

# THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

UNLEASH YOUR  
INNER ABILITIES

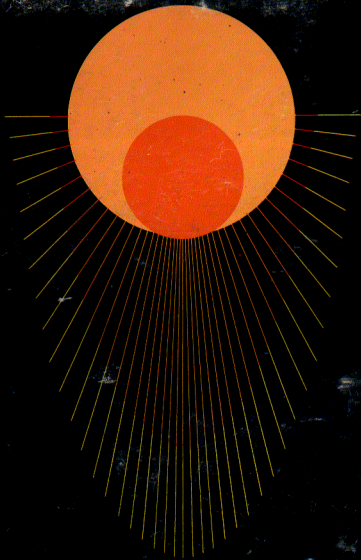
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JOIN

THE  
UNIVERSAL  
BROTHERHOOD  
TO BUILD A BETTER TOMORROW



NIGEL D. HINDLEY



**UNLEASH YOUR  
INNER ABILITIES!**

JOIN THE  
UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD  
TO BUILD A BETTER TOMORROW!



# BE ALL YOU CAN BE!

## Get In Touch With the Power Inside You!

It's a difficult world we live in. Lots of decisions to make, decisions that affect our quality of life...even whether we continue in this life. In most cases, we're on our own when we make these important decisions: no guidance, support, or help. Success or failure is based on what we know now, this minute—about the world around us and about ourselves.

So much of our day-to-day life comes down to self-knowledge. A pre-industrial writer named Shakespeare said, "To thine own self be true. But how can we be true to ourselves if we don't know ourselves?"

## We Can Help!

We are the Universal Brotherhood, a worldwide organization dedicated to YOUR success. We can help you get in touch with the Truth that's at the core of your being. We can help you find your own value in the Grand Scheme, your own personal destiny.

If you think this sounds like philosophy, you're right. But it is scientific philosophy that can be applied to the real world. It is philosophy that can make your life better, more effective, more enjoyable...and more significant.

## What is the Universal Brotherhood?

The Universal Brotherhood is an organization bound together by the scientifically proven fact that all Humans are, at a very deep and real level, brothers. Like the many branches of a tree spring from a single trunk, so do all the people of the world share a central core, a basic origin. This core, the well-spring of spiritual self-knowledge and power, is what truly makes us brothers. Just as islands seem isolated and unconnected within the vast oceans, so do individuals beings often seem alone and adrift. But take away the oceans, and the islands become one solid land mass. Look beneath the surface of Humanity, and you'll see the universal brotherhood that connects us all.

The Universal Brotherhood is dedicated to showing you the path to unleashing your full potential. But it's also so much more...

Because all Humans are brothers, acting to help one another is really acting to help yourself. The Universal Brotherhood has a responsibility to those less fortunate, and

we take that responsibility very seriously. That's why you'll find our charitable works wherever they're needed. We're down in the streets, working in the soup kitchens, sponsoring the educational resources, and free clinics. These are all works of the Universal Brotherhood.

## Our Philosophy

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The fundamental brotherhood of all sentient beings is a fact proven scientifically and mathematically. It is as measurable and tangible as the Gravitational Constant...and just as pervasive.

Breakthrough studies conducted in the middle of the last century proved that a major cause of stress and suicidal tendencies was a sense of helplessness. This led many people to the conclusion that their lives were no longer in their own hands. With the help of the Universal Brotherhood, you can leave this fear behind forever.

Then you can sleep soundly each night, unburdened by drugs, untroubled by anxiety and nightmares. You can awake refreshed each morning, ready to take on the world...and win. You'll be more open to the opportunities around you. Each day, you will make the world a better place for yourself and for everyone else.

With the power and support of every sentient creature on this planet—over three billion strong—at your fingertips, the possibilities are mind-boggling!

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**Universal Brotherhood**  
**Building a Better Tomorrow**

## WELCOME TO SHADOWLAND!

>>>>[Welcome to Shadowland, the latest in exclusive BBS (Bulletin Board Systems). Unsupported by the megacorps, unsanctioned by any government. No initiation fee, no sign-on charge. We figure that anyone who can deck his way in here deserves to be a member.

Shadowland is a non-profit venture, but only because that's the way it's turned out. So, yes, chummers, we gladly accept donations to help defray operating costs, but don't expect donations to be tax-deductible or that we'll be giving you a receipt.

Our main database is safe in Denver, with thousands of affiliated boards constantly uploading and downloading information in cities around the world. So if you want the real chiptruth about anything, Shadowtalk is the place to visit.

As shown on the main menu, Shadowland is broken into various topic areas. The data areas of a topic are sacrosanct and very well-protected. Don't try any writes or deletes on the main topic. We've packed it with IC, on the theory that anyone who wants to deck into that stuff is either corporate or stupid, neither of which we want prancing around our database. In the last three months, our black IC has killed two "customers." Let's not make it three.

If you are really interested in a topic, log onto its Special Interest Group (SIG). The SIGs (we call them "Shadowtalk") aren't protected. You're free to write what you want. Think of it as an FIFO (first in, first out) rolling picture of public opinion. When the Sysop (system operator) gets around to it, she house-cleans Shadowtalk to get rid of stuff that's out-of-date or an obvious waste of memory.

So that's about all you have to know. Check out the main menu, see what interests you, and go to it.]<<<<

-Control (12:29:54 PST/07-10-50)

- ① Street Samurai Catalog
- ② Paterson's Guide to Paranormal Animals
- ③ Neo-Anarchist's Guide to North America
- ④ Government Regs.
- ⑤ Matrix Realities
- ⑥ Utilities
- ⑦ Media Watch
- ⑧ Reference
- ⑨ Miscellaneous
- ⑩ Dump!



## 9. MISCELLANEOUS

## 10. DUMP

## Routing:

Or: Seattle 34

Des: Waiting Upload — File X3XL5

Date: 22:58:03/05-06-51

X:\WANDERLYZ\NOTES\UB&gt; Data Dump

SELECT RECORDS (MARKED/ALL)&gt; OVERRIDE — ALL

DESTINATION: OVERRIDE — PRINTER

ALL RECORDS DUMP REPRESENTS 263.5 KILOBYTES OF DATA.

CONFIRM DUMP (Y/N) &gt; OVERRIDE — Y

DUMPING.....

>>>>[My name is Zeb Wanderly. I'm a dead man, and I know it. I've written dozens of articles about people who were "out of sanction" and "beyond salvage." I'm talking about people-shadowrunners, mostly who had to be killed simply because they knew too much. As a journalist, I've struggled to maintain my professional detachment when writing those stories, but it's hard to stay emotionally isolated. You want to tell your readers enough so they can feel what you want them to feel, but at the same time you can't let anything get to you.

Now I find myself on a "better dead" list because I learned more than I was supposed to. Maybe if I hadn't been so detached when I was writing about those out-of-sanction runners, I'd understand how they handled it. Maybe then I could handle it better now.

I don't want to die.

They'll kill me. The Brotherhood will kill me, just like they killed Rick. Poor Rick, he never knew what a powder keg we were sitting on. I tried to tell him, but maybe I didn't try hard enough. And I didn't have the guts to put my foot down and say enough was enough. I'm babbling. That's the problem with headware, it records everything.

I have to be calm and cool. What was the phrase that Archangel liked? "Grab the naked blade?" I have to grab the naked blade, I have to become a weapon. If I want to live, I have to think more clearly than ever before. And I have to act fast.)<<<<<

-WanderlyZ (10:17:43 PST/06-23-51)

>>>>[What follows is the entire record of the research done by Rick Davitt and myself concerning our investigation into the Universal Brotherhood. I imbedded a simple virus in the file to automatically print this out whenever someone scans it. I hope it works.

Right now your printer should be spewing out a mass of raw notes, rough drafts, EMAIL conversations, annotated transcripts of interviews, and downloaded information from various databases. This is everything that Rick and I uncovered. Nothing has been edited, nothing left out. Draw your own conclusions.]<<<<<

-WanderlyZ (09:24:37 PST/05-06-51)

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: WanderlyZ (11:13:20 PST/03-03-51) CHAT MODE**

DAVITT:

Morning, Zeb. It's still morning in Seattle, isn't it?

WANDERLY:

Hi, Rick. Yeah, I think so. How's Washington? And how's the second-best writer in NA?

DAVITT:

The answer to your first question is the same as always, poor to mediocre. As for the second part, I'm doing good and getting better. I've got something for us, Zeb. Something real juicy.

WANDERLY:

How juicy?

DAVITT:

How good are you at conspiracies?

WANDERLY:

Conspiracies? Well, let's see..Kennedy and the grassy knoll, Dallas..1963, wasn't it? That pope late last century, the reformer who the cardinals didn't quite approve of. The Big Four of '16. Those anonymous phone calls that trashed Senator Schwarzenegger's chances for the Oval Office. How am I doing?

DAVITT:

Not bad. You remember a lot. And that's exactly my point.

WANDERLY:

What is?

DAVITT:

You're talking about stuff that happened 50 to a 100 years ago. How many other presidents from the last century do people remember? How many have they even heard about? Next to none, right? And why do they remember Kennedy? Because of the mystery surrounding his death. To this day, people are still theorizing about who killed Kennedy. People love conspiracies.

WANDERLY:

Go on.

DAVITT:

What do you know about the Universal Brotherhood?

WANDERLY:

Not much. I've seen their Seattle HQ, of course. The Octagon, unsightly thing that it is. The Universal Brotherhood, let's see..some kind of retro-New Age, pseudo-religious crew, isn't it? Get in touch with the power and goodness inside you and all that drek.

DAVITT:

Not bad. Here, I've got one of their brochures. I'll dump it for you.

**IMBEDDED DATA DUMP**

## EMAIL CIRCUIT HELD

### BE ALL YOU CAN BE

#### Get In Touch With the Power Inside You!

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**Unleash Your True Potential**

**Building a Better Tomorrow**

**Universal Brotherhood**

**END DUMP**

**EMAIL CIRCUIT RE-ESTABLISHED**

WANDERLY:

Now that you've refreshed my memory, I do recall reading a flash or two about them on Newsnet. There were some rumors about kidnappings, too, weren't there? And something about parents taking on the Brotherhood in court because the Brotherhood "stole" their kids.

DAVITT:

Right. Those cases were all in Cal Free State. The kids were street kids, runaways. Some had legally divorced their parents. The Brotherhood picked them up and the parents fought to get them back.

WANDERLY:

Did any of the parents win?

DAVITT:

Every single case was thrown out of court. Remember anything else?

WANDERLY:

Well, they get preferential tax treatment, at least over here. I'm pretty sure they cut the same kind of deal in Cal Free State.

DAVITT:

In UCAS, CAS, the Caribbean League, Tir Tairngire, and in the tribal lands. The only place they're taxed normally is Quebec, but they're bringing to bear enormous political pressure trying to get that changed.

WANDERLY:

I see you've done a fair amount of research already.

DAVITT:

Like I said, it's a hot topic. Come on, anything else?

WANDERLY:

Nothing. No, hold it, there is something else. I remember it surprised the hell out of me when I first learned that the Universal Brotherhood wasn't one of those old-fashioned "personality cults." It doesn't have a charismatic leader or founder. No Reverend Moon, Jim Jones, Elizabeth Prophet, or Werner Something-or-other...

DAVITT:

Erhardt.

WANDERLY:

Werner Erhardt, that's the guy. That really surprised me. Fringe cults are usually built by a single so-called visionary, someone part psycho, part science-fiction writer, and part marketing genius. How did the Brotherhood get started?

DAVITT:

One of many questions that needs looking into.

WANDERLY:

You think they're involved in a conspiracy?

DAVITT:

Maybe conspiracy's too strong a word. But there's definitely more to the Brotherhood than meets the eye.

WANDERLY:

What do you mean?

DAVITT:

The tax structure, for one thing. Think about it. I don't know about Seattle, but here in D.C., the local government's in big trouble. With its deficit from hell, the city needs more revenue, so they're jacking taxes. Corporate taxes went up almost 10 percent, a couple of juicy loopholes got closed, and they just boosted the personal surtax for the third time in three years.

WANDERLY:

So? Sounds like Seattle. Things are tough all over.

DAVITT:

Yeah, they're tough all over...except when it comes to the Brotherhood. Here's this big organization whose cash flow's got to be on the order of...well, drek, I don't know yet, but it's got to be in the meganuyen. And yet the group pays hardly any taxes. I've heard they don't even bother with the formality of filing full returns. Why? Kinda makes you think they've got some major "in" with the government, like they know where the bodies are buried or something.

WANDERLY:

Maybe. But plenty of corps juggle their returns and pay next to nothing. That doesn't necessarily mean there's a conspiracy afoot.

DAVITT:

Granted, but last week I went to meet somebody at the airport and saw a dozen or so Brotherhood guys marching through the terminal. Most were wearing those green shirts, but some had on suits. Coming in through another door was a pack of those Krishna Consciousness fanatics, Hare Krishnas or whatever, wearing their saffron robes. There were maybe 60 of them, all milling around until frag it if a ruckus didn't break out.

WANDERLY:

HKs against the Brotherhood?

DAVITT:

You got it. I stayed well back because HKs have been known to pack heat as well as their incense sticks and wildflowers. The Brethren were outnumbered five to one, and I thought they were going to get slit up real quick.

WANDERLY:

What happened?

DAVITT:

The Krishnas fought just like you'd expect them to: no discipline, no organization, just slashing at anything and everything. The Brethren, on the other hand, closed ranks and fought tight with lots of magic. I think all the suits were shamans. They fought like pros and just blew the drek out of the Krishnas: confused them, fried them, and turned them to goo. It was over real quick. If the Brethren had any casualties, they carried them away before anyone could even get a look. Out of all those HKs, only five were still conscious, and they looked like they'd just lost an argument with a trash compactor.

WANDERLY:

And your point is?

DAVITT:

My point is that whoever taught them to fight like that knows what he's doing. Where would the Universal Brotherhood get such training? And more important, why would they want it?

WANDERLY:

To defend themselves.



DAVITT:  
In case they get jumped by HKs? That's kind of a low-probability event, don't you think?

WANDERLY:  
It happened.

DAVITT:  
Once. In however many years it's been since the Brotherhood started up, there's no record of any other such physical clash. None. Now look at the Humanis Policlub. They're involved in a rumble every other week. They should be the ones getting the small-unit combat training, but they never have. So why would the Brethren? Interesting question, isn't it?

WANDERLY:  
And you think that's enough on which to base a full-scale exposé? Come on, Rick, there's nothing there. The Catholic Church never paid a penny of taxes, and the Jesuits used to be military shock troops.

DAVITT:  
If the Catholic Church was still a major player, I'd do an exposé on it.

WANDERLY:  
I bet you would. Listen, Rick, as a favor to you, we'll do some preliminary digging. If there's any meat, we'll keep going. If not, we drop it. Deal?

DAVITT:  
Deal. You'll see, there's going to be a whole lot of meat there. I can smell it.

WANDERLY:  
You can't smell your upper lip.

DAVITT:  
Very funny.

WANDERLY:  
Let's touch base in a couple of days.

DAVITT:  
You got it.  
**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (12:21:19 PST/03-03-51)**

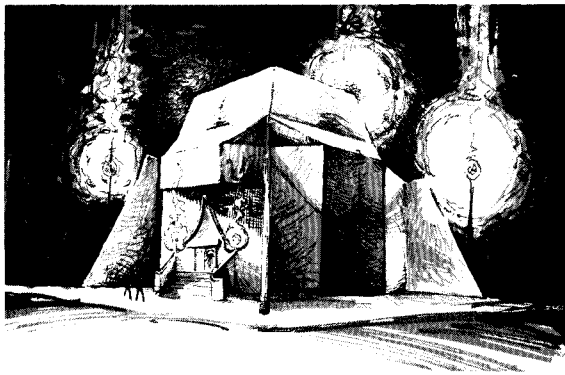
**NEWSNET — NA Netlink SEA**  
**LOGON: WanderlyZ (09:18:28 PST/03-04-51)**

**RETRIEVAL/DOWNLOAD**  
**SPECIFY SEARCH CONDITIONS (KEYWORD): universal brotherhood - octagon**  
**SEARCHING....**

**UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD SEATTLE HEADQUARTERS OPENS**

(Seattle)AP  
[04-01-45]





The housing for Seattle's newest chapter of the Universal Brotherhood was unveiled today in official ceremonies conducted by Consul (Chapter President) Galen Walker. The building, nicknamed The Octagon, is a ten-floor, 46,500 square-meter edifice located on the corner of Eighth Avenue and Westlake Avenue. It was designed and built by members of the Brotherhood.

"It's really not a headquarters," Consul Walker told reporters afterward, "though I'm sure that's how many will continue to see it. It's just another chapterhouse that happens to be the biggest one around."

Currently, there are four Universal Brotherhood chapters in the Greater Seattle area, with a total membership of over 1,300.

In addition to the traditional bookstore, administrative, training, and meeting spaces required by the chapter, the Octagon also contains a soup kitchen and a well-equipped, 50-bed clinic. Both are open round-the-clock for anyone who needs their services. "It's part of our responsibility to the community," said Walker, "and we take that responsibility very seriously. Street people, the disadvantaged, the homeless... we have to do what we can for them. Simple Humanity demands no less."

The Octagon's entire construction cost (more than ¥7 million nuyen) was raised from fund drives within the Universal Brotherhood organization, as well as from charitable donations. No bank financing was ever sought.

Galen Walker was named Consul of the new Central Seattle chapter in January of this year. She was Consul of the Ukiah (California Free State) chapter for four years, and Pro-Consul since that chapter's inauguration in 2043.

#### ANOTHER SEARCH (Y/N)? y

SPECIFY SEARCH CONDITIONS (KEYWORD): universal brotherhood > first occurrence  
SEARCHING....

#### HERE COMES THE BROTHERHOOD!

(Seattle) UPI  
[02-17-43]

Californians have always been known for their "flavor-of-the-week" approach to religions and cult institutions. Some traditions never seem to change.

The latest entry in the "fringe-cult sweepstakes" is the so-called Universal Brotherhood. A month ago, nobody had ever heard of them. On February 1, though, four "chapters" opened their doors simultaneously across California: two in San Francisco, one in Ukiah, and one in Gilroy (that's right, "Garlic Capital of the World" Gilroy). Each chapter pays for space in whatever low-rent building it can find—abandoned church, dilapidated house, bankrupt business establishment. Current estimates show that each chapter has from 10 to 20 active members, though they are already starting to recruit more.

The Brotherhood espouses a tripartite philosophy based on equal parts of EST, New Age pseudo-mysticism, and a healthy dose of Madison Avenue marketing smarts. Some who have attended the revival meetings say no specific religious belief is ever mentioned, but the overtones of spiritual devotion and financial contribution are reminiscent of the televangelist craze at the close



of the last century.

The Universal Brotherhood declares itself a purely charitable organization, and their actions so far seem to support that. The two San Francisco chapters have cooperated in setting up a soup kitchen for squatters, while the Ukiah and Gilroy chapters are each setting up youth recreation centers in impoverished neighborhoods.

A statistical survey commissioned several years ago reported that most fringe cults have an average lifespan of 18 months. Experts say that if a group such as the Universal Brotherhood lasts longer than that, the chances are better than good that it will be around for a much longer time.

**ANOTHER SEARCH (Y/N)? n**

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (09:25:31 PST/03-04-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: WanderlyZ (09:35:41 PST/03-05-51) CHAT MODE**

DAVITT:

Top o' the morning to you, Zeb, old boy.

WANDERLY:

I'll thank you not to be so obscenely cheery this fragging early in the day.

DAVITT:

Rather touchy, aren't we? Get up on the wrong side of the bed this morning? Or the wrong bed, perhaps?

WANDERLY:

If you have to know, I have a truly lethal headache. If there were any justice in the world, somebody would drop a bomb on me and end this misery.

DAVITT:

Out on the tiles last night?

WANDERLY:

Research. Strictly research. I went out for a few drinks with Icepick, and she was giving me some black background on the Brotherhood. Then her friends showed up and the drinking really started.

DAVITT:

Icepick? You do hang with some interesting people.

WANDERLY:

Icepick's her street name. She's a decker. Her real name's Juli Parkhurst. A ravishing blonde, maybe 25 years old, with nice, uh, you'd like her.

DAVITT:

Hanging around with shadowrunners again?

WANDERLY:

It's research for *Into the Shadows*.

DAVITT:

You're never going to write that book. Shadowrunners are a dangerous breed, Zeb.

WANDERLY:

No more than the yakuza you were investigating.

DAVITT:

Maybe not, but the key word there is "investigating." I wasn't buddying up with them. I think it's your basic tendency to live vicariously, boyo. If you can't pack a Remington Roomsweeper, you want to hang out with people who do.

WANDERLY:

Do you want to hear what Icepick gave me or not?

DAVITT:  
Ravishing blonde, eh? Since you're feeling so rough this morning, maybe what she gave you was more than some black background. Ho-ho.

WANDERLY:  
O.K., Rick, so I was seeing Icepick-Juli-for awhile. Now we're just friends. There, is your curiosity satisfied? If so, I'd like to change the subject.

DAVITT:  
Sorry, Zeb. Tell me what Juli had to say.

WANDERLY:  
She says the Brotherhood is recruiting on the streets.

DAVITT:  
Who and how? And why?

WANDERLY:  
Who? Street punks, go-gang wannabes, runaways. How? They're smooth. They dress recruits in green shirts and hire them as guards or nightwatchers, something that's got the feeling of toughness and power, even though there's nothing to guard against. That's how they start working on them.

DAVITT:  
What do you mean, working on them?

WANDERLY:  
I'm not really sure. It sounds kind of confused, kind of flaky, but Icepick says the Brethren give them a sense of identity. People like that.

DAVITT:  
That's not flaky. That's good strategy. What else would street failures be looking for but a sense of identity?

WANDERLY:  
Interesting theory. I'm just not sure I buy it.

DAVITT:  
Last time we chatted, you mentioned the Moonie cult. If you want to know the power of acceptance, just look at them. Or take a look at a novel from way back called *The Green Ripper* by a guy named MacDonald.

WANDERLY:  
Ancient literature?

DAVITT:  
Not that ancient, maybe 80 years ago. I'll dump you a copy. It may be fiction, but there's a lot of truth to it. You really should read more of that old stuff; the psychology's interesting and you'll get more out of it than from those old movies you're into. But back to the Brotherhood. You answered the who and how. What about the why?

WANDERLY:  
Icepick doesn't know why they're recruiting. She hasn't been able to figure that one out yet. Hey, did you know that the Seattle Brotherhood built the Octagon with their own money? That and "charitable donations." No outside financing.

DAVITT:  
You think they used one of those give-us-all-your-worldly-goods-and-we'll-give-you-inner-peace kind of scams?

WANDERLY:  
I thought so at first. Now I'm not so sure.

DAVITT:  
Because they're recruiting street muscle?

WANDERLY:  
Poor excuses for street muscle. These recruits might think they're tough, but compared to





some of Icepick's friends--real street samurai--they don't know what tough is.

DAVITT:

So why's the UB interested in recruiting them? Is that your question?

WANDERLY:

That's exactly my question. Remember the airport story you told me last time? I just heard another one. You know what muckers are?

DAVITT:

Hey, D.C.'s civilized. We've got muckers, too. They're like vandals except that they like defacing people rather than buildings.

WANDERLY:

Now this is pure black info that never made it to the newsnets or trideo, but a clan of muckers called the Mindfraggers decided to do a job on the UB and have a little fun with one of the introductory meetings they hold at the Octagon every Tuesday night. About 30 Mindfraggers, all chipped out of their tiny minds and armed to the teeth, busted into the Octagon for a little fun.

DAVITT:

And?

WANDERLY:

Not one of them came out alive.

DAVITT:

That's confirmed?

WANDERLY:

Who the frag's going to confirm it? The UB's not talking and there aren't any Mindfraggers available for comment. A friend of Icepick--a guy they call Hangfire--heard about it on the street.

DAVITT:

Are you starting to agree with me that there's a story here?

WANDERLY:

There're a lot of questions, that's for sure. But you know as well as I do that questions alone don't always make for a good story. The story depends on the answers.

DAVITT:

But you're interested in getting the answers, right?

WANDERLY:

Yeah, I'm interested. Go see what you can dig up about UB membership in UCAS. Membership numbers, rate of growth...I'd really like to see some member demographics: age, income, educational level, job classification, all that stuff. Is the UB starting to recruit different kinds of people?

DAVITT:

Gee, you're not asking for much, are you?

WANDERLY:

I'll see what I can scrape together. If you've got any contacts you can use, see if you can set up an interview with a UB member. Not the brass, not a recruiter, just a rank-and-file member. O.K.?

DAVITT:

Give me a couple of days on that. And give my best to Icepick.

WANDERLY: Slot off.

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (10:10:21 PST/03-05-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**  
**LOGIN: Davitt (20:32:25 EST /03-08-51) NOTEBOOK MODE**  
**Online Annotation [ZW] [08:19:46 PST/03-09-51]**

Zeb:

Here's what I've got. It's not as much as I'd hoped, and it was harder to dig up than I thought. These UB people are a cagey bunch.

This stuff applies specifically for DC alone, but you can probably generalize it for the rest of the UCAS and maybe all of NA. Here goes.

**Chapters:** There are three chapters in D.C. One is at 26th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue (250 members), one is at 4th Street and G Street (100 to 200 members), and the other is located at Alabama Avenue and Wheeler Road (also 100 to 200 members). There are approximately 300 chapters spread out across NA. No figures are available for total membership, but we can probably make a few assumptions. Take 300 chapters, each with an average of maybe 200 members...no, better make it more conservative and drop it to 100 members each. That still gives us a grand total of 30,000 members! That's in NA alone. Worldwide they must have at least another 100 chapters, though they're probably smaller. Let's say they have 50 members each. That means another 5,000 members.

