

SHADOWRUN

midnight

DAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS



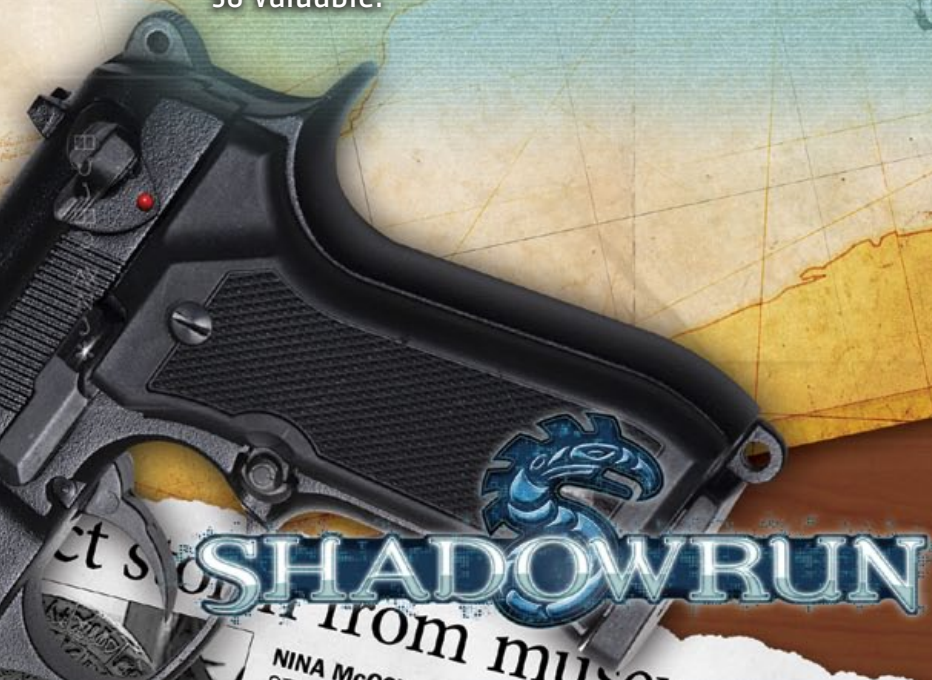
A SHADOWRUN ADVENTURE

CATCH A THIEF

There are deep secrets in the Sixth World, and there are people who will do anything to uncover them. Some secrets reach into the ancient past, but they still have the power to shake the world. What they will do depends on whose hands they fall into ...

Dusk was only the beginning. Jane "Frosty" Foster is back and ready to continue her artifact hunt. If they're game, runners will join her in a chase across North America, from the frozen, bug-filled wastes of Chicago to the political hotbed of Denver to the Deep Lacuna lurking under Los Angeles.

Midnight is the second adventure in the *Dawn of the Artifacts* series, giving skilled runners the chance to find a second powerful artifact—and perhaps uncover clues about what makes these treasures so valuable.



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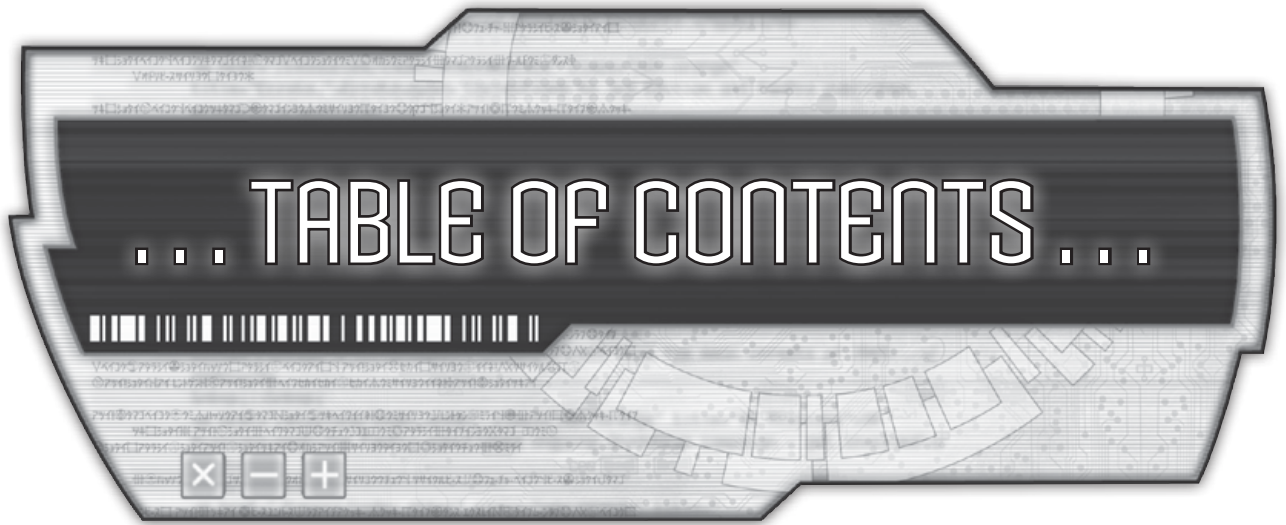


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INTRODUCTION	4
PREPARING THE ADVENTURE	4
ADVENTURE STRUCTURE	4
MAIN SECTIONS	6
ADVENTURE SCENES	6
BACKGROUND	7
PLOT SYNOPSIS	9
Dusk: Dawn of the Artifacts Summary	9
Bridging the Adventures	9
REMEMBER ME?	10
ON ARRIVAL	13
STAND-OFF	18
ROAD TRIP!	22
DENVER LAYOVER	25
TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE	30
TURNING THE TABLES	36
ENEMY OF MY ENEMY	40
THE END OF THE ROAD	45
AFTERMATH	46
LEGWORK	47
CAST OF SHADOWS	49
Jane “Frosty” Foster	49
Samriel	50
Vigilia Evangelica	51
Sonora	52
Itztli	53
HANDOUTS	54
Chicago	54
Denver	54
Flashpoint: Denver	54
Crossing Borders	55
Mile-High Underworld	55
San Bernardino	55

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"We lost their trail."

Aina looked up at the black-haired elf and scowled. He didn't flinch, just shrugged and wandered over to help himself to the hot coffee she kept on a sideboard. She had an elegant office she used to meet with those she wished to intimidate or impress. This office, with its comfortable leather couches and battered desk, was where she did her real work.

"How?" she asked, leaning back in her chair, her temper simmering.

"They disabled the tags in the case immediately—but they didn't find the stealth tag. So when we pinged it, we located them. Moved to intercept. There was a ... an ... incident," he said. He cleared his throat, took a quick sip of coffee.

She knew the "incident." Two small shipping vessels, one exploding, the other sinking with flames shooting up to the sky—it had been the leading story two weeks ago on the evening news.

"Unfortunately, my hacker was forced to deal with the fallout of the, ah, incident. When he resumed pinging for the tag, it'd gone non-responsive. The team's rigger was killed in the explosion, and I know at least one other was injured. And their transportation plans were screwed," he said with a slight smile. "We started working on using magic to track the item, and also tried to ID the rigger. Took a while."

Aina raised one white eyebrow, giving him a look. He shrugged.

"Body was a bit crispy. Had to bring in an expert."

"Indeed. And the ritual tracking?"

"Their mage is good. She kept it on the move, kept it within wards, did everything right to slow us down. When we finally tracked it down, she was ready. We engaged them outside of Charleston, but they," this time, he scowled. "They got away again."

"You're losing your touch, Taggert," Aina said. "Why Charleston?"

"They were heading for CAS, making a run for New Orleans—or at least, that's what the smuggler we questioned said," he shrugged again, and Aina didn't ask how they'd questioned the smuggler. "We've been tracking them across UCAS. Lexington, St. Louis, Springfield. Then they just ... disappeared."

Aina ground her teeth together.

"We did finally get an ID on the rigger, though," he said. "Worked for a team headed by a mage named Sonora. She's known to work for Aztechnology. My guess is she was supposed to get it to Aztlan. We've made getting out of UCAS hard for her, burning her contacts. She's on her own—wherever she is."

"Aztechnology? Assholes. They've been pissed ever since the will came out." Aina ran her hands through her short white hair. "You've got good instincts, Taggert. What do you think?"

"I think she's gone to ground. Regrouping. Trying to figure out what to do. And if I wanted to disappear, off the grid, hide from people tracking me with magic, with tech, there's one place I'd go."

Aina sighed.

"Chicago."



INTRODUCTION

Midnight: Dawn of the Artifacts 2 is the second in a series of adventures designed for *Shadowrun, Fourth Edition*. Like the first adventure, it is not designed specifically for the novice player, but can easily be tweaked to suit a wide variety of player experience levels.

Players and gamemasters who played through *Dusk: Dawn of the Artifacts 1* will have met several of the main characters involved in the adventure series, and Player Character actions in the previous adventure will undoubtedly color their interactions with characters in this adventure. Likewise, their actions in *this* adventure will have ramifications on future adventures in the series.

Players should note that only gamemasters should read beyond this point. The following text reveals secrets and plots that, if read prior to the adventure, could impact their enjoyment of the adventure (and the surprises in store).

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Midnight can be run with only the *Shadowrun, Fourth Edition* rulebook. However, many of the characters presented in this adventure draw from the additional core rulebooks such as *Arsenal*, *Augmentation*, *Unwired*, and *Runner's Companion*. All rules in this adventure are assumed to follow the core rules presented in *Shadowrun, Fourth Edition*. A gamemaster can, of course, use any of the optional rules as best fits his or her game.

This adventure reunites the runners with Jane “Frosty” Foster, then takes them on a continent-spanning road-trip, visiting three major sprawls in North America and making several stops in-between. The first city, Chicago, is a featured location in *Feral Cities*. The final city, Los Angeles, is a featured location in *Corporate Enclaves*. Gamemasters and players will find a wealth of information, contacts, and additional plot hooks in both of those core location books. For players who have not read *Feral Cities* or *Corporate Enclaves*, player handouts included in this adventure provide a broad overview of the two cities. Gamemasters may wish to provide these to their players prior to the adventure, or alternatively, provide them as player characters research the cities or interact with the various factions.

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

Midnight takes the players on a journey across North America, across several nations and into (and out of) very different cities.

This adventure is intended to be played at a frenetic pace; although there is not a hard timeline, the gamemaster is encouraged to convey to the runners that they must move quickly if they are to catch up with the stolen Sextant. This adventure is meant to be a test of endurance as the runners pursue the stolen artifact across North America without stopping, knowing that any delay could cost them the artifact.

The adventure is designed as a series of sequential scenes, with several scenes set in each city, and a variety of travel encounters provided in *Road trip!*, (see p. 22) to cover the travel along the way. The gamemaster may choose to use any of the travel encounters presented, in any order, as the players make certain choices along their journey. Gamemasters should feel free to add their own encounters that play off specificities of the travel routes chosen by their groups and introduce appropriate challenges. This allows the adventure to flow more naturally without “railroading” the

DWINDLING RESOURCES

This game is intended to not only test the runners' endurance, but to encourage the players to think and act strategically as well. The pace, and timeline, should be non-stop. This has several effects that should challenge the players and force them to think creatively as they see their resources dwindling.

Edge

Although the adventure may take several sessions to complete, Edge Points should **not** refresh during the adventure. The gamemaster may consider rewarding player characters with Edge Points during game play—for guidelines, see p. 74, SR4A.

Fatigue and Healing

The runners won't have a chance to get a good night's sleep, although this adventure spans several days in game time. Except for snatching a few uncomfortable—and unrefreshing—hours of sleep on a t-bird (or other plane), the runners won't have much chance to pause for rest—and the chances they do have can be interrupted by a particularly devious GM with the encounters provided in *Road Trip!*. Neither Stun nor Physical damage can be healed naturally without rest.

The gamemaster should also call for the Sleep Deprivation Test, p. 256, SR4A, to demonstrate the effects of the grueling cross-country trip.

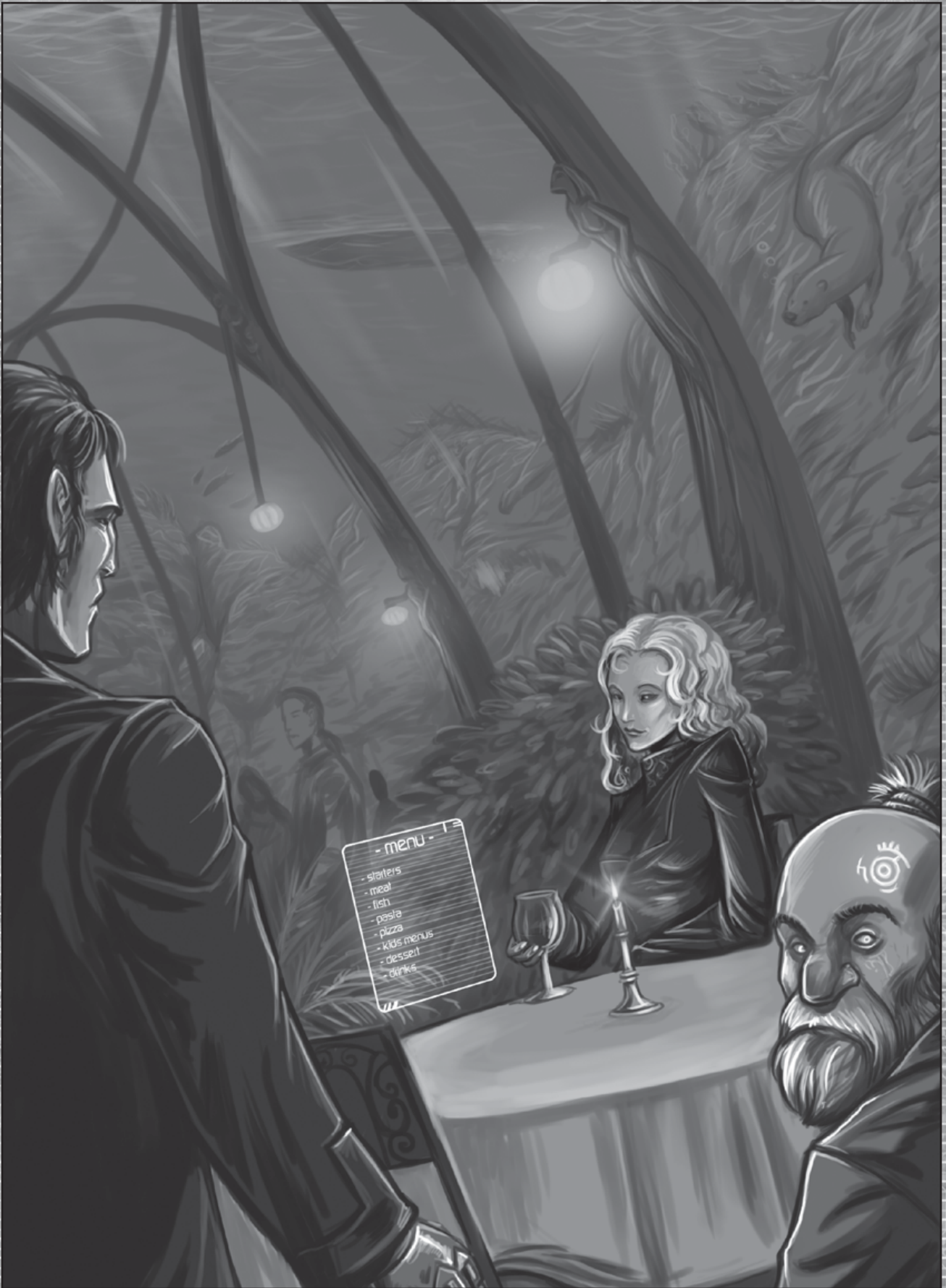
Resources

The characters may not have time to shop around in unknown cities for the gear they need to replace—like ammo, damaged armor, tools to fix broken drones, or even useful drugs. Without appropriate SINS, IDs, and licenses—for the country they're *in*—even standard items are unavailable. Few fixers are willing to deliver restricted items to unknown teams, especially when they're in a rush or just passing through—and merely procuring the gear can take longer than the runners have to wait (see *Availability and Buying Gear*, p. 312, SR4A). As their resources dwindle, the characters may be forced to make some tough decisions on how to get by with what they have.

players onto a certain path. In addition, side adventures are presented, allowing the gamemaster even more leeway to make the adventure as linear or non-linear as he or she desires.

While some scenes must occur for others to follow, due to the nature of the adventure, players may skip some of the scenes and still end up at the final, climatic showdown. As any gamemaster knows, for every suggested scene and outcome, players will think of two or three alternative methods of getting to their objective. Dealing with these unexpected detours is where a good gamemaster shines. In fact, the structure of this adventure may even encourage these detours, and the alternative paths can be fun





and enjoyable for both the players and the gamemaster. The point, after all, is to have fun. Each scene will have some gamemaster hints for keeping players on track or, alternatively, for expanding on the tangents they may take.

MAIN SECTIONS

This book is divided into several sections designed to assist you in bringing the adventure presented herein to your table:

- **Preparing to Play:** A plot synopsis, necessary background information, and other useful details and data.
- **Adventure Scenes:** The adventure itself, broken down into individual scenes.
- **Legwork:** Summaries of information and data the player characters might find during their research.
- **Cast of Shadows:** Profiles of the primary NPCs the player characters will interact with during the adventure.
- **Player Handouts:** Information designed for players.

ADVENTURE SCENES

The adventure itself plays out over a series of sequential scenes. Each scene contains some, or all, of the following subsections:

- **Scan This:** A brief summary of the events in the scene.
- **Tell It to Them Straight:** A text selection that can be read directly to the players or paraphrased when the player characters reach specific points in the scene.
- **Hooks:** Descriptions of ways that characters might be encouraged to play a scene.
- **Behind the Scenes:** The mechanics behind each scene, including NPC motivations and any secrets or special instructions for the scene.
- **Subplots:** Secondary adventures—or red herrings—that offer avenues for gamemasters to develop to make the adventure less linear for players.
- **Pushing the Envelope:** Suggestions for gamemasters on altering the scene to challenge more experienced players or more powerful player characters.

GAMEMASTERING THE ADVENTURE

Midnight is an adventure designed for *Shadowrun, Fourth Edition*, and is the second in the *Dawn of the Artifacts* series of adventures that will immerse characters in some of the greatest mysteries of the Sixth World.

Here are a few suggestions that will make the adventure, and gamemastering it, run more smoothly.

Step One: Read the Adventure

Reading through the adventure prior to introducing your group to it ensures you know what's coming down the line and are familiar with the entire story. This helps when your players (inevitably) come up with something not presented in the adventure.

Step Two: Assess the Adventure

Rarely does any gamemaster take a written adventure and run it without any changes. You may decide it needs to be more challenging for your players, or perhaps they form a specialized team (such as all mages) who will undoubtedly approach certain tasks in unique ways. You may want to switch certain NPCs with characters your players are familiar with in their game, such as a common fixer or gang contact. Assessing the adventure lets you decide how you want to customize the adventure to best fit your game and your gamemastering style.

Step Three: Know the Characters

You should have a copy of each character prior to running the adventure, so you can assess their individual (and group) skills, contacts, and abilities. If a scene calls for them to fly a plane through the Rockies, and none of them have a Pilot Aircraft skill, you may need to tweak the scene so they'll still have a chance at success. Likewise, you should feel free to

add challenges tailored to the players' abilities, and if a character is sidelined for parts of the story due to lack of abilities or skills, you should consider adding scenes that play to the character's strengths.

Step Four: Take Notes

Written notes help you keep things organized. You may want to jot down a note to give a particular handout to players at a specific moment or highlight important details about an NPC or combat scene. Taking notes during the adventure helps you remember characters' actions along the way, which is useful when awarding Karma and handling contacts at the conclusion. Since this is the second adventure in a series, if these characters played through *Dusk*, you may want to refer to those notes as well. It is not unlikely that the players' decisions in *this* adventure might come back to haunt them later!

Step Five: Don't Let the Dice Run the Game

Dice rolls normally dictate the outcome of events in a roleplaying game. However, sometimes the dice fall in such a way that they interfere with the story. Remember, as gamemaster, you can always tweak the dice to enhance the story. As a rule of thumb, a gamemaster shouldn't fudge the die rolls to *hurt* player characters, but occasionally might tweak the roll to help them out or to help the story progress (softening a roll to seriously injure a player character rather than killing him is one example).

Step Six: Don't Panic

You'll make mistakes. *Everyone* makes mistakes. You may forget a rule, misread a scene, or forget an important clue. Don't worry. The reason you're there is to have fun, and fun is far more important than a flawless performance. If you or the players make a mistake, do your best to straighten things out, then keep moving forward.

Urgent Message...



- **Debugging:** Suggestions for getting the adventure back on track if the player characters' actions derail it.
- **Places of Interest:** Locations featured in the scene, including descriptions and Ratings for security systems and Matrix systems.
- **Grunts and Moving Targets:** NPCs in that particular scene. NPCs that are featured in multiple scenes are found in the Cast of Shadows.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Non-player characters (NPCs) are key to bringing any adventure to life; they include the allies, enemies, and contacts the characters will interact with during the shadowrun. Important NPCs have relevant profiles, including stats, in the *Grunts and Moving Targets* section for each scene. Major NPCs who appear in multiple scenes are listed in the *Cast of Shadows* section at the end of this book. Some of the major NPCs are recurring characters from *Dusk*; they have additional background provided that reveals more of their motivations. Gamemasters can and should tweak the NPCs to make them more or less challenging opponents (see *Prime Runners*, p. 284, SR4A). NPCs in groups benefit from Group Edge (p. 281, SR4A), while individual NPCs in this adventure possess their own Edge stat to use.

BACKGROUND

Artifacts are a big business in the Sixth World. Entire organizations exist devoted to unveiling the secrets of metahumanity's lost history. Arcanoarcheology is the field that studies the artifacts and remnants of this lost history. The ones that

have been unearthed are hot commodities, desired by collectors, magical groups, even by megacorporate thaumaturgic research departments.

Dusk introduced one such artifact, the Piri Reis map. *Midnight* focuses on another ancient artifact, the Sextant of the Worlds (mistakenly called the Sexton of Worlds by some). These two artifacts are connected in a way that is unknown except to a few people in the Sixth World—in fact, these are just two of *several* connected artifacts. The shadowrunners are about to join the handful of people aware of this mystery from a past age of magic ...

THE SEXTANT OF THE WORLDS

"To the Aztechnology corporation, I leave the Sexton of Worlds, with the provision that the corporation and the government of Aztlan ban the practice of blood magic in territories under their jurisdiction within a year of my death and submit to an outside investigation to verify this ban, the investigator to be designated by and answerable to the Draco Foundation."

— *Dunkelzahn's Will* (2057)

The Sextant of the Worlds is an artifact with a long and colorful history. In 1100 AD, it was brought back from the First Crusade and presented to Pope Paschal II as part of the Catholic Church's share of the loot captured from the Dome of the Rock, in Jerusalem. It later came under the protection of the Vigilia Evangelica, an *extremely* secretive order of priests set to guard the hidden treasures and knowledge of the Church. For centuries, it resided in the Vatican's secret vaults, a part of the immense

Urgent Message...

VIGILIA EVANGELICA

Publicly known as the keepers of the Vatican's Matrix network, the Vigilia's true agenda is kept secret even from the highest ranks of the Vatican. They are an extremely secretive order of priests tasked to guard the accumulated knowledge—some of it so forbidden and dangerous even the Pope does not know its existence—and artifacts of the Church. The Vigilia does not advertise its existence, and even in the shadow world there are few rumors about it. The Vigilia has four vaults, each of them kept a well-guarded secret: two in Europe, and two in the New World.

In this adventure, the three Vigilia Evangelica members will not make any references to their affiliation and will not appear to be priests. If asked, they should present themselves as Sylvestrine brothers (an order that includes many magically active members). In the end, the players should only end up with hints and insinuations that the three men belong to something more mysterious than the Sylvestrine order ...

THE SMOKING MIRROR

The Smoking Mirror is the dark, hidden secret of the popular public worship of Tezcatlipoca in Aztlan. While Tezcatlipoca has his own temples and his priests are

major players in both Aztlan and Aztechnology, the Smoking Mirror cult is the stuff of rumors and nightmares. It's said that the high-ranking priests are all blood mages. Some rumors even place high-ranking cult members at the highest level of Aztechnology. The most frightening of rumors are those that hint that the priests follow the dark god Tezcatlipoca made flesh, a living god who directs their every move ...

THE DRACO FOUNDATION

The Draco Foundation (DF) was established by the last will and testament of the deceased president Dunkelzahn. Charged with administering his will and legacy (both the public and private sections), this foundation controls the bulk of the late dragon's wealth. With such financial backing, it continues to be a major influence in a variety of realms—from the boardrooms of AAA megacorps to the world of arcanoarcheology. It is a primary competitor to the Atlantean Foundation in the world of arcanoarcheology and antiquities. The Draco Foundation is nominally under the control of Chairman and former UCAS Vice President Nadja Daviar, but her appearances are rare to nonexistent. Aina Dupree is the acting Chairman of the Foundation.



Aquinae collection guarded by the Vigilia. In the late sixteenth century, it was moved, along with a host of other artifacts, to a new vault in the New World: *Tertius*.

Even then, among the Vigilia, there were rumors of the cursed nature of the Sextant. They whispered that anyone who dared to steal the artifact would die a terrible death. Even the Vigilia were not sure if they kept it in their vaults to protect it—or to protect those who would covet it.

For centuries, no one dared the curse, or the Vigilia's remarkable safety precautions. Then it was stolen from the sacred vault—by a member of the Vigilia itself, a rogue priest who abandoned his vows for reasons unknown. The rogue priest was murdered by one of the first blood-mages to serve Aztlan, who took the Sextant for his own and called it the “Sexton of Worlds,” for the similarity it held to the traditional staff of office. When he himself was killed—rent apart by one of his own blood spirits—the Sextant disappeared again. It remained hidden, its location a mystery, until the death of Dunklezahn.

In Dunklezahn's will, he left the Sexton of Worlds (using their name) to Aztechnology, under the condition they stop using blood magic. Certain people within the corporation were undoubtedly surprised to discover that their missing artifact was in the possession of the late dragon—and even more displeased that it appeared locked tight against their efforts to “recover” it. Whether Dunklezahn was simply flaunting his theft of the Sextant from Aztechnology, or baiting specific individuals within the corp, is unknown—what is known is that Aztechnology did *not* meet the conditions of the will, and the Sextant reverted to Draco Foundation possession, where it remained for years.

In late January 2072, the Sextant of the Worlds was requested by researchers at the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research (DIMR) for study. It was to be transferred from the Draco Foundation vaults in Washington, DC, to the DIMR labs in Boston. Somehow, Itztli (p. 53), an Aztechnology mage and member of the secretive Smoking Mirror blood cult, got word of the transfer, and set his plans into motion. He hired a runner team led by Sonora (p. 52) to take the artifact en route to the DIMR labs. They did so, but recovery teams from the Draco Foundation, sent by Aina Dupree, foiled their travel plans back to Aztlan. Sonora and the surviving members of her team (three of them) are now on the run—hiding from not just the Draco team, but from others who have learned of the theft and are scrambling to be the first to recover the artifact—both the Atlantean Foundation and the Vigilia Evangelica are looking for it as well. Sonora's Aztlan contacts have assured her that the Sextant can withstand the dangers of Chicago, and she knows that the local astral phenomena make astral tracking hazardous. Combined with the lack of wireless coverage, it seems the only alternative. But getting *out* of Chicago is a touch more difficult than getting *in*. By mid-February, Sonora is hiding in Chicago, desperate to contact a *trustworthy* smuggling crew that can get her to the backup rendezvous point, Los Angeles, *before* one of the other parties finds them.

THE ATLANTEAN FOUNDATION

Created by Sheila Blatavska shortly after the Awakening in 2012, the Atlantean Foundation is a private organization publicly dedicated to restoring the glory of the lost golden age of Atlantis, a supposed Mecca of wonders and knowledge that disappeared into the mists of time. It is an organization with branches worldwide, popular trid shows, monthly newsletters and chats, major research centers, sponsored archeological digs, and cadres of respected scientists. It boasts millions of members worldwide and operates at a level just shy of an AA corporation.

The Mystic Crusaders

This paramilitary group is a secret order within the Atlantean Foundation, allegedly organized around the precepts of an ancient Atlantean codex. Part knightly order, part relic hunters, they serve a variety of roles for the organization, although they remain mostly the stuff of rumors even in the shadows. The Mystic Crusaders avidly follow the rules set forth in their Codex, the ancient manuscript Sheila Blatavska gave to the founding members of the Mystic Crusaders. No one outside the Mystic Crusaders knows what the Codex entails, but rumors are it discusses the protection of some very specific artifacts ... For more information on the Mystic Crusaders, see p. 73, *Street Magic*.

Worse, Sonora has begun to believe in the curse herself—as members of her team die in inexplicably horrible ways (her rigger burning to death in his own boat, her hacker taking a bullet from a Draco team sniper and bleeding out). She wants nothing more than to hand the Sextant over to her employers and let *them* deal with the bad luck that seems to haunt it.

The Sextant itself is a cross between an armillary sphere and a navigational sextant, although what it might navigate is a mystery known to only a few. In the center is a sphere of polished orichalcum, which anchors a small, unremarkable stone. The sphere is mounted on a staff, which is intricately carved with spiraling designs and undeciphered glyphs—symbols which are also found on the Piri Reis map. Despite being held for so long by the Vigilia, and later by the blood-mages of the new nation of Aztlan, its purpose has yet to be determined. Even the great dragon Dunklezahn was unaware of its abilities; why he added it to his collection, or even if he was behind the theft from Aztechnology, is unknown. Those few who know of its existence—Aztechnology, the Draco Foundation, the Atlantean Foundation, and the Vigilia Evangelica—will do everything in their power to ensure they're the ones who end up with the mysterious artifact.

