

SHADOWRUN

ON THE FRONT



Shane
05

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		Injection (writing music), Orphx (dev-	
		editing music)	
		Shout-Outs: Dan, for general coolness;	
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PROLOGUE: DIAMOND IN THE DUMP

Jamming his finger into his mouth, Kerwin Loomis tasted the metallic tang of blood mixed with sweat and grime. He wondered if this whole thing was worth it.

Kerwin slumped back, running a hand back across his sweaty, bald head. He stank, he needed a good whiskey—not that synthahol crap—and he was seriously beginning to doubt that there was anything here worth his while. At this point, it was probably a waste to have spent the cred on a plane ticket to paw through Dad's collection of crap before it all got hauled off to the dump.

It wasn't like the two of them had gotten along or anything. If it hadn't been for the fact that Kerwin was K-Spot's only son, he doubted he'd have even gotten the formal email from the lawyer announcing Dad's death and informing him that he, Kerwin, had been left everything. This large storage locker was all that remained of dear old Dad, known to the entertainment world as Clarence "K-Spot" Loomis, mid-level purveyor of mostly two-bit acts that everybody with any sense had forgotten about twenty years ago. Naturally, since Dad had been about as good with cred as Kerwin himself was, "everything" amounted to some clothes, a few random bits of furniture and household appliances, two ratty old guitars, a nonfunctional pre-2055 cyberdeck, and the key to the storage locker.

From the look of things, the place hadn't been opened in a good ten years. The locker company was making noises about dumping everything in the street if the last three months' back rent wasn't paid, and since Kerwin didn't want to pay it, here he was to grab any good stuff that might be hanging around. The hell with the rest of it—let them dump it. It would save him the trouble, and it would serve his old coot of a father right.

He didn't quite want to admit it to himself, but he had a reason for pulling open carton after carton of junk. It was probably just another fib, but his dad had mentioned it enough times when Kerwin was growing up that he had to believe that it might just possibly be true. The faint chance that it might be somewhere in the locker was what kept Kerwin going long after he'd normally have given up the job in favor of getting good and drunk (and maybe even laid, if he was really lucky). It sure as hell hadn't been in the apartment—Kerwin had made sure of that, going through every drawer, every possible hiding place, even looking under the smelly old carpets before he'd handed the key back to the landlord. No, if Dad still had it (and hadn't sold it to finance any of his sleazy habits), it would be here. Kerwin was going to keep looking until he either found it or was convinced that it wasn't here. He had a feeling that if Dad had sold it, he'd have heard about it. It wasn't the kind of thing you could keep quiet.

"Come on, you old bastard," he muttered to himself. "You better not have been lying, all those times you ran your mouth about this thing. Don't make me sift through all of this crap for nothing!" He savagely threw yet another box full of junk into one of the locker's walls, where it burst and scattered its contents all over the floor. He was sullenly about to move on to the next one when he spotted a bulky cream-colored envelope in the midst of the spilled junk. He'd been so impatient he nearly missed it going through the box, hidden as it was inside a folder with some other old papers.

Something was written on the envelope. He kicked his way through the trash-drifts and snatched it up, peering at it in the grimy overhead light from the single naked bulb. "To K-Spot," it said in a flowing, somewhat old-fashioned hand. "Enjoy these with my gratitude." It was signed, "JB."

Kerwin held the envelope in front of him, just looking at it with wide eyes and open mouth for several seconds. Then, his body seized with a kind of jerking urgency, he fell back into his chair, ripped open the envelope, and allowed the contents to drop into his lap.

He stared at the old-style optical disk in its paper slipcover, entranced as the quivering light made dancing rainbows on its silvery surface. Written on it in the same handwriting as the outside of the envelope was: "Carrion Sessions, '48, JB. For enlightenment, seek out absent friends."

"Holy shit," Kerwin breathed, hardly daring to believe his sudden change in luck. "This is it!"

Letting his breath out slowly, he slumped back, clutching the precious disk. His eyes were already beginning to gleam with the light of avarice, but he knew he had to be careful. He sat abruptly upright, realizing he was alone in the storage building and it was getting late. His plane back to Seattle was due to leave tomorrow morning; the sooner he was packed up and on it, the better. He slipped the disk inside his jacket, kicked the boxes back inside, and closed and locked the door. The devil rats could have the rest, as far as he was concerned.

He had what he'd come for—old Dad had come through for him in death as he never had in life. But he'd have to be careful ... very careful. If he didn't handle this just right, he was likely to lose his prize.

He didn't even consider that it might also cost him his life.





INTRODUCTION

On the Run is an introductory adventure for *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. Though it can be adjusted for player characters of most ability levels, it is designed with beginning players and gamemasters in mind. Each section is heavily annotated with gamemaster tips and tricks, references to pages in the *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition* rulebook where the gamemaster can find rules relevant to the section, and notes for ways the adventure can be “tweaked” to make it enjoyable for different types of characters and players.

Beginning players and gamemasters should be aware that only gamemasters should read beyond this point—if players continue reading, they will discover the secrets of the adventure and reduce the enjoyment they’ll get from playing out the scenario with their characters.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

On the Run is intended for use with *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. No other sourcebooks or supplements are necessary to run it. The *Shadowrun* gamemaster’s screen included in *Runner’s Toolkit* is recommended, as it contains many useful tables organized for easy reference.

Note that some of the characters featured in this plot originally appeared in an out of print (but available as an electronic PDF) adventure called *One Stage Before for Shadowrun, Second Edition*. This old material is by no means necessary to play *On the Run*, but any long-time *Shadowrun* players (or characters!) may have fun making the connections.

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

On the Run is a basic shadowrun—the type that every group of player characters will encounter many times in their shadowrunning careers. A “Mr. Johnson” approaches the characters through their fixer (who can either be someone they already know or a character they meet during the course of the adventure) and offers them a job, providing them with some information they’ll need to know to accomplish the task. From that point, the characters are on their own; the players determine their characters’ actions, and the gamemaster interprets the results—and consequences. The characters can choose to do legwork and seek information, hit the streets for some snooping, go in guns blazing, or whatever else they can dream up. The gamemaster’s occasionally daunting—but ultimately rewarding—task is to keep the characters moving in essentially the right direction, without “railroading” them into following a prescribed course of action. This is often easier said than done.

To this end, the adventure is set up in a flowchart format with a series of interconnected scenes. Some scenes logically follow others and can’t occur without their predecessors; some stand alone and can be accomplished at any point during the adventure; others still are red herrings designed to lead the characters off the track. Naturally, for every task that’s listed, the players will come up with at least two or three that aren’t—and dealing with these unscheduled detours is where a good







gamemaster can really shine. Sometimes the players' ideas can lead them to a new and promising angle; if so, be ready to run with it. You might find some of the gamemaster hints throughout the adventure helpful in dealing with these situations.

MAIN SECTIONS

The adventure contains the following main sections:

- **Preparing to Play:** A synopsis of the plot, background information, and other useful data the gamemaster will need to get started.
- **Adventure Scenes:** The adventure itself, broken down into individual scenes.
- **Legwork:** Tables and summaries of information the characters can learn over the course of the adventure.
- **Cast of Shadows:** A section featuring the primary characters who play an important role throughout the entire adventure.

ADVENTURE SCENE SUBSECTIONS

The adventure is divided into scenes. Each scene contains the following subsections:

- **Scan This:** A brief summary of the events in the scene.
- **Tell It To Them Straight:** Passages of text that can be read verbatim to the characters or paraphrased when they reach certain points in the scene.
- **Hooks:** Descriptions of ways that characters might be encouraged to play a scene.
- **Behind the Scenes:** What's really going on. This is where the nuts and bolts of the scene occur, including stats for NPCs, descriptions and ratings for security systems, Matrix systems, and so forth along with any secrets or special instructions for the scene.
- **Pushing the Envelope:** Ways in which you can alter the scene to make it challenging for more powerful or experienced characters.
- **Debugging:** Ways in which the gamemaster can get the adventure back on track if the characters' actions derail it.
- **Gamemaster Notes:** Notes for beginning gamemasters on methods to more effectively run the scene. They include suggestions for how to handle relevant situations, tips on running different types of activities (such as combat, magic, hacking, or social interactions) and ways in which the gamemaster can make changes to the scene to accommodate player actions.
- **SR4A References:** A table showing *Shadowrun*, *Twentieth Anniversary Edition* page number references for the main concepts touched on in the scene (for example, casting spells, making Opposed Tests, or using Augmented Reality).

GENERAL ADVENTURE RULES

This *Shadowrun* adventure uses rules presented in *Shadowrun*, *Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (SR4A). Standard rules such as Success Tests, Extended Tests, Perception Tests, glitches, and the more common mechanics are described in SR4A and are not repeated in this book.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Non-player characters (NPCs) are essential to any adventure. They are the allies, antagonists, and background characters that populate every scenario—in other words, the people that

the player characters will interact with. The important NPCs for *On the Run* have already been created and can be found in the *Behind the Scenes* sections of each adventure scene. Major NPCs who appear in multiple scenes are listed in the *Cast of Shadows* section at the end of the adventure (see p. 53).

The NPCs in this adventure were designed with the beginning player in mind. For teams that are more advanced and require more challenging NPCs, each NPC group includes gamemaster hints on how you can “beef them up” to make them a good match for more advanced player characters. You can find more advice in the *Prime Runners* section on p. 284, SR4A.

NPCs in groups are given a group Edge rating, from which each character in the group can draw (see p. 281, SR4A). Named individual NPCs each have their own Edge score.

GAMEMASTERING THE ADVENTURE

Gamemastering is an art. Like any talent worth having, it has to start somewhere. *On the Run* is ideal as a first adventure to help a new gamemaster get her feet wet running *Shadowrun*. Unlike the majority of published *Shadowrun* adventures, this one will spend almost as much time offering help and pointers as it will presenting the situations the gamemaster will run. Feel free to use or ignore these tips as you see fit—it's your game, and you should run it in a way that will give you (and your players) the greatest amount of enjoyment. Remember, one of the first rules of gamemastering is this: if you don't like something or it isn't working, change it. (Just make sure that you keep track of what you change so it doesn't come back to bite you at a later point.)

Here are a few general guidelines to help you get started:

STEP ONE: READ THE ADVENTURE

Read it through from beginning to end, familiarizing yourself with the plot points, NPCs, and the general flow of events. If you know the way things are supposed to go in the scripted version, it will help you deal with the inevitable situation when your players come up with something you didn't expect and force you to adapt.

STEP TWO: ASSESS THE ADVENTURE

It's a rare gamemaster who takes a published adventure and simply runs it exactly as written. There are many reasons for this. It may be that you simply don't like parts of it or don't think it'll work for your group of players; events in the adventure may contradict things that have already occurred in your campaign; it requires a type of character (for example, a hacker or magician) that the player character team doesn't have (and you can't or don't want to replace with an NPC); you have an ongoing antagonist who would work better in the campaign than the one included; or any of a plethora of other reasons. This is your chance to make changes, jot down notes where you want to change events or characters, or rework the adventure to fit your campaign. Since *On the Run* is an introductory adventure, hints will appear throughout on ways you might tweak it to fit you and your group's tastes.

STEP THREE: KNOW THE CHARACTERS

As the gamemaster, you should have a copy of each team member's character sheet so you'll be aware of their skills, abilities,



and whether they possess all the needed capabilities to fulfill the adventure's requirements. If they don't (for example, if swimming is required at some point and none of the characters can swim), you'll need to adjust that event so they have the chance to succeed.

STEP FOUR: TAKE NOTES

As you read through the adventure, jot down notes that you can refer to as you go. For example, you might make a note to remember to give the players a necessary handout or bit of information that will be vital later on, or perhaps highlight key facts about an NPC or a combat. Don't forget to take notes while running the adventure as well, to help you remember what characters did so you can award Karma points fairly and work the characters' actions and their ramifications into subsequent adventures. Players love it when past actions come back to haunt them (or reward them!) later on—it helps to give the campaign a feeling of continuity.

STEP FIVE: DON'T LET THE DICE RUN THE GAME

In most cases, dice rolls determine the outcome of events in the game. Sometimes, though, the dice can get in the way of a good game. For example, it's no fun to have your main villain roll a critical glitch on her Dodge skill and get blown away in the first round of combat, nor is it any fun for a player to lose a character he's spent hours creating because of one bad die roll. As a rule of thumb, you should *never* fudge die rolls to hurt player characters, but the occasional fudge to help them (by seriously injuring rather than killing them, or by allowing the villain to survive long enough to get spectacularly taken out in the climactic battle) is no problem. Use your judgment—as you grow as a gamemaster, you'll get a feel for when (or if) this is the right thing to do.

STEP SIX: DON'T PANIC!

One of the biggest misconceptions inexperienced gamemasters have is that you have to be perfect—know every rule, keep track of every eventuality, and never make a mistake. Forget it. You're going to make mistakes, because *everybody* makes mistakes. You might get a rule wrong, get events out of order, or forget an important fact about an NPC. Don't worry—you and your players are there to have fun, and fun is more important than perfection. Do the best you can to straighten out the problem and move on. Your players will prefer a quick resolution rather than waiting while you spend fifteen minutes paging through the rulebook looking for the "right" answer.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

"JetBlack Lives!"

—graffiti in numerous locations in many UCAS cities

The Crash of 2064 hit many of the world's computer systems hard, taking down large sections of the Matrix and throwing much of society into chaos. When people look back on this period, they tend to think of the big stuff—plane crashes, lost financial data, ruined identities—but the Crash's ripples caused countless smaller effects as well, ranging from the trivial to the calamitous.

One such effect was the destruction of a music label called Apogee Music. Apogee had been limping along throughout most of the late 2050s and early 2060s. It had experienced something of a revival in 2064 when it released a few chips featuring popular acts in the insurgent Goblin Rock genre and had come up with a foolproof plan to pull itself out of its hole of debt: They'd gotten their hands on a series of unreleased recordings by dead megastar JetBlack, made shortly before his disappearance in 2048. The so-called "Carrion Studio Sessions" contained seven new songs never heard by anyone outside JetBlack's circle except for a few Apogee executives, and Apogee planned to release them in 2068 (the 20th anniversary of his disappearance and presumed death) as part of a "JetBlack Retrospective" along with some of his more obscure (but still available if you knew where to look) recordings.

Unfortunately for Apogee, they took their security a little too far. Terrified that somebody would steal the recordings and flood the Matrix with illegal copies before they could complete their release, the Apogee executives stored the only copies offline at their corporate headquarters. Only a few people even knew of their existence. All the preliminary work for the project was done with the assumption that the retrospective would initially contain only the previously released recordings; the new ones would be incorporated at the last possible moment. The Apogee management was nothing if not patient, but this time their patience and diligence would come back to haunt them.

Since the recordings were stored on offline systems, the Apogee people were convinced that they wouldn't be vulnerable to Matrix glitches—until a Crash-based surge in the building's power delivery system caused a short, which in turn sparked a massive fire. Because emergency-services personnel were stretched to the breaking point, help didn't arrive until the building was fully engulfed. Everything inside—including the JetBlack recordings—was destroyed.

Apogee went bankrupt shortly thereafter. Their remaining assets were acquired by another company, which was subsequently acquired by Horizon in 2069. One of the original Apogee executives, Ari Tarkasian, remained through the two mergers and is now a "lead synergist" (Horizon's decentralized equivalent to a middle manager position) for Shangri-La Productions, one of Horizon's music subsidiaries.

Tarkasian and the other synergists on his management team use various sophisticated networks and systems—from forecasting agents to data mining analysis to future markets to street gossip snitches—to keep in touch with the music culture's latest developments. Their job is to monitor, keep pace with, and influence the culture industry, which includes keeping an eye out for up-and-coming talent, subcultural trends in their formative stages, and of course rumors of anything potentially *big*.

Due to Horizon's exhaustive research, it recently came to Tarkasian's attention that a mysterious and anonymous email had been received by several of Seattle's top producers and artists. At least one of them had pursued the matter far enough to be offered a chance to buy a once-in-a-lifetime piece of history: a disk containing lost JetBlack recordings.

When Tarkasian heard this, he was astonished. Was it possible that another copy did exist? He immediately set about trying to track down the email's originator in order to obtain the disk before it could be sold to anyone else. Though he is using





the resources of Shangri-La (and to a lesser degree, Horizon) to help him with his search, so far he has told no one else about its purpose, representing it simply as a hunt for a promising new Goblin Rock act. These things have a way of getting out, however, and this is no exception.

Others have also gotten wind of the disk's existence, including the shadowy party behind the "Mr. Johnson" who arranges to meet with the player characters. Johnson, a flamboyant troll, tells the team simply that someone has stolen a disk from his employer and he has reason to believe that the thief is trying to peddle the disk on the black market. Johnson wants it back by any means necessary with no questions asked. Their first job is to figure out who's stolen the disk, and then to get it back. Ideally this should be by stealing it back from the thief, but if necessary they are authorized to make an offer to "ransom" it back. Either way, Johnson is adamant about the fact that this must be done quickly before the thief is able to offload the disk.

Through detective work, contacts, and Matrix hacking, the team discovers that the person offering the chip for sale is a guy named Kerwin Loomis, the owner of a dive club in Redmond called the Coda. If they go there to talk to him, they'll have to deal with members of a local gang he's hired as security. The gang should provide some challenge, but not too much. The real problem they face is that while they take care of the gang members, Kerwin slips out the back door, taking off with the disk and running for his life.

Fortunately for them, Loomis isn't very good at covering his tracks. It won't take them very long to track him down. Unfortunately for them (and Loomis), a Shangri-La strike team hired by Ari Tarkasian had the same idea; they both find him right about the same time. If the team succeeds in dealing with the corp agents, they find themselves in possession of an old-fashioned optical disk with the mysterious legend, "Carrion Sessions, '48, JB. For enlightenment, seek out absent friends." If Loomis is still alive, he tries desperately to cut himself in on the deal—but he'll settle for not getting killed.

With a little legwork, the characters can determine that the disk is from a recording session at Carrion Studios in 2048, most likely from dead legendary rocker JetBlack. The only problem is that they can't read the contents of the disk. The data format requires ancient tech to read; even if they manage to find something that will read it, they're still only able to get a badly mangled version without any of the essential emotional sim components. The rest is encrypted with some sort of strange bi-level algorithm that's resistant to all attempts at hacking—especially when the hacker realizes that attempting to mess with it and failing will result in the destruction of the information on the disk. By this time, the team should realize they have a potential goldmine and that speed and care are of the essence.

If the team is still curious, they can find out more information by tracking down the former ace recording engineer of the now-defunct Carrion Studios, or by locating the "absent friends." This clue refers to a member of The Shadows (a band that was as successful as JetBlack around the same time period, and well known for a close friendship with the angst-rocker)—though she no longer possesses the encryption key.

While they're tracking this information down, though, Ari Tarkasian and his Shangri-La team haven't been idle. There's also

the threat of a new player on the scene, one no one realizes is there: JetBlack isn't dead, and he's heard rumors of the disk. He's a vampire in the process of launching a new pseudonymous career as a Matrix *idoru* and wants the disk back, since he gave it to his now-dead friend, K-Spot, and doesn't really want anyone else profiting from his lost work.

As the runners contact Mr. Johnson and set up a meet to hand over the disk, JetBlack sends some of his people—a group of trusted gangers led by another vampire—to persuade the team to attend a meet before making any decisions and assure the runners that attending this meet will be well worth their while. They hint that they'll pay at least twice what Mr. Johnson was offering for the disk. JetBlack's representative gives the team an address and tells them to meet there just after dark.

The meet spot proves to be a spooky graveyard that happens to contain a large (and rather famous in its day) Jim-Morrison-style memorial marker commemorating JetBlack's death. When the runners turn up, JetBlack's people surround them. The spokeswoman makes their offer: namely, that they represent JetBlack's interests and want the disk back. She offers the team a significant sum for it, no questions asked. Now the team is in a tough position: do they accept the offer (or even try to get her to increase it), or do they remain loyal to their original employer—perhaps with an eye toward trying to get Johnson to raise his fee in light of new information?

As they ponder what to do, they're faced with a new problem: Tarkasian's Shangri-La team has found them again, and this time, he's sent shadowrunners instead of corp security flunkies. Now it's a three-way battle, with JetBlack's people as the unknown quantity: will they fight on the team's side to ensure the safety of the disk, join forces with the newcomers and collect the spoils at the end, or will they simply fade into the background and wait to see how things pan out?

When the smoke clears, what decision will the runners make (assuming they've survived the battle, of course)? Their decision could determine their futures as shadowrunners for some time to come—especially since they have no idea of the true identity of Mr. Johnson's "employer."

MR. JOHNSON, I PRESUME

SCAN THIS

A new Mr. Johnson—a flamboyant troll—hires the runners. He makes it clear that he's representing a third party and wants the characters to obtain an old-style optical disk. It contains important data files stolen from the people he represents. He wants the runners to find out who stole it and get it back by whatever means are necessary. He asserts that speed is of the essence, since he has heard rumors that the thief might try to sell the disk.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Read the following to the characters:

Another day, another struggle for survival on the mean streets of the sprawl. It's raining, Lone Star's running a high-profile "serve and protect" visibility campaign lately, and pickings have been a little lean for you and your team. Occupational haz-



ard, *omae*—newbies gotta make a rep before they get the good jobs, but they gotta get the good jobs before they can make a rep. Ever heard of Catch-22? Congratulations—you're living it.

You're awake one night pondering where you're going to get next month's soymilk money when a familiar number pops up in the corner of your AR display. Your fixer's on the line, and that can only mean one thing—a job. Cred. A way to keep the wolves off your back for a couple more weeks—if you survive, that is.

"Yeah, I got a job for you," the fixer says. "Looks like something you guys should be able to handle. Meet Mr. Johnson at 21:00 at Infinity. The meet'll be in one of the private conference rooms—tell the elf bartender *chica* that you're with the Johnson party and she'll show you where to go. Oh, and dress like you know what you're doing, willya?"

If they accept the offer, read the following:

Infinity is one of the current novahot nightspots on the Seattle scene. Before you even schmooze past the formidable pair of troll bouncers at the door, you can hear and feel the pounding beats of the latest club hits. Once you're inside, the bassline thrums through the walls and floor like a giant subsonic heartbeat, making it difficult even to breathe out of time with the music. All around, people dressed in the latest clubwear fashions writhe and gyrate on the dancefloor, with holographic images skittering over and above the moving display and adding to the sensory overload.

When you subscribe your PAN to the club's network, things get even more chaotic; Dozens of messages and signs flash across your vision, everything from mundane AROs, like directions to the restrooms and a list of the bar specials, to private messages from clubbers who want to get to know you better. Adjusting your commlink's settings to filter out unwanted information, you're glad that you and your team can use your links to communicate, since you sure aren't going to hear anything audibly over the music.

You spot the elf bartender your fixer mentioned immediately—she's the only woman back there, and she's a beauty.

When they arrive at the meet and are introduced to Mr. Johnson, read the following:

You are greeted by a troll of medium height, no longer young but not quite middle-aged. He's handsome in a rugged sort of way, wearing a purple and chartreuse suit in the latest style that somehow manages to stay on the tasteful side.

"Welcome," he says, smiling. "Please sit down. I'm Mr. Johnson, and I trust that *<fixer's name>* sent you. Can I get you anything?"

"Shall we get down to business, then?"

"Someone has stolen an object from the people I represent. We would like to get it back quickly, as we have reason to believe that this person is trying to sell it. What you're looking for is some music-related data that's important to my employer's business. I don't know who stole it—my employer's home was broken into a couple of days ago, and the disk was taken along with some other items in which we have no particular interest. Your best bet is probably to keep your ears open to whatever channels you think might be appropriate—if the thief is going to sell it, word will have to get out that it's available. The object storing the data

is an old-style optical disk. We want both disk and data returned, in the eventuality that the one no longer resides on the other. In case it's not clear, my employers don't want the disk's data getting into the hands of anyone but themselves, so if the data gets out, we expect you to track down and eliminate any copies.

"Once you've located it, the second part of the job is to track down the person who's offering it for sale—probably not the same person who's offering the information, since the thief will probably be working through intermediaries—and get the disk back. You can do this in whatever way you see fit: if you can get it back by making an offer for it, my employers can cover the arrangement and take care of getting my money back later. If you'd prefer something a little more larcenous, that's fine too. Just do it as quickly as possible and make sure the disk is not harmed.

"I'm authorized to offer your team 10,000¥ for the job, half up front and half upon the return of the disk to me. Do we have a deal?"

HOOKS

You shouldn't need any in at the beginning of this scene—a team of newbie runners would be idiots not to accept an offer of work, especially one this straightforward. After all, that's why they became shadowrunners in the first place. If they're afraid of a little action, suggest that maybe they might be happier as accountants or short-order cooks.

For the meet itself, play up the club—describe the sights, sounds, and smells that the runners encounter—and don't forget what's going on in the Matrix. The scene both in the meat world and in augmented reality should be frenetic, exciting and just a tiny bit dangerous. Use vivid descriptions to help them get the sense that they're about to enter the world of the "real" shadowrunner—that they're not here to party, socialize, or "be seen," which might be difficult if any of them are well known on the club scene.

Experienced teams will probably be more jaded about this standard "meet Johnson and get the job" setup, but you can hook them in by playing up Johnson's connections to the entertainment industry—and possibly even hinting that he might be willing to share a few of these connections if they can get the job done to his satisfaction.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Infinity is one of the current hot nightspots in Seattle, a place where people go to see and be seen. Play up the chaotic sense of hedonism. Take a little time to let the team interact with the place before hustling them to the meet. If you let the place make an impression, the team could easily decide this is a new favorite, giving you a recurring set piece to use in your games.

Their first challenge will be getting in. The pair of troll bouncers at the door have been instructed to reject anybody who isn't dressed in fashionable clubwear, along with anyone who looks particularly scruffy, ugly, or dirty. If the team isn't correctly attired, a 50¥ bribe (for each troll) should be enough to make the bouncers look the other way, barring a decision on the part of the runners to escalate the situation or make trouble.

Weapons are another matter. Anyone entering the club must pass through a magnetic anomaly detector (MAD), Rating





3. If any firearms are discovered, the patron will be asked politely to check them or (leave and come back without them). Knives and other small hand weapons are allowed, but characters should not try to bring in anything larger—a katana, for example.

Once inside, the characters will find themselves in the midst of a loud, crowded scene. The club has two dance floors, one featuring a live band and one with a DJ pounding out dance tunes. The bar, which takes up the entire back wall of the club, is stocked with every kind of liquor (synthetic and real) imaginable. A small army of bartenders and waitrons keep up with drink orders, both in person and over the club's AR network.

Emphasize the scene in AR—depending on how much information the characters' commlinks are set to gather, they can be getting everything from the basic public-safety AROs (pointing our restrooms and emergency exits) to a floorplan of the club's public areas, menus and liquor lists for the bar, different music broadcast on different AR channels (so clubgoers can tailor their musical experience to their tastes), opportunities to purchase music at a discount from the live band, notices for upcoming events at the club, and ads for stores where the hottest clubwear can be purchased. And that's just the stuff sponsored by the club itself: each character (assuming he or she isn't

running in hidden mode or hasn't blocked such things) will get numerous solicitations from members of both sexes to do everything from dance to go off in a private room for a little extracurricular activity. Have fun with this and let the characters get a good taste of what AR has to offer.

The elven bartender, Sarissa, is expecting the team's arrival, but she's not above trying to make a little cred on the deal—she'll play coy when the Johnson party is mentioned, pretending not to remember the correct information, but her memory will return if she is given a bribe of any amount, if a team member makes a successful Con (Seduction) + Charisma or Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Test against her Charisma 6 + Negotiation 3, or if she believes the team won't "play along" and might become hostile. One way or the other, though, she'll give up the information.