**Rate of Growth:** Fast! As you said, they started out with four chapters in '43. Since then, we're talking about a 95 percent annual growth rate on average. It's starting to trail off a little, but they could conceivably have as many as 70,000 members by next year.

**Demographics:** Membership is 70 percent male, 95 percent Human. The average age is 27.6. (Back in '43, the average age was 48.7. Now isn't that interesting?)<<ZW: Remember to ask Rick about mean income. If I'm right, it should have risen.>> Sex/race distribution does not seem to have changed over the years.

**Cash Flow:** Official returns show that the UB is a non-profit corporation, with a total UCAS cash flow of under one million nuyen, which shows how little we can trust the official returns. The general opinion is that the UB is actually turning over a hundred million annually, much of it protected through various holding or "resource" companies. You know the set-up.

Well, that's what I've got at the moment. Email me when you want to discuss it.

-Rick

**LOGOUT: Davitt (20:41:06 EST/03-08-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**  
**LOGIN: WanderlyZ (19:25:38 PST/03-08-51) CHAT MODE**

WANDERLY:

You there, Rick?

DAVITT:

I'm here. What do you think? Interesting stuff, huh?

WANDERLY:

Did you get anything on the average income?

DAVITT:

I knew you'd ask that. No, I couldn't track that down, but I'll keep looking. That could tell us a lot.

WANDERLY:

How much you want to bet that when the UB first opened its doors, the mean income was drek? Those first members would have been squatters, people who'd join anything if they thought it would get them some food.



DAVITT:

So you think that's why the mean age was high?

WANDERLY:

At first they were taking anyone they could: old squatters and street vagabonds. Now they're recruiting fresh, young talent.

DAVITT:

If you're right, the mean income shouldn't have changed much.

WANDERLY:

Not much, no. But I'd like to confirm that.

DAVITT:

And just how do you propose we do that?

WANDERLY:

Ask them.

DAVITT:

What?

WANDERLY:

It's a sure bet you and I can't deck our way into the UB's computer system. It's also a sure bet that any decker who can is going to want more money than we can possibly afford. But groups like the UB have to be concerned about public opinion. No doubt they've got a big PR department just drooling to tell a reporter how great they are.

DAVITT:

They'll lie.

WANDERLY:

They will if they've got something to hide. Even then, having some kind of line that we can evaluate is better than nothing at all. Right?

DAVITT:

So ka. Go for it, chummer. I'll try to track down a UB member who wants to talk. Then I'll let you know.

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (19:36:08 PST/03-08-51)**

#### **DATACHIP TRANSCRIPT**

**Original Recording (10:05:19 PST/03-11-51)**

**Online Annotation (ZW/FD) (13:18:22 PST/03-11-5)**

**Graphics File Appended (12:05:34 PST/03-11-51)**





<<ZW: Interview transcript: Martin Johnson, Assistant Director of Public Relations, Universal Brotherhood, Central Seattle (Octagon) chapter. Young, maybe 30 years old. Real smooth demeanor, probably a sales background. Big smile, artificial teeth. Weird cybereyes: you see numerous reflections of yourself when looking into his eyes. A surprising affectation for someone whose job it is to make you feel comfortable and feed you the company line. The office is full of flashy tech and expensive pastels--what you'd expect from a big multinational corporation, not a non-profit organization. Rick, these guys are pulling in real money from somewhere.>>

WANDERLY:

Thanks for taking the time to see me, Mr. Johnson <<FD: Mr. Johnson?>> <<ZW: Chip truth.>>

JOHNSON:

Please, call me Martin. No thanks are necessary. I really do enjoy this kind of thing, Zeb. Mind if I call you Zeb? I know it sounds cliché, but the Brotherhood made a real difference in my life. <<FD: Damn straight it sounds cliché, chummer.>> It saved my life. I think it's important to let as many people as possible know just what the Brotherhood can do for them. Every person I save makes me feel that I've done something worthwhile with my life. So, you've got questions you want answered, right? Well, fire away and I'll do my best to answer them. <<FD: You're right, Zeb. Sales background for sure.>> <<ZW: I don't know, Rick. He talks like he really means it.>>

WANDERLY:

Tell me about your founder. Most cults revere their founder and regard him or her as being nothing short of a deity. I never hear Brotherhood members talk about the founder.

JOHNSON:

Well, first of all, I'd question your use of the word "cult."

WANDERLY:

What term should I use? <<FD: Nice approach. I'm impressed. Put him on the spot and force him to describe his beliefs.>> <<ZW: Hold the applause until you see how he wriggles out of it. The boy's slick.>>



JOHNSON:

"Cult" has a negative connotation; it has become a kind of catch-all term for radical or bizarre groups who espouse anti-social principles or behaviors. I question your use of the term simply because I know that is not what the Universal Brotherhood is all about. Quite the contrary. But I understand your confusion. I have seen many journalists struggle with concepts that are too basic and straightforward. <<ZW: See how he turned it around and put me on the defensive?>> <<FD: This one is slick.>>

WANDERLY:

Er, anyway, about your founder..

JOHNSON:

You're quite right, we don't talk much about our founder. Not that we aren't immensely proud of her and what she's done. It's just that the Universal Brotherhood is not about individual personality, it's about a general philosophy for the betterment of us all. It's the idea, not the person. See what I'm saying? If we give the person too much importance, that's all people see when they look at the Brotherhood. The more important message gets lost. But, indeed, our founder is Caitlin O'Connell: sociologist, psychologist, futurist, writer. I see you're smiling. No, Dr. O'Connell was not a science fiction writer. Her writing was almost all academic, mainly to do with cultural dynamics. Among other things, she predicted the events of the Night of Rage years before it happened.

WANDERLY:

She predicted it?

JOHNSON:

Not every exact detail, of course. She's a scientist, not a fortune teller. But she did accurately point out the dynamics that allowed it to happen...that, indeed, made it unavoidable. Whether it took place in Tacoma, or Sacramento, or in Ukiah, she knew something like the Night of Rage was inevitable. <<ZW: Have you ever heard of this Caitlin O'Connell, Rick?>> <<FD: No. I'll check into it.>>

WANDERLY:

Where does the Universal Brotherhood come in?

JOHNSON:

It comes from Dr. O'Connell's research. She was working, under a corporate grant, on the development of a numerical value system that could be used to measure and ultimately predict social interaction in various situations, particularly mob dynamics. In essence, mathematical psychology. I guess the corps wanted to find some way to defuse situations like the Night of Rage. <<FD: Or instigate them.>> It was all pretty revolutionary stuff. Of course, the math is way beyond me--show me a double integral and my eyes cross--but I'll try to explain it as best I can.

WANDERLY: Go ahead.

JOHNSON:

Well, over time Dr. O'Connell found that the equations she was coming up with worked for both Human and Metahuman behavior...almost. The values were always a little bit off, though, indicating the presence of another variable somewhere in the equation. So she started looking for this lost variable. It took her years, but...

WANDERLY:

When was this?

JOHNSON:

In 2036. She made her breakthrough discovery in June 2039 when she came up with a universal value that fit into the equations for all races and cultures. This provided the first empirical proof of a deeper, metaphysical connection between everyone in the known world! It's like...well, this is my clumsy analogy, but...it's like you drill a whole bunch of wells

and water comes out of every one. They look like separate, distinct entities. But if you go deep enough below the surface, you find that all the water ultimately comes from the same source. Do you understand what I'm getting at?

WANDERLY:  
I think so.

JOHNSON:  
She proved it! We are all directly connected in a way that transcends both body and spirit. The psychologist Jung called it the "collective unconscious." Dr. O'Connell called it the "universal brotherhood." That's where we get our name, and that's what we're trying to teach people.

WANDERLY:  
Could I see the mathematical equations, the actual formulae?

JOHNSON:  
You understand that stuff?

WANDERLY:  
I dabble. <<FD: Drek!>> <<ZW: I know some people who do more than dabble. I would trust their analysis.>>

JOHNSON:  
Very well. I'll make sure my secretary gives you a copy on your way out. We have copies of all her papers, published and unpublished, in our library. Will an optical chip be sufficient, or do you want hardcopy?

WANDERLY:  
A chip would be great, thanks. I'm almost embarrassed to ask, but is Dr. O'Connell still alive?

JOHNSON:  
She is. In fact, she's still actively involved with the Brotherhood. She talks to the president nearly every day, and she still spends most of her time doing research.

WANDERLY:  
Where does she live?

JOHNSON:  
Is this on the record?

WANDERLY:  
Not if you don't want it to be.

JOHNSON:  
Well...I guess as long as you don't print it. She has her own research lab in the Hell's Canyon area. That's about 70 kilometers east of Walla Walla. <<FD: She's in SS-Council territory?>> <<ZW: Yeah, but that whole area is one vast wilderness. If you want to be left alone, that's the place to be.>>

WANDERLY:  
And how old is she?

JOHNSON:  
You know, to tell the truth, I'm not sure. She's probably in her early fifties.

WANDERLY:  
You mentioned the president. Who is the president of the Brotherhood, and where is the organization's headquarters?

JOHNSON:  
I know this must sound crazy, but we don't have a headquarters. That is, it depends on who's president. Every two years, delegates from all our chapters nominate candidates, and then the general membership votes on the Council members--that's a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The elected president is usually the consul president of a chapter. That president's chapterhouse then becomes the "headquarters" during his term of

office.

WANDERLY:

Let me get this straight. This is a multi-million-nuyen outfit, right?

JOHNSON:

Not at all. Our cash flow was under a million nuyen last year. <<FD: Sure it was, chummer.>>

WANDERLY:

That's still quite a responsibility to lay on somebody who comes up from the ranks, isn't it?

JOHNSON:

The screening process ensures that only the finest are ever nominated. Our Brethren know how to judge people. <<ZW: Said with a broad, drek-eating grin.>> <<FD: Smile when you say that, chummer.>>

WANDERLY:

I suppose there's some kind of bureaucracy that stays in place from term to term?

JOHNSON:

Sure. <<FD: It's like the government. It's the snivel servants that keep the place running, and they're the same no matter who's in the hot seat.>>

WANDERLY:

And it's all one man, one vote?

JOHNSON:

Yes. The previous Council has a somewhat stronger voice, of course, based on seniority and experience. <<FD: Bingo.>>

WANDERLY:

Who's the current president?

JOHNSON:

It's Consul Walker. Galen Walker.

WANDERLY:

She's still Consul of this chapter, isn't she?

JOHNSON:

I guess I shouldn't be surprised that you've done your research. Yes, Consul Walker has led this chapter since it was founded. She was elected president in June of '50, so she's not even halfway through her term yet.

WANDERLY:

What exactly does the president do?

JOHNSON:

Not all that much, really. The chapters are, in large part, autonomous organizations. The president is responsible for coordinating any matters that do require the cooperation of several chapters, however. She also travels quite a bit, visiting the chapters, maintaining contact, that sort of thing. And, of course, she's the main contact with Dr. O'Connal.

WANDERLY:

Straight and simple, what does the Brotherhood do for people?

JOHNSON:

It saves their lives. Perhaps the best way to say it is that it makes a person become an "agent." Are you at all familiar with the term?

WANDERLY:

It's commonly found in philosophy and psychology. <<FD: Drek again! You didn't know the word until you read that brochure I dumped you.>>

JOHNSON:

We help people get hold of their lives, make them take direct responsibility for who they are, what they are, and where they're going. I believe—we believe—that everyone can become the "agent" of his or her own transformation. If you don't like where you are, you can do something about it. That's what we do for our members. We help them find that power, that special energy that's in all of us. We help them tap that energy source. It's not easy, and sometimes it hurts. It's difficult to give up all those convenient excuses you've been living with for years. But we're there to back you up. We're with you every step of the way, with strong arms to support you, and tender sympathies from which to draw comfort. You don't mind if I talk about myself?

WANDERLY:

Go right ahead.

JOHNSON:

I was really lost for a while, and the sad part was I didn't know it. I was working for Matsutomo, really into climbing the proverbial corporate ladder. You know, department head by 25, Assistant VP by 28, a shoe-in for Executive VP of my division, probably before I turned 35. I mean, I had it all, right? Wrong! It was empty. I had all the nuyen, all the toys, all the women—all the stuff we're supposed to be knocking ourselves out for. Yet I felt empty inside. Slowly I realized that I wasn't living my life for myself. I was living it for what other people expected of me. I was supposed to want the toys, so I pretended I did. <<FD: Aw, poor little rich boy.>> <<ZW: Back off, O.K., Rick? I think he was sincere about this.>>

WANDERLY:

What happened?

JOHNSON:

I had some sort of emotional breakdown. It was the day before my 29th birthday. I was having a nice intimate dinner with three...well, let's call them "entertainment consultants." A few drinks, a few laughs, the usual thing. Then something happened. The funny thing is I don't even remember leaving the restaurant. The next thing I know, I'm standing on the roof of my building, 64 floors from oblivion, trying to think of one good reason why I shouldn't take the dive. And I couldn't think of one. I took one long, last look at the skyline of Seattle. I wanted to appreciate it one last time, I guess. And that's when I saw the Octagon. When it's lit up at night, it looks like a strange and wonderful gemstone. Suddenly I remembered some of the stuff I'd read about the Brotherhood, some of the things they promised, and I thought, why not? If they couldn't give me back what I'd somehow lost—or never found—well, the roof would still be there.

WANDERLY:

So you joined the Brotherhood?

JOHNSON:

That very night.

WANDERLY:

And did you find what you were looking for?

JOHNSON:

I'm here, aren't I? The Brotherhood did, indeed, give me what I'd lost.

WANDERLY:

Which was?

JOHNSON:

My sense of self. My unique place in the grand scheme of things, my value to myself and to the world around me.

WANDERLY:

A sense of belonging.



JOHNSON:

Exactly! Not only to the Universal Brotherhood, but to the...the "family of man" I guess you could say. I know this must sound strange. <<FD: You got that right, chummer.>>

WANDERLY:

No, not really. I think that's what a lot of people are looking for. So tell me, how many Brotherhood members are like you? Corporate men or ex-corporate men?

JOHNSON:

More than you might imagine. When the Brotherhood first came to be, its members were mostly the helpless dregs of city life. They were the desperate ones, the ones willing to try anything to improve their situation. But you know something, Zeb, I don't think the ones on the street are the worst off. They know that their life is drek, and they accept it in a way that's a kind of cold comfort. What about the guys in the corporate suites, the ones like me? Their lives are drek, too, even though everyone's telling them it isn't so. They've grabbed the brass ring, but for most, it's a hollow victory. Nowadays, more and more of our power base comes from these disenchanting executives who need answers. Do you know what the suicide rate is among corporation executives? I'm talking senior-management level.

WANDERLY:

Is it high?

JOHNSON:

Higher than you'd believe, and much higher than what the authorities give out. These guys are smart; they know how to play the insurance game so their families are provided for. Insurance doesn't pay off if you do a one and a half gainer off the Space Needle. But it does if you get geeked while cruising in Ancients' turf. There are other ways of killing yourself besides stepping off a rooftop or blowing your brains out. The Brotherhood represents an alternative.

WANDERLY:

So how many...

JOHNSON:

I'm afraid I didn't answer your original question, did I? At last count, about 20 percent of the Brotherhood's membership is made up of corporate management. And it's rising, too. <<ZW: There we go! >> <<FD: Smoothly done, my man.>> Some of our members are top people in the largest corporations. Government agencies, too. And you know something else? Not all the numbers are in yet, but I believe the suicide rate in this city is dropping. Of course, our doors are still open to the street types.

WANDERLY:

I understand that includes some samurai wannabes and street muscle.

JOHNSON:

Our doors are open to *anyone* who needs what we offer.

WANDERLY:

Would it be possible for me to speak with some of these execs?

JOHNSON:

We keep our membership roster confidential. Unfortunately, some still believe we are nothing more than a shelter for squatters and outcasts. Divulging names could jeopardize careers. I'm sure you can understand that. But I'll tell you what I can do for you. I'll contact some members and tell them you're interested in talking. If they want to, they can get in touch with you. Sound fair?

WANDERLY:

Very fair. Well, Mr. Johnson-er, Martin-thanks for your time. I appreciate it very much.

JOHNSON:

Not at all. If there's anything else, you've got my access code. You're researching an article, right? By the way, what publication is it for? I'd like to get some off-prints, maybe, or download it to our net if it's electronic.

WANDERLY: Um, I'm working freelance at the moment.

JOHNSON:

So, you'll peddle it after you've finished? Well, best of luck. Hey, if you want some good background, why not come to one of our Discovery Meetings? These are our formal introduction seminars to the Brotherhood. Tuesday nights right here at the Octagon. Who knows? Freelancing must be a soul-killing job with all that rejection. Maybe you'll find that the Brotherhood is just what you need. You're always welcome. <<FD: Hard sell. I knew that was coming.>>

WANDERLY:

That brings up a good point. If I did join, what would it cost me?

JOHNSON:

Nothing to worry about. There's an initiation fee of a couple hundred nuyen. I'm sure that's nothing for a man of your position.

WANDERLY:

But that's quite a ding for someone down and out on the streets.

JOHNSON:

Well, of course it's predicated on the person's ability to pay. If somebody doesn't have the credit and they're serious about us, they can pay later, most often after we've found them a job. They give us 10 percent off the top until the fee's made good. Did you notice the doorman and the security people in the lobby? All are members who took that option. Most of them keep the jobs we give them. It's an important part of reestablishing their sense of self-worth.

WANDERLY: Surely initiation fees of a couple of hundred nuyen didn't pay for the Octagon.

JOHNSON:

Certainly not. We greatly encourage donations from all our members once they're on their feet again. It's not required, of course, but it does fit in perfectly with the theme that we, as brothers, must do what we can to help each other. Almost everyone contributes freely. It's a wonderful thing, Zeb. It really is.

## TRANSCRIPT ENDS

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC-SEA**

**LOGIN: WanderlyZ (15:27:18 PST/03-11-51) CHAT MODE**

WANDERLY:

So what do you think, Rick?

DAVITT:

Aren't we up for some legal liability here, Zeb?

WANDERLY:

What do you mean?

DAVITT:

You didn't give him the disclaimer about recording the conversation. That could mean big trouble if we quote.

WANDERLY:

You should keep up-to-date on your legal matters, chummer. Darryl James, that reporter for Shockwave, challenged the disclaimer law and won. Now that almost all topnotch journalists have recording hardware (present company excluded), it's become the interviewee's responsibility not to say anything he doesn't want published. He must assume that he is being recorded, unless otherwise notified.



DAVITT:

It would be Darryl, wouldn't it? The king of ambush journalism.

WANDERLY:

Yeah. Ever seen his work?

DAVITT:

I promised myself a long time ago I'd never watch "Schlockwave."

WANDERLY:

You should invest in some headware yourself, Rick. I don't know how I ever did without it.

DAVITT:

It's quite a whack of cash, and I need to use a keyboard to get my thoughts straight. When this exposé hits the streets and we're rolling in nuyen, then maybe I'll consider it.

WANDERLY:

Wuss.

DAVITT:

Anyways, what do you think? Even if your Mr. Johnson was giving you only half the straight goods, I think this Brotherhood thing takes on a whole new light. Drek, 20 percent execs? This is serious stuff. And what do you think about these voluntary donations?

WANDERLY:

Like I said before, I think Johnson is sincere. If he isn't, he's one frag of a good liar.

DAVITT:

Always a possibility.

Wanderly:

I believed him, Rick. I really did.

DAVITT:

I'll admit that he did sound sincere. What about the math? You were going to have it analyzed.

WANDERLY:

I did. Interesting stuff. The original work on mob dynamics was very incisive, possibly years ahead of its time. My contact said that if sociodynamics ever becomes a real science, they'll have to credit Dr. Caitlin O'Connell with being its founder.

DAVITT:

What about all that "universal brotherhood" drek?

WANDERLY:

That's where everything falls apart. The equations do work if you throw in another variable. But the idea that the new variable represents the "universal brotherhood of man"...that's just too flaky. My friend thinks their "universal variable" is really just a random factor, a floating number. All it proves is that we can't predict the actions of a mob.

DAVITT:

That's it?

WANDERLY:

They've taken that even one step further. Have you ever read any of those old pamphlets put out by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the self-professed transcendental meditation guru?

DAVITT:

No.

WANDERLY:

He always used to throw out obscure scientific terms—stuff like "quantum mechanical tun-



elling" and "Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle"—just to confuse people enough so that they would think he knew what he was talking about. The UB has done the same thing with O'Connell's math.

DAVITT:

It must be working. So, what's next?

WANDERLY:

We need to talk to a UB member. I'd love to get hold of one of those execs. I'll follow up on that. Did you track down your rank-and-filer?

DAVITT:

Her name is Tandis M'Bala, and I'm having lunch with her tomorrow. I'll send you what I've got tomorrow evening. I'm afraid I don't have any foreign hardware stuck in my head, so it won't be as good a transcript as yours. Think of it as real writing.

WANDERLY:

Slot off.

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (16:01:45 PST/03-11-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: DavittF (19:56:27 EST/ 03-12-51) NOTEBOOK MODE**

**Graphics File Appended (20:05:21 EST/03-12-51)**



Zeb:

It was Friday afternoon and Beagle's Bagels was crowded—mostly bright-faced secretaries and cruising sararimen looking to hit the jackpot. I was early for our appointment, so I took a seat at the bar and ordered a cocktail. With the place so crowded, I worried that I might not recognize Tandis M'Bala when she showed up. Of course, I should've known better.

I spotted her the moment she walked in. Something told me it had to be her. Something about her was different from the other patrons. She moved through the crowd like she wasn't even part of it. I know what you're thinking, Zeb, but I hadn't even touched that cocktail yet. There was just something about her.

She came straight over. As I introduced myself, I felt the girl look into me as though she knew everything about me, as though she could see through even to what I was thinking.

I've seen people brain-fried on drugs, and I've interviewed people who've slotted so



many BTL chips that their neural pathways are nearly gone; they always show a similar disassociation from reality. But Tandis's manner was not detached. Actually, she seemed more in tune with reality than anyone I've ever known.

Tandis couldn't have been more than 21. Small-boned, blond, and very well-dressed, she certainly cut a striking figure. There was a straightforwardness in her speech that I took at first for naiveté. But Tandis is not naive.

In some ways her background was quite different from Martin Johnson's; and yet very similar in others. She was born in the slums and grew up the hard way on the streets, making a living any way she could. Apparently her look of little-girl innocence served her well. The inevitable happened, of course, and she was noticed by one of the yakuza operations—the Fantasy Dream combine. They picked her up, "indoctrinated" her, and put her back on the streets to work for them. I should tell you here that she volunteered all this information freely.

Most Fantasy Dream "workers" don't last very long—maybe a few months, maybe weeks. If they're found at all, it's usually floating face-down in a river somewhere—suicide or homicide, what's the difference?

After a particularly unpleasant episode involving a party in Yokogawa's executive suites, she simply couldn't take it anymore. She ran, knowing full well what the consequences would be if they caught her.

She was caught, but not by the yakuza. Instead she wandered onto the wrong turf at the wrong time, and ran into a street gang out looking for a little entertainment. Things got pretty rough before the night was over.

The next thing she remembered was waking up in what looked like a hospital room, but turned out to be a facility of a local Universal Brotherhood chapter. Medical personnel and attendants watched her round the clock, slowly nursing her body back to health. Her spiritual and emotional well-being, however, were another matter. The time needed to heal those wounds would take longer, much longer. But the Brotherhood was willing to give her that time.

"They didn't save me," is how she put it. "They helped me save myself. They accepted me for what I was, and what I could be, and helped me to do the same. The Brotherhood became the family I never had."

Nowadays, Tandis truly believes in the Brotherhood and their philosophy that every living person is part of her "family." She also believes in herself. You can tell that just by looking at her. She works in the Brotherhood's public relations department and is apparently doing quite well. In addition, she runs the weekly Discovery Meetings and volunteers as a crisis counselor for street children.

"I can never fully pay back what the Brotherhood did for me," she insists. "I can only pass on the word to others. And that's what I'm trying to do."

She says her goal is to make the transition to what is known as the Inner Circle. This is supposedly a level of personal enlightenment and understanding above and beyond that which she has already reached. She wouldn't say exactly what is required for this higher transformation, but it was obvious she had no doubt she would attain it.

After she left the bar, I sat there thinking for the longest time. There had to be more to this Brotherhood, of that I was sure. Simply put, it's either one of the greatest hoaxes of all time, or maybe—just maybe—one of the greatest discoveries.

Zeb, get back to me as soon as possible. We really need to discuss this.

-Rick

LOGOUT: DavittF (20:28:13 EST/03-12-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: WanderlyZ (09:58:44 PST/03-16-51) NOTEBOOK MODE

Rick:

Don't go weird on me, chummer. Before you run off and join the Brotherhood, I've got two things you might want to know.

First off, last night I went to the Discovery Meeting at the Octagon. I won't waste bandwidth on the transcript; most of what they said we've already heard from Tandis and Johnson. But I did get some other valuable stuff.

I don't know what I expected, probably some cross between Chippers Anonymous ("Hi, I'm Yoshi A. and I'm a chiphead") and those ancient religious revival meetings. Wrong. The "meeting hall" was more like a giant corporate boardroom with over 100 comfortable seats, wood-paneled walls, subdued lighting, and lots of wiz AV tech (rear-projection, computer-generated graphics, multi-media display units). The meeting itself was like those assertiveness training courses that CareerTrack-Nightingale puts on for the corps. There were two presenters, male and female. Very professional and understated, but with enough barely controlled energy to light up Seattle. They started off quietly enough with the UB's scientific basis, then switched into high gear with "what the UB can do for you." "Belonging" and "self-esteem" were the buzzwords. The crowd just ate it up. They were so wrapped up in it that one minute they were on their feet screaming and cheering wildly, the next minute they were listening so intently you could have heard a pin drop. There were a couple of scruffy bleeders at the back who had come to heckle, but after the first couple of minutes, even they were entranced.