Urgent Message...



PLOT SYNOPSIS

Jane “Frosty” Foster is brought in to track down the Sextant. With the Piri Reis map in hand, it is possible to trace the approximate location of the Sextant; likewise, the Sextant can be used to track the Piri Reis map (*Turning the Tables*). When the appropriate ritual is conducted, it is discovered that the Sextant is somewhere near—or in—Chicago. Faced with a trip to *another* feral city, Frosty knows just who to call ... (*Remember Me?*).

Together with the runners, Frosty heads to Chicago (*On Arrival*). Unfortunately, the ritual to locate the map is both time-consuming—taking four hours to complete—and draining, leaving Frosty effectively mundane for twelve hours after performing the ritual. She’ll be depending heavily on the runners for both protection and for legwork as they search the city for the missing artifact and Sonora’s team. Others are tracking the Sextant as well, including Samriel Lockwood (p. 50) and three members of the Vigilia Evangelica. Without a way to actually track the Sextant itself, Samriel decides to turn the tables on Frosty and the runners by following *them*, hoping they’ll lead him to the Sextant—although his reasons for tracking the Sextant are not what the runners may be expecting. He arranges for the runners’ food to be tagged with nanite-coated, hardened stealth tags (*Consumable Goods*). Since Samriel cannot use the map himself, he is content to simply follow the runners until the final scene, watching over them—and stepping in if it appears the map, or the Sextant, may be in danger.

In Chicago, Sonora is desperately trying to find a way to pay a smuggler crew for a trip out of the city. Eventually she makes contact with Wingman, head of Spire Enterprises—a smuggling crew gone legitimate who operate out of the Spire—who agrees to take her to Denver (which, as a smuggler haven, means she’ll

be able to find a connection to someplace where she can meet up with her employer). However, en route to the Spire, one of her teammates is killed.

The runners will have to use extensive legwork to find Sonora’s trail. When the runners finally track down Spire Enterprises, the Spire is under attack by another faction of the zone; Don Roland “The Greek” Stephanopoulos’ men are attempting to wipe out the smugglers (*Stand Off*). The runners’ actions will determine the outcome of the attack—and while either group will be willing to provide transportation *out* of Chicago to the team, only Wingman knows just where Sonora has gone.

En route to their next destination, the runners will have to deal with multiple border crossings, tense military patrols, inclement weather, and a smuggler with some interpersonal issues (*Road Trip!*, p. 22).

In Denver, Sonora gets in contact with a smuggler who agrees to fly her out of the city (*Layover*). Jane will perform the ritual again, leaving her helpless for another twelve hours, but revealing that the Sextant is still in Denver. Once in Denver, the team will be faced with negotiating the various borders, factions, and underworld syndicates to track down Sonora ... and they have to do so without attracting the attention of Ghostwalker, who would undoubtedly like to add the Sextant to his own hoard (*Dodging the Dragon*).

URGENT MESSAGE... DUSK: DAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS SUMMARY

In *Dusk*, Jane “Frosty” Foster hires a team of runners to accompany her to Lagos as protection and as investigative assistants, telling them she is a shadowrunner herself who normally works alone—but the feral city is no place for a single woman, no matter how skilled. They are going to Lagos to find Samriel Lockwood (p. 50), an Atlantean operative who has been tasked to go to Lagos himself on the trail of the missing Sextant. While in Lagos, the runners discover that the Sextant isn’t in the city, but find another artifact their employer is interested in—the Piri Reis map. It comes up at a black-market auction in Lagos and the runners need to find a way into the auction, or a way to steal the map beforehand. During their time together in Lagos, the runners learn more about Frosty, including the fact that she is a powerful magician when she saves the team from an ambush in the dangerous slums of the city.

After a harrowing week in the feral city—and with the help of some unknown, unseen guardian angels—the runners successfully acquire the map and return to Seattle.

BRIDGING THE ADVENTURES

Dusk and *Midnight* are meant to be run consecutively. If Frosty was satisfied with the runners’ performance in *Dusk*—and if she *liked* them—the team will be the first she considers calling when faced with going to another feral city. Note that her impression of the runners, and their behavior towards her, will guide her decision more than if they were *successful* in acquiring the map.

What if the runners didn’t end up with the map in *Dusk*? You have several options in that case. If Celedyr ended up with the map, then Frosty may trade some favors with the dragon in order to “borrow” the map for a few weeks. If someone else ended up with the map, then Frosty may well hire another shadowrun team to steal it from the winners—or she may hire the first team, as a second chance. If the map was destroyed in *Dusk*, then Frosty may have access to another magical ritual to track the Sextant (with the same effects presented below)—although this will deviate from the adventure series, you can make the substitution with some creative gamemastering.

If the runners and Frosty ended *Dusk* with a terrible relationship, she will likely hire a different team for *Midnight*—this might be a good time to point out that, especially in the shadows, positive working relationships can trump skill and proficiency when it comes to keeping contacts.

Either way, *Midnight* follows right on the heels of *Dusk*.

DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT: ...

URGENT MESSAGE...



Sonora, however, will have heard that someone is on her trail in Denver. After an encounter with some Mafia enforcers, which leaves another of her teammates dead, Sonora hires a runner team to protect her when she's meeting the t-bird smuggler (*Too Little, Too Late*). When the runners catch up to Sonora, they'll face a chaotic, three-way fight—and Sonora will slip away again. If they can keep any of the hired help alive, they'll learn that Sonora was heading for Los Angeles. However, the flaring tensions between Ute rebels and the PCC military make travel precarious, and smugglers—Sonora's and the runners'—will have to make multiple pit stops to avoid patrols (*Road Trip!*, p. 22).

Sonora finally ends up in Los Angeles, where she shelters with the Burning Angels outside of LA proper, out past San Bernardino. Her employer, Itztli, is also in San Bernardino, and he verifies that the Sextant is the correct artifact when Sonora arrives. However, his ritual to test the Sextant reveals another artifact is nearby—the Piri Reis map. Itztli sends a team out to discover what artifact the Sextant is pointing to—and to bring it back to him (*Turning the Tables*). The runners will have no time to recover from their travel to Los Angeles before they are attacked. Luckily, Samriel and his Mystic Crusaders are nearby and can intercede if the runners appear to be overwhelmed. The attack also gives the runners a lead on where the Sextant is. If they trace the attackers back to where Itztli is, they'll have a chance to recover the artifact before the blood-mage takes it into Aztlan (*Enemy of my Enemy*). They'll just have to get through a heavily armed gang, a blood spirit, traversing the underwater tunnels of the Deep Lacuna, and a final, climatic battle in an underground smugglers' cavern to get it—but they'll find as they meet each challenge that foes become allies, and that the saying "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" is based in truth.

REMEMBER ME?

SCAN THIS

Frosty is back, looking to hire the shadowrunners to accompany her to yet another feral city: Chicago. She's still on the trail of the missing artifact ... and she really needs a team she can trust, because she's in a tough spot. Her ability to track the missing artifact leaves her magical resources drained, and she's hoping the team can be bodyguards as well as investigative partners.

This scene is all about reuniting Frosty with the team and convincing them to go on another fun trip with her. Which, considering their last trip together, may be harder than it sounds.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Seattle is having one of those rare days where the persistent acid drizzle is swept away by an unusual warm spell, unthawing the city and teasing everyone with a hint of spring. Even the air smells good, the breeze off the Sound pushing away the normal stench. It'd be a perfect day to play hooky—which is apparently what half the city is doing, from the crowds on the downtown streets—but an unknown number pops up on your AR.

When you answer the call, a familiar woman comes into view. She tucks a stray ice-white curl behind one delicately pointed ear, and when she sees you a brilliant smile lights up her heart-shaped face.

"Hey, there, remember me?" she says. "I've got another job, and I thought of you guys first. It involves travel—oh, not to Lagos." She chuckles. "You guys want to meet to discuss the particulars? I've got six p.m. reservations at the Gray Line."

When they arrive at The Gray Line, read the following:

The elegant restaurant is actually built *in* the Puget Sound, with the water held back by transparent walls that give an unparalleled view of the underwater life of the Sound. Multicolored lights illuminate the carefully reconstructed marine habitat.

Security is thorough, and after passing the checks—and checking your weapons—you're led to a secluded corner of the restaurant. Artfully placed ferns and miniature rhododendrons full of red and purple blooms hide the table from the rest of the restaurant. As you pass the foliage, you see the table, and the single woman sitting there. Behind her is a long, tubular plastic case, propped up against a pot of ferns. On the table in front of her is a half-full glass of wine.

It's Jane. Her curly hair is white as snow, and there are violet shadows under her eyes. She looks tired. But she still smiles at you.

She waits to speak until you've ordered drinks and dinner, and the host has left you alone again.

"Thanks for coming," she says. "I wasn't sure you would, after Lagos. Man, that was a miserable trip, wasn't it? Anyway. I'm still on the track of that missing artifact—the one we went to Lagos to find. Looks like it never left the UCAS at all. I've got an idea of where it is, and I was hoping you would go with me to find it ..."

She trails off, picking up her wine glass and taking a large drink. "I'll pay you each 10,000 nuyen for your help—half now, half at completion. Hopefully this will only take a day or two. There's still a finder's fee *if* we recover it. Because of ... ah, our previous experiences, and where the thing *is*, I've negotiated it up to 100,000 nuyen for your team."

Frosty pauses again, and this time drinks down the rest of her wine. She looks like she wished it was something stronger.

"The hitch is ... it's in *Chicago*."

If they accept the job, read the following:

"Great. I've got a plane chartered for the O'Hare Airport. I can give you more details once we're on board—it's more private. It's ready and waiting, and I'd like to get to Chicago *before* the damn artifact leaves the city. Weather's cold there—apparently there's a big storm blowing through—and, well, I'd pack prepared for anything. The plane is fairly small, so nothing big—no vehicles—but otherwise, bring whatever you think necessary.

Once they're on the plane and in the air, read the following:

Jane tells you to help yourselves to the drinks and snack bar in the small plane. Once you're all settled in, she sits back and looks at you. Beside her is the same plastic tube.

"Pilot says the flight will take five hours. He also isn't going to wait for us in Chicago. Chartering the plane emptied my expense account, but I want to get to Chicago without any delays.

"Anyway. You're probably curious how I tracked down the artifact," she says, then pats the plastic case beside her. "This is the map we recovered in Lagos. Apparently the two things are ... ah, linked." She wrinkles her nose. "Which I just found out yesterday. I can find the missing artifact using the map—there's a ritual—but ... well, you saw the map. It's not exactly a user-friendly

format. Best it can do is narrow down the location within maybe ten or twenty kilometers. And it only lasts for a few seconds. Then I have to try again.” Jane sighs. “There’s another problem, too.”

“Using the map, the ritual ... it’s hard. Draining. Afterwards, I’m wiped. I’m not used to—” Jane clenches her fist, and frowns. “I’ll be depending on you guys. I’m afraid I won’t be much use, magically. Although,” she touches her gun, “Magic or no, I’m still a damn good shot.”

HOOKS

This scene should be fairly straightforward—although depending on their experiences in Lagos, Jane may need to be quite persuasive to get the team to agree to accompany her to *another* feral city. Jane has some wiggle room in her payment, and is willing to pay a higher rate if that’s what it takes to get them to agree.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Jane “Frosty” Foster has called the runners in hopes that they’ll accompany her as she attempts to find the missing Sextant. She’s made arrangements at the upscale Gray Line restaurant for a private table. She also has a chartered plane waiting for her at the Everett airport, which happens to be the plane she arrived upon. She’s recently performed the tracking ritual with the map (see p. 12), and so her magic is functionally gone. She’s more than nervous—she’s carrying a valuable artifact with her, and is without her powerful magical abilities.

Inside the restaurant, Frosty’s table is protected from visual surveillance by strategically placed foliage. A white-noise device prevents electronic listening devices. However, Frosty is not confident in the protections, and will not discuss any details of the job in the restaurant (beyond the payment and the location). The other details will have to wait until they are on the plane.

Gamemasters may ask each player to create a list of what items the player character is taking when they leave their home city. Keeping track of these items as they are used will increase record-keeping duties, but will also increase the feeling that every bullet counts ... forcing players characters to conserve resources, or employ creative problem-solving.

Urgent Message...

HAVE PLANE, WILL TRAVEL

Some groups may include a rigger or other player character with both the equipment and skills to handle the travel portion of the adventure. This is an adventure where a travel specialist can really shine. In this case, a gamemaster can have Frosty use the team’s transportation, rather than the chartered plane or the smuggler offered in *Road Trip!*. If this occurs, the gamemaster is encouraged to use the encounters in *Road Trip!* to spice up the travel legs—and remember, the NAN actively patrols their airspace, and player characters who choose to fly through those nations need to use extreme caution ...

Frosty will offer the runners a starting rate of 10,000 nuyen each for their assistance, half up front, plus she’ll pay for the transportation and lodging. The runners can negotiate the rate with a Negotiation (4) Test. For each hit above the threshold—up to a maximum of ten—she’ll increase the payment by 1,000 nuyen (up to an additional 10,000 nuyen each) or provide 1,200 nuyen worth of gear per runner (up to 12,000 nuyen total per runner)—the runners can negotiate either additional payment, gear, or split their hits between the two (although the end total is still limited by a maximum of ten hits). The “finder’s fee” can also be increased with a Negotiation (4) Test, with each net hit increasing the final payment by 5,000 nuyen, up to a total of 150,000 nuyen for the group.

She’s chartered an independent plane and pilot for the trip. The plane is a Honda HA 520 jet (use stats for Gulfstream Luxe V, p. 113, *Arsenal*), which seats up to nine passengers, but has almost no cargo space. A rigged pilot is controlling it.

A basic search on Chicago will turn up information that a major snowstorm has just passed over the area, leaving the city with below-freezing temperatures and a lot of snow (temperatures below -15°C , with windchills dropping the temperature to -30C). Frosty has packed a variety of gear, including cold-weather survival gear and MREs (8). She has one case full of an assortment of small med-kits (5), antibiotic tablets (100), pocket water-purification systems (3), and miscellaneous small medical gear (10)—for bribes and payments in Chicago. Another small case holds supplies for her ritual magic. Finally, she has the map, held within a special, heavily armored tube (Armor Rating 15/13) designed specifically for holding fragile manuscripts (purchased at Sotheby’s). The tube is 1.5 meters long and 0.2 meters in diameter.

In the plane, Frosty will share what she knows with the runners. She’ll tell them about the Sextant (see p. 7) and that she’s *heard* the team with the artifact is led by a mage named Sonora. She’ll also tell them more about the map, if they ask, but will be vague about the ritual—“Hurts like hell” is all she’ll say. And while the runners may note that the mysterious writing on the map matches the symbols on the Sextant, if asked, Frosty will only reply that she doesn’t know how to read it, and say nothing more.

Frosty got her information secondhand from her employer. She does not have an image of Sonora, just the most general description (mage, Latina, human) and that she’s likely been on the run—Frosty will mention that others are after the same artifact, although she’ll still say that it was stolen from her employer; she won’t mention any connection to the Draco Foundation (DF) itself, and she isn’t that sure that her employer means to return the Sextant to the DF. After all, to her knowledge, the DF agents can’t find the Sextant, because *she’s* got the map—not them.

Frosty will also point out that the map and Sextant are both precious artifacts, and it is imperative that they not be damaged—so no shooting at it, throwing grenades anywhere near it, tossing fireballs around it, or otherwise doing anything that might blow it up (or anyone carrying it)!

Frosty will be insistent that the team move quickly. She’d like to leave as soon as possible, although she’ll allow the runners a few hours (4 max) to gather gear, with the caveat that the Sextant is on the move, and the longer they take the colder the trail will be. She believes (rightly) that Sonora isn’t going to be in Chicago long. This should be the first hint to the runners that they’ve entered a non-stop chase.

The flight to Chicago will take 5 hours.

DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT.....



DESCRIBING THE RITUAL

The actual ritual, if any of the runners wish to observe/participate, is left to the gamemaster to describe. A few key points are listed below:

- Performing the ritual takes four hours.
- Frosty chants in a language none of the runners know.
- Part of the ritual includes setting up a protective ward around the ritual space.
- Once the ritual is complete, a glowing orb forms over the map, revealing the location of the Sextant for approximately 10 seconds. For every additional magically active person inside the ward, the orb lasts an additional 10 seconds.

- Any magically active runners who are inside the ward (whether they participate or not), have their magic completely drained during the time the orb is visible, rendering them mundane. This should be a painful and wrenching experience. While mundane, they cannot use any magical Active Skills (including Astral Perception) or any adept abilities. After 12 hours pass, their magic suddenly returns in full. Foci are unaffected and spirits are disrupted (if they don't leave prior to completion of the ritual).
- If asked, Frosty will give a very vague explanation: there isn't enough "natural" mana for the map to work, so the map "feeds" on the participant's magic.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

This scene is fairly straightforward, but if you wish to make it more difficult for the runners, you can make procuring their gear difficult. Cold-climate survival gear is available online, but waiting for it to ship is unacceptable. There is a store that sells the gear they need nearby, but it's closed for the day—so the runners will have to break in and steal the gear.

DEBUGGING

Runners who had a rough time in Lagos might not be interested in traveling to another feral city. Frosty will point out that while the heart of Chicago is a feral city, it's still located in the UCAS, with regular towns and cities surrounding it. Unlike Lagos, traveling to the city isn't *that* difficult. She's quite sure that the artifact won't be in the heart of Chicago, since it's an Awakened artifact. She'll try to tempt their curiosity (perhaps offering a

CONSUMABLE GOODS

Samriel Lockwood (p. 50) has followed Frosty to Seattle without her knowledge. He knows she's on the trail of the artifact, and knows that with the Piri Reis map she has a good chance of locating it. When she goes to the Gray Line restaurant he manages to spike the runners' meals with nanoinfectors loaded with taggants; any of the runners who consume any food or beverages in the restaurant will ingest the tags (including Frosty—she's already ingested some in her wine prior to the runners' arrival).

The nanoinfectors (p. 117, *Augmentation*) are a Rating 6 microscopic soft nanoware system. They've been loaded with hardened Stealth RFID tags (p. 319, *SR4A*) and designed to activate once in contact with the chemicals in a metahuman digestion system. They will adhere to the walls of the intestines, securing the stealth tags. They will degrade at one point per week, and when they are gone, the stealth tags will be flushed from the runners' digestive systems. They have no ill-effect on the health of the runners, nor do they affect the essence or aura of the runners.

The nanoinfectors can be detected with a nanotech scanner (threshold 6) or by a technomancer with the E-sensing echo (threshold 5). Blood tests will not reveal the presence of the nanoinfectors since they are programmed not to enter the bloodstream,

but to remain in the digestive tract. They can only be destroyed with a Universal nanite hunter system, which will cause the Stealth tags to be released and flushed from the digestive track within 72 hours. The Stealth tags themselves use special frequencies and other tricks to avoid detection, making them difficult to detect even when broadcasting. They cannot be located with a bug scanner or a commlink.

The Stealth tags activate themselves at irregular intervals (set with an internal clock) and send out an encrypted message to a designated Matrix address via any available/nearby (40 m) Active node. The file contains only the current time and a log of the Access IDs of the nodes it travels through until it arrives. Samriel will have Atlantean hackers backtrack the file to roughly triangulate the runner's position at the time it was broadcast. The broadcast will typically last only one combat turn—as soon as the tag sends the file, the signal will cease, causing the tag to go silent.

Samriel will follow the data during this adventure, allowing him and his compatriots to be nearby during the finale of the adventure. However, unless the player characters need his assistance, he will be content to follow them at a distance, never revealing himself.

These tags may also come into play in *Darkest Hour: Dawn of the Artifacts 3* ...

magical player character the opportunity to observe the map in action). She'll also be *very* careful not to mention that she'll be magically drained until *after* they're on the plane—it's not her fault if the runners assume that traveling to Chicago in the presence of a powerful magician will be sufficient protection ...

If the runners are unable to successfully enter the Gray Line restaurant, Frosty will agree to meet them outside the restaurant; although she'll offer fewer details if she's not assured of the security of the alternative meeting location (instead of naming Chicago as their destination, she'll simply say "someplace cold").

If the runners refuse to accept the job for the amount of nuyen offered, she'll be sympathetic but firm. It's a fair rate for a day or two of work.

If the player characters refuse to take the job, regardless of these suggestions, you may want to discuss with your players what it is about the job that they object to, and find a mutually satisfactory solution

PLACES OF INTEREST

The Gray Line Restaurant (Pier 63, Downtown Seattle)

The Gray Line restaurant is one of Seattle's finest, serving a mix of Elven and Salish cuisine with a focus on seafood and local ingredients. It's built in the Sound, a multi-level structure with transparent walls (heavily reinforced and shielded) that run the length of the water-side of the restaurant. The upper level has a secured entry lobby, a security area, and the inner lobby, while the first lower floor sits at the high-tide level. A third floor is below that, and is fully underwater. The surrounding area has been reconstructed with marine habitats, which draw a variety of wildlife from sea lions to otters. Lights and daily feedings attract fish and the creatures that prey on them.

Security is discreet but *very* thorough. Firearms are required to be checked, and cyberware with built-in guns will not be allowed in the restaurant. A Rating 6 cyberware scanner, a Rating 3 MAD scanner, and a chemsniffer scan everyone prior to entry into the inner lobby. The restaurant staff will offer gentlemen a coat and tie if they didn't wear appropriate attire. They will also turn away anyone who is obviously scruffy or doesn't fit the "atmosphere" of the restaurant. Restaurant security is armed with tasers, stun batons, and other non-explosive defensive devices.

ON ARRIVAL

SCAN THIS

Frosty and the runners have arrived in Chicago and must track down Sonora and the Sextant. With little-to-no Matrix service in the city, the runners will be forced to track down the missing artifact the old-fashioned way. This scene also serves to introduce runners to Chicago, including the various factions who struggle to control their part of the city. The runners will determine how they locate information about Sonora and what they learn depends totally on them. However, simply traveling across the snow-bound city will eat up hours, and there are a lot of dangers in Chicago—metahuman and otherwise. By the end of the scene, they should learn that Sonora has contacted Spire Enterprises and may have already left the city—talking to the leader of Spire Enterprises is the only way to learn *where* Sonora has gone next.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Your plane skids to a stop on a narrow runway, fishtailing as the pilot fights against the wind and the ice-covered runway. Frosty looks out the window at the dark clouds boiling across the sky.

"Looks like we hit the tail of the storm," she says, gathering up her bags. "Let's get rolling. The sooner we find this thing, the sooner we can get the hell out of here. There should be an SUV waiting for us—all I could get on short notice. I know a place to stay off the 294—outside the O'Hare sprawl, since I don't really want to deal with their police."

After they've left the airport, read the following:

Route 294 is maintained—kind of—as it passes by walled-off corporate enclaves and fortified business parks. That is, until you reach the end of the O'Hare subsprawl territory, where the border security looks like you're about to drive into hostile territory. Large prefab buildings are set back from a double-layer monowire-topped fence, and armed guards, wearing arctic-style armor, are on patrol. There's nothing stopping you from leaving but it's pretty obvious getting *back inside* the O'Hare subsprawl is going to be *tough*. Not only that, but once you pass the security checkpoints, the freeway is no longer clear of snow and ice—in fact, driving slows to a crawl as vehicles push through snowdrifts covering the road.

The occasional barricade is set up on the freeway exits, manned by people wearing layers of tattered clothes and carrying heavy weaponry. They eye you as you drive past.

Wireless signals ebb and flow, in places dwindling to nothing. Eventually, Frosty points to an upcoming exit.

"That's the one. There's a motel a few blocks off the freeway."

The exit has rusted-out cars parked across it, with a narrow gap just big enough for one vehicle to pass. A path has been beaten through the snowdrifts where vehicles have navigated the road-block. Sitting on the barriers are a dozen men, their faces obscured by ski masks, each holding a rifle ...

If the runners need help finding contacts, read the following:

Frosty watches you gather your gear while she sits on the only chair in the room—a chipped plastic lawn chair.





INCOMING FEED.....

“I’ll stay to protect the map,” she says, holding her Predator on her lap. “In a few hours, I’ll be able to start the ritual again. If you haven’t found *something* by then ... I can check the map.” She looks around the room and wrinkles her nose. “After I sterilize the place, that is.”

“There’s a trading post in Southside, Póg mo Thóin. Kind of a general store, although what’s in stock depends on what people’ve brought to trade. Sean and his pack of crazy brothers run the place. There’s a nasty little bar tucked in the basement. Great place to meet up with people in the know, pick up rumors, that sort of thing. If you go there, mention my name to Sean—he owes me a favor. He can introduce you to some of his customers. He charges ammo for drinks, so take a few extra clips. Oh, and tell him that my last tee-shirt got ripped up in Lagos, and I want another. Size small.”

If the runners contact the smuggler group at Lake Calumet, read the following:

The smuggler eyes you warily. He’s a human of indeterminate age, with blackened teeth and a trio of scars slashed across his face. You can tell he hasn’t *bathe*d in a while. Like, say, this decade ...

“Latina chick, huh?” He scratches his greasy beard. “Yeah. She came through here, with a couple a others. Offered to take them a few places, if she could pay. She didn’t have squat with her, but that big box—asked if I’d take nuyen,” he chuckles. His breath might qualify as a toxic gas. “Sent her on. Those guys at the Spire take nuyen. Told her to try them, if she was brave enough to go into the Zone.” He shudders, just once.

If the runners break the siege and ask Wingman about Sonora, read the following:

Wingman shrugs, then nods.

“Well, I do owe you for the help. Lady and her friends hitched a ride out with one of my birds [insert time here], heading to Denver. Left one of theirs behind—poor guy. Freak accident, they said, guy lost his head. Lady paid me to have the body—and the head—cremated. Seemed pretty torn up about it, too. I gather she’s had a run of bad luck lately—heard one of her friends, cute ork girl, muttering about ‘the curse.’ Dunno what it meant, but there you go. Now the siege is broken, I can get some of the boys to take the body out and torch it.”

HOOKS

The runners are in Chicago, and the artifact is somewhere out there. Finding it is their primary goal (or perhaps their secondary goal, after survival).

BEHIND THE SCENES

This scene is where the runners first pick up Sonora’s trail—and the trail of the Sextant. To keep the plot moving forward for the rest of the adventure, picking up her trail is the key point of the scene. There are numerous ways the runners may find clues that point to Sonora. Several potential paths are detailed below (*Picking up the Trail*, p. 16), and gamemasters are encouraged to use these or create their own to suit their players.

TRAVEL TIMES

With the inclement weather (up to half a meter of snow, which has blown in meter-high drifts in some areas, plus ice), the lack of road-clearing crews, and the deteriorated condition of the roads, traveling by vehicle in the Chicago sub-sprawls can be a time-consuming process. Snowmobiles, smaller and more maneuverable, can travel significantly faster. And for those who choose to fly (who risk being targeted by ground attacks; those who might try magical means of flight risk entering an area of background count and finding their spells and spirits failing at exactly the wrong moment), it is fast, but *very* risky. A few approximate travel times to/from the Motel 5½ are listed below. *Note: these times do not include any "encounters" with locals, wildlife, or other hazards of the feral sprawl.*

Location	Vehicle	Snowmobile	Foot	Air
O'Hare Subsprawl border	1 hour	1 hour	7 hours	20 minutes
Póg mo Thóin	2 hours	1 hour	5 hours	15 minutes
Lake Calmut	4 hours	2 hours	9 hours	25 minutes
Containment Zone border	2 hours	1 hour	7 hours	20 minutes
Containment Zone border to Spire Enterprises (by land)	not applicable	4 hours	5 hours	10 minutes

First, the runners will face numerous challenges from the structure (or lack thereof) of the feral city of Chicago. The runners have arrived in Chicago right after a storm, and many of the residents have holed up in their shelters. Without any modern city infrastructure to deal with the snow and ice, the roads are almost impassible.

Frosty has rented them a large SUV, but will need one of the runners to disable the gridlink tracking device if they wish to take it outside of the O'Hare sub-sprawls. (And she wouldn't mind at all if a hacker was able to make the rental records "disappear" just in case ...) Enterprising runners will be able to find an outdoors store that sells and rents snowmobiles, although a hacker will also have to disable the tracking devices on them.

The areas surrounding the O'Hare sub-sprawls are teetering on the edge of feral. Frosty has stayed at the Motel 5 ½ in the past, and knows the manager (although she does not have reservations, since the place has no Matrix connection). She plans to hole up in the motel with the map and send the runners out to search. Her employer has assured her the map can withstand any of the astral dangers in Chicago, but she'd rather be safe than sorry. She has a satellite uplink for her commlink, and hopefully the runners will have something similar so they can communicate.

At their exit off the freeway, however, they encounter a "toll-booth" where the Windy City Tollkeepers are charging vehicles to exit the freeway. The Tollkeepers take bartered goods, not nuyen, for their "toll." They can also provide—for additional payment—information about Chicago, or even hook up the runners with a guide.

As the runners hit the streets, Frosty will ensure they have both a hardcopy image of the Sextant and a description of Sonora. How they go about searching for it is up to them. Frosty will point out the 20 kilometer "circle" where the Sextant was approximately 10 hours ago. She's going to stay behind and in (10 hours after meeting with the runners at the Gray Line), she'll be able to perform the ritual again to locate the Sextant, which will take 4 hours to complete.

In the week(s) that Sonora has been hiding in Chicago, she's left a trail. She has contacted several of the smuggler groups in Chicago, including those at the Lake Calumet area and the Spire. She also learned that her contacts within Aztechnology were

compromised when she attempted to go into Gary, Indiana (an Aztechnology-controlled town). The Mafia have a strong presence in both areas and someone will have taken note of the shadowrunning team led by a Latina woman.

