests important to DeeCee. These are the seats where you'll find the real battles. Most of these fights are down to two major players, but a couple of them have three viable contenders in the ring. I've got the candidates here, and FastJack asked me to lay off the issues; someone else will hit that later. These are the guys and gals to start digging up the dirt on.

Iowa

Ingrid Black is an up-and-coming Republican who feels the fruits of America's breadbasket needs to stay in the hands of



American citizens. Her stance sounds remarkably similar to her opponent except that she has been claiming that her opponent is really pulling the wool over the eyes of the average Iowan. Black has been reaching into the shadows to dig up ownership, sales, and employment records for farms all over Iowa looking to prove that Rummens is really just another Technocrat corporate sellout.

Jess Rummens is the incumbent and marginal favorite to hold onto his seat. Famous for his appointment to the Scott Commission while a representative for Iowa, he moved over to the Senate in '62 making way for younger Technocrats in the House. He's a proponent of citizen-owned farms instead of big agribusiness and has been working hard to hold his seat, especially with the impending avalanche of food-production issues about to hit the UCAS. If Black is hiring runners to dig out Rummens' secrets, you can be damn sure Rummens is doing the same to protect them. He's kind of a political white-hat, so don't expect a lot of dirt digging from him, but his campaign manager, Dagger Jones (yes that's his real name), is a whole different story.

- Jones does all of Rummens' dirty work, including hiring his shadow talent. He's a veteran and is pretty direct, but don't let that fool you into thinking he's telling you everything.
- Icarus

Kansas

Paul Hollensfeld loves being a senator. He's the Republican incumbent and knows what one needs to say to get the good citizens of the Sunflower State to follow his lead. He's currently running on a campaign of strengthening the border, pointing to Colloton's newly rebuilt military as a shining example. Since this state borders on two different foreign powers, he gains a lot of support with this agenda.

- Hollensfeld is not in Colloton's good graces. He was a suspect in some New Revolution investigations, but nothing could be pinned on him. His border strengthening sounds more like preparation for invasion to me.
- Sticks

Penelope Wellington is the only child of oil and cattle magnate Chadmire Wellington IV and the Technocrats best chance at another seat in the Senate. Daddy Wellington's properties span the border making him slightly multinational but the big deal here is the value of the Wellington name if you are from what once was Oklahoma. Virtually all the Oklahomans vote as a bloc. Wellington is really just a pretty face running so her father can pull her strings once she's in office.

- Don't rely too heavily on that last thought. Penelope is a shrewd woman and is more likely playing daddy for his money so she can get a foot in the door of big government and get it back on the track she feels it should follow.
- /dev/grrl

Minnesota

Shane Hunter is the Republican incumbent and is not a huge fan of playing fair in elections. He's a mudslinger and a dirt digger who will defend his own territory with lethal ferocity. He's

finishing up his first term strong and pulling out some of the old "take back the continent" rhetoric to incite the people against his softer opponents.

Melanie Patel is a fast-rising Democrat looking to use her momentum to take a spot in Congress. Her politics are pretty average but she has a charisma and a black belt in persuasion; once she catches your ear her words are like the siren's song. Her current issue of choice is protecting the lakes of Minnesota from corporations looking to control water resources. Her disappearance in the Indian Union and subsequent rescue by a runner named Helios have given her a certain star power as well. She's got a good chance at grabbing the seat if Hunter and White keep focusing on each other and forget about her.

- I know Helios, and he tells the story a different way. He says he just picked her up at a cockroach infested dingy hotel and got her out of country. No fuss, no muss.
- Picador
- She tells a tale of valiant rescue from a cult that wanted to sacrifice her. Something doesn't jive here.
- Stone
- What exactly did Helios mean by "cockroach infested"?
- Bull
- Dunno. He rolled back in country and I haven't heard from him since.
- Picador

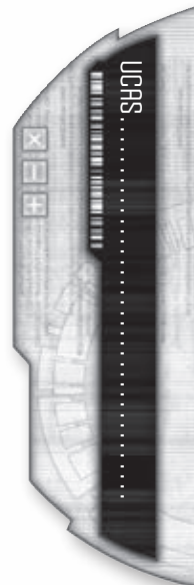
Dorian White is a New Century mage who has been picking away at some of Hunter's regulars by playing a similar tune but having some mojo to back it up. He happened to be in DecCee when the Watergate Rift was closed and has neither confirmed nor denied his involvement with that event. Personally, I think he's full of drek and had nothing to do with it, but I'm not the average Minnesotan. Look for jobs targeting his actions in DecCee during that time.

- Hopefully he was ankle deep in hookers and blow and someone got a shot of it cause I can't stand this prick. Be careful digging around DecCee. White's part of the IoND, and they take care of their own.
- Snopes

Maine (Newfoundland)

Jacques Ryan is a rare Independent in the Senate. He managed to get his seat while every other party was busy throwing their biggest losers into the mix back in '68. He actually only managed twenty-one percent of the vote, but it was a bigger chunk than anybody else. Even though the other parties have stepped up their game he's still got a chance of keeping his seat; he has done nothing but good for Maine since taking office. Best thing about being an Independent is that other parties will look to buy your vote with all sorts of favors, and Ryan has been making sure to get paid in advance before he votes this way or that.

Berrian Dorchester is a Democrat looking to gain popularity by pointing out how wishy-washy the voting of his opponent



is. Problem is no one really cares as long as money, jobs, and government programs keep finding their way up to Maine and Newfoundland. Dorchester's methods are changing as the election gets closer, and he's working the best angle he can find by trying to prove Ryan is a secessionist. Rumors have been popping up quite frequently about Ryan and the Republic of Quebec discussing the reunification of Newfoundland and Labrador under the flag of Quebec. Look for opportunities to dig up this dirt.

- Close but not quite. Ryan's conversations have been with the UK not Quebec. How crazy would that be?
- Winterhawk
- Seriously. Secession. Simply spectacular. Alliteration aside, the point is that there are enough rumors that he's talking to someone. That will get him out of office faster than getting busted with a trunk full of coke rolling up I-95.
- Plan 9
- There was a time that wouldn't really lose you an office.
- Kay St. Irregular

Henry Philipson doesn't seem like much of a challenger, but the Libertarian is looking better and better as the other two drek all over each other. He's really on the ballot because his party has seen Ryan's success and wants to steal his momentum. Ryan's favors are still paying off all over and Philipson and the Libertarians know that. Our role here is trying to keep Philipson's dirt underground, or exposing it if you're into that, all the while trying not to get frostbite.

- Be careful when digging up dirt on Philipson. He's got strong ties to Knight-Errant from his corp days. He actually still has a place just outside their Cold Weather Combat training facility up there. He was an instructor in his younger days but didn't teach combat training. Instead, he taught weather prediction. I know, geeky, but those classes have saved enough KE boys assigned to the middle of nowhere that he's kind of a local hero.
- Sticks

Nebraska

Travis Roman is a monster of an Archconservative, a former linebacker who is loved by every Nebraska Cornhuskers' fan. At 2.11 meters he towers over every other senator around him and has earned the nickname "Gentle Giant," a sobriquet that would be laughed at by any offensive lineman who ever had to try and stop this behemoth. He was formerly the Lone Star sheriff's chief in Lancaster County, home of Lincoln. This is his first run at the Senate, and despite the lack of real political experience he's winning over votes by not being a politician. His following in rural Nebraska is huge, and it's hard to find a SINner in Lincoln that doesn't like this guy's strut. About the only thing that could stop Roman's ascension to the Senate would be proof that he's as racist as every other Archconservative, which he doesn't seem to be.

- That's because he's an ork. Every record out there says human but this guy's size and aging pattern scream *Homo sapiens robustus*. I think he knows that and is conning the Archies. If those slags

on Capitol Hill can overcome revelations that they are Awakened, I think this guy can beat the "Oh my God, I'm an ork" revelation when it hits. After he makes it into the Senate.

- Bull

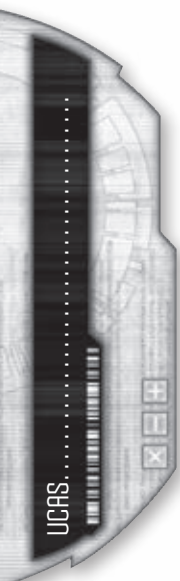
Jeffrey Forester is the incumbent senator and a typical member of the Republican Party. He toes the party line and survives on the endorsements of other popular Republicans. He's never had a real challenger for his seat and has been having a tough time wrapping his head around the idea of actively campaigning. Probably understandable after decades of just sticking his name on the ballot and picking up another six years. The Republicans really don't want to lose their power bloc, so he has been loaned Ladasha Breigh, a protégé of David Nevsky, Colloton's campaign manager. Breigh is running a nice positive campaign on the airwaves but she's digging for dirt on Roman in hopes of getting him to back out of the race before Election Day.

New Brunswick

Avery Shork has been sitting in his Senate seat since shortly after it was created, and he sat in a similar seat for Canada for a decade before that. He's fought off all-comers in his fifty-four years of service by having an impeccable record in both the Senate and his private life—until recently. Near the end of his last term Shork had some serious heart issues, not a huge surprise for a man in his nineties. Since then some of his decisions have been "unexpected" or "erratic," depending on who you ask. He's also been missing Senate sessions; not many, but it's significant since he never missed a single session before this year. He hasn't improved any but doesn't seem to be willing to step down either. If he wins this could be an interesting six years for New Brunswick.

- His statements to the public have been a wild ride. Morose and ready to quit one day, full of piss and vinegar and ready to take on the world the next. Even if it doesn't affect the politics I'm curious what's up with him. Reminds me of someone I know.
- Slamm-0!
- Might be nothing, but his heart issues were taken care of with a healthy dose of nanotech and gene therapy. Might be related, might be Alzheimer's. It's all I got for free.
- Fastjack

Ellen Sanpertino is an Independent being backed by the Children of the Dragon. Her platform is an offbeat blend of New Century, Republican, and Green party agendas with a healthy dose of New Age crazy. She hasn't said a single negative word about Shork, but the Children have been saying all sorts of stuff on her behalf; wacky drek out there up to and including wild speculations about a mammoth dragon skeleton buried under Fredericton. Among other things they claim Shork was willingly possessed by a spirit to prolong his life. The ranting Shork, they say, is supposedly the real Shork pushing through the will of the spirit on rare occasions. Politically Sanpertino will probably just act as a puppet for the Children if she wins the seat. Which, honestly, could be kind of entertaining.



North Dakota

Donner Evanston is a card-carrying member of the NRA and a staunch believer in the Republican Party who regularly makes statements that have many Canadian-Americans wondering why he was never investigated as being part of the New Revolution movement. My guess is it's because he's been making those same statements for forty years, ever since he got "relocated" from his family farm in Montana. He's good friends with Senator Hollensfeld of Nebraska, and the pair go on frequent hunting trips together. Evanston also somehow manages to still be in Colloton's good graces even though he's both Hollensfeld's friend and gets campaign contributions from Ares.

- Someone should take a little look at their hunting trips. I'm sure they have some interesting discussions where they don't think anyone is listening.
- Snopes
- Evanston got seriously injured on a hunting trip in '73. Public story was a bear attack, but I've never seen a bear use a 7.62. Evanston has made an enemy somewhere who missed last time they took a shot. Gotta be some work in lining up a second shot.
- Sunshine

Edward Court's last political position was as a junior aide for the mayor of Bumpkinsville. How he ended up on the ballot for the Democrats is a miracle of biblical proportions. How he managed to suddenly become a contender with an incumbent like Evanston is ... well ... I can't even make a comparison. Court hopped on the campaign trail back in August of '73 with a brand-new Zugmachine hauling two trailers that were already decked out in full "Court for Senate" regalia. When weather permits he rides ahead of the big rig on a classic 2050 Blitzen proudly painted in red, white, and blue. Funding questions are expertly deflected back to the real issues while in front of the media and never addressed in public. Public records show the Zugmachine belongs to the party and is only on loan to Court. The question here is why are the Dem's putting so much effort into getting a seat in North Dakota. And also why are the people falling for this show.

- Everybody loves a showman!
- Slamm-0!
- Because the Dem's are watching the border states all slowly go one hundred percent Republican and really don't like what that might lead too. The UCAS has been bashed, broken, and stepped on since the Awakening. They now have a leader who has twice gone to war on their own soil, taken a healthy disliking for the megas, and who might think it's time to push back a little. We might want to start campaigning for the other parties too.
- The Smiling Bandit
- Speak for yourself. Looks like I might not have to travel so far for work soon.
- Picador

North Missouri

Ezekial Johnston made a name for himself as the Mayor of St. Louis for three terms before hopping up into the big leagues with the Technocrats. His time as mayor was filled with "free city" rhetoric pushed by his corporate backers but it never got traction. He still has similar leanings and frequently meets with the CAS Senator from Missouri and the Mayor's of both halves of St. Louis. The meetings could be considered treasonous if it weren't for how public all four men make their discussions. Their plans call for the transformation of St. Louis into a free city belonging to both the UCAS and the CAS. Gestures of peace and unity abound. It's an ideal that carries a lot of sentimental weight with unification supporters.

- That would probably be step one down the road to reunification—a neutral city where talks could be held.
- Snopes
- Time to start working to show folks how bad of an idea that is. The city would be controlled by the corps, not by either government. Can you say New York? Oh wait, I mean Manhattan Development Consortium.
- Aufheben

Maxwell Holtun is the picture of the southern gentleman. He's attractive, talks with that slow drawl, holds the door for ladies, and always takes off his hat for the national anthem. No one would ever peg him for a member of the New Century party. Unless they looked at his past. Holtun was one of the earliest physical adepts. He set new marksmanship and time records for every Cowboy Action Shooting event he entered until he realized what he was, and then he went back to every event and forfeited his records on his own. Shows the kind of man he is: one that won't keep anything he didn't earn fair and square. He's currently campaigning with a focus on everything in the state that isn't St. Louis, and he passed Johnston in the last statewide poll.

- Holtun may look all gentlemanly but he's an ice-cold killer and a member of the Black Lodge.
- Plan 9
- Proof to back up those statements would be appreciated by all.
- FastJack
- I'm not looking to be the next notch in Holtun's belt. Sorry folks. Telling what I know would only put the bull's-eye on my back.
- Plan 9
- I'm never a big fan of those statements but I just did a little visual comparison of Holtun through the years, and he does in fact put notches on his gunbelt. Looks like he had four in 2052 and added fourteen more between then and now. No mention of what they're for but ... oh drek. My correlation program just finished a little event analysis for me and the results are pushing the limits of coincidence. Hit me private if you want a peak.
- Snopes





INCOMING FEED.....

HOUSE OF (NON)REPRESENTATIVES

The House of Representatives rolls over a little quicker than the Senate and has a lot more seats. They have elections every even number year; the Representatives serve four-year terms, and states split their seats for election each two years. This means work for or against these politicians is always rolling in. Fact of the matter is these seats turn over so frequently we actually don't get as much work for these elections as we do for the Senate (the candidates' war chests are not as impressive, so they can't afford as much), but we do tend to stay busy between elections. We get a lot of interesting work for representatives when they spend three years selling favors and then try to collect all of them during the year of their election while trying to play nice with voters.

The big hotspots for activity in these elections are really focused on the issues and some of them overlap, meaning some states are going to just be runner magnets. Right now the breadbasket states (Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, North Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana) are practically on fire. Politicians from every party are looking to get a piece of the action in these states as they wait for the fallout from Sirurg's attack. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, North Dakota, and Minnesota are also getting hot as they look north at the fertile land and water of AMC.

Border states, all of them, are getting hot as whispers of expansionism start to drift from DeeCee. The New Revolution is trying hard to force that old idea down the throats of the populace. They should have listened to their mothers and known they get more bees with honey than cordite. Since the House tends to reflect the wishes of the populace a little better than the Senate,

some of these issues really could be sorted out here, but every party is focused on securing as much voting power as possible.

Expect opportunities for blackmail operations, kidnappings, extractions, entrapments, misinformation, cross-border scouting, clandestine escorts, protection; everything up to and including assassinations to fill the shadows all over this area.

- Corps in the UCAS often use House elections as cover for their ops. If they can throw a little misdirection out they can keep the runners guessing.
- Sunshine

GOVERNORS FOR HIRE

Since the federal government always seems so far detached from my everyday life I'm happy to come further down the ladder now and start talking about state legislators. Gubernatorial elections are held three out of every four years. Each governor holds office for four years. Term limits are set by each state. Look it up if you really care that much. We have a few interesting ones coming up this year. They match up pretty well with the congressional hotspots, but obviously the candidates are different (well as different as any two politicians can really be).

Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Saskatchewan are all up for grabs in the west, but only Minnesota has a real challenger for the incumbent. The others aren't running unopposed but their multitudinous opponents are all doing more harm than good for themselves by running. If you're looking for work in these areas, tread carefully. All of these candidates are pressed for time and some aren't exactly shadow savvy. Most think

they want a press spectacle that casts an unpleasant light on an opponent. Their greed and haste means high risk of casting a bit too much light into the shadows. You've been warned.

In Minnesota, it's former Viking QB Tal Carver, a Republican, defending the state's top spot from, oddly enough, former teammate, defensive end James Montblanc, an unrelenting Archconservative. I'm sure Montblanc is happy to see no red penny on his way to tackling Carver. Carver is all about the status quo in his state. He's looking to keep everything moving in his preferred direction. He likes keeping strong relations with a few key megas balanced by some strict state rules on resource allocations. Montblanc isn't looking to change that, but he is ready to crack down on the rampant smuggling that he says, and I quote, "Infects Minnesota like a biblical plague of lawless locusts robbing the state of its very soul." You remember I said Archconservative, right? He's campaigning all over the state and carries a man-portable surface-to-air missile just in case he needs to swat some flies. His major focus seems to be showcasing every resident of Minnesota who has had an unpleasant run in with smugglers, and it seems to be working.

- Ha. He's hiring most of those folks and planting them along his campaign trail. I was paid good money to have my cyberarm temporarily removed so I could play the victim of a smugglers run from the law.
- Marcos
- Getting desperate are we?
- Picador
- Nope. I needed a SAM and that little act got me close enough to grab the SOTA hardware that moron carries around the state. Truth be told I think he's paranoid the smugglers are going to go after him and he thinks that thing is going to stop them.
- Marcos
- Is that why he had that string of virtual stops where he never left his hotel room? If so, that's funny!
- Slamm-0!

There are plenty of other states coming up in this election but the only other one with a really interesting cast of candidates is Illinois. Current Governor Anthony Presbitero, an Independent with supporters in a number of parties, is looking to hold on for one last term so he can finish a long-term goal. Presbitero ran for mayor of Chicago (and lost) just before the place became a suburb of hell. He threw a fortune at trying to get friends out of the CZ through less-than-legal means. After the wall came down, he took a tour of the ruination (guarded by a lot of those assets he had used to save a handful of folks). The whole thing was recorded, including his (I believe) very real emotional breakdown. He ran for governor in '58 and won by the largest margin ever seen in Illinois history.

- Probably helped that Governor Colucci had done nothing but spout slogans and get aid workers killed in a grand show of political enlightenment. But really, this guy has done nothing since.
- Sticks

Since his first day in office Presbitero has been trying to get Chicago back on its feet, and we can all see how well that's going. Illinois term limits give him this one last chance. Truth is, he's made quite a bit of progress since Ares lost their golden-boy status with the federal government. No one knows his plans, but a lot of folks would like to so they can play a part on one side or the other. If he can hold on for one more election.

His opponent, Marcia Cosenza, is an Archconservative with a ruthless record as the Illinois States Attorney General. She's made lots of enemies all over the state, but no one can argue with her success record. The one glaring exception was her failure to come up with enough evidence to bring corruption charges against Presbitero. That makes this whole thing personal for her. She's playing the strongest card she has in the election and that's the failure of Presbitero to make good on his promise of restoring Chicago. With only a few weeks left to election time, this state is only going to see the tricks get dirtier.

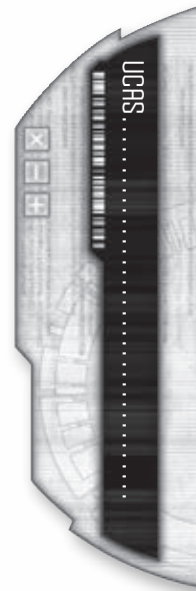
- Presbitero only made it past the corruption rap because one of his top aides, Prescott Wolf, took the bullet. Not long after sentencing, Wolf escaped and is rumored to be Presbitero's connection to the shadows of Illinois.
- Sticks
- Let's not forget about his short stay in the Zone. Doesn't give him tons of street cred, but if you talk to folks who met him or were with him inside you'll know he's a tough SOB. And a shaman. Why hasn't that been mentioned?
- Sunshine
- Because no one really considers raccoon a real totem. Ha. Seriously, it's because he doesn't flaunt it or even talk about it.
- Mika

Expect to see some scuffles in North Missouri when their election comes around next year. Even though the idea of St. Louis as a free city seems ridiculous, there are plenty of ways it could get steam in the next year. Especially if the CAS and UCAS need a western port where they can hang out together. Planning a vacation to Manitoba or Nova Scotia might also benefit your bank account in the coming year. Nova Scotia's hot for problems that could come up with Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba might heat up if the expansionist's plans for the AMC gain support.

I won't speculate much on '76, especially since it's a presidential year and that always seems to overshadow the local stuff. Though it also means less people are paying attention to the dirty tricks being played on the state level. Just remember that if you need a vacation from the fires burning at home but still need to feed yourself, look for which states are running elections that year and make some new fires to keep you warm.

MAYORAL MACHINATIONS

With every city in the UCAS having a mayor I'm damn sure not covering all of the elections that are occurring this year, but it wouldn't be fair for me to ignore the ones that might make you some money coming up. Best part about mayoral work is a lot of towns don't have an overabundance of professional runners. I'm not saying these are easy places to work, but if you have given the



Gubernatorial Election Years by State

2074: Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Saskatchewan, Seattle, South Dakota, Vermont, Wisconsin

2075: Kentucky, Manitoba, New Jersey, North Missouri, North Virginia, Nova Scotia

2076: Delaware, Indiana, New Brunswick, North Dakota, Ontario, West Virginia

streets of Seattle, NYC, or Denver your blood, sweat, and tears, some of these smaller spots should be a cakewalk.

Minneapolis Metroplex

This sprawl on the river has a fight coming up because every candidate sees the value in controlling smuggling through this part of the country in the coming years. This place has had such a brutal mayoral election the candidates are banned from making speeches and their supporters cannot hold rallies due to potential for violence and collateral damage. When the election season kicked off there were eleven potential candidates for mayor of Minneapolis. Of those eleven, four are still in the running, four are in the morgue, and the last three have either been hospitalized, stepped out of the race, or both. The issues dividing the candidates aren't whether they are for or against smuggling, but which smuggling operation is backing their campaign.

Jesse Ventura III: The grandson of a former Minnesota Governor (who was himself a professional wrestler), Jesse is probably the toughest SOB on the ballot. He has actually survived two attacks since this election became a deathrace, and he's been skating the edge of the ban on public speeches. He's been visiting bars, nightclubs, and sports venues (he's a huge combat biker fan) and announcing the trips on his P2.0 account. The notice is short enough to reduce the chance of serious threats, and his security detail has taken care of the few rushed attempts that did materialize..

He's being backed by a small "coalition" of smugglers who call themselves the Ladies of the Lakes. The group is all about increasing their piece of the action by having a mayor on their side but they aren't as violent as some of the other campaign contributors, meaning Ventura is taking a lot more hits than his girls are giving. This isn't necessarily a bad thing since a lot of media attention is going into finding out who's funded by whom.

Gunther Grossberg: As a former UCAS Air Force jet pilot, his ties to the smugglers might be closer than just campaign funding. Grossberg only made the scene as a mayoral candidate when one of the other candidates dropped out after a near-death experience. Grossberg was actually the reason it was only *near* death. He was working as a limo driver and made some really fancy moves with an Elite to get his employer to safety. The other candidate stepped down and announced his support for Grossberg. The public line is pushing him as a regular Joe who can really connect

with the people of Minneapolis. What they mean is someone who knows how the smugglers work and can get the best leverage for the city.

- Word on the street is that Grossberg staged the incident that got him noticed. Not sure if it was a mayoral nod or just a regular driving gig he was looking for, but he's made the best of what he got.
- Turbo Bunny
- He's had more than his share of "incidents." Every one of them looked staged to make him come across like some kind of cheesy superhero behind the wheel.
- Rigger X

Calorie Hughes: This woman is a redheaded firecracker. She's actually running on a "clean up the city" platform, telling the citizens of Minneapolis that she'll work to make the city's streets and skies safer for the everyday citizen. It must be working, as she's the current leader in the polls. The problem is it's complete and utter crap. Hughes' campaign is funded extensively by the North Wind Cooperative. NWC is actually a business front for the Chinook, a band of smugglers who work the northern runs up into AMC and Québec. They play nice on paper by also donating to a number of reputable causes, especially those that have ties to powerful political and media figures who don't want to lose face by being connected to a band of smugglers. Smuggling and blackmail cruise hand in hand in Minneapolis.

- Hughes is HOT. She did a "tasteful" swimsuit spread for a veterinary hospital's annual calendar sale back in '72 and there are people who still haven't changed their calendars. The shot with the albino boa in December ... sooooo very "tasteful."
- Slamm-0!

Declan Chance: While others are getting funds from smaller smuggling groups, Chance is the most well funded of the candidates. His backers have much deeper pockets than the others and a wide smuggling network that has been in operation since the 19th century. Yes, you guessed it: the Mob.

Declan is a long-time employee of the criminal network. He started out as a small-time money launderer at a bank in St. Paul but quickly worked his way up the ladder as a skilled accountant. When the Mob needed some more pull with the City Council they backed Chance, and politics has been his life ever since. He's pretty clean these days but still does favors for the Mafia and votes whatever way they tell him.

- Chance runs on the New Century ticket since he's a highly skilled Hermetic. This also helps him from bumping heads with any other Mob politicians by overlapping political affiliations. It causes the occasional issue with his own party when he doesn't toe the party line. I'm sure some of those folks are beginning to wonder what's up.
- Kay St. Irregular

- Plenty of them have already wondered what's up, and the overly curious ones have gotten some extremely heavy new shoes and a visit to one of the states many lakes. One in particular did not go gently into the night, as they say, and actually survived his trip. Sometimes it pays to have a water spirit hanging around. He slipped into the shadows and works cheap anytime the mob or Chance is the target. He's calling himself Leander.
- 2XL

Boston

Boston's mayoral seat opened up when the former mayor took an ungraceful leap off NeoNET Tower in downtown Beantown. The death was ruled a suicide, though there are those still not convinced, and the election was near enough they didn't hold a special election. They just let the Deputy Mayor, Meghan O'Rylan, take the spot for a few months. The seat grew on her and she's running for the top spot. She has one major opponent and one huge supporter that could definitely affect the elections.

Garrett Seaver is not a man used to hearing the word "no." So when he went to the former mayor's office and "politely" requested some inquiries be made into the holdings and activities of a new powerbroker in town, he got really angry when the mayor said that exact word to him. On that day Seaver started working to pull the rug out from under the mayor. No accusations were made and zero proof was ever discovered even hinting at foul play, but some folks still suspect the mayor's quite literal fall was enabled by the figurative hands of Garrett Seaver.

- Seaver wanted the mayor to look into Damon, the club-hopping dragon, and he got laughed out of the office. The former mayor already had Celedyr, a Great Dragon, parking his HQ in his town and had no desire to worry about some underling dragon that was stepping on Seaver's toes, or maybe screwing his daughter.
- Cosmo

Seaver has now finagled a nomination from the Technocrats and pumped some serious funding into his own campaign. The move is working to get his name out there, but he's having a tough time topping O'Rylan's built-in PR machine. Her time in office has been a gentle sail with pleasant weather and a fully stocked bar. Crime is down, the city's budgetary committee actually agreed on a balanced budget, and the Red Sox have the best record in baseball. She's in charge riding on the coattails of whatever might have pushed her predecessor to suicide. Garret sees all of this and is trying to point out how little she had to do with any of it.

Other than superstitious Red Sox fans who think the Lady Mayor is a good luck charm, O'Rylan has another very strong supporter. Damon. He rolled into town earlier this year and has settled more than in previous places. After word hit the street of the former mayor's visit with Seaver, Damon stopped by for a visit. I don't know what they chatted about but Damon left happy and met Deputy Mayor O'Rylan for the first time. The two were spotted that night at one of Damon's clubs dancing up a storm. O'Rylan was incognito but enough folks in the know recognized her. Since then, the two have been spotted at business lunches and other more traditional spots to explain their affiliations. He may not be the most powerful dragon in town but he's backing O'Rylan for Mayor so we'll see what kind of pull he can muster.

- Speaking of not being the most powerful dragon in town, keep an eye on the results. If O'Rylan wins and Damon is not in the good graces of Celedyr you can bet the mayor's office will feel the pinch. All that smooth sailing will drift right into turbulent waters, and we'll see just how well O'Rylan can handle real politics.
- Cosmo

Winnipeg

With the current mayor, Avi Goel, sitting pretty in the polls a month ago, no one really expected the seat to change hands. Then rumors started to fly about northward expansion in order to grab resources up in the AMC. The mayor of Winnipeg won't really have a lot of say in whether armies march, but he does have a lot of control over the laws of his own city. Goel isn't paying a whole lot of attention to the talk of expansion, but he has started putting out his stance on smuggling and he's a zero tolerance kind of guy.

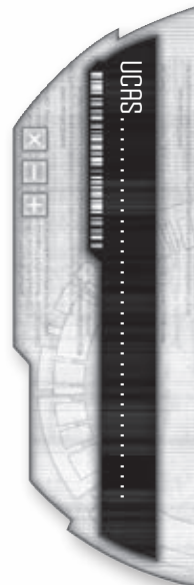
That's how Taylor West managed to get into the race and why he's edging Goel in the latest polls. He's running as a Libertarian and looking to decrease regulations on transportation companies moving through Winnipeg. Through all the political double-talk he is basically saying that smugglers will be free to move their goods through the city. This benefits the city by making it a great stopover point for smugglers and all those nice AMC resources. Resources that no one is really going to start a war over no matter how easy they think it would be.

With the election coming up next month, these two are battling it out over the airwaves and looking for every scrap of dirt they can get to fling at their opponent, even if it doesn't stick. I'm sure once this is all over some lawsuits will be filed, but for now the mud flies free.

- Those lawsuits are already starting to develop, and the lawyers they have working on them are prime targets for coercion. Expect to see a few disappearances in the legal community and a bunch of shifting lead attorneys on cases for both candidates.
- Haze
- Goel has already started using first-year law students as lead attorneys in hopes of saving the real minds behind the scenes. Sad that the man has such a poor opinion of runners that he'd think such a cheap trick will work.
- Icarus
- Goel's maneuver is twofold. He uses them in hopes of tricking the dumb runners but also to help out the cops. If a lawyer hasn't been in business long he hasn't made a list of enemies a kilometer long. Means the cops can focus their attention on West's associates and not somewhere else.
- Hard Exit

Fredericton

I bring up this place not because it holds a whole lot of political sway, but it's one of the reasons why this election is so wild. It's similar to Winnipeg in the amount of mudslinging, but all the mud that's being tossed here is creating a whole lot of worry and fear as the candidates accuse each other of being shedim, like their last mayor. Mayor Cole Bright was very publicly outed as a shedim back in June. He was practically lynched after his arrest



when a whole lot of hooded and very angry citizens marched on the jail. They had some skilled friends because they popped the doors and were pushing for the holding cells before riot officers stopped them. Bright's still locked up as they try to figure out exactly what to do with him/it.

- He's also locked up because they are questioning what he/it was up to while in office. Bright was mayor for a decade before this went down, and no one knows when HE became IT.
- Arete
- Or if he was IT the entire time.
- Man-of-Many-Names

The current candidates—there are four—have all accepted astral scans conducted by the Astral Space Preservation Society (ASPS). They're clean according to the impartial organization, but that has not stopped them from making all sorts of claims against each other. In the shadows these claims are being preceded and followed by runs to make their opponents look like an abomination. The candidates are all playing the game, and some are even playing it against themselves because of all the free press they get out of the deal.

- Be careful working up here. The people are starting to think of this shedim business as a running joke and forgetting that their last mayor was a magical walking dead. The shadows of Fredericton might be darker than you realize.
- Winterhawk
- Since you brought it up, I'll point out that no one has managed to get much out of Bright. The only thing that's certain is he's an average everyday shedim, not a Master. Someone might have been pulling his strings and maybe the strings of others. Outside of the politics there are a number of other organizations, including the ASPS, who are investigating his actions as mayor and who he might have been tied too.
- Arete
- It might be interesting to run up to Fredericton and have a look at their astral space, just to see if there's anything attracting shedim. Might want to look into those dragon bones rumors mentioned earlier, since those things can carry a signature long after the creature's death—assuming, of course, that you know how to look for it.
- Winterhawk

Naperville-Bolingbrook and Joliet

With a governor that seems to be preparing for a major move on the ruins of Chicago, the top seat in one of the sprawl's biggest burbs is going to have a lot of say in what's to come. Not to mention having one of the best shots at being the first mayor of a new Chicago once it's raised from the ashes. Both of these cities have a mayoral election next year and their candidates are making all sorts of outrageous statements; the sort that lead to work for us.

The current mayor of Naperville-Bolingbrook, Felix Naper, is a Democrat who claims to trace his family back to the founders of

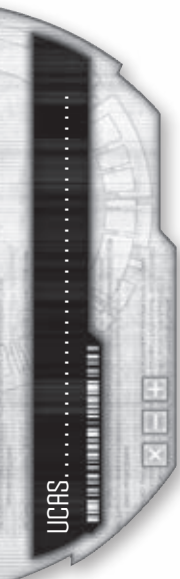
the city. I don't care if the claims are true. I do care about is his latest promise to open up the city to massive corporate expansion with cheap government land sales and lenient building rules. I think he sees the governor's plan and is trying to get as many corps as possible on his turf before Chicago regains its status. He doesn't have any real opponents; just three relative unknowns, all with political ties to Governor Presbitero splitting voters between them.

- At least two of the three are stalking horses. Presbitero wants N-B to fill up with corps. More folks to offer chunks of the city to if they help take it back. Word is they're doing a lot of hiring to prevent other viable candidates from getting into the race.
- Sticks

Down in Joliet, it actually looks like there might be a fight for the office for the first time in almost two decades. Joliet's current mayor is an Ares lackey who's had the spot for two terms and took over from another Ares lackey before him. With the presidential thumbs down on the megacorp, and a governor who doesn't like them much, Ares is facing the first real challenge to their hold on the city of Joliet.

Notice the lack of names? That's because Joliet's mayoral race is less of a "Who can win the most votes?" and more of a "Who can survive to take office?" proposition. Ares has the firepower and the protective services to keep their boys safe, but the other side seems to have a whole lot of shadow assets that're doing a damn good job of getting to their candidates. I haven't heard any suggestions from the opposition for candidates yet, but I'm sure that's a protective measure.

- Or maybe they haven't found someone crazy enough to take a dump on Ares in their own backyard. Joliet belongs to Ares lock, stock, and barrel. And it's no coincidence that ancient idiom cites parts of a gun. Joliet is an armed Ares camp. Whatever political game their opponents are playing here, it isn't a coup. Maybe a distraction?
- Sticks
- I gotta say, all this Ares bashing is actually starting to bother me. Maybe it's their American roots pulling on my heartstrings, but whatever it is, it makes me want to go do some work for them to try and help boost their rep.
- Stone
- Maybe that's their plan.
- Kane
- Maybe it's not a great idea to try to push the biggest anti-bug corp out of the biggest bug hellhole around. Just saying.
- Sticks
- Just spitballing here, but what if Governor Presbitero is a bug. He did spend all that time in the city and they have been talking about him pulling out "friends." Now he wants to help rebuild the city. Maybe it's to give the bugs a place to hide again.
- Plan 9



Des Moines

Iowa's capital lost its mayor to a freak combine accident earlier this year, and the election coming up is a six-way race that has really gotten hot since the incident in Borinquen. Every party sees the value of being in control of the biggest city in Iowa with a food crunch closing in. It probably also helps that Des Moines is home to several smaller NatVat processing plants. These plants will be ramping up production creating more work all around Des Moines, both in the real world and the shadows. And though NatVat is extraterritorial, the majority of the land around the plants is city property; empty, barren, city property, but city property nonetheless.

Expect shadow work in the final stretch looking to sabotage campaigns, especially through revealing or creating ties to megas other than AZT.

- For those looking for an inside track the Technocrat candidate is currently the AZT favorite while the Republican, an Ares yes-man is actually putting up a solid fight.
- Icarus
- Combine accident? Funny. The last mayor got too buddy-buddy with Horizon for Aztechnology's taste and paid the price for their little shadow war.
- Marcos
- Back the New Century candidate. It's not the best-paying work but it will probably lead to the most interesting future. She's the illegitimate child of the last mayor and some farmer's daughter, but the mayor did everything he could to make her life comfortable even though he couldn't be there. If she gets the seat everybody better watch out.
- Plan 9
- Take those jobs at your own risk. That farmer's daughter has taken a dark turn from her original Great Mother totem and she's recently been spotted having lunch with a suspected leader of TerraFirst!
- Winterhawk

Jefferson City

With all the talk of a free St. Louis going around, no one is paying attention to the capital. Not that anyone ever does anyway, but at least for the next six to eight months this might be the place to lay low. And by "lay low" I mean influence the future of the UCAS agricultural complex. I'm directing your attention here because the mayoral race is down to three candidates, all three of whom owe every iota of their allegiance to the same corp, or nation, or whatever you want to call the PCC. All three candidates have been getting massive donations from three different agricorps. The three companies look independent on the surface, but enough digging reveals all of them tied back to banks wholly owned by the PCC.

Where most elections on my list here have been talking about working between the candidates, the work here is getting funded by elements within the UCAS government. Getting paid by the government to mess with the government sounds like a win-win for my inner neo-anarchist. Expect work from some of the other

agricorps too once word gets out that these guys are all backed by one force. If our business doesn't turn this race upside down, some of you amoral types might get a shot at starting the game all over again.

- Why would the PCC be backing a city mayor here of all places? Anybody got an inside track on this?
- Pistons
- Jefferson City has more agricultural research labs per square klick than any other city in the UCAS. Being in the mayor's office during some tight times might mean a lot of influence on just what those labs have access to.
- Lyran

Boise City and Guymon

Formerly part of Oklahoma and now under the umbrella of Kansas, these two towns are tiny. But don't let their size fool you—they are about to gain some serious significance and at least two political parties know this. The Republicans and the Democrats (sounds like the old days) are running neck and neck to grab the top town seats and hopefully direct, or deflect, some of the action that may be coming down the road.

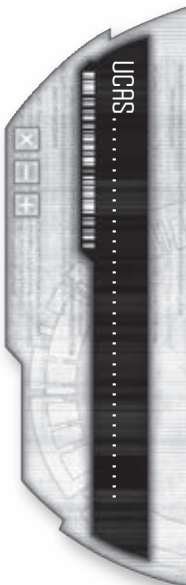
Alongside all the political pandering that you can play a part in, the megas, especially Ares and S-K's heavy industry sectors, are taking a strong interest in this area. There's a lot of work scoping out terrain and property. Though this doesn't sound like our kind of work, most of it is being done on the sly and the companies are hiring teams to keep an eye on their engineers while they do their thing. With that said you can also bet they are hiring on the other side to stop those engineers.

- Be warned, there're other interesting parties doing other interesting things around here. Quite a few foreign governments are keeping an eye on activity in this little UCASian peninsula, namely the PCC and CAS.
- Sticks
- Some work out of Denver has been heading down this way as well, and it stinks of white wyrm.
- Thorn

LOCAL ELECTIONS

Below the level of big-city mayoral elections, there's not a whole lot of shadow opportunities, though there's a brisk seasonal market for hooding. Especially hooding for runners, fixers, and Johnsons who have ties to the candidates or their own personal agendas. This type of work may not pay well, but you usually can rack up favors with local politicians. Never know when having those in the bank might make life easier.

Honestly, these smaller elections are so much easier to work with than the big ones. Security tends to be lighter and the jobs easier. Problem is a lot of this stuff gets personal real fast. A big-city mayor has more constituents than they would ever be able to meet, while a small-town mayor might know every person in town. If you are doing shady work for Merle because he's running against Jeb, you may stay on Jeb's good side as long as you keep your work options open. Jeb's sister, Lizzie, on the other hand, may



think your actions against her brother are unforgivable and she's married to Earl, the town mechanic, who is currently working on your car to fix a leaky radiator hose. Suddenly that radiator hose is backordered or something else breaks until you make amends and do this one little job for Jeb to make Lizzie happy. There's a reason why runners congregate in big metropolitan areas: anonymity.

- And, I should add, small-town politicos generally don't have enough scratch to pay you much. Go to these places when you're on the run or need a change of scenery, not as a prime destination.
- Stone

One last important thing to remember with local political work is the abundance of the jobs and the value of really being a professional. Make sure your employers understand they are contracting you for a job and for your silence on that job. They are not hiring you to be the bagman for every bit of dirty business they want done. They can sell out to a mobster for that. They need to know you may work for them today, but if your next job offer comes from their opponent you aren't going to be warning them that you're coming. In the same vein, you also need to avoid using insider information or playing a former employer for the gain of another. That isn't professional work, and it can get you blacklisted or worse. As I said before work at this level can get real personal for the politicians.

MAJOR ISSUES: WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT

Posted by: American Archon

It always amazes me how little UCAS citizens know about what is going on in their own government. Around election time they get some hot-button topics like gun control, mage/electrokinetic registration, and military funding, but they pay very little attention to what is really going on day to day. Now I'm not going to go into all of that because, well, it's really boring. Have any of you ever cracked open a government budget? Good, keep it that way. But I will toss out some big-ticket issues that are currently making the rounds. This is where you'll make your money working in the UCAS.

I'll break the major issues down into some broad categories and give a little on each. If you want more, check your local screamsheet or newnet; all of these things are popping up in the news more and more lately.

BORDER TROUBLES

We all know about the troublemakers that made up the New Revolution. We also all know what happened to the ones that got caught. Ugly, ugly, business. But folks like that don't get their revolutions that far without knowing what a good many people really want. Those folks might not have been voted into office by campaigning for a reunified America, but they did grab lots of votes with other slogans like "traditional American values" and "expanding UCASian influence."

I read what Jack got from Proud UCASian about the politicians and the elections going on that could be good for shadow business. Here's a little of that behind the scenes.

Pueblo Corporate Council

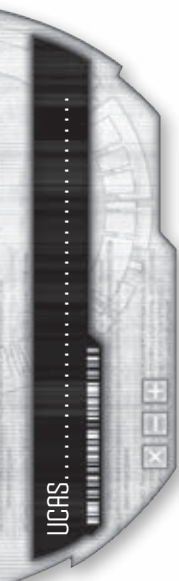
Though the border is small, the trouble could be growing. More than one historian has done some recent comparisons between the early United States' westward expansion and the growth of the PCC in recent years. Absorbing the Ute nation, taking a chunk of California, and now relieving Aztlan of part of Texas have all brought attention to the corporate Native American Nation.

The rise of the PCC is playing a big part in both Kansas and federal elections. Politicians in these two areas are using the continued expansion of the PCC to expand the federal military budget while pushing for an increased diplomatic presence in the growing neighbor. Kansas has two small towns in the narrow strip that was once Oklahoma that have become political battlefields because they're also slotted for some potential military advancements.

In order for all these political maneuvers to develop any real traction they need support from the people. Which is where we come in. When most people think of political insurgents, they've got third world countries and AK-97s in mind. Here in the southwestern corner of the UCAS, they look like "independent" news correspondents, political aides, and concerned citizen activists. All of whom are trying to make sure everyone understands the dangers of an expansionist PCC. Truth of the matter is most of these people are bought and paid for by one politician or another, and their message is filled with veiled support for their employers.

These people, or their employers, are also going to hire people like us to create news. That could be little extra activity on the other side of the border or a game of dress-up where you accidentally leave behind some piece of incriminating evidence or get recorded on security cameras, or the commlinks of passers-by. The games are a little more dangerous than old-school political sabotage, but they also tend to pay better and are tons more exciting.

- The PCC is well aware of the image they are gaining, and they are working hard to make sure this latest move was not seen as an invasion but as a show of support for their neighbor nation.
- Mika
- They're trying not to look like they are supporting the Aztlan-Amazonia conflict on either side, even though they just freed up an entire division of Azzie soldiers who were hanging out to keep some Texans in line. This might be the move that turns the tide for Aztlan. Can't wait to see what happens when they want their land back.
- Marcos
- That freed-up division took a serious hit on their journey south. The group got split for transport. Half the force went over land to save resources, a quarter headed for Corpus Christie to sail down, and the last quarter got the fast track and went by air. A tropical storm rolled up on the boatload and put the whole freighter at the bottom of the Gulf, all hands lost. The land rollers are also losing a few to pockets of guerrillas.
- Glasswalker
- Another hit by Mother Nature on the Azzies. You'd think the planet doesn't like them.
- Kane





INCOMING FEED.....



- I've got to wonder how much mojo this is costing the Amazonian weather control.
- Picador
- If it keeps the Azzies out of the Amazon, there is no price too high.
- Ecotope
- There is always a price too high.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Algonquin-Manitou Council

One of the strangest rumors being thrown around is about conflict with the Algonquin-Manitou Council. Best known for their anglo-friendly residency policies, the AMC hasn't had much trouble with the UCAS but whispers have that changing, and soon.

Candidates from Saskatchewan and Manitoba had been campaigning on the usual issues, but as the elections get closer, voters' groups and local op-ed forums have focused more and more on the possible need for AMC's resources and which candidate has the best chance of securing those resources. Nothing's being said openly by the candidates but their constituents seem to be hearing a lot at late-night rallies.

- Security at these rallies is tight and often provided by folks like us. Teams are often hired based on the skill of their hacker or rigger to make sure nothing's getting recorded. Needless to say nothing's always one hundred percent, so we also get called to stop recordings from reaching the public.
- Stone

- I don't think anyone believes the candidates have the pull to really invade the AMC. But most of the candidates have some strong corporate ties. Ties that may lead to some sweet resource deals if this whole food shortage ever really comes to a head.
- /dev/grrl
- And if the corps do get control of the resources up here, those smugglers who have been working from Winnipeg will get a serious boost in business.
- Mika

Sioux Nation

This is not a fun area for political speculation, especially on the possibility of conflict. The UCAS/Sioux border is already a powder keg looking for a spark. Yes, looking. The troops on both sides of this border have been staring at each other for years, waiting for that day when the big guns get the green light and the tanks can roll out from under their ruthenium tarps. What keeps this from happening is politicians on both sides of the border preferring to live in the luxury of privilege rather than the misery of war.

The Sioux Nation becomes the big talking point during every election in the border states. Politicians in both Dakotas, as well as Kansas and Nebraska, know rattling their sabers drives voters to the polls. But election time is a very narrow window, and politicians need media events at the right times. Their best chance of orchestrating these events is to hire some deniable assets to create incidents on both sides of the line. Runners can make a killing in the border states from June to October if they just look around for the current elections.



- Understand the Sioux don't take kindly to invaders. Make sure your IDs are top-of-the-line and up to date. Even if you get snagged by a roving border patrol, everything better be in order because one of them is likely carrying a satellite uplink and will check your credentials, usually without anyone knowing, while the others question you.
- Stone
- The border guards aren't as world renowned as the Sioux Special Forces, but they do some cross-training; training that makes the Wildcats deadly in natural terrain. More than likely they will watch you for kilometers before coming at you in a place where they have all the advantages.
- Picador

Right now the Sioux might be coming into a rough patch. Their fellow NAN members are dealing with their own issues, leaving the Sioux to be the glue of the coalition. That and UCASian politicians stirring up the borders here and in Denver is making the Sioux a little twitchy. The borders are tighter, and they're likely to make examples of folks who come around whacking the beehive. You've been warned.

CAS

The other Americans, or "The Real Americans" if you believe Ares' latest slogans, are always on the minds of politicians in the UCAS. Whether it's a question of mutual enemies, talks of reunification, or arguments over pollution damage to the Mississippi, the two countries are constantly looking to one another for something. Right now the three biggest focal points are CAS Naval actions in the Caribbean, St. Louis' delusions of free city grandeur, and the shit hitting the fan with the PCC getting a piece of Texas and not handing it over to the CAS like a good neighbor.

The naval actions in the Caribbean are no big deal to the UCAS, but they are being spun by UCAS politicians as military maneuvers in preparation for a little expansionism. Political candidates in states along the border with the CAS are talking about military numbers on the borders and what could happen if the CAS Navy decided to roll up the Mississippi. They're looking to stir up just enough fear to pull the militants into the voting booths, but not so much they're tempted to take on the CAS directly. Along the coastal states the political line goes a little differently. They're looking at facing blockades or trade route limitations if the CAS starts going after nearby islands or Florida. The Carib League is not a first-tier ally of the UCAS, but they do a significant amount of trade in fruits, nuts, sugar, and high-quality rum. This may sound completely useless to someone who hasn't eaten, or likely even seen, a fresh fruit in her life, but it matters to a lot of people who hire us. They want things to flow so they need the status quo maintained. They use us to do that. A little warning here, some sabotage there, and we keep the eastern seaboard of North America from becoming a shooting gallery.

With St. Louis' issues, the CAS and the UCAS are being dragged to the table with local politicians to discuss a topic none of the federal folks plan to budge on. Even though both sides get along most of the time, they have no intention of sharing the city. That's way more commitment than these two divorced parents want; 50/50 custody never works. You might as well hand

the city over to the neo-anarchists and call it a day. As long as they're willing to go through the motions, we get four different major factions to work for here and that's before considering the corporate element, which is huge.

Last big issue—and this one is probably the biggest—is the problems the CAS is having with the PCC after the PCC gained part of Texas from Aztlan so the Azzies could keep beating on Amazonia and stop worrying about their northern border for awhile. How does this affect the UCAS, you ask? In a lot of ways. The PCC just expanded again, and this time with almost no effort whatsoever. That continental powerhouse is growing fast, and that means pressure on its neighbors to keep up or get gobbled up.

- This event is one of the few things that might actually pull the Americas back together. If the PCC can get a better relationship with the Sioux Nation, you can sure as hell bet the two American Congress' are going to start meeting about becoming one, or at least teaming up to try to keep the NAN in check.
- Kay St. Irregular

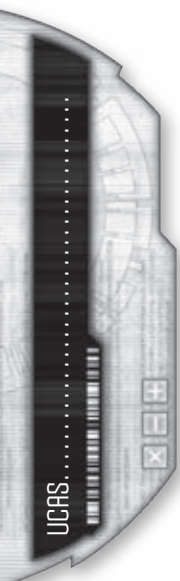
By giving the PCC their new piece of Texas, the Azzies freed up assets to send south. This means more trouble for Amazonia, another loose alliance of the UCAS. The country is a supplier of tropical produce, rainforest tesmas, and hundreds of other smaller imports; not multi-billion dollar industries, but valuable luxury items. Politicians tend to make the whole thing out to be more like an attack on the rainforest and the planet itself. They use Amazonia as an example of a country that is trying to do the right thing and being attacked for it. With this area heating up, expect to see opportunities for work digging to find out what the PCC is really getting from this whole deal.