I was expecting the program to be some kind of testimonial, something like what Johnson had given me. The two presenters did do a bit of that, but they wasted no time in going for the knock-out punch.

Throughout the presentation, they'd been using all that expensive audio-visual tech in a smooth, understated manner. Then at one point they turned down all the lights and lowered a huge tri-vid screen. Suddenly the room was engulfed in the larger-than-life image of Bill Yakamura, the CEO and majority shareholder of Sony-Universal. This was to be his testimonial. He went on to tell his story of helplessness and woe, how his life was headed for failure. It seems like Big Bill had gone through much of the same dark despair of the soul as our friend Martin Johnson, only to be saved by the grace and wonder of the Universal Brotherhood. (The new crisis clinic the UB just opened over in Bremerton was his "voluntary donation." Yes, the whole fragging-clinic!) He made brief mention of that higher transition that Tandis was telling you about. Then, in that sophisticated, slightly condescending tone of his, he urged us all to look at our lives and decide whether we were happy with the world we inhabited. If there was even the slightest doubt, he said, we owed it to ourselves to talk to the UB counselors available in the lobby after the meeting was over.

Overall, the show was the best selling job I've ever seen, and it sure as drek worked. After an obligatory disclaimer from the presenters ("The Brotherhood may not be for everyone. It's up to each of you to decide how to better your life."), they opened up the doors. One had only to look at the long lines of people waiting to talk to the counselors to see that the program was a success.

Assuming this was just an average night, I think Johnson's estimate that 20 percent of the members were execs is about right. Most of the people in that room still came from the lower ends of city life. Half the people looked to be squatters who may just have wanted to get in from the cold. Maybe 25 percent were higher-echelon: suits or sararimen of one stamp or another. The rest looked like your average citizens. And most of them signed up for appointments afterward. I was trying to corral one so we could talk, when good old Martin Johnson popped up out of nowhere. By the time I'd shaken him, there was nobody left worth talking to.

Rick, these guys are good at what they do. Real good.

Now the important part. I'd arranged to have drinks with Juli (Icepick) and a couple of her friends after the meeting. One of them, a runner who calls himself the Chrome Rat, told me he'd found out a little more about the Mindfragger incident. (Remember the muckers that tried to take out a Discovery Meeting?) It seems that one of the Mindfraggers did get out alive, barely, but still breathing, still alive. Her name was Livi (short for "Oblivion," according to Rat), and she was holed up at Seattle General. After some negotiation, Rat agreed to take me to see her.

It cost an additional bite out of my credstick to persuade the doc in charge of intensive care to let me in.

Now, Rick, you know I've seen messed-up people before (remember that Seculpa-yak turf war I covered a couple of years back?), but I've never seen anything like this. It was hard to believe it was still a person under all the bandages and life-support equipment. She must have been hooked up to a couple million nuyen worth of hardware, with tubes and electrodes connected to almost every trace of skin tissue that was left. (If Livi's ever going to move again, it's going to cost her at least a mil in cyberware, and I don't think she can pay. God knows what's going to happen to her.) I've seen gunshot wounds, decompression damage, traumatic amputation, katana-work, but this...this was bad.

She was unconscious, of course, when we entered her room. It took yet another payment to the doc before he would take the necessary steps to bring her to. You said that Tandis's eyes seemed to look beneath the surface of things and find peace and comfort. I think Livi's eyes saw through the surface, too, but what she saw was something I don't even want to imagine. I'll transcribe what little conversation we had.

**IMBEDDED DATACHIP TRANSCRIPT — EMAIL CIRCUIT HELD**

Original Recording (23:44:58 PST/03-15-51)

Online Annotation (ZW) (01:58:24 PST/03-16-51)

Graphics File Appended (24:07:28 PST/03-15-51)



WANDERLY:

Livi, can you hear me?

Livi:

[Unintelligible.]

WANDERLY:

Livi, My name is Zeb Wanderly. I'm a writer and I want to talk to you about what happened two weeks ago. Can you understand me? I want to talk about what happened at the Octagon.

LIVI:

[Panic sounds.] <<ZW: The medico made another adjustment. Probably pumped her full of some don't-worries. She calmed down quickly.>>

WANDERLY:

Livi, I need to know what happened to you.

LIVI:

Uh-huh.<<ZW: Rick, her face was so messed up I had to use computer processing to wash the distortion out of her voice. I didn't understand much of what she said until after I'd run the routine.>>

WANDERLY:

Two weeks ago, you and your chummers went to the Octagon. You were going to hose the place, weren't you?

LIVI:

Uh-huh.

WANDERLY:

Start with when you first entered the building. Just take it slow and easy and tell me what happened, Doc? <<ZW: Another adjustment.>> Livi? Tell me what happened.

LIVI:

Busted in. Sec-guards, they shot...we cut 'em down. Geeked 'em real good.<<ZW: I was watching her one good eye. She wasn't seeing me. She was seeing it just as it happened.>> We hosed 'em down and took their gear.

WANDERLY:

Then what?

LIVI:

People were talking down the hall. It's feeding time. Down the hall. We geeked one guard, then ripped another, but he got away. Chopper goes after him. <Gasp> It's dark, and there are bells. <<ZW: Security response? Sound the alarm, cut the lights?>> Can't hear the people. Where are the people, where's the raw meat? There's a scream up ahead. Lace cuts loose and hoses down the hallway. No, Lace, cut it. It sounded like Chopper. Chopper's screaming. Dog, do a thumper down the fragging hallway.

WANDERLY:

You fired a grenade.

LIVI:

A thumper, a grenade, yeah. There's an airburst down the hallway. There they are--in the strobe image. Moving in the darkness. Still seeing afterimages, everybody cuts loose. Dog's rounds are lit. <<ZW: "Lit" means tracers, I think.>> We're hitting...we're hitting something.

WANDERLY:

What? What are you hitting?

LIVI:

Oh my...what are those things? Big teeth and they've got fragging claws! We can't get everybody up to the front, can't concentrate firepower. Wizzer's down. Check your fire, you dreckheads. You geeked wizzer. Back up, back up. Keep hosing, Lace. Dog, another thumper. Frag, what are these things?

WANDERLY:

What are they? Orks, Trolls?

LIVI:

I...I don't know. Some are on all fours, covered with spines. There're two tall ones out in front. They're making this strange, scratchy noise. Dog, move your fragging ass. The tall ones are almost on Dog. Dog, you sorry bleeder, waste the fraggers and get back here. His rounds are bouncing off them like they were nothing. Damn it, Dog! Oh my God, they're tearing his head off. Dog, don't do this to me! <<ZW: I think we can conclude some emo-

tional attachment here between Livi and Dog.>> Noise above us. Fire, you drekheads! Fire through the ceiling! They're breaking through. Run! Back down the hallway, into the lobby. Street lights. I see street lights through the glass doors. There're more of them moving in the half-light. There's Tober. Tober, toast the fraggers. A fireball bursts in the middle of these things. Two are on fire, but they grab Tober. He's down. The windows. Got to get out the window...Nooo! <Screams> <<ZW: Doc made another adjustment and Livi went out like a light. We were all pretty shaken by that. We stared in silence at Livi.>>

WANDERLY:

Hey, Doc, who brought her in here? <<ZW: I know, a breach in etiquette. But like I said, I was shaken.>>

Doc:

I can't tell you.

WANDERLY:

Doc, this is fragging important. Who brought her in?

Doc:

I didn't see his face and I didn't ask his name. I don't want to talk about it anymore. I think you'd better leave now.

#### TRANSCRIPT ENDS — EMAIL CIRCUIT RE-ESTABLISHED

So, Rick, what do you make of that? We know some of the big corps use nasty biologicals-Awakened critters-to guard their facilities. But something sweetness-and-light like the UB? Granted, the Mindfraggers asked for it, and sure as drek got it, but still...that whole episode shook me pretty bad. I keep seeing Livi's eye growing wide with terror and...and...get back to me as soon as you can.

-Zeb

LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (10:42:30 PST/03-16-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: DavinF (18:56:40 EST/03-16-51) CHAT MODE

DAVITT:

Zeb.

WANDERLY:

Yes.

DAVITT:

I can understand why you were shaken, chummer. That's pretty intense stuff.

WANDERLY:

No drek.

DAVITT:

Sorry it took me so long to get back to you, but I had to do some checking. You're right about some of the corps using nasty critters for security purposes. But here in D.C. (and also in Seattle), they've got to get "official" government approval first. It seems the government thinks there's a difference between getting killed by gunfire and killed by critters. The UB chapter in Seattle has no such license. That makes me think they're protecting something they don't want anyone to know they're protecting. Get my drift?

WANDERLY:

Yeah, I get your drift. I should have checked out the Seattle laws. Thanks, Rick.

DAVITT:

For what?

WANDERLY:

Getting me back on track. I guess I was thinking...no, forget it. It was stupid.

DAVITT:

You want to back off on this for awhile? That's cool...

WANDERLY:

No, no, I don't want to do that. Forget it. So, what's the next step?

DAVITT:

There are a couple of different angles we could try. First off, I think we should try to get a little further into the UB itself, see if we can kinda browse around the building.

WANDERLY:

What the frag are you talking about, Rick? Livi and her friends tried to "kinda browse around the building," and look what happened to them.

DAVITT:

They used a slightly different approach than either of us would, don't you agree? I'm talking something a little more official. Maybe a guided tour for a prospective member, that kind of thing.

WANDERLY:

Not me, Rick. I'm sorry, but...that Livi drek hit me harder than I thought. I'm not up for any guided tours of the place just yet. My hands are still shaking. Sorry, pal. You'll have to count me out on that one.

DAVITT:

Hey, no strain. I was thinking I'd like to give it a shot anyway. You've done a Discovery Meeting; I haven't. I should get a closer look at things, anyway.

WANDERLY:

I don't know whether that's such a good idea.

DAVITT:

They're not going to have their watch-critters roaming the halls during the day. And I'll be just another prospective cultist.

WANDERLY:

I don't feel good about this.

DAVITT:

How are we going to get to the bottom of this if we don't take a few chances?

WANDERLY:

O.K., O.K., you win. You said there were a couple of angles. What's the second?

DAVITT:

I think we need to know more about the corporate connection. Do you want to handle that? You've got a better high-level touch than I do.

WANDERLY:

Yeah, let me work on that.

DAVITT:

Think you could get a line on Bill Yakamura? A personal interview, maybe?

WANDERLY:

I don't know. That might be too high-level, even for me. I'll give it a go, but don't hold your breath.

DAVITT:

Any other ideas?

WANDERLY:

I've got good contacts inside most of the major corps in Seattle. How about if I approach them for an article on, say, different religions or philosophies within the corps? My slant would be to show how open-minded the corporations are about philosophical diversity



within their ranks. It's kind of esoteric, I admit, but it sounds like good copy.

DAVITT:

And during the interviews, you could toss out the name "Universal Brotherhood" and then see how they react. I like it.

WANDERLY:

Give me a week or two on this one. It'll take me some time to set up the interviews.

DAVITT:

No strain. It'll take me about that long to set myself up as a prospective cultist. Catch you in about two weeks, chummer.

WANDERLY:

Be careful, Rick.

DAVITT:

Always, boyo. Later.

LOGOUT: Davittf (19:28:28 EST/03-16-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: Davittf (00:06:39 EST/03-24-51) NOTEBOOK MODE

Graphics File Appended (00:13:12 EST/03-24-51)



Zeb:

Well, chummer, I guess I blew it. It seems I don't have your suave and debonaire approach. Maybe you should give me lessons.

I hit the Discovery session as planned. Just the same as yours, right down to the testimonial from Big Bill Yakamura. (By the way, hope you managed to track him down.) You're right. These jokers are really smooth; it was one of the most professional shows I've ever seen. CareerTrack-Nightingale could take lessons. Same cast of characters, too: one quarter sararimen, about the same percentage of street muscle. (One or two of them



looked like real samurai, not just wannabes. Now that is scary.) When the show was over, I joined the other good little sheep and trailed in through the doors to make my appointment with the counselor.

I got my meet the next day. My counselor was a really smooth Elf by the name of Jim Harker. He was short, even for an Elf, and barrel-chested almost to the point of deformity. (Almost everybody at that Discovery Meeting was Human. Come to think of it, I saw almost no Metahumans the whole time I was there.) Anyway, I'll try to give you as much of the conversation as possible. (No guarantee that every word is verbatim. Like I said, I don't have those gadgets in my head.)

"Tell me how you heard about the Universal Brotherhood?" Harker said.

"Well," I replied tentatively, "I'm a journalist, which means I have a lot of contacts in different places. I kept hearing them talk about this wonderful organization and finally I decided to look into it myself."

Harker smiled. "To do a story?"

"At first, yes," I admitted. "But then I got to thinking. I talked to one of your members..."

"Tandis M'Bala," the Elf cut in. I must have looked startled, because he went on with a smile. "Don't worry, Mr. Davitt. She told us about your meeting because you seemed like a good candidate for the Brotherhood. Please go on."

Some Elves have smiles that look like painted masks; there's no way to look behind them to see the true face. Jim Harker had one of those.

"Sure," I said a little hesitantly. "So you know that Tandis told me about how the Brotherhood had helped her. And I started thinking..."

"Yes?" Harker prompted.

"I started thinking about my own life. I know it's a bed of roses compared to what happened to her. But sometimes the streets aren't the only place to find people who don't have any hope. Know what I mean?"

Harker gave his plastic smile again. "I know exactly what you mean. Go on."

"So, I kind of did an audit of my life. Where I was, what I had accomplished."

"And you came up short?"

I nodded, feigning embarrassment. "I came up short. So I thought, hey, if the Universal Brotherhood could help somebody like Tandis..."

"We could help you," Harker completed my statement. "Of course this is good to hear.

I'm just not sure if you understand exactly what the Universal Brotherhood stands for. On the surface, one could say we helped her by giving her food and a place to stay. This is true. Where we really helped her, though, was right here." He thumped his chest. "We opened up her heart and made it possible for her to help herself! That's all we really can do for anyone."

"Yes, she did make that clear. I was just being sloppy with language."

Harker studied me for a few seconds. "What is it that you want out of life, Mr. Davitt?"

That one set me back a moment. I should have had an answer prepared, but I didn't. Maybe it was good that I didn't. Harker probably would have recognized a canned answer.

"Acceptance," I told him after a moment of deep and slightly panicked thought. (And for the first time in this conversation, I was telling him the truth.) "As a freelancer, you're accepted for what you do, but you have to keep doing it or they will forget about you very quickly. I want people to accept me for me, not just my work."

Harker nodded, and the smile was back. "That is an interesting statement," he said slowly. "Let's examine it, shall we? You say you want people to accept you for you. But how do they know who you are? By the face that you show to the world, wouldn't you agree? By your words, by your actions, by the attitudes that you display." I nodded, knowing already where he was heading. "In your case, most people know you by your writing. Your writing stems from your tightly held opinions and attitudes on the world. It reflects who you are. Many people appreciate your writing—as well they should. Let me say I've read some of your work, particularly the piece on the USX takeover, and I was impressed. People appreciate your writing and they show their appreciation by laying out their hard-earned credit to buy what you write. Might the issue be more one of you accepting yourself? Could



that be it?"

I remained silent. Let him think I was trying to digest that insight. Actually, I was appreciating his smoothness at leading me around to this point.

"Well?" he pressed again.

"Maybe."

"That is where the Universal Brotherhood can help you," he said quietly, sinking the hook with a professional's skill. "We can help you find acceptance of yourself. Does that interest you?"

Harker was silent after posing the question, barely seeming to breathe. His eyes locked with mine, a cool, steady gaze I found disturbing, almost disorienting. I had to force my eyes away. "Yes," I said quietly, almost in a whisper. "Yes."

The moment passed. Harker smiled once again, but this time with real warmth. His voice returned to normal. "Good. I think you'll find that the Universal Brotherhood is what you're looking for." He started to rise.

"What's the next step?" I asked. "What happens now?"

"Now we set up a convenient time for you to come to your first guidance session," the Elf said. "I would also like to bring Diane Dybhavn in now. She'll be handling your therapy."

"Therapy?"

"Don't worry," he said with a smile.

He pressed a button on his desk console and in walked Diane Dybhavn. I expected another glossy corporate suit like your Martin Johnson. She was, on the contrary, more the archetypal mother figure: gray hair, warm smile, dressed comfortably but not lavishly. When Harker introduced me, she spoke the same basic line about the UB, but it sounded even more convincing from her than from Tandis. The two Brethren booked me in for a guidance session on Thursday the 21st.

As Harker was escorting me to the front door, I asked him if a tour of the building was possible.

He fixed his cool eyes on me. "Why?"

I shrugged. "Writer's curiosity. Besides, if I'm going to join, I'd like to see what the facilities are like."

He nodded at that. "Sounds reasonable."

The chapterhouse I was visiting at 26th and Pennsylvania, if you're keeping track—turned out to be a lot less impressive than I'd anticipated, especially considering the ornate room where they held the Discovery Meeting. (I suppose the Octagon is more flashy.) This was an older building, probably built back sometime in the 90s. It must have been a police station at one time; there were marks on the windows where bars used to be. Apart from a large lobby and a few meeting rooms, most of the ground floor was taken up by dreary, little offices. ("There's a lot of paperwork involved in running a non-profit organization," Harker later explained. "Maybe even more than for a typical corporation.") They also had a well-equipped computer room. It seems that the UB runs its own bulletin board in every major city. (Maybe Icepick can deck her way in and take you on a tour.) There's also a cozy soup kitchen out in back. Harker says it fills up to capacity with indigents at meal times.

The upstairs floor wasn't much different. More offices, some temporary accommodations for visiting Brethren, an expensive cafeteria, and a library. My Elf friend showed me everything there was to see in the building with one notable exception. At the end of a wide hallway on the ground floor was a black door with fittings that looked like solid gold. Of course I asked Harker about it.

"That's the Retreat Area," he explained. "It's a private place where members can meditate, get themselves centered, or just to catch a nap. I'm sorry, but I can't show you inside right now. Maybe in a few weeks, after your Guidance session."

We trekked through most of the building, so I had a reasonably good idea how much space that Retreat Area was taking up. I couldn't very well pace it out, but I'd be surprised if it was less than 200 square meters. That's a hell of a lot of room reserved for meditating and "getting centered." (Another thought just struck me: old buildings like that usually have basements. That would be a lot more space unaccounted for.)

Time to do some fishing. "How do you handle security here?" I asked.

I was expecting a defensive reaction, but such was not the case. "We have security guards," Harker answered smoothly, "most of them hired directly from among our membership."

"Nothing else?" (I know it was risky to push it, but I had a fall-back position.)

Harker grinned. "Like what?"

"Like an exclusive alarm system. I wrote a piece about a business that depended solely on security guards. A few guards got geeked one night and the building was torched."

The Elf nodded. "This is something that concerns us, of course," he said. "But we have members coming and going around the clock. An alarm system wouldn't be very appropriate. We just have to trust our security people." And that was that.

Okay, Zeb, I'll skip ahead to Thursday, March 21.

Guidance Meetings are completely different from Discovery Meetings. We met in a smaller room. This time there were only 20 people (21 if you count Diane Dybhavn), and 10 of those were already members. That's the way they work Guidance Meetings: a one-to-one mix of candidates and converts. It wasn't like we each had one Brethren assigned to us, but while we waited for the meeting to get underway (it was starting late, no doubt on purpose), the converts had time to circulate among us.

Did you ever notice how rarely someone ever listens to you? I mean, really listens to you? These guys didn't just wait for their turn to talk; they studied you while listening, keeping constant eye contact the whole time, like they were hanging on your every word.

When "Mother" Diane arrived, we all took our seats. There were just enough chairs for everyone, the Brethren subtly managed to put at least one of theirs next to each candidate.

Diane introduced herself again, though everyone had already met her. Then she explained the nature of Guidance.

"The first thing that each must do," she began, "is open up. You can't change what's wrong until you admit that something is wrong. We have countless ways of lying to ourselves, don't we? One thing I've learned is that sometimes the only way to admit to yourself is to admit to others. I'd like each of you to come up and tell the rest of us about yourselves, particularly what it is that's bothering you so much. Don't be afraid. We're all here for a reason."

She called up one of the Brethren—a young girl called Jem—to get the ball rolling. Jem was a lot like Tardis, with that same aura of innocence that I found so striking. As she began her story, it was the same kind of tragedy as Tardis's, but with different names. (Are such cases really so common?)

While she talked, the other Brethren were in their listening mode: accepting body language, eye contact, the whole bit. The candidates started picking up on it, too, until Jem had everyone's undivided attention. You could see she knew it. All that acceptance—even love, if that word isn't too overused—had her so charged up that she almost glowed by the time she went back to her seat.

Then it was time for one of the candidates, a guy named Hammer. I already knew he was a samurai because I'd accidentally brushed against him earlier and it was like walking into a building. Hammer seemed nervous and had trouble getting started, but the Brethren's encouragement finally loosened him up.

Hammer's story: a street kid who'd joined a go-gang early on. After running with them for some years, he dropped out after meeting a lady-love. The only skills he knew were those useful on the street, so he trained to become samurai and run the shadows. While he was out on a run one night, his old gang broke into his place and geeked the girl. Inevitably, he blamed himself—if he'd been at home instead of running the shadows, and so on.



From then on, he began to take chances on the street, hoping that somebody would take him down and save him the trouble of killing himself. That's why he was here.

When Hammer finished talking, he was in tears. Several Brethren came up to him. They didn't touch him in the state he was in, and not knowing how high his reflexes were chipped, that would not have been a healthy move. They spoke to him too softly for me to hear, but it seemed to do the trick. The man got hold of himself and returned to his seat.

I suddenly realized how tense I'd been while Hammer was talking. The emotional currents in that room were so high...it was almost overpowering.

I had my own story worked out, and I was psyching myself up to present it when a hand tapped me on the shoulder. It was Harker, my Elf buddy. He led me out of the room.

Out in the hallway, he gave me this "more in sorrow than in anger" speech about how disappointed and saddened he was that I was trying to gain entry to the UB under false pretenses. How could they have found out? I thought I had my act down pretty good, but I must have slipped somewhere. Anyway, he went on to say that the Brotherhood was based on a foundation of trust and confidentiality, and since I had violated that trust, I would have to leave. However, he added, should I ever want to come back with true intentions of joining, the doors to the UB would always be open.

By that time, we were at the front lobby with two security escorts.

What can I say, Zeb? I blew it.

There is one more thing that will interest you. In casual conversations with some old contacts, I mentioned Caitlin O'Connell and her research lab near Hell's Canyon. They all say there is no research lab, or if there is, it's the smallest on record. Seems that your friend Martin Johnson got some of his facts a touch wrong. Dr O'Connell lives in a large, fortified castle halfway up a mountain. Very little communication in or out. Just food and supply deliveries once a month. No visitors that anyone knows about. Sounds like our Dr. Caitlin O'Connell is quite the recluse.

Get back to me when you've got some results.

-Rick

**LOGOUT: DavinF (00:53:03 EST/03-24-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: Wanderlyz (16:34:06 PST/03-29-51) NOTEBOOK MODE**

Rick:

Sorry it's been so long. Too bad that the UB caught you. But from what I've learned over the last two weeks, I'm not really that surprised. I'll explain later.

Well, the corporate end of things is interesting, to say the least. I couldn't get to Big Bill Yakamura. Apparently he's gone into seclusion at his father's estate on Galiano Island in the San Juans. Nobody I talked to has spoken with him directly in almost a year. Most of his orders are relayed through his Senior Executive VPs. Those that aren't relayed personally come in text-only transmission on a secure channel to Sony-Universal HQ. I tried to get a line on Bill's Exec VPs, but I didn't make it to the top.

That's not to say I didn't get anywhere. The "philosophy-religion" slant worked like a charm, and here's the list of worthies I ended up interviewing:

**MCT**

Ross Billinghwaite, Senior VP, Transportation Division  
Toshio Ito, Assistant VP, Corporate Holdings

**Yokogawa**

Candice Wellen, Director (Western Region), Industrial Controls Division

**Sony-Universal**

Marjorie Amato, Assistant Director, Human/Metahuman Resources

**Fuchi**

Grant Cooper, Senior Financial Analyst

**Federated Boeing**

Russ Kwan, Junior VP, R&D

**JVC**

Hiro Yamatsu, Junior Assistant Director, Policies & Procedures

**Aztechnology**

Stuart Smith, Junior VP, Biotech Division

With one notable exception, they all gave me the same exact story. Yes, it seems that the UB has members high up in all the major corps. None of the people I interviewed were UB, but they all knew others who were. That's why the "now open is your corp?" slant was an inspiration. The stigma attached to admitting you are a member is still quite strong. I did a little checking in some old sociology and psychology journals and found the same thing happened in the 70s and 80s with EST.

With the UB, Brethren are actively trying to avoid alienating non-members. When several Brethren work in close proximity, they'll be on good terms with each other, but they take pains to socialize beyond the circle of converts to avoid an "us-versus-them" situation.

If it was a conscious decision, it was a sensible one. Now that Brethren have been around for awhile, they seem to have eliminated the initial doubt—something the EST people never managed. Corporate types have to recognize that membership in the Brethren doesn't interfere with anyone's work or abilities on the job. In fact, they say it often seems to enhance those abilities. Brethren are more focused, more self-motivated, and more willing to take reasonable risks. As Candice Wellon (Yokogawa) put it, "Two of my department managers are in the Universal Brotherhood. Their work is fine, and actually goes even beyond what their jobs require. They're very achievement-oriented, both for themselves and their departments. They're leaders, not just managers or administrators. I wish all my staff would join the Brotherhood."