Sonora has also needed to find shelter and supplies, so she's been around the city. She's traded magical services for supplies (at the Open Enclave and The Headshop, p. 51, *Feral Cities*) and people will remember her—and be willing to trade info for something else of use.

Sonora and her teammates are sheltering at the Spire as the runners arrive in Chicago. Unfortunately, as Sonora's team was making their way through the Zone, they were attacked by wild dogs. While fighting off the dogs, one of her teammates fell in the thick snow and was decapitated when he landed on a jagged piece of metal. Sonora and her remaining teammates (two now) take the body with them to the Spire. She pays Wingman to cremate the body (to ensure it isn't used for ghoulish food), and to transport the rest of them out of the city (the Spire being one of the few smuggler operations in Chicago that accept nuyen). The smugglers are waiting for the weather to clear enough to get her to Denver, where she's hoping no one will look for her—after all, Aztechnology has no real presence in Denver—and which is a major smugglers' hub. She's not sure where she's going from Denver, but the options are

TRADE AND BARTER IN CHICAGO

Low Value: toll (per person), trade for minor information, 4 cans food, 4 soybars, small battery pack, blanket, bottle of aspirin, clip of regular ammo, 1 grenade

Mid Value: gang bribe, introduction, transportation through low-risk area (per person), shelter (per person)

Trade: bottle of hard alcohol, antibiotics strip (10 dose), rating 2 medkit, clip of APDS

High Value: major gang bribe, medical care

Trade: rating 4 medkit, magical services, clip of EX-EX, blood donation (1 pint)

much more open, and she really just wants *out* of Chicago. They'll be leaving the city almost immediately after the runners arrive—although the runners won't know that.

FINDING THE TRAIL

Each of the paths detailed below offers the runners a way to track down Sonora and the Sextant. These paths are suggestions; player characters may devise their own routes to finding Sonora, and gamemasters can tailor the Chicago scene to fit the team's approach. Ideally, tracking down Sonora should require three or more steps, to make it sufficiently challenging to the runners.

For example, a Mafia contact could provide info that a "runner team led by a Latina woman was asking for transport outta the city. Why don'tcha talk to Scuzzy-Z, at Lake Calumet? Tell him Ricky One-Eye sent ya." That would lead the runners to a meeting with a Lake Calumet smuggler, who would in turn direct them to the Spire Enterprises smugglers.

As the runners traverse Chicago, a variety of challenges will present themselves. Gamemasters are encouraged to use the suggestions below, or to create their own challenges.

- The runners are accosted by a street gang hoping to take the "tourists" gear for their own. The gangers aren't particularly well armed, or even healthy, but there are 25 of them, and they're desperate. (Use Tollkeeper stats, p. 18)
- To travel through the Southside, the runners are forced to go through Human Brigade Territory. The enclaves will be willing to assist an all-human, all-mundane group, but if any of the runners are metahuman, Awakened, or mention they're searching for an Awakened artifact, the Human Brigade will turn on them.
- The runners encounter a group of people—two men, three women, and two young children—being attacked by wild dogs. The people are dressed in rags and suffering from the cold and malnutrition. If the runners help them, they'll be very grateful, but have nothing to offer. (Gamemasters may consider refreshing Edge Points (p. 4) for the 'good karma' of an unselfish act.)
- The runners see a woman dressed in thick rags and carrying an infant. She appears to be from the same group the runners just helped. She's hunched over, suffering from the extreme cold. If the runners approach to help her, they'll discover—at the last minute—that she's really a Gabriel hound, and they've fallen into a trap set by a hungry pack.
- When the runners are traveling down the road, their vehicle suffers a malfunction (either from the natural biodiesel fuel thickening because of the freezing temperatures, or because a spirit interferes). The runners are stuck and will have to find their way to a safe haven.

The gamemaster should also feel free to reward player creativity in this legwork section, allowing the players to follow their own route to picking up Sonora's trail.

Bounty Hunting

Links: Matrix Search, Asking Around

Contacts: Bounty Hunters, Info Brokers, Sean at Póg mo Thóin, Larger Gangs

Archangel's Bounty Redemption Center (p. 17, or *Feral Cities*, p. 47) has gotten an assignment on Sonora (Wanted: Alive. Bounty: 50,000) and they've posted her information for the bounty hunters in Chicago. Archangel has downloaded Sonora's data into their node, so bounty hunters with a subscription can get her most recent picture, a description (Hispanic woman, age unknown, Magician, believed to be with four or more professional runners), and that the bounty is only paid if she's captured alive. An additional 5,000-nuyen bounty is offered for each of her teammates, alive. If the runners want, they can also download the information (50 nuyen subscription fee), visit Archangel's center in person (where hardcopy flyers are tacked to the walls) or even hack the node itself in hopes of getting a few more bits of information (like the names of the bounty hunters who're looking for her).

If the runners *do* hack Archangel, they can also discover that the Draco Foundation is behind the bounty on Sonora, but there is no mention of any artifact with her.

The runners may also run across the bounty hunters at some point—and they may have to choose between meeting them aggressively, or using their wiles to avoid a confrontation. Since Sonora is listed as a mage, many of the bounty hunters would likely prefer a small cash payment (1,000 nuyen) to hand over information, rather than risk going after her themselves. Bosc (p. 18) is a prime bounty hunter who knows that Sonora has been seen visiting several of the smugglers' enclaves outside the Zone.

Made Men

Links: Asking Around, Contacts

Contacts: Mafia, Mafia-Aligned Smugglers, Info-Brokers

If any of the runners have Mob connections, they may choose to approach one of the Mafia factions in Chicago. Don Roland "The Greek" Stephanopoulos controls the Lake Calumet smuggler haven as well as the Gary docks, and Sonora has tried both those areas, looking for a smuggler to take her out of the city. The Greek, or his men, will require some trade for the information they have, although if the runners are Mafia-affiliated or have a contact who is, the trade will be significantly easier.

Póg mo Thóin

Links: Asking Around, Frosty, Matrix Search ("Info-trading in Chicago")

Contacts: Frosty, Info-Brokers, Traders, Smugglers

Sean, at Póg mo Thóin, will know about the bounty (although he won't particularly care) and, if the runners use Frosty's name, he'll give them the name and location of a prime bounty hunter—Bosc—who keeps tabs on the wanted in Chicago. He can also point them in the direction of a variety of other places: smuggler hangouts, medical facilities, Archangel Bounty Redemption Center, trading posts, gangs, etc. He won't himself have seen Sonora or her team but if the runners ask about her (and pay for the info, or drop Frosty's name), he'll point out that he'd probably start with Archangel or the Anarchist Black Crescent—newcomers to Chicago often find themselves using the ABC services ...

Get Me Out Of Here (Smugglers)

Links: Asking Around

Contacts: Smugglers, Mafia, Info-Brokers, Bounty Hunters

The runners, if they talk to the various smuggler crews, can buy information on what Sonora and her surviving teammates want—a trip out of Chicago. Savvy runners may also realize that Chicago is likely just a stopping point for Sonora, not her final destination. Or the team may spend long enough searching that Frosty completes the ritual, and tells them the Sextant has left Chicago—and tell them to find out where Sonora might have gone (or who she hitched a ride with).

They will learn that there are two main groups who could get the mage out of the city: Spire Enterprises, based in the Zone, and the Calumet smuggler groups, on Lake Calumet. The Lake Calumet smugglers will point the runners to Spire Enterprises. They'll also be willing to provide more information on Sonora and her team (three teammates at that point, one ork woman and two human men, all Hispanic).

Because of the storm and the overall lack of wireless infrastructure, there is no way to contact the smugglers via the Matrix; the runners will have to meet with the smugglers in person.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Regardless of where the runners go, the fresh snow and freezing temperatures make travel difficult. Play up the hazards as the runners navigate the city. In some places, vehicle traffic will be impossible, requiring the runners to travel by foot. Hypothermia is a serious risk, as is dehydration. With the wind chill factor, frostbite can set in within ten to thirty minutes of exposure. As the runners travel across Chicago, their basic ability to survive the elements will be put to the test.

Gamemasters may call for periodic Survival Tests (p. 137, *SR4A*). The threshold would be 3 (Tough), and potential modifiers would include Terrible Weather (-2), Extended Travel or Exertion (-1 to -4), or even Toxic terrain, if they enter the Zone (-2 to -4). For inexperienced teams, a gamemaster can call for a Survival Test once for the Chicago stay. For more experienced teams call for a test for every hour the runners travel on foot, every two hours they travel by exposed transportation (rickshaws, snowmobiles, etc), or once if they are traveling within an enclosed vehicle. In addition, gamemasters may call for a survival knowledge test to see if the runners are aware of the danger around them, or know what steps to take to protect themselves.

DEBUGGING

The runners may get bogged down in the legwork section of this part of the adventure. If they are unwilling to go out and brave the elements, or aren't sure how to make new contacts, have Frosty guide them to Sean at Póg mo Thóin. He can assist the runners in meeting some people who might have heard a rumor or two ...

Chicago is a dangerous place, even more so with the weather. If the runners don't have any survival skills, a guide may be very useful. If the runners do succumb to the elements, or are injured during their outings, the Anarchist Black Crescent is a medical aid organization. They have shelters set up across the city, with medical personnel available. Payment, however, will be in trade—perhaps a pint or two of blood will fit the bill ...

If the runners seem to be dawdling or taking a break for a rest, have Frosty press the urgency of the mission. She can get a call from a contact saying that another team has arrived in Chicago to hunt the mage, or perhaps Sean at Póg mo Thóin can send a messenger to say he's heard the mage was planning on leaving in a few hours.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Motel 5½

This motel is a two-story L-shaped building set around an open parking lot. Rooms face out into the parking lot, but the windows have been boarded over with sheets of hard plastic. The doors are reinforced metal and the walls are made of thick bricks. Inside, the rooms are decorated in “scrap-yard scavenge” style. A large generator provides electricity for heat, and each room has a working chemical toilet in the bathroom (but no running water). The front office has been transformed into a small bar, where fresh water and home-brewed alcohol is available. A local biker gang hangs out in the bar occasionally and provides spotty security for the motel. There is no stable wireless service in the area, but occasionally locals' commlinks will provide a mesh network. Awakened ivy grows in the area, proving it safe for magic.

Póg mo Thóin

A trading post, meeting place, and information exchange take up the ground level. The basement has been converted into a bar, although the place has almost no lighting, smells like spilt beer, piss, and unwashed metahumans, and serves whatever drinks they manage to acquire—be it beer, homebrewed spirits, or toxic sludge scooped up from the rain-collection barrels. On the bright side, the bar features live music most nights—or what passes for music—and accepts ammo for drinks. It's an Irish place, with old Irish—not Tir—flags decorating the walls. For more information, see p. 53, *Feral Cities*.

Archangel Bounty Redemption Center

Archangel compiles information on outstanding bounties and provides it to subscribed bounty hunters for a monthly fee. They have a well-fortified building in Southside, which provides a place for bounty hunters to pick up hardcopy reports on outstanding bounties. It's also a hangout for many of the bounty hunters in the area, and after the storm will be packed with those who decided to camp out there.

Archangel Matrix System

While the public node has weak defenses, it also contains only the lists of current bounties being offered. The administrative node is available on-site or via its satellite uplink (which is non-functional due to the recent storm).

Sculpting (Public): Bare bones sculpting; a room with tan walls and “Wanted Posters.” Looking at any of the posters provides the details of the bounty.

Sculpting (Private): A reproduction of an administrative office, with a live receptionist.



Hardware: (2) Persona Limit 9, Processor Limit 10
Authentication: (Public) Passcode. (Private) Passcode.
Privileges:
Public: Standard
Private: Security and Admin only
Attributes:
Public: Firewall 3, Response 3, Signal 3, System 3
Private: Firewall 4, Response 3, Signal 0, System 4
Spiders: Professional Spider “jumped in” at all times in Private node.
IC:
Private: Baby Swarm Rating 3
Resident Programs:
Private Node: Encrypt, Analyze
ARC: Alert Spider, Terminate Connection
Topology: The private node is only accessible on-site via physical connection.

Lake Calumet

Lake Calumet is a smuggler haven, with heavy Mafia influence. Numerous smuggler crews have their home bases on or near the lake. The Mafia also uses the area to smuggle their own goods (and people) in and out of Chicago. It’s a rough area, but the Mafia keeps the larger gangs out of the area.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

Sean

A skinny redheaded human with a thick Irish brogue (never mind that his family has lived in Chicago for generations).

Use Bartender stats (p. 289, *SR4A*), but replace Media Stars 3 with Chicago Gangs 3.

Windy City Tollkeepers

A group of former toll employees—or at least a group who have some uniforms—these men and women set up temporary toll spots on exit ramps on Chicago-area freeways. They’ll accept almost anything as a toll, and rarely stay in the same place for more than a day or two.

Use Halloweeners Street Gang stats (p. 282, *SR4A*), except remove Hand Razors and replace Essence 5.8 with Essence 6.

Bosc (Bounty Hunter)

Use Bounty Hunter stats (p. 98, *SR4A*). He also has a Weapons Specialist (p. 113, *SR4A*) and a Street Sam (p. 110, *SR4A*) as backup.

Gabriel Hound

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
3	5	6	7	2	3	2	4	2	6	5	9	3

Movement: 10/60

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 4, Running 3, Shadowing 3, Spellcasting 2, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Compulsion (Immobility), Concealment (Self), Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Movement, Innate Spell (Mask, Self Only, See Notes), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 5P, AP-1)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

Note: Gabriel Hounds use the Mask spell to give them a metahuman appearance. They immediately drop the spell if injured.

Snowmobiles

Small and maneuverable, snowmobiles are great for traveling in the snow-bound city. Unfortunately, they offer no protection from the elements. They can seat up to two humans (or one troll). They are not adapted for rigger use.

Handling	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Armor	Sensors
+3	10/20	30	1	4	3	2

STAND-OFF

SCAN THIS

The runners have picked up Sonora’s trail in Chicago, and it leads them into the Zone, to the Spire. Traveling to the Spire—through the Zone—is dangerous enough, as they discover when they’re attacked by multiple Roach spirits and their human companions. When they finally arrive at the Spire, they find it under siege by another Chicago faction. The Spire Enterprises smugglers are holed up in their building, unable to get out. Will the runners help the besiegers, or the smugglers? Their decision will affect the next scenes—the smugglers know where Sonora has gone and will share the information if the runners assist them (although the runners won’t know that before they speak to the smugglers), while the Mafia group has the contacts to help the runners get out of the city and to their next destination, if the runners will help *them*. Or the runners could choose to retreat altogether.

Frosty will perform another ritual with the map, and—as the runners are confronted by the siege—she’ll inform them that the artifact is no longer in Chicago, but heading west, near Des Moines, and on the move. It will be another sixteen hours before she can perform the ritual again. Will the runners choose to wait, or choose to intercede in a fight that’s not theirs, for the prospect of the information or assistance?

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

When the runners approach the Zone, read the following:

The famous wall is really more of a multistory heap of once-impenetrable rubble, like a low ridgeline with its coating of snow and ice. White-caked gates stand open, with meter-high snow drifts blocking the entrance. There’s no sound except the whistling of the wind.

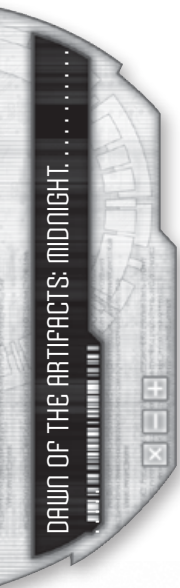
It looks peaceful.

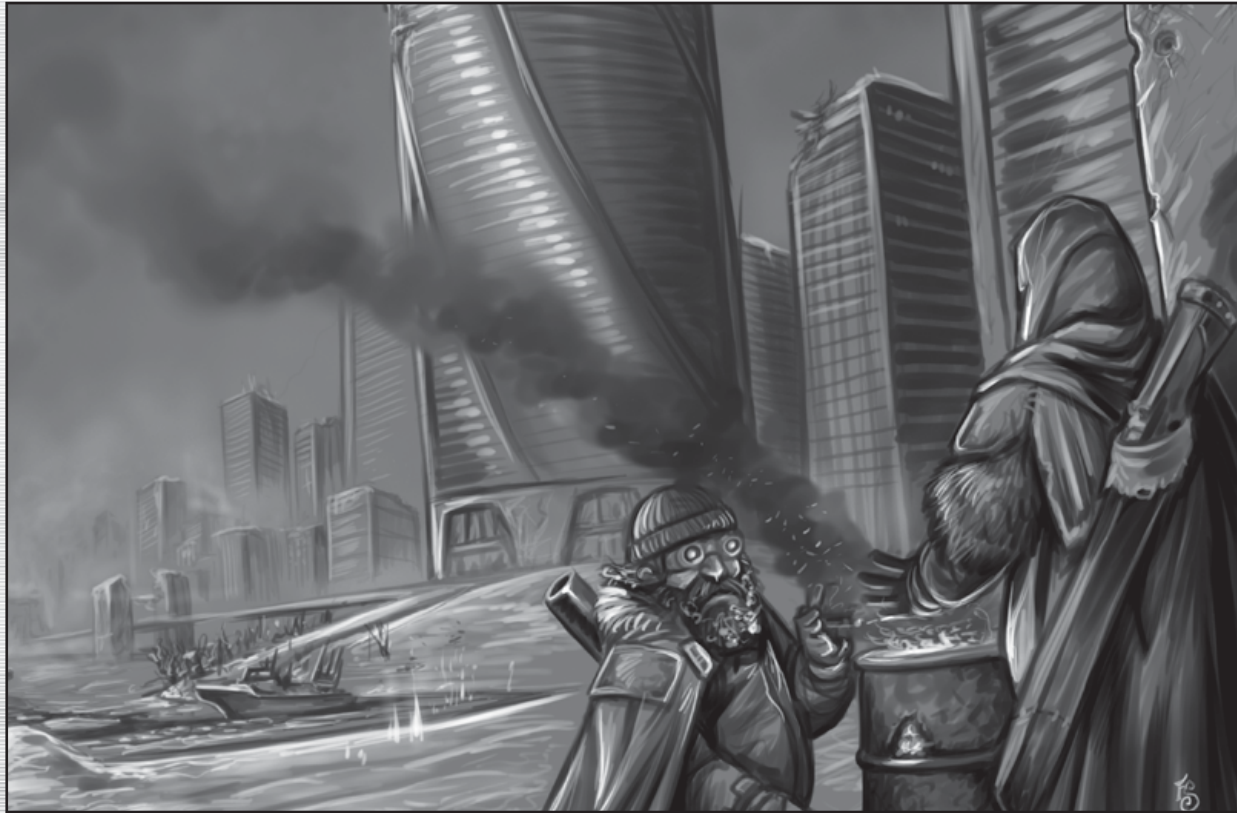
Not at all like a place where a hundred thousand people were locked into a living hell, or the ground zero for a nuclear weapon, or the resting place of unknown numbers of sleeping Bugs ...

You have to go through there to reach the Spire.

When the runners are in the Zone, read the following:

The Zone is quiet. Too quiet. The unbroken snow means nothing has walked this way for hours, maybe days—but not everything in Chicago needs to *walk*.





INCOMING FEED.....



DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT.....

You're walking in a broad street between what used to be multistory businesses. The windows are gaping holes with the wind whistling through them. There are vaguely car-shaped mounds of snow crowding the street, making it impossible to navigate. Cars were abandoned here when the wall went up; a permanent traffic jam, scavenged for metal and parts long ago. Who knows what they look like underneath the snow? Occasionally those mounds block the sidewalk, too, so you're forced to pick your way through snow drifts, maneuvering carefully between the vehicles.

Another mound blocks your way.

This mound is different. Set against the white snow are the tracks of a large dog. As you look at the tracks, you hear a strange sound, a cross between barking and the chittering of an insect. That's when you see them.

Two creatures—what might have once been large black-and-tan dogs, but with strange patches of glittering red-black chitinous armor, bulging multifaceted eyes, and long antennae shivering between their pointed brown ears.

That's when you realize that *they* see you.

When the runners reach the Spire, read the following:

The Spire is easy to spot, even from a distance. The twisted steel frame glares like exposed bones on the upper reaches. As you draw close the sounds of periodic gunfire echo through the snowy canyons of the city. Closer, the wind whipping off Lake Michigan carries the smell of smoke.

When you get close enough, you see a large group of people surrounding the Spire—but standing a careful distance away. Close to the Spire are a few bodies, blood splashed against the white snow. A dozen barrels hold fires—out of range of the Spire's guns—and people are standing around them for warmth, heavy rifles slung across their backs. Snowmobiles ring the building on the land side, while several boats float on the water. In the back of one boat you can see a large anti-aircraft gun system. From around the second and third stories of the Spire turret-mounted machine guns periodically spray the snow with bullets, but fall short of the metahumans outside.

It appears the Spire is under siege.

If they have their commlinks turned on at the Spire, read the following:

When you get close to the Spire, you begin picking up the first trace of a weak wireless signal. A single message is being broadcast.

"Spire to the Union. We are under assault. Request backup. Union, do you copy? Fuck. I think the storm cut their signal, Wingman. I'm not getting jack from them. Anyone else out there?"

A second later, you get a beep from your commlink. You open the call, and see Frosty looking out at you. Her face is pale and drawn.

"Uh, guys, there's a problem," she says. "I finished the ritual. The Sextant's on the move—somewhere west of here. It'll be sixteen hours until I can find it again. *Please* tell me you've found *something*..."

If the Mafia men spot the runners, read the following:

A couple of the people—you can't really tell if they're orks or humans, men or women, under their heavy winter gear and face masks—spot you and wave.

"Hey," one of them yells. "Youse guys from the Greek? One of youse our hacker? Get your asses over here and start hacking, already!"

When the runners inform Frosty that Sonora is heading to Denver, read the following:

Frosty looks at you, then groans and drops her head in her hands. "This is bad. *Very bad.* You know who lives in Denver? *Shit,*" she swears, then switches to Sperethiel and swears some more. Finally, she takes a deep breath.

"I see one of two options. Either she stole the Sextant for Ghostwalker and is heading to Denver to hand it over ..." she stops, then mutters under her breath. "But that doesn't make any sense, Ghostwalker's on good terms with that *laëlnit*—" then she shakes her head.

"More likely, she's just stopping over in Denver on her way somewhere else. In which case we still need to go there—but if the wyrm learns that the Sextant is in town, he may just try to take it himself. Sonora can't be that stupid, so she's not going to stick around Denver long if that's the case.

"And, um..." Frosty pauses, and swallows. "The wyrm would probably be interested in the map, too. In fact, it's probably a *really* good idea if *we* don't stick around, either."

HOOKS

If the runners have tracked down Sonora's trail, they know she's gone to the Spire to ask for transportation. The only way to discover if she's still there is to go there themselves. For some reason, the Spire's normal node is offline ...

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Spire is home to Spire Enterprises, a group of smugglers gone (mostly) legitimate with a business license, transportation permits for most North American nations, and even a stable Matrix node.

They are also one of the few groups in Chicago willing to take Sonora and her team *out* of the city.

While the runners are navigating the Zone, heading towards the Spire, they come across a group of Roach spirits (Hybrid merges with Doberman dogs) and several maggots (humans who ally themselves with Insect spirits or shaman) that are out patrolling their territory. While the runners fight the first two spirits, four others pop up from under the snow, engaging the runners in close combat. If the runners flee, the roaches won't pursue.

Meanwhile, another Chicago faction has besieged the Spire. The soldiers of Don Roland "The Greek" Stephanopoulos are attacking the Spire, hoping to take it over. There are thirty soldiers on the ground around the Spire, with another dozen out on the water. The Greek hopes to limit the Spire Enterprises smugglers' competition with his own shipping operations out of Gary and Lake Calumet. He's also hoping to convert the building to a base where he can launch future attacks against the Union—which controls the *very* valuable water treatment plant. Controlling the water supply for much of Chicago might just be what he needs to gain enough power to trump his rival, Don McCaskill. The Spire

smugglers have been unable to get out of the Spire, but the Mafia men haven't been unable to get *in*, either. It's a stalemate. The Mafia army has sent a runner back to their home base for hacking assistance. They're hopeful that a hacker can infiltrate the Spire's intelligent management systems and unlock the blast-doors at the base (or at least knock out the Spire's automatic defense systems long enough for them to have climbers scale the building). The hacker they brought was hit by a lucky shot from the Spire's defenses.

The Spire smugglers are desperate to get word out to their allies at the Union. The Union's limited communication network has been knocked offline due to the storm. The Spire smugglers are sure that Don McCaskill would come to their rescue if they could get word to him. Someone needs to go, on foot, to Union headquarters to beg assistance ... but no one in the Spire can get out.

The runners are in position to tip the balance.

If they assist the Greek's men, the Greek will pay them with transportation out of Chicago. They'll even provide the runners with an armed convoy to pick up Frosty and fly them out of Lake Calumet. Unfortunately, the Greek doesn't know where Sonora's heading, so if the runners assist the Mafia men, they'll have to wait until Frosty can once again use the map—and by that point, Sonora will be about to leave Denver, leaving the runners lagging behind and potentially losing her trail altogether.

If the runners assist the Spire smugglers, Wingman will tell the runners where Sonora was headed (Denver) and he'll pay Ricky Steelsky (p. 24) to fly them wherever they want to go. The runners will only be a few hours behind the artifact (a t-bird could easily land in the parking lot of the 5½ to pick Frosty and the map up on the way).

MANA EBBS AND MAGIC

The entire Zone has a significant background count, ranging in areas from -1 to -4 (see p. 120, *Street Magic*), and fluctuating from a mana ebb to areas aspected towards Insect magic to rare areas of healthy mana. While dual-natured beings and astral forms are not injured in a mana ebb, the ability to shape mana is severely restricted. For areas with aspected magic backgrounds, characters who do not follow the paradigm of the aspect will be penalized as though it were a mana ebb. Characters' magic attributes will be reduced by the absolute value of the ebb or background count. The absolute value is also added to the Force when a character attempts to resist drain. Adepts' magic attributes are affected as well, and players must choose 1 point of powers to lose for every point their magic is decreased. Characters whose magic attribute is reduced to zero are unable to use any magical abilities within the area.

The area within half a kilometer (or occasionally more) of the Cermak Blast goes beyond a mana ebb into a mana void (Rating 7). See p. 119, *Street Magic*, for more details.

Magically active characters should feel the ebb and flow of mana as they move through the different areas.

Urgent Message...



If the runners decide to withdraw, they'll be on their own finding a way out of Chicago, and unaware of where the artifact will end up until Frosty is once again able to perform the ritual. The O'Hare subsprawl security won't let them back inside—not without some very good IDs and difficult persuasion—and even if they get in there, Frosty can't take the map on a commercial flight out of Chicago ...

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

If you wish to make this scene more challenging, you can have the runners come under attack by more Zone gangers or scavengers, or throw in the following challenge:

Rumors persist of thousands of Insect spirits supposedly sleeping in the Zone, knocked into torpor by the nuclear blast. Some say the passage of metahumans may be enough to awaken the spirits from their torpor. One such hive is slumbering in a cavern a few meters below street level. The ground was weakened when a water pipe burst years ago. With the freezing temperatures and previous damage, the streets and sidewalks in this area are ready to collapse, exposing the hive. The weight of a single metahuman is enough to send the fragile concrete crashing down ... directly into the center of the hive.

While the hive is dormant in winter, intruders might just be enough to wake them up ...

DEBUGGING

The runners may not wish to enter the Zone, no matter what. If they don't, they'll be unable to discover the information held

by the Spire smugglers on where Sonora has taken the artifact. However, Frosty will be able to repeat the ritual in 16 hours, and they'll discover that the artifact is in Denver (although Sonora will be *leaving* Denver by then). If they chose to wait to see where the map will show the artifact next, it should be a wait full of tension. Frosty may even point out that if the artifact gets into one of Aztechnology's pyramids, it'll be beyond their reach.

The runners may chose to second guess where Sonora is heading, and end up traveling to the wrong city. If they do, you can delay Sonora in Denver until they find her there, adapt the Denver adventures to whatever city they end up in, or simply skip to the final scenes where they locate her in Los Angeles.

PLACES OF INTEREST

The Chicago Containment Zone ("the CZ" or "the Zone")

The Containment Zone is where the UCAS military consigned a hundred thousand people to a living hell when a massive insect spirit wracked the city. Several weeks later (October 2055), Ares detonated a tactical nuclear weapon inside the Zone, stunning a majority of the insect spirits into torpor. The quarantine remained in effect for over two years (until February 2058), then Ares released an astrally active bacteria that destroyed much of the astral space in the area—along with killing all the dual-natured creatures and plants. The "walls" around the Zone are the remains of buildings imploded by the military, topped with razorwire; during the quarantine they were manned by sentries who shot anyone—or anything—that approached, but that's long past.

Inside the Zone all the traffic caught during the sudden quarantine remains in a permanent gridlock on the streets and sidewalks, a rusted testament to the horror the residents faced. The mana in the area is particularly unstable and the background count fluctuates between -1 and -4, while aspected domains (often towards Insect magic) and the occasional healthy areas of mana exist in hidden pockets.

Where the Roach spirits attack, the area is aspected towards Insect magic, with a Rating 3 domain.

For more on the Containment Zone, see p. 30, *Feral Cities*.

Spire Enterprises

Once home to Truman Technologies, and then to several Wasp Insect nests, the iconic 150-story Spire building now houses Spire Enterprises on the lower levels. The uppermost levels are blocked off—the Spire employees haven't gotten around to clearing those floors out yet. Spire Enterprises is a smuggler operation gone (mostly) legitimate, although they still keep their hand in the smuggling business. Solar cells keep the building self-sufficient and provide enough power to run the building's intelligent management systems and defense systems.

