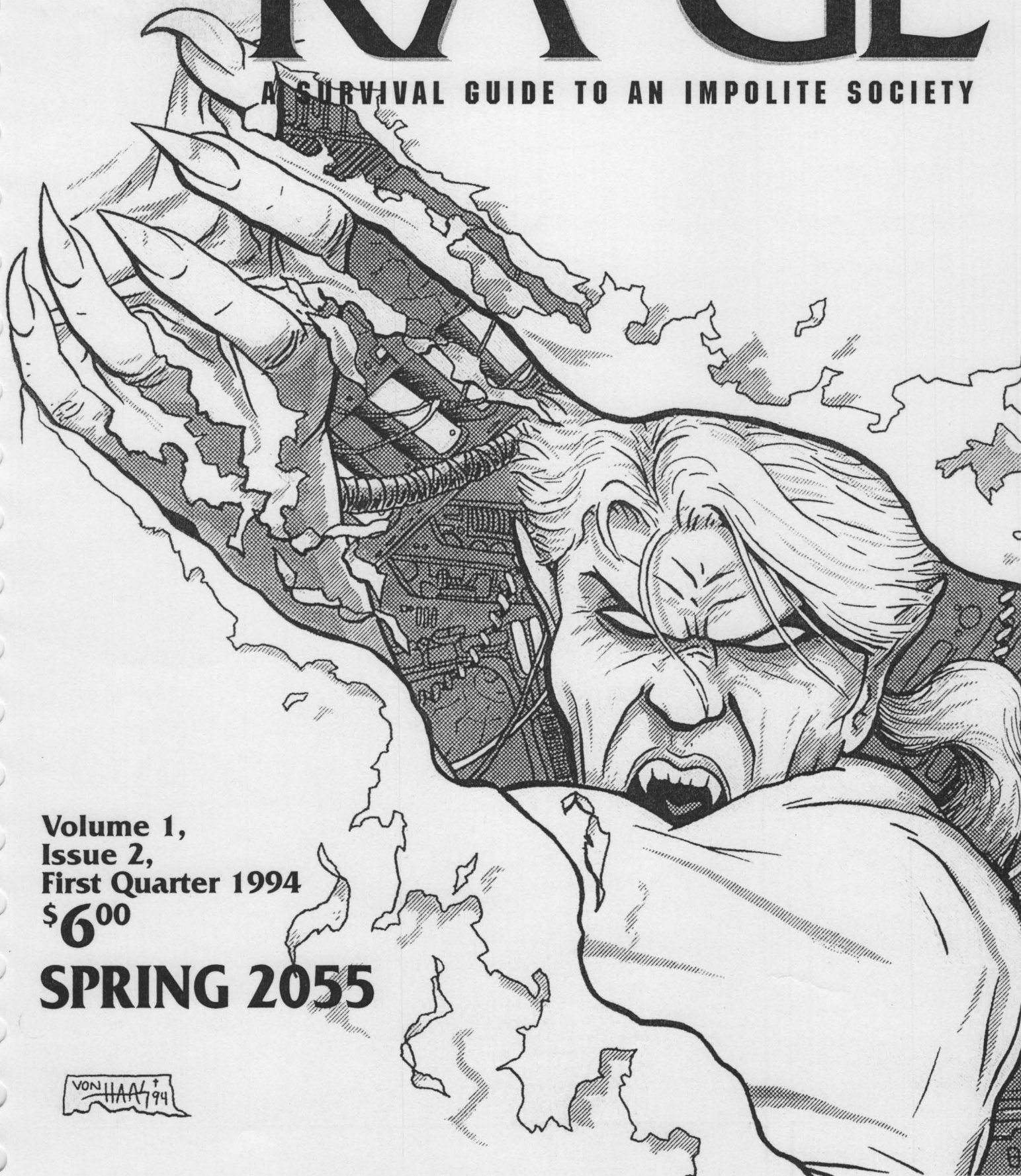


KA•GE

A SURVIVAL GUIDE TO AN IMPOLITE SOCIETY



Volume 1,
Issue 2,
First Quarter 1994
\$6⁰⁰

SPRING 2055

VON HAA†
HAA 794



Howdy,

As you can see, we're making even more changes with the issue and more changes at AWOL Productions. First off, how do you like the cover? We're going to try the heat-set cover even though it's a little more expensive for one reason. It wears better. Although we always felt the standard cover was good, there can be little doubt the heat-set produces a longer lasting product. The cover also gives the newsletter a little more weight, which helps keep the issue around longer. As a side benefit of this printing process you're picking up four additional pages of stuff. All at no additional charge! Sounds like a good deal to me.

We're also making some slight changes in the way we do business. First an apology. Sorry, we got caught in a rut. We've been doing so many things over the last year that we sort of got in a rut with the newsletter. It began to look like the same thing over and over. Artist and authors we'd used before kept popping up in subsequent issues. For the most part that is great. Good talent is sometimes hard to find, and when you find a winner (as we've done) you tend to want to stay with him (or her). That is not what this newsletter is about, however. Although we will always try to provide quality material, we are also committed to giving new artists and authors a chance. Look for some new names in the future. Note, however, this does not mean we won't be using material from established authors and artists. We're working with "name" writers and artists all the time, and we'll continue to do so in the future. We're just going to broaden our base a little at the same time.

Although it is still only February, we're already getting ready for the convention season. Once again AWOL Production will be at GenCon in Milwaukee. Why bring this up now? Easy question. AWOL has made some of its best and strongest contacts through the face-to-face meetings we've had at conventions like GenCon. It makes everything easier when we can talk to an artist, author, or member one-on-one. If you're interested in writing or producing art for the game market, now is the time to put together a portfolio. Start gathering your work and write us for an appointment at GenCon. Our main goal this year is to meet as many interested contributors as possible.

I've been asked numerous times, "How did you become a writer for FASA?" Another easy answer. I wrote and I wrote and I wrote. I said yes a lot and I never missed a deadline. The more work I did the more work they wanted me to do. It got to be a self-perpetuating cycle that lead to the Black Thorn novels. No reason you can't do the same thing. I've talked to enough successful artists that have the same story. So get excited, get inspired, and get going.

Enjoy,

Jim

BTW, thanx to all the people who offered support and patience during my surgery and rehab. It took lots of both to get me back on my feet (literally!).

k a • g e
is an
AWOL PRODUCTION

AWOL President and Publisher.....James D. Long
AWOL Administrative Coordinator...Rodney Knox
AWOL Office Manager.....Jane Foster
AWOL Membership & Convention Coordinator....
Kimberly Knox
AWOL Dude.....Jeff Schroeder

Magazine Staff

Senior Editor & PublisherJim Long
Editor & DeveloperRodney Knox
Contributing Writers.....Stephen Kenson, Michael A.
Stackpole, Rodney Knox, Sean Parrack, Jim Long,
Kimberly Knox, Teras Cassidy, Chris Hussey, JB
Buchanan, Terry Elder, Michael Morris
Cover ArtEric VonHaas
Interior Art.....Sean Parrack, Dan Smith,
Kimberly Knox, Corey Gulley
Layout.....The Tribune Publishing Company

For FASA

President-PersonSam Lewis
Shadowrun-Person.....Tom Dowd

Shadowrun and Matrix are trademarks of FASA Corporation, registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office. Shadowrun Network is a trademark of AWOL Productions, Inc. All materials in Ka•ge are © 1994 AWOL Productions and © FASA Corporation.

Ka•ge is published quarterly for \$20.00 per year by AWOL Productions, Inc., 310 Tiger Lane, Suite 3, Columbia, MO 65203. Application to mail at Second-Class Postage Rates is Pending at Columbia, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to AWOL Productions, 2101 W. Broadway, #305, Columbia, MO 65205-6018.

i n d e x

Notes from the NetPage 3
The questions you wanted answered, the answers FASA wanted us to give, and some advice from us for a distraught Gamemaster.

Patterson's Guide to Paranormal Animals.....Page 4
European Awakened critters by Network members Peter Williams, Sean Parrack & Corey Gulley. The Mist Viper and Arachnis.

Kage Fiction.....Page 8
*The final installment of "If As Beast You Don't Succeed" by Michael A. Stackpole
It's tough when you first meet your girlfriends parents, but if you're a werewolf, well that is another story!*

Shadows.....Page 20
Two new contacts and two new archetypes by Network members Sean Parrack & JB Buchanan. The Combat Medic, The Ex-Brawler, and more.

Corporate Shadow FilesPage 23
European Business Machines and Magic—EBM[2] by Network member Stephen Kenson

Ka•ge FictionPage 27
*"There Are Shadows And Then There Is ... " by Network member Chris Hussey
More hairy beast are loose in Seattle. The only trouble is who is the beast and who isn't?*

Paydata.....Page 33
Up Coming, Reviews, and more

Calendar of EventsPage 39
The Cons every runner should attend

Turring's Guide to Organizations.....Page 40
Coven of the Crimson Moon by Network member Stephen Kenson adds an ever growing element to the Shadowrun game. We at the Network call it the "Vampire Factor".

New Gear.....Page 44
Eight new pieces of gear to add to your collection by Network member Teras Cassidy and Michael Morris.

Network Member GraffitiPage 48
Read it here first or the next rights you have read may be your last!

Writing on the Wall.....Page 49
News and Blues from the Shadowrun Universe



"I have a question about the spells which transform or 'morph' a character. If the spell is cast on a person with cyberware, does the cyberware transform or does it simply fall off of the person?"

In essence was paid for the cyberware, and it always is, the added material becomes a part of the character's body. This being true, the cyberware is transformed also, BUT, the new form does not gain the advantages of the cyberware. So if you get transformed into a frog and you have cyberlegs, you are just an ordinary frog, you cannot jump 300 meters. I think the rules work this way because a transformation spell would become the most powerful attack in Shadowrun if the cyber-implants were destroyed or simply fell off when the character is transformed.

"If a Rigger is using his targeting equipment on a humanoid target, what is the targeting number?"

When a Rigger is attacking a character or NPC, he must follow the standard attacking actions and calculate the bonus of the sensors versus the movement of the target.

"I had a player that really botched a game I was running. He managed to tick-off a corporation, LoneStar, and the other players he was playing

with. My question is how hard do you think I should come down on him?"

When we play Shadowrun the players are very aware that perturbing the gamemaster, or the other players, will usually get them killed. Jim Long is not a forgiving soul to those who 'zig-left' when they should have 'zagged-right'. So my first thought is that the player character would gain a bad reputation with the corporations and that they would "black-ball" him and anyone associated with him. On the other hand, it is the gamemaster who is ultimately responsible for the running of a game. The character could not have gotten out of control unless he was allowed to run loose. The decision is in the hands of the gamemaster when all is said and done. It is a call that you have to make. (On a personal note, I find that a sniper's bullet, fired at range from an open window, is always the best solution to most problems.)

"What happens when you fall a success roll for healing in the Shadowrun game? I have read what to do when you score a success but I can't find the rules about what happens when you fall."

It will depend on the severity of the damage, but as a general rule the healing time is doubled.

"Can players use 'Nega' characters in the Shadowrun game? The reason I ask is because I read about a Nega-magician in another magazine, so I tried him out in our current game. This character dominated the game. Nothing could hurt him (as far as magic goes). I really like the 'Nega' archetypes but my gamemaster said they were too powerful and told me I couldn't use them anymore. What do you think?"

This is the question we have dreaded for sometime. The 'Nega Factor', as we call it here, is a very powerful and possibly destructive element in the Shadowrun universe.

For those of you who don't know, 'Nega Character's are unaffected by any type of magic. No spell can affect them, and no magically created items concerns them. The reason why this is a problem in the game is because the entire Shadowrun game is based on the awakening of magic in the world. If you destroy that element of the game, it soon becomes pointless to play.

The official position of FASA and Ka•ge is that 'Nega Characters' should not be allowed to be used in the game. There is and will be no support for any type of 'Nega Character' in the Shadowrun game.





MIST VIPER

IDENTIFICATION

Mist Vipers are awakened creatures who somehow morphed between being a bird and being a snake. They are also endowed with the ability to assume the form of mist. This allows them to approach their prey and deliver a killing bite without ever being seen as a threat by the victim.

MAGIC ABILITY

Innate

HABITS

Mist Vipers are omnivorous, eating small creatures as well as insects and certain types of seeds and spores. They generally live in low, swampy areas.

POWERS

The viper has the unique ability to transform into a mist. The transformation is actually an illusion and sentient creatures can sometimes defeat the ability. The creature can also fly for

short distances. Its feathers are a bright red in color with the serpent's head being a green-blue color. Many Asian gangs use the Mist Viper as their emblem. The viper represents stealth and death.

WEAKNESS

None

GAME INFORMATION Mist Viper

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Attacks
4/1	5x5	3	-	1/3	4	6	4	6/S

Initiative Dice : 2D6

Powers : Flying, Illusionary Transformation, Poison Venom

MIST VIPER

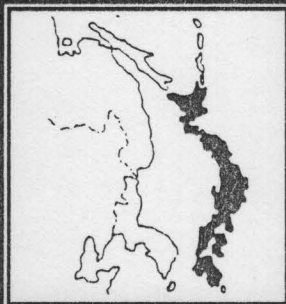
Ophidia Vipera

HABITAT

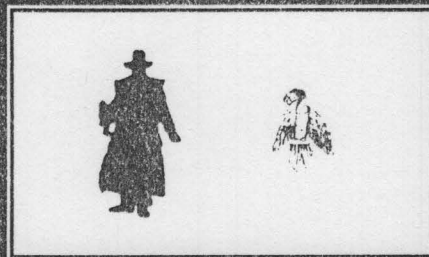
Desert & badland areas

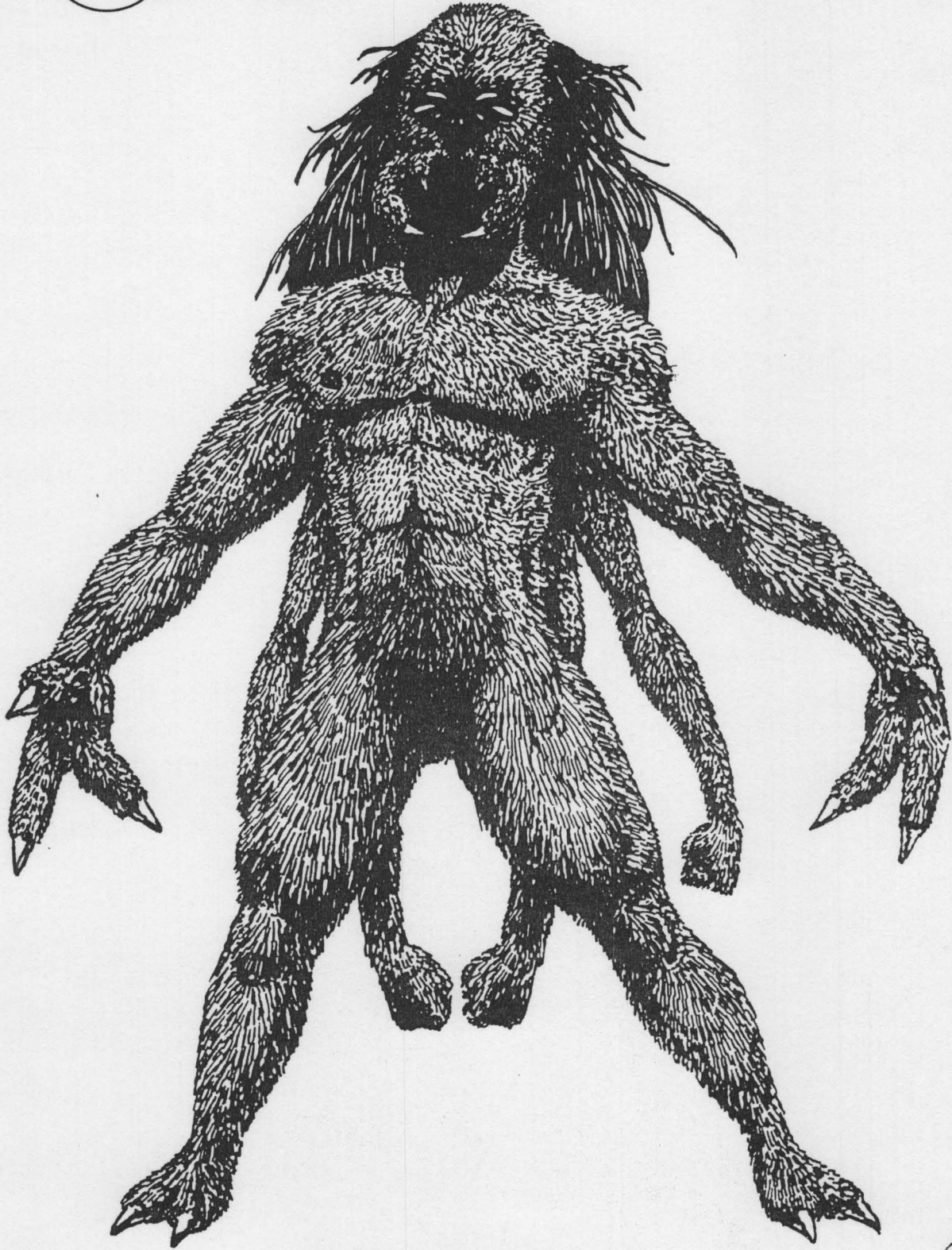
RANGE

Azatlan & South America



SIZE COMPARISON





St. ARZACH '11



ARACHNIS

IDENTIFICATION

The Arachnis resembles a cross between a human and a spider. The head has two pinchers and eight eyes. The creature also has eight limbs and is covered in a very coarse fur. At full height they stand an average of 2.5 meters and weigh 280kg.

MAGIC CAPIBILITIES

Innate

HABITS

The Arachnis is strictly a carnivorous creature, eating a diet of small rodents to house pets. The Arachnis is usually found in herds of 3 to 15 and tend to

be nomadic. The creature is only found in Azatalan and South America.

WEAKNESSES

None

GAME INFORMATION Arachnis

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Attacks
4	5x5	3	5	3	2	6	5	6/m

Initiative Dice : 2D6

Powers : Enhanced Senses, Immunity to poisons, Venom

ARACHNIS

Arachnid Neanderthalus

HABITAT

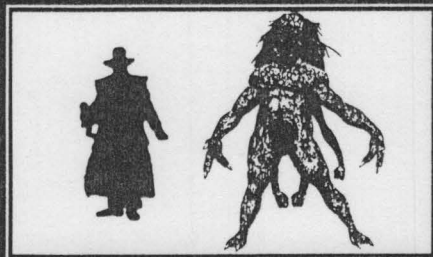
Desert & badlands

RANGE

Azatalan



SIZE COMPARISON





If As Beast You Don't Succeed

When you come right down to it, there's no easy way to tell the woman you intend to marry that you're a werewolf. If I'd been a hit-man for the mob, or had worked clean-up for yakuza enforcers, or had even been a poacher out in the Elven preserves, I could have told her straight out. I would have taken Lynn's hand in mine and said, "Look, there's something you should know about me. I've done some bad things in my life, but that's all ended now."

That would have been easy. The confession, some tears, some hugging, some kissing and an "I will marry you, Wolf," would have all followed one after the other. Not that I'd gone this route before, but I knew it would have worked. Women really seem to find honesty seductive — probably because there's damned little of it in the courting process. Besides, I had it so bad for Lynn I couldn't let myself consider her rejecting me.

But that was in the case where I confessed to being a mass murderer or something just as bad. Being a werewolf, on the other hand, was much worse.

Lynn would try to understand, and I knew that for her trying was as good as doing. Her parents would be decidedly more difficult to sway. In an instant I saw Lynn's parents inviting me to dinner and the effect my little revelation might have. "That's nice, dear," Blanche Ingold would say politely. "Does that mean we shouldn't use the good silver?"

Phil would have a use for the silver and probably would not have that diffi-

cult a time finding the bullet molds or a gunsmith to do the trick for him. I liked Phil, and he liked me, but he'd still be at the door with a gun to keep me away from Lynn. I couldn't blame him, really. No man wants to think about having to paper train his grandchildren.

My computer console beeped, rescuing me from the nihilistic and depressing spiral my thoughts had spun into over the last two hours. I swore when I saw I'd only gotten a piece of E-mail because I'd hoped Raven would have stayed online so we could discuss the message I'd sent him earlier. I decrypted his sending by hitting two keys and read it as the words, scrolled up the screen.

Wolf,

Kid Stealth, Tom Electric, Tark and I are taking Valerie Valkyrie and heading up to Oak Harbor to probe a bit more deeply into Mr. Sampson's background. Uncertain when we will return. I would heartily encourage you continue to see Lynn Ingold as we would not want another attempt to abduct her.

We will discuss the matter of your message upon my return. I am glad you are happy, my friend.

—Raven

As I read the message I found myself of two minds, and they were at war with each other. I was a bit piqued that Dr. Raven hadn't asked me to go with him on the investigation. I am, after all, his longest surviving aide, and

I've got talents that all the cybernetics built into Kid Stealth and Tom Electric combined can't equal.

More importantly, I'd brought the Sampson matter to his attention in the first place. The Halloweeners, a street gang that controlled what had been my old neighborhood, had never been much of a threat to anyone aside from themselves. This proved especially true after the night of fire a couple of years ago when the Weenies had been taken down—hard. It took them over a year to get back up to strength, and then they had to fight to get their t back.

