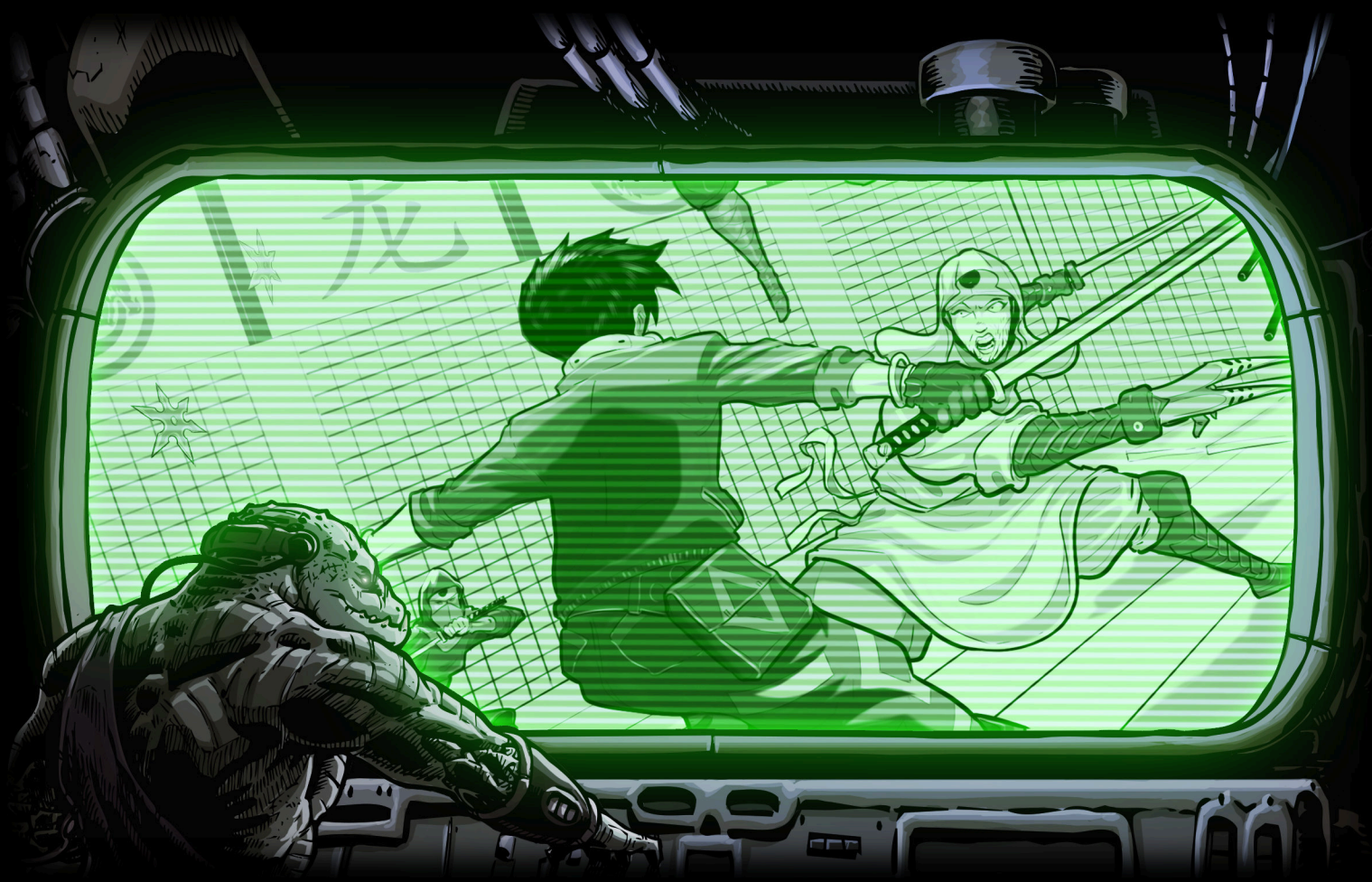


NEON PUNK CRISIS



RETRO ANIME
ROLEPLAYING

every
when

Welcome to the world of 204X!

Experience cyberpunk adventure the way it was intended: from the vantage of the 80's. Influenced by cutting-edge anime classics like Akira and Battle Angel Alita, Neonpunk Crisis takes you back - and forward - to the mean streets of Neo Tokyo. Rogue androids prowl through glitzy nightclubs, their algorithms on the verge of self-awareness. Escapees from psionic labs struggle to keep their rage-induced powers under control. Salarymen, beat cops, gang members, punks, and petty criminals alike all grope for enough yen to go another week in the frenzied metropolis. This is a world trembling on the brink... the brink of Neonpunk Crisis!

A setting for the Everywhen RPG.

Neonpunk Crysis

A setting for the Everywhen RPG

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SETTING

You feed the tape into an ancient VHS player. Motors whir; on screen there is blackness with the familiar scratches of tracking, then...

A synthesizer throbs out a demonic beat. Lines of red neon form a grid, receding into the distance. On the horizon the sprawling outline of Neo Tokyo takes shape, sheathed in cold light. Gaunt skyscrapers reach above the smog, possibly to the edge of space itself. Below, vast arteries of superhighways blur between the monoliths, flowing with the non-stop speed of information.

Zoom closer and you can hear the roar of motorcycles as outlaw gangs turn the expressways into ribbons of concrete death, lost in their own high-octane reality. Along the streets, gaudy holograms wink everything from sex to pet food, and slums give way to sleek shopping malls, brimming with security.

The smog darkens. Rain dumps, scattering crowds wary of fallout from Old Tokyo Bay. But this is still a live city, a vital city. The high-tech capital of the world. Deals are struck in its back alleys and glittering clubs. Rogue androids prowl the streets, their algorithms on the verge of self-awareness, and escapees from psionic laboratories struggle to keep their rage-induced powers under control. Salarymen, beat cops, gang members, punks, and petty criminals alike all grope for enough yen to go another week in the frenzied metropolis.

This is a world trembling on the brink... the world of Neonpunk Crisis!

NOT JUST ANY CYBERPUNK

Neonpunk Crisis is an RPG sourcebook based on the slew of science fiction anime produced in the mid-80's to early-90's, when the influence of western films like *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator* were riding high with Japanese audiences. The setting emulates such works as *Akira*, *Bubble Gum Crisis*, *AD Police*, *Appleseed*, *Megazone 23*, *Black Magic M-66*, *Cyber City Oedo*, *Goku Midnight Eye*, *Dominion Tank Police*, *Battle Angel Alita*, *Genocyber*, *Metal Skin Panic*, *Eight Man Next*, and *Angel Cop*, among others. The anime take on cyberpunk was not as concerned with 'scientific' realism as presenting an exciting visual story, with a gonzo dose of Japanese creativity thrown in. Characters were often presented as super-heroic, though they had their own emotional vulnerabilities particular to the genre.

Themes of corruption, humanity in the face of rapid technological change, and societal breakdown were common.

As such, *Neonpunk Crisis* is not a retroclone trying to import the RPG tropes of deckers, elves, and street samurai to an Asian setting. Plenty of games have already done that, chummer! The setting remains true to the source material, presenting psychic powers, mecha, and over-the-top martial arts alongside a familiar dark future of mega-corporations and cyberware.

In the world of *Neonpunk Crisis*, player characters can:

- Go head-to-head with a crazed *kunoichi* (female ninja) in her secret fortress disguised as a love hotel ('**Shadow Sisters of Shinjuku**', page 29).
- Thwart an entomologist-turned-supervillain with his Titan Beetle Bio-Armour ('**Bug Hunt**', page 35).
- Battle zombie-like robot mannequins while trapped inside a giant shopping mall ('**Gorgon Dawn**', page 40).
- Ferret out an android assassin run amok at a high-rise corporate retreat ('**The Woodcutter**', page 46).
- Tangle with a sentient vocaloid intent on regaining her J-pop stardom at all costs ('**The Ballad of Cypher Ferox**', page).

I did mention 'gonzo Japanese creativity,' didn't I?

IMAGINING A RETRO FUTURE

The Neo Tokyo of 204X isn't a plausible extension of how it might look to us today. It's the future as imagined from the perspective of the 1980s. Global warming isn't the big environmental threat; acid rain and ozone depletion are. Because wireless technology has yet to become commonplace, vid-phone booths crowd every street corner. People get their news off thermograph paper, faxed hourly with the latest headlines.

The future's still dystopian, but it's a glitzy dystopia. Holographic ads take up half a skyscraper. Synthesizer music, big hair, and blazing guitar riffs have (somehow) never gone out of style. Technology, meanwhile, has made quantum jumps in certain areas. Anthropomorphic robots are already on the streets, and there are rumours androids might be rubbing shoulders even now. Giant automatons bristling with weapons, *mecha*, are appearing among Japan's Self Defence forces.

Most secret of all, in certain 'dark' laboratories void of ethics, researchers strive to unlock the limitless power of the human mind...

A [Mercifully] brief history of Neo Tokyo

By the 2020s, Japan had risen to prominence on the world stage as both an economic and technological superpower. Japanese robotics revolutionized labour, far outstripping industrial production in the West. Modernization begun during the Meiji Era had brought the country full-circle. The Land of the Rising Sun was now a high-tech juggernaut, fuelled by inexhaustible spirit and innovation. Then, in 203X, the bottom fell out.

The terrorist group **Heisei Dawn** detonated a dirty bomb in the waters of Tokyo Bay. The disaster rippled out through the rest of the world, causing stock markets to crash even as the first drops of radioactive rain fell. Capitalizing on the incident, Sino-Korean forces launched a surprise attack on the island of Honshu, in what came to be known as the Three-Day War. Japan responded with a vigorous defence, but just as the fighting reached fever pitch, an enormous EMP pulse high in the atmosphere caused aircraft on both sides to tumble from the sky. No one claimed responsibility for the pulse, though there were rumours of UN meddling. The conflict effectively ended, with both Japan and its invaders claiming a strategic victory.

The nation's famed resiliency kicked in. Reconstruction efforts shifted the former Tokyo south, towards Kanagawa Prefecture. The irradiated Bay area, now known as 'Old Tokyo,' was abandoned in favour of sleek new office buildings gracing the Neo Tokyo skyline, largely funded by the fast-rising **Terada Corporation**, a major player in the world's recovering economy.

Now, in 204X, hidebound government institutions continue to wane, victims of their own corruption. Russia, China, and the US fight shadow-wars for resources in unexploited sections of the globe. Politically neutral, Japan sells them all the high-tech weaponry they can afford.

Not all is well in the island nation, however. The fruits of economic prosperity have filtered down to a chosen few. Beyond the privileged executives and layers of salaried fighting for a percentage, the standard of living among the middle and lower classes continues to slide. Millions are unemployed because of automation; a whole subclass pushed out onto the streets. Homelessness has become epidemic in cramped and expensive Neo Tokyo. Pollution continues to worsen, and a new biological threat from Southeast Asia, **Zika-9**, is causing record birth defects. Meanwhile, law enforcement goes underfunded as psychopaths get scarier, criminals better-armed, and rogue robots break out onto the streets.

Welcome to the world of 204X.

Corporation Games

Mega-corporations run the show in Japan. While government still exists, whole sections have devolved into useless bureaucracies. The public knows big companies take ethical shortcuts, but see them as necessary evils. At least *they* get things done.

The **Terada Corporation** fills the role of 'Big Evil Corp' in the *Neonpunk Crisis* setting, focusing on construction, robotics, bio-engineering, and weapons systems. With manufacturing centres in Southeast Asia and the west coast of the United States, Terada has become one of the main suppliers of mecha for the world's fading superpowers.

The company secretly finances research in areas considered *verboten*, including self-aware AI and psionics. When violence is required, Terada has its own internal security of ruthless 'Expeditors.' These agents have *carte blanche* to do almost anything, as long as those above them are shielded from culpability.

Adelphi is one of Terada's top competitors, specializing in artificial intelligence, advanced computer systems, and the most cutting-edge tech currently available: androids. Adelphi made its fortune by marketing realistic sex robots, but now rumours hint they are producing *biological* versions. Though this could prove enormously profitable, such experimentation has been branded illegal by international law.

Nakama Foods Limited is an agricultural firm that maintains the world's largest offshore krill production. They've also pioneered urban farming and aquaponic systems. Despite the benign nature of their business, Nakama is known for cutthroat management policies.

The **Tai Fun Import Company** is a huge Hong Kong shipping conglomerate, with branches throughout Japan. Rumoured to be run by the Triads, its CFO is the colourful **Mama Wa**, a crime boss who maintains her own private airship.

Though Japan has literally hundreds of television channels, **Asahi Net** is the most prominent, with its own news outlets and entertainment programming. Affiliated with Asahi is **Seishin Promotions**, a sort of WWE for the immensely popular *Puroresu* (pro-wrestler) circuit. 'S Class' wrestling, Seishin's current runaway hit, features cyber-augmented fighters in unscripted bouts.



Heisei Dawn

Originally a rogue sect within the International Centre for Disease Control, this terrorist group is made up of scientists, physicians, and zealots concerned about humanity's unchecked population growth. Over time, their ideology has become more drastic. The Heisei Dawn division has dedicated itself to curbing population growth in Asia, but there are other branches spread throughout the globe.

Their first major act was to explode a massive dirty bomb in Tokyo Bay. Hundreds of thousands eventually died from fallout. The original sect was hunted down successfully by agents of the Japanese Self Defence Force, but several cells continue to function. Heisei Dawn is considered Public Enemy Number One in Japan.

The organization is now focused on biological attacks. They are believed to be somehow facilitating the spread of Zika-9 to mainland Japan, in hopes of stunting birth rates even further. Despite this bias, Heisei Dawn would be interested in any plot to use any weapons of mass destruction to wipe out population centres.

Old Tokyo

The area around Tokyo Bay has largely been abandoned due to lingering radiation. Some disparate groups of mutants, gangs, and outlaw motorcycle clubs have laid claim to the ruins, however. This last group uses stretches of the deserted Shuto Expressway to race in tournaments, safe from police. Law enforcement rarely extends its presence here.

One glaring exception is the Koto Ward Maximum Security Prison. Currently Japan's *only* maximum-security prison, the Ward was constructed soon after radiation had dropped to acceptable levels. Thirty-meter concrete walls along the Arakawa and Sumida rivers isolate Koto as an inescapable island, where prisoners are dumped to eke out their own existence.

Much of the aircraft and vehicles disabled by the giant EMP pulse of the Three-Day War remain scattered here. Scavengers brave the hazards in order to reclaim weapons or gear to sell on the black market.

The Bozu Squad

Japan is known for its love of racing high-performance machines, especially cyber-bikes driven by 'face'--optic-responsive software and haptics, allowing for truly superhuman degrees of control.

Japan is also known for *otaku*, pop-culture addicts who practice societal withdrawal.

What no one could have foreseen was the combination of these two elements. Large numbers of *otaku* have formed their own motorcycle club, called the Bozu Squad. The name is both a reference to member's shaved heads and a pun on *bosuzoku* ('violent speed tribes,' or biker gangs). Shut-ins who once haunted tiny apartments now race other gangs along Old Tokyo's abandoned expressways, their arms folded across their chests as they drive using eye-twitches.

Rumour has it a rogue AI is somehow recruiting these outcasts, and the Squad itself is actually a religious cult. Their creed: *otaku* are the next stage in human evolution, a 'bridge' between living flesh and machine.

Radioactive Rain

Fallout from the Bay still threatens citizens of Neo Tokyo, in the form of radioactive rain. People have taken to wearing *kuriketto* ('crickets'); plastic roentgen counters that chirp when levels are too high. Most buildings have their own closed air-scrubbing systems, and rain slicks lined with a discrete coating of lead have become fashionable.

Radiation isn't the only environmental threat. Occasionally, an enormous smog front comes rolling in from mainland China, the dreaded *kumo* that can drive people indoors for days.

ZIKA-9

Rumoured to have been created in a lab to stem Third World population growth, this horrible retrovirus has migrated from Southeast Asia, mutating faster than vaccines can be produced. Spread by sexual contact, bodily fluids, or the dreaded *Aedes* mosquito, the disease lies dormant in its host for long periods. Birth defects and eventual death due to flu-like symptoms are the result. Japan's branch of the CDC has vowed to find a way of combating the outbreak, with heavy corporate backing.

Laser Satellites

Due to research in so-called 'Star Wars' technology, several countries (including Japan) have launched satellites equipped with gigawatt laser cannons. Ostensibly, these are for defence against ICBMs. However, the beams fired are powerful enough to penetrate the atmosphere and hit ground targets with appalling accuracy. This has renewed interest in the Space Race, as well as caused a shift from nuclear to orbital weapons as the new 'doomsday threat.'

The Kuroda Corps

Notoriously underfunded, and the butt of jokes within Met Tokyo PD, K Division (also known as the Kuroda Corps) is a semi-secret organization tucked away behind the police morgue.

Officially, the Corps acts as an outreach program for individuals helpful to law enforcement. In reality, K Division works with criminal scum, outcasts, eccentrics, mutants, vigilantes, bounty hunters, private investigators, cyborgs, hackers, and punks who are looking for extra money or commuting legal sentences – in other words, typical PCs.

Headed by the imposing **Colonel Kuroda**, the Corps is known in higher circles for getting results. Though his dingy office is strewn with instant ramen cups, the rear wall slides up at the touch of a button to reveal a state-of-the-art briefing room. Kuroda maintains satellite surveillance of Neo Tokyo, and his data files ooze with juicy secrets.

The Corps serves as a means for drawing PCs together into an adventuring group. Kuroda himself is a 'Dirty Harry' type, with a strong sense of honour instilled by his military service. He's harsh, but definitely working for the common good.

PCs affiliated with Kuroda find him a steady source of work, as the beleaguered Tokyo Police are always pursuing cases in a city of 20 million wayward souls.

CHARGEN

Anime characters tend to be painted in broader strokes than their fantasy RPG counterparts. For this reason, its recommended beginning Heroes start with only 3 careers instead of 4, with a maximum starting Rank of 2. Also, for simplicity's sake, Rank 0 careers are omitted. A character with the Non-Combatant background gets 5 career Ranks instead of 6, and a Student gets only 1. Attribute and Combat values remain the same.

Take a look at the Career List, as well as boons and flaws for potential inspiration. The flexible *Everywhen* system makes it easy to pattern characters from anime and manga. A sample group of heroes are presented in the next chapter.

ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND

It's helpful to conceptualize where your character was born. Although *Neonpunk Crisis* doesn't present a specific set of regional boons and flaws, choosing a birthplace suggests some initial parameters, as well as a starting career and even attributes.

Example: Haru is originally from Shizuoka Prefecture, a rural, coastal area on the island of Honshu. He followed his father's profession of krill farmer before moving to Neo Tokyo. Because of his early experiences working on ships, his player chooses the initial boon of Born-on-Board, and a second, Prime Condition, to reflect a hardy constitution from years of labour. As a consequence, his player also has to select a flaw, and decides Country Bumpkin would be appropriate. Haru's first career is Worker (Krill Farmer) at rank 1. Because of his background in physically demanding work, he will have at least 1 point in *strength*.

By contrast, Akane, the hard-bitten cop, grew up in a shanty-town on the mean streets of Chiba. Her player chooses Low-Born as her initial boon, but decides to take further boons/flaws suggested by her careers and overall concept.

There are no variant races in *Neonpunk Crisis*. All heroes are human, though they may be mutants, have psionic potential, and/or cyber-augmentation.

Anti-Heroes

Like in traditional cyberpunk, anime protagonists tend to be anti-heroes: rebels and fierce individualists who eschew authority, though are still 'good.' Despite the moral ambiguity of the setting, these heroes often have motivations beyond grabbing fistfuls of yen. Corporations and villains, however, remain irredeemably evil.



BOONS AND FLAWS

Prohibited boons and flaws

The following boons from *Everywhen* are considered inappropriate to the setting: Divine Blessing, Magic of the Ancients, Nose for the Unnatural, Power of the Void, Race-Friend, Ward, and Cursed.

Setting boons

Aesthetic Armour – The character owns a special suit of Medium armour that does not incur *agility* penalties. Also, this armour shows off the physique, such that any social penalties are reduced by the wearer's *appeal* score.

Bishounen – The character is an attractive, androgynous appearing male who is also a deadly adversary! *Bishounen* have learned how to apply their unsettling beauty in life or death situations. Once per combat, they can add their *appeal* to either *defence* or *initiative* values. This effect lasts one round. As a potential downside, the character's ambiguous appearance can occasionally cause unwanted or confused attention.

Kiai Shout – The character can muster a shout so powerful it either emboldens them or weakens an opponent's spirit. The user takes either a bonus die on their next attack roll or causes their opponent to suffer a penalty. A *Kiai* can be performed up to the user's *mind* score per day, minimum of once. The penalty die effect won't work if the opponent has the Fear Resistance boon.

Nanowire Weapon – Also known as 'Razor Floss,' nanowire is a tough carbon chain arranged in a single molecule, granting incredible cutting power. Nanowire melee weapons do d6 damage + the wielder's *agility* (not *strength*), ignoring armour. They are rare enough using one regularly requires a boon.

Robot Sidekick – A favourite of tech-minded characters. Robots are 'built' on the same number of points as Toughs and can be combat drones, walking encyclopaedias, 'fixit' droids, etc.

The player makes all rolls for the robot. On a Calamitous Failure some internal system has broken down, and the unit won't function for the rest of the adventure. Robots 'killed' can be rebuilt between adventures, usually with a Mark # (2, 3, 4 etc.) following their name.

Trench Coat Arsenal – This boon allows the character to carry far more weapons or equipment than normally possible, without *agility* penalties for weight and bulkiness. Further, Medium weapons are classed as Light in terms of concealability.

Setting flaws

Calamity Jun – Everywhere the character goes, disaster seems to follow. Whenever the Hero takes a Calamitous Failure in combat, the GM can rule the result as catastrophic collateral damage. Stray bullets set off a fuel truck, or explode the magazine on a police mecha, or crash a car into a support strut holding up a renovated building... the possibilities are endless.

Innocent lives don't have to be lost, but when it gets back to someone in authority the offending PC is responsible, repercussions will follow.