CORPORATE TROUBLES

We've all heard President Colloton's opinions of Ares. Pleasantly worded enough for the news but filled with enough venom to drop a juggernaut. Her opinion has influenced the opinions of a lot of other members of her party, and the all-American megacorp has taken a pretty drastic hit in the political arenas around the UCAS. While the government doesn't have the power to go head to head with a monster like Ares, this country hasn't seen that kind of influence over corporations since—well, it never has. The old U.S. had some power, if you believe the history lessons, but none of the nations that rose out of its rubble ever came close to its standard. Until now. Now the push and shove has created power voids all around the UCAS that need to be filled. Political elections are starting to look like corporate bidding wars as corps back politicians looking for some inside help when government contracts and relationships start getting reassessed.

Famine

No one in the modern world of universally available flavorful soy products would have thought a famine possible, or imagined the threat of famine becoming a major political issue; especially for a first world nation like the UCAS. Now I'm not saying the UCAS is going to starve; they produce too much of the world's food for that. The issue is the UCAS is such a solid producer that famine—or even food shortages—may give it leverage enough to



gain back some of its former world power. Or at the very least give them the muscle to stand against the megacorps.

- Bullshit. Who do you think owns that food supply? If anything, the UCAS is going to have to go begging to the corps to make sure Aztlan doesn't buy their food out from under them at inflated prices.
- Cosmo

The potential for famine is the result of a recent attack by Surrurg on the NatVat facility in Borinquen. The facility handles approximately eighty percent of Aztechnology's processed food production. With that plant shut down for repairs, the NatVat products we all know and love (or eat because we have few other options) are going to be scarce on the shelves sometime in the next twelve months.

- Two points to clarify here. First, NatVat Borinquen may never come back online. That's how bad Hurricane Surrurg trashed the place. Second, twelve months is way longer than this stuff will really last. People have already gotten a full whiff of this disaster and are starting to buy every NatVat-produced junk food by the gross. Expect to see NatVat products declining in stock by the end of the year, everywhere. The worst of it, of course, will be in Aztlan.
- Sunshine

For the UCAS this means a few things. NatVat has production facilities in a couple UCAS cities, but in the present climate they're likely to expand their operations in other countries without trying to clean up Borinquen. Expect deals to be done behind closed doors and expect to be hired to kick in, or guard, a few of those doors along the way.

At the same time expect the UCAS to increase their production output. Ordinarily, planting additional fields this late in the season wouldn't help. But planting crops engineered with Aztechnology's patented QuikGrow gene will. I'm sure some agreements will need to be made there, and again, agreements like that often involve us before they hit the public arena.

All in all the UCAS is looking to make out like a bandit on this issue if they play the game right. They have been out of power and insular for so long that may not be how it plays out, but we can all hope. I often prefer dealing with the government of "elected" officials over the cold, uncompromising bottom-line mentality of the corps.

- This looks like a perfect spot to mention some unorthodox work that's been popping up lately. With all the drama about food shortages, farm owners have been hiring extra help to keep the crops safe. Most of the time they just hire regular old farmhands but occasionally they think they need something a little extra, and they reach into the shadows to find it. It's different enough from regular jobs that a niche market of Nightfarmers is developing. Good money for now even though the nickname is a bit lame.
- Kia
- Work stealing experimental fertilizers and insecticides has been on the rise too. And since most companies think beyond the

immediate future all sorts of crop-related genotech and research is getting targeted. Whoever thought a processed food shortage would mean we runners could get so much work that we could just buy real food. Crazy.

- Cosmo

Water Rights

Sort of tied into the famine and border issues are water rights. The UCAS has the Great Lakes, but those are used so heavily for trade and transport that there are obstacles to pumping it off for watering crops and assets in place to make sure those obstacles stay in place. Same goes for the Mississippi and its tributaries that are regulated to limit how much water is pulled off. Quite a few of the lakes in Minnesota are used for irrigation water, but eyes are looking north to Algonquin-Manitou lakes for another source if production needs to be increased in the UCAS.

Politically this could mean trade agreements, possibly with megacorporate intermediaries, or—if the UCAS gets to feeling really spry—invasion. No matter which way it goes, or if it falls any number of ways in between, we are probably going to get a lot of work trying to get the upper hand for somebody.

- All this talk of water rights, farm-handing, and expansionism has me picturing the wild west from the early days of the old U.S. Only now we have cybercowboys who would put every one of those old gunslingers to shame. Interesting times we live in, interesting times.
- Butch

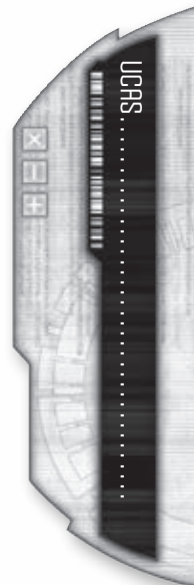
FREE CITY MOVEMENTS

I have difficulty fathoming why some places somehow think they would be better off outside the jurisdiction of their parent state. But every election cycle the idea comes up in way too many of the larger metropolitan areas and populated islands. Folks get all excited about their freedom from governmental oppression and their chance to really shape the future of their home. When election hoopla ends, the idea fades away.

Oh, yeah, that's why the idea of independence keeps raising its ugly head. Because politicians stoke the fires to get into office and then become a mouthpiece for whatever corporation is running the place to stay in office. Right now it's St. Louis looking to become a neutral zone between the UCAS and CAS, Prince Edward Island looking for some religious freedom to continue to be nutbags, Newfoundland trying to figure out where they really belong, and Chicago looking to stop being that feral scar on the heartland of the UCAS and give the title back to Gary.

St. Louis

I have mixed feelings about this place. On one hand they really do have it rough. No city deserves to get chopped in half like St. Louis was when the nations split; it sucks for everybody. On the other hand, this place went from being the Midwest's "drive-thru" city to being a major transportation, shipping, and international relations hub. Their unemployment rate took a serious nosedive (on both sides of the border), they started attracting all sorts of business to both sides of the city, and they developed a real shadow community. Nothing says a city's hit it



big like having shadowrunners call it home. Other than a little split personality, this place definitely came out with the long straw.

Now the air is filled with talk of reunifying St. Louis. Call it nostalgia, call it the influence of the New Revolution, or call it another political pitch, just don't call it a joke. I know I said these things come and go with their elections but I've checked in on the chatter in this burg and it feels like a city ready for a big change. Everyone from the CEOs to the squatters are talking about making that first step, building that bridge, sewing the wounds shut, and a dozen other cute phrases for reunification. This city wants to be healed.

I don't know who's behind this latest push, but a unified city would change the game for enough people in every aspect of the equation that I'm sure someone really wants to know.

- Seems like the corporations are on board with this idea too. No surprise since they would gain a lot of influence over such a small free city but usually they aren't so keen on things like the UCAS and CAS teaming up again. A broken US is better for business to most corps.
- Kia
- Only some corporations. As American Archon points out, business has boomed in the divided city, and some of the locals don't want anything to change. There are some multinationals on that side of things, too. Maersk is leading the charge here, since their St. Louis-based shipping concern regularly brings in a very healthy profit.
- Mr. Bonds
- I'm trying to figure out why Colloton would let any of these candidates campaign on an issue that definitely has to go through the federal government and pretty much crosses the line into secessionism, even with the thin veil of being a city of both nations.
- Sticks
- Because she has better things to do than slap the wrists of politicians who play on the heartstrings of their constituents for votes. This is just another election season ear-catcher. Could be a nice place to do some work before the elections.
- Slamm-0!
- And your desire for work there wouldn't have anything to do with the Cardinals being still in the hunt would it?
- Netcat
- Nope, strictly professional curiosity.
- Slamm-0!

Prince Edward Island

Technically this place is part of Nova Scotia, but its most famous residents, the Children of the Dragon, seem to be looking for a place of their own. No one on the island is talking secession, but there are plenty of conversations about adding a little dragon silhouette to the maple leaves on the flag. The symbol is more of a joke (though I wish it wasn't) but the sentiment is there. The people of Prince Edward Island, namely the members of the Children, aren't happy with just one representative in the House (he's New Century, but he's a member). They want state status so

they can have a pair of senators and their own little puppet government that falls in line with all their foolishness.

Since they have to get this little notion past the larger government of Nova Scotia their chances are pretty slim, but they have been known to throw money at worse causes. Right now their considerable resources are finding their way into our community as they poke into the closets of their political peers in search of leverage. For now that seems to be the extent of their efforts. They can be granted statehood any time, not just during an election year. It's quite possible this could be a long game for the CotD.

- Expect some jobs applying pressure to members of the state congress first to get them on board before the Children start extending their talons farther afield looking for federal support.
- Mr. Bonds
- These guys do not realize the trouble they are getting themselves into. They're going to be so far in debt to everyone who votes to let them become a state we might as well start calling them the Children of the Congress.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Are you sure they're going to be the ones who owe the favors? They may call themselves the Children, but they are far from it. The UCAS Congress would be wise to simply let them gain statehood instead of playing at politics with Dragonson.
- Goat Foot

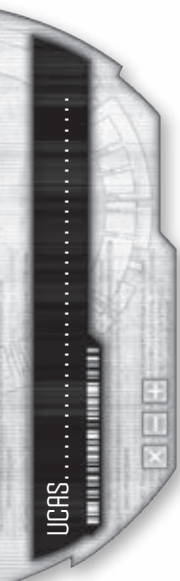
Newfoundland (Maine)

I've been intrigued by this place for a few years now. Ever since the first time I went up there to check out an abandoned sub base that someone paid me to think was interesting (it wasn't), I've been fascinated with the history and cultural seclusion of this place. It is considered part of the state of Maine, despite their geographic separation, because back during the parceling of North America they decided it was better to be part of the UCAS than the Republic of Québec (I can't blame them).

But why not become part of Nova Scotia, or New Brunswick, their fellow Canadian territories? Because those two territories were familiar with Newfoundland. A familiarity that meant they didn't want a half million socially awkward recluses added to their demographic figures. Now don't get me wrong, I love the Newfies. I use words like "socially awkward recluses" because that's how they feel with outsiders. Get to know them and you'll realize they just don't like anyone who isn't a Newfie. Put in a hard winter shuttered up in a small fishing village and you'll start to dislike outsiders too.

Point of this is not for me to tell you how much I love these guys but to key you in to the political scene evolving on the island. Looking at the federal picture, this place only sends one representative to the House (Maine sends three; Newfoundland is one-third of their population) but there's never been a Newfie in Congress. They pay their taxes and vote for the "Lobber" (their term for people from Maine) who pretends to care about them the most while continuing to live their quiet, some would say antiquated, lifestyle.

This was the status quo up until April of this year when a number of smaller towns sent representatives to St. John's with



a message of change. Feeling as if they aren't really represented, they've been meeting to discuss other options. With each passing month more of the small towns have sent emissaries, and the delegation is up to thirty-four. The meetings have been held in private so far with city officials attending off the record. My unique status as an honorary Newfie has gotten me an invitation to attend a meeting, but not until late October so I'm left speculating like everyone else until then.

- He doesn't want to speculate, so I will. If PEI can buck for statehood, these guys could look to break from Maine and gain some control for themselves. Secession is a possibility, especially for the Newfies, since there wouldn't be much of a change for them, but the corporations that have been harvesting all the resources here might take issue with an independent government of stubborn fishermen. If Newfoundland leaves the UCAS, it would likely be for another country. A reconnection with Labrador is possible but a longshot, since it's part of Québec. Newfoundland has historical ties to the UK, Iceland, Greenland, and the nations of the Scandinavian peninsula so they could also be looking across the pond.
- Icarus
- S-K has a lot of operations in the interior of the island. They might be working an angle to get more direct control here.
- Kia
- S-K already has plenty of control. Most of the politicians currently in office around Newfoundland and Maine have strong ties to the megacorp. They don't need, and actually wouldn't want, this place changing hands. They'd have to start all over again building connections. If anything, look at these guys for jobs to stop any political exchanges.
- Mr. Bonds
- Speaking of megacorps, Ares caught some serious flak back in March when their UnlimiTech R&D outpost near Granite Lake had a security breach. According to them it was nothing major, but the town had a rash of disappearances right after. This could have been caused by a specimen of some sort. That little community out there was one of the first to send someone to St. John's.
- Sticks

Chicago

This poor place has seen its unfair share of bad luck that I don't need to recap. But I will point out that even though this place has taken a beating it has not been forgotten. Politically savvy folks from both state and local governments use a "Clean-up Chicago" spin in their campaigns all the time. The only time this spin gets left off the ads is when a recent bug sighting or attack has the people spooked. The winners quickly cite all the hurdles and difficulties with cleanup efforts, usually scapegoating the next level up of government for tying their hands on the issue, and then let it fade into the background.

This may really change this year. The current governor has had a real hard-on for the city ever since he lost the Chicago mayoral election just before the disaster in '55. He's coming up

for reelection and entering his last term. On top of that Ares has enough black eyes with the feds that other corporations are seeing Chicago as worth recovering. With all the red tape Ares put in their way eliminated, other corporations are looking at moving back. Contracts around the city are getting renegotiated like crazy.

Now that may sound easy, but moving back in after almost twenty years of being gone can lead to some seriously compromised legal situations. As such the Illinois State Supreme Court is looking to be a political inferno as corporations, political parties, and other government agencies vie for influence on the bench.

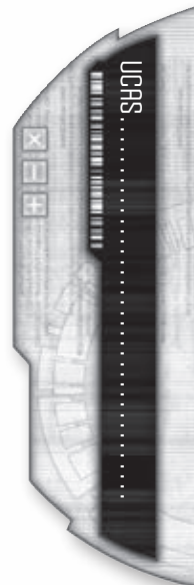
And now for the kicker. The people who are about to be "saved" inside the zone by all this corporate and government recovery really don't want the help. They've settled into their feral lifestyles and have little use for anyone telling them what to do or how to live. This will probably be the toughest thing to overcome, and the "Leave us alone" movement isn't without political savvy. A lot of the neo-anarchists who call Chicago home are actually meeting with the warlords who control the place, and they're doing some seriously non-anarchist things, like making sure all the folks living under the protection of the warlord have a valid SIN. Whether it's one they still remember or one they stole off a corpse, the neo-a's are trying to make sure the citizens of Chicago have voting rights when the city does its little phoenix bit.

- The neo-a's aren't doing this on their own. Most of the efforts are being coordinated by a fixer named Lycus.
- 2XL
- Lycus is the alias of Prescott Wolf, Governor Presbitero's aide who took the corruption charges Cosenza tried to lay on his boss. If you think he took a bullet for his boss you can think this is all for Presbitero; alternately, if you think he's angry at the governor you can think this is all a plot for revenge against his former boss. I don't know which it is, but I find it interesting either way.
- Icarus

DRAGONS

Dragons are scary. Even if you are the most understanding and open-minded person in the world, deep down, the sight of a dragon causes a visceral reaction. There's nothing wrong with this reaction; it's natural to fear something that can swallow you whole *and* beat you at chess. Since this reaction's almost universal ("almost" because the world has its share of nutbags who haven't figured out self preservation) it is a tool that can be used by politicians to incite the masses.

Right now the amount of tension in the world revolving around dragons is getting worse. A couple decades ago these troubles would have been explained and discussed openly on national trid by Dunkelzahn. His openness made that scariness turn to awe and respect, enough to get him elected president. Then the fear I mentioned earlier got him assassinated. But the point is we don't have that voice anymore. These dragons make speeches that are heard by the world, but really only meant for their kin, with hidden meanings in every sentence. All the signs indicate we live in a world on the brink of a very ugly war with no good outcome.



- I'd point out that his thesis is at risk by the fact that he has the particulars of Dunkelzahn's death wrong, but as I consider it the larger strokes are still valid, so I'll content myself with only saying this much.
- Plan 9

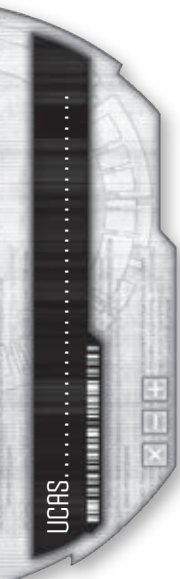
Politicians can read those signs and know they can get votes in two ways, by being a voice of reason or by rallying the troops behind a flag of ignorance. We all know which is easier. The current batch of office seekers and incumbents are playing up the fear and making claims about seeking peace but readying for war on all levels of government. These claims are always better when they have some kind of support or evidence of their efforts and their conviction. That's how we come in, especially those with arcane talents in the field of illusion.

Actions by dragons are popping up on trid news nightly, especially attached to stories about the dragon being chased off by the security force of a politician seeking office. None of these dragons ever die and none are ever identified by name, but every time one of these attacks occur the politician in question gains a few points in the polls. It's a dangerous game, though. There aren't many dragons out there who appreciate these shows, but most are smart enough to know the truth. Those are the ones who hire us to have "polite conversations" with the politicians in question and make sure they don't keep up the charade. The game goes on since there are a lot more politicians than dragons and the visits are actually polite most of the time, but push the issue and see if the next visit you get by a dragon is so easy to chase off or get caught on camera. Worse for us, though, is the attention it brings to our spellcasters. The dragons often seek out the offending spellslinger to make sure they understand the error of their ways when meddling in the business of dragons, so beware when you get a call for this kind of work.

- How does this level of stupidity not get the politicians killed?
- Jimmy No
- They're protected by the shield of subterfuge. The public doesn't know the show's a hoax, and if a real dragon goes after the politician publicly it just feeds the fire. The non-great dragons

(need a good term for them that isn't demeaning) are especially aware of their uncomfortable place in this war. They are the most likely to be the casualties in a war between metahumans and dragons. The Greats really don't care if politicians want to look all heroic; they can always point out GW's little scene in Denver.

- Winterhawk
- What about Sirurg? Do you think he knows the effect he's having on politics around the world?
- Marcos
- If he does I don't think he cares.
- Kane
- Yes. I'm sure Sirurg thoroughly understands the worldwide ramifications of his actions, which is why he attacks where he attacks. The blast on NatVat not only hurt Aztechnology but it also hit every nation in the world with a Stuffer Shack. I don't doubt he's also well aware of the gains other companies and countries are going to get from this move.
- Glasswalker
- Whether he knows or not, I still don't think he cares. He attacks targets that allow him to exercise his grudge, nothing more.
- Marcos
- His assault on NatVat and then the possibly related attack on Aztlan's crops may have hurt Aztlan and AZT, but they led the Azzies to dropping a big chunk of land that included Roswell, his rumored base, into the hands of the PCC. Now if Sirurg continues his actions he becomes a terrorist hiding in a foreign nation. We may all think dragons play a smart long game, but this last move may have been the checkmate on Sirurg.
- Mika
- I hate to see the Azzies win at anything, but Sirurg is a blight that needs to be stopped. But maybe not until after he levels Tenochtitlan.
- Kane



... DIRTY SOUTH ...

**August 18th, 2074, 18:44:13, Agudilla, Borinquen,
Natural Vat Technologies, Inc. Corporate Compound,
Processing Tank #2**

Fernando checked the control board yet again, trying to ignore the howling winds and driving rain as best he could. Hurricane season was never a fun time, and this year they were predicting several powerful storms. The NatVat compound was well designed and had survived dozens of them in the past with only minor damage, but as sturdy as the facilities were, the sound simply couldn't be blocked out.

He was lucky ... as a technician, he stayed inside, making certain that the myco-protein tanks were fed proper levels of nutrition and that the temperature remained in the green zone at all times. Every four hours, the batch would reach the draining point, where half would be drained to a processing plant and a new layer of glucose syrup injected into the remaining fungus, at which time he'd be allowed his ten-minute break. Three shifts a day, six days a week, and a steady deposit in his account. It was good, steady employment.

Now, Carlos? He had it rough. He was in security, but as an ork, his size and intimidating glare got him foot patrol duty outside, where he could keep pirates at bay. He made half what Fernando made, if that, and had to duck bullets on a regular basis. Moreover, on a day like today, he had to suffer the worst of the weather in person. They were both smokers and had bonded during smoke breaks together. Carlos was a good guy for an ork, but how he afforded that girlfriend of his, Fernando'd never know.

A green light on the board flashed red.

After a moment of interaction, none of the usual sequences cleared the problem, which meant calling central.

"Central this is Processing Tank #2, and I ..."

"Clear the comm!"

"Central, I repeat, this is Processing Tank #2, and ..."

"Clear the comm! Code Fourteen!"

Code Fourteen? For the life of him, he couldn't recall what that was, so, off to the training manuals. It'd be nice if management would ever update the system to AR, but his datajack would do in a pinch, letting him search files via a sub-processor while he focused on trying to clear the error. He'd gotten a third of the way through the sequence

when the file pinged for his attention. Code Red for fire, no; Code Black for weather already; Code Grey for intruders, thankfully no; Code Six for pirates ... here we go. Code 14, Spirit Incursion.

"Well, that's not good." Hurricanes would always bring air spirits with them, capricious things that loved sneaking through air vents and causing havoc indoors. Water spirits would sometimes be involved as well, which could damage the cooling systems or, less important to corporate, the bathroom facilities. The "fond" memory of that last happening curled his nose in disgust.

The explosion snapped his attention back to where it belonged, just in time to enjoy the nausea of dumpshock when the power flickered. Less than a second, but at the speed of cold VR, it was enough to knock him for a loop. Once his head cleared, he avoided bothering Central, simply calling up some of the cameras himself. Did the storm finally collapse the storage building by #8? It was always shoddy ...

The scene on his monitor was pure chaos. It looked like the entire security force was outside, engaged in a running battle with a dozen spirits while the storm raged, hurling debris, knocking down guards, and obliterating the audio with wind. One guard was swatted aside by a water elemental, who in turn danced in agony as electrified bullets plunged into its surface, reducing it to a steaming puddle. "Hey! Carlos! Good shooting, amigo!" Stick 'n' shock was good for taking down water spirits. Who knew?

Suddenly, everything changed. The wind dropped dead, the rain stopped falling, and the spirits vanished en masse to the astral. It was too abrupt to be the eye of the hurricane, so what could it be?

The guards, who had just been celebrating their good fortune, looked up and froze as a black shadow passed overhead.

Fernando's breath caught in his lungs. The massive figure that landed made a mockery, not only of the feathered serpents that he knew, but also of the other western dragons of its kind. No ordinary dragon—as if any of them could be called "ordinary"—this one was a great.

The horror he felt only increased as he saw the thing snatch up Carlos and drop him down its gullet in one smooth motion. It became even worse when he understood just what he was watching.

Sirurg the Destroyer had arrived, and he had come to kill them all. "Madre de dios."



THE DIRTY SOUTH

Posted by: Southern Belle

- All right everyone, with all of the recent chaos down south, I asked Kane to give us the lowdown. Unfortunately, the hurricanes have played havoc on his operations and he's too busy to really contribute right now; he did put me in contact with people, however, as did Hannibelle, which leads us to today's datadump. As ever, when dealing with those outside of JackPoint, I can't verify their accuracy on these matters, so be forewarned. That said, let's talk CAS.
- FastJack

HOWDY Y'ALL! WHY DON'T YOU COME ON IN AND SIT A SPELL?

From what I'm told, these datafiles are heading up north to people who don't really know much about the CAS. I'm going to assume you read Aetherpedia first and are familiar with the general area and history of the region, but before I can get into the specifics, I first want to get a few things straight. "Y'all" is plural. When speaking to one person, you use "you." Please, tell any actor friends you have to stop doing that. Second, while there are a few fans of the old Confederacy, you'll find that most of us have long since moved on. These days, we see ourselves as the last caretakers of the American dream. Yes, America, from the United States of America, from before the formation of the UCAS. Right about now you're pointing to your textbooks and the notation that we seceded and, yes, this is true, but the general feeling isn't that we left America but that America changed so much that we no longer recognized it. We didn't leave America, it left us. And third? We don't marry our cousins, we have teeth, and we wear shoes. We're a first-world nation, after all.

- You younger members don't know what this means, I don't think. Not really. I grew up in America and, as the years have come and gone, I've watched my country change, shatter, and fall apart. I'm hardly the one to stand on a hill and wave the flag, as it attracts too many bullets, but I confess to having a hole in my heart on this one. I miss the old USA.
- FastJack
- What, with the jingoism and the hatred and being the world police? The racism and classism and ... really?
- Slamm-0!
- Rose-tinted glasses and a big cup of nostalgia, kid. You'll understand when the gray sets in.
- Bull

Racism

While it's true that the CAS has a racist streak, you might be surprised to find that there are actually more racist policlubs in the UCAS than down here. Metahumans will find that it's a different kind of racism as well; in the CAS, there's a degree of acceptance of racism that allows it to be public. If someone doesn't like orks, they'll step up and say it loudly and proudly, rather than coach it in pretty words and coy mannerisms. Rather than subtle

digs, such as being left at a table and not served for an hour, and even then your food is wrong, you'll simply be stopped at the door and told that "your kind" isn't welcome there. There aren't "special discounts" for human customers, but signs that say, "Shoes, shirts, and round ears required for entry." Society tends to segment itself, with racial neighborhoods forming for protection, small areas where their kind aren't welcome, and the majority of people and places that don't really care as long as you have nuyen. As a general rule, about ten percent of the people you meet will be racist, ten percent will be cosmopolitan and the other eighty percent wish that everyone would stop making a big deal out of things.

- I'm going to need sedatives before this datafile is complete, aren't I?
- Butch
- Maybe, but in large part, she's right. When I've gone to the CAS before, the general reactions I get aren't far removed from those in, say, Seattle. Comes with the territory. The difference was that there was never any doubt; a glance at a person or a store and I knew immediately if I was welcome or not. Helped me decide who I wanted to befriend and where I wanted to shop. The racists are loud, but visible, and dying off. Turns out that it makes for a poor business climate, and money is more important than earlobes.
- 2XL
- That said, there's still a lot of backlash over interracial dating, especially orks and "normal humans."
- Haze
- Saeder-Krupp continues to invest heavily in the CAS and hires many metahumans; the dragon doesn't care what someone's metatype is as long as they get the job done, and that attitude is starting to spill out of the corporate culture and into the mainstream.
- Kay St. Irregular

When it comes to the racial breakdown, the first thing a visitor will notice is that the urban population will feel a lot like home; the cities naturally attract diversity, while the tourist parts encourage it, to make visitors welcome. Only when you get off the main roads will you start to see the imbalance hit. The big one is the elf shortage. A few theories bounce around as to why the CAS has so few elven citizens; some talk about economic indicators tied to genetic expression or dietary comparisons or other early-Awakening studies, but the truth is simpler: they weren't welcome here. When UGE first hit, parents were mortified, often moving to other areas of the country where relatives lived. As they grew older, the first generation of elves also heard the siren call of their brothers, with the wealthier elves moving to Tír na nÓg and the poorer migrating to Tír Tairngire. The few who stayed behind stuck to the cities, where they have survived, if not exactly thrived.

- Depending on the part of the city you go to, of course. Elves often wind up in centers of magical research or in areas with a thriving arts community. Yeah yeah, stereotypical limo-riding daddy's girls and starving artists blah blah blah. It's a trope because it's common.
- 2XL

- There are a few exceptions, as always, but as a general rule, if you need an elf, you hit the nearest 'plex.
- Haze

Orks are, by far, the largest metatype, composing a fifth of the population officially, and likely a larger section if the SINless were counted. Orks are, again, most prevalent in the major cities, but there are quite a few rural communities with significant ork minorities, with Mississippi being famous for having an ork majority. Dwarfs are the second-largest metatype but remain far less represented in public life than the near ten percent that their numbers indicate. I suppose they're easy to overlook, no pun intended, and simply don't have the social cachet that the others do. Elves and trolls are roughly the same in number, with the trolls largely having moved into the country, where cheaper land prices allow them the freedom that the cities can't. The Smokies are a common destination, and there are thriving communities that only consist of trolls up there.

- Yeah, in the city, there're a few less elves around, but not enough to really notice unless you start counting pointy ears. Once you get out into the small towns, or worse, the countryside, you notice just how much of a minority you are. There're some one-horse towns down there that have never seen an elf in person. It isn't good to be so easily recognized, but there are certainly perks as well.
- Haze

Magical Traditions

It always comes a surprise to visitors that the CAS has a large, and active, magical community. The Atlantean Foundation is well known, of course, as well as the programs at Texas A&M&M, but there are dozens, if not hundreds, more. The CAS is filled with natural power sites and mana lines, while the Smokey Mountains, the Everglades, and the bayou are famously powerful. Then, of course, you have the mighty Mississippi River itself, the pre-Columbian mounds, the Bell Witch, and so on. During the initial Awakening, there was a powerful anti-Awakened backlash in the CAS, as in other areas, but the actions of Pope John Paul IV denouncing the Awakened was, oddly, helpful. Turns out the only thing the racists hate more than magicians are Catholics. The Protestant majority was comfortable with faith healing and banishment of evil spirits, so it didn't take much for them to accept magic as a "blessing," rather than a mark of the Devil. These days, it's pretty much accepted that magic is just a tool and the one using it makes it "good" or "evil." Most of our magicians follow a Shamanic tradition, rather than a Hermetic, but only if you count "preachers" in the Shaman side of things. I do, but that's not something you want to say in public. People are still touchy. Corporate policy had to shift a bit to make up for this, allowing religion a more public role in corporate life than most are comfortable with. Saeder-Krupp, in particular, struggled with this for years but is now the largest megacorporation in the CAS.

- I can't stress this nugget of truth enough. If you make the usual preparations, you know that some fire spirits will be on guard duty in certain areas, and you come equipped with fireproof clothing and what have you. All too often, in the CAS, you encounter a spirit of man instead and ... well, those things are far more

unpredictable. It seems like every other one has some new ability that you've never seen before. It makes it quite difficult to plan ahead. Not impossible, but difficult.

- Mika
- I, for one, find the diversity delightful. I've been fortunate to speak with the spirits of both Atlanta and Nashville, and found them absolutely enthralling. Fire spirits are useful in combat, or so I'm told, but they're terrible conversationalists.
- Elijah
- Please note that "pretty much" is *not* the same as "entirely". You still have people that think witchcraft is the Devil's magic.
- Haze
- The Awakening brought out any number of "one-sixty-fourth Cherokee" types, trying to reclaim "their" heritage. When it first began, the native nations were reluctant to send any shamans to teach the potentially hostile power, but over time, led by the Tsalagi, magical training arrived. MCT has predictably moved in as well, but their Hermetic focus leads to sluggish sales.
- Winterhawk
- Money cannot buy the spirits' attention. Anyone may speak at them, but only those who are Chosen may be spoken to.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- Don't discount the religious spellcasters. Liberty University isn't an accredited university, but when it comes to magic, they know their stuff. Healing spells, combat magic, sure, but chummer, nobody knows banishment like those guys.
- Haze

Politics

My own personal cup of sweet tea. The Confederation has a weak central government by design. The President has authority over governmental services (what few there are) and can sign or veto bills, and that's about it. He doesn't get to be the military commander, and the power to declare war is in the hands of congress. The vice president gets even less, being little more than a back-up if the president dies. The Senate is composed of three Senators per state, giving us thirty-nine in all, which should negate ties, but just in case, the vice president is the tie-breaker. The House of Representatives is where there's been a massive change. Before Crash 2.0, the House was composed of one representative for every fifteen thousand citizens. This meant that Atlanta alone sent five hundred representatives to congress. When the Matrix was up, this was a workable number, and the sheer size of the House kept reform from happening. Crash 2.0, though, showed how Matrix-dependent the House was, as they were unable to quickly respond to anything until their Matrix facilities were restored. This was the tipping point that helped cries of smaller government beat out cries for more representation, and the ratio was changed to be one representative for every million citizens, based off the 2070 Census. In one bold move, over ninety percent of the House was cut loose. This led to some turmoil, which continues today, as elected officials found themselves floundering. Backstabbing is at an all-time



high as politicians jockey for the much smaller pie, giving ample opportunity to those seeking discreet employment.

Traditionally, the CAS is primarily unconcerned with international affairs. Having few embassies and even fewer allies, they do their best to not get involved. Aside from Aztlan, the CAS is on good relations with all of the NAN, as well as the UCAS. Tensions with the Caribbean League come and go, depending on how bad piracy's been that month. This year's hurricane season has put a new level of urgency in these matters, and there's talk of the CAS reclaiming South Florida or even taking Puerto Rico.

- Rich Port? What?
- /dev/grrl
- Turn off the translation program, dev, Puerto Rico is the old name of Borinquen. Much like the CAS talks about the Gulf of Mexico, instead of the Gulf of Aztlan, it's just one of those little pokes that remind you of how they look backwards, not forwards.
- Butch
- You've not been to Charlotte of late, have you, Butch? Or Space City? Norfolk? Let alone your Atlanta or your Nashville or ... seriously, we have got to get you out more. Drop me a line sometime, we'll make a weekend out of it.
- Sounder

When it comes to the CAS, it pays to remember that all politics are local. With a weak central government, the states are free to take cracks at one another, and the fighting for new corporate contracts or similar things can get intense. Georgia and Tennessee have been going on about water rights for decades (Tennessee refuses to accept the proper borders that would give Georgia access to the Tennessee River), which resulted in actual shootings; Virginia, North Carolina, and Alabama struggle for ship contracts; Texas and Louisiana lock horns on the vanishing oil industry; and so on. It's a telling mark that someone from the CAS will state, "I'm a Georgian" first, then clarify "Confederationist" later. Of course, more and more, we're just using "American," which sounds so much better.

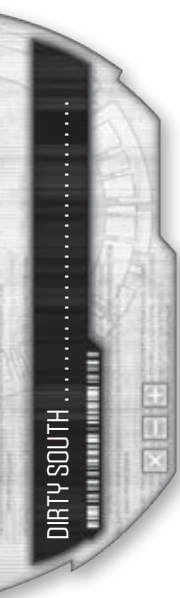
- I hate that so much. How did two whole continents lose their name to one constituent?
- Stone
- Well, in defense of the old guys, their other options were, what? USAres? That's horrible.
- /dev/grrl
- The ever-widening gap between President Colloton and the UCAS has driven Ares to have a huge market push in the CAS, playing on the "Real America" strings like a master. I wouldn't be surprised to see "American" replace "Confederationist" in a few years.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- That reminds me, I need to get a sociologist around here. Anyone interested in brownie points, drop me a private message.
- FastJack
- (PS: American sounds much better.)
- (PPS: Yes, I can do this when I want. It's good to be the king.)

The Economy

If there's one thing that Confederates are as proud of as their state, it's their economy. The first Crash nearly killed the information technology industry down here, but corporate investors loved the area and moved in quickly, bringing us life even as the traditional manufacturing base up north grew old and fell apart. Today, the CAS boasts a diversified economy of both heavy and light manufacturing, primary industry in agribusiness and natural resource extraction, and a healthy tertiary economy in banking, insurance, information technology, and so forth. Tax breaks, infrastructure support, a cheap labor force ... is there any wonder why the megacorps all flock here? As of 0.7 seconds ago, the CAS exchange rate was two CAS dollars to a nuyen, compared to the current UCAS exchange of seven to two nuyen. Saeder-Krupp maintains its North American headquarters in Charlotte, while all the other megas have numerous investments here, and even CatCo, the once-triple, now-single A-rated corporation lives on, even if in a zombified state. Aztechnology has the smallest footprint, of course, but it still exists. Of the local corporations, Lone Star is the only one rated AA, but Wal-Mart has both Wuxing and Evo backing their case next year to the corporate court.

- CAS citizens are the hardest workers in the world, bar none, with a production rate over ten percent higher than UCAS citizens. Of course, while the national economy has gone up from this high production, the average wage has gone down when adjusted for inflation. If you want to know where the wealth has gone, look at your corporate masters.
- Aufheben
- Most of the CAS has tight environmental regulations, enforced by the ERLA. Shockingly, they do good work where used. Unfortunately, the CAS is a patchwork of local laws. MCT will do to Mississippi what they did to the Tsimshian. Unless some runners get involved ...
- Ecotrope
- Horizon's war with Aztechnology is well known, but they're facing a different fight in the CAS; Ares Global Entertainment doesn't quite have the PR machine but has the power of nostalgia, while MCT has been on the scene for decades thanks to the Confederate Broadcasting Company. Saeder-Krupp, Renraku, and Shiawase all have good reputations and fund assorted entertainment as well.
- Sunshine
- Wait. Renraku has a good reputation? Since when?
- Clockwork
- They've spent a lot of time and money repairing their rep and the CAS loves their toys. High Tech Redneck is a Thing down there.
- Slamm-0!



- Heck, the whole shutdown thing happened when I was a kid. If I hadn't hacked into some serious black files, I never would have gotten the official story. Still sad that they confiscated my school report; it would have been fun to read in class. Dad got some calls from Very Important People over it, however, and it was a little tense. Outside of you guys, I think maybe five people have ever seen it.
- /dev/grrl
- That's something to remember; while the shutdown was a big part of Seattle's life, for the rest of the country it was just a big event that happened a decade and a half ago and was never reported very well. Most of what existed was lost with the second Crash, and these days, most people figure that the whole thing was just an early hiccup of the Crash 2.0 virus, if they even know that much. Renraku's spent a decade distracting people with short attention spans. Most kids today don't know drek about it.
- Bull
- Wait wait wait. I know about it and I'm a kid!
- Slamm-0!
- Which side of thirty are you on again?
- Kia
- For the record, I'm always keeping an eye out for potential new blood. If you have someone in mind, drop me a link.
- FastJack

SO WHAT'S HOT IN HOTLANTA?

Now that you know the basics, there are a few major events that everyone's talking about of late. Depending on whether you're in Texas or not, the biggest is the Rio Gambit, while the rest of us are on about SIRRURG and NatVat, the oncoming food shortage, and, as always, politics. Let's go in chronological order, shall we?

- The presidential election's not for two more years, but Gaw started running last year. Hey old people, what was it like to not have an election cycle that never ended?
- /dev/grrl
- None of us is that old.
- FastJack

The Rio Gambit

On August 7th, Aztlan president Enrico Silva sold a chunk of Aztlan territory that was once a part of New Mexico and Texas to the Pueblo Corporate Council (or, more specifically, to a consortium of Ute investors). It runs from the PCC down to El Paso, follows the Rio Grande, then heads straight north as it gobbles up Kermit. Aztlan keeps Odessa, but giving up Roswell is interesting due to SIRRURG. As everyone knows, President McMulkin had pushed getting Texas back as a huge part of his campaign and had been in negotiations with Aztlan President Silva about the issue for over a year. The Treaty of Denver talks threw things into a pot, of course, but something about Ghostwalker and Perianwyr going eye to eye must have spooked him into action, and I don't think that he cleared everything with Aztechnology. He got called up

for an emergency meeting with the powers that be, but whatever he said, it must have worked, as he's still breathing. Texas politicians were thrilled at first, since they assumed that the PCC would sell the land to them, but when that didn't happen, it got ugly. All of a sudden, "Puebs" has become a filthy word for dishonorable actions and betrayal, and the Texans have been howling for blood and war. Thus far, cooler heads have prevailed, but I don't know for how long. Texas politicians are notorious arm-twisters and aren't above using dirt as leverage to get their way. Shadowrunners are everywhere, it seems, as leaders are either after one another's secrets or looking to bury their own before they get found out. Representative Kevin Savage (Drp-SC) just went down when it was discovered that he was cheating on his husband with the daughter of a NeoNET executive who was interning with him, and he had to resign in disgrace. I know Kevin personally and I can assure you that he'd never stray, but, the video implied that he was trading access for "access," and that was that.

- Of course, while he lost his job, the exec in question's attempts at sexual bribery were blown off as business as usual.
- Dr. Spin
- The scandal cost NeoNET a valuable service contract, which Renraku then snapped up. The evidence was on film, instead of digital, so they ruled out forgery. You'd think they'd know physical mask spells exist, but I won't complain. Said intern was a fun slot. Good pay for good times.
- Haze
- As for why the PCC won't sell, it has to be voted on by the nation, most likely added to the Vote of No Confidence in October. In addition, the owners are former Ute nationals who are blocking moves to sell it unless Aztechnology is allowed back into the nation. Both sides are locked in negotiations, but are also hiring deniable assets to get information. Chief on everyone's mind is how this group got the money to make the purchase when the Ute were some of the poorest people in North America.
- Dr Spin
- I have it on good authority that they purchased it for one nuyen. Turning the CAS and the PCC against one another secures their northern border while they push against Amazonia in the South, which is worth more than the land the Azzies sold.
- Plan 9

SIRRURG DESTROYS NATVAT

On August 18th, Hurricane Donald slammed into Borinquen, the first real monster hurricane of the season. Somehow (magic, I'd guess), SIRRURG and his dragons flew through the hurricane and turned it to their advantage, unleashing the full power of a dragon flight on the NatVat facilities there. CAS forces could have scrambled to help, but officially the weather was too bad to risk it, and Aztlan's own forces were out of position. By the time SIRRURG was done, there was just nothing left. Once the producer of eighty percent of Aztechnology's food products, NatVat was far too valuable for the local pirates or corporate raiders to ever damage. It was one thing to shoot one another, but if so much as paint were





INCOMING FEED.....



scratched on the actual facilities, everyone would turn on the guilty party. SIRRURG doesn't play by metahuman rules, however, and wasn't interested in gathering a resource for his hoard. He simply wanted to make Aztechnology pay. In just under eight hours, he and his spirits hopped from one part of the island to another, destroying everything they could, until it looked like twenty hurricanes all hit at once. The devastation is ... well, you've seen the footage. You know. NatVat has been essentially eradicated.

- SIRRURG doesn't have the spiritual mojo of a Ghostwalker, but he's still a Great Dragon, and with a hurricane whipping air and water elementals into a frenzy, the destruction was epic. True or not, the Azzies are pushing the story that SIRRURG gathered up Aztechnology workers and used them as sacrifices to power up the storm even stronger. They don't get the irony, I don't think. At any rate, SIRRURG's spirit allies opened a path for him as the storm passed beyond the island, letting him escape with ease.
- Ethernaut
- CAS relief was first on the scene, beating John Hopkins International by about three hours. They really want to give the CSS Kitty Hawk a shakedown, and the supercarrier is as well-equipped for rescue operations as for actual war. Rumor is that since they're already there, McMULKIN might think about planting a flag. He made a promise to reclaim lost American soil, and the Texans are screaming for action against the PCC, so this might calm things down.
- Sounder

- Aztechnology was also on the scene, but when they saw the level of destruction, they focused on gathering up their people and whatever data they could, then bailed. "It's an internal Caribbean League affair" is their official dodge. The bastards.
- Pistons
- I wouldn't put it past Aztechnology to exaggerate the extent of the damage, including using doctored footage. Making themselves look more wounded than they really are so that they are underestimated is not a bad strategy.
- Marcos
- Whether the damage is exaggerated or not, the fact of the matter is Aztlan lost a significant part of its food production capacity, and they're going to be scrambling. And they're not going to make up for the shortfall by just buying a lot of food from other nations.
- Mr. Bonds

Atlacoya and the Lean Times

By the 20th, Hurricane Donald hit the eastern coast of Aztlan, ripping up the coastline something fierce, but it seems it had picked up something along the way. Aztechnology blames SIRRURG, others think Aztlan's corrupt astral was guilty, some point at Pobre and the Yucatan, and others still think it was a plot of Amazonia. No matter why it happened, when Donald hit Aztlan, the rain that fell was jet black. It smelled bad, tasted worse, and took a while to wash off. Within twenty-four hours, Aztlan's corn crop withered and died. Within two days, areas that hadn't been



rained on also saw their corn die, and from there it spread both north and south. Inside of a week, Aztlan saw it's agricultural strength evaporate, with no chance of a harvest thanks to this Atlacoya blight. They've had to turn to foreign sources of food, which has caused a cascading effect across the world. It isn't a true famine (unless you're in Aztlan) but rather a global food shortage that's driving prices higher. National and corporate forces are taking note of what they have and figuring out how to allocate it, the average person is hoarding, and the panic is causing even more problems. It'll be months before stock is taken by most; food levels are in theory enough to cover everyone, but distribution and transportation will make this tricky.

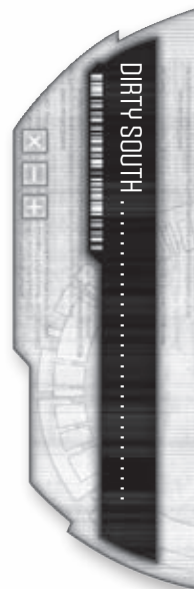
- Of course, the wealthy won't have a problem. Corporate royalty, ensconced in their ivory arcologies, enjoying the high life, while the peasants outside the walls fight over scraps of devil rats. They're above such mortal concerns.
- Aufheben
- Did Aufheben type that himself, or did he just have his AnarchoBot 'ware generate it automatically?
- Haze
- Not here long, just uploading new files and downloading new posts from here while in a cafe in southern Europe. Lots of worries about food, but nothing solid yet. Shiawase profits explode as rice futures skyrocket. Having to tell every third person I meet that Asamando is *not* offering to buy children from families for their weight in wheat. Plan 9 must be in Heaven. More when able.
- Snopes
- Snopes should know I'm not the gloating type. Besides, while everyone is focused on food, they've missed the important part. Magic had nothing to do with Atlacoya. Donald's path went over abandoned (excuse me, "abandoned") oil rigs and sucked up some kind of nano-virus, possibly one replicating petroleum-spill eating bacteria. Probably from a Saeder-Krupp secret lab, but I'm not sure yet. Still researching. It went after Aztechnology corn because of the petroleum-based pesticides they use.
- Plan 9
- This is sloppy, even for you. If there were nanites involved, why hasn't anyone seen them?
- Glitch
- No one you know has seen them. When the petro-corn's gone, they sniff out one another to eat since they're bloated with chemicals. After a few days, the survivors die off, leaving no trace. Open your eyes, sheeple!
- Plan 9
- Using the word "sheeple" automatically docks you fifty credibility points. Just so you know.
- Butch

- With so many international aid groups and corporate fact-finding missions, it's easy to get into Aztlan right now, and work is everywhere. Oddly interesting is that a turkey shifter (!) was killed near a field yesterday. Possibly a magical vector for the blight via Amazonia?
- Marcos
- NatVat made eighty percent of Aztechnology's food products. This means that StufferShack is in trouble. Where am I gonna get NERPS?!
- Slamm-0!

Political Fallout

This has all come together to make the president's life miserable. McMulkin got past the "carpetbagger" tarring of him by being more macho than any other candidate and pledging to get American soil back, but now he's got a handful of crises. The Texans want to invade the PCC, Florida is getting overrun by South Florida refugees and wants the CAS army to establish order, Mississippi got hit by Hurricane John and Tropical Storm Ichibod back to back, New Orleans is having shedim issues, and while food's fine now, no one knows yet how hard winter will be. Oh, and Borinquen is just sitting there, abandoned, helpless, and at McMulkin's mercy should he want it. The True Southerner coalition has put forth Southern Democrat Aiden Gaw as a presidential candidate, a man who is a firm believer in negotiations, not war. Interesting that his running mate, Republican Jack Jackson, is calling for sending the army in to Florida. Strains in the coalition, or is JJ being the mouthpiece for Gaw's unspoken beliefs? Lots of parties interested in knowing for certain. Texas and Florida will decide the election, as usual, but if one goes for Gaw and the other sways toward McMulkin, things get interesting.

- I suppose now's as good a time for this as any. Southern Belle is Melissa Goldberg, who was kidnapped by Kane a while back. Turns out that the senator's daughter is a hellion who had romantic dreams of being a sea captain herself and had a whole period piece romance novel in her head involving Kane. She had no idea that he only has eyes for one lady in his life. His Kat is downright swag.
- /dev/grrl
- For those keeping score, Tennessee and North Carolina hate Georgia and so are on Gaw's side. Arkansas, Georgia, South Missouri, and Virginia are behind McMulkin. South Carolina's holding off on picking a side, while Mississippi and Alabama don't much matter. (They vote against war, hoping to get money their way, but it never happens.) The rest are too close to call, so break out your certified credsticks, because it's a great time to be a shadowrunner. One push could flip a state, and that could decide the whole race.
- Hard Exit



THE GREAT STATE OF TEXAS

Posted by: Texas 2-Step

- When Kane had to back out, I started dropping some feelers out for who I could trust to give us the good data. Look who popped up. Texas 2-Step is a former CAS soldier and current freelance sniper down in Amarillo. He used to post infrequently on Shadow SEA, but we would sometimes chat offline over matters relating to the old US of A. He's a Texan, first and foremost, and full of fire. Brace yourselves.
- FastJack
- 2-Step? I thought you was dead!
- The Smiling Bandit
- Not hardly. Ain't met anyone with a quick enough draw yet.
- Texas 2-Step

Yeah, got into a dust-up with some Azzies a while back. I'm dropping this data file. They ain't. That should tell you all you need to know.

Normally, me an' the Azzies don't get along so well, but right now, my eyes are full of Pueblos. No good, backstabbing, lying, cheating, indian-giving, low-down dirty dogs, every last goddamn one of them. The Pueb done gone and stuck us square in the back, and that's the mark of a coward. I hate the Azzies, but at least they have the decency to come at you like men. The Pueb? Fuck the Pueb.

Texas is right pissed. How angry is the average Texan over the Pueb right now? When Sirurg and his junior dragons torched Puerto Rico, we didn't even throw a party. Everybody's too focused on the Pueblo bastards. That land is ours, fair and square, and we've been their allies for years. Military intel, joint training missions, arms sales, magical support, standing shoulder to shoulder with them when the Azzies wanted to roll into L.A., letting them know that if the fuckers rolled north, we'd roll south ... We was brothers in arms, close as could be. Hell, my niece married one and moved to Albuquerque a decade back and I was proud to share blood with them. Turns out all that time they were just waiting to stab us in the back. Fuck those guys, right in the Goddamn face.

Sorry FastJack, I know you wanted data, but it just gets me so mad I wanna spit. But it's time to be professional.

Texas is the biggest and most important member of the CAS, bar none. Georgia's the capital, Tennessee's the face, and New Orleans ... well, New Orleans is special. But Texas? Texas is the heart and soul of it. We've been our own nation before, and if the CAS doesn't get its shit together, well, I still have a Republic of Texas flag in my closet and I know I ain't the only one. Twenty million Texans generate over a trillion nuyen a year, which would make us the fifteenth largest economy on Earth if we went solo. We're one of the last oil-producing nations around, refining too, which is useful in both plastics and agribusiness; gives us some nice farms, and nobody ranches like Texas. Aerospace, information technology, industrial equipment, ships, tanks, cars, finance, whatever you want, you can get it in Texas and get it bigger than anywhere else to boot.