That fight had been going badly, which was no great surprise because Charles the Red was still in charge of the Weenies. Then this huge guy, with long blond hair and arrogance dense enough to stop bullets, showed up and started giving orders. Chuckles accepted his demotion graciously and, after getting out of the hospital, started backing Mr. Sampson in his effort to retake Weenie turf.

I'd never been on good terms with the Halloweeners, and Charles the Red thought of me as the person who had destroyed the gang. I knew that wasn't the whole truth, but letting Charles imagine it was kept him away from the others who had broken the Weenies. I had Raven backing me, which meant Charles growled a lot, but didn't bite.

Then Sampson showed up and the Weenies started being a lot more aggressive than they had been in the past. Raven decided to see what he could do to curb the Weenies and investigation into Mr. Sampson began.





If As Beast You Don't Succeed

When you come right down to it, there's no easy way to tell the woman you intend to marry that you're a werewolf. If I'd been a hit-man for the mob, or had worked clean-up for yakuza enforcers, or had even been a poacher out in the Elven preserves, I could have told her straight out. I would have taken Lynn's hand in mine and said, "Look, there's something you should know about me. I've done some bad things in my life, but that's all ended now."

That would have been easy. The confession, some tears, some hugging, some kissing and an "I will marry you, Wolf," would have all followed one after the other. Not that I'd gone this route before, but I knew it would have worked. Women really seem to find honesty seductive — probably because there's damned little of it in the courting process. Besides, I had it so bad for Lynn I couldn't let myself consider her rejecting me.

But that was in the case where I confessed to being a mass murderer or something just as bad. Being a werewolf, on the other hand, was much worse.

Lynn would try to understand, and I knew that for her trying was as good as doing. Her parents would be decidedly more difficult to sway. In an instant I saw Lynn's parents inviting me to dinner and the effect my little revelation might have. "That's nice, dear," Blanche Ingold would say politely. "Does that mean we shouldn't use the good silver?"

Phil would have a use for the silver and probably would not have that diffi-

cult a time finding the bullet molds or a gunsmith to do the trick for him. I liked Phil, and he liked me, but he'd still be at the door with a gun to keep me away from Lynn. I couldn't blame him, really. No man wants to think about having to paper train his grandchildren.

My computer console beeped, rescuing me from the nihilistic and depressing spiral my thoughts had spun into over the last two hours. I swore when I saw I'd only gotten a piece of E-mail because I'd hoped Raven would have stayed online so we could discuss the message I'd sent him earlier. I decrypted his sending by hitting two keys and read it as the words, scrolled up the screen.

Wolf,

Kid Stealth, Tom Electric, Tark and I are taking Valerie Valkyrie and heading up to Oak Harbor to probe a bit more deeply into Mr. Sampson's background. Uncertain when we will return. I would heartily encourage you continue to see Lynn Ingold as we would not want another attempt to abduct her.

We will discuss the matter of your message upon my return. I am glad you are happy, my friend.

—Raven

As I read the message I found myself of two minds, and they were at war with each other. I was a bit piqued that Dr. Raven hadn't asked me to go with him on the investigation. I am, after all, his longest surviving aide, and

I've got talents that all the cybernetics built into Kid Stealth and Tom Electric combined can't equal.

More importantly, I'd brought the Sampson matter to his attention in the first place. The Halloweeners, a street gang that controlled what had been my old neighborhood, had never been much of a threat to anyone aside from themselves. This proved especially true after the night of fire a couple of years ago when the Weenies had been taken down—hard. It took them over a year to get back up to strength, and then they had to fight to get their t back.

That fight had been going badly, which was no great surprise because Charles the Red was still in charge of the Weenies. Then this huge guy, with long blond hair and arrogance dense enough to stop bullets, showed up and started giving orders. Chuckles accepted his demotion graciously and, after getting out of the hospital, started backing Mr. Sampson in his effort to retake Weenie turf.

I'd never been on good terms with the Halloweeners, and Charles the Red thought of me as the person who had destroyed the gang. I knew that wasn't the whole truth, but letting Charles imagine it was kept him away from the others who had broken the Weenies. I had Raven backing me, which meant Charles growled a lot, but didn't bite.

Then Sampson showed up and the Weenies started being a lot more aggressive than they had been in the past. Raven decided to see what he could do to curb the Weenies and investigation into Mr. Sampson began.





Apparently something had turned up to link Sampson to Oak Harbor, and I was glad Raven was following up on the lead. Still, getting left behind made me feel like I was being punished when I hadn't done anything.

I stopped for a second. *Wolf, sending Raven that message this morning can hardly be considered nothing.*

The message said that I had decided to ask Lynn to marry me and, for that reason, I felt I had to sever my connections with Raven and his crew.

I smiled as I reread Doc's suggestion that I continue to see Lynn. Short of having me trussed up and hauled down to the southwestern deserts that spawned him, Raven knew he couldn't keep me away from her. It pleased me to see Richard took real joy in seeing that I had obtained the happiness he denied himself.

The timer on the computer terminal went off, and I realized I was going to be late if I didn't get moving. With the stroke of one button, I zapped the message, then shut down my terminal. I retreated to my bedroom then frowned as I stared at my wardrobe. If haute couture ever discovers Kevlar, I'll be doing turns on Paris runways modeling my wardrobe. I had plenty of stuff for playing the well-heeled soldier of fortune, but virtually nothing to wear that could be described as *normal*.

I shook my head. *That's because you ARE a soldier of fortune, Wolfgang Kies. For the past eight years you've worked with Dr. Richard Raven in his battle to keep the chaos of the Awakening from swallowing up what's left of humanity. You and the others have helped hold the line that keeps normal people safe from magical monsters and technological monstrosities. There's nothing wrong with being a warrior and your clothes have allowed you to survive by dressing for the part...*

I nodded solemnly, but still selected clothes that looked less martial than most. I settled on a pair of jeans Lynn had cajoled me into buying on our last outing — so I'd have a pair with more fabric than holes, she'd said. The gray t-shirt I selected had two advantages: it was clean and it was woven of Kevlar. While I did not expect trouble, I'd not become Raven's longest living aide by being completely stupid. Lastly I chose my black leather jacket even though it had a red and black raven patch on the left shoulder.

Having selected my wardrobe, I hit the shower for a quick, somewhat bracing scrubdown. I had a devil of a time trying to wash my back and actually gave up after not too much effort. As long as I was going to be confessing things to Lynn, I figured I could confess needing help washing my back and see if she'd offer to help me.

That tactic had worked before.

I toweled myself dry and found myself standing there before the mirror, doing that obligatory, Double-X chromosomally-challenged person's flexing and posturing. I'm not as tall as some men, but taller than most. I have a lean, muscular build that had prompted a few folks — the aforementioned Charles the Red being one — to think of me as easy pickings until we tangled. Brown hair covered my torso front and back, yet it could not hide the myriad scars that crisscrossed my flesh. Each one reminded me of some adventure I'd had with Dr. Raven — and even a few before I hooked up with him.

The most recent scar, a puckered, pink dot with a line bisecting right beneath my left nipple, stood out because the chest hair around it had not fully grown back. I'd gotten that scar from a bullet shot at me by a big-time hunter who wanted to bag a human. She'd gone from hunter to hunted — if one can say that maggots actively hunt

— and her compatriots curtailed their poaching of human targets in my last adventure with Raven.

Scars. They meant I had survived. No one could say that I'd not given better than I took in all these adventures, but something inside of me felt tired of it all.

There'll come a point when you don't live long enough to scar.

I forcibly turned my mind away from maudlin thoughts. I dressed quickly and headed out of the apartment. At the door I hesitated and almost tucked my Beretta Viper 14 in my waistband, but I knew Lynn would hate it. Not wanting to give her any reason to be even slightly displeased with me, I left the gun on the foyer table and went out into the cool autumn afternoon air.

I set off at a leisurely pace and tried to keep my mind clear of any matters vexing or bothersome, but that wasn't simple as it might seem. I tried to think of Lynn — which was easy — but my thoughts quickly veered off into the vortex from which Raven's message had rescued me.

"Maybe I could ease into it... the next time we go shopping I'll just pick up some dog biscuits or flea and tick shampoo..." I laughed openly at that thought, but more sinister laughter filled in the echoes.

Dr. Raven knew my secret — he'd helped me conquer the darker, savage, wolf side of myself before I could cause too much damage. Through Raven I learned of the wolf spirit dwelling within me, and because of Raven I was able to use the wolf's strength and speed as other warriors used cybernetics to enhance their abilities in combat. In enabling me to gain control Raven had very definitely saved my life, my sanity and my soul.

Valerie Valkyrie, Raven's newest aide, did not know about my affliction, nor did Tom Electric or Plutarch Grao-



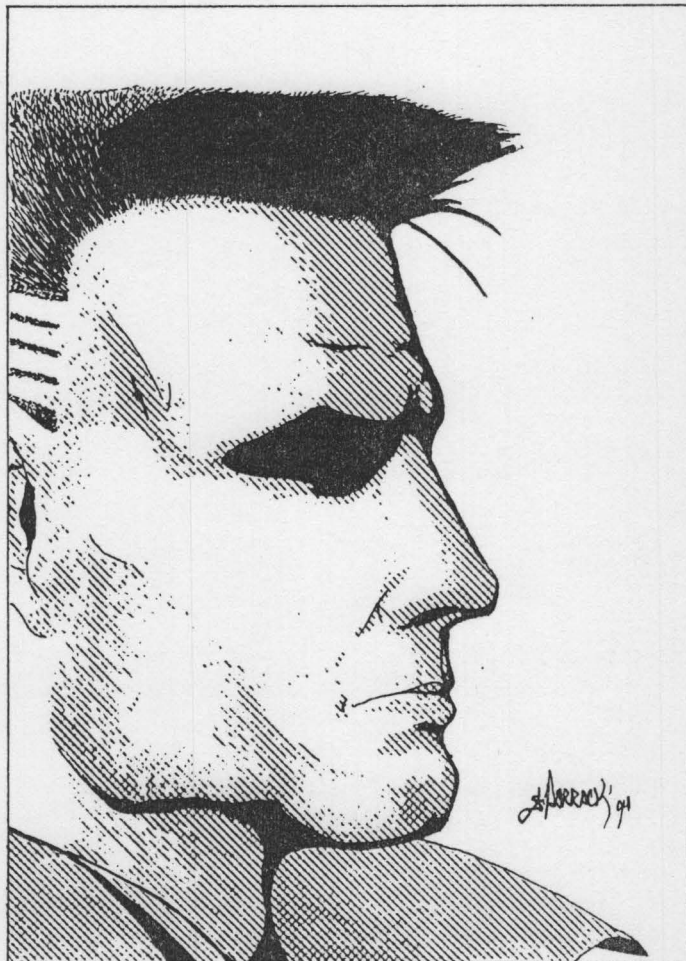
grim, even though the three of us had worked together for the last several years. Kid Stealth probably had some idea there was something special about me from the time when he was stalking Raven's crew, but he'd never mentioned it. The Chauffeur, Kid Stealth's replacement as the chief enforcer of Etienne La Plante's criminal organization, certainly had an idea that I could change shape, but he probably put it down to a spell instead of any inherent ability.

The others who had actually known about me presented the real core problem that had me wanting to find a way to leave Lynn in the dark. The Silicon Wasp, Robin Carter and Mr. Stilts were all members of Doc's entourage who had learned the truth about me. All of them had taken the secret to the grave with them, and there were simsense starlets who had careers that lasted longer than my friends did. I knew it was only coincidence, but learning that secret seemed about as safe as drinking a plutonium cocktail. Though I should have taken heart in the fact that Raven had survived the longest, somehow I harbored the fear that knowing my secret had killed the others.

As much as I wanted to share my secret with Lynn, as much as I wanted to share my life with her, I didn't want to add any more pain to her life. If that was to be the result of my actions, I'd sooner have shot myself than cause her any hurt. And, of course, being male and in love meant I knew there was a solution to the problem somewhere. All I had to do was

find it and use it to keep Lynn safe.

I'd met Lynn through my association with Dr. Raven. Etienne La Plante, one of the larger pieces floating to the top in the cesspool that is Seattle's underworld, fancies himself a commodities broker. Whereas legitimate folks are content to deal in grain, simsense chips or other such staples, La Plante



brains smaller than your average lugnut — kidnapped Lynn to provide La Plante with merchandise to soothe the ruffled sensibilities of an angry client. Kid Stealth discovered La Plante had something special going down, so, with Stealth's buddies the Redwings, we hit an old resort complex called The Rock. We ran into something a bit nastier than we had expected, but Dr. Raven showed up in time to prevent Stealth and me from adding our names to the list of deceased aides.

After we rescued her, Dr. Raven and I took Lynn back to the apartment she shared with her parents in the RJR Nabisco-Sears tower. She was still pretty out of it because of the drugs La Plante had used to sedate her, but Raven pronounced her fit and said all she needed was lots of sleep. I volunteered to stay in case there was any more trouble — to the relief of her parents — and spent most of the next thirty-six hours holding her to keep the nightmares away while she slept.

All in all that wasn't incredibly different from things I'd done in the past for other victims of Seattle crime. It sounds smug to say that I'd gotten used to people being grateful and looking to me as some sort of

goes in for more exotic merchandise. Arms trading and narcotics are his bread and vegemite, but he makes his profit moving bodies through white slavery rings. Pretty women, or men for that matter, can fetch a premium in the penthouses of the corporate towers around the world.

La Plante's henchmen — orks with

saviour, but it's true. You have to get used to it because the connection always ends. There's always another person with a problem or another mystery that needs solving. I'd been through the same thing hundreds of times before.

Only this time it was different. This time it involved Lynn and involved me



getting involved with Lynn.

I looked up and found myself at the corner of the small strip mall the RJR folks put into ground floor of Employee Tower #1. I winked at the two woman greeters stationed on either side of the door, then hurried across the crowded lobby to the small bakery that employs the whole Ingold family. I waved at Phil as he poured coffee for a couple at one of the rear tables, then caught his daughter as she threw herself into my arms. I hugged her tight and kissed her, then set her down and stared at her, scarcely believing she was truly there and really did care for me.

Lynn wore her burnished copper hair pulled back in a ponytail just long enough to reach her shoulderblades. The top of her head came up to my nose. The scent of her perfume brought back pleasant memories of intimate moments that threatened to make me blush. Her broad smile and pert nose accentuated the lively twinkle of her green eyes and the sprinkling of freckles across her cheeks made her seem happier yet.

She wore jeans and a red-checked shirt with complementary kerchief that meant she was going to try to talk me into going to a neo-Western dance club. After the Ghost Dances had killed so many people, and prompted others to go native, things concerning America's Wild West had been downplayed. Time breeds a certain amount of contempt and this neo-Western club called itself "Oklahoma." Everything had been styled after an ancient musical, which meant the men wore shirts made of the tablecloths from Italian restaurants and every other vidiot packed a sixgun with a low grade laser triggered by revolver blanks.

Blanche came out of the back and smiled when she saw me. She and Phil both looked happy and content and perhaps a bit proud that their only

daughter was dating someone from Dr. Raven's band of heroes — mind you, that's not as good as someone from the corporate boardrooms, but it beats most of the Gillettes running around the streets. Their occupation had made both of them plump like gingerbread people, but I've always distrusted anorexic cooks anyway. They'd invested the last twenty-five years in their daughter, and their love for her showed plainly on their faces.

I shook Phil's hand as he came over. His grip, a bit dry from the flour coating it, was strong nonetheless. "Afternoon Mr. Ingold, Mrs. Ingold. How are you?"

Phil mumbled something I didn't quite catch as Blanche distracted me. Staring at her daughter as only a mother can when trying to remind her to do something, Blanche's gaze flitted to me, then back to Lynn. I frowned. "What's going on?"

Lynn glared at her mother as only a daughter can do, then looked up at me and sighed. "My parents are celebrating their 30th anniversary next week, and they wanted to make sure I invited you to the party, *which I would have done a bit later*. They also wished you extend the invitation to Dr. Raven and your compatriots."

Blanche unconsciously clasped her hands together in an attitude of prayer and crushed them to her ample bosom. "That Dr. Raven, such a nice, ah, man."

I suppressed a laugh. Raven is a rare commodity — an Amerindian Elf who does not live in the Indian Land or the Elven Preserves outside Seattle. He's also devilishly handsome — a fact that had not been lost on Blanche Ingold or many of the other women he's met. That's one of the reasons I'd studiously avoided having Lynn renew her acquaintance with Raven.

Phil looked over at his wife and sighed. "I hope you get that Kid

Stealth to come. I've still not thanked him for saving my little girl."

I felt the shiver run through Lynn. Her father put it down to memories of her ordeal, but I knew it had come at the mention of Kid Stealth's name. Lynn's very much a pacifist and Stealth, well, I think he considers violence some sort of performance art. His openings are a splash, and only close after the coroner uses a lot of sutures.

I gave Lynn a reassuring squeeze, then addressed her parents. "I'll see what I can do. Raven and the others have gone out of Seattle for a while. I hope they will be back in time for your party. We'll let you know if they can make it."

Lynn's father laughed. "They can come even if they don't call ahead — Blanche, she always makes too much food for parties. I can remember a time..."

Lynn slapped me playfully on the stomach. "That's our cue to leave." She kissed her father on the cheek, then grabbed a jeans jacket and brown paper bag from her mother. She kissed Blanche and made her promise not to wait up.

Blanche gave her an extra little hug, then let her go. "Be careful. I worry even though I know you're in good hands."

I slipped my left arm around Lynn's slender waist and guided her through the lobby. "I take it from your outfit you want to go to that Sooner saloon later?"

She gave me an impish smile. "You're not much of a detective for all the work you've done with Dr. Raven."

I shrugged easily. "He just keeps me around for heavy lifting and comforting damsels in distress." I narrowed my eyes and tried to figure out what nefarious plan she had brewing in her mind. "If there's a mystery here, I can't solve it. Don't tell me you've been



hired by the Yamaguchi-gumi to square dance me to death!"

Lynn shivered eloquently. "You know, my love, that I know how much you hate Oklahoma." She glanced back over her shoulder at her parents. "However, they don't know that. I thought perhaps we might catch a bite to eat after we hit the park, then just retire to your place..."

"Well, my back does need washing..."

"My specialty."

"Maybe you think so..."

Lynn blushed and smacked me playfully on the arm.

The awkwardness of her sharing living quarters with her parents had been dealt with before through similar subterfuges. Because her parents had worked for RJR Nabisco-Sears all their adult lives, they got a sizable apartment in the employee tower, and it came with cleaning services and childcare that made it possible for employees to devote themselves fully to serving the company instead of having to maintain a household. The Bakery and other company shops provided anything and everything the employees might need, and children were encouraged to remain there — especially if they decided to work for the company as Lynn had.

For a moment my mind drifted back to my younger days on the streets. Born in a tenement with no state or corporate official there to register me, I started life as a shadow runner. No official records existed of Wolfgang Kies, which meant I was free of harassment by the city unless I attracted their attention. It also meant I could never in-

tegrate myself with numbered society — like the RJR folks — because I did not exist. Whereas legitimate and tracked citizens had myriad safety nets built into the system to keep them alive, shadow runners just slip through the cracks.

than your average kitchen still lurked on street corners and in shadows. They still had the hollow, haunted look of despair in their eyes that they would die with — and that I had worn until not so long ago — but it just didn't seem to matter to me anymore.

Shadow running is fine when your life is a dead end, but when you can see a future, it just seems a childish game.

The wolf spirit inside me spoke in a harsh whisper. *A warrior who views war as a game is a warrior who will not see death when it comes for him.*

We reached the park and walked to the benches beyond the area where the local wireheads had jacked into the public access systems. Those with trodes built in, like Lyr or Valerie Valkyrie, just plugged themselves directly into the game tables. The others rented electrode coronets from a ramshackle kiosk and jacked in. Two kids were playing some variant of chess in which holographic pieces battled each other — they attracted a small crowd that cheered when a piece died a particularly grisly death. Others did their own things, oblivious to spectators. One guy who wore his purple hair in a spiked mohawk with piglet curls fore and aft seemed familiar, but I couldn't place him immediately. He amused himself by projecting images of



Heading down to pier 59 and the Aquarium park with my arm around a beautiful woman, I looked at the city in an entirely new way. Sure, it was the same, dreary gray sinkhole of concrete. Yeah, street toughs with more chrome

city officials and hapless sheep into diagrams from an online edition of the Kama Sutra. I realized I probably recognized what he was *doing* instead of recognizing him, because I had on done the same thing during the sum-



mer days of my misspent youth.

Lynn sat on the bench and opened her bag. She took out an old crust of bread and broke it into small bits. She tossed them out in a haphazard pattern at first. Then, as birds congregated she sowed her crumbs in a way that kept the bigger birds back from where the smaller ones came to feed. She gave me a hunk of bread and frowned disapprovingly as I tossed a large piece halfway between two monster blackbirds.

"Wolf! You're supposed to break it down into smaller portions!" Her pronouncement came as if it were one of the laws of the universe that I'd missed somewhere in my meager schooling.

"You want to run that by me again, with the help files active this time?"

She rested her hands in her lap, which prompted one bold sparrow to alight on her knee and pick at the crust she still held in her hands. She laughed, then composed her face and turned to lecture me. "You have to use small bits because, as my mother taught me, birds that fly away with your food in their mouths take your prayers to heaven with them." She nodded once as if that answer explained everything, then started feeding the birds again.

I opened my mouth to ask a question, then stopped. Over the years I'd been with Dr. Raven I'd had the gaps in my knowledge of the world filled in for the most part. Ever since the Awakening — when magic again appeared in the world — the God Lynn and her family worshipped had lost lots of ground. Still, with all the things I'd seen in Raven's company, and even though I seriously doubted her God existed at all, I couldn't discount the possibility she was right. Weirder things had happened.