"You'll find your party in the Blue Room," she says. A new room appears on their commlinks' floorplan diagram, along with a code to allow them entry to the room.

The Blue Room is on the club's second floor, accessible via a wide catwalk surrounding the lower level. The catwalk is lined with several such doors, probably leading to other conference rooms. Attempting to assense them will reveal nothing (they're

Troll Bouncers

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM PR ARM

9 3 3 7 2 3 2 3 6 6 1 13 2 1/1

Skills: Clubs 2, Etiquette (Street) 3 (+2), Intimidation 3, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Notes: Reach +1, Thermographic Vision, Natural Armor +1

shielded). Passing a few clubbers having amorous moments in shadowy corners, the team can use the code Sarissa gave them to get inside. The first thing they'll notice upon entering is that the place is decorated entirely in blue. The second thing they'll notice is that it's surprisingly quiet, given the din outside—the soundproofing here is amazing.

This room in particular is a conference room, with an oval table made of genuine wood (oak with walnut inlay, for any characters who might have a relevant Knowledge skill) and several chairs. Mr. Johnson is waiting for them, sipping a drink and tapping something into his commlink. A mushroom-shaped white-noise generator (Rating 4) is prominent in the middle of the table.

Mr. Johnson's real name is Darius St. George—or at least, that's the name he uses when he's not hiring runners. He isn't telling the team the truth: he's never even seen the disk in question, nor actually was it stolen from his employer. The whole thing is a sham, just in case the runners have a conscience. His client believes that sympathetic runners are more likely to avoid looking too closely into the situation, nor does the client want its name attached to the project. Darius's client wants the disk, so he's hiring the team to find out who's selling it. Since the disk wasn't actually *stolen*, the employer wouldn't even mind paying for it; the only important thing is that it ends up in the client's hands when the smoke clears.

If the runners try to negotiate and raise the price, allow them to make a Charisma + Negotiation Opposed Test against Mr. Johnson (who has Negotiation 5 and Charisma 4). Each net hit results in him raising his offer by 1,000¥ (though he'll only agree to pay the extra on completion, with no additional payment up front). He can't give the team any other help with locating the thief, except to suggest that they tap contacts in the music or entertainment industries. He won't tell them specifically what's on the disk beyond a vague, "It's some music files that are of significant personal and sentimental importance to my employer." If they ask him for more specifics about the disk, he says, "I'm not sure exactly what the format was—it was in a drawer with a bunch of other disks and chips. All I was told is that it's some kind of old-style optical disk." If they want to inspect the place from which it was stolen, he refuses. "That's not going to be possible, I'm afraid. My employer is a very private person, and he's reluctant to allow anyone into his home." If they want details on what else was stolen, he claims it was nothing of significance or that would help track the thief. If the runners balk at being asked to track down the data should it get out, Mr. Johnson will assure them that it is unlikely to get spread far and wide by anyone, as its value is purely in its rareness and obscurity.

If the team's magician assesses Mr. Johnson, he'll glance over with amusement and comment, "It's rude to stare, y'know," though he won't ask the magician to stop. On the astral plane he shows up as what he appears to be: a troll with no magical abilities and minimal cyberware (most of it in his head). His attitude is somewhat urgent and focused, but nowhere near panicked or desperate. He's relaxed and seems to be enjoying the exchange.

If the runners attempt to discover Mr. Johnson's identity (perhaps by snapping his picture with a cybereye and then showing it around), they won't have too much trouble discovering

that his real name is Darius St. George and that he is primarily a behind-the-scenes music sim producer who specializes in finding and promoting new acts. In other words, nothing that would seem strange in a guy who's looking for a lost music disk (see Legwork, p. 49).

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

This scene should play out effectively for beginning and experienced teams alike, since even a team converted from *Shadowrun, Third Edition* is probably experiencing things like augmented reality for the first time. An experienced team might be a little less eager to jump in and accept the job—you might consider allowing Johnson to increase his offer a bit more (perhaps raising it by 2-3,000¥ for each net hit on the Opposed Negotiation Test), but otherwise there should be no real need to punch anything up for this scene.

If the team is new, you can also add a bit more challenge by placing some of their friends at the club—they could spot the runners and want to party, making the team have to decide whether they're going to act like "professional" shadowrunners and risk annoying their friends, or whether they'll consider it worth the risk to party for awhile before or after the meet. If they do the latter, Johnson might notice and his opinion of their professionalism might drop appropriately.

DEBUGGING

Despite the straightforward nature of the scene, a few things can still go wrong. If the team causes trouble in the club (gets into a fight, hassles the troll bouncers, or tries to get in while carrying inappropriate weapons or gear), try reminding the players that they're here as professionals, especially if this is their first job. The impressions they make here can follow them for a long time. Remind them that the shadow community is actually fairly small and potential employers hear quickly about teams that can't be trusted to act like pros.

If they try to ask Johnson for significantly more than he's willing to pay for the job, have him remind them that this is a simple snatch-and-grab coupled with some elementary data-snooping. He'll be sympathetic to the fact that they're a new team and assure them that the pay he's offering is fair for the type of job it is. If you feel it would help, have him offer a larger percentage up front or perhaps a small bonus when they return the disk to him.

If they simply refuse the job, there isn't much you can do. Again, try reminding them that they're new at this and refusing work is a good way to get a bad rep out of the gate. Try to find out what it is about the job that they don't like and adjust if you can, but you can't force them to take it. When they go to look for their next job, play up the fact that some potential employers are avoiding them and others are looking at them suspiciously because they're "too good for the work."

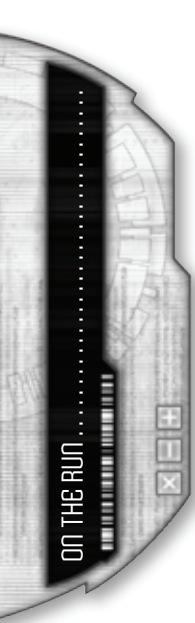
GAMEMASTER NOTES

Here are a few tips for beginning gamemasters:

Getting the Team Together

"You all meet in a bar/tavern/inn." That's the classic way to get a team of new RPG characters together in just about every genre, but it's so old it's become a cliché. For *Shadowrun*, it also





doesn't make a lot of sense—in a line of work where secrecy and paranoia are the norm, would you trust your life to a group of lowlifes you just met in a bar? Fortunately, there are many more plausible ways of bringing the various characters together for the first time:

- Have them hand-picked by a fixer for this job based on their skills and reputations.
- Have them all be members (or ex-members) of the same gang, corp team, military unit, extended family, or other organization.
- Have them introduced to each other through contacts or friends of friends.
- Have them all present individually at a place or event. Set up an encounter (such as a plane hijacking, gang attack, or Lone Star raid) and let them discover that they work well together.

At least one of the characters should have a fixer as a contact—this would be the one who lines up the job for them with Mr. Johnson (and gets a “finder’s fee” as a reward). This fixer contacts the character(s) that he or she knows, and sends them to the meet, telling them to bring along a team. If none of the characters have a fixer contact, then they are approached by one who’s heard of them through other contacts. If you need a fixer, see the *Fixer: Smiley* sidebar on p. 13.

Meets and Mr. Johnson

Most classic shadowruns start with a meet with the “Johnson”—that’s where the team scopes out its potential employer, finds out the details of the job (including how much they’re going to get paid) and makes any arrangements for additional requirements. “Mr. Johnson” is the shorthand way to refer to the often secretive employers in the *Shadowrun* world—since they often represent megacorporations or other powerful entities, they don’t want their identities known. Smart shadowrunners mind their manners around Mr. Johnson, since he’s the man or woman (there are plenty of *Ms. Johnsons* out there, too) who holds the cred. Don’t be afraid to have Johnson get up and walk out if the runners aren’t showing him proper respect—give them one warning, but after that they’re on their own. They’ll learn to be on their best behavior next time.

Established Teams

If your players already have an established team of shadowrunners, you can still run this adventure—you might just need to increase the power level of the opposition and possibly the amount of cred the team is offered for the run. The *Pushing the Envelope* section of each scene will contain information on how to beef up opponents and other features (such as computer systems) to make them effective against more seasoned shadowrunners.

Transplanting to another Locale

On the Run is assumed to take place in Seattle and features locations and details from that city. There’s no reason, however, why you can’t transplant it to any other sprawl of reasonable size: if you’d prefer to set it in Hong Kong, New York City, or London, for example, go right ahead. You’ll need to translate the Seattle locations into their counterparts in whatever city you choose. The maps provided should still work fine, but feel free to alter them if you like.

Scoping the Joint

A common trait of newbie players/runners (and even some more advanced ones who never grow out of it) is to attempt to scope out every aspect of a situation, anticipating every eventuality and potential problem before committing to a course of action. They’ll arrive at the meet site two hours early and scan it for bugs, spirits, wandering drones, cute girls, and everything else they can think of—and if they don’t find any, they’ll start ranging out to the areas *around* the meet spot. Some of this is normal, expected, and intelligent, but if they go too far it can get boring for players and gamemasters alike.

What players sometimes fail to realize is that, as the gamemaster, you control all the eventualities. For every problem they can anticipate, you can come up with a challenge they’d never think of. It’s your job to pace the game by helping the characters to get the information they need without bogging things down. One way to do this is to throw obstacles in their path—maybe a contact calls and needs a favor, preventing them from showing up early, or maybe the club’s security wants to know why they’re doing all this snooping around. If you know there’s nothing useful to find, let them make a single appropriate dice roll to sum up their search and give them information accordingly.

Augmented Reality

If this is the team’s first run (whether the players are newbies to *Shadowrun* in general or just to the Twentieth Anniversary Edition), this scene is an excellent chance to highlight the new augmented reality experience. Infinity is networked to the hilt, with everything from public safety AROs to the latest in bar-management technology, augmented entertainment, and social-networking applications. That’s just the club—the patrons add a whole new dimension. Use this scene to showcase AR and help the players understand all the cool ways they can incorporate it into their lives. Let them communicate via commlink and subvocalization (since they can’t hear each other over the music), try to hack some of the club’s systems or other guests’ commlinks, or deal with the amorous advances of drunken club kids who’ve fallen hard for a character and won’t stop sending him or her solicitations. Finally, help them visualize what AR looks like: how it’s overlaid over the real world, facilitating real-time interaction with the Matrix instead of forcing the user to submerge him- or herself fully in virtual reality. It may not be as flat-out cool as some of the things you can do in VR, but you don’t have to shut your mind off to the real world to use it, either. It’s computing for the masses, and it’s ubiquitous in the world of 2070.

Making Things Up

As the gamemaster, there will be many times when you’ll be called upon to make something up. It’s guaranteed that this adventure (or pretty much *any* published adventure) won’t contain every bit of information about everything that your players will ask you about, want to interact with, or otherwise need to know about. In cases like these, it’s your job to make something up.

The best way to do this is to consult the *SR4A* book, find the rules that govern what you’re looking for, and make an educated decision. For example, say a character wants to break down a door. The adventure doesn’t give you the door’s barrier



rating, so you consult *SR4A* for the Barrier Rating Table (p. 166, if you're curious). Since you decide that the door in question is a normal, non-security door, a glance at the table shows that "Door" is listed under "Cheap Material," with an Armor Rating of 2 and a Structure Rating of 3. Though not all conceivable barriers are listed in the table, you can usually extrapolate from what's there. If it's not quite right, don't worry about it. It's almost always better to be a little bit wrong with a decision than to bog down the game trying to get everything just right.



SR4A REFERENCES

Topic	Page
Negotiation	130
Fixers	290
Augmented Reality	219
Making Opposed Tests	63
Weapons Scanner (MAD Scanner)	262, 334
Astral Barriers	194
Gamemaster Advice	271



WHO'S SELLING?

SCAN THIS

The first part of the job requires the team to find out if anybody is offering Mr. Johnson's disk for sale. By using their contacts, they find out that Nabo, an up-and-coming young ork-rock musician, has been offered the chance to buy the disk. Since the only way for the team to get close to him is during one of his shows, they arrange to sneak backstage while he's performing and hack his commlink to get the information. This leads them to the seller's intermediary, who they can intimidate into coughing up the seller's identity and location.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Read the following to the characters:

Okay, so your first step is finding out who's selling this hot disk. Since the odds are pretty good he's not going to offer to sell it to *you*, that means you should probably be looking for somebody he did offer it to. Time to put the word out on the street—but discreetly, or everybody and their dog will start thinking something's up and start looking for the disk. If it gets sold before you get your mitts on it, Johnson's going to be *very* unhappy.

Time to start making some calls.

When they hear back from their contacts that Nabo got the email, read the following:

You've heard of Nabo. Everybody's heard of Nabo, unless they live under a rock. The whole Orxploitation movement has settled down somewhat in the last five or six years from its former white-hot glory, but that doesn't mean it's going away anytime soon. Every few months the music-sim companies find

FIXER: SMILEY

If the team doesn't already have a fixer (most likely the contact of one of the runners), Smiley can step in and take the job. A former shadowrunner who hit a decent run of luck and decided to get out of the runner biz before somebody shot his head off, he's made a successful transition to the other side of the fence. He remembers the breaks he got when he was a newbie, and so he enjoys helping new teams get established. Smiley is always on the lookout for promising talent. (Of course, the fact that newbies let him get away with skimming a larger percentage off their fee doesn't enter into the equation—not at all. Really.)



Smiley is an ork—a big, bluff "good ol' boy" with a CAS accent and a preference for baseball caps (though he doesn't seem to have a loyalty to any particular team). As you might expect by his name, he sports a wide, tusky grin that tends to make people like and trust him immediately, a feature he emphasizes by keeping his tusks polished to a brilliant white. It doesn't take long to realize, however, that there's a tough negotiator behind that grin. Smiley never lets anybody have anything for free. He doesn't try to screw over his talent, though, and he is willing to go out of his way to find work for people he likes. He's greedy, but he's trustworthy—what more can you ask?

SMILEY

B A R S C I L W E S S I N I T I P C M P R

7 2 3 6 3 4 3 4 6 7 1 12 4

Skills: Automatics 4, Dodge 4, Etiquette 4, Intimidation 4, Negotiation 5, Perception 3

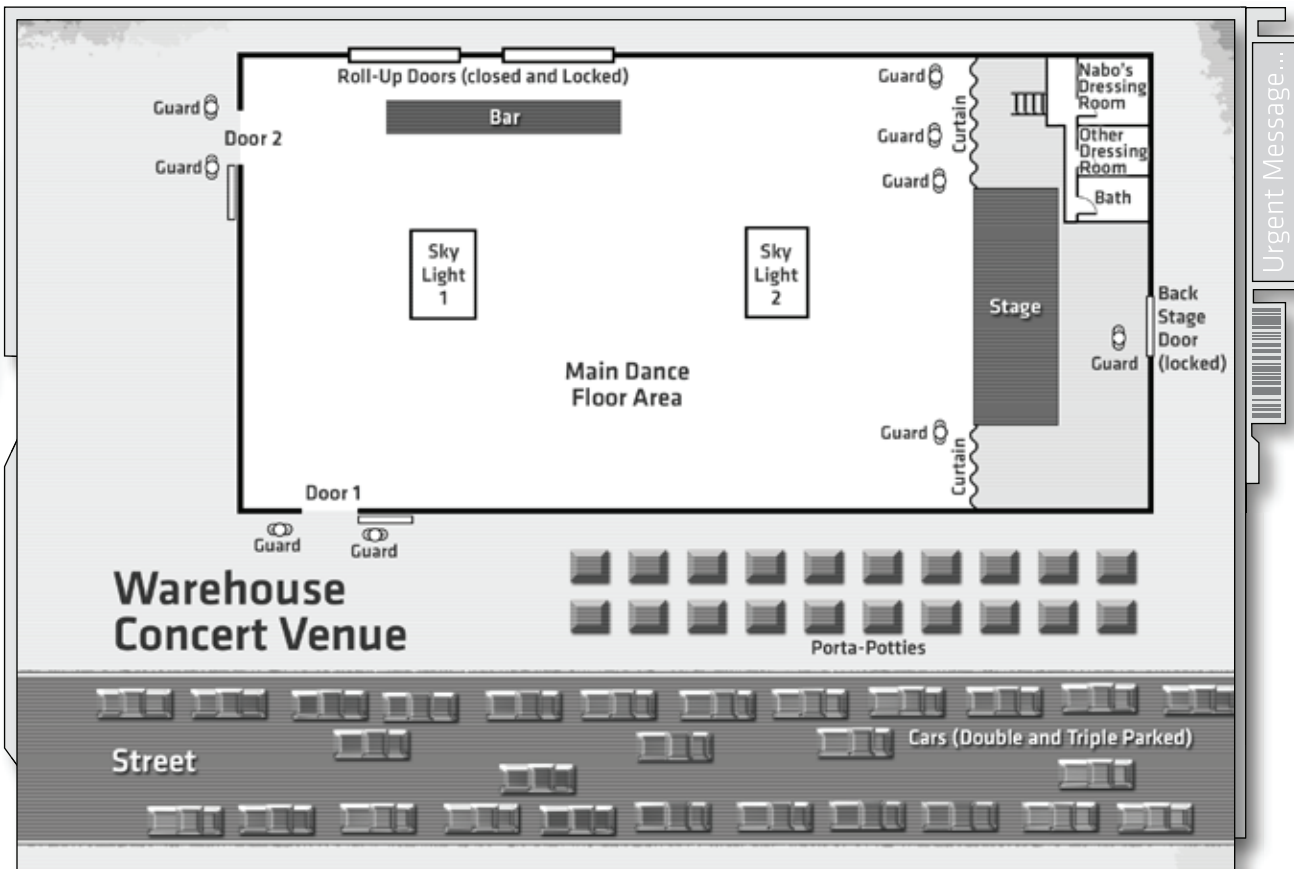
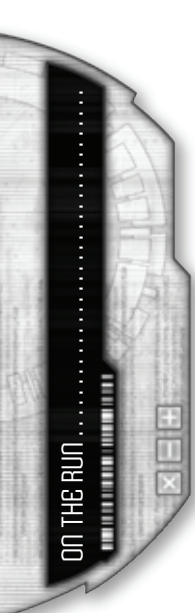
Knowledge Skills: Psychology 3, Runner Hangouts 4, Seattle Shadowrunners 4

Notes: Low-light Vision

somebody new to promote, propel up to the pop charts, and exploit until they can find a new cash cow. These days, Nabo's their golden boy. Anybody who pays attention to popular music knows his story: he's an ork ganger kid from the Seattle Barrens who loves music more than he loves firefights and selling BTLs. He makes a name for himself performing in small local clubs, gets noticed by somebody big time, and the next thing he knows he's rocketing up the charts and livin' *la vida loca*. Must be nice.

Urgent Message...





Urgent Message...

When they reach the warehouse, read the following:

Your first thought when you get a look at the place where the concert's going down is, *You've got to be kidding!* It's a warehouse. Not a club artfully disguised to look like a warehouse. Not a former warehouse that's been converted into a club. It's a friggin' warehouse.

Smack dab in the middle of a crumbling industrial district near the docks, the place is obviously not prepared for the number of people who'll be showing up for the gig. Cars and motorcycles choke the streets, everywhere you look people are double- and triple-parked, and you're pretty sure that line of porta-potties off to the side isn't going to be adequate to handle the crowd (even if they are super-sized to accommodate orks and trolls, the majority of the concertgoers). Already quite a few people are milling around outside, and you can hear the booming sounds of music coming from inside the badly soundproofed walls.

You figure whoever's sponsoring Nabo must have dropped a lot of cred for bribes to make this happen, since you don't spot even a single Lone Star cruiser prowling around, nor do you see any angry fire marshals. Yeah, this is the Barrens, but even then it takes big money to get something this big ignored.

HOOKS

The team might be reluctant to try to get the information they seek by hacking their way into a high-profile star's commlink, so they might want to try to find another source. Unfortunately for them, no other sources are forthcoming—they're lucky that one of their contacts remembered Nabo mentioning the email in the first place. If they still insist, let them try, but all their searches will

come up blank for the next several hours—or however long it takes to make them nervous enough to risk going after Nabo's data before he finishes his concert, leaves for his tour, and becomes essentially unavailable for several weeks.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Kerwin Loomis didn't have the faintest idea how to go about putting out the word about the disk without having it traced right back to him. He turned to Willi Ishikawa, aka "Zipper," a hacker who owes Kerwin some cred but somehow never seems to get around to paying it back. In exchange for forgiving the debt, Kerwin gave the hacker a list of people he thought might be interested. He told her to send untraceable emails to the people on the list, letting them know only that "some lost tracks from a legendary dead rocker" have become available for sale, with replies directing to a blind email drop. Anybody who responded with interest would then receive a second email telling them that the legendary rocker in question was JetBlack. In other words, only those who responded to the first email actually know the details about the subject of the disk. Through an oversight on Kerwin's part, Darius St. George's name wasn't on the list (maybe he thought Darius would only be interested in *new* acts, not twenty-year-old dead ones) so he didn't get the email. Darius only found out about the offer when his mysterious employer instructed him to locate the disk in question. The truth is, Darius's employer isn't even convinced that the offer is genuine, which is why he is trusting this job to a group of newbie shadowrunners.

Only a couple of other people responded to the email (including Ari Tarkasian, former executive at Apogee Music, where



the only other copy of the sessions was destroyed in the Crash). The rest dismissed it as fraudulent.

If the runners put the word out to their contacts, roll a Charisma + Connection Extended Test (12, 1 hour) for each contact that could have even a tangential connection to the music industry. The first contact to reach 12 hits comes back with useful information: Nabo, a young ork-rock sensation on the fast track to superstardom, recently received an email from someone trying to sell lost music tracks. (The contact remembers being in a bar near Nabo's entourage's table a couple nights back and hearing them laughing about the email, with Nabo joking about how "he didn't know Elvis was still recording.")

Flush with bravado from his newfound fame but determined not to lose his "roots," Nabo is performing one last local concert at a warehouse in Redmond before moving off to start his multi-city tour. Since getting to talk to him directly is probably not going to happen since he's surrounded by handlers, bodyguards, and his old gang, the team's best bet is probably to hack his commlink and see if they can track the source of the email back to its originator. To do this, they'll need to get into the (sold-out) concert, sneak backstage, break into Nabo's dressing room, and successfully hack his commlink to get the information they're looking for, all without attracting the attention of Nabo's security, bodyguards, handlers, and gang hangers-on. Once they've got the information, they'll have to contend with trying to get out through a riot that's broken out among the fans there to see the show.

Getting In

The concert is not only sold out, it's overbooked. The local fire marshal would normally have a fit about this, except that he's been bribed handsomely to look the other way for the duration of the concert. Nabo's management and handlers aren't happy about the place he chose to hold the show: in order to accommodate all his fans but still stay true to his loyal local supporters, he and his people have rented a vacant warehouse in the Redmond Barrens. From a logistical and security standpoint, it's a nightmare. Nabo, however, is young and brash and determined not to let down those who got him where he is today. If the runners play their cards right, this could work to their advantage.

Nabo's people have spent a fortune on security, but they know they aren't going to be able to cover everything. Two burly ork or troll guards—heavily but discreetly armed—are stationed at each door, portable Rating 2 magnetic anomaly detectors have been installed at every entrance, and three MCT Fly-Spy drones (operated by a rigger from a trailer parked next to the warehouse) zoom around inside the building to keep a constant eye on things.

MCT FLY-SPY DRONE

Handling	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Armor	Sensor
+1	3/15	15	3	1	0	2

Rigger: Perception 2, Pilot Aircraft 3, Initiative 6 (both Physical and Matrix), IP 1

Nabo's crew erected a makeshift stage at one end of the warehouse and also set up a large bar (soy beer and soft drinks only) on one side. For restrooms, a huge line of plus-size portapotties has been set up outside, adding their distinctive odor to the already unpleasant smell of the area.

Behind the stage, the warehouse offices (accessible by a guarded stairway) serve as dressing rooms for Nabo and his band. A large black curtain hung from the ceiling far above divides the stairway and the offices from the stage, and a line of event-security people (ork and troll gangers from the old neighborhood) stretches out across the front of the stage to keep the crowds from getting too close. There are no seats—the whole area promises to become one giant mosh pit when the main event starts.

The team has several options for gaining entry to the concert. The most expensive is to buy tickets. Though the tickets went for a relatively modest price a few weeks back, scalpers have driven the value up to around 500¥ each. If the team doesn't feel like dropping most of their fee on getting into the concert, they'll need to come up with another plan. Options include:

- **Bribery:** It's possible to bribe one of the guards, but it'll end up costing almost as much as buying a ticket. Since the guards feel a personal connection to Nabo and his music, they look at accepting bribes as betraying one of their own. Still, everybody has a price. For 200¥ per person, the guards will look the other way.
- **Sneaking:** None of the outside guards are magically active, so an Invisibility spell will be very effective in slipping past the guards. The team will need to be careful, though, since the size of the crowd (both in number and in sheer mass) means that it won't be easy to remain unnoticed even while invisible.
- **Forgery:** The team can score fake tickets if anybody on the team has a forger contact: naturally, since these are such a hot commodity, the forger's got a few whipped up already. He'll charge 150¥ each for the forged tickets (Rating 3).
- **Seduction:** If the team includes an attractive female ork or troll, she can try to schmooze her way past the guards using seduction. The character makes an Con (Seduction) + Charisma Opposed Test (Seduction is a specialization of the Con skill) against the guard's Con (or Negotiation) + Charisma.
- **Strongarm:** One weak link in the security setup is that concert-goers have to be able to get outside to use the "facilities." Before they leave, they are given a wristband with an RFID transmitter that identifies them as a valid guest. The team could waylay some ticketholders and steal their wristbands.
- **Unconventional Entry:** The warehouse has two skylights. Both are locked, but the locks are old and easily picked. If the team can get up on the roof without being detected, they might be able to use the skylights as a point of entry, especially after the show starts. They'll still need to look out for the spotter drones inside, though.

Jager

The weakest link in security for the concert is Jager, Nabo's best friend and gang buddy. Nabo has put him in charge of security for the show over strong objections from cooler heads (such as his music label). Jager is trying to take his job very seriously, running around giving orders and making sure everything's going smoothly—and he's actually doing a decent job at it.



TROLL GUARDS (2 PER DOOR)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM PR ARM
9 2 2 8 2 2 2 3 6 4 1 13 2 7/5

Skills: Automatics 2, Close Combat Group 2, Intimidation 3, Perception 2

Gear: Armor Vest (6/4), Club, Commlink

Notes: Reach +1, Thermographic Vision, Natural Armor +1

After all, he is used to handling the kinds of people who will be attending the concert, and knocking the heads of unruly people together is one of his specialties. The only problem is, Jager has a moderate addiction to novacoke, and as the night wears on he's starting to think more about where to score his next fix (and go off and enjoy it in peace) than he is about running security.

If the team finds out about Jager's weakness (see *Behind the Scenes*, p. 14), they might be able to exploit it. First, though, they have to find him. Whenever they go looking for him, roll 1D6 (one six-sided die)—on a roll of 1, they can spot him. If they don't know what he looks like, most of the fans can point him out. He's a large, muscular, outrageously dressed ork with bright orange hair, a large bioluminescent nanotattoo on his face, and numerous glowing piercings in his nose, ears, and lips.