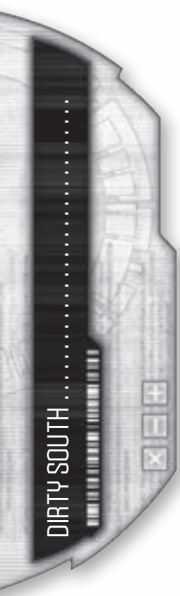
- Laying it on thick, isn't he?
- /dev/grll
- Proudful boasting comes as easy as breathing to a Texan. Factually accurate, though.
- Kane

THE RIO GAMBIT

The thing on everybody's mind is the Rio Gambit, where the Pueb cut us deep and took a chunk of Texas back. There's about half a million bodies in that land currently, before the Azzies move out, with El Paso being the one that hurts the most. It's no Dallas, don't get me wrong, but El Paso was always the westernmost part of Texas, and we use it and the Rio Grande as the two points to measure what's ours. It's supposed to be El Paso, Texas, not El Paso, PCC. North Texas goes dry while the coastline gets hit by hurricanes and flooding, but since Howling Coyote and the Great Ghost Dance, the Rio Grande got its mojo back. Around the turn of the century, it dried up most of the time, and on the Gulf, it wound up being little more than a muddy stream. These days, it's back to being a real river, and lord knows we could use the water more than the Pueb could, but that don't mean squat to them, now does it? They're supposed to be some fancy democracy where you vote on things every day, but they can't vote on giving us our land back until the end of the year? And even then they don't even know if it'll pass? You can't be serious.

Right now, every politico in Texas is trying to be first in line to lead the invasion, and I can't wait to see which one will replace our current Pueblo-loving governor Ken Hutchinson. The Hutch talked a good game and kept the border with Aztlan solid, but he's been in bed with the Pueblos his whole run, and that's come around to bite his ass. He says he's as shocked as anyone else and has been in talks with PCC leadership, but, come on. Every day he's on the trideo, calling for calm, trying to sell us on how complex the vote is, how Georgia's tying his hands; man up already! We know how a goddamn vote works. You call it, you give a thumbs up or down, you count, done. And they can't manage that little thing? Fuck those guys.

The good part of this whole thing is that Silva didn't clear things with his higher-ups before he sold the land off. Aztlan is nothing more than the largest subsidiary of Aztechnology, and everybody knows it. The day after he sold the Gambit, he got called to a meeting back at corporate HQ; I can't believe he walked out of there with his heart intact. Unlike the Pueb, the Azzies didn't betray a deal and honored the sale, but they haven't had time to pull out of there yet. They have military bases to decommission, public facilities to empty, secret facilities to empty, spies to move around, magical assets, all kinds of research ... take it from a military guy; things get left behind. There are shadow assets, both government and private, crawling all over the area or using the Pueblo border as a gateway, smuggling through Texas, and trying to uncover anything they can. Security's in chaos, people are confused, lots of foreigners are flocking to the area, and folks are loading up their cars and driving, looking for where they need to be. Hard to be a refugee in your own state, but nobody knows for sure what's going to happen. Sirurg attacked several cities and towns back in the summer, and now they're worried that he might do it again, or that the area'll light up in war, or that



their religion will be oppressed; whatever the reason, people are panicked. There's never been a better time to get in there and get stuff done.

Early reports are pretty bad, by the way. There have been several revenge killings, where some Azzie employee takes out years of frustration on his boss by ganking them before they can leave, places are getting looted as security forces fall back, and in all the chaos, people don't know which way to turn. It's not as bad as Bug City, but people are getting lost in the shuffle, and their families are waving contracts around to go in there and fetch them back, recover a prize possession, get some files back, whatever. You also have Texas money in the air as people want to get in before things get removed. Use that dirt for leverage, grab some newer Azzie military tech, try to snatch up some encryption codes, anything and everything.

- I have a stack of contracts from Johnsons waiting to be filled, guys. More than I have teams for. I'll start posting them in the Hiring Hall when I'm done with this file. 2-Step isn't kidding.
- Bull
- Echo that. Aztechnology assets are tied up down south and they just don't have the manpower to take care of this in-house, even now. For once, the Azzie side of things is the cleaner of the contract options. I've got Azzie Johnsons mostly wanting to recover loved ones, pets, or mementos, while the CAS contracts are for black ops, forced extractions, and wetwork. Go figure.
- Cosmo
- Personally, I'm looking to get into the PCC's new territory myself. Aztlan isn't fond of me, but this is a unique opportunity to get in and study. Foveae are not well understood, and you can't get access to them normally. From what I gather, West Texas has several after the Azzies bled the land dry. If I can get in, I can finally set up some proper research.
- Elijah
- Why didn't you ask sooner? Drop me a PM! I've been in Lisbon too long, anyway.
- 2XL

FLOOD AND FIRE

It's been a bad year for hurricanes, but nothing more than a tropical storm's hit Texas yet. Still got over a month to go, so anything could happen. The Texas coastline usually gets hit hard, and we had flooding in Houston from Isabella, but we're all waiting for one that stays big and doesn't turn aside. Happens every year. Meanwhile, the panhandle's baking. Back in June, it walked above 95 degrees and didn't look back until after August. It went from dry to parched to crispy, and we've been fighting back several wildfires. Doesn't look like any rain's on the way up there, either. The heat and water shortages have impacted the crops, so the harvest is pretty bad this year, and the cattle look downright sickly. Been a bunch put down and sold early this year, and prices for beef are on the rise even as the rate for a head of cattle drops from them being so thin. Going to be a belt-tightening year for the industry, and next year doesn't look much better, thanks to the corn blight. Corn's the major feed used to

fatten up livestock, and without it they have trouble getting to butcher size. On the positive side, the range maggots are hurting, so that's always good.

- Range maggot is a derisive term for sheep, used by cattlemen.
- Icarus
- Oh, and the CAS doesn't use metric. They're the last nation on Earth to use imperial. That 95 in Fahrenheit is 35 Celsius.
- FastJack

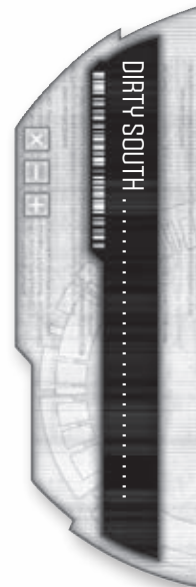
MILITARY ASPECTS

Carrier Strike Group I is based out of Newport News, VA, but Texas has its own brown water patrol craft. Mostly they're smaller PT boats, used to keep an eye out for smugglers and Azzie incursion teams, but there are a few old destroyers as well. The old CAS flagship, the CSS Atlanta, is stationed in Texas now to make room for the Kitty Hawk. Most of the real work is done by the submarine fleets, but now that we have our own (small, but still) carrier, we feel a lot better about Aztlan aircraft trying to buzz our squids. The CAS air force kicked the Texas Air National Guard out of Austin so that they could use Camp Mabry, so the Guard moved their HQ to Grand Prairie.

- With the Kitty Hawk down in Borinquen, Battlegroup Atlanta is patrolling the southern border. The governor of Mississippi is furious that neither ship is docked in Gulfport and offering to help the hurricane survivors there, but it's Mississippi, so nobody cares.
- Kane
- Battlegroup Atlanta is showy, but not that big of a threat. The CAS submarines, however, are amazing, including the world's only submersible carriers. I can't believe that nobody's talked about them in MilSpec yet.
- Sounder

The real strength of the military is the army. The Texas Rangers have just over two divisions of heavy armor dug in around Austin, and the CAS Army has another division of lighter tanks held in reserve. There are several militia groups beyond that, with the Sons of the Alamo being the biggest and best armed. The SoA get their gear from Cavalier Arms, and the new CEO, Derrick Kane, will probably keep the same discounts for them that the Old Man did. The SoA also engage in cross-border incursions into Aztlan territory but the official CAS government denies any involvement with them, naturally.

- Officially, the SoA are just a policlub whose members commonly join citizen militias. A vocal minority aren't just wanting to defend Texas, but want to dish out damage to Aztlan; these are the ones who partake in illegal acts but stop short of terrorism.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Former Cavalier CEO Patrick Goodman wasn't killed because he was funding them to deal with Aztlan, he was killed because he was funding them to get the Republic of Texas back as its own nation again. The "ritual murder" was just an elaborate cover-up.
- Plan 9





INCOMING FEED.....



- Newsflash! Cavalier Arms will be the new manufacturer for the Ruger (soon Cavalier) Thunderbolt. It looks like someone's bid for the Lone Star contract was undercut after some data got hacked.
- Stone

- You're welcome.
- Icarus

Austin

The divided city is seeing all kinds of activity right now. Rumors are everywhere and no one has solid information. The Rio Gambit's on everyone's mind, but now that the Azzies are hurting, there's a chance that McMulkin can save his skin and negotiate a return of Texas land from them, since the Puebs sold us out. Until then, the Azzies are confused about the change in the borders with the PCC, and forces are being jiggered around to handle it and to protect assets as they get moved. This means that the border's thinning out, which is letting more incursions in. Smugglers are all over the place right now, as are intel assets. One of the more interesting things recently picked up is that the Azzie side of the border is staffed mostly with veterans of the Yucatan war, while younger troops are being fed into the Amazonian meat grinder. A lot of these vets didn't come out of the 'tan intact, so suicides and camp shootings are on the rise as they snap. (Of course, the CAS Army magical division might be helping out as well.) Morale's in the shitter, and they're being shorted on supplies as the active troops need them more. There's a significant worry that food supplies will run out (a constant rumor these days), which has set

them all on edge, even more so when the official rationing policies came down a week ago. Hell, I was watching a psy-ops show last night where a platoon of Texas Rangers had a picnic within sight of Azzie watchtowers. Just sat down and had a big old meal of chicken with all the trimmings. Swear to God, I could hear Azzie stomachs rumble across the river.

- Is it really that bad out there?
- /dev/grrl

• Not yet. Aside from Aztlan, there's plenty of food for everyone for now, but as prices go up, expect to see the barrens and similar areas start to run low. It'll hit the trolls the hardest, then the orks, since they're both poor and large. Brackhaven is just looking for an excuse to send KE into the Ork Underground, and food riots would certainly fit the bill. I'm worried about winter.

- Bull

- As noted, Shiawase is making a killing right now from rice futures.
- Kia

Dallas

The provisional capital until the question of "Occupied Austin" is resolved, Dallas is the seat of the Texas legislature, and never a more corrupt bunch of fatcats have you ever seen squirm. Over the past decade and a half, they've all cozied up with the Puebs more and more, giving favorable trade status, tax breaks to Pueblo businesses, and so on and so forth. Now, they're chewing off their own arms to try to separate themselves from the PCC.

They're hiring people to cover up all kinds of connections, and the media is hiring even more to dig in and find the juicy scoops. Scandals erupt as some of them try to distract the population by tossing their fellow congressmen under the bus, the agribusiness-bought members are trying to get aid sent their way while the SoA policlub agitates for more money to go to the Rangers, and ... man, best show on the trideo right now, I have to tell you. Still can't believe that Glascock punched out Taylor! Who knew the little old lady had that kind of a right hook? There's talk of calling up an emergency session, but that would bring everyone off the campaign trail, and that's not likely. Every single person up for re-election is being hounded on the Gambit and how they'll deal with the Puebs, and the challengers are trying to out-macho the sitting legislators in almost every race. The CAS is rightly worried, and McMulkin has sent some top people down to try and smooth things over. There's some serious shadow money being tossed around as well to try and make certain that the hotheads lose.

Border Towns

Port Arthur's dealing with some kind of magical fallout from New Orleans. Don't know much about that. Texarkana is seeing several new arrivals by way of Arkansas who then spread out ... easy entry point for those who know that the airports in Dallas and Austin are watched by a dozen different agendas right now. Amarillo is a rally point for the Sons of the Alamo and anyone with anti-Pueblo sentiment. Seems like every politician in the state's been up here at least three times, giving speeches and making promises. No official allocation of troops by the Rangers or the CAS yet, but militiamen have turned out in droves. Oklahoma City keeps sending people down to call for peace, but those bastards have always wanted secession from the CAS so they can go join their Pueb buddies. Fuck 'em.

Corporations

Most of the megacorps have Texas subsidiaries, with the obvious exception of Aztechnology. Lone Star is the only AA-rated corp in the state, but there are dozens of A-rated that are too proud to sell out to a foreign company, with the cattlemen the most stubborn. Of course, with the drought and corn shortages, they're all hurting, and Shiawase is making some excellent offers. Looks like they're turning higher profits from rice futures into cash, to try and pick up struggling businesses. When you hit the rural areas and ranches, Karaoke Cowboys are everywhere and looking to buy. The oilmen are largely staying quiet, but Saeder-Krupp is nervous about their refineries. Hestaby's forces have been hitting Lofwyr's assets worldwide, and everybody knows it's only a matter of time until the refineries get hit ... they're profitable, expensive to replace, have a low manpower ratio, are environmentally unfriendly ... it's a perfect storm for her in terms of targetability, and with the destruction in the Middle East, he has to rely on his assets in Texas and Philadelphia to make up the slack. Of course, it's also a good cover for other corporations to score hits against S-K, so deniable assets should be rolling in any day now.

Lone Star is at an interesting point: the CAS has a strong agricultural base, so food riots are virtually unknown, and riot insurance contracts are quite profitable. They're moving to sell them in every state, as is Ares, who is trying to underbid them

to make sure they freeze out the Star. Doevtails nicely with the ongoing push by Ares Global Media to highlight that the CAS is the last bastion of the real America. Former Lone Star chief Clayton Wilson's running the show in this regard, and he's downright dominating. He's over ninety, but he finally decided to get Leónization two years back and is reinvigorated to fight against his former company and his brother. Everyone thinks of him as that crazy cowboy who walks into Ares board meetings with spurs on and a ten-gallon hat, but that's just an image he cultivated to promote the Star. If you go back sixty years or so, you'll see him looking like the corporate shark that he always was, in a sharp suit and devouring anyone who challenged him in the boardroom. He's a master of acquisitions, mergers, and tricky financial deals and has always had an eye for buying into fields right before they see their profits explode. He's flying out to Japan soon for some physical maintenance, and after that, he'll be raring to go.

- Hey, isn't Hard Exit from Austin? Why didn't she handle this?
- Kia

- For one, I hate politics. For the other, I'm on the fence with the whole Rio Gambit thing. Most people I know are upset, but under control. Like me, they're waiting to see how the vote goes; if we get our land back, no harm, no foul. If we don't ...
- Hard Exit

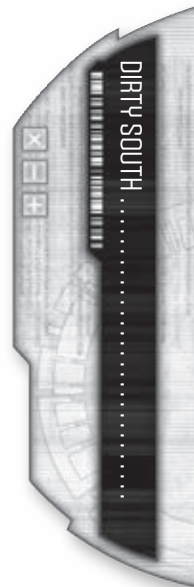
GEORGIA PEACHES

Posted by: Southern Belle

Atlanta is both the state capital of Georgia and the capital of the Confederation of American States. There's a metroplex government as well, of course, and the friction between it and the state government is legendary; in essence, Georgia has one massive metroplex of just over seven million bodies, while the rest of the state combines to eight million. The 'plex devours resources at a much higher rate, despite having a smaller population, creating a constant drain on the rest of the state. Atlanta counters that their money supports the rest of the state, but the biggest drain is the water supply. Georgia has always had water shortages, made worse by having to share Lake Lanier with Florida and Alabama, while its rivers are shared with South Carolina on the east and Alabama on the west.

- So, the state has a water shortage. You'd expect them to conserve water, outlaw watering your lawn, and so on, right? Wrong! Instead, water waste has become a sign of wealth, with the richer families showcasing lavish swimming pools, fountains, and lush green lawns. Sandwiched between the announcements that drinking water fountains at public parks were being shut down for a lack of water, there was a showcase on Georgia's rich and famous, showing several glitterati involved in a water balloon and squirt gun war.
- Traveler Jones

Georgia has lobbied every year for the border between itself and Tennessee to be changed, but to do so would require both states to agree, which the Tennesseans never do. The



Confederation government has the power to redraw borders with a two-thirds majority in the legislature, but these efforts have also been blocked. Ten years ago, then-governor Augustus Shaw decided to rattle sabers over the issue and deployed some of the Georgia National Guard to the Tennessee border, promising to head up there and dip his cup in the Tennessee River. Tennessee governor Gaw matched the action, putting his own troops on the border. When the second Crash came, everyone's gear went awry, and the Tennesseans took advantage, firing on our brave Georgia boys, who naturally returned fire. By the next morning, a cease fire had been called and both sides withdrew. The ten men that Georgia lost have a memorial in Freepark, just below Standing Stone and the capital building itself. The anniversary of their death is a fiery event, filled with passionate speeches and a promise that those brave men won't have died in vain.

- Check the Tennessee section for a different take on this.
- Kane

Currently, the talk is all about the upcoming election, but there's also worry in the national government about Borinquen, and of course, the Texans are howling about going to war again, only this week it's with the Pueblo Corporate Council instead of Aztlan. It seems that they're not happy unless they're getting ready to fight someone. Of course, the last time they tried anything, Aztlan took half their state, and they came crawling back to Atlanta to beg forgiveness, but good luck getting one of them to admit it. What business of ours is it if Aztlan sold some of their land to the PCC? They're each a sovereign nation, after all. Texas simply needs to get over itself. Now, Borinquen, there's a jewel that would look ever so nice if added to the CAS crown. But I digress. Let's have an overview of some of the issues keeping the capital in a tizzy, shall we?

POLITICS, THE GREAT GAME

The race that everyone's talking about is the presidential one, where President Ramsay McMulkin and his True American coalition are trying to fend off a challenge from the True Southerner coalition's John Simmons. Four years ago, McMulkin's carpetbagger reputation nearly scuttled his run, but his tough talk (and some fancy campaignin') was able to win Texas over, narrowly netting him the victory. This year, he's pinned into a corner as he's been trying to negotiate with Aztlan to transfer "occupied Texas" back to the CAS, only to have everything blow up in his face. Now, he'll lose Texas if he doesn't find a way to deal with this Pueblo situation. Currently, he seems to be taking a two-pronged approach. First, if he can lock in Florida, he'll have enough votes to overcome the loss of Texas; to do this and to be able to mark his campaign promise of restoring lost territory to the CAS, he might look to conquer South Florida. The hurricanes this year have left the Caribbean League scattered and recovering, and they'd be unable to resist an invasion. He also might lay claim over what remains of Borinquen, adding it to the CAS, or perhaps offering both financial and humanitarian aid to Aztlan in exchange for large swaths of Texas. If he gets neither Texas nor Florida, the race is effectively over.

- As you might imagine, both sides are looking to find something that can swing the vote in their favor. McMulkin's birth in North Virginia found good purchase last time, but he's been walking the walk for two years and has sanded much of that image off. Ares Global Entertainment is backing him to the hilt, driving their Real America theme as hard as possible. Saeder-Krupp is supporting his candidacy as well, while MCT and Renraku have both fallen in line behind Simmons.

- Kay St. Irregular

- The average Renraku executive's shoe size is 8, which is smaller than the average Horizon executive. Renraku executives continue to practice the art of Meishi, the art of exchanging business cards, using paper rather than digital transmission whenever possible. The highest level executives handmake their cards, showing their talent in calligraphy. Owning these cards denotes an executive's personal favor and is a mark of a promising young talent. The secondary market for these is quite high. Search for Meishi? Yes/No.

- Netcat

- ... the fuck?

- Glitch

- Oh, dammit, sorry. Netcat just got back from some Deep Resonance trip and she's still kind of out of it. I thought I deleted all of her posts, but it looks like I missed one. I'll go ahead and clean that up.

- Slammm-0!

At the state level, Governor Wilson was expected to retire, but he underwent some extensive rejuvenation therapy and emerged fit and ready to run. This has put Evo into a bit of a bind as they had been supporting Micaela Cherry, a photogenic (aren't they all?) elf who won the support of the Democratic Reform Party, who would have been allies with Wilson's Republican Party. The True Southerners are backing Southern Conservative candidate Luther White, a long-standing member of the Humanis policlub and a staunch isolationist. The slander the Humanis club has been running against Cherry is absolutely horrid but has slowed down some in recent weeks, once the governor recovered from his treatments.

- For the record, he underwent the Genesis Treatment at an Evo facility and obviously has no ill effects.

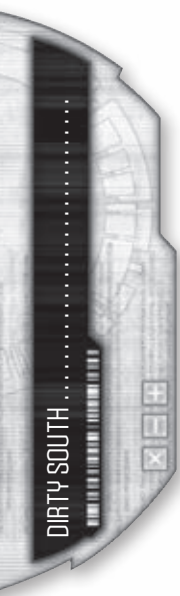
- Plan 9

- Cherry's people are furious that Wilson won't step aside, on the grounds that it will split the coalition's vote and simply hand White the election. Her people would certainly welcome information that could get him to drop out after all.

- Cosmo

Atlanta

The focus should be on the race for mayor of Atlanta, as incumbent Vance Davis faces hard-charging challenger Reggie Brown, an ork from the Democratic Reform Party who's seeking to unseat the two-term Southern Democrat. "Weathervane Vance" has long been the most boring man in office, seemingly in over his



head and unable to rule effectively, but he bumbles into success despite himself and always seems to know where 51 percent of the voters want him to be. The corporations love him, as he's all about business as usual, and Saeder-Krupp has been brazenly supporting him as he takes credit for bringing S-K Prime to Atlanta. The lone exception at this time has been Ares, who continue to push their Real America campaign by backing True American coalition candidates like Brown. Evo is making noise about supporting Brown, and Horizon might jump ship as well; should that happen, Brown has an excellent chance of being the first ork mayor of a CAS metroplex in history.

Saeder-Krupp's North American headquarters has been in Charlotte for a while, but S-K Prime hadn't made a move to open a similar branch until recently. Ghostwalker's activities and the ongoing Dragon Civil War seem to have prompted them into action, starting with dropping a record-shattering sum to purchase the Cord Mutual Tower skyscraper. It's one of the largest buildings on Earth, five hundred stories tall, and with the communication spire, it's an even mile (1.6 kilometers) high. Saeder-Krupp has been using some of their nano-technology to repair structural damage in the tower and has reinforced the footprint as well, providing a much more stable structure. Interestingly enough, while Cord sold most of the building, they kept the top twenty-five floors, all of which have been declared unsafe for as long as I can remember. You'd think that they would sell those floors to S-K as well, or at least contract them to repair the damaged sections, but no, they kept it off limits. Saeder-Krupp occupies the first five floors and S-K Prime has everything from 401 to 475. Everything in between is rented out to other corporations.

The strategic division of S-K Prime is lead by Eric Kothe, a man carved from the S-K mold. Tall, chiseled, stern, and married to his work (leaving no time for romance); he's a corporate man's man, absolutely dedicated to the corporation. Kothe was hand-picked to make certain that everything runs smoothly, and he tolerates neither failure nor fools. Prime's Matrix division is, for now, being lead by Dmitri Baichik himself, who is higher-ranked but far less interesting to talk about. Who takes over when he's gone is a question that only computer technicians really care about.

- Shallow bint, this one. Kothe is genetic perfection made flesh, sure, but Baichik's technological skills are amazing and he's often rumored to be a technomancer (he's not, but the implanted commlink is Delta-grade. Good luck finding it with scanners!). If he's taking a personal hand in this, then it means those old rumors that there's an AI in the top twenty-five floors are going to roar back up. He gave the 475th floor executive office to Kothe, which means Baichik's stationing is going to be temporary. Obviously someone else is going to be promoted to run it when he's finished with whatever he's working on, and since you can't rely on in-house teams to get you crawling over rivals for that spot, this means that contracts are there for shadowrunners.
- Aufheben
- Wait. This isn't right. The S-K North American HQ is in Portland, in the Tir.
- Frosty

- Yes and no. Technically, it's still in Portland, but when the Tir troubles started, Lofwyr prepared the CAS HQ office in Charlotte as a back-up. The headquarters has enough space and data connections to serve the NA role, but there was no need to do so until the Dragon Civil War started. Hestaby was still a prince while Lofwyr wasn't, and he hates fighting from a position of weakness, so, while he worked on getting her removed from office, he transferred operations to Charlotte in case it didn't work. It was a big source of pride and heavily advertised in the CAS, but Hestaby hasn't lifted a claw against Portland, so now the transfer's on hold. Everyone in the CAS calls the Charlotte facility the HQ, while everyone else still thinks about the Tir. Remember, perception and reality aren't required to match.

- Icarus

- Kothe's parents were focused on upward mobility, and he's undergone lifelong genetic augmentations. No chrome, and barely any bio, but his genes are tweaked like few others. He's a cold fish, detached from normal concerns like breeding, so technicians get samples from him on a weekly basis to help construct the next generation of perfect corporate executives.

- The Smiling Bandit

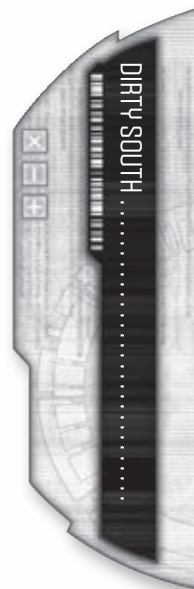
- Did a private show for him once. He's either a robot or a eunuch.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- No description of Atlanta is complete without a look at the Atlanta Fulton County Dome. The Dome is a microcosm all of its own, where some of Atlanta's estimated million SINless congregate, watching or participating in underground arena fights. Security keeps the Domers contained, leaving the entire place to them to do whatever they want. Many corps use the area as an experimental lab, with all sorts of prototype tech popping up in gladiators, renting people's bodies for experimentation (they're tagged so they can be followed and checked up on to see how things are developing), or plucking strong-willed lowlifes, cleaning them up, and making them loyal dogs at their corporate heels. Ares Consumer Products regional director Dylan Taylor's arm-candy-slash-bodyguard is one of these.

- Slamm-O!

THE ATLANTIAN FOUNDATION

Based out of Atlanta, the AF was founded by Sheila Blatavaska all the way back in 2012. Sheila's still around, but the foundation is run by CEO Casey Williams these days. With an avowed mission statement of returning to "The Enlightened Age of Atlantis," it's easy to dismiss them as quacks, but the truth is that they're a well-run, magic-focused archaeological society with a worldwide readership and their own 24/7 trideo network. Yes, you get horrible sims that ask if the Pilgrims were actually aliens from Mars and whatnot, but when they're focused on their work, they're quite good, and they run museums across the nation. There's a longstanding rivalry between the AF and the Dunklezahn Institute of Magical Research, despite one board seat of the DIMR being filled by an AF member. There are only so many magical treasures to be found, after all, and the two vie for each and every one. The Foundation is also fond of the arts, supporting numerous painters, composers, and similar ventures throughout the CAS.



- I'm told that a recent firefight near the Dome was between the AF and Saeder-Krupp, and might have involved the Arrow of Red Dragon Slaying. Nothing concrete yet, but interesting.
- Sunshine
- I hear that Harlequin passed through there a week ago and picked up a package from Blatavaska, personally. Frosty? Know more?
- Bull
- Sorry Bull, Harlequin and I aren't on the best of terms right now.
- Frosty
- The Foundation opened an office in the Philippines after the Comet Quakes shook Japan. Masaru seems amused by this.
- Turbo Bunny
- MCT kept them out of there for decades. Now that they're gone, the Foundation can finally start the real work.
- Elijah

New Echota

A town of about ten thousand, New Echota wouldn't even be a blip on my radar if it wasn't a feature of Treaty of Denver negotiations. Originally, it served as an eastern station akin to Seattle, where natives would have their own chunk of land so they could interact with the United States government, but it never quite took off. The Cherokee used to use New Echota as their capital, centuries ago, and were willing to be "exiled" East to serve as ambassadors, a role no other tribe wanted so happily gave them. When first re-established, it was a rough place for them; attacks were commonplace until their spirits made certain that the locals knew not to harass them. Once that was clear, they proved to be excellent neighbors, and quietly switched their political efforts from the US government to the UCAS, then the CAS. New Echota serves as an airlock between the NAN and "America," making certain that paperwork is filed and serving as something like a consulate, but larger. New Echota is also where *The Phoenix* is printed, the largest distribution news publication in the NAN, available in both Cherokee and English, and a very small number of each issue is actually printed. On paper! How quaint!

- The Tsalagi are an honorable people and the first of us to develop a written language. Tsalagi literacy remains at 99 percent.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- When the Trail of Tears erupted into astral life during the Comet flyby, New Echota shamans were on the scene in heartbeats. They also keep watch over the mounds, and serve as the voice of the NAN to recover artifacts. The Atlantean Foundation hates them.
- Elijah

LAISSEZ LES BON TEMPS ROULEZ!

Posted by: Guillotine

Bon soir et le plaisir de vous rencontrer, je m'appelle Guillotine, et je serai votre hôte pour la soirée. Do forgive me, but the ever-enchanting Hannibelle has asked for my input on the

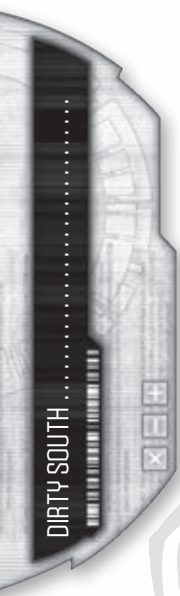
current social situation in Louisiana, and I fear that my own focus is on New Orleans, rather than the state as a whole. Still, she's stated that no others were quite as entrenched as I am, so, please, allow me to be your guide until the sun rises ...

- Hannibelle heard that Kane had to back out, so was kind enough to drop a line to one of her friends in New Orleans. I've gone ahead and left the translation program off, to keep the local color. You can activate it from your control panel if you want, of course.
- FastJack

NEW ORLEANS

Oh ma ville natale peu, comment je t'aime! Vieux Carré, the French Quarter, is the oldest, and most well-known, part of the city. Only seventy-eight blocks and populated by less than 5,000 people, yet it is the element vitale, the life blood of the city. The architecture is Spanish, the stucco garish, and tourist traps are everywhere you turn, but as worries of shedim and other things that go bump in the night drove away the nouveau rich, the area once again became home for a bohemian culture that focused on the arts. Hand-crafted carvings and jewelry, exotic attire, live music ... it is as close to Heaven as I can imagine. One particular artist I find utterly fascinating is Anthony Maroni, who ran away from home as a teenager, and who settled far away indeed from New York. He's a Nanofax artist, designing things on a computer, then creating them from different raw materials that are fed into the machine. I confess that I have no idea how it all works, but the designs are astonishing, and the process allows him to put together latticework that no one can duplicate by hand. He sells his work to tourists, of course, but his best works are gifted away and cannot be bought for any price. During most of the year, there is a steady, if small, flow of tourists to the city, mostly from North America but a healthy dose from Japan as well. When Mardi Gras hits, however, the streets swell to bursting.

- Of course, since the Quarter is the spot for tourism, it's heavily policed, and unattractive metas (read: orks and trolls) are scrubbed from public view. Oh, it's not racist because there are plenty of eternally gorgeous elves on display <wink wink nudge nudge>, it's just an issue of keeping tourism up. When Mardi Gras hits, however, all bets are off.
- Traveler Jones
- I hate the whole fucking South. Every fucking racist-ass fucking piece of shit part of it.
- Butch
- It's not much better in the UCAS, Butch, just not as visible.
- Bull
- I know what you mean. I went on a five day VR-and-junk food bender a few months ago and put on, like, two kilos. I was fat and bloated and everybody knew it. They just kept looking at me like I was some kind of ugly freak. Luckily, my parents could afford some digestive modifications, but you have no idea how much pressure elves are under to stay slender at all times.
- /dev/grrl





INCOMING FEED.....



- I like you /dev/, but ... no. Okay? Just ... just no.
- Beaker

I wish I could tell you about each parish, but I understand you need information fast more than information complete, so I'll use a broad brush for a moment. New Orleans, as a whole, is a city of stark contrasts. The rich are very rich, the poor are very poor, and those in between are squeezed downwards even as they try to claw their way up. Areas of the city such as Faubourg Tremé and the Lafitte are crippled with poverty, while Audubon Park and the Central Business District are flush with wealth. The areas that bring in the most nuyen are well-protected and friendly, while the parts of the city that lie outside these areas are quite dangerous. Crescent City is always in the running for highest murder per capita rate, and the number of kidnappings or unexplained vanishing is higher than any city besides Tenochtitlan. Keep inside the marked boundaries and you will be safe. Stray only if you have a guide.

- He (she?) isn't kidding here. Even before shedim and the infected moved in, New Orleans was a place people vanished. The swamp is over here, the river over there, there's a lake, the Gulf, the organleggers ... the list goes on and on. Plenty of poor folk slip in, figuring that it's risky but better than, say, living in Mississippi, then wind up doing menial labor if they're lucky or turning tricks if they're not. When they go missing, no one notices and even fewer people care.
- Slamm-0!

- Isn't prostitution legal there? You'd think the orks would have a lock on that.
- Glitch

- You mean elves, right?
- /dev/grrl

- Too many trids, not enough streets, kid. In the sims, prostitutes are almost always human or elf, drafting actresses into the roles. In reality, it's a profession that you only enter if you're desperate. Attractive is a plus, but a willingness to engage in illegal and degrading activity for cash means that you get a lot of orks who have no other job opportunities or assorted indentured servants pulled in from warlord China or Nigeria. Since prostitution is legal in New Orleans and has a sort of romantic cache for some ungodly reason, you get a number of humans and elves that actually do have a lock on high-end escort services and on-street brothels. Once you leave the tourist areas, of course, it goes back to normal, with local orks and Mississippi girls who fled a life that's actually worse than what they have now.

- Bull

- You can get things there that you simply can't get anywhere else, by the way. Voodoo priests can call up a spirit to "ride" you, BTLs are omnipresent, vampires can provide a dangerous high by offering bites-for-hire, and I'm told someone in the Bayou has found a new source of tempo.

- Traveler Jones



- The hell you say. All known supplies of tempo dried up years ago. Nobody can get a fix anymore, no matter how bad they want it.
- Haze
- Probably just a rumor, trying to get junkies to flood into the city where, after they find out it was a scam, they have nowhere else to go so fall into the usual dens of inequity. Once the powers that be hear it, I expect a flood of corporate money to find out for certain.
- Baka Dabora
- I have in my possession a file that proves it's no mere rumor. I hope you'll forgive me, but I do have a hefty fee for this one.
- Icarus
- ... And that was the quickest data purchase I've ever had. Thank you, anonymous buyer, for your contribution.
- Icarus
- Oh please. It was Haze and we all know it.
- Pistons
- I couldn't afford that price even if I was an addict, which I'm not, you slitch. Somebody else bought it.
- Haze

Tourism brings over a million people a year to my beloved city and is responsible for significant tax revenue, but it's far from the only source of income here. Shipping is a bigger, but less glamorous, occupation that employs many more people than tourism. The ports handle enough freight to qualify as the second busiest in the CAS, behind only Tampa, and the fourth busiest in North America. Wuxing, predictably, dominates this industry, but there are dozens of smaller operators who have never been snatched up. It's an open secret that these small players are often tied in with the Mafia. The rest of the real money comes from the Central Business District, where the corporate drones go about in their grey suits, working in grey buildings, living their grey lives. Mainstream retail establishments, oil companies, financial towers, and so on. If you want to speak to a salaryman, they're everywhere, grouping in sales, advertising, and legal cliques and blathering away their boring little stories.

I suppose I should take a moment to highlight the oil industry here. Many of the oil rigs off the coast were abandoned as oil dried up decades ago, and the rigs have since fallen into disrepair or even collapsed. Saeder-Krupp and Shiawase Petrochem bought the rest and continue to operate them to this day. The Germans have started upping their security in the wake of Hestaby's actions, but no attack has yet come. Perhaps she plans to bleed the big lizard dry by forcing him to pay overtime? Shiawase has actually cut back somewhat on security, figuring that their only rival is Saeder-Krupp and that they're too busy on the defense to go on the attack. Do the rest of us worry about a dragon attack? *Que sera sera.*

- Mitsuhamas loves New Orleans. They bought Entregy Tower from Renraku in the wake of the arcology disaster, and Renraku's financial problems have turned it into one of the hottest buildings in their entire corporation. MCT citizens flock here for vacation, their entertainment divisions pick up local artists on a regular

basis, and, of course, their magical division swarms over the city. Shiawase makes more money, but Mitsuhamas is more invested.

- Mr. Bonds
- Ares has a quiet presence there, focused on magical research. They're trying to turn their bug-hunting skill into shedim-swatting.
- Sticks
- Ten years from now, if I'm having to tell Plan 9 to stop with the "shedim have infected Ares" rumors, I ... shit, company. Gotta go.
- Snopes
- Evo has a lot of pull in the area for obvious reasons. Wait, not so obvious, Guillotine hasn't dropped demographics on us. Not counting the SINless, the Big Easy is just over fifty percent ork. More than eighty percent of the SINless are orks, however.
- Plan 9
- Had to check, and unemployment is low unless you have tusks; the ork rate is pushing thirty percent. Those with jobs are house servants, menial labor, janitorial, backroom cooks, and dishwashers ... did I mention that I fucking *hate* the CAS?
- Butch

The Bayou

It's hot, it's muddy, the people are unkempt, and everything you see wants to eat you. Why would you want to go there? <sigh> Fine. The Bayou is composed of assorted wetlands, such as slow-moving creeks or sluggish rivers that continuously overflow their banks, or shallow lakes that spread out when it rains. Agribusiness farms the place for shrimp, fish, frogs, and so on, while trying not to get bit by alligators or snakes, or shot by backwoods hillbillies. It's a disease-ridden filth hole and no one should go. There. Done.

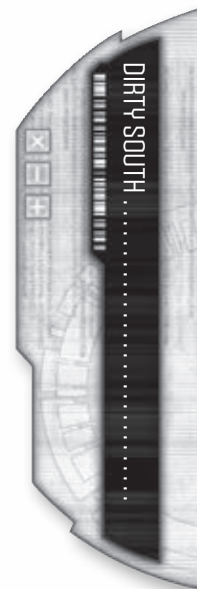
- Someone's bitter, eh? The biodiversity in the Bayou is astounding, and researchers from UO, Evo, and Shiawase are always out there, looking for the next big thing. The CDC out of Atlanta also keeps tabs on the area, worried that the next round of VITAS will erupt from it.
- Nephrite
- There's magic hidden back in the swamps, and there are shamans born, raised, and die inside. They never leave but have power levels above any I've ever encountered. The Mississippi River is semi-Awakened, and it seems to pour raw energy into the swamps as well.
- Ethernaut
- The swamp spirits are powerful but primal. They are not friends of the people, but protectors of the land.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- The crime families have several hidden spots out there, where they exchange goods with smugglers and dispose of problems. Which reminds me ... smuggling? The Mafia? The magical communities? These are the biggest things about New Orleans, and your contact hasn't said a thing about them. What gives, Hannibelle?
- ZXL



- Guillotine is a magician, but he prefers to not talk about the community for fear of being blacklisted. These are very tight circles, after all. Furthermore, neither of us are smugglers or Mafia members, so never look into such things. You want to fill us in?
- Hannibelle
- Low on time today, but here's an interesting quirk for you gun bunnies out there: Back in 1890, the Mafia bumped off Chief of Police David Hennessy to keep him from testifying against one of their own. When the trial of his killers ended in a not guilty verdict, a lynch mob formed up and killed all six of them, plus five more Italians who happened to Guilin the area. As a result of this violence, the Mafia put in a hard rule that no cop was to be touched, ever. In other cities, Lone Star kicks in the door and you get a running firefight, but in N.O., the mobsters calmly put their guns down, their hands up, and won't so much as snarl at a badge. If you even *think* about hurting a cop here, expect the Mafia to find you and turn you in themselves. Blast a security guard or a ganger, no problem, but *never* hurt a cop.
- 2XL
- There's a large community of infected in New Orleans, always has been. Ghouls, sure, but vampires flock to the place. I'd lay odds that our boy (girl?) here is one of them. They keep quiet, since an exposed vampire is a staked vampire, and they've gone even quieter of late. I think something's happening there, but no one's saying anything. We really need to get eyes on the ground down there.
- Frosty
- The CDC has a well-hidden clinic in the French Quarter that caters to vampires, offering health care in exchange for samples. Neutral ground where no one dares break truce, as they're the only people willing to help out. Someone broke in recently and stole files on a "Patient X-0," after which the CDC execs in Atlanta got called together for a meeting. Not sure what was said, but soon after, Johnsons with suspiciously good health care started looking for bounty hunters.
- Nephrine
- As for crime, the Yakuza came in under the Mitsuhama brand (shock of shocks) and spread out through the tourist industry. The mobs control the docks and all the gambling that isn't pachinko. Donna Kozlowski should have hung it up by now, but her chosen heir, Pamela Rodenbush, got a bad case of SURGE; La Cosa Nostra still has a strong Catholic tradition and Pam's demonic looks have driven them to refuse her, even after all these years. Donna K doubled down, picking no one else to force the issue, but it hasn't paid off. Now, it's too late to train someone else as a successor, and if she names Pamela, hell breaks out. It's a lose-lose.
- Sunshine
- The Mossinos will likely float Joseph "Fishface" Mossino as their guy, should a war break out. Joey's full-blooded Sicilian and as traditional as they come. Brian "The Little Prince" Romero is being groomed by his father to take over the Romero family, but there's stress in the

family. As a favor to the Donna, "Prince" Michael agreed to marry Brian to Pamela, but the younger man balked when he saw her. Fear of God is stronger than fear of your father, I suppose. Took a few years for him to be forgiven, and it's still a sore spot between the two. If it becomes a three-way power struggle when the Donna dies, the streets will run red. This would be an excellent time for the Yakuza to try to take some of the empire away. Then again, nothing ends a family feud faster than an outsider.

- Mihoshi Oni
- Smuggling is doing well right now. The CAS has had to move people to Texas and Florida to deal with troubles, and the usual anti-smuggler patrol craft are tied up with hurricane-related issues. Interestingly enough, the hot new item to transport is fresh fruit from the Caribbean; the hurricanes this year gave their supplies a hit, and demand has skyrocketed. Oh, a single banana only sells for three nuyen, but it's also completely legal, so there's no real risk involved aside from customs. Get the stuff in, and selling is simple. Outbound smuggling is, as ever, arms to Amazonia. Ares weapons are the hottest, but anything will do.
- 2XL
- Anybody have anything about the Krewes and the Zobop? We have so many magicians that somebody has to know what's up?
- Goat Foot
- Seriously? Nobody?
- Goat Foot
- So, I'm in New Orleans for some R-n-R when my contact gives me a ping. There's something going on with the DIMR and the shedim, and he wants to know if I'm in. Money's good, my guys are with me, so, why the hell not. Two days later, I'm lurking in a tomb (They don't bury people in New Orleans, ground's weird. Instead, they put them in big stone tombs. Long as it pays, I don't care) with some kind of gizmo I've never seen before in my hands. There's a meet and exchange between the DIMR people and some Haitian-looking guy, but one of my people gets a mold allergy, sneezes, and it all goes sideways. Zombies come shambling into view, bullets are flying, fireballs are exploding, and it's just chaos all over. Some ghouls hear the fun and comes running over, looking for free snacks, gets shot a lot, then starts getting possessed, and now we've got undead ghouls because my day just wasn't fun enough. The main Draco guy gets blown up, but I manage to get a lock on the Haitian guy and blast him with the thingy. He screams, then falls over, leaving a ghost behind that's trapped in this green electric bubble thing that I shot at him. The zombies start dropping, the ghouls that aren't possessed lope off with lunch, and the DIMR #2 lady thanks me for my services. gives me a bonus, and walks off with the gizmo and the ghost. I don't know what that was all about, but it paid for another two weeks of vacation for my entire team, so rock on.
- Stone
- While I was calming Netcat down, she said something about "Newstrom knows" and something about the Republic of Texas. Anybody?
- Slamm-0!



- Back in '44, Mississippi senator Timothy Newstrom was picked as a replacement for CAS president Joseph Alexander's turfed vice president. When Alexander got assassinated, Newstrom was elevated to president, a position he wasn't at all qualified for. His cabinet ran roughshod over him and he took a dive in the next election. Took a few weeks to get his affairs in order, gathered up some vital things, than vanished into the Louisiana Bayou where he used to hunt when a kid. He's a survivalist, and rumor has him seen every so often ever since. Nobody knows why he went into exile, what he's doing out there, or even if he's still alive (The last sighting was just before SURGE broke out.) It's no "Where's Dankwalther's Money," but the few who follow this one are emotionally invested.
- Plan 9
- Side note: Organlegging feeds on New Orleans like mad, thanks to the transitory population.
- Black Mamba
- On a related note, when the freaks started emerging, many of them were driven crazy by wireless noise. As the wireless Matrix spread, it got harder and harder to find somewhere to hide. A ton wound up moving to the Florida Everglades, but others went into the Bayou. No wireless, no headaches. Damn well hidden, but if you find a community, the bounty is huge. Interested, drop me a line.
- Clockwork
- While the magical groups of New Orleans are rivals, the one thing that brings them together is a natural disaster. They roll out during bad weather, trying to calm the spirits down and implore storms to go around with limited success. Way back in '32, they got together for some kind of Great Ritual to try and deflect a hurricane completely, but it didn't quite go as planned. I guess the thing got pissed, so it picked up a few oil platforms and tossed them around, one of which landed about thirty miles deep into the Bayou as pretty as you please. Shiawase flew in techs, stripped it of anything of any value, then wrote it off. Ten years later, the Bayou had reclaimed it and covered it up with trees, and a guy named Biz moved in. He uses it as a base of operations, where he buys, sells, and repairs any vehicle you can imagine. The cranes still work, so he can handle anything up to a tank or an eighteen-wheeler, if you can get them out there. Helicopters too. A gang called the River Rats acts as security, backed up by an agoraphobic shaman for magical assets. You can't find the place by air, so you need to get the Rats to take you in. He does good work. As for the Great Ritual, nobody knows where the spell formulae are, and no one's ever been able to cobble it back together. Wonder why?
- Clockwork

TENNESSEE PRIDE

Posted by: Rebel Yell

For the record, I'm only doing this because I lost a bet to Kane. Say what you want about a true Southerner, but when we give our word, it's as good as gold. Those idiots in Atlanta don't know jack about honor. Hell, Atlanta isn't even a real Southern city! After the devil Sherman marched to the sea and burned her down, they built

a Yankee city where she once stood. Never been anything worth bringing back from up north and I'll take being a Confederationist over being an American any damn day of the week.

- All right, I'm out.
- Butch
- Hang on, Butch. I don't care for the attitude either, but it's good to get a different viewpoint on things. As the bossman says, "What you don't know can kill you." Reb isn't starting off well, but something useful might fall out of his head yet. Maybe.
- Bull
- For the record, he's a great rigger. Been driving since he could look over a steering wheel. Doesn't know the difference between a meter and a yard, though, so wound up losing to me. Heh. Sucker.
- Kane

Tennessee, Tennessee, greenest state in the land of the free. Texas talks big, Atlanta tries to rally the flag, but Tennessee? We're where everything comes together. That motto of agriculture and commerce? It's green and grey, farmland and cities, a good work ethic and no fear of success. We've worked for everything we've ever got, and we kicked ass while doing it. Don't listen to the other states and their yammering; they're just jealous of our success. And Georgia? You guys can suck my tailpipe.

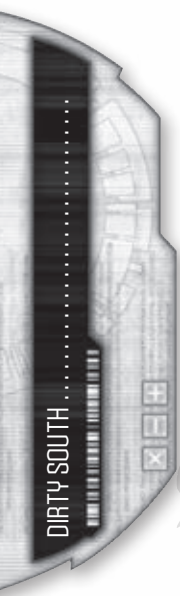
Let's go back to the founding of the CAS. Tennessee was one of the states that walked out on the UCAS, proud to say that our way was better. Then we went out and proved it. Nashville was in the running for the Confederation capital. You don't hear that much, since the talk was about the final round between New Orleans and Atlanta, but the round before that, Nashville was in the mix. Leading, too, until Atlanta saw the writing on the wall. Knew they would lose to us, but could roll the Big Easy, well, easily. A shadowrun later, our top negotiator's caught with a dead hooker, boom, down we go. We've tried to get the capital moved where it belongs a few times since then, but the power of lazy is hard to get past. One of these days, we'll get what we have coming.

Unlike N.O., we didn't curl up and cry about it, we did what we always do: grit our teeth, buckled down, and worked twice as hard. There are no less than four sprawls in Tennessee now, with the Vol Sprawl (Nashville) being the largest, then K-Plex (Knoxville), Memphis, and Chattanooga. The Vol Sprawl runs fifty miles north to south and a hundred east to west. Running the hour sprawl is a dream goal for every rigger in the state, but nobody's done it yet. (Me? One hour and fourteen minutes.) Outside of them, we got rivers, we got lakes, we got farms, churches, schools, factories ... you want it, we got it.

- Seriously, Kane, are you two related?
- Butch

GAW FOR PRESIDENT!

Aiden Gaw is the real deal. He knows that money put into a foreign war is money wasted and that we need to keep all of it here, where it belongs. Why go fight the Pueblo Corporate Council just because Texas has its panties in a twist? Texas talks big, but they can't back up shit. Azzies attack? They fold. Santa Anna attacks?





INCOMING FEED.....

They run. Who holds at the Alamo? Davy Crockett of Tennessee, that's who. And who did he fight for? Sam Houston, another Tennessean. Hell, we gave Texas chili and country music and they fucked those up too! The Pueblos are willing to stand side by side with us to defend their Texan asses against Aztlan, and they want to start a war with them? Bunch of idiots. If it wasn't for how much the Confederation needs Texan money, I'd just as soon pull our troops out completely.

Gaw is a Southern Democrat and a True Southerner. He's backing a path of isolationism, also known as keeping our nose out of other people's business and theirs out of ours. Trying to go around, be the world police, see where that got the old United States? Penniless, broken up, and tossed on the dustbin of history where it belongs. And that carpet-bagging McMulkin wants to go back to that? Please. He's Virginian, and they're barely Southern on the best of days. North Virginia was too tied up with DeeCee and all that crap, so I'm glad we cut it off, but if we'd have pruned back a bit more, I wouldn't have minded. Hell, if it was up to me, I'd trade the rest for Missouri. At least those guys know how to drive!

- All right. I confess. Even I want to punch this guy now.
- FastJack
- See? What did I tell you? The man's gifted.
- Kane

The governor is "Jolly" Jerry Hargrove, a Southern Conservative. Don't much care for the man's racism, but he knows how to work a budget like nobody else. We've had a state surplus

for three of his four years, and the rainy day fund keeps growing. So maybe a few trolls are out of work; they just need to pick themselves up by their bootstraps and make something of themselves. Not his fault if they're too damn lazy to learn a trade. We're an at-work state! There's not a union to be found that'll freeze you out! No excuses! He's up against a Republican out of the True American coalition, Laura Jennings out of Dayton. She's running against sin, claiming CalHots are as bad as BTLs, and that we need to take the war against all the NAN, to try and get America back, starting with the Pueblos.