"Sorry," I muttered, "I just can't resist watching two dinosaurs fighting over bread."

Lynn rolled her emerald eyes to heaven and tossed a little novena to a wren. "You're not going to try to convince me that birds were once dinosaurs again, are you?"

I quick-scattered a rosary's worth of crumbs in a wide arc, then brushed my hands clean on my thighs. "I double-checked all that stuff I mentioned last time. Deinonychus is the name of the dinosaur that had a wrist joint that looks the same as the wing joint in the Archeopteryx, and the Archeopteryx has feathers and wings, hence is seen as the first bird. See, dinosaurs and proto-birds had this common ancestor in the Jurassic period..."

She frowned. "Why would I remember deinonychus as a word?"

I shrugged. "It was a large and particularly bloodthirsty carnosaur. It ran fast and had this nasty old sickle-shaped claw on each of its feet that it used to disembowel..." As I hooked my right hand over to represent the claw, I saw her pale just a bit, and suddenly I realized why she knew the word.

I reached out and hugged her to me. "I'm sorry, forgive me."

She kissed the side of my neck. "Nothing to forgive — you didn't mean it."

But I did it anyway. She'd first heard the word deinonychus when I clarified why Kid Stealth ran with such an odd gait. In her rescue she'd seen only glimpses of him and had never had a good look at his titanium legs. She'd actually seen more than she knew and put the weirdness down to the dope in her system. When I explained how Stealth had chosen legs styled after those of a deinonychus, she asked me to stop, but she still dreamed of him for the next couple of nights.

She pulled away from me and set about feeding the dinosaurs again. Her smile returned and she passed me an-

other piece of bread, but I shook my head. "Lynn, there's something I have to tell you about me." I faltered. After seeing how she reacted to the mention of Kid Stealth or anything that might remind her of violence, there seemed no easy way to tell her about the true Wolfgang Kies.

She brushed her hands off and cupped my jaw in them. "Wolf, I know that you've been forced to do things of which you are not proud. I know you have killed people and things while working for Dr. Raven, but I also know you did that to help others, like me. I cannot and will not let that drive a wedge between us — that's a decision I made the first time I agreed to go out with you."

She pressed her fingertips to my lips to stop me from saying anything. "I know you, perhaps better than you know yourself. I know you are a good man, a strong man and I know I love you. There is nothing you could say that would change that or make me think any less of you."

I sat there stunned for a moment or two as I realized the true depth of her feelings for me. Somehow I'd assumed there was no way she could feel about me the way I felt about her, but that proved to be a fallacy that exploded with the greatest of ease. Still, she didn't know about my lunar mood swings, and that revelation would sorely test the strength of her convictions.

I started to speak, but something caught my attention above and beyond Lynn's head. Two hollow-eyed kids came around the corner of the trode kiosk, then ducked back when they saw me. Alarm bells immediately went off in my head because while they had washed off most of the jack o'lantern make up the Halloweeners affected, their jackets were black and orange — Halloween colors.

"Are you done feeding the birds?"



Lynn immediately caught the concern in my voice. "What is it?"

I looked around and saw more potential Weenies loitering in the background. "Bangers. I don't like it."

She sighed with exasperation to cover her nervousness. "Wolf, this *is* a public park. They have the right to use it."

I nodded. "True enough, but this just doesn't feel right."

Again she tried to play it light. "I think you just want to get me back to your place..."

I stood and held my hand out to help her up. "No denying that. Why don't you scatter the rest of the bread in one huge Papal audience, and let's get out of here. We'll keep it natural, as if nothing is wrong..."

"Wolf, you're scaring me." She crushed the bag, then up ended it and let the crumbs spill out. "Let's go, if we must."

The fear in her voice gave way to anger. I knew it wasn't directed at me exactly, and I immediately focused my reaction to it on the Weenies that had started to follow us. At the same time I wanted to kick myself for having left my Viper behind. The situation that appeared to be shaping up was not one in which I wanted to be unarmed.

The wolf spirit's voice echoed through my head. *You need not be weaponless, Longtooth. Embrace me and I will deal with your enemies.*

"No!"

Lynn looked back at me. "What?" Despite her fear, I saw her concern for me reflected in her green eyes.

I shook my head. "Nothing important." I glanced at the forest of gray buildings at the landward end of the pier. "I'm not sure if we're being followed, but there is a quick way for us to find out."

She hesitated for only a second. "Lead on."

I guided her toward the crosswalk

as if nothing unusual was happening. The Weenies stayed with us, but lurked at the back of the crowd gathering to cross the street. I worked us toward the curb, then pulled her into the street. "Run!"

The irate honking of horns and the squeal of brakes drowned out any shouting from the other pedestrians as we dashed into traffic. Lynn let her fear run riot and the adrenaline made her nimble and oh so quick. She cut around the front of a Ford Astarte and between two Honda mini-vans while I vaulted a silver Porsche Mako sports coupe. The driver shook his fist at me through the windshield, then went white as a bullet shattered the safety glass.

The next two silenced shots went high, but I saw them hit the Sumitomo Bank building. Adrenaline lending wings to my feet, I caught up with Lynn and grabbed her right hand in my left. Without warning I stopped and swung her around into the alley behind the bank, then I paused and made yet another in a long line of mistakes. I turned back to see who was pursuing us.

The lead Grunge snapped two shots off with his silenced Mac 10 before another Mako — this one white and sporting a dorsal fin telephone antenna — took him like its namesake would take a swimmer on an Australian beach. The lower portions of his legs whipped around like empty nylons on a clothesline, and the gangbanger bounced from the hood to windshield, then up over the top of the car. I'm not sure where the antenna caught him, but it looked crimson to me as the car continued through the intersection.

One of the two bullets peppered me with concrete shards and lead splatter as it hit the wall near my head. The other one hit me square in the ribs and spun me back into the alley. I ricocheted off the opposite wall, then

sprawled unceremoniously on stinking bags of garbage.

Lynn dropped to her knees and reached out to me, then her hands recoiled in horror to cover her mouth as she saw the bullet hole in my jacket. "Oh, God, you're shot!" The blood drained from her face and I sensed she wanted to run but refused to give in to her panic. "I have to get help..."

I held a hand up as my body once again let me breath. "Wait... I'm battered but not bloodied." Gingerly I opened my coat and the .45 caliber slid across my t-shirt and to the ground. "See, no blood, no foul."

It heartened me to see the relief in her eyes. I saw no reason to mention the bullet had broken at least one of my ribs and that if the Weenies got any closer with their guns, my t-shirt wouldn't stop their evil intentions, much less another bullet.

I took her hands in mine and gave them a squeeze. "Go further along the alley. Duck down behind that big dumpster there. I'll be along in a second. There's something I have to do."

"I don't want to leave you here all..."

"Just a second, babe, then I'll be with you. Trust me."

As she headed back down the alley, I worked past the pain and reached inside myself. Deep in my heart I touched the wolf spirit. The Old One hauled himself up into a sitting position and looked at me disapprovingly. The red rebuke in his eyes found allies in the scarlet shadows rippling over his black form.

Even before the Old One had a chance to speak, I cut him off. "I need your strength and your speed and your senses, and I need them now! I have no time to debate you. Now!" Without waiting for his acquiescence, I pulled myself out of the self-imposed trance and smiled as the world reordered itself in accordance with my new per-



spective.

Despite the fetid garbage surrounding me; I could still smell the lingering trace of Lynn's perfume and the fear it helped mask. I heard the sounds she made as she ducked to safety and the sounds of the rats in the dumpster behind which she hid. More importantly, though, I heard the asthmatic wheezing of a Weenie running down the sidewalk toward where he had seen me fall.

In an instant—the broken rib a twinge of pain to be ignored—I reached my feet and flattened myself against the opposite wall of the alley. The scent of cordite burned into my nostrils as the silenced snout of another Mac 10 poked around the corner. Without hesitation I grabbed the gun and yanked, pulling the startled Weenie into the shadowed

byway. I tore the gun free of his feeble grasp, then smashed its blocky butt against his head. He collapsed without so much as a moan.

Following him came a Gillette who had learned to move almost silently. My first warning of his presence came when the 14" long claws he'd had

it into his right hand telescoped out with a click, then whistled as he swung

them at me. His cut came waist high and should have sliced my belly open, but I'd already begun to twist away before his attack began. The trio of polished steel blades shredded the right flank of my jacket and razored through the t-shirt and some flesh, but they didn't get enough to put me down.

Before he could turn his wrist around and try to backhand me with

The blow numbed his forearm and released the claws.

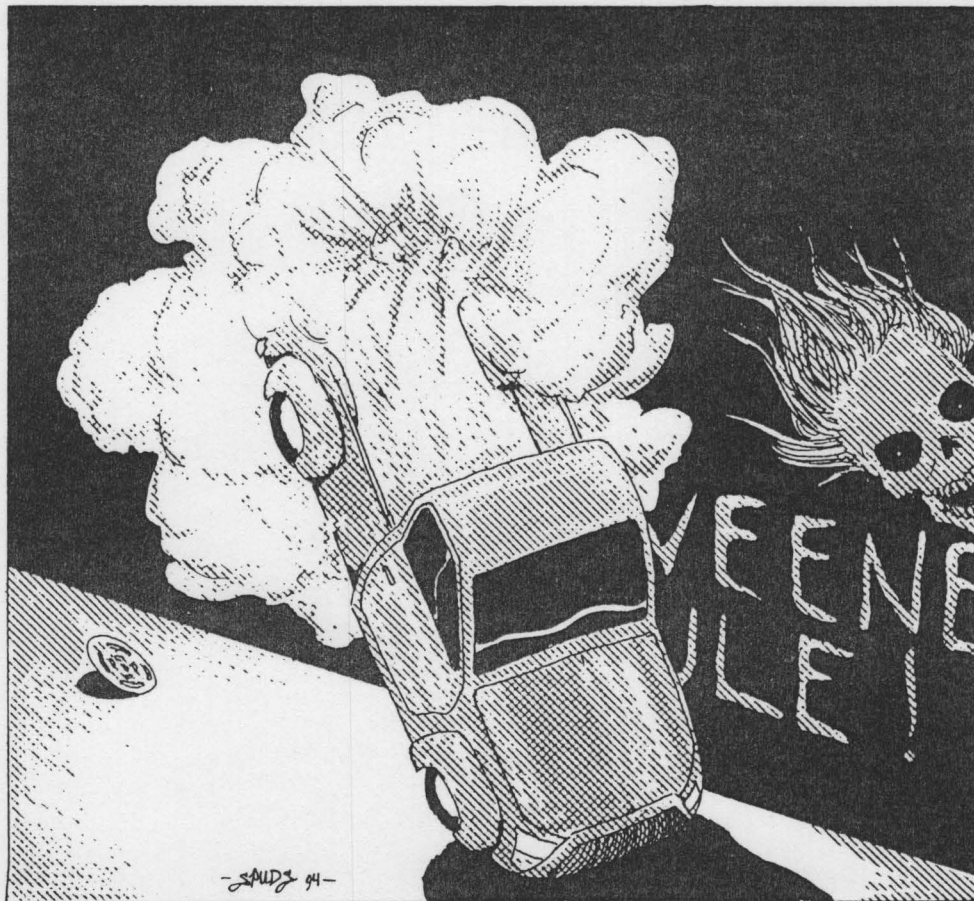
I stepped over his dying body and out onto the street again. The half-dozen Grunges and razor boys racing down the sidewalk collided abruptly as their lead elements tried to stop. I stroked the Ingram's trigger twice, sending two three-shot bursts in their direction. Fortunately for them, and

whoever does the Workman's Compensation filing for the Halloweeners, a heavy-set Grunge up front absorbed most of the damage. One bullet lanced sparks from a Gillette's left arm assembly and another folded an ork over as it drove his navel out through his spine, but otherwise it left the band unscathed.

Four out of at least ten down, and me with a half empty clip and busted barrel staves in my chest. Why the hell don't these

things ever happen to Kid Stealth?

I ducked back into the alley and looped the machine pistol over my shoulder by its strap. I grabbed both the men I'd downed and dragged them to the dumpster. Lynn's eyes grew wide enough to fall out of her head, and I suddenly realized that with the silencer on the gun and the way I dealt with the first two people, she



the blades, my right hand locked on his hand. I bent his hand inward toward his own chest. Anticipating my move, he retracted the claws and relaxed in preparation for using some esoteric martial art to turn my attack against me. That's why it surprised him when I jammed his fist against his own chest, then smacked the gun in my left hand against his funnybone.



had no idea any fighting had taken place.

I dropped to one knee and brought the Ingram to hand again. "I'm sorry I got you into this, Lynn, believe me I am." I nodded toward the bodies. "I need you to go through the razor boy's pockets and get whatever he has — guns, knives, bullets, anything. I'll do the kid. It's our only chance at survival."

She reached out to touch the ragged furrows cut in my coat. "You're hurt."

"Not as badly as I will be if they get you because of trying to kill me." I started to pat the Weenie down, then liberated the spare Ingram clips in the thigh pockets of his khaki fatigues. "Charles the Red or Mr. Sampson somehow learned Raven and the others were going out of town. They decided to make a move against me. Chuckles has been planning this for some time."

"How do you know that?" she asked as she pulled wires and jack-cords from the dead man's pocket and stuffed them into her own.

I whirled around and pointed the Mac's snout at the alley mouth. A short burst blasted a Grunge back over a parked car. "This won't do." I stood and twisted the dumpster so it blocked the alley, then answered her question by pointing at the razor boy and his purple-spiked coiffure.

"He was one of the ones in the park when we arrived. He was jacked into one of the public tables. It's my fault: We've been too predictable — always going to the park before we go elsewhere. He just let the others know we had arrived and the gears started grinding."

Suddenly I felt the alley walls close in on me like a trap. I lunged forward and covered Lynn's body with my own. The bullets sprayed down through the space where I'd just been

crouching and, somehow, missed my splayed-out legs.

As spent cartridges tinkled down in a brass rain, I rolled over into my back and burned the rest of the Mac's clip. Bullets traced a line up the alley wall and through the street samurai who'd taken the high ground. He pitched back out of sight, his body looking like a piñata filled with cherry jello, and I reloaded the gun without thinking.

Lying there on my back gave me a unique view of the world. From beneath the dumpster I saw a truck turn into the alley. Its tires squealed and smoked as it fought for traction in the garbage choking the alley mouth. As it picked up speed and the obscenities being shouted by the passengers fought over the roar of the engine, I realized the Weenies meant to use the dumpster to smear us into a thin, bloody paste.

Off to my left I saw a sewer grating lurking like a grime-smear island in the midst of an oily patch of waste water. I leaped to it and single-handedly ripped the grating free. "Lynn, over here, now! Get down in here."

Tears streaking her face, she crossed to the hole and started her descent. The slimy, rusty rungs made the climb difficult, but she moved as quickly as she could. My enhanced olfactory senses sampled the sewer miasma with the relish of a wine connoisseur sipping Sterno. The stink gave me ample reason not to follow her, but the gangers in the truck allowed me no alternative.

"Drop, just drop!" I yelled as I thrust my legs down into the hole. I let myself slip into the darkness as the truck slammed into the dumpster with a horrendous clang. My left hand grabbed the top rung and my head slipped beneath street level as the dumpster's leading edge guillotined its way above me. I felt a grinding in my shoulder and a jolt of pain as my

handhold stopped the drop short, but I was too intent on other things to worry about injuries at that very moment.

I shoved the Ingram back up toward street level and tightened down on the trigger. Like a bandsaw cutting wood, the bullets ripped along the truck's midline. Just behind the cab the slugs lanced through the gas tank. Almost instantly the acrid scent of gasoline filled my nose and I let go of the ladder's top rung.

The truck exploded before I completed the fifteen foot drop to the river of sewage below. I saw a tremendous flash, then felt the thunderous detonation shudder through my chest. The scream of metal twisting out of shape as the flaming truck cartwheeled through the narrow alley sounded like a banshee death-wail and was made yet more haunting by the acoustics of the subterranean sewer tunnels.

I hit water and the bottom one right after the other. Fire sparked in my right flank as the water gnawed into the claw wounds. Water hissed as it touched the gun's silencer and evaporated into steam. Gathering my feet beneath me I hauled myself to the surface and stood in the waist-deep river of sludge. As quickly as possible I moved upstream. By doing that I rejoined Lynn and avoided the flaming liquid dripping down in long burning rivulets through the hole above.

I slipped my left arm around Lynn's shoulders and tried not to react as she wrapped her arms around my middle and hugged. I failed and she recoiled. Her hands came away bloody. She stared at the black stains on her palms, for the burning gasoline's light was too feeble to give the blood its true color.

She looked up at me as if her world was folding in on itself. "You're bleeding. This water... You need a doctor."

I forced a confident smile onto lips. "You have that straight. I need Dr.



Raven.”

She gave me a puzzled look. “But you said he had left Seattle for a while.”

“True, but Raven keeps tabs on Seattle through the computer networks. That’s why he took Valerie Valkyrie with them.” I frowned. “Unfortunately I can’t jack into cyberspace, so unless we get to a place where I can use a deck, we’re up a creek without a sewage treatment plant in sight.”

For the first time since we left the park, Lynn smiled. She plucked a short computer jack cord from her pocket, and I recalled having seen her strip it off the Gillette I killed. “Get me to a junction box or public outlet and I can access cyberspace.” She pulled her hair back away from her left ear and I saw the small jack into which she snapped the cord. “If you can just get me to a public phone access jack, I can use the RJR computer through a remote line to hit the Matrix. You’ve got the access codes — I’m not going to have to break any ice, am I?”

I hesitated. The access codes and link numbers for Dr. Raven’s private communications network were secrets I ranked right up there with knowledge of my particular brand of lunacy. They were the most precious secrets Raven had because if they fell into the wrong hands — read the Halloweeners, La Plante or the legion of other enemies Raven had — it would be possible to uncover a whole string of Raven’s safehouses and resources. Sure, Raven is far too intelligent to keep all his secrets online anywhere, but any information gleaned could jeopardize operations I knew nothing about.

Furthermore — and far more important to me personally — giving those codes to Lynn would be to bring her into a world I wanted to save her from. I wanted to shield her from the danger

accepted as one of Doc Raven’s aides. By giving her the codes I would

increase her risk. It wouldn’t matter to someone like Mr. Sampson that all she knew had become obsolete because Raven had subsequently changed things — she would become a target through which he could get at Raven.

She looked up at me and I saw she had done some hard thinking. “Wolf, if we don’t reach Raven, what do you think our chances of survival are?”

I took a deep breath — as deep as my broken ribs would allow anyway — then pursed my lips. “Without contact of any sort, Raven would get suspicious after 24 hours, but he probably would not return until after 48 or even 72 hours.” I sighed wearily. “I could hold out that long — hell, with a quick trip to my crib I could even carry the war back to the Weenies.”

She looked down at the torpid river swirling around our legs. “Do the odds change when you have me in tow?”

“Somewhat, yeah.” Slinging the gun over my shoulder, I cupped her jaw in my hands and kissed her. “I’d take you back to the tower...”

“But they’re probably anticipating that idea and it would just put my parents in jeopardy.”

“My thoughts exactly.” I didn’t add that we had no way of knowing how long they had been watching us or how much they knew about where I was likely to go. “I’m sorry I have put you in this danger. If there was any other way...”

Lynn pressed a finger to my lips. “If you were anyone or anything else, Wolfgang Kies, I’d never have gotten to know you. Never regret or deny what you are. It is what I love about you.”

I kissed her again. “Well, then, let’s find a phone box and get to work.”

Finding a phone junction box was actually easier than I had imagined. The only danger in reaching it was an encounter with an alligator, but even a

creature that had withstood millions of years of evolutionary pressure was no match for a half-dozen .45 caliber slugs up and down the length of his armored snout. We abandoned the body because it didn’t seem the right shape for luggage.

I ripped the gray junction box open. The wires inside looked like so much rainbow spaghetti to me, but Lynn recognized things right away. She smiled and slipped her jack into a slot. In a hushed whisper I gave Lynn the link number I had been assigned and the access codes, including the one that disabled the pattern checker. I had to do that to verify that I was not using the codes or the computer would see an input pattern totally out of sync with my previous access and would sever the connection.

Lynn winked at me. “Don’t worry lover, no one will get those codes out of me, I promise.”

“I know,” I said, but she was already gone. The smile remained on her face, but her eyes got a glassy look as she went online. Her eyes REMed as she worked through the RJR computer link and hit cyberspace. I watched her grin broaden, which meant she’d gotten into Raven’s system. For the next minute she looked utterly enraptured, then her eyes blinked and she returned to the land of flesh and blood.

She stared at me with incredible joy flashing in her eyes. “When I used your codes and gave the system the override, I heard Raven’s voice say, ‘That’s not necessary, Ms. Ingold.’ He had a pattern check already built into the system for me! The man’s unbelievable!”

I suppressed a smirk. “Yeah, that’s putting it mildly.”

“I left a message telling him that the Halloweeners were after you and me. I also said you felt you could hold out for 72 hours, but any help would be appreciated.”



I nodded. "Good. That will get him back, or he'll cut someone loose to help us."

Obviously pleased with herself, and the fact that Raven had gone to the trouble of building a pattern file on her — from material undoubtedly stolen by Valerie from the RJR computer system — she unplugged the jackcord and tucked it away in a pocket. "What do we do now?"