If the team can manage to score a hit of novacoke (not difficult—there's plenty of it to go around among the concertgoers), track down Jager, and give him a semi-plausible reason for why they want to go backstage (such as they're longtime fans and want to party with Nabo, they're looking for an autograph for their little boy back home, or they've got a business deal to discuss), he'll talk to the orks at the curtain and let them slip backstage.

Keep in mind, though, that the music label isn't staffed by idiots—they don't trust Jager, which means that their own people are circulating around as well. If they spot the deal going down (give them a Perception + Intuition (2) Test with a dice pool of 5 as often as you prefer) they will call more security guards to follow the team.

Getting Backstage

Once the runners get inside, they immediately find themselves in a crush of bodies, many of them quite large. A good estimate is that 65-70 percent of the attendees are orks or trolls, with the remainder made up of humans, elves, and dwarfs who are either into Goblin Rock or just want to be where the good party is. If the team waits until the show starts, Nabo is already onstage belting out his biggest hits through banks of speakers the size of small trucks. It's impossible to hear anything in here

JAGER

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM PR ARM
8 2 4 (+1)* 7 2 (+1)* 3 2 2 6 7 1 12 2 6/4

Skills: Automatics 3, Close Combat Group 3, Perception 2 (+1)*

Gear: Armor Vest (6/4), Commlink, Ruger Super Warhawk

Notes: Low-light Vision, High Pain Tolerance 1*, Moderate Addiction to novacoke (* asterisks indicate bonuses while high)

unless you yell directly into someone's ear, so commlink communication is a must. There's very little traffic on AR here except for whatever broadcasts and invitations the attendees are putting out, along with a virtual swag table where you can buy Nabo's music, concert t-shirts, and other memorabilia.

Fortunately for the team, the security guards are more concerned with keeping the crowd from rushing the stage than they are with keeping people out of the dressing room. The dance floor is one large seething mass of metahumanity, slamming into each other, spilling drinks, yelling (even though nobody can hear them), and generally having an old-fashioned violent good time. Most of the non-orks and -trolls (and even some of the smaller orks) are staying out of the crush, keeping near the periphery of the crowd.

The curtain across the back part of the warehouse is made of heavy canvas and guarded by four orks stationed at 5-meter intervals. They're instructed not to let anybody beyond the curtain unless they're:

- Wearing an "all access" RFID badge.
- An attractive female ork looking for fun (i.e., a groupie).
- A member of Nabo's old gang, the Black Fangs.

ORK BACKSTAGE GUARDS (4)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM PR ARM
7 3 4 6 3 2 2 3 6 6 1 12 2 6/4

Skills: Automatics 2, Close Combat Group 2, Con 2, Intimidation 2, Perception 2

Gear: Armor Vest (6/4), Club, Commlink, some have Ceska Black Scorpion machine pistols on hand.

Notes: Low-light Vision

The team has several options, including:

- Steal an all-access badge (there are several around—all of the guards are wearing them, and several people in the crowd seem to be sporting them as well).
- Distract or incapacitate one or more of the ork guards and slip under the curtain.
- Use a Mask or Physical Mask spell to disguise a teammate as a cute ork girl.
- Bribe a cute ork girl to go up to the dressing room, grab the commlink, and smuggle it down.

Breaking into the Dressing Room

Once they get on the other side of the curtain, they will see several techs scurrying around, intent on their business (and pretty much ignoring the characters unless they look blatantly out of place). A metal stairway leads up to a catwalk, where three doors are visible. Each door leads to an office with a large window overlooking the warehouse floor; the one in the middle has its window covered by another curtain. An ork sits on a rickety wooden chair, bopping away to the music and smoking a cigarette.

The team shouldn't find it too difficult to deal with the ork guard, but if they leave him lying on the catwalk, it will be quickly discovered (1D6 minutes).

Nabo's dressing room is a combination of abandoned office and star's hideaway. The desk and office chairs have been hastily



INCOMING FEED.....

pushed against the wall to make room for a comfortable-looking oversized couch, a table holding a wide array of liquor, and a portable wardrobe with mirror. A bathroom with a small shower stall is visible through an open door. The only window is the curtained one looking over the warehouse. With the door closed, the sound from down below fades to something you can talk loudly over.

As the runners burst in, two scantily-dressed ork girls are lounging with an ork male on the couch. All three appear to be drunk and/or high. None of them are armed, though the male has a heavy pistol in the pocket of his synthleather jacket, which is tossed over the back of the couch. With a successful Perception + Intuition (2) Test, the runners can spot Nabo's commlink. It was knocked to the floor next to the couch after the orks sat down and got comfortable.

Assuming the runners deal successfully with both the door guard and the three orks inside, they will have 1D6 minutes to finish what they came for before someone else comes in. (This time period should be halved if any of the orks guarding the curtain downstairs were killed or violently beaten.)

Hacking the Commlink

With typical rock star brazenness, Nabo's commlink has zero security, so it's a trifling matter to access it directly. A successful Computer + Logic (1) Test allows the team's hacker or technomancer to recover Loomis's email from the trash file. It would be smarter to grab the file and try to trace it later, but if the hacker decides to do it now, it will require an Extended Computer + Tracking (15, 1 Initiative Pass) Test to get a suc-

cessful trace on the address that sent the email. It's also possible, of course, to simply grab the entire commlink and take off with it to hack it at leisure.

It's clear that whoever sent the email was trying to route it through a series of anonymous mail drops, but they weren't very good at it. The address traces back to a hacker who goes by the handle "Zipper" (see p. 20).

There are a few other useful files on the commlink as well, if the hacker takes the time to find them—this takes only a Computer + Data Search (2) Test for each (Nabo's not too good about password-protecting his files). There are commcode numbers and Matrix addresses for several famous people, lyrics from songs Nabo is working on, an itinerary for where he will be staying during the upcoming tour, and financial information. All of this information has the potential to be used for profit—either for blackmail or by selling it to one or more "celebrity" periodicals or Matrix sites (they're always hungry for information about anybody in the public eye). As the gamemaster, it's up to you to decide how much cred (if any) the team can make from this information—it could even lead to another adventure.

Getting Out

Getting out should be easier than getting in—should be, that is. Of course, somehow things never work out the way they should. While the team is busy upstairs, an altercation breaks out below between members of two rival gangs. The show is in danger of turning into a riot.



The runners' first clue that something's up should be that the curtain guards are gone. The second clue is the sound of gunfire over the music. Nabo is trying to quell the hostilities by going on with the show while the record-label people are trying to hustle him off the stage before he gets hurt.

Use your discretion for this part of the encounter—if you think the players might enjoy getting involved in the fight, have a few combatants on its edge notice them and approach in a drunk and threatening manner. You can also let them get out without joining the fight by carefully sneaking around the fray and ducking out the first available door (the guards have no objection to letting people out).

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Despite the fact that there's a lot going on, this encounter should be fairly easy for the characters if you don't involve them directly in the riot. If you want to punch up the opposition a bit, there are several ways you can do it:

- Add more guards, perhaps including a couple up on the roof and a few more patrolling around the outside of the building.
- Raise the chance that somebody will enter Nabo's dressing room while the team is inside, thus forcing them to either engage in combat or think fast to find a way to avoid it.
- Increase the security on Nabo's commlink. Make the runners hack their way in with an Extended Hacking + Exploit (5, 1 Initiative Pass) Test, and maybe have it protected by some Rating 4 Attack IC provided by Nabo's corporate handlers.
- Have the rigger follow the team with one of the drones as they leave the concert. He can send a group of Nabo's ganger buddies on them an hour or so later, when they think they're safe (this is especially effective if they actually stole the commlink rather than just the data).
- Involve the team more directly in the riot, perhaps having it block the exits and thus forcing them to fight or find a way to get out through the skylights.
- Have Lone Star show up in force outside the warehouse, responding to reports of a disturbance despite all the bribes to stay away.

DEBUGGING

Several things can potentially go wrong in this scene, but most of them aren't significant problems. Areas include:

- *Getting caught trying to sneak in:* If this occurs, the only things that could happen (depending on how the character(s) respond) are that they could get kicked out or beaten up. Either way, they can dust themselves off and try again. Let them have an easier time getting in the second time (the guards can't imagine they'd be stupid enough to try it again).
- *Getting discovered while inside Nabo's dressing room:* This isn't a big deal assuming that they can deal with the interlopers before they're able to call for backup. Even if the orks do manage to call, all it means is that the team will have to get things done a lot faster and probably will need to take the commlink with them.
- *Somehow managing to destroy Nabo's commlink or corrupt the files:* Either of these options only occur if a critical glitch is rolled. If they do, the team will have to find a more accomplished hacker or technomancer to recover the files at a cost of 1,000¥.

It's also possible, of course, that somebody will be seriously injured or killed during the combat. Try to avoid killing anyone at this early point in the adventure—remember, the security guards aren't great shots and nobody is trying use deadly force. Even the rioters aren't trying to kill anybody—they mostly just shoot into the air and start drunken fistfights.

GAMEMASTER NOTES

Legwork

Legwork is a critical step in most Shadowrun adventures, and usually the first step taken right after getting the job. Legwork is the process of gathering information and investigation, usually handled by talking to contacts and searching online. The rules for handling legwork are fully covered on p. 49 and also on p. 286, *SR4A* (with data searches covered on p. 230, *SR4A*). The gamemaster's most important job here is to string the information out at a good pace—if you let out information too soon, the runners may get ahead of the plot; if you mete out too little, they may get frustrated or bored. This is also the best place to roleplay interactions with the character's various contacts and acquaintances, bringing their personalities to life and reminding the characters that they are part of a shadowy social network of people who have their own lives and own interests.

Sneaking Around

There are lots of ways for characters to be sneaky in *Shadowrun*. They can do it physically by using the Stealth Group skills, distraction, or misrepresentation; magically using Invisibility, Mask, or other spells; or virtually using Hacking skill. As the gamemaster, it's your job to listen to what the players plan to do and then determine if they're successful, based on their dice rolls, your dice rolls, the stats and attributes of the opposition (metahuman and technological), and, perhaps most importantly, your gut feeling for whether what they're attempting is possible. No matter how much Infiltration skill a character possesses, he's not going to be able to sneak through a stark white room while wearing a neon orange jumpsuit if anybody's paying attention. Conversely, a character dressed all in black sneaking through a dark-colored room at night will have a much better chance at success. For magical sneaking, don't forget things like odor and sound, which Invisibility doesn't do anything about. Be creative, use common sense, but don't be unfair. If they players come up with a good idea, let the dice decide if they succeed at it. If they come up with a really good idea, you might even consider giving them a bonus to their dice pool for the roll.

Running Large Combats

You can decide how large you want the combat at the concert to be—if you'd prefer it to be small and peripheral, you can just choose a few gang flunkies out of the *Shadowrun* rulebook and place them at the edge of the crowd, basically fighting among themselves and ignoring the player characters unless the characters specifically decide to get involved. If you want to have a bigger combat, simulate its results by rolling dice to represent large groups of combatants, such as one group of gangers vs. another, tailor the results to fit the rolls, and describe the action to the players. (Note that increasing the scale of the riot isn't recom-



mended—combat is deadly and this one is basically just a way to divert attention so the team can get out without being caught. If you're determined to do it, though, we won't stop you). Again, if the characters decide to get involved, you can manage things by breaking them off into a smaller group. We'll get into more about how to run large-scale combats in *Where's the Disk?* on p. 22 and *Grave Danger* on p. 40.

Seduction (And Other Things Characters Can Often Do Better Than Players)

At a couple of points in this scene, the characters can use Seduction (which is a specialization of the Con skill) to try to get what they want. How you do this depends on your group. If you don't think they'd be comfortable with describing their seduction attempts in detail, just fall back on straight dice rolls—an Opposed Test pitting Con (Seduction) + Charisma vs. target's Con (or Negotiation) + Charisma—and tell them whether they succeed in schmoozing their way past the troll guards or into Nabo's dressing room. If you think they'd be okay with a little more roleplaying, have them describe their attempts and factor them in, perhaps allowing a +1 or -1 to the dice pool depending on how good (or bad!) their description is.

This is something you'll encounter again and again as a gamemaster. Player characters in *Shadowrun* know how to do things—fire assault weapons, hack computer systems, seduce opposition—that might not be high on your players' skill lists. That's where statistics and skill ratings come in, to simulate what the character can do and how well he can do it. It's important to separate the player from the character—your best friend might be so inept in a fight that he usually ends up injuring himself, but if his troll has Strength 9 and Unarmed Combat 5, that means he's pretty darn good at it and should be treated accordingly by NPCs.

Hacking

Hacking has been simplified significantly for *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. Still, it would be impossible to do justice to the hacking rules in a short section, so it is recommended that you read through the *The Wireless World* chapter in *SR4A* and familiarize yourself with it before you run this scene.

Detecting Invisibility

Many new gamemasters (and overeager players) tend to treat the Invisibility spell as a way to literally disappear—to make oneself completely undetectable and sneak around with impunity. Remember, all the spell does is make it so a character can't be seen—it doesn't affect any of the other senses. Other people can still smell, hear, and feel invisible characters; the spell doesn't prevent their being noticed if they have to brush past a person in a crowd or even walk close enough to create a change in the air. Remember too that the spell only makes the target invisible, not anything she affects—an invisible character walking across a dusty floor will leave a line of very noticeable footprints.

Remember that there are two types of Invisibility spells: Invisibility and Improved Invisibility. The former only works against people (and any cyberware for which they've paid Essence), while the latter also works against technological devices.

WHAT DO THOSE NPC STATS MEAN?

Abbreviation	Attribute
B	Body
A	Agility
R	Reaction
S	Strength
C	Charisma
I	Intuition
L	Logic
W	Willpower
M	Magic
EDG	Edge
ESS	Essence
Init	Initiative
IP	Initiative Passes
CM	Condition Monitor
PR	Professional Rating (Group Edge)
F	Force
ARM	Armor (Ballistic/Impact)



Finally, there's no such thing as astral invisibility. Anyone under an Invisibility spell not only shows up on the astral plane, but they show up as being under a spell.

As a gamemaster, it's up to you how tough you want to be on invisible characters. It's your game—if you want to ignore all the side effects of the spell and simply allow the character to move unseen (most of the time, anyway), that's your call.

Using Edge

Edge is an attribute introduced in *Shadowrun, Fourth Edition*. It represents how lucky a character is and how likely it will be that things will go his or her way. Characters can use it in all sorts of ways: to negate glitches, reroll dice, go first in an Initiative Pass—they can even burn Edge points permanently in dire situations. The rules for using Edge are on page 74 of *SR4A*; you should familiarize yourself with them and with the different ways Edge can be used and regained.

NPCs

To simplify record-keeping for the gamemaster, *SR4A* suggests several methods for treating NPCs differently:

Single Condition Monitor: Rather than keeping track of individual Stun & Physical Condition Monitors for each NPC, each NPC simply has one Condition Monitor (CM) equal to the highest of the two. Both Stun and Physical damage are applied to that single Condition Monitor.

Group Initiative: All members of an NPC group go on the same Initiative.

Group Edge: When dealing with a group of NPCs, use a single Edge pool for the entire group, rather than keeping track of separate Edge scores for each NPC. A group's Edge pool equals its Professional Rating (PR).

Lieutenants: Lieutenants are the leaders of groups. They draw Edge from the group's pool, but they go on their own separate Initiative, and are generally more powerful.



Making Money On The Side

Player characters are always looking for ways to make extra cash, and this scene affords them a good one: selling the data they find on Nabo's commlink. Be aware that they will probably try to make money any way they can, up to and including looting bodies and even trying to sell body parts and cyberware. It's up to you whether you want to tolerate this in your game, and if you do, how much you want to let them get away with. Remember, blackmail makes enemies, and selling bodies makes bigger ones. In any case, most characters will at least want to sell the extra goodies they find on their vanquished opponents, so check out the Fencing rules on p. 312, *SR4A*, for prices and dice rolls.

ZIPPER

SCAN THIS

The email information gathered from Nabo's commlink has led the team to a hacker named Zipper, who hangs out at a hacker bar called the Cathode Glow. They don't know yet whether Zipper is the seller of the disk or just the intermediary, but they're about to find out. Zipper is reluctant to tell them anything, but an application of bribes or violence will loosen her lips. She rats out her friend, Kerwin Loomis, and tells the team how to find him.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

When they reach the Cathode Glow, read the following:

The Cathode Glow looks like it's been around for at least fifty years and has been going downhill for forty-nine of them. As you walk in the front door, you can feel the crawly sensation of suspicious glares from all around the room. This looks like the kind of place where old hackers go to die. There's ancient computer terminals and old-school cyberdeck equipment attached to the walls, the tables, the bar, and even the floor. You could swear some of it dates back to the previous century—and all of it seems to be in working order. In AR, the place is even weirder—each of the archaic devices is overlaid with bizarre active icon AROs that seem to be alive and watching you. An eyeball on a metal stalk cranes down from the ceiling and regards you dispassionately, followed by a monotone voice that crackles over your speakers: "Help you?"

HOOKS

The team shouldn't need any encouragement to seek out Zipper, since she's currently the only lead they have.

BEHIND THE SCENES

If the team consults contacts in the hacker community about Zipper (see *Legwork*, p. 49), they find out that she spends most of her evenings at a dive hacker bar called the Cathode Glow.

The Cathode Glow is the kind of place that attracts hardcore nerd hackers: the guys and girls whose idea of a good time is spending the weekend taking apart old cyberdecks, laptops, terminals, commlinks, and other techie toys to see what made them tick (and reassembling them to make them "better, stronger, faster"). Its claim to fame is its large collection of working computer hardware, some of which really does date back to the 20th century. Old-style screens display everything from dinosaur-era amber text up to early trideo, with nothing newer than twenty or thirty years old. Several console video games dot the room; they are still moving, though nobody appears to be playing them. It won't take long to figure out that the hackers in residence are controlling them remotely.

If the characters view the scene in AR, they will see that every piece of hardware has sprouted eyes—and in some case mouths, ears, and other body parts. If the team's hacker or technomancer makes a successful Computer + Intuition (2) Test, he or she will realize that there's a lot of cutting-edge tech seeded among the dinosaurs here, though the newer stuff is a lot less obvious. An array of sophisticated sensors scans the runners as they come in, including an agent run by the Glow's house network that scans their commlinks and shows each team member an AR display detailing any security vulnerabilities they have to well-known exploits (including a helpful set of links to the ap-

propriate software patches and a message that "it might be a good idea to fix these as soon as possible to avoid potential intrusion by hostile parties.") The old-style robots zooming around filling drink orders only appear old-style until the team gets a better look at them—what they really are is the latest tech wearing "dinosaur suits," including famous robots from old trid and TV shows.

It's quiet here, especially after the warehouse concert. Tables are spread all around the bar, arranged in small clumps and surrounded by comfortable chairs. Half the chairs are filled with hackers of various metatypes, all of them absorbed in whatever they're doing. If any interaction is going on, it's happening in the Matrix.

A successful Etiquette + Charisma Test gets them Zipper's current whereabouts. The team's hacker or technomancer needs only 1 hit, while anyone with obvious cyberware or muscle needs 3. Everybody else needs 2. She is sitting at a table in the back of the bar.

Zipper is an Amerind-Asian dwarf woman with short spiky black hair, a synthleather jacket, and biker boots. She sits with another dwarf woman, each with a drink in front of them. They appear to be playing some kind of game with their commlinks.

When the team explains why they're looking for her, she'll first act like she doesn't know anything about a disk. "That wasn't me. I was just helping out a friend. Out of town guy. He's in—uh—Boston." (She's a lousy liar; as 2 hits on a Judge Intentions Test (Intuition + Charisma) can tell.)

SR4A REFERENCES

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INCOMING FEED.....

ZIPPER

B A R S C I L W E D G E S S I n i t I P C M A R M
 4 2 4 2 3 4 5 4 2 5.9 8 1 10 2/2

VR Initiative/IP/CM: 9/3/10 (hot sim)

Skills: Cracking Group 3, Electronics Group 3, Perception 2, Pistols 2

Gear: Commlink (Firewall 5, Response 4, Signal 4, System 4), Leather Jacket (2/2), Defiance EX Shocker

Cyberware: Datajack

Notes: Thermographic Vision

She will simultaneously try to use her commlink to contact Loomis and warn him, but give the team hacker/technomancer a Perception + Intuition (4) Test to notice—unless they’ve already hacked her commlink or are intercepting her wireless traffic, the only outward indication is a momentary attention loss. If the hacker catches on, though, he can attempt to block the transmission by intercepting and editing the signal or by jamming it (though it might not be a good idea to do an area jam—in a bar full of hackers, that might cause a riot). If the hacker fails the Perception roll, Zipper gets the message off successfully and Kerwin will get a head start.

If they push her (and especially if they attempt to intimidate her) she will spill the beans—she wasn’t paid enough to remain stoic. Possible methods of persuasion include: lucrative or nerdy bribes (500¥+, or some noteworthy hacker gear) or outright

threats. Keep in mind that obvious displays of aggression against Zipper may not go over well with the other hackers in the bar, who tend to be cliquish towards non-tech-geek outsiders. While none will physically intervene, the intimidating character’s commlink, cyberware, and other devices may come under attack, and the bar’s robots will develop a sudden tendency to hinder the characters.

If the block succeeds or if they figure out she’s lying and up the intimidation factor, Zipper will give up and give the team the whole story as she knows it: her friend’s name is Kerwin Loomis. He’s a local who runs a bar called the Coda. He has a disk he’s trying to sell, but he doesn’t want it traced back to him. He asked her to send out the anonymous emails and handle the replies.

If they ask, Zipper tells them that so far there have only been a couple of replies—she’s already passed them on to Kerwin. They were sent through anonymous channels so she doesn’t know who they were from, and she didn’t keep copies. She will try to stall them for as long as possible while she tries to come up with another way to warn Kerwin, but won’t risk her life, injury to herself, or damage to her link to protect him. If the team gets their information and leaves without doing something to prevent Zipper from contacting Loomis, she will do so immediately after they leave.

If the team coerces her to come with while they interview Loomis, she’ll do her best to talk her way out, but will concede rather than fight if that fails. If the runners ask/force her to contact Loomis, perhaps to arrange a meet, she’ll do it, but he won’t answer (either because she’s already warned him, or because he’s simply busy). The runners will have to go to his bar to find him.



PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

This should be a pretty straightforward encounter. If you want to add a little spice to it, have some of the other hackers in the bar attempt to hack the team's commlinks (or even their cyberware, if it's connected to the Matrix). The hackers here aren't malicious unless the team overtly threatens Zipper—if this happens, they might try to destroy or corrupt information on team members' commlinks instead of simply snooping and grabbing anything that looks interesting.

DEBUGGING

The only significant things that can go wrong here are if the team injures Zipper to the point where she can't give them the information they're seeking, if she is able to get off her message to Kerwin without anyone noticing, or if the team gets the data on their links destroyed by Zipper's hacker buddies. If they injure Zipper, let them find the information on her commlink; if she gets her message off, you'll need to decide whether you want to have Kerwin escape and force the team to chase him down, or if you'd prefer to have him unavoidably detained so the team is still successful in reaching him before he bolts. Either way works—the second option just takes less time than the first one. If they get their data hacked, consider going easy on them and just corrupting a few files—they'll know next time to take better precautions.

GAMEMASTER NOTES

Hacking

Hackers can be a mischievous bunch, and the ones at the Cathode Glow are good examples of this. Have a little fun with this section and use it to play around with some of the things hackers and technomancers can do—and by doing so, give the team codeslinger a few ideas for things he or she might try in the future. For example, the team's cybered samurai might get a message from a "helpful hacker" who warns him that one of his implants is overdue for a maintenance check, or the team's gun-bunny might suddenly find his inbox and AR display deluged with spam from anti-gun lobbyist groups, hunting clubs, and women-with-guns porn links. Don't do anything malicious, but impress on the team that almost everything is connected in 2070 unless its owner takes specific steps to the contrary.

Intercepting Zipper's Message to Loomis

The runners know they're dealing with a hacker, so they may seek to pinpoint her wireless activity in advance. There are many, many nodes active at the Glow, but a determine hacker can eventually track down Zipper's commlink (she's publicly broadcasting her handle) with an Electronic Warfare + Scan (12, 1 Combat Turn) Extended Test. If the hacker wants to intercept her traffic, Zipper's encryption will need to be broken first with a Decrypt

+ Response (8, 1 Combat Turn) Extended Test. After that, an Electronic Warfare + Sniffer (3) Test will intercept her traffic.

Of course, once Zipper's commlink has been identified, the team's hacker or technomancer could also attempt to hack directly in.

WHERE'S THE DISK?

SCAN THIS

Now the team knows who's selling the disk—but getting it is going to be another matter. Showing up at the sleazy bar he owns, they're delayed by Loomis's ganger buddies long enough for Loomis to slip out the back door. The would-be dealmaker soon discovers, though, that he's jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire as he's accosted by a corporate team (sent by Shangri-La's Tarkasian) also bent on getting the disk. The team will have to pull Loomis's bacon out of the fire before they can get their hands on the prize.

SR4A REFERENCES

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TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Look in the dictionary for the definition of "dive bar" and it'll have a picture of the Coda. Located in a building that looks like it should have been condemned ten years ago, its closest neighbors appear to be an abandoned barbershop on one side and a large, rambling junkyard on the other. A neon sign above the door proclaims it to be the "C-da." The huddle of chipheads squatting in the doorway tells you that you're not going to be in for a five-star experience. Don't step in the puddles of vomit as you go inside.

HOOKS

This should be a no-brainer—unless Zipper was lying to the team, this is the guy with the disk. The fact that he seems very nervous and is trying to escape by running through an unlit junkyard at night might also tell them that this is the guy they've come to see.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Coda is a dive, all right, but it's all Loomis has (except for the disk, of course) and he does his best to keep it going. Trouble is, his best isn't all that good—he's a bit of a slacker and doesn't really have a head for business. The local gang, the Trashers, keep an eye on the place in exchange for free drinks. They handle any fights that might pop up among the place's usual clientele of dockworkers and down-and-outers.

Refer to *Cast of Shadows*, p. 53, for Kerwin Loomis's stats.

If Zipper Warned Loomis

If Zipper was successful in contacting Loomis while the team was looking for info about him, he won't be here—he won't be far away, though, since he didn't check his messages until a



Urgent Message...

few minutes ago. Seems that he was ready to take off when some bit of bar business cropped up that he had to deal with, so he got a late start getting out. He decided to take a shortcut through the junkyard, but halfway through he tripped over some scrap metal and went down, opening up a nasty gash on his leg. He's managed to stop the bleeding but he's limping along at about quarter-speed and scared to death he'll trip over something again. He's got the disk stashed in a secret pocket in his jacket.

Tarkasian's strike team saw him leave, however, and has moved into the junkyard to get him. Loomis heard them coming and quickly hid, but it's only a matter of time before they find him.

If Zipper Didn't Warn Loomis

If Zipper didn't call Loomis or the team caught her before she was able to get a message out, he will be in his office in the back part of the bar with the feed from a hidden surveillance camera. If the team's magician does an astral scouting mission, he or she will pick up an agitated individual in one of the rooms near the back of the bar. As soon as Loomis figures out that the characters are there for him, he will message the Trashers (by commlink) to cover his escape, then attempt to leave by running down the hallway to the rear exit and through the junkyard.

The Trashers

The Trashers are the neighborhood gang, composed mostly of humans and orks. In exchange for free drinks and a blind eye toward the peddling of BTLs on the premises, they keep the Coda relatively trouble-free. When the team enters, there will be as many Trasher members as player characters. The gangers are lounging around the place drinking soybeer and shooting pool. If the team attempts to muscle their way into the back room to see Kerwin, they will do their best to try to stop or at least stall them. They like a good fight, but they won't risk their lives for Loomis.