- As far as anyone can tell, "pulling one's self up by one's bootstraps" first popped up in the Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen, where the good baron, when stuck in quicksand and seeing no one around to help, reached down, grabbed his own bootstraps, lifted himself up by them, and deposited himself safely on the shoreline. By definition, it's bullshit.
- Slamm-0!

ECONOMY

We kick ass. Yeah, Texas makes more money than us, but they're the only one. We know how to make it and how to invest it. Cash on the barrelhead and no debt in sight. If you can't afford it, you don't need it, and jobs, jobs, jobs. Look around the state and there's not a single megacorporation missing. We even let Aztechnology in, and since they lost their offices in Georgia, they've moved their CAS HQ to Nashville. We make computer chips, we make cars, we do finances, it don't matter. Heavy industry, light industry, finance, we kick ass at each and

DIRTY SOUTH

every one of them. Texas has the only AA in the country, but Tennessee has the most A-rated industries, and more are added every day. Unemployment's down to three percent, the budget's under control, and every bit of it's been earned.

- Tennessee has a weird love affair with industry. Most anything goes, from low wages to forced overtime to company towns, but they draw the line at environmental issues. Even Saeder-Krupp has had to use low-impact policies in their auto manufacturing plants. The megas use Tennessee as a place for the jobs that need medium education and hard labor, diverting the polluting ones to other states like Mississippi. Tennessee gets photo ops and jobs, other states get the runoff.
- Sunshine

THE WAR OF HONOR

Ten years back, those idiots in Georgia cranked it up a notch and sent troops to the Tennessee border, looking to take the Tennessee River from us. Like we're going to back down from a fight? Son, this here is the Volunteer State. We don't start trouble, but we damn sure finish it. Georgia's terrible at investment and shares the water it has badly because they don't know how to take care of what they got. Instead of sitting down, figuring out the problem, then taking steps to correct it, they figured that they could just reach out and take what wasn't theirs. That don't fly, sunshine. Craven to the end, they wait until our comm gear goes down from the second Crash, then start taking pot shots at us. By the time it ended, thirty Tennesseans had given their life, but didn't give an inch. Peace broke back out when they realized they couldn't win, and both sides went back home. Every year, there's a solemn memorial in Nashville, remembering those who laid down their lives for the cause. Moment of silence please.

- Check the Georgia section for a different take on this.
- Kane

MEMPHIS

The westernmost part of the state, the Memphis sprawl extends into both Mississippi and Arkansas, the poor thing. Memphis has a chip on its shoulder about being second to Nashville. It was understandable when it had a larger population, but Nashville's been booming for years and passed it up. Worse, K-Plex has moved into the number two city spot, leaving Memphis as an also-ran. Hell, the Church of Elvis even moved to Nashville; that's got to sting.

- Interesting note: No dragon has ever set claw in Memphis. Perhaps related to the Egyptian heritage it claims?
- Glasswalker
- Along those lines, Aztechnology bought the Pyramid Arena from the University of Memphis late last year and has been heavily converting it. I'd lay good odds that whatever kinds of anti-dragon technology they have, it'll be designed there. Who'd look for Aztechnology facilities in the middle of the CAS? The Pyramid should be fully operational by the end of the year.
- Marcos

CHATTANOOGA

The smallest of the four sprawls, 'Nooga is in danger of being swallowed up by Atlanta in another twenty years' time. As it's directly between the Georgia and Tennessee state capitals, the citizens there are well aware that if war breaks out, they'll be where the fighting happens; as such, they play the primary peacemakers and negotiators between the two sides. Lots of A-rated corps in the area, including McKee Foods, but Saeder-Krupp lords over everything there.

- McKee Foods makes Little Debbie snacks, among others. They were using fake cream well before dairy became a scarce commodity, so they have the experience to do it right. Delicious!
- Slamm-O!

K-PLEX

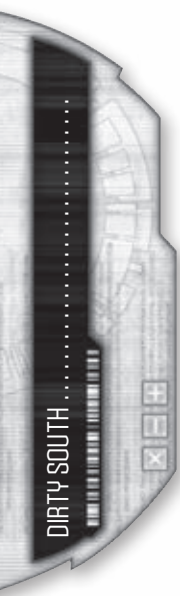
Knoxville has the right idea about money, but that's about it. They don't understand the finer parts of life, like the arts. It's why they'll always want to be Nashville but will never quite make it. Credit where it's due, their sports teams kick Nashville's ass. The Volunteers operate out of the University of Tennessee, and the whole state bleeds orange for them. It's also the home of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a former government body, now an A-rated private corporation that provides power to nearly every part of the CAS. The TVA serves as a multi-state waterways inspector as well and has enough heft to make it to the AA-level, but they can't get any sitting mega to lobby for them. Shiawase, in particular, has been looking to buy them out for a decade, to no avail. The TVA ownership just won't sell.

- There are standing contracts for this on my desk. Drop a private message if interested.
- Cosmo
- Here's an interesting note for you: Of the current board of directors of the TVA, every single one is a dwarf. In fact, Knoxville has a population of almost twenty percent dwarves, but less than two percent elf. This makes it the most dwarven city in America.
- Icarus

THE VOL SPRAWL

And I saved the best for last. Nashville is the best place to live in the entire world. All the comforts of a metroplex with all the politeness of a small town. It's the entertainment capital of the CAS, supports several professional sports teams, has a world-leading medical university in Vanderbilt, a thriving arts community, and a fierce military tradition; is it any wonder that we call it the Athens of the South? Five million people call Nashville home, more than the other three sprawls combined, enriching the city coffers and culture at the same time.

- I want to remind him that Nashville fell in a whopping two days worth of fighting back in 1864.
- Hard Exit
- FastJack, you have to invite this nimrod to JackPoint. Sell the rights to banhammering him to the highest bidder. We won't have hardware budget issues for at least a decade.
- Glitch



If you visit, stop by Centennial Park first, and take a look at the Parthenon. The statue of Athena inside is gorgeous, and my magic friends tell me that the City Spirit of Nashville is a dead ringer for her. The Bicentennial Mall is by the capital building, which is a work of art in and of itself. When you get downtown, the NeoNET tower (formerly the Transys Tower) is the largest building, with Saeder-Krupp's Nippon Credit and Trust financial center a close second. Every single megacorp has a facility in and around Nashville, ranging from the Renraku Arcology (a prototype half the size of Seattle's own) to Horizon's own Brand New Opry.

- After they lost Seattle, Renraku went in and rebuilt the command rooms of their arcologies. At one time, the goal was to have a single master control program that would run it all, but after Deus, they went with a compartmentalized design. This limited processing power to any single node, ensuring that there would be no more incidents, and put human oversight on top of each and every system. You should see one sometime, it looks like the bridge of an old sci-fi trid. Really swag.
- Clockwork
- Snuck in for a shadowrun, eh? What did you find out?
- Glitch
- Actually, it was for a job interview. Have to get inside before you can infiltrate.
- Clockwork

Due to some old zoning issues, prostitution's legal in Nashville. Combine this with being an entertainment mecca, and you can understand how the adult sim industry swooped in, despite the high morality level of the state as a whole. Nashville passed Atlanta's output of entertainment a decade ago and has never looked back, now standing second only to L.A. in terms of production, having just passed Vancouver this year. Horizon is worried that the PCC will soon outlaw CalHots so has pushed for Tennessee to legalize them statewide. Obviously, Jennings is against them while Hargrove supports the motion. If he's re-elected, it should pass next year's state legislature, while if she wins, it has no chance at all. Needless to say, nuyen is flowing into both campaigns.

THE REST OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

Once you get out of the big four, it's mostly drive-through towns and rural areas. Nice farms, some great parks, hiking trails, fishing ... it's a real nice change of pace from the Floor It! day-to-day grind in the metroplexes. Quite a few people commute, or telecommute, instead of dealing with the sky-high rent that you get in, say, downtown Nashville. While Vanderbilt has the number two Hermetic studies program in the nation, it's the backwoods you need to search to find the real mojo. The Great Smoky Mountains have some classic instructors, courtesy of Cherokee, North Carolina, while the small troll and dwarf communities up in the mountains lay claim to shamans of amazing power. Something about the land being full of old Earth spirits, I don't know. I'm a driver, not a spellslinger.

- Supposedly, the CAS Army has a secret magical research facility hidden somewhere in the Smokies. They specialize in ritual casting and use spiritual spotters to unleash magic on unsuspecting targets. The El Paso Incident, if, again, you believe the rumors, was them testing out some new configuration. Should war break out between Aztlan and the CAS, these guys would get a baptism by fire.
- Kane
- I've heard that as well, but the base is actually in New Orleans.
- Picador
- If it was, Guillotine would have said so. Virginia's more likely.
- Hannibelle
- Virginia's magical talent is tied up with secret societies, like the Black Lodge, and not-so-secret societies, like the Initiates of the New Dawn. The spy agencies certainly have remote-viewing specialists, but military strikes aren't their thing.
- Hard Exit
- What about the Everglades? They're as Awakened as the Louisiana Bayou, but not as romantic. It might also explain all the people that have gone missing out there. Wait—why are a bunch of mundanes speculating on this? Where are our mages?
- Sticks
- The spirits share their wisdom when they wish, not when we ask. All things in good time.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- The Vol Sprawl gets its name from the Volunteer State, not the Vols college football team in Knoxville. The state's inordinately proud of themselves, and they stick together when outside of it. Take a look at the Ares teams in the desert wars sometime and you'll notice the mechanized support units are all from Tennessee and give priority to other Tennesseans, letting them cut in line for refueling and repairs. Happens in business and other areas as well. "Me against my brother, my brother and I against my cousins, my clan against another."
- Hard Exit

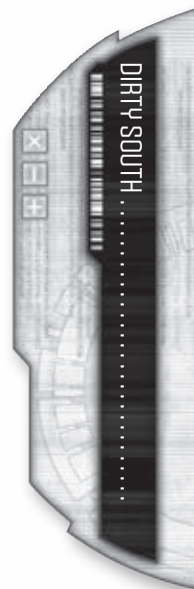
DRIVE-BY: THE CAS OUTSIDE YOUR CAR WINDOW

Posted by: Rebel Yell

You know those jokes about "fly-over country" in the old United States? The drive-by states of the CAS are mostly the same. You don't hear much about them because they don't much matter. Yeah, I'm looking at you, Virginia, you want some? Still, Kane wanted data, so data he gets. Hope your guys appreciate this, Kane; I had to go to Mississippi to get some of this. Mississippi!

ALABAMA

The number one thing to remember about Alabama is that at least they're not Mississippi. The second thing is that you don't want to mess with the kudzu. There are about five



million living here, with a good third of the population being ork. Unofficially, there's another quarter million SINless, half of which are tuskers. Alabama has about six percent unemployment, which sounds good, until you realize that a high number of these are heavy industrial jobs, such as steel making, auto manufacturing, and mining. Saeder-Krupp is the biggest player, with Ares and Renraku wrestling for second. Shiawase never seems to get the lucrative mining contracts but constantly wins cleanup bids. They've recently hired Wuxing to consult on several projects and found mineable resources after snapping up the land for decimals on the nuyen. MCT has tried to break into the mix but has never managed to get past so many shoulders. With Tsimshian no longer an option, expect MCT to start pushing hard for shadowruns in the region, to force the contracts that they otherwise get frozen out of.

Alabama's also the home of the CAS Army machine, with Ares Heavy Industries and Ares Arms having taken over the Redwall Arsenal decades ago, and Maxwell Air Base being a CAS military area that's a subsidiary of Ares in all but name. Every major auto manufacturer has at least one plant in Alabama, as do major steel producers like Renraku, Ares, and UCAS Steel. This makes Alabama the largest steel producer in the CAS and second only to Pennsylvania in North America. Banking is found largely in Birmingham; Mobile has ports galore, shipping, and refining; and Huntsville handles the electronics and computer firms.

- So, what's this on the map? "Space City" where Mobile is supposed to be?
- /dev/grrl
- I was hoping no one would ask that. <sigh> All right, Proteus AG covered for their space program by talking about their underwater facilities, trying to get that bequest from Dunklezahn's Will. They knew they couldn't earn it, but keeping people watching that made them miss the space race. Four years ago, they approached the mayor of Mobile with a plan to build up the aerospace industry and construct an offshore space launching facility. Tons of nuyen traded hands and, to show solidarity with Proteus, they even renamed the sprawl "Space City" to draw in more investment. Whole thing was a massive boondoggle, costing the state billions and pushing the mayor out of his job. Proteus still has a half-finished floating arcology off the coast but hasn't been seen working on it in over a year. Of course, there are all kinds of rumors about work going on that we don't see. Lots of people are curious about what this was to distract people from as well.
- Kane
- What if I told you that they were just playing their hand backwards, making everyone look up while they worked on perfecting bioengineering of a fully aquatic human genotype, a "mermaid" treatment that would allow anyone to live safely under the sea?
- Plan 9
- Hazardous environmental modifications have been around for years, Plan 9. That's not news.
- Slamm-0!

- True! But these aren't bioware augmentations. They're rewritten DNA strings, genetic engineering ... and hereditary.
- Plan 9
- I've shared this tidbit with a few people, and I'm told our old friend KAM would be interested in chatting with you
- Butch
- That's too bad for her. It won't happen. She's spent too long in the belly of the beast for me to trust her.
- Plan 9

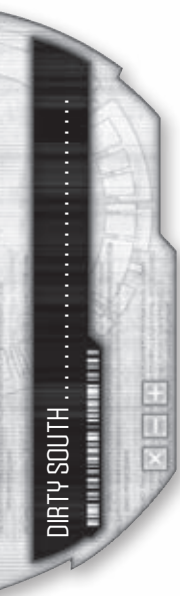
One of the most unusual things about Alabama is that the entire state is threatened by kudzu. Kudzu's an invasive vine, originally brought over from Japan in the hopes that it would use its strong root system to combat soil erosion. Turns out that it loves the CAS climate in ways that would never be allowed back home and grows at an incredible rate, covering the land as it does so. From Alabama, it's crossed into most of the rest of CAS, but it can't expand anywhere that gets a decent amount of snow. Kudzu can be killed, but it grows back from about anything and at a rate that's hard to understand; fully an inch an hour. Watching from a hillside, you can see the vines writhing and hear them stretch and pop as they move. Creepy as all get out. Everybody was worried that the stuff would Awaken, but it never did, so we let our guard down. That changed when the comet passed over. There's a rare, but not rare enough, carnivorous branch now. Mostly, it eats critters. Mostly.

- Um, what's an inch?
- Slamm-0!
- I keep telling you to get a math CPU Fred, but do you ever listen? It's an old unit of measure that's not used anywhere in the world but the CAS these days. It's roughly 25 centimeters.
- FastJack
- It grows 25 cm an hour?! That's insane! That could swallow my apartment in a day!
- Slamm-0!
- Not as bad as all that, Slamm-0! ... FastJack misplaced a decimal up there. 2.5 cm an hour growth. Still crazy, but less.
- Glitch

ARKANSAS

There's about two and a half million in the Natural State, about a third of which are orks. The northwest quarter is hilly, with about a third of the state's residents living there, including most of the dwarves and trolls. Mount Clips (formally Mount Magazine, but the nickname stuck; thanks Ares!) features the largest concentration of trolls in the state. The southeast is flat and serves as the agricultural center for the state, thanks to the Mississippi River delta. With the river's Awakening, farming's a bit trickier, so there's a good market for mages.

The center of the state's where Little Rock sits, along with half the population. The primary employer here is Wal-Mart, an A-rated corporation that at one time was the biggest corp on the



planet. It's true! Back around the turn of the century, nobody was bigger, but the rise of the megas doomed them. They probably would have been a founding member if they didn't arrogantly dismiss Shiawase; honor demands retribution, and the Waltons weren't ready for the intensity of modern corporate warfare. Bloodied, they struggled to stay afloat until the Crash (Wal-Mart used to have the second most powerful computer system in North America after NORAD, and the Crash virus nested there for a while before using the Wal-Mart comsats to beam itself all over the world.) With such a computer-centric, centrally run business model, they collapsed, and the family fortune was destroyed. Most walked away with what little money they had left; William "Willy" Walton was the only one left who cared about salvaging it. It took decades, but he's managed to restore the corporation to a fraction of its old status. You don't see their stores in the UCAS much, but they're as common as Stuffer Shacks in the CAS and have penetrated into the NAN as well. They recently teamed with Wuxing to try to break into the Chinese market, and Kong Wal-Mart has been a great success for them. It remains to be seen if, or rather when, Wuxing will turn around and use their loans to absorb the chain.

The next largest employer is MCT, whose magical divisions are hungry for the unspoiled telesma that the state provides. This has put them into a small clash with the shamans who operate around the delta, with the poor folk backing the shamans and the middle class folks supporting MCT. You can always find jobs down there, backing one faction or another for market share near the agricultural areas. (The corporate farms are generally run by Shiawase Envirotech, by the way. Aztechnology's not welcome.) Shiawase, as noted, is third, and it falls off quickly after that. Arkansas runs around a sixteen percent unemployment rate, with ork and troll unemployment closer to fifty percent. The trogs with jobs toil away on the farms, while the rest are domestic servants for the wealthy. The state reps tend to vote however their corporate masters want, and as long as nuyen trickles in, the rest don't seem to care much.

FLORIDA

Keep an eye on this one. In the decade since Gunderson went down in Miami, South Florida's been unable to keep a decent security provider. This year, unemployment skyrocketed, riots broke out, and refugees streamed over the border into the real Florida, which hasn't gone over well. Orlando, in particular, hates the idea of homeless rolling into Disney, so it has been employing security forces (cough) to keep out the riffraff. Dunklezhan must be rolling in his grave. This would be bad enough, but the CAS is reeling from the Rio Gambit, and President McMulkin is looking to restore some confidence. There've been calls to retake Florida ever since it broke off, but no one who mattered ever cared. If McMulkin is going to try to win re-election after his "Restore this Great Nation" speeches, well, there'll never be a better time to invade. Interesting that the Atlantic Battle Group has been mobilized for wargames, hmm? Built around the CSS *Charlotte*, the second CAS carrier, the ABG also has the majority of the CAS marines and amphibious craft. If they decide to sweep into Miami and establish martial law, there's not a lot that can be done to stop them, what with Aztlan being tied down.

- Rumor has it that Dankwalther's money is somewhere in Florida. People think he secretly converted it to gold (bought from Saeder-Krupp asteroid mining, to not destabilize global markets) and hid it, either off the coast, deep in the 'Glades, or out in the Carribean. Thousands of pirates and would-be treasure hunters out there looking for it. That I'm not should tell you something.
- Kane

Florida's got a population of about twelve million, but that's mostly a guess as the Everglades dwellers don't much care for government men, and the SINless populations of Tampa and Orlando have been swelling with those fleeing Miami. Officially, orks are only about twenty percent, but everybody knows that this is undercutting the actual number. Lots of orks and trolls in the 'Glades and, as noted, they don't really sign surveys. Unemployment's only around 13 percent if you don't count the SINless, which they don't. The biggest employers are all in agriculture, with Shiawase Envirotech the leader, as usual. Ares, of all things, scooped up the citrus industry, which operates under the aegis of Ares Consumer Products. They never did anything much with the monopoly, aside from blasting California Free State produce into the dirt, and they were happy to roll the profits back into the corp as a whole. There's been an influx of resources in the last two years, however, as they snap up South Florida businesses at a song due to the chaos there.

- I feel an opportunity here. Sticks? Were you aware that this influx of resources started just a few months before Roger Soaring Owl left the company? You might think there's nothing interesting about an agribusiness purchasing insecticide, but the fact that they're sending people in to examine the plants that the chemicals are made in, to make sure they don't get "tainted supplies" might be up your alley.
- Icarus
- You have names and addresses?
- Sticks
- But of course. Reasonable fees.
- Icarus
- I don't run on Ares—bad for my contracts—but there's nothing wrong with subcontracting. Drop me a line for the prices and I'll pass it along to some Johnsons I know that hire exterminators. Gonna be some contracts for interested parties ...
- Sticks
- The Seminole Tribe was the one and only tribe not to capitulate to the United States during the Resource Rush. They still have land in Florida and protect it fiercely. Unrelated, but true—if you meet a Seminole in Florida, disrespect their warriors at your peril.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Phosphate mining's a big industry (Shiawase again, since the sales go to agribusiness), half of which goes to the NAN and a quarter to the CAS. The rest goes internationally for soil enrichment. Renraku's been funding some light investigations of the industry but hasn't made any real moves yet. Housing is



a big field that all the corps fight over, simply because you get at least one major hurricane a year, and the contracts for cleanup and rebuilding are lucrative. Florida backing McMulkin put him over the top in the last election. If he moves against Miami and doesn't botch it, he's a shoe-in for re-election.

- Sorry I'm late, but for the record, the CAS president can serve up to two four-year terms. Term limits don't apply otherwise. Every state rep is up for election every two years, and each of the three senators serves a six-year term, so one's up for election every two years.
- Kay St. Irregular

MISSISSIPPI

How bad is it in Mississippi? Even Alabama looks down on Mississippi. The CAS government can't afford to repair the damage that Mississippi sucks up every year from hurricanes in the south and tornadoes in the north. The poorest place on the continent (even when the Ute were a nation of their own, they were better off than Mississippi, which is saying something!), the worst education system, and a population that's two-thirds tusker, all come together to say that, fact is, God hates Mississippi.

- Gotta say, the racist schtick of this guy is getting old. Don't suppose we could give him a real account, just so I could ban him?
- Bull

Unemployment in Mississippi is upwards of forty percent, which has lead to everyone with anything to move out, leaving the two million-ish folks left behind to fight over the scraps. The state has a minimum wage, somehow, but the rate (one nuyen a day) isn't enforced. Sharecropping is the primary employment, with agribusiness using indentured servants whose work doesn't fully pay for room and board, putting them into a lifetime of debt. Who said slavery was illegal in this day and age? Secondary industries are tourism based on gambling, and gambling itself. Most of these areas are run by the NAN, especially the Sioux, but a healthy chunk is Yak-related, which means MCT. Horizon popped up in Jacksonville three years ago, looking to take advantage of the cheap labor, and has expanded gradually into the state. The PR that this has given them is unreal, and you can't turn on the trideo without seeing a story about Horizon suits feeding the starving or bringing a civic center into an area that had no jobs before. Gary Cline is worshiped like a god here, and Horizon has found that there's money to be made in Mississippi entertainers. A blues explosion has started up, and artists like No-Tusk Nelson (bad dental hygiene hits even orks), Kelly Calloway, and Jimmy the Truth are getting major play through Horizon affiliates. Calloway, a rare human from Mississippi and a looker at that, has been getting the most attention. She's supposed to be doing a relief concert with Teiko Ikemoto, which is going to be huge.

- Mitsuhamas are still upset over Teiko's defection. A chance to get a swipe at her, undercut a rising Horizon star like Calloway, and do some damage to Horizon all in one go? You can believe that some Johnsons will be paying out MCT scrip to make sure things don't go smoothly here. No one in Mississippi would raise a finger against Horizon, however, so they'll need to bring in foreign assets.
- Haze

- Fuck you Haze, you immoral bastard. Running against a relief concert that's trying to raise money to help people put out by Hurricane Jacob? Even for you, that's low.
- Pistons

- Biz is biz.
- Haze

- For the record, a little bird tells me that Microdeck is looking at heading MCT off at the pass on this one. The Gates Foundation has been dropping aid to the area for decades and doesn't want it disrupted. Pay's not as good, but it's clean.
- Turbo Bunny

- I bet that birdy wears a digital fedora.
- /dev/grrl

- Horizon and Microdeck have been chummy for a while now, but it stumbled when the truth about technomancers and Horizon got out. Pulsar has taken a personal hand in trying to rebuild Horizon's rep with the digital sentients. Teaming up with Alexander Gates and Teiko has a lot of upsides for him. He sees rebuilding Horizon's reputation with our kind as a major undertaking, but valuable.
- Netcat

- Yeah, and if this blows up in Cline's face, Pulsar looks to move ITS (not his, dammit, its!) reputation up by bringing Cline down. I think the damn thing must have been a chess program in another life. It wants to be CEO and will sacrifice pawns to win the game.
- Clockwork

- A while back, Lone Star moved its Grey Men down to Mississippi from Seattle. They're up to their old tricks again, but with Mississippi having no oversight worth mentioning, it's been open season out there. Conviction rates from local judges have gone up by 25 percent, and Lone Star's facilities are the only ones with spare rooms to take the new convicts. If you head down there on work, better make sure that your permits are all locked in tight to your SIN. They have terrible computers down there and sometimes things get "lost," especially if you have dental issues. Once you go into the hole, nobody looks for you anymore. Be damned careful.
- Kane

- When Kane tells you to be careful, you'd better pay attention.
- Bull

NORTH CAROLINA

The third largest economy of the CAS, North Carolina saw their population come in at 9,999,998 after the 2070 census, which shorted them one representative in Congress—a fact that produced an insane number of legal challenges. Georgia, which is the fourth largest economy, happened to absorb that leftover rep and, as the seat of CAS government, was also the state that ruled the census was legal and binding. North Carolina has voted against Georgia at every possible opportunity since then, taking a particular glee when water's involved (see the War of Honor in the Tennessee section.) NC is about a quarter ork,



while unemployment is down around ten percent. This number used to be lower, but the last textile facilities moved to Alabama a couple years back, finishing off the small-town industry and driving everyone to the sprawls. Financial services make up the largest chunk of the economy, with agriculture a close second, and manufacturing a distant third. (Once again, jobs being shipped to Mississippi and Alabama are killing local business.) Saeder-Krupp's North American headquarters is found in Charlotte, along with major investments from Wuxing and the Frankfurt bank. Saeder-Krupp has a huge investment in the manufacturing field, but Ares, Renraku, and Shiawase are also major players. Runs between the four, and the smaller players in the area, crop up on a monthly basis, more often if big contracts are due soon.

- On a related note, Renraku's recent announcement that they're going to build an entire Olympic park in under seven years if Nairobi wins the bid for the 2080 Olympics has people curious how they plan on pulling this off. Charlotte's a prime location for work right now.
- Slamm-0!

I'm doing them a disservice by sticking NC in the Drive-By section, as it's a large state with a stable economy, good technology, and lots of tourism opportunities. Good place to live. I'm pressed for time on this whole datafile, however, and corners have to be cut somewhere. Suffice it to say that it's a pretty state with a lot going on for it, thanks to having a diversified economy, but there's some struggle as the small towns vanish when jobs leave, forcing the locals to move to the big cities and the higher cost of living there. Lots of low-grade stress from this, but nothing boiling over yet. Neo-anarchists, I should add, are on the rise.

- He's missing a mention of Asheville, the San Francisco of the South. One of the rare areas with a decent population of elves, Asheville is also powerfully active magically, with shamans and Wiccans and all sorts of magical types mixed together. Crystal-wavers, free spirits, even a small coven of psionicists. If it's unwelcome in the rest of the CAS, it has a home in Asheville. Plan 9 would love it.
- Traveler Jones
- As if I'd set foot in the home of the International Climatic Data Center? Hah! Don't you know what those guys are doing? CONTRAILS.
- Plan 9
- You're also missing out on all the universities! Duke, Chapel Hill, Wake Forest ...
- Slamm-0!
- Since when do you care about university education?
- Netcat
- I don't! But oh, the athletics programs! Mmmm, nobody does college sports like the CAS.
- Slamm-0!
- North Carolina and Tennessee straddle Cherokee country. The Qualla Boundry was established two hundred years ago by a

white man named William Thomas, who had been adopted into the Tsalagi (Cherokee) tribe. He bought up land there, which the natives couldn't, and held it in a trust, rather than a reservation. Ownership of this land's been passed down and preserved, and the Eastern Cherokee were able to ride out the worst of the Resource Rush relatively unscathed. These good relations are why New Echota was given permission to form down in Georgia.

- Frosty

OKLAHOMA

Population just a hair over three million. Gorgeous place, wide diversity of terrain, but the weather's murder. Thunderstorms and tornadoes every time you turn around. I'm told that it used to be bad, but after the Great Ghost Dance, it got terrible. This leads to flooding, so the people of Oklahoma turned to engineers for help. Dams are everywhere, and over three hundred artificial lakes dot the land. The Okies have fusion power, but rely on wind, solar, and hydroelectric as well, held over from the old days. They lease excess power to the Pueblo, but that might be ending now. Oklahoma has an unemployment rate of only about six percent, making it one of the best places for jobs. It should also be noted that orks are only eleven percent of the population. The Humanis policlub is powerful here and works hard to let tuskers know that they can visit, but that they'd better not be inside the state when the sun sets.

- To forestall the inevitable complaints here, let me say that Reb's not, unfortunately, being racist here. He's just detailing how it is. And he should know, since Reb's an ork himself.
- Sunshine

Like most of the CAS, agribusiness is strong here, but the unpredictable weather has changed the format. You don't get acres of fields and miles of corn anymore. Everything's moved indoors to hydroponic gardens that focus on high-value vegetables and fruits. A few still keep wheat going, but the weather makes it a tough battle. The aerospace industry is booming, with both Federated-Boeing and Ares having facilities in the area. There aren't a lot of shadowruns between the two, simply because it's hard to be deniable when there's only one other local corp in your field. In contrast, there are dozens of small biotech firms that work alongside the agribusinesses to produce new strains of plant and enhance livestock. These guys are always keeping an eye on one another, and the big boys like Evo and Shiawase hire people on a regular basis. Stop by Tulsa to meet Mr. Johnson, then get ready to drive for a whole lot of miles.

I oughta add that there used to be talk about folding Oklahoma into the PCC, but the Rio Gambit stopped that in its tracks.

- Shame, too, as Oklahoma has far more in common with the NAN than it does the CAS. Good education system, an appreciation for the natural land, high-tech industries ... it's a perfect match.
- Traveler Jones
- Surprisingly, Oklahoma has the lowest magical birth rate of any state in the CAS. Some speculate that the Great Ghost Dance just sucked the magic right out of the place, others think that the land holds it all and refuses to give it up, while still others

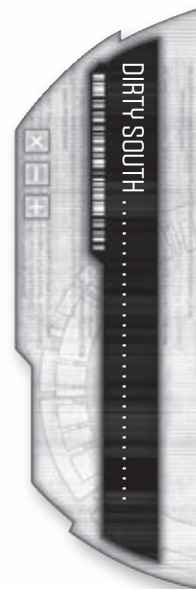


figure that it's just how life balances things ... they got great terrain, good education, and jobs, but had to give up magic to get it. (Mississippi is the state just above Oklahoma, technically, but that's because they can't afford standard magical testing. Low in testing, high in shamans.)

- Arete

SOUTH CAROLINA

Population about four and a half million, a third of which are orks. Unemployment up around eighteen percent right now, thanks to an aggressive policy of temp workers. Skillwires are omnipresent here, allowing workers to be shuttled between different service industry jobs, then released before they can be taken on for longer terms. There are some agribusiness jobs, but mostly in soy since the rest of the CAS is better suited to other farming or ranching. One reason for the decline in jobs is the decimation of the education industry; CatCo had been brought in to run many of the school systems around 2060, and was doing well before Crash 2.0 and the Ares attacks that followed. No one moved in to pick up the rubble, and an entire generation of South Carolinians wound up uneducated and unemployable. Horizon has moved in now to take over the educational system and has also been quick to subsidize skillwire implantation in potential workers; the lack of education and skillsets have little effect on the Horizon business model, which has always been heavy on skillwires for technical ability.

- I have to say, I'm not a fan of skillwires. I just don't like the idea of letting some program take over my body.
- Glitch
- After watching how much fun Marionette has with hers, I've been thinking of getting myself a set. You should live a little, Glitch.
- Turbo Bunny
- Sorry, I have control issues.
- Glitch
- Horizon has good wires, TB, but you can't beat Evo's Jack-of-All-Trades line. Let me know if you need any programs after the upgrade—I have some stuff that'll blow your mind.
- Plan 9

SOUTH MISSOURI

Ever since Nashville's focused on cleaning up its act, the smugglers and hard drivers have had to shift gears. These days, the St. Louis run brings us south to Memphis instead of Nashville, and we fan out from there. South Missouri has a population of three million, with only about thirteen percent ork. Agribusiness is the largest (official) source of income, with soy being far and away the main product. Pigs used to be higher, but the demand for real meat has turned it into a premium product rather than a mass market item. You can also find rice, cattle, and wine industries here, but Aztechnology has fingers in every pie. They have an absolute lock on the state's foodstuffs industry, with a few crumbs falling to Ares or Shiawase. Shiawase makes up for it by taking the lead in mining, with limestone and lead being the go-to field. Not as high profit or glamorous as iron or gold mines, but steady, reliable profits are always the Shiawase mantra.

The main thing to know about Missouri is that it's smuggler country. With borders that lead to easy access to the Sioux, the Pueblo (after a bonus hop), the CAS, and the UCAS, only Denver gets you more smugglers per square mile.

- Again with the miles!
- Slamm-0!

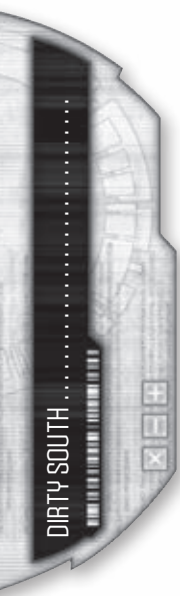
Missouri's a rigger's paradise, with numerous limestone caves for hidden meetings and deliveries, ample roadways and off-road options, and lax laws ... it's perfect.

- Of course, that also makes it ground zero should war ever break out between any of the four.
- Hard Exit
- Wait. Where's all the talk about reunification and St. Louis being a free city and all that stuff?
- /dev/grrl
- Rebel Yell's a Tennessean. By and large, Confederationists care about their own state and don't give two shits about the others. If he doesn't care, he didn't talk about it. Had he been a local, I'm sure we'd have gotten nothing but that.
- Kane

VIRGINIA

The last of our drive-by states, Virginia is the also-ran. They wanted to be held up as the new core of the CAS, just like they led the Confederacy, but they never expected us to break from that mold like we did. Seven million people, nearly ninety percent human, made up of idle rich, old money, and high-tech industries. NeoNET, Ares, Horizon, MCT, Renraku ... all of them are in orbit around there, but the wealthy spend too much time sniffing one another to understand what it's like for everyone else. The DeeCee area is split off from the rest, of course, but there're plenty of folks who live on one side and work on the other. Hell, President McMulkin is one of them.

- I always wondered how he moved from the UCAS to the CAS governments like that. Is it just his living arrangements?
- Mr. Bonds
- Residency in North Virginia when the United States split. He has dual citizenship, which was given out to everyone in the region during the separation. No one gets it anymore, so you won't see it happen again, but he's in a weird legal area with his dual citizenship.
- Sunshine
- North and South Virginia used to agitate for moving to one nation or the other and reunification, but this movement has largely died down as the status quo took hold. The Virginia military that patrols the UCAS border looks impressive, with all that shiny new gear, but it has never been battle-tested. They don't even get a rotation at the Texas-Aztlan border. As such, they're greenies with medals for showing up on time and well-polished boots, but if the UCAS ever invaded, they'd fold like tissue paper. Good thing that the CAS and the UCAS have such good relations, eh?
- Hard Exit



... TSIMSHIAN PROTECTORATE ...

"So let me get this straight," said Pistons, and took a sip from her wine glass. "You're willing to pay me top nuyen for my services to grab some financial paydata that likely will take me only half a day to acquire? From what you told me, any experienced hacker could do this job, and at a much cheaper rate. What's the catch?"

The Amerind Johnson, in his late fifties and sporting a well-tailored Synergist suit, smiled. "Those I represent need the hacker to travel into a relatively... compromising location to get the information for us. They are willing to pay more for your services, which are both proven and exemplary. You have an established track record for getting yourself in and out of dangerous situations. From where we sit, you are the most likely to succeed at this job."

Pistons shook her head abruptly. "Okay, enough bullshitting. Just tell me in one sentence or less where you want me to go."

"Kitimat."

"Shit. Tsimshian."

"Is there a problem?"

"Are you kidding? As an outsider and as an Anglo, I'm going to stick out like a sore thumb. I'm going to have to hire a smuggler just to bypass the fucking red tape that Tsimshian has in place against people like me. I'll have to arrange for some good forged documents. The less attention I draw to myself, the better. It's going to cost you to expedite those documents. And you can fucking bet I'm bringing my own rations. Food and water. No way in hell I'm drinking or eating anything from that cesspool. Plus, I'll have to purchase antibiotics to keep me from getting sick. See how this adds up."

"So how much more money, over your established cost for your services, is this going to run us?"

Without hesitation, Pistons replied, "Another 10K or I'm walking. In addition to the expenses I just mentioned, I want compensation for putting up with all the fucking bigotry for being a 'pinkskin.' Plus, you still haven't mentioned who the target is. Might cost you even more."

"There is an election in Tsimshian coming up. Those whom I represent want the incumbent from the District Three council seat race to lose. His name is Chetan Hale. We need you to hack into his personal records, and find evidence of his corruption. We believe the Dogmen are buying him off for information the council has on ongoing police operations throughout Tsimshian. The Dogmen are—"

"I know who the Dogmen are, thank you. Part of me wants to ask you where you're getting all this money to hire me. Last time I checked, your people were broke."

"But your professional side knows that isn't your concern so long as I have the money. Here's a certified credstick. Verify the amount. That's more than enough to cover your services and your expenses, whatever they are."

"So long as where you are getting your money doesn't come back and bite me in the ass." After a moment's hesitation, Pistons responded, "I will take the job, but because he's a high profile target, likely with skilled protection around him at all times, I'll need to charge another five thousand nuyen. Are you sure you don't want to find a cheaper hacker?"

"We're confident we have the right person for the job. Here's a file with all the details you need of Hale's activities and security team, and the documents we need you to recover to make sure Hale loses this election."

Posted by: Mika

Tsimshian is a topic very few people discuss these days. Native shamans are easily incensed when reminded of how the old Tsimshian government, under Great Chief Deborah Jim, sold out their own sacred lands to Mitsuhama in exchange for tens of billions of nuyen to fill their empty coffers. Today, that ill-gotten nuyen is long gone, having been squandered by shortsighted, corrupt politicians more interested in maintaining their fleeting political influence and their wealthy lifestyles than the general welfare of their own people. The Tsimshian nation is bankrupt once more, choked with serious problems without hope of progress from the tribally divided governing council. And as far as the greater population of Tsimshian is concerned, its people are left to fend for themselves.

- Mika, why are you doing this article on Tsimshian and not Kay St.? Politics isn't your field of expertise.
- Ma'Fan
- Would you rather have someone who used to work in DeeCee for the UCAS government doing an article on a Native American Nation (no offense, Kay St. Irregular)? On Tsimshian's internal politics? Does that make any sense? Admittedly, I'm not from that nation myself. But it's much more appropriate for me to do this article than anyone else here on JackPoint. Any objections to that?
- Mika
- I didn't think so.
- Mika

In the years before MCT, Tsimshian could leverage its lands for agricultural endeavors or talismongering enterprises, bringing much-needed jobs and tax revenue from Single A and Double A corporations. However, instead of treating their lands as a renewable resource and vigorously fighting to protect them as other Native American Nations have done, their politicians allowed harmful exploitation of the land in hope of profit. This included extremely invasive mining and logging operations. As each year passed, more environmental laws were simply abolished, promoting greater destruction of their lands. MCT's arrival only exasperated the situation, as Tsimshian's politicians paved the way for MCT's completely unrestrained strip mining, extreme slash-and-burn operations, and severe ground and water contaminations.

Between a corrupt government and corporate greed, nearly eighty-five percent of the land in Tsimshian is all but dead. Any life was mutated horrifically. The unemployment rate throughout the nation remains close to forty percent, while health issues continue to skyrocket amongst the general Tsimshian population in the forms of respiratory diseases, cancers, and birth defects. In many ways, the old Tsimshian guard literally sold out its own people's futures, and the futures of the next generations, for a few electronic digits in a bank account. What Tsimshian did to its own people ought to rank amongst the worst political dirty tricks in the book.

Today, a vast majority of shamans fear travelling into the Tsimshian nation due largely to this loss of pristine wilderness and the sheer magnitude of environmental destruction. Many fear that experiencing the destruction firsthand could have an irreparable

and profound impact on their psyches, and could very well drive them down the toxic path. History has shown repeatedly that their fears are well founded. A few brave shamans from the Shasta Shamans tried to resurrect the lands but had little success against the sea of toxic sludge and blighted landscape. Other eco-groups have tried to help over the years, but the problem can only be solved with the resources of a megacorporation.

As a result, Tsimshian is no longer populated with large numbers of native shamans, but with hermetic magicians who are not nearly as affected by the destruction of the environment as shamans. They lack the connection to nature and the environment the shamans have, and so they place less emphasis on maintaining a strong connection with the land. They place even less political priority on repairing the damage in Tsimshian. This is yet another fact about Tsimshian today that irks many native shamans (now expatriates) of the Tsimshian Protectorate. Forced to relocate, they have become refugees in their flight from the extreme environmental devastation.

- As a matter of fact, that ecological devastation isn't particularly all that great for us adepts, either.
- Ma'Fan

It isn't just the native shamans who dislike talking about Tsimshian. Other groups, from politicians in neighboring nations to the megacorporation themselves, are just as unwilling to talk about the Tsimshian nation. On a practical level, Tsimshian has no money or real influence left in North America; as a failed state, why should anyone give a damn? Most nations couldn't care less about their own SINLess population, never mind a crippled, neighboring country harboring higher levels of SINLess populations at greater poverty levels. From a megacorporation's point of view, if the SINLess population in Tsimshian possesses little to no nuyen for trade, that population is more of a parasitic burden than an asset. And as we all know, the megacorporations are not out to work for charity cases.

Great Chief Littletree, following the second Matrix Crash, tried to bring in Wuxing to help fix their enormous environmental disaster. After a couple of years, Wuxing pulled out because Tsimshian was simply unable to pay the bills for their services. And from Wuxing's point of view, coming in for "scientific research" purposes was no longer enough. Nuyen was needed for its services. Saeder-Krupp, (reportedly interested in moving its headquarters from Tir Tairngire to Kitimat) recently announced plans to stop developing the land it purchased in Tsimshian. The official reason is the contamination of the lands and water tables is so severe that they cannot meet Saeder-Krupp's needs. Interestingly enough, other rumors suggest talks are underway to move Saeder-Krupp's headquarters to Bellingham, in the Salish-Shidhe Council. That move will take away several hundred million nuyen in development for Tsimshian and place it directly in the hands of the Salish-Shidhe Council. Many tribal members within Tsimshian, especially the more militant ones, are more than willing to use that as an excuse for more violence against Tsimshian's current "caretakers."

- What Mika alludes to here is just the tip of the iceberg as to why people treat the subject of Tsimshian with great disdain. For one, their criminals were forced into slave labor. Oh, I'm sorry. That's not the nice term that they used for it. They preferred "indentured



INCOMING FEED.....



servitude,” where you could get killed from the explosive charges that they slapped on you to ensure your “compliance.” People tend to not forget those things. There was torture in their prisons, too, and if it wasn’t torture, it was summary executions. Anyone remember the “potlatch ceremonies,” when Tsimshian publicly broadcast executions as a state-run sport? Yeah ... Tsimshian did a lot of evil back in the day, and it has yet to take any steps to make up for its bad karma.

- Lyran
- If the “indentured servitude” angle wasn’t bad enough, you had all the bigotry against Anglos and metahumans, even against metahumans from the same tribes that were in power, the Tsimshian and the Tlingit tribes. To this day, even after the second Matrix Crash, not a single metahuman has served in the government of Tsimshian. For groups like Humanis, I’m sure it’s considered a “model nation.”
- Butch
- And sadly, metahumans in Tsimshian are still marginalized, and not just by those in power. No matter what they have gone through, Tsimshian citizens still cling to their hate, making it much harder for anyone to feel sympathy for them.
- Traveler Jones
- S-K decided to pull out of Kitimat. That must’ve been one hell of a run. What are they doing with all that land then? They purchased, what, 20K hectares of land in that city alone? Are they just going to let it go to waste?
- Sticks

- They pulled out of Kitimat publically. It’s very possible they will develop the land when no one is watching. As far as I can tell, S-K has no intention of selling it. Plus, that area reportedly has a high background count. As we know from the SOX, S-K is not afraid of building facilities in devastated areas to use the background count as part of their magical security measures. There doesn’t appear to be activity on that land now, but we’re also dealing with a great dragon, so it could be a while before something happens. Could be worth keeping an eye on.
- Glitch
- Saeder-Krupp could just be biding its time. Kitimat in particular still has extensive damage from the EMP bomb during the second Matrix Crash. They estimated that well over a third of Kitimat needs major reconstruction that could cost billions. Knowing Ol’ Golden Snout, he’ll just sit on those lands until Tsimshian has the nuyen to start rebuilding, and then S-K will be in the perfect position to “help,” allowing S-K to make a very tidy profit because of it. Once cleanup efforts are completed, S-K could always resell the land at a much higher property value and therefore higher profit.
- 2XL

So given its deplorable state, why should we even be bothering talking about Tsimshian? Why does it matter to us when it matters so little to those in power?

Tsimshian, despite many common misconceptions that the Salish-Shidhe Council has already completely assimilated the Protectorate into its own lands and into its own political system. still has its own independent governing council that has an election coming up at the beginning of 2075. All nine members

TSMISHIAN PROTECTORATE.....

are up for re-election. This makes Tsimshian a viable topic in this larger political conversation. For another, Tsimshian has a laundry list of unique political hot-button issues in this election that could have ramifications beyond its own borders. And third, when we're talking about a failed state, we're also talking about shadow opportunities. So yes, Tsimshian is perfect for discussion here on JackPoint.

THE BASICS

For this file to make any sense to the vast majority of JackPointers who may not be familiar with the Tsimshian nation, here is a quick data dump on the inner workings of the current Tsimshian government.

The existing government is made up of a nine-member governing council. The council formed shortly after Crash 2.0, after Great Chief Deborah Jim was publicly executed in the capital at the hands of the Haida National Front during their armed uprising. In response to the revolt, the Sovereign Tribal Council, in a rare show of military strength and unity, marched into the Tsimshian capital of Kitimat with its own military forces in December 2064 with the purpose of restoring order in the streets. Once the riots were subdued and the looting ended, the Sovereign Tribal Council established a special election for a new Great Chief. Edward Littletree, from the Tlingit tribe, and John George, the founder of the Haida National Front, were among a dozen or so candidates who ran against each other for Tsimshian's highest position. In the nationwide vote on January 5, 2065 (an election the Sovereign Tribal Council oversaw to ensure a fair election), Littletree won the Great Chief position by a whopping eighteen percentage points over George and the other candidates. Tsimshian was readmitted into the Native American Nations as a member state that same day.

Immediately following his victory, Littletree worked with the Sovereign Tribal Council and advisors from the Salish-Shidhe Council to put a national government in place. Littletree had to maneuver his way through a political minefield that included vicious inter-tribal conflicts and political unrest amongst other interested parties, including the Haida National Front and the Longhouse Brotherhood. In the end, Littletree put together a council of the Great Chief (himself) and appointed eight other council members, who would represent eight specific Tsimshian districts. Among Littletree's appointments were John George and Nathan Jance, the national spokesperson for the Potence Party and surviving member of the former Kitimat council. Those eight seats became elected positions, up for grabs when the first term of office ended in 2070.

The council as it stands now (pre-2075 election) includes Littletree, George, and Jance, along with relatively unknown council members outside of the Tsimshian Protectorate: council members Chetan Hale, Lomasi Williams, Tamara Amherst, Tahatan Hill, Meli Cardinal, and Atian Parker.

- I'm curious. If John George was the founder of the Haida National Front, and he was actively involved with the Haida National Front when Littletree's predecessor was executed, why did Littletree even name George to the council in the first

Incoming Message

TSIMSHIAN GOVERNMENT (2074)

Great Chief:

Edward Littletree/Moderation Party/Tlingit

Council Members:

District 1: John George/Haida National Front/Haida

District 2: Nathan Jance/ Potence Party

District 3: Chetan Hale/Moderation Party, Tlingit

District 4: Lomasi Williams/Moderation Party/ Haida

District 5: Tamara Amherst/Potence Party/Tsimshian

District 6: Tahatan Hill/Long House Brotherhood,
Kwakiutl

District 7: Meli Cardinal/Potence Party/Tsimshian

District 8: Atian Parker/New Progressive Party/Tlingit

NAN Representative:

Mirtha Longford, Potence Party, Tlingit

Council Details:

Term: 5 years

First Election of the existing Council: January 2065

Next Election: January 2075

Political Parties:

Moderation Party

Potence Party

New Progressive Party

Revival Party

place? I mean, wouldn't it be weird to sit across the table from the man who was directly responsible for the death of your predecessor? It must be intimidating for the other council members to know George helped lead a militant march on the capital that resulted in the murder of Jim and some of her council. Doesn't that give him about as much pull over the existing council as Littletree?

- Riser
- Politics creates more than its share of strange bedfellows. I obviously wasn't involved with those negotiations, but if I had to guess, the Haida National Front likely demanded a representative on the council to greatly diminish the possibility of violence from their members against the other majority tribes. And given that John George enjoyed (and likely still enjoys) folk hero status with many of the citizens of Tsimshian (particularly from the minority tribes), Great Chief Littletree realized that it was in his administration's best interests to accommodate, and not alienate, John George. To allow him to serve on the council, instead of trying to, say, arresting him for treason. Such a move would've led to full-on civil war. So far, violence from the Haida National Front toward the other tribes has calmed, but yes, even I have to admit that those council meetings have to be more than a bit awkward. I'm sure each side tries to get the other to "retire," but

so far, neither one has budged. Both Littletree and George have proven to be stubborn survivors.