I pointed on further down the tunnel. "We'll head toward my apartment, but we'll wait until dark before we go up to street level. At my place I can get weapons and some more suitable clothing for both of us. We'll let your folks know we're going underground, then we lose ourselves."

Lynn frowned. "Isn't it possible they know where you live and might be waiting for us?"

I nodded. "That's why we wait until dark — most of the Weenies have an early bedtime. We'll scope things out and walk away if anything is weird."

"Sounds like a plan."

"That it is." I smiled and started splashing my way deeper into the tunnel.

Lynn took my hand. "I think we make a good team — one too good to split up."

"I agree, kid." I gave her hand a squeeze. "The only way we'll part company is over my dead body."

By the time we made our way through the tunnels to the area where I lived the cold had soaked into my bones and I shivered. I knew, without a doubt, the cuts in my side were infected. I needed antibiotics and bandages, as well as dry clothes, dry shoes and the better parts of the arsenal I owned. Fortunately all those things were available in my apartment.

The full moon had risen far enough above the horizon that the ball no longer looked huge. Lynn and I returned to the surface through a grate

in a storm culvert one street over from my apartment house. With it still being early evening and the neighborhood being on the peaceful side of residential, not many folks were out and about. I took that as a good sign — in these parts "neighborhood watch" meant folks kept score in gunfights. If no one was out looking around I could allow myself to assume there was no trouble brewing.

Once we made it into the lobby of my apartment house I felt a lot better. I checked the security door down the back hallway and saw it was closed tight. With me in the lead, we ascended the stairs as they angled their way up and around three floors. Each flight had twelve steps, forty-eight steps between floors, and we took each one as if it was our last. I kept looking up and down the stairwell core and saw nothing.

Giddy is the only way to describe how I felt when I reached my door. I was tired and achy and stank like raw sewage, but that was all secondary to the happiness I felt in reaching sanctuary. Lynn clearly felt the same way and even the Old One yipped inside my head to signal his return to our lair.

I keyed the lock, opened the door and reached inside to flick on the light. I hit the switch and nothing happened. That struck me as unusual, but not dire. *Blown bulb* I told myself, and stepped into the darkness.

Looking up I saw two red eyes burning balefully about five feet above my eye level. A hand closed about my forearm, covering it from elbow to wrist. Suddenly I found myself yanked off my feet and flying through the darkness into the middle of my apartment. As I whirled through the air I saw the silhouette of the troll that had thrown me eclipse my vision of Lynn.

She screamed, the Old One snarled and I hit a knot of bodies in the dark. The Old One filled me with strength

and dulled my pain. I lashed out left and right, connecting solidly. I heard grunts and groans, then I slipped off balance and began to backpedal in the darkness. Something shoved me and I exploded out into the night through my apartment's picture window.

Longtooth, we are falling!

If you were a raven or a hawk, we could be flying!

Landing precluded further discussion. I faintly recalled something about martial arts and breakfalls. I used one, but broke my left arm instead of my fall. The rest of my body slammed into the ground a second later, the breakfall not withstanding. The impact knocked the wind from me and reduced my left side to one huge bruise.

Pain blazing through my body, stale air burning in my lungs, I lay on my back staring up at the jagged black hole in my apartment's window. Lynn screamed again and I could do nothing. I fought to clear my head and tried to roll up to my feet, but I only slumped back. My left arm hit the ground again, sapping all the strength I had.

You must get up, Longtooth. They are coming for you.

I can't.

You must. You must fight them.

I'm in no shape to fight anyone.

Then I must fight them.

No!

It was too late. With the full moon in the sky, the Old One was at his most powerful. At these times of the month the control I can exert over him is stretched more thin than a politician's sense of self-restraint. The Old One no more wanted my consent to what he was going to do than he thought he needed it, but we both knew my concession would make things easier.

Just not the woman, Old One, not the woman.

I will not harm your bitch, Long-



tooth, just those who would harm her.

The transformation, when I fight it, is a horrible experience. Now, having given my body over to the Old One, I heard my bones breaking as he recreated me in his image of what we should be. I felt the pain, but it seemed distant — like music heard in the background of a telephone call. I could feel it, and I knew it was pain, but there was not enough of it there to hurt me.

My facial bones broke and jutted out into a muzzle. My arm bones telescoped inward, shortening them so my muscles could exert greater leverage in strikes. My hands became blunt fin-

gered paws that ended in claws. My feet stretched out and my ankles shifted so my legs took on a characteristic lupine shape. Fangs, elongated ears and a thick grey pelt completed the transformation.

I had become *his* creature. With the Old One at the helm concepts like discretion, sanctuary and ambush were all tossed into a bin marked *cowardice*. The Old One could be as murderous as Kid Stealth and with two bullets blowing the lock out of the security door that led into the apartment complex's backyard, I felt no inclination to restrain him.

One of the Weenies kicked the door

open and light from the hallway splashed out in a narrow stripe down the center of the barren yard. "Hey, Wolf's not here!"

Had I been in control, the Halloweenies would have had a smart remark's worth of warning. The Old One has no taste for humor. He stepped us into the light so they could behold the monster they had helped create, then he set about building an even stronger correlation between learning my secret and premature death.

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE!

Michael Stackpole has written and developed many of the current plots seen in *BattleTech* and *Shadowrun*. He has also written for almost every major company in the gaming industry. To say that he has made his mark in the gaming business would be an understatement. His characters, Raven and Wolf along with all of their shadowrunning cohorts, have been published in *Challenge Magazine* and in the *Shadowrun* anthology.

In his most recent venture Mike has taken the next step in his career and has written an original epic fantasy adventure. "Once A Hero" is a riveting tale of a legendary human hero who in one life built a kingdom and who, 500 years later, must be raised from the dead to help save it. The book is a rousing adventure of mystery, magic, and swashbuckling adventure in the tradition of David Eddings and Robert Jordan. The book is action packed and fun to read. It will appear in your favorite bookstore in May.

"Once A Hero is easy to start, easy to like, and very hard to put down." —Larry Bond

"What a magnificent tale! Scope and verve...an incredible tapestry...a page turner." —Dennis McKiernan



Former Combat Medic

"I learned my medical skills from UCAS Air Force medical schools. However, eight years in the service left me with a first lieutenant's salary and not much else. The only time I saw real, not Simsense, blood was after a field training accident. On the streets, I choose my own goals and who I work for. I don't care who or what the target of the run is. To hire this medic, just transfer the right amount into my credstik."

Quotes

"If you're wounded during a gang fight, I'm the women who's trained to get you out and patch you up. Will your average Street Doc do that? No way!"

"Sure, not even a Troll plans on getting hurt during a run. But, when you do, I'll be patching up your wounds before DocWagon personnel can even get into their vehicles, let alone get to where you're bleeding."

Commentary

The Former Combat Medic was once part of an elite search and recover team, trained to rescue downed pilots from behind enemy lines. Her skills allow her to shift from combat support, to combat, and back again, without a second thought. Better skilled than most DocWagon team personnel, she's the women who will keep badly mauled Runners alive until they can reach a hospital or Street Doc.

Attributes:

- Body: 5
- Quickness: 6
- Strength: 5 (7)
- Intelligence: 5
- Willpower: 3
- Essence: 1.25
- Reaction: 6 (8)

Skills:

- Armed Combat: 3
- Athletics: 5
- Biotech (First Aid): 8
- Biology (Trauma Care): 6
- Car (Military Ambulance): 3
- Military Theory (Modern Combat Medicine): 4
- Stealth: 3
- Unarmed Combat: 3

Cyberware:

- Muscle Replacement (2)
- Radio
- Wired Reflexes (1)

Contacts:

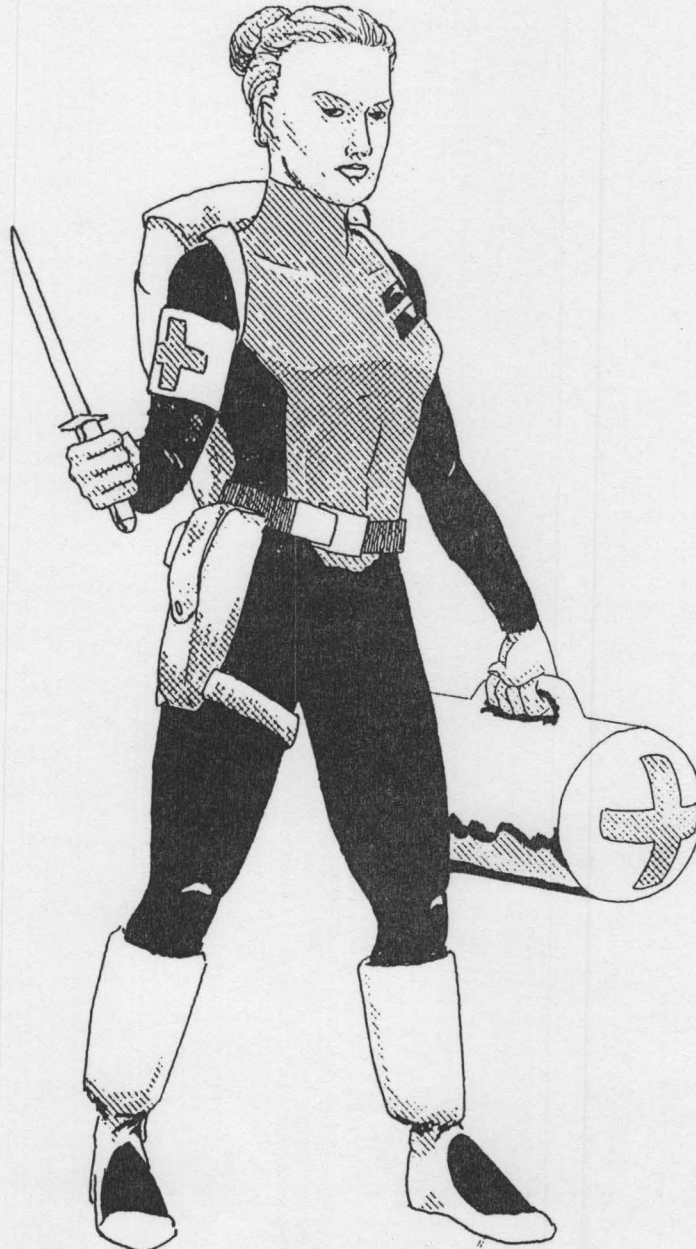
Choose (3) Contacts

Gear:

- Ares Predator (with 10 rounds of regular ammo)
- Backpack
- Combat Knife
- Flare Gun
- Signal Flares (3 green, 3 red, 3 black, 3 white)
- Helmet (with ballistic face protection and night vision optics)
- Military Medkit: Rating 5

- Partial Heavy Armor
- 5 Antidote Patches
- 5 Stimulant Patches
- 5 Tranq Patches
- 5 Trauma Patches
- Stabilization Unit
- 4 months Middle Class lifestyle prepaid

>>>> (Don't get into combat without one.)
<<<<< - Psyche
<02:12:03/04-06-54





Ex-Brawler Archetype

"So's I used to be a Brawler, y'see? 'Cept I got bored. Too many rules and not enough fun. I mean there wuz only so many ways I could break a guys skull without gettin' a penalty or somethin'. I always considered myself one of them creative thinkers, y'know? I figure runnin' pays as much as Brawl-in' and sure as drek allows me to release a bunch more of that creative energies I got built up in side 'o my noggin. As an added bonus it lends lots 'o heads for me to bust-up too."

COMMENTARY

The Ex-Brawler turned to the shadows because the game was getting old and he felt the urge for something more exciting, of course, there are some aspects of the Brawl he still enjoys.

TRIBUTES

Body	4 (6)
Quickness	5 (6)
Strength	4 (5)
Charisma	3
Intelligence	2
Willpower	3
Essence	.2
Magic	0
Reaction	3 (7)
Initiative	7 + 2d6

SKILLS

Stealth (Urban) :	5
Armed Combat :	5
Armed Combat (B/R) :	2
Unarmed Combat :	5
Etiquette (Street) :	2
Etiquette (Media) :	3
Firearms :	4
Firearms (B/R) :	1
Bike :	3
Sports (Brawling):	5

DICE POOLS

Combat :	6
----------	---

CYBERWEAR

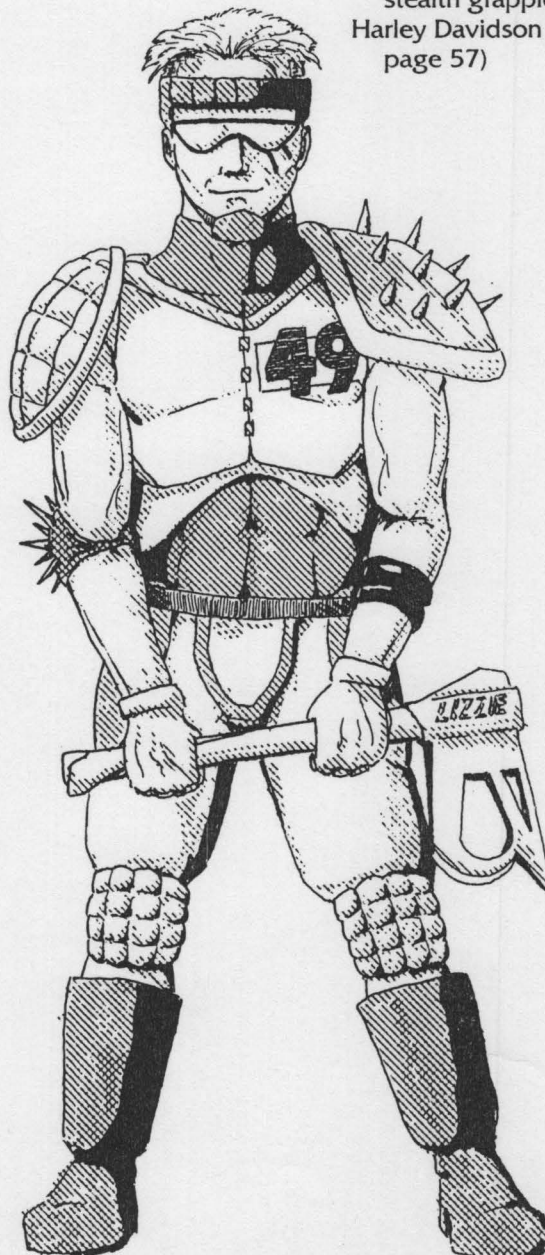
Dermal Plating	Level : 2
Muscle Replacement	Level : 1
Wired Reflexes	Level : 2
Hearing Amplification	
Retractable Spurs	
CyberEyes with :	
Rangefinders	
Thermographic	
Optical Magnification	Level : 3

CONTACTS

Pick Any Two
Former Team Mates (4)

GEAR

Combat Ax w/ 40 rounds
H&K MP-5 TX
Survival Knife
Helmet
Respirator
Earplug Phone
Medkit
Tram Patch : 4
Antidote Patch : 4
6 Months High Lifestyle
DocWagon Gold
CredStick with ¥52,210
Browning Ultra Power w/ 10 rounds
Grapple Gun with 1000 meters of stealth grapple line
Harley Davidson Brawler (Killing Glare page 57)





FOREIGN DIGNATARY

"There are times when diplomacy is the only answer to a tense situation. Of course, information is the key. That is where I come in. I can fix more problems with carefully chosen words than any ruffian with a gun. Perhaps the trading of information is morally corrupt in your eyes, but a leak here or there keeps the captain of a ship on his toes."

QUOTES

"I will take your concerns under consideration and I will give them the attention they deserve."

"You can not detain me, I have diplomatic immunity!"

"May I offer my views on the subject in question?"

COMMENTARY

The Foreign Dignitary is a very intelligent and powerful person. He often is

playing both ends against the middle in an effort to gain what is in his best interest. Most runners will find that the facts given to them by the Dignitary are only half trues and cloaked leads. The foreign Dignitary will never commit to a position. This allows him the avenue to refute any claims made against his position.

Body	3
Quickness	3
Strength	3
Charisma	5
Intelligence	5
Willpower	4
Essence	5
Reaction	2

CYBERWARE

Datajack
Memory (250 Mp)

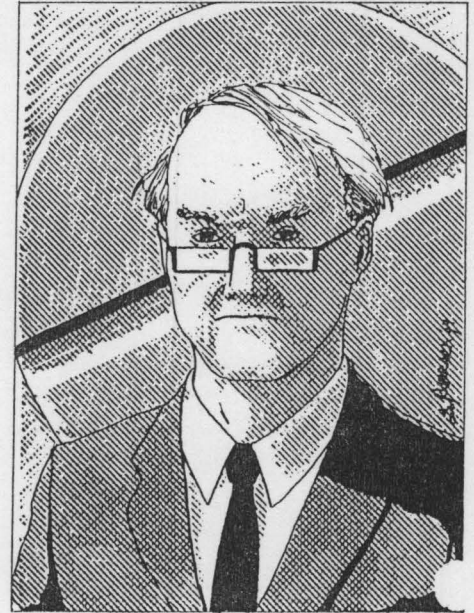
SKILLS

Etiquette (Corp) :	3
Etiquette (Media) :	6
Negotiations :	4

Computer :	2
Psychology :	3

SPECIAL SKILL

Leadership (Political) : 8



SOCIAL WORKER

"You think we get all the tax money you pay out? You had better think again. The political big-wheels get their cuts first, then the bills get a taste, and then - if anything is left - we get ours. I spend the majority of my waking hours trying to help people get a better life, while I sacrifice my own. I sometimes wonder why I do it or even if it makes a difference, then I see some little kid without a place to sleep or food to eat. Reality shakes you fairly hard if you let it."

QUOTES

"Please fill out these forms completely. When you get finished with those I have some more for you to read and sign. When you get finished I have some more for you to read and sign. After you get finished with those I have some more for you to read and sign."

"Do your parents know where you are?"

"Oh man, that is the third time my car has been stripped this month!"

COMMENTARY

The social worker is constantly waging a losing battle. She is ever at odds with the government machine and the bureaucracy. She knows her way around the system and for the right cause, plus a few nuyen, she can untie or entangle almost anyone in the confusing wheels of government paperwork.

Body	2
Quickness	3
Strength	3
Charisma	4
Intelligence	4
Willpower	4
Essence	5
Reaction	2

CYBERWARE

Datajack
Memory (150 Mp)

SKILLS

Etiquette (Street) :	3
Etiquette (Tribal) :	4
Car:	3
Computer :	3
Psychology :	6





EUROPEAN BUSINESS MACHINES AND MAGIC

Home Office Location: Geneva, Switzerland

President/CEO: Helena Swinburne

Chairman of the Board: Victor Swinburne

Corporate Status: Private Corporation

Major Shareholders:

- The Adellier Family (approx. 17%)
- Der Brukhart Groupe (approx. 18%)
- LeDuc Foundation (approx. 15%)
- Clan MacTaggart (approx. 16%)
- Swinburne Investments (approx.

20%)

Other shareholders (totalling approx. 14%)

Net Rating: 102

Major Interests

- ospace: 4
- Agriculture: 2
- Biotechnology: 3
- Chemicals: 5
- Computer Engineering: 8
- Computer Science: 8
- Consumer Goods: 5
- Cybernetics: 5
- Entertainment: 3
- Finance: 5
- Heavy Industry: 4
- Mystical Goods/Services: 6
- Military Technology: 5
- Service: 2

Operations

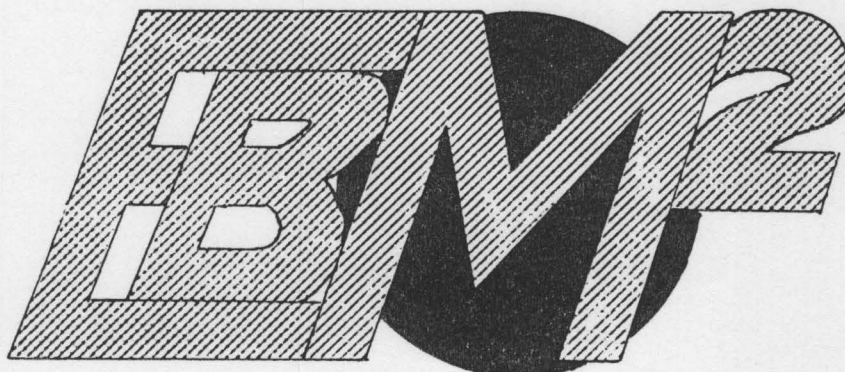
- Fiscal: 7
- Intelligence: 7
- Management: 7
- Security: 7
- Magic: 8
- Matrix: 8
- Physical: 7
- Military: Company/Average

MARY BUSINESS

EBM² is primarily active in computer

engineering and programming fields and all the various areas related to those fields such as military applications, cybertechnology and even biotech (for the development of organic-based chips and processors). The corporation's other interests are geared toward supporting their main product: computers.

>>>>[EBM-squared isn't quite as big as the Big Three computer corps (Fuchi, MCT and Renraku) but it's fraggin' close. That makes EBM² hungry and a frequent employer of shadowrunners against the Big Three.]<<<<<< - Ariel (18:56:24/11-04-54)



>>>>[And, of course, the Big Three also do a fair number of shadowruns against EBM², although usually in retaliation.]<<<<<< - Killroy (was/here)

>>>>[Just the occasional shadowrun to remind EBM² who's *really* in charge and keep them in their place, basically.]<<<<<< - Tesseract (03:04:34/4-04-54)

The corporation's only other significant area of interest outside the computer field is in magical goods and services. Here the company is a strong innovator in magical research and development and applications for a variety of magical techniques and processes. Only Mitsuhamas and Aztechnology

devote more effort to mystical R&D.