Tarkasian's Strike Team

Tarkasian has been doing his own detective work and has also traced the disk to Loomis. Not wanting to take any chances on who ends up with it, he has dispatched a small but well-equipped strike team dressed in street clothes and low-key armor to present his "offer" to Loomis. This team already has the Coda under surveillance when the runners arrive.

If Loomis is already on the run in the junkyard, the strike team will be scrounging the junkyard, looking for him. They will eventually find him by tracking his blood or assensing. If the runners scope out the area (not just the bar), they may notice some suspicious activity next door with a Perception + Intuition (4) Test (use the largest pool among the characters, +1 die per extra character). Otherwise they will have to check out the bar and learn from the Trashers (after a confrontation, as Loomis told them to mess with anyone who came looking for him) that he just ran out the back door.

If Loomis is still inside when the runners arrive, the team will spot the runners and watch from a distance. If it looks like Loomis is going to escape, they'll swoop in and try to grab him in the junkyard (but he'll elude them at first, giving the run-

G-MAN (ORK TRASHER LIEUTENANT)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	ESS	Init	IP	CM	ARM
7	3	4	6	2	3	2	3	4.6	7	1	13	8/6

Skills: Automatics 3, Clubs 2, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Gear: Armor Jacket (8/6), Sony Emperor Commlink, Pepper Punch (2 doses)

Cyberware: Obvious Cyberarm (Left, Armor 4, BOD 7, STR 7, AGI 4, Machine Pistol)

Notes: Low-Light Vision

TRASHERS (HUMAN AND ORK)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	ESS	Init	IP	CM	PR	ARM
4	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	5.8	5	1	10	1	8/6

Skills: Blades 1, Clubs 2, Dodge 1, Pistols 1, Unarmed Combat 2

Gear: Armor Jackets (8/6), Sony Emperor Commlinks, Clubs, Knives, Bottles and Pool Cues

Cyberware: Handrazors,

Notes: Orks have Low-Light Vision

ners time to catch up). Otherwise, they'll let the runners catch Loomis in the junkyard, and then swoop in and ambush the runners as they interrogate him, hoping to steal him away.

The Combat

The combat takes place in the junkyard, which is full of stacked-up, flattened cars, wicked pieces of rusted metal poking up at irregular intervals, puddles of oil, and other hazards. There will be lots of places to take cover, and the maze of rusted vehicles should provide the team with a challenge as they try to catch up with Loomis while dealing with the strike team.

The strike team isn't really interested in the runners—their orders are simply to kidnap Loomis. If the runners move to interfere, they'll warn them off ("This isn't any of your business!") and use nonlethal methods (such as the Stunbolt spell) to subdue them as necessary. If the runners capture Loomis, they'll do what they can to catch the runners by surprise, holding them up and taking Loomis for their own. If the runners shoot at them or otherwise do anything threatening, however, all bets are off.

Since the strike team doesn't know where Loomis has stashed the disk, their objective is to take him alive. They don't really want the hassle of dealing with the aftermath of killing him. It would be a lot easier to just beat the location of the disk out of him, take it, and go on with their business. Since the characters don't know where the disk is either, this should probably be their objective as well.

Loomis will do his best to run away and hide somewhere, especially when the shooting starts. He's a coward, but he knows that he'll never see another opportunity like this disk in his lifetime, and that makes him rash. If it looks like somebody is about to find him, he'll pull out the disk and shriek, "Don't come any closer! I'll break it! I will! Just watch me!" This is a bluff, but he's just desperate enough to make it sound believable.

If the Trashers haven't been dealt with, they will investigate sounds of a fight. They will involve themselves (it's their turf),



LIEUTENANT (HUMAN)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM ARM
5 4 4 (6) 3 4 4 3 5 2.5 8 (10) 3 11 6/4

Skills: Automatics 4, Infiltration 3, Leadership 3, Longarms 4, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Cyberware: Damper, Datajack, Flare Compensation, Smartlink, Vision Magnification, Wired Reflexes 2

Gear: Lined Coat (6/4), Sony Emperor Commlink, AK-97 (smartlinked), Colt Manhunter (smartlinked), Restraint Cuffs

MAGE (ORK)

B A R S C I L W ESS M Init IP CM ARM
4 3 3 3 3 5 4 5 6 4 8 1 11 8/6

Astral Initiative/IP: 10/3

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 4, Counterspelling 3, Perception 4, Pistols 2, Spellcasting 4

Gear: Armor Jacket (8/6), Sony Emperor Commlink, Colt Manhunter, Restraint Cuffs

Spells: Clairvoyance, Mind Probe, Powerball, Silence, Stunbolt, Trid Entertainment

GRUNTS (3 HUMAN)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM PR ARM
5 3 4 (7) 5 3 3 3 3 4.6 6 (9) 1 11 4 6/4

Skills: Automatics 4, Dodge 2, Infiltration 1, Intimidation 2, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Cyberware: Damper, Datajack, Flare Compensation, Reaction Enhancers 3, Smartlink, Vision Magnification

Gear: Armor Vests (6/4), Sony Emperor Commlink, Colt Manhunter (smartlinked), Yamaha Pulsar

especially if they spot Loomis in danger. If bullets start flying, however, they will play it safe, unwilling to risk their lives unless they have a clear advantage.

Aftermath

If the characters manage to beat the strike team and examine any dead or unconscious members, they'll find Shangri-La secure RFID tags on them. Their commlinks are encrypted (Rating 5) and "sanitized" for the mission (nothing incriminating or useful). Give them a reasonable time to loot bodies—this *is* the Barrens, after all. It'll take a lot more than a firefight at a junkyard to get a response from a Lone Star patrol (though the ghouls and other scavengers will come sniffing around eventually).

If Loomis is still alive, a successful Intimidation + Charisma Opposed Test versus Loomis's Intimidation + Willpower will convince him to cough up the disk. It's clear he's very reluctant to do this, but he's finally caught on that his life is worth more than some paydata. If the team offers him payment, he'll try to weasel as much as he can out of them, playing on their sympathies, but he'll secretly be grateful to take what he can and get out with his life. If Loomis is dead or unconscious, the team can find the disk in his jacket pocket.

The Disk

The disk is an old-style optical disk (similar to a modern-day minidisc) in a paper sleeve. Written on the front of the disk is the legend, "Carrion Sessions, '48, JB. For enlightenment, seek out absent friends."

What About Loomis?

Once the runners get the disk, Loomis no longer plays an important role in this adventure. He'll be happy to have escaped with his miserable life—even more so if he wrangled a payment out of the runners.

If the runners express their ignorance about the disk's contents, he will rebuke them for stealing something so personally valuable ("My dead father willed it to me!"). If they accuse him of stealing it, he will truthfully deny it. If they ask him about the contents, he'll only say "You wouldn't believe me!" with exasperation. If threatened or held hostage until the contents can be verified, he will blurt out everything he knows about the disk.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

This should be a pretty tough combat (potentially two combats—one with the Trashers and one with the strike team), but if it isn't enough to provide a challenge to your players, you can either raise the opponent's combat abilities a point or two and give them better weapons and armor, or simply add more of them. For the strike team, we recommend that you increase their stats rather than increasing their number, since it's hard to justify why Shangri-La would send a large number of trained operatives against one non-combatant, even if he does have a valuable commodity. For the gangers, go ahead and add more, since you can always say that there are several more hanging out in the neighborhood that come running at the first sign of trouble.

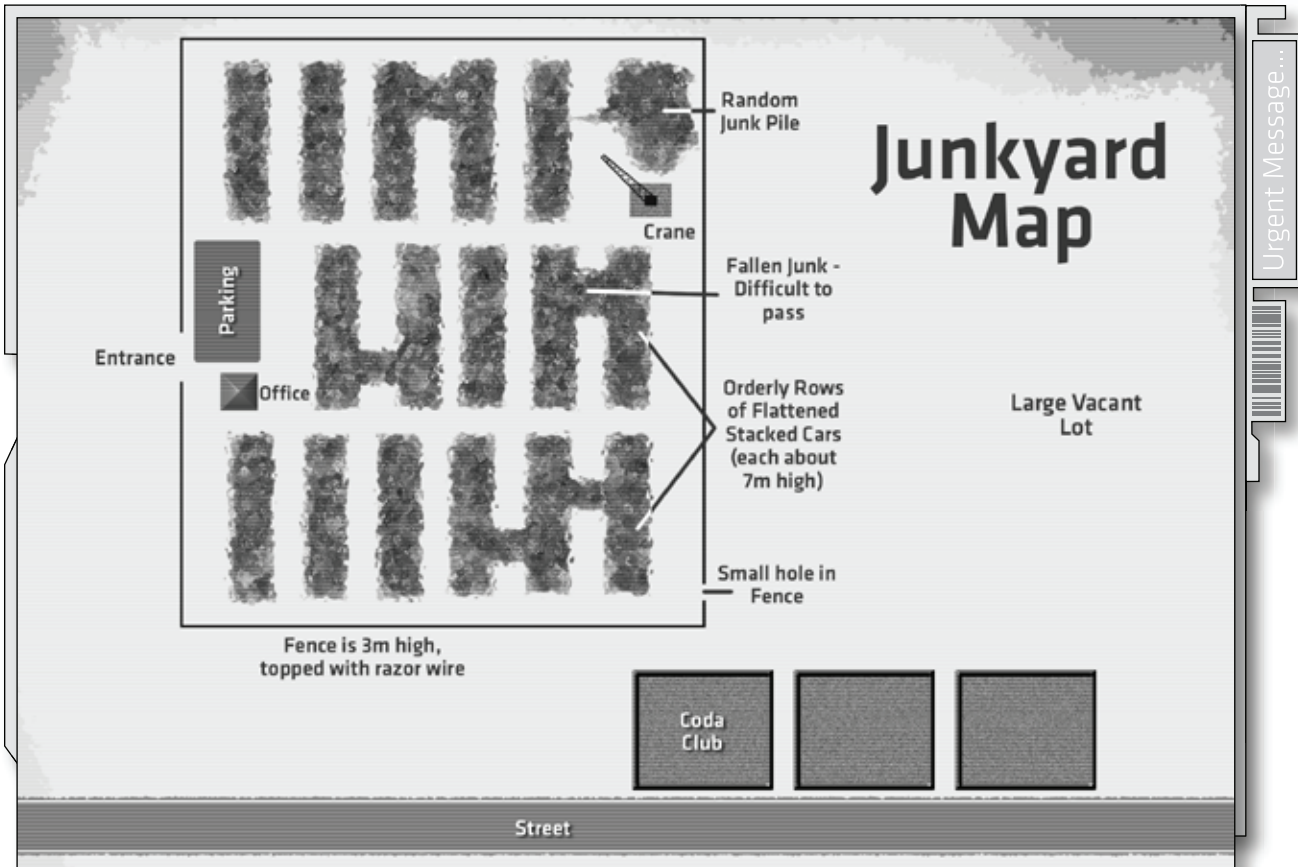
DEBUGGING

The main thing that can go wrong here is that the combat ends up being too tough for the characters. You should be able to determine this early on—especially when fighting in the junkyard, there should be ample opportunities for taking cover and sneaking around, so anybody who stays out in the open probably needs a little advice on the art of surviving firefights. Keep in mind that neither the Trashers nor the strike team are particularly bloodthirsty—though they could become so in a hurry if the characters start shooting to kill. If things start getting too hot, have the Trashers start actively going after the strike team, turning the combat into a three-way battle and taking some of the pressure off the characters.

If the Shangri-La team somehow ends with Loomis or the disk, the runners will have to track them down. Try to leave some evidence at the combat site that the runners can use to track them (a dropped weapon, perhaps, or maybe the team's hacker automatically scanned one of the Shangri-La RFID tags). At the very least, the runners can use the blood that Loomis spilled as a link for ritual sorcery.

It's possible that the disk could be destroyed in the middle of the combat. Don't let this happen accidentally—if anybody hits Loomis, you can simply say that the round didn't penetrate the disk in his pocket. The only way it can be destroyed is if one of the player characters specifically states that he or she is destroying





it. If this happens, give the character (and the rest of the team) a common sense Logic + Intuition (1) Test to determine that this is a really bad idea. If they insist on doing it anyway, they'll have to live with the consequences. There are no other copies of the disk, since Loomis didn't have anything capable of reading it.

If the runners interrogate Loomis and get the full story, they may find themselves sympathetic to his case—and suspicious that Mr. Johnson didn't give them the full story. Loomis now realizes that as long as he has the disk his life will be threatened, however, so he will be eager to wash his hands of the affair.

GAMEMASTER NOTES

Even though the number of people present at this combat isn't as large as you had to contend with at Nabo's concert, you might find this one to be more complex because it has more active participants. You've got the player character team (each of whom is doing his or her own thing), the Trashers, and the Shangri-La strike team, all of whom you have to track. Here are a few tips for making large combats go smoothly (and you'll find more in *Who's Selling?* on page 40 and *Grave Danger*, page 40).

Maps Are Your Friends

When you're trying to keep track of large numbers of combatants, maps are a very handy things to have. Whether you use one of those vinyl dry-erase hex mats or just scrawl the general idea on a piece of notepaper in the middle of the table, the map helps everybody visualize the terrain, the general size of the area, any obstacles, and where all the participants are in relation to each other. In the

case of the combat in this scene, drawing out the junkyard (complete with stacks of flattened cars, the fence surrounding the area, and the proximity to the Coda) will help you get things started. You and the players can use miniatures, dice, chits, or even just X's on a piece of paper to represent characters' locations, and hex grids will help everyone figure out how far each one can move. One positive side effect of mapping is that it cuts down on arguments on who was in or out of whose line of sight—everybody can see it all right there on the map, so there's not much room for disputes.

If you do use maps, it's often useful to have two: one showing only what the characters can see, and a second one for your reference that's identical except that it also shows hidden things like security cameras, invisible mages, monowire, and so on. As the characters discover these hidden "surprises," you can mark them on their map, but yours will help you to remember where they are in case the characters blunder into them.

Preparation is Key

When it comes to running combats, a few minutes of preparation ahead of time will save you a lot of time in the long run. Study the statistics, abilities, and gear of the NPCs in the combat. Figure out their strategy, keeping in mind that they'll need to adjust it based on what the player characters do. It's always useful to have a combat control sheet, where you can list each participant and include things like initiative rolls, injuries, and any penalties they suffer due to damage or drain. You can also use this sheet to jot down anything you might want to remember about the NPCs—for example, that a particular lieutenant will call for a retreat after he's lost 50 per-



INCOMING FEED.....

cent or more of his men, that a shaman prefers using nonlethal spells, or that reinforcements will arrive at the beginning of the second Combat Turn. In the heat of battle it's inevitable that you'll forget some of these details, but if you have them written down right there in front of you, it's less likely that you'll leave out something important.

Use the Gamemaster's Screen

The gamemaster's screen contains a large number of useful tables, pulled out of the main rulebook and organized in a way that makes them easy to find and to reference during combat. If you have the gamemaster's screen, it can be a big help in keeping combats running smoothly. If you don't, you can make your own version by copying frequently used tables and arranging them so you can find the information you need quickly.

Perception Tests

Gamemasters vary in their philosophy about how to handle Perception Tests—some of them simply announce, “Make a Perception Test,” and let the players roll dice, while others like to keep track of everyone's relevant statistics and make the tests themselves behind the gamemaster's screen, only sharing the results if someone succeeds.

The upside to the first approach is that you don't have to roll all of those dice and keep track of everybody's Perception rolls; the downside is that it immediately puts everyone on the alert, figuring that if you're asking them to try to notice something, there's probably something around to notice. If you're the type who prefers this method, one way to keep your players off guard is to occasionally ask for Perception Tests even when nothing is going on—that way, when there really *is* something going on, they won't be expecting it.

Props

One surefire method to pull players into a game is to use props. A good way to do this is to give them an actual disk with the information written on its label. If you have a minidisk, great. If not, just use an old CD (surely you've got at least *one* lying around that you use as a coaster, right?) and stick a label on it. For an additional bit of realism, tell the players that you will assume that the character holding the disk in the game is the one who belongs to the player holding the disk in real life. This cuts down on disagreements about who actually has it at any given time.

SR4A REFERENCES

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WHAT'S ON THE DISK?

SCAN THIS

The team has the disk now, so the next question is: what are they going to do with it? They can be good little shadowrunners and call up Mr. Johnson right away to set up a meet, hand it over, and get paid—but then again, they've now got a tantalizing mystery. What's on this antique disk that everybody's so anxious to get? Whether they've already found out what it's supposed to be or not, their curiosity might get the better of them and they might decide to try reading the data on the disk before they hand it over. If they want to do that, of course, they're going to have to find something out there that can read it and that won't be easy. Meanwhile, the other parties trying to get their hands on the disk aren't just going to give up ...

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

When they look closely at the disk, read the following:

It looks like an old-style minidisk—you'd guess it's maybe twenty to twenty-five years old. This is the kind of stuff your parents—or maybe even your grandparents—had hanging around the house when you were a kid.

When they first attempt to access the contents of the disk, read the following:

For a few seconds you hear nothing, then your ears are assaulted by a cacophonous mix of pops, crackles, and squeals, punctuated by the occasional loud blast of guitar or voice for just a couple of seconds at very low fidelity. It's obvious the disk contains some kind of music file, but there's no way you're going to make out anything else from it the way it is now.

When they successfully break the first level of encryption, read the following:

You all stand around, staring at the speaker in anticipation. After a moment, the music begins to play. The pops and crackles are still there and the quality hasn't gotten a whole lot better, but now you can clearly make out the melody and even some of the lyrics of the songs. The music is haunting—hard-edged rock with a moody, introspective tone, heavy on synths and melancholy atmospheric backgrounds. The singer is male and his voice is perfect for this kind of sound: deep, melodic, with just enough of a rough edge to it that you can tell he's been through a lot in his life. You recognize the style as one that hasn't been popular for several years, but even though it's not what you're used to grooving to, the sounds are infectious. You sit spellbound through seven songs, each one the same blend of rock riffs and contemplative, angry sadness. You feel like you're listening to somebody's psychoanalysis session set to music. The talent this person has is unmistakable.

HOOKS

You can't really force the characters to be curious about what's on the disk—after all, they were hired to simply find out who stole it, get it back, and return it to him intact. On the other hand, Johnson never said the team wasn't allowed to look at it. Any hacker worth the name shouldn't be able to resist the curiosity to do just that.

At this juncture in the adventure the characters may simply follow Mr. Johnson's orders and deliver the disk; however, *On The Run* was conceived to continue to play out if characters allow their curiosity, greed, or paranoia to get the better of them. In fact, the subsequent plot becomes even more interesting for everyone, from a storytelling point of view, if they decide to misbehave and take a peek at the disk and its contents. Considering that many players may prefer that characters act professionally, getting them to play along without feeling railroaded can be a challenge. What follows are a few options gamemasters may wish to call upon to pique player's interest or paranoia:

- Circumspectly remind the players they don't really know really know if the disk they've recovered is the disk they were looking for. Loomis might have slipped them a fake.
- Have a trustworthy contact the players used to locate the disk, contact them and tell them that there's another party interested in the disk (and possibly willing to pay more for it).
- Warn the characters via a contact that some other faction has put out word that it is interested in the disk's contents and is willing to double whatever the runners are being paid to get its hands on a copy before they deliver it to Mr. Johnson.
- Seed doubts in the character's mind about all the massive interest in this particular item means that it is highly valuable – and possibly something the runners should keep a copy of “for protection.”
- Inform them that Nabo has become aware that they are now holding the goods and would like to outbid whatever Mr. Johnson offered (though he wants authenticity verified first).
- Exploit a technical character's potential interest in the old tech involved, or an artist or pop culture buff's interest in the possible contents by dropping hints and red herrings about the possible contents.
- Have a contact call in to warn them that someone has put out word that if the disk isn't delivered to “absent friends” the thieves are dead men walking. (Whoever is behind the threat seems to be well-connected. It might even be the original owner, whoever that may be, roused by the sudden interest in his old work.)

While none of the options above are foolproof solutions, creative gamemasters can probably come up with other ways to nudge players in the “right” direction, options tailored to their games and the characters involved.

If they appear to be uninterested in checking out the disk, you can drop a hint that it might be a good idea to make sure this is actually the correct disk—after all, Kerwin Loomis might have been gager than he looked, and left them with a disk full of dwarf porn, or worse. Wouldn't that just look great if they showed up, all bright-eyed and eager to hand over the spoils from their first-ever shadowrun, only to discover that Loomis had given them the wrong disk?

If you need an additional hook to convince them to check out the disk, remember that Johnson's employer (and thus

Urgent Message...





Johnson) is actually attempting to track down several similar items (and, in fact, doesn't necessarily believe that this one is the genuine article), so Johnson isn't exactly sitting by his commlink waiting for the team's call. If they try to call him and set up a meet before you're ready for them to do so, simply have them get his voicemail and an assurance that he'll call them back "just as soon as he can."

BEHIND THE SCENES

The disk can't be read by any commlink, cyberdeck, or music player produced in the last fifteen years at least—probably closer to twenty. In fact, it was a fairly uncommon format that was already falling out of its limited favor even back when JetBlack originally recorded it. What this means is that the team is going to have a challenge locating something capable of playing it that's still in good enough shape to do so. If the players give you a hard time about this, ask them how easy it will be for them to find a working computer that will read an 8-inch floppy disk. Since the odds are good that most of them don't even remember 8-inch floppy disks, you'll have made your point nicely.

Fortunately for them (if they were paying attention), the answer is staring them in the face. Don't give them any hints about this, but somebody might remember that the Cathode Glow (where they found Zipper) had numerous antique computers still in working order—very likely including one that can read the relevant format. Assuming they didn't trash the place before or hassle Zipper too badly, they can probably talk the bar's owners into letting them use the equipment for an upfront fee of 200¥. The only problem with this approach is that they're probably going to be surrounded by curious hackers (who are intrigued more by the disk itself than by its contents). For an additional 50¥, the owner will take the machine into a back room and let the team use it there, but he'll hover nearby to make sure they don't break the merchandise. Note that Zipper won't be there when they arrive—she's decided that maybe a nice vacation somewhere warm and safe might be just the thing for a couple of weeks, so she's skipped town.

If they trashed the Glow or don't think to go there, they'll have a harder (and longer) time finding something that will do the job. If they put out the call to their computer-savvy contacts, have each one who does so make a Charisma + Connection (16, 1 hour) Extended Test. Eventually somebody in town will have what they're looking for. In this case, the item will be an ancient music player (similar to a portable minidisc player) which the friend-of-a-friend will be willing to sell for 100¥ or some equivalent trade.

The Disk's Contents

The first thing that's apparent when the team puts the disk into the machine is that whatever files are on it are encrypted. When they begin playing it, they hear nothing but a series of electronic squeals, high-pitched pops, and other unpleasant noises, with the occasional tantalizing snippet of music (only a second or so at a time—never long enough to identify) every ten seconds or so.

A hacker/technomancer can copy the disk's contents (encryption and all) to her commlink or headware memory, but first she'll have to come up with a way to interface to the antique

(and decidedly non-Matrix-capable) computer or music player. This will require a Rube Goldberg-style series of connectors and a successful Hardware + Logic (12, 10 minutes) Extended Test. Note that the character must have the requisite connectors before he or she can attempt this—they can be found at an electronics store that specializes in older hardware, at a cost of 25¥ (or the characters can attempt to shoplift them or obtain them from contacts—any hacker contact will have a 1 in 6 chance of having what's needed).

Though the encryption algorithm used on the disk is not overwhelmingly complex by 2070 standards, it is unusual enough due to its age that modern-day hackers might find it more difficult to crack than a comparable contemporary encryption algorithm. To decrypt, the hacker or technomancer must employ a Decrypt + Response (16, 1 minute) Extended Test.

When the characters are successful in decrypting the file, they're in for another surprise: it's actually a double layer of encryption, obviously set up by a master cryptographer. Decrypting the first level automatically prevents the second layer of decryption from working without destroying the file. This will be immediately obvious to the hacker/technomancer once the first level is completed. But then, if she's worth the name "hacker," she's made another copy and is working on that. Think of it like a lock with two keyholes—a lock that will open slightly with one key but requires both to be inserted simultaneously in order to open fully.

All is not lost, though. The first successful level of decryption has gotten the team something useful: namely, the ability to play the files on the disk at a bandwidth high enough to recognize the music, but too low (and deliberately full of pops and crackles) to ever be useful as a commercial recording—especially without the simsense emotional component that listeners crave.

The disk contains 7 files, each one an old-style, audio-only song (obviously the sensory/emotional parts are locked by the second level of encryption). The songs range from introspective and angsty ballads to more hard-edged rock numbers. It's difficult to make out any of the lyrics due to the low fidelity—about the only things that are obvious are that the singer is male and very good, possibly even professionally produced. This is no garage-band recording from a bunch of unknown teenagers. If the hacker has any expertise in handling sound files, she might be able to clean it up enough that the team can pick up a few snippets of lyrics—all of which are decidedly depressed and angsty in tone, all about the futility of life, the fear of death, and the desire for immortality. Happy stuff.

If any of the runners have music-based Knowledge skills, let them make a Success Test with a threshold of 2. If the hacker was able to clean up the files, give them +2 to their dice pools. If they get 2 hits, tell them that the music sounds familiar, but they can't quite place it. If they get 3 or more hits, let them figure out that the singer sounds like JetBlack, the famous angst-rocker who died back in 2048. The "JB" on the label bears this out, as does the date. If this is truly JetBlack, the recordings were made the year he died. 4 or more hits on the Success Test also tell them that they've never heard any of these songs before—at the very least, they're not popular hits. Only JetBlack fans would know that the recordings have never been heard in public before, but it wouldn't be hard to check them against his existing catalog.



The cryptic comment about “finding enlightenment by seeking out absent friends” refers to JetBlack’s famous friendship with the band The Shadows, who were also at the height of their popularity in the late ’40s and early ’50s. Though the band is retired now (and one of their number has died), JetBlack entrusted one member with the key to the second phase of the disk’s encryption, knowing that K-Spot would know what he meant and seek her out. The band member, Marli Bremerton, is the only one who still resides in Seattle. Whether she’ll deal with a bunch of shadowrunners, however, is another matter ...

Next Steps

The team now has some choices to make. The easiest (and probably wisest) is to simply call Mr. Johnson and arrange for pickup and payment. If they decide to do this, go to *Finale* on p. 46. (While simplest, this option isn’t recommended—the team will miss out on a significant portion of the adventure if they insist on delivering the disk now).

If the team wants to search out the key to the encrypted file, their most obvious lead is the reference to Carrion Studios. If they track down this clue, go to *Carrion Studios* on p. 30.

Alternatively, they might try to interpret the meaning of the “absent friends” note on the disk. This path isn’t as clear, but can be pursued through legwork or research into the Shadows (Loomis may also point them this way if interrogated), which should eventually steer them toward Marli Bremerton. Go to *The Shadows* and *Marli Bremerton* in the *Legwork* section on p. 49 for more information. The most they’ll be able to find out about Marli is that she’s still alive and lives somewhere in Seattle; to find where she is, though, they’ll need to find somebody who knew her.

Lastly, they might continue trying to decrypt the file themselves or seek out a more proficient hacker to try it. If they do this, allow them to spin their wheels looking for another hacker, but do not let them or the hacker NPC decrypt the file. (For the purposes of this adventure, removing the second level of encryption is not currently possible—it may figure into a future adventure). After they have tried for a while, have one of their contacts get back to them with a useful piece of information that leads them toward another approach (your choice, depending on what they’ve done previously).