I heard the same thing from almost every company and found that a surprising number of the movers and shakers are UB. Russ Kwan at Boeing had the only negative comment, and that was a friend-of-a-friend story. It seems that a UB member in another department was involved in some kind of industrial espionage, with the guy leaking environmental-impact studies to the New Sierra Club about a proposed Boeing development. It was hard to totally condemn his motives, especially after it turned out that the impact data Boeing originally released had been doctored up.

Sounds almost too good to be true, doesn't it? Well, check out this transcript of my interview with Stuart Smith at Aztechnology.

**IMBEDDED DATACHIP TRANSCRIPT EMAIL CIRCUIT HELD**

**Original Recording (15:48:22 PST/03-26-51)**

**Online Annotation (ZW) (18:33:48 PST/03-26-51)**

**Graphics File Appended (18:46:21 PST/03-26-51)**



<<ZW: Stuart Smith deserves his reputation as a vicious corporate shark. He's sleek and handsome, with lots of charm when he decides to use it, but he can turn on you in a flash. His eyes are steady, almost hypnotically so, and they have a slightly unnatural sheen to them (obviously some vision enhancement.)>>

WANDERLY:

Thanks for taking the time to speak with me, Mr. Smith. As I explained before, I'm writing an article about attitudes in the workplace toward people of-how can I put it?-different beliefs and philosophy. To say it bluntly, what I'm after is a feel for whether people in the corporate world are accepting of those whose personal beliefs differ from their own.

SMITH:

You're talking about religion, then?

WANDERLY:

And other philosophical positions, yes.

SMITH:

I can assure you that Aztechnology goes to great lengths to help our employees feel comfortable. For those with strongly held religious beliefs, we try to be as accommodating as possible to the requirements of their faith. As long as it doesn't interfere with the orderly and safe conduct of business, of course. Full beards can't be worn under bioscreen helmets, for example, nor can turbans, that sort of thing. We are also very open to what we call "flex-time" with regard to holy days and such matters. All we ask is that the worker make up any time missed for such observances.

WANDERLY:

What percentage of your employees would you say hold such religious beliefs?

SMITH:

I can't tell you right now, but I could certainly get the information for you.

WANDERLY:

Thank you. And how many would you say followed more secular philosophies? <<ZW: This was the way I'd normally edged onto the subject of the UR. With all the others it worked just fine. Smith just held my gaze for a moment, and I felt like a mouse trying to stare down a snake.>>

SMITH:

To which philosophies, precisely, do you refer?

WANDERLY:

Well, for example, what about the Universal Brotherhood? <<W: And it was as though big steel doors slammed shut behind those eyes.>>

SMITH:

Mr. Wanderly, I have no intention of discussing the Universal Brotherhood with you or anyone else. That's obviously your main interest, and I'm embarrassed that you approached me under false pretenses. <<ZW: Just like your "brotherhood" ops on Tom Barker, huh?>> I suggest you return to your superiors and tell them that. And, um, my response has not changed, and will not change, with regard to the Brotherhood's views on the UR.

#### TRANSCRIPT ENDS — EMAIL CIRCUIT RE-ESTABLISHED

I started to ask what he meant, but the door opened and two bodyguards came in to escort me out. (He must have called them, maybe through his headset.) As I left, Smith just sat and stared at me. The whole episode was more than a little unnerving.

After thinking about this for a few days, I've come to some tentative conclusions. I'm going to wait before passing them on because I'd like you to think about it and give me your opinion first.

Aside from Aztechnology, it seems pretty obvious that the UR has a good foothold in most of the major corps, and the Brotherhood are making their way to the top. Not by Machiavellian techniques, but just by being good at their jobs.

Before I close, there's one last thing. Your info on Caitlin O'Connell was fascinating, so I did a little more digging. Her access code is unlisted (surprise, surprise), so I had a friend (Icepick, if you want to know) get it from the databank. I called up Dr. O'Connell with my story all ready: I was doing a piece on the UR and wanted the perspective of the person who made the original discoveries that made it possible.

I got through immediately, but not to the good doctor. It was some flunky who answered. No, Dr. O'Connell couldn't come to the phone. She was in an important meeting. No, he didn't know when she'd be free. Yes, he'd take my name and look and pass it on to Dr. O'Connell, but with no guarantee that she'd return the call.

This was one day after I got your latest message. I've had a few tries (three more times, and I've had other people try, too, so the flunky who didn't want to recognize my voice. The response is always the same: she's in a meeting, she's involved in research, or she's away from the "lab." Dr. O'Connell is obviously not accepting calls from the outside world. (I wonder how she'd respond if someone just showed up at her doorstep?)

Anyway, Rick, that's where I stand at the moment. Get back to me.

Zeb

LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (17:02:36 PST/03-29-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: Davitt (15:45:29 EST/04-02-51) CHAT MODE

Davitt:

Hi, Zeb.

Wanderly:

I'm here, Rick. Too bad about your premature expulsion from the Brotherhood. I think you'd have made a great cultist.

Davitt:

I'm touched.









Wendell:

The guy I'm thinking about would love it. He's a hard-edged street mage with just a touch of the actor in him.

Dennis:

A shadowerunner, right?

Wendell:

His street name is Archangel. Only name I've really interesting. What's next for you?

Dennis:

I've been on here again, and I've heard of our friend, Dr. Caitlin O'Connell. I think I'm going to follow up on that. Been trying to phone her, if you can, and let me know if you get through.

Wendell:

Not too likely.

Dennis:

No, not likely, and I'm assuming, by the way, Tasha is scheduled to make the transition to the Inner Circle in a few days.

Wendell:

You sure?

Dennis:

I talked to her last night, and she said, yes, but it's not in her mind.

Wendell:

What exactly is the deal with her?

Dennis:

Tasha still can't read. She has known that it's some kind of willpower thing. You have to prove that you have the will to master yourself, or some dreck like that. She's really confused, huh.

Wendell:

Are you sure she won't be a member of the Circle?

Dennis:

I think I've got to go. I'll be back in a minute.

Wendell:

Well, keep me up on it, huh.

Dennis:

Surely, of course.

**LOGOUT: DaviHF [16:04:09 EST/04-02-51]**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: WanderlyZ [20:41:02 PST/04-08-51] NOTEBOOK MODE**

PL 1:

I can't know if you've found what you were looking for, but I've got a global search on "billy" which will search all the files for the word "billy". I have no explanation, I don't know where it came from, but I'll send you the file as soon as I can. I'll take a look.

## RANDOM VIOLENCE SHATTERS CALIFORNIA CALM



(GILROY) UPI

[04-07-51]

The death toll continues to mount as rescue crews pick through the smoldering ruins of two small California Free State towns today. As of the 2046 census, Gilroy and neighboring San Martin had populations of 17,950 and 8,200, respectively. Now both are veritable ghost towns, with nearly 10 percent of their populations dead and the rest having fled to safer pastures.

Officials are still trying to reconstruct what happened. Survivors recall that it began around midnight with screams, automatic weapons fire, and other strange sounds. Witnesses report that armed gangs were roaming the streets, shooting anyone who came within range of their various weapons. "They weren't typical gangmembers, though; they weren't street punks," claimed a resident of San Martin. "I recognized two of them. One was a storekeeper, the other his wife. Both lived over in Gilroy."

This strange story is supported by others lucky enough to survive the night. Said one Gilroy resident, "Some had hunting rifles, others had gardening implements, whatever they could get their hands on. I knew some of them from over in San Martin. It's like they all of a sudden decided they were going to invade Gilroy."

The destruction in both towns was centered in the downtown areas. San Martin suffered the most property damage, with both the City Hall and the newly opened Universal Brotherhood house virtually razed to the ground. Damage in Gilroy was slightly less severe.

Officials are at a loss to explain this unprovoked violence. "At this point, I don't know if we'll ever understand any more than we do now," said C.H.P. Captain Dennis Livingstone. "We've talked to over a hundred people who were there and none of them know how or why it happened. Apparently those who do know are dead."

For further details, access code UPI040750-A12.

Don't bother about the "further details". It's just a rehash of what they don't know.  
For your information, Gilroy has a UB establishment, too.

Make of this what you will.

Zeb

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (20:46:00 PST/04-08-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: WanderlyZ (09:39:21 PST/04-13-51) NOTEBOOK MODE**

Rick:

Here's a new development. I've been trying to reach Caitlin O'Connell, with always the



same results. Until last night.

I put through the access code and got that most hated of all voices, the Phonenet vocoder: "The access code you have selected is no longer in service."

I checked the directory service, of course, but there was no new or old listing. I contacted Ioepick and asked her to dig out the new code.

Guess what, Kick? According to Ioepick, the databank shows that the access code is unchanged and is not marked as "out of service." She also noticed a rather unusual level of processor activity in the Matrix around that particular access code. (Whatever that means. Deckers talk about "seeing" things in the Matrix, and I don't think their perceptions are directly transferable to real-world analogies.)

Anyway, I've got a weird feeling about this. Could you do me a favor? Humor me and try to reach O'Connell from your phone. The access code is NA-SLS-2201(55-2817). Get back to me asap. Thanks.

-/Zeb

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (09:45:17 PST/04-13-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: DavittF (14:50:54 EST/04-13-51) CHAT MODE**

DavittF:

Hoi, Zeb.

WanderlyZ:

Hoi, chummer. Got anything for me?

DavittF:

I got a bad feeling. Are you sure you were punching the right access code when you got the voice of doom saying "it was no longer in service"?

WanderlyZ:

I'm not brain-fried, Kick. I tried it several times and verified my keystrokes. Are you going to tell me what I think you're going to tell me?

DavittF:

Somebody's got a monitor on your telecom account, heyo. Whenever you try O'Connell's code, the monitor automatically reroutes you. Do you have any idea how deep you've got to deck into the L7G to lay down a monitor like that?

WanderlyZ:

This is getting nasty.

DavittF:

Frag, yeah. Later, chummer!

**LOGOUT: DavittF (14:54:49 EST/04-13-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: DavittF (14:55:03 EST/04-13-51) CHAT MODE**

**<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>**

DavittF:

Zeb, this is what you were getting at, isn't it? Encryption.

WanderlyZ:

Yeah. If whoever it-is is in that deep, they're deep enough to crash our little chats.

DavittF:

Whoever-it-is? I think it's pretty frigging obvious who it is.

WanderlyZ:

I know. How secure is encryption?

DAVITT:

Icepick could probably tell you more, but this is the way I understand it. If you use large enough prime-number keys and we are breaking the encryption would require someone to find the prime factors of a number with 30,999 digits. Even with a Cray XMP-9 ultracomputer, it would take a year or two, and by then it won't really matter. I respectfully submit that our conversation is secure.

But just to play it safe, I generated a list of random contact times and layered a second encryption code keyed to each time. That means we can only talk to each other at set times, but it makes our conversations as secure as possible. I'll send you a hardcopy of the list by bonded courier. You should have it by tomorrow.

WANDERLY:

O. K., I feel better, but just to be on the safe side, I'm going to move to that place where I did the surveillance work for the O.R.C. exposé. Have the hard copy delivered there.

DAVITT:

I think you're going a bit overboard. This tap is just part of the game. You keep an eye on them, they keep an eye on you.

WANDERLY:

Rick, I'm starting to get spooked. And more than a little. This story is big. Maybe it's too big.

DAVITT:

Oh, dreck. Come on, this ain't so big. Woodward and Bernstein took down a President. Hollis and Wable took down the fragging N.R.A. I think Davitt and Wanderly can hold their own against a flaky cult, don't you? I'll contact you tomorrow.

**LOGOUT: Davitt (15:21:00 EST/04-13-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: Davitt (09:26:27 EST/04-14-51) CHAT MODE**

**<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>**

DAVITT:

Zeb, are you there?

WANDERLY:

Yeah, I'm here. The encrypt slows things down a bit, but I got you.

DAVITT:

So, did you hear anything from your mage friend? Archangel, was it?

WANDERLY:

Archangel, right. Well, they flushed him out, of course. When he tried to arrange an appointment for a Guidance Meeting, the OR told him there were no more openings available. He pressed, and they gave him the same dreck they gave you about being disappointed in his trying to enter under false pretenses. It wasn't a fair test, of course.

DAVITT:

You think they got his name from our EMAIL conversation? Freak! I didn't tell you what I was going to do about O'Connell, did I?

WANDERLY:

Give me a second, I'll check. No, you were irritatingly vague, as usual. What have you got planned?

DAVITT:

It's already underway. I've got a friend, Gareth Hill, living in Spokane, and he's going to see how close he can get to O'Connell's little hideaway. If he can get away with it, he'll try for a meeting.

WANDERLY:

This guy must owe you big time.



DAVITT:

He was up for a murder he didn't commit. The Salish-Shidhe Council would have locked him up and thrown away the key if I hadn't been able to provide his alibi. So, yeah, Gareth owes me.

WANDERLY:

When's he going to do it?

DAVITT:

Any time now. I'll let you know what happens. What do you make of that drek you sent me about the towns trying to geek each other?

WANDERLY:

I don't know, I really don't. I do know I don't like it.

DAVITT:

You think it's connected to the UB?

WANDERLY:

Drek, I don't know what to think. Sure, it could be a coincidence. UB chapterhouses are all over. It could have been anything: positive ions in the air, something in the drinking water, some Dragon's idea of a belated April Fool's joke.

DAVITT:

But you don't think so, do you?

WANDERLY:

No, and neither do you. I was out with Icepick and some of the runners a couple of nights back. Along with Icepick, Archangel, Hangfire, and the rest, there was this guy I'd never seen before. They said he was a shaman called Man-of-Many-Names. He hardly said a word the whole night. Until I started telling the story about the two towns. He looked right at me, slowly shook his head, and murmured, "The cycle begins."

DAVITT:

What the drek is that supposed to mean?

WANDERLY:

He wouldn't explain. "If you do not know," he added, "then you are the lucky one." And that's all he'd say, no matter how much I pressed him. Then he left. None of the others had any idea what he was talking about, either.

DAVITT:

Sounds like this Many-Names joker should write for the *National Star*. He'd fit in well with cryptic, meaningless statements like that.

WANDERLY:

This guy was something else.

DAVITT:

Well, forget him. I'm starting to worry about you, chummer. You're really getting spooked.

WANDERLY:

Yes, I am.

DAVITT:

Do you want to back off? I can carry things for awhile.

WANDERLY:

No, I'd get more freaked if I wasn't doing something.

DAVITT:

You sure?

WANDERLY:

Yeah. When's Tandis up for her transition?

DAVITT:  
Tomorrow. She phoned me this morning. She was so excited about it that she needed to talk with somebody.

WANDERLY:  
Rick, call her up day after tomorrow and find out how it went. And then let me know, O.K.?

DAVITT:  
I hear you, chummer. Also, by then, I should have something from Gareth. Anything we do from here on in, even our personal notes, I think we should encrypt.

WANDERLY:  
Right.  
LOGOUT: DavittF (09:52:00 EST/04-14-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA  
LOGIN: WanderlyZ (15:10:43 PST/04-17-51) CHAT MODE  
<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

WANDERLY:  
Rick.

DAVITT:  
I'm here.

WANDERLY:  
Where were you the last two days? I was waiting for you.

DAVITT:  
Yes, I know.

WANDERLY:  
What happened with Tandis?

DAVITT:  
She's gone.

WANDERLY:  
What do you mean, gone?

DAVITT:  
She's disappeared! When she didn't call me on Friday, I called her. No answer. I called again yesterday, and got another "no longer in service" routine. So I called her landlord. Somebody other than Tandis had settled up the lease. Next I called the UB chapterhouse. It took me hours to get through, but when I finally did, they told me she had already undergone the transition to the Inner Circle on Thursday, April 14. They asked me if I was her immediate family, and if so, could I prove it? I think I got a little crazy with him, but he didn't cut me off. When I calmed down a little, he told me that after making the transition to the Inner Circle, some members are asked to relocate to another chapter. But of course they couldn't give me any information as to her whereabouts.

WANDERLY:  
That's it?

DAVITT:  
She's gone.

WANDERLY:  
Sorry, Rick.

DAVITT:  
Yeah. Well, it's not that I felt anything special for her. It's just...it's tough to lose a good contact. That's all.

WANDERLY:  
I know, Rick.

DAVITT:

I got a message from Gareth. Here's the transcript.

**IMBEDDED DATA DUMP — EMAIL CIRCUIT HELD**

Frederick:

You'll be overjoyed to hear that I'm well on my way toward settling our account. I'm currently in beautiful downtown Imnaha, and I've seen the residence of La Belle O'Connal.

Ricky, chummer, I thought you said this was a research lab. A research lab for what? Penology, perhaps? Due to no fault of my own, I know what a prison looks like, and I know one when I see it.

It's a big enough place, surrounded by high walls topped with what must surely be razor wire. The gate is made of reinforced metal. Next to it is a small data terminal, no doubt a control station for an alarm system.

Then there are the armed guards. At first glance, I thought they were packing hunting rifles, but then I saw they were equipped with automatic weapons. Are you getting the message I'm sending, Ricky? This place is serious. (By the by, the guards don't patrol next to the walls, but among the buildings themselves. Either they trust the wall, or they know something about it.)

I've actually seen O'Connal. The O'Connal "estate" takes up a fair bit of terrain, but Hell's Canyon is open to all. From some of the hiking trails, you get a good view down into the O'Connal compound.

Are you ready for this? She's a prisoner, Ricky. Don't ask me how I know, I just do. No matter how well-decorated it is, a prison is still a prison if the door doesn't open for you. And that's exactly how it is for her.

Step Two is tomorrow. I'm going to pay a visit as a scholarly fan of the great Doctor's earlier writings. (I can play that role to the hilt.) If I get to see her—great. I don't expect it, though. Either way, I'll have learned something...and after that, I think you're going to owe me a favor, Frederick, my dear friend.

I'll be in touch tomorrow, Friday at the latest.

-Gareth

**END DUMP — EMAIL CIRCUIT RE-ESTABLISHED**

WANDERLY:

Rick. Was Gareth's message encrypted?

DAVITT:

No. I had no way of warning him to encrypt.

WANDERLY:

Can you reach him now?

DAVITT:

No. His message was sent time-delayed from a public terminal.

WANDERLY:

Do you know where he's staying?

DAVITT:

No.

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (15:17:52 PST/04-17-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: WanderlyZ (18:58:28 PST/04-18-51) CHAT MODE**



<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

WANDERLY:

Anything from Gareth?

DAVITT:

Nothing.

LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (18:59:23 PST/04-17-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: DavittF (19:01:56 EST/04-19-51) CHAT MODE

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

DAVITT:

Zeb.

WANDERLY:

Anything?

IMBEDDED DATA DUMP — EMAIL CIRCUIT HELD

HIKER FOUND DEAD



(SPOKANE) AP

[04-19-51]

The body of a hiker was found early this morning in the Imnaha River near the Hell's Canyon area of the Salish-Shidhe Council. The body was identified as that of Gareth Hill of Spokane, SLS.

Exact cause of death has not yet been determined. The possibility of foul play has not been eliminated.

END DUMP — EMAIL CIRCUIT RE-ESTABLISHED

LOGOUT: DavittF (19:13:03 EST/04-19-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: WanderlyZ (08:29:50 PST/04-20-51) CHAT MODE

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

WANDERLY:

Rick. I'm sorry about Gareth.



DAVITT:

Yeah.

WANDERLY:

It wasn't your fault, Rick.

DAVITT:

Sure it wasn't. And don't you even suggest that we drop this thing. There is no fragging way I'm going to drop it now.

WANDERLY:

How do you want to take it from here?

DAVITT:

I'm flying to Spokane. From there, I'll head down to Hell's Canyon and find out exactly what happened to Gareth.

WANDERLY:

Rick, that's not the right move.

DAVITT:

I don't want to hear it.

WANDERLY:

It's not smart and you know it.

DAVITT:

Frag it! I have to find out who geeked Gareth.

WANDERLY:

So do I.

DAVITT:

And I want to know what the drek's going on with O'Connell. Is she a prisoner or isn't she? What does she know?

WANDERLY:

Right.

DAVITT:

What?

WANDERLY:

I agree with you, Rick. But it's still not the right move for you to blaze over there.

DAVITT:

Then what do you suggest, huh?

WANDERLY:

I'll go.

DAVITT:

What?

WANDERLY:

I'll go.

DAVITT:

Are you serious?

WANDERLY:

Of course I'm serious. I admit it scares the drek out of me, but I'm the best one to go. Think it through: I'm over here, you're over there. I know the territory, at least somewhat. Ever been into the wild country of Salish-Shidhe? Your little junket to Spokane doesn't count.

DAVITT:

I see your point.

WANDERLY:

Don't forget that some of my friends are shadowrunners.

DAVITT:

Would they help you with something like this?

WANDERLY:

They've already agreed to go.

DAVITT:

Why?

WANDERLY:

They're my friends, Rick. Besides, it won't hurt their street reps, and of course, any marketable data that comes out of it belongs to them. But friendship still counts for a lot, Rick. Even today.

DAVITT:

When do you go?

WANDERLY:

As soon as they get here.

DAVITT:

Who's going?

WANDERLY:

Me, Icepick, Hangfire, and his lady-love Aurora (a combat mage who they say is even tougher than he is), plus two samurai street brothers, Edge and Sidewinder. Hangfire recommends we keep the party small.

DAVITT:

Sounds like a fun group. Zeb, this is fragging crazy.

WANDERLY:

Why? A minute ago you were all ready to hop a jet out here.

DAVITT:

Yeah, but...

WANDERLY:

I have every intention of coming back in one piece. That's why I'm surrounding myself with people who do this for a living. I've thought this through. You haven't. So back off, O.K.?

DAVITT:

I guess this means you finally get to carry your Remington Roomsweeper.

WANDERLY:

Not quite. Hangfire's already equipped me with a Lightfire. He says anything else is too much to think about. The Lightfire's about as idiot-proof as they come.

DAVITT:

It better be.

WANDERLY:

Cute. Real cute.

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (08:42:10 PST/04-20-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: DavittF (16:07:13 EST/04-21-51) CHAT MODE**

**<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>**

DAVITT:

Hoi, chummer. I've got a line on something interesting.



WANDERLY:

What's that?

DAVITT:

Someone who's quit the UB!

WANDERLY:

You're drekking me.

DAVITT:

No drek, chummer. Randy Russell's his name, and I've got a meet set up with him tomorrow. From what he's told me already, it's going to be a profitable conversation.

WANDERLY:

Terrific!

DAVITT:

When are you off?

WANDERLY:

We leave tonight. By tomorrow night, we should have it scoped out.

DAVITT:

What then?

WANDERLY:

Depends on what we find. Hangfire's cautious by nature and I think he'd be happy if we just took some pictures. The younger runners, though, are a different story. When I said there was a chance that O'Connell was a prisoner, they all got excited about running a little P&E. Penetration and Extraction, that is. I think I'm going to have to depend on Hangfire's calmer nature here.

DAVITT:

And Icepick?

WANDERLY:

The whole shadowrunning thing is a big game to her. It's not the result, it's the run itself.

DAVITT:

You two are on good terms? There's going to be no trouble there?

WANDERLY:

Yes, mother, we're on very good terms. Stop worrying. I'll be in touch when I get back. Have a good one, chummer.

DAVITT:

Watch yourself, Zeb.

WANDERLY:

Doesn't everybody?

DAVITT:

Slot off.

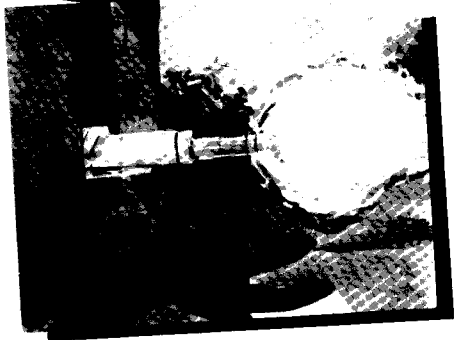
LOGOUT: DavittF (16:23:31 EST/04-21-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: WanderlyZ (14:22:54 PST/04-24-51) NOTEBOOK MODE

Graphics File Appended (16:59:01 PST/04-24-51)

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>



Rick:

Yes, we're still alive. Yes, we think we know what happened to Gareth. But, no, we didn't get Caitlin O'Connell out. I'll give you all the details.

Rick, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. In fact, I'm not sure that I was even there for most of it. I mean, I can't remember the details of what I was doing or what was happening. It was only after reviewing my headware recording and talking to the others that I could reconstruct it all. Even then, it was more like remembering a story that someone told you.

The drive down there was uneventful, and the identification papers that got us into the SS-Council lands were the best money could buy. Most of the route followed the old Interstate system, and Aurora's all-wheel-drive power wagon made easy work of the rough logging roads.

The three-hour trip passed by rather quickly. Aurora, a tall, red-haired woman with not a gram of fat on her body, drove the whole way, her Zeiss eyes glued to the road. At one point, she even killed the lights and drove several kilometers in pitch darkness, thanks to the Zeiss's infrared capabilities. She never explained why, and nobody questioned her decision.

Both Icepick and Edge spent the time sleeping. The other samurai, Sidewinder, relaxed by running his already-dangerous stiletto blade over a small whetstone. He honed the blade with a smooth, mechanical rhythm, each stroke putting more of an edge on the weapon and the man.

Hangfire sat in front beside Aurora. His head was down. I was sitting in the second jump seat. I thought Hangfire was asleep, too, until the man spoke.

"You're nervous," he said. It was a statement, not a question. "You should be before an op," Hangfire went on before I could think of a suitable response. "Everybody's nervous, but we all handle it differently. Him—he gestured toward Edge—he sleeps his way through it. Sidewinder, though, holds onto it, concentrates on it, enjoys it. Right, Winder?"