- Kay St. Irregular
- I assume violence would have ended from the Haida National Front anyway. Many of its members actually got folded into the police force and became the Haida National Defense Front. They can't exactly maintain their agenda as a militant activist group if they're busy enforcing laws as the cops.
- /dev/girl
- Seriously? You think Lone Star or Knight Errant don't push their own agendas from behind the badge? You don't think racist cops perpetrate violence against metahumans under the authority of the badge? What are you, twelve? A badge gives you more freedom to carry out your agenda, not less. Even some of the former Haida National Front on the Tsimshian Police force strengthens John George's hand on the council. Luckily, the Salish-Shidhe Council provides a much larger contingency of the police and military, keeping George and the Haida National Defense Front in check. In a country as desperate as Tsimshian, patriotism only goes so far, and cops are loyal to who pays their salaries—usually the SSC. I'd say Littletree still has good relations with the SSC, one of the factors keeping him in office (and likely keeping him alive).
- Hard Exit
- A large number of the Haida National Front members got rolled up into the police force now known as the Haida National Defense Force, but not all of them. The Haida National Front still exists underground, still has splinter cells of militant followers, and is still active advocating profound social change in Tsimshian. Many of their members still refuse to be part of the corrupt system. They continue to lead political reprisals against individual tribal members, particularly war criminals yet to be punished within the Tsimshian and Tlingit tribes. Their tactics, thankfully, are much more precise and do not inflict nearly the same number of casualties and collateral damage as under the Progress Party's regime. This may change in the future, however. I heard rumors recently from various Neo-Anarchists in North America that certain underground remnants of the Haida National Front aren't happy with their poster boy, John George. And one of the reasons is pay. Did you know that the per-capita income in Tsimshian is less than fifteen thousand nuyen? And guess what the council members make, not counting the Great Chief? One hundred thousand nuyen per year. The Great Chief is even worse, close to one hundred and eighty thousand nuyen. Of course, that information is not readily available to Tsimshian citizens; the council intentionally buries the info in its records. It took a hacker friend of mine close to two weeks just to find that tidbit of information. And George has done nothing to speak out for this inequality. He seems to take his paycheck just like everyone else. Seems like his cushy position has corrupted the once-idealistic activist. We have a word for that kind of person: traitor.
- Aufheben

- As they say, power corrupts. It's a shame the council members didn't learn their lessons the first time. Hopefully it doesn't take another executioner to begin real reform in Tsimshian.
- Kay St. Irregular
- We both know there's something important you're failing to tell us about, Mika, but I'll bite my tongue for now and see how this article plays out before I comment any further.
- Ma'Fan

After the new council assembled, it was only a matter of time before three political parties emerged from the ashes. Virtually identical to their predecessors even in name, the three parties are the Moderation, Potence, and the New Progressive Parties. By 2074, each of these parties experienced subtle changes within their platforms to reflect the new blood circulating within them, distinguishing themselves from the old parties.

The current Moderation Party tends to take a very practical approach to Tsimshian's problems, much like its pre-Crash predecessor. Their platform is built around establishing coalitions with outside groups and corporations (MCT notwithstanding) and using those coalitions to solve problems Tsimshian couldn't handle on its own. Their platform includes having the Tsimshian government "rebrand" itself to improve its public image on the international stage. This, according to the Moderation Party, would entail making sure that practices such as indentured servitude and the potlatch ceremonies are permanently banned. The first council after Crash 2.0 banned the ceremonies, and the Moderation Party wants to keep it that way. They want to end the practice of firing squads for capital punishment, opting for lethal injection instead. The Moderation Party also wants to invest in improvements into the Tsimshian penitentiary system, which is harshly criticized by outside metahuman rights groups. They would also like judges and magistrates to face elections instead of political appointments to further distance the judicial process from the political one.

The Moderation Party wants nothing more than to make Tsimshian a more cooperative and active member of the NAN, with a Moderation Party member as the Tsimshian representative to the NAN. Right now, representative Mirtha Longford, a prominent member of the Potence Party, holds that position. Since being appointed in 2065, Longford has openly shown her disdain for the Sovereign Tribal Council and rarely shows up to votes that do not impact Tsimshian directly. She freely admits that the STC only made the situation worse for the people of Tsimshian and never should have intervened in its internal affairs after the second Matrix Crash. Longford even accused the STC of conspiring with the Salish to deny the people of Tsimshian the right to determine their nation's own policies, and all but forcing Tsimshian to return to the NAN. This has done nothing to win any support or sympathy from the STC for Tsimshian and its current predicament. Despite threats of recall from Great Chief Littletree, Longford continues to serve. This is something the Moderation Party seeks to change with the next election.

- If Littletree is the Great Chief from the Moderate Party, how did they get a NAN representative from the Potence Party? Shouldn't he have nominated someone from his own party? That seems pretty straightforward to me.
- Pistons
- It was politics, pure and simple. The three Potence Party council members, working in conjunction with the New Progressive Party council member and the Long House Brotherhood council member, formed a majority voting bloc to kill any nomination from the Moderation Party. After nine months of this, and faced with mounting pressure from the STC to send a representative to Cheyenne, Littletree had no choice but to nominate Mirtha Longford, a nominee with support from Potence Party council members. And now Littletree knows if he were to recall Longford, he would face similar difficulties from the council in nominating her replacement. His only choice is to wait for the next election, and hope his party gains more seats on the council to prevent the opposition from forcing his hand.
- Doctor Spin

The Moderation Party, in its effort to rebrand the nation, also advocates for negotiating with the Salish-Shidhe Council on how to best tackle environmental issues, particularly the environmental disasters that cross the borders from Tsimshian into the Salish lands—including the damage done to the Fraser River and the pollutants that regularly flow into the SSC from that river. The Moderation Party is the most willing to work with outside environmentally friendly groups to lend a hand to fix the widespread environmental damage (under strict supervision) and would welcome the return of the Shasta Shamans to continue the work they once started. In fact, it was Littletree who invited the Shasta Shamans to work inside Tsimshian in the first place.

Some of the more extreme elements in the Moderation Party encourage the government to reach out to the UCAS and CAS nations to utilize their extensive scientific expertise to help heal the toxic ecosystem. Despite much success in the elections since 2065, only a few of the Moderation Party's ideologies were adopted into mainstream Tsimshian practices. Hardliners and other conservatives from the larger tribes and other political parties continue to oppose such radical changes, believing the Moderation Party finds their traditions and cultures contemptible enough to implement more "Anglo-appeasing" rules and norms in the hope of making Tsimshian more acceptable to the outside world. This argument still resonates with the more traditional Tsimshian voters and council members, who often label the Moderation Party as the "Sell-Out Party." Despite this pushback it often faces for its ideals, the Moderation Party has enjoyed a significant presence in Tsimshian's politics since Crash 2.0. In addition to the sitting Great Chief and two council members as high-profile members, the Moderation Party also claims the mayors of Ketchhikan and Quesnel, as well as a handful of judges and magistrates scattered through the various districts of the Protectorate.

- Mika sounds like he has some respect for the Moderation Party. And yes, they seem to stand for a lot of good and reasonable things. But for metahumans, their policy is, "although we'd love to integrate them more into our society, it is not politically feasible

for us to talk about them or their concerns at this time, so we'll just ignore the problem. We'll do something about it if we're in a better position, perhaps after the election. Hint." Such bullshit. That always seems to be the answer to controversial issues in politics, then the politicians conveniently forget all about the problem once elected. The Moderation Party may not be the only ones to do this, but that still doesn't excuse the underlying problem of not touching important issues for the sake of getting elected.

- 2XL

A second political party that reappeared in Tsimshian is the Potence Party. The new Potence Party, much like its predecessor, is a heavily traditional isolationist group that frequently butts heads with the Moderation Party. It is typically made up of hardliners who have not given up on their hostility toward the SSC. The Potence Party desires an immediate declaration of independence from the Salish and their "oversight." Such a dramatic cutting of all ties with the nation providing Tsimshian with a vast majority of their infrastructure will likely lead to war (especially if this separation includes neglecting the huge debt Tsimshian owes the Salish), but many of their members are ready for war. For many in the Potence Party, the ten years Tsimshian spent as a Protectorate under their sworn enemies' domination has been downright disgraceful; a break from the SSC must happen for Tsimshian to regain its dignity. The Potence Party likes to point out that Tsimshian cannot be certain whether the military and police serve Tsimshian or the Salish-Shidhe Council. Many within the Haida National Defense Force are Salish-born citizens, and for the Potence Party, this is reprehensible. They refuse to budge on their stance against integrating minority tribes or metahumans fully into the culture. A vast majority of their support comes from similarly minded Tsimshian and Tlingit tribes whose members were guilty of brutally repressing smaller tribes like the Haida.

Now, the Potence Party has enjoyed three council seats, helping slow any reforms the Moderation Party is anxious to implement. Their main supporter on the council is of course Nathan Jance, who is technically the longest-serving council member (as member on the previously dissolved council). In addition to its council seats, the Potence Party has a number of mayoral positions, the most important of which is the mayor of Kitimat, the capital of Tsimshian, and the city of Prince Rupert. And as mentioned previously, they also hold the representative seat on the Sovereign Tribal Council for Tsimshian. Many in the opposing parties like to characterize to the Potence Party as the "Obstinate Party" for their unyielding grasp on tradition.

A third major party in Tsimshian politics is the so-called "New Progressive Party." Supporters of the New Progressive Party are proud to be the direct successor of the old "Progress Party." The original Progress Party was the political machine of the late Deborah "Dangerous" Jim, known as the party of reckless consumption (which single-handedly brought in MCT). It was the party of acquiring nuyen by any and all means, lawful or not. At one time, the Progress Party had all the political power and almost no opposition, as the Progress Party rigged their elections to remain in power. Those who opposed their practices faced imprisonment (see John George) or summary execution if they ever spoke out. The original Progress Party left a lot of emotional scars and trauma on the electorate of Tsimshian, which is why

the New Progressive Party did itself no favors by ignoring the people and appealing to the old party's sympathizers. Now that the New Progressive parties are out of power, most of the Tsimshian electorate (a.k.a. the silent majority) is responding by outright shunning them. Over the last ten years, the New Progressive Party has lost nearly two-thirds of its base to the Potence Party or to other small-time political parties that appeal to traditionalists and hardliners without the ugly history of the Progress Party. The New Progressive Party's coffers are nearly empty without donors and with only holding one seat on the council. Its remaining members no longer control any mayoral positions within Tsimshian. The judgeships and magistrates in their pocket reside in remote locations that have little or no influence over a vast majority of Tsimshian and its laws. After watching Moderation Party judges overturn many of the New Progress Party's legal precedents, it would not be surprising if the New Progressive Party, essentially the remaining legacy of the Progress Party, is dissolved by 2080. Many in Tsimshian would point to that as a sign of progress for not allowing past mistakes to resurface.

The New Progressive Party platform still craves innovation, technology, ambition and influence at any cost, much like the party it replaced. Their big solution to the environmental woes that plague Tsimshian is to bring in Renraku and Proteus AG to build arcologies and arkoblocks to house citizens and to protect them from the environmental destruction their predecessors in the Progress Party created. The New Progressive Party's ultimate solution is to devote entire arcologies to growing crops and raising livestock in controlled environments, as their own native lands are unable to do any longer. The New Progressive Party would also encourage the development of casinos within these arcologies to help spur economic growth for the nation. They envision cities of arcologies, a model for the rest of the world to emulate. Of course, there are major problems with these plans, namely Tsimshian's lack of nuyen. On top of that, people still remember the Seattle arcology incident. Even though it happened nearly fifteen years ago, the Renraku Arcology crisis is still just as engrained in people's minds as Ghostwalker attacking Denver in '61. Many in Tsimshian do not trust outsiders, and Renraku is at the very bottom of that list (next to Mitsuhama). And as far as Proteus AG is concerned, many have at least heard that Proteus has almost as dismal a record with the environment as MCT, particularly in the North Sea. Overlooking these realities makes the New Progressive Party look out of touch with the Tsimshian electorate. Add the fact that many within the New Progressive Party would like to bring back both the potlatch ceremonies and the practice of indentured servitude as a part of their "economic development plans," and you see how the New Progressive Party in Tsimshian earns the derogatory slurs of "the insane party," the "irrational party," and the "madhatter party." As it stands now, the New Progressive Party is in no position to start implementing its policies.

- You would think that bringing back the potlatch ceremonies would be out of the question for a majority of Tsimshian politicians, but they're desperate. Those ceremonies brought in millions of nuyen from media outlets paying for the rights to air those contests. Tsimshian needs that revenue, badly. Some of the council members from the Potence Party are leaning toward this idea as

well. The Moderation Party may have a difficult time preventing the potlatch ceremonies from coming back during the next term. And if the New Progressive Party can play a role in bringing back these controversial games, they may be able to score some political points for bringing in new revenue, and use it to save their sorry party. It's still a long shot for them though.

- Sunshine
- Killing prisoners is one thing. But that ceremony also destroys a lot of wealth from various families—houses, boats, vehicles, etc. In Tsimshian, what wealth is left with such high poverty levels? If they bring the ceremony back, it'll obviously have to be heavily modified. They might be better off sponsoring more urban brawl and combat biker tournaments. And frankly, they could use the toxic nature of their lands to sell those tournaments as being much more dangerous and more exciting than urban brawl and combat biker tournaments elsewhere. Hell, it might be interesting to see an urban brawl game interrupted by a wandering, toxic plasma that attacks the participants (and perhaps even spectators).
- Kane
- The campaign headquarters for the New Progressive Party was attacked four times already during this campaign cycle. Two were attempts to burn down the headquarters, while the other two were attempts to hack the campaign headquarters' nodes and gain access to their donor and supporter lists. At least one of these attempts may have been successful. Nearly a dozen or so supporters of the New Progressive Party were brutally beaten in recent weeks. The Haida National Defense Force believes those attacks were based on party affiliation, and such attacks will only get worse the closer it is to election day.
- Kay St. Irregular

While the New Progressive Party heads toward an inevitable dissolution, a new rising star is taking shape in Tsimshian in the form of a brand new political party. This one calls itself the Revival Party, and many believe it could be the next major political party on the scene. The Revival Party officially formed in November of last year. They have no members to speak of yet who hold public office, but so far, the Revival Party's popular policies draw strong support from common Tsimshian citizens in all walks of life. The Revival Party went from only a few hundred members in November 2073 to thousands of supporters in just six months, even sponsoring six candidates in the upcoming election to challenge six incumbents on the council. At least half of them have a reasonable chance of winning their elections and could potentially shake up the governing council for the next term.

So how is such a new and untried political party able to challenge the established parties for political power? What is their appeal?

First, the Revival Party isn't waiting to get into office to get involved. The Revival Party set aside nearly five million nuyen from its campaign funds to clean up ecological disaster areas. They began employing Tsimshian citizens (without waiting for the council's approval) to remove severely contaminated soil from an old MCT strip mine near Manson Creek in Council Member Lomasi William's district. Her seat is open this election cycle, as she is stepping down for health reasons. This gives the



Revival Party candidate a strong advantage in the polls over either the Potence or the Moderation Party candidates within that district who are silent on the ecological devastation in Tsimshian, preferring instead to use their nuyen to call each other names, smear each other's records, and try to score political points off of each other's misfortunes.

Second, while the other political parties either reluctantly accept metahumans or continue to shun them entirely, the Revival Party actively embraces metahumans, particularly if they are Awakened. In fact, two of the candidates running for council seats are metahumans (an elf and a dwarf). They would like to see native-born Tsimshian hermetic mages and shamans come together to form new magic groups to deal with their ravaged eco system. It is their political belief that hermetic mages can teach shamans how best to survive the onslaught of the environmental destruction and how to cope. The Revival Party hopes to transform Tsimshian so that in five years, it can welcome back many of its native shamans who fled as ecological refugees. This appeals to many, which in translates into support at the ballot box.

Lastly, while the other parties continue to stress tribal segregation and past transgressions, the Revival Party rarely speaks of tribal divisions. They emphasize the need of Tsimshian unity in the face of adversity, appealing to those facing long-term poverty and unemployment. In a few months time, we will see if their party ignites a major movement within the Tsimshian nation or merely proves to be a flash in the pan, destined to eventually flame out as quickly as it started.

- No derogatory name(s) for this party yet?
- Slamm-O!
- Nope. The other parties really don't know what to make of the Revival Party yet, or how big of a threat they could be. Should they win as many elections as it seems they will, you'd best believe the other parties will find ways of insulting them. Likely by accusing them of using magic to rig the election, altering people's choices with subliminal suggestions, or other such nonsense. The establishment rarely tolerates upstart challengers.
- Mika
- The story you gave about the Revival Party helping that one district only proves the Revival Party knows how to manipulate and effectively use photo ops to their advantage. I wouldn't be surprised if either the Illuminates of the New Dawn or the Black Lodge is behind this new party. I realize that one of the Revival Party's members is an elf, so its association with the Black Lodge is unlikely. But it could still be any number of shady groups looking to manipulate Tsimshian in its fragile state.
- Lyran
- The elf in question could always be a plant to make you think it's not the Black Lodge. After all, the elf in the District Seven race is so far behind in the polls that she doesn't have a shot at winning. So the Black Lodge could've set up that candidate to fail, throwing people off their trail.
- Plan 9

- It all depends on whether the Black Lodge felt confident enough that the candidate would fail no matter what. If I were making those choices, I wouldn't try it. Too risky. Weird things happen in politics that you can't foresee or control. And I don't think they would risk getting their mortal enemies elected, no matter how they stacked the deck. It simply doesn't track with their M.O.
- Frosty

THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

THE RACE FOR GREAT CHIEF

As one would expect, the Great Chief acts in a similar fashion to any other chief executive. He signs council-approved legislation into law, but more importantly he has veto power, giving him the power to broker deals amongst the other council members and their pet projects. The Great Chief neither introduces nor votes on legislation unless he is needed as a tiebreaker. The Great Chief does not have a specific district to represent, as the role is designed to represent all of Tsimshian; this means all of Tsimshian votes for the Great Chief. Technically, the Great Chief can engage in international negotiations with leaders from other nations or from the megacorporations as a head of state, but that gets ... complicated, especially when the Salish-Shidhe Council is involved. That prickly relationship is addressed later under the topic *Hot Button Issue #1: Independence versus Assimilation*. The Great Chief also nominates appointees to the serve as magistrates in the Tsimshian court system, with each appointee needing council approval before assuming office. The best single word to describe the Great Chief is "powerful."

The Great Chief has no term limits (much like most modern day politicians in other countries; they either don't have them, making the concept completely antiquated, or they find ways around them, such as challenging their legality in court until they get a sympathetic judge to strike down the law). Great Chief Edward Littletree is running for his third consecutive term, and once again facing opposition in John George. Even though anyone from the Tsimshian nation (except for metahumans) can run for Great Chief, the race comes down to a battle of wills between these two strong incumbents from passionate and antagonistic tribes. These candidates each have significant name recognition, possess full coffers for their campaigns, and have personal supporters who will go to extraordinary lengths to not just protect them, but to help them win. This includes fervent supporters who hire runners (without the candidate's knowledge, of course) to find any potential advantage that their candidate could have over their opponent to help shape public opinion and get votes. These jobs include everything from digging up dirt on a candidate's financial donors (i.e., investments in MCT), locating footage of the events of the Haida uprising (particularly those that may have captured George's activities during that time), or creating smear tactics. They have supporters who can generate crowds for rallies at a moment's notice. The other four candidates for Great Chief, including the candidate from the white-hot Revival Party, have been unable to match the national grassroots support these two candidates enjoy. This advantage clearly shows in the polls, where the four lesser-known candidates combined have only convinced a measly six percent of voters to support them for Great Chief.



These candidates in the Great Chief race are more like outliers in polling data than they are genuine candidates for the position of Great Chief.

- How in the hell is John George able to challenge Littletree without losing his own seat? When George lost in 2070 to Littletree, you'd think someone would've replaced George on council, and now George would be looking to run against the council member who took his seat. What gives?
- Mihoshi Oni
- It's something George did himself. In 2068, he introduced legislation that said if you were on the council, you could run both against the Great Chief and for retention of your old seat. Basically, it allowed you to hedge your bets. John George is the only person on the council with the popularity among the people who can easily afford to run in both races. In 2070, George beat his nearest opponent, a member of the late Deborah Jim's Progressive Party, by thirteen points. In that same election, George lost the election for the Great Chief to Littletree by ten points, but since he won his council seat back, George remained active on the council. The other council members had no choice but to focus all their attention on their respective races, as they all had margins much closer to their opponents than George. And even by doing that, three of the members still got voted out of office in 2070. And conveniently, for 2075, John George is running unopposed for his seat.
- Mr. Bonds
- Is Littletree out of his mind? Why did he stand for something like that from George?
- Mihoshi Oni
- He didn't. Littletree vetoed that bill George introduced. But John George worked his magic again (figuratively) somehow, and convinced the public (and the other council members) that this was in the best interests of Tsimshian. He also convinced several council members to switch their votes to override that veto. And of course, the only politician this has benefitted so far has been John George. In this election, he trails Littletree by seven points—much closer to the margin of error. George's actions so far are getting him that much closer to the Great Chief position.
- Mr. Bonds
- While history is often written by the victors, laws are written by incumbents for the sake of keeping incumbents in power. That is a universal truth in all political systems. Like death and taxes.
- Kay St. Irregular
- If George has all this power now, so much so that he can get enough support to override a veto, why bother with the title of Great Chief?
- Marcos
- Having John George as the Great Chief would command a significant amount of influence, respect and esteem towards his tribe, the Haida. For decades, the Haida tribe was among the minority tribes that the larger tribes (like the Tsimshian and

Tlingit tribes) brutally repressed. Understandably, there is a lot of resentment and bitterness over that fact between Littletree and George. Although the Haida tribe itself has done progressively better since the Matrix Crash 2.0, having George as Great Chief will elevate the Haida's stature within Tsimshian culture. So, this in itself is reason for historically anti-Haida tribes to oppose George. This seven-point lead of Littletree's is actually making a lot of people from the Tsimshian and the Tlingit tribes nervous, which will likely translate into runs between now and the election to make sure that lead is not eroded any further. This could include trying to assassinate George, though he's already survived multiple assassination attempts and a lengthy internment in the old Tsimshian government's prison system.

- Sunshine
- Littletree, the Moderation Party, and the Tlingit tribe have to be concerned about those candidates that by themselves are "statistically insignificant." Should a couple of them drop out of the race and throw their support behind George, this election could easily go from Littletree's to lose to a toss-up in a short amount of time. If George is smart, and clearly he is, I'm certain he or his supporters (or their runners) are already in contact with these candidates to persuade them to drop out of the race and to support George in exchange for perhaps political favors or government seats in the future, such as a magistrate or a staff position.
- Plan 9

As one would expect, the campaign between Edward Littletree and John George has grown ugly over the last two months. Stakes within the campaign continue to rise dramatically. In his campaign speeches, George accuses Littletree of being a sellout to the SSC, keeping the Tsimshian Nation permanently indebted to the SSC as a Protectorate without fighting for its independence or demanding a timetable for when its status as a Protectorate will end. And of course, Littletree fires back by hinting that George is an alleged murderer, whose antics in 2064 denied the former Great Chief her due process in the form of a trial for her crimes. Littletree also reminds citizens that when George was fully engaged with the HNF, there was much collateral damage from the guerrilla and terrorist-style attacks. Even though there is no evidence from that period of time to link George personally to those attacks, Littletree uses those assumptions and preconceptions to his advantage with his own tribe. Littletree also claims that if George becomes Great Chief, the Tlingit and Tsimshian tribes will face retaliation from the Haida, resulting in shutting those tribes out of the government completely. These verbal attacks fire up Littletree's base but agitate the Haida tribe and other minority tribes that were so disenfranchised under the Tlingit tribe and the Progressive Party. This may be the reason why the poll numbers seem so close between the two at the moment, as both the Tlingit and Tsimshian tribes and all the minority tribes once again appear ready to spar at the ballot box. The minority tribes have no trouble rallying together behind George if only out of spite for the Tlingit tribe. Of course, once Littletree ratchets up the mudslinging, George fires back; just this week, George pointed out the poor progress made by the Littletree administration, claiming Littletree failed to make any progress on cleaning up the environment, bringing down unemployment,

improving inter-tribal relations, stimulating the economy, or improving the quality of life for the average Tsimshian citizen. And like campaigns found in other parts of the world, the closer the campaign gets to the election, the uglier and more desperate the political attacks become as Littletree's lead narrows. Currently, the Tsimshian airwaves are almost as toxic as their ravaged ecosystem.

- I have to ask: With their nation in such dire straits, where are Littletree and George getting the funds for their campaigns? I would imagine outside donors are few and far between. Unless they use their own money to fund their campaigns?
- Jimmy No
- Who knows. Unlike the UCAS or CAS, which allegedly have campaign reporting laws (too many loopholes—they're more like suggestions), Tsimshian does not. So an anonymous, one-million-nuyen donation to a candidate in Tsimshian isn't all that surprising or newsworthy. They have lived their lives under corrupt regimes, and this new governing council doesn't appear much different than the last. MCT could be secretly donating to these politicians' campaigns, and no one would know anything about it. Frankly, people in Tsimshian have a lot more pressing issues to worry about than who is buying off their politicians. Making enough money to keep from starving is likely more important to them right now.
- Kay St. Irregular

Incoming Message

NEWS NET DAILY POLL TRACKER

If the election for Great Chief was held today, who would you vote for?

Edward Littletree (I): 49.9%
John George: 42.1%
Other (Combined): 6%
Undecided: 2%

DISTRICT ONE RACE

John George currently represents the first national district in Tsimshian. This part of Tsimshian incorporates Prince George, a stronghold for the Haida Tribe and the Haida National Front, and its surrounding areas. In 2070, George won his first election for this district by thirteen points. It is unknown whether that large margin, combined with George's popularity, kept other candidates out of this election. At the start of 2073, two other candidates (a Potence Party member and a Moderation Party member) looked to run against George. However, within a few months of declaring their intentions to run, both dropped out of the race. In other nations, parties would simply replace those candidates with a new slate. Neither party chose to follow this course. The real winner of this race is already obvious: John George, whether or not he wins the Great Chief position. Should George finally beat Littletree, he will have to step down from his current council position and take over as Great Chief, requiring a special election to fill the

seat for District One. But what is more interesting to runners could be why George's original District One opponents decided to drop out, and why their parties chose not to pursue the election. Even the Revival Party chose not to run a candidate in this race. Does this mean they simply believe George's popularity here is insurmountable, or was there something more nefarious—some backroom deal made to keep the rival parties out? There could be paydata here, paydata that outside metahuman voting rights groups might find interesting—megacorporations like Horizon, the Sovereign Tribal Council, or perhaps even the Salish. In any case, there is a strong possibility that dirty tricks were employed here to keep George in his seat.

- There are some whispers amongst the media that there was a woman from the Haida National Front who wanted to run against John George. Her name was Annabelle Burdge, but she never made it to her press conference to make a public announcement of her campaign, and so far, no one has heard from her. And because Tsimshian still has state-run media, Burdge's name never even made it to the airwaves. Any potential scandal involving her has been buried.
- Sunshine

DISTRICT TWO RACE

Incumbent Nathan Jance represents the second district in Tsimshian. Jance's district encompasses the Tsimshian capital of Kitimat and the immediate surrounding areas. In the previous election, Jance beat out his opponents by eleven points, and Jance's current standing in the polls is similar. It looks like the only way Jance will leave is retiring or dying while in office. Jance's closest competition is from the Revival Party, a Tsimshian man by the name of Darin Todd. The biggest scandal of this race so far: Jance and the Potence Party revealed that Todd is the offspring of a Tsimshian woman and a Japanese man from MCT, and that Todd had cosmetic surgery to conceal his heritage. According to Jance, Todd also took advantage of the fact that the Crash 2.0 wiped out his SIN and other records, so he forged new ones to eliminate any hints of his lineage to an outsider, specifically one tied with MCT. Since that information was revealed, Jance has increased his lead by three points and has all but sealed this election in his favor.

- If his SIN and his background are all forged, who's to say what other dark secrets he might be concealing? I'm not a big fan of the Potence Party, but perhaps it's for the best that Jance retains his position on the council. Better the devil you know than the one you don't.
- Lyrán

Incoming Message

NEWS NET DAILY POLL TRACKER

If the election for Tsimshian's District Two was held today, who would you vote for?

Nathan Jance (I): 50.2%
Darin Todd: 36.8%
Charlotte Beck: 11%
Undecided: 2%

DISTRICT THREE RACE

While the District One and District Two races seem set in stone, the race for the council member seat in District Three is not. The incumbent for District Three, Chetan Hale, faces strong challengers in the race for the southern district within Tsimshian that encompasses the city of Quesnel. Hale is significantly behind in the polls thanks to a recent scandal, and it looks as though the council seat will fall to one of his challengers. The most likely is the Revival Party candidate, Helki Walker. The scandal in question comes in the form of reports that say Hale was on the payroll of the Dogmen, the dominant criminal organization within the Tsimshian nation. An anonymous source leaked Hale's personal banking records, showing that over the last five years, Hale received more than three million nuyen from unaccounted sources. Around the same time as those deposits, the Haida National Defense Force led several now-infamous police operations against the Dogmen. As we know, these operations were compromised; the Dogmen knew about the operations and were waiting when the police attacked. Six Haida National Defense Force cops were killed, and their teams found not a shred of the evidence they originally meant to uncover.

Hale, as a council member, had access to the classified information about those operations. Though speculation is rampant that Hale will be arrested prior to the election, most people believe that Littletree does not want the scandal of a sitting council member arrested for corruption. Many believe Littletree is waiting until after the election to have Hale arrested. If the poll numbers stay the same, and it looks like Hale is going to be defeated, count on his disappearance.

- So, what—if Hale pulls off the impossible and manages to get re-elected, he's in the clear? They'll just sweep it under the rug as if the scandal never happened? I think I'm in the wrong business. Politicians have it way too easy.
- Kia
- They'll likely chalk up the leaks to part of his opponents' insidious and orchestrated smear tactics and conduct no real investigation. It'll be swept under the rug as a political attack. Hale's supporters are already presenting their own documents showing that the leaked data is false. Some of those documents appear pretty convincing. Plus, there's a little bit of tribal politics going on here. Hale comes from the same tribe as Littletree: the Tlingit tribe. Even though Hale's opponent comes from the same party (the Moderation Party), Joshua Jacobs actually hails from a minority tribe, the Kitskan tribe. Littletree, and many traditionalists and hardliners, would not like to see yet another council seat fall to someone from a minority tribe, no matter what their political affiliation. So there will be an effort to save Hale, even though it's going to be daunting, if not impossible. And if by some miracle they pull off the impossible and save Hale (without outright rigging the election), the council could save face by charging Hale with some ethics violations and merely issuing an "official reprimand."
- Kay St. Irregular
- And look at it this way: the political and judicial processes are joined at the hip in Tsimshian. So if Chetan Hale is brought up on charges of public corruption, it is possible that Hale could have

some sway over the judge and convince the judge to side with him for an acquittal. Not likely, but it could happen.

- Icarus
- It won't help Hale. They don't have double jeopardy standards. The prosecution would merely need to present new evidence, get a new judge, and start a new trial for Hale. If Hale is arrested, his political career is more or less over.
- Mika

Incoming Message

NEWS NET DAILY POLL TRACKER If the election for Tsimshian's District Three was held today, who would you vote for?

Helki Walker: 35.4%
Joshua Jacobs: 31.8%
Chetan Hale (I): 23.8%
Undecided: 9%

DISTRICT FOUR RACE

Council Member Lomasi Williams represents the fourth district of Tsimshian. The fourth district covers a large section of the northern border that Tsimshian shares with the Athabaskan Council, including the city of Ketchikan. A point of interest in this election: Williams is not running for reelection. She announced in early 2074 that she had terminal cancer and likely only has a year to live. Williams has grown progressively worse, missing more council meetings as the year goes on. At one point, Littletree suggested Williams nominate a proxy that could sit in for her for the rest of her term, but Williams persists, determined to hold out as long as possible. Williams' stepping down has created an open seat, which is the best opening for a newcomer to get onto the council. The leading candidate for this seat is David Lambert from the Revival Party and the Tsimshian tribe.

- In any other nation, a politician suddenly stepping down for "health" or "family" issues is a code for, "I'm getting out before someone exposes one of my scandals and sends me to prison." But in Tsimshian, with its deadly ecosystem, I have no doubt that health issues are directly responsible for this woman stepping down. I'm actually surprised Tsimshian hasn't had the problem of its council members simply dying while in office.
- Riser
- It's a safe bet at least a third of them could be receiving genetic treatments to repair genetic damage from the ecosystem. Unfortunately for Williams, her genetic treatments and surgeries appear unsuccessful in dealing with the cancer.
- Plan 9
- Tsimshian's ecological disaster provides a fantastic cover if you're hired to poison someone. Just dope the person's food or water with heavy metals already found in the water or food, and no one will suspect the exposure was anything but accidental.
- Clockwork

Incoming Message

NEWS NET DAILY POLL TRACKER If the election for Tsimshian's District Four was held today, who would you vote for?

David Lambert: 51.3%
Jared Bennett: 31.9%
Colin Alvarez: 12.8%
Undecided: 4%

DISTRICT FIVE RACE

Outside of the Great Chief race, the fifth district race is easily the next most heated election in Tsimshian. People are talking about how the sitting council member for this district, Tamara Amherst, faces a dwarf as her strongest opponent, who trails by a mere four percentage points. The young, idealistic dwarf, Isaac Conover, is a skilled public orator seeking to win over fierce opposition; most Tsimshian pundits would call this a historical election, as much of District Five has strong populations of conservative and hardliner voters from the Tsimshian and Tlingit tribes guilty of actively repressing metahuman tribal members in the past. On top of that, Conover is from the Haida tribe, and therefore has the support of the council's second most powerful figure: John George. With this race much closer than expected, and with Conover the most likely metahuman in Tsimshian to win a council seat in this election cycle, nuyen is flowing into this district from outside groups like the Mothers of Metahumans and the Ork Rights Committee for Conover. On the other side, financial support for Amherst is coming in from outside Tsimshian from groups like Humanis, who would like nothing more than to see Tsimshian remain one of the only nations in North America without metahumans in elected positions. Amherst's district covers central portions of Tsimshian, as well as coastal areas, including the city of Prince Rupert.

- Not only is this race one of the most heated in Tsimshian, it is also becoming the ugliest. As soon as Conover narrowed the race to six points between him and Amherst, Amherst's opponents began accusing Conover of using his magical abilities as an adept to "mesmerize" the electorate, to manipulate them against their wills into voting for him. They also have accused members with the Revival Party of rigging the election using magical means. Members of Humanis have shown up to try and prevent any "voter irregularities." And of course, Sons of Sauron members, both local and from outside Tsimshian, are showing up in greater numbers in Prince Rupert to observe the so-called watchers. This race, with passions already inflamed by such a close election, can easily become violent between these two fired-up groups.
- Bull

Incoming Message

NEWS NET DAILY POLL TRACKER If the election for Tsimshian's District Five was held today, who would you vote for?

Tamara Amherst (I): 40.2%
Isaac Conover: 36.2%
Joseph Abreu: 10.6%
Anthony Sapp: 3%
Undecided: 10%

DISTRICT SIX RACE

Tahatan Hill represents Tsimshian's sixth district, an area that includes the far northeastern quadrant of Tsimshian along the Athabaskan Council border.

Council Member Hill is not your typical politician, but a member of the Long House Brotherhood—believed to be a society of toxic shamans in Tsimshian. The Long House Brotherhood is a long-time enemy of the Progress Party, and when the second Matrix Crash hit, many of its members came out of obscurity to keep order on the streets and protect neighborhoods. Littletree invited the Long House Brotherhood to the negotiation table because of its opposition to the Progress Party and its backing of the Moderation Party, at which point Littletree appointed Hill to represent the sixth district. Hill narrowly won re-election in 2070, suffering two recounts and emerging only 184 votes ahead of his Moderation Party opponent. Now, in 2074, Hill is stepping down, also citing respiratory health issues. Despite stepping down, someone leaked medical records showing that Tahatan Hill has no significant health issues, raising questions of his motivation. His successor, Rodrick Gulley, is trailing badly in the polls. In all likelihood, Richard Sylvester of the Moderation Party will fill the seat.

- Interesting that in 2070, when Hill ran for reelection, his campaign used trideo footage of him and a group of Long House Brotherhood members protecting neighborhoods by guarding it from interlopers and ne'er-do-wells. Much of the footage from that era was lost during the Crash. It's amazing that Hill had managed to retain that footage for his reelection bid. It was almost as if he planned to use it as a photo op. Maybe there's truth to the rumors that he was a toxic shaman and managed to arrange to be on the council.
- Glasswalker
- If that's the case, why give it up?
- Picador
- Maybe he's close to being found out and exposed? Maybe he was hoping a more popular candidate from the Long House Brotherhood would win the seat?
- Arete
- No matter the real reason for Hill's departure, the Long House Brotherhood is not happy they are about to lose their council seat. They apparently made it clear to Littletree that they feel entitled to representation on the council. They have demanded redistricting (also known as gerrymandering in other circles) that would keep them on the council, but Littletree has refused to consider such a motion. It looks like whatever goodwill the Long House Brotherhood created during Crash 2.0 was used up with Littletree. I would expect as a result of this slight that the Long House Brotherhood could start trouble within Tsimshian once more.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Given the Revival Party's feelings about magic, you would think they'd be interested in working with the Long House Brotherhood. But it seems as though that couldn't be farther from the truth. There's a lot of talk that the Revival Party sabotaged the Long House Brotherhood's chances to win the seat. They may have lost this election in the process, but they got rid of "competition."
- Axis Mundi



- Paper ballots? Are you serious? What, are they stuck in the twentieth century?
- Slamm-0!
- Ever since MCT pulled out and gutted their Matrix infrastructure, there is no way Tsimshian's Matrix connections are secure enough to run an election. Outdated security, outdated software, and outdated hardware. That's just asking for problems. Ballot boxes filled with paper ballots can still be stuffed, but that's a lot more work than hacking through a nonexistent firewall.
- Glitch
- In 2070, once the polls had closed and the ballots were counted at a central warehouse, poll workers discovered three additional ballot boxes in District Four full of filled-out ballots. Because Tsimshian record keeping isn't what it should be, there was no way to distinguish these mysterious ballot boxes from the others. All markings on the additional boxes seemed authentic. The courts within Tsimshian decided that instead of disallowing potentially legitimate votes, the contents of the mysterious ballot boxes would be counted and included with the total. As a result, Lomasi Williams of the Moderation Party won the election by three thousand votes. Makes you wonder if that was a legitimate win, or if the Moderation Party managed to literally stuff the ballot box. But in any event, stuffing the ballot box with paper ballots is still possible, even today.
- Glasswalker

Incoming Message

NEWS NET DAILY POLL TRACKER
If the election for Tsimshian's District Six was held today, who would you vote for?

Richard Sylvester: 36.4%
Hershel Pickett: 27.6%
Waylon Sheehan: 15%
Rodrick Gulley: 11%
Undecided: 10%

DISTRICT SEVEN RACE

Council Member Meli Cardinal represents Tsimshian's District Seven. Her district lies on the eastern side of Tsimshian, bordering both the Athabaskan Council and the Salish-Shidhe Council. This could have been another high-profile race like District Five, as her strongest competitor from the Revival Party is Sarah Campbell, an elf from the Kwakiutl tribe. Unfortunately, Campbell has not proven as skilled at political rhetoric as Isaac Conover and is losing by a landslide to Cardinal in the polls. Campbell is actually third in the race, behind Adam Sullivan from the Moderation Party. At this point in the race, any outside funds from various policlubs have stopped coming in for Sarah Campbell, instead redirected to Conover's campaign. From the polls, it seems that Meli Cardinal will easily win reelection and retain her seat for the Potence Party.

DISTRICT EIGHT RACE

The only New Progressive Party member on the council, Atian Parker, represents the eighth district, which covers the centralmost portions of Tsimshian. This district is perhaps the

Incoming Message

NEWS NET DAILY POLL TRACKER
If the election for Tsimshian's District Seven was held today, who would you vote for?

Meli Cardinal (I): 56.7%
Adam Sullivan: 20.2%
Sarah Campbell: 19.1%
Undecided: 4%

Incoming Message

NEWS NET DAILY POLL TRACKER
If the election for Tsimshian's District Eight was held today, who would you vote for?

Lonny Casper: 43.3 %
Elizabeth Bryant: 33.6%
Atian Parker (I): 17.1%
Undecided: 6%

most ecologically destroyed section of Tsimshian. The Haida National Defense Force regularly clashes with toxic shamans within their toxic domains, and they are inefficient at quelling the problems associated with the toxic shamans in the area. Populated areas in Parker's district have dropped significantly over the last five years; fifteen percent of residents relocated to different parts of Tsimshian. Its unemployment and poverty levels are the worst in the nation. Unsurprisingly, the candidate most closely associated with the political party responsible for this devastation is losing his race by a landslide. The people here are desperate for change. The candidate currently leading in the polls is Lonny Casper from the Moderation Party, a member of the Tsimshian tribe.

HOT-BUTTON ISSUES

ISSUE 1: INDEPENDENCE VERSUS ASSIMILATION

Depending on the party, this is the most important hot-button issue in Tsimshian for the 2075 election. Candidates for public office find it intolerable that Tsimshian owes a four-trillion-nuyen debt to the Salish as its Protectorate. Hardliners have gone as far as saying they feel enslaved to the whims of the Salish; they feel that the autonomy of the current governing council they have now is essentially an illusion. They know if the Salish put their foot down on an issue, the governing council has no choice but to comply; if the Salish asks the Tsimshian council to jump, the governing council will always ask, "how high?"

They point to the fact that the Salish remain unwilling to negotiate with Tsimshian to alleviate some of the debt burden that Tsimshian owes to the Salish. The governing council has tried to negotiate with the Salish to have room to build up its treasury and become more self-sufficient. They have tried to negotiate for lower repayments of that debt, or lower interest rates to even a partial forgiveness of that debt. Such an overture

was last made two months ago, but the Salish refuse, instead demanding very high monthly payments that reach into the millions of nuyen each fiscal quarter with extraordinarily high interest rates (39.6 percent, to be exact). The governing council has no choice but to maintain high income and business taxes for its population, which in turn contributes to the high levels of poverty and unemployment. Hardliners see this as the Salish not protecting their financial investment in Tsimshian, forcing Tsimshian to remain dependent. The hardliners in Tsimshian frame this issue to suggest that the Salish deny Tsimshian independence to keep from having an economic and military competitor.

Essentially, hardliners complain, the Salish and its policies are actively preserving Tsimshian as a failed state. The way the Salish have been dealing with the Protectorate, there is truth in these allegations. And for hardliners, they want their independence, and they want it now, if only to make concrete progress in improving the dismal state of Tsimshian.

Possibly motivating Tsimshian hardliners in their fervor to gain independence is the fact that across the border in Salish, recent polls suggest a growing majority of the Salish tribes favor full-out assimilation. Tsimshian, in their opinion, had the opportunity to self-govern and failed miserably. Because of that, there are major problems (especially environmental) seeping across the borders into the Salish-Shidhe Council's lands. Because of the shape of the Tsimshian nation, many of the Salish tribes believe the only way to fix these problems is to go into the Protectorate and fix it themselves. So far, the Salish-Shidhe Council has not taken any overt action to change the status quo, but political pressure is mounting from its own citizens, as is pressure on the Tsimshian governing council to declare its independence. This next election in Tsimshian will likely determine whether Tsimshian continues to face an uneasy peace with their former enemy and current caretaker, or whether it will be on the path to yet another war—one that Tsimshian may not win. Tribal members of the Salish nation have made it clear that if they go to war and Tsimshian is subjugated, the Tsimshian tribes have no political power, much like the local minority tribes under the Progress Party and the Great Chief Deborah Jim.

While hardliners promote independence and likely war (usually as a matter of patriotism), moderates argue that Tsimshian does not have the resources for either. Without the Salish, Tsimshian would not have the nuyen to sustain the electrical grid for more than three months. Other utilities like water and sewage would also be in danger of shutting down. Without pay, Tsimshian's current military and most of its police force would collapse. Tsimshian, they argue, would be in the same sad state as Bogotá (minus the carnivorous trees). Independence can come later; getting back on their feet must be the priority before Tsimshian can even think about independence.

ISSUE 2: ENVIRONMENT VERSUS TOXIC SHAMANS

While the issue of independence is foremost to Tsimshian citizens in the upcoming election, the state of the environment is not far behind. Tsimshian lands are plagued with illegal dumping grounds soaked with dangerous chemicals. Many sites still have dozens of neglected barrels of leaking chemicals that bear the corporate logo of MCT. The landscape is pockmarked with hundreds of abandoned strip mines that have robbed Tsimshian of

its natural resources. The lands are completely deforested and left vulnerable to erosion from acid rain and mudslides, only spreading the contamination. Lakes and rivers are saturated with dangerous chemicals and contaminated with heavy metals from mining operations. Severe soil contamination prevents the land from supporting safe crops, to the point that raising healthy livestock is cost-prohibitive. Each council term, the electorate demands a cleaner environment. Council members debate the issue, but they only have a limited amount of nuyen. Some improvements are made, but the damage is far more extensive than the resources Tsimshian has at its disposal. Many believe that as long as Tsimshian's ecosystem remains in ruins, the economic depression will continue. The environmental concerns also lead into another unique problem facing Tsimshian: that of toxic shamans.

Tsimshian has one of North America's highest populations of toxic shamans and is one of the top twenty-five locations for toxic shamans in the world. This becomes a serious problem when groups such as the Shasta Shamans or Save Our Seas attempt to clean up the environment, only to have toxic shamans undo their work. Candidates running for political office typically pledge to apprehend these dangerous individuals and put an end to their toxic domains, but what the politicians say and do are totally different things. Why the disconnect? During the years when the Progress Party was in power, opposition groups (including the old Potence and Moderation parties), the Haida National Front, and the Long House Brotherhood frequently relied on toxic shamans as an instrument to weaken the regime. Individual politicians who survived the Great Purge and are now active within these political parties likely formed alliances with these toxic shamans. None of these politicians want to publicly turn on a former ally, fearing exposure of these secret alliances to the general public, so the toxic shamans hide from justice. There are rumors that some parties continue to work under the table with toxic shamans to this day, so these parties and politicians are all too happy to leave the toxic shamans out there in the wild.

To make matters worse, the toxic shamans in Tsimshian were trained in urban and asymmetrical warfare when they were fighting the Progress Party and its military. The Haida National Front was one of the groups who taught the toxic shamans guerrilla-style tactics, such as using spirits to carry out suicide bombings, setting up ambushes and traps, and using their environments to their advantage. Taking on toxic shamans is bad enough. Taking on combat-hardened toxic shamans in domains that double as weapons is something else. No elected politician in their right mind is going to sign off on a military mission that could result in the deaths of half of the soldiers assigned. And so, even though candidates pledge to do more about the problem with toxic shamans, nothing significant is ever accomplished. Those who do try to solve the problem are forced to hire shadowrunners. The last toxic shaman confirmed killed was approximately eight months ago, at the start of 2074. At that time, the ten-man runner team was sent out to hunt a high-level toxic shaman initiate. The run lasted two months longer than expected, and the runner team suffered three fatalities during their hunt. The shaman kill was proudly broadcast throughout Tsimshian in campaign commercials as a tremendous success for the Revival Party. They were happy to claim the accolades, but those responsible for the kill, as well as those who died, were quickly forgotten. And since it was not the military that suffered fatalities, "only runners," there was no backlash for the effort.

Since the killing, the Revival Party's popularity has increased by ten percent. The people of Tsimshian will have to see whether the Revival Party's intention of dealing with the toxic shamans was genuine or merely a PR stunt for more votes.

ISSUE 3: ECONOMY VERSUS HEALTH ISSUES

And the hits just keep on coming for the Tsimshian economy. "Depressed" is one word used to describe the Tsimshian economy, though "ravaged" is probably more accurate. When MCT pulled out of Tsimshian, thousands of Tsimshian citizens were left unemployed. Since that time, no one has filled the void, and with Saeder-Krupp essentially cancelling its move to Kitimat, any real shot for improving the Tsimshian economy is lost.

Since 2064, the situation within Tsimshian has progressively worsened, with far more family businesses and A-level corporations either going out of business entirely or relocating to other nations. Agriculture and farming should be enough to heal the broken economy, but as detailed above, the toxic land both prohibits those industries and sickens any potential workforce. That potential workforce suffers asthma, chronic bronchitis, various cancers, and birth defects. Without a health system that can adequately address these problems, these health issues prevent people from being productive members of the work force and stimulating the economy.

The combined toxic environment and high levels of poverty result in ongoing epidemics of tuberculosis, pneumonia, influenza, and even outbreaks of Aura Deficiency Syndrome and Mana-Active Deficiency Syndrome. Some of these strains show higher-than-average levels of antibiotic resistance and arcane resistance. Many Tsimshian citizens are illegally crossing the borders into surrounding territories looking for work; they usually head to the Salish-Shidhe Council or the Athabaskan Council, though some are caught far away as Seattle. This exodus means these citizens bring their antibiotic and arcane-resistant diseases into the metroplex. Other Tsimshian citizens are so desperate for work, they enter the toxic wastelands of Tsimshian to hunt the toxic and mutant critters. If their hunts are successful, the citizens cross the borders with their kills to sell the hides or collect a bounty. To a lesser extent, other Tsimshian citizens attempt to deal with the problem of toxic shamans by capturing the shamans, transporting them over the border, and turning them over to either the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research or the Draco Foundation to collect a bounty. Many of these citizens are not experienced enough, lacking the hardware necessary to deal with toxic shamans. Instead they attempt these hunts out of sheer desperation, and many do not return.

- So, why isn't the DIMR or the Draco Foundation active in Tsimshian to round up all these toxics?
- Sunshine
- A lot of it has to do with—wait for it—politics! Big surprise there. The Draco Foundation's headquarters is in Washington, DeeCee, which is already a deal breaker for many of the traditionalists and hardliners in Tsimshian. And the DIMR headquarters is in Boston, which is another problem. And when you add in the fact that significant portions of the Draco Foundation and the DIMR are made up of Anglos and metahumans, you can see where Tsimshian would not want them to come into their lands. If the

Draco Foundation or the DIMR attempted to set up shop inside Tsimshian, they'd have met with serious bureaucratic red tape and opposition. Plus, despite allowing small groups to come in from the outside, another major corporation like the Draco Foundation will likely stir up a lot of old emotions and memories from the days of MCT. MCT promised a whole new way of life for Tsimshian. Unfortunately, it was a way of life no one wanted. They don't want the same thing to happen with the Draco Foundation or the DIMR. Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if it was a group within Tsimshian that actually sunk that S-K deal.

- Baka Dabora
- And the people are once again made to suffer because of the politics.
- Aufheben
- Forget what Shakespeare said about killing all the lawyers. Let's kill all the politicians instead.
- Picador
- Do we get bonus points if the politicians are also lawyers?
- Slammm-O!
- It may not all be Tsimshian's fault. I've interacted with several people from the Draco Foundation and the DIMR over the years. And although some were decent people, there were others who acted as though I should be locked up on a fucking reservation. It could very well be a systemic indifference on the part of the Draco Foundation and the DIMR toward Tsimshian. After all, you don't see them actively lobbying the council to be granted access to Tsimshian, or working on getting approval to set up a system where they can pay bounties within Tsimshian lands for the toxic shamans.
- Lyran
- So I guess Tsimshian has a problem with Anglos, but not a problem with great dragons? Is that why they wanted Saeder-Krupp to invest in their nation, and to keep the Draco Foundation out? That nation is truly fucked up.
- Beaker
- Not all political parties want the same thing. Littletree and the Moderation Party actively worked to bring S-K in, sure, but the other parties didn't want to see that happen, just like they didn't want Wuxing in there, and they don't want the Draco Foundation now. That's a lot of unwanted outsiders (who they may need to grow their economy, but I digress). The other parties also didn't want the Moderation Party to get the political credit for actually accomplishing something that improves the economy. So instead of showing national unity for once and doing something together that would benefit the entire nation, the rival political parties could easily be behind a deal to sabotage the Moderation Party—assuming that it was, in fact, someone in the Tsimshian Nation. The Salish's motivation to get that project killed and get S-K moved to Bellingham are equally strong. It not only ensures Tsimshian dependency, but it also leads to economic development within Salish. A savvy political move for the Salish for sure.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Another "out" for Tsimshian citizens is to join up with local street gangs and organized crime like the Dogmen. Their ranks have

swelled since the second Matrix Crash, growing anywhere from five to seven percent each year. On top of everything else, this is yet another reason why Tsimshian has one of the highest crime rates in North America.