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

This should be a simple scene. It’s meant primarily to get the team thinking rather than cause them any harm. If you want to make things a little tougher, you could have the owner of the Cathode Glow challenge the team’s hacker to a Matrix battle for the right to use the equipment that will read the disk. There’s nothing malicious about it—just one hacker having fun testing himself against another one. The test could either be a hacking contest (first one to access a target system chosen by a third party and retrieve a file wins) or cybercombat to “first blood,” with each side allowed to use all nonlethal programs and skills at his or her disposal. If the owner wins, the team will have to pay the 200¥—if the hacker wins, they get to use it for free.

If the team uses the Cathode Glow’s equipment and doesn’t go somewhere private so the other hackers can’t watch what they’re doing, it’s possible that one of the hackers will recognize JetBlack’s sound even if the team doesn’t. On the plus side, he’ll



probably blurt it out. On the minus side, the disk’s existence will be plastered all over the Matrix faster than you can say “distributed systems.” Be aware that this has the potential to really heat things up for the team (up to and including their getting an annoyed call from Mr. Johnson, saying “I’ve heard you’ve got my disk—why haven’t you called me to return it?”), so use this option only if you want to raise the potential complication level significantly. Needless to say, this isn’t advisable in a beginner-level adventure, but it may be make things interesting for an experienced team who suddenly find themselves in the spotlight.

DEBUGGING

It’s possible that the hacker could blow his Hacking rolls and be unable to even decrypt the first stage of the files on the disk. If this occurs (or if the team doesn’t have a hacker), they can hire the services of an NPC hacker to handle the decryption at a cost of 250¥.

GAMEMASTER NOTES

Hackers

This is a good time to emphasize to newbie players just how powerful and pervasive hacking is in the world of 2070. It’s very handy that almost everything is wired; it makes life very convenient, but it also leaves all this wired hardware open to attacks from hackers and technomancers looking for mischief. Anything that’s wireless is potentially at risk for hacking, including cyberware. If this is the players’ first adventure in



Shadowrun, the hackers in the Cathode Glow are a good way to give them a relatively harmless lesson in data security. (It might also be a good time to point out that if they didn't pay attention to the scanners' advice when they first walked into the Glow, maybe they should have.)

CARRION STUDIOS

SCAN THIS

Carrion Studios was big news in its day, birthplace to some of Seattle's hottest recordings. Now, though, twenty years later, it's long gone. Its once-famous building is crumbling and a crude, low-end studio has taken its place. Fortunately for the team, there's still someone there who can give them some information that can help them. It's going to take some legwork to track down the lead, however, and to get anything useful is going to cost them—and not in cash.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

When the runners arrive at the location of the former Carrion Studios, read the following:

When you arrive at the address, you have to check it again to make sure you're in the right place. It's hard to believe this used to be the hottest recording studio in the 'plex. This building looks like it's about to be condemned: it's rotting and crumbling and all of its windows are broken and boarded up. Whatever Carrion Studios used to be in its heyday, it's been replaced by something that looks like it's waiting for the vultures to drag it away.

HOOKS

The best clue they have to tracking down the encryption key will lead them here first. Even if the team has already deduced that they need to find Marli Bremerton, they won't have had any luck tracking her yet. They can get tantalizing clues that she's still in town, but nobody seems to know where she lives. Carrion Studios (or the former Carrion Studios, anyway) holds the next set of clues—though the people there don't know where Marli is, someone there knows how to find someone who does know.

This scene also gives the team a chance to pick up a couple of valuable and useful contacts if they handle things right.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Carrion Studios fell on hard times in the mid-2060s. Their management was better at recording music than they were at paying bills, and a few of them began skimming from the studio's coffers to fund their various drug, gambling, and BTL habits. When the runners find the former address of the studio, they find a crumbling two-story building with a stairway leading down to a basement door. In peeling letters (no AR here), the sign on the door reads "Healey Productions."

The door isn't locked. From somewhere in the back part of the building, the runners can hear the muffled strains of what sounds like some pretty bad music—Healey Productions is so hard up that they basically support themselves by providing stu-

dio time to anyone who walks through the door with a garage band and some cred.

When the runners get inside, the room they walk into is empty except for a desk, a diseased plant, and a couple of dusty chairs. Behind the desk sits a gum-cracking teenage dwarf girl, wearing a "Dwarf Girls Dig It" t-shirt stretched tight across her chest and bright teal fake eyelashes that match her glossy lipstick. She looks up and reluctantly switches off her simsense player, surprised to see anybody come in. If they ask her about Carrion Studios, she says she's never heard of it. An old ork man pokes his head in through an open doorway at the mention of the name, however. "Did you say Carrion Studios?" he asks. He's carrying a push-broom and looks like a janitor.

The ork will look at the team a little nervously, but doesn't seem overly concerned by their tough appearances. He introduces himself as Stanley Lasky and takes them back to a shabby breakroom, offers them some soykaf, and smiles. "I haven't heard about Carrion in a long time," he says wistfully. "Those were the days, oh yeah. Before the place turned into this dump."

Stanley used to be a junior recording engineer at Carrion; when the studio started going downhill he couldn't get another job, so he stayed on. He doesn't remember the JetBlack sessions (he wasn't there that early) but he does offer them two bits of info: first, he offers to let them go through some of the place's old records, stored in a back room on the premises (he's not worried about getting in trouble—the owners never come in, and the engineers are too busy trying to make a bunch of bad teenage musicians sound halfway passable to care about anything else). He also gives them the name of the hotshot head engineer during the period when the JetBlack recording was made, a woman called Delphia. If they can track her down, she should be able to give them some information they can use.

The Back Room

It's pretty clear that nobody's been in this room for at least ten years. The lock on the door is stiff from disuse and the door seems stuck shut at the top, taking a good stiff push to get it open. When Stan opens the door, the strong smell of mold, rot, and musty disuse rolls out. Piled inside the room are stacks of cardboard boxes: some of them are labeled, some not, some suffering from water damage where the elements seeped in. Various cleaning supplies, old broken machinery, and dead mixing boards are piled haphazardly around with all sorts of other useless junk.

The room is about 6 x 8 meters, and it's about three-quarters full. Naturally, the box of chips that the team is looking for is in the back, behind a bunch of other boxes.. "Go ahead and look," Stan tells them. "I gotta get back to cleaning up. There's nothing in here I gotta worry about you stealing—heck, they'd probably be happy if you took it off their hands."

If the characters search diligently, it will take them about an hour to find the box labeled "Carrion—01/47-12/55." Before they find it, though, they also find something a bit more unpleasant: a group of devil rats has taken up residence in one of the back corners of the room, and the runners' activities disturb them enough that they'll attack. They will use their Concealment pow-

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er to keep themselves hidden, attacking from behind cover. They shouldn't prove much more than an annoyance, but in order to find the chips, the team will have to deal with the rats first.

DEVIL RATS (6)

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP CM PR ARM
 2 5 5 1 5 5 2 3 2 6 3 10 1 9 2 0/0

Movement: 2/10

Skills: Climbing 3, Dodge 3, Infiltration 4, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Animal Control (Ordinary Rats), Concealment (Self Only), Immunity (Toxins), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 1P, AP 0, -1 Reach), Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

In addition to the devil rats, the room also contains a number of ordinary rats and mice and more than a few spiders. Stan is the only one to hear the sounds of the scuffle (the dwarf girl is busy listening to her sim player, while the rest of the occupants are inside soundproof rooms recording music). He'll come running, but when he sees that the runners have taken care of the devil rats he'll be very pleased. "Go ahead and take those chips if they'll help you," he says, relieved that he doesn't have to handle the rats. "Nobody'll notice them missing."

The chips in the box are easily readable by a standard commlink. In the June 2048 records, the runners find an account of a recording session that did take place with JetBlack on June 24 and 25 of that year. It lists the titles of the songs and contains a few brief sound files (30 seconds or so each, mostly to help them set levels and such) but no complete songs. A successful Intuition + Perception (2) Test shows a couple of strange things: both nights the recording sessions took place from 10 p.m. to around 2 a.m., and the only engineer's name listed for the session is Delphia. Several other spaces that are normally filled with names of engineers and support personnel are blank—it's almost as if this recording was made in secret.

Delphia

The team will have to do a bit of legwork to find Delphia, but music-industry-related contacts or anybody who could be involved in the BTL trade (gangsters, organized crime figures, etc.) can help. Fortunately for the runners, she's a rather memorable individual (see *Legwork*, p. 49).

She never stays in the same place very long because she's always on the run from Lone Star. Right now she's got an apartment on the edge of the Barrens, where she deals garden-variety BTLs in order to support her more expensive habit. She keeps a few "beetlehead" gangsters (most of them barely more than children) around her for protection, paying them in discount-rate merchandise.

If the runners have found out about Delphia's activities, one or two of them can present themselves as people interested in purchasing what she has to sell. Any more than two will spook the gangsters and make them send out the alarm to Delphia, in which case she'll try to escape out the back of the apartment. Even if there are only a couple of runners, they'll need to submit to a full search, get rid of any large or obvious weapons, and agree to being escorted to see Delphia.

If the team decides to fight the gangsters, it shouldn't be much of a fight, though if they have any consciences at all, they might be reluctant to shoot kids—even kids who are shooting at them. These kids have guns and would be enough to handle a couple of normal chipheads looking to cause trouble, but they're not equipped to deal with armed and trained shadow-runners. If more than two of them get hurt, they'll all turn tail and run.

If Delphia hears a scuffle going on, she will try to escape by slipping out the back of the apartment building, where she's got a Dodge Scoot waiting (see p. 348, *SR4A*).

BTL-HEAD GANGERS (5)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM PR ARM
 2 3 3 2 2 3 2 2 6 6 1 9 2 6/6

Skills: Computer 2, Etiquette 1 (Street +2), Hardware 3, Perception 2, Pistols 1, Throwing 2

Gear: Sony Emperor commlink (BTL-modified), ratty Urban Explorer jumpsuits (6/6), rocks (DV: (STR/2)P, AP: 0), Streetline Special

Note: All gangsters suffer a -1 dice pool penalty to all their actions due to the fact that they're distracted (jacked in to low-level BTL).

When the runners finally track Delphia down, either by intercepting her as she tries to escape or by catching her in her apartment, they find a tall, statuesque human woman with dark skin, bright blue dreadlocks, and large nanotattoos of tribal designs running up and down her arms. It's obvious that she was once very beautiful, but these days she's got the thin, twitchy look characteristic of a hardcore chiphead. Her eyes, however, are hard as steel. The runners will see immediately that she's still in possession of her faculties, which speaks volumes for her willpower considering that rumors say she's been a BTL junkie for many years.

While she talks to them, she will seem very twitchy and nervous, like she's constantly afraid of being discovered. Once she figures out that the team isn't Lone Star, though, she'll be very polite.

"Oh, I remember those days very well," she tells them. "Good times, good times. Carrion made a lot of stars' careers. JetBlack, he was one of the best. It's too bad about what happened to him.

"I remember that session, though. Recorded in the dead of night, just me and him and his backup band. He wanted to keep it a secret—he was planning to release it later on, but he died before he got the chance.

"No, I don't have a copy. He insisted on taking all the copies with him—that was part of the deal." She looks at them slyly. "If you're trying to track down concrete details about that recording, though, I know something that can help you out—but it's going to cost you to get it. Not money—I just need you to do me a favor."

If the runners seem willing, she tells them, "There's a package I need picked up, but I don't want to get it myself or send one of my friends." She waves her hand vaguely, probably to indicate the gangsters. "Lone Star knows what we look like and they'll pick us up right away if they catch us. It's already paid for—I just need





INCOMING FEED.....

you to retrieve it and bring it back to me. If you do that, I'll tell you something that I promise will help. Deal?"

If the runners accept the deal, she tells them, "Okay, good. What you need to do is go to the Lotus Flower Card Room on 56th Street in Tacoma. Ask to speak to Mr. Lo. Tell him you've come to pick up the package for Lady Blue; the password is 'Abbey Road.'"

If the runners try to physically intimidate Delphia or otherwise try to coerce her into giving them information without running her errand, she will put up a token resistance then give a piece of false data that might lead them to believe she's not as sane as she seems ("JetBlack's not really dead, you know. He staged his own death and went into hiding. He's still in Seattle somewhere—if you can track him down, you can find out a lot more about the recording session.") If they try to use some sort of mind-control spell, they might be surprised to find out how tough-minded she is (Willpower 5)—this isn't usually true for wireheads. If the spell succeeds, she will tell them how to find Marli Bremerton, whom she's sure knows much more about the recording session. (See *Cast of Shadows* on p. 53 for Delphia's statistics.)

The Lotus Flower

The Lotus Flower Card Room is run by the Yellow Lotus Triad. One of their sidelines is selling particularly hot BTLs. The package Delphia wants the runners to pick up is highly illegal: it's the master copy of a brand-new snuff BTL chip featuring an Aztlan torture session, where several Yucatan dissidents are questioned and then slowly killed. The BTL is worth 5,000¥ on the black market.

The card room is small and sumptuously decorated in Asian style. Non-Chinese runners will feel very uncomfortable there, as everyone else inside is Chinese, most of them are human, and they're all speaking Cantonese. When they enter, every eye will be on them.

Give them the impression that this place is extremely secure physically (well-dressed, polite, but obviously well-armed guards surreptitiously patrol the area), magically (three Force 5 spirits watch from the astral plane and Force 4 wards surround many of the non-public areas), and in the Matrix (the house node features System 4, Firewall 5, and roaming IC agents carrying Analyze 5, Black Hammer 5, and Track 5). In AR, the place glows with more Chinese iconography, including animated dragons. All of the text is in Chinese.

If the runners mind their manners in the card room, they'll be watched closely by the patrons. When they ask for Mr. Lo, they are asked to wait for a moment. Three young well-dressed Chinese men then approach, the center one obviously the leader. The leader introduces himself as Mr. Chen and tells them that Mr. Lo is very busy. He offers to help them with anything they need.

Chen's manner is openly contemptuous. He makes it clear he can barely bring himself to speak directly to the runners. Behind him, the two other men smile as if they're waiting for something to happen. This is a test: if the runners mind their manners—and successfully make an Etiquette + Charisma (2) Test—he will nod grudgingly and say, "All right, then. Follow me," while the other two look disappointed. If the runners tell him what they're after,

he will quickly lead them away to someplace more private to finish their conversation. If they cop an attitude with him (or, even more unfortunately, try to attack him), things will go badly. As the gamemaster, you can decide if Mr. Chen refuses to allow the team to see Mr. Lo, if he and his companions attack, or if they toss the runners out on their collective ear.

If they are taken to see Mr. Lo, they are first scanned by a MAD Rating 4, patted down, and asked to check any weapons that are found, then ushered into a back room where they are met by an unassuming looking Chinese human in his mid 30s. Once they give him the proper password, he reaches in his pocket and removes a small sealed box, which he passes gravely over to whichever character is doing the talking. "I hope that Lady Blue will find this acceptable," he says.

Getting Back

Play up the paranoia as the runners return to Delphia's place with the box—have them spot Lone Star patrols nearby or get the feeling that they are being watched as they return, but don't have anyone actually hassle them unless they do anything stupid (like speeding through town, driving erratically, or similar). Note that it is possible to unseal the box, but it will be very obvious that it's been unsealed.

Inside is an unmarked old-style chip of a type commonly used up until a few years ago. If one of the runners slots the chip, they will unluckily experience the drawn-out, excruciatingly painful and horrific final hours of several brutally tortured political prisoners. Both torturers and doomed victims only speak Aztlaner Spanish, but the experience itself should be severe enough to shake even the most callous characters. If appropriate, the gamemaster may require the slotting character to make a Willpower + Charisma (4) Composure Test (see p. 138, *SR4A*) to avoid losing his lunch. The experience is so intense that the gamemaster may also decide to call for an Addiction Test, pitting the character's Willpower + Logic against a threshold of 3. If the character fails the test, he suffers a Mild addiction to BTL and is becomes particularly fascinated by the more violent end of the BTL spectrum. The player and the gamemaster should discuss how this addiction will be handled, using the "Roleplaying Addiction" section on p. 256 of *SR4A* as a guide.

Note that unlike most BTLs bought on the street, this chip is a *not* a one-shot item, so the runner can view it repeatedly if he chooses. As a unique master copy, it's highly valuable, so if the chip is somehow damaged or the material sold or released to others, Delphia will become enraged.

If the runners return the sealed box to Delphia without opening it, she will be pleased. She'll check it to make sure what she expected is inside, then nods. "Thank you," she tells them. "You've helped me—now, I'll help you. The person you want to talk to is Marli Bremerton—formerly of The Shadows. She still lives here in town, in the Richmond Highlands part of Downtown. She doesn't get out much these days—rumor says something happened to her and she doesn't like to be seen, but I don't know about that. She was always one of JetBlack's closest friends, and I know she knew about the recording sessions. I'm sure she can point you in the right direction." She looks eager to get rid of the runners at this point—now that she has her prize, she wants to slot it and get her fix.

If the runners decide not to give her the chip (either because of an attack of morals or because they decide they can sell it themselves on the black market), they've gained themselves an enemy. You can feel free to fuel their paranoia about both Delphia and the Yellow Lotus Triad. Neither actually poses a threat: the Triad doesn't care (they were paid) and Delphia doesn't have the resources to mount any effective vengeance. The runners, however, don't know this.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

There are several ways you can make this scene tougher for a more experienced team: you can make Delphia's teenage BTL-head guards harder to deal with, make Delphia herself harder to track down (she never stays in the same place longer than a couple of days, so her trail might be hard to follow), make Mr. Lo and his people less willing to simply hand over the chip (password or no password), or have Lone Star be on to the exchange and more proactive about stopping the runners on their way back to Delphia's place.

If the team handles this scene correctly, there should be no combat, but they'll have to roleplay their way past several tense and potentially explosive situations. They'll also have to deal with any sense of morality they might have retained if they discover the true nature of the chip Delphia is planning to slot. Even in the jaded society of the 2070s, snuff BTLs are taboo in most circles.

DEBUGGING

The only thing that can go seriously wrong in this scene (assuming you use Lone Star as a threat and not an actual encounter) is that the runners could offend Mr. Lo or others at the Lotus Flower Card Club. The Triad members will put up with a fair amount of ignorance from the runners, but if they are insulted they will retaliate. In the interest of not killing or seriously injuring the team in an encounter that's not necessary to the completion of the adventure, you might consider giving them a Logic + Intuition (1) Test to realize that insulting an organized crime figure in his own place, while surrounded by some very formidable security, is not the best idea they've ever had. If they insist on blundering on, though, let them take the consequences.

GAMEMASTER NOTES

Using Critters

Critters are sometimes difficult to use as an effective combat threat, as they're so easy to blow away—lots of them don't have armor and don't move at wired speeds, so they end up as cannon fodder. Sometimes this is just the way it is—heavily armed, armored, enhanced, and aggressive metahumans are usually going to get the drop on critters, most of which are acting mainly out of instinct or fear. In the combat in this scene, the devil rats are not tough creatures: they don't have much of an attack and they're slow. What they do have going for them is their innate Concealment power, which helps them hide by subtracting their Magic value (3) from any Perception Tests to try to locate them. This helps them surprise opponents and makes it more difficult to hit them. Remember, they're in their home territory; they can move around piles of junk a lot more easily than a bunch of large armored individuals.





BTLs

BTLs are bad news—every bit as addictive as many of today’s drugs, and every bit as disruptive for the lives of those who’ve fallen prey to their temptations. Play this up in both Delphia and her chiphead ganger bodyguards—make sure that the players are aware of just how dangerous this stuff can be. The chipheads, especially, should be played as classic drug addicts: thin, unkempt, twitchy, haunted-looking, always aware that the specter of their next fix is hanging over their heads. If they perform well for their boss, they’ll get it without having to resort to thievery, mugging, begging, or any of the other methods chipheads use when they don’t have money, and that’s worth a lot to an addict. There’s nothing glamorous about BTLs, though it can be very tempting to just “give it a try.” Make sure, also, that the players see just how strong a person Delphia had to have been (and still is) to be able to function this well when in the grip of a horrifying addiction. She is not a typical BTL-head by any means.

Triads

The Triads are the Chinese branch of organized crime, and they have a heavy presence in Seattle. Each Triad is independent. They don’t have a central authority like the Mafia and Yakuza do. The Yellow Lotus Triad isn’t as powerful as they once were in Hong Kong, but they still maintain a strong presence in Seattle. The *Runner Havens* sourcebook contains more information on Hong Kong and the Triads.

Composure Tests

As the gamemaster, you can call for a Composure Test whenever you feel a character experiences something that is unnerving, scary, disgusting, or downright traumatic. This test pits the character’s Willpower + Charisma against a standard difficulty threshold (1 to 4) of your choice. The character’s success or failure determines whether he bites the bullet or whether he panics, breaks down and cries, or loses his lunch. You can use Composure Tests to reinforce the misery, depravity, and ugliness that are sometimes commonplace in the shadows.

Making New Contacts

This scene offers a couple of good chances for the team to make new contacts if they handle things right. Remember, after starting characters “purchase” their initial contacts, any others must be gained the old-fashioned way: by treating them well, doing them favors, and cultivating them as one would cultivate a friend or business contact in real life. Both Mr. Lo and the other Yellow Lotus members and Delphia could be potential contacts for the team if they take the trouble to pursue the relationship; if the players are new to *Shadowrun*, you might want to suggest that it might be worthwhile to follow up after the adventure’s completion, assuming that they didn’t do anything to anger either party.

Touchy Etiquette Situations

Some players look at *Shadowrun* scenarios as opportunities to commit as much mayhem and cause as much property damage as possible using the vast array of cool destructive methods at their disposal. Sometimes this is the best way to go (sometimes it’s the only way), but other times require a bit more tact and finesse—especially if the potential opponent possesses clearly superior firepower. Obviously, the best way to handle these situations is to roleplay them, using appropriate skill rolls (such as Etiquette) as needed. With groups that don’t enjoy roleplaying out such situations, however, you can get away with letting the players tell you what they’re trying to do and making the rolls to determine how well they do it. In any case, you should impress upon them that approaching every situation with firepower is not a good method—for example, attempting to intimidate the Yellow Lotus Triad on their own turf is a fast track to a bad end.

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THE SHADOW KNOWS

SCAN THIS

If the team wants to get more information about JetBlack and/or have correctly surmised that the “absent friends” comment on the disk refers to The Shadows (or if they’ve talked to Delphia of Carrion Studios), at some point they will look up the last Shadow left in Seattle—lead singer and frontwoman Marli Bremerton. If they’re expecting the beautiful and charismatic woman who led the band to the top of the charts twenty years ago, though, they’re in for a surprise.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

When the team reaches Bremerton’s home, read the following:

You thought the old-fashioned image of a haunted house was a stereotype, but here’s one right in the middle of Seattle. Set back from the road in a grove of trees is a large two-story stone mansion with tall, narrow windows, a slate roof that slants at odd angles, and several tall chimneys. It even has gargoyles (the stone variety, not the paracritter variety—you hope!) perched on several of its corners. The house is surrounded by a large yard and completely enclosed by a three-meter, gothic wrought-iron fence. A locked gate prevents entry, but you do see the familiar form of a small speaker box next to the gate.

HOOKS

This section isn’t vital to successfully completing the shadowrun—it’s a side trip that the runners might or might not decide to take, depending on how curious they are. If they do decide to take the trip, they’ll get some useful on-the-job training about how to deal with magic, spirits, and rigger-controlled home defense measures. They’ll also find out quite a bit more about JetBlack and the disk if they play their cards right.



BEHIND THE SCENES

Marli Bremerton still lives in Seattle, but nobody sees her anymore. If the runners do any research on The Shadows, they'll see that she was a tall, dark-haired, charismatic, and very beautiful human woman who fairly crackled with energy—the kind of performer who could captivate an audience even if she *weren't* backed up by three other equally talented musicians. The four Shadows together, at the height of their popularity, had the world at their fingertips: they lived the jet-set lifestyle and made enough money that they'd never have to worry about anything again.

As often happens, though, the rest of the world moved on and their style of music went out of favor. In a world whose population is carpet-bombed with the latest hit until they're sick of hearing it, bands with The Shadows' longevity were growing rarer by the day. They remained popular throughout the 2050s, but the size of their venues slowly decreased along with their box-office draw until they found themselves playing oldies revival shows and small clubs. The four members began to squabble over money and creative direction, and fairly soon they all realized that this just wasn't fun anymore. Lead synth-axeman Joey Nightmare left the band after a particularly acrimonious fight in 2057 (the split actually got a brief mention in the day's evening entertainment news segments, attesting to their continuing popularity among their fanbase) and the other three decided to call it quits soon after.

After a bad marriage followed by a worse divorce, Marli tried to launch a solo act in 2059, but music fans had moved on to the next big thing by now and her album tanked badly. She fell into a period of depression for awhile and dropped out of sight, but by 2061 she had written some songs that she felt would speak to a new generation and was ready to try again. She might have succeeded—except for Halley's Comet and SURGE.

SURGE struck Marli in a particularly unkind way: her bones grew and twisted, poking out of her flesh in many places and forming large lumpy deposits under her skin. Finding it very painful and difficult to get around under her own power, she paid a trusted surgeon to implant cyberware that would allow her to control a motorized chair and a series of small drones that aid her in her everyday needs. She bought a rambling old mansion in Richmond Highlands (Downtown) and stopped going out altogether, doing all her business virtually through the Matrix.

When the transformation first hit, Marli was so ashamed of her appearance that she didn't want anyone to see her. After years of isolation, however, she has grown accustomed to both her appearance and her solitude, to the point where she no longer desires contact with flesh-and-blood people. Except for a trusted niece (a shaman) who serves as her aide and takes care of her outside business, her need for metahuman contact is filled by her Matrix excursions. Oddly, the only other person she doesn't mind interacting with is JetBlack, who visits her occasionally and is helping her translate her love of music into an *idoru* career, similar to the one he's launched recently.

One other ability SURGE conferred on Marli (though she doesn't realize it) is the ability to see the astral plane. She uses this to converse with the spirits who inhabit the old mansion. She has not told anyone about this, however, as she doesn't really understand what she's doing and thinks they'll consider her insane.

MARLI'S HOUSE

Marli Bremerton lives in a large, forbidding-looking mansion surrounded by a tall wrought-iron fence. The house was rumored to be haunted, part of the reason it intrigued her in the first place.

The gate in front of the house is always locked with a Rating 4 maglock. There is a speaker next to the gate; during daylight hours, it is turned on so a visitor can call ahead and state his business. If the visitor is expected, the gate will be opened. The speaker isn't active at night. Two MCT-Nissan roto-drones continually patrol the area and send reports back to Marli, setting off an alert if anyone unexpected approaches the house. Several tiny surveillance cameras watch the yard (Perception + Intuition (3) Test to notice each one), and are attached at strategic points around the house, many of them incorporated into the gargoyles. Motion sensors trigger the lights if anyone comes over the fence at night. The house's exterior has no automated defenses—Marli isn't interested in hurting intruders, but just wants to make sure they don't break into her house. If an intruder gets into the yard area surrounding the house, a speaker will pop up and announce in a loud voice, "You are intruding on private property. You are under observation. Please leave immediately. If you do not leave immediately, law enforcement will be summoned." It will continue repeating this until the intruder leaves or destroys the speaker.

The house is warded against astral viewing at Force 4—Marli's niece, Althea Charles, set up the ward with the help of a few friends at her aunt's request, since Marli doesn't want astral snoopers looking in on her. If the ward is pierced, Althea (who lives with Marli) will know it instantly and alert Marli.