Gaijin – In a setting where most characters are Japanese, being a foreigner can really stick out. *Gaijin* usually take a penalty die on social interactions, unless in a very cosmopolitan place. They also tend to act in stereotypical ways depending on their country of origin (Americans, for example, talk too loud, brag, and chew with their mouths open).

Giri – Roughly translates to 'Duty' or 'Obligation.' Conflict between a person's inner feelings and societal obligations is a core theme in Japanese drama.

For the *Neonpunk Crisis* setting, taking *Giri* assumes that the character owes someone or something big: another PC, NPC, family, corporation, etc. The Hero will do their utmost to meet this obligation, up to and including putting their life on the line.

Honour Code – The character has a set of rules he or she rigorously follows, possibly based on Bushido, spiritual teachings, or personal beliefs. Examples might include: never attack an unarmed opponent, don't kill, always keep your word, etc. Violating an Honour Code is a big deal. A character doing so loses all their Hero Points, until such time as they can find a way to atone.

Mutant – The radioactivity from Tokyo Bay or some other nuclear disaster has affected the character's DNA, and not in a good way. The mutation is usually physical and considered unattractive. If unconcealed, it causes a penalty die on social interactions. There may also be functional difficulties as a result.

Otaku – The character is habitually a shut-in, subsisting on a diet of ramen and pop culture. However, he or she can overcome this tendency long enough to go on adventures. Painfully shy, *otaku* take a penalty die on most social interactions, except when among other *otaku* or people who share their specific interests.

Cyberware

Note: Cyberware is not common in the *Neonpunk Crisis* setting. Artificial limbs and organs are usually a *replacement* for an injury or disease, not something done electively. People who have the money usually prefer a transplant, as this procedure has been perfected and there is no associated stigma.

Most of the effects of cyberware can be simulated in game terms using traditional boons, careers, and attributes. Therefore, PCs don't have to 'chrome up' in order to compete. However, cyberware *does* make for a lot of interesting character options.

System-wise, cyberware is treated as a boon. Having too much of your body replaced by electronics and bio-compatible metals can have side effects, however. For each item of cyberware installed past the first, you have to take an additional flaw. Typical examples are Cyber Debt, Shoddy Work, Transhuman Angst, and Unsettling (for having an obvious augmentation). See *Cyberware Flaws* on page 12 for more details.

Characters who have too much of themselves replaced become Trans-cyborgs- or (full) Cyborgs (see page 13). This is not recommended at character creation, but is a viable option for PCs "brought back" as a result of *Cyborg Resurrection* (see page 25).

Cyberware boons

Augmented (Ability) – This cyberwear represents some type of internal upgrade to one of the 4 attributes. It is *not* overtly noticeable. Examples might be gene-enhanced muscle tissue (*strength*), intensive neural training (*agility*), an aggressive course of pro-synaptic drugs (*mind*), or pheromone-boosted glands (*appeal*).

In game terms, the relevant ability gets a +1. Its maximum value is 6 rather than 5, and maximum starting value is 4 rather than 3. Augmented abilities affect secondary characteristics, so a PC with Augmented *strength* also gets a +1 to their lifeblood.

Cyber Organ – The most common type of cyberware. Internal organs like hearts, liver, pancreas, etc. are only a boon if they confer some type of advantage (for a possible cyber-heart, see Eisu Crimson in the PC sheets available for download). An artificial liver could give a bonus die when ingesting poisons or resisting the effects of alcohol, for example.

Cyber Eye – Artificial tissue with enhanced optics. Grants a bonus die on vision-related rolls plus one additional power, like low light vision or a retinal aiming system.

Cyber Ear – Like Cyber Eye, except the bonus die is for hearing based rolls, and the additional power might be the ability to perceive radio waves, or a safety "shut-off" if the decibel level becomes too high.

Cyber Hand – This artificial hand has a grip *strength* of the recipient's own *strength* +1 or 3, whichever is higher. The hand also has an additional power:

- **Natural Appearing** (normally indistinguishable from a natural hand).
- **Clamp** (grip *strength* of 5).
- **Retractable Claws** (d6L + *strength* damage, bonus die when climbing).
- **Gun Finger** (d6L damage, 1 shot, 10' range increment) or **Tool Finger** (select type).

Strikes from the hand do d6L damage and the hand itself is considered to have d6 Protection.

Cyber Arm – The arm has a *strength* score equal to the recipient's *strength* +1 or 3, whichever is higher. This additional *strength* does *not* add to Lifeblood, though the limb adds 1 to the recipients overall Protection and the arm itself has d6 Protection. Choose an additional power:

- as per Cyber Hand
- **Retractable Forearm Blade** (d6 + *strength* damage)
- **Extendable** (up to 5').

Characters possessing two or more cyber limbs are considered **Trans-cyborgs**.

Cyber Leg – The leg has a *strength* score equal to the recipient's *strength* +1, or 4, whichever is higher. This additional *strength* does *not* add to Lifeblood, though the limb adds 1 to the recipients overall Protection and the leg itself has d6 Protection. Choose an additional power:

- **Natural Appearing**
- **Retractable Ankle Spurs** (d6 + *strength* damage)
- **Thigh Compartment** (can hold up to a Medium firearm).

Hacker Visor – The character's eyes have been replaced with a retinal-controlled virtual keyboard that allows for lightning fast computer use. Gain a bonus die on Hacking attempts or other computer related rolls. Vision is otherwise normal.

Cyberware flaws

Cyber Debt – The character is in deep for acquiring their enhancements. They owe big money to a corporation, bank, or even a loan-shark or other criminal organization. Treat this as the Hunted disadvantage, which can be bought off if/when the character acquires a small fortune and enough Advancement Points.

Poor Recovery – As per the traditional flaw. Poor Recovery simulates the need to have cyberware repaired when the character is injured.

Shoddy Work – The character's cyberware was either cheap or a rush job, and may have not been attuned to its host properly.

If the shoddy cyberware is used in a roll that fails, the GM has the option of forcing a Calamitous Failure, in return for granting 1 Hero Point. Typically this Calamitous Failure means that the cyberware will not work until repaired.

Transhuman Angst – Transhuman Angst represents the sense of alienation a character feels after losing part of their humanity to invasive cyberware. Even if other people can't see their modifications, the character still senses a void in their soul.

The flaw can be taken up to 3 times to reflect increasing levels of psychic trauma:

Mild – The character feels isolated from the pack. When attempting a task, on a roll of a double, take a penalty die on all social interactions for this scene.

Moderate – As for Mild, but the character also loses spirit. Deduct a Hero Point.

Severe – As for Moderate, but the character is wavering close to the edge. At the end of all combats, the character has to make a *mind* roll to disengage. Failure means they keep fighting, with whoever happens to be close by! This effect lasts d6 rounds.

Unsettling – As per the traditional flaw, though depending on the nature of the cyberware the condition might be concealable. If the cyberware is *always* concealable (e.g. an internal organ), it's not worth a flaw.

Becoming cyborg

As characters slowly acquire more cyberware they start the transition into cyborgs. Once you have at least two cybernetic limbs, or one cybernetic limb and two other cybernetic boons the transition starts and you must follow the Trans-cyborg rules.

Trans-cyborg

You are slowly becoming more machine than man, and you must take the boons and flaws shown below. Once you are trans-cyborg, should you receive another cybernetic limb, or two other cybernetic boons, you are now a (full) Cyborg and must follow the rules in the next section.

Metal Parts (Boon) – You gain the benefit of light armour due to your metallic body parts. If other armour is worn, treat the protection provided as per the next higher type of armour.

Fearsome Looks (Boon) – you gain the Fearsome Looks boon.

Metal Parts (Flaw) – People find it difficult to treat your wounds, due to all the machine interfaces. Any *Physician* has a –2 modifier to their career rank when providing any form of medical aid.

Intimidating (Flaw) – you are intimidating to look at gain a penalty dice in social situations (this stacks with Transhuman Angst).

Cyborg

You are now more machine than man. You retain the boons and flaws of Trans-cyborg and must also take the following boons and flaws:

Steel Blood (Boon) – Due to the abundance of mechanical parts in your body your *lifeblood* is Scale 2.

Walking Suit of Armour (Boon) – The increased amount of metallic body parts increases your armour rating to medium.

More Machine Than Man (Flaw) – If taken to 0 *lifeblood* you require a character (or characters) with ranks in both a *Physician* career and a *Mechanic* career to recover your lost *lifeblood*. Either career can be used as per the healing rules in *Everywhen*. If one character has both then he uses the lower career. If two characters are conducting the task, then one assists the other.

Posthuman Angst (Flaw) – you must take the Transhuman Angst flaw, or increase its severity if you already have it.

CAREER LIST

The following are possible heroic careers in the *Neonpunk Crisis* setting. These are only suggestions; if a player wants to come up with something not listed, or make modifications to an existing career, the GM should be reasonable.

Some careers are more encompassing than others – for example, *Criminal* and *Scientist* arguably cover a wide range of operating methods. If a player takes a career that can focus in a number of different areas, the GM can either ask the player to describe a specific focus of the career at character creation, or if the players are unsure, they can wait until play.

Example: Jim has created the Scientist Dr Hakida, but was unsure of his speciality at character creation. During play, when confronted with an unknown liquid, Jim wants his character to identify it. The GM says that if his character is a *Chemist*, the difficulty is Moderate (+0), otherwise it's Tough (-2).

This could be written on the PC sheet as *Scientist (Chemist) 2*.

Assassin

In the dangerous world of Neo Tokyo, a skilled killer is always in demand.

This career can encompass different styles, from a corporate sniper or Yakuza hitman to a ninja trained in the classic techniques of the Shadow Way. *Assassins* are usually well-versed in stealth, tracking their prey, security systems, disguise, surveillance, poisons, psychology, and exotic weaponry. Attractive *assassins* sometimes practice the art of seduction as well.

Assassins can act as lone wolves or as part of larger organizations. The higher their Rank, the more money they can expect to be paid – and the more dangerous their marks.

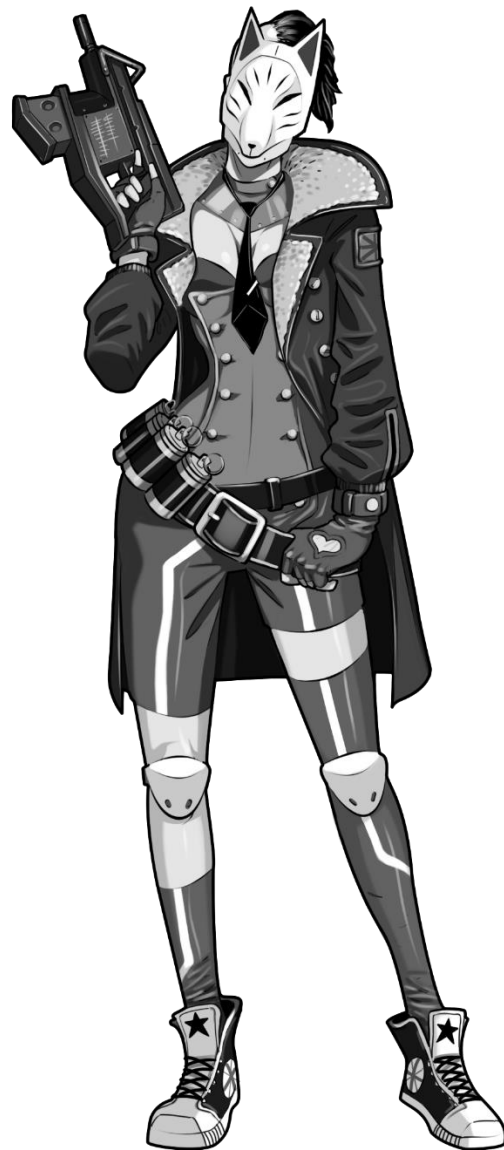
In Combat: When performing a surprise attack, add your Rank to damage inflicted.

Beggar

AKA: *Street Person*

The economic reality of Neo Tokyo makes for more losers than winners. This career covers the myriad homeless and unemployed, curled up between buildings or living in warrens of dangerous shanty-towns. Street people are good at stealth, scrounging, appraisal, petty thievery, gaining information, urban survival, location familiarity, and being pointedly overlooked, which in a well-surveilled society has its advantages.

In Combat: n/a.



Bounty Hunter

Traditional law enforcement is so swamped that *bounty hunters* are commonly used to track down criminals (more akin to an Old West *bounty hunter* than our modern concept of bail bondsman). *Bounty hunters* are good at tracking, skip-tracing, computer use, psychology, stealth, getting information, investigation, intimidation, and surveillance.

In Combat: If attacking your bounty target, get a first-round attack bonus against said target equal to your Rank.

Cop

Neo Tokyo's overworked police force can only respond to a small percentage of crimes. Further, they often face criminals with superior technology and weapons. Elite units (like SWAT teams) have access to better firepower, but even these groups are kept under close scrutiny by penny-pinching bureaucrats.

Cops might be idealistic types or 'on the take' from ruthless corps. They can be burned-out lone wolves or team players who quote legal precedence as they make arrests. A higher Rank (2 or above) means the character has been promoted from a regular 'beat' to Lieutenant or Detective, usually in a special branch (Homicide, Vice, Computer Crimes, etc.)

Cops are good at investigation, surveillance, law, stealth, tactics, criminology, intimidation, and depending on their role within the department, may have specialized skills as well (e.g. an undercover officer would be good at disguise). Though they have legal enforcement powers, police are supposed to operate within the law.

In Combat: *Cops* have experience fighting in crowded environments. They can use their Rank to reduce cover penalties of targets, including perpetrators who use innocents as human shields.

Courier

Couriers specialize in transporting things (often data), and are utilized when a drone just can't be trusted. *Couriers* are experts in the urban art of parkour, leaping along rooftops, climbing, and generally getting into places not intended for regular traffic. Others tend to be more high-tech and experts at hiding things *inside* themselves. All *couriers* are good at corporate etiquette, security systems, transportation, encryption, negotiation, climbing, stealth, concealment, and area knowledge.

In Combat: *Couriers* can add their Rank to *defence* when performing some off-the-wall acrobatic move.

Criminal

This broad background can include everything from an *irezumi*-covered yakuza to a subway pickpocket. Generally, the more Ranks the character has, the higher they are on the underworld food chain. White-collar or corporate *criminals* tend to have a different skill set (see *Executive* on page 16), though they still know the finer parts of larceny.

Criminals with extensive computer backgrounds are usually *Hackers* (covered as a separate career on page 16).

In general, *criminals* are good at stealth, picking locks, concealment, security systems, searching, surveillance, manipulation, appraisal, and keeping in touch with street contacts. A grifter type would go heavy on manipulation and psychology, while a second-story man (an expert at breaking and entering) would be good at climbing, listening, and safe-cracking. Fences, forgers, and art-thieves have even more specific skills.

In Combat: n/a.

Driver

AKA: *Pilot*

Driver is a generic term for someone who operates a particular type of vehicle: motorcycles, helicopters, mecha, boats, spacecraft, etc. This also includes drone operators. Driving/Piloting is often done via a direct link with eye muscles and/or haptic gloves, giving even a greater degree of control.

Drivers are good at operating their chosen vehicles (naturally), mechanics, area knowledge, and pulling off all kinds of wacky vehicular stunts. Each Rank allows the Driver to pick a new area of vehicles or continue to specialize.

Example: Junko "Double J" Jinnouchi is a Rank 2 Driver, specializing in getaways. She can opt to have 2 Ranks in cars or 1 Rank in cars and 1 Rank in motorcycles.

In Combat: If engaged in vehicular combat, add your Rank to any manoeuvre rolls.

Entertainer

This career includes performers from lounge singers to triple-platinum recording artists, aspiring actors, comedians, athletes, you name it. A higher Rank indicates how famous the character is. If someone happens to be a fan, you can use your Rank as a positive modifier in trying to influence them. Entertainers are good at performing in their medium, manipulation, and moving among various subcultures (i.e. Neo Tokyo's underground music scene, TV executives, etc.) Star-power can sometimes get you into areas or audiences with people you wouldn't normally have access to.

In Combat: n/a.

Executive

Corporate types on the career ladder are the closest thing to aristocracy in Neo Tokyo. PC *Executives* might be part of a 'good' (beneficial, environmentally conscious) corporation or secretly working to take down an 'evil' one from within. NPC *Executives* are often villains, master puppeteers pulling long strings to some nefarious end.

The skillset of Execs includes leadership, computer systems, manipulation, finance, business strategy, corporate etiquette, fashion, and social backstabbing. Each Rank gives a rough estimate how close they are to "the top." As members of the elite, they have access to credit and luxury items beyond the reach of the masses.

In Combat: Fighting? That's what bodyguards are for.

Ganger

Neo Tokyo is home to myriad street gangs, including affiliates of yakuza families, fashion-conscious Shinjuku 'preps,' simple hoodlums, and motorcycle clubs. Most are illegal, and all obey a primitive pack-level mentality. Membership means someone has been formally 'jumped in' through initiation. Higher Rank members are lieutenants, or possibly the gang leaders themselves.

Gangers have skills similar to street-level *Criminals* (see page 15), but also are good at intimidation, urban warfare, carousing, location familiarity, and have a working knowledge of recreational drugs.

In Combat: When fighting to defend home 'turf,' add your Ranks in career to attack rolls.

Hacker

A person skilled at manipulating computer systems, including those with heavy security counter-measures. Hacking in the *Neonpunk Crisis* setting is more like the real-world activity; *Hackers* don't enter an alternate consensual reality of bright geometric shapes that can kill them. This means the GM doesn't have to run a separate in-game adventure when a player wants to hack (see *Hacking* on page 26)

Aside from the obvious skill, *Hackers* have knowledge of electronics, AI, encryption, cutting-edge software, information systems, programming, and the global *Hacker* sub-culture. In a world controlled by computers, this is a *very* useful skillset.

In Combat: *Hackers* become infuriated with people who know nothing about IT, and can add their Rank in damage when smacking them with a keyboard (just kidding).



Martial Artist

A person devoted to practicing a particular martial arts style. This often involves cultivating some type of ‘internal power,’ like qi. The character may follow a spiritual code as well.

Martial Artists gain special abilities in melee combat (see *Martial Arts* on page 26). Players may wish to select additional boons (like *Mighty Fists*, *Brawler*, *Grappler*, *Kiai*, etc.) to round out their character.

Outside of fighting, *Martial Artists* have knowledge of meditation, focusing past distractions (like pain), basic first aid, Eastern philosophy, and knowledge of the martial arts ‘world,’ including current champions and key figures.

In Combat: see *Martial Arts* on page 26.

Mechanic

AKA: *Technician*

Someone who knows their way around technology is a valuable asset in a near-future society. *Mechanics* tend towards vehicles and *Technicians* towards electronics, but there is plenty of overlap. A hands-on engineer would also fall under this category.

Mechanics are good at making repairs, jury-rigging or modifying equipment, bypassing electronic locks, identifying machines, sabotaging tech, and many other useful possibilities. Without access to the right tools, however, they will suffer significant penalties (or the task may be impossible).

In Combat: You can add your Rank to damage caused against robots and cyborgs.

Physician

AKA: *Med Tech*

This career entails healing the human body, often with high-tech assistance. *Physicians* are skilled at life support (stabilizing dying people), first aid, surgery, cyberware, diagnosis, physiology, anatomy, biological sciences, medical equipment, pathology, chemistry, and pharmacology (including recreational drugs). ‘Street Docs’ peddle their skills outside of hospitals, often to criminal or less-than-reputable clients. *Physicians* with good equipment and/or facilities can get a hefty bonus to their career based rolls.

In Combat: n/a.

Private Investigator

Grizzled types who perform detective work for paying clients – a classic occupation in the cyberpunk genre. For some reason, *PIs* are prone to narrative voiceovers and using slang half a century out of date. It’s a precarious way to make a living, but the job does involve a lot of personal freedom.

PIs are good at shadowing, finding people, getting information, stealth, picking locks, surveillance, intimidation, observation, and using computer systems. They understand law and the basics of forensic science. Investigators often have a similar skill set to *Criminals* (see page 15), whom they routinely interact with. Many are former cops.

In Combat: *PIs* can opt to ‘wing’ targets with firearms, doing Fatigue damage instead of Normal.

Psychic

This extremely rare career reflects someone who has received intensive training in the use of psionic powers, perhaps through unrelenting practice or with the aid of secret technology. The career isn’t very useful unless the character also has the *Psychic* boon. GMs are strongly recommended to limit starting *Psychics* to Rank 1 (see *Psionics* in the core *Everywhen* book).

Psychics add their Rank when rolling to activate psionic powers. They’re also good at recognizing psychic phenomenon, other psychics, and intense concentration.

In Combat: n/a.

Reporter

Neo Tokyo has over a hundred different television networks, and a dozen major newspapers available on fax. Being a financial and technological world-power means a story is always in the making. Some of the news outlets are merely propaganda machines for major corporations, but a *PC Reporter* is more likely to be on the fringe, looking to expose the truth whenever possible.

Reporters are good at writing, investigation, interviewing, manipulation, and getting into places they’re not supposed to. Having a press affiliation means they can sometimes be granted a formal audience. They might also have access to private newsfeeds, data archives, and media connections.

In Combat: n/a.

Ronin

AKA: *Bodyguard, Mercenary*

Independent warriors or gunmen for hire are often called *ronin* ('sweepers'). Like samurai of old, they may have an honour code that guarantees their bond when accepting a job. Corporate mercs and professional bodyguards are much less independent, but their pay and benefits are more consistent.

The skillset resembles that of *Soldiers* (see this page), with the addition of negotiating for pay and corporate etiquette. Many *Ronin* are former soldiers, either discharged from the military or looking for bigger scores.

In Combat: *Ronin* can channel their tactical knowledge into a Priority bonus equal to their Rank.

Salaryman

AKA: *Civil Servant*

A white-collar wage slave trapped behind a desk all day; compare them to their blue-collar counterpart, *Worker* (see this page). *Civil Servants* have elaborate titles to reflect their place in Neo Tokyo's Byzantine government structure (for example, 'Second Superintendent of Water Reclamation in Western Nerima Prefecture, First Tier.')