Spire Matrix System

Sculpting: The sculpting is bare-bones, with standardized iconography.

Hardware: MCT Sentinel II and two NeoNET Office Genies

Authentication: Passcode

Privileges: Standard

Spiders: 1 Professional Spider on duty at all times

IC: Baby Swarm Rating 4

Resident Programs: Analyze 4, Encrypt 4, Databomb 4 on files

ARC: Scramble Secondary Security Hacker (Security Consultant, p. 207, *Unwired*)

Topology: Single chokepoint public node, protecting an encrypted business node. Shipping files offline. Signal Rating is temporarily reduced to 0 due to storm damage on the satellite uplink, so the Professional Spider is using his personal commlink to broadcast the help call.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

Roach Hybrids (6)

A hybrid-merge with what might have once been a Doberman, these Insects retain their dog-like form—mostly. When the runners intrude upon their territory, the Rating 3 spirits are in a Rating 3 aspected domain—and so their dicepools for Magical skill tests and Drain resistance tests are boosted by 3. As a hybrid form, the creature has Immunity to Normal Weapons (p. 288, *SR4A*). The bugs will defend their territory (a two-block area above ground, a four-block area below ground) against intruders, but will not pursue them if they flee. Roaches also have a +2 modifier to all damage resistance tests.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
5	6	6	5	3	3	3	3	3	6	3	9	2

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Movement: 10/45

Skills: (all at 3) Assensing, Astral Combat, Counterspelling, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Animal Control (Roaches), Fear, Hive Mind, Natural Weapon, Sapience

Weapons: Natural Weapon [Bite: Reach 0, DV 8P, AP -1]

Weaknesses: Allergy (Insecticides, Mild)

Maggots (4)

For those times when the spirits need a pair of hands, these human servants are loyal to the hive. Their reward is being cared for—at least until their body is required ...

Use Humanis Policlub Goon Squad (p. 275, *SR4A*).

Wingman

The charismatic and cunning head of Spire Enterprises, this ork has built a legitimate business from a one-man smuggling operation. Of course, in Chicago, if you've built something, there are always those looking to take it from you.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	4	5(6)	6	4	5	4	3	3	4	(10)11	2

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Skills: Automatics 2, Dodge 2, Etiquette 4 (Smugglers +2), Cracking Skill Group 1, Gunnery 4, Leadership 4, Mechanics Skill Group 3, Navigation 4, Perception 3, Pilot Aircraft 5, Pilot Ground Craft 3

Knowledge Skills: Aeronautics Mechanics 5, Border Patrol Tactics 3, Chicago 4 (Underworld +2), Corporate Policies and Procedures 4, Smuggling Routes 4

Cyberware: Wired Reflexes (1)

Mafia Soldiers (30 on land, 12 on the lake)

Use Enforcer stats (p. 93, *SR4A*).

ROAD TRIP!

SCAN THIS

Part of the adventure involves travel to and from various North American cities. This travel can be made as complicated or simple as the gamemaster desires. Some teams, no doubt, will have the appropriate licenses and IDs (and not carry restricted weapons/gear/cyberware/magical items) to take commercial flights. Unfortunately, Frosty will be unable to carry the Piri Reis map onto a commercial flight—so the team will need to make alternative arrangements.

Road Trip! lists a variety of trip encounters designed for use during any of the travel legs of this adventure. To provide flexibility, the scenes are not designed in chronological order—let the team's own travel decisions guide the number and difficulty of the encounters.



These encounters should be incidental to the main plot line, serving as a way to make the travel more interesting, more challenging, or simply wear the runners down and force them to think creatively as they pursue the Sextant.

Given the tight timeline and the frenetic pace of the adventure, if a gamemaster incorporates one or more of the *Road Trip!* encounters, it's advisable to have Sonora encounter her own delays in her travel, so the team doesn't fall *too* far behind (but allowing the player characters to sweat every passing minute is encouraged).

More information on travel and smuggling can be found on p. 28 of *Runner's Companion*.

Most of these assume the runners are using a smuggler in a t-bird to travel—one of the most common methods smugglers use to cross the various nations in North America. A sample t-bird and a pilot are listed in *Grunts and Moving Targets*, p. 24.

ENCOUNTER 1: WILDLIFE DETOUR

While flying across the Rockies, two giant birds approach the t-bird. The pilot swears and tries to swerve, but it's too late—he's accidentally flown into the new nesting territory of a pair of thunderbirds. The birds attack the t-bird in tandem, overwhelming its electrical systems and forcing the t-bird to crash-land. The team and the pilot survive the landing—the plane's safety systems work—but each must resist 10S damage from the impact. They are stuck in the middle of *nowhere* with a non-functioning plane. The pilot thinks he can get it airborne given some time to repair the damage ... and if the runners can clear out the mature conifer trees that were knocked down around (and on) the t-bird. If any of the team has an Aeronautics Mechanic skill, they can assist the smuggler in a teamwork test (see p. 65, *SR4A*). Repairing the t-bird is an Aeronautics Mechanic + Logic (12, 1 hour) Extended Test (see p. 138, *SR4A*). Dice pool modifiers include Poor Working Conditions (-2), Inadequate Tools (-2), Reference Material Available (+1).

With time running against them, the team could also attempt to contact another smuggler crew—Frosty has a commlink with satellite uplink. The other smugglers, if they know about the thunderbirds, will refuse to come into the area during daylight hours (the birds are diurnal). They'll have to wait until nightfall to get picked up.

ENCOUNTER 2: HIJACKED

Smuggler crews in the NAN are generally cooperative towards each other. Every now and then you come across a cut-throat crew that'll do anything to add another t-bird to their stable. A rival smuggler crew sees the t-bird the runners are in and decides to engage in a little Grand Theft Aircraft. They try to force the t-bird down where they can take the t-bird, steal its cargo, and eliminate its pilot. They ambush the aircraft, attempting to use non-destructive methods to force it down—and they've got a secret weapon: a technomancer who attacks the t-bird's internal system via its wireless link and hits the pilot, who's rigging via VR, with a blackout complex form. Once the pilot is unconscious, the technomancer will use a machine sprite to land the t-bird.

The team has few options. If they notice the second t-bird (a Perception + Intuition (2) Test for any runners *in the cockpit only*), they can react before the t-bird begins to descend.



DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT.....

Otherwise, they'll notice something happening when the t-bird begins landing. They can try to engage the technomancer in Matrix combat—which will require hacking the t-bird themselves. They can physically disable the t-bird's wireless connection with a Hardware + Logic (3) Test. If they do, however, they'll have to physically jack into the t-bird's system to control it—the t-bird does not have manual controls available, and their pilot is unconscious. Or maybe they'll just wait to land, then engage the hijackers the old-fashioned way ...

ENCOUNTER 3: HOSTILE TAKEOVER

Smugglers flying across the NAN or the Rocky Mountain corridors don't do so in a straight line. Frequent stops to avoid the NAN military and border patrol sweeps are necessary. A good smuggler knows the patrol times and routes. Small, isolated towns exist in the most remote areas of the NAN, making their entire livelihood by providing services to the smugglers—selling fuel, food, drinks, intel on patrols, even drugs and sex. Some are very rough and see daily traffic. Others are tiny communes hidden in the mountains, infrequently visited.

The increased border patrols force the pilot to land in an infrequently used way-station. It isn't a town, but a small, self-sufficient commune. The commune has a large barn, where they allow smugglers to hide their t-birds when necessary—generally in exchange for supplies or equipment the commune can't produce themselves.

However, when the t-bird lands, there are no people there to meet them. The barn is open, and empty—no animals are inside or out. The pilot tells the runners they'll have to hide for about two hours, until the patrols move to another area. Because the smugglers act as an important conduit of information between isolated towns—but also passing word on to other smuggler outfits—the pilot decides to go out to see what's going on in the commune.

If the runners accompany him, they'll discover what happened to the residents: a twisted avenger shaman and several of his followers have taken over the way-station, killing the residents with toxins and stashing their bodies in a house. The eco-terrorists can't afford to let the pilot and runners escape and spread word of their new hide-out ...

If the runners wait in the t-bird, the pilot will be attacked outside the barn. The runners will have the choice of abandoning him (and destroying their reputation in the smuggling world) and stealing his t-bird ... or going out to help him. Of course, the t-bird is designed to function only for the pilot—and it has a biometric handprint and retinal scanner keyed to the pilot—so they may have a strong incentive to rescue him (or at least *parts* of him) ...

ENCOUNTER 4: SHOTGUN WEDDING

When a pilot flies a route regularly, he gets to know the people at the pit stops. Sometimes, he gets to know them a little *too* well. In Sweet Water, the pilot has been fingered by a young woman as the man responsible for her pregnancy. Her father and other male kin are determined to regain her besmirched honor—by forcing the pilot to marry the girl, willing or otherwise. When they realize he's about to land, the townspeople get prepared. As he's refueling his t-bird, the young woman comes by and asks to speak to him, alone. The pilot, with a wink to the runners, goes off with the girl—and doesn't come back. The young woman's family has locked him up after he, shocked by the news, refuses to marry

the pregnant girl. The runners will have to negotiate to get their pilot back, or else they're stuck ... and the townsfolk won't let him leave until he's safely married.

HOOKS

The runners need to follow the Sextant, so travel is required. The gamemaster can decide how many of the encounters to use, and when to use them, as the runners travel across North America.

DEBUGGING

If the runners get trapped in one (or more) of the encounters, or get sidetracked and spend too long in a pit stop, a variety of methods can be used to rescue them. Frosty has contacts in the smuggler world, and can call for help if nothing else works (use 2XL, a troll smuggler, to come to the "rescue").

PLACES OF INTEREST

SWEET WATER

A tiny town, it survives primarily by the smuggler traffic that comes through. It's a "pinkskin" enclave in the NAN, fewer than 100 people. They have little to do with the native population or the NAN government—and the government has even less to do with them. There are multiple mechanic shops, a small 24-hour diner, and a couple of boarding houses where smugglers can get a clean room and a shower. A large church, complete with steeple, is the center of the community. The town is very conservative, so the normal vices aren't available—no prostitutes, drugs, or hard alcohol. The townsfolk have a reputation for honesty, discretion, and talented mechanics, so it's a popular stop on many smuggler routes.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

MiG-67 (Thunderbird)

Modified with Chameleon Coating, Multifuel Engine, Passenger Protection (Rating 6), Pilot Upgrade, Rigger Adaptation, Signature Masking 6. Additional security measures include biometric palm and retinal print scanners as well as an encrypted node.

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Armor	Sensor	Firewall	Analyze
+2	50/200	800	4	18	10	2	4	4

Ricky Steelsky, Ork Smuggler

One of the Steelsky orks, a family well-known for their smuggling throughout Western North America. He has many contacts within the smuggling communities of the NAN, UCAS, and CAS. He knows what border patrols will be where, and when, and has the best pit stops for layovers memorized. Plus he knows the routes like he was flying them before he could even walk ... which he was.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
8	5	5(6)	5	3	4	4	3	3	9(10)	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 12/10
Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6



Skills: Automatics 2, Dodge 2, Etiquette (Smugglers +2), Electronic Warfare 3, Hacking 2, Gunnery 4, Longarms 2, Mechanic Skill Group 4, Navigation 4, Perception 3, Pilot Aircraft 6 (VTOLs +2), Pilot Ground Craft 5

Knowledge Skills: Aeronautics Mechanic 5, Auto Mechanic 4, Border Patrol Tactics 4, Smuggler Pit stops 4, Smuggling Routes 6

Languages: English (N), Or'zet 3

Augmentations: Control Rig, Commlink (Device Rating 4), Datajack, Sim Module, Wired Reflexes 1

Gear: Survival Kit, Medkit (Rating 4), Armor Jacket, Hunting and Fishing Equipment, 2 Fake SINS (UCAS, Pueblo, both at Rating 4), GPS Unit

Weapons:

Knife [Blade, Reach 0, DV 5P, AP 0]

Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, 5P, AP -1, SA, RC 0, 15 (c), smartgun]

Ruger 100 [Sport Rifle, 7P, AP -1, SA, RC 1, 5 (m), smartgun]

Hijacker Crew Technomancer

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Res
3	3	3	2	4	4	3	4	4	6	5

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/10

Matrix Init: 9

Matrix IP: 3

Skills: Electronics Skill Group 3, Cracking Skill Group 4, Compiling 3, Registering 2, Etiquette 1, Perception 3, Pilot Groundcraft 3, Pilot Aircraft 4, Gunnery 2

Living Persona: System 3, Response 5, Firewall 4, Signal 3

Complex Forms: Analyze 3, Armor 3, Attack 3, Bio-Feedback Filter 4, Blackout 5, Blackhammer 5, Command 5, Scan 4, Stealth 5

Registered Sprites: Paladin (Rating 4) 3 services, Machine (Rating 5) 4 services

Knowledge Skills: Border Patrol Tactics 3, Smuggler Routes 3, Matrix Combat 4, Sprites 2

Hijacker Crew (5)

Use 3 Smugglers (p. 108, *SR4A*) and 2 Street Sams (p. 110, *SR4A*).

Hostile Takeover Eco-Terrorists

Use stats for a Radical Eco-Shaman (p. 107, *SR4A*) and 8 Weapon Specialists (p. 113, *SR4A*).

DENVER LAYOVER

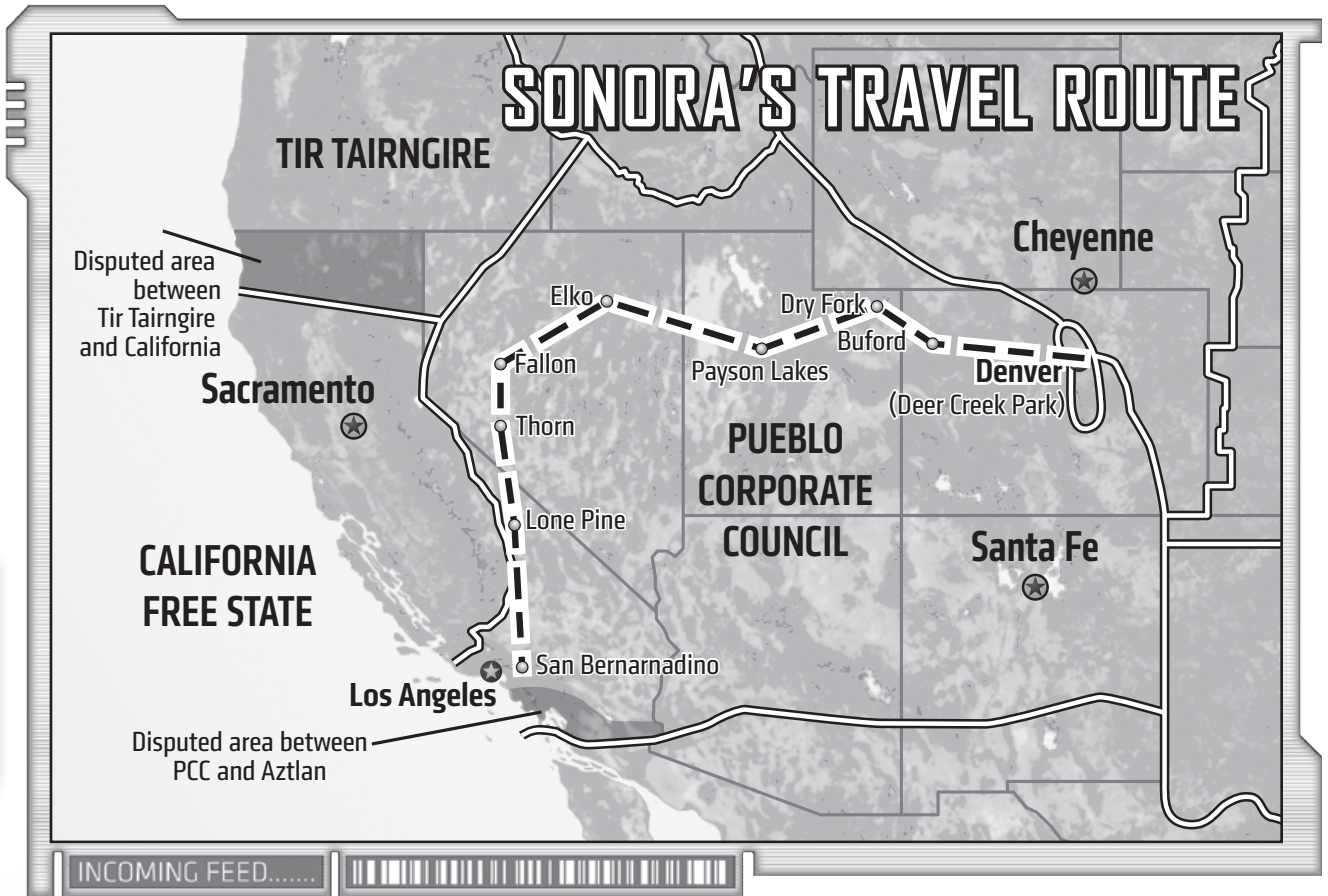
Part of the purpose of the two Denver scenes is to allow the runners to catch up with Sonora and to discover they are not the only ones after the Sextant. The other purpose of these two scenes, as well as the *Road Trip* scenes, is to wear down the runners, making this adventure into a test of endurance—and forcing the runners to make some smart, strategic decisions at the end if they want to win.

SONORA'S TIMELINE

Sonora will be leaving Denver as the runners arrive at Deer Creek Park in *Too Little, Too Late*, or by nightfall of the day she arrives.



DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT.....



SCAN THIS

Sonora has stopped in Denver to secure additional transportation. Increased surveillance from the Sioux keep her from broadcasting until she is safely in Denver, but once there she is able to contact her employer and a variety of smugglers. Her employer is in Los Angeles, ready to meet with her directly. Sonora finds a smuggler who agrees to transport her and her team, no questions asked, but it takes her some time—giving the runners a chance to (almost) catch up.

This scene deals with the runners' arrival in the Mile-High City, and the legwork they've got to do to discover Sonora's next stop. They've landed in the Sioux sector (this means their ride didn't have to cross any of Denver's borders or deal with Denver's military). Sonora has been staying in the PCC sector ... Unfortunately for the team, this means navigating Denver's borders, with all the hassle that entails.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

When you arrive in Denver, the weather feels balmy after Chicago. To the west, the imposing presence of the rugged, snow-capped Rocky Mountains dominates the view. The acrid air burns your lungs, and you can see a semi-permanent brown cloud of pollution hovering over the city. The city itself is bustling, with thick air traffic zooming over and around the gleaming skyscrapers. AR traffic is just as thick, the hustle-and-bustle of a major city in stark comparison to the wasteland of Chicago.

You're in the Sioux sector of the city, and you know you're not in Seattle any more when you see a dusky blue spirit floating

a foot above the sidewalk having a heated debate with a human Amerindian about the chances of the Sioux soccer team in the upcoming Olympics.

Frosty doesn't even blink at the spirit. She quickly clips her breather in place.

"So ..." she says, shifting the tube that holds the map. "This is an improvement. That artifact has to be easier to track down in a civilized city ..." You don't hear a lot of confidence in her voice.

If the runners attempt to cross the border via a patrolled checkpoint, read the following:

Traffic is moving slowly, corralled into three lanes as it approaches a manned border checkpoint. Overhead, three drones circle, running scans. At the checkpoint, armored personnel stand with guns at the ready, while a pair of animal handlers with leashed dogs inspect vehicles. As your vehicle draws close, you can see that a border guard is questioning each vehicle's driver for a brief moment before waving them through. To one side, a red pickup truck is being carefully swept by a team of personnel, while the resigned-looking ork driver sits handcuffed to a bench.

And then it's your turn ...

If the runners contact a Coyote for transport across the border, read the following:

The Coyote is a heavyset Ute ork, with a gold cap on one tusk and copper-red skin. His black hair is long and straight, and he's got a trio of gray feathers tied into a braid. He takes you to an older building, around the back and down a set of steep stairs into

a basement. He pounds on a thick door with a heavy fist. The door swings open and another ork is standing inside what looks like an access port for a utility tunnel.

“Follow me,” he says. You follow him down a ladder into the tunnels. Once there, he unholsters his shotgun. “Just a little insurance,” he says, with a wink. “But don’t worry. I’ve got sensors all along here. This is the safest route under Denver. Really.”

If the runners contact Belinda Swiftwing, read the following:

The Golden Feather doesn’t have a sign outside, just an AR painting on the steel-plate front door of a—imagine this—gold feather. When you open the door, its corroded hinges let out an ear-numbing screech. Inside, the patrons turn to look at you. It’s immediately apparent they are all natives, and there isn’t a human in the bunch. Trolls and orks seem to be the primary patrons, although a trio of dwarfs sit at one table and stare at you. Behind the bar an elf and troll are pouring drinks—beer so thick it looks like you could eat it with a fork. Toward the back you see a massive troll woman, her black hair twisted back in a waist-length braid, her two upturned horns carved with tribal patterns. It’s Belinda.

If the runners are non-Natives, or humans, read the following:

As you walk toward Belinda, your path takes you between a table with four orks and a table with three trolls. Their tables are crowded with empty tankards—it’s obvious that they’ve been drinking *a lot*. One troll sticks out a leg the size of a small tree, blocking your path.

“Lost, pinkskins? [use “breeders” if the runners are human]” he slurs, in a deep rumble. At the other table, the four orks shove back their chairs, eager—if very intoxicated.

When the runners talk to Belinda, read the following:

“So, you’re looking for a Latina woman who just arrived in town, via one of the Spire smugglers? I’ve heard about her. The data costs, though—a grand for the basics, and if you like what you hear, another grand for the details. Sound fair?”

[once the runners pay]

“Word is she’s laying over in Denver. She’s been asking around, looking for a ride. That’s the basics. Want the details?”

[if they pay the rest]

“Well, I guess you guys are serious. She’s been asking for a ride ‘somewhere in the PCC’ for herself and two others. And you’re not the first group to ask about her ... I’ll tell you what I told them. I’m pretty sure she’s still in the city—I haven’t heard of anyone taking the ride. If you want, I can give you a call if I hear more. Like, say, where she’s heading.”

HOOKS

The runners are in the city, and they don’t know if Sonora is handing off the artifact here, or if this is just a layover. So the runners should be motivated to get out and do legwork before she moves on—or hands the artifact over.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Sonora has landed in Denver to make contact with a smuggler who can take her and her crew somewhere “in PCC territory” (that’s what she tells the smugglers she asks). One agrees. The runners have a variety of ways to track her down, although depending on how long they spent in Chicago, she may be leaving Denver, or have already left, when they arrive (Sonora’s t-bird smuggler will have issues with the weather and border patrols, allowing the runners time to catch up to her in the final scene).

Since Sonora’s asked several smugglers, she’s left a trail behind. In addition, Sonora’s team had a run-in with some Mafia soldiers, who mistakenly believed she was smuggling *telesma* through their territory. She survived the encounter, with the Sextant, but another of her teammates is killed when an accident, caused by a Mafia-summoned spirit, causes a utility pole to come crashing down and a metal bracket on the utility pole impales him.

Runners who choose to do legwork will find several trails to Sonora. The Mafia incident is enough to make the local news (“A freak accident that impaled an unidentified Latino human male in the Pueblo territory of Denver”). On gossip sites and data havens, rumors are that the Latino man was an out-of-town shadowrunner. Another trail leads to a gossip-monger, Belinda Swiftwing, a Pueblo troll. She makes her living keeping track of the smugglers going into and out of Denver. Belinda only works with people she’s met in person; strangers need to do a face-to-face meeting before she’ll sell them any info. Spreading around some nuyen or doing Matrix data searches will point to Belinda. Matrix-savvy runners will see she regularly posts on the Denver Nexus, a major shadow data haven. The runners can pick up data with a Matrix search (threshold 4), which will lead them to Belinda.

Runners who lack contacts on the ground in Denver may find tracking down this information challenging, but this is an opportunity for the team’s face to really shine. Gamemasters are encouraged to push this beyond the normal negotiation and info-brokering to challenge the team socially.

Belinda Swiftwing will agree to meet the runners at the Golden Feather, a local bar in the PCC section of the city, which caters to NAN metahumans—humans and pinkskins will face outright hostility from the primarily troll and ork patrons.

If the runners can handle themselves, they’ll be able to talk to Belinda; however, all she knows is that the “Latina breeder” was heading “somewhere in the PCC.” She will tell them that they’re not the first group who’ve asked about Sonora ... giving the runners the clue that they’re not the only group looking for the mage. She will tell the runners about the other group if they’re willing to pay her price (and intelligent runners may realize at this point that Belinda may also sell data on *them* ...).

While the runners are looking, Samriel Lockwood tracks down the runners via the Stealth tags. He heads out, and will arrive in Denver approximately 6 hours after the runners, and will continue to discreetly tail them.

The runners’ search may take them across several borders in Denver. If they don’t have the appropriate IDs and sector passes, they’ll have to rely on bribing the border guards (with a successful Negotiation, Con, or Etiquette (3) test, a 500 nuyen per person



bribe is sufficient), hacking the border station (device Rating 5 for drones and nodes, device Rating 4 for commlinks on personnel), using a Coyote, or finding an alternative way across the secured border. Coyotes are smugglers who specialize in getting people across the borders in Denver—frequently by taking them *under* the border. While most guard their own routes vigilantly, and keep sensors up and running, sometimes problems occur—from a pack of devil rats to a patrol of border guards intent on wiping out the Coyotes. If the runners choose to use a Coyote, the gamemaster can choose to include an encounter with some hostile critters or metahumans (sample stats listed in the *Grunts and Moving Targets* section).

Note that any runners attempting to cross the borders *legally* in Denver need to be aware of just what they're carrying with them. Items that are Restricted or Forbidden are likely to be caught and the runners denied crossing. Restricted items can be gotten across with the appropriate license (or fake license) and/or bribe (100 nuyen per item, up to Rating 12R), while Forbidden items are just that—*forbidden*. However, laws change from nation to nation—in Denver, this means that what is legal in the Sioux (such as high Rating magical foci) is illegal in the UCAS. It is up to the gamemaster's discretion as to what these differences entail.

If the runners traveled with Ricky Steelsky, he can take them into different sectors—but it'll take him several hours to fly far enough out to avoid the sensors and patrols of the city. He can also offer to meet up with them in another area, even carrying their Restricted or Forbidden gear, while they travel through Denver. Again, it'll take him at least four hours or more to travel around the city.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Denver is well known for being home to underworld elements. A local Triad mistakenly believes that the characters and Frosty are talislegging through their territory, and they corner Frosty when she's alone (and without her magic), wanting a piece of the action. A frantic call from Frosty to the runners will reveal that she's been left tied up, and the Triad soldiers have taken the map ...

SUBPLOTS

Dodging the Dragon

Ghostwalker considers Denver his private territory—and who's going to disagree with him? He has agents—both meta-human and free spirits—throughout the city and patrolling the various datahavens, reporting items of interest back to him. Also, he has an agreement with the smuggling rings that pass by Denver: he allows them to exist, and they keep him informed.

If the runners aren't very careful, word of what they're looking for may come to the attention of one of his agents. And if they aren't actively watching for trails and using their Shadowing skill (see *Using Stealth Skills*, p. 136, *SR4A*), they'll lead one of those agents back to where Frosty is waiting with the Piri Reis map. Since both Frosty *and* the ancient, Awakened artifact would

be of great interest to Ghostwalker, the agent will report back. If Ghostwalker learns that Frosty is in the city, or hears about a "strange Awakened artifact," he'll send one of his agents to "invite" Frosty and the runners to a meeting.

The agent will be polite and confident—after all, no one would say "no" to the great dragon, would they? He'll wait in the main room of the hotel. Under guise of gathering her things, Frosty will pull the runners into the bedroom. She'll insist—vehemently—that they *not* go to the meeting.

"He'll keep the map," she'll say, and flush. "And I might have ignored some *minor* protocol things coming here—" she'll say, swallowing.

No matter what, she'll insist they not injure or kill the dragon's agent. Without any magical abilities of her own, it'll be up to the runners to find a way to get away from the agent—and out of Denver—without attracting any more attention.

If they do end up getting taken to meet Ghostwalker, you can choose to have the runners sit in an antechamber while Frosty is taken in to meet with the dragon, or have the runners go in and have to negotiate with the great dragon to keep the map, after he snaps at Frosty for being as "impertinent as her mate." Either way, the meeting should cost them hours in delay—or even the map.

(Note that gamemasters should use this subplot carefully. Dealing with dragons is not for the faint of heart ...)

DEBUGGING

The runners may have difficulties crossing the Denver borders or run afoul of police or Denver security forces. If they don't know the appropriate bribes for the border guards, or have the appropriate IDs and licenses, Frosty can give them some tips. If they end up in a fight with border security or police, they could end up in prison (or worse). Frosty can pull some strings to get them out, but it should cost them much of their paycheck in bribes—decrease their final payout by 50 percent.

If the runners aren't able to discover where Sonora is heading, they may have to wait in Denver until Frosty can do the next ritual (see *Sonora's Travel Route*, p. 26). If the runners don't ask around, the gamemaster can have the t-bird pilot point out there are people in Denver who specialize in tracking the smuggler traffic going through the city (nudging them toward Belinda Swiftwing or a similar contact). Having the runners run into another group hunting the Sextant—like in the next scene—may also motivate them to be more proactive in their approach.

The runners may also believe that Sonora is in Denver to hand off the artifact to someone (like, say, a certain great dragon). If they start to research this angle, let them run with it—until Frosty does the ritual again and discovers the Sextant has left the city—which hopefully will get them back on track and convince them to do the research to discover where Sonora is headed.