Depending on when the team arrives, there are several ways to talk to Marli:

- They can break into the house, which shouldn't be too hard for them to do. It's well defended against common street thieves, but not really set up to thwart professionals. If they do this, however, they might be surprised to see that Marli's got some interesting security measure set up inside. She'll be fully aware that they're coming and hide from them, controlling the house's defenses from a hidden location and calling Lone Star to deal with the intruders. Althea, her niece, will help in the defense of the house by using her magic and spirit-summoning skills.
- They can call her on the comm or the speaker and try to get her to let them in. She will initially refuse to do this, but if they mention JetBlack's name, this will get her attention. If they mention the disk and something that proves they have it (such as the title of one of the songs, or the "absent friends" message), she will let them in.
- They can talk to one of the many spirits that hang around the house and persuade it to try to convince her to talk to them.

Breaking In

The house's windows and doors have all been replaced with higher-quality security versions (both are Armor rating 8, Structure rating 9; doors are equipped with Rating 5 maglocks). There are several ways in: front door, side door, back door (a pair of armored-glass French doors), any of a number of windows, or the skylight. The only way they can get in without being noticed by Marli is to disable the security system in such a way that the cameras show nothing of interest (by hacking the security net-





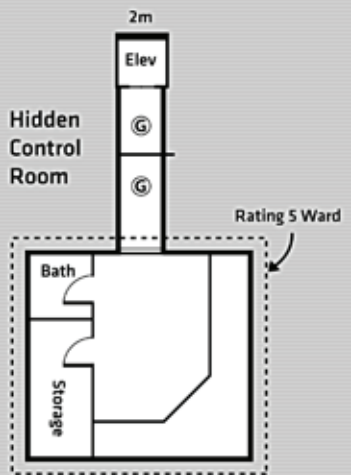
Urgent Message...

Marli's House



Key

- = Camera
- = Gas Emitters
- = Trap
- = Door
- = Stairs



work, taking control of the camera, and editing a few seconds of a scene that shows nothing out of the ordinary, then looping in that scene). If they simply shut the cameras down, Marli will immediately call Lone Star; a cruiser will show up in 2D6 minutes to investigate.

Once the runners are inside, they'll have to deal with a few of Marli's nonlethal but annoying security measures: knockout gas emitters (Neuro-Stun, Power 10, inert after 1 minute, takes 1 Initiative Pass to fill room), holoprojectors, and rooms that can be turned into traps (security doors slam shut, windows are armored glass) to hold intruders long enough for Lone Star to arrive and deal with them. The rooms with gas emitters are marked with "(G)" on the map, and the rooms with the traps are marked with "(T)".

If the runners get in, Marli will hurry downstairs and hide in a secret basement room, the entrance of which is concealed in the pantry in her kitchen. She will continue directing the house's defenses from there. Marli's niece Althea will use a fiber-optic visual system to cast spells at the team (stun-only—she just wants to incapacitate them, not kill them) and summon spirits to deal with them. The fiber-optic system allows her to view any room in the house.

Once the runners are inside, the wards no longer block them from astral snooping. The basement "panic room" is warded separately, however, at Force 5. It should be obvious to any searching astral magicians that there is a hidden and warded area in the basement. This should be enough of a clue to tell them that there's something interesting going on down there.

Althea casts spells as long as she is reasonably sure she won't be discovered, then she invokes one of her summoned spirits' Concealment powers to help keep the team from locating her. She is hiding in the walk-in closet on the third floor.

Calling Ahead

Marli avoids interacting with people at all costs—she encourages rumors that she has some kind of mysterious possibly contagious condition that won't let her go outside. She uses the Matrix to take care of any business that her niece Althea can't handle. She's not much of a hacker, but since she finds it hard to walk in her condition, she's become a fairly accomplished drone rigger/security spider.

Any attempt to call her on the comm or talk to her via the speaker is met with no luck ("Sorry, she's not home—she'll be back next week. Come back then." Or "You don't have an appointment. She doesn't see anyone without an





INCOMING FEED.....



MARLI'S HOUSE SECURITY NETWORK

System: 4
Firewall: 5
Response: 3
Signal: 3

Alert Response: IC agent (Pilot 4) with Analyze 3, Track 4, Attack 4

appointment, sorry.”) unless they mention JetBlack or the disk. If they do this while talking over the speaker, the voice will say, “Hold on. Call me at—” and give them an LTG number.

If they're on the comm, the voice will ask them what they know about JetBlack. If they tell her that they have the disk and can prove it by telling her something about it (the title of a song, a snippet of lyrics, or the “absent friends” inscription on the label), there will be a long pause followed by a resigned-sounding, “Maybe you'd better come in after all.” Continue with “Invited In” on p. 38.

Talking to Spirits

Marli's home looks like it could be a haunted house, and the fact is many spirits do inhabit it—the ghosts of unfortunates who died when fire engulfed part of it back in the mid 1900s. As part of her SURGE transformation, Marli

also gained the ability to view the astral plane—a fact that she doesn't share with anyone because she's convinced that all the strange beings she sees flitting around her house are figments of her imagination. (In reality, she has gone a little crazy, but nothing serious enough to impair her daily functioning.)

This doesn't, however, stop her from talking to the ghosts. She's actually struck up friendships with a few of them. They keep an eye on her home and supplement her security measures, and in turn she provides them with contact with the living world. If the team magician is examining the house astrally, he or she will encounter one or more of these ghosts hanging around the area. If the magician tries to talk to them, they will speak fondly of the “lady of the house” and say that they watch over her. If the magician speaks kindly to the ghosts and convinces them that

ALTHEA

B A R S C I L W M E D G E S S I n i t I P A R M
 4 4 2 3 5 4 4 5 4 3 6 6 1 0/0

Astral Initiative/IP: 8/3

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 4, Binding 4, Blades 3, Counterspelling 3, Etiquette 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Spellcasting 4

Gear: Sony Emperor Commlink, Knife, CS Gas Grenades (2)

Spells: Chaotic World, Clout, Confusion, Hush, Mask, Poltergeist, Stunball



the team means Marli no harm (keep in mind that the ghosts can observe the characters' auras to judge their emotional state and intentions, though this is by no means a fool-proof method of lie detection), they promise to pass a message on to her. If the team gives them a message that includes JetBlack's name or any mention of the disk, Marli will reluctantly open the gate for them. Go to *Invited In*, see below.

Keep in mind that the house ghosts died in the middle twentieth century and they've been hanging around this house a long time, which means that they're not exactly the most straightforward beings in the world. There are men, women, and children—pick (or roll randomly) one or two to talk to the runners, and keep their conversations vague, without a lot of concrete information. Some of them would prefer to talk of other things (like their own deaths) while others might become annoyed if they feel that the runners are pushing them too hard for information. The only thing they all agree on is that Marli is a good person and someone they will try to protect from harm.

Invited In

After they have been admitted to the house (which looks every bit as haunted from the inside as it did from the outside, and is poorly lit even at midday), a holographic projection of Marli's younger self will appear and invite the runners into a sitting room. She won't offer them any refreshments, but will simply ask them point-blank what they know and why they have sought her out. What they tell her will determine what she does:

If they try to intimidate her into giving them the code, she will apologize sincerely and tell them that she no longer has it—that all her computer records were lost in the Crash and she didn't have backups. (Remember, they're talking to a holographic image: the *real* Marli is safely down in her basement control room.) If they press the issue, the room's doors slam shut and neuro-stun gas (rating 10, inert after 1 minute) is released into the room.

If the characters are overcome by the gas, they'll awaken to find themselves in the back of a panel van in the Redmond Barrrens. Marli instructed her people to leave the team's gear with them, but sometimes temptation can prove too much to resist. Roll a 1D6 for each team member; on a 1, that team member is missing a random piece of gear. Note that Marli's people will not take the team's commlinks nor any gear that looks particularly personalized or one-of-a-kind.

If they tell her the truth—that they have a disk of undiscovered JetBlack songs that they obtained from a friend, and that the "absent friends" inscription led them to her, the image will smile wistfully. "Ah, Jet. I haven't thought about him in a long time. It really is a shame he had to die so young—he had such an amazing talent.

"May I hear the songs, for old time's sake? I might be able to tell you something about them."

If they tell her they've been hired to get the disk and return it to their employer, her manner grows cold and distant. She will ask who their employer is. If they refuse to tell her, she will tell them that she can't help them—she won't sell out her friend to somebody who just wants to capitalize on his name. If they tell her they don't know his name but describe him, or if they've found out his name and tell her that, she'll smile. "Oh, yes, Darius. I knew him a long time back." She'll reminisce about "the old days" until the runners nudge her back on track. Again, she will ask if she can hear the songs.

If the runners agree to let her hear the songs, she will invite them to her studio, where she has a very professional-looking sound system. She will not come out personally, but remain in holographic form. She instructs them where to insert the disk, or where to upload the file if they don't have the disk with them, and then takes over from there, running the setup from her control center in the basement. (This should give the runners a big clue about some of her capabilities). As the music plays, the sound seems to grow clearer, though still not completely so, as buttons are pushed and sliders moved as if by magic. The sounds flood the studio through numerous hidden speakers.

Marli's image smiles again. "Oh, yes. I remember those sessions. Carrion Studios, right? Not long before he died. I used to have a recording of them myself, but it got lost somewhere and I never found it. Always regretted that..." Her expression clouds. "I wish I could help you decrypt them the rest of the way, but I

don't have the code anymore. It got lost back when the Crash hit. I lost a lot of irreplaceable files back then. I know, I should have done backups—but those weren't good years for me, you know? I should have done a lot of things I didn't do."

Marli genuinely doesn't have the code. The runners won't be able to verify this unless they find her underground lair (see *The Real Marli* on p. 39) but if they do find her and use any kind of truth magic or drugs on her, her story won't change (though she will get angry with them and try to get them to leave her home). No matter what they do to her, she can't give them the code.

Now What?

It looks like the team might be at the end of their rope at this point—they've got the first level of encryption handled and they know what they're sitting on, but it appears that the "absent friend" who's supposed to be able to decode the rest of it isn't going to be of any use to them after all.

If they appear genuinely dejected and don't try to intimidate Marli once they're reasonably satisfied that she's telling the truth, she turns thoughtful. "You know ..." she says, as if dredging up a memory from a long time ago, "I think I might—*might*, mind you—know somebody who can help you. If you'll leave me your contact info and let me make a call or two, I'll see what I can do. I believe those recordings should be available to the world—

GHOSTS

F	EDG	M	Astral Init	Astral IP
3	3	3	6	3

Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 3, Dodge 3
Powers: Astral Form, Fear
Note: Ghosts cannot materialize, and so are restricted to the astral plane. Use their Force for all attributes.



after all, JetBlack's been dead for more than twenty years now. I'm sure he wouldn't mind at this point. It's really a shame that I lost that code, or I'd help you out in a minute."

If the runners give her their contact information, she'll show them graciously to the door. As soon as they're gone, she will call JetBlack (or his people), tell them about the disk, and pass on their contact information. If JetBlack didn't know about them before, he will now. He wants the recordings back because he doesn't want some stranger making huge profits from his work. He, of course, already has his own copy of the recordings, so his aim is to simply take this one off the market until he can arrange with someone he trusts to release it. Go to *Grave Danger* on p. 40.

If they refuse to give her their information, she'll still make the call after they leave, but it will take JetBlack's people a little longer to track them down. Again, go to *Grave Danger* on p. 40, but cut the margin a little shorter on the time when the team is supposed to meet Johnson.

If they manage to get down to her underground control room and kill her or injure her severely, she will have already made the contact with JetBlack's people before they arrive. Go to *Grave Danger* on p. 40. If they have injured or killed Marli, JetBlack's crew will make no pretense at negotiating—they will simply attack. Since they won't be the only opponents present at this meet, this will likely have a very bad outcome for the characters.

The Real Marli

The only way the team would get to see Marli in her true form is if they track her to her underground control room and successfully storm it. There are several ways to do this, but none of them are easy: the best two are that they could triangulate her control signals (requiring an Electronic Warfare + Sniffer (3) Test) or search astrally and find the warded off space down below.

She will be clearly very disturbed about being seen, and at the sight of the runners' shock she will break down and begin sobbing. If they treat her kindly and don't seem too put off by her appearance (and especially if they promise not to reveal her secret to the world), her amazement will cause her to be much more favorably disposed toward them—in fact, she can prove to be a valuable contact for the team in the future. Even as a recluse, she has many useful contacts of her own in many areas via her Matrix connections.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

You can play this scene as tough or as easy as you like by increasing or decreasing the number and potency of the defenses inside and outside Marli's house. If you want to make it tougher on the team, simply turn the house into a fortress with heavy-duty security doors and armored windows, more cameras and patrolling drones, and maybe even a paracritter or two (such as hellhounds that look scary but are actually very well trained) hanging out in the yard. The important thing to remember, though, is that Marli refuses to use any potentially lethal security methods such as guns or monowire. She is a recluse and values her privacy, but not at the expense of harming anyone. The only way she and Althea will resort to lethal force is if they feel their lives are threatened. Otherwise, feel free to go through the "Street Gear" chapter (p. 310, *SR4A*) and add any defenses or

security measures that you think might be more challenging for your team.

Another way to increase this scene's challenge (though not recommended) occurs if Marli and Althea are successful in knocking the team out with spells or gas: instead of having them wake up in the back of a truck on the other side of town with their gear, have them wake up in the back of a Lone Star van on the way to the lockup. They will have to fight their way out of the vehicle, reclaim their gear (which is stowed in a locked box), and escape—not an easy proposition, even for an experienced team.

DEBUGGING

There's really no way for the team to die in this scene—even if they start shooting or using lethal force, Marli and Althea will respond with nonlethal methods and deal with the team remotely. The worst thing that could happen to them is that they are knocked out by spells or gas and find themselves sleeping it off somewhere.

If the team kills Marli, JetBlack will find out. This will change the tone of the climactic scene (see *Grave Danger*, p. 40). Instead of being interested in making a deal with the characters, he will be enraged by their wanton violence and by the loss of his dear old friend. The team he sends will be instructed to kill them, not to negotiate; if the team survives the combat, they will have picked up a powerful and vengeful enemy.

To avoid this dangerous eventuality, you might consider dropping a hint or two that killing innocent people (especially innocent *famous* people) in cold blood is not the best way to ensure their continued survival and good health. If they decide to do it anyway, let them take the consequences. *Shadowrun* is all about consequences, and if you make the wrong decision, you pay for it. They'll learn next time.

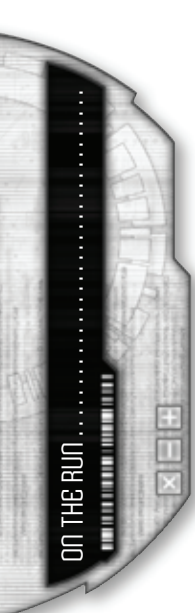
GAMEMASTER NOTES

This is a complex scene with lots of opportunities for roleplaying, puzzle-solving, and even a good old-fashioned shoot-'em-up. Here are a few tips to help you run it:

Roleplaying Marli

There's a lot to remember about Marli, but roleplaying her will be a lot easier if you make the effort to get inside her head. She's a woman who used to be beautiful and powerful—somebody who could have everything she wanted—but who's now been reduced (in her mind) to a grotesque middle-aged recluse. She's remained remarkably upbeat about the whole situation, except for the fact that she no longer wants to interact with the outside world. Her life on the Matrix and talking to the house ghosts have made her more than a little odd, but she's still smart and no pushover.

Marli knows JetBlack isn't dead—in fact, she stays in regular contact with him, though she hasn't talked to him in a few months. She also knows his secret—that he's a vampire—which is part of why she trusted him with hers. She considers him a dear friend and would never voluntarily betray him by giving the decryption code to a group of strangers, even if she had it. She doesn't consider it a betrayal to help them hear the songs a little more clearly, though: she's proud of her friend's accomplishments and thinks they should be released so the world can enjoy his talent once again.



House Defenses

This is a good place to have several maps. One is for the players and should display the outer perimeter of the house, the yard, the fence, and the surrounding terrain. The others are for your eyes only. They should show the floorplan of the house (including the hidden basement control center) and the location of the defenses and surveillance equipment both inside and out. As the players discover things, you can mark them on their map. You can also keep track of the locations of the participants (both player characters and NPCs), including any spirits or house ghosts who might be lurking around ready to cause trouble.

Laminated maps or printed copies inside plastic slipcovers are handy, since you can write on them with dry-erase markers and easily move people and things around to help you keep track of the shifting nature of the scene.

You should read through and familiarize yourself with the rules for physical, technical, and magical security (p. 259, *SR4A*) before running this scene.

Consequences

This is probably a good time to point out that in good *Shadowrun* games, actions have consequences that can haunt the player characters indefinitely. Shadowrunners are criminals; much of society (especially law enforcement) would like nothing better than to see them behind bars or dead. In most cases, you shouldn't let characters get away with wanton murder, mayhem, and property damage—at least not against innocent people, bystanders, and others not involved with the run.

Society in 2070 may be more than a little lawless, but Lone Star and other law-enforcement organizations still take keeping the peace very seriously (it's what they get paid for, after all). If confronted with a group of heavily armed and armored troublemakers, they will respond by bringing out the big guns. You can be sure that in almost all cases, their big guns are bigger than the characters' big guns. Don't hassle the characters with law enforcement (remember that combat rounds are only three seconds long, so combats are usually long finished by the time the Star shows up), but just because characters are packing heavy firepower doesn't mean they can always use it with impunity.

Another consequence to keep in mind is that almost every person the team kills or maims has relatives, friends, and business associates who might decide revenge is better than forgiveness. These people make great plot hooks in ongoing campaigns—it's always fun to wait a few adventures, let the characters get complacent, and then unveil an uncle or ex-wife who runs a large corporate division, is a powerful shaman, or holds some other position that would allow him or her to make life miserable for the characters.

GRAVE DANGER

SCAN THIS

By now the team has run into a brick wall on the second half of the encryption. The runners have probably decided that at this point they just want to get paid. It's time to set up a meet to hand it over and pick up their hard-earned fee.



SR4A REFERENCES

Topic	Page
Maglocks	263
Physical security	259
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Toxins	254
Neuro-Stun gas	255
Security drones	350
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Wards	194
Shamans	181
Magic and spellcasting	177, 182
The Astral Plane	190

Things never work out that easily, though. Before they're able to make the meet, the runners are presented with an offer they'll have a hard time refusing—a mysterious third party contacts them, suggesting a meet where they can sell the disk and the data for more cred than Mr. Johnson is offering.

The team agrees to meet with the third party and at least listen to his offer, probably with visions of nuyen signs dancing in their eyes as they contemplate what kind of cred this new unknown player is willing to put up to get their hands on the recordings. They might be a little put off when they find out the meet's in a graveyard, but hey, money's money, right?

Unfortunately, Shangri-La's team has caught up with them again and they're determined not to leave empty-handed this time. The adventure's final battle pits the team against a newly-beefed-up Shangri-La strike team (now made up of shadowrunners instead of corp flunkies)—and what about the meet's instigators, who claim to represent JetBlack himself (or at least his interests)? Whose side will they be on?

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

As the team is getting ready for their meet with Mr. Johnson, read the following:

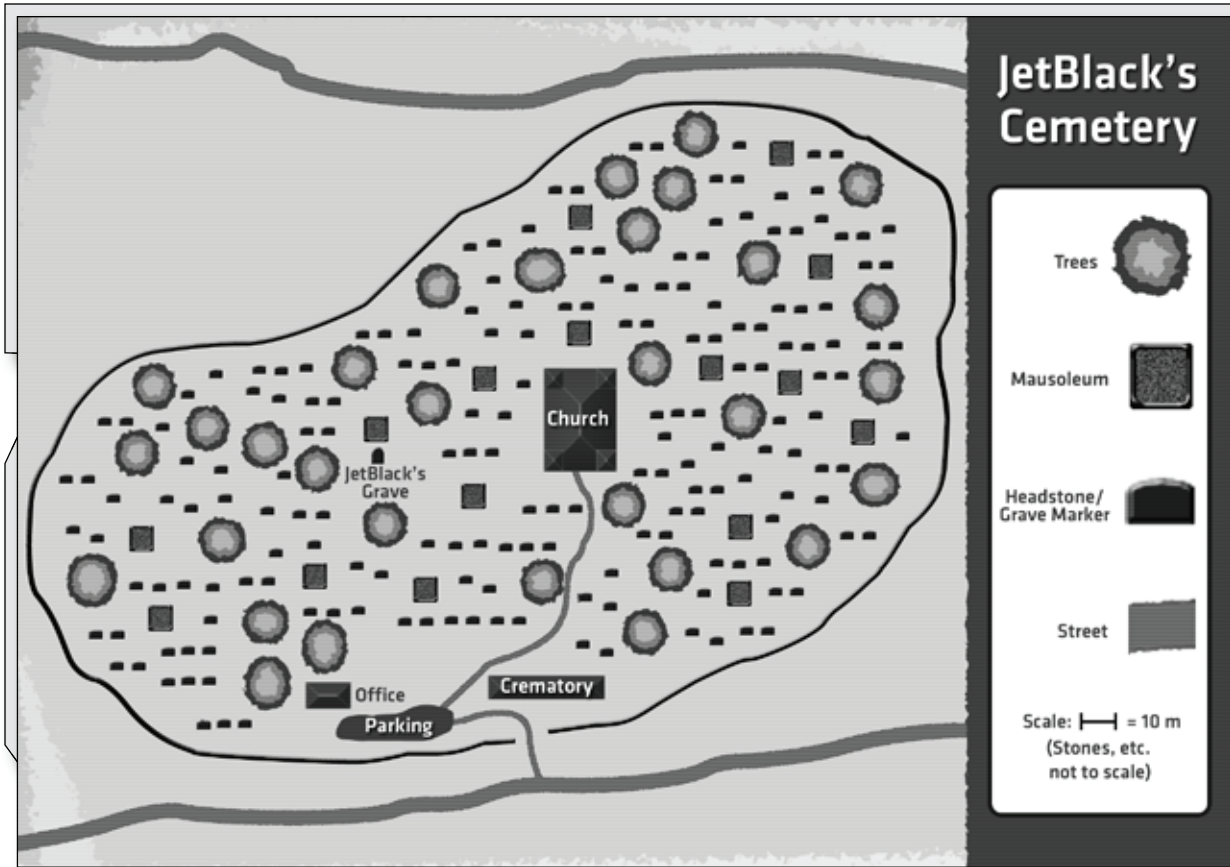
As you're preparing to leave for the meet, your phone rings.

"Good evening," says the voice on the other end: deep, male, and obviously processed. "I've heard you have an item I'm interested in. I've also heard that you're already being paid to provide this item to someone else. Before you do that, though, I'd like the opportunity to speak with you. I'm quite sure I can make you a significantly better offer for the item in question, if you'll just agree to hear me out."

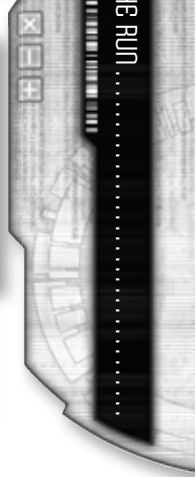
As they arrive at the meet site, read the following:

You've heard of meeting in some strange places before, but this has got to be the strangest yet. It's a cemetery—a good old-fashioned graveyard full of headstones, mausoleums, fog, spooky





Urgent Message...



old trees, and plenty of places to hide. What are these guys up to, anyway? You consider just packing it in and heading off to meet your original Mr. Johnson, but the lure of big nuyen calls to you. After all, you can handle the dead—it's the living you have to worry about.

HOOKS

Unless the team is comprised of a bunch of hopeless goody-two-shoes or Boy Scout types, they're at least going to want to listen to an offer for significantly more cred than they're getting from Johnson. If they're careful and cover their butts, they can always say no and go back to Johnson with a counteroffer, right?

If they decide they don't even want to listen to the offer and go straight to the meet with Johnson instead, see *Pushing the Envelope*, p. 45.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Regardless of whether they've succumbed to their curiosity and figured out what's on the disk, by now the runners are probably just as happy to be rid of it by calling Johnson and arranging to have him take it and/or its files off their hands. Johnson agrees to meet with them in one hour and suggests Infinity (the club where they initially met) as the location.

However, before the team can get to the meet, they're contacted by someone else: a mysterious party who tells them that he represents someone who's interested in the disk and who's willing to pay them at least twice what Johnson is paying them if they'll turn over the disk to him instead. The person asks the runners to at least listen to his offer before they make

up their mind. He assures them it will be worth their while to do so.

If the runners agree to the meet, the mysterious person gives them an address and tells them to be there in twenty minutes (which, coincidentally or not, is about the amount of time it should take them to get there). The location is a large, rambling graveyard with a church in the middle of it—if the runners attempt to look up the address, it will pop up as the church but won't mention the graveyard.

The Cemetery

The mysterious third party is working for none other than JetBlack. The vampire rocker wants the recording back. His people are willing to negotiate for it, but if the team turns down their (very lucrative) offer, they'll drop the "friendly" act and go right for the strongarm tactics.

When the runners arrive at the cemetery, play up the spookiness of it. The area is dark and foggy: there are a few lights, but they're spaced widely and many of them have been shot out. Anybody without some kind of vision enhancement is at a disadvantage equivalent to Partial Light (-2)—see the Visibility Modifier table, p. 136, *SR4A*. The place is an old-style graveyard with trees, paths, and rolling hills, not just acres of lawn with markers. There are plenty of places to hide, get lost, or even to fall into an open grave if you're not careful. The old stone church in the middle is small and looks as though it isn't often used. Its doors are locked.

If the team magician tries to assense the area before the group enters the cemetery, have him roll his Astral Perception





INCOMING FEED.....

Test at a -2 dice pool penalty to account for the general eerie aura of the area. JetBlack's people are divided into two groups—the first consists of five people waiting near a large, ornate grave marker at the center of the cemetery; they shouldn't be too hard to spot. One is clearly the leader, though she assents as a mundane without cyberware (she's actually a magically active vampire, but is masked with the power of a Grade 3 initiate). The second group consists of five more people hidden around the area, who will only show themselves if a combat starts.

When the runners arrive at the meet, they will immediately notice that the ornate grave marker is actually JetBlack's own—it is made of granite, about three meters by two, and surrounded by a low wrought-iron fence. It reads, "The stars shine brightest on the blackest of nights." It is also covered with flowers, mementos, and notes from admirers, even twenty-two years later.

A tall, dark-haired woman dressed in leathers steps forward from behind a nearby mausoleum. She is flanked by two men: one human, one elven, both attired similarly. They are armed but their weapons are holstered. The woman smiles wryly at the runners. "Evening. My name's Risa. Sorry about the location—I've thought it would be appropriate, given the circumstances. Do you have the recording?"

If the team indicates that they do, she nods. "Good. It needs to go back where it belongs. You see, I represent JetBlack's interests. Those recordings were given to a friend of his before he died—he never meant for them to be available to the public. How much did the people who hired you promise to pay you for your trouble?"

If they tell her the truth, she nods again, as if she knows this. "All right, then—what about if I offer you twice that, plus an additional five thousand each to keep your mouths shut and pretend you never knew there were any recordings?" She pauses, and her expression darkens. "Of course, you understand that if you accept my offer, that means we expect that you won't keep any copies. If you've made any, you'll destroy them. If they ever see the light of day, we'll know where they came from, and believe me, you do not want the people I represent as your enemies."