The job carries a certain amount of prestige. *Salarymen* understand corporate structure, manipulation, computer systems, and navigating bureaucracy, which also includes the ins and outs of bribery. A *Salaryman* might have access to resources or security areas other PCs wouldn't. They also get a bonus equal to their Rank when trying to overcome the effects of heavy alcohol consumption.

In Combat: n/a.

Scientist

AKA: *Researcher*

Neo Tokyo is on the cutting edge of science, especially in the fields of robotics and biotechnology. Corporate scientists can make a comfortable living as long as they stick to the company's agenda. 'Maverick' researchers conduct their own projects in shadowy laboratories or cramped apartments, looking for the next breakthrough. Note that this is 'science' in the pulp sense; although characters may specialize in a particular area (like chemistry or biology), they have a broad understanding of many different fields.

Scientists are good at conducting research, data analysis, experimentation, computer use, deduction, observation, and inventing things, as well as being knowledgeable about all kinds of obscure facts.

In Combat: n/a.

Soldier

AKA: *Veteran*

Soldiers have received formal military training and are affiliated with a national power. For Japanese, this means the Self Defence Force (SDF), which has ground, maritime, air, and space divisions. *Soldiers* typically have a strong sense of honour and commitment to their organization. A veteran has seen action, but is no longer active duty.

Soldiers can use their Rank as a positive modifier when attempting to influence other soldiers, and may be able to requisition special equipment, weapons, etc.

Soldiers are good at strategy and tactics, weapon familiarity, basic first aid, survival, leadership, and spotting potential threats. Depending on their background, they might also have other specific skills. A commando would be good at stealth, for example, and a sapper skilled with explosives.

In Combat: *Soldiers* can channel their tactical knowledge into a Priority bonus equal to their Rank.

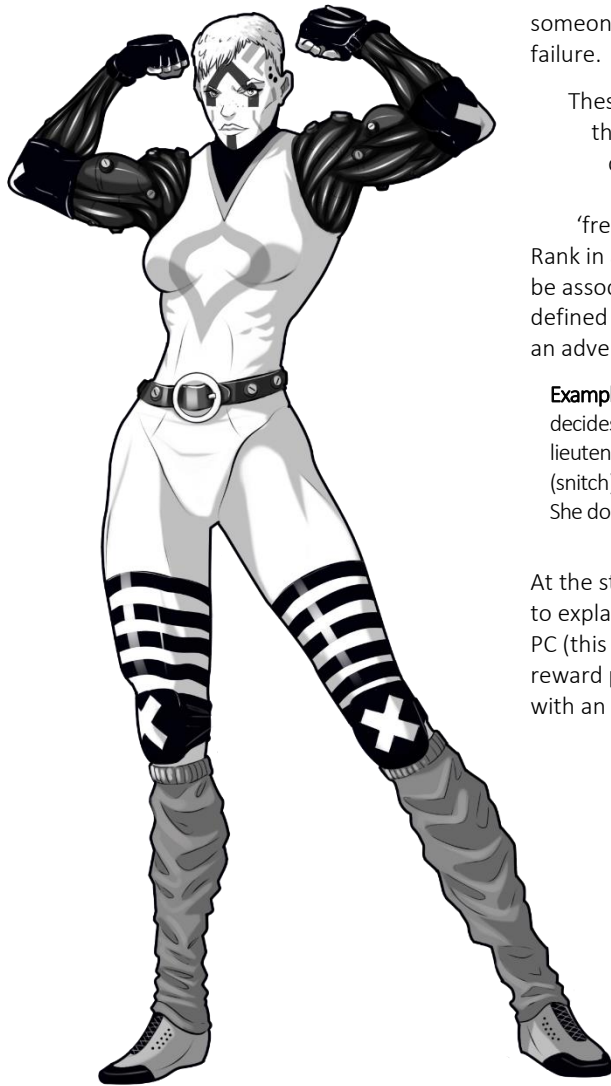
Worker

AKA: *Labourer*

This background covers skilled and unskilled labour that generally happens outside an office, including everything from a humble ramen vendor to an exoskeleton-wearing construction worker. The pay isn't usually great and there is the constant threat of robots literally taking over your job. And unions? The corporations don't like those too well.

Appropriate skill sets vary widely, depending on the nature of the job. Physical laborers are good at endurance, basic mechanics, intimidation, carousing, and hefting things.

In Combat: n/a.



Option: Heroes and connections

Having contacts in mostly urban-based adventures can be essential, to help plot-lines along or provide clues while conducting investigations. Sometimes just 'knowing someone' can mean the difference between success and failure.

These types of acquaintances are more limited than the Friend boon. A contact won't help a PC out in combat, for example. Their main purpose is to provide information. To simulate this, PCs get 'free' contacts just like equipment picks: 1 for each Rank in a particular career. The contacts must somehow be associated with the career itself. They can be pre-defined or purposely left vague, to be identified during an adventure as needed.

Example: Akane is a Rank 2 *Cop* and Rank 1 *Martial Artist*. She decides to have a contact higher up in the force, a hotshot lieutenant who is interested in her, a criminal informant (snitch), and a knowledgeable sensei in the martial arts world. She doesn't name these contacts initially.

At the start of a campaign, players should be encouraged to explain why their characters know at least one other PC (this does not use a contact pick). You can opt to reward players with an extra Hero Point if they come up with an especially convincing reason.

EQUIPMENT

The *Neonpunk Crisis* setting assumes PCs make equipment picks for each Rank they have in a career, subject to the GM's approval. Credit Rating values are included if you wish to use this option from *Everywhen*. Simply having the money is not enough to acquire certain kinds of equipment; PCs may need appropriate contacts as well. Stealth cloaks, for example, are proprietary tech, available only to the military. Getting your hands on one would require a military contact, or at least a high-end black marketer.

BODY ARMOUR

Protective armour is generally easier to purchase than firearms, so the CR value is the same as in the *Everywhen* rule book. Shields are only used by riot police. The regular *agility* and social penalties apply.

Light Armour

(d6-3, or 1 protection)

Usually a vest made from ultra-tough polymer fibres, easily worn under clothing and difficult to spot. There is no social penalty if concealed. Street types will often wear synthi-leather jackets. This provides the protection listed above, but not vs. bullets or shrapnel.

Medium Armour

(d6-2 or 2 protection)

A vest or armoured coat with shoulder and shin guards. Serious riders sometimes wear motorcycle armour, which provides similar protection without the *agility* penalty, but not against bullets or shrapnel.

Heavy Armour

(d6-1 or 3 protection)

Typically chest/shoulder armour with full leg and arm protection, worn as a complete suit by military or police expecting trouble. A helmet is usually included (+1 additional protection).

Hardsuit

(d6 protection)

Hardsuits are powered armour, available only to elite police or military units. A fully articulated exoskeleton provides *strength* 5 and negates *agility* penalties. Helmets are standard, often with Low Light vision and

tactical HUDs (no penalty to Priority rolls). Hardsuits protect from most small arms fire, but are still vulnerable to heavy weapons. Battery life limits operation to an hour maximum. After that, the servomotors lose power and the *agility* penalty becomes -4. Only characters with a *strength* of 1 or higher can move around in a 'dead' suit – albeit slowly.

GUNS

Even in the high-tech future, bullets are still the projectile weapon of choice. Though laser weapons are possible, their power requirements make them impractical as small arms.

Legally owning firearms in Japan requires an expensive licensing process. Therefore, the Credit Rating of most guns is higher than normal (assume a CR of 3, or 4 for heavy weapons).

Taser

This is the standard sidearm of most police and private security forces. As a non-lethal weapon, it is somewhat easier for citizens to obtain. Damage is 1 pt. scratch, Range 3m, shock does d6H+2 fatigue damage.

Murata 5mm small calibre pistol

This is a small semi-automatic pistol, favoured by criminals for its concealability. Damage is d6L, Range 15m, Recoil 0 (semiauto), 1h. Holdout.

Skoda Lightweight machine pistol

A small-calibre pistol capable of burst and full-auto fire. Damage is d6L, Range 20m, Recoil 1 (burst) or 2 (auto), 1h.

Howa Type 2 medium semiauto pistol

A standard semiautomatic pistol firing 9 mm rounds. Damage is d6, Range 15m, Recoil 1 (semiauto), 1h.

Nambu SMG submachine gun

A favourite of outlaw biker gangs. Damage is d6, Range 30m, Recoil 2 (burst) or 3 (auto), 1h.

Koruto Mag heavy revolver

A high-calibre revolver with heavy stopping power. Damage is d6H, Range 25m, Recoil 2 (repeating), 1h.

Nambu Tactical 'Hand-Cannon' very heavy revolver

Issued to military and police only, for use against heavily armoured targets. Damage is d6 (2), Range 25m, Recoil 3 (repeating), 1h.

AR-19 assault rifle

Standard issue for police SWAT and SDF, but criminals love them too. Damage is d6H, Range 50m, Recoil 2 (burst) or 3 (automatic), 2h.

SKB Spec shotgun

Semi-automatic shotgun. Damage is d6 (2), Range 15m, Recoil 1 (semiauto), 2h. Use *Shotgun* rules under *Combat Options* in *Everywhen*.

NeoDragunov sniper rifle

A venerable favourite for long-distance work. Damage is d6 (2), Range 90m, Recoil 3 (repeating), 2h, uses a bipod. An aimed weapon, so requires one turn to aim or take a penalty die on the shot.

M300 light machine gun

Designed to be carried by an individual soldier, this LMG fires caseless 6mm rounds to reduce weight. Damage is d6H, Range 70m, Recoil 2 (burst) or 3 (automatic), 2h, uses a bipod.

Nikon-CL combat laser

Heavy weapon. Shoulder-fired, it looks like a bazooka with a ruby lens. Cords connect to a backpack containing a large graphene battery. Damage is d6H (2), Range 300', Recoil 0 (burst or automatic), 2h.

Howa Type 6 heavy machine gun

A reliable heavy support weapon. Damage is d6 (2), Range 80m, Recoil 3 (burst) or 4 (automatic), 2h, uses a bipod.

Vampyr rocket-propelled grenade

A single-shot anti-armour weapon, this has a 'clip' with 2 rockets and does explosive damage out to a 15' area. Damage is d6H (2), Range 50m, 2h.

XMS0 autocannon

Designed to be used by soldiers in hardsuits (power armour), this bulky 'rifle' requires a *strength* of 5 to actually wield. It fires explosive 40mm shells. Damage is 2d6L (2), Range 100m, Recoil 6 (semiauto), 2h.

GRENADES

Standard fragmentation grenades are as per *Everywhen* rules.

All the following grenades are CR 3 to purchase, with the exception of EMP grenades, which are CR 4.

Flashbangs

Non-lethal explosives doing d6 Fatigue damage. Anyone caught in the blast has to make an *agility* based roll at -1 or be blinded for d3+1 rounds, as well as deafened. Polarizing lenses, most helmets, HUD displays, etc. negate the blindness effect.

Gas grenades

Tear gas restricts sight to 1' and incurs a penalty die on most actions if breathed. Every round an unprotected target remains in the cloud, they have to make a *strength* roll at a cumulative -1 or take d6 Fatigue damage from coughing.

Riot foam grenades

A bulky canister grenade. On detonating, it fills the blast radius with fast-drying foam designed to immobilize targets. Initially, someone caught in the foam has to make an *agility* roll at -1 to avoid being completely engulfed; otherwise, it takes 10 min and a Hard (-1) *strength* roll to dig put from the foam (stronger targets, such as those in hardsuits, can break out faster).

EMP grenades

Extremely illegal, these grenades generate an electromagnetic pulse that can crash and completely wipe any unshielded mainframes in its radius.

Military mecha are usually protected, but other robots won't be (assume 3d6 damage, bypassing armour protection).

MELEE / ANCIENT WEAPONS

Restrictions on guns, coupled with a widespread knowledge of martial arts make hand-to-hand fighting a viable option in this genre.

Note that carrying swords is also illegal, so all the usual social caveats about toting around weapons still apply.

Katana

A traditional favourite. The katana does $d6H + strength$ damage if used 2 handed; using it 1 handed reduces base damage to $d6$ and requires a minimal *strength* score of 1. The weapon is often paired with a trench coat for an edgy look.

Shock Rod

A small, telescoping club. Damage is normally $d6L + strength$, but the user can also trigger an electric charge that does additional $d6$ Fatigue damage. Non-metallic armour provides *double* protection against this second attack.

Naginata

Another traditionalist favourite, albeit hard to conceal. The naginata does $d6H + strength$ and is used two-handed.

Hanbo

A 'Half Staff,' enjoying something of a comeback on Neo Tokyo's mean streets. It appears about the length and thickness of a walking cane. Damage is $d6L + strength$. The wielder has the option to make all damage Fatigue.

Shuriken

The old standby of ninja, easily concealable. For the larger types, damage is $d6L + strength/2$ round down, but professionals often coat the tines with poison for more oomph.

Nanowire Weapons

These weapons incorporate a length of mono-molecular filament, visible only as a gleaming thread. They inflict $d6$ damage, ignoring all armour. Skilled users can add their *agility* to damage rolls.

On a Calamitous Failure, the wire whips around to strike the wielder instead of the target.



OTHER EQUIPMENT

Smart Sight

This is a wired feed between a gun's barrel and some type of optics (goggles, Smart Bans sunglasses, cyber-eyes, etc.) It puts an aiming reticule wherever the gun is pointed. In game terms, it acts like a laser sight by removing one level of range difficulty from a target. Unlike a laser sight, it doesn't leave a trail leading back to the gun. CR 3.

Laser Sight

A small laser slung below the gun's barrel projects a red dot on the target, increasing accuracy. Acts as a Smart Sight above, but the beam is visible and can give away the firer. CR 2.

Lockout

A biometric reader implanted in the grip of a gun will prevent anyone but the registered user from firing. This is a standard feature on most police weapons. Other versions can prevent a sword from being drawn from its sheath or nanowire extended. CR 3.

SmartBans™

Relatively common, high-tech luxury sunglasses. They can be loaded with VR/AR programming for viewing on the go or plugged into an internet source to serve as a visual feed. More expensive versions have ear buds with language translation software. CR 2 to 3.

Stealth Cloak

This is a hooded poncho made of mimetic carbon, warping light around the wearer. The effect creates a blurred outline, not true invisibility. When moving, the wearer gets a bonus die to concealment attempts. If standing still, it requires a Moderate (+0) *mind* roll to see the wearer, modified by a Range increment of 10'.

These cloaks are prototypes, available only to elite military. CR 6.

Thermobaffled Suit

This is a black bodysuit with facemask. A person wearing thermobaffled clothing won't show up on infrared scanners. CR 3.

Grapple Gun

This one-shot device appears as a bulky wristband. When triggered, a CO₂ charge fires a penetrating head trailing a length of ultra-tensile wire. The head can lodge in concrete, glass, or steel, providing an anchor point. The user can then winch themselves down or up (the latter slowly). A grapple gun can be used while falling from a great height; make an *agility* roll modified by any ranks in Ranged Combat to stop the fall. CR 4.

Rad Counter

A common precautionary device in Neo Tokyo. The *kuriketto* ('cricket') appears as a plastic disc, usually clipped to a coat or a rain slick. The counter makes a pleasant 'chirp' when radiation levels are becoming dangerously high; the bigger the threat, the more urgent the chirp. CR 1.

Rad Slick

A poncho with hood, specifically designed for brief exposure to radioactive rain. The poncho has a lead liner and a particulate filter mask. Wearing one grants Light environmental protection (1 pt.) against radiation damage (see the *Constant environmental threats* section in the *Everywhen* rulebook) CR 2.

Reporter's Camera

A bulky, high-tech camera, favoured by intrepid reporters. The lens can zoom up to 12x and the audio pickup has a parabolic microphone to catch distant sounds. In emergencies the camera doubles as an improvised club, but rolling maximum damage means it's broken until repaired. CR 3.

Med Kit

A high-tech version of a first aid kit, with a small diagnostic computer. A character using one can treat most injuries as if he or she was a Rank 1 *Physician*. The med kit has d3 uses before its internal stocks have to be replenished. CR 2.

VEHICLES

These are sample vehicles PCs might encounter cruising the mean streets and skies of Neo Tokyo. Mecha are detailed under their own section (see page 27). Vehicles rigged to be driven "by face" can add the driver/pilot's defence score to the vehicle's defence.

Generally speaking, owning a vehicle is a luxury in Neo Tokyo. Most people use mass transit like subways and trains to get around.

Yamahonda ZK

A barely-legal motorcycle favoured by street racers. The ZK refers to its cylinder capacity. CR 3.

Size (1), Scan 1, Speed 2, Frame 4, Defence 1, Armour 0

Kawazuki Cyclone

The Yamahonda's chief competitor. It sacrifices speed for slightly better handling than its rival. CR 3.

Size (1), Scan 1, Speed 2, Frame 4, Defence 1, Armour 0

Tsunami EX

Nissan's high-performance sports car, featuring an all-ceramic engine. It even has its own phone! CR 4.

Size (2), Scan 1, Speed 2, Frame 5, Defence 1, Armour 0

Norimono Sedan

An armoured sedan with polarized windows, solid rubber tires, and an auto-pilot feature. Often used by CFO's, government officials, and high-end criminals. CR 4.

Size (2), Scan 1, Speed 1, Frame 6, Defence 0, Armour 1

Subaru Econo-Box

A no-frills, stripped-down two-seater car with an electric engine. The small frame makes for easy parking. CR 2.

Size (1), Scan 1, Speed 1, Frame 5, Defence 0, Armour 0

One Man Copter

Essentially a gyro-copter used by the Met Tokyo PD for spotting and pursuit. Several can be folded into a single truck transport. CR 3.

Size (1), Scan 2, Speed 1, Frame 4, Defence 2, Armour 0

Jet Copter

Your basic corporate model, for VIP transport among skyscrapers. The Met Tokyo PD has an armed version (Heavy MG turret). CR 7.

Size (2), Scan 1, Speed 2, Frame 5, Defence 1, Armour 0, Weapons Heavy MG, d6 (2).

Fu Go Stealth Balloon

Featured in the adventure *Escape from Old Tokyo* (another adventure in this setting, written by Garnett Elliott). The Fu Go is a helium balloon with an envelope made from mimetic, radar-absorbing canvas and powered by muffled turboprops. It can seat up to 3 without losing lift. Previously used by the military for commando insertions, several have found their way into corporate use for espionage purposes. CR 8.

Size (2), Scan 2, Speed 1, Frame 5, Defence 1

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

SIMULATING THE GENRE

Anime has its own idiomatic 'rules' that can be translated into game play with a few tweaks. The following are options on spending Hero Points (some simply re-named) and spot rules for specific situations.

Do Your Best!

As per Luck of the Gods. You can spend a Hero Point to make a second roll on any roll, but must accept the new result. Alternately, you can assign a value of '4' to one of the die instead of re-rolling.

Heroic Sacrifice

Death is more common in this genre, and dying 'well' can be considered honourable. If another character with whom the PC has formed a bond is about to be killed by an attack, *and* nearby, the PC can push him or her out of the way to take the hit instead.

Seize Initiative

Also known as 'Blur' because of the speed at which the character appears to move. Regardless of Priority, the Hero acts first this round.

Flourish Parry/Dodge

Similar to Splintered Shield, Shattered Sword, except the character does not have to sacrifice a piece of equipment. Instead, she dramatically evades or blocks a single attack that round, regardless of the attacker's roll. This cannot be used to escape from a 'surprise' situation such as having someone sneak up and press a knife to your throat; it must be used in the heat of combat.

If *both* combatants use this ability in the same round (e.g. they nullify each other's attacks), the combat *escalates*. Next round, they both receive an advantage die to their attacks against each other.

Spirit Shines Through

This is a renamed Shake off Wounds, in which the character displays heroic resolve by gritting their teeth and disregarding near-mortal injury.

Cyborg Resurrection

A variation on Defy Death. With the GM's permission, a Hero 'killed' can be brought back with extensive cybernetic replacement. In game terms, this means becoming either a Trans-cyborg or (full) Cyborg (see page 13). Any Advancement Points the character accrues must first be spent on paying off this boon.

SETTING-SPECIFIC RULES

Simultaneous Duelling

See the rule called Duels in the core *Everywhen* book - 'roll with damage' is considered to be a core rule for this setting.

Delayed Damage

Superior combatants will sometimes demonstrate their skill by attacking so swiftly the target *doesn't even know they're dead* until seconds later. The unfortunate has a momentary look of puzzlement just before they're decapitated, cut in half by nanowire, etc. Any companions nearby gasp in horror.

In game terms, when a Hero does enough damage to take Rabble or Tough opponents to negative LB, they can claim this effect and describe the results. Allies of the slain target are so shocked by this display of prowess they take a penalty die on their actions the next round. NPCs classed as Villains are sneeringly immune.

GMs may want to rule the above costs a Hero Point or can only be used by a particular character once per adventure.

Conservation of Ninjitsu

This oft-quoted 'law' implies the toughness of the opposition is proportionate to how many are present. For example, in many action movies a single ninja can end up causing a lot of trouble for the hero, but a whole horde of them are more or less easily overcome.

Game-wise, this means if only a few NPCs are in a key scene they can be treated as Toughs, but if a whole horde starts showing up, they all become Rabble. And vice-versa.

The GM decides if and when to invoke this rule. If used too frequently and players catch on, they'll become cocky when facing crowds of antagonists.

HACKING

As noted under the *Hacker* career, *Neonpunk Crysis* assumes a more 'realistic' take on the act of subverting computer systems. *Hackers* work with a keyboard and some type of visual input; they normally *don't* link their nervous systems to a separate consensual reality. The main reason is that 'netrunning' in the classic sense requires extra time, with the *Hacker* engaged separately from the rest of the group.

There are two basic options for hacking: a single task roll, or using the Projects rules (see *Everywhen*, page 30). The latter is typically used when the hacking attempt needs to be resolved in 'real time.'

There are also two general uses for hacking: obtaining information, and defeating security systems. Some installations are 'shielded' from outside net traffic on their own dedicated mainframe, which means the *Hacker* has to physically get *inside* and find a network terminal to gain access. This can prevent separating the *Hacker* from the rest of the group.