If Ghostwalker ends up with the map, not all is lost. Perhaps as a consolation, he'll inform the runners that he's heard from another agent that Sonora is heading to San Bernardino. In this case, the runners will need to use legwork to track her down there—but they'll be able to skip the potentially lethal fight in *Turning the Tables*.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Golden Feather

A bar in the PCC sector of Denver with a predominantly metahuman clientele. Non-natives and humans face a lot of discrimination from the clientele, and likely receive little service from the staff. The bar does serve real beer as well as a variety of hard alcohol. Smugglers often pass some time here, and it's known as a good place to pick up a ride, get info on what crews are working what routes, buy intel on where the border patrols are hitting, and find out the latest news and updates on the "road conditions" of the various smuggling routes that pass Denver.

The Coyote Underground Route

This series of interconnected tunnels, basements, utility pipes, and sewage pipes travels under the heavily defended border security checkpoints. In places, it is dry and spacious. Other places are wet, smelly, and even cramped—trolls will have to work to squeeze through the openings. The Coyotes aren't the only things down here, either. From the ever-present problem of devil rats, to rival criminal groups—like the Mafia—to patrols of NAN soldiers, there're a lot of things that can interfere with what should be a quick and easy trip.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

Belinda Swiftwing

A Pueblo troll who keeps track of what's going on in the smuggling world.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	3	3	5	4	4	4	4	3	5.8	7	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 11/10

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 1/1

Skills: Computer 2, Data Search 5, Etiquette 5 (Smugglers +2), Hacking 2, Negotiation 4 (Bargaining +2), Perception 4, Pistols 1, Unarmed Combat 1

Knowledge Skills: Black Markets 4, Greater Denver 4, NAN Politics 3, Smuggler Crews 5, Rumors 5

Qualities: First Impression

Cyberware: Commlink (Device Rating 4)

Grey Crow (Coyote)

A heavy-set Ute ork, this man knows the routes *under* Denver.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	3	4	5	2	3	2	2	2	6	7	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 11/9

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6

Skills: Dodge 2, Etiquette 1 (Smuggler +2), Longarms 3, Navigation 4, Perception 3, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Knowledge Skills: Coyote Routes 4, Border Crossing Points 3, Border Patrol Procedures 4

Gear: Commlink (Device Rating 3) with Glasses (Rating 2 w/ smartlink and image link), 2 fake SInS with appropriate licenses (Pueblo, Sioux, both Rating 4), Armor Jacket

Weapons:

Remington 990 [Shotgun, DV 7P, AP -1, SA, RC 0, 8 (m), smartgun]

Survival Knife [Blade, DV 6P, AP -1]

Golden Feather trolls (3)

These trolls hire onto smuggler convoys as muscle, but they're back in town at their favorite bar—consuming beer by the gallon.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
9	4	4(6)	9	2	3	2	3	2	3	7(9)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 13/10

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 9/7

Skills: Close Combat Skill Group 4, Dodge 4, Etiquette 2 (Smuggler +2), Firearms Skill Group 5, Intimidation 3, Perception 3, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pilot Aircraft 4

Knowledge Skills: NAN Politics 3, Smuggler Routes 3, Border Crossing Points 3, Border Patrol Procedures 4

Qualities: Toughness

Cyberware: Wired Reflexes 2

Gear: Commlink (Device Rating 3) with AR glasses w/smartlink and image link, 3 fake SInS with appropriate licenses (Pueblo, Sioux, Salish-Sidhe), Armor Jacket

Weapons:

Ruger Super Warhawk [Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP -2, SS, RC 0, 6 (cy), smartgun]

Survival Knife [Blade, DV 6P, AP -1]

Golden Feather orks (4)

Four (rather inebriated) brothers who're more than ready to join a fight.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
7	4	4(6)	6	3	3	3	2	2	4.6	7(9)	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 12/9

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6

Skills: Close Combat Skill Group 3, Dodge 3, Etiquette 1 (Smuggler +2), Firearms Skill Group 3, Negotiation 2, Perception 3, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pilot Aircraft 4

Knowledge Skills: Denver Area Knowledge 3, Metahuman Rights Skill Groups 4, Smuggler Routes 3, Border Crossing Points 3, Border Patrol Procedures, Urban Brawl Teams 3

Qualities: Guts

Cyberware: Cybereyes (Rating 2 w/Low Light, Smartlink, Image Link, Vision Enhancement 3), Reaction Enhancers 2, Control Rig

Gear: Commlink (Device Rating 3) with Glasses (Rating 2 w/ smartlink and imagelink), 5 fake SInS with appropriate licenses (Pueblo, Sioux, Salish-Sidhe, UCAS, CAS), Armor Jacket

Weapons:

Ares Predator IV [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC 0, 15 (c), smartgun]

Survival Knife [Blade, DV 6P, AP -1]

Devil Rat Pack (20)

See p. 299, *SR4A*.

Border Patrol Guards

Use Lone Star Police Squad Member, p. 282, *SR4A*.





INCOMING FEED.....

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

SCAN THIS

This scene has the runners coming in just a moment too late to grab the Sextant from Sonora.

Sonora has contracted with Winding Joe, a smuggler, to take her, her surviving teammate, and her “package” to Los Angeles. He is parked at Deer Creek Park and is willing to leave as soon as Sonora arrives.

Belinda will contact the runners with the info on Sonora’s meet, offering to sell it to them—but they’ll get the info with barely enough time to reach the meet point. Sonora will have already gone to the t-bird.

When the runners arrive, they’ll find Sonora leaving, and themselves in the midst of a chaotic, three-way fight with innocents as unfortunate casualties. When a fourth group enters the fray—the *Vigilia Evangelica*—will it be as allies, or foes? And if the runners survive the fight, they’ll still have to discover where Sonora has gone next ... and then attempt to catch up once again.

If they do get the information, their reward is being able to skip the last parts of this scene and proceed directly to Los Angeles. That time savings should allow them to get some rest and perhaps even secure some supplies before the events in *Turning The Tables*.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Your commlink beeps an incoming call—it’s Belinda Swiftwing. The troll looks out at you from the AR window.

“So, I’ve heard another interesting rumor—and of course I thought you’d appreciate the info. For another grand, I’d be happy to pass it along ...”

[if the runners pay]

“Word is the lady you’ve been looking for has a meeting at a campground set for about an hour from now—at the Deer Creek Park, so I heard from a little bird. I’ve *heard* that a t-bird pilot by the name of Winding Joe’s got his bird parked out there. Might be she’s hitching a ride with him.” Belinda shrugs. “Well, that’s the intel. Pleasure doing business. Call if you need anything else.”

If the runners go to the park, read the following:

Deer Creek Park is looking particularly beautiful in the fading evening light. The skeletons of deciduous trees are dusted with a light layer of snow. A deer sees you and vanishes into the tall grass and scrub oaks that make up the undergrowth. It’s remarkably peaceful. You pull into the parking lot at the edge of the campground. Permanent camping shelters—canvas-lined yurts—dot the area in front of you, while the short scrub oaks and bushes break up the landscape. The campground is mostly dark, with some of the yurts lit up from inside, and a few campfires sparking in the night. Beyond the campground is a stretch of taller trees and tangled undergrowth. The light isn’t great, and the trees and undergrowth obscure the brief glimpse you get, but you *think* you catch a glimpse of someone disappearing into the trees.

Just like that, they’re gone from sight. And even worse: you hear the characteristic thunder of a t-bird’s engines roaring to life just beyond the trees ...



If they manage to question one of Sonora's goons successfully (Intimidation test), read the following:

"Fine, fine, I'll tell you. Just don't—don't hurt me anymore. The bitch just hired us today. Said she wanted some protection. We weren't supposed to know anything more. But Bert was doing some hacker thing and said he picked up a call she made—to someone in San Bernardino."

If the runners stop at one of the smuggler towns Winding Joe has been in, read the following:

The mechanic looks at you warily, idly tapping her wrench against her thigh.

"Yeah, I might've worked on Winding Joe's bird. What's it to you?"

[if they bribe, negotiate, or successfully persuade her]

"Look, not that it's any of my business. But the guy can't hold a secret any better than his liquor. He said he was gonna be flush. Taking some high-class dame to Los Angeles. No... not LA. Some place outside LA. San... San Bernardino? That's the place. He didn't say what route he was taking, just where he was ending up."

HOOKS

The runners have finally caught up with Sonora and the artifact. The prospect of finally getting the artifact should be enough of a hook ...

BEHIND THE SCENES

Sonora has managed to contact Winding Joe, a smuggler who's agreed to take her and her surviving teammate out of Denver. Winding Joe has his t-bird at Deer Creek Park, where he's just dropped off a load of metahumans (primarily women and teens) to the local Triad, who use the unfortunates as slave labor for illegal telasma harvesting. The Triads house the slaves in the yurts, and there are Triad soldiers guarding the campground. Because it is a telasma harvesting crew, there are several magically active Triad members on-site, along with two patrolling watcher spirits (with orders to alert them to Astral presences). Winding Joe tells the Triads that he's picking up a fare and leaving, but they don't know about the backup team Sonora has hired.

Paranoid because of the earlier Mafia fight (and of the Sextant's curse itself), Sonora hires a secondary team to protect her and her surviving teammate—and to delay anyone who might try to follow her or prevent her departure. If the runners weren't careful to either bribe or eliminate Belinda, Belinda will have turned around and sold info on *them* to Sonora. If this is the case, she'll have told the team protecting her to ambush anyone who arrives in the camp. The team takes her literally, and decides on their own that "delaying" pursuit would be more effective if they cause as much chaos as possible. The team's hacker was also a bit too curious about his mysterious new employer, hacked her commlink, and discovered her next destination. He shared this info with one other teammate. If one of them is interrogated, they'll provide that detail to the runners.

Frosty is still recovering from the last ritual. She'll go to the meet, but she won't be much more than another gun—and will want to remain in the vehicle with the map, just in case.

A NOTE ON THE VIGILIA EVANGELICA

As this is the first appearance of the Vigilia Evangelica, the gamemaster should remember that the three priests are more than fanatical about hiding their secretive organization—they all wear anchored spells designed to kill them if they should ever mention the Vigilia. While *Midnight* refers to the three men as priests, it should *not* be obvious to the runners. Their affiliations are secret, and although they wish to recover the Sextant, they will be circumspect in doing so. If the runners press them for details, the most the three men will admit is to being Sylvesterine lay brethren.

If the runners wish to scrutinize the three men, the following information is available via a Perception Test:

Hits	Information
1	Three men, all dark haired, all wearing dark, non-descript clothing.
2	One man (the leader) has a faint Italian accent, one has a faint German accent, and one has no accent at all.
3	They all are wearing identical silver chains with a finely-wrought silver cross. Their armor is not a name brand, but the quality is extremely high, and the detail work (on the seams) is a very unique pattern.
4	When casting a spell, they chant in Latin and sign themselves with traditional Catholic symbolism. Catholic symbols (the cross, for example) are worked into the patterns in the detail work on their armor.

The runners arrive at the pickup site just as Sonora's getting into the t-bird, on the other side of the trees. The runners should arrive just in time to catch a glimpse of *someone* disappearing into the trees (this isn't Sonora, but one of the team she's hired). The t-bird's engines start, which is enough to alert the Triad guards and the slave-labor.

While the runners could decide to perform reconnaissance on the campground prior to arrival, anything that slows them down (i.e., stopping to sneak through the woods) should cost them their lead, as the Vigilia Evangelica have also received info from Belinda and are on their way. If the runners take the 'slow and cautious' route, the Vigilia will end up triggering the trap. Any quick astral searches will risk alerting Sonora, the Triad magicians, watcher spirits, or even the Vigilia Evangelica.

Urgent Message...



DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT:

As the runners approach the tree line (through the campground; the high, rocky ridges in the area make circling around difficult and very time-consuming), gunfire opens up (see Surprise Tests, p. 165, *SR4A*). The team has been ordered to delay any pursuit (or to ambush pursuers), and they've spotted the runners.

The team uses the cover of the forest line to attack the runners at a distance, with several laying down suppressive fire while others attempt to target individuals. These are well-trained runners and their tactics should reflect this. Their plan is to get the pursuit (the runners and/or the Vigilia) engaged in a fight, get the Triads engaged in the fight as well, then retreat into the woods while those groups fight among themselves.

The Triad soldiers come pouring out of the yurts, as expected, and immediately engage both teams (the player characters and Sonora's hired help)—making the entire campground a deadly free-for-all. There's plenty of cover (trees, picnic tables, yurts) but in the chaos several of the talisleggers see their chance to escape and run out of the yurts, directly into the firefight. Others remain in the yurts, but the canvas sides provide little protection from stray bullets ...

The t-bird pilot, already warned that there may be trouble, has turned off all wireless connections to his t-bird; he's rigging via a hardwired datajack. (Frosty will be adamant that they not actually open fire on Sonora or the t-bird once it takes off; the risk of damaging the artifact is too great.)

The opposing team doesn't care about the slaves; the more damage the merrier, in their opinion. They'll continue to fire through the campground, injuring innocents as they attempt to hit the runners and the Triad soldiers, until the t-bird is well away, at which time they'll attempt to disappear into the forest and escape. Of course, the Triad soldiers have no interest in letting *anyone* escape, and will continue the fight ...

If that wasn't bad enough, calls have gone out to emergency services. Park rangers dispatch quick-flying drones and head out to the campground.

While the runners are battling, the Vigilia Evangelica arrive (alternatively, if the runners choose to go slow and cautious, the Vigilia will be the ones who spring the trap). The priests see the fight, see the t-bird taking off, and enter the fray. One will attempt to assist and protect injured innocents while the other two shield him and attack the attackers (using Stun and other non-lethal spells). If the runners attempt to contact them (locating their commlink signals and calling them, getting close enough to talk, or even waving a white flag), the Vigilia Evangelica will agree to a truce—if they haven't seen the runners injuring the women and children, that is. With the Vigilia Evangelica's help, the runners should be able to win.

And if that's not bad enough, the Vigilia alert the police and paramedics, so Pueblo security will be on their way as well. The ambushers will attempt to inflict the maximum amount of damage before fleeing ... and if the runners don't manage to capture at least *one* of the team *alive*, they'll have to start all over to discover where Sonora is heading next.

If the runners stick around to assist the injured slaves, the police will not arrest or hassle them (regardless of what gear they're carrying). In fact, one of the injured will speak up on the runners' behalf, telling the police that the runners helped them escape the Triads. The police will tell the runners to go, with a gruff thank you.

COMBAT SCENE TIMELINE

Combat turn 1: T-bird starts engines. Sonora's grunts open fire on runners.

Combat turn 2: T-bird takes off. Triad soldiers engage both teams. Slaves attempt to escape.

Combat turn 3: Vigilia Evangelica enter fight.

Combat turn 4: Background count increases by 1 due to injuries and panic of metahuman "slaves." T-bird is 500 meters away. Sonora's hired team attempts to disengage and disappear into forest.

Combat turn 5: T-bird is 750 meters away.

Combat turn 6: T-bird reaches travel speed of 1,000 m/combat turn (1,200 km/hr).

Urgent Message...

If the runners choose not to assist the injured, they'll be implicated in the attack, and their likenesses (or actual images if any of the park drones get a picture) broadcast throughout the PCC as "suspected metahuman traffickers." If they go through the PCC again, or get stopped at any checkpoints, that should come back to haunt them later.

No matter what happens, after the scene the runners should learn that they aren't the only ones after the Sextant—although if they've fought to protect innocents and are honorable, the Vigilia Evangelica will be on their side (at least for now).

There are a variety of ways the runners can discover Sonora's destination is Los Angeles. If they questioned one of Sonora's hired help, they should know her destination was San Bernardino, outside of Los Angeles.

If they didn't manage to get the information from the hired help, they have several other options—but all of them take more time. Frosty can recast the ritual, when she's recovered. Sonora is traveling slowly, a combination of weather and having to evade increased PCC patrols. Winding Joe stops frequently and waits for the patrols to pass.

Increased Ute resistance to PCC control has sparked numerous rebel groups and attacks on PCC military sites, corporate sites, and infrastructure. Accordingly, the PCC has ramped up patrols in the old Ute territory. Smugglers are either going south into the Rockies through the PCC (towards Santa Fe) and then heading west through the Mojave Desert, or northwest in the Rockies (skirting north of Salt Lake City, with stops near Idaho Falls), and then heading southwest to the Sierra Nevadas in Calfree. The Mojave has its own difficulties, not the least of which is the unpredictable magic of the desert.

Winding Joe is reluctant to cross the Mojave. Instead, he's taking the longer (but relatively safer) route north and west. The 19-hour trip will stop in Buford (west of Denver), then head north to Dry Fork, then southwest to Payson Lakes (due south of Salt Lake City), then northwest to Elko, then southwest to Fallon, then south to Thorn, then Lone Pine, before making the final leg to San Bernardino.

Using the locations and times, the gamemaster can determine approximately where the Sextant is when Frosty does the ritual. If the runners rely on the map to locate the Sextant, they'll be several hours behind the mage.

SONORA'S TRAVEL TIMELINE

Deer Creek Park to Buford:	1 hr (2 hr layover)
Buford to Dry Fork:	30 min (1 hr layover)
Dry Fork to Payson Lakes:	45 min (45 min layover)
Payson Lakes to Elko:	2 hrs (3 hr layover)
Elko to Fallon:	1 hr (1 hr layover)
Fallon to Thorn:	30 min (2 hr layover)
Thorn to Lone Pine:	1 hr (1 hr layover)
Lone Pine to San Bernardino:	1.5 hr
Total Travel Time:	19 hr

Ricky Steelsky can fly them out of Denver (he's still being compensated by Wingman) or the runners can hire a different smuggler.

The runners will end up hopscotching behind Sonora; although the map doesn't give exact locations of the Sextant, Ricky Steelsky can point out the likeliest pit stops a t-bird would make (a Smuggler's Routes (3) Knowledge Test). If they visit enough of those places, they may get lucky—Winding Joe lets slip his destination at one of the smuggler's pit stops (for suggestions on a few encounters to use during the various stops, see *Road Trip!*, p. 22). He shares a beer with one of the mechanics as they do a quick tune-up on his bird, and brags to the woman that he's got a rich-paying fare to San Bernardino.

If they do follow Sonora this way, a variety of encounters are sure to make the trip exhausting for the runners. Even if they know the final destination, if they use a t-bird smuggler to travel, they'll be subjected to the same conditions as Sonora—having to make frequent layovers as they wait for PCC patrols to pass by.

The runners may also decide to make an educated guess at the final destination. Knowing Sonora is from Los Angeles, and that Aztlan is just a short distance away, could be just enough of a hint for the runners to decide to go to the city.

If the runners travel by t-bird, their trip should take a similar amount of time, unless their pilot chooses to short-cut across the Mojave Desert (total travel time, 9 hours). The Mojave is a dangerous place, however, and the runners may find themselves paying for the time they gain in their own blood ...

The runners may also decide to drive, but the fastest route still takes them through the Mojave, where they will be prey for roving bands of Anasazi (who frequently attack travelers on the main roads through the desert), subject to scrutiny by PCC military checkpoints, and at risk of encountering the strange, hostile magics of the desert itself. Few travel across the desert except in large armed caravans these days ... for good reason.

The frequent stops and starts of traveling by t-bird smugglers should make it difficult, if not impossible, for the runners to get uninterrupted sleep. The cargo holds of the t-birds aren't sound-proofed and the frequent landings and take-offs, complete with the characteristic "thunder" of the engines, make restful sleep a difficult proposition. Sleep-aids—pharmaceutical, magical, or technical—do exist. Of course, runners who use those may find themselves at a disadvantage during some of the *Road trip!*, p. 22 encounters ...

Either way, Sonora's travel will last long enough for Frosty to perform the ritual at least once. The runners may be behind the Sextant, but the game isn't lost yet.

Once in Los Angeles, Frosty will arrange for a safe house with the Ancients, unless the runners suggest something better.

Their t-bird pilot will set the down outside the city wherever they want, but not near a town or populated area. If the runners have some contacts in Los Angeles already, they may be able to convince those contacts to bring them a vehicle or come pick them up. If they are at a complete loss, Frosty can make a call. About thirty minutes after that call, a squad of Ancients will show up, with a few extra bikes for the runners.

The runners should have only a short time before the events in *Turning The Tables* start.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

If you wish to make this scene more challenging, have the Park be the location of a large metahuman trafficking ring. Increase the number of soldiers appropriately (team x 5) and have a variety of drones and other guard systems in place.

DEBUGGING

If the runners appear to be overwhelmed during this combat, have Samriel and his Mystic Crusaders step in to help. Although they won't show themselves, some appropriately placed sniper shots may tip the balance in the runners' favor—at least long enough for them to flee. It should be obvious that *someone* helped them, but *who* should remain a mystery for now.

While the point of this scene is to give the runners the feeling that they were just a moment too late (increasing the sense that this is a frantic race against time), the runners may decide to attack the t-bird or attempt to give chase by sending a drone or spirit (or levitating themselves) after it. The t-bird cannot be hacked; its wireless signal has been shut off during take-off. If a runner attempts to target the t-bird with a spell or attack it with long-range gunfire, Frosty will stop them—at the top of her lungs. Making the t-bird crash could damage—or even destroy—the Sextant. If the runners send a spirit after it, Sonora will, at some point, disrupt the spirit. If they send a drone, the t-bird will likely outdistance the drone quickly; if it does not, the t-bird pilot will shoot it down.

If the runners dawdle excessively on the way to the meet, the gamemaster can present the end result of the combat instead of having the runners engage in it. The Vigilia Evangelica can have engaged the opposing team. The runners may only hear that there was a significant fight there, and not be able to get close enough to observe (or they may observe by hacking a park or police drone's visual feeds). They should also hear that a t-bird took off and got away and that "Pueblo authorities are looking for it," giving them a broad hint that Sonora escaped and the hunt is still on.

The later parts of this scene can quickly dissolve into a wild-goose chase. If the runners attempt to guess Sonora's final location and miss, ending up in a different city (Portland, Seattle, or someplace else), they may find themselves lagging too far behind to capture the Sextant in the end. While the map ritual will eventually show the Sextant in Los Angeles, the runners will have to hurry to get there to not miss the final scenes. This could entail traveling by a faster route—commercial airplanes, or even a sub-orbital—and leaving Frosty and the map behind. Unfortunately, travel by commercial airline or suborbital, while fast and efficient, does come with some significant baggage restrictions ...



PLACES OF INTEREST

Deer Creek Park

A hunter's paradise, this remote park has native mule deer, black bears, elk, mountain lions, and grouse. In chilly weather the campground is closed to the public. However, a Triad-backed ring of forced-labor talisleggers are staying in the campground (the tesma-hunters are victims of metahuman trafficking). The park is based in a rocky valley, and thick stands of trees and bushes provide plenty of habitat for the animals (and cover for metahumans). The campground is at the end of a gravel road, and has a dozen canvas-lined yurts spread across it, each with a picnic table, parking spot, and fire-pit. Small scrub oaks and taller bushes decorate the campground. Beyond the campground is a stand of thicker trees, which block the view of a small rocky open space. The park is also an off-season favorite of t-bird smugglers, who frequently land to pick up cargo from the Triads.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

Team Street Sam (6)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	4(6)	4(6)	5(7)	2	3	3	4	3	1.76	7(9)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/10

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6

Skills: Athletics Skill Group 3, Close Combat Skill Group 4, Dodge 4, Etiquette 1, Firearms Skill Group 5, Infiltration 3, Intimidation 3, Outdoors Skill Group 3, Heavy Weapons 4, Perception 3, Survival 2

Knowledge Skills: Denver Politics 3, Denver Joint Forces 3, Combat Background 2

Qualities: Guts, Toughness

Cyberware (all Used Alpha grade): Wired Reflexes 2, Cybereyes (Rating 2 w/Flare Comp, Low-Light, Vision Enhancement 2, smartlink), Muscle Replacement 2

Gear: Commlink (Device Rating 3), 3 fake SINs with appropriate licenses (Pueblo, Sioux, CAS, all Rating 4), Armor Jacket

Weapons:

Ruger Super Warhawk [Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP -2, SS, RC 0, 6 (cy), smartgun]

Ingram White Knight [Light Machine Gun, DV 6P, AP -1, BF/FA, RC 5 (6), 100 (belt)]

Remington 990 [Shotgun, 7P, AP -1, SA, RC 1, 8(m)]

Survival Knife [Blade, DV 6P, AP -1]

Team Combat Hacker (1)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	3	5	3	2	5	3	3	3	5.2	11	3

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/10

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6

Skills: Athletics Skill Group 1, Cybercombat 5, Dodge 4, Electronics Skill Group 4, Electronic Warfare 4, Hacking 5, Perception 3, Pistols 1, Longarms 1

Knowledge Skills: Denver Politics 3, Denver Joint Forces 3, Combat Background 2

Qualities: Codeslinger (Hack on the Fly)

Cyberware: Cybereyes (Rating 2 w/Flare Comp, Low-Light, Vision Enhancement 2, smartlink), Commlink (Device Rating 5), Hot-Sim Module, Datajack

Gear: 3 fake SINS with appropriate licenses (Pueblo, Sioux, CAS, all Rating 4), Armor Jacket

Weapons:

Ruger Super Warhawk [Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP -2, SS, RC 0, 6 (cy), smartgun]

Remington 990 [Shotgun, 7P, AP -1, SA, RC 1, 8(m)]

Programs: Analyze 5, Armor 5, Attack 5, Biofeedback Filter 5, Blackhammer 3, Browse 4, Command 3, Decrypt 4, Edit 5, Scan 5, Spoof 3, Stealth 5, Track 3, Exploit 5

Triad Soldiers (8) + Triad Lieutenant (1) + Talismonger (2)

Use Triad Posse and Triad Lieutenant, p. 284, *SR4A*, and Talismonger, p. 292, *SR4AA*. Give each Triad soldier an Ingram Smartgun, a Remington 990 and Goggles (Rating 3 w/ smartlink, Low Light, and Flare Compensation). Each Talismonger has one watcher spirit patrolling.

Weapons:

Remington 990 [Shotgun, 7P, AP -1, SA, RC 1, 8(m), Internal Smartgun System]

Ingram Smartgun X [Submachine Gun, 5P, AP 0, BF/FA, RC 3, 32 (c)]

Urgent Message...

KNIGHTLY HONOR

The safehouse ambush has the potential to be highly lethal for the runners. If the gamemaster wishes, he can use Samriel and his team to balance out the lethality and ensure the runners survive to get to the Sextant. However, there is every possibility that the Mystic Crusaders can “upstage” the runners—and since this is the runners’ story, the gamemaster must be careful to keep the runners in the “starring roles” and not let the NPCs outshine the player characters (the same issue can arise in the final scene). It is up to the gamemaster to decide how to use the Mystic Crusaders, based on the makeup of the runner team, their overall health and strength at this point, and the cinematographic effects desired. Above all, remember that the Mystic Crusaders want both the map and the Sextant to end up in Frosty’s hands—although their reasons won’t be revealed in *this* adventure. While their orders are to simply observe and report, Samriel’s oath to the Codex involves protecting the artifacts, and allowing them to end up in the hands of the Smoking Mirror violates his oath. The gamemaster can decide what action Samriel will take, knowing his orders and his oaths may directly conflict with each other.

Note that the final scene, *Enemy of My Enemy*, is very challenging, especially if the runners are exhausted, battered, and low on weapons and supplies. Samriel can be used to lend a helping hand to the team during the final scene—if he’s introduced in this one. For beginning teams or less experienced players, Samriel’s assistance in the final scene can mean the difference between survival and death—literally.

If the gamemaster chooses to use the Mystic Crusaders as active participants, here are some suggested ways to integrate Samriel and his team in *Turning the Tables*:

A Friend in Need

Samriel and his team are watching over the runners a short distance from the safehouse. Samriel has gotten word from Atlantean Foundation assets that a blood mage is in LA to get the Sextant. He knows the Sextant can be used to find the map. He also doubts

the runners’ ability to go face-to-face with a blood mage and his resources.

As a gesture of good faith, Samriel calls Frosty and asks for a meeting. Frosty is a bit upset, and a bit resigned—she’ll mention “men who like to meddle”—but not particularly afraid. Samriel comes to the safehouse alone, his team strategically placed for support, and tells Frosty and the runners that he’s gotten word that a blood-mage is in town for the Sextant.

Before the runners can question him, his men warn him of the imminent attack. He has just enough time to warn the runners before the Burning Angels attack. Trapped, Samriel will fight side-by-side with the runners, with his team outside engaging the *Cuacuahin*. Afterwards, he’ll offer to come with the runners and to have his men escort Frosty and the map to a safer location.

Tell It to Them Straight:

After Frosty finishes the call, she has a resigned look on her face. “I hate men who meddle,” she mutters under her breath, then turns to you.

“Samriel—that Mystic Crusader from Lagos, remember him?—is nearby. He wants to meet. Says he has urgent information for me. He promises he isn’t after the map or any other artifact and that he has only ‘honorable intentions.’” She rolls her eyes. “Normally I wouldn’t trust someone in this situation, but those Mystic Crusaders are fanatics about their honor. If he says he’s here to help, he means it. We may as well hear him out ...”

To the Rescue

Samriel and his team are watching when the Burning Angels approach to attack. He holds back for a few seconds, waiting to see if the runners can handle the attack on their own. If the runners are unable to withstand the attack, Samriel and his team will step in to even the odds. He will decide to disregard subtlety and reveal himself and his team. If the runners can handle the gangers, the Mystic Crusaders may step in to deal with the *Cuacuahin* directly. When the runners emerge

Continued on p. 36.

DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT:



from the safehouse, they'll see the Mystic Crusaders locked in a deadly battle with the *Cuacuahtin*. (The Mystic Crusaders should succeed.)

Either way, with the Mystic Crusaders' help, the runners should survive. If some (or all) of the runners are knocked unconscious by the *Cuacuahtin's* magical attacks, they should wake up with the Mystic Crusaders standing guard, and the Burning Angels dead, with the *Cuacuahtin* dead or in retreat.