The samurai looked up and grinned, then went back to sharpening his stiletto.

"Your problem," Hangfire told me, "is that you don't have anything to focus your energy. Where's your weapon?"

"Here." I pulled out my pistol, its black plastic casing glistening faintly in the dim cabin lights.

Hangfire nodded. "Some things to know about the Lightfire: it's best used for close-in work. Don't think about aiming. Just point it in the right direction and let the gun do the rest. That's all there is to it. The action on the trigger is light, so you don't have to squeeze hard.

"If you have to take somebody down, don't just fire once. This isn't simsense. Keep firing until he goes down and doesn't move, or until you click empty. You've got sixteen shots to a clip, and that should be enough."

It was approaching dawn when our power wagon pulled into the town called Imnaha.

According to Aurora's calculations, we were now 32 clicks away from O'Connell. Aurora wanted to wait and make the final approach the next night, so she pulled the wagon off the road. Nothing to do but wait.

The runners arranged themselves in a loose circle around the clearing. Edge was asleep again, and his street brother, Sidewinder, was still working on the glittering stiletto. Hangfire was methodically cleaning his frightening array of firearms, and Icepick rattled away on the keyboard of a small remote cyberdeck hooked into the Matrix through a satellite uplink. I knew better than to go over and strike up a conversation. She was busy and I knew she didn't want to be disturbed.

Only Aurora was unoccupied. For awhile, she sat beside Hangfire, now and then the two of them exchanging a few words. Then she got up and walked over to me.

"Mind if I join you?" she asked in her sultry voice.

"Not at all," I replied. "Pull up a seat."

"Can I ask you something?"

"Go ahead."

"Why are you here?" she asked with an amused grin. "I know the mission background, and I know what your designated role is, but why are you really here? Curiosity? Thrill-seeking?"

"No," I said slowly. "It just never occurred to me not to come. This was my idea, and you agreed to help me out. How could I ask you to do something like this, and then not come along?"

Aurora smiled. "I'm glad to hear you say that. A shadowrun isn't a place for amateur adventurers." Then she changed the topic smoothly. "You're tense, aren't you? That's understandable. Do you have a headache?"

"No."

"Oh? No stress headache right about...—the fighter-mage reached out and touched me gently between the eyes with her forefinger—"...here?"

I did feel a dull knot of pain somewhere back there. "Well, now that you mention it..."

Aurora nodded. "I thought so." She extracted a small capsule from a pouch on her belt. "Take this. It'll knock down the headache and help you to relax. Go ahead."

I slipped the capsule into my mouth, and within seconds the pain was gone.

"Thanks."

She smiled. "No strain. Now get some rest. You're going to need it. We're all going to need it."

It was sometime later that I opened my eyes again, only to see dark all around us. The only light in the clearing came from the open cabin of the power wagon. Moving shapes flickered in and out of the light as the runners loaded equipment into the vehicle.

The tension and excitement came right back to me. This was it. Time to go. I saw Aurora look hard at me and I replied with a grin and a thumbs-up. Climbing into the wagon, I felt confident. There was no conversation; everyone knew what they had to do. Even I felt it. Six disparate people had melded together to form a team, and I was part of it.

Aurora drove in darkness for nearly an hour before she brought the vehicle to a stop. The doors opened, and without a cue, the runners shouldered their equipment and jumped out into the woods. I made sure that my pistol was secure, then followed them out into the dark.

Aurora and her Zeiss eyes led the way. After several minutes, she stopped and held up two fingers—the signal that we were 200 meters from the target. We dropped to the forest floor and crept forward slowly. Even loaded down with gear, they moved in complete silence. My movements, in comparison, seemed clumsy and noisy. Within seconds, we were at the edge of the woods. There straight ahead, across a wide strip of cleared-out land, was the compound.

The late Gareth Hill was right. The O'Connell "estate" did look like a prison: the high walls, the razor wire, the heavy gates. The only things missing were guard towers and spotlights.

Aurora sat crouched at the tree line, eyes closed, hands moving in mystic patterns. After about a minute, she opened her eyes. "No surveillance cameras," she whispered. "No outside sensors. The wall and gate are alarmed."

Hangfire, who'd been studying the compound through an instrument vaguely similar to a pair of binoculars, nodded. "Concur. Probably too many false-positives from animals."

"We go for the gate?" whispered Icepick. I couldn't help but marvel at her calm.

I had to force my attention back in time to catch Hangfire's answer. "Go for it," he said. "We'll cover."

Icepick and Aurora got up and started to run at a low crouch. Before I realized what I was doing, I had jumped up to go with them. We soon reached the gate. Icepick swung her cyberdeck around and started unrolling leads. "Don't touch the gate," she warned. "Not until I say so. Then you can go over."

Aurora's eyes were shut again and her hands were weaving. "No guards within 30 meters of the wall. None looking this way. I'll warn you if that changes."

Icepick approached the small data terminal set into the wall beside the gate. She delicately placed small electrodes on the outside of the terminal's enclosure. She had to reset the trodes four times before she was satisfied.



Noticing my fascinated attention, she smiled. "Inductance," she explained, touching one of the electrodes. "They work even through the enclosure." She unreeled another lead from the side of the cyberdeck, this one a fiber optic cable tipped with a jack. As Icepick inserted the jack into the ceramic-lipped socket in her temple, she looked at me and said, "O.K., this is where it gets interesting. If I can't crack the ice and this thing goes off, drag me out of here and do it fast."

Icepick punched a button and her eyes rolled back in her head.

I jumped as a synthetic voice from the data terminal said, "Stand away from the gate." Of course, Juli showed no response at all.

"Stand away from the gate," the voice sounded again. I thought the intensity of command was stronger this time.

The other two were still calm and cool. But I figured that deep down they had to be as tense as I was, their nerves screaming as loud as mine. The only difference was their ability to control it.

"Proximity violation." The voice from the terminal had a threatening tone. "Five.four..."

This time the runners responded. Muscles tensed and gun barrels were aimed. Aurora moved next to Icepick, ready to drag her away from the gate.

"Three.two..." The last word hung in the air, the pause growing longer and longer. Over the pounding of my heart, I heard the sighs of relief coming from Icepick and Aurora. Only when I felt my chest muscles straining did I realize that I'd been holding my breath, too.

Icepick's eyes fluttered open and she quickly began disconnecting the leads from the terminal. "Sorry it took so long," she whispered. "Their ice was better than I thought." She grinned quickly. "Interesting out here, was it?"

I nodded, struggling to keep my voice calm. "A little."

"The alarm's down?" asked Aurora.

"It's still feeding data back to the monitors," Icepick explained, "but it's the same data it sent an hour ago. Whatever we do to the gate won't show up on their monitors for over an hour. Good enough?"

"Good enough."

Icepick signalled the others to come out. As soon as they made it to the gate, Hangfire patted Edge on the shoulder. "Go ahead," he said. "Do it." The samurai jumped up and caught the top of the gate more than two meters over his head. I stared in amazement at the ease with which he did this.

Edge settled himself atop the gate and tossed down a rope. In less than a minute, we were all inside the compound. The ground was covered with short grass. Scattered about were a few flower beds, but that was it. Nothing large growing here, nothing big enough to serve as concealment or cover. The compound was one large, open killing ground.

"Guard over there," Aurora whispered, pointing to her left. "Thirty meters."

"He's mine," Edge answered. It was almost as though the samurai had disappeared. All I saw was a blur heading in the direction that Aurora pointed. He reappeared seconds later with an assault rifle in one hand, a helmet in the other. Scratch one guard.

We crossed over to where Edge had removed the guard and crouched up tight against the wall. Aurora used her arcane senses to scan the area again. I kept my eyes fixed on the darkened sky. The last thing I wanted to see right now was that guard's body. Edge was suddenly beside me. "Don't sweat it," he said into my ear. "I didn't geek him. 'Course, when he feels his head tomorrow, he might wish I had." And then the samurai moved on.

Sidewinder led us along the wall, then stopped and looked carefully around the corner. "Window."

The window was small and the curtains were drawn, but incandescent light still leaked out into the night. Sidewinder crouched in the yellow wash below the window. The samurai carefully raised his head until his eyes just cleared the sill. After a moment, he turned to us and made a quick sign of the letter "O" with the fingers of his right hand.

"O'Connell?" I whispered to Hangfire. "She's there?"

The erstwhile corporate man impatiently shushed me to silence, then nodded.

The group moved carefully along the wall until they joined Sidewinder. "She's in



there," he said.

He glanced at me. "Zeb, she's dying."

I gasped. "What? How do you know?"

"Trust me," Sidewinder replied. "I know the look."

"Frag," Hangfire cursed softly. "We have to pull her out of here. Was she alone?"

"I didn't see nobody else."

Again Hangfire glanced at Aurora, who confirmed this with a nod.

"No alarms on the window?"

The mage shook her head.

"O.K.," Hangfire said softly. "Two go in. Zeb and Icepick, it's got to be you." A nasty grin spread across his face. "We don't want to scare your Dr. O'Connal to death," he whispered. He gestured at himself, Aurora, and the two street samurai, "One look at us coming through the window and she'll kick off right here and now."

I nodded.

"Which way's she facing, Winder?" Hangfire asked.

"Her back is to the window."

Hangfire nodded. "That gives us extra seconds. Aurora, you got enough left to keep her quiet while these two go in?"

"A simple control manipulation. No strain."

"Go get her." Hangfire patted me on the shoulder. "Remember, Zeb, this is your play. Icepick's there to back you up. Give us the signal when you want Aurora to put O'Connal to sleep. Don't take too long in there." Without waiting for me to answer, he turned to the two samurai. "Chummers, you want to do the honors?"

The street brothers moved in perfect synchronization. Edge slipped a fist-sized suction cup onto the windowpane and Sidewinder traced a large circle on the glass with a thin metal stylus. Edge twisted the suction cup's handle and out popped the disk of cut glass.

Aurora's fingers were spinning their threads of magic once again as Hangfire tapped me on the back. "Be careful of the glass."

Just then, two sets of hands grabbed the backs of my thighs and boosted me through the window. I landed lightly, thanks to the heavy carpeting that muffled the sound. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw the flash of Edge's smile as he was boosting Icepick through the window.

In her chair, Caitlin O'Connal had seen or heard something. Her head was turned toward the window, and her eyes were wide with surprise. Her mouth was open, but no sounds came out. Her willpower fought to overcome Aurora's magical control, but it was futile.

O'Connal was thin and pale, with dark circles under sunken eyes. Her hair was snarled and streaked with gray. One look quickly confirmed Sidewinder's prognosis that, indeed, this woman might be dying.

With two quick strides, I was at her side. "Dr. O'Connal," I whispered urgently, "we're here to get you out!"

I could almost feel the release as Aurora lifted her control on O'Connal's speech center. Words tumbled from the woman's cracked lips in an hysterical torrent. "No, you're with them! You've come to take over my mind, but I won't let you! I won't let you! I'll fight you!" She glanced over my shoulder toward the window, her eyes filled with terror. "Monsters," she hissed. "You're bringing the monsters. You're going to make me a monster and I can't fight them. The merge will be bad. I don't have the strength anymore. You took my work, you took what I'd built, now you'll take me. Yes, you'll..." Her voice cut off as Aurora re-established magical control.

There was no doubt about it. Dr. Caitlin O'Connal was completely insane.

I turned to the window where Aurora was weaving another spell, no doubt to knock O'Connal out. "No," I whispered harshly. "No sleep. Can you get her out of here while she's still awake? It's important I hear what she's got to say."

Aurora hesitated. "The drain will be high," she replied. "Control isn't easy, and she's got a strong will, but...if you say it's important."

"It is. Believe me."

The mage took a deep breath and closed her eyes. Fear spread across O'Connal's face with the first twitch of her body, the first movement of muscles no longer under her own



control. She jerked to her feet like a puppet on a string and shambled over toward the window. Unable to control all the motor and speech centers at once, Aurora had no choice but to relinquish control over one of them.

Suddenly O'Connell began babbling again, but at least at a softer volume. "I won't worship them, I won't become one of them. The hive will never have me. Never."

As Edge reached through the glass hole to O'Connell, the woman jerked backward, her fear reaction momentarily overcoming Aurora's mental manipulation. The mage quickly re-established control, but that meant losing all hold on O'Connell's speech centers. The tormented doctor let out a high-pitched screech, cut off only as Aurora blotted out her consciousness altogether. O'Connell's body swayed but remained standing under Aurora's brute-force mental control. Edge grabbed the woman and easily lifted her out through the window.

Hangfire's face appeared in the window. "Get out of there! We're blown, we've got to move."

I turned to Icepick. "Go."

She hesitated a moment, then nodded. Clutching her precious cyberdeck to her chest, she took two quick steps towards the window, then launched herself head-first through the opening, already tucking in preparation for a shoulder roll when she hit the ground outside.

I was still trying to figure the best way through the window when I heard the door burst open behind me. A security guard, machine pistol at the ready, charged into the room, only to be blown off his feet.

I whirled back toward the window to see smoke still rising from the muzzle of Sidewinder's silenced Ingram. "Let's go!" snapped the samurai. As Sidewinder covered the door, Edge reached through the window again and pulled me out with one arm.

He could use only one arm because the unconscious Caitlin O'Connell was draped over his shoulder. "Aurora," he said without strain or effort, "can you get her to walk under her own power? I get the feeling I'm going to be needing both arms."

Aurora closed her eyes in concentration and that was when I first noticed the sheen of sweat on the woman's brow. The strain was starting to take its toll on Aurora.

But her control remained effective, and O'Connell did, indeed, stand on her own feet.

"The wall," Hangfire yelled, and all the runners leaped forward. My response should have been no match for the chipped reactions of the others, but good old-fashioned adrenaline worked just fine.

Suddenly the night silence was broken by a high-pitched whine. "Vindicator! Break!" shouted Hangfire. The runners responded instantly, scattering and diving in all directions. I didn't know what a Vindicator was, but I knew I wasn't going to like it. I jumped back and flattened myself against the wall of the building that had housed Doctor O'Connell.

Then it seemed to me that the whole universe was being torn apart. A thunderous crash deafened me as a brilliant fireball erupted. In seconds, the noise and the fireball were gone; only the electric whirring sound continued.

Panting with fear, I looked around the compound. Projecting through the window of O'Connell's room was the fearsome barrel of a large weapon, actually multiple barrels rotating around a central stock, much like an ancient gatling gun. The whine was the electric motor spinning the barrels. This had been the source of that instant carnage.

Another firestorm was ignited by a short burst from the rotating barrels. A few rounds of machine pistol fire spattered against the wall near the window in futile defense. The minigun cut loose again; it had everyone pinned down in the yard, and it would be only seconds before they were cut to pieces. I had to act now.

It was then that I saw Caitlin O'Connell stand up in the murderous cross-fire. Aurora must have lost control of her. Before I had a chance to even cry out, the minigun had blasted O'Connell's body halfway back to Seattle.

Filled with rage, I clutched my gun tightly, spun along the wall, and leaped right in front of the window. I could feel the heat from the menacing barrels.

I extended my pistol toward the gunman's head and pulled the trigger. Again and again and again. Compared to the rip of the minigun, the pistol's thin, vicious spits were almost inaudible. For a moment, I wasn't even sure whether my gun had fired at all. But then I saw the gunman slump forward. I had to throw myself out of the way as the dead man jackknifed out the window. For a moment, the compound was silent, then gunfire again tore through the night as two security guards quickly learned the folly of taking on five armed shadowrunners.

I first saw them in the waning moonlight as they rounded the corner of the building. Slender and tall, maybe half a meter taller than me, these things weren't anything Human or Metahuman. The grotesque figures wore only their own...exoskeletons, if that's the correct word. The six creatures moved with surprising speed—straight for the runners.



Gunfire again crackled in the night, but the light machine pistol rounds bounced off the creatures without even slowing them down.

Our only hope was that minigun. The Vindicator was attached to a gyro-mount harness on the gunman's hip. The fall from the window had killed the harness' power, but the gun was still free to pivot on its mount. I grasped the sculpted grip at the rear of the minigun and pressed the recessed button with my thumb. With a sharp, electric whir, the barrels began to spin. When the whir had stabilized at a high pitch, I pivoted the bulky weapon until the barrels were aimed at the creatures. I pulled the trigger.

The Vindicator shuddered in my hands while a solid stream of fire swept across the running figures. Even after the last creature was down, I kept hosing their bodies until they all but disintegrated. Then the brilliant firestorm at the muzzle of my weapon died. The only sound left was the clanking whir of the spinning barrels. I unclenched my finger from the trigger of the now-empty minigun and released the thumb button. The weapon fell silent.

The only sound was that of running footsteps fast approaching. I couldn't see through the darkness, but I didn't have to. From their fast cadence, it could only be one of the samurai. As iron-hard hands grabbed me and lifted me up from behind that gun, I did the only thing I could do.

I fainted.



The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes was Icepick's face. The girl's expression of concern softened into a warm smile. "So you're back with us, Dead-Eye," she said.

"I guess so," I murmured. "Dead-Eye?"

It was Hangfire who answered. "That's right. Shadowrunners never operate under their true names, always under street names."

"But I'm not..."

"You are now," Icepick said, pressing a cool cloth against my brow. "You saved the team."

I tried to sit up, but everything spun so wildly that I knew it would be a while before I was up and running around. "Take it easy," Icepick told me, "you're just feeling stress reaction. It's perfectly normal."

"Is everyone all right?" I asked groggily.

There was approval in Hangfire's voice, "We all made it. Thanks to you, chummer. The Vindicator ripped one of Winder's legs, but he's in no danger."

"O'Connal?"

Aurora answered this one with a grim nod. "That gunner took her down as soon as he had the chance."

"He must have recognized her," I said, "and yet he still cut her down."

"Which implies...?"

"Which implies that the orders must have been to stop O'Connal from escaping...even if it meant killing her." I closed my eyes for a moment, remembering the light of madness in O'Connal's eyes. Then another, more frightening memory overrode that. "What were those...those things?"

"We don't know," Icepick answered quietly. "Nobody's seen them before." She smiled tenderly. "If you hadn't done what you did, we'd probably know a lot more about them than we wanted to...if only for a few seconds." She brushed a lock of hair back from my forehead. "I think you should try to sleep now, Dead-Eye. We can talk about this later."

I returned the smile. "So ka. Do I get another one of Aurora's special pills?"

"I don't think you're going to need one."

Seconds later, I knew she was right.

Well, that's what happened, Rick. Get back to me and we'll discuss it.

-Zeb

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (15:01:39 PST/04-24-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: Davitt (20:44:38 EST/04-24-51) CHAT MODE**

**<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>**

DAVITT:

Hoi, Dead-Eye. Know something? You're one courageous son of a bitch.

WANDERLY:

Hardly. I've never been so scared in my life.

DAVITT:

So? Davitt's Definition of Courage: As virtue is proper action in the face of temptation, so courage is proper action in the face of fear. I repeat, you are one courageous son of a bitch. Anyway, Zeb, so they geeked our dear Dr. O'Connal, hrm?

WANDERLY:

Yes. There's no doubt in my mind that the gunner knew exactly what he was doing when he lined her up in his sights.

DAVITT:

Really?

WANDERLY:

The key question, then, is why did they keep her alive all this time? I'm telling you, chummer, she was round-the-bend insane.

DAVITT:

Was she driven mad by "things too horrible to contemplate lurking behind the facade of supposed reality?"

WANDERLY:

Save the Lovecraft recital for later. Something, some kind of trauma did drive her crazy. She kept talking about monsters...and damned if there weren't some kind of monsters in there.

DAVITT:

Those things you hosed, you mean. What exactly did they look like?

WANDERLY:

I ran my headware pics through an enhancement program. This is what I got:

**IMBEDDED GRAPHICS FILE — EMAIL CIRCUIT HELD**



**END FILE — EMAIL CIRCUIT RE-ESTABLISHED**

DAVITT:

This is the thing you geeked?

WANDERLY:

That's what the machine says. Any idea what it is?

DAVITT:

I've never seen anything like it—except maybe in some bad nightmares. Did they act intelligent?

WANDERLY:

I couldn't tell. They were going straight for the runners, but I suppose guard dogs would have done the same.



DAVITT:

I know. It just occurred to me that it might not be a good idea to flash this picture around.

WANDERLY:

I agree. Show it only to people we know we can trust. I'm going to try to set up a meeting with that shaman, Man-of-Many-Names. I think he might know more about this than anyone else.

DAVITT:

You trust him?

WANDERLY:

Icepick and her friends do.

DAVITT:

Good enough. Hey, do you figure these creatures were what got to Gareth?

WANDERLY:

More than likely. And they also match poor Livi's description of the things that geeked her friend Dog at the Octagon. So what have we got? O'Connal was the founder of the Universal Brotherhood and was imprisoned, yet still valuable enough to keep alive-until it was apparent she was escaping. Then they gunned her down. It all ties together somehow. It's got to. Maybe you could ask your ex-member more about O'Connal's role with the organization. How did that meet go, by the way?

DAVITT:

Now there's a story worth hearing. But let's not get off on a tangent now. Even before I scanned your report, I started thinking about why the UB would keep O'Connal prisoner. Then I found out that every year she does a live Christmas Day message to all UB chapterhouses.

WANDERLY:

In her state of mind-or lack thereof-they must have been some wild messages.

DAVITT:

Not necessarily. Maybe they weren't live broadcasts. Or maybe it wasn't really her. They say there are drugs strong enough to temporarily relieve major mental disorders. Then add a little magic...and who knows. Whatever it is, it sure fits in with the whole UB thing, doesn't it? A yearly message of congratulations and acceptance from the founder, and all that drek.

WANDERLY:

These guys don't miss a trick, do they? I don't know, Rick. This is all getting pretty heavy. Maybe the authorities...?

DAVITT:

Think about it, Zeb. We can't stop now. First of all, where's our proof that anything illegal is going on? Livi is hardly what you'd call an unimpeachable witness, wouldn't you agree? And even your snatch-and-grab raid, there's no solid proof of anything there.

WANDERLY:

There's my cybears record.

DAVITT:

Which could have been modified in the meantime. I've seen more realistic special effects in that new Queen Euphoria simsense. All that you really have is a record of you and your buddies committing criminal trespass, aggravated assault, kidnapping, even murder. Right?

WANDERLY:

I suppose so, but...

DAVITT:

Can you think of two major institutions besides the corporations that might have some major UB membership?

WANDERLY:

What? Two major...wait a minute, you're not saying...the UCAS Federal Government and Lone Star Security Services?

DAVITT:

Give the man a cigar. I know for a fact that the Feds have UB'ers in among the highest levels of the civil service. And the Assistant Deputy Director of the fragging FBI is a member. There are probably Brethren among the elected types, too, but they're keeping quiet. They're everywhere, Zeb.

WANDERLY:

Then just what the frag do we think we're doing? Even if we do find out what's going down, we can't do anything with it. We can't take it to Lone Star, we can't take it to the FBI, we can't take it to the fragging government. Just what do we do?

DAVITT:

We're writers, Zeb. We get the story out there any way we can. Newswet, any other data net, data-faxes, print media, whatever. Then let the people--those who aren't UB, that is--take it from there. That's our job, remember?

WANDERLY:

O.K., you sold me. You're right about the proof, though. We don't have any, and we do need some. What about the guy who quit the UB? What did you get out of him?

DAVITT:

I'm afraid I didn't get the chance.

WANDERLY:

You didn't get the...oh no.

DAVITT:

Take a guess.

WANDERLY:

They fragging geeked him?

DAVITT:

Somebody did.

WANDERLY:

When? How?

DAVITT:

They found him yesterday with his head bashed in. The official report said it was a probable mugging.

WANDERLY:

Oh, like drek. And Caitlin O'Connal was killed when somebody was cleaning his minigun and it accidentally went off.

DAVITT:

I know, I know. But again, no proof.

WANDERLY:

Frag this. I'm going to get us some proof.

DAVITT:

What are you talking about, Zeb?

DAVITT:

Zeb?

**LOGOUT: DavitF (21:00:23 EST/04-24-50)**

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA  
LOGIN: WanderlyZ (10:59:08 PST/04-28-51)  
<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

IMBEDDED DATACHIP TRANSCRIPT — EMAIL CIRCUIT HELD  
Original Recording (01:02:24 PST/04-28-51)  
Online Annotation (ZW) (10:54:18 PST/04-28-51)  
Graphics File Appended (11:24:40 PST/04-28-51)

<<ZW: This is a direct transcript of my own verbal notes. Other people's speech was generally too quiet to pick up on the record. If it's not obvious from context, I'll comment on what anybody else said.>>

We're calling it Task Force Dead-Eye. It's the same faces, minus Sidewinder, who is recuperating from his leg wound. His street brother, Edge, looks lonely, almost as though a part of himself is missing. It's a little past one in the morning and we're all in Aurora's power wagon cruising north on 5th Street, heading for Westlake.

We're not packing quite as much gear as last time, but everyone's still armed to the teeth. This time around, maneuverability is more important than firepower. Hangfire picked out lightweight weapons with enough stopping power to make a difference. As for me, I've got the Roomsweeper with me, and it sure feels good to have this toy at my side. I'm also packing a micro-camera. It's fully auto-focus with adaptive optics, and its data disk can store 256 images taken in any kind of light, from bright sun to infrared. Rick, there's no fragging way I'm coming away from here without some kind of proof.

Icepick's running this one without her precious cyberdeck—it's just too noticeable. If any hacking is required, she'll just have to get by on her own.

O.K., we're here. Aurora has parked us, and now it's out of the wagon and onto the street. It's a typical Seattle spring evening with chilly winds and light drizzle. The pavement is shiny and slick. We're off, moving quickly. Edge is at point, flitting from shadow to shadow doing a forward recon.