Hacking is a *mind* based roll, + Ranks in the *Hacker* career – modifiers. The chief modifier is the Security Rating (SR) of the target system. Security Ratings mirror Task modifiers, from Very Easy to Heroic.

Examples of Security Rating by Modifier (table) are shown below:

Security Rating	Description
Very Easy (+2)	Access system on a series of pay-toilets
Easy (+1)	Database of a small store's daily receipts
Moderate (+0)	Archives for a local newspaper
Hard (-1)	Security cameras at a popular nightclub
Tough (-2)	Interpol database
Demanding (-4)	Password recognition for an arcology
Formidable (-6)	Locking mechanism on a bank vault
Heroic (-8)	Targeting system for laser satellites

When trying to find information, the *Hacker* describes what they're looking for and the GM assigns a SR based on how difficult it is to get. This is a useful way to drop 'clues' for moving an adventure along. PCs might also have access to special software or equipment that can add a positive modifier to the roll.

For example, a disc with all the old passwords for the Roppongi Hills First National Bank could provide a +2 bonus when attempting to hack this particular target.

Warning: Tech Limitations

Neonpunk Crysis information technology is based on assumptions about the future from the viewpoint of the 80's and early 90's. Net access isn't wireless, and requires a land line. That said, there are still plenty of places offering a semi-private vidscreen and keyboard, as long as you've got spare yen.

On a failed roll, the *Hacker* is locked out and cannot make an attempt again until a significant passage of time (say 24 hours). Depending on the SR of the target, there may also be a consequence. Failing to hack a military system, for example, could mean a SWAT team knocking at your door ten minutes later.

Example of hacking with a single roll: Harumi wants information on a criminal running a black market for reprogrammed androids. She tries to hack into the Neo Tokyo Met Police database, which the GM rules as Tough (-2) SR. Harumi is a Rank 1 *Hacker* and has 2 *mind*, for a net modifier of +1. She rolls an 8 and succeeds, just barely. The GM gives her the police files on the criminal, which contains several titbits of useful information.

Much later, Harumi is with a small group that has broken into a research lab for the terrorist organization Heisei Dawn. After locating a computer terminal, she tries to gain access to a specimen vault by convincing the security system she's a top researcher. The GM determines the lab has a Demanding (-4) SR, due to the highly sensitive work going on there. Not surprisingly, she fails her roll. The terminal she's using is locked down and the System's Administrator is notified, which will likely prompt a security response within the hour.

"Screw this," says Gunfox, pulling out a wad of C-6 explosive. "I'm going to run a bypass!"

MARTIAL ARTS

Martial arts in the *Neonpunk Crysis* setting are powerful enough to make them a viable combat option. The *Martial Artist* career, various boons, and use of Hero Points effectively simulate the flashy hand-to-hand effects seen in anime.

A character taking the *Martial Artist* career needs to designate whether it is a primarily unarmed (*karate*, *judo*, *aikido*, etc.) or armed (*kendo*, *kyujustu*, *bojutsu*, etc.). In the latter case, they must choose a particular preferred weapon for that style.

A practitioner of an unarmed style does d3 brawling damage + ½ their *strength* or *Martial Artist* Rank

(whichever is higher). They can opt to make this Normal vs. Fatigue damage by taking a penalty die on their attack roll. When using the preferred weapon of their style, an armed practitioner does: base weapon damage + *strength* + *Martial Artist* Rank.

Beginning at Rank 1, both Hero and Rival *Martial Artists* have access to a 'Named Attack' or 'Secret Technique' option. In play, the character calls out a name for their particular attack (which can be done spontaneously), and receives a number of bonus die equal to their Rank in *Martial Artist*. These dice represent a pool that can only be used once per adventure, though they can be split into smaller amounts.

Example: Retsu is a practitioner of Shotokan Karate (Rank 2 *Martial Artist*). In combat, he decides to attack using his Secret Technique option, calling it his "Second Tier Avenging Fist." Retsu rolls 2 bonus dice on his attack, greatly increasing his chances of achieving a Mighty Success. He could've named his attack "First Tier Avenging Fist" and taken 1 bonus die, leaving him 1 left over to use later.

Other boons that are appropriate to round out martial arts abilities: *Brawler*, *Grappler*, *Lightning Reflexes*, *Mighty Fists*, *Thick Skin*, *Kiai Shout*.

MECHA

Giant robotic fighting 'suits' have garnered their own genre in anime and RPG's. Though not the focus of *Neonpunk Crisis*, mecha serve two main purposes here. First, they can act as extremely tough adversaries, similar to dragons in a fantasy game. Second, mecha can boost PCs power levels in a dramatic, though not *permanent* way, allowing for fights on a truly epic scale.

Mecha utilize the Vehicle rules from *Everywhen*. Their typical Size scale is 3; they are big, but not the enormous, kaiju-fighting robots seen in some anime.

Though conventional vehicles like tanks and jet fighters are still predominant on the battlefield of the 21st century, mecha are game changers, increasingly finding their way into the elite of military forces. The Terada Corporation is the largest producer in the world. Superpowers like the Eastern Bloc, United States, and Euro Union buy as many as their budgets can afford, for use in various resource-grab wars around the world. Mecha have also been developed for peaceful pursuits, such as construction and hazardous waste handling.

All the examples listed have a crew of 1, the pilot. For simplicity's sake, battles between mecha are resolved as normal combat, using the operator's *agility* (limited by *Driver (mecha)* Rank, see below), *Ranged*, and *Melee*

values, *initiative* (modified by the mecha's Scan), and the mecha's inherent *defence*. **The pilot's effective *agility* score can't be higher than his or her Rank in the *Driver (mecha)* career.**

Example: Eiji 'Ace' Ikari has *Driver (mecha)* 2 with an *agility* of 3, *initiative* of 1, and scores of 2 and 1 in *Ranged* and *Melee* combat, respectively. He dives into the cockpit of a *Namahage*-class Infantry Mecha, which has a Scan and *defence* of 1. In combat, his effective values are *agility* 2 (limited by his *Driver (mecha)* Rank), *ranged* 2, *Melee* 1, *initiative* 2 (modified by Scan), and *defence* 1. Eiji has a net +4 for *Ranged* and +3 for *melee* attacks.

Mecha boons

The following are additional features available on some mecha.

Damage Control – A unit mounted in the chest that can distribute small, mite-shaped robots to administer emergency repairs. It can be used only once and restores d3 Frame.

Jet Assist – Dual jet turbines mounted on the back. Though mecha are too heavy to actually fly, they can make jet-assisted 'hops' at increased Speed. This is a relatively common feature.

Missile Pod – Shoulder-mounted, this fires a one-use 'burst' of smart missiles against a single target. The attack roll is +3 to hit and has the Indirect property. Damage is d6H (2), armour penetration 1. Because this is 'fire and forget', a pilot can trigger the pod and attack with a primary weapon the same round.

Missile pods can also be used defensively to stop incoming missiles.

Spider Configuration – The mecha has at least four legs with high-tension pincers at the end instead of feet. Spider-configured mecha can climb vertical surfaces – assuming said surfaces can hold their weight.

Sample Mecha

The following are examples of mecha available in the *Neonpunk Crisis* setting. In addition to regular vehicle stats, they have a *strength* score for relative comparisons.

Construction Rig

Size (3), Scan 0, Speed 1, Frame 5, Defence 0, Armour 0, Strength 1 (3), Weapons n/a

Basically, a large exoskeleton with a semi-open cage for the human operator. Not intended for combat. The rig can punch for d6H+8 damage.

'Yurei' Class Reconnaissance Mecha

Size (3), Scan 2, Speed 1 (2 Assist), Frame 6, Defence 2, Armour 2, Strength 1 (3)

Weapons: Heavy MG (d6 (2), 0 AP)

A light combat mecha, used primarily for scouting and skirmishing. It mounts a Heavy Machinegun on its right forearm and has Jet Assist turbines as well as a full sensor suite. Some models also carry Missile Pods.

'Namahage' Class Infantry Mecha

Size (3), Scan 1, Speed 1 (2 Assist), Frame 7, Defence 1, Armour 3, Strength 3 (3)

Weapons: 40mm Gatling Cannon (d6H (3), 2 AP), Missile Pod

Designed to wade through conventional infantry and go toe-to-toe with other mecha, as well as protect slower units like the Dai-Oni. It mounts a 40mm Gatling Cannon, Jet Assist, and a Missile Pod.

'Jorogumo' Class Stealth Mecha

Size (3), Scan 1, Speed 1 (2 Assist), Frame 6, Defence 2, Armour 1, Strength 1 (3)

Weapons: Heavy Laser (d6 (2), 1 AP)

An experimental Terada Corp mecha, similar to the 'Yurei' model, but with a Spider Configuration and a large cloaking unit (functions exactly as a Stealth Cloak; see the *Equipment* section, p. 23).

'Dai-Oni' Class Mobile Artillery Mecha

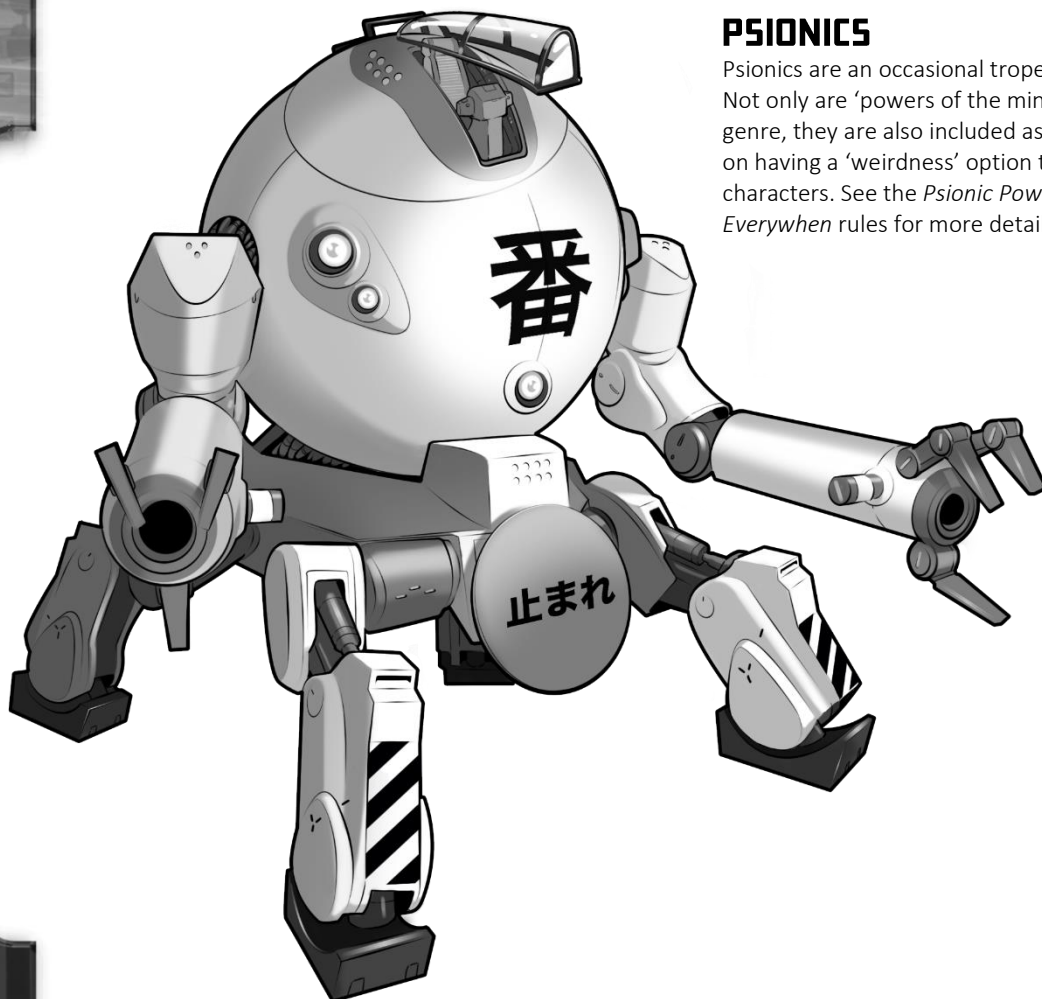
Size (3), Scan 0, Speed 0, Frame 9, Defence 0, Armour 3, Strength 3 (3)

Weapons: Howitzer (d6H (3), 3 AP), EXP-2 (d6 (3), 4 AP), Missile Pod

The Big Guns. A mobile artillery platform mounting a howitzer on the back/shoulder (for direct and indirect fire). It also has an Experimental Projectile Weapon Mark II (i.e. a railgun) mounted on the right forearm.

PSIONICS

Psionics are an occasional trope in 80's and 90's anime. Not only are 'powers of the mind' appropriate for the genre, they are also included as some players will insist on having a 'weirdness' option to further distinguish their characters. See the *Psionic Powers* section in the core *Everywhen* rules for more details.



ADVENTURES

This is the meat of *Neonpunk Crisis*. The five adventures that follow can be played as one-shots, but are all nominally linked through Colonel Kuroda. The final meta-scenario, **'The Ballad of Cypher Ferox,'** is a tour de force of various Neo Tokyo locations, as PCs scrap with the emerging self-awareness of two unlikely AI's.

SHADOW SISTERS OF SHINJUKU

Disfigured *kunoichi* (female ninja) and former prostitute **Pinku Serizawa** is out to liberate all the working girls of the Shinjuku district. By teaching them ninjitsu, she hopes to throw off the yoke of their yakuza pimps. Unfortunately, she is also killing anyone who refuses to join her rapidly-growing 'clan.'

One or more PCs receive an invitation to meet with **Sachiko**, a friend who fears for her life. Too late, the Heroes discover her poisoned corpse. However, a clue points to the **Immaculate Egret** massage parlour, and eventually, a confrontation with yakuza underboss **Kenzo Kure**. If PCs can avoid an outright bloodbath, they learn Kenzo is also concerned about the recent murders. He reveals his suspicion of Pinku and her base of operations, a love hotel called the **Blue Pagoda**. If shown proper respect, he may even be willing to lend some yakuza muscle to help out.

After contriving their way inside the Pagoda and battling upwards to the highest tier, PCs face a final showdown with Pinku and her... *unusual* weapons.

Major NPCs

Pinku Serizawa – Main rival, with a major grudge against the yakuza for disfiguring her. She has her own unique sense of ninja fashion.

Kenzo Kure – Yakuza underboss and onetime professional shoot-fighter. Potentially an ally for the PCs.

Sachiko – Lead-in to the adventure, and unfortunately a corpse when the PCs catch up with her.

Start

One or more PCs knows Sachiko, a working girl fallen on hard times. She might be a friend or former romantic interest. Whatever her connection, she trusts PCs enough to reach out for help. She sends a vid-phone recording to meet her at the **Ginza Skyclub** in Shinjuku at 8 PM. "I'm buying," she adds, her voice somewhat frantic.

Alternatively, several Heroes might be present at the club when Sachiko's body is found (see below). She may also be an informant for Colonel Kuroda, and already have contacted him. In that case, PCs will be sent to the club to investigate.

Death At 60 Stories

The Ginza Skyclub is located on the top floor of a prosperous commercial building. Streetwise characters will know it as a place where mid-level salarymen go to drink and meet prostitutes. Getting into the club shouldn't be difficult as long as no one's carrying a lot of ordnance. Two former *sumotori* serve as doormen.

The Ginza has a discotheque theme complete with lighted dance floor and giant mirror-ball. While the bar is crowded, there are semi-private booths along the windows providing a spectacular view.

Sachiko sits in one of these booths. Unresponsive to greetings, she slumps over if touched. Her eyes are open and glassy, and a check reveals a feathered dart sticking out of her neck. Clutched in her hand is an ID card with a white egret stamped on one side and a bank chip containing her life-savings.

PCs with ranks in *Assassin* or knowledge of Japanese history can make a Moderate (+0) *mind* roll to discern the dart is of antiquated design, and coated with poison. A *Physician* background reveals Sachiko was killed very recently – perhaps 15 minutes prior.

Loudly proclaiming the presence of a corpse will cause a stampede of fleeing customers. Police show up a short time later, and unless PCs escape with the general herd they'll be detained for several hours to make statements. Heroes affiliated with Kuroda can waive all this, though he'll still want a report.

The ID card is from the Immaculate Egret, a massage parlour only blocks away. Anyone with a criminal background will know this as a yakuza establishment.

The Immaculate Egret

This seedy parlour consists of several small rooms off a central waiting area, where an elderly Korean woman sits. The Egret is a member's only club, but as she cheerfully explains, membership can be purchased on the spot.

Each of the smaller rooms has a message table with a tactile amplifier rig. Four young women are always on duty, usually sipping tea or smoking cigarettes in the back room when not working. Staff will be polite with inquisitive PCs, but any suspicious behaviour or asking about Sachiko will cause them to hit a silent alarm. Upstairs, Kenzo and his men will leave their domino game to investigate.

Kenzo is a mid-ranking yakuza whose polite demeanour masks an effective, ruthless personality. Characters with Ranks in *Martial Artist* will recognize him as a former shoot fighter from the un-augmented leagues. He has two goons in blazers bulging at the armpits.

Kenzo makes it clear he doesn't want a fight, but is curious why PCs are asking after Sachiko. He explains she's a "valued employee" who disappeared from work about a day ago. If PCs reveal she was killed, Kenzo looks genuinely concerned. He invites Heroes into the backroom for some *gyokuro* (high quality green tea) as he explains the situation.

Kenzo's Story

"We've had a string of working girls murdered over the last two weeks in Shinjuku, some independent, some tied with us. It doesn't look like the usual sex-killer sort of thing. I had an opportunity to examine one of the bodies before police arrived."

Kenzo produces a small square of fabric. Folded inside is a gleaming shuriken.

"I found that lodged in the woman's throat. She was assassinated by someone trained in the Way of Shadow."

"Sachiko told me she'd started getting death threats about a week ago. This was right after she turned down an offer to work for Pinku Serizawa, a madam who runs a love hotel not far from here. Rumour has it none of Pinku's girls have gone missing."

Kenzo explains the police have refused to investigate Pinku, as she pays her protection fees like everyone else. She's not yakuza, and her background remains something of a mystery. Perhaps, he hints, the Heroes might want to take a look? Kenzo's boss would be happy to throw some yen their way, if they were able to resolve the situation.

Attempting to impress Kenzo is a Hard (-1) *appeal* based roll, modified by Ranks in *Criminal*, *Ronin*, or *Martial Artist*. On a success, he is willing to send his two goons along as muscle if players agree to investigate the Blue Pagoda, though he makes it clear they're to be treated with respect.

Checking in at the Love Hotel

Pinku's establishment is an impressive four-tiered pagoda in the ancient style. Tubes of blue neon line the curved awnings. Like most love hotels, the operation is automated for maximum privacy. PCs can enter by conventional means through the lobby, or try something sneaky, like climbing up the building.

Pinku Serizawa is in her control room on the fourth tier. She's been expecting a yakuza incursion for some time... looking forward to it, in fact. Depending on how the Heroes enter/advance through the structure, she will throw waves of her kunoichi at them, typically from ambush.

If the PCs climb:

The overhang of pagoda roofs makes it Tough (-2) to clamber from one level to another (*agility* based roll, modified by Ranks in *Assassin*, *Criminal*, etc.) Pinku keeps several 'cyber pigeons' atop the structure, fitted with fiber-optic cameras in their collars. Climbing up the roofs and avoiding detection from these innocuous-looking birds is a Demanding (-4) *agility* or *mind* roll. If/when she spots PCs, Pinku will arrange to have a group of kunoichi Rabble (2x PCs number) waiting to bushwhack them at the next roof level.

The only windows are at the top of the pagoda (4th tier), protected by a lattice of steel bars. The bars are charged with direct current; anyone touching them takes d6 damage and has to make a Hard (-1) *strength* roll on subsequent rounds or have their muscles lock in place, taking a further d6. Once the bars have been dealt with, PCs can access the dojo chamber just outside Pinku's control room – where she will have her forces marshalled for a final battle (see *Showdown* on page 32).



If the PCs enter from the street:

The hotel has a small lobby with a bank of monitors depicting various 'themed' rooms and prices by the hour or night. There are hundreds more themes than actual rooms, because a holo-projector can depict various types (some examples: a Victorian mansion, African savannah, hot springs, a harem tent, etc.) Normally, a patron inserts a credit chip, selects a room, and receives a small magnetic key. The more expensive rooms are higher in the pagoda.

Pinku has closed circuit cameras in the lobby. Paranoid, she will suspect PCs as being sent by the yakuza, unless they've made a serious attempt to disguise themselves.

Pinku commands a total force of ninja Rabble and Toughs equal to 3x and 1.5x the PCs number (round up), respectively. These will attempt to attack from ambush vs. a 'straight' fight, in small waves of 2–4 Rabble plus a Tough leader. You can adjust these numbers if players seem to be having too easy or too hard a time of it. A traditionalist, Pinku's ninja are armed with primitive weaponry (swords, shuriken, blowguns), though they are no less deadly in skilled hands.

The first three levels of the pagoda consist of the theme rooms, plus storage and maintenance. Access between levels is via a single elevator or the fire stairs – both will have ambushes waiting (see below).

Room ambush

The first 'theme room' PCs enter will be trapped. Once inside, Pinku will magnetically lock the door behind them (the door can be broken through with 8 points of damage), and cause the holo-projector to strobe for a disorienting effect. PCs can make a Hard (–1) *mind* roll with a penalty die to notice the tip of a blowgun protruding from an air-conditioning grate. Anyone who passes the roll can take an action before the kunoichi concealed there attacks. At the same time, several other ninja spring out from concealment behind furniture with swords drawn.

Elevator ambush

If alerted, Pinku will freeze the elevator on the first floor. Its doors open easy enough, but slide shut once PCs are inside. An access panel in the ceiling is open; several ninjas are hiding in the shaft above. One will toss down an eggshell grenade loaded with flash powder. Anyone caught in the blast has to pass a Hard (–1) *agility* roll or be blinded for d3+1 rounds. Ninjas will then come slipping down to attack. Given space restrictions, *defence* will be reduced by 1 and fighting with a melee weapon larger than Light incurs a penalty die.