After the fight, Samriel and his team will assist in healing any injured runners (using medkits). They'll offer to protect Frosty or to have Samriel come with the runners to retrieve the Sextant. Samriel will answer some questions, although with answers that cast him in the best light. He speaks in a pragmatic manner, using the occasional flowery phrase, treating Frosty with respect. His purpose (at this time) really *is* to protect the map, so any Analyze Truth spells or Judge intention rolls will reveal him as "dedicated, to the point of fanaticism, to protecting the map." He is focused, determined, and intense. He will do whatever it takes to convince the runners that he has only Frosty's best interests at heart, without actually lying.

He goes so far as to offer his men to guard Frosty and the map, relocating them to a more secure location. If the runners agree, they will act with honor, taking good care of Frosty and the map.

In addition, if necessary (gamemaster's discretion, depending on the condition and make-up of the team, compared to the upcoming final scenes), he'll offer to accompany the runners as they go after the Sextant.

If the runners don't agree, acting mistrustful or outright attacking him, then he will leave—and the runners may rue their decision in the final scene.

Tell It to Them Straight: After the Fight:

The silver-eyed elf looks at you, a streak of blood across one cheek, and dark stains on his armor. "If I were to make a guess, I'd say that the person with the relic you pursue sent these men and women here. And that once they realize their plan has failed, they will likely be leaving. Deprived of these weapons, the relic may be vulnerable—for a brief moment. If you wish to recover the relic, you should move—now.

"My men can protect the lady and the map, if you wish to strike back at those who've attacked you." He eyes you all, taking stock of your injuries. "If you wish, I can accompany you. You have my word of honor that I will assist you to the best of my ability."

A Solitary Rescue

If the runners have left Frosty alone with the map, Samriel may have no option but to come to her rescue. The runners should get a call from Frosty that she's been attacked and telling the team that Samriel rescued her. She wants them to return, *now* ...

If they question Samriel, a few sample questions and his answers are below:

Why are you here/What are you doing?: "I am here to protect the relic."

How did you find it/us: "I've been watching over the relic."

If they press: Samriel flicks a glance to the map, then to Frosty. With a raised eyebrow, and a bland voice, he says, "There are ways to track the relic. As she *should* know." With that, Frosty blushes beet-red.

If they ask why: "I have sworn my life to the Codex and the sacred duty of protecting the relics from those who would profane them. My allegiance—the allegiance of the Mystic Crusaders—is only to the Codex. I am not here as a rival, but only to ensure the safety of the relics. The Lady Frost has a pure heart and is worthy of my trust. The blood mages are not."

TURNING THE TABLES

SCAN THIS

Weary from several days of non-stop work, and a long and exhausting trip to Los Angeles, the runners barely have time to catch their breath before they are forced to spring into action.

Sonora has arrived in Los Angeles, and is hiding out on the outskirts of San Bernardino with her one surviving teammate. Her employer, Itztli, is already waiting when she arrives. He quickly inspects the Sextant. To confirm it is the correct artifact, and useful for the Smoking Mirrors' purpose, he knows a ritual that allows him to use the Sextant to determine the location of another artifact already in the cult's possession. He is completely surprised to discover that the Sextant points towards a closer artifact—the Piri Reis map. Itztli sends a unit of Guerreros—elite *Cuacuahtin* (Eagles) who have been in Los Angeles training the

Burning Angels—to discover what the Sextant is pointing to, and to bring it back to him. When they find Frosty and the runners, they attempt to capture them for Itztli.

Meanwhile, Samriel has been tracking Frosty and the runners from Denver. Once they are in Los Angeles, he quickly locates them and gets into position to watch over them.

If, or how, the Mystic Crusaders assist the runners in the fight is up to the gamemaster.

If the runners succeed in repelling the *Cuacuahtin*, they may discover just where Sonora and Itztli have the Sextant. But do they dare leave Frosty and the map unguarded while they go retrieve the Sextant? Do they dare trust Samriel's Mystic Crusaders to guard over the map? Will they allow Samriel to accompany them? The runners will have to make some serious decisions about who is an ally and who is an enemy before they can retrieve the Sextant.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The safehouse isn't the worst place you've stayed on this trip. The furniture is dingy and beat-up, but there are cots set up in the two bedrooms, with clean disposable blankets. A box of flats, disposable one-size-fits-all jumpsuits—although clearly “fits all” really means “fits elves”—is in each bedroom. The kitchen is grimy, and the appliances don't work—a small ARO above the sink says, “Water available between 2:00 AM and 2:30 AM. Drink at your own peril.”—but there's a steel box, latched to keep out vermin, full of bottled water and once-a-day meal bars. And the single bathroom has a working chemical toilet. The windows are boarded up with sheets of plastic like the other tiny houses in this ramshackle “neighborhood.” It's not *quite* a slum. More like a neighborhood that is struggling to hold onto its status as an outlying lower-lower-class suburb. The kind of place where the police don't bother the residents, and the residents rarely do anything to draw the attention of the authorities, the gangs, or the slum-lords.

If they question one of the Burning Angels, read the following:

“Okay, okay. I'll tell you. We were supposed to grab something, I don't know what. Something fragile. The Eagles would've known it when they saw it. And then take it back to ... to ...” the ganger turns pale, and you see fear in his eyes. “To Itztl. He's got some other thing, something the *puta* brought him. He's been waiting for it for days. Now they're heading back. Where? Where the fuck do you think? Aztlan. He's at a warehouse of ours, a place just a few kilometers away from here. Although I heard one of the Eagles tell him to leave if they weren't back in thirty minutes.”

BEHIND THE SCENES

When Itztl realizes there's another artifact in San Bernardino, he sends the Burning Angels, led by the *Cuacuahtin*, to acquire it. He tells them to be *very careful* not to hurt the artifact. (Because of the nature of the Sextant, it provides much more specific details on the location of the linked artifacts than the Piri Reis map does.) He'd also like to get those who have the artifact back alive, if possible.

Itztl will wait to hear back from the *Cuacuahtin* before leaving Los Angeles with the Sextant (see *Enemy of my Enemy*).

Samriel and his team have been tracking the runners since they left Chicago. He knows they came very close to getting the Sextant in Denver, but they didn't make it. He also knows that there is a blood mage in Los Angeles, and he suspects the Smoking Mirror blood cult of being *very* interested in getting their hands on the map as well as the Sextant. Doubting the runners' competence in protecting the map, he decides to stay close. Samriel's motivations aren't as pure as he acts, but regardless of *why*, he does want to make sure that the map remains safely in Frosty's hands ... for now.

In addition, the Vigilia Evangelica will also be in the city (either having lifted the destination from one of Sonora's hired help via a mind-probe spell, or having done the same guesswork as the runners). They'll be searching for the Sextant via magical means (which is possible now that the Sextant has left the disruptive mana environment of Chicago).

LIGHTEN UP

The safehouse attack is a challenging and deadly scene, even for experienced teams. At some point in every runner's career, they'll discover that they're not the toughest hombres on the block. However, killing the player characters isn't much fun for players (although bringing them to the brink of death may be). Toning the encounter down for less experienced teams is up to gamemaster's discretion. A few ways to make the scene *less* lethal, if desired:

- Use only stun batons and close combat for the gangers, which will deal stun damage only. Once the runners are down, the gangers leave them alone (killing an unconscious person just takes all the fun out of it).
- Have only one *Cuacuahtin* and have him remain outside the safehouse, while the gangers attack those inside.
- The team's face (or Frosty) can negotiate with the Ancients to leave a guard or two outside the safehouse. The guard can give an alarm, taking away the surprise of the attack.
- The Ancients can tip off the runners that “some Angels” are coming, giving the runners time to get into position to defend themselves.
- Have both *Cuacuahtin* remain outside the safehouse, and allow the Mystic Crusaders to engage them while the runners deal with the Burning Angels (if the gamemaster wishes the Mystic Crusaders involvement to be indirect, two well-placed sniper shots should deal with the *Cuacuahtin*, and leave the players wondering who assisted them).
- It's a gamemaster's privilege to fudge the dice rolls. If a hit will take a player character's condition monitor into overflow damage, knock a few boxes off and tell the player that he took just enough damage to knock him out, or took stun damage, rather than kill the player character.

Once in Los Angeles, Frosty will take the runners to a safehouse on the outskirts of San Bernardino (an Ancients' safehouse they “loan” her for the day), unless the runners suggest or procure a different location. Regardless of the location, once Sonora has been in Los Angeles for at least four hours, the attack will come. If the runners are still en route to Los Angeles, Itztl will continue to track the map's progress via the Sextant, and will send the attack almost immediately after they arrive.

The *Cuacuahtin* and Burning Angels will travel on motorcycles, but use stealth to approach the safehouse on foot. Because the location is on the outskirts of Los Angeles and outside the slums of San Bernardino, the typical paparazzi camera drones don't go in the area (and those that do are quickly captured for parts by

Urgent Message ...



DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT:

enterprising residents). Neither do the Pueblo security forces. The *Cuacuahtin* will advocate a blitz attack, hitting the doors and windows simultaneously, then going in for close-combat. They will use magic, including Stun spells, in order to quickly incapacitate the runners and Frosty. Their primary purpose is to recover the artifact without damaging it.

There are two *Cuacuahtin* shamans, backed by ten Burning Angels whom they've personally trained. The *Cuacuahtin* will consider the Burning Angels their primary force, using them to target the runners while the *Cuacuahtin* boost the Angels' abilities with their spells, or use non-lethal spells on the runners. The Burning Angels will use stun batons, tasers, and close combat, using the *Friends in Melee* rules (p. 157, *SR4A*) to keep the runners at a disadvantage.

Since the *Cuacuahtin* and the Burning Angels don't know *what* the artifact is, they are playing it safe. After all, it could be something small enough to fit inside a pocket, or could be made of some fragile crystal or other material. Accordingly, they will act with extreme caution. (Of course, the runners have no such restraints themselves.)

The runners do have a way to discover where the Sextant is. Questioning any surviving Burning Angels (an Interrogation test) will reveal where Itztli and Sonora are (and some additional information on Itztli). Mind probe spells will provide the same information. Also, the Burning Angels' commlinks have some limited data on them (perhaps the phone number of another Burning Angel at the warehouse), and the *Cuacuahtin* each have a commlink (Device Rating 6, running Analyze 6 and Encryption 5) with the commlink number for both Sonora and Itztli. Itztli's commlink is active, and a hacker can trace it to their location. Unfortunately, the *Cuacuahtin* have a failsafe set in their commlinks: a Rating 5 Data Bomb (p. 233, *SR4A*) is attached to the node and linked to the firewall, and anything that triggers an active alert causes the data bomb to destroy all data. The motorcycles (parked a block away) will also have data showing their recent route in their nodes (Device Rating 2). Also, the Ancients have an intense rivalry with the Burning Angels. If they're told of an attack on their safehouse, the Ancients will likely assist the runners in tracking down the Burning Angels for a bit of revenge—the gamemaster can decide what, or how many, hints the Ancients may be able to provide on the location of the attackers. (And if the players negotiate well, have contacts within the gang, or use Frosty's connection to the gang, the runners may even be able to get a squad of Ancients to assist them in attacking the warehouse in *Enemy of My Enemy*.)

Using one of these (or another method they devise), the runners should be able to learn where Sonora and the Sextant are waiting. They should also learn that the Sextant is going to be on the move very soon.

The runners don't have too much time to make a decision. Once Itztli learns that his team failed, he'll order Sonora and the rest of the *Ocelomeh* guarding him to move immediately (within 30 minutes of the battle). The runners will need to make a split-second decision: trust Samriel to guard Frosty and the map, find someone else—like the Ancients—to guard her and the map, or split their own forces, leaving some to guard her and the map while the others go after the Sextant...

WHEN EVERY SECOND COUNTS

Because *Enemy of My Enemy* follows immediately after *Turning the Tables*, the gamemaster may wish to pay close attention to how much time passes between the beginning of the combat and the runners leaving for the warehouse. It will take at least fifteen minutes to drive (by motorcycle) to the warehouse—the rubble-strewn, cracked, and pot-hole-studded side streets don't allow excessive speeds. That leaves the team with a scant fifteen minutes to succeed at the combat, learn where the Sextant is, discuss things before leaving, and heal their injuries—if they want to get to the warehouse before Itztli enters the Deep Lacuna.

The gamemaster may choose to keep track of the time passing by saying that "real time" applies to the gametable (i.e., every minute that passes in real time is a minute in game time) once the combat is over. This can serve to heighten the tension and the sense of urgency for the players (as well as the player characters). Alternatively, the gamemaster can simply keep track of the time passing without saying anything to the players. If the player characters take time to recover from the fight, take hours to stake out the warehouse, or ignore the clues dropped by Samriel and any surviving attackers, they may simply be too late to recover the Sextant ...

And of course, Frosty cannot risk taking the map *directly* to the enemy. Not only that, but who knows if another attack might be coming? The runners will need to decide what to do with both Frosty and the map.

DEBUGGING

The runners may not be able to succeed in this scene. Refer to *Lighten Up*, p. 37, for tips on scaling the combat to leave the runners unconscious but not dead. The characters may all be unconscious, but in an hour (or two) they'll be awake and probably more than ready for a little revenge. If this occurs, chances are the *Cuacuahtin* also took the map. First, with the map in hand, Itztli will not feel the need to leave immediately. Delaying his departure for a few hours will give the runners a chance to recover. Second, have a few clues available for the runners—perhaps a dropped commlink from one of the Burning Angels with the warehouse address in it, a call from a helpful Ancient about a squad of Burning Angels seen near the warehouse, a suggestion from Frosty that the team's magician summon a spirit to search for the map, or perhaps even having the Mystic Crusaders leave some hint for the runners to find. The team will have the opportunity to recover both the Sextant *and* the map in the final scene.

Alternatively, having Samriel and the Mystic Crusaders find the runners after the fight, and assist them, is also possible. The Ancients may also be used to come to the runners' assistance, providing medical help or assistance in attacking the warehouse in the final scene.

Urgent Message...

Safehouse in San Bernardino



PLACES OF INTEREST

Safe House

This small house is set in a neighborhood of identical single-story homes, all of which show evidence of damage from years of earthquakes. The neighborhood isn't *quite* a slum, but given a few more years of neglect by the government, it could well end up there. At least none of the neighbors are likely to call the police if there's a disturbance.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

Cuacuahtin (The Eagles) (2)

The Eagles are Guerreros that specialize in leading, training, and protecting mundane troops. It is said that a unit of ten men led by one *Cuacuahtin* is the equal of a hundred men on a battlefield. They specialize in magics that bolster their troops, inspiring confidence and even fanaticism among those they lead.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Ess	Init	IP
4	5	5	3	7	5	4	6	8	6	10	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 14/12

Metamagic: (Initiate Grade 2) Centering (Chanting), Shielding

Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 3, Athletics Skill Group 1, Close Combat Skill Group 3, Conjuring Skill Group 4, Etiquette 3, First Aid 4, Firearms Skill Group 3, Infiltration 2, Instruction 6, Leadership 6, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Sorcery Skill Group 6

Qualities: Exceptional Attribute (Charisma), Magician (Aztec Tradition)

Spells: Antidote, Armor, Control Emotion, Eyes of the Pack, Fireball, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Increase Reflexes, Manabolt, Reinforce, Resist Pain, Stealth, Stunball, Stunbolt

Gear: Light Military Armor w/helmet and chemical seal, Tacsoft (Rating 4), Power Focus (Rating 4 onyx thorn in ear), Sustaining Focus (Rating 4 eagle feathers and jet beads tied to one braid)

Weapons:

Monofilament Sword [Blade, DV 5P, AP -1, Reach 1]

Ares Alpha [Assault Rifle, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 2, 42(c)]

2 Gas Grenades [CS/Tear Gas]

Stun Baton [Club, DV 6S(e), AP -half, Reach 1]

Burning Angels—Professional Rating 4 (10)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
4	5(6)	4(5)	4(5)	3	4	3	4	2.8	8(9)	1(2)

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/10

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6

Skills: Close Combat Skill Group 3, Etiquette 1 (Gang +2), Dodge 3, Pistols 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Pilot Groundcraft 2 (Bikes +2), Pilot Watercraft 1, Survival 1 (Urban +2)

Qualities: High Pain Tolerance 3

Cyberware: Cybereyes (Rating 1 w/Smartlink, Vision Enhancement 1), Wired Reflexes 1, Muscle Replacement 1

Gear: Armor Jacket, Commlink (Device Rating 4)

Weapons:

Knife [Blade, DV 4P, AP -2]
 Stun Baton [Club, DV 6S(c), AP -half, Reach 1]
 Yamaha Pulsar [Taser, 6S(c), AP -half, 4 (m), internal smartgun system]
 (Optional): Ares Alpha [Assault Rifles, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 2, 42(c)]

Ancients Ganger

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
3	6	3(7)	3	6	4	3	3	3.12	7(11)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/10

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6

Skills: Close Combat Skill Group 4, Etiquette 3 (LA Media +2), Dodge 3, Firearms Skill Group 3, Perception 4, Pilot Groundcraft 5 (Bikes +2), Survival 1 (Urban +2)

Cyberware (Alphaware): Reaction Enhancers 2, Wired Reflexes 2

Gear: Armor Jacket, Commlink (Device Rating 4), Goggles (Rating 1 w/Smartlink), Medkit (Rating 3)

Weapons:

Knife [Blade, DV 4P, AP -2]
 Ingram Smartgun X [Submachine Gun, DV 5P, AP -4, BF/FA, RC 2 (3), 32 (c), APDS Ammo]
 Ruger Super Warhawk [Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP -2, SS, RC 0, 6 (cy), with internal smartgun system]

Samriel's Mystic Crusaders (3)

An all-elven team, these three were in Lagos with Samriel.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Ess	Init	IP
4	8	5(8)	4(7)	5	6	4	5	7	6	11(14)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 14/12

Skills: Athletics Skill Group 5(6), Close Combat Skill Group 5, Cracking Skill Group 4, Etiquette 3, Dodge 4, Electronics Skill Group 5, Exotic Weapon (Parashield Dart Pistol) 5, Firearms Skill Group 5, First Aid 3, Perception 5, Stealth Skill Group 6, Survival 3 (Urban +2)

Qualities: Martial Arts 4 (Carromeleg)

Adept Abilities: Astral Perception, Counterstrike, Improved Ability (Climbing, Gymnastics, Running, Swimming) 1, Improved Reflexes 3, Killing Hands

Metamagic: Centering, Extended Masking, Masking

Gear: Light military armor (w/ mobility upgrade 2, strength upgrade 3, thermal dampening, ruthenium polymer coating) and military helmet, medkit (Rating 4)

Weapons:

Knife [Blade, DV 4P, AP -2]
 Sword [Blade, DV 7P, AP 0, Reach 1]
 HK Urban Combat [Submachine Gun, DV 5P; AP 0, SA/BF/FA, RC 2, 36(c) w/ internal Smartgun system]
 Parashield Dart Pistol [Exotic Weapon, DV 10S (Narcoject Toxin), AP -2, SA, RC 0, 5(c) w/internal smartgun system] (see p. 324, SR4A for injection dart description)
 Ranger Arms SM-4 [Sniper Rifle, DV 8P, AP -3, SA, RC 1, 15 (c), w/internal smartgun system]

ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

SCAN THIS

Itztli has the Sextant in a Burning Angels warehouse outside San Bernardino. He plans to take it to Aztlan. To get past the tense situation at the border between the PCC and Aztlan, he is going to exit Los Angeles the way he came—the Deep Lacuna. The Burning Angels have control of a large warehouse in San Bernardino that sits over an opening to the Deep Lacuna. With personal-sized submersibles, he—along with Sonora and her teammate, and his personal protection team of *Ocelomeh*—are going to traverse the underwater cave system.

When the runners arrive at the warehouse—battered and exhausted—they'll have to get through the Burning Angels guarding it, along with a nasty surprise Itztli has left behind to guard the opening. The runners will get there at the same time as the Vigilia Evangelica, and depending on how they left things in Denver, the priests may help them, hinder them, or even outright attack the runners.

Once in the Lacuna, the runners will have to navigate the underwater caverns until they get to a large cave—one of the few dry caverns. In the cavern will be the final, climatic fight. During the fight, Itztli kills Sonora's teammate to help fuel a massive spell. Sonora's loyalties suddenly switch, as Itztli becomes her enemy.

If the runners do succeed, and emerge from the Deep Lacuna with the Sextant—and they turned down Samriel's offer off assistance in *Turning the Tables* and acted "dishonorably" in previous scenes—then Samriel and the Mystic Crusaders will be waiting to ambush them and take the Sextant. If the team took Samriel up on his offer and have acted honorably in previous scenes, then the Mystic Crusaders will be guarding Frosty and the map, as they promised—and will even offer to provide healing and first aid for the runners.

This should be a climactic final scene, with the runners battling not just for the Sextant, but for their lives, deep within the Deep Lacuna.

The outcome will depend on the runners' behavior in past scenes, as friends become foes, and foes become unlikely allies.

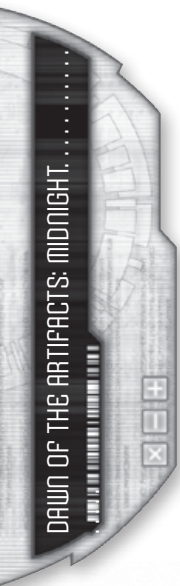
TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

When they reach the pool, read the following:

The center of the warehouse is a large hole where the floor has crumbled down, forming a hazardous tumble of jagged chunks of concrete. As you draw near, you realize the center of the hole is actually filled with dark water, water that smells like rancid fish and dying sea life. It's the size of a small pond. Someone has tossed planks down in one area, forming a ramp over the broken concrete, down to the water's edge. A small plastic dock floats in the water. At the dock are [insert team members +1] small submersibles, looking like encased jet skis, each one barely big enough to hold one sitting human, hunched over the console—and nothing else.

As you step closer to the water, you see a blood-colored spirit materializing, hovering over the black water, a spirit that looks like a traditional Aztech warrior, his face twisted in seething hatred. Blood runs from a dozen wounds sliced into his arms and legs, and from a gaping slice across his throat. When he sees you approach, his black eyes light up with fury.

Then the blood spirit laughs ...



When they enter the Deep Lacuna, read the following:

The water is too murky to see anything, despite the clear plastic bubble of the submersible and its ineffective lights. Instead, you must subscribe to the submersible's AR feed, and the darkness is lit with an augmented view of sonar-defined walls in a narrow tunnel. The "floor" is perfectly flat and the walls and roof are perfectly rounded—almost like you're in a subway tunnel that's been flooded with toxic seawater. Each submersible has a harpoon gun subscribed to the central node, and you notice that yours is missing one ... what did the last rider use it on?

The tunnel slants down, and down, and the readouts continue to tick off the meters as you sink far below the city. As you travel, dozens of tunnels meet up with yours, merging, then dividing, numerous times. At each juncture, a small tag emits a signal, a broadcast that says, *this way*. Someone has marked these tunnels. Someone must use these frequently enough to have left an AR breadcrumb trail. You don't have much choice. You follow the tags.

When they emerge from the flooded tunnels into the air-filled cavern, read the following:

You know you've arrived at your destination when the submersible breaks through the surface. As the dark water streams down the plastic shield, you realize you're at a dock.

Climbing out of the submersible takes a moment. You realize you're not alone when you hear a shrill man's voice scream out, "Mátanos!"

A woman's scream echoes, once, before getting cut off.

When you stand, you see you're in a large cavern. Stacks of crates obscure your view, and shadows are cast from the few lanterns that hang from the rock ceiling.

When the runners maneuver to see the far side of the cavern, read the following (if they Observe in Detail):

The air shimmers on the far side of the cavern, and behind the strange shimmer is a cloud of ominous-looking smoke. At the center of the smoke is a fat man, barely visible. In one hand, he holds a wicked-looking black blade. In the other, the Sextant. And at his feet, in a spreading pool of blood, is an ork woman, her throat cut so deeply that her head is barely attached. Lying limp on the ground at the feet of another armored person, you see Sonora.

If Itztli is able to escape, read the following:

The black-robed blood-mage is laughing at you, his hands flicking drops of blood as he claps in glee.

"To think, you are the best they could send. You've been *very* entertaining." He nudges the dead ork woman in front of him. "More than this weak creature."

He looks at you, then taps one bloody finger against his lips, leaving a brilliant dot of red against his dark skin.

"Hm. Now, how best to finish this. Something suitably rewarding for your efforts ..." He smiles, and one hand clutches the black-beaded necklace at his throat. "Yes, I think—"

Beside him, a towering figure of flame rises. He smiles again.

"I'm not sure how long the air will last in this cavern. I wish I could watch, but ... well, I really must be going."

He turns and walks down to the submersible, and a few seconds later, you hear it sink below the dark water. The fire elemental stares at you, as the barrier drops ...

If the runners emerge from the Deep Lacuna with the Sextant, read the following:

The men who helped fight the blood spirit are sitting together on a stack of crates, vigilant as you emerge. They make no threatening movements; their weapons are pointed towards the outside.

"Ah, friends," the leader calls out. "I am relieved to see you! We have kept watch, as promised. And—I see you have recovered the Sextant. *Buon lavoro!* But, now." He spreads his hands. "You know of the curse, yes? We would offer to protect you from this curse, to take the artifact and put it where it will remain safe. If you give it to us, you will—hopefully—divert the tragedies that follow those who steal it. The last who stole it came to a bad end, yes? Come, what do you say?"

BEHIND THE SCENES

In the aftermath of the fight in *Turning the Tables*, the characters should learn that they have very little time to recover the Sextant before it disappears into the Deep Lacuna and ends up beyond their reach in Aztlan. Without time to recover from the last battle, and no time to prepare for what lies ahead, the team must rush into the next conflict—which will be their last chance at the Sextant before it ends up in Aztlan, and in the hands of the Smoking Mirror blood cult.

Itztli and his remaining guards (p. 43) are sheltering in a large warehouse fifteen minutes by bike away from the safehouse. In the warehouse there is a large pool, a surface opening for the Deep Lacuna. The Burning Angels have several submersibles stored in the warehouse, as well as crates of goods that have been smuggled into San Bernardino by way of the Lacuna.

Inside and outside the warehouse a dozen Burning Angels (p. 38) are on guard. Itztli has left a special surprise behind in the warehouse as well, a Bound Rating 6 Great Form blood spirit.

Once Itztli realizes his team isn't returning (30 minutes after they attack in *Turning the Tables*), he will order his remaining guards to move out. He will also extend an offer to Sonora and her teammate to accompany him. Fearing retribution for the theft of the artifact, she takes him up on the offer of shelter in Aztlan—beyond the Draco Foundation's reach.

Itztli and the others use submersibles and follow the tagged underwater trail to a dry cavern: a smuggler's cache. The cavern has a half-dozen different tunnels that lead off it, and one is large enough for a small (4 person) mini-sub to traverse. That vehicle is waiting for the blood mage. Itztli plans to meet the submersible, but once there, he will be delayed for a brief time as the pilot waits for the currents to change (the exact time is up to gamemaster's discretion, with 30 minutes suggested; the longer Itztli waits, the more likely the runners will succeed). Having traveled via the Deep Lacuna both to and from LA, the Jaguar Guards are carrying only small weapons with them (something the runners may be very grateful for in the end).

When the runners arrive at the warehouse, the Vigilia Evangelica are ready to go in. There are only enough submersibles for the runners or the Vigilia Evangelica—only one team can follow the Sextant into the Deep Lacuna.

The Vigilia Evangelica's actions will depend on how the runners behaved in the *Too Little, Too Late* scene. If the runners worked with the Vigilia, assisted in helping the civilians, and otherwise behaved with respect for life, the Vigilia will step in to



assist the runners—approaching them outside the warehouse and warning them of the blood spirit inside. If the Vigilia help the runners, when they have defeated the blood spirit at the pool—and especially if the runners are valiant in defeating the blood spirit—the priests will step aside, telling the runners they have earned the right to follow the Sextant, and giving them a blessing before they leave.

The Vigilia will also promise to keep watch in the warehouse, in case any of the gangers return; this will ensure the runners don't emerge into an ambush or hostile territory when they return.

If the gamemaster chose not to have the Mystic Crusaders reveal themselves in *Turning the Tables*, or the runners did not accept Samriel's offer to help in this scene, one of the Vigilia priests will offer to go with the runners in the spare submersible. *If the runner team is lacking magical support, it's highly suggested that at least one NPC mage accompany them.*

If the runners behaved “immorally” (in the viewpoint of the priests) in *Too Little, Too Late*—firing into the civilians without regard for their safety, killing and/or injuring civilians, or attacking the Vigilia themselves—the Vigilia will stand back and wait for the Burning Angels to (hopefully) wipe out the runners. If the runners make it to the pool, the Vigilia will step up to attack them, and the runners will be forced to fight the priests for the few submersibles available in the warehouse.

The submersibles are sized for humans, rather like an enclosed jet-ski, and an ork can fit—barely (although bulky armor, weapons, or any other gear may need to be left behind, and the submersible will struggle to carry the extra weight, which should give the orks in the party a few bad moments in the flooded tunnels). At gamemaster's discretion, if the team includes trolls, *one* submersible may be available to carry the troll (they just aren't that common in the Burning Angels gang). Small weapons, such as pistols, knives, and grenades will fit (strapped to the metahuman). Because the occupants need to sit hunched over in the small jet-ski-like submersible, larger weapons—such as submachine guns, rifles, shotguns, and swords—and bulky armor will not (unless, of course, they take the time to disassemble it into smaller pieces, which means they'll have to take the time to *reassemble* it in the cavern ...).