If they try to lie to her about the amount they were promised, she shakes her head ruefully, sighing. "Come on—don't play me for a fool. We both know that isn't right. Why don't you try again and tell me the truth this time, and maybe we can do business."

After she's made her offer, she will allow the runners a few moments to confer among themselves about whether to accept. She and the two men will stand near the memorial marker, alert and ready. The other two will remain near the mausoleum, one near each side.

If the team accepts the offer, she smiles. "Excellent. I'm glad you've seen reason. Please give me the original disk along with any copies you've got with you. I'm going to assume that you're not stupid and that you've left one or more other copies somewhere else. That's fine for tonight, and I'm going to trust that you'll destroy them in keeping with our arrangement. I'll warn you once: don't try to sell them to anyone else or make them public. I wasn't kidding about my employers. They've got resources you can't even imagine. They *will* find you—and

Urgent Message...



they will make your lives most unpleasant when they do.”

If the team doesn't accept the offer, Risa frowns. “So—you're turning down over twice what your employer is offering you? Clearly you're not as smart as I thought you were. Please, I beg you to reconsider.” She doesn't sound like she's begging, though—in fact, she sounds like she's got the situation completely under control. She smiles as she says the last sentence—at this point, give the runners Perception + Intuition (2) Tests to notice her enlarged canine teeth.

Enter Shangri-La

The Shangri-La team consists of shadowrunners this time, not corp security types. They don't know who JetBlack's people are (they weren't around long enough to hear the conversation); their only objective is to get a copy of the recording, whether it be the disk itself or a copy from the runners' commlinks.

Tarkasian is thoroughly tired of being jerked around by a bunch of newbie shadowrunners and has developed an unhealthy obsession with this recording. He's taken off the gloves now and given the strike team instructions to get the file by whatever means necessary. The runners knew the job was dangerous when they took it, and they could surrender and just hand over the disk, avoiding any unnecessary unpleasantness. Regardless, though, Tarkasian is more concerned with making sure he gets the goods than whether his operatives leave a trail.

Whether or not the runners accept the offer, Shangri-La's strike team will attack—the only question is when. They acquired the team's trail on the way to the meet. As the runners meet with Risa's group, the strike team is observing the action via astral recon and a spotter drone from a nondescript van parked nearby. They want to figure out who's got the disk before they attack.

There are a couple of ways that Shangri-La's team can be spotted: a magician character or bound spirit can spot the Shangri-La magician lurking on the astral; one of the characters can spot the drone (though this will be very difficult Perception + Intuition (4) Test to see it); or one of Risa's group can spot the astral scout or the drone (same Perception + Intuition roll). Alternately the Shangri-La hacker may try to hack the commlink of the team's hacker, to see if there are any copies of the files stored there—this will take 2 Initiative Passes of hacking on the fly (see p. 230, *SR4A*). The team's hacker has gets to make two Analyze + Firewall Tests against the intruder's Stealth of 4; if he doesn't achieve that many hits, the intruder gets in undetected.

RISA'S GROUP

Risa (Vampire)

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP CM ARM
 3 5 5 2 4 4 3 5 4 6 6 9 2 11 6/4
Skills: Assensing 4, Astral Combat 6, Banishing 3, Binding 4, Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Spellcasting 5, Summoning 5, Unarmed Combat 3
Initiate Grade: 3
Spells: Acid Stream, Detect Magic Extended, Influence, Hush, Shadow
Metamagic: Masking, Centering (Chanting), Shielding
Powers: Enhanced Sense (Hearing, Smell, Thermographic Vision), Essence Drain, Immunity (Age, Pathogens, Toxins), Infection, Mist Form, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0, -1 Reach), Regeneration, Sapience
Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate; Wood, Severe), Dietary Requirement (Blood), Essence Loss, Induced Dormancy (Lack of Air)
Gear: Erika Elite Commlink, Lined Coat (6/4), Colt Manhunter

Lieutenant (1)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM PR ARM
 5 (+2) 4 (6) 4 (6) 4 (6) 3 3 4 4 0.9 7 (9) 2 11 (13) 4 8/7
Skills: Automatics 4, Blades 4, Leadership 3 (Tactics +2), Pistols 5, Perception 3, Shadowing 3, Unarmed Combat 3
Cyberware: Wired Reflexes 1, Muscle Replacement 2, Aluminum Bone Lacing, Smartlink
Gear: Hermes Ikon Commlink, Low Light Contacts, Monofilament Sword, Ares Predator IV, Armor Jacket (8/6), H/E Grenades (2), Thermal Smoke Grenades (2)

Mage (1)

B A R S C I L W ESS M Init IP CM ARM
 3 4 4 3 2 4 4 5 6 4 8 1 11 6/4
Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 2, Conjuring Group 4, Counterspelling 3, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Pistols 3, Spellcasting 4
Spells: Control Actions, Ignite, Levitate, Lightning Bolt, Shadow
Gear: Sony Emperor Commlink, Lined Coat (6/4), Yamaha Sakura Fubuki

Flunkies (7)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM ARM
 4 3 3 3 2 3 2 3 5.1 6 1 10 8/6
Skills: Automatics 3, Blades 3, Dodge 3, Pistols 3, Stealth Group 4
Cyberware: Datajack, Flare Compensation, Low Light Vision, Simrig, Vision Magnification,
Gear: Renraku Sensei Commlink, HK 227X, Camouflage Suit (8/6), Ceska Black Scorpion (smartlinked), Forearm Snap Blades, Smartlink contacts





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SHANGRI-LA TEAM

Leader (Dwarf)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM PR ARM

5 (+3) 4 4 (7) 5 4 5 4 4 3.1 9 (12) 1 11 4 9/7

Skills: Athletics Group 3, Con 3, Etiquette 3 (Street +2), Firearms Group 4, Perception 4, Shadowing 2, Survival 3 (Urban +2)

Cyberware: Cybereyes 3 (Flare Compensation, Low-Light Vision, Smartlink, Vision Enhancement 2, Vision Magnification), Reaction Enhancers 3, Sound Link, Titanium Bone Lacing

Gear: Hermes Ikon Commlink, Ares Viper Slivergun (Concealed in a Hidden Arm Slide), Mossberg AM-CMDT, H/E Grenade, Frag Grenade, Armor Jacket (8/6)

Notes: Thermographic Vision, +2 Body dice for tests to resist toxins and pathogens

Shaman (Human)

B A R S C I L W ESS M Init IP CM ARM

4 2 3 3 5 4 3 5 6 5 7 1 11 8/6

Astral Initiative/IP: 8/3

Skills: Assensing 3, Conjuring Group 3, Counterspelling 2, Dodge 4, Etiquette 3 (Street +2), Perception 3, Spellcasting 5, Stealth Group 2

Spells: Detect Life Extended, Heal, Invisibility, Magic Fingers, Mindlink, Stunbolt

Gear: Hermes Ikon Commlink, Armor Jacket (8/6), Goggles w/ Image Link, Colt America L36

Notes: This shaman follows the Dog mentor spirit (+2 dice for Detection spells, +2 dice for spirits of man) for more information see (p. 200, SR4A).

Adept (Human)

B A R S C I L W ESS M Init IP CM ARM

5 4 5 (7) 4 2 3 3 4 6 4 8 (10) 1 (3) 11 9/7

Skills: Archery 5 (7), Athletics Group 4, Close Combat Group 4, Dodge 3, Infiltration 3, Pistols 3

Adept Powers: Improved Ability (Archery) 2, Improved Reflexes 2, Mystic Armor 1, Rapid Healing 2

Gear: Hermes Ikon Commlink, Bow, Camouflage Suit (8/6), Colt Manhunter, Survival Knife

Samurai (Human)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM ARM

6 3 4 (7) 5 2 3 3 2 0.55 7 (10) 1 (4) 11 10/8

Skills: Athletics Group 3, Etiquette 2, Demolitions 3, Dodge 2, Firearms Group 5, Infiltration 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Cyberware: Hand Razors, Wired Reflexes (3)

Bioware: Orthoskin 2

Gear: Hermes Ikon Commlink, AK-97 with smartgun system, Camouflage Suit (8/6), Smoke Grenades (3), Smartlink Goggles

Continued on page 45

If the characters notice the Shangri-La group and try to back off or break off the meet, Shangri-La will attack. Risa's party will enter the fight on the team's side—clearly the attackers represent a common enemy. The team, however, may not realize that the Shangri-La squad is a third party, and make mistakenly think Risa is trying to ambush them. Play up this confusion; the runners should not necessarily know who's on their side without assessing their actions and responses first.

If Risa's team notices the Shangri-La group, they will suspect that the player characters are somehow trying to doublecross them. Risa will say something to this effect and order her group to attack the team. The Shangri-La squad will defend themselves but stay out of the main fray at first, hoping that that the other two teams will wear each other down, but they will contain anyone from leaving and will swoop in once it looks like the fight is ending. Since they're unsure about who currently has the disk, they will focus equally on Risa's group and the player characters. Note that the Shangri-La team doesn't know about the additional five members of Risa's group who are currently in hiding.

If neither Risa's group nor the characters notice them, the Shangri-La squad will wait until the meeting ends, planning to ambush whichever group has the disk a short distance away (using surprise). If the runners refuse to hand the disk over to Risa despite the lucrative offers and threats, Risa will pretend to call off the meet—but as soon as the runners move to leave, her five compatriots in hiding will attack. As noted above, Shangri-La will sit this battle out, but will quickly move in to mop up afterwards and take possession of the disk from any survivors.

If the runners decide to sell the disk to Risa, the vampire will pay them what they ask on the spot and take possession of all copies of the disk. Her team will then back off, but give the runners a Perception + Intuition (1) Test (with a -3 dice pool modifier due to the distance) to notice the gunfire and shouts as Shangri-La ambushes them a short distance away. It will be up to the team to decide whether or not to get involved—they've been paid, so there's no reason for them to remain and help Risa's group; they might just decide to take the money and run. On the other hand, they might worry that they'll be framed for the ambush if Risa loses the disk to someone else, so better to help her out now than to have her come gunning for them later.

Note that if at any point the runners do surrender and offer to hand over the disk, the Shangri-La team would be happy to take it and



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go. JetBlack's people aren't going to let this happen, though, taking the fight as far as they have to in order to prevent the disk from being taken.

The Shangri-La team will fight until half their number is taken down, then disengage. If they manage to take down any of the player characters, one of them will try to search that character's unconscious (or dead) body to try to locate the disk or a commlink that might contain a copy of the files. They might also make another attempt to hack the commlink during the fight itself. If they extract the files, they will signal their teammates and attempt an orderly retreat.

Try to spread the fight out over some distance—the gravestones, trees, and even the church make great cover, and the darkness and fog provide negative visibility modifiers for everyone. Keep in mind other natural hazards, too—on a glitch or critical glitch, a character could fall into an open grave, trip over a headstone, fall out of a tree on a dead limb, or even run into some of the other people and creatures who tend to hang out in graveyards at night.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Getting The Team To The Meet

It's possible that the team will decide that they don't want to meet with this new unknown person. They just want to go to the meet with Johnson, hand over the data, and get paid. This is actually a fairly smart thing to do (especially if they don't want to mess up their rep by screwing over their very first Johnson), but that would be just entirely too easy.

If they decide to blow off the meet with Risa, consider choosing one of the team's contacts—preferably one that a character is attached to—and have Risa indicate that her group is holding on to that person and that they'll be perfectly safe as long as the team is willing to at least listen to her offer. Whether they actually have the person or not is up to you, but the contact should be out of touch and unreachable by the character to maintain the air of uncertainty.

Note: If you're uncomfortable with this solution and feel that it's "railroading" the players too much, feel free to simply allow them to take the disk to Johnson and finish the run. They'll miss out on the climactic combat and some of the adventure's potential Karma award, but there's nothing wrong with that if it's more appropriate to the game you and your players prefer.

Making The Fight More Interesting

This combat should be plenty tough for a newbie team—don't pull any punches, but don't go out of your way to kill them either. Remember, there are ten people in JetBlack's group, and they're as big a threat as the runners. The Shangri-La team will be focusing as much on them as they do on the characters.

If your team is a bit more experienced, you might want to add a few more details to make things a bit more interesting in

SHANGRI-LA TEAM (Cont.)

Hacker (Human)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM ARM
3 (+1) 4 3 (5) 3 4 5 4 3 4.2 8 (10) 1 10 8/6

Virtual Initiative/IP/CM: 11/3/10 (hot sim)

Skills: Close Combat Group 2, Cracking Group 4, Demolitions 2, Electronics Group 3, Etiquette 2, First Aid 2, Locksmith 2, Perception 3, Pistols 2

Cyberware: Datajack, Plastic Bone Lacing, Reaction Enhancers 2, Simrig, Touchlink

Gear: Custom Commlink (System 4, Firewall 5, Response 5, Signal 4, misc. software at Rating 4), Autopicker Maglock Passkey 4, Miniwelder, Handheld Radio Signal Scanner 3, Spatial Recognizer Earbuds, Yamaha Pulsar, Armored Jacket (8/6)

Rigger (Ork)

B A R S C I L W ESS Init IP CM ARM
7 3 3 7 2 3 4 3 3.4 6 1 14 8/6

Virtual Initiative/IP/CM: 7/3/9 (hot sim)

Skills: Firearms Group 3, Gunnery 4, Mechanic Group 4, Perception 2, Pilot Aircraft 3, Pilot Anthroform 2, Pilot Cyberware: Control Rig, 2 Cyberarms (STR 4, Armor 3), Datajack

Gear: Handheld Radio Signal Scanner 3, Hermes Ikon Commlink, 2 GM-Nissan Dobermans (LMG equipped), Lonestar iBall (equipped w/Flashpack and Smoke Grenade), Armored Jacket (8/6)

the form of other things that tend to hang around graveyards and might object to being invaded by a bunch of idiots shooting at each other. Possibilities include:

- Ghosts and spirits
- Shamans
- Ghouls
- Gangers
- A group arranging a drug deal
- Teenagers using the graveyard as a makeout spot or the location for a club initiation ritual
- One or two cemetery security guards on their rounds
- A patrolling Lone Star officer

DEBUGGING

This is the final combat, and it's a biggie. Keep it fair. Don't have either the Shangri-La team or JetBlack's people concentrate too strongly on the player characters to the exclusion of other dangers, but don't worry if you kill somebody off. This is a dangerous fight.

If your team consists of newbie runners on their first shadow-run (especially if the players themselves are new to *Shadowrun*), by all means offer them hints on things like cover, tactics, and how to stay alive in large combats. The fight should be fast-paced and unpredictable—it's up to you and your players whether you prefer to run it as a cinematic, broad-strokes combat or with more detail and realism. Both can be very satisfying.





If the Shangri-La team manages to win the combat (or if the team has turned down JetBlack's offer and his group wins), the player characters will lose the disk. If you're feeling charitable, you can have the bad guys miss whichever commlink that contains a copy of the file so the team will have something to give to Johnson, but play up the fact that they have now bought themselves at least one (and possibly as many as three) powerful enemies. This is a great initiation into the world of *Shadowrun*, where watching your back is not only necessary but instinctual if you want to stay alive.

Remember, though—even if the team does gain enemies, there's no law that says you have to use them right away. Corporations (and vampire rock stars) have a lot of other things going on. It might take them awhile to turn their attention back to a team of newbie shadowrunners who will probably get themselves geeked anyway. The anticipation and suspense is often more fun and keeps the players on their toes.

GAMEMASTER NOTES

Surprise

There are several places in this combat where the Surprise rules will come into play. For example, Risa's group could surprise the team by attacking suddenly if they suspect a doublecross, or the Shangri-La team could surprise both Risa's group and the player characters when they enter the fight. Surprise comes in two parts: a Perception Test (usually made by the gamemaster secretly) to see if each character notices anything out of the ordinary, followed by a Surprise (Reaction + Intuition) Test. The number of hits a character scores on this test determines the number of hits another character must beat in order to act before him (characters who make their Perception roll get +3 dice for the Surprise Test). You should read through the Surprise rules (p. 165, *SR4A*) prior to running this combat and keep track of who's surprised by whom. Remember, Surprise only counts in the first Initiative Pass, unless someone new enters the combat later on.

More On Running Large Combats

There are a few things you can do to make this combat go more smoothly. The first is to make a master control sheet containing important information, such as combat skills, Edge values, Initiative Passes, and so forth along with a Damage Track for each NPC participant in the combat. This will save a lot of flipping back and forth between pages, and will let you have all the combatants on your side of the fight together in one place. You can tell at a glance who's wounded, who's about to go down, and who's still fresh.

The second is to note on your copy of the map where each combatant is (especially since several of them start the fight from hidden positions) and be aware of how long it will take them to join the combat. Remember, if someone is several hundred meters away, it will take them quite awhile to get into position for even a long-range shot if they're on foot (though magic doesn't have this limitation).

The third is a trick some gamemasters like to use. Prior to the combat, roll a lot bunch of dice (like a hundred or more)

and note down the results in order, circling anything that's a hit. When you need to make a roll during the game, cross off that many results from your list and note the number of hits in that group (for example, if you need to roll twelve dice, cross off the first twelve rolls on your list and count how many circled numbers are in that group). It can speed up combat, so long as you're comfortable with the idea.

Finally, don't commit your NPCs to any particular action no matter what. Conditions will change during combat, so make sure your NPCs react by altering their actions to fit what's happening. If one side starts losing too many people, for example, they might gang up on the enemy's most potent-looking fighter, or they might even retreat. Keep your options open and let the battle happen as it will.

SR4A REFERENCES	
Topic	Page
Surprise	165
Masking	198
Vampires	301

Cinematic vs. Realistic

Gamemasters and players vary in how they like to handle combat. Some groups like to inject as much gritty realism into the fight as possible, carefully applying every appropriate modifier, plotting out distances and angles, and generally trying to make the combat as lifelike as possible. Others prefer a more cinematic approach, running the combat with broader strokes, fewer dice rolls, and less attention to detail in favor of flair and storytelling value. Both ways are fine. Just make sure everybody is on the same page before you start, so you don't have the cinematic swashbucklers getting frustrated when the gritty realism fans want to spend 10 minutes plotting out every aspect of each Combat Turn (or vice versa).

Damned If You Do (The Shadowrunner's Dilemma)

This scene serves to point out something to characters and players alike—things don't always work out the way you want them to. In this scenario, they're put into a situation where they're damned if they do (selling the disk to Risa's party means they'll likely face the wrath of Mr. Johnson and the associated loss of reputation) and damned if they don't (they lose a large amount of money, have to fight a formidable enemy, and probably gain a different powerful enemy). The players might not like this situation, but it's one that they're going to encounter over and over during their shadowrunning careers. Small victories are common (and become more so as the team grows in experience and reputation), but in a world where megacorporations and other powerful entities maneuver runners like pawns on a chessboard, big wins are rare and usually not without a drawback or two. If a shadowrunning team isn't looking over its shoulder for enemies, it hasn't done enough to get anybody's notice yet.

FINALE

SCAN THIS

After the climactic battle at the graveyard, the runners either still have the disk (or a copy of it), sold it to JetBlack's people, or lost it to JetBlack or Shangri-La. Regardless of the combat's outcome, the team needs to decide whether they're going to go back to Johnson or blow him off.





TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

If the runners hand over the disk or a copy of the recordings and haven't sold or lost it to anyone else, read the following:

Mr. Johnson accepts your offering with a nod of thanks. "Good job," he says, grinning. "I've heard that a lot of people were after this, and it looks like you've managed to beat them all out. I'm impressed, especially if the rumors I've heard are true. I'll pass this on to my employer, and I'm reasonably sure that there might be more employment for you in the future. I'm even authorized to toss in a little extra bonus—5,000¥, to be exact—to reward you for your integrity. Now—let's have a drink, shall we? I'm buying."

If the runners hand over the disk (or a copy of the recordings) and have lost (not sold) the files to someone else, read the following:

Mr. Johnson sighs, taking your offering but not looking pleased. "Well, you got me the disk. I would have preferred that you were the only ones to have the files, but ... well, there's little point to discussing that now. I think we'll be able to salvage things, since my employer can move a little faster than the competition. Here's your payment—let me give you some advice, though. If you want to stay in this business, you need to be more careful to hang on to things. I guarantee your next boss won't be as forgiving."

If the runners hand over the disk (or a copy of the recordings) and have sold the files to someone else, read the following:

Mr. Johnson is all smiles until you hand over the disk, and then he glares at you like a scientist pinning an insect to a wall. "Nice going," he growls. "You guys are new at this, I know, but I thought you'd be smart enough to know that when you get paid to deliver something to somebody, you don't start freelancing copies to other players. Yeah, yeah—I know, they probably made you an offer you couldn't refuse. I know how it is. I hope it was a damned good offer, though, 'cause I'm sure as hell not gonna pay you for acting like a bunch of greedy kids. You realize, if I was any other Johnson, you'd be dead now. See, we don't like getting doublecrossed. Fortunately for you, my employer was able to broker a ... deal ... with the party you sold the information to. Everything's frosty now, so he's decided to let you keep breathing ... for now, anyway. If I were you, I'd get my ass out of here before I forget that I'm a nice guy and decide to teach you the lesson you really need to learn."

If the runners don't go back to Johnson at all and attempt to lay low, read the following:

A day after the time of the scheduled meet, *<choose the most obvious team leader/spokesperson>* receives a voicemail message. "This is Mr. Johnson. Apparently you've chosen to accept a bet-

ter offer than the one I made you. Either that, or you're all dead. Either way, I'm not pleased and neither is my employer. You'll be hearing from us again."

HOOKS

No hooks should be needed for this scene—one way or another, the team is going to have to interact with Johnson (on their terms or his).

BEHIND THE SCENES

The way in which this scene plays out is entirely dependent on what the team ended up doing with the disk. Each decision has ramifications for future interactions between Mr. Johnson and the team.

Team delivers disk to Johnson (and only Johnson)

If the team emerged intact from the combat at the cemetery, turned down Risa's offer, and delivered the disk to Mr. Johnson, he will be very pleased with them (particularly if they're newbie runners and this is their first job). He will indicate that both he and his employer are quite satisfied with their performance and offer them a bonus of 5,000¥ as a reward for maintaining their integrity in the face of what was surely a tempting offer.

In this option, Johnson and his employer will keep the team in mind for future jobs. The characters can use Darius St. George as a contact (Connection 4, Loyalty 2) in future adventures, where his vast knowledge of the Seattle entertainment scene might come in handy. Though the team won't find out who Darius's employer is, that individual will also keep the team in mind should he have any other jobs that might suit their talents. (These future jobs might be detailed in future *Shadowrun* products.)

Team delivers copy to Johnson but have lost the disk or a copy of it

If the team hands over a copy of the files to Johnson but fails to deliver the disk because they've lost it to another party (the Shangri-La team or JetBlack's group), their Johnson will not be pleased with them. He will be more understanding than they might expect—after all, he didn't expect that they'd be facing this level of opposition. He's mildly impressed that they've managed to come away with a copy, even though they lost the original. He will pay them their agreed-upon payment, but will admonish them to be more careful in the future.

Note that if the team was experienced rather than new, Johnson won't be impressed by their inability to hold on to the disk. He'll still pay them, but the meet will be abrupt without any helpful advice.

Either way, the team still has the potential to retain Darius St. George as a contact (Connection 4, Loyalty 1), if they manage to convince him that they will strive to do better next time.

Team delivers copy (or disk) to Johnson but has also sold it to someone else

If the team was hoping that Mr. Johnson hadn't heard that he's not the only one receiving the files, they're in for a nasty surprise. Johnson will act like everything is fine until the team has handed over the disk or the copy and he's checked it, and then his

anger will be obvious. He's heard from somebody (his employer, perhaps) that the team is dealing from both ends of the deck, and he's not pleased about it. He will decline to pay them for the delivery, telling them that he hopes that they got a good offer from the other party. He also tells them in no uncertain terms that they'd better not be peddling any other copies of the files to anyone else—his employer has made a deal with the other party who has the disk, so right now everything is fine. If the team starts selling other copies, however, he's going to know about it.

Play up the fact that he's angry with them for the double-cross and barely containing himself from causing them some serious harm. In this case, the team has lost their chance to retain Darius St. George as a contact. If he needs a team in the future, the runners will not be on his list to call.

If the runners try to demand their payment anyway, Darius will call in his back-up (a more experienced and heavyweight runner team, hiding just out of sight) and have the runners roughly kicked out.

Team sells the files to someone else and doesn't attend the meeting with Johnson at all

If the team has sold the files to another party and decides to blow Mr. Johnson off rather than telling him about their decision, he'll find out anyway (it's that mysterious employer again—he tends to hear things). He'll give them a call to let them know that not only does he know what they did, but he knows how to find them if he wants to do so.

The call is simply to put fear into the team—to make them sweat with the thought that a powerful person might just come after them at his leisure some day. There's also the matter of his employer, of whom they have no knowledge despite the fact that he seems to know quite a lot about them.

Whether you decide to exact revenge on the runners or just continue to let them worry is up to you, but Darius St. George and his employer are not available to the runners as contacts or potential sources of information no matter what. In fact, it would probably be a good idea for them to avoid St. George entirely for quite some time.

DEBUGGING

This is the last scene, so let things fall where they may. If the team has betrayed Johnson or sold the disk to someone else, play up the fact that he's able to reach them even when they don't want to be reached, and may prove to be an ongoing thorn in their sides. Whether you decide to pursue this angle or just make the characters sweat, Johnson will not hire this team for any subsequent runs.

GAMEMASTER NOTES

No real need for gamemaster notes here—by now you should be familiar enough with Mr. Johnson and his reactions to the runners' action that you'll be able to run this last meet effectively.

AFTERMATH

WHAT NEXT?

Okay, so the team has finished the run, handed the disk over to somebody (or more than one somebody) and reaped



the reward or suffered the consequences for their actions. What now?

If they keep their ears open to entertainment news, they will discover that the JetBlack recordings appear never to see the light of day. No retrospective collection is released, no publicity is generated—it seems that the recordings have simply dropped off the face of the earth. If the team gave the disk to Mr. Johnson and attempt to contact him to ask him about it, his reply is simply that “Oh, that’s all in my employer’s hands now. What he does with it is none of my business. And if you know what’s good for you, you should probably just forget the whole thing.”

The characters might find this an ultimately unsatisfying climax to their first “real” shadowrun, but that’s the way things work in the shadows more times than not—you do a job and you never find out the results, the ramifications, or even if your run had any meaning. This is as good a time as any for them to learn it, because in a lot of cases it’s not going to change.

AWARDING KARMA

At the completion of a *Shadowrun* adventure, characters are awarded Karma points depending on how well they accomplished various objectives in the adventure (in addition to simply surviving). Karma is awarded to the team as a group and also to individual characters (see *Awarding Karma*, p. 269, *SR4A*). Karma awards are listed on the Team and Individual Karma tables.

Odds are good that the characters won’t earn all the available Karma points for the adventure—that’s normal. For the individual Karma awards, it’s a good idea to jot down notes while you’re running the adventure, keeping track of when a character did something that impressed (or didn’t impress) you. In that way, when the time comes to hand out the Karma, you’ll know who should get what. Don’t be afraid to withhold Karma points from a character who did something particularly out of character or just plain stupid—the award is supposed to represent the Universe’s favor for a job well done, so it makes sense that a poorly-done job might result in a few deductions. Naturally, you don’t have to tell the players this—sometimes it’s better to keep them in the dark over which actions result in Karma awards or deductions, so they don’t try to anticipate what you’re looking for.