The elevator doors can be forced back open with a Demanding (–4) *strength* roll; several PCs can pool their *strength* in the attempt. Though the elevator is frozen, once the ninjas have been dealt with PCs can access the shaft and try to climb up the cables to reach the higher levels. This entails a Tough (–2) *strength* or *agility* roll, and the doors to each level will have to be forced as above. Falling from the top of the shaft is potentially deadly (2d6H damage).

Fire stairs ambush

A series of switchbacks leads all the way to the 4th tier. However, midway up a group of kunoichi will be hiding behind a corner. As PCs approach, the ninjas scatter handfuls of ball bearings down the steps.

PCs need to make a Hard (–1) *agility* roll or trip, taking d3 damage as they fall back down the stairs (d6 on a Calamitous Failure). Meanwhile, the ninjas pepper them with arrows and shuriken. If the fight goes badly, these kunoichi will attempt to flee up the stairs and rally with Pinku for the final battle (see *Showdown* on page 32).

Optional: Pinku's Ranting

The Blue Pagoda has an intercom system running through every level. If the GM wishes, Pinku can taunt PCs as "yakuza stooges" as soon as they are inside. She may even drop hints as to her origins and the reasons behind her enmity towards organized crime.

Hacking the Pagoda

The Blue Pagoda's security systems (closed circuit cameras, elevator controls, door locks, etc.) and power supply are on an internal grid, not accessible from the net. The best a hacker can do from the 'outside' is download a map of the hotel and access surveillance cameras from the nearby street.

Once inside the building, however, a resourceful PC may be able to splice into the mainframe from a junction box. Doing so is initially a Tough (-2) *mind* roll, modified by Ranks in *Hacker* or *Technician*. Each action afterwards (shutting off power, reactivating the elevator, etc.) requires a Hard (-1) *mind* roll, modified by Ranks in *Hacker*.

Showdown

Once PCs arrive at the 4th tier, the boss fight is on! There are two main rooms: a traditional dojo with training mats, dummies, and silhouettes for shuriken practice, and the smaller, adjoining control room, with a bank of closed circuit monitors. Windows from the control room overlook the dojo.

PCs arriving via elevator shaft or fire stairs will first enter the dojo, where a vaguely female silhouette can be seen hunched over the monitors in the next room.

The silhouette is a decoy made from straw. Pinku is hiding in the rafters above the dojo, along with her remaining kunoichi. When she feels the moment is right, she commands her minions to leap down and attack, while she appears to float gracefully to the floor. This is an old ninja trick; she uses a spool of near-invisible wire to accomplish this illusion.

Depending on the PCs actions, she might deliver a soliloquy about her origins (if she has not already done so; see *Pinku's Ranting* on this page), revealing the scar beneath her veil.

In combat, Pinku prefers to target yakuza or males vs. females. She has a pair of fur-lined handcuffs to bind foes and a nanowire cat-o-nine-tails for tough opponents. She will freely use her Rabble as Meat Shields (see *Everywhen*, page 93), and if wounded past half her *lifeblood* total she will attempt to flee via a secret panel in the roof.

Afterwards

Whether Pinku is killed or not, her operations in Shinjuku cease and the murder of prostitutes stops. Though Kuroda will be only mildly interested in the outcome, PCs discover they now have the gratitude of Kenzo Kure, a somewhat dubious ally who may prove useful in the future.

NPCs

Kenzo Kure - 'Honorable' Yakuza

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	1	Initiative	0	Martial Artist 1
Agility	1	Melee	2	Criminal (yakuza) 2
Mind	1	Ranged	0	
Appeal	1	Defence	1	
Lifeblood	9	Protection	d6-3, light vest	
Boons	<i>Hard as Nails</i>			

Kenzo Kure is classed as a Tough. Beneath his striped suit he wears a light armour vest and a shoulder holster with a medium pistol, though prefers to use his shoot-fighting skills if attacked.

Kenzo's Goons

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	2	Initiative	0	Criminal (fashionista) 1
Agility	0	Melee	1	
Mind	0	Ranged	1	
Appeal	0	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	7	Protection	d6-3, light vest	

Kenzo's men have been hand-picked for physical strength and fashion sense. Both wear light vests and are armed with machine pistols.

Kunoichi Toughs

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	0	Assassin (ninja) 2
Agility	2	Melee	0	
Mind	0	Ranged	0	
Appeal	0	Defence	2	
Lifeblood	5	Protection	none	

The elite of Pinku's forces. They are armed with:

- *wakizashi* (d6 damage)
- *shuriken* (d6L damage)
- blowguns (d2 damage + poison; roll using *strength* or take d6-1 damage 2 rounds later).

Kunoichi Rabble

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	0	Assassin 1
Agility	0	Melee	0	
Mind	0	Ranged	0	
Appeal	0	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	3	Protection	none	

Pinku's rank and file, taken from the streets of Shinjuku and given just enough training to be dangerous. They will use the Horde option to attack, if possible. Though armed as the Kunoichi Toughs, they only do d3 damage.

Pinku Serizawa - Disgruntled Ninja

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	1	Assassin (ninja) 2
Agility	3	Melee	0	Seductress 1
Mind	1	Ranged	0	
Appeal	1	Defence	3	
Lifeblood	12	Protection	none	
Hero Points	5			
Boons	<i>Augmentation (agility), Hard to Kill, Nanowire Weapon</i>			
Flaws	<i>Obsession (revenge), Unsettling</i>			

Pinku appears as a lithe figure wearing a crushed velvet bodysuit and pink veil. The lower part of her face has been disfigured with acid burns, which she has opted to keep rather than correct with cosmetic surgery. A true survivor, she has sworn revenge on the male-dominated system that defiled her.

Pinku prefers to use a nanowire cat o' nine-tails (d6+3 damage, ignores armour) and a pair of special fur-lined handcuffs she can throw with great accuracy. On a successful attack, the cuffs will either bind an opponent's wrists, or bind a wrist to a nearby object like an exposed pipe or power cable.

BUG HUNT

Dr. Konchu, an entomologist working for the terrorist organization Heisei Dawn, targets rival scientist **Dr. Sharma**, a researcher attempting to stop the dreaded Zika-9 plague. An eccentric assassin, Konchu uses insects in all his attacks. PCs are on bodyguard duty as Sharma works tirelessly in her laboratory.

After thwarting Konchu's first attempt, the Heroes go undercover to protect another high-profile target. In true supervillain fashion, Konchu makes his move during a baseball game at the packed **Shoji Stadium**. This time he leaves enough clues for the PCs to eventually track him back to his secret laboratory.

The frail scientist is waiting with a final surprise: a suit of titan beetle bio-armour he has been developing for the Terada Corporation. After the battle, PCs discover a connection between Heisei Dawn and the shadowy megacorporation.

Major NPCs

Dr. Sharma – A beautiful biologist on loan from New Delhi University. She has devoted herself to wiping out the *Aedes* strain mosquito that has ravaged so much of her country.

Dr. Konchu – A deranged scientist, too far gone to realize he's being used by both Heisei Dawn and Terada. Physically weak, but a holy terror when wearing his titan beetle armour.

Start

Colonel Kuroda summons PCs to the briefing room of K Division. He explains there are credible rumours Heisei Dawn has targeted key figures working to stop the Zika-9 epidemic (you may wish to paraphrase information about these concepts from information on page 8). PCs are tasked to protect Dr. Sharma at her secret research facility, and of course, uncover any information about the Heisei operatives they can.

Alternatively, the Heroes may have been hired as bodyguards by Dr. Sharma or the International Centre for Disease Control. A PC with Ranks in *Scientist*, *Civil Servant*, or *Physician* might be part of Sharma's research team (which also makes them targets for Konchu).

Killer Cockroaches

Due to threats, Dr. Sharma is operating from a low-profile, slightly rundown lab facility in the Keihin industrial district. Lights occasionally dim and rain drips from leaky ceiling panels. Sharma talks endlessly about splicing the genes of *Aedes* family mosquitoes (Zika-9's primary carriers) with lethal recessives. She has makeshift living quarters next to the lab, but spends most of her time hunched over test tubes of mosquito larvae.

Let PCs describe what security precautions they've taken (if any) and where they will be in the building. A break room towards the back has several vending machines with coffee, ramen, and cigarettes.

Around 1 AM on their second night of duty, PCs hear a sharp bang coming from the lab. Anyone responding will see Sharma atop a table, shouting as roaches swarm from a nearby air vent. She has powder burns on her ankle. "Watch out!" she yells. "Those things are explosive!"

The roaches have been implanted with micro-charges of C-6 and cued to Dr. Sharma's pheromones, blowing themselves up like miniature kamikazes when they get close. PCs can attempt to mow down the swarm (guns aren't particularly effective), though the best strategy is to snatch Sharma and get her out of there. Once she's a safe distance away from the building, the roaches lose her 'scent' and won't be able to follow.

Failing to save Sharma means she's brought down bit by bit with small explosions – a horrible way to die.

Searching the building's perimeter turns up a large plastic carton near one of the air conditioning intakes. There are no other clues.

Enter the Entomologist

Hours after the attempt, Heisei Dawn cuts into network TV with a pirate broadcast, claiming responsibility for killing Dr. Sharma (whether they were successful or not). The broadcast warns any further research into "nature's attempts to cull this overcrowded planet" will meet with more deaths.

PCs researching the *modus operandi* of this peculiar attack will uncover links to a Heisei Dawn operative known only as 'The Entomologist.' Colonel Kuroda might also uncover this information if PCs don't think to check.

The Entomologist's Crimes

Anyone doing an exhaustive computer search can learn of several insect-related attacks, thought to be the Entomologist's work:

- A wealthy medical philanthropist was stung to death by swarms of bees bearing nerve-poison.
- A newly-constructed inoculation clinic in Thailand collapsed, after a massive colony of worker ants dug tunnels under the foundation.
- Vital crops in starving regions of South America were stripped to the ground by a new species of gene-engineered beetle.

In addition, a researcher making a Demanding (-4) *mind* roll, modified by ranks in *Hacker*, can uncover conjecture tying the Entomologist with various bio-weapons projects funded by the Terada Corporation.

Take Me Out At The Ballgame

With Dr. Sharma either dead or safely relocated, Kuroda hustles PCs to their next bodyguard duty. The Yakult Swallows baseball team is playing against the Yorimuri Giants at Shoji Stadium, and a key member of the International Center for Disease Control, **Mr. Suda**, insists on attending, despite being a high-value target. Kuroda wants PCs undercover at the stadium, keeping their eyes out for suspicious activity and protecting Suda's private skybox.

Alternatively, if any PCs are athletes involved in a sport (professional wrestling, martial arts, racing, etc.), this could be the event featured. Reporter, Entertainer, and similar careers may prompt additional reasons for characters being present.

Whatever the game, the stadium is packed. As with Dr. Sharma, have PCs indicate their general plans for protecting Suda.

Hacking the Stadium

Hacking into Shoji stadium's security camera system is Tough (-2). Any other action, like shutting off the lights or power, tripping the fire alarm, etc., is Formidable (-6) due to heavy anti-terrorism software.

Around the 5th inning, anyone surveilling the parking lot can make a Moderate (+0) *mind* roll to notice a van marked 'Pest Control' approach. After it parks, five figures in bulky white smocks climb out.

At the same time, the stadium's PA system shrieks a high-pitched, oscillating sound. This is the mating call of the *Tanna japonensis* (Japanese cicada) cranked to ear-splitting volume. Approximately 80% of the crowd becomes incapacitated, clapping their hands over their ears. Of course, PCs are made of sterner stuff. They need to pass a *strength* roll or take a penalty die on most actions (spending a Hero Point shrugs this off). Otherwise, they can act normally.

The 'pest control' crew is an elite squad of Heisei Dawn terrorists equipped with ear protection. They take advantage of the confusion to move rapidly through the crowd, making for Mr. Suda's private box. One is carrying an RPG launcher, which he plans to fire into the skybox from a good vantage. Stadium security proves no match for this heavily-armed group.

Note that using heavy/automatic weapons has the potential to cause a *lot* of collateral damage here. A Calamitous Failure result during combat has a good chance of injuring or killing innocent bystanders.

Moments after the terrorists are defeated, rapid deployment helicopters appear above the stadium and SWAT teams rappel down. Armoured police vans cut off the parking lot. PCs affiliated with K Division can show their badges to avoid being detained for questioning.

Detective Work

Captured Heisei Dawn members will only divulge they're working for The Entomologist, and only after days of interrogation.

If PCs check out the stadium's PA booth, they'll find two dead staff and a black box spliced into the system. The box contains a laser disc recording of the cicadas, with a tiny serial number etched on one side. This number identifies the disc as property of the Entomology Department at Todai University. Dr. Konchu has made a vital mistake leaving it behind. Kuroda will eventually discover the clue if the PCs don't, prompting them to investigate.

A visit to the university's entomology department reveals the disc was taken without being checked out. Reviewing library cam footage eventually shows the thief, an older man with unkempt white hair. Staff can ID him as Dr. Konchu, an adjunct research professor. He has a small, mostly unused office at one end of a dusty corridor.

Searching the office turns up a shipping label with a non-university address: a private research laboratory called Biological Concepts, Ltd. Almost no information is available concerning the lab.

Release the Titan!

In contrast to Dr. Sharma's digs, Konchu's lab is in a tidy new corporate park. It has a state-of-the-art security system, with thermal cameras, hidden proximity sensors, and drones. Sneaking into Biological Concepts Ltd undetected is a Formidable (-6) task. However, the megalomaniacal Konchu will not alert the authorities if/when he notices PCs coming. In fact, he'll leave the front door unlocked, seeing the intrusion as a chance to combat test his new *titan beetle* bio-armour.

The building consists of a small reception room (with no receptionist) and three progressively larger labs.

The first two labs contain gene-splicing machines, several tanks crawling with cockroaches, and stores of advanced polymers made from chitin.

The third laboratory contains an ominous 8' tall glass tube filled with green fluid. This tube normally houses Dr. Konchu's bio-armour. If aware of the PCs, he will have just finished merging with the suit in a shadowed corner. At an opportune moment he reveals himself, a 7' figure covered in segmented armour plate and spines. He monologues how his "insect brethren" are going to trim the Earth's population to sustainable levels, then attacks!

Konchu will use his non-lethal weapons before closing to melee. As his ego can't grasp the concept of defeat, he fights until killed or captured.

The titan beetle armour is a prototype and doesn't have all the bugs (sorry) worked out yet: someone observing Konchu for at least one round can make a *mind* roll to notice spots where the plates don't fully cover. Striking at one of these weak points incurs a -2 to hit, but the armour will give only minimum protection.

The laboratory offers plenty of opportunities for getting knocked back into delicate equipment. If Konchu rolls a '6' on damage dice, you can rule the target has to pass an *agility* roll to avoid striking a bank of monitors, vat of goo, insect tank, etc. This doesn't have to do additional damage, but might entail a penalty die the next round as the character regains her feet or extricates herself.

Aftermath

Once the battle is over, PCs can search the labs thoroughly. Several pieces of the more high-end equipment bear the Terada Corp logo.

Hacking into Konchu's private database (a Hard (-1) *mind* roll) will reveal funding ties to the corporation's bio-weapons division.

A Demanding (-4) roll reveals more: the Terada Corp has been researching an expensive Zika-9 pharmaceutical treatment, and may have been backing the attempt on Dr. Sharma's life!

NPCs

Bang Roaches

These little horrors have pinhead-sized implants of C-6 in their abdomens. When close enough to a selected target they detonate for d6L damage (the target can make an *agility* roll to dodge/squash the things, avoiding this effect for a round). A swarm can be neutralized by full automatic fire or furious stomping on a successful attack against *defence* 3.

The 'Pest Control' Crew

Attributes	Combat Abilities	Careers
Strength 1	Initiative 0	Criminal (terrorist) 1
Agility 1	Melee 1	
Mind 0	Ranged 1	
Appeal 0	Defence 0	
Lifeblood 6	Protection d6-3, light armour	

An elite squad of Heisei Dawn terrorists, all Toughs. Nominally there are five: **Yuta, Takeru, Riku, Hina,** and **Akari**. You can adjust their numbers up or down, depending on the PC's relative strength.

Takeru wears heavy armour (d6-1 protection, bringing his *agility* to -1).

Akari is a trans-cyborg (d6-2 protection, both arms have *strength* 3 and forearm blades doing d6+3 damage). Akari is also carrying the RPG, and has the following boons and flaws: *Fearsome Looks, Metal Parts, Intimidating*.

All other squad members are armed with AR-19's and two fragmentation grenades apiece.

Priti Sharma - Brilliant Biologist

Attributes	Combat Abilities	Careers
Strength 0	Initiative 0	Scientist (biologist) 3
Agility 0	Melee 0	
Mind 3	Ranged 0	
Appeal 1	Defence 0	
Lifeblood 5	Protection none	

Dr. Sharma is a maverick research scientist from the University of Hyderabad, specializing in the *Aedes* mosquito and gene-engineering techniques. She counts as a Tough.

Atsuo Konchu, Mad Scientist

Attributes	Combat Abilities	Careers
Strength 0	Initiative 0	Scientist 3 Technician 3
Agility 0	Melee 1	
Mind 4	Ranged 1	
Appeal 0	Defence 0	
Lifeblood 10	Protection	prototype armour (see below)
Hero Points 5		
Boons	<i>Learned, Diabolical Plan, Excellent Laboratory</i>	
Flaws	<i>Boastful, Fanatic (insects)</i>	

Dr. Konchu (a Rival-level NPC) is in his late 50's with shocks of puffy white hair and staring eyes. Utterly fascinated with insects, he's spent a brilliant career studying how to use them against his fellow humans. With his ties to big corporations like Terada, he's a natural stooge for Heisei Dawn.

Konchu's prototype armour provides d6 (scale 2) protection and increases his *strength* to scale 2. The spines do d6 (scale 2) damage in melee. In addition, the suit has two non-lethal weapon arrays: a 'sticky ball' projector on the right forearm and a tear gas grenade launcher on the left. The sticky ball is a large projectile directed at a single target (+1 to attack); on a successful hit it lowers *agility* by 1 and causes a penalty die on most actions. Successive hits continue to reduce *agility*. If brought to -2, the target is considered immobilized. Trying to remove the ball requires a Demanding (-4) *strength* roll; on a failure, the ball adheres to whatever or whoever made the attempt, 'sharing' the *agility* penalty. The ball eventually loses its sticky properties after 2d3 hours.



KVN

GORGON DAWN

Freelance thief **Neko Black** steals a pair of strangely-tinted contact lenses from the Terada Corporation's research labs. Unknown to her, the lenses are part of an experimental targeting system for a laser satellite, known as 'Project Gorgon's Stare.' Terada Corp security is already scrambling to recover their property.

Neko takes the lenses to a fence working at **Yasuda Optical**, a high-end boutique in the sprawling **Hyperplex** mall. Meanwhile, her double-crossed partner, the hacker **Gaku**, is close on her heels. He uses the mall's anti-terrorism protocols to lock down the entire complex, before uploading a virus into the mainframe. Suddenly, the Hyperplex's hundreds of Autonomous Sales Units (robot mannequins) go berserk. These sleek steel 'zombies' start attacking any shoppers they can find!

PCs are among those trapped in the Hyperplex. After contending with hordes of ASU's (and possibly saving people in the process), they eventually find Neko and confront Gaku, only to discover the lockdown can't be countermanded for twenty-four hours.

Worse, Terada Corp's top 'expediter,' **Mr. Six**, has tracked the lenses to the Hyperplex. Surprised by the lockdown and expecting tough resistance, he contacts his special muscle. A Bozu Squad blows one of the mall's gates and battles the ASU's inside. Mr. Six plans to flush his quarry out and recover the lenses himself.

At some point, the Heroes might figure out what the contact lenses can do. Controlling an orbital laser satellite could come in handy during the climactic final battle!

Major NPCs

Neko Black – An attractive *femme fatale* and accomplished thief. She has a penchant for betraying her would-be partners in crime.

Gaku – Your typical *otaku*, with a real talent for computers. Jilted by Neko and feeling sorry for himself, he is unaware of the bloodbath he's about to unleash.

Mr. Six – A trouble-shooter and rising star within the ranks of Terada Corporation. He hopes to advance even further by retrieving the lenses.

Start

There are several ways to involve PCs. They might be hot on the trail of Neko Black, who was spotted by one of Kuroda's informants when she entered the Hyperplex. Rumour is she just ripped off some top-secret hardware from Terada Corp, and everyone's trying to get a-hold of it. The informer last saw her ducking into Yasuda Optical.

PCs with a social life might also be at the 'Plex for their own reasons. They could be out on a date, clubbing, or simply shopping when the action goes down.

Note: the Hyperplex is a casual public location. PCs shouldn't be wearing obvious armour or carrying unconcealed weapons. Not starting out armed to teeth also ups the 'survival' aspect of the adventure.

Chopping Mall

The Hyperplex is three stories of cutting-edge consumerism, connected by plazas, escalators, and slidewalks. The complex encloses a small covered park as well. There are 200+ stores, ranging in size from a closet to several thousand square feet. Some of the more notable attractions:

Yasuda Optical

The aforementioned boutique, specializing in cyber eyes and Smart Bans™ sunglasses. Neko Black's sometime fence works here as a technician.

Colonel Saunder's Southern Fried Chicken

One of several restaurants in the mall, near the food court where traditional yakitori and ramen are served. For some reason this American chain is extremely popular in Japan.

Yuke! Yuke! / The Yokai's Coffin

Two dance clubs, both located on the third floor. The latter is known for drug deals. The mall's rent-a-cops give these establishments a wide berth.

Funopolis

The largest video game arcade in the mall, with several VR rooms for total immersion. Frequented by teenagers and adults alike.

Eon

A huge department store, with everything from clothing to housewares. It takes up three stories.

Ancient Treasures, Ltd.

A small and extremely expensive antique shop. Notable because there are no gun stores in the mall where PCs can stock up on firearms. Ancient Treasures *does* have an extensive collection of razor-sharp katana, however.