Inside the Deep Lacuna, smugglers have studded the underwater route with AROs to help guide their way. The AROs are broadcast from RFID tags that require an encrypted signal to activate (the submersibles have the signal encryption (Rating 3) inside them). If the runners follow the path, it will lead them past dozens of offshoots and side tunnels on the way to the dry cavern. The water is impossible to see through, even with lights from the submersibles. The submersibles are equipped with sensors (such as sonar) that will transmit via AR or VR to the person piloting the submersible. For runners without the appropriate skill, the submersible Pilot (Rating 2) is (barely) adequate enough to navigate the tunnels—as long as they don't run into anything that requires a reaction (like a sea-monster). The tunnel itself is unnaturally smooth-walled, and looks like it owes more to metahuman construction than to nature. Any characters who perceive it in Astral will see glowing symbols on the walls and will see that it is a dual-natured construct.

Traveling through the Deep Lacuna to the cavern takes twenty-five minutes, but a successful Pilot Watercraft (3) Test reduces the travel time to twenty minutes. The runners should

arrive with only minutes (or seconds, if the gamemaster wishes to really challenge the team) to spare before Itztli makes his escape.

When the blood spirit is destroyed at the warehouse, Itztli knows someone may be pursuing him—someone strong enough to destroy a powerful spirit. He starts to plan—and he enjoys the idea that a worthy foe may test his wits, and his abilities.

The tunnel opens up to a jury-rigged dock inside the dry cavern. At the dock are other submersibles, including larger smuggler crafts big enough to move two crates of goods each, and the larger submersibles used by Itztli and his guards. Across the cavern are several other pools with docks. One very large opening has a small submarine docked at it. Itztli is there, standing with Sonora and her teammate, waiting for the current to change so he can leave. When he hears the runners' submersibles enter the cavern, he'll prepare. He likes to toy with his victims, and he'll wait until the submersibles dock, and the runners begin to emerge, before shrilly ordering the Jaguar guards: “Mátanlos!” (“Kill them!”) He grabs Sonora's last surviving teammate and slices the woman across the throat with his Macuahuitl Weapon Focus, chanting as he does so. Sonora attempts to stop him, but one of the Jaguars knocks her aside, stunning her. As the sacrificed woman collapses, Itztli will use the sacrifice to absorb the drain from a massive Physical Barrier spell (a Rating 12 barrier, see p. 211 and p. 166, *SR4A*).

This will take him two Complex Actions (the first for the sacrifice, the second for the spell); he has three for the first Combat Turn (he's sustaining Increased Reflexes with his sustaining focus). Itztli will provide Counterspelling for himself and for each of the Jaguar guards in his line of sight (Counterspelling focus 6, Counterspelling 7, Initiate grade 8). He will use a point of Edge to ensure he goes first in the Initiative pass. He also has two backup bound spirits, which he will use as a last defense (they will remain with him as bodyguards, only going free when he is killed).

It is possible that the runners may be quick enough to strike at Itztli before the barrier is up. While they will have to emerge from the submersible (a Gymnastics (3) Test to do so in 1 complex action, otherwise it will take 2 complex actions), they still have a chance to act before the barrier is completely up—if they can draw their weapons in time *and* move to a position that gives them a view of Itztli, that is. There is no direct line-of-sight from the runners' dock to Itztli's dock.

An Observe In Detail Test (p. 147, *SR4A*) is required to get a clear view of the situation (while the obvious details are immediately noticeable, including the glowing barrier, the smoke aura obscures Itztli and the area around him enough that spotting Sonora on the ground, or Itztli holding the Sextant, requires a careful look). If they wish to fire at him with a firearm, it requires a called shot to ensure they don't hit the Sextant instead. Itztli's quickened Smoke Aura spell means visibility modifiers will be in effect, along with partial cover from the Sextant and the guards in front of him. Itztli also has two bound spirits with him as backup.

If one (or more) of them gets inside the barrier, they will be faced with two Jaguar guards and Itztli—who will smile and say, “Such a willing sacrifice!” as he moves to attack. Magical attacks will be met with his Counterspelling. If the runners can get past the Counterspelling, or get close enough to attack him prior to the barrier, they may have a chance for quick success.

Two of the Jaguar guards are on his side of the barrier, the other three on the runners' side. Sonora was knocked down and is

SONORA

It is possible that the runners, either on their own or with Samriel's or a Viligia's help, are not able to break through and succeed against Itztli. If the gamemaster desires, he can use Sonora (who is behind the barrier) to tip things the runners' way. Sonora is aware that Itztli likely has an area bomb in his head. She won't try to kill him, but may try other sneaky tricks: breaking his sustaining focus, pushing him into the water, communicating with the runners via commlink to offer suggestions, summoning a spirit of her own to attack (and distract) the guards or Itztli, providing counterspelling for the runners, even attacking the barrier directly with magic. While Itztli

is providing counterspelling for those guards he can see, he isn't for the ones he can't see, and if his two remaining guards step out of his line of sight, she can hit them with a stun bolt and knock them out of the fight. She knows that Itztli is probably going to kill her, and she quickly switches allegiances, siding with the runners. With her assistance, the runners may have a fighting chance. All she'll ask is that the runners spare her life. She's done with the Sextant, believes it cursed, and doesn't care at all if they steal it from Itztli ...

Of course, Sonora can also choose to warn them about the "curse" and the area bomb in Itztli's head ...

pretending to be stunned—she knows the situation has just gone to hell, and 'playing dead' is her best option as she sees how things will play out. Itztli watches the runners with glee, prepared to enjoy the battle before him.

The runners will have to survive and defeat the three other Jaguar guards if they want to break through the barrier.

There is a lot of cover available with plastic crates of smuggled goods stacked haphazardly around the cavern. The three Jaguar guards are dedicated to the Smoking Mirror cult and willing to follow Itztli's orders to the death. They will make use of cover as they fan out towards the runners. As Itztli watches he will comment on the battle, praising the Jaguars and runners alike for particularly brutal or bloody attacks, even clapping when he is especially pleased. He won't intercede until it is apparent that his Jaguars are losing. If it looks like his Jaguars might be losing, he will selectively target the runners with magic. If the runners have significant magic of their own, he will likely shelter behind something (such as one of the guards on *his* side of the barrier) to prevent line of sight, or cast a Mana Barrier to stop the runners' spells. If the runners send a spirit past the barrier, either he or his spirits will engage it in combat.

As the runners get to the point of attacking the barrier itself, Itztli will begin to take a more active role. He only needs to stall for a short time. He will taunt the runners. He will use painful spells against them, including Mass Agony (p. 170, *Street Magic*). He may particularly enjoy using Control Actions (p. 202, *SR4A*) to manipulate runners into attacking their teammates, or Control Emotions (p. 203, *SR4A*) to overwhelm the runners with fear. He will play with the runners like a cat with a mouse, passing the time until he can leave with the Sextant.

If the runners can resist the magic and get through the barrier, they can engage him and his Jaguar guards directly.

Even if the runners win, there is still the matter of getting the Sextant back *out* of the Deep Lacuna.

If Samriel's Mystic Crusaders are protecting Frosty and the map, they will have honored their deal. If Samriel accompanied them into the Deep Lacuna, afterwards he'll take them to their safehouse and congratulate them on their success (or survival, if they don't have the Sextant). He will even offer to assist in first aid and healing any injured runners. Once they are secure and stabilized, he and the Mystic Crusaders will leave.

When the runners emerge, the Vigilia Evangelica will be waiting in the warehouse (even if none of them accompanied the runners into the Deep Lacuna). They'll *ask* the runners if they'd like to hand over the Sextant. They'll also warn the runners of the curse, which strikes any who steal the Sextant, and tell the runners that they may avert the curse if they hand over the Sextant. If the runners refuse to hand it over, the priests will not take it from them—they do not want to risk the curse. The priests will simply accept the runners' decision with a shrug, and give the runners their contact information, in case the runners change their minds.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

The final scene should prove challenging even to veteran runners (and beginning runners may need to hear the phrase, "Those who fight and run away, live to fight another day"). However, to make it even more challenging, the runners can encounter any number of creatures in the murky water of the Deep Lacuna. Or technical difficulties with a submersible could leave them running out of oxygen, with some distance yet to travel in the water-filled caverns ...

DEBUGGING

There is the possibility that the runners don't end up with the Sextant. This is fine. Not every run is successful, and Frosty (and her employer) was not aware of the blood-mages behind the theft of the Sextant. If the team is unsuccessful, but can report back to Frosty that there was a blood-mage and/or a blood spirit, she will still pay them their "finder's fee." Just surviving an encounter with a blood-mage is an impressive feat.

PLACES OF INTEREST**Warehouse**

The warehouse is a large, ramshackle prefab building that has suffered significant damage during the big quakes. However, inside it's been (mostly) structurally reinforced. There's no wireless system inside it, but there are alarms hardwired on the doors. The building is windowless. Inside, the Burning Angels use it to warehouse crates of smuggled goods, including some weapon caches—which means they're extra-vigilant about guarding it. Four watcher spirits patrol the area in and around the warehouse.



Cavern

The cavern where Itztli is waiting is one of the few dry caverns in the Deep Lacuna. It has half-a-dozen large pools that lead into different tunnels in the Lacuna. Several of those pools have docks with submersibles in them. Stacks of waterproof plastic crates are stored haphazardly in the cavern. Lanterns running off rechargeable batteries have been set on crates and hung from hooks hammered into the rock. Because of the shadows, the lighting is considered Partial (see Visibility Table, p. 152, *SR4*). The height of the ceiling varies from one to four meters. The floor is uneven, damp, and slippery, and both stalactites and stalagmites are present.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

Guardian Blood Spirit (Force 6)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init
7	8	9	8	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	13

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 12/11

Skills (at force): Assensing, Astral Combat, Blades, Clubs, Counterspelling, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Astral Form, Energy Drain (Essence), Fear, Guard, Magical Guard, Materialization, Movement, Natural Weapon (6P, AP 0), Sapience, Elemental Attack (Fire), Concealment, Psychokinesis, +1 Reach, +1 DP Modifier to Resist Banishing

Weakness: Evanescence

Itztli's Personal Guard (5 person team) Professional Rating 6

Dedicated Jaguar guards, these men are employed by the Smoking Mirror to protect their members.

Street Sams (3)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
4(7)	5(7)	6(8)	4(6)	3	6	4	5	1.93	12(14)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10 (12)/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 7/3

Skills: Athletics Skill Group 4 (6), Close Combat Skill Group 6, Firearms Skill Group 6, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pilot Aircraft 4, Pilot Watercraft 4, Survival 3, Stealth Skill Group 5, Etiquette 3 (Military +2)

Qualities: Toughness

Augmentations: (all betaware) *Nuevo Guerrero* Cybersuite [Cybereyes (Rating 3, w/flare compensation, low-light, thermographic, smartlink), Dermal Plating (Rating 2), Titanium Bone Lacing, Wired Reflexes (Rating 2)], Muscle Augmentation and Toner (Rating 2), Synthacardium (Rating 2)

Gear: Form-Fitting Body Armor, Commlink (Device Rating 5, running Analyze 5 and Encrypt 5)

Weapons:

Vibro Knife [Blade, DV 4P, AP -2]

Ares Predator IV [Heavy pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, 15(c), w/ smartgun]





Adepts (2)

B A R S C I L W Ess M Init IP
 4 6 6(9) 5 2 6 3 5 6 8 12(15) 1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 6/2

Skills: Athletics Skill Group 4, Close Combat Skill Group 6, Firearms Skill Group 5, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Survival 2, Stealth Skill Group 5, Etiquette 3 (Military +2)

Qualities: Adept, Toughness

Adept Abilities: Counterstrike, Distance Strike, Improved Reflexes (3), Killing Hands, Living Focus

Metamagic: (Initiate Grade 2), Adept Centering, Masking

Gear: Form-Fitting Body Armor, Commlink (Device Rating 5, running Analyze 5 and Encrypt 5)

Weapons:

Vibro knife [Blade, DV 4P, AP -2]

Ares Predator IV [Heavy pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, 15(c), w/ smartgun]

Submersibles

Small personal underwater craft, which look like an enclosed jet-ski. Metahumans ride in a sitting position, although hunched over—these are designed to fit through small tunnels and have maximum maneuverability. Comfort or personal space doesn't factor in. Much of the available space is taken up with an air-tank, which provides up to two hours of oxygen. Anyone with claustrophobia will have a *very* difficult time in these. They can

be controlled manually (Pilot Watercraft) or they come equipped with a low-end Pilot program. They also have a bottom-mounted harpoon gun, which can be fired while submerged.

Weapon: Harpoon Gun (6P, AP -1, SS)

Handling	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Armor	Sensors
+2	10/15	30	2	8	8	2

THE END OF THE ROAD

SCAN THIS

This scene is all about simply getting home. After the long trip they've just gone through, there really isn't anything more complicated to this scene.

The runners have either retrieved the Sextant, or not. If it is in their possession, they'll probably be anxious to get it passed off as soon as possible—they should have heard enough about the "curse" by now. If they did not succeed, and the Sextant made it into Aztlan (or into someone else's hands), this will still be the end of the road.

Frosty will take her leave of them in Los Angeles, simply asking the runners to escort her and the two artifacts (if they have them) to the John Wayne airport, where a private jet—unmarked—is waiting for her. The runners will be free at that point to return home.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Frosty tells you to stop at a private entrance to the "corporate" airstrip area of the John Wayne airport. She sends a coded message



to the guard booth, and the double gates slowly slide open. You're waved through by guards in flashy Horizon uniforms. In the corporate area, Frosty directs you to a waiting plane. It's a sleek little executive jet, without any markings.

"That's my ride. I wish I could offer you guys a lift, but I'm not heading your way. I'll transfer your payment now—" she pauses, and a second later your account balance reflects a nice sized deposit. "Anyway. Thanks for your help. You guys did great. Really. I know I wasn't much use, but thanks for the help. I've got your number, you've got mine ... so I'll be in touch.

"Here's the number for a pilot. She's got a plane ready somewhere around here. She can get you home—a nice straight flight. Oh, and if you don't want to go back home right away—the concierge at the Mountain, here in Orange County, is a fellow named Rafael. He owes me a *big* favor. If you guys want to cash in on it, I'm sure he can get you a suite there—on the house, so to speak. If you need to lay low, you might as well do so in the lap of luxury, right?"

If the Mystic Crusaders did not reveal themselves prior to this in the adventure, read the following as Frosty boards her plane:

Frosty climbs the stairs and disappears into the plane. As it begins to slowly taxi down the runway, you catch a momentary glimpse of someone at a distance across the private field. An elf, with blond hair and silver cybereyes. He flicks a salute towards you. Then the plane rolls in front of you. When it passes, he's gone.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The runners have either succeeded, or not. If the Sextant is in Aztlan, Frosty will simply shake her head and tell them the job's over. "I've got some bad history with Aztlan ..." she mutters. "And I'm not going in there without some time to prepare."

Regardless, she'll still arrange for their transportation home, although she herself will take a separate, private jet to a different location. She'll pay them the full amount, regardless of their success—simply surviving against a blood mage deserves full payment, in her opinion. Of course, if she had to pay out large bribes or transportation costs in earlier scenes, she may feel a lot less generous ...

If Samriel was not revealed in any prior scenes, the runners should catch a glimpse of him as he verifies that Frosty and the two artifacts are about to fly out of LA.

Frosty will also offer to let the runners use a favor at the Mountain (a luxury hotel/resort in the Orange County area). The favor will get the runners seven days, fully paid, at the exclusive hotel. Food, entertainment, or other services will come out of their own pocket. If the runners are worried about the consequences of their run, the Mountain is a very nice, fully secure place to lay low while the heat dies down. For more information on the Mountain, see p. 33, *Corporate Enclaves*.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

The runners have already been through enough, haven't they?

DEBUGGING

Hopefully not much will go wrong with this scene. However, the runners may not be satisfied with the payment they originally

negotiated, or may try to renegotiate. Although this isn't professional behavior, Frosty will be sympathetic. She won't offer them any more nuyen, but she's willing to have her employer cover some of their medical expenses. There are a variety of clinics in the area where they can get medical care, and she'll arrange for those costs to be offered at a 50 percent discount.

The runners, if they did not succeed in getting the Sextant (or lost the map), may wish to continue. In this case, have Frosty be firm but clear. Going into Aztlan takes more research and more extensive preparation than she can do this instant. She can tell them she's not giving up yet—and let the runners know that they'll be the ones she calls, when she's ready.

PLACES OF INTEREST

The Mountain

A luxury-class hotel/resort, the Mountain guarantees complete privacy to all their guests. A full security squad, including magicians and spirits, is on duty at all times. Several five-star restaurants are on site, or, for 1,000 nuyen per plate, personal chefs are available to create a specialized meal, catered in-suite. On-site entertainment includes private shows from popular entertainers, while several dance clubs cater to a variety of tastes. Entertainment of a more intimate venue is also available; just speak to the concierge, who can procure *anything* the guests desire.

AFTERMATH

So, the runners are back home. Those who keep their ear open for news that *might* involve them will hear reports from Denver about a "Ute-terrorist incident" at Deer Creek Park, listing an unknown number of PCC citizens injured and dead. If the shadowrunners stuck around and helped the injured, there will be a mention of "unnamed Good Samaritans who aided Pueblo emergency services and saved countless lives."

The real aftermath of this adventure lies in the contacts—the friends or enemies made during the course of the adventure.

AWARDING CONTACTS

Midnight presents the runners with a broad variety of possible contacts, and the runners' actions dictate if those individuals or groups will become friends or enemies.

Chicago Contacts

If the runners assisted the Greek in the siege on the Spire, they can count him as a low-level contact. He's grateful, but he doesn't have much sway outside of his territory in Chicago.

If the runners helped the smugglers at Spire Enterprises, the smugglers will be very grateful. As a legitimate corporation, the smugglers have the ability to transport goods, and people, throughout North America legitimately (and will even smuggle less-legitimate goods or people). The smugglers can assist the runners in future transportation needs.

If the runners took a ride with Ricky Steelsky, and assisted him in the *Road Trip!*, p. 22 encounters, they will also gain the Steelsky thunderbird smuggling clan as a contact. The Steelsky group is a family of orks who operate thunderbirds and primarily work on the West Coast, although they'll take commissions to fly anywhere in North America.

Denver Contacts

If the runners fought to protect civilians at the Deer Creek fight, and helped care for those who were injured, they'll have impressed the *Vigilia Evangelica* priests, and can count those three as contacts in future games. If the Pueblo park rangers and/or Pueblo security forces observed the runners helping Pueblo citizens, the runners should also gain at least one ranking security officer (police detective rank) in the PCC Denver forces.

Los Angeles Contacts

If the runners left any Burning Angels alive, the gang will pass around their descriptions, and consider them enemies. If the runners ever end up in Los Angeles again (or are based there), the Burning Angels will be a fierce and determined enemy. If the runners let the Ancients know about the warehouse, and that they wiped out a squad (or two) of Burning Angels, they'll earn the Ancients' respect and the LA part of the gang as a contact.

Also, the runners will have earned the notice of the Smoking Mirror blood cult. While this cult isn't going to hunt down the runners, they can be used as a terrifying enemy if a gamemaster so desires ...

If the runners rescue Sonora from Itztli and the Deep Lacuna, they can also earn her as a contact.

Frosty

If the runners gained Frosty as a contact during *Dusk*, her Loyalty Rating for them may increase depending on their actions in *Midnight*. If the runners did not play through *Dusk*, but complete *Midnight*, they may gain Frosty as a contact, with Connection 5, Loyalty 1—assuming they act in a way she finds appropriate (remember, she's a rather moralistic runner).

AWARDING KARMA

At the end of any Shadowrun adventure, Karma is awarded to each player character for their part in the adventure. Just surviving deserves some Karma, and accomplishing specific goals earns more. Most player characters won't earn every point of Karma available, which is normal.

For awarding individual Karma, it is a good idea to keep notes on each player character's performance during the adventure. Exceptional roleplaying, humor, or heroics deserve to be rewarded, so keep notes on those actions (or others) to ensure you have an accurate tally by the end of the adventure. Along the same lines, don't be afraid to subtract Karma from characters who do particularly foolhardy or out-of-character actions. Karma represents the universe's award for hard work and a job well done, and it can be lost just as easily as earned.

In *Midnight*, bonus Karma is also awarded for certain contacts the player characters earn during the adventure.

Of course, you don't need to share this with your players. Allow them to play the adventure as presented, without informing them of what actions will result in a Karma award or deduction. This will help keep them from second-guessing themselves (and you) as they go through the adventure.

Generally, Karma is awarded at the end of the adventure. Occasionally, some gamemasters like to award a point of Karma during the game, to reward a particularly impressive feat, exceptional roleplaying, or even a particularly brilliant in-character joke.

TEAM KARMA

Situation	Award
Tracking down Sonora (in Chicago)	1
Going through the CZ to the Spire	1
Tracking down Sonora (in Denver)	1
Destroying the Blood Spirit in the warehouse	1
Recovering the Sextant and handing it over to Frosty	6

Bonus Karma (+1 per contact gained)

Spire Enterprises	1
The Greek (Chicago Mafia)	1
Steelsky group	1
Vigilia Evangelica	1
Pueblo Security Officer/Park Ranger	1
Sonora	1

INDIVIDUAL KARMA

Situation	Award
Surviving	3
Good roleplaying	1-3
Guts/Bravery	1
Humor	1
Pushing the storyline along	1

Urgent Message...

DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT: ...

LEGWORK

As the runners go through the adventure, they'll have numerous opportunities for research. This section gives some results for legwork the runners may attempt. Research can involve the Matrix, checking with contacts, or any other method the player characters devise.

Note that some information is best presented to the players as handouts. These are found at the end of the book. You can provide them as handouts prior to starting the game or give the player characters the information only after they research the topic. Some information may be best presented during specific scenes.

SEARCHING THE MATRIX

Player characters may elect to search for information themselves by scouring the various data havens and informational dumpsites throughout the Matrix. In this case, have the player character perform a Data Search + Browse Extended Test, with intervals of one minute. Extended tests are limited by the addition of a cumulative -1 dice modifier to each test after the first. For example, a character with Data Search 3 and Browse 3 would roll 6 dice for their first test, 5 in their second, 4 on their third, and would be only able to roll 6 tests total (p. 64, *SR4A*). After this, any data not uncovered is simply too obscure or well hidden in the Matrix for that hacker to find. Not everything is available in the Matrix. Gamemasters may decide what data is reasonably available in the Matrix, what data is available inside secured nodes and requires hacking to discover, and what data simply isn't available at all.

Note that technomancers and sprites have advanced options available for searching the Matrix. Using the Traceroute power (p. 156, *Unwired*) will not reveal Sonora in Chicago (she's outside a wireless zone), but will reveal her presence in Denver (Threshold 16), in the PCC sector, although not at Deer Creek Park. Likewise, during her travel to San Bernardino, she will infrequently interact with the Matrix at *some* stops (Threshold 12). Once in Los Angeles, she will access the Matrix once when she first arrives in San Bernardino, but not when she's at the warehouse. Sonora is using a disposable commlink and the number is not available by Matrix searches (although using the Info Sortilege echo (p. 146, *Unwired*) may reveal it, at gamemaster's discretion).

USING CONTACTS

Rules for using Contacts for legwork are detailed on p. 286, *SR4A*. Networking may be particularly useful when the characters are away from their home turfs and contacts (p. 287, *SR4A*).

BELINDA SWIFTWING

A rumor-monger who buys and sells data on the smugglers operating around Denver.

Contacts: Smugglers, Denver Datahavens, Infobrokers

Contact	Matrix		Results
	Contact	Search	
0	0		"Who?"
1	2		"Swiftwing—some chick connected to the smuggling routes in Denver."
2	6		"Belinda's an info broker, specializes in the smuggling world around Denver. I bet she knows every smuggler and Coyote that's landed in Denver in the last five years."
4	12		"Belinda hangs out at the Golden Feather. She also posts on the Denver nexus. She'll sell data to anyone, and she's always on the lookout for interesting intel."

GOLDEN FEATHER

A bar in the PCC territory of Denver, with a bias against humans and "pinkskins."

Contacts: Smugglers, Denver (Pueblo sector) residents

Contact	Matrix		Results
	Contact	Search	
0	0		"Never heard of it."
1	2		"It's a bar in the PCC sector. I hear they've got good beer."
2	6		"Place is supposedly popular with a lot of the smugglers passing through. Great place to pick up a ride, if you need one."
4	12		"The Golden Feather is a NAN establishment—no pinkskins wanted. And the patrons tend to have pointy ears or horns, if you get my drift."

SONORA

A shadowrunner based out of Los Angeles, she's a known mage with suspected ties to Aztechnology. She has an experienced team and accepts high-profile, dangerous jobs—for the right price. She does have an account on the P2.0 network, but the account has been silent for the last 3 weeks—in fact, she's close to losing it altogether, although speculation on what "big job" she's on is keeping it active.

Contacts: Any one on the P2.0 network, Aztechnology fixers, MagicNet.

Contact	Matrix		Results
	Contact	Search	
0	0		"Who?"
1	2		"Sonora? Isn't she dating the lead vocalist for Latin Revolution?"
2	6		"She's a mage, a 'runner—in the big leagues. Works out of Los Angeles, but I hear she's an international runner. Has a solid team, too."
4	12		"Sonora supposedly takes a lot of Aztechnology jobs, but truth is she'll work for anyone who meets the price. She's not real picky about the types of jobs, either. She uses altskin when in Los Angeles, so those pictures you see of her? That's not her real face. She's a Latina chick, but who knows what she looks like for real."

THE SEXTANT OF THE WORLDS

A strange looking artifact.

Contacts: Antiquities dealers, conspiracy theorists, history buffs, Dunkelzhan cultists, Atlantean Foundation members.

Contact	Matrix		Results
	Contact	Search	
0	0		"The what?"
2	4		"Oh, that thing. Dunkelzhan mentioned it in his will. Didn't he leave it to Aztlan?"
3	6		"Dunkelzahn left it to Aztlan, with the condition that they stop using blood magic. Never heard anything more about it after that. The Draco Foundation is responsible for administering his estate, though. Supposedly it's got some weird curse attached to it."
4	12		"They say it curses anyone who steals it, or maybe just owns it. Supposedly they die some horrible death. Like Dunkelzahn getting blown up. And that it was originally owned by some religious group—Jesuits or something. Supposedly the one who had it ended up getting his heart ripped out by some Aztech priests."

CAST OF SHADOWS

The following characters are major players in this adventure. Both Frosty and Samriel were first introduced in *Dusk*, and may continue to be recurring allies or threats in future *Dawn of the Artifacts* adventures.

JANE “FROSTY” FOSTER

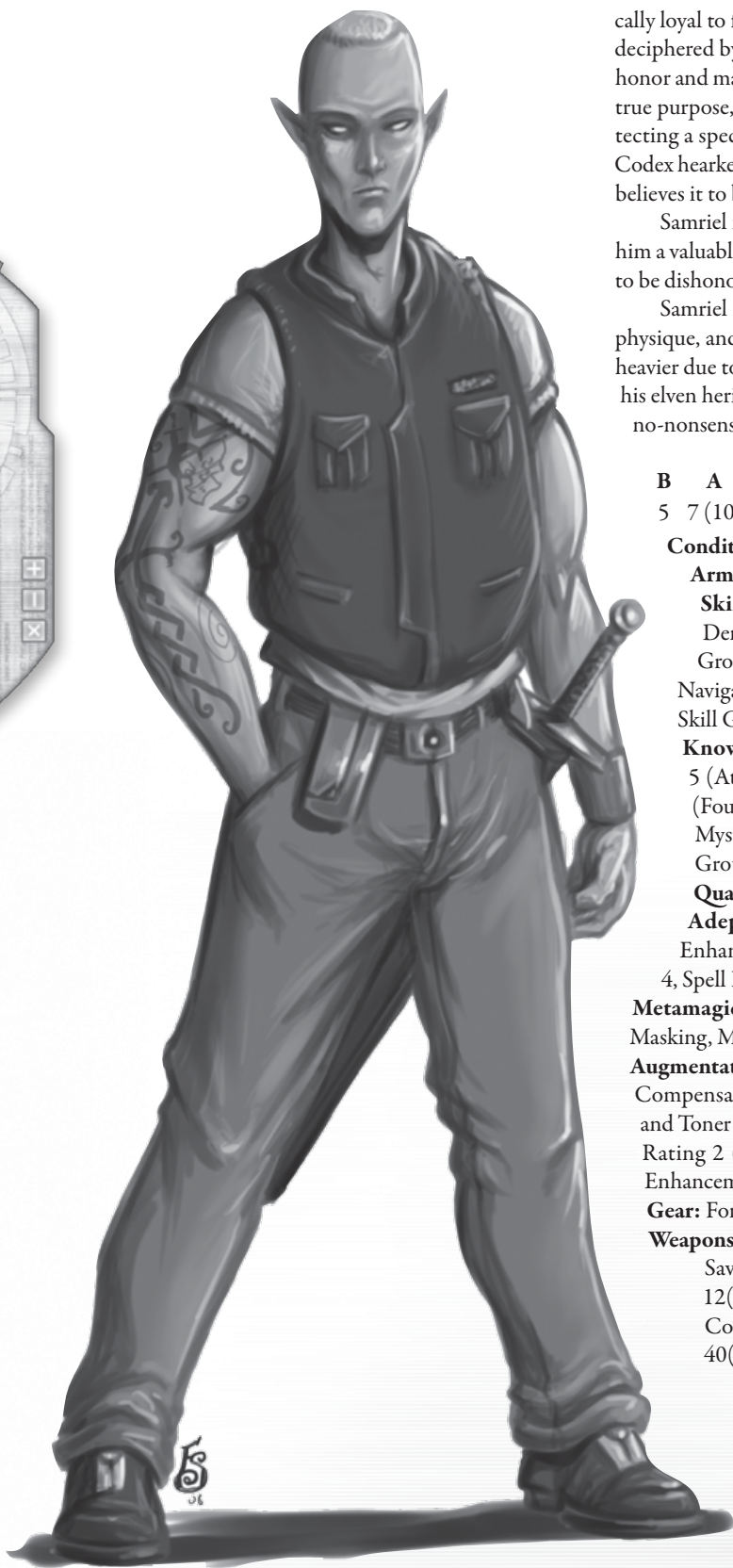
Jane “Frosty” Foster is an accomplished magician in her mid-forties. Physically, she appears to be in her early twenties due to her elven heritage. She has long, curly white hair. Her eyes are a clear blue, and she’s attractive, with a stunning smile. At first glance, she appears human, although she’s much taller than average for a human woman. She also has a very slight limp. Frosty has a casual attitude and a very pragmatic outlook on life. She is very loyal and basically honest, despite her career as a shadowrunner. She has a well-developed sense of humor and enjoys a good joke. She doesn’t like surprises, however, and tends to lash out at unpleasant surprises with a hot temper—and significant amounts of mana.