>>>>[EBM² hasn't had any conflicts with the Big A yet (lucky for them).]<<<<<< - Pyramid Watcher (15:36:50/11-05-54)

>>>>[On the other hand, EBM² and Mitsuhamas go at it tooth and nail, since both of their major interests compete. A full-scale corp war hasn't broken out between them yet, but I'd say that it's only a matter of time.]<<<<<< - Argent (19:25:53/11-05-54)

>>>>[It won't happen unless MCT decides to start one. EBM² knows it doesn't stand a chance in a full-out conflict because MCT is a AAA corp and has the Corporate Court on its side; therefore, even if their resources were equal (and they're not), MCT would still come out on top.]<<<<<< - Ariel (21:30:31/11-06-54)

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

The major shareholders of EBM² are primarily wealthy European families and their representatives. EBM² grew out of a small group of companies after the EuroWar. A consortium of families got together and built the company, setting up a pretty dynastic line of succession for control of the Board. CEO Helena Swinburne's family and those of the other board members were the primary financiers when the corporation was founded.

>>>>[Rumor has it that the Brukhart Groupe is a front for a Nosferatu... or maybe even a group of them.]<<<<<< - Kane (16:07:11/11-04-54)



>>>>>[There's also at least a couple of Elven interests in the corp and rumors of a Dragon who owns a substantial interest. Lofwyr, maybe?]<<<<<< - Sandman (02:12:50/11-05-54)

>>>>>[Nope. Trust me, Lofwyr doesn't have anything to do with EBM², but other parties do.]<<<<<< - Talon (22:04:16/11-06-54)

>>>>>[“The Elves” aren't exactly a single monolithic entity. Where EBM² is concerned it is most likely some wealth Elven aristocrats from England or France, or maybe even some nobles from the Seelie Court.]<<<<<< - Tartan (17:45:54/11-07-54)

>>>>>[Overall there's surprisingly little infighting among the families. They seem to rotate control of the CEO and Chair slots and maintain the status quo. All very civilized.]<<<<<< - Witworth (12:26:30/11-09-54)

>>>>>[Don't count on it. There are lots of rumors that suggest plenty of conflict going on in the shadows that most of us never see: back-room dealings, corporate politics and even magical duels.]<<<<<< - (19:05:36/11-11-54)

Major Divisions

EBM² has three main divisions: Europe, North America and Asia. Each of these divisions oversees a variety of operations and subsidiaries in their respective areas, and the other two divisions report to EBM² Europe; the main headquarters in Geneva.

EBM² North America is headquartered in Boston in a massive skyscraper called the EBM Tower. EBM² Asia is based out of the Hong Kong Free Enterprise Enclave.

>>>>>[Hong Kong is the only city that has both a major EBM² division and a

major MCT division. Since it is also a “Free Enterprise Enclave” (read: corporate controlled state) it's where the friction between the two corps gets pretty hot and heavy. MCT has fairly little presence in Boston, only a suite of offices near the stock exchange, and EBM² has virtually no presence in Japan or Seattle, two of MCT's major stomping grounds.]<<<<<< - Ariel (20:14:53/11-05-54)

>>>>>[Coincidentally, the Yakuza also has very little presence in Boston.]<<<<<< - Tesseract (22:12:01/11-07-54)

>>>>>[This whole “corp war” thing between EBM² and MCT is a load of drek. They put on a good show of corporate dog-eat-dog for us, while in the back-rooms everyone's cutting deals with everyone else and they share half the same Board of Directors...]<<<<<< - Johnny K (04:16:34/11-06-54)

>>>>>[Oh? Try telling that to the MCT research lab in Cambridge, Massachusetts that got raided by EBM² shadowrunners last month.]<<<<<< - Ariel (20:46:15/11-09-54)

>>>>>[Okay, so it's a good cover-up.]<<<<<< - Johnny K (03:52:11/11-10-54)

Executives

Chairman Victor Swinburne oversees the many and varied political maneuverings of the founding families in the boardroom, after leaving the day-to-day running of the company to his daughter, Helena. Helena Swinburne, the only daughter of Victor Swinburne and scion of one of the corporation's founding families, is a graduate of the Sorbonne with an MBA as well as a Masters in Thaumaturgy.

>>>>>[Victor Swinburne is a wily old fox. He's had the longest term of any chairman to date without getting pushed out by all the back-room politics or killed by the stress of the job. On the contrary, he seems to thrive on all the Machiavellian political maneuverings.]<<<<<< - Connor (14:13:49/11-05-54)

>>>>>[The Lady Swinburne is also a formidable woman. Rumor has it that her legendary charms are supplemented by magic and that she uses her abilities as a mage to further her family's interests in the company.]<<<<<< - Tangent (20:54:35/11-05-54)

>>>>>[The way I hear it Helena Swinburne's just a figurehead for daddy; someone to hobnob at parties and look good for the annual corporate report photo while Victor pulls all the strings.]<<<<<< - Dr. Crash (22:59:25/11-05-54)

>>>>>[Then you've obviously never met her, chummer. If you had, you'd have no doubt that she's nobody's figurehead.]<<<<<< - Daikoku (17:54:22/11-07-54)

>>>>>[Name dropper.]<<<<<< - Dr. Crash (23:06:50/11-07-54)

The Vice-President of EBM² North America is Christopher Johnson, a Boston-bred and Harvard-educated Europhile. Johnson is young for a man in his position (only 35) and is someone with ambition. He is very active in EBM activities and has worked to strengthen corporate ties with the government of the Boston Metroplex.

>>>>>[Mr.Johnson????]<<<<<< - Madcap (02:51:22/11-06-54)

>>>>>[Chip truth, chummer. It's his real name and he gets more than his



share of jokes about it.]<<<<< - Ariel (19:05:43/11-06-54)

>>>>>[Word on the street in Boston is that Johnson is a shadowrunner wannabe and that behind all of the cultivated blue-blood Euroclass, a firm believer in promotion through superior firepower.]<<<<< - Tesseract (21:58:03/11-08-54)

>>>>>[How do you think he got this far, chummer?]<<<<< - Ariel (20:00:20/11-10-54)

>>>>>[Johnson's also pretty paranoid when it comes to magic. He's seen all the amazingly scary stuff that comes out of the EBM² Thaumaturgy R&D Department (not to mention the stuff the Lady Swinburne is capable of). A mundane himself, he's surrounded by wards, bound spirits and physical adept bodyguards. Let the magically active among us take note.]<<<<< - The Silicon Mage (13:12:33/11-11-54)

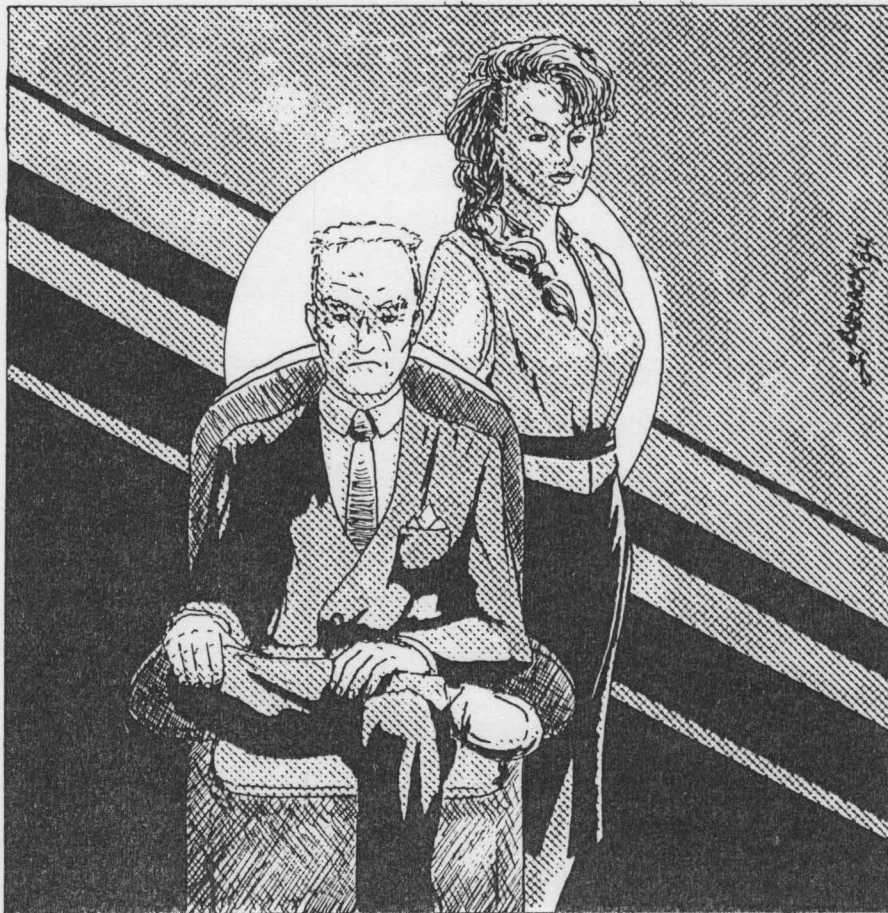
>>>>>[Speaking of which...]<<<<< - Talon (19:06:40/11-11-54)

SECURITY

EBM² has fairly aggressive security forces. They maintain a visible show of

security in their various facilities wherever possible as a means of deterring any possible aggression.

>>>>>[The corp keeps a close watch out for shadowrunners working for the Big Three. One flaw in their security, though, is the fact that it always goes up when there's some big project going on. Keeping an eye on EBM² se-



curity allocations is a good way to tell where the paydata's going to be.]<<<<< - Tangent (19:48:57/11-06-54)

>>>>>[Don't count on it, chummer. There's at least one case I know of where EBM² faked such a security allocation, hoping to trick anyone watch-

ing for such patterns.]<<<<< - Silk (20:06:53/11-07-54)

>>>>>[Sounds like they did, too, eh?]<<<<< - Madcap (01:13:26/11-09-54)

Physical and Magical Security

EBM² trains and fronts their own private security force through Paragon Security, one of their subsidiaries, which provides the vast majority of its services to its parent corporation (surprise, surprise).

>>>>>[Alain Adellier, the CEO of Paragon, is firmly behind Lady Swinburne and her family... for now, at least.]<<<<< - Argent (18:20:32/11-07-54)

>>>>>[Adellier is very much "old school" European and likes things done by the book. Paragon's Security personnel are very well-trained and efficient, but not too creative. The

ability of any EBM² security force depends a great deal on the abilities of the commander on site.]<<<<< - Silk (20:13:06/11-07-54)

EBM² has one of the best magical security divisions of any megacorp. They fully integrate magical options and countermeasures into all their se-



curity measures.

>>>>>[The impressive part about this is the fact that most EBM² security magicians aren't directly attached to Paragon (like most of the security personnel). Despite that, the magical ops division integrates smoothly with Paragon.]<<<<< - Tangent (20:06:01/11-06-54)

>>>>>[Not always. There have been conflicts in the past, but Adellier has handled them smoothly. The thaumat-ops mages tend to take a "you-poor-mundanes" view of the Paragon people.]<<<<< - Talon (19:20:30/11-08-54)

>>>>>[The corp also takes an interesting view on adding magical "touches" to their other security measures: spirits, paranimals or anchored spells. See my comments on Matrix security below.]<<<<< - The Silicon Mage (14:04:22/11-10-54)

Matrix Security

The corporation's Matrix security is top-rate and makes use of a variety of experimental cutting-edge IC systems.

>>>>>[No surprise, considering they're a computer corp. While not as tough as the Big Three. EBM² Matrix security is tough. They tend to avoid a lot of real fancy sculpted systems, but the icon work is first rate.]<<<<< - Tesseract (22:06:35/11-08-54)

>>>>>[EBM² also uses a lot of funky experimental IC. Last I heard they

were testing out some theory on the psychological impact of certain icons and images.]<<<<< - Ariel (20:19:40/11-09-54)

>>>>>[Damn thoughtful of all those shadow-deckers to volunteer to test their new IC, isn't it?]<<<<< - Madcap (01:43:50/11-10-54)

>>>>>[Believe it or not EBM²'s matrix and magical security also work together. If an EBM trace program gets a line on you, plan on an elemental being there within 30 seconds or so.]<<<<< - The Silicon Mage (12:30:34/11-10-54)

Military Security

EBM² isn't a significant player in events like Desert Wars and fields only modest military forces that, while well-trained, are quite unremarkable.

>>>>>[The only thing about the EBM² military that's interesting is the rumors that there are divided loyalties and lots of back-room dealings. If a serious rift develops with the families, the military is probably where it will be visible first.]<<<<< - Tangent (20:14:22/11-06-54)

>>>>>[Although by that point it may well be too late to make much use of that information...]<<<<< - Blade (23:34:16/11-07-54)

Extended Security

EBM² has a capable covert operations branch, especially skilled in counter-intelligence work to keep rival

covert ops teams away from the company's vital secrets. They also mount occasional operations against other corps and maintain a comprehensive intelligence-gathering and sorting network.

>>>>>[EBM² covert ops make heavy use of magic. Most of their best agents are magically active and skilled in using illusion, mind manipulation and divination to further the corporation's ends. There are also rumors that the corp has a specially-trained team of assassins made up of physical adepts and magicians.]<<<<< - The Silicon Mage (12:51:27/11-06-54)

>>>>>[There are also totally unconfirmed rumors about the corp employing free spirits, nomads, gaki and other sorts of astral critters as covert operations agents, either through some sort of truly unique hiring agreement or magical coercion.]<<<<< - Talon (21:16:06/11-06-54)

>>>>>[The magical-ops teams are good, but not infallible. Word on the streets is that an operation against Aztechnology recently resulted in two dead operatives and one who's permanently insane. Makes you wonder what Aztech's magical op's division is like.]<<<<< - Argent (19:27:48/11-07-54)

>>>>>[Trust me, you don't want to know.]<<<<< - Pyramid Watcher (17:49:03/11-10-54)



There Are Shadowruns, And Then There Is...

Madness.

It's here. Oh God, no, please, not here. Not now. Must keep control, till I can find an escape. Way out. Something.

"What? I'm sorry, I didn't hear you."

"I said, it seems as though some of the new anti-pollutant chemicals they've been testing over the Barrens have been showing some effect. Not many effects, but at least it's something. Rather have them test it there, in case it goes bad. Don't you think that's interesting?"

"Yes, interesting. Hmm."

Pain.

My guts. Oh God, they're tearing. Don't flinch. Too late.

"Are you feeling okay?"

Fight... it... back... "Yes." Back... "Fine. Must have" Back... back... "been the salmon" Back... back... "crackers. Excuse me." Must leave now.

Madness. Confusion. Where am I? Stop. Think. Yes. Party, dinner party. Bad salmon crackers. Chemicals. *Confusion.* No! Pollution. Auntie Pollution. Barrens, with bad salmon. No, that's not it. Must leave before more *Confusion. Madness.* Where am I? On the ground. No. No. Floor. I fell. Oh no. Everyone is looking at me. Get up. Slowly. Say something. Make them calm.

"Oops. Sorry. I slipped. Must have been the bad salmon pollution in the Barrens." That was good. Wait! I'll be drunk.

"Sorry. Too many chemicals. No, I mean too much salmon-anti." Oh God, shut up and just leave.

Where am I? Street. Outside. Good. Must find... Paaaaiiiii-innnnnnn! No! Too quickly. There, ahead. Darkness. Alley. Safety. **MADNESS.** Here. Safepolu. Anslamin. Baldrunkenisalmonantipolutoion-safelydalnessallilly.....

I awake. The night is mine once again. I'm here. Where have I been? seems like... like... it seems. It does ..ot matter. I am alive. My body

proves it to me. The Pain is with me, letting me know I'm here. Every inch aches. I'm alive! My eyes see through the night, all in reds and blues. This is good. It is time to go. I shed my skin of cloth to feel my own. It is there. My coat to keep out the darkness chill. Time to go.

The Pain is with me as I slink through the alleys, my home, for my purpose. I will find it, as I always have. As it has always been.

Him. Talking to the non-male. He is my purpose. It is the male I seek. I slink along, closer, the Pain comforting me. Strengthening me. He leaves the non-male, heading for his mover. I slink faster as I can, for the Pain is with me. I come to him in a flash, the Pain powering me. He is mine. The male has Pain, for he howls as I take him. I can see his Pain in his eyes. My Pain is stronger, for it is always with me, driving me, bending me.

The male is mine. The Pain powers me as I take him away. The night is mine.

Lock strode into the *Platinum Stair* and made his way through the lobby toward the host's counter. The Samurai didn't particularly like the feel of the clothes he had on. Lock was the first to admit that he was not one to wear *nice* clothes. That was Quicksilver's job. He was the tre' chic geek as far as Lock was concerned. But 'Silver was out on some biz of his own, and Lock was the leader of the team.

Lock could feel the eyes upon him as he spoke to the maitre d'. Although most of his cyberware was hidden by the clothes, some was not. Particularly his eyes. The urban warrior was always proud of having eyes that were entirely neon irised. No pupils. It helped his image. On the street that is. No one can read your emotion

without seeing your eyes. In high public though, it just wasn't working.

It took some convincing, both monetarily and verbally, but Lock was able to gain entrance into the depths of the dining hall. Wealth abounded in the decor and in the clientele, most of whom were only at the *Stair* to be seen, not to eat. Unfortunately for Lock, he came hungry. *Living too long in the streets. You're slipping Donovan.* He thought to himself.

Lock's guide led him to the table where his host waited for him. A beautiful woman, she looked expectantly at Lock. The woman smiled as Lock sat down. Out of reflex, the Samurai studied her, quickly sizing her up. *Early forties, no obvious cyberware. Definite cosmetic jobs. Wealth factor... six outta ten, I'd guess.*

"Good evening Mr. Donovan. I'm pleased that you could make it. Would you care for anything to drink? Something to relax you in that suit?"

Lock smiled inwardly. *Pretty good.* "No thanks. Don't drink and talk business, you know."

"Yes. Quite." The woman reached over the table and uncovered a small silver bowl. It was filled with various types of fruit cut into small sections. Using a large spoon, the woman carefully lifted several chunks of the juicy fruit out of the bowl and placed them on her plate.

"Excuse me, please. I just love fruit. It's one of the few foods that doesn't make me sick. Can't get enough of it. Please help yourself, if you like."

"No thanks, again." Lock answered. The Samurai stared closer at his host as she placed a piece of watermelon into her mouth. Lock found himself staring dumbfounded at her as she chewed. Without warning, the woman turned her eyes toward Lock. Like a school



boy caught staring through a peephole in a locker room, the urban warrior snapped his head back to hide his guilt.

"I really do love fruit. Are you sure you wouldn't want some, Mr. Donovan?" The woman started into Lock's pupiless eyes. "It's really quite... tasty."

What the frag is wrong with this biff? I don't want no fraggin' fruit! Lock mentally shook the clouds from his head. "No, really. I'd rather prefer to talk biz, if you don't mind."

The woman almost seemed to frown, but resigned herself to Lock's request.

"My name is Shannon, Mr. Donovan. There is no real need for me to tell you what I do or where I do it, but I shall just say that I am involved in research."

Mage or labboy. Lock pegged her.

Shannon speared a piece of musk melon and directed it into her mouth. After several chews, she continued.

"Have you ever experienced prolonged pain, Mr. Donovan?"

Huh? "I'm sorry, did you say pain?" Lock questioned.

"Not just pain, but prolonged pain. I'm sure that someone in your line of work has, at one time or another, experienced times of prolonged pain. Not just for several hours, but for several days."

Lock's mind flashed back through the memories of his past. His mind swam past a sea of images of his early days as a 'runner. His first firefight. His first kill. His first time being shot. Cyberware implants. Losing Julie. Father's death. As these passed by, so did views of pleasure. First payment. Holding Julie. Childhood.

"Mr. Donovan?"

Lock's mind snapped back to attention. *C'mon Donovan. You're slipping gears.* "Yes. I have at times. Why?"

"Oh several reasons. I often enjoy just asking the question. It throws people off and let's me know if they are paying attention. But this time, I have a real reason." Shannon swal-

lowed a hunk of apple and leaned over the table. In a lowered whisper, she spoke.

"Have you ever heard of the Loup-Garou?"

Lock thought back. He had heard the name before, but couldn't place it. Was it a group? A drug? Sexual position? No, if it was *that*, Lock would have remembered it. He suddenly found himself admitting that he hadn't.

"Don't be offended." Shannon consoled him. "Most have not. The Loup-Garou is a creature. An Awakened being, or so it is thought."

Great. Bug hunt.

Shannon leaned back and bit off another piece of fruit. "Mr. Donovan, two nights ago a man was slain right in downtown Seattle. His body was quite mutilated and appeared to have been... eaten."

Lock raised his eyebrows.

"My sources were able to obtain a copy of the police report, which seems to indicate the killing was done by some creature. Something non-human or meta-human. Several hair and skin samples were discovered at the scene."

"Was the creature found?" Lock asked. "Is Lone Star even looking for it?"

"Not yet. They have more important concerns. Fortunately, that buys us some time. I want this Loup-Garou found and brought to me, soon."

"It can be done, but I will need to know more." Lock knew the negotiations were coming down.

"I understand." Shannon reached for her purse. "Here. This disk will supply you with all the data you should need to familiarize yourself with the being. It also includes contact numbers and drop-off locations once the creature is found. By the way, this is a solo mission. No teamwork." Shannon placed the last bit of fruit in her mouth. She gazed curiously at the Samurai while she chewed. Lock returned her gaze, trying to understand her.