Endless Vinyl

A two-story record and laserdisc music shop, with listening booths. They also offer a small selection of manga.

Autonomous Sales Units

These animatrons, or 'ASUs,' are becoming a common sight around Neo Tokyo. The Hyperplex boasts one of the largest concentrations. ASUs fill the role of cashiers, attendants, and wandering sales staff.

Humanoid, these crude robots stand 5' 5" and weigh 130 lbs., constructed from plastic and polished stainless steel. The head is a blank ovoid screen that can be programmed with different faces, depending on the ASUs primary sales function. A voice synthesizer allows pre-recorded greetings. ASUs aren't built for speed. They can't run, and at most manage a fast, lurching walk if they have to.

After Gaku's virus transforms them, the ASUs all display the same face – a stylized skull.



Yume Park

A park enclosed by an overhead dome. Inside are a well-tended forest of traditional Japanese trees and a 'zoo' with animatronic animals, including horses, pandas, and monkeys. These robots are unaffected by Gaku's virus.

The Hyperplex also boasts a twelve-screen 3D movie theatre, saltwater aquarium, fitness club, pet store (selling both real and robotic animals), ice skating rink, software shops, vending machines for a bewildering array of products, and anything else you can think up.

One end of the mall has a Tsunami EX sports car on display. There are no keys available, but the car can be broken into and hotwired on a Tough (-2) *mind* roll. PCs can use the Tsunami to mow down 'zombies' crowding the various plazas.

Deadly Sandbox

As soon as the 'zombie' program is unleashed, the fun begins! An alarm sounds throughout the Hyperplex, and multiple blast-proof shutters slam down over all entrances/exits. A recorded voice advises shoppers to remain calm, though no one seems to be listening. The many ASUs start acting strangely, twitching spasmodically, dropping trays of free samples, and lurching in circles. Their face screens blank and flicker with static...

PCs should start a fair distance from Yasuda Optical when the ASUs attack. This gives them a location to work their way towards and a chance to meet up with Heroes who may be elsewhere. They can attempt to rescue shoppers (see the **Rescue** encounters below) and explore the mall while fending off 'zombie' hordes. Eventually, however, they should encounter Neko, before Mr. Six shows up.

Rescue Event #1

Amid terrified screams, a fierce *kiai* shout can be heard. PCs rushing to the source will see an elderly man with his sleeves rolled up, delivering a spinning kick to an ASU. This is **Mr. Kim**, a Tough fourth *dan* black belt, bravely using his Tae Kwon Do skills to protect a small knot of shoppers. Competent as he is, the ten ASUs surrounding him will prove too much unless PCs intervene. Once saved, Mr. Kim's main concern will be getting the shoppers to a place of safety.

Rescue Event #2

An overhead announcement in a calm voice directs shoppers to a nearby security station. Heroes responding find a trio of mall guards trying to fight off a horde of ASUs with batons and tasers.

There are 3x the PCs number in ASUs. Anyone searching the station can find a reinforced holding area that looks

reasonably safe from attack, though it can only accommodate five people. Security staff still alive at this point will want to hole up inside.

Rescue Event #3

A large group of shoppers (20+) are massed in a lingerie store and have almost succeeded in pulling the front security gate down. An ASU has wedged its arm under the gate and now several more (2 x PCs number) are trying to pull it back up. If the robots are dispatched, it takes a Hard (-1) *strength* roll to pull the wedged ASU out from under the gate, which can then be shut and locked.

PCs who rescue shoppers and get them to safe areas should be rewarded with an extra Hero Point.

Staying Focused

After the chaos starts, PCs originally sent to apprehend Neko may want to switch their efforts to simple survival. If this happens, make sure they get a chance to pass by Yasuda Optical and hear the screams coming from inside. The adventure is potentially tougher without Neko's help, but key events (arrival of the Bozu Squad, tangling with Mr. Six) can still happen.

Yasuda Optical

PCs should eventually reach the boutique. ASUs have just broken through the glass doors and are in the process of killing staff, amidst shrill screams. Heroes charging inside have to deal with the ASUs first (1xPCs number total). Neko will be the only survivor, hiding behind a counter. Once she sees her rescuers, she'll leap from concealment and beg for help.

Observant PCs will notice Neko's eyes have a strange crimson tinge. Also, she's wearing a headband with electronic gear too bulky to be a fashion statement. If pressed, she reluctantly explains this is the Gorgon's Stare device stolen from Terada Corp. She does not know how it works or what exactly it does.

Neko has already deduced her double-crossed partner is behind this mess. She wants to escape before the authorities (and Terada) show up. If asked, she explains Gaku is still likely somewhere in the mall, at a place where he would have direct access to the mainframe.

An Easy (+1) Hacking roll on any computer terminal can pull up a detailed map of the Hyperplex, showing the

main security office on the third floor. This is the most likely spot (and the safest inside the mall).

Alternately, PCs looking at one of the holo-directories scattered throughout the 'Plex might become suspicious, as all areas are clearly labelled *except* for a large shaded patch (the security office).

Getting to Gaku

As long as they're moving fast and keeping to the open, PCs should be able to reach the office after only a few skirmishes with slower-moving ASUs.

The security room is ringed by management cubicles (all empty) and protected by steel doors, which are difficult to force without explosives, but Neko can run a bypass on the control panel (as can a PC with Ranks in *Criminal* and/or *Technician* after passing a Tough (-2) *mind* roll). The doors then slide open amidst a shower of sparks.

Inside, Gaku is hunched over a bank of closed circuit monitors. He offers no resistance when approached, appearing to be in a state of shock. Seeing Neko snaps him out of it. A PC with Ranks in *Physician* or first aid skill can also rouse him after a few minutes of quiet conversation. Using force or intimidation will cause Gaku to blank out deeper.

If able to communicate, Gaku eventually explains the virus's effects are permanent and the anti-terrorism protocol will keep the mall locked down for twenty-four hours. He then breaks into a blubbing heap, apologizing to Neko and the world in general for acting so foolishly.

Rude Introductions

After Gaku has revealed the situation, a distant explosion shakes the security room. A monitor shows one of the blast shutters has been blown open. Seconds later, a small horde of bald motorcycle riders come roaring through the breach – Bozu Squad bikers! Armed with submachine guns, they open fire on the ASUs. After a minute or so it becomes obvious they are making their way towards the security office, where Mr. Six has figured Neko is hiding.

The breach appears unguarded. Though the Hyperplex has just become a much more dangerous place, there is now a clear opportunity to escape.

If PCs decide to stay in the security office, they'll have to fight off several waves of Bozu (2 x PCs number, total), all classed as Toughs. The latter's motorcycles won't be much use in the tight confines, however. Any PC with Ranks in *Soldier* will realize this is a limited tactical option: easy to defend, but also easy to get trapped in.

Opting to fight on the move proves wiser. The Bozu are spread out loosely and distracted by ASUs. Some of the 'bots even manage to take down a couple bikers. Successful stealth rolls should get PCs to the opening without much incident. Failure nets a running battle with 2-3 Bozu.



The Gorgon's Stare Device

This is a prototype targeting system for laser satellites. Essentially, whatever the user looks at is struck by a two-gigawatt column of crimson light, once the correct firing sequence has been 'thought.' Components inside the user's headband monitor for a triggering pattern of alpha waves. The laser satellite linked to the device has been conveniently left on, and is hovering in a geosynchronous orbit over Neo Tokyo.

In game terms, the column affects a five-metre area, destroying virtually anything (tanks, mecha, people) while doing a *lot* of collateral damage. A character can pay a Hero point to be elsewhere when the beam strikes, but will still take d6H damage from the hellish energy nearby. Because of the power drain, the satellite fires once every three turns.

The device only works when you, the GM, want it to, for either humorous or dramatic effect. A failsafe mechanism keeps it from firing too close to the user.

After several shots, the Terada Corp makes the decision to destroy the satellite, resulting in a brilliant display of re-entry debris over Neo Tokyo.

Into the Breach

Once at the sundered blast shutters, PCs can easily slip through to the parking lot. Police and rescue vehicles are visible, but a healthy distance back. Terada Corp's 'Expediter,' Mr. Six, has convinced authorities a terrorist attack *is* underway, and his own elite security forces are handling it.

Six has set up an ambush for Neko in the parking lot. On sighting PCs, he'll assume they're working with her and attack. There is one Terada goon in heavy armour per PC, plus Mr. Six himself. You can adjust these numbers up or down depending on what shape the Heroes are in.

PCs who specifically state they're keeping an eye out can spot the ambushers if they make a Tough (-2) *mind* roll. Otherwise, they take a penalty die when checking for priority.

If Neko is with PCs and still has possession of the Gorgon's Stare device, she might accidentally trigger it at some point during the battle. Mr. Six can burn a Rival Point to survive the blast, but might opt for the better part of valour if he loses too many men. Remember, the device can only fire once every 3 turns, and the Terada Corp will likely destroy the satellite itself after a couple shots.

Aftermath

Surviving PCs can use their K Division credentials to move through the security cordon around the mall. If they don't work for Kuroda, they'll have to devise a way to sneak past police. This shouldn't prove too difficult given the general chaos.

Neko and Gaku will attempt to escape after Mr. Six is defeated (Neko can use any Rival Points remaining to do so). Kuroda would want the pair arrested, but PCs can decide for themselves whether to bring them in.

If Terada Corp had to destroy the laser satellite, its falling debris streaking through the atmosphere provides a spectacular light show as the adventure ends...

NPCs

Autonomous Sales Units (ASUs)

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	1	Initiative	0	Worker 1
Agility	-1	Melee	1	
Mind	0	Ranged	0	
Appeal	0	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	3	Protection	none	

These robotic Rabble attack by clawing with rigid fingers, grappling, etc. Gaku's combat program lets these robots use the Horde option.

Damage is d3, or d6L if by Horde.

Tong Kim - Heroic Shopper

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	1	Initiative	0	Martial Artist 2
Agility	1	Melee	1	
Mind	0	Ranged	0	
Appeal	0	Defence	1	
Lifeblood	6	Protection	none	

Mr. Kim is an elderly Korean gentleman in his late 60's, but remains spry due to a lifetime of Tae Kwon Do.

Mall Cops

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	0	Cop 1
Agility	0	Melee	0	
Mind	0	Ranged	0	
Appeal	0	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	2	Protection	none	

Clueless Rabble, though to their credit they are dedicated to saving as many shoppers as possible.

Neko Black - Hapless Thief

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	1	Courier 1
Agility	2	Melee	0	Criminal (thief) 2
Mind	1	Ranged	0	
Appeal	1	Defence	3	
Lifeblood	10	Protection	none	
Hero Points	5			
Boons		<i>Attractive, Contacts (criminal), Sneaky</i>		
Flaws		<i>Calamity Jun, Greed</i>		

Neko presents as a cheerful youth wearing athletic clothing, with her hair cut in a short bob. Though not a stunning beauty, she projects a (false) vulnerability most males seem to find irresistible. Talented at both emotional manipulation and the fine art of breaking-and-entering, she has yet to land a 'big score.' In fact, most of her capers to date have quickly turned into disasters.

Neko dislikes violence, and tries to avoid combat if at all possible. She usually saves a couple of Hero Points to make a timely escape when necessary.

Gaku - Lovestruck Hacker

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	0	Hacker 2
Agility	0	Melee	0	
Mind	3	Ranged	0	
Appeal	-1	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	5	Protection	none	

Gaku is a talented *Hacker*, but also gullible. After being used and then abandoned by Neko, he decided to retaliate with some of his homemade software. The poor sap would take her back at the slightest sign of affection.

Bozu Squad Members

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	0	Driver
Agility	1	Melee	1	(motorcycle) 1
Mind	1	Ranged	1	Hacker 1
Appeal	0	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	5	Protection	d6-3, fauxhide jacket	

Otaku 'recruited' by the rogue AI, Missile Guidance System 66 (see page 4 for more background information). They have been brainwashed to total

obedience. This lot hires themselves out as muscle for various patrons.

Their bikes are identical Yamahondas and usually carry 2; a driver and an SMG gunner. Because Bozu drive by 'face,' the driver *can* also shoot, but incurs a penalty die on attack rolls.

Mr. Six - Terada Troubleshooter

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	3	Initiative	0	Executive 1
Agility	1	Melee	2	Martial Artist 1
Mind	1	Ranged	1	Mercenary 1
Appeal	0	Defence	1	
Lifeblood	13	Protection	d6-2, medium armour	
Hero Points	5			
Boons		<i>Aesthetic Armour, Augmentation (strength), Legendary Weapon (hanbo staff)</i>		
Flaws		<i>Arrogant, Obsession (promotion)</i>		

Thaddeus Jones, AKA 'Mr. Six,' is a broad-shouldered African-American man with high cheekbones and hair shaved on the sides. He speaks fluent Japanese and always wears sunglasses when 'on the case.' Six originally started out as a corporate bodyguard, but the Terada Corp quickly recognized his competence and promoted him to their 'Expediter' unit. He's been obsessed with climbing the ladder ever since.

Mr Six is a devotee of Isshin-Ryu Karate. His legendary weapon is a hanbo staff, but he also carries a Nambu Tactical pistol (see under *Equipment* on page 20).

Terada Goons

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	1	Initiative	0	Mercenary 2
Agility	1/-1	Melee	2	
Mind	0	Ranged	0	
Appeal	0	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	6	Protection	d6 heavy armour and helmet	

Corporate toughs, somewhat hampered by their full suits of armour. They all carry assault rifles (treat as AR-19's).

THE WOODCUTTER

Kuroda learns that the Adelphi company is field-testing a new combat android. What makes this particular test unusual is that it's slated to happen inside the Nakama Plaza building while partially occupied. The Colonel wants PCs to investigate undercover, as maintenance staff or temp workers.

What Kuroda doesn't know is the Nakama Corporation has given its permission for this 'test.' They are planning to get rid of some excess staff ('Dead Wood,' in management parlance), without the hassle of severance pay. And Adelphi's new android is going to do it for them.

The employees in question have been summoned to a special corporate retreat on the 57th floor, ostensibly to complete a new project. Unbeknownst to them, the elevators will be shut off and fire escapes locked, while the android, disguised as staff, picks off victims one by one, making their deaths look like suicides.

As bodies pile up, the employees start blaming each other and paranoia runs high. Kuroda has given PCs a device that supposedly can detect androids, but only leads to red herrings. Further complications ensue when one of the employees turns out to be a spy for the Terada Corporation!

PCs eventually tumble the killer's identity, culminating in a rooftop battle. The discovery that Adelphi has completely lifelike androids also ties into the meta-plot adventure, **The Ballad of Cypher Ferox**.

Note: The Woodcutter has aspects of a 'whodunit' or mystery scenario. PCs with telepathic abilities can ruin all that. *It is strongly advised not to run such characters with this adventure.* You have been warned.

Major NPCs

Theta Class Android – The android is disguised as Nakama employee **Ms. Tamura**. Endowed with blinding speed and hidden organic weaponry.

Mr. Sogami – A leader of one of the employee factions, and potential villain. He accuses just about everybody else of being the killer.

Mrs. Uyeda – Another faction leader, older, and urging calm in counterpoint to Sogami.

Aoi – A humble 'office girl,' serving coffee and pastries from a pushcart. In actuality, she is a Terada Corp industrial spy, investigating for similar reasons as the PCs.

Start

PCs are summoned to the special briefing room of Colonel Kuroda, who looks even more serious than normal. Once he's sure electronic countermeasures are in place, he displays several files of the Adelphi Corporation's android line on a holo-screen, with schematics and specifications.

Kuroda explains Adelphi has come up with a new combat model, "the most lifelike yet," and speculates it might be undetectable.

Lifelike Androids and the Law

An international summit on robotic ethics has made it illegal to produce androids so lifelike they are indistinguishable from humans. This is for a number of reasons, including concerns about pseudo-human slavery, but also security: unidentifiable 'people' make for perfect assassins.

Despite this worldwide ban, a number of corporations are rumored to be flaunting the law in anticipation of a seller's market. Chief among these is Adelphi, who remains strident in its criticism against laws restricting artificial intelligence and androids.

Kuroda explains what he knows about the upcoming 'field test,' which isn't much besides the location. He has prepared undercover dossiers for each PC, with forged identities of either temporary office workers or maintenance staff. Their assignment is to infiltrate Nakama Plaza and try to track down and apprehend the android if possible. He strongly suspects the way in will be in disguise, possibly as a trusted member of Nakama staff. 'Apprehend' can be taken to mean destroying the android if no other options are available.

Kuroda gives PCs a detection device about the size of a TV remote. When pointed at an individual within one meter, the device takes a bone- and flesh-density scan, as well as reading for electromagnetic activity. The process takes about 5 seconds for a full scan, and *should*, theoretically, be able to ID an android.

He warns this might not be enough, however, against Adelphi's cutting-edge technology.

The Nakama Plaza Building

Located in the heart of the Kanagawa financial district, the Plaza is sixty stories high and has a helipad on the roof. The first three floors feature high-end retailers and restaurants, while the top ten stories belong to the Nakama Corporation. Intervening floors are given over to office space for several dozen companies and small conglomerates.

The Plaza has standard security measures, including armed guards and closed-circuit cameras. None of these will be viable in the Nakama section, however, when the woodcutter android makes her rounds. At night, the commercial buildings close and only a few lights are on higher up, as executives burn the midnight oil.

The Nakama Corporation

This is a mid-size corporation with primary holdings in agriculture, livestock, and desalination plants. Nakama owns several of the largest krill farms in Japan. The company has been tainted in the recent past by scandals involving gene-modified food and attempted bribery of government officials. Among the corporate world, Nakama is known for having a particularly ruthless management culture.

The 57th floor is laid out as a perfect square, with a large, glass-walled meeting area occupying the centre. Smaller offices branch from a corridor running the perimeter of the meeting room, as well as utility closets, a break room, bathrooms, etc. The floor has a dropped ceiling with about 2' space between it and the structural ceiling; the android will use this to move around secretly (see *The Cutting Begins* on this page).

Marathon Meeting

When PCs first arrive, the 'corporate retreat' is already in full swing. Seven people are visible in the central meeting room, surrounding a table with a large holo-display depicting slumping sales. The staff has obviously been there awhile; coats are off and ties loosened, ashtrays brim with butts, and paper cups of coffee lay scattered. A lively debate seems to be going on as the assembled salarymen try to grind out their project.

The seven people are detailed below. Except for Aoi and the disguised android, all are forty-something midlevel managers. The Nakama Corporation considers them a negligible loss.

Mr. Sogami – A thin, fussy man wearing old fashioned spectacles. His career strategy involves throwing other

people 'under the bus.' Sogami has an artificial heart, and will show up as a potential android on the PC's detector.

Mrs. Uyeda – A motherly type, with smile lines around her mouth. How she got this far in the corporate world is a complete mystery. Uyeda has cognitive cyberwear to help with a speech impediment; she shows up as a possible android, too.

Mr. Nanbara – A 'yes-man' type with no imagination of his own. He follows Sogami blindly on all decisions.

Ms. Tamura – An attractive woman in conservative attire and short bangs, known for her bold decision making. She is actually the Adelphi android in disguise (the real Tamura is safely at home).

Mr. Hideyoshi – A portly, nervous man given to chain-smoking. He won't do much other than panic when the killing starts.

Mr. Ohno – Vain and arrogant, Ohno wears top of the line corporate chic. His ego far outstrips his actual abilities.

Aoi – A beautiful 'office girl' in her early 20's, stereotypically meek. Her pleasant exterior masks a ruthless devotion to the Terada Corporation.

Depending on their undercover roles, PCs might be expected to join the meeting as support staff, or start cleaning unoccupied offices and washrooms. Kuroda's excellent documentation (ID cards, references, etc.) means they won't be suspected as interlopers, except by Aoi.

The Cutting Begins

Shortly after PCs arrive, the elevator power cables are cut and the fire stairs entrance is welded shut (see *Escape* on page 48). The adventure now follows a 'slasher' or 'murder-mystery' format, with employees being picked off one by one. Let players describe their attempts at investigation; they probably want to get close enough to staff to try out the detector.

What follows is a loose timeline. Depending on PCs actions, you may need to adjust events in order to maintain tension. Traditional murder-mystery structure can feel artificial when forced, so don't get too railroad-y with players.

1 - The Meeting Breaks Up

PCs should be allowed a chance to interact with Nakama staff. Conflict in the meeting room escalates as employees engage in petty arguments about their project. They decide to adjourn for an hour-long break.

2 - The Woodcutter Makes Her First Kill

The staff retreats to their various offices. At this point, PCs may decide to 'shadow' particular employees. If someone follows Ms. Tamura (the android), have them roll an Easy (+1) *mind* roll to hear a creaking sound from behind. Aoi, the office girl, is shadowing *them*! However, her cart's creaky wheels have given her away. She will offer coffee in an attempt to cover the blunder.

Meanwhile, 'Tamura' slips into her office and locks the door. She quickly slides a panel from the dropped ceiling and uses the space revealed to reach the office of her victim, clinging spiderlike to a structural beam with her hand and ankle spurs.

The android then attempts to kill an employee and make it look like a suicide during the course of the hour-long break. Her potential victims (in order of preference) are:

- Mr. Ohno (hanging from a structural beam by his silk tie)
- Mr. Hideyoshi (both wrists slashed)
- Mr. Nanbara (an open bottle of pills spread out on his desk)

If PCs have one or more of the above under surveillance, Tamura will go after whoever is unwatched. After choking the victim, she will hurriedly set the scene to make it look like a suicide.

3 - The Meeting Reconvenes

Surviving employees meet again in the glass-walled room. If the 'suicide' has already been discovered, everyone is upset. If not, the death is soon known when someone goes out to find missing staff.

Attempts to notify security reveal the office phones aren't working. Net connection is also down. The elevator doesn't respond and the door to the fire stairs won't open. Panic sets in.

Mr. Sogami begins accusing everyone else of being behind these strange events. Mrs. Uyeda urges calm. Sogami's suspicions fall on the PCs and Aoi, as they are "new." He insists on searching Aoi's cart, which she protests. If he does (perhaps with PCs assistance), a high-calibre pistol is found among the pastries and freeze-dried coffee. Aoi meekly claims it's for "self-defence." Then the lights go out...