There's the Octagon. Remember how Martin Johnson described it as a glowing gem? He was right. In the powerful floodlights set around its base, it does look like a jewel glittering in the light. Its walls must be made of some kind of ceramic composite.

We're moving around the back of the building now. Having done our research, we know there're always guards on duty in the lobby and at the door to the soup kitchen out in back. But that loading dock is all ours.

There it is: big steel loading door, with a smaller door beside it. And in between them is a data terminal. This one's a lot less elaborate than the one at the O'Connell compound.

No strain this time. A red light on the terminal turns green and there's a metallic click from the smaller door as the maglock snaps open. We're in.

Edge still has the point. All heavy weapons are out of the question now. Edge and Hangfire have Ingram Smartguns, Icepick has some kind of silenced SMG, and Aurora is making do with a light pistol and a mage sword. (Of course, with her magic, she's probably even more deadly than the samurai.) About half the lights are still on. That's a break for me and Icepick. We're the only ones with natural eyes. The loading bay is empty. (If anybody was there, I'd feel sorry for them. Edge is in a particularly lethal mood tonight.)

We're moving out of the loading bay and into the building itself. One out of four ceiling lights is on in the hallways. There's no sound at all. Wouldn't it be nice if the building was empty?

Rick, I'm hoping the Octagon's laid out something like the chapterhouse you visited. What we're looking for is your special Retreat Area. If we're going to find anything worthwhile, it's probably going to be there. I'll admit it, chummer, I'm more than a little scared right now. I can't help thinking that maybe the hallway we're in is the same one where Livi...

We're splitting up now to cover more ground. Hangfire and Aurora are going one way,



Edge and Icepick are taking me the other. (I don't think Edge is too pleased that he's going to have to babysit me, but he's too much of a pro to say anything.)

Huh? Well, sure. Thanks, Edge. <<ZW: Christ, Rick, that guy's got unbelievable hearing power. He told me to shut up and reminded me that I'd saved his life. If there's even the slightest chance that I might do it again, he says, he'll "babysit" me anywhere.>>

I think I've been in this area before. We're getting near the meeting room. Hold up, what's down there? The hallway's wider.

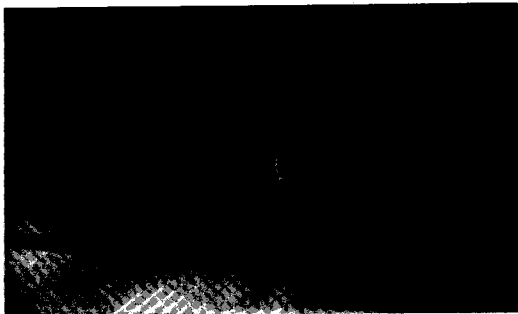
Ah-ha, here we go. Black double-doors with gold fittings. This is what we're after.

Aurora is doing some astral scanning. (What an ability for an investigative reporter. I wonder if I'm too old to learn this magic stuff.) Her eyes are open again.

What? I won't...what do you mean? Just tell me what you saw. Why? Well, if you insist, but I don't like it already. <<ZW: Here's the subtext: Aurora finished her scan and said the area was clear for me to go in, but I wasn't going to like what I'd see. She wouldn't tell me what she meant, only that I wouldn't believe it unless I saw it for myself.>>

Aurora masked us so that we would give off the appearance of UB security guards. When I look at Edge, I see a guard, but when I look down at myself, all I see is a very nervous Zeb Wanderly. But Icepick says the spell works for both of us. (I'll never understand this magic drek.) Aurora's manipulating the lock and...O.K., the door's open.

It's darker inside. The lighting is very subdued. Edge has shut the door behind us, and we're all alone in this inner sanctum.



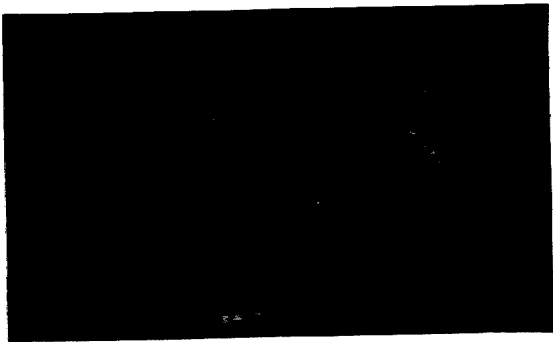
On second look, I see that we're not really into the inner sanctum yet. We're still in a hallway. The floor is real soft under my feet, but not like carpet. It's more like...like...ugh, I don't like to say it, but it's more like soft, warm flesh. It's still deathly quiet, but now there's a strange smell in the air, something vaguely familiar, like something I remember from a long time ago. It's yeast, or something very much like it; it's something biological.

Edge is moving ahead. There's a door to the right and it's open a crack. He's telling me to take a look. Here goes...

Oh my god, what are those things? They're...I can't believe it...I'm looking into a circular room, maybe 20 meters across, and it's full of...of...I don't know. They're bipedal creatures, shorter than Humans, but more...more bulky. I can see their ribs, which means they're animals of some kind, but they look like...giant insects! I know this sounds crazy, but...what are they doing? They're tending to something. It's something large and bloated. It's writhing in some sort of sac. It's...a Human! Or should I say it was a Human.

The camera. Now we're going to get our proof. We can't turn back now.





There's movement up ahead!

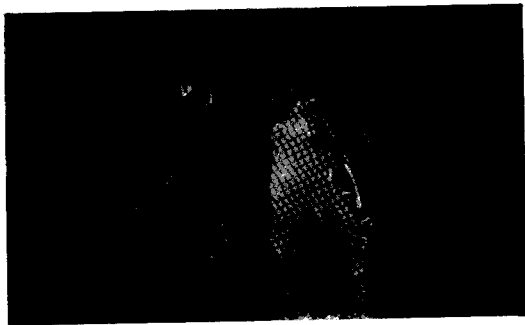
Wait, it's gone, whatever it was. It was bloated, covered in black spines, and its eyes were huge and multifaceted like a fly's. I hope these shots come out.

What the frag are these things? Rick, I've never seen anything like this. Never.

Edge, look down here. If these are insects of some kind, these must be the warriors or soldiers. What else could they be? Look at the size of those claws and mandibles.

What are those three over there doing? They've got another creature pinned up against the wall. But the one against the wall isn't like them. Those big teeth, they've got a different shape. And its head's not the same. If those three are warriors, then maybe this one is some kind of drone?

What are they doing? Frag, they're ripping it apart!



Sorry, I thought I had a stronger stomach. The warriors were tearing the other one up into pieces. All this time, the drone-thing was screaming.

I've seen enough. We have our pictures, so let's get the frag out of this hellhole. Wait, did you hear that? It's coming this way. Maybe if we...

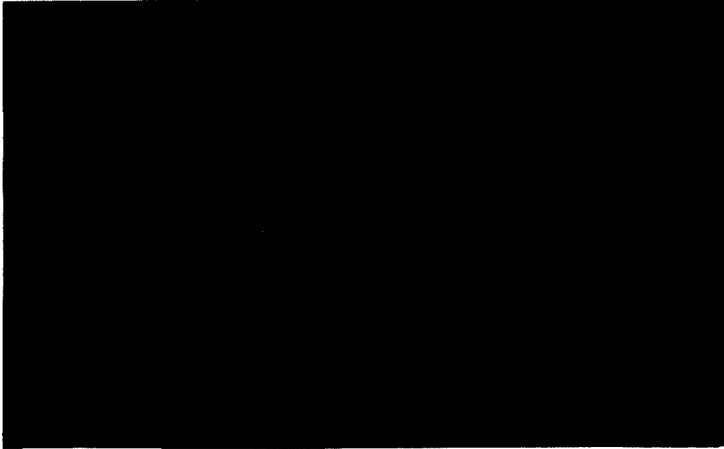
Warriors. They've seen us! Aurora! Open the fragging door! Hurry!

She got us out of there just in time. But now who's firing? Security guards? Juli! Get her, she's been hit. Edge, give me the gun. Get the frag going! Now!

Rick, I don't know if you'll ever hear this, but...I can't see the things yet, but I can hear them. Dozens of 'em. The other runners are still scrapping it out with the security guards, trying to cut a route out of here. I'm going to try to hold those things off as long as I can.

The firing's died down behind me. That means either Hangfire and the others have geeked the guards, or the guards have geeked them. I guess I'll know soon enough.

They're coming. Rick, I'm going to keep recording as long as I can. If I don't make it, but somehow you get to hear this, I just want you to know that working with you has been...wait a minute.



There they are. They're not armed. O.K., Edge said keep the bursts short, just touch the trigger, and...die, you fraggers! There are so many of them, I can't miss. Another burst, another, they're going down, they're dropping like...like flies. But there're so many of them.

I'm empty. How do you release the clip? I don't have any more clips anyway...

The Roomsweeper holds six rounds. That's five for those mutants, the last one for me. Goodbye, Rick.

Rick, we're all back in Aurora's wagon after Edge came to the rescue. We are now officially hauling our butts back as fast as we can. Juli's doing better. She'll be out of



action for awhile with a concussion, but Aurora says she'll be up and running soon enough. Hangfire has a new crease along his temple (and a new appreciation for life as well).

These pictures better turn out. I'm going to bring them up on my system as soon as possible—maybe after I've had a good stiff drink or five. Then I'll see if there's any kind of enhancement I can run. I don't think the raw shots are going to be much good. The light was just too weird, everything was moving, and I wasn't in the right frame of mind to concentrate on composition. I've got some pretty good line recognition and signal processing software, though, dating from my abortive career as a paparazzi. I'll dump them over to you as soon as I'm done. Contact me when they arrive.

-Zeb

**TRANSCRIPT ENDS — EMAIL CIRCUIT RE-ESTABLISHED**

**LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (11:01:34 PST/04-28-50)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: DavittF (13:25:43 EST/04-29-51) CHAT MODE**

**<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>**

DAVITT:

Hoi, Dead-Eye. Or is it Horatio?

WANDERLY:

Don't slot me around, Rick. I'm feeling kind of delicate.

DAVITT:

I can imagine. Out for a little celebration last night, were we?

WANDERLY:

Five pitchers of margaritas. For medicinal purposes only, of course.

DAVITT:

Of course. All kidding aside, Zeb, my respect for you knows no bounds. There's no fragging way I could have handled that.

WANDERLY:

I don't know if I handled it, but I did survive it. You should've heard me wake up in the middle of the night screaming. Did you get the pictures?

DAVITT:

Yeah, I got them. You're right, these things are nightmares.

WANDERLY:

I hope to find out more tonight.

DAVITT:

Many-Names, or whatever he calls himself?

WANDERLY:

That's right. I'll get back to you as soon as I know something.

DAVITT:

Later, Horatio.

**LOGOUT: DavittF (13:32:39 EST/04-29-51)**

**EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA**

**LOGIN: WanderlyZ (09:44:42 PST/05-01-51) CHAT MODE**

**<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>**

WANDERLY:

Rick.

DAVITT:  
I'm here.

WANDERLY:  
Sorry to keep you waiting, but I just got done talking to our shaman friend and...Rick, this is really getting scary.

DAVITT:  
Just calm down. What did you find out?

WANDERLY:  
Insect totems.

DAVITT:  
Insect totems? No such thing.

WANDERLY:  
Chummer, I wish to god you were right. Here's the transcript:

**IMBEDDED DATACHIP TRANSCRIPT — EMAIL CIRCUIT HELD**

**Original Recording (22:01:24 PST/04-30-51)**

**Online Annotation (ZW) (08:19:46 PST/05-01-51)**

<<ZW: The meet was in The Downfall, a favorite meeting place of Icepick and her friends. I arrived a few minutes early, but Man-of-Many-Names was already waiting for me in a back booth.>>

WANDERLY:  
Many-Names. Thanks for seeing me. I need your help.

MANY-NAMES:  
Yes.

WANDERLY:  
I have some photographs I'd like to show you. Maybe you can tell me what they are.

MANY-NAMES:  
Very well.

WANDERLY:  
Here. <<ZW: There was a long silence as he looked at the photographs. Then he finally looked up.>>

MANY-NAMES:  
Where did you take these?

WANDERLY:  
I'd rather not say.

MANY-NAMES:  
You have visited the Brotherhood?

WANDERLY:  
How did you know that?

MANY-NAMES:  
The cycle begins.

WANDERLY:  
You said that once before. What does it mean? <<ZW: He just smiled.>> What do you know about the Brotherhood?

MANY-NAMES:  
Enough to fear them. <<ZW: And that scared the drek out of me. According to the runners, Many-Names is not someone who scares easily.>>



WANDERLY:

Why? What are they?

MANY-NAMES:

Have you heard of Insect totems?

WANDERLY:

Insect...? Like shamanic totems?

MANY-NAMES:

You have the proof right there in your hands.

WANDERLY:

What are these things?

MANY-NAMES:

Members of the hive, so-called "Flesh Form" Insect Spirits. This picture shows a termite warrior; this one is an ant worker. And this, a termite Queen.

WANDERLY:

They almost look like...like they used to be Human.

MANY-NAMES:

They were at one time. That is why they are called Flesh Form. "True Form" Insect Spirits are something completely different.

WANDERLY:

I'm afraid I'm not following any of this. Maybe you better start from the beginning.

MANY-NAMES:

Do you understand the ways of the totem? A shaman dedicates himself to a particular totem and, in return, receives great blessings.

WANDERLY:

The totems are things like bear, snake, coyote, rat...

MANY-NAMES:

No, they are Bear, Snake, Coyote, and Rat. There are Insect totems as well: Wasp, Ant, Termite, Fly, Mantis. But only those shamans who have lost their center would ever consider approaching them for power.

WANDERLY:

But some shamans do, is that what you're saying?

MANY-NAMES:

Yes. There are shamans who follow the Insect totems. Among the powers granted them by their totem is the ability to summon lesser Insect Spirits into the world. These are the True Form Spirits, the Warrior Termite Spirits and Worker Termite Spirits, for example. All Mantis Spirits are warriors who are solitary hunters. The shaman can even summon a Queen Spirit, though the effort and risks involved are often too great.

WANDERLY:

Are you saying these...things are under the control of a shaman?

MANY-NAMES:

No. What I am saying is that prolonged contact with the Insect Spirits does have an effect on the shaman. Insect totems have their own motivations, their own goals. But these goals are far removed from our thought patterns. A shaman can only withstand the alien thought processes of the Insect totems for so long before his own mind snaps. The shaman slowly becomes a helpless pawn in the intricate play of his Insect totem. The lucky ones will die. The unfortunate ones may linger on in insanity. The totem uses the shaman to gain a foothold in the world.

WANDERLY:  
How?

MANY-NAMES:

Eventually the shaman will be coerced into summoning a Queen, an individual through which the power of the archetypal Insect totem is focused. Once the Queen has been summoned, she becomes the center of a hive—a community of both Flesh Form and True Form Spirits that are of her insect type. Most often the shaman will, by this time, probably have arranged for hosts for the Spirits, thus ensuring that the Queen has at least a small hive to greet her. Now the shaman becomes expendable.

WANDERLY:  
What are "hosts"?

MANY-NAMES:  
They are the Humans or Metahumans who are possessed and become Flesh Form Insect Spirits.

WANDERLY:  
Oh my god...

MANY-NAMES:  
When the Insect Spirit inhabits the host, the host's body is encased in a chrysalis. This is where the physical changes begin to take place.

WANDERLY:  
So all hosts turn into things like these?

MANY-NAMES:  
Not all. A voluntary host...

WANDERLY:  
What? Some people want this to happen to them? Why, for frag's sake?

MANY-NAMES:  
Power. A Flesh Form Warrior is a powerful creature, regardless of which totem it is. But there are other benefits as well. It is always possible for a host to resist the physical changes and retain a Human form, at least partially. In cases like this, the host retains most of his former characteristics, but receives additional power as well.

WANDERLY:  
What types of power?

MANY-NAMES:  
Enhanced strength, resistance to pain, some resistance to physical damage. A successfully merged host is a powerful creature. It is not hard to see why some people covet such power and are willing to take great risks to attain it.

WANDERLY:  
But if the merge doesn't work...

MANY-NAMES:  
Yes. It is a matter of willpower. Those whose willpower is strong enough will remain intact. If not, then a full Flesh Form Spirit is the result. And of course, because nobody would voluntarily take such a risk in order to become a worker, only Warrior Spirits will be found in voluntary hosts.

WANDERLY:  
And the others...?

MANY-NAMES:  
Involuntary hosts. Unconscious and unable to resist.

WANDERLY:  
Drugs?

MANY-NAMES:  
In some cases, yes. There are also hypnosis and various other means of mental indoctrina-



tion. Tell me, were all these photographs taken from the same place?

WANDERLY:

Yes.

MANY-NAMES:

This disturbs me. I thought that hives from different totems could never exist together—a significant weakness. It has always been believed that even different hives of the same totem, when brought into close proximity with one another, will explode into violence. Members will literally tear each other apart.

WANDERLY:

The town of Gilroy.

MANY-NAMES:

What?

WANDERLY:

Nothing. So, what do these hives want? What is their purpose?

MANY-NAMES:

This is the great mystery. They expand, they conquer new territory, they found new hives. But why should primarily Astral creatures like the Insect Totems be concerned about physical territory? This is what no one can understand.

WANDERLY:

How do you know as much as you do?

MANY-NAMES:

Years ago I destroyed an Ant totem in Amazonia. It cost me more dearly than I care to explain, but one benefit was a greater understanding of the enemy. And Insect totems are truly an enemy to be feared.

WANDERLY:

These Human Form Spirits...how can you recognize them?

MANY-NAMES:

Astrally. Their aura will depict their true nature, except for those few who have successfully merged and are capable of masking their true forms. Only the most powerful magic-users can differentiate them from normal Humans. Such Human Form Spirits are valuable to the totems as intermediaries between them and unsuspecting Humans. As such, the totems will usually protect them.

WANDERLY:

What if you can't assense?

MANY-NAMES:

Only the strongest-willed hosts show no physical changes.

WANDERLY:

Many-Names, how did you destroy the Ant Spirits?

MANY-NAMES:

I will not speak of that. The same path would not be open to you.

WANDERLY:

Is there anything I can do?

MANY-NAMES:

The totems cannot stand the light. Remember that. In both the physical and metaphorical sense. You represent the light, Zebediah Wanderly.



WANDERLY:

Like I said, Rick, I'm scared.

DAVITT:

I know. At least the guys in charge are Human. We've seen them. That means they've got those grotesques under control, right?

WANDERLY:

Remember Martin Johnson? He had multi-faceted eyes, Rick.

DAVITT:

Drek. So, the guy's got custom cyberware. We both know Zeiss's best stuff never goes in the catalog. Right?

WANDERLY:

Right.

DAVITT:

This thing is like one of those zombie cults of long ago. Those voodoo guys fed some kind of neurotoxin to people that turned them into mindless workers. The UB's the same thing. It's nasty, sure, but it's no supernatural conspiracy.

WANDERLY:

But look at the way it fits together. Gilroy and that other town must have been where two Insect totem hives tore each other apart. Caitlin O'Connell, the founder of the UB, talked about "bad merges."

DAVITT:

But you said a shaman was needed to set up a hive. She wasn't a shaman.

WANDERLY:

But her husband was. Paul Grigg was a shaman who taught at the same university as O'Connell. I looked it up last night, Rick. I'll bet anything that if you dig a little deeper, you'd find that he was the driving force behind the UB, not her. Sure, she came up with the original discoveries, but he took them and turned them into the UB. Interesting theory, eh?

DAVITT:

What happened to this guy Grigg?

WANDERLY:

He killed himself. He went mad and killed himself. Coincidence?

DAVITT:

It could be. And the Gilroy riot could have been something else, too.

WANDERLY:

Drek, like what?

DAVITT:

More to the point, what do you want to do about it--saddle up again with your runner friends and nuke the Octagon, and then every other UB chapterhouse in the entire fragging world, all 400 of them? Or do you just want to lock yourself away and hide?

WANDERLY:

No.

DAVITT:

Your buddy Many-Names told you what we've got to do: bring this thing out of the shadows. Tear the lid off and expose it to the light.

WANDERLY:

I know what he said, but...

DAVITT:

Let's go after 'em. Whoa, hold on, somebody's at the door. I'll get back to you in a bit. Later, chummer.



WANDERLYZ:

No, Rick, wait!

LOGOUT: Davitt (09:59:15 PST/05-01-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: WanderlyZ (13:41:13 PST/05-01-51) CHAT MODE

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

WANDERLYZ:

Rick? Are you there?

LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (13:42:59 PST/05-01-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: WanderlyZ (17:19:29 PST/05-01-51) CHAT MODE

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

WANDERLYZ:

Rick?

LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (17:20:55 PST/05-01-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: WanderlyZ (03:43:24 PST/05-02-51) CHAT MODE

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

WANDERLYZ:

Frag it, Rick, answer me!

LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (03:45:03 PST/05-02-51)

EMAIL — NA Netlink UCAS-NC/SEA

LOGIN: WanderlyZ (16:45:27 PST/05-03-51) CHAT MODE

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

WANDERLYZ:

Rick?

LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (16:48:48 PST/05-03-51)

NEWSNET — NA Netlink SEA

LOGIN: WanderlyZ (16:53:51 PST/05-03-51) RETRIEVAL/DOWNLOAD

SPECIFY SEARCH CONDITIONS (KEYWORD): davitt

frederick, rick?

SEARCHING....?

FREELANCE NEWSWRITER FOUND DEAD

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) AP

[05-02-51]

The body of freelance reporter Frederick Davitt was discovered late last night in a dumpster behind his Washington, D.C. apartment building. Cause of death was listed as extreme trauma, possibly the result of an armed assault.

"He was bludgeoned to death," concurred Lt. Karl Baumeister of Lone Star subsidiary Capital Security Services. "The ferocity of the attack is, well, startling. We've been predicting an increase in street use of energizer drugs, and I think that's what we might have here—an assault by a turbo junkie."

Bloodstains in the hallway outside Davitt's apartment indicate the assault took place there. Lt. Baumeister admitted the police have no significant leads or suspects at this time, though the investigation was continuing.

Frederick Davitt began his career as a reporter for Turner News Service (later renamed Newsnet) back in 2030. After cutting his teeth on the local beat, ironically winning a Seattle Golden Pen award for his series on the escalating phenomenon of random street violence, he gained a reputation for hard-hitting investigative journalism. His exposure of the ConEd scam in 2032 won plaudits from journalists across the country. Davitt moved on to work on what he described as a "freelance oversight" role with respect to the fiscal responsibility of governmental agen<CANCEL>

LOGOUT: WanderlyZ (09:10:18 PST/05-03-51)

**PERSONAL JOURNAL, WanderlyZ**

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

(18:12:17 PST/05-04-51)

So it all comes down to this. A life, a career...the very existence of someone who's been loved as a friend, appreciated as an ally, and respected as a colleague. It all comes down to a single article by some young hack on the AP Newsnet wire.

The irony is even stronger when you remember that Rick's greatest passion was blowing open conspiracies. It's like what they say about wolves: "The wolf wins every fight but one, and in that fight, he dies." I can't believe that Rick was lost to "random street violence." He was smarter than that. Besides, the timing is too convenient. That's why I've found another place to stay. I'll never rest until I find his killer.

I called Juli for advice, and she insisted that I stay with her. "I let you go once," she told me, "and I never make the same mistake twice." Old Icepick may not be samurai, but she's just as tough. I'm safe here with her, safe enough to relax for awhile. Safe enough to bury myself in writing what must be written. Safe enough to remember Rick and come to terms with his memory. Safe enough to cry.

(10:06:09/05-05-51)

At least the writing is going well. Three chapters of the book--yes, the unwritten article is now in the process of becoming a book, *The Universal Brotherhood: A Web Of Deceit*. I've been in frequent touch with Man-of-Many-Names, who's been filling in more and more of the gaps.

The book is coming out under Rick's name as well as mine. As it should be.

(09:33:59/05-06-51)

Where's Juli? Before we went to sleep last night, I made some remark about wishing I had my Bartlett's Quotations. It's a book dating back to before the turn of the century, before people started editing historical quotations to make them more acceptable to their modern tastes. (Remember Armstrong's "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," upon first setting foot on the moon in 1969? Only 20 years later, some overzealous magazine editor decided the last phrase was really "one giant leap for *Humanity*.")

Anyway, I made some remark about needing my Bartlett's. When I woke up this morning, Juli wasn't here. Knowing her, she headed over to my old apartment to pick up the book.

Fine. But it's only 20 minutes each way to my old place.

Where's Juli?

(12:44:33/05-06-51)

Still no Juli, and I'm getting worried. More than worried. Everything I sense seems to scream disaster.

Noise in the hallway. Juli?

(18:50:52/05-06-51)

It wasn't Juli. And I'm at a loss to explain what I experienced.

When I heard the noise outside, I looked through the viewing lens of the door. There were two men outside in the hallway, waiting for something or someone. They were dressed like typical sararimen, nothing out of the ordinary. But when I looked at them, they looked...alien. I was using my eyes, but it wasn't vision that told me. Call it instinct or intuition, but these two were plastic, brittle, and very alien.

Is that what it is to "assense"? Do I suddenly have magical abilities?

Somehow I knew these were Human Form Insect Spirits. I knew they had come to kill me.

I climbed out the window, taking only my pocket terminal with me. It was a two-story drop to the alley, but I made it into a dumpster (a quick flash of Rick) and that broke my fall. I ran and ran for what seemed like hours, every moment expecting something to catch me and tear me limb from limb.

Now I'm here hiding in an alley off of Pike Street. I can smell the oil and salt of the ocean nearby. I'm safe for the moment. But what do I do now? What can I do?

This one I'll have to think out by myself.