- Riser

This debate between the economy and health issues has become the proverbial “which came first, the chicken or the egg?” in Tsimshian politics. Some council members want to address the economy, while others want to address the health issues. It is agreed that no corporation would come into Tsimshian and absorb the high cost of healthcare for Tsimshian workers just to get them to the point of a productive work force. And when it comes to the economy, Tsimshian is already boxed into a corner from making exorbitant payments back to the Salish as a Protectorate. Tsimshian can’t afford to make changes that might attract businesses to their nation, like lower taxes. Even if they could, there is still the problem of putting up obstacles for businesses that are owned by or employ Anglos. The Moderation Party is the most prepared to move past this racial bias, but the other parties are not so forward thinking.

- Tsimshian needs to get a handle on its health issues first, particularly the diseases at epidemic levels. If one or more epidemics break out on the Salish side of the border, it will agitate that debate of assimilation even further, if not lead to war.
- Butch

ISSUE 4: MAGIC (PRO-AWAKENED)

Magic remains a hot-button issue within Tsimshian, and not just relating to the toxic shaman problem. Shamans still present in Tsimshian and those who now live outside of its borders as refugees are very much interested in this issue. The shamans believe they are better caretakers of the lands than the “distant and emotionless” hermetic mages who remain embedded in Tsimshian, and the shamans want to safely return to their homeland without becoming toxic themselves. Many experts believe the only way to successfully heal Tsimshian lands is through the prolonged and sustained use of magic and through the successful removal of those who practice toxic magic.

For the Revival Party, this is a top priority. The Revival Party wants to establish state-sponsored magic groups made up of hermetic mages and shamans. In their philosophy, fusing both mages and shamans into a single cooperative magic group will keep the shamans sane. They want these magic groups made up of local magic users, designed to support the local community by employing Awakened citizens, including Awakened metahumans—an extremely popular idea for the metahuman communities within Tsimshian, but an unpopular idea for the hardliners. The Revival Party is also not opposed to including Anglos in these magic groups.

The Revival Party also advocates for establishing an Awakened police force, one that is totally independent of the Salish and answers only to the Tsimshian governing council. They want this police force to be the sole agency responsible for hunting toxic shamans instead of the Haida National Defense Force, which is currently made up of a mixture of Awakened and mundane cops. Their justification is that it would free up the Haida National Defense Force to focus on other criminal activity—namely, the activities of the Dogmen. They

would also make it illegal for anyone outside of this magical police force to pursue toxic shamans, keeping unprepared and untrained citizens from trying on their own to collect on outside bounties at great risk. These ideas have a lot of appeal for hardliners looking to find ways for Tsimshian to stand on its own, breaking free of Salish influence and regaining its pride. If Revival Party members win their elections and take office, the Potence Party may join the Revival Party in calling for this new police force, though with certain adjustments. It’s unlikely that the Potence Party would approve of metahumans or Anglos.

The Moderation Party has already expressed its opposition to the plan, saying that the toxic shaman problem is too big to fix, and that limiting who hunts them will make them harder to track. The Moderation Party’s alternative is to initiate talks with the DIMR and the Draco Foundation, but those ideas are not sitting well with traditionalists, hardliners, and other conservatives within the Tsimshian nation, who continue to throw up roadblocks for the Moderation Party.

In addition to building state-sponsored magic groups, and a Tsimshian-run police force (which will also not sit well with the Salish), the Revival Party would like to eliminate the requirement for registering magic users within their borders. The Revival Party believes such a repeal would be welcomed universally by magic users and might get more of their kind to settle in Tsimshian. These magic-users could then help regenerate the lands and lead to a faster recovery for Tsimshian. The Moderation Party is also quick to point out that removing the registration of magic users will attract a bad element of magic users, particularly those that may be vigilantes from other nations, or toxic shamans who will hide within Tsimshian.

- Damn. With all this magic talk, and making Tsimshian stronger with magic, it really does make it sound like the Revival Party may intend to make the nation a magocratic state.
- Haze
- I’m not a big proponent of registration for magic users or their gear myself, but if you are inviting more magic users into your country, you’ve got to know who they are, and whether or not they are at risk for turning toxic. I can see other nations, such as Pueblo, lifting registration restrictions on magic users, but they don’t have nearly as many problems that can lead to the creation of toxic shamans as Tsimshian. Tsimshian’s records are already spotty on toxic shamans. Crash 2.0 trashed their records, which means those toxic shamans they are aware of may only be a fraction of the true number. Some of those records may even be wrong. So it’s possible Tsimshian is chasing a bunch of wrongly accused individuals instead of going after the right targets. That being said, getting rid of the records they do have would be madness. They would be better served trying to rebuild and correct the records that they do have. I’m with their Moderation Party on this one.
- Winterhawk

ADDENDUM (THE SIOUX AGENDA)

Posted by: Ma’Fan

Do a quick search through Mika’s document for Sioux. I’ll wait. I bet you had the same result that I had: At no point in his article did he mention the Sioux. Not even once. This should strike you as surprising, for as you know from his *Street Legends* profile,



Mika is a member of the Sioux tribe from the Sioux Nation, and he served his mandatory time in the Sioux Defense Force. There is no reason to believe that Mika didn't know the Sioux utilized their military assets to assist the Sovereign Tribal Council in its efforts to restore order on the streets in Tsimshian during Crash 2.0. Mika can be sloppy from time to time, but I find it hard to believe that this glaring omission in Mika's article is anything but deliberate. He has also failed to suggest the Sioux's involvement in Tsimshian may not have ended in 2065, and that the Sioux may in fact still influence Tsimshian politics.

There are still very active forums on ShadowSea (some of which I know Mika reads) that suggest that the Sioux still have a presence within Tsimshian, albeit a covert one. Many posts suggest the Sioux, immediately following Crash 2.0, took advantage of Tsimshian's badly damaged electronic records to plant their spies within Tsimshian with very convincing forged documentation (kind of like Darrin Todd, except they haven't been caught). These posts suggest many of these are sleeper agents, gathering intelligence on Tsimshian and sending it back to Cheyenne. They also suggest that the Sioux have infiltrated the Haida National Defense Force and are also secretly keeping tabs on the Salish as well. Many of the Matrix rumors say that at least one, if not more, of the members of the Tsimshian governing council is on the Sioux's payrolls. No concrete evidence has emerged (yet), but rumors suggest that either Jance or George are being paid off for their cooperation. They lack datatrails and hard evidence of these payoffs, but unnamed sources claim to have at least witnessed George receiving hand-carried deliveries of hard nuyen, likely from his Sioux handler. And you might not think this a big deal, but Littletree has started to use these rumors in his campaign ads to try to paint George as being at the very least a Sioux collaborator (in addition to an alleged murderer). This fact in itself should have been in Mika's report, but it wasn't. This makes me think Mika knows more about what is happening in Tsimshian than what he is letting on and is actively trying to cover up any obvious Sioux connections to Tsimshian. This may even suggest Mika still has contacts within Sioux Intelligence, which would explain how he has so many details about the inner workings of the Tsimshian government.

- First of all, Ma'Fan, I don't have the time to report on all possible rumors, especially in campaign season, when it's rumors gone wild. That's best left up to Plan 9, Sunshine, or Snopes. Anyone can come out and say anything anonymously about a politician (especially on the Matrix). They could say they saw Angela Colloton sleeping with Edward Littletree; it doesn't mean it's accurate. And there's no way of verifying those alleged "eyewitness" reports. For all we know, Littletree put those people up to make those anonymous claims to smear John George's reputation. We just don't know. Could I have mentioned it? I suppose so. I could have also mentioned that several Tsimshian candidates are accused of being meta lovers or Anglo lovers, but for me, those types of attacks don't have a lot of merit. I did the best I could with the article. I apologize if you weren't happy with it.

Finally, let me remind you what I said about the Wildcats in the *Sixth World Almanac*: "Everyone's heard of the Sioux Wildcats, the special forces units that eat Tír Ghosts for lunch and Red Samurais for dessert. I personally believe the Wildcats are the top special forces in the world." Forgive me if I want to be cautious about accidentally revealing any secrets of their ongoing operations here on JackPoint. Forgive me if I don't want to piss them off. I've met the people in the Office of Military Intelligence, and they're scary fuckers. If you want to piss them off or underestimate their reach, go right ahead. Spill all their secrets. It'll likely mean one less pain in the ass for me in the long run.

- Mika

There are other rumors on the Matrix that suggest the Sioux Nation intended for the Tsimshian Nation to become its Protectorate following the second Matrix Crash, and not the Salish-Shidhe Council's. Some of these sources claim that the Sioux are sabotaging the Tsimshian nation now to bring the simmering tensions between Tsimshian and the Salish to a head, forcing the Sovereign Tribal Council to intervene once more. And once they intervene, the Sioux could make certain that the Council votes the right way this election, making Tsimshian a Protectorate of the Sioux. Why the Sioux would be so interested in Tsimshian is anyone's guess. Some have theorized the Sioux may be interested in establishing control over a nation that borders the Pacific Ocean, allowing smuggling from port cities. They could likely expand any intelligence networks or operations ongoing within Tsimshian to better monitor events happening along the west coast. And they could even expand military operations within Tsimshian. Some speculation suggests that the Sioux already have ongoing military operations in Tsimshian; the Wildcats may be using Tsimshian's toxic landscapes and toxic shamans as advanced combat training in hostile or adverse conditions. The Wildcats, if they are operating within Tsimshian, have not yet been caught. But there are some in Tsimshian that at least believe these rumors are true. I have noticed bounties posted in certain parts of the Matrix for information leading to the confirmation of Sioux operations within Tsimshian (for both covert military and intelligence ops). These bounties average around fifty thousand nuyen, so it is likely someone on the council would like to know what the Sioux are up to. Again, this is something that Mika should have mentioned.

- *Sigh.* Where is Snopes when we need him?
- Riser
- Last time I heard, he was in the Canary Islands. But if I heard about it, chances are that safehouse has been burned. So he's probably somewhere else by now.
- Plan 9
- Damn. And you chided me for my P2.0 habit, Ma'Fan. Perhaps I should be chastising you for spending too much time on the conspiracy theory sites.
- Mika



ANARCHY IN THE U.K.

Posted by: Winterhawk

The UK can claim to have invented a lot of things, one of which is Parliamentary democracy. The jury's out on whether corporate lobbying and political corruption also got their start in Great Britain, but they certainly have a big place in the nation's heart anyway. All the history—and the corruption—means that the UK's politics operate in a way that most JackPointers are probably not too familiar with, so before we get stuck into a discussion of who's who and what's what, I should probably clear up a few misconceptions. Contrary to popular belief, not every democratic nation in the world uses the old USA as a model. The United Kingdom has no fixed term for Parliaments, no elected second chamber, a hereditary head of state, and no Constitution to speak of. Whatever you expect about British politics, you are probably wrong.

- This isn't entirely true. The UK has no *written* constitution, for sure, but there are various Acts of Parliament, court decisions, and international treaties that do exactly the same job. And although there are no fixed dates for General Elections as such, each one can produce a government lasting no more than five years—so there absolutely *must* be an election by June 2076.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Unless there's a military coup or something ...
- Kane

For example, the British political spectrum is considerably further to the left than the UCAS or CAS; what our American cousins would call liberal values are pretty widely accepted as centrist in Britain. Social-democratic policies like the National Health Service have broad public support, with most political debates being more about how they operate rather than about the rights or wrongs of their existence. What might be intimidatingly socialist in the CAS is more likely to be seen as centre-left in Britain. Still, discourse has been steadily moving to the right for

the last ninety years or so, especially following the implosion of first the Labour Party and then the Socialist Workers' Party.

With that in mind, it's worth getting certain things straight. For example, Queen Caroline is technically the head of state, but her political role is mainly symbolic. Once bills have passed successfully through both Houses of Parliament, they need Royal Assent to become law. However, the Queen has no authority to refuse to give Royal Assent, reinforcing the notion of Parliamentary sovereignty, and she can't even propose amendments. Alongside that, the House of Nobles—a mainly hereditary second chamber—only has the power to make amendments and slow bills down rather than stop them entirely. A Prime Minister with a strong majority in the Commons could invoke the Parliament Act, creating new Nobles to sit in the upper House to vote the bill into law. And, of course, although the Queen's Speech that opens Parliament sets out the legislative priorities for the session ahead, it is written by the government. Of course, the Armed Forces, the Police and the Civil Service are all Crown employees, owing their loyalty to the Queen rather than the government of the day. This is supposed to ensure their impartiality no matter who happens to have been elected.

Where all this falls down is that, right now, we don't have a strong Prime Minister. William Darch was well enough received when he came to power in the snap election back in June 2071, but he is rapidly losing popularity within his own party and with the country at large. Decades under the Lord Protector have left the British public poorly equipped to hold their elected officials to account, but the hunger to do so is certainly there.

- "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."
- Aufheben
- Well said, comrade.
- Chainmaker
- Uh, FastJack, who's the newbie?
- Bull



- Mea culpa. FastJack gave me permission to invite the delightful young Ms. Chainmaker here as a guest to give some insight into the shadowier side of British politics. She appears to lack the patience I had hoped for, though.
- Winterhawk
- You didn't ask me here for my meek adherence to authority, 'Hawk.
- Chainmaker
- Touché, madame.
- Winterhawk

In context, a crucial thing to realise is that we don't actually know when the next general election will be held. We know that it has to be before June 2076, but traditionally, waiting until the last possible moment to hold an election has been seen as a sign of weakness and even an admission of defeat. So if Darch wants to avoid appearing weak, he will call an election six or twelve months before then. But of course, that puts him in the position of needing to secure a decent outcome. The few by-elections we've had recently haven't gone well for the People's Party—except where candidates have publicly distanced themselves from the PM. This is a problem for everyone involved, as the Queen “chooses” the Prime Minister by summoning the leader of the party that commands a majority in the House of Commons (or a representative of the largest party that is part of a coalition that makes up a majority) and asking them to form the government. I'll cover this in more depth shortly, but suffice it to say that the only way for the People's Party to stay in power might be for them to ditch their Parliamentary leader.

All this means that the date of the next general election, and what the results might be, are all up for grabs—and that, as always, means work for people like us. Political parties need deniable assets to make overtures about possible coalitions, uncover intel on one another, and push the PM to set a favourable election date. The megacorps need deniable assets to make sure that they get the result they want out of all this, and the nobles want the same. Of course the British people have something of an interest in the matter as well.

To that end, I've received FastJack's permission to invite a young shadowrunner from the Midlands called Chainmaker. She's a homegrown street samurai who does a lot of hooding work for her chosen political causes, as well as taking corporate gigs to keep funds up. I recommend not challenging her to defend the ethics of that particular decision.

- It's simple. Me disappearing off to some Communist utopia would have the same net effect on the world as if I committed suicide. So instead I work with what I've got—and what I've got is megacorps offering me work as a gillette. I take their money, turn it into new 'ware or use it to fund projects, and the world gets a little better.
- Chainmaker
- You should come to Berlin some time.
- Aufheben

INCOMING FEED.....



- I went there once. Loved the place, but hated the food.
- Chainmaker
- Phillistine.
- Traveler Jones

POLITICAL PARTIES

Since the abolition of the Lord Protector's Office, political discourse in the UK has been forced into high gear. The political landscape has been shifting for a while, of course, but the Pendragon's little performance with Queen Caroline might yet prove to be a mortal wound for the Greens. They've been the New Druidic Movement's cat's paw for decades, and with Marchmont off in cryo-suspension (if rumors are to be believed), the real driving force behind that relationship has vanished.

- It's depressing that people still believe that "cryogenic" story. I've been doing some more research since the *Spy Games* posting, and all signs are that Marchmont has been infected with HMHVV, courtesy of the Ordo Maximus. Expect to see him back on the scene in a few years, complete with fangs and slicked-back hair.
- Plan 9
- I'd love it if just once you could provide some evidence for these idiotic theories of yours.
- Snopes

That's led not only to more space for other political parties to have their say—for good or ill—but has also revitalized previously defunct groups like the Scottish and Welsh civic nationalists. While I don't think that the Union is under any serious threat, we can expect a lot of focus on improving the state of devolution in the run up to the next general election. Of course, that might be the least of anyone's worries by that point.

It's also worth saying quite what the government is; once the Queen has asked someone to form a government, they do so by selecting a number of other politicians (usually, but not always, from the House of Commons) to form a Cabinet, including the other three Great Offices of State: Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary, and Home Secretary. Aside from Prime Minister, these three roles are the big jobs in British Politics and the ultimate aim for most career-minded MPs (that stands for "Members of Parliament" for those of you not up on our political terms). The Prime Minister can appoint any number of other Secretaries of State and Ministers of State, with the Secretaries heading up entire Departments and Ministers acting as their support along with Parliamentary Under-Secretaries. Members of the ruling party (or parties) who are not part of the government are called backbenchers.

Government is responsible to Parliament, as are all the individual members of the Cabinet. As part of this process, the largest party outside of the government (currently the Green Party) forms Her Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition, or the "Official Opposition" for short. They are headed up by a Shadow Cabinet, which generally mirrors the structure of the Government in terms of its departments and roles. The Leader of the Opposition even sits on the Privy Council alongside senior members of the government, offering advice to the Queen about relevant issues.

- For the record, "relevant issues" here includes things like the dates of public holidays, disciplinary proceedings against veterinarians, and where people get to put graveyards. Gripping stuff this is not.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Everything the corps wouldn't want to be troubled with if they took over formally.
- Aufheben
- Honestly, it's shit like this that shows up how antiquated our political system is. It's an embarrassment to anyone who values democracy that so much custom and tradition gets bound up with how we run the country. And that's before you factor in all the bought-and-paid-for MPs on the take from the corps.
- Chainmaker

The People's Party

Formed from the dregs of the Socialist Worker's Party back in 2055, the largest party in the House of Commons took 38 percent of the 632 seats in the last general election. Based on their tenuous coalition with the Democratic Party, the People's Party's Parliamentary leader, William Darch, was named Prime Minister. The true leader of the party, however, is Martin Kennedy, who has been its General Secretary since its formation. He's the one responsible for the party's aggressive use of shadowrunners to promote their agenda, but he's on the other side of an ideological gulf from their Parliamentary poster-boy Darch, so he has been known to plot heavily against the Prime Minister just to make the point.

- Rumor has it that Kennedy has sponsored shadowruns against the Prime Minister using People's Party funds to manipulate and pressurize the older politician. If the news were ever to break widely, it could really ruin the party's reputation.
- Kay St. Irregular

The key thing to remember with the People's Party schism is that it was formed from a fairly unlikely marriage of left-wing parties. Kennedy is inheritor of the SWP's old guard, a real revolutionary who would prefer never to stand for public office because he views it as a distraction from the real business of revolution. Darch, on the other hand, is a meek and mild Social Democrat in the tradition of New Labour, and Kennedy's cronies largely consider him to be a corporate stooge. This is particularly ironic, given the megacorps' disdain for Prime Minister Darch and his stated aim of pursuing the openness demanded by the Pendragon—despite his relationship with financial giant Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal.

Policy-wise, the People's Party is in a similarly difficult spot. They notionally want to push power from Parliament toward its constituents, but Prime Minister Darch has still not really pressed the issue. Readjustment to life without the Lord Protector's shadow only has so much traction as an excuse after all this time, and many people are starting to question Darch's commitment. His interests currently lie with building a base of political allies to help push his agenda, and an increasing fervor for the capture of Sir Adam Dashwood, former o-three operative. Unfortunately, that necessitates a lot of shady dealings of the kind that Kennedy's wing of the party are so keen to expose.





- Darch's behaviour is the Iron Law of Oligarchy in action. Without revolution, elections are just us choosing different masters to be slaves to. I wish Kennedy had stayed true to his principles and never set foot in the Commons.
- Chainmaker

The Green Party

With 215 seats in the Commons, the Greens are the second party in Parliament for the first time since the late 2030s. It's fair to say that they are down but by no means out. Former Prime Minister Richard Hume is back to lead the Party in the absence of the Lord Protector, and some of the nastier prejudices of the New Druidic Movement—like their not-so-secret preference for Parliament being a place for humans only—have been pushed onto the back burner while the Party regroup. One of the knock-on effects of the weakening of the power of the New Druidic Movement has been the split of Plaid Cymru (the “Party of Wales”) from its long-standing position as a subsidiary of the Greens.

Despite the widespread dissatisfaction with life under Lord Marchmont as Lord Protector, the Greens are a familiar force in British politics, with many of their MPs popular with the nice middle-class human voters they represent. That means that despite the Conservationists' and Democratic Party's fantasies, there's very little chance of the Greens dropping out of the political lime-light any time soon. I wouldn't be entirely shocked to see them win the next general election, given how little Prime Minister Darch's coalition has actually achieved so far.

That said, they really don't have any high-profile leaders to speak of. Hume is noteworthy more for his inoffensive taste in ties than his political positions, and most of the real firebrands were kept on the low rungs by Marchmont, filling the safe seats with NDM loyalists. Much as a Green victory wouldn't surprise me, neither would a mass exodus of—or takeover by—the mainly elven Deep Green-sympathizing brigade. Going from mild-mannered English Heritage members to radical ecologists would be a huge shift for the Green Party, but I don't feel confident in ruling it out completely as a possibility.

- There are some good people in the Greens, and I sincerely hope that Winterhawk's prediction comes true.
- Ecotope
- I suspect that if they were going to stage a coup or take things to the next level some other way, they already would have done. Winterhawk's notion is just wishful thinking.
- Aufheben
- I should say that whilst I think it's *possible* that the Greens will get their fire back, I certainly don't think it's very *likely*.
- Winterhawk

The Conservationists

The Conservationists' vote share shot up to fifteen percent in the 2071 election, giving them just shy of one hundred seats. For anyone who remembers what things were like when they were in power in the 2020s and 2030s, this should be a cause for real concern. They are essentially neo-fascists in nice suits, although they have done a lot to soften their image by selecting a British

Asian woman, Parminder Desai, as their leader. Nevertheless, the rhetoric remains the same: staunchly inward-looking, with a real aversion to any co-operation (or “surrender,” as they would have it) with other NEEC Governments. And at the grassroots, things go from the sublime to the ridiculous—they still hark on about the “sanctity of the indigenous British people” and are little better than old-style white supremacists. They're profoundly suspicious of elves, orks, and trolls, but are peculiarly accepting of dwarves, viewing them as taking their place in the world—a perspective that seems primarily based on old fairy tales.

- Desai's ancestors arrived in England in the 1940s, meaning that her family has had several generations in which to establish themselves. Rumor has it that Parminder's older brother Rajendra was among those who became nartaki, but otherwise the rest of the family is pure human. That might be why they fit in among the neo-fascists, even though they'd ordinarily be in the Conservationists' firing line.
- Kay St. Irregular

Don't let that fool you, though. They prey upon poorly educated working-class people, filling their heads with nonsense about European immigrants “stealing their jobs” and a global elven conspiracy against the British people. They whip people up into a nationalistic fervor, making it impossible for most normal people to display the Union Jack—and especially the St. George Cross—without people making assumptions that they are somehow linked to the Conservationist agenda.

Since the Greens' hold on power has weakened, the Conservationists have been pushing the environmental implications of their name in a rather sinister way. In discussing immigration, they remind people that Britain is an island, and that there's only so much space and only so many resources here. They then lead people to the conclusion that the only way to stop everyone falling into the sea is to throw out all the elves and send the immigrants home.

- Wow. Why the sudden hate-on for these guys, Hawk?
- Slamm-0!
- History. One of the gangs where he grew up had pretty strong neo-fascist leanings, and their “traditional values” didn't take kindly to a smart-mouthed kid with a single mom.
- Fianchetto
- Why is it so hard to accept that I find small-minded bigotry offensive on its own merits, or lack thereof?
- Winterhawk

The Democratic Party

The smallest party in Parliament still has eighty-two MPs and wields a disproportionate amount of power thanks to their coalition with the People's Party. Their leader, Elaine Morris, is the daughter of previous leader Janet Richards, and she has her mother's charisma. Still, time has done little to widen its base of support from a particular skeptical breed of liberal in the classic British sense of the term. Hostile to both the Greens' sandal-wearing political savvy and the Conservationists' bully-boy



tactics, the Democrats have a certain kinship with the People's Party, but this is tempered with suspicion. The Democratic Party are notably popular away from urban areas, with a certain suspicion of the intellectualism and media-savvy that characterizes their more fiery cousins.

Still, Morris is arguably the biggest winner in the current political landscape, having gone from leader of the smallest Parliamentary party to Deputy Prime Minister thanks to the Pendragon's changes. For all that the Democratic Party are unlikely to set the world on fire any time soon, they have a long history as power brokers and this looks set to continue long into the future. Although they would prefer to avoid siding with the Greens or Conservationists in the future, they might find that the lure of being in government is stronger than their principles. Certainly, Morris is being very careful not to alienate potential future coalition partners and is rumored to have been selling information gained from party-sponsored shadowruns to bolster her position.

Plaid Cymru

At the turn of the century, Plaid Cymru was a decentralist-socialist party dedicated to Welsh independence from Great Britain, promoting a kind of civic nationalism that would accept anyone that wanted to live there into an independent Wales. As the party's prominence grew thanks to an upswing in popular support, their leader, Alan Cunnick, developed a strong interest in hermeticism and started preaching that this philosophy was the only way to restore the land, and thus the country, to glory. That's when Cunnick founded the New Druidic Movement, essentially rolling Plaid Cymru under that banner.

- This again? I'd still love to know how Cunnick knew what was coming—if indeed he did.
- Jimmy No
- Sadly, I still don't have all the information, but I maintain that Cunnick, or those close to him, had personal foreknowledge of the Awakening and used it to position himself perfectly. Given what happened over the following decades, I'd say he did a good job.
- Winterhawk
- I've said it to Plan 9, and I'll say it to you: if you don't have evidence for claims like these, I'd prefer you not make them at all.
- Snopes
- Did Snopes resurface just for that, or is that response generated automatically these days?
- Butch

Once the NDM adopted the Green Party as its chosen Parliamentary mouthpiece, there was no real voice for Welsh independence aside from the elven nobles gathered around Rhiannon Glendower, who were excluded from the New Druidic Movement's inner circles by that organization's pro-human stance. Since the NDM's (relative) fall from grace, though, there has been an upswing of public demand in Wales for a political party to push the notion of independence. Thus, the Duchess of Snowdon devoted some of her considerable resources to securing the party

out from under the NDM, supported by the Celtic druids and—allegedly—Celedyr. Plaid Cymru has already started selecting its Prospective Parliamentary Candidates and looks set to make a decent showing.

Scottish National Party

Scotland has always had a unique relationship with Great Britain; historically, separate laws applied in Scotland to those in England and Wales, as Great Britain was formed by the Act of Union joining together the Kingdom of England (which included Wales) and the Kingdom of Scotland as separate legislatures sharing a head of state. Both Scotland and Wales enjoyed a weak form of devolved power with minimal authority to make decisions under the Conservationists, which continued under the Greens, but the reality has always been closer in Scotland. With the Green Party notionally catering to the “Celtic fringe,” the Scottish National Party fell into something of a slump, heavily represented in the regional assembly but with no Members of Parliament.

Once again, the abolition of the Lord Protector's Office and his influence has given an opportunity for this relic of the past to prosper again. Rumor has it that the SNP have been colluding closely with Plaid Cymru, sharing resources and tactics on the basis that what's good for one will be good for the other. Given Transys Neuronet's heavy investment in Edinburgh and Celedyr's noted antipathy towards HKB—close allies of Prime Minister Darch—it's possible that the SNP might receive some corporate backing that could help them make their case to the voting public.

Mebyon Kernow

I'm including the “Sons of Cornwall” more for completeness than anything else, as they compose the Celtic Triad with Plaid Cymru and the SNP. Mebyon Kernow argue that Cornwall is a separate country from the rest of England, and that no Act of Union was ever passed, meaning that Cornwall is *de jure* independent, despite its long-standing status as a Duchy under the Crown. However, the Cornish Wild Lands that make up most of Cornwall have long been staunch supporters of the Green Party, given the history of environmental and cultural protection which the area benefited from under Green rule.

That said, the bardic tradition of the Cornish druids does have the potential to be a powerful tool for building a mass movement, despite the fact that there are very few people for them to speak to. Mostly, Mebyon Kernow lobby for the Cornish language to be given the same status as Welsh, with bilingual road signs and official documents. Thus far, they are not taken very seriously in the halls of power, but one would do well to remember their links to the Breton druids of Broceliande Forest—and the stories linking that place to the Arthurian tales.

- What stories?
- /dev/grrl
- Vivien—who might be the Lady of the Lake, or might be Morgan le Fay—trapped Merlin in a tree at the Broceliande site. I doubt it's literally true, but in the context of the Pendragon's legacy, those stories have a certain extra potency, and bardic magic relies on stories.
- Winterhawk



Others

Of course, it's not just the old faces and the Celtic fringe who will want in on the action come general election time. Comedy stalwarts like the Official Monster-Raving Loony Party still appear in the polls, whilst various local-interest candidates often do well in particular constituencies, but rarely win. This is, however, Chainmaker's area of expertise rather than mine, so I shall hand over to her for the next section.

POLICLUBS AND PRESSURE GROUPS

Posted by: Chainmaker

Hoi, terms. As Winterhawk said, he's not very tuned-in to the political underbelly of this green and pleasant land, but it's my bread-and-butter. So, with FastJack's permission (thanks, FastJack!) I'm here to educate you all about what really matters here. One thing before we go any further, though—I'll be spelling things differently (some would say "correctly") to the way you're used to. You should probably get over it.

- I like this one. Can we keep her?
- Kane

- Ask me later.
- FastJack

Despite what generations of politicians would have us believe, class politics are alive and well in Britain. The nobles have more power now than they ever did before, whilst the SINless have absolutely nothing. I'm sure there's folk who would claim that that's true everywhere, but what's different is that in Britain we've got a history for fighting against that sort of thing. People fought and died for the rights we've so casually given away over the years, and it pisses me off how easily most people have let them go. The women chainmakers went on a ten-week strike for a minimum wage 150 years ago, and some of us still remember their sacrifices. They're an inspiration to all of us.

Anyway, that sets me up nicely for the first group of rabble-rousers and troublemakers I want to talk about:

Trade Unions

"Unionism" had pretty much become a dirty word since the Business Recognition Accords, where extraterritoriality gave mega-corporations the right to do away with organised labour. That's not to say that trade unions just went away, though; they've been too big a part of the British mindset to just disappear so easily. We might never see membership density like there was a hundred years ago at the height of union power, but almost half of the workforce in the public sector and domestic private sector have their terms and conditions negotiated by a union, even if they aren't members themselves.

The British Government has usually been very hands-off about unions, preferring a voluntary model, but plenty of power has been ceded to employers over the decades. Still, with Lord Marchment's ultra-authoritarian bullshit finally finished with, those of us who kept the faith are coming back out of the woodwork, and the people with real jobs are starting to quietly mobilise and recruit their friends and colleagues. If nothing else, it should give us a bit of leverage when it comes to getting the People's Party to do their job and represent us properly.

- Putting your faith in the People's Party to represent you well is optimistic, to say the least.
- Aufheben

- As with so much in Britain, it's historical. The trade unions founded the Labour Party, which got folded into the Socialist Worker's Party back in the day. The SWP got ruined by an embezzlement scandal back in '53, and the few activists who got out clean founded the People's Party. There's this irrational expectation that the history means anything to the MPs other than as a talking point in a good tub-thumping speech.
- Kay St. Irregular

Republic

This straightforwardly named policlub have been banging the same drum for decades. They want rid of a hereditary monarchy, in favour of a democratic republican constitution, and frankly who can blame them? Queen Caroline did very well in a pinch when the Pendragon pushed her to act, but neither she nor her father did anything about the Lord Protector before that, so it's not like the Royals have any right to claim they look after the people. Sadly, the majority of the public really don't see it that way, and the country's still awash with sycophantic gratitude to Her Maj for saving us all—as though the two million people who marched on Westminster had nothing to do with it.

- I've been offered work by Johnsons I believe were operating on Republic's behalf before now, offering payment in Saeder-Krupp corporate scrip. Make of that what you will.
- Winterhawk

Republic seem to attract a disproportionate amount of police attention, especially around public holidays. Known Republic activists often find themselves arrested whenever there's a public appearance by Queen Caroline, ostensibly on unrelated grounds, but they are always released without charge once Her Maj has gotten home safely. Quite what they think Republic would do, I have no idea—the policlub is pretty open about being against violence in public debate.

Church of England

Whilst not a policlub, and certainly not to my taste, the Church is still the state religion of England (but not Wales or Scotland), with the Queen being its Supreme Governor. Given that there are twenty-six bishops and archbishops in the House of Nobles, the Church's influence extends far outside England, despite the formal situation. The Church is pretty shaky on some key issues for me—like metahuman rights and the role of the Awakened—but they developed a healthy hatred of the New Druidic Movement for "stealing the soul of the nation." What that means for people like you is that they're willing to offer paid work to folk who don't mind going up against the NDM and their friends, and of course there are more than a few vicars who are willing to offer sanctuary for a shadowrunner on the run if they think your sympathies are in the right place.

- As quaint as that sounds, you should know that there's no legal right to religious sanctuary in the UK or anywhere else outside of the Vatican. And good luck getting it there.
- Hard Exit

More generally, they have amazing access to a shrinking (but still solid) grassroots movement. Now, most of them are pretty much only interested in social climbing and keeping up appearances in front of the neighbours, but they're a fantastic network of information-gatherers when taken together. Seriously, what doesn't get discussed over cucumber sandwiches after church isn't worth knowing.

National Front

If you mention football to anyone outside of the UK, you inevitably hear about hooliganism. That particular sort of demonisation of the working class is mostly behind us now, thankfully, but back then the National Front were right at the heart of it. Time hasn't improved them any, sadly; whether it's their legitimate face in the neo-fascist Conservationists, or the ultra-rich Human Nation aristocrats in the Genealogy Society, the fact remains that underneath it all is a bunch of neo-Nazi thugs who just want to break heads. There's plenty of evidence connecting the NF to Alamos 20k and the seedier parts of the Humanis Policlub, not least in the tactics of violence and hate they employ.

- If you've got the stomach for it, the National Front often offer network contracts against metahuman or Awakened politicians.
- Riser
- I can't believe that even you could be so callous as to accept such work.
- Aufheben
- Believe what you like.
- Riser
- Happily, groups like the Independent Working Class Association exist to combat NF street thugs, and they're always looking for muscle to help the cause.
- Chainmaker

These blokes follow the Conservationists like a bad smell; wherever their political wing becomes active, violence against immigrants and metahumans rises by as much as twenty-five percent. Now, correlation doesn't imply causation and all that, but there's definitely a pattern here. It gives the Conservationist bastards the opportunity to pontificate about the violent tendencies of the working class and immigrants whilst driving people out of the area who might vote for more progressive candidates. Hal Brooker is the main source of communication between the Conservationists and the NF, although he's slimy enough that there's no real evidence of this.

Anglo-American Friendship Society

A bit of an odd one, this policlub exists to build on the long-standing links between the UK and various North American states—primarily the UCAS, but also the CAS, Sioux Nation, Salish-Shidhe Council, and Tír Tairngire. On the face of it, the Friendship Society's primary work is to arrange cultural exchanges,

cheap travel, and the like. Underneath it all, however, it serves as a front for the cream of the elven aristocracy to influence international relations and push British policy from outside. It also gives said nobles access to naïve teenagers and young adults, shaping their perspectives and politics even before they're old enough to vote.

- Word is that these folks' money doesn't spend.
- Sounder

Lambeth People's Congress

They're only active in a small area of London, but given the history of the Lambeth Containment Zone, the LPC could potentially punch well above their weight when it comes to influence. There's even talk of them standing a candidate at the general election, spurning their usual tactic of publicly supporting the People's Party. They've got a history of embarrassing and even ruining politicians who oppose them, and recently achieved a majority on Lambeth Council, such as it is. Much has been made of their links to Rhiannon Glendower, as it would seem to undermine their populist, left-of-centre claims. However, it's hard to fault their tactics, given what gains they've made out of her financial and logistical support to date. If nothing else, they have made sure that the LCZ will be a huge issue in the next general election and the Parliament it creates, regardless of whether they get their own candidate elected. The current rumour is that they're trying to convince Sheila Bennett to stand on a platform of demolishing the Angel Towers Arcology, but she's resisting.

- Presumably because of the rumored bugs hiding in there: just knocking the place down isn't going to solve the problem. Dispersing a hive that big would just make trouble for the entire city of London, perhaps the whole southeast of England. And that's even assuming it *could* be knocked down.
- Stone

BEHIND THE SCENES

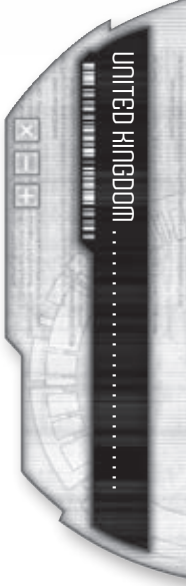
Posted by: Winterhawk

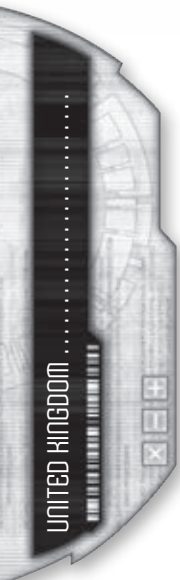
The City of London has been the financial powerhouse of Europe for over a century. Nowadays it's got competition on the continent, but nevertheless there's a huge concentration of corporate money and influence in the Square Mile. More widely, as I said in the *Conspiracy Theories* posting, the UK spawns a disproportionate number of conspirators and shadowy agendas. Needless to say, the general election is going to bring all of them and more out of the woodwork. Much like the various pressure groups and policlubs Chainmaker told us about, as long as you can fake agreement with these groups' aims, you can score yourself some decent work.

Domestic Terrors

First among the homegrown troublemakers has got to be the various former Oversight Office Operatives. They're dispersed pretty well throughout Government now, putting their broad and deep skillsets to work in new roles. Of course, many of them were personally loyal to Sir Adam Dashwood and his boss, Lord Marchmont; how many of them do you think have forgotten that Queen Caroline and Prime Minister Darch are the public figures responsible for their former masters' fall from grace? These are exactly the kinds of people you don't want working against you.

Even more alarmingly, word is out that Dashwood himself has resurfaced and is intervening personally to stymie any hope Darch





and the People's Party might have of winning a majority in the General Election. With an operator like Dashwood involved, there is sure to be a lot of shadowy activity in both directions. If nothing else, I'm sure the People's Party would pay handsomely for information that would uncover who's funding Dashwood's vendetta.

The New Druidic Movement were heavily invested in the Green Party and remain so to this day. However, they're also very influential amongst whole swathes of the House of Nobles—at least, the human parts of it. They're very keen on securing the future of the Union, and so oppose moves towards further devolution or—Heaven forbid!—independence for Wales and Scotland. This has further cemented the antagonism between them and the various Celtic and wild druids, weakening their focus when the NDM's political wing needs it most.

Opposed to that are some serious paramilitary groups, the best known of which is Siol nan Gaidheal (Seed of the Gaels)—they're an ultranationalist group closer to the National Front than they are to the Scottish National Party. They view anyone not of ethnic Celt stock as being their enemy, and since the fall of the Lord Protector's Office they have taken to acting on their hostility. They claimed responsibility for the recent bombing of the Scottish Assembly building at Holyrood in Edinburgh, saying that it was a betrayal of "all true Scots." Without the all-pervading presence of the triple-Os to keep them in line, groups like SnG have been growing in both popularity and audacity.

- Given the British intelligence services' record in Northern Ireland in the 20th century, it's not too much of a leap to imagine that Dashwood and his former employees might be fomenting these problems and training the paramilitaries. No one's been killed in any of the attacks so far, but it can't be too long until that line is crossed.
- Thorn

The Anti-Papists are an interesting one. Howard Becker's budding Inquisitors have been accused—with good reason—of hacking into membership records of the mainstream political parties and posting them online. Since then, there have been multiple reports of prominent party members who happen to be Catholic being harassed whilst leaving Mass. The Anti-Papists have also been credited with corrupting National Curriculum data for state-sponsored schools, changing the content of Religious Education lessons to be extremely damning of the Vatican. Becker himself has been arrested for conspiracy but was released on bail shortly afterwards. It's not clear where the Anti-Papists are getting their Matrix support from, but the rumors point either to Argus (MET2000's intelligence arm) under orders from the Allied German States or to Mossad, although the motivation for either group to do this is murky at best.

Old-Fashioned Lobbying

The Democratic Party has cultivated corporate money for decades now, leaving PM Darch somewhat late to the party. Still, word is that he has been trying to reach out beyond his cozy HKB buddies for support in the next election. Of course, there's no such thing as a free lunch, so we can expect to see some increasingly business-friendly rhetoric coming from the People's Party in the next few months. That's just going to pile on the pressure between Darch and Kennedy and may ironically be what costs them the election.

In particular, the corporate situation shakes down to a longstanding conflict between our old friends

Hildebrandt-Kleinfurt-Bernal and NeoNET. Prime Minister Darch basically outsourced the administration of the Lord Protector's Office to HKB as one of his first acts in office, giving them the responsibility for winding down LPO operations and letting the Houses of Parliament do their work again. Of course, what this means is that HKB has hoovered up a lot of those disenfranchised triple-Os and had privileged access to their datastores. Celedyr absolutely hates HKB and is directing huge amounts of his personal resources—including the Knights of Rage—against them, along with throwing NeoNET corporate assets into the mix as well. Celedyr has taken personal responsibility for the restructure of British data architecture now that NeoNET is administering the Chancellery Network system, despite Queen Caroline's snub. Her Majesty essentially warned Celedyr away from HKB, but that hasn't been anything like enough to actually put the old wyrm off.

- Hildebrandt-Kleinfurt-Bernal has a clear interest in Darch remaining as Prime Minister, but it's obvious that the People's Party is not a natural fit for the financial powerhouse. Rumor has it that Alicia Harborough, a top HKB fixer, has been brought in to facilitate Darch's defection to the Democratic Party.
- Kay St. Irregular
- How would that even work? If Darch crossed the floor, then he'd instantly stop being PM, no?
- Snopes
- Unless the coalition partners decided it was best for everyone not to rock the boat.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I've also heard rumors that senior HKB executives—including Ms. Harborough—are ranking members of the Ordo Maximus, which means vampires. Given the fact that they've already turned Lord Marchmont, we could be looking at an unholy triad of political, financial, and mystical power here.
- Plan 9

Renraku have a large presence in London and smaller subsidiaries across the rest of the country. In particular, Renraku staffers spend a lot of money in the West End Underplex, rubbing shoulders (and other body parts) with civil servants. Although their complex in Dagenham is extraterritorial, that's not to say that the megacorp has no interest in gaining influence over policy, especially with their long-time rivals NeoNET so well dug-in. Expect to see Renraku wielding a lot of "soft power" with a view to scoring some cushy government contracts in the next procurement round. I wouldn't be surprised if they tried to pull the C-Net rug out from under Celedyr—rumor has it that Renraku were the next in line for the job.

Aztechnology have been doing a very strange dance lately, inviting key candidates from all the major parties to their London Arcology for "special receptions." No one I've spoken to has been able to find out what's been going on in there, but the pattern certainly makes it seem as though they're positioning themselves to take advantage of any weakness Celedyr might show. One of my sources suggested to me that they're lobbying for a relaxation of Britain's famed anti-firearm laws, but that rumour surfaces every three or four years and never goes anywhere.





INCOMING FEED.....



In a bit of a break from form, Ares Europe & Middle East has been building its profile in Lambeth and is apparently courting the various political party leaders. Word is that they're looking to put in an offer on the Angel Towers Arcology, paying well above the odds for it. It's not remotely clear how it all fits into their corporate strategy, but it certainly seems to be a major priority.

- Aw, man. This is either the best or the worst news I've heard all week.
- Stone

Dangers from Overseas

As is traditional when electioneering is afoot, foreign agencies are just desperate to get some dirt on up-and-coming politicians, all the better to control them (or at least predict their behavior) if and when they come to power. Given their proximity and history, it may be no surprise to learn that the Tír Republican Corps from jolly old Tír na nÓg have been shaking a few trees here and there, but it should alarm everyone to hear that they've been in secret talks with Rhiannon Glendower. As with so much of this stuff, there are no details of what arrangement—if any—they reached, but nevertheless word is that they left the meeting looking happy with the outcome.

Other European agencies, as well as North American interests, will circle around strong candidates like flies. If you can't find work for one of the political parties, policlubs, corps or fringe groups, there should still be plenty of jobs going picking up the slack for the spooks.

WAITING (AGAIN) FOR A SAVIOUR

Posted by: **The Smiling Bandit**

- I asked The Smiling Bandit to do this next section, because sometimes there are some things that are best explained by an outsider, and some things related to the phenomenon of the Pendragon is one of those. Besides, he's an old friend, I haven't heard enough from him lately, and he's worth listening to.
- FastJack

There are bits of legends and folklore that are integral to the national character of many people. You cannot hope to truly understand those people until you understand those bits. For example, you cannot truly understand why Scandinavians are the way they are unless you understand that their mythology ends with the destruction of their gods, of the universe, and everything. The great heroes are lost forever. Yes, it's true that the universe is reborn, but the end of this universe, the one we know and the one in which we keep all our stuff, is death, loss, and cold. That mindset is at the core of the Scandinavian character, and if you find yourself in the Scandinavian Union on a long, cold winter's night, and you start wondering why the people around you are the way they are, you now will have at least a small part of the answer.

The myth of King Arthur—the original Pendragon—plays a similar central role in the English character. The Arthurian story is one of brief triumph and long loss, but it (like many other cultural mythologies and even religions) comes with the promise of eventual redemption. Someday, the legend tells the English, the great king will come again, when they most need him. This



is key, because it means the stories of Camelot and the Round Table are not simply tales of past glory—they are stories of what lies ahead in England's future, of the good that is waiting for them if they can just be patient enough to endure until it arrives. The Arthurian stories are instructions, then, for the future. They tell each new generation of English children what it means to be great, and impresses upon them that they must be ready to be great, because the hour of need and the return of Camelot could come at a moment's notice, and as King Arthur once again walks among his people, he will need knights, and there is not a child (or adult) in England that would want it let him down if he calls on them.

The promise of the Pendragon's return contributes to the famous English stiff upper lip. When the need is great, the legend tells them, he will return, and that provides comfort to them in the direst of circumstances. For the British know that they have an ace in the hole, the ultimate weapon they can wield if things get too bad. And if there is a crisis going on and the Pendragon has not appeared to help them? Then clearly it isn't so bad that they can't handle it themselves, so they can soldier on, confident that Arthur's failure to appear means that they themselves are up to the task. After all, if he didn't appear to turn back the Luftwaffe on its constant bombing sorties, then there is a whole range of crises that some combination of Arthur, the fates, and the powers that be judge to be not severe enough to warrant the Pendragon's return.

- Note that Bandit quite correctly uses the word "English," not "British," and certainly not "Scottish" or "Welsh." King Arthur may have Welsh roots, but the triumphalism inherent in his tale does not resonate well with people in conquered lands, who continue to ponder their place in this realm and wonder just how they fit in. Generally speaking, they are not awaiting the return if the Pendragon with quite the same level of anticipation.
- Fianchetto

As I've thought over the recent history of the United Kingdom, I've concluded that the actual identity of the character known as the Pendragon is not of vital importance. Was he the spirit of Arthur returned? Was he just some prop in a complex scheme magnificently executed by the royal family and other opponents of the Lord Protector? From my perspective, that answer is unimportant. What matters is that in the minds of millions of English citizens, the great national myth was reinforced. They found themselves in need, they did not see any way out, and the Pendragon emerged to bring them from the darkness.

The real question, as it always is, is what happens next. Many English citizens will be quite content if the Pendragon takes another 1,500 years to return. It would be greedy, they reason, to ask for more. How many miracles can you expect in a single lifetime, or single century? After you have been delivered once, perhaps it's best if you muddle through on your own for a millennia or so. The gift has been given, and it is their job to see that it lasts.

Others, though, believe that the Pendragon's work is not yet done. When we read one of the many versions of the Arthurian legend, the whole time of Camelot seems to pass so quickly, a brief flash between the moment Arthur pulls Excalibur from the stone and the final battlefield sunset when a weary king waits for the final crushing advance of the thronged enemy. In truth, though, it was years, decades even. Camelot took time to grow, evolve, then fall. In their eyes, the emergence of the Pendragon was just step

one. Now, wherever the Pendragon is, he is growing. Evolving. He is preparing the next Camelot, whatever that may be.

To most people with this perspective, it's an idle belief, something that passes through their mind briefly, a curious thought about where the Pendragon is now, what great works he is preparing, and what role they might be able to play in it when the time comes. Then the thought passes, and waiting returns.

Others, though, are not content to only wait. They want things to happen, and they are willing to spend money to make those things happen. I very much hope that all reading this understand what to do when those circumstances exist.

Some of them want nothing more than to know where the Pendragon is now. As it turns out, there is a fair amount of bearded, dignified-looking men in the United Kingdom, and finding the Pendragon in their ranks has proven to be a challenge. It will be even more so if it turns out he has shaved.

A simple Matrix search will show a number of rewards out there for anyone who can provide information leading to discovery of the Pendragon's whereabouts. Ten thousand nuyen from something called the New Round Table. Twenty thousand from Ordo Maximus (I have no solid information on what they plan to do with the information if they get it). And of course one hundred thousand nuyen offered by NeoNET.

- The fact that these rewards are still available should confirm that finding the Pendragon is no easy task. You're not just going to saunter into some village and see the Pendragon sipping tea at an outdoor café. Whether he went into hiding voluntarily or forcibly, he went away pretty good.
- Stone
- Are you saying you tried?
- Hard Exit
- No, but I've swapped drinks with a few people who had. Each of them spent a fair share of money and came up empty. So I wouldn't take this on unless you like working for free.
- Stone
- Unless I think I'm better than the people you drink with.
- /dev/grll

There are other groups, though, with more complex, and perhaps more clever, ways of encouraging the Pendragon to come out of hiding. Camelot, Inc., is the leader in this category. Camelot is the largest producer of unlicensed Pendragon merchandise in the world (their spokesperson, Emilie Gardner, claims they exerted every effort to obtain a license to use the Pendragon's image, but quite naturally they have been unable to find him). Those Pendragon glo-tats you see on some people's biceps and shoulder blades? That's a licensed Camelot design. The Pendragon Army line of t-shirts, jackets, and jewelry? Camelot. Those pewter Camelot mugs that seem to be used in just about every pub these days? Of *course* they're a Camelot design.