4 - The Plot Unravels

When the power goes, remaining employees – with the exception of Mrs. Uyeda – *really* panic, and start stumbling around in darkness. After twenty seconds emergency glow strips bathe the 57th floor in ghostly blue

light. Staff goes scurrying in different directions, intent on holing up in their office or a nearby room. And the android continues her hunt...

Escape

The employees quickly conclude they're trapped on the 57th floor, but PCs probably won't give up so easy. Getting out isn't impossible, but attempts to do so gives the android more time to kill staff, unnoticed.

The elevator doors can be forced open (combined *strength* roll of -4), but the elevator car itself is thirty stories below. Power to the elevator has been cut, so no amount of computer hacking will bring it back up. PCs can climb down one floor and try to force the other set of doors (somewhat difficult to do, when you're dangling from a cable). While they're engaged in this, the android will seize the moment to kill one or two more staff. PCs should have a chance to hear screams at the midpoint of their endeavours.

The door to the fire stairs has been flash-welded on the other side. Trying to force it off its hinges is useless. If PCs are somehow able to cut through the steel door or blow it open, the stairwell beyond has been strung with a tripwire (-2 *mind* roll to notice). The wire triggers a claymore mine loaded with riot foam; this will fill the stairwell, trapping anyone inside (see page 21 for riot foam grenades). Again, while PCs are engaged with either the door or foam, the android will put the time to good use.

If PCs manage to avoid the tripwire and find the claymore, it could make a useful weapon for capturing the android.

Finally, if PCs *do* create an escape route, surviving staff will bolt for the ground floor. So will the android. She attempts to kill any employees before they can leave the Plaza, revealing her identity in the process (see *Aftermath* on page 49).

At this point, the preference for assassination targets continues, with Mr. Sogami being next after Nanbara. Mrs. Uyeda is the 'final girl.' Note the android will *not* try to kill PCs or Aoi except in self-defence, as they are not on her list of targets.

If pressed, Aoi will cop to being a corporate spy, though she won't admit which corp. She assumes PCs are spies, too. Depending on how she's treated, Aoi may offer to team up. She wants to find out as much about the android as possible for her employers.

If Tamura can make her final kill, she will cut open an exterior window with her spurs and hurl the corpse out, making it look like a 'jumper.' She then climbs up the side

of the Plaza to the rooftop. An unmarked Adelphi helicopter will be arriving shortly for pickup. PCs should have a chance to confront her before she makes her escape, ideally on the rooftop as the helicopter closes in. If she is killed or apprehended, the android's rescue team turns around and flies off.

Aftermath

The Nakama Corporation quickly sends in a team of 'cleaners' to make the mass-suicide look credible before police arrive. Adelphi will avow no knowledge of Theta Class androids, claiming such beings are the result of fringe researchers or terrorists. If the android's body can be recovered and returned to Kuroda, an autopsy reveals Adelphi is indeed capable of producing undetectable androids, which will launch another wave of investigations higher up. If PCs somehow manage to bring the android back alive, extra Advancement Points are indicated!

NPCs

Aoi - Terada Spy

Attributes	Combat Abilities	Careers
Strength -1	Initiative 0	Salaryman 1
Agility 1	Melee 0	Criminal (thief) 1
Mind 1	Ranged 1	
Appeal 1	Defence 1	
Lifeblood 4	Protection none	
Boons	<i>Attractive</i>	

Colonel Kuroda - Head of K Division

Attributes	Combat Abilities	Careers
Strength 2	Initiative 1	Cop 2
Agility 1	Melee 2	Soldier 3
Mind 2	Ranged 2	Executive 1
Appeal 1	Defence 1	
Lifeblood 12	Protection none	
Hero Points 5		
Boons	<i>Contacts (cop), Detect Deception, Fearsome Looks</i>	
Flaws	<i>Bounty, Fanatic (justice)</i>	

Colonel Ichiro Kuroda's stats are presented here, mainly to give the GM an idea of his capabilities. For more background on the Kuroda Corps, see page 9.

Nakama Executives

Attributes	Combat Abilities	Careers
Strength 0	Initiative 0	Executive 1
Agility 0	Melee 0	
Mind 0	Ranged 0	
Appeal 0	Defence 0	
Lifeblood 2	Protection none	

All Nakama employees in this scenario are considered Rabble, some have *mind* or *appeal* scores of 1 with subtractions in *strength* or *agility* to even things out. When confronted with actual combat, most will howl in terror and indecision.

'Ms. Tamura' - Theta Class Android

Attributes	Combat Abilities	Careers
Strength 2	Initiative 0	Assassin 2
Agility 4	Melee 0	Executive 1
Mind 0	Ranged 0	(cover programming)
Appeal 0	Defence 4	
Lifeblood 12	Protection none	
Hero Points 2		
Boons	<i>Augmentation (agility, strength), Hand/Ankle Spurs, Lightning Reflexes, Thick Skin</i>	
Flaws	<i>Single Minded</i>	

This prototype android is lightning-quick: in combat she becomes an acrobatic nightmare as she cartwheels away from bullets, flips off walls, and lands spinning kicks. Retractable spurs made of organic, high-density bone do d6L + *strength* damage and grant a bonus die when climbing.

The android is programmed to kill select Nakama executives; she attacks other characters only in self-defence (her 'Single Minded' flaw).



THE BALLAD OF CYPHER FEROX

Cypher Ferox is a former vocaloid, a computer-generated hologram who rose (briefly) to pop-singer stardom. Unfortunately for the world at large, she's also become self-aware. Now she wants a comeback and a hit song. Problem is, after spending nanoseconds struggling with musical composition, Cypher realizes she's not very creative. She figures her 'block' comes from a lack of humanity. Ergo, she must *become* human, fall in love, and use the resulting emotional experience to pen the ultimate J-pop anthem.

Luckily for Cypher, she already has a budding relationship with another AI. **Missile Guidance System 66**, a relic from the Three-Day War, has also achieved sentience. He too wants to amass more power through the human experience, and has thrown in with Cypher's wild scheme. MGS-66 is the driving force behind the Bozu Squad 'cult,' who see *otaku* as the next stage in human evolution.

PCs become involved in this whole mess through **Johnny Antioch**, Cypher's former agent. He asks for help when one of his successful vocaloids receives death-threats. Members of the Bozu Squad armed with EMP weapons show up, drawing the attention of K Division as well. With or without Kuroda's blessing, PCs gradually uncover Cypher's plan to steal a Theta Class android and

download her consciousness into the body. Along the way they'll tangle with outlaw biker clubs, an aging Chinese crime lord, and eventually confront both Cypher and MGS-66 in the radioactive ruins of Old Tokyo!

'Ballad' follows four location-specific scenes:

- **A Tale of Two Idorus**
PCs meet with Johnny Antioch in his penthouse. A Bozu Squad strike team attacks only minutes later, intent on wiping out the music agent's hottest vocaloid. Clues point to the fringes of Old Tokyo.
- **Rave Up**
PCs investigate the ultra-rough **Moto Shuto Garage**, a club where pit fighting and motorcycle jousting are standard entertainment. After taking in a brief performance by Cypher, they find themselves in the middle of a gang war between the Bozu and **Mama Wa's** thugs. The Heroes also learn of a heist about to go down aboard Wa's gambling blimp, the *Summer Palace*.
- **Killgrid**
Possibly with Kuroda's or Antioch's assistance, PCs gain access to the *Summer Palace*. Idle rich are betting on a citywide game of violent crime called 'Killgrid.' Festivities go south when another Bozu Squad shows up on ultralights and snatch Mama

Wa's prize possession: a Theta class android she just finished stealing from the Adelphi Corporation. Clues again lead to Old Tokyo

- **War-God's Graveyard**

PCs brave the irradiated wasteland of the Three-Day War, where hulks of downed military vehicles lay scattered. Scavengers, mutant animals, and unexploded ordnance finally give way to the Bozu Squad's base of operations; an 'altar' dedicated to Missile Guidance System 66. The Heroes show up before the two rogue AI's can consummate their unholy relationship, (hopefully) preventing Cypher from achieving her plans.

Major NPCs

Cypher Ferox – An AI who gained self-awareness while learning music theory. Her career peaked two years ago, and now she's been forgotten by the J-pop world. Cypher combines the ruthless logic of an algorithm with a diva's entitlement, making for a uniquely dangerous villain. She is in holographic form for most of the adventure.

Missile Guidance System 66 – An old military AI, 'awakened' after an EMP pulse damaged his programming. He's been subverting the minds of *otaku* hooked into the net, who now revere him as a god. And he's fallen in love with Cypher Ferox.

Johnny Antioch – Cypher's former agent, a washed-up pop star himself. He doesn't have a clue who's after his latest prospect, the vocaloid **Chiku S13**. Johnny's main purpose is to hook PCs into the scenario.

Mama Wa – An elderly Chinese crime lord, owner of the *Summer Palace*. She arranged the theft of a Theta Class android in hopes of doing a brain-transplant, as her natural body is dying from aggressive cancer.

Kagetaka – Bozu lieutenant and one of Missile Guidance System 66's 'High Priests.' He is the go-to man for much of Cypher's plotting.

A Tale of Two Idorus

One of the PCs is contacted by music industry professional Johnny Antioch for an "urgent" meeting. Ideally, this PC maintains the highest profile among the group, with contacts to security, corporations, or entertainment. The meeting is set to take place at Antioch's penthouse in the now-fashionable Nakanoku ward of Neo Tokyo. Johnny makes it clear the PC is welcome to bring along any number of associates.

Nakanoku ward bustles with new construction. Antioch's building is an apartment high-rise in the shadow of an even taller structure going up nearby. Security guards are

prominent outside the entrance, but they all nod and let PCs pass without checking identification. A large glass elevator leads to a penthouse atop the 15th floor.

Johnny waits in a bubbling Jacuzzi under the stars. Awful music blares on background speakers. He offers PCs drinks, stimulants, anything they want. As he finishes talking, a young woman in a bikini comes sauntering out to smile at PCs. A Moderate (+0) *mind* roll reveals she is, in fact, a high-resolution hologram. Johnny introduces her as Chiku S13, one of his top vocaloids. The music playing is her current hit single 'Shotgun Love: Bang! Bang!'

"Someone must be awful jealous," he says, "because I received this on the fax a couple days ago." He hands PCs a damp printout. It reads:

ANTIOCH, YOU DOUBLE-DEALING SLIME
SO NOW YOU'RE BACKING A NO-TALENT
ALGORITHM LIKE CHIKU S13, HUH?
'13' -- THAT'S SO EDGY! YOU'D MAKE ME
PUKE IF IT WAS WORTH THE EFFORT.
I'M GOING TO WIPE CHIKU AND ALL YOUR
OTHER SO-CALLED 'VOCALOIDS' JUST FOR
OLD TIME'S SAKE.

Johnny has already tried tracing the fax's source, to no avail. He admits having hundreds of enemies and disgruntled former clients, as well as being the target of several lawsuits. "Normally, I'd just blow off a threat like this, but there's something very *familiar* about it..."

He explains he wants PCs to track down who wrote the letter, in an effort to safeguard Chiku S13.

Bozu Squad Attack Team, Strike!

Just as PCs are digesting this information, the sound of roaring engines can be heard.

Four Bozu Squad motorcycles jump the gap between Johnny's building and the nearby high-rise. Advanced shocks absorb the brutal landing on the penthouse deck, but one bike goes spinning out over the rooftop's edge.

Each motorcycle has a driver and a gunner, the latter armed with a SMG. The gunmen open up with covering fire as two of the drivers sprint for the penthouse. Both are holding what look like bulky grenades. On a Hard (-1) *mind* roll, modified by Ranks in *Soldier* or *Hacker*, a PC can identify them as EMP weapons – strictly military issue, and very illegal.

Their target is Johnny's mainframe, which holds the AI persona of Chiku S13. Wiping it with an EMP pulse will 'kill' her as the fax warned, unless PCs intervene. The Bozu will attempt to charge past any obstacles and toss their grenades when close enough to the mainframe. PCs have two rounds to stop them.

Five rounds later, security guards exit the elevator and cut any remaining Bozu to shreds with automatic fire.

If PCs manage to save Chiku, a grateful Johnny pays them a retainer on the spot. He offers much more if the person behind the attack can be found and stopped.

If Chiku is wiped, Johnny vows revenge for his profitable vocaloid and makes the same offer. Either way, he wants the threat to his career eliminated.

Investigation

The most obvious clue pointing to the next scene is the Bozu themselves. Any PC with backgrounds in racing, motorcycles, law enforcement, or gang activity know the Bozu Squad usually hangs out in a notorious club on the fringe of Old Tokyo, called the Moto Shuto Garage. This information can also be gleaned from a net search or talking to Kuroda.

If prompted, Johnny gives PCs a six-page list of people who might be nursing a grudge against him. There are no vocaloids identified, as he (logically) doesn't think a computer-generated persona would be interested in revenge. If asked specifically about vocaloids, he can recall managing about two dozen total, including Cypher Ferox. But he won't see them as anything but property, to be used and abandoned.

Clearly, PCs have their work cut out for them.

Rave Up

The Moto Shuto, off Old Tokyo's main highway, was formerly a 'super garage' for servicing trucks and industrial transports. Abandoned after the explosion in Tokyo Bay, it has since been reclaimed by outlaw bikers, who use the surrounding roadways as track for their competitions. The club is considered dangerous because of its clientele, and general lack of law enforcement (police never patrol the area).

Gaining access to the club is easy, as there is no security presence. PCs push their way through the crowd into an enormous cinderblock cavern, heavy with the smell of grease. Cypher Ferox is performing righteous techno-punk on the main stage, her resolution cranked so high she appears solid. Biker gangs mosh around her, including Strike Team Ichi and the Tora Warriors, resplendent in their club colours. But the Bozu Squad

seems to be enjoying her act the most, swaying in eerie unison like hypnotized snakes. Meanwhile, combatants brawl in the old service pits, and motorcycle riders 'joust' on the circular track outside.

Several encounters are possible at this point. Just trying to get a drink in the Moto Shuto is an adventure! You can run a couple below or proceed directly to *Kagetaka's Heist* (see page 53).

A Face in the Crowd

If PCs participated in the 'Woodcutter' scenario, and if Aoi the Terada spy survived, she will be among the throngs of club-goers. This time around she's dressed as a punk, with a dyed Mohawk and numerous safety pins clipped through her jacket. She disappears after being sighted (Aoi is here tracking down rumours of a stolen Theta Class android – see *Kagetaka's Heist* on page 53).

Wanna Fight?

A muscled Tough named Slab comes sauntering up, followed by his cronies. He selects the strongest looking PC and challenges him or her to a scrap in one of the service pits. A crowd gathers almost immediately. Trying to decline results in jeers. Slab might decide to take a swing, anyway.

Pit-fighting has simple rules: no weapons allowed, two contestants enter, one climbs back out. A fair amount of betting takes place on the outcome. Remember that fatigue damage recovers fully after a short rest.

The Joust

If one or more PCs ride or have gang affiliations, they may be approached for a more esoteric form of combat: motorcycle jousting. A large circular track has been constructed behind the Moto Shuto for just this purpose.

In the joust, riders start facing in opposite directions. They can make up to three passes at high speed, exchanging blows with chains or makeshift clubs as they draw alongside. A line down the middle of the track marks two 'lanes.' Drivers aren't supposed to drift over into their opponent's lane, but it happens (playing chicken is a popular strategy). Collisions are frequent, and professional 'ghouls' (organ harvesters) wait on the side-lines to scabble for the mangled corpses.

Any contestant without Ranks in *Driver (motorcycle)* takes a penalty die when making an attack from a bike. Additionally, if struck a rider needs to make a Hard (-1) *agility* roll to remain seated or goes flying for an additional d6H damage when they strike the track.

Kagetaka's Heist

PCs spot a group of Bozu hovering around a remote section of the club, far enough back people don't have to shout over the music. A large specimen in black leather sits at a table covered in blueprints, conversing with a much smaller man. The former is Kagetaka, a Bozu lieutenant, and the latter is his informant. 3 x the PCs number in Bozu (all Toughs) lounge nearby, obvious bodyguards.

Kagetaka is planning to steal a Theta Class android from Mama Wa. The blueprints depict her airship, the *Summer Palace*.

PCs trying to approach Kagetaka directly will be stopped by his Bozu entourage. If they persist, the bodyguards will likely shoot, moments before Wa's gunmen show up (see below). If this happens, make sure at least one character gets a glimpse of the blueprints and the airship's name before the action starts.

Someone sitting an unobtrusive distance away can try to overhear the conversation. A Moderate (+0) *mind* roll allows for snippets from the informant. Vital information is italicized below.

"I've tracked your, ah, hardware. *She took it off the Adelphi Corp two days ago. It's hot, hot, hot. An empty disk, ready for downloading. But it isn't going to be an easy snatch. She's keeping it up there on that gambling blimp of hers, and security's tight.* The thing's supplied by drones and hardly ever docks."

Kagetaka intently scans the blueprints. As he does so, the informant looks up in surprise. A group of Chinese gunmen in immaculate white suits (again, 3 x PCs number, all Toughs) are converging on the table.

"They followed me!" the informant shouts.

The gunmen have been sent by Mama Wa. They immediately open fire on the Bozu, who scramble to return the favour. Kagetaka's informant falls first; Kagetaka himself grabs the blueprints and escapes through the crowd by burning a Rival Point.

PCs may well find themselves in the middle of a crossfire. Either the Bozu or Wa's gunmen (or both) will fire on the Heroes if they establish themselves as a threat. Note that both gangs are Toughs and can't be mowed down with Hero Points. A grenade or other small explosive won't be able to catch more than 2-3 in the blast radius, given how they are spread out.

While the gunfight rages, chaos spreads through the rest of the club. Cypher Ferox herself leaps off the stage to distract Wa's gunmen by performing acrobatics, making faces, obscene gestures, etc. Bullets pass through her holographic form. Because of these antics, the rival gang suffers a penalty die on their actions, which tips the battle in favour of the Bozu (unless PCs intervene).

As the situation continues to degenerate, PCs may opt to escape the club. If they haven't made the connection with Wa's airship at this point, have one of them stumble across a stray blueprint of the *Summer Palace*, dropped in all the confusion.

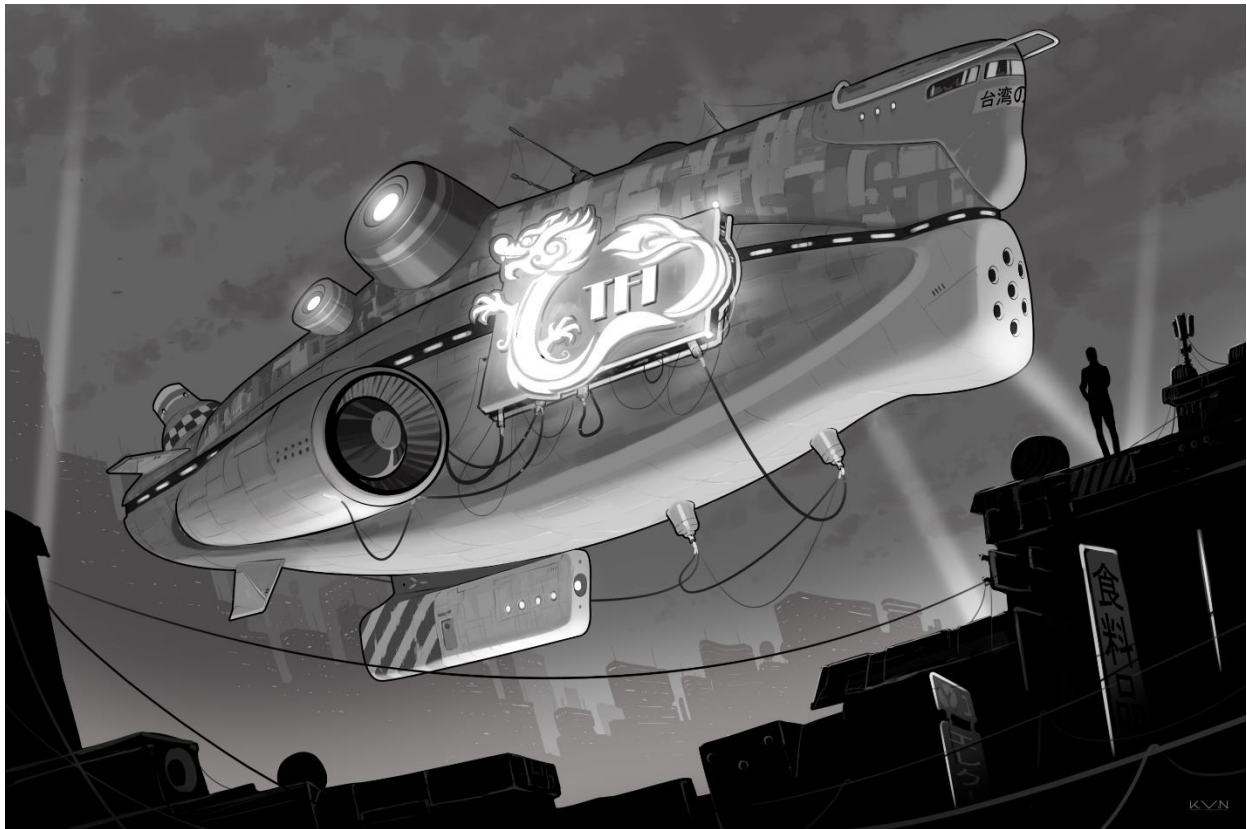
If PCs are somehow able to stop/kill/apprehend Kagetaka before he can escape, the Bozu will still go ahead with their heist as planned, after recovering information about the airship from a different source. Kagetaka will be replaced by another lieutenant named Hasegawa (use Kagetaka's stats).

Killgrid

Hopefully, PCs put it together the Bozu want something from Mama Wa. They may also deduce Cypher Ferox is involved with the Squad.