# **THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD**

## **A Web of Deceit**

by  
Rick Davitt  
&  
Zeb Wandery

Annotated Draft 05-05-51  
Copyright 2050 by Frederick Davitt & Zebedlah Wandery

# CHAPTER ONE

## ORGANIZATION AND PROPAGATION

### INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2043, the Universal Brotherhood has quickly become a worldwide organization, purportedly dedicated to the enlightenment and enablement of every Human and Metahuman on the planet. As this book will show, the benign face that the Universal Brotherhood (henceforth referred to simply as the UB) displays to the world is but a mask for its truer, darker nature.

This is *not* an authorized survey of the UB. In fact, much of the information contained herein is diametrically opposed to the Brotherhood's official line. The authors have gone to great lengths to check and confirm the facts, basing their claims on interviews with people both inside and outside the UB, as well as on documented personal research. In many cases, the identities of interviewees cannot be disclosed for reasons that will become apparent later. The authors have included an Appendix that lists the public-domain sources from which much information was drawn.

The Universal Brotherhood is by no means the first major organization to use pseudo-religious trappings to cover a more sinister purpose. Previous examples include the "Moonies", Scientology, the Moral Majority, the PTL Club, the Hare Krishna movement, and the personality cults of Baghwan Shree Rajneesh and Jim Jones. Whatever were the ulterior motives of these other organizations, they all pale in comparison to the hidden agenda of the UB.

The following facts are not pretty. Horrifying may not even be a strong enough word. But facts they are.

This is the Universal Brotherhood.

### HISTORY

The groundwork that would lead to the founding of the Universal Brotherhood began in the late 2030s when Dr. Caitlin O'Connell was a lecturer in sociology and statistics at U.C.L.A. After completing some preliminary research into the mathematical analysis of mob psychology, Dr. O'Connell drew startling conclusions that were immediately dismissed by most of her colleagues. She remained steadfast, however, in the belief, that her mathematical studies proved beyond doubt that all Humans and Metahumans are inextricably linked by a bond she called the "universal brotherhood." This principle might well be equated to the Jungian theory of the "collective unconscious," though O'Connell's formulation contained its own unique features. Besides binding together all the populations on Earth, O'Connell's "brotherhood" also represented a reservoir of unimaginable inner power that could be tapped by those who knew how.

<<ZW: I should cite O'Connell's original papers here; maybe include excerpts in an Appendix.>>

O'Connell's final report was completed in 2040, but no reputable journal would publish her work because her conclusions were considered unacceptable. Little else is known of O'Connell's life between 2040 and the opening of the first Universal Brotherhood chapters in California Free State in 2043.

Her husband, Paul Grigg, himself a shaman and fellow instructor at U.C.L.A., was also deeply involved in the formative stages of the UB philosophy. Shortly after the first UB chapters opened, his mental health began to deteriorate. (In 2045, Grigg committed suicide.) Others must also have been involved in the behind-the-scenes development of the UB; the work would have been beyond the scope of two people, no matter how capable and dedicated. It is unlikely that anyone will ever know the true details of this stage in the UB's evolution.

In any case, it was on February 1, 2043 that the first four UB chapterhouses opened their doors. Two houses were in San Francisco, one in Ukiah, and one in Gilroy, all cities in California Free State. Each chapter had a membership of between 10 and 20 people, most of whom come from the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum. These were street people and squatters for whom any change in situation would be an improvement. It seems reasonable to assume that the "officers" of these first chapters were involved in the pre-opening development of the UB organization. The Consuls (presidents) of the first four chapters were Cathryn Westgate (Gilroy), Thomas Dorkin (Ukiah), Wayne Kokura, and Robert Cook (San Francisco).

Since then, the UB's growth has been nothing short of phenomenal. As of March 2050, the UB has some 300 chapters scattered across North America, with another 100 established internationally (growing from 4 to 400 chapters in seven years represents an annual growth rate of 95 percent.)

The UB refuses to disclose any information about its current membership. It is possible to make some general estimates, however. On average, every North American chapter has slightly over 100 members. With 300 chapters, that means some 3,000 members nationwide. Best available estimates give each of the 100 international chapters an average of 50 members per house. All told, the UB has at least 35,000 members today. If current growth rates continue, that number will double within a year!

The demographics of UB membership is changing drastically. As mentioned above, most early UB members were street people and squatters. But as the profile of the organization began to rise, the Brotherhood aimed their recruitment at more affluent citizens.

Today more members are drawn from two highly unlikely segments of society. One group might be called "street muscle."



These are pseudo-samurai and gang members who know life from the grittier side. An equally large and considerably more influential segment is composed of corporate employees at middle- and upper-management levels. The fierce attraction that these sararimen display toward the UB is, perhaps, a reflection of the superficiality and emotional emptiness that the higher-level corporate culture tends to breed. According to Martin Johnson, Assistant Director of Public Relations for the UB's Central Seattle (Octagon) chapter, people of this group fill perhaps 20 percent of the Brotherhood's ranks.

Other characteristics of the demographics are even more interesting:

About 70 percent of the membership is male, and over 95 percent is Human. The average age of members fell from 40.8 in 2043 to 20.5 in 2050.

Though popular descriptions of the UB often mention that it is supportive of members who wish to pursue magical studies, the fact is that mages and shamans are actively discouraged from joining. This is not to say that no shamans are UB members. On the contrary, it seems likely that many of the "movers and shakers" of the organization possess shamanic powers, albeit from an unusual source.

## PHILOSOPHY

The central belief put forth by the Universal Brotherhood is that all Humans and Metahumans are truly bonded together in a way that transcends culture, race, and geography. (This was the original thrust of O'Connell's research.) The bond that is at the core of every being is portrayed as a source of strength and emotional stability for anyone willing to reach within himself to utilize it.

The stated goal of every UB member is to become an "agent": one who has total control of his actions and whose motivation is the betterment of all. An agent takes full and complete responsibility for his present condition and future potential. Theoretically at least, it is only an agent who can live life to the fullest.

This is an attractive concept: to take complete control of one's life, to command one's destiny. Many groups have tried to spread this word before. In the case of the Universal Brotherhood, however, such lofty sentiment provides a smokescreen behind which lurk <<ZW: Oh, drek, this is getting just too Lovecraftian. Rick would have hated it. I'll finish this part later.>>

## ORGANIZATION

On the surface, the Universal Brotherhood appears to be a loose confederation of autonomous chapters. Each chapter is led by a Consul and his Pro-Consul. They are solely responsible for the day-to-day operation of the chapter.

The International network is run by an elected Council composed of a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Officially, the Council is elected every two years by the membership at large, though the votes of the outgoing Council members wield a predominant influence over the outcome. It is

the responsibility of the Council to oversee and coordinate any matters that require the cooperation of several chapters. More specifically, the Council directly controls all nationwide membership drives, public relations, advertising, and establishment of new chapters.

The Council President was supposedly in regular contact with the reclusive Doctor O'Connell for frequent "heart-to-heart" talks on various matters concerning the organization.

*(ZW: Author's Note - Must make earlier reference about O'Connell's insanity and death.)*

There is no central headquarters for the Council. The UB claims that it is disruptive to "tear the president-elect away" from his or her own chapter. It is much more efficient, the organization believes, to keep the president-elect in place, and to turn his or her chapter into an ersatz "headquarters" during that president's term of office.

The UB is set up under the provisions for non-profit organizations in UCAS and most other countries. In addition, the Brotherhood enjoys the tax-free status awarded to churches and religious institutions. This latter provision is even more all-encompassing than non-profit status: the UB pays not one nyuen of tax (with the notable exception of the Quebec chapters, which are taxed normally, though the political pressure to reverse this is growing). Official returns last year showed the UB's total cash flow within the UCAS to be just under \$1,000,000 nyuen. This only begins to tell the story. The UB's Central Seattle chapterhouse, for example, is a 10-story, 46,500-square-meter building that experts agree must have cost well in excess of \$7,000,000 nyuen to build. Yet it was paid for entirely by internal funds; no bank financing was sought or accepted. But the money had to come from somewhere.

The UB is quite proud of its charitable works. Most chapterhouses include either a hostel, a soup kitchen, or a free clinic as part of their day-to-day operations. In addition, several chapters have set up youth organizations along the lines of the defunct Boys' Club of America. In addition to fronting an impression of good will, these so-called "charitable works" also provide the UB with an efficient and thriving recruiting venue.

## MEMBERSHIP/INITIATION

The path to membership in the Brotherhood is carefully laid out. Prospective members attend a Discovery Meeting: a psychological sales job that plays on the candidate's desire (or need) to belong to society. Previous articles on the Brotherhood have described these meetings as "whoop-it-up celebrations" or "revival meetings," yet such descriptions are far from accurate. The Discovery Meetings are more akin to corporate motivational meetings than to bolsterous pep rallies.

After attending a Discovery Meeting, the candidate makes an appointment for a Guidance Meeting. At the Guidance Meeting, significant psychological pressure is applied to the candidate. The technique (developed and perfected by the "Moonies" in the 1960s and 1970s) was termed "love-bombing." This is a highly effective form of selective attention, whose goal is to convince the subject that he or she is accepted,

respected, and appreciated—that he or she belongs.

The cost of membership to the UB involves a one-time initiation fee of several hundred nuyen. For poorer members, this fee is predicated on the ability to pay. New members with no source of income are often hired by the Brotherhood as security guards or cleaning staff. The UB pays competitive wages for these jobs, but takes 10 percent off the top until the initiation fee is paid back. These Brotherhood-employed members are the ones who wear the ubiquitous green shirts so identified with the UB. The concept of hiring new members to work for the Brotherhood ties in closely with the UB's philosophy of creating a sense of belonging for all its members.

In addition to the membership fee, all members must make a "voluntary donation" to the UB. The amount of this donation is left up to the conscience of each member, but it is supposed to reflect what the Universal Brotherhood is worth to the member. The size of some of these donations is staggering. For example, Bill Yakamura (CEO of Sony-Universal) is reputed to have single-handedly paid for a new crisis clinic in Bremerton... to the tune of over a million nuyen.

Once the candidate has been initiated, the next major step is the transition to the Inner Circle. This is purported to be a step of enlightenment even greater than that involved when initially joining the Brotherhood. There is no telling how soon after initiation a Brethren will become eligible for this transition, or, indeed, if he or she will ever become eligible. Brethren are told that members who make the transition are transferred to other chapters, in accordance with those members' ambitions and goals within the organization. In fact, the transition sometimes leads to members vanishing from the face of the earth.

The transition is portrayed as a highly desirable experience. In fact, though, it involves one of the darkest and most horrific secrets of the Universal Brotherhood.

<<ZW: I've got to get more information on this. How?>>



# CHAPTER TWO

## PENETRATION

In its seven years of existence, the Universal Brotherhood has demonstrated an unprecedented ability to make its presence felt in almost every stratum of society. Other cult-like organizations in the past have usually been limited to certain fringe elements of society. The UB is showing no such bounds. Its influence extends everywhere, from the dreariest squats to the most prestigious boardrooms.

In his classic paper, "Neo-Postmodern Society", Patrick Bowers divided our society into five major "spheres of influence": the multinational corporations, the government, the service-providers, organized crime, and the shadowrunners. Bowers' thesis was that all changes and trends in society are caused by complex interactions between these five spheres. An examination of the entire UB enterprise would, therefore, not be complete without examining how it relates to each of these spheres.

## MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS

Though Bill Yakamura of Sony-Universal is the only multinational CEO to openly admit his association with the UB, the majority of the major corporations—with one notable exception—have Brethren throughout their corporate structure. At first, there was (understandably) some stigma attached to admitting membership in what was seen as a "fringe cult." As the UB slowly gained notoriety and credibility, however, that stigma began to disappear. Nowadays, the Brotherhood's profile is respectable and well-established.

Brethren within the corporate fold have the reputation of being more controlled and more competent than their non-Brethren colleagues. To quote Candice Wellon, Director (Western Region), Industrial Controls Division for Yokogawa, "Two of my department managers are in the Universal Brotherhood. Their work is fine, and actually goes even beyond what their jobs require. They're very achievement-oriented, both for themselves and their departments. They're leaders, not just managers or administrators. I wish all my staff would join the Brotherhood."

Aztechnology Corporation is the one significant exception to the widespread appreciation of the Brethren. Aztechnology has no UB members in its employ, and seems extremely hostile to the very existence of the Brotherhood organization. (One of the authors was physically expelled from a junior vice-president's office simply for mentioning the Brotherhood's name.) The reasons for this hostility will be discussed in a later chapter.

## GOVERNMENT

The Universal Brotherhood has penetrated the UCAS federal government as extensively as it has the corporate structure of the multinationals. (No information is available on other governments, though the situation in UCAS is probably typical.) Brethren permeate the upper layers of the Federal Civil Service. Some evidence even suggests that Cindy Bouver, Assistant Deputy Director of the FBI, is a member of the organization.

As yet, no UB members are known to be among elected government officials, though the extent of penetration into other areas of society make it likely that the UB has also gained a foothold here.

Any Brethren among the ranks of elected representatives are probably concealing their connection to avoid backlash from voters still opposed to such organizations. A study of the current tax structure indicates that the Brotherhood is already using its influence in government to make sure certain policies swing their way. In a time when the tax burden is growing for everyone from the largest corporation to the lowliest wage slave, it is almost inconceivable that an organization such as the UB should remain totally untaxed. Inconceivable, that is, until one considers the organization's significant political clout. It also seems inconceivable that no one has yet challenged the Brotherhood's claim to an annual cash flow of under one million nuyen, especially when cost overruns for construction of the Octagon in Seattle were projected at more than seven times the original budget.

## SERVICE PROVIDERS

This group includes independent corporations that perform essential services for cities and districts. Examples of such service-providers are Lone Star Security Services and Shilwase Atomics in Seattle, and Capital Security Services and Potomac Utility District Incorporated (PUD, Inc.) in Washington.

It has been confirmed that UB Brethren have infiltrated Lone Star up to the rank of Precinct Captain. Rumors persist that it goes even higher than that.

*<<ZW: Frag, this sounds weak. I'll have to dig around some more (HOW?) for membership in other providers.>>*



## ORGANIZED CRIME

To the outside observer, organized crime might seem a perfect target for a group attempting to establish a power base in society, but

<<ZW: I know nothing about this yet. Frag. Big fragging holes everywhere. I wonder if I dare use any of my old yakuza contacts? Or would I be signing my death warrant?>>

## SHADOWRUNNERS

It can be stated categorically that the UB has made no significant penetration into the shadowrunner community.

<<ZW: Uh-oh. Am I sure about this?>>

As a group, shadowrunners are more magically aware than other segments of society (with the possible exception of Aztechnology). As such, they would quickly learn the truth about any Brethren who tried to run with them.

It is also unlikely that successful shadowrunners would be attracted to the precepts of the UB. The Brotherhood preys on feelings of personal inadequacy and insecurity. Few shadowrunners, it seems, are burdened by such feelings.

If the influence of the Universal Brotherhood continues to grow, shadowrunners may represent the only segment of society still in a position to challenge the UB.

<<ZW: O.K., I'm stuck again. I need to cite cases, quote authorities. And how am I going to do the necessary research without getting my head torn off and eaten? Yeah, well, I guess I'll worry about that later.>>



# CHAPTER THREE

## PHYSICAL PROCESSES

<<ZW: Here comes the heavy stuff. Don't overdo it, Zeb, old boy. Let the facts speak for themselves.>>

The truth behind the Universal Brotherhood is as simple as it is startling. The driving force behind the organization is neither Human nor Metahuman. The leaders of the UB are of a totally different nature.

## TOTEMS

As any shaman can explain, a totem is the universal archetype for a certain animal: Bear, for example, or Coyote. As such, it possesses all the archetypal properties of that animal. But a totem is much more than a set of properties or characteristics based solely on Human/Metahuman perceptions of that animal. A totem is an actual source of power for a shaman. A shaman dedicates himself to a totem whose attitudes and beliefs he shares. In return, the totem bestows upon the individual the ability to practice shamanic magic. The most well-known totems are Bear, Coyote, Dog, Eagle, Raccoon, Rat, Raven, Snake, and Wolf.

Less well-known, but just as powerful, are the Fly, Ant, Wasp, and Termite totems. These Insect totems also have their devotees, usually shamans with a more evil outlook and intent. These are the ones who pursue power regardless of the consequences to themselves or to others.

Insect totems are powerful patrons. Unfortunately for their shamans, however, the thought processes and goals of the totem are totally alien. Prolonged exposure to these bizarre thought patterns has a profound effect on the shaman. At first, the shaman's approach to the world becomes somewhat convoluted and misguided; he or she begins to devise intricate plans and stratagems to achieve his ends. With this, however, comes a growing paranoia. Sooner or later, the shaman crosses the fine line into madness. To quote the shaman Man-of-Many-Names, such shamans become "empty shells through which howl the cold winds of madness." The shaman becomes progressively more a pawn in the intricate and inscrutable plans of his Insect totem, until he becomes a near-mindless puppet dancing to his totem's tune.

Much of the following material on the nature of the Insect totem is courtesy of Man-Of-Many-Names.

## QUEENS

As the shaman slips further into the madness brought on by the Insect totem, he or she is eventually coerced into summoning

a Queen. This Queen is a powerful Spirit of the same Insect type as the totem. To exist in the material world, this Queen Spirit needs a Human host.

An ideal host is a Human or Metahuman female who is strong, healthy, and willing to act as a host, though more likely it will be an unknowing victim under the mental control of the shaman. Once an appropriate host is acquired, she is sealed in a translucent chrysalis or cocoon. (This task is usually performed by "True Form" Worker Spirits, which will be discussed in a later section.) The Spirit of the Queen then possesses the mind and body of the host.

The consequences of this possession are profound physiological and mental changes occurring within the host. The body becomes bloated and deformed, often with atrophied limbs—all within a matter of weeks. The first three or four weeks of this terrible metamorphosis occur while the body is in the chrysalis; the remaining changes occur after the Queen has emerged. Once the possession process has begun, the mind and—if one so believes—soul of the host are irrevocably lost. It is possible that the Queen Spirit could be magically banished from the host's body, but the host would remain little more than an empty shell, beyond the reach of any resuscitation techniques. Once the Queen has been summoned and has attained her full abilities, she becomes the center of a hive (this word is used as a convenience even for those Insects that, in nature, have no hive community structure). Once the Queen has arrived, the shaman who summoned her is expendable and thus is sometimes killed. More often than not, the Queen leaves the shaman to linger on in his madness. (A further discussion of hives occurs later in this section.)

The accompanying illustrations—drawn from actual photographs—show examples of Queens from some of the representative Insect totems.

<<ZW: Insert queen illos here.>>

## INSECT SPIRITS

Queens are not the only type of Insect Spirits that exist. The organization and diversity of Insect Spirits is in direct and equal proportion to the types found in the physical realm of that Insect. For example, among Ant Spirits, there are Queen Spirits, Worker Spirits, and Warrior Spirits.

Furthermore, Insect Spirits can be encountered in three forms: "true form," "flesh form," and "Human form."

## TRUE FORM

In their true form, Insect Spirits are astral creatures who have the ability to manifest in the physical world. In such cases, they frequently appear as Human-sized (or larger) versions of the Insect's natural form: for example, a two-meter-long ant.

True Form Spirits also have various magical powers that reflect their true Astral nature.

Depending on the totem, True Form Spirits often serve the Queen as workers or guardians. They may also be dispatched by the totem to perform various tasks in the physical world.

## FLESH FORM

Like Queens, other Insect Spirits can possess both willing and unwilling hosts. With Flesh Form Spirits, the same initial changes occur in translucent cocoons. Once possession is complete, however, the physical changes are different. The body of the host takes on an appearance as close to that of an insect as a mammal can assume. These changes include—but are not limited to—dermal bone deposition, skeletal and muscular rearrangement, alteration of the nervous system, growth of fangs or dermal spines, and massive modification of the gastrointestinal tract. As with Queens, once possession is complete, the host loses his sanity forever.

The mental, physical, and maybe even magical abilities shown by a flesh form depend on the type of Spirit that possessed the host. Ant warriors, for example, have little measurable intelligence in areas unrelated to warfare. In that realm, however, they are matchless, having drawn upon hundreds of millions of years' worth of evolved instincts. Termite workers, on the other hand, are little more than automatons, though they do display great strength.

The accompanying illustrations show samples of flesh form insect spirits of various totems. Again, these were rendered from photographs.

<<ZW: Insert other illos here. Got to get them computer-enhanced.>>

## HUMAN FORM

It is possible for willing hosts to partially, or even completely, prevent the physical and mental changes that accompany possession by Insect Spirits other than Queens. Such resistance requires great willpower. Any physical and mental changes suffered are inversely proportional to the strength of the host's willpower. Thus it is possible for a particularly strong-willed host to remain totally unaffected by the possession. Most people, however, have insufficient willpower and determination to resist all changes. These people will suffer some insectoid transformations: multifaceted eyes, altered skeletal structure, or limited growth of dermal spines. (In a world where cyber replacement and cosmetic technology is commonplace, few such minor changes would be noticeable on the street.)

Mentation is also altered in an inverse relationship to the host's force of will. A strong-willed host will retain his or her own personality and thought processes, though these will be overlaid by a mental kinship with the Totem Spirit. This does not remove the host's free will, but it certainly aligns his or her goals and outlook to those of the totem. (Because the totem's thought processes are so alien, these hosts are doomed to insanity. Over the short term, however, anyone with sufficient strength of will to resist the physical changes can also weather the mental consequences of possession.)

The fortunate Human Form hosts for which—to use Many-Names' terminology—"the merge was good" also receive significant power from the totem. Though not strictly shamans, they do acquire the ability to perform limited shamanic magic.

The extent of this magic varies, depending on the individual host and the totem.

Possession is an extremely traumatic experience. Even those hosts thought to have strong force of will can suffer complete mental breakdowns. For these unfortunates, the merge is bad, and they suffer the same complete mental and physical changes as unwilling hosts. They become Flesh Form Spirits.

## HIVES

Before summoning a Queen, an insect shaman usually summons other Insect Spirits to possess unwilling hosts. The resulting Flesh Form Spirits, perhaps aided by the True Form Spirits, then prepare a suitable dwelling area for the Queen. This area is usually referred to as a hive (even though this terminology is technically incorrect for Mantis, Fly, and some other totems).

Once the Queen has been summoned and has taken up residence, she becomes the undisputed ruler of the hive. Through her totem, she receives the power to summon other Spirits. Thus, once a Queen is in the physical world, the shaman who summoned her is no longer needed. The Queen can and will do all that is needed to ensure the growth of the hive.

Queens are able to give birth to large numbers of Flesh Form Insect Spirits. (The biology involved is rather confusing. It is probably a combination of modified Human reproduction and immediate possession of the embryo by a True Form Insect Spirit.) This ability decreases the hive's need for Human/Metahuman hosts.

## UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

Here is the terrible secret hidden behind the benign and charitable facade of the Universal Brotherhood. The Brotherhood is actually a front for a number of insect totem hives. The Central Seattle chapterhouse, known as the Octagon, is home to hives of the following totems, and perhaps others as well: Ant, Fly, Termite, and Wasp. There is at least one Queen for each of these totems living right now within the Octagon. They are attended to, and guarded by, Flesh Form and, likely, True Form Insect Spirits. It appears now that Dr. O'Connell's husband, Paul Grigg, was the shaman who first "brought across" an Insect Totem Queen, thus forming the first hive. Grigg's suicide in 2045 was, in all likelihood, a direct result of the madness brought on by the Insect Spirits.

The majority of UB members are not possessed and are ignorant of the dark secret within their organization. It is also known that the highest positions within the organization are held by Human Form Spirits. These are the lucky hosts who retained their own physical forms and mentality. The membership of the UB represents a huge pool of prospective hosts for the hives. Unwilling hosts can be acquired easily enough by simply drugging members and cocooning them. This probably occurs under cover of the so-called "transition to the Inner Circle" that is often followed immediately by a transfer to another chapter.

Potential Flesh Form hosts are identified during the indoctrination and training periods. People with sufficient willpower and a lust for power are singled out and the grooming process begins immediately. Because these hosts must be willing participants, they must be told beforehand what the procedure will entail. (This brings up the interesting question of what



happens to those who refuse to undergo possession. It seems likely that they are rendered unconscious and then possessed, thus becoming Flesh Form Spirits. It is inconceivable that the Brotherhood would divulge such knowledge and then let that person go.)

The only confirmed presence of hives within a chapterhouse is in the Octagon (the photographs presented earlier were taken there.) Further adding to this theory is the recent outbreak of unexplained violence between the California Free State towns of Gilroy and San Martin. Both of these towns have UB chapters. Could it be that the sudden violence sprang from a rivalry, indeed a turf war, between two hives?

The motives of the Brotherhood remain a vexing mystery. Why would predominantly astral creatures have ambitions in the physical world? At this point, there is simply not enough data to come up with any solid answers.

## OCTAGON TOTEMS

Following is additional information about each of the totems represented at the Octagon chapterhouse. (Again, the authors thank Man-Of-Many-Names for providing this information.)

### ANT

The Ant totem displays a highly organized caste system, composed of the following sub-types.

#### Queen

The Queen does nothing but lay eggs. All food is brought to her or secreted by drones. The Queen is highly intelligent, though its thought processes are too alien to be comprehended by Humans or Metahumans.

#### Worker

This is a male or female form whose tasks are to build and maintain the nest and to tend the eggs until they hatch. Limited intelligence.

#### Warrior

The warrior is a specialized worker who defends the rest of the hive. The warrior is aggressive and moderately intelligent, with an instinctive understanding of strategy. Unless expressly forbidden by the Queen, it will attack—on sight—any warriors from other hives.

### FLY

This totem shows no organized caste system. There is only one female in each hive. The female is larger than the males and can carry hundreds of eggs. Flesh Form Fly Spirits are scavengers who prefer to live in foul conditions. Some males can deliver a venomous bite.