Camelot, Inc., though, is about more than making money off the Pendragon. The money is just a means to an end. Two ends, in fact. The first is assembling a dedicated workforce. If you've ever met any Camelot, Inc., employee, you'll know that they are as well-versed in Arthurian lore as your average comic book fanatic. They know not only every bit of ancient Arthurian lore, but all



INCOMING FEED.....

the salient points of the Pendragon's return. And not only do they know the plot, but they've bought into it fully. They are true believers, Pendragon loyalists, and they have been gathered in a single company. Should the Pendragon re-emerge, he will find a ready army awaiting him, all of them on the Camelot, Inc., payroll.

There will be more than an army, though. There will be a base of operations. A castle. Camelot bought Rochester Castle, an old ruin in Kent, about fifty kilometers outside of London, and restored it to operational status. The grounds are heavily guarded—Camelot's head of security spent some time with Mitsuhamma and seems to be a skilled summoner—and there is very little hard information about what's going on inside. There have been rumors of arms and munitions purchases flowing to the castle, though, hinting that if the Pendragon comes to claim his army, he will find a well-armed one.

- I call BS. The government is dim, but not *that* dim. If a corporation was building up a private arsenal like this, they'd know about it.
- Marcos
- Oh, they know about it, all right, but so what? Corporations have been building up arsenals and armies for the better part of the century. And here's a fun fact—Camelot does not actually own the castle they're using. It's been leased to them by HKB, and since the bank retains ownership, it's covered by their extraterritoriality. That means the law covering the castle is HKB's, not the UK's.
- Traveler Jones
- What's HKB's interest in all this?
- DangerSensei

- Might be nothing more than financial. Camelot might have been willing to pay more if HKB maintained their extraterritoriality, and the bank saw no reason to turn down their money. It could, though, be a show of support for the Pendragon, which in most people's eyes amounts to support of the Queen. Additionally, HKB has a good relationship with Prime Minister Darch, who of course only gained his position due to the Pendragon's intervention.
- Mr. Bonds

If there is anyone out there who has a legitimate connection to the Pendragon, I expect them to reach out to Camelot in some way in the near future, either to find a way to coordinate with them or to tell them that while their campaign is touching and sweet, it is not necessary. Expect the first connections between the two parties to be made by tentative outreaches through the shadows, and for other parties to be strongly interested in intercepting what is said when the groups actually make a connection.

- This assumes, of course, that the Pendragon's people are not already in total control of Camelot, Inc.'s actions.
- Plan 9

I bring Camelot up primarily to say this: While the corporation is not required to release financial statements to the public, insiders say they're pulling down more than one hundred million nuyen annually, and they're getting orders from around the globe. Camelot, you see, understands the thing about the English character I described at the start, and they know how to take advantage of it. That makes them an entity to watch—especially if they're up to something besides simply making money.

... MEMORY IN TIME ...

Sheer nothingness assaulted his senses as Big Bang awoke. He couldn't see anything, couldn't hear anything. Others might have panicked, but that emotion was beyond him now. Slowly, methodically, he took stock of where he was. And why he was there.

He tried to move and found that his body wouldn't respond. He could feel the air against his form, still and stagnant though it was. Nothing seemed to support his feet, though he appeared to be in a standing position. He was floating, he realized. Suspended in the air.

His eyes were open, but he couldn't see anything. His ears were uncovered, but he couldn't hear anything. Had to be magic. He could feel it, feel the mana working against his senses, binding him in the air in a complex matrix of sorcery. Whatever had him wasn't taking any chances.

His memories were foggy, and his thoughts slipped away from him almost as soon as they came to mind. Surely, this was intentional. Still, even his captors couldn't account for everything. He had some tricks up his sleeve yet, and despite their ministrations, his faculties were not so easily brought low. He began to piece his scattered thoughts together, his mind reconstructing the events that led here. Best to start at the beginning ...

"Hello, Mr. Hernandez." It was a pleasant voice, a male voice, and there would have been nothing alarming about it at all except it was coming from inside Big Bang's apartment. He had just come home, opened the door, and boom, there was the voice. He took it in stride; the initial surprise had faded soon after he'd reached his outer hallway and sensed a foreign presence within his home. It wouldn't do to keep the intruder waiting, so he didn't spend much time waiting in the hall.

"Hello to you, too!" he replied cheerfully, offering the intruder a wide smile as he stepped in and cast a look about. The apartment was still rather tidy; either it hadn't been searched too extensively, or whoever this was (and whatever friends he may have with him) had done a very meticulous job of it. Speaking of whom, this would be a good time to find out just who this was, so Big Bang gave him a once-over. He was a tall, wiry elf, reclining on Big Bang's couch with a practiced casualness, wearing the latest Zoé business suit and watching him with cold, ice-blue NeoNET cybereyes. Probably deltaware. Big Bang approved.

"Since you're here," Big Bang said, moving toward the kitchen. "Why don't I make you a drink? What'll it be? Tea? Coffee? I think I've got some tequila around here somewhere."

"You're remarkably calm for someone who just found a stranger sitting on his couch, I must say," the elf replied, looking casual while still following any move Big Bang made. "Of course, I expected you would be. That is, after all, why I'm here. Why we're interested in you."

"So, tea then?" Big Bang responded calmly. "There's no need to be nervous. I'm not going to bite you. I'm not even angry that you got past my wards without me noticing. In fact, I'm impressed."

The man smiled, though it did not reach his eyes. "Why would I have any reason to be nervous? Your name is Fernando Hernandez, though we know all the aliases you've used and are currently using. We know about the conflict involving the dragon Regevir and how it ended. We know about the abomination you helped to banish, and we know about your various friends and acquaintances and your correspondence with various individuals, among them Harlequin and Schwartzkopf. We even have some of the transcripts."

He stood slowly, though again it was the practiced casualness of someone who was wound like a coiled spring. "We know you, Fernando Hernandez, and we have precautions in place to deal with even someone of your caliber. Why would I have any reason to be nervous?"

"Because you know me," Big Bang replied calmly. "And because I read your aura when I walked in. My sister's all into herbal calming teas and healthy shit lately. Don't tell her I said that. So, we've got jasmine, wood betony, and chamomile, though I think that last one's a bit too much. I'll whip you up something soothing. What'll it be, Mr. Johnson?"

There was a momentary silence, though eventually the elven intruder replied. "Call me Figment. And I'll take jasmine."

Big Bang smiled as he filled two cups with hot water and inserted an old-fashioned tea bag in each. His sister had an expensive habit. "So," he said, walking back to the couch. A chair from the nearby kitchen table leapt across the room to land across from Figment. He set the tea on the coffee table and settled into the chair, reclining languidly. "What can I do for you?"

It was a job, Big Bang thought. He continued to make slow progress against the sorcery binding his senses and mind, feeling his thoughts slowly clear. As he did so, he drew upon an esoteric metamagic, a variant of masking, to disguise his work. Hopefully, anyone who assented him would get a "false positive," seeing only the spell effects that were supposed to be there, the effects he intended them to see.

Who hired me? What did they want? Big Bang asked, forcing his memories to coalesce as his mental fog continued to lift. He strained with the effort. Soon, the answer came.

Big Bang pored thoughtfully over the AR map as the plane began its descent. "So, swim out ten kilometers, dive about three more, navigate through the ruins, find the immobile lockbox, and bring said immobile box back here? Sounds fantastic. So what did the Black Lodge need me for again?"

The ork sitting across from him fixed him with a cold glare. "We already told you," he replied with an irritated growl. "It's protected by some sort of enchantment that causes anyone who goes near it to go

mad with terror. And since they tell me you're incapable of feeling such things, an abomination like you should be just fine."

"Let's hope so," Big Bang said with a serene smile. "So, who're you voting for? I think the election's pretty glitched, as it is. Personally, I'm in the 'anyone but Brackhaven' camp. What about you, Greggy?"

"Don't call me that!" the ork snarled. "The whole reason you're here is to prevent that lunatic from getting elected, in case you've forgotten."

"I haven't," Big Bang said. "This is going to help the other guy win." He shifted in his seat, getting comfortable. It was clear that his demeanor was unnerving his chaperone. "In any case, we're coming up on the landing site, so we're about to put the Lodge's theories to the test. Kiss for luck, Greggy?"

The ork's glare deepened.

The Black Lodge, Big Bang realized. Now things were starting to make sense. They wanted something from him, or more accurately, wanted him to retrieve something. It made sense; he had proven himself both powerful and capable, and if they knew about his inability to feel fear and anger, then he would be the perfect candidate.

Big Bang's thoughts were almost completely his own now. As he unraveled the binding of his senses, he carefully masked his activities, making it look like the enchantments still held. He turned his thoughts to his assigned quarry. A supposedly immobile lockbox would be easy enough to retrieve, as both mundane and magical barriers rarely posed much of an obstacle. The real question, of course, was just what was *in* it ...

Big Bang glided along the ocean floor, protected from the crushing pressure of the ocean by layers of spellwork and favors called on from powerful air and water spirits. Were he able to feel such emotions, he'd surely be experiencing more than a touch of rising panic right now as a quick, painful death was held at bay by mana alone. His magical light emanated from the ground a few meters ahead of him, casting an eerie glow about his surroundings like an aquatic spotlight.

It had been relatively easy to get this far out; an air spirit had brought him here quickly enough. Now, though, he moved much more slowly and carefully, gazing about at the ruins of an ancient city. Every now and then he spotted a large mussel shell laying among the rubble, but other than that, he was too far down for even algae to grow.

This had been a thriving city once. And though the city had taken damage from the water and the crushing pressure of the depths, several testaments to its former majesty remained. Chief among them was a massive bronze statue, nearly thirty meters high, of a robed human statesman. Big Bang smiled to himself. His target was nearby, in the mostly intact building beyond the statue.

He glided over the empty streets, noting the scattered bones and fragments that were all that remained of corpses, some still sporting tatters of thread that had once been clothing. "What caused this?" he wondered aloud, his voice reaching the end of his magical bubble of air and falling into abrupt silence. The silence had no answer.

The pieces were starting to come together. The image of a small iron box, inlaid with silver runes, came to his mind. Meanwhile, he'd overcome the spells blocking his senses, and though he closed his eyes to prevent anyone from seeing them suddenly focus, sounds of conversation came quickly and easily to his ears.

"... still can't get it open. He probably knows something we don't," a new voice spoke. No, not new. He knew it. It belonged to a human who went by the moniker of Magus. He was, naturally, a mage, and a good one.

"You're certain you've thrown all you can at it?" Figment's voice drifted through Big Bang's self-imposed darkness.

There was a soft cough. "*He* didn't ward it!" Magus retorted. "It was an ancient civilization from before the Fifth World. There are enchantments on this that I've never even dreamed of, and I doubt he could get through them either."

"Well," came a third voice evenly, female one that Big Bang recognized as belonging to a street samurai named Lenna "why not wake him up?"

The voices began drifting closer, following the sound of approaching footsteps. Big Bang nearly had it. There was just one more memory he needed to retrieve ...

"Halt!" It was a booming male voice speaking a long-forgotten language, carrying enough force to make even the master mage stagger. He stood in a shattered vault deep within the ruined building, his hand outstretched for the black iron box which even now sat on a still-intact pedestal.

"Halting," Big Bang confirmed as a wraith-like figure coalesced into being within Big Bang's air bubble. He beheld a massive, armored warrior in gleaming platinum plate mail and a full helmet. The warrior's visor was down and he stood behind a solid tower shield nearly as tall as he was. The shield bore markings in an ancient language that Big Bang roughly translated to "Guardian of the Cataclysm." In his right hand, the defender carried a massive halberd that gleamed supernaturally even deep underwater.

With a rush of triumph, Big Bang realized that he could actually understand this creature's language, and not through any magical ability to translate. He'd delved into forgotten lore and scriptures, and had learned many esoteric and forgotten languages, both from ancient texts and in some cases equally ancient tutors. This one was from a civilization referred to only as the Shaia, forgotten long ago. His employers probably knew about the civilization, but they almost assuredly weren't counting on his linguistic knowledge.

The warrior slammed the haft of the halberd against the ground, kicking up rubble and sand within the air bubble. "You are not welcome here!" it boomed, its voice reverberating through the bubble. "How is it you still stand?"

So, that's what that language sounds like in person, Big Bang thought. He cleared his throat and spoke. "I am not swayed by fear," he replied calmly in the language of the Shaia. "It is an emotion denied to me by events long ago. I come seeking what lies within that chest." His lips and tongue struggled with the forgotten language, and he was sure he spoke with a heavy accent, but hopefully he'd managed to get the point across.

"No human feels no fear," the warrior responded, and though it stood at the ready, it did not attack.

"Except me," Big Bang affirmed. "I've lost that part of my humanity. Though it serves me well for the situation at hand. Dare I ask what is in that chest?"

"Ruin," came the reply. There was no better translation for that word; it spoke of an event that could spell doom for an entire civilization. Perhaps this one. Second thoughts, already circling the back of Big Bang's mind, began drifting toward the surface.

A jolt of pain brought Big Bang's mind back to the present as he felt a clenched fist impact his face. He could feel the enchantment binding his senses unravel, leaving only his eyes limited. Or at least, so they thought.

"Is it morning already?" Big Bang murmured, tasting blood in his mouth. He opened his eyes, deliberately keeping his gaze unfocused, eyes darting about the room in what would hopefully look like a vain attempt to see anything. He caught glimpses of the various people in the room, never daring to rest his gaze on anyone. Magus, Lenna, and Figment were all accounted for, as were a cadre of six combat mages that carefully watched his every move. The room was bereft of furniture, even torture devices. The walls were made of stone, and the door, now open, was wrought of thick metal.

"Nope. Still dark," Big Bang continued. "Wake me up in a few hours." He closed his eyes once more.

The expected cuff didn't come; they were keeping their distance. After a few seconds of weighted silence, Figment's laugh filled the barren room. It was a pleasant sound, save for the unmistakable undercurrent of malice. "You are cocky to the bitter end, Mr. Hernandez," he mused. "But it all boils down to one thing, really. And we can do it the easy way or the hard way."

Big Bang opened his eyes and stared blankly ahead. He could see Figment holding a long, sharp blade—Big Bang's own katana. The elf was hefting the unfamiliar weapon, an approving smile on his face as he examined his new prize. He turned his attention back to the captive mage. "How the fuck do you open the box?" he demanded.

"You caught me leaving with it," Big Bang replied. "What makes you think I have anything to do with opening it?"

"Because you have a fucking sympathetic link to it," Magus replied angrily. "Damn it, do we really have to go over this? Even with your mind dulled, you're insufferable. We brought you down once; don't make this more difficult than it has to be. Besides, I've made sure you can't lie. Now, answer the question!"

Big Bang felt a chill run through him. At once, he recognized the sensation; an astral form had passed through his body. He'd worked out the signal earlier; if it was what he suspected, help was on the way. Or this could be one of his captors' spirits or mages attempting something on the astral plane. It was time to take a gamble. He'd just need to stall for time.

"The guardian appointed me as the bracelet's new protector," he replied, keeping his voice as monotone as possible. "This was after he told me what it did. What it had already done."

"And what's that?" Magus asked quickly, his tone laden with curiosity. Figment started to protest, but he cut across the elf. "Best to know what we're dealing with."

Big Bang heard Lenna shift somewhat impatiently. With practiced stealth, he worked a detection spell as subtly as he could and reached out with tenuous magical senses. He could feel them! His allies were closing in. Only a few more minutes to go.

"You would use it to win the election," Big Bang continued. "But it's far too dangerous to be used so frivolously."

"Frivolously?" Figment echoed. "Mr. Hernandez, you of all people should know of our struggle to make the world a better place."

"You don't seek to better the world," Big Bang retorted, though he kept his voice as dull as possible. "You seek to control it. And that's what this bracelet is. Ruin in the form of control. On its own, it can control a large handful of people, maybe a small building's worth. But I'm sure with the right rituals, you'll be able to expand that considerably."

"And what's your point?" Magus pressed. "I see nothing worth being worried about."

"My point is this isn't some tool a rad can use to scare up support," Big Bang replied. "The bracelet lets you take complete control of people, and you can't give it back. And without your direct input, they're just puppets with idle strings. They don't do anything on their own. They don't eat, they don't sleep, they don't even piss."

Big Bang let them digest his words for a moment. He could feel his allies closing in. The time to act was quickly approaching.

"How do you know this?" Lenna demanded, turning her head toward the open door slightly. She was probably receiving a report on her commlink.

"Because I opened the box," Big Bang replied, his voice regaining its usual, unnervingly pleasant inflection. As one, his captors tensed. "I analyzed the bracelet and verified what the spirit told me. And if you think I left it in the box on the likely chance that you'd eventually figure out a way to open it, I'm afraid you're sorely mistaken."

The sound of gunfire split the air outside. The assembled combat mages glanced at Magus for orders. "Fucking hell," he spat. "Hold him here. I'm going to go handle this myself. And you," he addressed the hanging prisoner. "Don't do anything stupid." Unslinging his halberd, he strode out toward the commotion, shoving the presumably empty box into the hands of one of the other mages.

Big Bang saw his opportunity. His gaze suddenly snapped into sharp focus. In one fluid motion, he released himself from his magical bonds and focused a spell on his nearby katana. Telekinetic fingers gripped the hilt, sending it hurtling from Figment's unsuspecting grasp directly into his hands as he landed sprightly on his feet, sinking into a practiced fighting stance. "Thanks for returning my sword, blue-eyes," he said cheerfully.

"The problem with dealing with someone of my caliber," Big Bang continued, locking eyes with Figment, "is that if your precautions fail, then you've just picked one hell of a fight. A hundred nuyen says I outlive you." And with that, he sprang forward amid the rising din.

... POWER BROKERS ...

The door to the ornate office in Confederate Studios swung open, followed by Vice President Eric LeMay with a number of other executives in tow. They engaged in some pleasantries and back slapping, then started to divide to head back to their own offices. Eric watched them go, then turned to his assistant. "Matt? I need to have a word with you."

Quickly closing some AROs only he could see, the executive assistant got up from his desk and followed his boss into the office. "Is there something wrong, sir?"

"You better believe there is. Look at this report I got from the Revenue Bureau on our campaign contributions for the last fiscal quarter. Do you see any irregularities there?"

After glancing at the report for a few seconds, Matt replied, "No, sir, I don't see a problem. Everything looks to be in order."

"Then why is it showing that we contributed to the campaigns of Jackson, Spencer, and Winterroth? None of the corporate officers support those candidates. Hell, I can't stand Spencer. So why is this showing we contributed money to their campaigns. I didn't authorize this."

"It's like there was some clerical error on the part of the Revenue Bureau—"

"Furthermore," interrupted LeMay, "why is this report showing we made campaign contributions of up to twelve million nuyen? Twelve *million*. What was allocated for campaign contributions was five million. Is there some kind of embezzlement going on here? Do I need to search the books? Do I need to call Lone Star? What the hell is this?"

If Matt was feeling any pressure or stress, he didn't show it. "Have you told anyone else about this report?"

"Not yet. I wanted to talk to you first. But something here stinks. I'm certain Lone Star would be able to get to the bottom of this." As LeMay reached for his commlink to call Lone Star, his hand froze in mid air. LeMay tried to will himself to reach for the commlink, but he remained physically unable to move.

"Eric," called out the executive assistant, with a force behind his words that was not there previously, "You are going to forget ever seeing that report. You are going to forget ever calling me into this meeting. You will be receiving a new report; one with the correct figures. You will not need to worry about a thing. Everything will be taken care of." Even as Matt constructed his spells to alter LeMay's memories, he deleted the report that the CAS Revenue Bureau had sent to his employer from his commlink. Manipulating a few more AROs, Matt erased the email from the company's node. As he completed his alterations to LeMay's memories and released his hold over him, Matt walked out of the office and placed a call using a commcode his corporate bosses knew nothing about.

"I need you to send LeMay a new report; one that matches the company's records. And we should call Atlanta, and let them know that report had not been changed before it went out."

"Yes, of course. It will be done, Warden."

Posted by: Plan 9

There were two other JackPointers who wanted to write this article; Snopes and Kay St. Irregular. Snopes, as you may recall, posted his *Powers That Be* section in the *Conspiracy Theories* file. Some of the things he posted overlap with the information here, which would have made him the ideal candidate for writing this so he could update or clarify things from his previous article. Unfortunately, Snopes is still evading those who took offense from his earlier posting (don't ask me how they found out about what Snopes posted here on JackPoint). The last thing I heard about Snopes was that he was in the Canary Islands. He is likely long gone from there by now, since news of his safe house has already spread. At this particular moment, Snopes does not appear to have the time to write long articles. Posting random responses to our bullshitting, yes, but not articles. Kay St., on the other hand, was going to work on this article, but an interesting angle from one of his jobs presented itself at the last minute, and he ran after it with great fervor (good luck, Kay St.!). So you guys get me instead! Huzzah!

- My opinion? Snopes got himself in trouble for not being discreet enough in his investigations and did something that got him noticed. But we should make sure there weren't any break-ins or anything. No offense, Jack, but you have not seemed to be at the top of your game lately.
- Sunshine
- None taken.
- FastJack
- Snopes seems to be plenty careful to me. After all, he's still breathing almost a year after he posted his stuff. So I doubt carelessness on his part is what caused him to land on someone's enemies list.
- Riser

There are thousands of major power brokers scattered around the world, in every field imaginable. The Catholic Church, for example, is a power broker in matters of faith and religion. In many nations, the Church has lobbyists who try to influence legislation that reflects Church doctrine, but they are more than that. In other parts of the world, particularly Bogotá, the Catholic Church appears to have taken a much more hands-on approach to shaping the political landscape in that South American city. Another example—Brokerage X is a power broker when it comes to the flow and manipulation of information. That organization is known for using paydata to manipulate markets and allow their investors to make millions based on the outcomes of shadowruns. Sometimes that drive for profit leads Brokerage X into the political sector as they use that paydata as leverage over politicians to either get laws changed in a way that further benefits their investors or give them access to insider information, which in turn makes their profits from their investments even greater.

The megacorporations, of course, are the most obvious of the power brokers, as they affect the quality and way of life of almost everyone on the planet. No one else, including nations, can rival their scope of power and influence. In the political arena, megacorporations have hundreds of billions of nuyen they

can throw around, using lobbyists across the world and political donations to make politicians dance to their tune. If politicians prove to be too idealistic to take what amounts to be a legal bribe, megacorporations can always make a promise of a cushy job with a significantly higher salary after the politicians' political careers are over ... provided the politician votes in ways that align with the megacorporation's agenda.

As the largest megacorporation in the world, Saeder-Krupp is the clear leader when it comes to throwing around power. Not only do they have a great dragon who carries great influence amongst his own kind, but they also have two seats on the Corporate Court and a seat on the New European Economic Community (NEEC). Saeder-Krupp wields this power with great effectiveness, making it much harder for outside megacorporations to compete with it in Europe. Recently, we witnessed how Horizon manipulated governments to delay enacting laws benefiting technomancers so that the only safe haven the technomancers could turn to would be Horizon itself, allowing Horizon to reap all sorts of the benefits from the technomancers' predicament. This type of influence happens every day around the world, affecting a wide variety of political issues.

Of course, there are also the more traditional political parties and lobbyists that have existed long before the megacorporations, who wield influence in the form of endorsements, organization, and campaign funds that can work to enslave politicians to their wills (at least, those that the megacorporations haven't already bought off for themselves). And then there are the great dragons, which are a whole new level of power brokers, and who may take years, decades, or even generations to manipulate people and events until their ultimate plans come to fruition.

Everyone typically either understands or simply accepts as fact the reach these relatively public groups might have, especially when it comes to the megacorporations and their Corporate Court. When the Corporate Court talks, everyone knows that nations have no choice but to listen, as their decisions can either be used to sustain, rejuvenate, or ruin their economies. But not everyone is aware of the reach of the shadow groups I'm going to talk about. Many of these groups work far under the radar; with many of their members working outside the scope of public scrutiny. In many cases, we here at JackPoint don't know about them either. They usually work through dummy corporations, fake datatrails, forged documents, secret meetings, and fake identities to accomplish their hidden agendas. They infiltrate institutions such as governments with impunity, often times working their way up from the bottom up into the highest levels. This often takes years, but these individuals gain vast amounts of knowledge of the inner workings of the systems they infiltrate. This knowledge makes it easier for these groups to effectively manipulate organizations once they have advanced through the bureaucracy into positions of authority.

In other cases, these groups work on having their members elected to public office. Once their members are elected, they are entrenched for years as career politicians. They are rarely exposed for what they are, allowing them to wield ever more power to get what they want.

These groups seek to manipulate national laws for their own ends. They often take advantage of the fact that in politics, so much happens every day that it is nearly impossible to keep



track of everything. Typically, the only signs they leave behind that they might be active, particularly in politics, are the subtle changes they make to policy. Their favorite tactics usually include adding amendments to bills that are rarely read, burying language deep in several hundred pages of legislation that most politicians do not take the time to read before they pass. These groups also make it a point to tack on unrelated amendments to popular bills, so that if the bill is certain to pass, so will any potentially controversial amendments attached to it. These amendments to these bills may seem innocuous at first, and likely they are, but as more laws are passed with more of these subtle changes, far-reaching change can occur; change that many politicians might cry foul over if the changes were done all at once in one single bill. Sneaky, eh? Many of these groups enjoy the freedom of being patient over time while acting in ways that will not get them caught. Or they tend to give their bills misleading names, filled with buzzwords that are sure to get the piece of legislation passed based on perception alone, despite the fact that the bill may have other consequences that the non-sponsoring politicians never intended.

The subtle ways in which these groups operate makes them particularly dangerous. The best thing we can do is expose them and their members, which is exactly what I intend to do. I just hope I don't end up incurring the same wrath Snopes is now feeling.

- Don't forget about all the loopholes. Politicians like to make us think loopholes in how the laws are written are inadvertent, but there's just so many of them that it is only logical to assume that many of them are intentionally designed that way, especially when they just so happen to benefit the politicians. This includes everything from tax laws to campaign finance laws.
- Doctor Spin

THE BLACK LODGE

Ah yes, the Black Lodge. Let's start there. We all know they are traditionally one of conspiracy theorists' favorite bogeymen (I should know; they are indeed on my personal top-five list). We know they exist. They have chantries spread out all across the world, including at Georgetown University in the Washington DeeCee area. From what has been shared on Shadowland and ShadowSea based on runs that have been carried out against the Black Lodge over the years, we believe that the Black Lodge possesses a substantial membership (even though we can only identify a mere handful of Black Lodge insiders; the rest of them remain cloaked in anonymity). According to the Matrix sites they use to recruit Awakened students to their ranks, the Black Lodge publicly acknowledges a membership of about one thousand members spread across a dozen or so cities. Most runners know that this number is a mere fraction of their true membership. As Snopes mentioned in his article, it is widely believed the Black Lodge has an actual membership of close to ten thousand, if not more. Without knowing the exact number of members that the Black Lodge has at its disposal to use as its own personal army, we may never be able to fully uncover just how far the Black Lodge's reach extends into our civilization. But hopefully my piece on the Black Lodge and how they may be impacting upcoming elections will paint a clearer picture of their activities and their agenda, and hopefully start giving us some new threads that we may be able to

start to unravel this global conspiracy before it comes back to bite us all in the ass, like what happened with Winternight a decade ago.

- I was hired to take a look at the Black Lodge's records following what happened with the Dunkelzahn/Washington/Watergate Rift last year. Despite having heavy Matrix security, when I finally got into the nodes for the Georgetown chantry, I found no mind-blowing secrets there whatsoever. All spells, foci, ritual materials were legal, all permits were up to date and in order, and there were no signs that any illicit activities were happening on the grounds. If Knight Errant was to do a raid on that chantry house, they too would find nothing criminal. I also did a thorough check of commlinks that were coming and going from the chantry house, including the commlink belonging to the head of the Georgetown chantry, a woman named Alexandra Kennedy, who is a person you would think would have secrets worth stealing. Again, she had a military-grade commlink, which was a bitch to hack into, but even after all that time I spent hacking it, I found nothing of value. All the commlinks I checked over a month's period of time were clean. It was as if they were intentionally using their nodes and commlinks as a misdirect to waste my time. I found no other hidden nodes to be broken into. I spent all my time trying to check their digital files, when I suppose I should have been checking their scrolls, tomes, and other hard-copy correspondence at their other sites for paydata, including Monticello and Mount Vernon. But I hear that in those places, the magical security is so tough that it isn't even worth the risk.
- Glitch
- Sometimes doing things old school works.
- Fastjack
- Wasn't there a run that was directed at Monticello shortly after the Dunkelzahn Rift was closed? What was the outcome of that?
- /dev/girl
- There was, and it would seem a runner team was successful in removing seven scrolls from the library at Monticello. Those scrolls allegedly contained the Black Lodge's "master ritual" that they wanted to use in conjunction with the now-famous four artifacts. The scrolls were delivered to representatives of both the Draco Foundation and the DIMR. The problem is those documents did not stay there long. In less than twenty-four hours, those scrolls disappeared, along with all digital copies of the scrolls and all research notes. Whoever did it, they left no signs of a break-in. And the DIMR researcher who began work on the text of those scrolls "conveniently" became victim number six for the blood mage identified as Emma Jean Chevalier. When something unfortunate happens to the Black Lodge, they don't seem to wait very long to get it cleaned up with a certain surgical precision. No one knows if those scrolls were ever returned to Monticello or if they were moved for their security to another Black Lodge holding. But whatever the case, neither the Draco Foundation nor the DIMR have access to those scrolls and their secrets now.
- Frosty
- Do we even know for certain if it was the Black Lodge that recovered those scrolls? They would hold almost as much value



to other magical circles as the Sextant or the Phaistos Disc. I could easily see the Illuminates of the New Dawn making a play for them, especially given the rivalries between the two magic groups. And the Illuminates would likely have a decent amount of resources to be able to cover it up, and to make everyone think it was the Black Lodge covering up the loss of its scrolls.

- Fianchetto
- I don't care who stole the scrolls from the Draco Foundation and the DIMR. Someone used a blood mage to kill that researcher. That should be the headline here. This clearly shows how far these secret societies are willing to go to achieve their objectives, and the ends they will go to when using others to cover up for their crimes. And the fact they can potentially influence blood mages and use them as instruments to help them reach their end goals is absolutely chilling. For me, this example only goes to show why these guys and their unparalleled level of ambition should never possess any kind of power, whether it be political or magical. Combining both is a very bad idea.
- Axis Mundi
- The thought occurred to me. Those thousand members that the Black Lodge boasts about on their recruitment sites—were you able to find records of those so-called members? Are they full-fledged lodge members, or do they appear on paper to be merely part of the public facade—the window dressing, so to speak, helping the Black Lodge make their activities look harmless and full of genuine academic merit?
- Winterhawk
- I checked into a few of them, and it's really hard to tell how involved any of them are from their files alone. Those I checked had squeaky-clean backgrounds. They appear from any level of scrutiny to be young, idealistic, college-age students, who have yet to make a significant impression in the world. Most are still interns and low level professionals, with no significant amounts of nuyen in their bank accounts. And yes, I am aware that is the perfect placement for the newbies. But it looks (again, on paper) like the training they were receiving from the Georgetown chantry is the kind of thing that any other magic group could provide. Based on the records I've seen, there is nothing nefarious or ominous about it. It's possible that these one thousand members are really washouts, and that even though they are Awakened, they lack the character qualities and skills necessary to be successful Lodge members. After all, ask any con man (or face), and they'll tell you it takes a specific set of skills and talents to be able to successfully pull off a long con, especially at the Black Lodge's level. So it is possible that they just use these Awakened people as a smokescreen in order to conceal those few that are the actual Lodge members.
- Glitch
- Here's an interesting piece of paydata that I've heard in campus-based chantry houses of the Black Lodge. From what I can tell, these chantries do not track any alumni in any of its records. Once the recruit has proceeded as far as they could in their academic career and graduated, their records are stricken from the Black Lodge's holdings, as if the individual no longer existed.

So it lends some credibility to the theory that the Black Lodge doesn't want to stay in contact with any of its recruits once they have graduated. They apparently want to make it look like once graduation is over, all ties to the recruits are broken. We know, though, that this is not the case.

- Jimmy No
- It sounds to me like all the Black Lodge's computer records are bogus. Seriously, why risk exposure for any of their initiated members, who will end up becoming their deep-cover moles? What's to stop them from just grabbing a bunch of names and SINS from the registrar's office and forging documents to claim them as members and give their lodge an appearance of legitimacy? All the while keeping the true identities of the initiates secret? Who's going to bother checking on a student to see if they are really a member of this magic fraternity? I really doubt any true members of the Black Lodge will put them down as a résumé reference. If a recruit is a true member of the Black Lodge, they have the reach to make things happen for that person that will benefit the lodge. Even if the false records become an issue, the Black Lodge has proven on more than one occasion that they have the ability to kill an investigation before it threatens them. I'm glad to hear you didn't check into too many of those alleged members, Glitch. Wouldn't want them identifying you as a threat.
- Thorn
- You know, that number of a thousand members seems to have been around for quite a while. Do we believe it still to be accurate? Or could the Black Lodge have opened up additional lodges and expanded their group even further, perhaps by a couple hundred or even thousand?
- Frosty
- Magic users are still fairly rare. Truly talented magic users are even more rare. It's hard to recruit significant numbers from that small of a population, especially when you're also competing with the likes of the megacorporations and governments for that same pool of talent, all while hoping to remain anonymous. This is probably the main reason the Black Lodge hasn't exploded in its numbers, and why they likely don't have control of everything ... yet.
- Lyran
- Your reasoning is sound, Lyran, only if the Black Lodge is recruiting Awakened solely from campus universities, and not active in recruiting from inside corporations and governments that they have already infiltrated. If they are engaged in the latter activity, which I believe they are, then they have greatly expanded the pool of potential recruits to select from without the threat of discovery. And plus, if they recruit someone who is already inside the corporation or government who has already been established based on their own merit and not from any help the Black Lodge could offer, it makes tracking any connections between the Black Lodge and the new recruit in the future even harder.
- Stone

Based on speculation alone, many believe the Black Lodge to be the largest magic group known to metahumanity. We believe them to be extremely proficient at absorbing the



traditions of various other secret societies, both modern and historical, including the Freemasons, the medicine societies from the NAN, and the Knights Templar, and they are able to implement those traditions seamlessly into its own customs and strictures. The Black Lodge's ability to cross cultural and social barriers and function cohesively as a group should give all of us reason to be concerned. Many suspect their organization goes back centuries, if not longer. They have had more than enough time to infiltrate all aspects of our civilization with their members, without us even knowing. And we suspect that the Black Lodge is invested in not only world domination, but is also determined in transforming it into an Awakened-centered and Awakened-controlled civilization.

Snopes did a really good job talking about the Black Lodge in the *Conspiracy Theories* file. Which is one of the reasons I think it may be the Black Lodge that's going after Snopes. Snopes dared to talk about a particular lodge that entrenched itself in the UCAS Congress. This was something that the Black Lodge went to great lengths to cover up last year. In July 2073, when the secret recording of this lodge occurred and made its way onto ShadowSea, it was quickly removed. Even corporations that may have had some access to it thanks to their shadow assets chose not to touch the story, deciding against exposing the members of the UCAS Congress for who and what they were. This speaks volumes, because each of the Congress critters involved with the secret society had concealed their Awakened status from the UCAS government when they initially ran for public office. In the UCAS, that's a felony-level offense. If the Black Lodge members had been revealed, seven of the most powerful politicians in the Federal District of Columbia would have either resigned or been impeached, which would have thrown the UCAS government into utter disarray. That is a type of story that makes reporters' careers, just like Watergate did for Woodward and Bernstein in the old United States. All this could have happened, but in the end the story never went beyond ShadowSea or JackPoint. With a recording as scandalous as this, one would think rival parties (including the Illuminates of the New Dawn's New Century Party) would have made campaign hay out of this recording. And yet, not even the political parties touched it. In the past year, there have only been a few instances where this recording has popped back up on the Matrix, and each time it is quickly taken down before it spreads any further. There were rumors of an official Department of Justice investigation that was being put together to look into the recording, but when it appeared that the cover up had been successful, the investigation was quietly killed and the status quo was maintained. If that doesn't scream massive power and influence on the part of the Black Lodge to be able to cover up something of this magnitude, than I don't know what does.

- Keep in mind that Kay St. Irregular knew a lot of these people when he was on Capitol Hill, and they even had Kay fooled for years. If you know anything about Kay and how diligent he is in gathering accurate and useful paydata and knowing everything he can find out about the people he is dealing with, that is saying a lot about how the Black Lodge operates and just how good they are at concealing their membership.
- Pistons

- Honestly, I don't think the people going after Snopes are the Black Lodge. Sure, Snopes dared to talk about them. But I was the one that posted the recording. And to my knowledge, these shadowy figures haven't come after me. It would only be logical that if they went after Snopes, they would come after me, too. And they haven't.
- Sunshine
- Not yet, anyway.
- Plan 9
- So can anyone give me a good reason why this recording was not used in this year's elections? I'm sorry, the Black Lodge telling people not to touch it doesn't hold water for me when it comes to the political parties, especially when using that recording would likely pay off in getting their candidates elected to office, and getting the incumbents from the other parties kicked out. And the offices we are talking about, particularly in the UCAS Congress, are not minor offices. These are offices that had a lot of power attached to them. You would think the political parties would simply suffer through any retaliation the Black Lodge threatened against them in the short term for some very long-term payoffs.
- Winterhawk
- Politics doesn't necessarily work that way. If the Black Lodge has as much clout as Plan 9 seems to imply, a lot of it likely comes from knowing other people's (and other parties') dirty little secrets to use as leverage. So they've probably told those parties, "Guess what. You have this recording. Great. We have all these other secrets of your candidates that we can use against them. If you use the recording, we'll use the secrets we have to bury them, making your chances to win future elections even harder." The Black Lodge likely wagered that the political parties would cave in the light of the them being willing to carry out a scorched-earth policy. So, in the interest of keeping their skeletons firmly in the closet, the political parties likely backed down and allowed the recording to be forgotten. But I'll admit, those secrets must be either pretty embarrassing or pretty damning for the political parties to simply back down from using the recording during an election year. Could be worth a couple runs to find out exactly what those secrets were.
- Kay St. Irregular

So now, we have unequivocal evidence that the Black Lodge has indeed infiltrated the UCAS Congress, and that they have been active on Capitol Hill for at least two decades. As I pointed out in the past, this does not mean that the Black Lodge is limited in the scope of its activities to just the UCAS Congress. Rather, the lodge that is active on Capitol Hill now is the only one to have been successfully caught red-handed. From what we believe to be true about the Black Lodge, it operates using a tiered system, with different lodges representing different levels. From the recording, this particular lodge was identified as being a Lodge of Morgana, which is believed to be a particularly high level in the Black Lodge ranks. In a city like DeeCee, there is lots of room for more than one tier of the Black Lodge to operate. You have the Supreme Court and the judicial branch, the executive branch at 1600 Pennsylvania, lobbyist firms, think tanks, embassies from



the various megacorporations as well as other nations, and you have the various central offices for the UCAS agencies themselves. This leaves the Black Lodge ample room to operate and ample opportunities to hide within the established bureaucracy. The Black Lodge may very well have only a finite number of members as initiates to be able to do things within any government, but their potent magical talent can extend the reach the Black Lodge has even further within the UCAS government through the calculated use of pervasive magic techniques such as the influence, control thoughts, and control actions spells on any number of mundane (and helpless) government workers. Even spirits can be used to extend this reach. And this is only the UCAS. We haven't even started talking about nations like the CAS, Pueblo, the Sioux Nation, or Aztlan, nations with almost as large of a bureaucracy as the UCAS has, and which are just as likely targets for Black Lodge infiltration. So with the Black Lodge operating at a global level, where do we even begin searching for the power brokers within the Black Lodge? Where should we start, when a vast number of their members are unknown to us, and where they can be anyone and can be anywhere?

For my part, I started with the obvious: the seven Members of the UCAS Congress who were inadvertently confirmed as Black Lodge members by that one recording (Joseph Ellis, Jennifer Henry, Samantha Payne, Richard Franklin, Thomas Lincoln, Nathaniel Sherman, and Samuel Ruthledge). I decided it would be a good idea to take a good, hard look at the datatrails that their campaigns are forced to maintain in the form of campaign finance reports. Obviously, the UCAS campaign laws leave much to be desired and are written in such a way as to allow for very flimsy and inaccurate records of whoever is contributing money in the national campaigns. For example, under UCAS law, anonymous individual contributor donations are still permitted. An individual can contribute up to ten thousand nuyen per campaign cycle to a campaign and remain anonymous. Anything above that amount, and the individual's name and SIN have to be reported (there's the separate matter of political action committees, but let's not make this any more complicated than it needs to be). But despite the rather dubious nature of the records, I still felt there could be something to be learned from them. So I procured the current and past campaign finance reports for not only the seven Black Lodge members, but for all current and past UCAS Congress members over the last ten years (campaign finance reports from previous years were conveniently lost during the Crash 2.0) for the sake of comparison, and to see if there was any kind of pattern or strategy that the Black Lodge might be using to fund their members' campaigns. And sure enough, I found that my theory was correct. Since 2064, in each of the elections in which the seven UCAS members were involved, they each received nearly eight times as many anonymous campaign contributions as their opponents. This was consistent in each election year for every one of the seven UCAS Congressional members. Obviously, I don't hold proof, but it would make sense that the Black Lodge would be responsible for those greater numbers of anonymous contributions to their campaigns, with the donations being perfectly legal and perfectly untraceable.

I then ran through the corporate contributions to see if I could find any connections between specific corporations and what they gave to these seven Black Lodge politicians in the

form of campaign donations. And once again, I struck gold. I found fourteen A and AA corporations that donated large sums of nuyen specifically to these seven politicians over the course of ten years (at close to one million nuyen per each candidate per election cycle). Three of these fourteen corporations are notable subsidiaries of three particular megacorporations: Aztechnology, Evo, and NeoNET. It's true that all these corporations donated nuyen to other political candidates who were not on this Black Lodge list, but those contributions were not nearly as high or as consistent as those contributions that were going to these seven UCAS politicians. Some would say these corporations were just trying to hedge their bets by supporting the candidates of the parties currently in power and then offering nuyen to other, smaller parties just in case there should be a reversal of political fortunes in an election cycle that might allow one of the minority parties to gain political power, and thus serve as a way to avoid political retaliation for the corporations supporting the "other guys." While that argument could be made, I personally feel this was yet another smokescreen made by the Black Lodge to try to conceal their organization's direct connections to these corporations. The fourteen companies that are consistently giving campaign funds to the Black Lodge politicians include: ABS (American Broadcast Service), AN Meridian, UCASRail, Table Top Travel, Talbot Security Vehicles, United Defense Industries, Inc., UCAS Steel and Manufacturing, Trans Orbital, Thomas Lake Mining & Oil, Textron Inc, Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation, a UCAS-based branch of Aztechnology's Mystics and Magicks subsidiary, Evo's ATRP (Investment firm, UCAS Branch), and NeoNET's Silveril Investments.

Now bear with me on this, as there is more to this investigation. The obvious assumption to be made here is that since there's been a reliable pattern of large campaign contributions being made to these seven members of Congress over time, these corporations must clearly have been infiltrated by the Black Lodge. But there could be a problem with that theory. Digging a little further, I discovered an irregularity between these corporations' records for campaign contributions and the UCAS campaign finance records. What I found was that over the span of those ten years, these corporations never actually contributed any of their own funds from their operating accounts to these seven politicians. All the smaller contributions made to the other, less high-profile UCAS politicians appeared to be legitimate and were drawn from their corporate accounts. The much larger funds that were paid out to the Black Lodge candidates came from different accounts tied to fake SINs, and those accounts have long since been closed out. These accounts did not appear to have any connections with the corporations at all. It was as if someone used funds from other sources but used the corporations' name and tax information to donate those funds, effectively using them as front companies for the Black Lodge. And since no corporate funds went missing for these contributions, no internal audits by the corporations in question would have caught the duplicity right away. This could actually mean a few different things. First, the individuals whose names appear on the contribution forms could have simply been complacent and submitted the bogus funds willingly because they are Lodge members. Each of the individuals involved hold positions where they could easily cover up any discrepancies associated with these contributions. Alternately, they could have





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been compelled by someone else within their respective companies to make those contributions for the Black Lodge, which then allowed the true culprits to remain anonymous. They too could have buried any discrepancies from being discovered. A third possibility is that those transactions could have occurred from the outside, as the Black Lodge could have obtained the appropriate information from hackers, forged the necessary documents, and used these individuals as patsies to transfer their funds to their members' campaigns without the Black Lodge having any direct connection to these corporations whatsoever. In this scenario, the Black Lodge would have had to work a little harder to cover up the discrepancies from the corporation, but this would also make finding the connections to the Black Lodge more difficult.

Utilizing other shadow assets, I acquired the corporate tax returns for the corporations in question that were required to pay UCAS taxes during those election years. I discovered that none of the corporations ever claimed the fraudulent campaign contributions on their taxes. And from what I could tell, none of the corporations ever got flagged for the discrepancies with the campaign contributions; they didn't even receive a single tax audit. All this tells me is that at some level, there is Black Lodge collusion with these corporations and that somewhere, there are major cover-ups of serious financial irregularities. Just precisely what the nature of that involvement is remains up for debate. I have not been able to find the time to thoroughly investigate each of these individuals to determine what the case is, but this appears to be a legitimate thread we can use to find more of the power brokers within the Black Lodge. The names of these individuals and their positions within their respective corporations as they appear on

the most recent UCAS campaign finance documents are: Arthur Kimberlin, Vice President, ABS; Madison Hilyard, Operations Manager, AN Meridian; Evelyn Warner, Executive Director, UCASRail; Aiden Pendley, Executive Manager, Table Top Travel; Matthew Fletcher, COO, Talbot Security Vehicles; Natalie Tetreault, CFO, United Defense Industries, Inc; Julian Alfonso, Office Manager, UCAS Steel and Manufacturing; Lorrie West, Executive Assistant; Trans Orbital; Charles Erwin, Vice President, Thomas Lake Mining and Oil; Alicia Ridgway, CFO, Textron Inc.; Brandon Wells, President, Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation; Damien Marquez; Director, Mystics and Magicks; Daniel Weber, CMO, ATRP and William Bell, President, Selter Investments.

- Damn. That sounds like a lot of tedious number crunching. I would only consider doing that for pay, and it would have to be a lot of pay. I wouldn't even think about doing all this work as a hobby.
- Slamm-0!
- Politicians tend to roll in circles with deep pockets. To find corruption, you almost always have to check their financial records. If you're not willing to sort through hundreds of files, and thousands of pages of numbers, than you probably should look for different types of jobs. The only thing I would caution is that the Black Lodge isn't the only organization that has a vested interest in having politicians, especially judges, on the take. Trying to track the Black Lodge in this fashion, you're bound to encounter other parties that have invested in the futures of certain politicians. Namely, your investigation might run you smack dab into organized crime. The Mafia, the Vory, the Triads, the Yakuza, etc. I

cannot stress this enough: tread lightly with these investigations, as you start dealing with some very dangerous people.

- Sticks
- Slamm-O!, if I don't do this investigation, I sure as hell can't count on anyone else to do it. My part of this investigation has taken a lot of man-hours. Nearly a year, in fact. Corporations like Knight Errant and Lone Star wouldn't want to do this type of investigation, because it doesn't come with an immediate payoff like an arrest, and it consumes a lot of resources. For LS or KE, that's not good for their bottom line. It wouldn't serve their interests to tie up their resources for this long. But maybe what I present here can get the ball rolling, and more people will start looking into and asking questions about the activities of the Black Lodge, which in turn gives them fewer opportunities to conceal their shadowy activities. That, for me, is a win. The last thing any of us should want is for them to turn into another Winternight.
- Plan 9

Using what I had found with the UCAS government as a template, I took a look at three other nations in North America: the Confederation of American States, the Pueblo Corporate Council and the Republic of Quebec. I wanted to find if there were similar irregularities, and to potentially find other sources of Black Lodge activity in North America. With the Confederation of American States having campaign laws that are similar to the UCAS, they were the logical ones to look at next. Unfortunately, I didn't have a convenient recording of a secret meeting telling me where to start looking within the CAS government. So instead of being targeted, I had to make a broad search and look for patterns. In CAS campaign finance laws, anonymous individual campaign donations are illegal, but in the case of individual contributions that are less than five thousand nuyen, the reported names and SINs only get a cursory review by CAS election officials. So long as the contributions aren't tied to a criminal SIN, CAS officials won't dig any further into the identities of those making those donations. As I was doing my research into the campaign finance records, I found a significantly high numbers of fake SINs and fake identities used to hand off campaign funds to CAS politicians. So for all intents and purposes, all those individual contributions made under the five thousand nuyen limit were basically anonymous thanks to the use of those fake SINs. Comparing the levels of these contributions to those of the seven UCAS Congressional members known as Black Lodge members, I found three CAS Members of Congress with similar campaign financing trends versus their rivals: Senator Anya Jackson (Democratic Reform Party), Senator Lane Spencer (CAS Republican Party) and Representative Emory Winterroth (Southern Democrats). Senator Jackson serves on the Senate Intelligence Committee in the CAS Senate, Senator Spencer serves on the CAS Foreign Affairs committee, and CAS Representative Winterroth serves on the House Appropriations Committee.

Being as meticulous as I am, I also checked the corporate donations. Not only did I find five CAS corporations donating to all three of these candidates over the past ten years, but I also found the names of two familiar megacorporate subsidiaries on those reports: ATRP and Silveril Investments. Interesting, no? The same people who had authorized the UCAS transactions

were also responsible for authorizing the CAS transactions: Weber and Bell. As far as the Aztechnology subsidiary being missing from this list, I attribute its absence to the fact that any contributions coming from any Aztechnology-associated subsidiary would be a major scandal in CAS politics, one I would think anyone within the Black Lodge would be smart enough to avoid. In addition to ATRP and Silveril Investments, the following individuals and CAS-based companies contributed large sums of nuyen to these three suspected Black Lodge-affiliated CAS politicians: Darryl Strider, CFO, Barrett Firearms Manufacturing Inc; Jennifer Davin, Executive Manager, BelTV; Ted Corrado, President, Black Cat Cargo Lines; Kelly Birchstrom, Executive Assistant, Business Computers International and Eric LeMay, Vice President, Confederate Studios. With the war chests Jackson, Spencer, and Winterroth have from these individual and corporation donations, it is almost a guarantee that these members will once again win reelection.