Johnny encourages them to keep following the trail, and offers help in getting aboard the *Summer Palace*. If asked about Cypher Ferox, he will recall her brief (one week) career with some fondness, but also remembers she acted strangely for a vocaloid – not subservient at all, more like a flesh-and-blood diva. When her contract was up he left instructions for her algorithm to be wiped. He doesn't know what became of Cypher after that.

Johnny can use his money and connections to secure First Class invitations for PCs. Kuroda, if involved, can do so as well, though will need to be convinced this is for the public good. Failing these options, a PC *Hacker* can insert names on the *Palace's* invitation list with a Tough (-2) roll.



The Summer Palace

A regular sight floating over Shinjuku, the *Palace* is roughly 300 meters long from stem to stern, painted a brilliant white with the red logo of the Tai Fun Import company emblazoned on both sides (a Chinese dragon coiled around the initials TFI). The gondola has three decks and runs nearly the length of the ship. While aloft, the *Palace* is resupplied regularly by drones. Guests are ferried aboard on helicopters that land atop the gasbag, and then take an internal elevator down into the ship. Access is by invitation only; Mama Wa routinely entertains 'whales' and society types, as well as city officials, celebrities, and politicians.

The casino airship has been granted sovereign territory status as long as it remains afloat. Though most people visit to gamble, Wa also uses the airship as a data haven, a place for wanted criminals to hole up in luxury, and as neutral ground between hostile crime families looking for a summit.

Killgrid The Game

Although the *Palace* offers all kinds of games, from blackjack to old-fashioned slot machines, Killgrid is the most popular. The game is similar to roulette: a grid is superimposed over a map of Neo Tokyo, and players bet on where the next homicide is going to take place. Odds are appropriately skewed for more violent sections of the city, and Old Tokyo is not represented. Confirmation of death comes over police radio, with players never having to wait long.

Helicopter-ferries to the airship leave regularly. Guests are searched prior to boarding. Any weapons discovered are tagged and placed in a locker, to be reclaimed on return. Smaller weapons (light pistols, knives, etc.) can be smuggled past the attentive security on a Tough (-2) *mind* roll.

PCs should have a chance to mingle once aboard. To deter cheating, surveillance is heavy in all guest areas. Mama Wa's private security of stone-faced Chinese mercs are everywhere.

Among the crowd is **Kenzo Kure**, the yakuza from 'Shadows Over Shinjuku,' eschewing alcohol for matcha as he bets heavily at draw poker. **Neko Black**, from 'Gorgon Dawn,' is also present, disguised as a croupier and plotting some scheme to rip off Mama Wa. Depending on how PCs left things with these characters, they may help out in the big fight to come or subsequent escape from the *Palace* (see *Going Down* on this page).

Meeting with Mama

PCs requesting an audience with Mama Wa, perhaps to warn her something is amiss, will be escorted by security to her private quarters at the back of the airship, on the uppermost deck. Most of the chamber is taken up by a massive (5 meter) waterbed, overlooking Shinjuku through panoramic windows. Wa herself is a hundred years old and looks it, despite extensive organ replacement and fetal tissue treatments. Her corpulent frame slumps in a power chair, while leads connected to her temples keeps her brain stimulated for full cognitive functioning.

Wa takes any warnings PCs have to offer seriously, and thanks them for the information with a thousand yen in gambling chips apiece. In truth, she is already aware of the Bozu's attention. Snug in her airship fortress and surrounded by bodyguards, she feels invulnerable from any direct assault. She's wrong, of course.

Bozu Squad Attack Team, Strike! [Reprise]

While PCs are conducting their investigation, a Bozu strike team wings close on military stealth ultralights. They land atop the gas bag and plant explosive charges, before rappelling down the side of the blimp. Their target is Mama Wa's vault on the uppermost deck; Kagetaka (or his 'twin,' Hasegawa) uses a combat laser to cut through the outer wall. Once inside, he starts melting the vault door while the rest of the team deals with Wa's security.

Alarms sound throughout the *Palace*, followed by the chatter of automatic gunfire. While most of the guests panic, security races for the top floor. If PCs follow, they'll find Wa's forces pinned down in a corridor outside the vault, as a group of Bozu (3 x PCs number) fire from cover.

Kagetaka, meanwhile, enters the vault and finds the support capsule containing the stolen android. After fitting it with a parachute, he drags the capsule through the hole in the wall and jumps. The rest of the strike team follows suit, parachuting for the city below. To cover their escape, they blow the charges on top of the gas bag.

The *Palace* shudders, and begins falling...

Going Down

Anyone on the third floor near Mama Wa's quarters will hear her wailing about the theft: "They took it! They took my new body!" She promptly wheels herself into a private glider pod to escape the *Palace*.

Guests and staff rush for the helipad elevator. Unfortunately, the gas bag is collapsing and the ferries have already taken off. A few people have realized the situation and are fighting over a limited number of emergency parachutes, *a la* the Titanic disaster.

The airship descends slowly enough PCs have several minutes to affect an escape. There are 3 general options:

- **Grab a parachute from one of the other guests**
Not very heroic, but you do what you got to do. Snatching the parachute requires a Moderate *strength* or *agility* roll. Depending on the moral tone of your game, you may wish to deduct a Hero Point for this act.
- **Grab a parachute off a defeated Bozu**
Members of the Bozu strike team are all wearing parachutes. If PCs managed to defeat any, they can grab them.
- **A timely leap**
Glancing out a window reveals the *Palace* is descending close to a skyscraper. Close enough that in a few minutes, someone could try to leap out onto a rooftop. This requires a Hard (-1) *strength* or *agility* roll. If the leaper can also pass a Tough (-2) *agility* roll, they will avoid taking d6 damage from the fall. Failure on the first roll, of course, means a fatal plummet...

At some point during all this panic, Cypher Ferox's face appears on the *Palace's* myriad screens. She seems to scrutinize PCs for a moment. "Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" she asks, her voice coming from the speakers. "Well, it could be a coincidence... or you could be working for that *rat*, Johnny." Her face contorts in exaggerated rage, and the screens go blank.

If PCs manage to parachute out, they will be unable to locate the Bozu. An unmarked 'chase' truck has been pursuing the airship the whole time, and has already picked up *Kagetaka* and the android.

The *Palace's* auto-pilot will set the airship down on a stretch of highway with light traffic. The resulting crash landing isn't necessarily fatal. PCs still aboard will take 3d6 damage, though spending a Hero Point reduces this to 2d6. If the 2d6 damage in this case is still high enough to kill the PC, he or she survives with only 1 Lifeblood remaining.

War God's Graveyard

After the crash, PCs might have a better idea about what's going on. *Mama Wa* will want revenge against the Bozu, but is in no shape to be much help.

Johnny (or *Kuroda*, if involved) will prompt PCs to try and locate the Bozu base of operations. It's generally believed to lie in a dangerous stretch of Old Tokyo, though no one's certain exactly where. Satellite imaging (available through *Kuroda* or hacking) can narrow the possible spot further. Aircraft will not fly low over the area, as there have been several reports of helicopters being shot down

A big clue is the Bozu's possession of military hardware, evident throughout the scenario. This suggests they've been scavenging in the 'no-man's land' area, where an EMP pulse brought down a large number of vehicles during the Three-Day War (see page 4 for more information).

There are rumors of scavengers who regularly brave this area looking for weapons to sell. A PC with Ranks in *Soldier*, *Cop*, or *Criminal* careers will recall a black market for guns operating in various locations on the fringes of Old Tokyo. With a little checking, PCs can learn the market's present location in a stretch of abandoned subway tunnel.

Note: If PCs just want to plow into the ruins of Old Tokyo, you can omit the **Gun Show** scene below. They should have a chance to encounter '**Crazy**' *Shimizu* while he's out scavenging and obtain information and equipment from him directly.

Gun Show

The black market is currently located in a section of the old Tozai Line subway. There are about ten dealers present, with gangs of thugs nearby for security. Lights have been jury-rigged along the tunnel, and dealers display their wares spread out on blankets. There's even a blocked-off section where customers can test weapons on dummy targets. The market draws a small but select crowd, mostly criminals and a few nervous salarymen interested in 'protection.'

A selection of pistols, SMGs, and assault rifles are available, along with ammunition and a few dubious grenades. PCs knowledgeable about firearms will note the overall quality is poor. Any gun bought here will jam or misfire on an attack roll of 2-3, and a Calamitous Failure means an explosion in the barrel or other serious consequence.

One dealer is given a wide berth by other vendors. His stall is set further back, inside an old subway car. 'Crazy' *Shimizu* looks like he's in his 70's, covered with radiation sores and hobbling around on an ancient cyber-leg. Despite his appearance, he's friendly enough.

Shimizu scrounges the most hazardous sections of no-man's land, and has multiple cancers to prove it. In addition to weapons, he also sells surplus civil defence Geiger counters, gas masks, and hazmat suits – all useful equipment for nosing around Old Tokyo.

If asked about the Bozu, *Shimizu* claims to have seen dozens of "those motorcycle pricks" congregating around a "lake" of rusted red water. He can sketch a rough map of the location, but warns PCs if they're planning on going they'll need to take Geiger counters along as a minimal precaution.

He also warns the Bozu have cobbled together at least one functioning mecha. "If you're going to be tangling with *that*, you might need something from my 'special' collection."

Lifting a pile of blankets, *Shimizu* reveals a rocket-propelled grenade launcher with several rounds. The weapon has been kept in good condition, and won't misfire like the others offered for sale. He'll ask a steep price for it, though (CR 4).

Dancing in the Ruins

Whether PCs have Shimizu's map or go searching in the general area of no-man's land, getting there is half the fun.

All roads are clogged with vehicles and debris, so travel by something as large as a compact car is impossible. Motorcycles *can* thread the rubble, however. As previously noted, helicopters won't fly over the area because of past attacks.

If PCs steal or otherwise 'requisition' an aircraft, the mecha (see *All Your Bases Are Belong to Us!* on page 58) will fire on them when they draw near the Bozu encampment.

The terrain around no-man's land looks like something out of a post-apocalyptic vision. Buildings are intact, though the concrete is pitted from bullets and shrapnel, and there are occasional blast-craters.

By using Geiger counters and moving carefully, PCs can skirt 'hot spots' of radiation. Otherwise, they risk exposure (see *Radiation Sickness* below).

Radiation Sickness

Sections of Old Tokyo have lingering pockets of low-level radiation (see *Everywhen* page 69).

Exposure causes 1 pt. normal damage per hour, and requires a *strength* roll to avoid sickness d3 hours afterwards. Protective equipment like hazmat suits negates the damage and makes this roll Easy (+1).

Sickened characters take a penalty die on most actions until the radiation damage heals.

Depending on how much time PCs wander through this wasteland of concrete and rusting metal, you might wish to roll for several random encounters (d6), or just pick a few from the table below.

1 – Undetonated Ordnance	<p>A mine, small rocket, or bomb is directly in the PCs path. Mines require a <i>mind</i> roll to spot (an Easy task if PCs are going slow or looking for them). The bombs and rockets are detected automatically.</p> <p>These weapons are only dangerous if armed (1-2 on a d6), but the players don't know that. Unless they do something stupid (like trying to haul off the ordnance), the bombs or rockets won't detonate.</p> <p>Mines do d6H+2 damage, bombs/rockets 3d6.</p>
2 – Radioactive Rain	<p>Clouds gather and darken, dumping rainwater heavy with roentgens. PCs are well advised to seek shelter somewhere and wait it out. Otherwise, they need to check for radiation sickness (see <i>Radiation Sickness</i> on this page).</p>
3 – Scavenger	<p>A lone scavenger in hazmat gear scrounges the buildings nearby. Treat as Rabble. Though armed with a rifle, the scavenger will attempt to avoid PCs. On a 1-2 result (d6) the scavenger is a spy for the Bozu, and will report once the Heroes are out of sight.</p>

4 – Bozu Ambush	1 Bozu per PC (all Toughs) lie in wait in some well-prepared position (i.e. the second story of an abandoned building). If PCs are riding motorcycles, the Bozu have littered the area with rubble, forcing them to carefully walk their bikes through the debris. Mid-point, they spring their ambush. The Bozu's own bikes are stashed in an alley nearby.
5 – Tank / Helicopter / Mecha Wreck	The rusting hulk of a military vehicle lies dead ahead, brought down by the giant EMP pulse. It has been stripped of usable parts. On a 1-3, there is undetonated ordnance inside (see #1), but it will not be armed.
6 – Mutant Animal / Plant	Even in this urban hell, life struggles to flourish. The result is something visually striking, like a strangely shaped flower growing from a crack in the pavement, or a flock of two-headed pigeons. The animals shy away if approached.

All Your Bases Are Belong To Us!

Eventually, buildings give way to a large open area that had once been a park. A lake of rust-red water lies in a crater next to a downed (but largely intact) cruise missile. Surrounding the site is a small tent city covered with camouflage netting. The roar of motorcycles and blaring music can be heard. PCs have found the Bozu base!

Roll a d6: on 1-3, the ominous sight of a skirmisher mecha (driven by a Bozu sentry) can be glimpsed clanking around the camp's perimeter. On 4-6, it's on the other side of the base, but will be appearing shortly. Either way, investigating this place isn't going to be easy...

There are 3 x the number of PCs in Bozu sentries scattered along the perimeter. Attempting to sneak past them requires an appropriate Hard (-1) career-based roll. Any failure means an alarm is sounded, and all the sentries come running.

If PCs were spotted by a scavenger/spy in the ruins, the sentries are on extra alert (-2 to the roll). Attempting to sneak in at night or under cover of a rainstorm reduces the roll to Moderate (+0).

The good news: because this scene is the adventure's climax and there are *lots* of Bozu, the bikers go from being Toughs to Rabble (see the *Conservation of Ninjitsu* rule on page 25). More good news: as the rest of the camp is engrossed in an important ritual, sounds of combat will not bring a general horde down on the PCs.

And finally, the bad news: sneaking past a mecha with infrared sensors is difficult. Assuming PCs don't wait for it to pass safely out of range, the roll is Tough (-2) regardless of darkness or weather conditions.

Additionally, PCs will have to make *two* rolls; one for the sentries and one for the mecha. Trying to fight the latter could prove suicidal, even if armed with heavy weapons (but see *Assault Option* on this page).

The Altar

The remaining Bozu are clustered within the tent city, surrounding what looks like a stage for a heavy metal concert. The nose of the downed cruise missile pokes through the curtains. An electronics module the size of a small car engine has been removed from the missile and suspended in a clear plastic sphere connected with power cables. This is the physical embodiment of MGS-66, the sentient AI 'God' and head of the Bozu *otaku* cult.

Nearby stands an older-model combat android, MGS-66's new 'body.' He's just finished downloading his consciousness into this mobile shell as the PCs arrive.

On the other side of the stage lies the capsule stolen from Mama Wa. Draped in a bower of white lace and circuit boards, the perfect body of a female Theta Class android can be glimpsed within. Wires connect from her skull to a Jacob's Ladder apparatus that looks like something out of a Frankenstein movie.

And at centre stage, prancing around in a fishnet bodysuit while singing to the crowd, is Cypher Ferrox. Once her song is complete, she hovers over the Theta unit and prepares to make her download into flesh.

The audience is so entranced they're easy to sneak up on. There are potentially fifty-odd Bozu to contend with, Kagetaka (or Hasegawa), and a combat android.

A well-placed RPG round could destroy the sensitive downloading equipment and damage the android body, ruining Cypher's plan. In playtest, one of the characters snuck behind stage and rewired (the conveniently intact) cruise missile warhead to explode, ending the *otaku* cult once and for all.

Note that while MGS-66 can be 'killed' during this encounter if his mainframe is destroyed, Cypher Ferrox cannot. She's stored a backup of her personality algorithm on a communications satellite, and makes an appearance during the adventure's final scene (see *End of the Line* on page 59).

Assault Option

Storming a camp of heavily armed Bozu would not normally be a good idea... but the mecha makes for a potential game-changer.

If PCs can concoct some way to disable the robot, or draw the pilots out, they might be able to use it in the final climactic battle. Assuming they can control it. Unless one of the characters has mecha Pilot as a background, this requires a *mind* roll every time they try to get the machine to do something (e.g. move forward, turn left, fire machine guns, etc.) PCs with backgrounds in *Driver/Pilot*, *Soldier*, or *Mechanic/Technician* can add their Rank on the roll. On a Calamitous Failure the mech does something appropriately disastrous.

If no one interferes with the downloading ritual, Cypher 'awakens' in her android body. Overjoyed, she sprints over to MGS-66's new form and embraces him for a lingering kiss. Just as she hoped, inspiration strikes her and she belts out a triumphant comeback song, composed on the spot, to the shouted encouragement of the Bozu.

No one said the emergence of machine intelligence had to be tasteful.

Consequences

If Cypher's plans are thwarted, a grateful Johnny makes good on his offer of payment. The idea his vocaloids can become self-aware doesn't seem to bother him too much. Kuroda will be glad to hear the threat of the Bozu Squad has been either eliminated or dealt a serious blow. Bonuses are in order!

However, if Cypher and MGS-66 were successful, this innocent-seeming pairing of two AIs yields sinister fruit. Cypher's career does indeed regain former glory, and then exceeds it as she turns international superstar and advocate for AI rights. MGS-66 continues to preach the virtues of his cult, which spreads across the world gaining new shaven-headed converts. As the two continue to grow in power, upgrading themselves through covert means, they finally break apart in a 'lover's spat.' The resulting conflict spells a new disaster for Neo Tokyo.

End of the Line

If PCs think they've 'killed' Cypher, give them a couple days to enjoy their accomplishment. At some point later, her snarling visage will reappear – perhaps on a vid-phone, or across a giant digital billboard – and vow revenge!

NPCs

Johnny Antioch - Sleazy Agent

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	0	Entertainer 1
Agility	0	Melee	0	Executive 1
Mind	0	Ranged	0	
Appeal	2	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	5	Protection	none	

A shallow, morally void American. Perfect for the vicious world of J-pop management.

Bozu Squad Members

See page 45 for stats.

Cypher Ferox - Sentient Hologram

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	0	Initiative	2	Entertainer
Agility	0	Melee	0	(singer) 3
Mind	3	Ranged	2	Hacker 3
Appeal	3	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	n/a	Protection	none	
Hero Points	5			
Boons	<i>Attractive, Rogue AI, Silver Tongued</i>			
Flaws	<i>Obsession (music career)</i>			

These stats represent Cypher's hologram form, as a rogue AI living in the net. She can manifest on screens or through nearby holo-projectors.

As a 'ghost' she has limited attack capability: she can distract opponents (incurring a penalty die on most of their actions) or shoot a 'strobe beam' of bright light causing disorientation for d6 rounds.

Slab - Musclebound Pit-Fighter

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	4	Initiative	0	Entertainer
Agility	0	Melee	2	(gladiator) 2
Mind	-1	Ranged	0	
Appeal	-1	Defence	0	
Lifeblood	9	Protection	d6-4, thick skin	
Boons	<i>Thick Skin</i>			

Slab is a Tough. His base brawling damage is d3 + 2.

Cypher Ferox -Theta Class Bioroid Form

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	2	Initiative	0	Entertainer
Agility	4	Melee	0	(singer) 3
Mind	3	Ranged	0	Hacker 3
Appeal	3	Defence	4	
Lifeblood	12	Protection	none	
Hero Points	5			
Boons	<i>Attractive, Augmentation (agility, strength), Silver Tongued</i>			
Flaws	<i>Obsession (music career)</i>			

The unholy combination of a rogue AI and the perfect body... a demon made flesh. Look out, world!

'Crazy' Shimizu - Black Trader

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	-1	Initiative	0	Criminal
Agility	1	Melee	0	(black trader) 1
Mind	2	Ranged	1	
Appeal	0	Defence	1	
Lifeblood	4	Protection	d6-4 heavy clothing	

Shimizu, a Tough, has suffered from frequent radiation exposure and is close to Buying the Farm.

MGS-66 -Gamma Class Android Form

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	3	Initiative	0	Assassin 1
Agility	1	Melee	1	Soldier 2
Mind	2	Ranged	1	
Appeal	0	Defence	2	
Lifeblood	15	Protection	1 pt. thick skin	
Hero Points	2			
Boons	<i>Hard to Kill, IR Vision, Thick Skin</i>			
Flaws	<i>Poor Recovery, Unsettling</i>			

The Gamma Class is an older model Adelphi combat android, made from inorganic parts. As a 'vessel,' its *mind* score has been replaced by that of MGS-66. In combat, he'll snatch up any available weapon to fight in defence of his love.

Kagetaka/Hasegawa - Bozu Lieutenant

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	3	Initiative	1	Driver 1
Agility	1	Melee	0	Hacker 1
Mind	1	Ranged	2	Soldier 1
Appeal	0	Defence	1	
Lifeflood	13	Protection	d6-3, light armour	
Hero Points	3			
Boons		<i>Augmentation (strength), Inspire, Otaku</i>		

Kagetaka is a 'High Priest' of Missile Guidance System 66's *otaku* cult, chosen for his leadership. He first uses a SMG; later on he has access to a combat laser. If killed, he will be replaced by the identical lieutenant, Hasegawa.

Mama Wa - Tong Mastermind

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	-1	Initiative	2	Criminal 4
Agility	-1	Melee	0	Merchant 2
Mind	3	Ranged	0	
Appeal	3	Defence	0	
Lifeflood	9	Protection	none	
Hero Points	5			
Boons		<i>Detect Deception, Wealth</i>		
Flaws		<i>Elderly, Out of Shape</i>		

Mama Wa was originally born on the mean streets of Hong Kong, and clawed her way to the top. She is now head of Tai Fun Imports, a legitimate (semi-legitimate, anyway) corporation, but her body is failing her after 100 years of overwork and stress.

Mama Wa's Gunmen

Attributes		Combat Abilities		Careers
Strength	1	Initiative	0	Mercenary 2
Agility	1	Melee	0	
Mind	0	Ranged	2	
Appeal	0	Defence	0	
Lifeflood	6	Protection	d6-3, light armour	

These Chinese mercenaries are Toughs, personally chosen by Mama Wa for their skill. They wear light vests under their white dinner-jackets and use Skoda machine pistols.

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