TEAM KARMA

Situation	Karma
Getting the data from Nabo’s commlink	1
Tracking Loomis and getting the disk	1
Successfully dealing with Marli without killing or injuring her seriously	1
Successfully dealing with Delphia without killing or injuring her seriously	1
Delivering the disk to Johnson without selling/losing the data to anyone else	1

INDIVIDUAL KARMA

Situation	Karma
Surviving	1
Good roleplaying	1–2
Guts/bravery	1
Humor	1
Pushing the storyline along	1

SR4A REFERENCES

Topic	Page
Awarding Karma	269

Some gamemasters like to award Karma points at the point when a character does something impressive, rather than saving them until the end. This is up to you—whichever way you and your players prefer is fine. Just remember that in general, characters shouldn’t be allowed to spend Karma to improve themselves during the course of an adventure—this takes place in the downtime between runs.

GOING FORWARD

One thing to keep in mind when running *Shadowrun* games, especially if your players want to keep the same characters and play an ongoing campaign, is that every adventure can contain the seeds of future adventures. For example, there are numerous people in *On the Run* whom the characters may be able to cultivate as contacts: Darius St. George, Zipper, Delphia, Marli Bremerton, Mr. Lo and his Triad members, Risa and her group—it’s even possible that some important but shadowy personages such as JetBlack, or Mr. Johnson’s mysterious employer, might have their eyes on the characters if they perform well.

It’s also possible (probable, in fact) that the characters are going to pick up at least a couple of enemies; whether these are powerful or incidental depends on how they play the adventure. As the gamemaster, it’s a good idea for you to keep notes about what the characters did—who they met, who they impressed, who they pissed off, where they’ve been and who they’ve talked to. Later, when you’re casting about for an idea for a subsequent adventure, you can go back to your notes and pull out an old friend who needs a favor, an old enemy who’s finally ready to settle a score, or some other aspect of a previous run that might come back to revisit the characters when they least expect it.

LEGWORK

This section contains tables you can consult to determine the results of the team’s legwork: checking with their contacts, doing Matrix research, or anything else they can come up with. The basics of using contacts for legwork are discussed on p. 286, *SR4A*.

For each contact the team approaches, they may get information in two ways. First, the contact may have personal knowledge of what they’re looking for. This is represented by the contact’s Knowledge skills. Have the contact roll the appropriate skill (for example, Music Industry Knowledge) + the appropriate attribute (for example, Logic), and consult the appropriate topic table below. If you haven’t worked out what the contact’s skills are yet, simply select what feels an appropriate number of dice for the contact and roll. Keep in mind that a contact with an



INCOMING FEED.....

average skill (3) + an average attribute (3) will be rolling 6 dice, so an inept or unskilled contact would roll less dice (say 3 or 4, but no less than 1) while a skilled and proficient contact would roll more (say 8 or 9, but likely no more than 12). Alternately, you can simply decide that a contact doesn't know the information (it's inappropriate, not his specialty, or you simply don't want the runners to know yet) or that he does (if he's clued in somehow, or it's time to feed the characters another clue to keep it moving). Of course, even if the contact does know some information, he may be unwilling to share it, perhaps requiring a Negotiation Test or threats to get it out of him.

Secondly, the contact can be asked to "ask around." In this case the contact makes a Charisma + Connection Extended Test with an interval of 1 hour.

Count each hit scored on these tests cumulatively and look them up on the Contact column in the appropriate topic table below. If a contact has accumulated 3 hits regarding a topic, for example, then he has all the information listed under 0, 1, 2, and 3 hits on the table.

SEARCHING THE MATRIX

Some characters may prefer to search for information online, checking through shadowy bulletin boards, data haven archives, and underworld rumor channels rather than asking around face-to-face. In this case, the character makes a Data Search + Browse Extended Test with an interval of 1 minute. Count each hit cumulatively and consult the Search column in the appropriate topic table below. Some topics may have a *Data*

Search Modifier listed, which is applied as a dice pool modifier to the search test.

Note that Extended Tests are hard to fail (except for glitching, as noted on p. 65, *SR4A*), so it may seem that a character could simply dig up everything given enough time (and not even that much time with a 1 minute interval). For this reason, we highly suggest that you enforce a limit on the maximum number of tests allowed equal to the character's dice pool (for example, a character with Data Search 3 and Browse 3 could only roll 6 times)—beyond this point, extra detail simply can't be found online, and the character will have to hit the streets. Alternately, you can simply set a limit as to what information is available online—though the Matrix is rich with data, not everything can be found there.

To simplify this test, ask the character how many minutes he will search for, then simply make the test once and multiply the results by the number of minutes (with a maximum minutes equal to the dice pool used).

NABO

From the streets of the Redmond Barrens to headlining shows at 50,000-seat stadiums, he's a real ork-rock success story.

Contacts: Gangers, orks, trolls, anybody familiar with popular music (especially Goblin Rock)

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	"What is that, some kind of new Aztlaner swear word?"

- 1 2 (*shakes head in disgust*) “Man, who *hasn't* heard of him? He's just the hottest ork rocker in the 'plex. He's gonna be playing in town tonight—go see him if you want to hear some good shit.”
- 2 4 “Use to be a ganger right here in Seattle—ran with the Black Fangs over in Redmond. Even now that he's famous, they say he'll never forget his friends.”
- 3 8 “Lots of talent, but high on himself. You know what his name means, right? ‘Nabo’ is short for ‘Eunabo,’ which is Or'zet for ‘pick of the litter’—sexually hot.”
- 4 12 “I've heard that he's put his best friend, Jager, in charge of security for the show. Maybe not the best move—Jager likes his novacoke a little too much, if you know what I mean.”

ZIPPER

She might not be the world's greatest hacker, but she's got the information you're looking for.

Contacts: Hackers, technomancers, anybody connected with the Matrix.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	“That's what people used to use for holding up their pants, right?”
1	2	“Yeah, that sounds like a typical hacker handle. Must be dozens of 'em in Seattle.”
2	4	“I don't think she's much of a hacker—her gear's crap because she can't keep away from the ponies and the cards, y'know? Nah, I don't know where she hangs out.”
3	8	“Oh, yeah, I know Zipper. Hangs out at the Cathode Glow. She's there almost every night—doesn't have much of a life, y'know?”
4	16	“Zipper's real name is Willi Ishikawa. She's a dwarf. Likes the girls. Nice enough <i>chica</i> , but a real loser.”

SHANGRI-LA PRODUCTIONS

The other party who's after the disk—and the guy at the helm isn't giving up.

Contacts: Corp watchers, anybody in the music industry, anybody in the corporate world.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	“Never heard of 'em. Sounds like a mellow bunch, though.”
1	2	“They're a music label. Lots of different kinds of stuff. Decently successful.”
2	4	“They're kind of a high-risk label—they sign a lot of new unknowns and hope some of them catch on.”

- 3 8 “They're a subsidiary of Horizon. Get it: Horizon? Shangri-La? Oh, never mind. But Horizon's definitely got their eye on this little division.”
- 4 16 “Shangri-La's internal hierarchy is partly based on one of Horizon's peer reputation systems, so it's hard to keep track of who's important as it may change from week to week.
- 5 20 I hear that a guy named Ari Tarkasian over at Shangri-La is running some project on the side. He's been spreading lots of money around and pulling in favors—he must be after something or someone.

ARI TARKASIAN

The team's primary competitor to finding the disk—he had it in his hands once before and lost it; he's not going to let it easily slip away again.

Contacts: Corp watchers, anybody in the music industry, anybody in the corporate world.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	“Isn't that the joy-girl who works down around the corner? Cute elf, brunette, no hips?”
1	2	“Isn't he some music industry guy?”
2	4	“That's right, he used to be at Apogee Productions before it went belly-up right after the Crash. Isn't he with some bigger corp now?”
3	8	“Yeah, he's that elf who works for Shangri-La. They're run by Horizon, with some weird sort of collective internal structure, so he's more like a chief hippie than a middle manager.”
4	16	“Make no mistake, he's in Shangri-La's inner circle, so he can pull strings. Rumor is he'd be even higher up in the food chain, but he lost his chance on something big and important when the Apogee building burned down.”

THE SHADOWS

The hottest band on the scene in the mid 2050s. Everybody who was older than 10 remembers them when they were popular.

Contacts: Music fans, music industry insiders, club kids, anyone who's older than 30 or so.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	“You're living in them, Mr. <i>Shadowrunner</i> .”
1	2	“They were hot shit back in the '50s. Sold out every show they did.”
2	4	“They had four members—Marli Bremerton, Sid Id, Joey Nightmare, and Ernest Hawkins. They hung out with JetBlack—that bunch was thick as thieves back in the day.”





- 3 8 "They broke up some time in the late '50s. I think Joey OD'd on something not long after that, and the other two guys moved outta Seattle."
- 4 12 "Marli's still around town somewhere, but I don't think anybody sees her anymore. Rumor has it she had a run of bad luck and dropped completely out of sight."

MARLI BREMERTON

The beautiful and charismatic face of The Shadows, her life has changed a lot since she was last in the public eye.

Contacts: Music fans, music industry insiders, club kids, anyone who's older than 30 or so.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	"Isn't she the anchor on one of the newsvids?"
1	2	"Leader of The Shadows band back years ago—she was some looker, I'll tell you. She's gotta be getting up in years these days, though, if she's even still alive."
2	4	"She disappeared off the face of the earth a few years back. I think she had a comeback album in the late '50s, but it tanked. Haven't heard from her since."
3	8	"There are all kinds of rumors that something bad happened to her: she's got a contagious disease, she was in a terrible accident—something like that to make it so she never sees anybody."
4	12	"Yeah, she's still alive. She lives in Seattle somewhere, but I don't know where. I don't think very many people do. She's gotten obsessive about privacy. Nobody knows why, though."

CARRION STUDIOS

An infamous starting place for many underground careers back in the late '40s and early '50s, it's long gone now—but there are still folks out there who might remember things, if you can find them.

Contacts: Anybody in the music industry (+1 to dice pool for anybody who's been around since at least the early 2050s); anybody with a general interest in popular music.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	"Sounds spooky—like it's run by ghouls or something. I'd stay away from it."
1	2	"I think it used to be a recording studio in the Bitter Lake part of Downtown."
2	4	"Oh, yeah—they did some good stuff back in the day, but I don't think they're around anymore. They were on Edgewater Street in Bitter Lake, Downtown."

- 3 8 "I've heard of them. They worked with some big acts back in the late '40s through the mid '50s, but I think they got swallowed up by some big corp after that. I think some of the original guys are still alive, though."

- 4 16 "A lady named Delphia was the big cheese at Carrion. Once she left, they never really got the good stuff anymore. She had the touch for dealing with those prima-donna stars, you know? I think she might still live around here somewhere."

DELPHIA

Once one of the hottest recording engineers on the Seattle music scene, Delphia has fallen on hard times in the past few years due to her growing BTL habit. Her tastes have grown more jaded with each passing year; now her addictions can only be sated by the hardest of the hardcore.

Contacts: Anybody in the music industry, gangers, organized crime types, drug/BTL dealers.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	"That's in Pennsylvania, right?"
1	2	"I think she used to be involved in the music industry a long time ago."
2	4	"She was one of the hottest engineers around—everybody wanted to work with her because she could make anybody sound good."
3	8	"She had a pretty heavy stake in Carrion Studios back in the late '40s and early '50s. When it went under in the '60s it hit her pretty hard."
4	16	"Part of the reason Carrion went in the crapper is because of her BTL habit. She started out with the mellow stuff but worked her way up. Now she's into some pretty bad stuff. She deals to get the money for what she needs. I think she's got a place in Redmond."

DARIUS ST. GEORGE

Also known as "Mr. Johnson," he's the troll with the money and the plan.

Contacts: Anybody in the music industry; amateur musicians; anybody with a general interest in popular music.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	"Didn't he play for the Seahawks a couple seasons back?"
1	2	"I've heard of him—I think he's connected with the music industry in some way."
2	4	"I've heard the name, but I've never actually seen him—he's a music producer. Specializes in new acts."



- 3 8 “Oh, yeah. Darius likes to stay behind the scenes, but you can usually find him at some club or another looking for acts to sign. He’s not much for the lime-light—leaves that to other people.”
- 4 12 “I’ve heard rumors that he’s working for somebody up high, and the whole music-producer thing is just a hobby. Nobody knows who, though.”

K-SPOT

Only old-timers remember him now, but in his day he was one of the guys to know if you were a young act looking for the big time.

Contacts: Music or entertainment industry old-timers or historians

Data Search Modifier: -2

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	“That’s the new snack they’re selling down at the Stuffer Shack, right?”
1	2	“Name sounds familiar—somebody in the music biz, I think.”
2	4	“Haven’t heard that name in awhile. I think he was a decently successful music producer twenty or so years back. He’s probably retired now, or dead.”
3	8	“Good guy—had the touch for finding good acts and helping them up the ladder. He died recently—a shame, too. There ain’t many like him left anymore. It’s all about the money now.”
4	16	“Real name was Clarence Loomis. I think his only kin is a son he never got along with. No-good kid, or so I’ve heard.”

JETBLACK

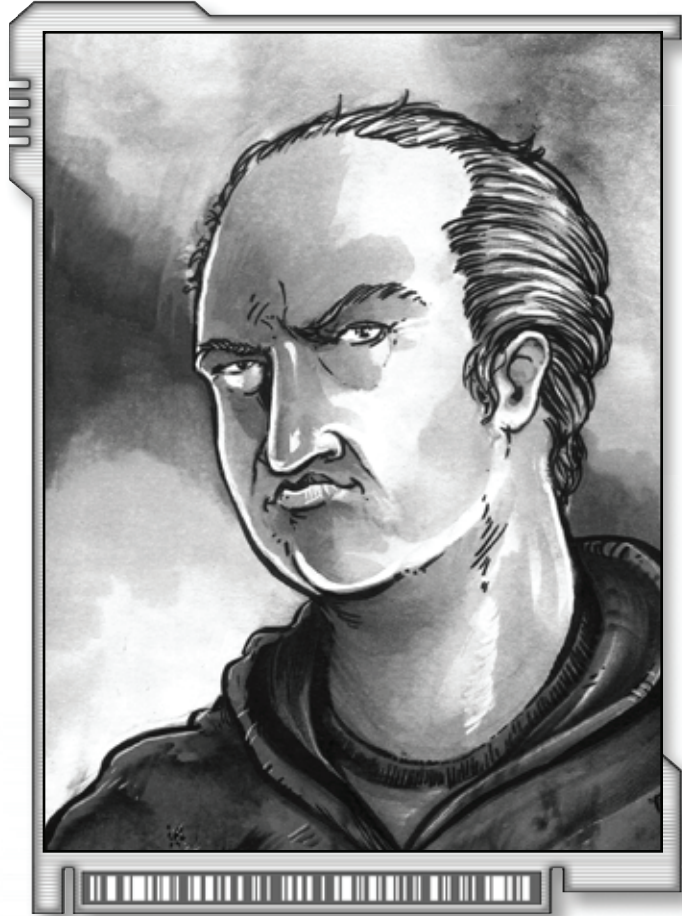
Everybody’s favorite dead angst-rocking vampire.

Contacts: Anybody with any familiarity with popular music.

Contact	Search	Results
0	0	“Some dead singer, I think.”
1	2	“He was really popular a few years back—around the late ’40s, I think. He was into that whole depressing angst-rock thing. Too bad he got killed so young, but I guess it does fit with the image.”
2	4	“A lot of people say he’s not really dead. I say that’s jetwash—all these people who’ve spotted him at the Stuffer Shack with Elvis and JFK are a little touched in the head, if you get my drift. Still, there have been a lot of stories ...”
3	8	“He used to be in tight with a band called The Shadows. They were almost as big as he was, back twenty years or

so ago. I don’t know what happened to them—retired, probably, or doing the county-fair circuit with all the other has-been acts.”

- 4 16 “I heard a strange rumor a couple of years ago that not only is JetBlack not dead, but he’s still performing, using a virtual *idoru* so he can stay out of sight. Maybe he just doesn’t want anybody to see he’s gotten old. I don’t really believe it, though—let the dead stay dead, I say.”



CAST OF SHADOWS

KERWIN LOOMIS

Kerwin Loomis is the perennial loser, the kind of guy who never gets a break—at least, not until now. Short, dumpy, and prematurely balding, Kerwin has bounced from job to job, always hatching a new (and ultimately unsuccessful) scheme to try to get rich. His current job is running a dump of a nightclub called the Coda, a place that’s never more than two steps from going under. The only thing he has going for him is that his father, the late music impresario Clarence “K-Spot” Loomis, possessed recordings of one of dead megarocker JetBlack’s last known sessions—sessions that have never seen the light of day since JetBlack’s untimely death twenty-two years ago. They were given to him by the rocker as a thank-you for some unknown as-



sistance shortly before JetBlack disappeared. When he finds the disk, he can hardly believe his luck.

Kerwin knows he's got a hot commodity on his hands. If he plays his cards right, he stands to make a fortune from selling the disk. The only problem is that despite some familiarity with the music and club scene, he isn't sure how to go about doing this in order to maximize his profit. Oh—and there's also the fact that the disk is an old-style optical disk from the late 2040s. Kerwin doesn't have anything that can read it, and functional out-of-date tech is hard to come by in the fast-changing technological landscape of 2070. (For a modern-day example, imagine trying to find something that can read an 8-inch floppy disk!)

After sitting on the disk for a few weeks, he's finally begun to put out discreet feelers that the disk exists and that he's willing to deal for the right offer. He has no idea how many people and entities (including the sessions' original performer) he's going to attract with his offer, but he's about to find out.

Kerwin is human, 28 years old, with the physique of a couch potato. His two most common expressions are a hangdog pout when things don't go his way and an eager, unpleasant leer.

B A R S C I L W E D G E S S Init IP CM ARM
 2 2 2 2 2 3 3 2 1 6 5 1 9 0/0
Skills: Automatics 2, Con 2, Etiquette 1 (Street +2), Negotiation 2, Palming 3
Gear: Novatech Airwave Commlink

ARI TARKASIAN

Ari Tarkasian prided himself on being able to spot the trends, the waves, and the next big things. He had been ready to jump ship away from Apogee Music in 2064, considering them to be on the fast track to nowhere, when a plum prize dropped into Apogee's hands: a chip containing unreleased recordings by legendary dead rocker JetBlack. Convinced that this would be just the thing to elevate Apogee to the next level (and consequently help him raise his own rep in the bargain) he stayed on and, along with a couple of other execs, shepherded the super-secret project toward its 2068 release date.

When Apogee and the recordings were destroyed by the Crash-based fire in 2065, Tarkasian was devastated—his meal ticket had slipped away. Ever the opportunist, however, he followed the money when the company's assets were acquired and eventually ended up working at Shangri-La, a subsidiary of the entertainment megacorp Horizon.

When Tarkasian began to hear rumors that another copy of the JetBlack recordings was floating around, he vowed that this time it's not going to slip through his fingers—even if he has to break a few rules to get it.

An elf, Tarkasian is 52 years old but looks to be in his late 20s. Smart, driven, and willing to do whatever it takes (legal or illegal) to achieve his goals, he has made it his crusade to get the disk back in his possession—preferably quietly and with a minimum of publicity.

The runners should never meet Ari Tarkasian.

DARIUS ST. GEORGE (MR. JOHNSON)

In Seattle, Darius St. George is probably one of the most influential trolls you've never heard of. Flamboyant, cheerful, and



utterly ruthless when it comes to searching out talent for his record labels, Darius prefers to do business behind the scenes. He presents himself to the world as a hedonistic dilettante who likes to hang around popular clubs and soak up the latest underground sounds. If he likes what he hears, he'll stop at nothing to sign and promote a new band, and he's got a good ear and a proven track record for potential hits. On the side (about which he's even more closemouthed than he is about his other affiliations), he works as an agent for a mysterious employer, at whose behest he arranges to have various jobs performed—usually by shadowrunners. No one is sure if he even knows the identity of this secretive employer, but he's certainly not talking about it either way.

Darius is of medium height for a troll, in his mid-30s, with coffee-hued skin, large ivory-colored horns, and a shock of black hair that he wears in a modified pompadour style. He wears several pieces of understated gold jewelry, including a large ring through one of his horns.

Note that Darius's employer is purposely kept secret—neither the runners nor the gamemaster will know who it is at this point, and there is no way for them to find out. This adventure may tie in to future *Shadowrun* adventures where the employer's identity will be ultimately revealed.

B A R S C I L W E D G E S S Init IP CM ARM
 7 3 (5) 4 7 (11) 4 4 4 4 4 3.1 8 1 12 (13) 8/4
Skills: Athletics Group 3, Computer 2, Data Search 3, Etiquette 4 (Street +2), Firearms Group 4, Negotiation 5, Perception 3, Stealth Group 3



Cyberware: Balance Augmenter, Dermal Plating 3, Ear Recording Unit, Eye Recording Unit, Smartlink, Sound Link
Bioware: Muscle Augmentation 4, Muscle Toner 2, Tailored Pheromones 3
Gear: Fairlight Caliban Commlink, Armored Clothing (4/0), Fichetti Security 600
Notes: Low-Light Vision, Natural Armor +1

DELPHIA

In the late 2040s through the mid 2050s, Delphia had it all. Her unparalleled genius with recording equipment allowed her to bring out nuances in simsense recordings that nobody else could manage—it was said that she could take four tone-deaf trolls and make them sound (and feel) like a choir of angels. All around the Seattle area, artists (both up-and-coming hopefuls and established names) fought for a place on her calendar, and Carrion Studio was *the* place to record if you wanted the best shot at getting your sim heard by the right people. Delphia partied with the in crowd, rubbed elbows with the elite of the music industry, and seemed to have nowhere to go but up.



Delphia had a problem, however—one not uncommon among music-industry people. At one of the parties she attended, she was persuaded to try a “safe” BTL chip for a truly memorable experience. The experience turned out to be a bit more memorable than she expected. Intrigued by the sensations the chip awakened in her and convinced that she could handle it, she tried another, and another ... it wasn't long before she was hooked.

As her addiction grew, Delphia found ways to funnel some of Carrion's money into her habit, and she found herself drawn to more and more intense (and expensive) experiences, eventually gravitating toward the more violent end of the spectrum—BTLs depicting combats, rapes, muggings, and similar acts. She has recently discovered the unparalleled high of “snuff” BTL: recordings, in which the subject dies while having his or her impressions captured.

These days she's dealing “lesser” BTLs in order to support her expensive habit. She has grown extremely paranoid because Lone Star is closing in on her. She's often forced to go longer than she'd like between fixes because she's convinced all her sources are poised to turn her in. She ventures out only when desperate, and

will always try to get someone else to take the risk of obtaining her BTLs for her if she thinks she can get away with it.

Delphia is a tall, statuesque human woman with dark skin, striking features, bright blue dreadlocks, and tribal nanotattoos up and down each arm. She was once very beautiful, but now has the sunken, thin look of the habitual addict. Nonetheless, she is still a commanding presence and rarely allows anyone else to see the desperation she feels when she hasn't had a fix recently.

B A R S C I L W E D G E S S Init IP CM ARM
 2 3 3 2 4 3 3 6 5 3 6 1 11 0/0

Skills: Clubs 1 (Batons +2), Electronics Group 6, Etiquette 3 (Street +2), Hacking 2, Shadowing 3, Swimming 2

Cyberware: Chipjack (old-fashioned datajack that only reads chips)

Gear: Renraku Sensei Commlink

Note: Delphia irrationally doesn't trust the new BTL delivered over the Matrix: she still has an old-style chipjack and prefers hardcopies.



MARLI BREMERTON

In days past, Marli Bremerton had everything anyone could want: she was the lead singer and main songwriter for megahot band The Shadows, she hobnobbed with the rich and powerful, and her life was the stuff that kids everywhere dreamed about. All this changed when society's tastes in music began to shift and the band wasn't able to keep up with the



trends—especially since they were experiencing the kind of inter-band strife that rips many successful groups apart. Still, she might have done okay, making a comeback as a solo artist, if Halley’s Comet and SURGE hadn’t turned her life upside down. Changed overnight from a beautiful woman into a monstrous figure, in constant pain with bones poking out of her skin, Marli took her still-considerable fortune and became a recluse, withdrawing to the safety and security of an old haunted mansion with her trusted niece. These days she’s contemplating a comeback as a virtual *idoru*. She’s compensated for her inability to be seen in public by developing an active life on the Matrix (and some formidable skills as a “spider,” or security rigger). One of the few outside-world people she still keeps contact with is her old friend JetBlack, who in many ways shares and understands her difficulties.

Despite all her adversity, Marli remains surprisingly upbeat about her life. She is concerned about her sanity, since she hasn’t realized that another side effect of SURGE is an ability to see the astral plane—and thus communicate with the ghosts who live in her house.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS Init IP CM ARM
 2 4 4 2 6 4 4 4 4 4.6 8 1 10 6/4
Virtual Initiative/IP/CM: 7/2/10

Skills: Electronics Group 4, Etiquette 4, Perception 2, Pilot Aircraft 2, Pilot Anthroform 3, Pilot Exotic (Ocular Drone) 2, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 2, Stealth Group 2

Cyberware: Control Rig, Datajack, Simrig, Sound Link, Voice Modulator

Gear: Novatech Airware Commlink with Iris Orb OS, Ruger Super Warhawk, Armor Vest (6/4)

Notes: SURGE has inflicted Marli with Astral Perception and Natural Armor (+1)

JETBLACK

The name “JetBlack” strikes the average citizen of 2070 about the same way that the name “Elvis” or “Jim Morrison” strikes the average citizen of 2006.

A phenomenally successful rocker at the young age of eighteen back in the middle part of the century, JetBlack became one of the earliest “megastars,” in the vein of Maria Mercurial, Concrete Dreams, The Shadows, and CrimeTime. Despite all this, though, he wasn’t happy. For one thing, he quickly discovered that his musical talent exceeded his business sense and others were making more money from his efforts than he was. This, coupled with a sense of terror at his own mortality, sent him spiraling down into a deep depression. His music reflected his depression, becoming increasingly darker and more angst-ridden. Naturally, the fans ate it up.

He’d hit bottom and was contemplating suicide in 2048 when a young fan approached him and offered him the gift of im-

mortality. JetBlack saw this as his only way to cheat death, so he allowed the fan to infect him with HMMVV.

He realized his mistake too late. Now that he was a vampire and thus would never age, it would be too risky to continue in the public eye. Someone was bound to figure out his affliction sooner or later, and he knew he would be the target of both vampire hunters and fans who sought for him to bestow the same “gift” upon them. To avoid this, he faked his own death and dropped off the face of the earth, for all intents and purposes.

JetBlack underestimated his fans, though, who continue to believe to this day that he is still alive even though he hasn’t appeared in public in 22 years. For awhile he amused himself by leading a street gang (The Nightstalkers), and spent some time seriously studying magic. In the past few years, though, he discovered that the drive to produce music has not left him, even though he dare not show his face in public. Instead, he pursues his dream by composing and performing electronic music with highly processed vocals, using the disguise of an *idoru* (a virtual persona). Only a few people know of his existence (mainly a few ex-Nightstalkers, his manager, and old friend and ex-Shadow Marli Bremerton) and he is happy to have it remain that way.

Physically, JetBlack appears to be a handsome, sensitive looking young man in his early twenties. Though slight of build, he possesses prodigious strength due to his vampire nature. He almost always feeds on voluntary victims (of whom he has many), and he only takes such blood as they can safely give. He can be an implacable and deadly enemy if he is crossed.

Note that, though JetBlack’s influence will be obvious and extensive throughout this adventure, he should never appear in person. Because of this, he is presented without stats.