"Payment is easy." Shannon

sparked. "25,000. All on completion of the mission. No negotiation."

Lock nodded. *Not bad. I can live with that. Besides, it's been awhile since I've done jobs on my own.* He took the disk and rose from the table. "I'll call you."

Shannon smiled. "I'm sure you will. I look forward to it."

The night is still mine. I cannot be touched. The Pain is still with me. This is good. The Pain loves me, she is my friend and companion. I continue my roam throughout the stone, searching for my purpose. I will find more. I must find more. It is my way.

Lock left the flat of his friend and fellow runner, Tracker. The decker had been with him for years. Lock needed to know if the disk Shannon supplied him with was legit and the data true. Turned out it was, and Tracker was even able to pull up some more.

These Garou were tough customers. Hairy too. Not only were they strong it looked like their touch could be lethal, least that was the rumor that was around. *Great. And she wants it alive.* Lock knew it wasn't going to be easy, but the money was good.

It had been about a day and half since Lock met with Shannon, and he could begin to feel the pressure of immediate delivery weigh on him. *These things take time. Needle in a haystack jobs like this take the longest of any of them.* The Street Samurai mounted his Rapier and glided off into the web of streets that was Seattle.

The wind waved through his hair as the cycle sped across the pavement. Lock's mind slipped back to the meet with Shannon. Something was bothering him about her. *What? What is it about her? The fruit? No. The cosjobs? No, everyone has those. The pain thing? Maybe. Rich folk are weird, though. They can afford it.* Lock pushed those concerns away as he made his way to the place of the Garou's first attack.

Clarity.

*No! What is this that enters m
Could it be happening once again?*



must not let it. *This must not change.*
Comfort.

No! Where is the Pain? I need her strength to fight this. It cannot happen. I am the night. I own the night. It's daytime. Pain, where are you? I hurt. I need your strength.

Clarity. Comfort.

I have stumbled. What's happening? Oh, God, the pain! No, don't scream.

"Where am I?" Nooooo. I am here. I will remain. I must reeem-maaaainnn.....

Agh! I hurt all over. My body, so stiff. So sore. What is going on? Where am I? Alley, someplace. Oh drek, I'm naked.

What's that?! Someone's over there. Only a bum. Good, I'm safe.

"Hey, buddy! What the hell's wrong with you? Where the frag's your clothes?"

Stupid bum. Drunk bum. But he has clothes. Must be smarter than me.

"Hey buddy, you need a shave!"

Hey buddy, I need some clothes.

Lock strode down the alleyway where the first killing was reported. *Not much left, I see. Lone Star usually cleans up well.* Lock moved further down the alley, studying. Looking for something, anything to give him a lead. His feet led him around several alleyways and backstreets. Soon, he was far from where he started. *Nothing.*

A noise to his left sparked Lock's reflexes. Instantly the Samurai was crouched at a buildings corner. Training and pattern took control, and Lock's hand twitched next to the shoulder holster which cradled his Manhunter.

A figure emerged from a nearby alley, only meters from Lock. Obviously a bum, the man wore clothes that were several years past their last washing. The man himself wasn't much better. He was covered with hair. His face was barely visible through his thick, coarse beard. The abundance of hair only added to the figure's pathetic appearance. The hair on his head was disheveled and wild,

making him appear almost prophet-like.

With that much hair, why does he even bother with clothes. Lock waited for the man to disappear, then turned and made his way back to the Rapier.

"Why have you not found him yet, Mr. Donovan? Did I hire the proper person for the job?"

Frag you, you biff. "What do you think? Look, Shannon. This is not the easiest job. Do you have any idea how big Seattle is? Not to mention the fact that there hasn't been another killing



like the one you described in over a week." Lock felt his anger growing. "Makes it pretty damn hard to find someone like that."

A pause fell between the two. Shannon sighed, then smiled. "I understand Mr. Donovan. It is just important to me that he is found quickly."

Even though they were separated by the telecom, Lock could feel her gratitude.

Shannon continued. "It's nice to

see you get angry though. It makes me realize that there is some human left in you somewhere. You're so hard to read without real eyes."

Good. "Look, I've got to go. I'm checking on another lead. I'll let you know what I find out. Later." Without waiting for a reply from Shannon, Lock killed his end of the conversation.

This feels so good. I haven't been in a nightclub in a long time. So relaxing. So comforting. Despite the music, I'm able to think with such clarity. Nice.

And look at this woman. She responds to me. She says I'm so clean-cut. I feel clean-cut. How and where I got that hair, I'll never know. Thank God for razors.

Bathroom.

Oh. Gotta go. Only renting the liquor. How quickly I forget.

I'll take the stall. I've always liked my privacy. Take the one furthest from the door. Relax. I could sit here all day, but I won't. She is out there.

Madness.

Oh God.

Lock rode down the street on his Rapier. *I need to think, find somewhere to relax. Think I'll hit the Shrii.* Several blocks later, Lock secured his bike near the entrance to the nightclub. Feeling in his element, the Samurai strode inside the building. The music pulsed into his chest, comforting him. Lock could feel all those around him. *This is where I belong. Not that high society restaurant dining drek.* Taking the drink he ordered, Lock reclined against the bar and soaked up the atmosphere.

They run from me, screaming. Howling their Fear. It is nothing to me, for I have Pain. I pursue. For there are many purposes here in this place. The barrier of wood does nothing to me as I burst through. Chaos. Noise. I see reds and blues with my eyes. There are many purposes here, and they all flee. Wait! One does not. He is male and stares at me. I see him without the reds and blues, see him as



he is. Pain comes to me. He is mine.

First came the screaming, then the door to the men's room blew apart. Lock stood and gazed over the sea of people who fled from the scene. Something was there, but Lock couldn't see it. Too many people. *What the frag is going on?*

Then it was there. Crouched just outside the doorway, it was there. Covered with hair, the creature bulged with muscles. It seemed to take in all

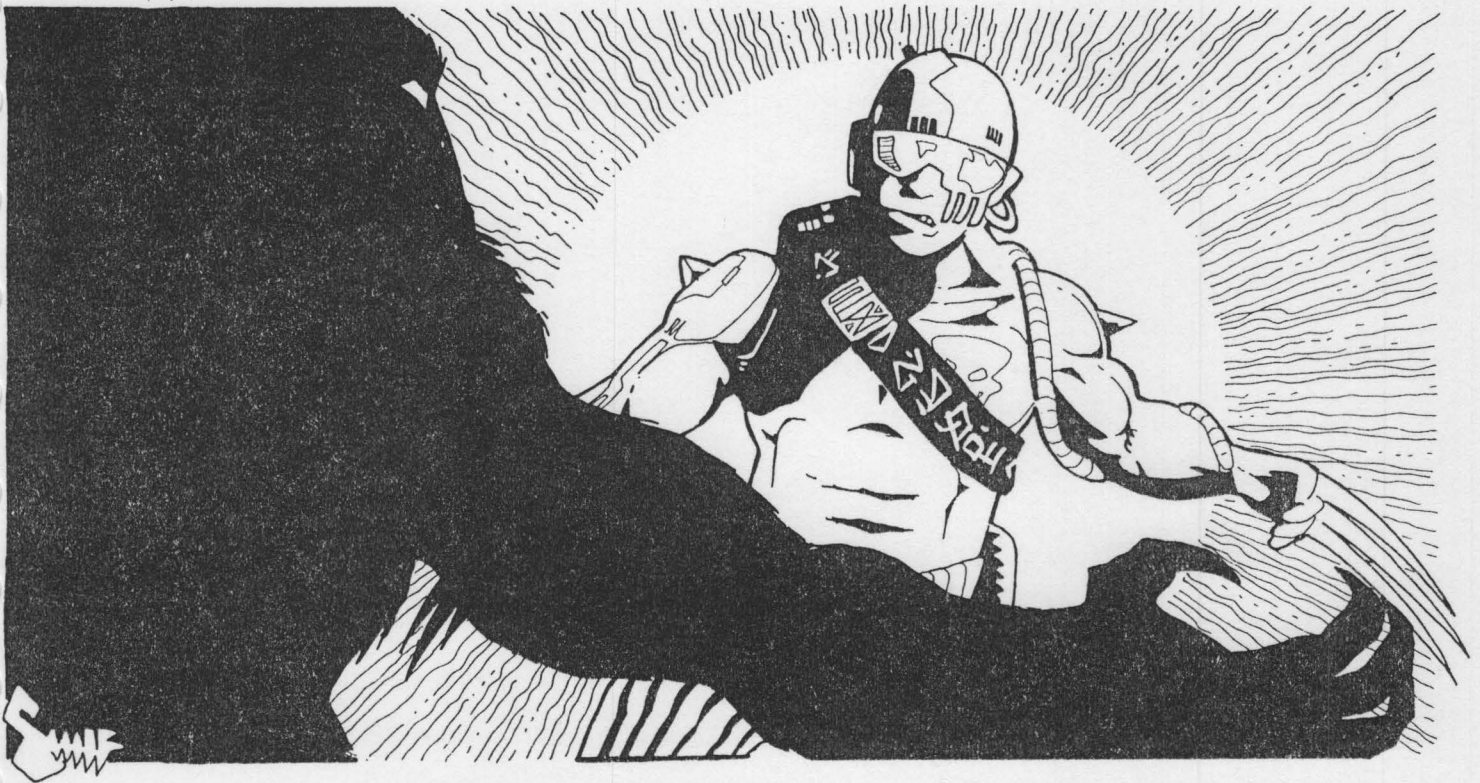
Pain.
He is fast. I must scramble quickly and strike.

The creature dove at Lock, attempting a tackle. Pattern taking control, Lock ducked low and rammed his fist into the leaping beast. The Loup-Garou grunted and spun off into a near table. Quickly it rebounded and dashed toward the urban warrior. Lock freed his Manhunter from its home and took aim. Before he knew

pose. Wait! He has no eyes. Where is—

Lock sensed hesitation from the Garou as it looked into his face. *Snooze, lose, my friend.* With a mental command, the spikes within the Samurai's arm shot out. Lock thrust their sharp ends deep into the beast's gut.

With a tremendous howl, the ape-like Garou threw Lock to the side, freeing the spikes. Lock crashed into and



the fleeing people with a gaze that looked like both pain and pleasure. Lock didn't understand it. Then suddenly it hit him. *Holy fragging mother of drek. This is it!* Within moments the club was emptied and Lock stood there, alone with the beast.

This one is my purpose. He has chosen it. He does not flee, but accepts it. This is good. He knows that I own the night and I own him. He is mine. Pain help me. I lunge. His fist finds me.

what hit him, the pistol was batted away. Lock's surprise turned to pain as he felt an explosion in his stomach. Stars and blackness filled his vision as the beast pounded him flat.

Before he could roll away, the creature scooped Lock by the collar of his long coat. Its face growled and came next to Lock's.

He falls easy. Like purpose should. I want to see his Pain. I must look into his eyes before he becomes my pur-

through several tables before stopping.

Lock struggled to rise, shaking the blackness that was threatening to overtake him. *Stay awake. Have to take him alive. He's still hurt. Better take him out now.* Lock advanced toward the Loup-Garou.

Pain. *What is happening? Pain is with me, but against me. She restricts me.*

Clarity.

No! What is happening? This can-



not happen now. Pain, why? Where am I? Oh, God I hurt. No, I am here. My purpose approaches. Pain is against me. I must flee. Someone's coming! No someone's here. What is happening? I'm bleeding! Oh God, please save me. The hair. Where did all this hair come from again?

Lock stood before the creature. It watched the Samurai, but made no move against him. *I know I hurt him, but it wasn't that bad was it?*

What am I? What is all this hair and blood? *Madness. I must remain, to complete my purpose. Something is with me, inside me. What? Clarity. Oh, God, what is happening to me? What am I? Now I know. I know what I am. Oh God, I hurt. Why am I in so much pain? What have I done? How many purpose— No, people have I killed? This is not right. Wait, someone speaks to me. My purpose before me speaks.*

Lock studied the creature before him. It appeared that despite the wound, the creature seemed to be having some sort of inner battle. He didn't understand it, and it was becoming stranger by the minute.

"Hey." Lock spoke. "Get up."
The creature did not respond.
"Are you okay, chummer?"

He is weak. Why does my purpose try to speak? Is it for mercy? He will have none. He is my purpose. No! I can't let you— myself kill him. You have no choice, it is our purpose. I strike.

Without warning, the beast lashed out and slammed Lock square in the face. The Samurai stumbled back and, slipping in a pool of liquor, fell to the floor. With the speed of his nature, the Garou was racing toward him. With the speed of science, Lock's chipped reflexes kicked in. The warrior rolled to his feet and struck in a flash. His steel claws raked across the beast's

chest as it barreled into him.

The two rolled about the floor of the nightclub, each struggling for superior position. The Garou continued to slam his fists into Lock's midsection. His blows were answered by the cracking of plastic. Lock wrestled his clawed hand free and drove the sharp spikes into the creature's back.

Pain. Aaargh! Pain is with and against me again. This purpose continues to resist. He does not acknowledge my ownership. He must. No. I can't let you. I must let him kill me. He must kill me and end my pain. Oh, God, the pain.

"Kill me!"

Lock threw the Garou off with a heave as the two rolled to a stop in the center of the dance floor, which continued to pulsate in its pattern of lights. The flashing blues, greens and reds sprayed over the faces of both of them. As the two began a dance of their own in a circle about the floor, Lock weighed his position. *All the dermal plating on my right side is completely cracked. I never knew plastic chips could hurt so much. Think I've got a broken rib or two.*

"Kill me!" the beast shouted again at Lock. Then as if to deny the statement, the creature roared, shaking its head furiously.

Something is definitely wrong with this thing. Have to finish this now.

Lock stepped forward toward the Garou, then feinted left. The creature took the bait and lunged. Lock spun to his right and stepped in closer toward the beast. With all the strength his synthetic muscles could muster, the Samurai slammed his fist down on the creature's upper back. With a large whoof! the Garou crashed into the dance floor, cracking the finish. Lock leaped on its back and grabbed the Garou's head.

He is on top of me. My purpose is taking me as his purpose. This is not the way. Yes. Finish me. Kill me. End

this.

Pain. Pain, oh Pain, why have you done this to me? Why have you left me. My head is becoming black. Blackness...

Lock stood up and stared down at the unconscious form of the Garou. After assuring himself that the beast was indeed out, the Samurai stepped across the nightclub and retrieved his Manhunter. Lock knew he would have to leave the club soon, as Lone Star would be there any moment.

As Lock returned to the place where the Garou lay, he noticed that the body of the creature began to move slightly. Lock took quick aim with his Manhunter, staying a safe enough distance away. For several minutes the body of the Garou writhed on the floor, never once rising. As the movement began to cease, Lock inched forward. The creature had changed. While it was still covered with hair, the musculature of the Garou had lessened.

Before the Samurai could make a closer examination, the sounds of sirens could be heard wailing in the distance. Lock quickly scooped up the Garou and flung it over his shoulder. Lock winced in pain at the weight of the beast and his broken ribs, but made his way toward the back exit.

Although it was late in the afternoon, two days after Lock had beaten the Garou, the Samurai was still exhausted from his battle. He wanted to wait until he felt better before meeting with Shannon, but she had insisted on retrieving the body of the Garou as soon as possible. She had already complained enough that Lock was being too slow in his efforts to find the creature and had threatened not to pay, if the Samurai did not meet right away.

Lock made sure that the Garou was going to stay out until the time came for the meet. He kept the creature pumped full of tranquilizers. Lock had no intention of having the beast wake up and trash his apartment. Lock had



also cleaned and bandaged the Garou. The blood from the wounds Lock had given the Garou had gone everywhere, including on Lock himself.

Unable to carry an unconscious body on his Rapier (and not really wanting to), Lock pulled up outside a small electronics shop in Fort Lewis in his rented Ford Paverunner.

He exited the car and stepped inside the shop. It was empty save for the clerk behind the counter. Lock stepped up to the clerk and smiled.

Slightly unnerved by the Samurai's eyes, the man spoke. "Can I help you, sir?"

Lock answered. "Yeah, my name's Donovan, and I'm here to make a delivery."

Seeming somewhat relieved, the clerk sighed and smiled. "Oh, yes. Please bring it in and I'll take you to the manager."

Without answering, Lock left the shop and went to the trunk to retrieve the Garou. The Samurai popped open the trunk and reached in. Lock had debated about whether to put the Garou in a bag or box, but opted for the bag. Mostly because he couldn't secure a box. Lock also felt that folding the beast into a crate might aggravate the wounds.

Slinging the bag over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes, Lock returned inside the shop.

The clerk waited expectantly and directed Lock toward the back of the shop.

"Just bring it down these stairs, here. The manager is waiting down there." The clerk pointed down the flight of steps which seemed to lead to a storage area.

Lock descended the steps and entered a small room. Several crates where lined up against the walls. A door was set into the wall opposite Lock. He stepped over to the door and knocked.

Before he even finished his knocking, the door opened revealing Shannon. Lock stood stunned. She looked completely different from the last time

they had spoke. Her hair frazzled and her clothes disheveled, Shannon urged Lock inside.

"What took you so long? You should have been here sooner!"

"Sorry, traffic was backed up." The Samurai lied. Lock studied the woman before him. He then began to notice other differences from when they last met. Shannon seemed much thinner, almost rail-like. Her skin was also quite pale. Lock couldn't tell if that was from lack of makeup or the poor lighting that existed in the room.

"Here." Shannon demanded. "Bring it here." Shannon directed Lock to a long table set against a wall. Lock set the Garou down on the table and proceeded to remove the bag.

Shannon squealed with delight at the sight of the Garou. She helped Lock off with the remainder of the bag, then used his assistance in applying restraining straps to the Garou to hold it to the table.

Lock began to get nervous. He mentally checked for his Manhunter, which assured him that it was there. "So what kind of research do you do, anyway?"

"None of your business, remember?" Shannon snapped at the Samurai. The woman could barely keep her hands off the hairy beast while she spoke to Lock.

"On the table over there. Your creditstick. It has the full 25,000. Enjoy."

Lock paused. "Okay. Whatever. I'm outta here."

"Good. Thanks." Shannon snapped again. Noticing the wounds on the Garou, the woman stopped, and turned toward Lock.

"One moment, Samurai."

Lock stopped at the door and turned.

"When you fought the Garou, did it wound you?"

"Yes. It busted a couple of ribs. Plus the fragger bled all over me."

Shannon smiled.

"What?" Lock questioned.

"Nothing. Just curious."

Lock stepped out the door.

Shannon smiled again. "See you soon."

It clears. The Blackness flees from my eyes. I am here again. Is Pain with me? Yes, she is. Pain is also still against me, but not with the vengeance of before. This is good. I do not wish Pain to be angered at me. I hunger. I must find purpose. Wait! What is this? I am frozen. Cannot move. Someone approaches. Is it purpose? It is a non-male. I see in reds and blues, but the non-male has little reds. I look upon the non-male and see it as it is. It does not fear me. This is not the way. The non-male speaks.

"Welcome little one. You were expensive, but worth it. Oh, were you worth it."

The non-male stalks me. I cannot strike, for I am frozen. It comes to my face. I look to see its fear. The non-male's eyes. What? They contain no fear! Wait, what is this? They illuminate fear. I will not fear. Pain will comfort me, give me strength.

"Good, you resist. Excellent. That makes it all the more wonderful. You and I are alike, did you know that? Almost two peas in the same pod. Do not that let comfort you, however. We are still different. In many ways.

"You are just a beast. I am more than that. I am above you. You are my purpose. I know of your Pain, and she will comfort me. You are my drug."

The non-male comes closer again. Pain will comfort and strengthen me. Allow me to move and be free. Wait! I cannot move! Pain, help me! Strengthen me. She is at me. I look. She has teeth. Long, sharp, teeth.

Pain.

Fear.



Lone Wolf

by Nigel Findley
Rating 4.5 out of 5

Blood and magic rage in the streets of Seattle. The shifting of turf by a few blocks cost lives, innocent and guilty, silenced forever and then forgotten in the city's deepest shadows. Lone Star, Seattle's contacted police force, fights a losing battle against Seattle's newest conquerors — the gangs. For several years Lone Star has had an undercover operative working inside one of the most dangerous gangs in the urban jungles of Seattle, Rick Larson. Larson thinks he knows the score. The gangs rule by a combination of guns, magic, intimidation, and fear. It's the most capricious of balances that keeps things from exploding into all out warfare. Inside the Cutters, Larson is in a prime position to watch the balance, act to it, and report to this superiors. But when things begin to shift unexpectedly, Larson finds himself not only on the wrong side of the fight but on the wrong side of the law as well.

Pros

Findley has once again succeed to hold my attention as a reader. If you thought his last book, ShadowPlay, was a great way to spend a rainy weekend, just wait till you read this one. The story weaves a mesmerizing image of the inside of life in a street gang. Well, at lease till the main character, a Lone Star named Larson, is ratted out to the gang and must flee for his life. Not only does Larson lose his love interest to the gangs but Lone Star turns against him also. As if that isn't enough to curl your hair, the corporations get in on the act also! The plot twist and turns to a momentous climax leaving you breathless and wishing that the next novel wasn't three or four months down the road. (At least that is how it left me.)

Cons

Well as with most books the start is a little slow and the plot will not satisfy all who read it. Several of the encounters are predictable but again there is nothing wrong with being predictable. I would have liked to seen better page art, but hey, I bought the book to read not to look at the pretty pictures.