- It should be pointed out that just like the UCAS members of Congress, the three members of the CAS Congress are also 100 percent mundane. [/sarcasm]
- Slamm-O!
- Three out of what, seven lodge members? Makes me wonder where the other four are, assuming Plan 9's analysis is right and they are Black Lodge members.
- Kia
- Who knows. Maybe they haven't been elected yet. Or maybe they are members of their staffs. Like Plan 9 has said, there are an infinite number of places for Black Lodge members to hide. Unfortunately, in the case of appointees and unelected bureaucrats, they don't leave money trails. And it could be that the Black Lodge wants to spread their members out, so there's less of a chance of them all being compromised, like the Lodge of Morgana in the UCAS was.
- Icarus

I then looked at the Pueblo Corporate Council. At the start of 2074, three members of Pueblo's Board of Directors were exposed as have committed acts of public corruption on the behalf of the Koshari. These individuals—Dasan Black, Gad Falleaf, and Lapu Corbray—were subsequently tried and convicted on multiple counts of public corruption and sent to jail for lengthy prison sentences. A fourth member, Ezekiel Gallipo, retired in May of this year. Each of these four Board Members had to be replaced in special shareholder elections. The winners in those shareholder votes had to run campaigns and buy expensive ads to win those elections, like any other democracy. And I was curious to know where all that nuyen came from. The first candidate, a Zuni man named Maxwell Olivas, seems to be independently wealthy and owns four large ranches near Santa Fe. Olivas does not appear to have any connections to any suspected Black Lodge activities, so I doubt he is a Board Member that will work for their interests. Olivas is also believed to be mundane. On the other hand, the other three raised my suspicions. One of the new members of the Pueblo Board, a Laguna tribal member named Amelia Lopez, spent thirty years of her adult life working as an investment broker




for Evo's ATRP firm. She became a regional administrator for the past ten years of her career before retiring and choosing to move into politics. Under any normal circumstances, I may not have found any reason to question Lopez's background. It was all pretty typical for a paper pusher. But given how many times ATRP seems to be coming up in my investigation of the Black Lodge and how long Lopez worked for ATRP, it should be considered more than just a coincidence. Her former company did contribute substantially to her campaign. Unlike the UCAS or CAS politicians, Amelia Lopez has acknowledged publicly that she is a hermetic mage.

The other two new Board Members, Victor Melendez and Gilbert Rosendo, each disclosed having significant investments with Silveril Investments, in addition to having accounts with other firms. They also admitted during the election to having investments with BANCOMEX, an Aztechnology subsidiary, which caused some consternation amongst the Pueblo shareholders. As a result of various rules, Melendez and Rosendo could not receive campaign contributions from those entities that they were invested in (the Black Lodge seems to have played by the rules this time). But in the end, both Melendez and Rosendo were elected to the Board of Directors, albeit with razor thin margins. Both Melendez and Rosendo have both admitted that they are shamans, with Melendez claiming to be an Eagle shaman (something I seriously doubt) and Rosendo claims to follow the Owl totem. Although several Pueblo corporations had given to their campaigns, five corporations seemed to give an unusually high amount of nuyen to these three candidates (including Lopez). The corporations and the individuals responsible for those campaign contributions include: Penelope Gressett; Operations Manager, EEX; Neil Fierros, COO, Hilton Hotels Corporation; Ted Penaflor, Regional Manager, Lockheed Corporation; Alfredo Gomez, Vice President, Tablelands Software; and Gabriel Ferrarotti, Operations Manager, WorldVision. As a precaution, I checked the records for the Chairman and the other sitting Board Members. Although there are a number of discrepancies within many of their records, I attribute those more to the Koshari, the Illuminates of the New Dawn, and possibly to the Kachina Society as opposed to the Black Lodge.

Finally, in my year-long investigation of the Black Lodge, I decided to take a look at the Republic of Quebec. Its members are elected officials, and frankly, we haven't been paying enough attention to what's going on up there. So I figured it was time to shed some light onto Quebec's governmental system and see if the Black Lodge had extended its reach into that part of North America. After overcoming some initial obstacles in obtaining the campaign finance records for Quebec's politicians (apparently they don't believe in releasing those records to people living outside their nation) and then translating them all into English from their preferred French language, I got to work looking for what I've established as the Black Lodge's pattern. I checked records again going back ten years. Out of the one hundred and twenty five deputies of the National Assembly, I found five deputies that had extraordinarily high levels of individual campaign contributions; most of which appeared to have come from those with really convincing fake SINS or from those who recently died. Although the Quebec government tends to crack down on those irregularities, in these five cases, they did nothing.

The five deputies whom I suspect of being involved with the Black Lodge are: Sébastien Edgard Cloutier (Démocrates Mondains Party), Béatrice Desrochers (Green Party), Thiern Sauvage (Parti Québécois), Rémy Harman (Green Party), and Jeanine Fauchoux (Démocrates Mondains). In addition to the irregular individual contributions, I found the typical pattern with the corporate donations. Each of these five received contributions from ATRP, Silveril Investments, and Mystics and Magicks. There are five Quebec-based corporations that have been regularly contributing to these campaigns over the last decade. Their names, including those of the individuals on the reporting forms, include: Clair Gaubert-Beaumont, CFO, MultiOcto Corporation; Adrienne Lefebvre, Executive Director, VIA Rail; Tristan Vespasien Vipond, Dean, L'Institut Thaumaturgique de Québec; Hélène Dufort, Operations Manager, Tridéovision Quatre Elements, and Lieutenant Césaire Mynatt, Public Relations, Gendarmerie. And yes, you read that write. Gendarmerie, the branch of Lone Star that is the official police force for Quebec, is making campaign contributions to these five specific politicians within these very diverse political parties. Strictly speaking, this is against the law in Quebec. But it is happening anyway and no one seems to be picking up on it, which suggests even more collusion with the Black Lodge.

So why does this all matter? Well, let's examine what the Black Lodge has been doing while working behind the scenes and behind the facades of politicians and political parties. According to the secret recording from Capitol Hill, at some point the Black Lodge gained access to both Mount Vernon and Monticello, two sites of great importance in American history. This could not have happened without some sort of government complacency, quite possibly brought about by Black Lodge pressure. These sites will likely be perverted toward some other Black Lodge purpose. With government access, the Black Lodge can use government assets like the FBI as their pawns. On the secret recording of the politicians on Capitol Hill, Speaker of the House Joseph Ellis refers to "their friends" in the FBI when it came to dealing with the hunt for those now notorious artifacts. It may just be me, but the FBI or any law enforcement agency should not be used as some secret society's private muscle. Rumors persist that the Black Lodge is taking advantage of their positions of power to gain access to greater amounts of reagents; particularly the illegal kind. With Quebec in its pocket, any of the paranormal critters that have had bounties collected on their heads could result in the Black Lodge harvesting those pelts for reagents, greater numbers of resources that they wouldn't have had access to if they hadn't infiltrated the government. Some rumors claim that the Black Lodge is deliberately hunting down dragon reagents; the exotic reagents that most talismongers are now looking desperately to get rid of. Government contacts could make that search easier; particularly if governmental law enforcement agencies such as the UCAS FBI or the CAS' Department of Domestic Investigation have ongoing investigations into smuggling, talislegging, or poaching rings that talismongers frequently rely on. Not to mention that with their infiltration in these powerful governments, the Black Lodge may have access to any number of the ritual materials and magical gear such as spells or foci confiscated during law enforcement raids. With access like that, we have no idea of



what they can or cannot do, and we have no idea how the Black Lodge intends to use these things to advance their agenda. And of course, we are not even talking about the classified stuff that governments routinely are involved in that they keep us in the dark about. I am not sure the Black Lodge or any other secret society should have any access to those classified materials. In the world that we live in, it is very much true that the shit that we do not know can get us very much dead. I absolutely do not want the Black Lodge to have this power over me, or over the rest of civilization. It is just far too dangerous.

To prove just how dangerous the Black Lodge likely is, I decided after Snopes' report in the *Conspiracy Theories* file to check up on some hunches I had regarding Awakened prisoners. It took months of research to obtain and scour through UCAS, CAS, Pueblo and Quebec governmental information on Awakened inmates. Again, I scoured ten years worth of records. It wasn't easy, as I literally had hundreds of thousands of records to go through. But what I found was pretty unnerving. Between 2064 and the present day, the UCAS federal penitentiary system could not account for nearly one hundred and twenty federal Awakened prisoners. In nearly all the cases, they were either given early release before they were technically eligible for such a thing, or they were listed as having died while in prison. Unfortunately, whoever forged the records for those Awakened prisoners did not do a great job. There were inconsistencies on the witness statements, medical reports, and death certificates. To me, it seemed as though whoever forged these documents was hoping that the sheer number of prisoner records would discourage too many people from giving the forgeries too close of a look. But they didn't count on me!

As we all know, sometimes the government springs individuals from prison because they want their services as runners. This is nothing new. But these one hundred and twenty Awakened prisoners felt different to me. A few were runners that were busted, but most were not. It felt as though they were released because they were Awakened, and that they could be of use to the Black Lodge for their magical talent. And unfortunately, the UCAS was not the only nation to "misplace" their Awakened prisoners. In the CAS, there were forty-five Awakened prisoners who were unaccounted for. In Pueblo, that number was only ten. But with the addition of these new board members with alleged Black Lodge connections, that number can easily skyrocket. I will be keeping an eye out for that. And in Quebec, eighty Awakened prisoners are no longer confined within their penal system. And again, this does not cover any of the secret prisons these nations may have housing their most dangerous of prisoners.

What you should gather from my year's worth of fact-finding is that the Black Lodge is extraordinarily powerful, has been very active in leveraging its influence as a power broker, and has been taking real steps to reach their objectives (whatever they may be). With the Black Lodge wielding their anonymity like a weapon, they can be as dangerous and as deadly as any dragon alive. And keep in mind, I was only able to do research on a handful of nations. This could be happening in a countless number of nations and hundreds of cities around the world. This cannot be allowed to continue, as it won't be good for any of us—except for those among us who are in the thrall of the Black Lodge.

- Can we play Accuse Each Other of Being in a Secret Conspiracy? The winner is the first person who accuses me of being part of the Illuminati!
- Slamm-O!

HUMAN NATION

Ever since the Human Nation allegedly attempted to destroy a site in Madagascar believed to hold a repository for dragon eggs, the Human Nation has had nearly eighty of its most influential members exposed in public (apparently as punishment for their infraction). For a secret society, this has not been a good thing. The most prominent members to have been outed so far have included UCAS Secretary of the Treasury Brenda Ogawa, CAS Vice President Lowery Grimes, Mitsuhama shareholder Shin Yuruyasu, and Wuxing shareholder James Harper-Smythe. Other ousted members have included six UCAS Congressmen and four UCAS Senators, eight CAS Congressmen and three CAS Senators, twelve high-ranking officers in Lone Star, seven high-ranking officers in Knight Errant, and six members of the Aztlan congress. It should be clear from those members and the positions they held that the Human Nation carries a lot of influence from within its membership and is in a position to be able to maneuver behind the scenes to advance its agenda, in similar ways to that of the Black Lodge.

Since being outed as members of this human supremacist group, some of the individuals have resigned from their posts or commissions, or otherwise retired. After much negative press and heat taken from metahuman rights organization groups, both UCAS Secretary of the Treasury Ogawa and CAS Vice President Grimes were asked to resign. In the CAS, to send a strong signal to groups like the Human Nation that metahumans are valued citizens and are welcome in his administration, President McMulkin nominated a man named Franklin Bellair to be the CAS' next Vice President. Bellair is a prominent business owner within the CAS and is an elf, and would be the first elf to serve in that capacity if the CAS Senate ever approves it. Four months after Grimes resigned, however, the CAS Senate remains deadlocked on the appointment. There is a real possibility that the appointment of Bellair will not go through, which would be a blow to metahuman rights groups, and would be seen as a victory for groups like Humanis, Alamos 20K and of course, the Human Nation. More importantly, as a result of the nomination, McMulkin's popularity seems to have taken a major hit, and he is down eighteen percent in job approval numbers. It is beginning to look like the CAS may very well not be ready for a vice president who is an elf.

- Those that oppose Bellair's appointment are claiming not to be doing so based on his race, but rather because the UCAS has an elf for a VP, and it could be considered disgraceful for the CAS to be seen following the UCAS' lead. Some misguided patriotism I guess? Supposedly, some of the opponents say they would approve a metahuman that is not an elf to avoid that comparison to the UCAS, but I'm sure if McMulkin put up a dwarf, ork, or troll, the opponents would find other, more "politically correct" reasons to oppose them. Obviously, metahuman rights groups are downright discouraged that Bellair's nomination appears to be in trouble and are pushing hard to get his appointment through.



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I'm sure there are runs being carried out on both sides right now to either get this appointment approved or get it killed. It'll be interesting to see who ultimately has the stronger muscle in the south; metahuman groups like MOM or the Human Nation. Unfortunately, despite Human Nation's recent setbacks, I have every reason to believe they'll be able to kill Bellair's appointment and likely get someone else who may be sympathetic to their cause appointed as VP instead.

- Doctor Spin
- How many metahumans does the CAS have in their national government nowadays?
- Beaker
- Five. There is currently one ork representative, three elves who are also serving as representatives, and one dwarf senator. That's it. For a nation as big as CAS, those numbers are a disgrace. Even the UCAS has a better representation of metahumans, with twenty-two, including the Speaker of the House, who is a dwarf.
- Butch
- Yeah, but he's also Black Lodge. So that's not exactly someone metahuman groups should be pointing to as a poster boy for metahuman progress.
- Plan 9

There are others, like UCAS Senator Thomas Lafollette and CAS Representative Eleanor Pennington, who have actually risen in the polls due to the make-up of their districts. Both

Lafollette and Pennington have denied associating with the Human Nation. Most pundits, though, believe their denials are half-hearted, and that they are more than happy to use coded language to appeal to the part of the electorate that might have Human Nation sympathies. The fact that these politicians can be re-elected despite widespread belief that they are secret members of the Human Nation has heightened tensions between humans and metahumans. Since Lafollette and Pennington were outed as Human Nation members, metahuman rights groups have been protesting in great numbers outside their offices. Humanis has also shown up with their members to throw fuel on that fire by supporting them. Further increasing tensions is the fact that death threats have been made against all the outed Congress members. Most of these death threats are believed to have come from the Sons of Sauron policlub, as well as other militant metahuman rights groups. Security has been increased surrounding these political figures as each of them decides whether to risk staying in office or to step down.

- You know why some of these politicians are surviving the scandal of being revealed as Human Nation members? Gerrymandering. The representatives have districts, which are usually drawn by state legislatures, and often times are designed to keep the incumbents, and by extension their respective parties, in power. If you look at those representatives, you'll find that their districts have an abundance of human populations and very few metahuman populations. It's not a matter of simple luck that these Human Nation politicians have districts sympathetic to their cause. It is very likely that the Human Nation politicians at

the national level received support from the state legislators in how their districts were drawn up. Since they would be in what pundits call "safe districts," it's likely we're going to be stuck with them until they retire.

- Kay St. Irregular

So how is the Human Nation acting as a power broker? First, they have nuyen. Lots of it. The Human Nation was allegedly formed from aristocratic families in the 1900s, when the issue was protecting the rich from the poor. When goblinization and the Unexplained Genetic Expression hit, the issue at hand for this secret group quickly became protecting and advancing humanity's interests at all costs. By studying the actions of the political figures that have been outed recently, we can see how the Human Nation intends to advance their agenda. Using appropriations, UCAS Senator Lafollette has worked to reduce funds and grants that are available to groups providing services for metahumans, particularly low-income metahumans. These services included job training, educational programs and healthcare. When asked about these cuts, Lafollette justified his actions by saying that he was being a deficit hawk and looking for ways to cut spending. While he was cutting government funds and grants to metahuman groups, he and others on Capitol Hill that share similar views on metahumans shifted those funds to clinics and organizations alleged to be Human Nation fronts, including clinics that support abortions and sterilizations for metahumans. Politicians like Lafollette and Pennington have used their positions to secure earmarks specifically for human-owned or human-dominated companies within their state or district. Having reviewed government documents from the past ten years, it seems that in the UCAS and CAS alone, nearly thirty billion nuyen has gone to support human-owned companies over the past decade. In the same period, it appears that thousands of metahuman-owned businesses have been locked out of the earmark process, thanks again to politicians like Lafollette and Pennington and their actions within their respective governments. Some of these companies that were denied have taken their claims against the government to the courts, only to have had their cases thrown out. No judges have been revealed to be Human Nation members (yet), but the way some of those cases were decided, it would not surprise me in the least if the Human Nation has a handful of judges in its pockets.

The Human Nation goes beyond influencing how these governments distribute funds and grants to favor human-owned corporations. They have been active in proposing anti-metahuman legislation for decades. Most of it, from creating "separate but equal" schools for metahumans (because, as everyone "knows," troll and ork children are such menaces and are so much more dangerous to the more feeble human children that they must be separated, *sigh*) to outright gun bans for metahumans, have stalled in various legislatures. The Human Nation has not had enough political influence to pass everything they want, particularly when that legislation has stood on its own. They have resorted to sneaking in their legislation into other bills. Last year, the UCAS passed a law requiring metahuman gun buyers to undergo a more rigorous background check than humans.

These checks can take anywhere between six months to a year. This particular provision was passed as part of a massive farm subsidy bill. Another law that recently passed radically increases costs for legal metahuman immigrants wishing to settle in the UCAS and has increased the time it takes for these immigrants to obtain the necessary paperwork to become legal residents. The wait time has jumped up by another five years. As a result, there has been a decrease in metahumans attempting to immigrate to the UCAS legally—it's down nine percent this year alone. And again, these new regulations were not stuck in an immigration bill where you would expect it, but rather in an education bill. In the CAS, the congress recently passed rules doubling the sentences for metahumans who have committed violent crimes. Of course, this rule does not apply to human criminals. Once more this type of rule was not found in a criminal reform law but in an appropriations bill.

Metahuman rights groups are fighting these changes in various court systems, but there's a good chance these lawsuits will find their way into the courtrooms of the Human Nation-friendly judges, who likely will throw them out. Even if they eventually get thrown out in the higher appellate courts, those appeals can take years, and in the meantime, metahumans will be forced to live with these new regulations.

THE ILLUMINATES OF THE NEW DAWN

A power broker that some have heard about is the Illuminates of the New Dawn. In the UCAS, the Illuminates are active on the Georgetown campus, teaching in their Occult Studies and Thaumaturgical departments. The Illuminates are active in other academic circles around the world, from MIT&T, Oxford, and Cambridge to CalTech, Prague, and Lyons. They have founded and are active in politics through their own political party, the New Century Party. Once more, their High Magus, Doctor Rozilyn Hernandez, is running again for the UCAS presidency. Using the New Century Party, the Illuminates have gotten twelve of its members elected to the UCAS Congress over the last twenty years; seven in the UCAS House of Representatives, five in the Senate. These members are out of the closet, so to speak, with their magical talent. They have publicly (and proudly) declared themselves to be mages, something that the Black Lodge conceals to avoid the scrutiny magic users receive. Through the New Century Party, the IOND also has members who are mayors of Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Toronto, and Boston, along with other smaller cities. They also have members in various state legislatures scattered throughout the UCAS.

Unfortunately for the IOND and the New Century Party, this next election is going to be rough for them. Many UCAS voters are fired up about what happened with the Dunkelzahn Rift. Many blame the Awakened for the path of destruction it left as it fluctuated in size before eventually closing. Hundreds of Washingtonians either died as result of that incident last year or are listed as missing, likely pulled into the rift. Violence against Awakened individuals is up throughout both the UCAS and, to a lesser extent, the CAS. Even a year later, violence remains elevated. In the wake of the polls for the New Century Party incumbents, four members of the UCAS Congress up for reelection in 2074 look to be losing their seats, trailing anywhere from nine to fourteen percentage points in their respective



districts or states. If trends continue, the Illuminates will likely lose two more seats in the 2076 elections. The Illuminates have a slate of a dozen more candidates scattered throughout the UCAS that are running for seats that they do not currently hold, but their prospects are dim at best. The New Century Party may win two new seats, but that would only happen if they spend a lot of nuyen on runs to rig the election.

The IOND could get a boost from their growing membership numbers. For years, the IOND claimed a membership of about seven hundred members worldwide. Starting in 2064, IOND began a recruitment drive to swell their numbers in a variety of locations, including Los Angeles, Prague, Atlanta, France, Australia, Denver, and Santa Fe. That number (if the IOND numbers can be trusted any more than the Black Lodge's) is now close to twelve hundred. The IOND tends to attract mostly the rich and the privileged as members—lawyers, doctors, politicians, and corporate types make up a vast majority of the IOND's membership. But the IOND is also about helping magic users, particularly hermetic mages, who demonstrate a significant talent in the arts. The IOND has set up a full four-year international scholarship to put talented hermetic magic users through prestigious ivy league colleges like Yale, Stanford, Harvard, and MIT&T. Every year, three dozen hermetic students are sponsored by the IOND, and no matter what kind of background they have, these students are always admitted to prestigious institutions of higher learning. Once they graduate and start their careers, they are admitted into the IOND.

- Interestingly enough, that scholarship fund is no longer restricted to gifted hermetics. It's also being used to sponsor mundane students who are particularly gifted in technological fields. The IOND wants a blending of science and magic to make life easier for the rest of us, or at least that's what they claim. Even though the IOND puts the individual through school, they would only be allowed to become members of the Outer Order because they are not Awakened. Still, this allows the IOND access to a different kind of talent, which likely gives the IOND a bit of an advantage over the strictly magic-oriented Black Lodge.
- The Smiling Bandit

Despite the hardships that the IOND is facing in the UCAS, Doctor Rozilyn Hernandez is insistent that the Illuminates branch out to other nations. There is an effort to establish a New Century Party in the CAS, which is not being welcomed by the existing parties. Hernandez wants the Illuminates to be much more active in the Pueblo. There are currently two hermetic mages on the Board of Directors, and the Illuminates have donated money to ensure that Carlos Holguín remains there. It's curious, though, that the Illuminates did not also donate to the campaign for Amelia Lopez, who is a hermetic. This seems to give plausibility to my theory that Lopez is indeed connected to the Black Lodge. The IOND is believed to have plans to foster the development of hermetics in Pueblo, which could prove controversial with the large shaman population there. Interestingly enough, IOND has also expressed an interest in Tsimshian, since the environmental imbalance in that nation has left it devoid of almost all shamans but populated with hermetic mages. Rumors suggest that a new party in Tsimshian, the Revival Party, is sponsored by the Black

Lodge. Tsimshian could become a new front between the IOND and the Black Lodge, and it might be worth watching to see if the New Century Party is able to set up shop in Tsimshian.

- After all these years, the IOND is still trying to worm its way into the Tír. There was another council vote on the matter just six months ago, and in a vote of 6-4, the IOND was once again denied the right to set up shop. This was actually the closest vote there has been on the matter. From what I have heard, the reason the vote was so close was that two Tír Princes, Johan van den Berg and Amy Joubert, had received large campaign contributions from Telestrian Industries. But as Plan 9 said about the Black Lodge, it is likely Telestrian was only used as cover for the IOND to donate money to the two Princes legally.
- Frosty

So how are the Illuminates spending their influence? For one thing, similar to the Black Lodge's methods, the IOND is able to maneuver and direct governmental funds and grants to their own programs through their elected members. Like the Human Nation that has redirected funds to human causes, the IOND has been using their positions within the UCAS government to siphon funds off via all the pork in the bureaucracy for their programs at the various universities. Over the course of the last ten years, the Illuminates have siphoned away nearly eight billion nuyen for their pet projects—projects whose true nature is known to pretty much no one outside the organization. Very few people raise eyebrows with money going to a respectable thaumaturgical program or to an occult studies program run by esteemed universities like MIT&T. Very few people stop to think about who is running these programs or realize that with the dangerous science and magic the Illuminates like to perform and the boundaries they are willing to cross for the sake of progress, this could prove to be a very dangerous combination. These funds, combined by governmental sanction, can give the Illuminates access to state-of-the-art technology that they may not have had access to any other way. Some of those funds have mysteriously disappeared, likely to fund IOND projects that are not even sanctioned by these universities. Some of these funds may have been laundered, to be used to help support other magicians (not necessarily aligned with the IOND) running for public office. After all, the IOND is not just about helping mages, but all Awakened. And the Illuminates frequently help those who can never become members. By offering that help, the IOND can put these individuals in their debt, so that in the future, they can use these favors to further the agenda of the IOND.

- It's funny. People cringe when they think that eight billion nuyen went to the IOND for their secretive projects over the last ten years. But that's extremely small in comparison to what it could have been. Thanks to the rivalry between the Black Lodge and the IOND, the Speaker of the House and Black Lodge member Joseph Ellis and Senate Majority Leader Jennifer Henry worked together to block efforts to funnel nearly forty billion more dollars to these projects. Though to be fair, I'm sure much of those savings were likely moved to Black Lodge assets instead. So it likely ended up being a "robbing Peter (the IOND) to pay Paul (the Black Lodge)" situation.
- Kay St. Irregular

DANIELLE DE LA MAR

Danielle de la Mar is the only individual on this list, even though there are numerous others that would certainly qualify, particularly megacorporate CEOs. Danielle de la Mar has an estimated net worth of nearly six billion, and she has been earning a name for herself as an opponent of a free and open Matrix. She's made it her personal cause to ask governments and corporations to take firmer control of the Matrix to, in her words, "protect innocent users from being inundated by all that is ugly in the world." By herself, de la Mar is relatively harmless. But with her money, her connections with the Grand Tour, and with a certain willingness by the megacorporations to follow her lead, she may very well get what she desires. What that means for all of us would be trouble. Making our way around the Matrix would be trickier, and likely slower unless you were willing to pay a premium.

- Or hack your way into a better account. Like the good old days.
- FastJack

No one really understands where Danielle de la Mar's obsession came from. It is as if she said one day, "This is the cause I will champion." There are rumors that her ex-husband's affair with his now-younger wife started on the Matrix, and continued and lasted for months before he worked up the courage to leave her. This bitterness could explain why De la Mar is so hell bent on arresting the few freedoms we currently enjoy in the shadows; to avenge some misplaced anger that she still has for her former husband.

- That's some pretty bad pop psychology. Not every woman does things because some man wronged her. You may disagree with her—I certainly do—but you can grant that she's working out of a genuine, if misguided, concern for whatever innocence may be left in the world.
- Pistons
- De la Mar likely will never employ runners. She believes them to be below her stature and deserving of her contempt. When she learned that there were runners attending a Grand Tour gala (invited there by one of their Johnsons), she made a big stink about it and nearly got the runners involved arrested. But should she ever resort to hiring runners, don't take the job. You never know when she'll turn on you, especially if she thinks she can curry some favor or raise some nuyen for her "cause" from your arrest (or death).
- Netcat
- I hate people like that.
- Slamm-O!

- That's okay. There's more than enough jobs out there to sabotage her efforts to make up for any that she might offer in the future. Legion, the technomancer group responsible for attacking Horizon earlier this year, is actively hiring runners to put a stop to her activism and to expose her as an extremist. Other jobs are coming in from other neo-anarchists. Even a few on the Grand Tour oppose what she is trying to do and would like nothing better for her not only to fail, but to be publicly humiliated by her failure so that she actually gives up being a part of the Grand Tour. I kind of hope they succeed in that endeavor. She needs to be ostracized and returned to the fringes of society where she belongs.
- Fianchetto

So far, de la Mar has only been really active in Europe with corporations like Saeder-Krupp, the governing body known as the New European Economic Community (NEEC) and with the Grand Tour. But she has opened up lobbying firms in Paris, London, Manhattan and now DeeCee, calling itself A Responsible Matrix for Prosperity Group. This lobbying firm has been active





INCOMING FEED.....

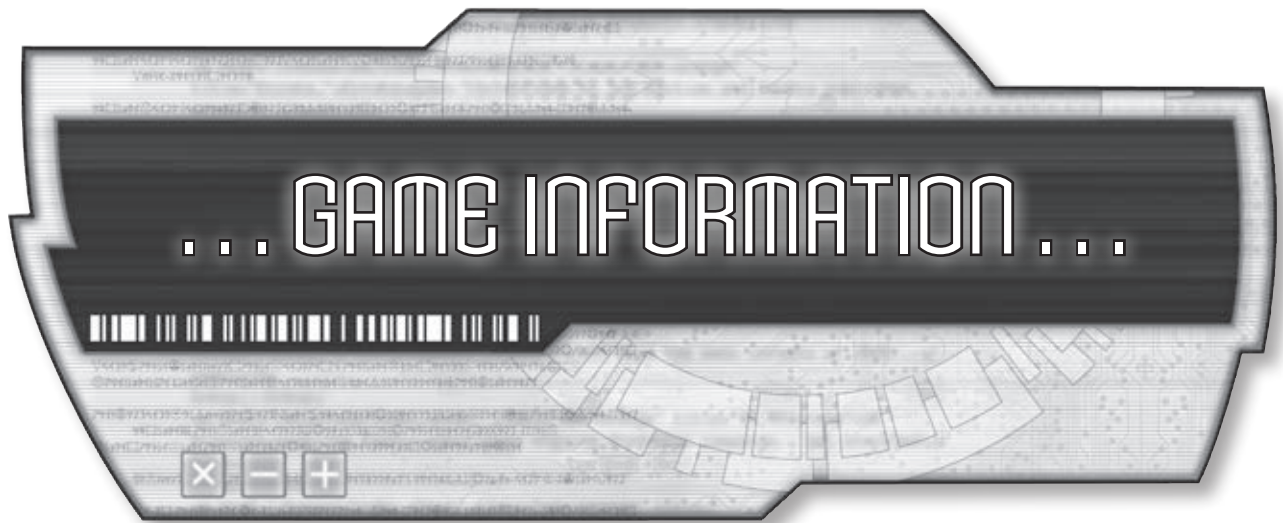
POWER BROKERS

in gathering news events and examples of why there needs to be more regulation and control over the Matrix. The technomancer revolt against Horizon that destroyed lives and livelihoods, Matrix vandalism that costs corporations millions of nuyen each year, and sites like Humanis and anti-dragon policlubs that promote hate and violence are all used as examples as why more regulation is needed. De la Mar and her organization advocates requiring anyone in the Matrix to have icons that broadcast their (valid) SINs and their location where they are logged on at all times. A Responsible Matrix for Prosperity Group believes that hate speech and other activities that inspire crime and violence need to end, and they think that ridding the Matrix of its users' anonymity would be a good first step. If de la Mar's organization gets its way, getting caught broadcasting a fake SIN in the Matrix should have the same consequences as being caught broadcasting a fake SIN while you are walking down the street in a secured area; you would be arrested.

De la Mar also objects to data havens that allow for illicit traffic, and she would urge corporations and governments to crack down on them, and shut them down by modifying both their copyright and their proprietary laws. De la Mar and her crackpot ideas seem to be winning over support from the likes of Julian Sergetti, a powerful S-K lobbyist and Grand Duke Adolphe III of Luxemburg. De la Mar is also not above utilizing metahumans who are strong advocates against child pornography to make the argument that more regulation of the Matrix is needed, so that those sites can be shut down quickly and the individuals behind them can be brought to justice.

De la Mar is a burgeoning power broker because the corps like what she is selling and are willing to let her make their arguments for them. She may seem kind and matronly, but don't be fooled—she is an extremist and could be dangerous. Forgive a little editorializing, but de la Mar needs to be stopped before she makes too much progress in her little crusade of hers, before she manipulates those around her into supporting widespread censorship.

- To bring in more nuyen to continue with this cause, A Responsible Matrix for Prosperity Group is hiring hackers to search the Matrix. They are using them to find people or groups who have been victimized by having private information released onto the Matrix, and they are helping them get as much of that data scrubbed from the Matrix as possible. A lot of these jobs come from women whose ex-boyfriends decided to get even with them by putting nude pictures of them on the Matrix, or using the Matrix to threaten them. These hired-gun hackers will find where these individuals are logging on, help the victims file a complaint with LS or KE, and get them arrested. It seems like it pays well, and de la Mar's group foots the whole bill—people are getting these services for free, and they tend to become passionate supporters of de la Mar and her opinions of the dangers of the Matrix. On top of that, it's rumored that this group may have an ongoing contract with a dragon or multiple dragons in an effort to get the recordings of the Dzitbalchen autopsy scrubbed from the Matrix. They're having some success—those recordings are becoming far more rare.
- Sticks



PULLING OFF DIRTY TRICKS

For many of the dirty tricks described in this book, the basic skills of a shadowrunner will be used as they always are—assassinations require firearms skills, break-ins require infiltration and hacking skills, etc. For some jobs, though, gamemasters may need to develop different ways to use existing skills. Below are some examples.

USING OPPO PAYDATA

For some of the data gathered through oppo research, the value is apparent. Catching the candidate in unsavory dalliances with an underage individual or spending twenty-four hours in a BTL den is easy enough for any street punk to use; catching a candidate to flip-flopping on a previous position, or making private statements that might look bad to the general public, is a subtler art. Knowing the political situations in particular areas gives runners a leg up in understanding how to use the data they uncover. Knowledge Tests using things such as Local Politics skills can be used to determine if the runners understand how to use the data they uncover (the threshold should increase based on the obscurity of the data). Alternately, a Memory Test (Logic + Willpower) can be used to determine if the runners remember something they heard about the local political situation that would be relevant in deciding how to use the data they just obtained. The threshold for this test should be based on how much they heard about local politics and how long ago they obtained those bits of information.

RENT-A-CROWDS

Getting a bunch of people to show up at a particular place and do what you want is not always simply a matter of laying out money. There is still the art to getting them to do what you say, and this can involve Leadership. Remember to use the Social Modifiers Table (p. 131, *SR4A*) for this test; runners can get the +1 bonus for being an obvious authority figure if they can credibly claim to be acting on behalf of a well-known authority figure. The size of a crowd runners are trying to manage may cause

additional difficulties; for every ten people they are trying to get to act in a certain way, impose a -1 modifier to their test due to the difficulty of managing a large group. Note that a test is not necessarily needed to determine if crowds who have been paid off show up at the intended; most people will keep their word, especially if runners were not foolish enough to pay them their entire sum in advance.

STALKING HORSE CANDIDATES

Runners may have the opportunity to expose a stalking horse candidate or, if they have the right knowledge and connections, become one. Exposing such a candidate is primarily a matter of tracing the candidate's network of support—who is funding the campaign, who is helping them gather the signatures they need to become a candidate, and other things of that sort. Hacking will likely be the most useful skill in this area.

Being a stalking horse candidate is trickier. The runner in this case will be required to make public appearances and speeches, and perhaps participate in debates. The gamemaster should have the player make appropriate Knowledge Tests as they prepare for these occasions and answer extemporaneous questions to make sure they don't make important flubs that could expose them. Of course, a flub doesn't have to be fatal, as many real candidates have said foolish or uninformed things without being exposed as anything besides a candidate with a hole or two in his or her knowledge. Surviving a flub—and navigating their entire course of the candidacy—should require frequent Con Tests. Some of these can be abstracted, though, instead of having the runner make a constant series of rolls. Success in a single Con + Charisma (4) Test at the beginning of the day should be enough for the character to negotiate their way through the day, though special circumstances, like a confrontation with an angry representative of an opposing campaign, might require additional Opposed Tests against particular individuals.

The runner's research (or lack thereof) will show up in the modifier for whether the character has plausible supporting evidence for their backstory and any positions they take. Early in the campaign, stalking horse candidates might receive a +2 modifier in social tests from members of their ostensible political

INCOMING FEED.....



party, who tend to view their own in a favorable light. The course of the campaign and the characters' behavior, of course, could change this or plunge the modifier into negative territory as either their opponents become more competitive or people start to suspect that the runner's candidacy is not as sincere as it may have appeared at first.

ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL

PLOT HOOKS

- Sports is big business in most parts of the world. The players are often ground up in the gears when they fall from their pedestal. A hotshot urban brawl player just signed a multi-million-nuyen contract with a soydrink manufacturer. The rival manufacturer is upset and hires runners to tank his investment. They have some inside information on the brawler's drug test specimen and its location. The runners need to tamper with the sample to make the player ineligible to play this season. The runners should have easy access to the types of drugs that would disqualify the player. Can they get in and out of the facility without anyone being the wiser? What happens if the brawler finds out and sics his teammates on the runners?
- The runners receive a meet request that takes place somewhere they may never have expected to meet a Johnson: a funeral. A congresswoman killed herself and her husband wants to know who was responsible. The police have written it off as a suicide. Though it doesn't help the police chief is her ex. She had rivals, lovers, enemies, and relatives who all wanted to see her dead. If the investigation slows down, drop the husband in a set piece where whoever killed the congresswoman tries to take him out as well.
- It seems like a simple mix up. The runner picked up the wrong bags at the airport. But when he arrives to switch the bags, he walks into a firefight where the ones still breathing are after his set of bags. The bags contain a chip that implicates an ambassador who is cutting some dirty deals with warlords looking to trade energy for weaponry. Can the runner get the information to someone who will put it to good use rather than turn it over to the ambassador so that it can be deleted? Gamemasters looking for a change of pace might have this take place when one of the runners is on vacation and have the rest of the players play different characters gathered at the vacationing runner has to assemble a ramshackle crew to help save his skin.

EXECUTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

PLOT HOOKS

- The last run was a decoy. The runners didn't know that, even if the security guards were a little too sleepy and the doors seemed to be very easy to hack. They were sent in to draw attention away from the actual team, who was sent in to retrieve a video featuring a senator, his mistress, and their three hired playmates. Unfortunately, the senator's chief of staff got a hold of the other team and killed the majority of

GAME INFORMATION

them in search of the video. He's hoping that if he takes on the runners, he can bring out the one remaining member of the dead team who still holds the video data.

- The run should be simple and straightforward. Track down the drone truck. Eliminate any escort. Hijack the vehicle. Deactivate the tracking beacon. Deliver it to the new location. Collect the fee. But something goes wrong during the hijacking. The cargo is revealed, and it's not the high-tech electronics the runners were expecting. The cargo is made up of twelve sedated women aged fifteen to twenty. They were destined for a syndicate's brother when the Johnson sent the runners to take them so he could bust them up and sell them each for a better profit. Will the runners stick to their original job knowing they are accomplices to human trafficking? How do they get out from delivering their living cargo?
- A sob story told by a corporate executive is unlikely to melt any shadowrunner's heart. But his credit is good, and his daughter has been missing for a week. The trail has two leads. She was seen entering the clinic of a street doc with ties to the Yakuza. The boy that she was seeing has at least three SINS. The truth is that her boyfriend was a recruiter for the Yakuza and the street doc installed a datajack. She's now a part of a bunraku parlor, where she is programmed to fulfill the desires of the very rich and powerful men that frequent the den of sin. The parlor is one of the gang's biggest holdings. Shooting up the place is a quick way to get all the families upset at the team. The girl has one final surprise in store for her. The doctor implanted a cortex bomb that activates if she strays from the grounds of the parlor. Whether the bomb is on a timer, a remote activation code, or a proximity sensor is up to the gamemaster.

TAKING THE BULLET

PLOT HOOKS

- When the extraction goes off without a hitch, the runners are right to be worried. The easiest jobs are the scariest ones. When they lock down their charge for the night, strange things start happening. Animals react poorly. Astral sensitives have nightmares about their asset. The team the runners were expecting to assault their position arrives and is torn to shreds by some mysterious force. The reasons become clear. The asset has been chosen by an insect spirit hive to be their new queen. They will stop at nothing to carry the queen away and merge her with their leader spirit. Do the runners protect their charge to the end or wash their hands by letting the spirits get their way?
- Sometimes, the P in VIP stands for "pet." For a humorous run to break up a heavy campaign, the runners are hired to protect a rare pet. Mr. Johnson is going through a very messy divorce, and the jilted spouse will do anything to hurt him. Mr. Johnson has to leave on business for a few days, so he hires the runner to house sit and keep an eye on his prized possession. The spouse has hired her own team just in time for a big shootout in a ritzy mansion. For an extra dangerous twist, the exotic pet is actually a paranormal creature. The

runners might be obligated to find a replacement if the animal is killed in the combat.

- Part of the normal negotiations for this job bring in an unusual benefit. Mr. Johnson agrees to let the runners use his private jet for an outgoing flight from their city of origin. Private jets mean faster travel, no questions at customs, and the ability to keep their illegal toys within reach at all times. The runners cash in this favor for what seems to be an easy trip to their next gig. The rocket that smashes into the wing ends the vacation quickly. The runners have to deal with the hostiles that brought their bird down in the wilderness with damaged equipment and wounded members of the team. If they survive, they must also ask a question: Did the Johnson know someone would try to shoot him out of the sky?
- The Pac-Cap Run is an illegal rally race from Seattle to DeeCee that takes place once every five years. The racers must hit five rally points in the California Free State, NAN, CAS, and UCAS before the finish. The only way to find out the next rally point is to hit the previous one. Anything goes otherwise: sabotage, running opponents off the road, tipping off the authorities. The entry fee is six figures and the prize money goes to the top three finishers. The executive hires the runners for two purposes: to protect her from dirty tricks and to make sure his rivals don't finish the race.

SEATTLE

PLOT HOOKS

To play through the events leading up to the Proposition 23 vote, see the *Shadowrun Missions* series, which provides several fully detailed, action-packed adventures for players and gamemasters. The odd-numbered *Missions* of the fourth season all are tied into the politics of the Ork Underground and the climactic vote. *Missions* can be found at: <http://www.battlecorps.com/catalog>.

Other possible plot hooks include:

- Mr. Johnson, working on behalf of a consortium of AAA corporations in Seattle, knows how important it is to get in front of vital information before it gets out to the general public. He very much wants to know what Agent Seth Dietrich found out, and where the federal agent is now. He hires runners to find him. It'll be tricky, though—Brackhaven Investments has people looking for him too, and they are not eager to cooperate with any megacorporate representatives. Things get even more complicated when an ork gang in the Underground contacts the runners, claiming to have Dietrich and saying they will ransom him to the highest bidder. Can the runners come up with enough cash to beat out Brackhaven—and are the ork gangers telling the truth?
- Governor Kenneth Brackhaven is not happy with the Ork Underground becoming an official district of Seattle, but he thinks he has an out. If he can get the miscast ballots and abstentions counted as votes against Proposition 23, then maybe he can get the vote struck down. Any court case in this matter is going to go end up on the Supreme Court, so he knows what he needs are justices on his side. So he sends

runners on a research campaign, looking for the right combination of blackmails and bribes that can deliver a majority of the seven justices.

UCAS

PLOT HOOKS

- Melanie Patel is charming—too charming. Some cursory assensing by her opposition has shown that she is Awakened, and the common assumption is that she's a social adept. Some politicians would like to know the extent of her talents, as they have not yet been able to get a clear reading on her aura—it seems to be masked or otherwise disguised. The runners either need to do some quality astral perceiving, or they need to convince Patel to talk. Once they deliver the information to their employers, the possibility of another job comes up. It turns out Mr. Johnson is from the Technocrats, and he wants to see if Patel will defect—or at very least, not turn to the New Century Party, who at this very moment are preparing an offer to sway her. The runners will serve as go-betweens in the negotiations, and if things don't go right, they may be required to extract Patel for someone. Unless she talks them out of doing it. Things could get even more interesting if the cult she is rumored to have escaped from comes looking for her as well.
- Determining whether Travis Roman is an ork should be a simple genetic test, and the runners are hired to find a DNA sample. They can't just get a hair from him—they might be able to show the hair is that of an ork, but there wouldn't be enough specific information in the DNA to confirm that the hair belongs to Roman and no one else. They need to get saliva or blood—and of course, they should be discreet in the way they obtain it.
- James Montblanc, gubernatorial candidate in Minnesota, knows that an anti-smuggling campaign goes best when you have some smuggler scalps to nail to the wall. Unfortunately, he doesn't have time to do the hunting himself, so he hires the runners to go out and get some pelts for him. Unfortunately, his opponent, Tal Carver, has gotten wind of the scheme, and he hires his own team to shadow the runners and record them fighting with smugglers. Then, the runners' faces will be broadcast across the state as evidence of the violent, lawless element Montblanc will bring into the state if he is elected. If the runners want to keep themselves in the shadows, they need to be sure this plan doesn't work.
- The clamor for the reunification of St. Louis is growing, but there are a number of local businesses that are quite happy with the way things are. They figure that the best way to keep the two halves apart is to demonstrate the violence that will inevitably result if they are rejoined. Runners are hired to stir up fights right on the divide of the city between rival gangs. The spats don't need to have a high body count, but things should happen that look good on local newsnets, like some firebombings or some such. This is a chance for the runners to get creative and possibly indulge some of their more destructive impulses.

CAS

PLOT HOOKS

- Texas has no interest in waiting any longer for the PCC to do the right thing and turn over the land they just received to the CAS. They want to put settlers in now. What they need, though, is a little armed assistance for a variety of tasks, including getting people across the border and protecting homesteaders. Are runners ready to be the hired gunslingers in this new frontier?
- The CAS knows Aztlan is going to need more food after the attack on NatVat, and they don't want any of their food taken to feed their neighbors to the south. It's not a matter of guarding fields—it's a matter of protecting shipping and supply lines. Rumor is, though, that Aztlan is one step ahead of the game, and they have placed several people in a division of Maersk Shipping located in Austin. The runners are hired to find which employees are planted and root them out. These individuals are tenacious and stubborn, though, and might not go down without a fight.
- Many in Atlanta are still reeling from the election of northerner Ramsay McMulkin as president, and many are completely unwilling to have him win another term. Opposition groups have decided to focus on the many local politicians who abruptly supported McMulkin when he threw his hat in the ring. While some of them might be genuine in their support, others were likely bought off in some way. The groups are hiring dozens of runners to find out what happened. The players' work brings them to State Senator Lewis Gentry in New Orleans. Gentry doesn't like anyone snooping around his business, and he has a voodoo shaman on staff to keep such snooping to a minimum. The runners will have to deal with her if they want to get to Gentry.

TSIMSHIAN PROTECTORATE

PLOT HOOKS

- John George has no desire to lose to Edward Littletree again, and he is breaking open every dirty trick in the bag. The runners are hired to perform a series of Nixonian runs against Littletree, including: creating a fake fundraising organization called Aztlaners for Littletree; engineering fake pictures of Littletree in casualwear vacationing on Martha's Vineyard (or finding a real one if it exists); breaking into Littletree's personal quarters and subtly messing around with his ceremonial clothing so that next time he wears it, things appear out of place; and anything else their creativity can devise.
- Nathan Jance, in District Two, seems firmly ensconced in his position, with people believing only resignation or death will take him out of office. Someone seems anxious for the first one to occur, as a lone shooter was caught after firing a few shots at Jance's residence. The candidate was home at the time, and the shots only missed him by a few meters. The shooter has been found, but Jance wants the people responsible for the attack exposed. He hires runners to find out who paid for the assassination attempt. He points them toward Darin



Todd, who is not only behind in the polls but is angry thanks to the fact that Jance's people exposed his hidden past. The runners can't find anything connecting Todd to the assassins, though; instead, the trail leads to MCT corporate officers, who seem to be angry that the connection between them and Todd is being made public. The next question is just what it is the MCT people want to keep hidden.

- Forces organized against the Salish "occupation" of Tsimshian are willing to do whatever it takes to make the Salish look bad in the eyes of the people. The Salish have promised to clean up the damaged lands of the Protectorate, so the opposition is determined to make sure that clean up doesn't progress well. They can embark on a number of activities, from interfering with the equipment of cleaning crews to summoning toxic spirits—or at least hiring mages who can do that part for them. The more annoying they are, the more pay they will get—but they will also become more likely to draw the attention from the top ranks of the Salish.

UNITED KINGDOM

PLOT HOOKS

- The policlub known as Republic is tired of waiting for the monarchy to disband, and they have decided to take aggressive action. Word in the shadows is that they have channeled a bit of the spirit of Guy Fawkes (some say maybe even literally), but instead of digging a tunnel to get to the royals, they've decided to just go through the rock with spirits. Republic seems to be assembling a large group of spirits to enter Buckingham Palace from underneath and do away with the Queen and anyone else they encounter. Security for the royal family is desperate for any information about who is involved in this plot, just what they plan to do, and when it will take place. If the runners want to earn extra pay, they can be in the palace when the spirits come howling out from the ground.
- Sir Adam Dashwood has been having fun tooling about Europe, but now he thinks the time is right to return home and make a power grab. While he's too smart to take out Prime Minister Darch through assassination, he's more than happy to fuel a concerted political takedown of the man. One leg of his plan is to make Darch look incompetent, so he is willing to pay handsome sums to people who can expose government corruption and ineptitude. He's not worried about how the corruption and ineptitude is generated—just that it's exposed. That is to say, the runners can go ahead and expose a bureaucrat for taking a bribe, even if it's money that they placed in the person's hands themselves. It's time to get creative and manufacture as much information as possible!

POWER BROKERS

PLOT HOOKS

- Someone has decided it's time to dig up solid information on the Black Lodge, and to do so they are launching an investigation into each of the one thousand listed members of the Lodge. If the runners are willing to take this on, they receive a list of ten names for people supposedly located in Seattle, Portland, and surrounding areas. The first few names are dead ends—addresses that don't exist, names no one has heard of, that sort of thing. Eventually, though, the runners find a burned-out house inhabited by a half-crazed squatter. They might be tempted to dismiss the squatter, but a check on the astral plane shows he is Awakened, and more than a little powerful. This clearly isn't a coincidence, but now the challenge is getting information from a close-mouthed vagrant and discovering what secrets he might have hidden in the burned-out wreck.
- Redistricting is underway throughout the CAS, and all sorts of politicians are angling for an advantage. State Representative Harriett Clemmens of Mississippi has been on the ropes lately due to her apparent Human Nation connections, and the latest blow is that the traditionally poverty-stricken (and currently predominantly largely metahuman) town of French Camp, with its more than one thousand metahuman residents, has been put in her district. Things were running close for her, and these votes (which are almost certain to not go her way) could cost her the election. She is desperate, and she's taking the kind of steps desperate people take. As it turns out, districts are based on precise geographic coordinates, not town boundaries. As it turns out, if the town of French Camp moved just two hundred meters east, it would be out of her district. With so many of the poor metahumans in the town living in foundation-free shanties, this idea is not as absurd as it might seem. So can the runners find a way to move a good portion of the town without the residents deciding to move it back?
- Danielle de la Mar attracts the attention of Matrix pranksters from across the globe. One group has determined to bombard her next scheduled rally with an onslaught of pornographic AROs. De la Mar has her Marix security staff, and that is all she will rely on; she will not hire shadowrunners. Some free Matrix supporters, including neo-anarchists, realize that this prank could go exactly wrong, building public support for de la Mar instead of breaking it down. Reluctantly, they hire runners to make sure de la Mar's rally goes off without a pornographic hitch.