After twenty years in the shadows, she’s made some very well-placed contacts, in both low circles and high. She’s met FastJack in person and is a member of his VPN JackPoint. In addition, she’s connected through her mentor to some very powerful individuals. On occasion, she has even met dragons—she was bequeathed a ring from Dunkelzahn in his will, a power focus that she never removes.

Due to her magical training, Jane knows several spells and metamagical techniques that aren’t common knowledge (or even believed possible) in the magical community of 2072. Jane uses an arcane language and symbols during her rituals that are not recognizable to any magicians who observe her. Her magical talents are also unique—or at least not known beyond a handful of other people, like her mentor.

Stats: Frosty is a high-level initiate magician (at least grade 8) with some unique spell and magical abilities. Her magic follows a different paradigm than other magicians in the Sixth World, though it looks vaguely hermetic. Jane eschews cyberware. No stats are provided as Jane should be as powerful as the gamemaster needs her to be and balanced with the group. She is experienced at driving a bike and should have a Pistols Skill dicepool comparable to that of the player characters. Deprived of her magical talents, she’ll prefer using heavy pistols in a fight, but she is also an accomplished swordswoman.





SAMRIEL

As an Inner Circle member of the Mystic Crusaders, Samriel is fanatically loyal to following the chivalric code laid out in an ancient mystic codex deciphered by the Inner Circle. The Codex emphasizes a strict adherence to honor and martial prowess. The code of behavior is incidental to the Codex's true purpose, to guide those who are responsible for watching over and protecting a specific set of artifacts: The Keys of Dawn. It is rumored that the Codex harkens back to a previous age of enlightenment, and the Inner Circle believes it to be a relic of Atlantis itself.

Samriel is a fanatic, but he adheres strictly to his code of honor, making him a valuable ally—though he is ruthless when dealing with those he judges to be dishonorable or untrustworthy.

Samriel is a Caucasian elf with solid silver cybereyes, a heavily muscled physique, and close-cut gray hair. He is above-average height for an elf, and heavier due to his bioware augmentations. Although he is in his mid-thirties, his elven heritage gives him a much younger appearance. Samriel has a strict, no-nonsense approach to life.

B A R S C I L W M Edg Ess Init IP
 5 7 (10) 7 (10) 5 (8) 5 6 4 (7) 5 7 3 3.2 13 (16) 4

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 11/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 10 (13)/6 (9)

Skills: Athletics Skill Group 5, Close Combat Skill Group 6, Demolitions 2, Dodge 6, Electronics Skill Group 2, Firearms Skill Group 5, First Aid 3, Influence Skill Group 3, Leadership 3, Locksmith 4, Navigation 3, Perception 5 (Visual +2), Pilot Ground Craft 5, Stealth Skill Group 5

Knowledge Skills: Atlantean Foundation 5, Arcanoarcheology 5 (Atlantean Artifacts +2), Archeology 4, English (N), History 4 (Fourth world +2), Leadership Background 4, Magic Background 2, Mystic Crusaders 5 (Codex +2), Security Procedures 3, Small Skill Group Tactics 5

Qualities: Adept, Exceptional Attribute (Reaction)

Adept Abilities: Commanding Voice, Eidetic Sense Memory, Enhanced Perception 5, Killing Hands, Magic Sense, Mystic Armor 4, Spell Resistance 4

Metamagic: (Grade 4 Initiate) Adept Centering, Cognition, Extended Masking, Masking

Augmentations: (all Delta grade) Cerebral Booster (Rating 3), Damage Compensators Rating 6, Enhanced Articulation, Muscle Augmentation and Toner (Rating 3), Orthoskin (Rating 3), Platelet Factories, Cybereyes Rating 2 (silver) [w/ Flare Comp, Low-light, smartlink, and Vision Enhancement 2], Synaptic Booster (Rating 3), Synthacardium (Rating 3)

Gear: Form-fitting body armor

Weapons: Monofilament sword [Blade, Reach 1, DV 7P]

Savalette Guardian [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA/BF, RC 1, 12(c)]

Colt M22A3 [Assault Rifle, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 4, 40(c) w/ personalized grip, folding stock, gas-vent 3]

VIGILIA EVANGELICA (3)

These three brethren are dedicated to protecting the most ancient and powerful artifacts and knowledge controlled by the Vatican. For more information, see (p. 7). Some Vigilia members are monks who take lesser vows, while others are ley brethren, known as the third Order in Catholic parlance. The active operatives of the Vigilia Evangelica are known as *praetori*. While not all Vigilia brethren are magicians, many are.

B A R S C I L W M Edg Ess Init IP
5 4 5 3 4 5 5 6 8 4 6 10 1

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 11/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6

Skills: Spellcasting Skill Group 5, Conjuring Skill Group 6, Infiltration 4, Close Combat Skill Group 4, Dodge 5, Exotic Weapon (Parashield Dart Pistol) 4, Influence Skill Group 4, Survival 5, Disguise 2, Assensing 6 (Artifacts +2), Perception 5, Astral Combat 6

Knowledge Skills: Arcanoarcheology 3 (Awakened Artifacts +2), Black Marketeers 4 (Antiquities +2), Catholic Background 4, English 3, Fine Cuisine 2, French 4, Italian (N), International Travel 5, Magical Background 6, Smugglers 4 (International +2), Spirits 4

Qualities: Magician

Metamagic: (Initiate Grade 3) Cleansing, Masking, Shielding
Spells: Analyze Truth, Armor, Detect [artifact], Detect Magic, Flame Thrower, Improved Invisibility, Manabolt, Stunbolt, Heal, Levitate, Mindlink, Mind Probe

Spirits: 1 bound Fire Elemental (Rating 5), 1 bound Air Elemental (Rating 5)

Gear: Disposable Commlink, Armor Jacket, Power Focus Rating 4 (Rosary), Sustaining Focus Rating 4 (silver cross earring), Anchored Spell (Triggered if they reveal the Vigilia Evangelica) on silver cross necklace

Survival Knife [Blade, DV 3P, AP -1]

Parashield Dart Pistol [Exotic Weapon, DV 10S (Narcoject Toxin), AP -1, 5(c), w/ smartgun](see p. 324, SR4A)



DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT.....



SONORA

A talented—and very lucky—mage with a good reputation in the shadows. She's a Latina human with black hair and vivid dark eyes. She's survived in the LA shadows by being great at what she does, although she's very careful not to let anyone get too close. She's loyal to her team, but above all, she's a survivor.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	4	3	2	5	6	5	5	9	8	6	9	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 10/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 8/6

Skills: Arcana 3, Spellcasting Skill Group 6, Conjuring Skill Group 6, Infiltration 4, Close Combat Skill Group 3, Dodge 4, Influence Skill Group 4, Survival 3, Disguise 3, Assensing 6, Perception 5, Astral Combat 6

Knowledge Skills: Aztechnology 3, English 3, Fixers 3, Leadership 3, Los Angeles 3 (Runner Scene +2), Magical Background 5, Nahuatl 2, Popular Music (Latin +2) 2, Runner Havens 4, Safe Houses 4, Spanish (N), Underworld Crime 4

Qualities: Magician, Lucky

Metamagic: (Initiate Grade 4) Cleansing, Extended Masking, Masking, Shielding

Spells: Improved Invisibility, Physical Mask, Powerbolt, Manabolt, Stunbolt, Heal, Levitate, Chaotic World, Mindnet, Mind Probe

Gear: Disposable Commlink, Armor Jacket, Power Focus (Rating 4, Gold necklace in Aztech style), Sustaining Focus (Rating 4, Silver ring), 1 chocolate chip soy bar

Survival Knife [Blade, DV 3P, AP -1]

Ares Predator IV [Heavy pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, 15(c), w/ smartgun]

ITZTLI

A blood-mage and ranking member of the Smoking Mirror (p. 7), Itztli is a mage who has let his power go to his head. He's cruel and confident, and likes to play with his victims before using them to fuel his magic. As is standard with Aztechnology blood-mages, Itztli has a cranial bomb linked to a biomonitor. This ensures that the bodies of their blood-mages never fall into the wrong hands ...

B A R S C I L W M Edg Ess Init IP
5 2 3 4 5 5 5 6 12 2 6 8 1

Condition Monitor Boxes (Physical/Stun): 11/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 14/12

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 6, Blades 4 (Macuahuitl +2), Conjuring Skill Group 6, Counterspelling 7, Enchanting 3, Ritual Spellcasting 6 (Blood Mage Gestalt +2), Spellcasting 6

Knowledge Skills: Aztlaner Spanish N, English 5, Nahuatl 6 (Espanahuatl +2), Magic Background 5, Anthropology 3 (Sacrificial Rituals +2), Tenochtitlán 3, The Smoking Mirror 5

Qualities: Aptitude (Counterspelling), Magician, Martial Arts (Etzlitzli: +1 DV on Blades attacks)

Initiate Grade: 7

Metamagics: Absorption, Extended Masking, Invoking, Invoking Blood Spirits, Masking, Sacrificing, Shielding

Augmentations: Cranial Bomb (Area Bomb, triggered if biomonitor detects cessation of vital signs), internal RFID Sensor tag w/biomonitor

Gear: Sustaining Focus (Rating 6, obsidian ring), Stylized Aztlaner medium military armor (w/integrated retractable spurs, auto-injector (K-10)), red clay tobacco bowl with 1 dose of Immortal Flower, respirator (6), counterspelling focus (6, obsidian ring), aspected binding focus (6, only for invoking blood spirits, native jade and silver medallion), 2 blood fetishes, custom commlink (Firewall 6, System 4, Response 6, Signal 1, w/nanotrodes, biometric reader, area-effect self-destruct if biometrics of user do not match, skinlink enabled, Hardening 3, set for Admin access only; running Analyze 6 and Rating 6 Black IC), contacts (Rating 3 w/image link, low-light, and thermographic vision)

Spells: Mass Agony, Control Actions, Control Emotions, Diagnose, Extended Detect Magic, Fling, Ignite*, Increase Reflexes, Jaguar Form, Napalm*, Physical Barrier, Sight Removal, Smoke Cloud

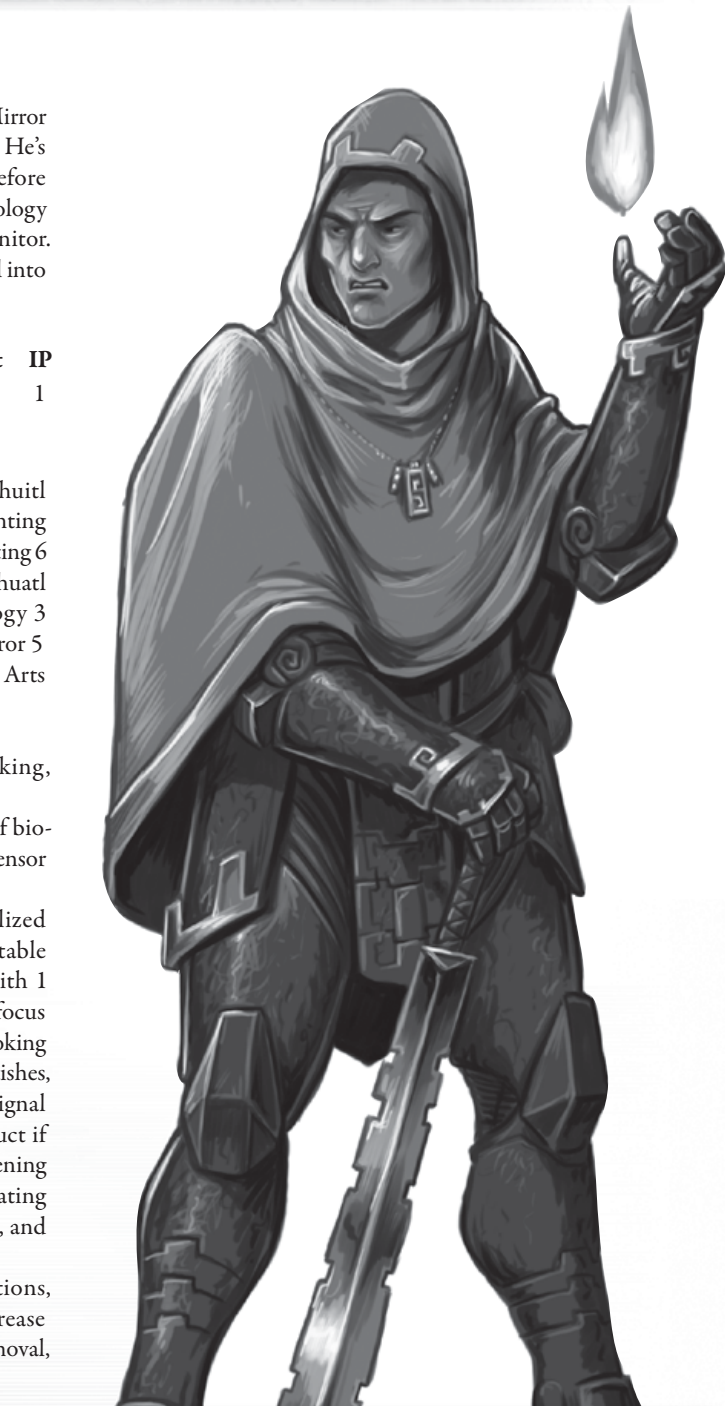
Maneuvers: Finishing Move, Vicious Blow

Weapons:

Macuahuitl [Blade, DV 5P, AP 0, Reach 1, w/ weapon focus (6)]

Spurs [Blade, DV 6P, AP 0, Reach 1]

Notes: Spells marked with an * are attuned to blood fetishes. Itztli is subject to a quickened Smoke Aura spell (Force 5, 18 Karma spent to quicken), which shrouds him in heavy smoke (see *Visibility Table*, p. 152, SR4A); these modifiers apply to his spellcasting as well as to those targeting him. 2 boxes of Physical Damage due to Blood Fetishes.



Urgent Message...

BLOOD FETISH

A blood fetish is a particularly potent enchantment fueled by blood magic, introduced in *Digital Grimoire*. For those without access to that ebook, the rules have been reproduced here:

A blood fetish functions in all ways as a fetish or talisman (see *Limited Spells*, p. 172, SR4A), except the magician gains +4 dice to resist Drain when casting the spell attuned to the blood fetish. Attuning a blood fetish requires a simple 10 minute ritual that inflicts 1 box of unresisted physical damage that cannot be healed while the blood fetish is attached.

DRAWN OF THE ARTIFACTS: MIDNIGHT.....

CHICAGO

- Here's the cliff's quickie version, if you wanna travel there. Crazy. Although if you go, bring me back a tee-shirt from Pog mo Thoin. My last one got a bullet hole in it. Oh, and if you want the full details on Chicago, check out the *Feral Cities* compilation on the VPN.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

In 2055, the city of Chicago was changed forever when a massive outbreak of insect spirits poured out of downtown Chicago, prompting the UCAS government to create a containment zone. A hundred thousand citizens were locked inside the Zone, along with the bugs, and the place became a living hell. The subsequent detonation of a subtactical nuke and the release of the dual-natured FAB III bacteria, which killed dual natured creatures, only made the place worse. Today, most people associate Chicago with trid images of feral gangs and warlords controlling the streets, of destroyed buildings, hidden insect hives, and a lack of—well, any modern comfort.

It's not *all* true. Sure, even the locals will walk twenty miles through the Westside just to avoid crossing into the Downtown core. And sure, magic is totally screwed up there—look for the patches of healthy Awakened plants, like the tall grey-leaved Chicago Grey (a hemp) or the Kudzu Awakened Ivy. That'll tell you if it's safe to cast magic. If you do run into a cloud of the FAB III, quickly turn off any foci and stop perceiving or projecting, and you should be okay ... although you might want to check and make sure none of it's clinging to you. Stuff is *nasty*. We don't want you bringing it home!

The wireless network ranges from *none* to *almost none*. Okay, there's a few places, like the O'Hare subsprawl, where the corps have built up an infrastructure. But for most of the rest of the city, the few people who *do* have 'links keep 'em in hidden mode, and there isn't even a mesh network worth using.

Which brings up my next tip. The economy. Don't expect to be able to buy anything—lodging, food, drinks, cute guys—with a nuyen transfer. Hell, since most of the people there don't have 'links, certified cred-sticks are useless as well. Barter is the name of the game. Medical supplies, rechargeable batteries, useful tech, food, drugs and alcohol, those are the currency inside the city. A lot of places and people will also accept services, so if

you know something useful—medical types and techies especially—you can barter your talents for goods or services. Of course, the big outfits, like the Mafia or the corps like Spire Enterprises take nuyen.

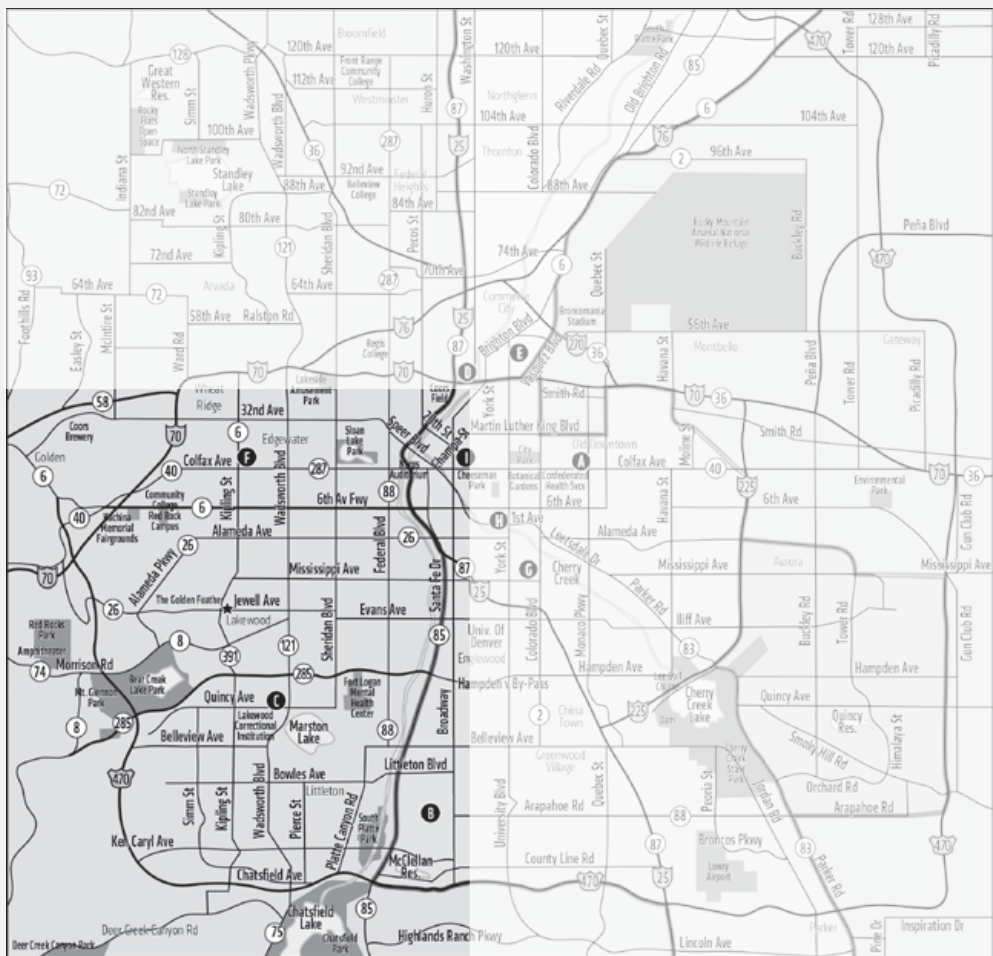
Transportation can be a real treat. Outside the O'Hare subsprawl, most vehicles run on old-fashioned fossil fuels and biodisels. Heck, really the only place you can drive is in the corridor anyway. Almost every street in the zone is blocked off and full of abandoned vehicles from '55, and outside the zone, there's little-to-no maintenance of side-roads. No grid-link, either. On the bright side, there's no traffic patrols, so if you really *want* to try those trid-stunts, go ahead. Unless you're sticking to the big freeways in the corridor, expect travel time to take, well, forever, and don't be surprised if you end up having to just walk places. Just remember to pack a lot of ammo.

DENVER

- Visiting the Mile-High City? Pack a breather, a warm coat, and remember that four borders + one city make for interesting times!
- Mika

FLASHPOINT: DENVER

The Front Range Free Zone (FRFZ) began to take shape when the 2018 Treaty of Denver was signed in the aftermath of the Great Ghost Dance. Since then, the names have changed, but the city remains a political hotbed. The contrasts between the different governments led to a dynamic and frontier lifestyle.





When Ghostwalker returned in 2061, he chased Aztlan out and then claimed the region as his domain. After the destruction he had sown there weren't any forces willing to argue the point. Since then, representatives of the CAS, PCC, Sioux, and UCAS nations have run their sectors with the white wrym's forbearance. All four nations contribute troops to the Zone Defense Force (ZDF), which answers directly to Ghostwalker.

CROSSING BORDERS

In spite of Ghostwalker's authority, each of the four sectors of Denver are ostensibly under the rule of their home governments. In keeping with this, the borders between sectors constitute international boundaries. These boundaries are secured by technological, physical, and magical resources. As security between these sectors and their home nations is kept to a minimum, the level of security at the sector limits can be substantial—dependent upon current international relations.

Unfortunately, increased Ute resistance to PCC control means there's a lot of unrest in the PCC sector—unrest that has been spilling over to other sectors. Security on the PCC borders is even more stringent than normal.

The sectors follow the laws of their home nations. This means that smuggling opportunities—both for people and goods—exist for those who can safely cross the borders. Abandoned utility tunnels, ancient caves, ruined buildings, and other holes in security have created an array of smuggling routes with varying degrees of reliability. Specialized fixers, called Coyotes in the FRFZ, aid those who have the money to cross the border.

MILE-HIGH UNDERWORLD

The presence of so many international borders and the bureaucratic red tape created a wealth of opportunities for criminal syndicates. The Casquilho Mafia family, the Yamato-gumi, the Golden Triangle Triad, and the Koshari are the four most powerful syndicates in Denver. These four organizations maintain an uneasy working relationship, which sometimes sparks into open conflict.

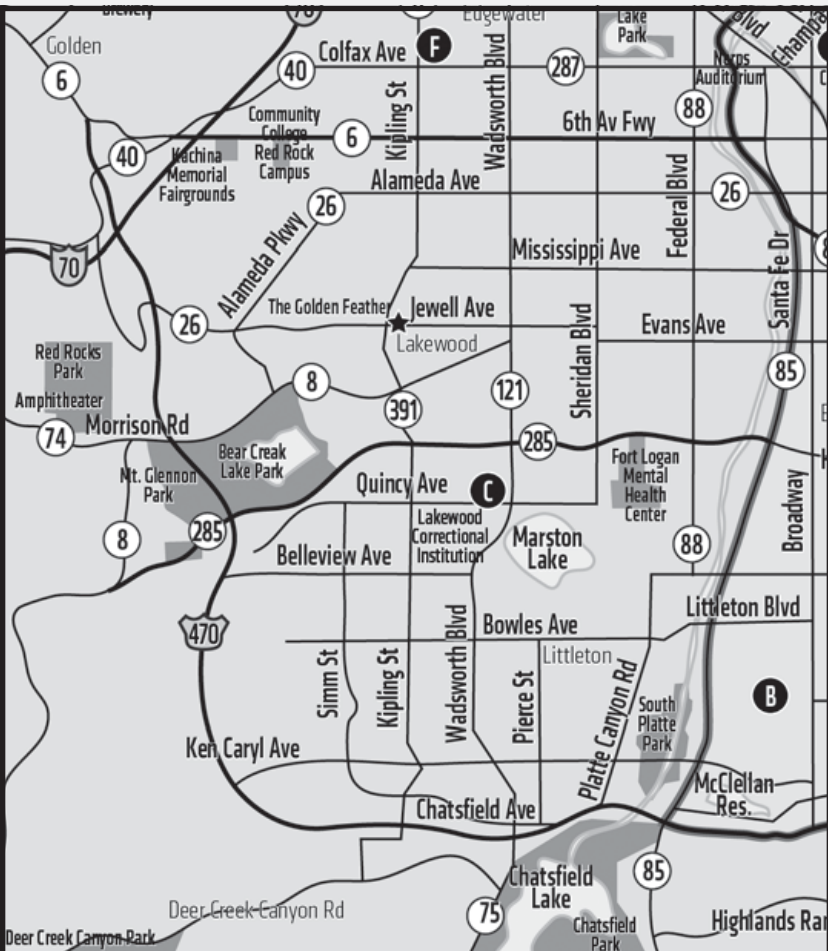
The recent death of Sottocapo Omar Chavez allowed the Casquilho family to seize control of the Chavez assets. The family is still in the process of consolidating their resources.

The Golden Triangle Triad was heavily involved in tempo distribution to all four sectors. The influx of cash allowed them to seize control of the defunct White Lotus Triad while simultaneously pushing into Koshari and Yakuza territory. Either of these groups might start pushing back soon—making things pretty hot in Denver.

SAN BERNARDINO

San Bernardino suffered like the rest of LA after the quakes hit. It was spared any flooding (although rumors persist of openings to the Deep Lacuna that appeared), but buildings and infrastructure were destroyed. Faced with the massive task of rebuilding the city, the Pueblo Corporate Council placed San Bernardino low on the priority list—after all, it had little corporate investment and was primarily home to lower-class citizens, and had a high population of the SINless. Residents quickly turned to the gangs and the criminal underworld for support, creating a cascading problem: as the crime rate (and SINless rate) increased, the PCC's resources allocated to the area decreased. Decreasing amounts of water, power, and social services in the area forced even more residents to look to the gangs, a vicious circle that continues today.

Buildings are crumbling, and residents live with the knowledge that the next strong earthquake could be the one to bring down their home or building. Water is strictly rationed, underground utilities—disrupted by the quakes or disappeared altogether in the Deep Lacuna—are missing or unreliable, wireless networks rely on mesh networks for service, and police and social services are lacking or non-existent. Many residents fear that San Bernardino is destined to become LA's next "El Inferno" ... and it looks like their fears are coming true.





She had the tinting of the windows at full power, preventing the bright sunlight from entering her office. The natural light betrayed her, showed the fine lines etched into her skin. Age-lines. On her face, her hands; a daily reminder of the time that had passed. Of what she had lost. Of what would come.

On the desktop view screen, her secretary's icon popped up, breaking into her thoughts.

"Ma'am, he's here."

She nodded, and the thick door swung open. Her silver knight walked in. No—*limped* in.

"Samriel?" she asked.

"It's done," he said, coming to a stop before her desk. She could see the bruises marking his unnatural flesh, see the lines pain had etched around his cybernetic eyes. "They found the Sextant in Los Angeles, engaged the blood mage."

"It looks as though you did more than *observe*," she said, giving the smallest of nods towards his appearance. "Observe from a distance. That was my order, was it not?" She could see him tense, feel his anger. Her loyal knight. How it tore at him to watch his sacred oath in the hands of outsiders. Even if it was for the greater good.

"They were not prepared to take on a blood mage. If I had not ... interceded ... they might not have survived to pass on word of the cult's involvement."

"Even with the *Raegh-ya's dáilta*?" she asked, surprised.

He simply shrugged. "I gather that using the map took all her ability."

She leaned back, surprised. "That child could use it? She's more powerful than I thought. And now?"

"She left Los Angeles safely, traveling alone. We tracked her plane until it landed in Portland. At last report, she'd left the grid in the Salish-Sidhe, near Mount Saint Helens. Last trace was two hours, eight minutes ago. Our hackers are continuing to track the runners as well."

"So ..." she mused. "She'll take word to the *Caynreth'im* of the involvement of the blood mages. That should keep them occupied. They'll set aside their squabbling to attack *that* threat. And never see what we do right in front of them."

"Shall we finish recovering the artifacts?" he asked. She shook her head. Her knights were so short-sighted. It was, of course, partially her fault. She'd created the "ancient" manuscript, arranged to have it fall into the hands of those who were weak-minded enough to believe it, those who were hungry for the secrets it revealed, those who needed a higher purpose to make sense of the chaos of the Awakening. Decades later, they'd grown past those first few individuals into a knightly order loyal only to their Codex. And when she presented them with the opportunity to see their divine mandate made real, they'd transferred all that incredible focus and loyalty to her.

As she'd known they would.

"No. *Eoerin-ha* will do the work, unlock the puzzle. We will wait. When he sends that child for the next artifact, we will know."

She called up an image on her screen. A map of the world, as it was today. Over the lands now known as Europe, the symbol of a single artifact floated. The Phaistos Disk. The third piece to the puzzle.

She looked at her hands, where they touched the modern view screen, the golden skin faded, the once smooth skin aged.

It was almost time.