Overall

I am newer to Shadowrun than many of the other staffers here but with this book really impressed me a lot. I see now why so may of the players rave over Nigel's work. This book is a solid read and in my humble opinion you should run right out and buy a copy!

The Germany Sourcebook

by Michael Immig & Thomas Romer
Rating 5 out of 5

Everyone has been waiting for this book and you know what, it was well worth the wait. This is by far the slickest sourcebook released from those globe-hoppers at FASA. The book was written by two authors from Germany and then translated into English by Reinhold Mai. When you first pick the book up you can see that you are in for a real treat.

The book begins with a trip down memory lane revealing the sorted past of Germany. The road continues to wind its way past the Confederate Government, foreign policy, and other political organizations. We make brief stops at The Military Forces and Internal Security sections before hurtling down the information highway and running headlong into German Society.

The part I found most intriguing was the Rhine-Ruhr Megaplex. Although this section is very small compared to other parts of the sourcebook, it offers the most abundant amount of latitude to create a unique experience for your runners. Oh, and I haven't even mentioned the art or the new magic yet!

The boys in the FASA art dungeon are beginning to explore new territory in the way of computer graphics and digital artistry. The old guard of readers may not take to this new style of art right away but I really think it adds to the flavor of the writing and the feel of the game.

I couldn't find enough "cons" about the book to justify writing them but I could fill the entire page with good points. This book is a must for players and gamemasters alike. If the Seattle Sourcebook had been done in this manner the players would never have had a reason to leave.

Eye Witness

by Mike Nystul
Rating 4.5 out of 5

From all the hype I read on this module I assumed, incorrectly, that it would be about a band of crazed cannibals terrorizing the city of Seattle. I pictured body parts being found on sidewalks and all sorts of other horrific scenes. I was very wrong. The adventure does deal with cannibalism and yes there is a graphic element but this is really a scenario about intelligence gathering and revenge. The module starts with a murder, the body-theft of a cybereye, and the race to recover the information that cybereye held. It leads to the sewers of Seattle and a race between the runners, the corporation, and a band of ghouls.



Pros

The adventure is just that, an adventure on a grand scale. Every element of Shadowrun is incorporated into this story. The players will have to be smart, have a lot of luck, and enough fire power to level half of Seattle to solve the mystery and exact revenge on the guilty parties. Mike develops the scenario so that Shadowrun first or second edition players alike may enjoy the action. This is possibly the best aspect of the entire module. For a long time now you could either play one or the other. We have had countless calls and letters asking about a way to convert the system or if there was going to be any further support for those gamers who just love the Shadowrun First Edition game. As far as we know FASA doesn't have any plans to support the First Edition but Mr. Nystul does a good job of trying to breach the gap between the first and second.

The characters in the story are well developed and could become re-occurring members in any on-going campaign. In addition, the Club Nosferatu will add hours of new story lines for the creative gamemaster.

Cons

At times the player will have to be guided by the gamemaster more than just a little. The plot becomes very difficult at one point and strays from the flow which had been established in preceding chapters. It does correct itself a few pages later.

I would have liked to have seen more new gear in the scenario but that is just a personal opinion. I suppose as a new player I am experiencing that "give-me-give-me" syndrome.

Overall

This is a solid product and worth the price of admission. I found myself wishing Mike had written a novel based around the introduction piece

and I would highly recommend that after the run is complete the gamemaster allow all the player to read the intro. This is a solid and more importantly fun adventure. Great work Mike!





The Coven of the Crimson Moon

The Coven of the Crimson Moon is a group of vampires who have banded together out of self-interest and a mutual need for protection from the elements of the Sixth World that would see them destroyed. It is unknown how many years the group has existed or how many members it has had in the past, but rumors suggest that it may have formed even before the Awakening.

The rules of the group are simple: obey the edicts of the Coven leader, protect the secrecy of the group and avoid direct conflict with other members of the Coven. In return, the Coven provides a safe haven, a ready "food supply," and a network of contacts. The Coven is also a magical initiatory group for the several vampires in the group with magical abilities.

Type: Dedicated

Members: 6

Individual Strictures

Attendance: Compulsory at each new moon.

Exclusive Membership: Vampires only.

Exclusive Ritual: Yes.

Fraternity: Yes.

Obedience: To the the leader of the Coven.

Secrecy: Yes.

Group Strictures

Limited Membership: Determined by the leader

Oath: Required.

Group Resources: Luxury

whom those seeking long lives would be well advised to steer clear. Sylvia is also a skilled Hermetic magician and an Initiate.

Members: Currently six. The members have their own various interests and meet regularly only during the Coven's new-moon gatherings. The group's strictures forbid members from doing any direct harm to each other, but catspaws, power-plays and subtle schemes abound.

Damien: Damien (not his real name) was infected with HMMVV 22 years ago at age 16. Damien has been a vampire longer than he lived as a human being. This makes him very unstable, possibly insane. Damien revels in his vampiric abilities and acts like a street-tough punk with a serious attitude problem. While his years as a vampire have unhinged him, they have also awakened his latent physical adept abilities, which combine with his vampire abilities to make him a brutal and deadly street fighter.

Damien leads a gang of vampire-positors and wannabees called the Lost Boys in the Barrens, and he may call upon 2D6 of them at any given time. The gang members are not allowed into the Styx by one of Julius' decrees, one which Sylvia has not reversed.

Damien looks like a skinny young kid with long blond hair falling into his eyes; eyes which reflect far more years than his face and form. He usually wears black jeans, a T-shirt and a leather jacket and carries a folding knife that is a weapon focus.

Karl: Karl Donnegal was an up-and-coming MBA graduate when a single night of slumming in a bad part of town took all his plans apart. Drained and infected with the vampire virus, Karl was forced to set aside his plans of corporate glory. Initially bitter, he eventually came to regard his new condition as both a challenge and an advantage.

The reclusive Donnegal eventually took his dual reputation for eccentricity and financial wizardry and parlayed them into a career as a successful investor and financial consultant who

deals almost exclusively through the Matrix. He cares little for Coven politics unless they directly affect him and prefers not to take sides.

Karl looks to be in his late twenties, with neatly cut and combed blond hair, wearing an immaculate suit in the latest power style for the season.

Siobhan: The Coven's only non-vampire member is the banshee Siobhan, whose past remains a mystery. She joined the Coven three years ago while Julius was leader of the group and since his destruction has apparently remained loyal to the new regime. It is known that she is from Tir na nOg, and it is assumed that she left to avoid being destroyed by her Elven kinfolk as a monster.

Sylvia is concerned about the mysterious Siobhan, since she knows nothing about her true motives or abilities. Siobhan seems completely neutral toward her fellow Covenanters, concentrating all her effort on some mysterious purpose of her own.

Siobhan is an attractive Elven woman with long, flowing white hair and delicate features that belie her great speed and strength.

Nosferatu: Vlad Malkovitch, known as "Nosferatu" in the shadow world, was a hitmage who became obsessed with ideas of death and how to attain immortality. His quest led him to a fascination with vampirism and, eventually, to the Coven. He asked the Coven to make him one of their number and Julius refused, ostensibly because he thought Malkovitch would threaten the security and stability of the group. Sylvia contacted the hitmage secretly and a deal was struck: Malkovitch assassinated Julius and two other Covenanters who were his strongest supporters and, in exchange, Sylvia granted him the immortality he sought and brought him into the Coven.

Having achieved his short-term goals, Malkovitch is becoming bolder and looks to leading the Coven. He is carefully laying plans and gauging Sylvia's strength before he makes his move. Malkovitch cares as little for Sylvia as she does for him; he is only using her to get what he wants. He will

Leader: The current leader of the Coven is Sylvia Demor. She obtained her current position by arranging the death of Julius, the previous leader, at the hands of Vlad Malkovitch in exchange for bringing Malkovitch into the Coven. Now that she has power, Sylvia intends to hold onto it, but she is concerned that Malkovitch is ambitious enough to try and take it from her.

Sylvia is a hauntingly beautiful woman with long black hair and pale complexion. She usually wears gowns and dresses in the latest style and fashion. She is a cold, deadly manipulator



gladly turn on her if it is to his advantage to do so. Malkovitch is also a professional; he does everything carefully and coolly. He never fights to the death and always has backup plans for various contingencies in place. The player characters should find him a dangerous foe to be respected.

Nosferatu looks like a character from a vampire movie. He has bleached white skin, black hair that is slicked back, and wears red contact lenses. His canine teeth have been replaced with cybernetic fangs. He dresses completely in black both for practicality and out of preference.

Marie: Marie Gerard is much more even-tempered than the other members of the Coven. She went from being a corporate secretary for Federated-Boeing to a vampire quite by accident when she became attracted to a man who turned out to be a member of the Coven, a man who eventually brought her "into the fold" with Julius' permission. Her mentor was killed by Malkovitch, and Marie still harbors feelings of resentment and vengeance against him and Sylvia, but for the time being lacks a means to express those feelings.

Marie appears to be in her thirties, with long brown hair that is usually elaborately braided. She favors pantsuits or skirt and sweater outfits and appears fairly casual.

Headquarters: The Coven owns and controls an exclusive nightclub called the Styx (use the Nightclub Archtype, Sprawl Sites, p.xx). The place is richly decorated in an "underworld" motif and the central dance floor is bordered by four narrow "rivers" spanned by bridges. Everything is dark, hip and gothic. Most of the patrons are private members of the club mixed with a collection of wannabees who are carefully selected by Renfield, the Troll bouncer (use archetype, p.xx, SR11) with an eye towards his masters needs. The Coven holds meetings on the night of the new moon in a secret meeting room in the club.

The Coven of the Crimson Moon NPCs

All the members of the Coven have

the standard vampire powers and weaknesses unless noted otherwise. (SR11, p.231)

Sylvia Demor

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
3	4	2+E	5	5	6	'	11	4+2D6	

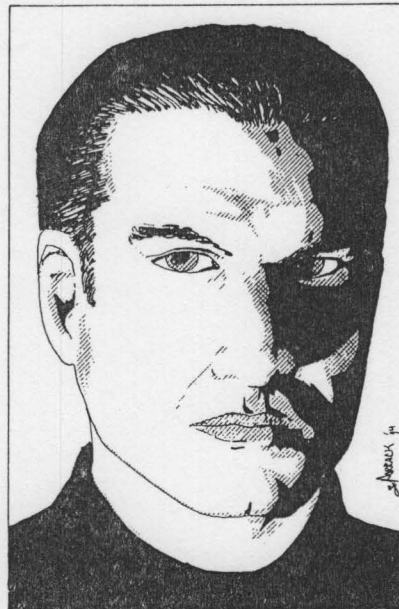
Threat/Professional Rating: 5/2

Skills: Conjuring 5, Enchanting 4, Etiquette (Corporate) 4, Magical Theory 5, Sorcery 6

Spells: Firebolt 5, Sleep 9, Analyze Truth 3, Detect Enemies 4, Confusion 5, Invisibility 4, Spectacle 3, Armor 7, Levitate Person 5, Poltergeist 6, Shapechange 4

Cyberware: None

Initiate Grade: 5



Gear: wand (Rating 3 Earth Elemental focus), necklace (Rating 3 combat/illusion spell focus).

Damien

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
5	4(6)	4(6)+E	4	3	5	'	6	4+3D6	0/1

Threat Rating: 4/3

Skills: Armed Combat (knives) 6, Bike 3, Etiquette (Street) 6, Leadership 3, Stealth 5, Unarmed Combat 5

Adept Powers: Combat Sense (1), Improved Quickness +2, Improved Strength +2, Improved Stealth +4, Increased Reflexes +1

Cyberware: None

Gear: leather jacket, knife (Rating 3 Weapon Focus)

Karl Donnegan

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
4	3	3+E	3	5	4	'	0	4+2D6	3/0

Threat/Professional Rating: 3/2

Skills: Car 3, Etiquette (Corporate) 6, Finance 6, Negotiation 5, Unarmed Combat 3

Cyberware: None

Gear: Armor clothing, Colt L-36, pocket secretary

Slobhan

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
4	4	5	4	4	5	'	7	4+2D6	3/0

Threat/Professional Rating: 4/3

Skills: Conjuring 4, Enchanting 3, Etiquette (Elven) 4, Sorcery 6, Stealth 5, Unarmed Combat 4

Spells: Sleep 5, Clairvoyance 4, Detect Life 3, Cure Serious Disease 4, Mask 2, Control Emotions 5, Poltergeist 6, Shadow 4

Cyberware: None

Initiate Grade: 1

Gear: Armor clothing, Colt L-36, pocket secretary

Vlad Malkovitch "Nosferatu"

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
4	4	4+E	4	5	6	'	9(11)	6+2D6	

Threat/Professional Rating: 6/3

Skills: Armed Combat (Axe): 4, Conjuring 4, Demolitions: 3, Etiquette (Street) 3, Firearms 4, Magical Theory 4, Sorcery 6, Stealth 4, Vampire Lore 4

Spells: Manabolt 5, Fireball 5, Detect Enemies 3, Detect Life 3, Increase Reaction +2 4 (Quickened, Force 4), Treat 3, Invisibility 3, Armor 5, Bat Form 3, Wolf Form 3

Cyberware: Fang implants (.3 Essence Loss. The fangs do only 2D damage, but can inject one dose of a powerful toxin that does 3D damage. Nosferatu will use this as a weapon of last resort.)

Initiate Grade: 4

Gear: Combat Axe (Rating 5 Weapon Focus), armor jacket, silver amulet (Power Focus 2), spell lock (Armor/3 Successes), AK-97 assault rifle w/ laser sight and recoil 2, Ares Predator w/ silencer and laser sight

Marie Gerard

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
3	3	2+E	5	6	5	'	0	4+2D6	3/0

Threat/Professional Rating: 3/2

Skills: Car 3, Computer 3, Etiquette (Corporate) 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Cyberware: None

Gear: Armor clothing, Ares Viper



1

Biz is slow. No, make that nonexistent. These dry spells are just part of life in the shadows and mean that it's time to hit the streets and make some action happen instead of just waiting for it to come to you. It also means wandering through the darker parts of the 'plex where no one else would take the chance of going. Desperate times make for desperate measures.

Quotes:

"Feeling a little *thirsty* tonight."
"Welcome to our turf, chummers, enter freely and of your own will."

Notes: While in a dark part of the Barrens (checking with a contact, looking for biz or just hanging), the runners encounter members of the Lost Boys gang out looking for some fun. The gangers look to scare the runners, playing up their pseudo-vampire image. Keep the characters in the dark about the truth and make them sweat a little. (Sure, the magician can sense that their auras seem normal, but is he *sure* that they couldn't be masking?) The gangers will tend to back down if the runners make it clear that they're tougher, but they will want to get back at them for the slight, especially if things get violent. After the incident, Damien will hear all about it and might look to arrange a rematch, which should be interesting if the runners have gotten it into their heads that none of this gang are really vampires...

Archetypes:

Lost Boys: Use Gang Members (p.54, SR11)
The Coven: Use Damien

2

Basic datasteal: break into the high-rise penthouse of this reclusive broker and guard the decker while he does his thing. Some decent security, but no big problem. Everything's going fine until the broker materializes out of a cloud of mist and asks what you're doing with his computer while flashing you a look at his fangs...

Quotes:

"We can go in at night, when he's asleep."
"Doesn't this guy sleep?"
"So, what brings you to my humble abode, mortals?"

Notes: The runners are hired to break into Karl Donnegal's apartment by a rival of his so they can acquire some sensitive financial data from his isolated home computer system. The run will prove interesting when the team observes their target and finds out that he almost never leaves his home. Their only real opportunities are to go in during the day while Karl sleeps or during one of his rare nocturnal visits to the Styx (such as the Coven's monthly meetings).

During the run (preferably while the decker is jacked into the system and dancing with some IC), Karl returns home unexpectedly and confronts the runners, putting them both in a difficult situation (since neither wants to involve the authorities).

Archetypes:

The Coven: Use Karl Donnegal.

3

You're not one to knock a little nightlife, but it can be overdone. You haven't seen your friend look this bad in a long while; gaunt, pale and sickly. They say it's some bug and a bit too much to drink, maybe a night or two too many at this new nightclub, the Styx, but nothing they can't handle.

Quotes:

"No, I'm fine, just a little tired."
"You should see this place, it's incredible. I'm still amazed I got in."
"I know I spend a lot of time there, but I like it."

Notes: A friend of one of the runners has become one of the "lucky" few to be let into the Styx by Renfield and has become the victim of one of the Coven. The Essence drain has them completely addicted, and they'll deny there is any problem. A concerned character who investigates will discover the truth about the nightclub and will have to decide how to prevent his friend from being willingly drained to death.

Archetypes:

Friend In Need: Use Club Habitue, p.14, Contacts Book, or another NPC as appropriate.
The Coven: Select an appropriate vampire nemesis.



4

Four victims in the past three weeks. All drained of blood in some back alley or abandoned building in the Barrens. The corps (including Lone Star) have no interest in a couple of SIN-less deaths, but your current principal says she knows something about the killings, and she's paying you to track down the killer: a vampire who is quite possibly insane. The catch? You have to bring him in alive... or un-dead in any case.

Quotes:

"He is not to be destroyed. That justice is not for you to hand out."
 "It doesn't matter where the information came from so long as you act upon it."

Notes: A newly created vampire has been killing victims in the Barrens to sate his hunger. However, the generally poor quality of Essence in such victims has forced him to kill more often than usually required. Sylvia is concerned that the careless new vampire might unknowingly create too many new vampires and present a sufficient threat that will bring on a vampire-hunt. She wants the runners to capture the vampire and bring him to the Coven so that he can be dealt with. If they perform well in this task, she might well hire them to go after the rogue's creator and newly risen victims as well...

Archetypes:

Rogue Vampire: Use Gang Member, p.54, SRII, with vampire powers and an Essence of 4.

5

A shadowrun on the Red Cross? No stranger than anything else. You heard that years ago the Red Cross was some kind of charitable non-profit organization, but that all went away in the big government breakups and privatizations at the start of the 21st century. Now Red Cross, Inc. is a biomedical supply corp just like any other, no matter what its history might be, and this is just a run like any other... hopefully.

Quotes:

"Withdrawl from a blood bank, huh?"
 "This information could be very valuable to the right people."
 "One man's curse is another man's blessing."

Notes: A small biomedical lab owned by Red Cross Inc. has been doing research on rare blood disorders, and one of their best researchers, Dr. Naomi Matlovik, has been doing ground-breaking research into the study of the Human-Metahuman Vampiric Virus with hopes of formulating a cure for it. Dr. Matlovik believes she is very close to a breakthrough in her research, but is frustrated by bureaucracy, a lack of personnel and funding.

The Coven fears that Matlovik's research might become a threat to them and have arranged to extract the good doctor from the research compound under the pretext of jumping ship to another biomedical company. In truth, if the runners successfully deliver Dr. Matlovik, she will be carefully interrogated about her research and then likely pressed into service using her skills to develop an anti-HMHVV agent for use as a weapon against other vampires.

Archetypes:

Dr. Matlovik: Use Former Wage Mage, p.xx, SRII, with Biotech 6 and a Healer orientation.

Red Cross Inc. Security: Corporate Security Guards, p.xx, SRII.

6

Being a shadowrunner means sleeping in places that most people in the 'plex are afraid to go to in the daytime. Lately, however, it's been scary even for the people used to living in the shadows. There has been something going on of late, something nasty. It started with a lot of unexplained violence; stuff that Lone Star didn't want to know about and doesn't care to talk about. Then people started turning up dead in lots of strange ways. Rumors began circulating about ghouls, sprits, and other *nosferatu* becoming very active in the night, like some purpose was driving them.

Quotes:

"There is business, but this is war."
 "Choose a side or get caught in the middle, it's up to you."

Notes: A shadow-war has erupted in the Coven and split the group into factions, each fighting for control and drawing upon all manner of allies and debts. Sylvia, Karl and Siobhan form one faction, while Malkovitch and Damien form another. Marie is outwardly allied with Sylvia, but plots behind the scenes cause her and Malkovitch to eliminate each other and to be around to pick up the pieces once the dust settles. Each faction is drawing numerous others into their conflict, which is spilling over into the shadow sub-culture. If the runners have done any work for the Coven before, they will likely be called up (perhaps even by both sides). Shadowrunners will need to be careful who they talk to and who they help, since the winners will be most appreciative to those who helped them and very angry at those who did not, and the un-dead have long memories indeed.

Archetypes:

The Coven: Use the full roster.

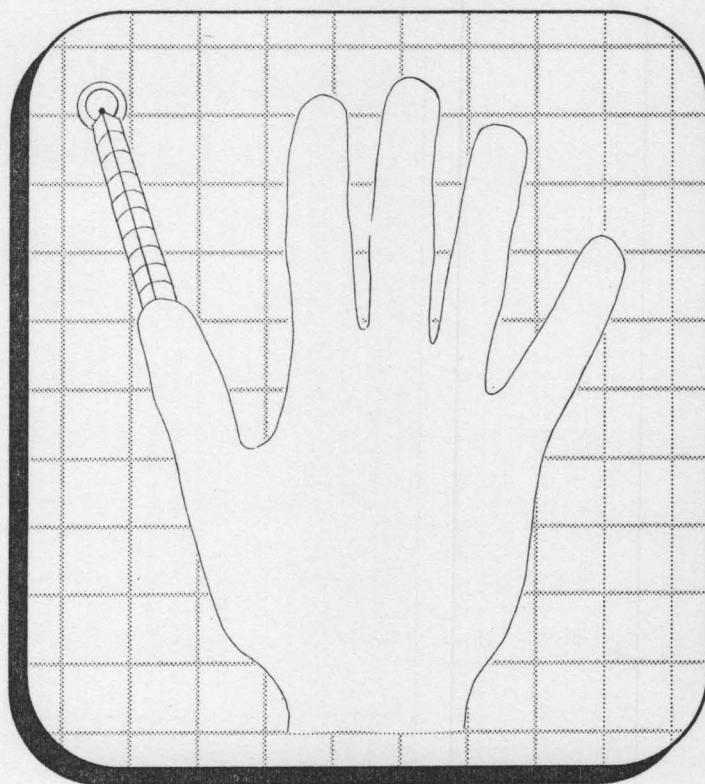


Glass Cutter

This finger is equipped with a super sharp blade that can be used to cut through almost any material. The blade is, however, most effective on glass and slices through even bullet-proof glass like a hot knife through butter.

The blade can be used to slice through any glass at a rate of Quickness X 0.5 meters per Combat Turn. If used on metal (of a reasonable thickness) the rate is per 2 Combat Turns.

Essence Cost: .15
Availability: 4/72 hours
Cost: 2500Y
Street Index: 2

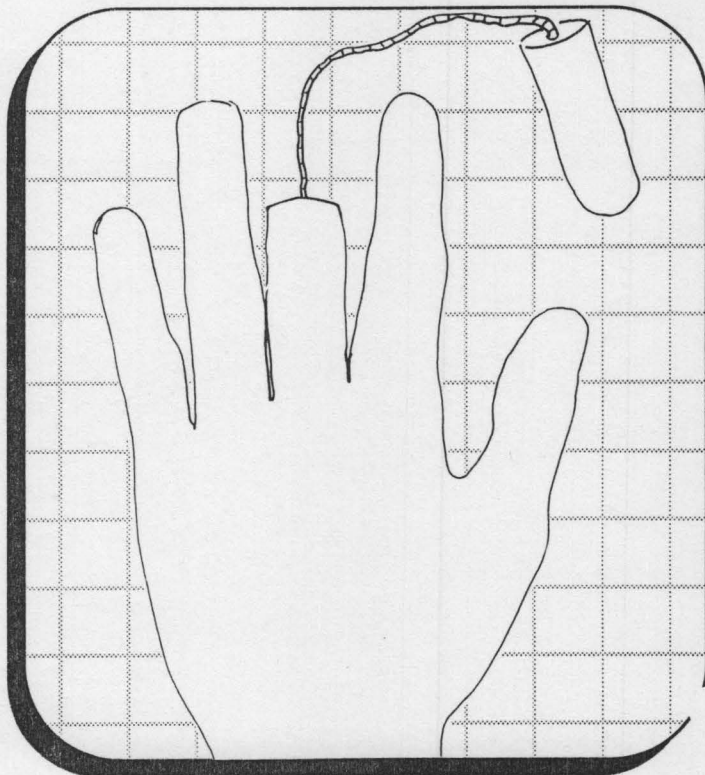


Garrote Finger

A quick twist releases the top of this digit while leaving it connected to the main mechanism by a strong strand of metal. This concealed weapon is ideal for quick terminations as victims rarely escape the garrote once it is drawn over their heads and around their necks.

A character needs two more successes than his opponent in order to get the garrote around the throat. The "garroted" character must then make a successful Opposed Success Test in order to escape death. Each character rolls a target number equal to the opposite character's strength with the attacker gaining a +1 bonus to his strength. If the victim wins the test he escapes the hold, but if the attacker wins, the victim reduces his strength by one. The Opposed Success Tests continue until the victim breaks free or is reduced to zero strength. If reduced to zero strength the victim dies. The time for one test is one combat turn. Characters that break free regain their strength at a rate of one point per minute while resting.

Essence Cost: .15
Availability: 6/4 days
Cost: 3500Y
Street Index: 2





Gas Bomb

The upper part of this finger is really a small grenade. After detaching it from the base, the wearer can throw it like any aerodynamic grenade. The blast radius for a smoke filled grenade is 10 meters and it lingers for three combat turns. The smoke causes a reduction in visibility as per the type of smoke (heavy or thermal: reference SR 2nd ed. page 89.) The grenade can also be filled with Neuro-Stun VII gas (concussion type grenade : damage code 12M stun) or standard Fragmentation grenade (offensive type grenade: damage code 10S.) Refer to SR 2nd edition page 97 for blast effects of concussion and offensive grenades.

Essence Cost: .15

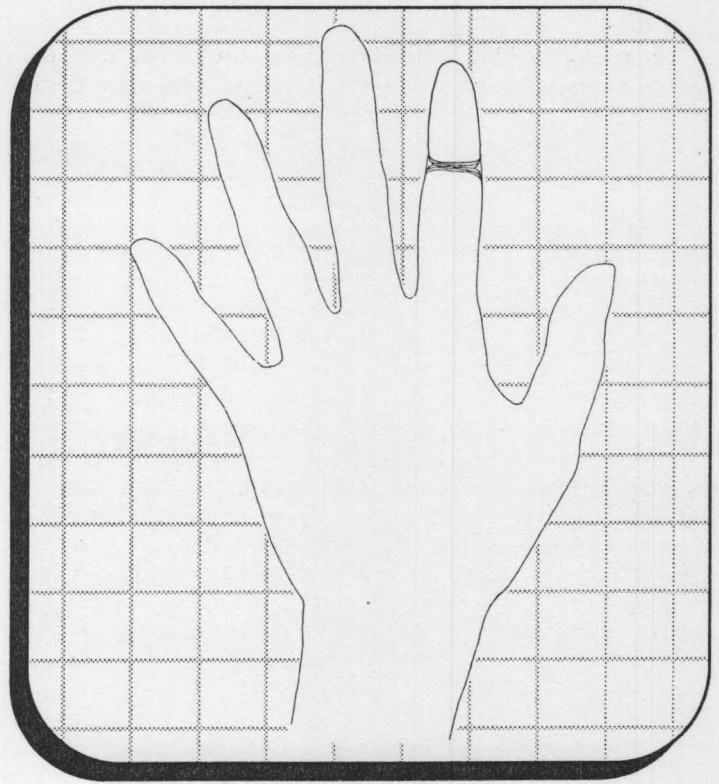
Availability:

Smoke	3/3 days
Thermal	4/3 days
Neuro	6/4 days
Frag	4/3 days

Cost: Smoke 500Y

Street Index: 2

Thermal	600Y
Neuro	1000Y
Frag	750Y



Monofilament Handgrapplers

Need to be mobile where others cannot go? Well, Dark-Men Incorporated introduces the newest in surveillance technology> Installed in the fingertips and the feet, the grapples are monomolecular strands that are barbed and knotted. There are nearly one hundred strands per fingertip, each with a full extension length of four centimeters. The strands are grafted to the skeletal frame of the individual, connecting in essence the wearer's skeleton directly to the injected surface. A command from the brain shoots the strands into anything, thereby allowing the wearer to fasten himself to any surface. One could then, for example, scale the almost frictionless surface of a corporate tower or fix himself to a plane with no other equipment but the grapples.

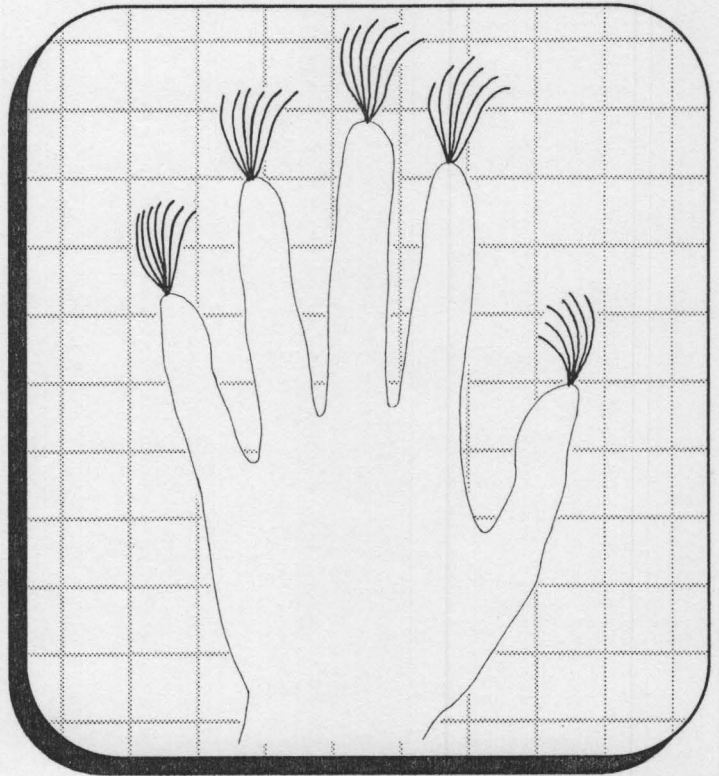
The grapplers, as stated above, can be used to climb the surface of a vertical object. The speed of ascent is equal to the character's strength X 3 meters per combat turn. Characters using the grapplers are virtually impossible to remove from the grappled surface. There have been reports of removing all the flesh from an individual and still having the skeleton bonded to the surface material. It should also be noted that if injected into living flesh the monomolecular filaments will destroy single cells in basic curved lines. A character is more likely to destroy his hands if the filaments are moved about in any motion other than climbing.

Essence Cost: .4

Availability: 6/3 days

Cost: 12,000Y

Street Index: 2

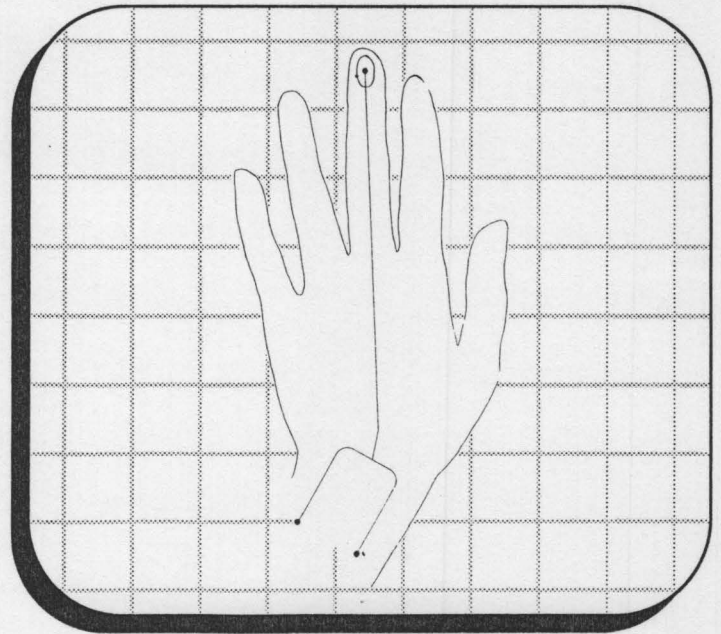




Hunter/Seeker Cortex Bomb

Secret Agent Electronics now offers the covert operator the ultimate in coercive power. This new weapon is delivered straight into a target by means of a powerful injection system built into the digit of the operator's hand. Causing basically no damage at the time of delivery, three small bombs are injected into the target and travel to the frontal lobe, the outer cortex, and the brainstem. The bombs are equipped with a series of barbs and microprocessors allowing it to seek out a large vein that will eventually lead it to the correct location within the cranium. After the units have delivered it is a simple matter to trigger them with an electromagnetic pulse. While the fuergel charges are not enough to destroy by explosion the victims cranium thereby endangering those close at hand, death is instantaneous.

The attacker must make one hit in melee combat. No damage is caused and the bombs will take 1 to 6 hours to reach their positions in the skull. If struck, the character can make a success roll versus intelligence with a target number of 5 to reason out what has occurred. A skill of Cyber Implant Weaponry or Cybertechnology will reduce the target number by one. Furthermore, upon delivery, roll 1D6 and on a roll of 1 or 2 the target suffers massive muscular cramps as the units make their way through the tissue. Bombs which are exploded before they reach their target have various effects. Roll 1D6: 1 or 2 = death, 3 or 4 = serious wound, 5 = moderate wound, and 6 = light wound.

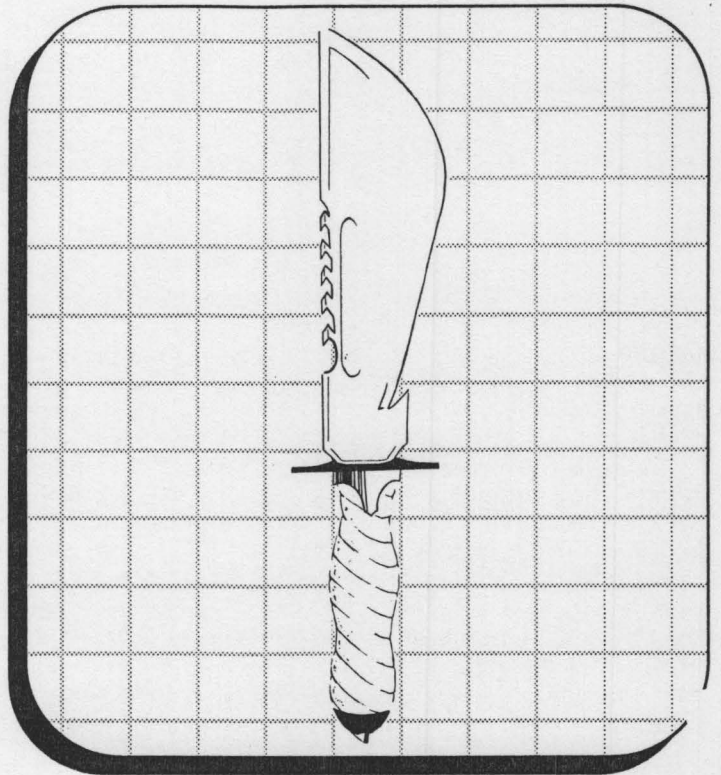


Hunter/Seeker Cortex Bomb	Injection System
Essence Cost: 0	Essence Cost: .2
Availability: 20/14 days	Availability: 15/14 days
Cost: 500,000Y	Cost: 15,000Y
Street Index: 2	Street Index: 2

Serpent' Fang Combat Knife

Blades have always been the mainstay of street gangs and Rollins International was not below designing for this clientele when they came up with the "Serpent's Fang" fighting knife. Constructed of a polyplastic material, the knife is as concealable as it is deadly. The Serpent's Fang is the preferred fighting knife of the Halloween Gang.

Combat Knife	
Concealability	7
Reach	0
Damage	(Str + 2)L
Weight	.60
Cost	300Y





Last Chance 45

The HK Last Chance 45 is the only choice for hold-out weaponry. Weighing only 1 kilogram, this pistol is the last best chance for the street smart citizen on the go. It comes with smart hook-up built in. The specially constructed undersight guarantees accuracy.

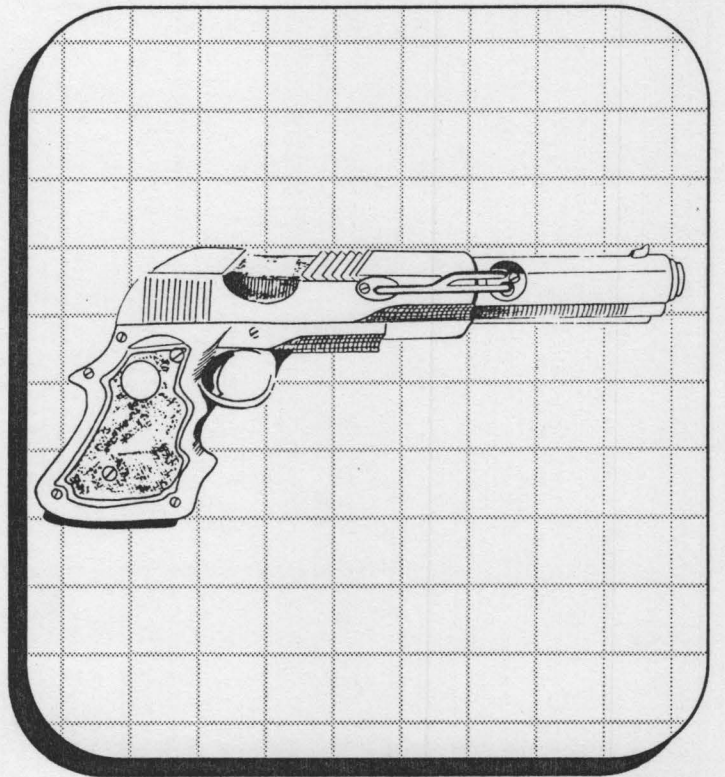
Last Chance 45 by HK	
Type	Light
Conceal	5
Mode	cyInd
Ammo	6(r)
Damage	6L
Weight	1.
Cost	650¥



Ares Long Arm

The Ares Long Arm is designed for accuracy at a distance. Designed for use in sensitive situations where one shot is all you get, the Long Arm combines the firepower of a rifle in the compactness of a pistol. The Long Arm is in limited testing by military and corporate security forces worldwide. It is expected to be on the market later this year.

Ares Long Arm	
Type	Heavy
Conceal	4
Mode	SA
Ammo	9(c)
Damage	7M
Weight	3.25
Cost	1650¥





>>>>(Re-posted from the newsnet for your convenience.)<<<< - Quirk (21:31:04 - 02/12/54

Today's Headlines

INTERNATIONAL

TRAGEDY IN THE NORTH SEA

The New Ulster Revolutionary Movement claimed responsibility for the unexplained sinking of the luxury liner "Pride of Ulster." The search for survivors continues with little hope of success in the choppy waters north of Great Britain.

"You'll not find survivors," claimed an unidentified spokesman of NURM, "unless you look in the hereafter."

The maiden voyage of the "Pride" seemed to be going well until last night at 12:29 am GMT when all routine contact with the vessel was lost. Subsequent effort to reestablish communications with the vessel failed. The ship carried 342 crew and 1,052 passengers. (Story continued on page A-5)

NATIONAL

MYSTERY FIRES PLAGUE NEW AGE ARMS

For the fourth night in a row firecrews and emergency personnel were called to the grounds of New Age Arms Minneapolis compound to fight chemical fires.

"We're getting pretty tired of this song and dance," said Fire Chief Zucher, of the Medicine Valley Fire Protection District. "By the time we're cleared through their security systems, what started as a minor two-company blaze has engulfed the entire compound. By that time you're forced to act as damage control."

Speculation runs high that the fires

were caused from testing of the company's Plasma Shock weapons systems. Officials from New Age Arms were unavailable for comment, but promised to issue a press release by noon today. (Story continued on page B-21)

LOCAL

NORTHERN LIGHTS IN SEATTLE

Ritual magic is being cited as the cause for the strange set of lights witnessed by citizens of the entire Seattle Sprawl last night. The spectacular light show started around dusk and continued until almost dawn, when the lights were suddenly extinguished.

City officials report the lights originated from Cascade Crow lands, but there is no indication of tribal involvement. Tribal officials indicated they were treated to the same light show, but the source seemed to come from much further south, perhaps from Ork lands.

Although nothing adverse appeared to happen as a result of the lights, the city is already buzzing with expectations for another show, perhaps with different results.

"You just never know what you're going to get with real magic," said one viewer who expects a repeat of last night's show. "That's what makes it so wiz." (Story continued on page C-30)

BUSINESS

BARNES THROUGH THE ROOF

Initial stock offerings for Barnes Pharmaceutical, Inc., the largest privately held corporation in Seattle, skyrocketed during the first three hours the corporation issued new stock on the Boston Exchange.

Traders indicated they anticipated brisk trade, but when one of the initial purchase orders attempted to grab 82% of the available stock, the buying

rush was on. Over six million shares of stock were traded during the first five hours alone. The stock finally settled at 832¥ per share, up over 500¥ from the initial offering of 325¥ per share.

The Barnes family has long held the corporation as a closely held venture, allowing few insiders to know their business. Rumors of a public offering began to circulate last year when Jephtha Barnes, the family patriarch, disappeared, leaving five children to split the company. (Story continued on page D-6)

ENTERTAINMENT

ELVEN THEATRE OPENS

Haversby Theatre opened last night to a wildly enthusiastic crowd of elves with their original play "Full-formed." The play, which required complete audience participation remains unique in the Seattle area.

"They've been doing this type of thing for years in Dublin," said the Theatre's owner, Maivus McQuewen. "We're just trying to bring a spot of culture to this benighted city."

Paramedics were called to the theatre twice during the five hour performance, but even those injured by the night's activities seemed delighted with the results of the Theatre's first effort.

"Brilliant," said one viewer as he was treated locally for a broken arm. "The effects were fantastic and what a range of emotions. I only hope I can get tickets tomorrow."

Still considered too avant garde for the main-stream theatres of the area, Haversby offers elven theatre made popular by the "Children of Mac Lir." (Story continues on page E-10)



SPORTS

HURLING DRAWS TOP RATING

Last night's semi-final action between the Salem Kinsmen and the Bend Journeymen set a near-record for viewers in the Seattle Sprawl. Although Hurling is an elven sport, usually appreciated by elves only, local interest has been catching on since talk began of having an international league.

"I think the grace and power of the sport appeal to the masses," said network spokeswoman Ruby Helder. "Of course, it didn't hurt that the other semi-final game on Wednesday resulted in the death of Albany forward Shane Chism. I guess the fans appreciate a good body blow when they see one."

The final match between the Marchers and the Kinsmen is scheduled for next week, with the Marchers a two-goal favorite. (Story continues on page F-1)



高泉