### TERMITE

Termite Spirits show a caste system similar to that of Ants, with a Queen, drones, workers, and warriors. Termite workers are adept at burrowing and can build mounds and towers from sand. They mix the sand with their saliva to make a fast-hardening, concrete-like material. Termite Spirits are less likely

to invade other colonies, but they are ferocious in defense of their own territory.

### WASP

Wasps have no organized caste system. A Wasp hive can contain multiple females, though only one of these will reach sexual maturity. Flesh Form females are larger than males, but carry few eggs. Males are territorial and not particularly intelligent. Females have a malign intelligence, especially the Queen (at egg-laying time). A Queen secretes a toxin that paralyzes the body of a host creature so that it can lay eggs within that body. When the eggs hatch, the larvae—young Flesh Form Spirits—feed on the host and eat their way to the outside world.

*<<EW: Should I even mention Many-Names? Am I condemning him to death, too? Maybe I should wipe the names of all the contacts. But then this is all worthless. Unless I can quote sources, nobody will believe it.>>*

PERSONAL JOURNAL, WANDERLYZ

<<PRIVATE KEY ENCRYPT>>

(21:19:54/05-06-51)

My name is Zeb Wanderly. I'm a dead man, and I know it.

I've written dozens of articles and stories about people who were "out of sanction" and "beyond salvage." I'm talking about people-shadowrunners, mostly who had to die simply because they knew too much. As a journalist, I've had to struggle to keep an objective detachment when writing those stories. It's hard to stay emotionally isolated. You want to tell your readers enough so they can feel what you want them to feel, but at the same time, you can't let anything get to you.

Now I find myself on a "better dead" list for the simple reason that I found out more than I was supposed to. But I'm not handling it real well. I don't want to die.

They'll kill me. The Brotherhood will kill me, just like they killed Rick. Poor Rick, he never really knew what a powder keg we were sitting on. I tried to tell him. Maybe I didn't try hard enough. He never believed me. And I didn't have the guts to put my foot down and say enough was enough. I'm babbling. That's the problem with headware, it records everything.

I have to be calm. What was the phrase that Archangel used to like? "Grab the naked blade." That's it, I have to grab the naked blade, I have to become a weapon. If I want to live, I have to think harder and clearer than I've ever thought in my life. And I have to act fast.

Time to reason this all out. The Brotherhood wants me dead because I know too much, and they're afraid I'll tell others. Right now I'm the only outsider who knows about them. Rick's dead. If I'm dead, so is the story.

I have to tell the story now. Just dump it unpolished and unedited onto a network where anybody and everybody can scan it. Not a government or corporate network. The Brotherhood is the government, it is the major corps. I need an independent net. I need Shadowland, the runners' net.

I'm dumping everything onto Shadowland where they can route it to the Denver data haven. With a central copy safe in Denver, anyone with access can download his own copy. Instant dissemination, that's the answer. That's what I'll do.

Once the record is disseminated, there won't really be much point in killing me. Revenge, maybe, but the Brotherhood's too professional to indulge in revenge. At least I hope they are.

Shadowland. Where's the local server hub? It floats, but where is it now? Under Grodin's Tavern, that's right. Half an hour transit at the most.

I've got to get through. Then I'm out from under.

If you're scanning this, then I have succeeded.







**NAK:Error sending on network**  
**Infinite re-try on alternate line**  
**Catastrophic Error**

>>>>>[What the hell happened? Disk crash?]<<<<<<  
—Terry (23:05:01/05-06-51)

>>>>>[Sorry for the inconvenience. The local server hub went down.]<<<<<<  
—Sysop (23:06:02/05-06-51)

>>>>>[No fragging kidding it went down. I can see the flames from my window. Somebody took out the whole fragging building.]<<<<<<  
—Gar (23:11:45/05-06-51)

>>>>>[Hey, Sysop, what about file X3XL5? I was just opening it when the net crashed. Now I can't access it.]<<<<<<  
—Terry (23:13:23/05-06-51)

>>>>>[I have no record of a file X3XL5.]<<<<<<<<  
—Sysop (23:13:24/05-06-51)

>>>>>[What do you mean, no record of it? I was in the middle of opening the fragging thing.]<<<<<<<<  
—Terry (23:15:09/05-06-51)

>>>>>[I mean I have no record of it. Sorry.]<<<<<<<<  
—Sysop (23:16:34/05-06-51)

>>>>>[Hoi, Terry, check Denver. Maybe they got it.]<<<<<<<<  
—Garth (23:17:12/05-06-51)

>>>>>[Sorry, chummers, no joy. I already checked with the locals. Denver data haven never got it. No transmission made, no attempts logged.]<<<<<<<<  
—Karin (23:22:46/05-06-51 NA-UCAS-WE REMOTE)

>>>>>[DREK!]<<<<<<<<  
—Terry (23:25:59/05-06-51)



**LONE STAR NETLINK (16:47:06/05-10-51)****E-MEMO**

TO: Wallace Haygood, Commander, 25th Precinct, SEA  
FROM: Capt. Judith Bentz, Arson-Sabotage Dept., 25th Precinct, SEA  
RE: Grodin's Tavern fire

Wally, we've got final IDs on everyone caught in the fire. Only two victims are of interest. They were both found in the basement. One was Juli Parkhurst, streetname of Icepick. We've had her tagged as a drek-hot shadow decker from way back. The other was Zebediah Wanderly. Guy used to be a journalist for Newsnet, but hasn't worked for three years.

Word on the street is that he got tied in with some runners awhile back, and they were all involved in some pretty heavy action, maybe even network. (Off the record, Wally, we think he geeked his old partner, Frederick Davitt, but we don't have enough evidence to push it.)

This is how we read the Grodin's fire. Wanderly was hired to take the place out. He carried in the explosives and set them in the basement. Parkhurst caught him in the act and they got into a fight. Somehow the explosives got triggered, killing Wanderly, Parkhurst, and the people upstairs. We did find traces of explosives and primer in the pockets of what was left of Wanderly and his clothes. At this point, there is absolutely no doubt he was trying a torch job.

I understand somebody told you Wanderly had a chip on his person when he was found. I scanned the chip myself, but it was blank. Probably erased by the heat.

I know it's not the best solution, but I think we should soft-pedal this thing. We have no way of knowing who hired Wanderly to do the job. We know who his old associates are, but we'll never get anything out of them. If we put on a heat wave, they'll just drop off the face of the earth. I'll keep them under discreet surveillance, but I suspect we'll never know exactly what went on.

**Recommendation: No Further Action****Authorization Code: 02974-4-NFA****Capt. Judith Bentz**

>>P.S. It's Tuesday, so I guess I'll see you tonight at the meeting.~Judy<<

END



What are  
those two doing?  
Oh no!!!

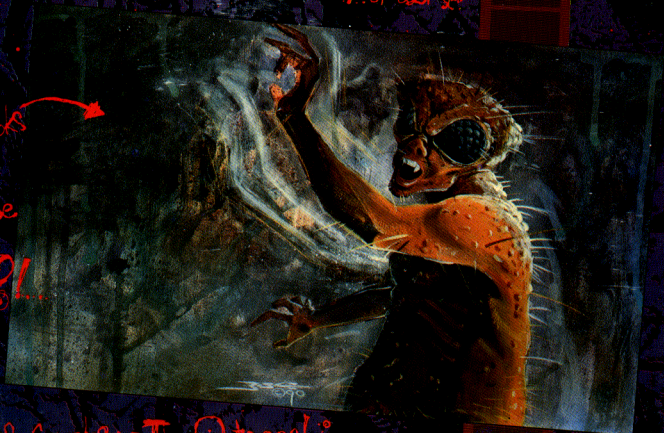


And warriors - After me!!!



an Ant Queen?!  
...or worse!

This looks  
like  
maybe  
a  
Fly?!  
!



All images Courtesy - The Octagon! :)



# MISSING BLOOD



Chris Kybasik



FASA CORPORATION

1990

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# DEATH'S SECRET: A Prologue

She was nervous, so they gave her an injection. "She's not ready," one of them complained.

"Nonsense." As always, Malcolm's voice was gentle and reassuring. "She's one of our best. Aren't you, dear?" It had been Malcolm who'd first suggested she was ready for the Inner Circle.

"Yes," said Victoria. "I'm ready."

The first man cut in again. "But she's apprehensive. There's no way she'll have a good merge." Victoria had never seen the man before today and she had already forgotten what he looked like. Because of the drug, she couldn't focus her vision in the dim room.

She was confused and hadn't the foggiest idea what "a good merge" might mean. She attributed her lack of understanding to the drug and her own apprehension. She'd only felt this nervous before, but never in the two years since she'd joined the Brotherhood. And now she couldn't remember why she was afraid. It had to do with something they had told her... something to do with what was about to happen. But she knew the Brotherhood had given her the strength to stay alive during the last two years and that she would always be safe in their care. If it hadn't been for the Brotherhood, she'd probably have killed herself and would never have known how wonderful it was to be alive, would never have met Danial...

Her secret, she thought. Her affair with Danial Simpson was her one secret from the Universal Brotherhood because he'd insisted that she never tell anyone about their relationship. In return, she kept her association with the Brotherhood a secret from him, knowing that Danial would never understand why she needed the group. But after her initiation, she would tell him all about the Brotherhood. He would be proud of her for working her way up the organization's ranks. He would understand when she explained what a responsibility it was to be a member of the Brotherhood.

She reached to touch the necklace Danial had given her the day before, but her fingertips found only the flesh of her neck. For an instant, she was afraid she'd lost it. Or had it been stolen? Her memories were clouded. Then she recalled the necklace being taken from her. "No jewelry," Malcolm had said. "Just the beauty you possess as you. You'll get it back after the ceremony."

"Victoria?" It was Malcolm's voice, here and now.

She realized that she'd gone wandering off with her thoughts.

"Yes, Malcolm. I'm ready."

As the men helped her off the table, Victoria felt dizzy and feared she would crash to the floor. But they held her up and she was safe. The floor was cold against her bare feet and the air chilled her skin. Standing straight, she regained the confidence the Brotherhood had instilled in her over the last two years. She knew with certainty that her impulse to the Join the Inner Circle

was correct. There was no doubt, no need to second-guess. The men directed her down a corridor, and her steps were firm and unwavering. When they loosened their grip, she continued without difficulty.

They came to a large door that she had seen many times, but through which she had never been allowed to pass. "Some day," they had told her when she'd asked about it. "When you are ready."

I'm ready, she thought. Today I learn more than I ever thought I would.

The door was opened and a rush of warm air caressed her skin. The men on either side of her touched her lightly on the arms and escorted her through the doorway. The floor was warm and soft. Almost alive, she thought, then realized it was the drug again, altering her perceptions. The light was low, a dim orange, and up ahead, she could see a large room. Shapes were moving about in the room, large, hulking figures.

Victoria could not believe her eyes, so she did not. "We are taught lies," the Brotherhood had instructed her. "Illusions that cause us fear, loneliness. You must learn to see what is true and ignore what is not." What her eyes showed her was a creature with huge claws and hard, insect-like skin, but she knew that it was not so. Or, if it were, it was simply part of the wonders the Brotherhood was about to reveal to her.

She noticed that the room was filled with large, rough balls. Cocoons. "This way," Malcolm said softly.

They led her to a cocoon that had been slit. Its surface was wet. "This is where you will stay for awhile, Victoria," said the other man. "This is where you will enter the Inner Circle."

The fear, the instinctive fear, rose in her once again. "Danial," she said softly. The grip of the other man tightened slightly on her arm.

"Relax," said Malcolm, though Victoria did not know if he was speaking to her or to the man. She decided on the latter when Malcolm added, "If someone comes looking for her, we'll deal with it then." Then he asked her, "What is the first truth?"

"That we are all brothers," she answered.

"I love you, Victoria. Do you love us?"

"I love you all."

"Do you want more love, Victoria?"

In a flash, the loneliness of her past shot into her soul and she knew that she needed more love, more love and even more, enough to build a fortress against that loneliness. "Yes. I want more love. Please give me more."

"There is all the love you will ever need within the cocoons, Victoria."

Her body relaxed and she lowered herself down onto hands and knees. She thought she detected a pulse of some kind from the floor. She crawled into the cocoon. It was sticky, like cotton candy, and she remembered going to a carnival with her mother and father... before everything had gone wrong...



## DEATH'S SECRET

She sat down in the cocoon and hugged herself tight, drawing her knees up to her chest, wrapping her arms around her legs. Malcolm and the other man pushed the two sides of the cocoon's slit together and then there was nothing but darkness. She closed her eyes and thought she heard a wet kind of sound, like something slithering, but she could not be sure...

All she was sure of was the Brotherhood, the bond that existed between all Humans, and the love that was hers to share if she would only trust.

And then she was aware, without a doubt, that something was inside the cocoon with her...



# INTRODUCTION

**Missing Blood** is a roleplaying adventure set in the world of **Shadowrun**. The year is 2050. Advances in technology are astonishing, with Humans able to blend with computers and travel through the netherworld of data known as the Matrix. Even more astonishing is the return of Magic, Elves, Dragons, Dwarfs, Orks, and Trolls have assumed their true forms, while megacorporations (rather than superpowers) rule much of the world. Moving through it all like whispers in the night are the shadowrunners. In a world where the identities and movements of almost all citizens of all nations are carefully tracked, the ID-less shadowrunners are the only people who can do the Illegal (or semi-Illegal) work that corporations and private individuals sometimes need. No one admits the existence of shadowrunners, but no one else can do their secret work.

But even shadowrunners are in the dark about some aspects of the world of 2050. Unknown to everyone on Earth but a select few, the world is slowly being infested by Spirits of the shunned Insect Totems. These powerful and destructive Spirits are hiding behind the facade of the Universal Brotherhood, a "self-help" cult that cloaks itself in pseudo-science and promises eventual world peace through its practices. In truth, the cult's purpose is to gain influence in Human society and to use its Human and Metahuman members as hosts for the evil Spirits.

**Missing Blood** is a story about a group of shadowrunners having a run-in with the forces of the Universal Brotherhood. The adventure takes place in the city of Seattle. The characters will move through an ever-tightening web of intrigue involving the masters and pawns of the Brotherhood. Though the shadowrunners begin with very little knowledge of the Brotherhood, they will be deeply aware of the cult's danger by the time the adventure is over.

## GAMEMASTERING NOTES

**Missing Blood** uses a decision-tree format, meaning that the players' team could arrive at the same encounter via various routes, depending on choices they make during roleplay. They could also just as easily miss a planned encounter altogether. To run the adventure, the gamemaster needs a thorough familiarity with the contents of this booklet as well as a working knowledge of the basic **Shadowrun** rules. The contents of this booklet are for the gamemaster's eyes only, except for certain items earmarked as handouts for the players. Everything needed to roleplay **Missing Blood** is included here.

**Missing Blood** is designed for a party of four to eight player characters. The group should contain a variety of talent, and mages and shamans with some strong combat spells to deal with the Insect Spirits will be especially valuable.

This adventure combines several approaches. Some encounters are thoroughly planned out and described in detail. Others merely set the scene and remain open-ended. Hints for gamemastering the various situations are included with individual sections that make up **The Adventure**.

## MAKING SUCCESS TESTS

During the course of the adventure, the players will make a number of Unresisted Success Tests using a skill and a given Target Number. These Unresisted Success Tests are indicated by the name of the appropriate skill and the Target Number. For example, a Stealth (4) Test calls for an Unresisted Stealth Test with a Target Number 4. Sometimes it is necessary to make die rolls against a table that includes different information for varying levels of success.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

To play this adventure, the gamemaster will need the basic **Shadowrun** rules and the companion book entitled **The Universal Brotherhood**. Also suggested but not necessary are **The Grimoire**, which will clarify certain mystical elements of the adventure, and **Sprawl Sites**, which contains archetypes referred to in this adventure. The gamemaster should read through **The Universal Brotherhood** before reading **Missing Blood**, as the adventure assumes a familiarity with the information it contains. The gamemaster should then read through the entire adventure module before playing it. Some important plot developments will not become apparent until well into the adventure, but the gamemaster will have to lay the groundwork much earlier on. He can only do that by being familiar with the storyline.

Though this book tries to cover all the likely—and even unlikely—things that can happen during the adventure, it is impossible to foresee everything. The gamemaster may find that sometimes it is a good idea to just let the unexpected lead where it will.

The **Plot Synopsis** is a summary of both the story background and the course the adventure is intended to follow.

The **Adventure** begins with the section entitled **A Simple Affair**. This scene starts off the adventure. Following this are a series of short sections describing each of the encounters that the players will face or are likely to face in the course of roleplaying **Missing Blood**.

Most of the encounters begin with a text entitled **Tell It To Them Straight**. This is intended to be read, verbatim, to the players. It describes where they are and what is happening to them as though they were there. The gamemaster can, if he

wishes, paraphrase the text. This allows for a more fluid interaction between the players and the gamemaster. Any special instructions to the gamemaster are printed in boldface type.

Next comes the information entitled **Behind the Scenes**. This is the real story, for only the gamemaster knows what is really going on at any given moment in an adventure. If there is a map needed to play this encounter, it is included in this section. Non-player character stats needed to roleplay the section are usually included here, too.

Finally, each section includes hints entitled **Debugging**. These notes could include suggestions for getting the story back on track if things go too far wrong. For example, most gamemasters will not want the characters to get too discouraged or killed off too easily. The gamemaster is, of course, always free to ignore these hints and let the chips fall where they may.

**Legwork** contains the information the player characters can obtain through their contacts or the public data nets.

**The Cast of Characters** includes non-player character descriptions and stats.

**Picking Up The Pieces** includes tips on Awarding Karma.

**The Player Handouts** are items that the gamemaster can pass out to the player characters at appropriate points in the adventure.

## PLOT SYNOPSIS

**Missing Blood** begins with what seems to be an affair of the heart gone sour.

Danial Simpson is an executive at Renraku. The plump paper-pusher has everything he ever wanted out of life—a high paying job, prestige, and a knockout wife, Lucile, the envy of all of his colleagues. He is content. Or he used to be. The problem is that his wife doesn't think much of Danial. Her father got Danial a job at Renraku, but he isn't shooting up the ranks the way she'd like. Lucile now feels nothing but contempt for Danial because of his lack of ambition. At this point in their marriage, she sees him merely as the person who replenishes the credit card (which she drains daily).

One day, Danial met a young woman named Victoria Delling, and she was everything that Lucile was not. Caring, concerned, loving. After several intimate dinners, they began an affair.

Danial insisted that Victoria keep their relationship a complete secret. He knew that if Lucile ever found out he was cheating on her, he would lose his job as well as his wife. And holding rank in the corporate world means everything to Danial.

Meanwhile, Victoria was withholding her own secret: she had joined the Universal Brotherhood a year before meeting Danial. Feeling that her life was falling apart, Victoria had looked everywhere for help, turning to readers of tarot cards, tea leaves, the I Ching, astrology, and whatnot. Nothing helped. She was contemplating suicide when a tarot-card reader suggested that the Universal Brotherhood might be the answer.

And the Brotherhood did. Indeed, give Victoria the solace she so desperately needed. Through the teachings of the UB, she found purpose and meaning in life. When she met Danial, Victoria feared he would not approve of the Brotherhood, and so she never revealed her membership to him.

In time, Lucile began to suspect that Danial was up to

something. She hired Patrick Bamba, a private detective, to follow him. Bamba, an eccentric young man who loves to watch vintage black and white disks about hard-edged detectives with hearts of gold, admits to being an incurable romantic. He is still eagerly waiting for the right woman to enter his life.

Bamba followed Danial Simpson for two months but came up with nothing. He reported back to Lucile Simpson, assuming that would be the end of it. All she did was increase his salary and tell him to follow her husband some more. Following Bamba's instructions, she even installed a phone tap on Danial's phone.

Bamba finally got his first break last Friday when he observed Simpson buying jewelry at Crawford & Crawford. Bamba had his buddy, Toggie, access the jewelry store's database to dig up a copy of the receipt. The records showed that Simpson had purchased a necklace fashioned by the famous jeweler Dante. As with all his creations, Dante had titled the piece. It was named "Blood" for the magnificent color of its sparkling rubies.

Bamba suspected right away that "Blood" was meant for Danial Simpson's mistress. When Lucile learned of this development, she immediately confronted her husband, even showing him a copy of the receipt. Simpson stammered about how the necklace was supposed to have been a surprise gift for their anniversary, which was coming up.

Because the receipt was made out for "Blood," Danial was going to need that very same necklace in order to validate his story. He thought it would be a simple matter to ask Victoria for the necklace and buy her another one later. Unfortunately, by this time, Victoria was already encased in a cocoon at a Universal Brotherhood chapterhouse, where she was transforming into a host for an Insect Spirit.

On Sunday, Victoria left a message on Danial's office answering machine. She told him that she was a member of the Brotherhood and was about to receive a great honor. She left the message at the office, knowing that Simpson would not be there until Monday. Despite her love for him, Victoria was still fearful that he would not tolerate her involvement with the Brotherhood. She was afraid he would try to talk her out of joining the Inner Circle.

The officials at the Brotherhood had assured Victoria that she would be assigned to a chapterhouse in Seattle as soon as her initiation was completed. Therefore, she told Danial that she would see him again in a few days.

Danial Simpson would never receive that message. Instead, Patrick Bamba picked it up off the phone tap on Sunday night and then erased it from Danial's machine before the man had a chance to hear it. The detective, like a character out of an old movie, had fallen in love with the image of Victoria. That was why he erased the vid-message, hoping to protect Victoria. From the first moment Bamba saw Victoria's image on the screen, her strange combination of sweetness and self-confidence told him she was the woman of his dreams. The detective decided to let Danial hang and get the girl for himself.

This is where matters stand when the adventure begins:

The Universal Brotherhood has been leery ever since Victoria let it slip that there was someone—a man named Danial—who was important in her life. This meant that someone would notice her absence—a potential loose end in the matter. The Brotherhood does not like loose ends. If this Danial, or

anyone else, starts snooping around, the Brotherhood's policy is to simply give them the brush-off the first time. If the snoop comes back a second time, they geek them.

When Danial learns that Victoria's phone has been disconnected, he decides that she is either getting ready to skip town with the 60,000-nuyen necklace or that she already has. After all, he never received the message she left him. On Tuesday, he stopped by her apartment, but there was no answer.

Bambra has decided to find Victoria by himself, for himself. In his own romantic imagination, he now sees himself as a knight on a mission to rescue a damsel in distress.

He visited the Seattle chapterhouse on Monday, only to be told that Victoria had resigned her membership. Bambra then went to Madame Ulisshia's, but she claimed to know nothing. When the detective finally located Victoria's apartment, he found that every bit of furniture had been taken away.

Something is definitely wrong here, and Bambra is determined to find out what it is. This business of entering the Inner Circle sounds ominous. Even more ominous is the fact that the Brotherhood has marked him as a security risk. After dodging bullets for the last twelve hours, he is currently hiding out in the back room of a friend's bar, planning his next move.

Lucile is sitting at home with the receipt for the "Blood" necklace, waiting for her anniversary to come and go so she can nall her husband and get out of this failed marriage.

This is where Danial hires the shadowrunners to find Victoria. They have two days to retrieve the necklace so Danial can give it to his wife for his wedding anniversary. The only clue he can give the runners is Victoria's address. They must track her down from there.

At first the job seems easier, or at least safer, than most assignments. But as they work their way further into the mystery, the runners discover that all is not as it seems. People are giving them the run-around about who Victoria was and

where she went. Heavy muscle pops up and tries to take them out. It looks like the Brotherhood wants to get rid of anyone looking for Victoria.

Soon the runners are dealing with people who are a little bit different—mandibles for teeth and chitin-like flesh. Even more chilling is the horror that comes to light when the runners find the corpse of a half-Human/half-insect infant in a hidden room at Madame Ulisshia's, the tarot reader who initially guided Victoria to the Brotherhood.

Madame Ulisshia is actually a Flesh Form Fly Spirit who has the ability to hide her true nature by Masking her aura. Working as a tarot reader, she pulls in recruits for the Brotherhood. Ulisshia's possession was special because it was the first "flesh-form" possession of a person who was pregnant. The Fly Queen decided to let the pregnancy go to term to see what kind of creature would result. Because the child was not possessed by an Insect Spirit, the Queen kept the child a secret from other Hives whose members might not have understood.

With the discovery of this perverse Human-insect creature, the runners realize they must learn more of the truth behind the Brotherhood. When the shadowrunners deck into the Matrix, they may find a crashed document called *"The Universal Brotherhood,"* a terrifying exposé of what the cult is really about. Whether they find the report or not, the last stage of the adventure involves a raid on the Brotherhood's Seattle chapterhouse. As the runners race through the building in search of the necklace, they encounter twin horrors—Insect Splits in true form and metamorphosing Humans sealed in giant cocoons.

If they do make it out with the necklace, the runners will pick up their reward from Danial Simpson. But the world will never be the same for these runners, now that they are aware of a conspiracy that is not only dark and far-reaching, but the work of beings beyond the pale of any creature that has ever walked this Earth.



# A SIMPLE AFFAIR

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

This section uses **Noggin**, a fixer with connections at **Renraku**, to get the adventure started. If the players' group already has a fixer, the gamemaster can substitute that character for **Noggin**. The idea is to give the impression that this run is nice and simple. The shadowrunners are more likely to believe that a simple deal really is a simple deal if the word comes from someone they already know.

It's midday at **Ugly's**, and except for you shadowrunners, the only other customers are a half-dozen losers who've no better place to go this afternoon than a slightly run-down bar. The other patrons, four men and two women, all normals, wear the look of loneliness. The men, two in beat-up raincoats, the other two in ragged sweaters, haven't shaved for days. The women, middle-aged former beauties gone downhill, are heavily made-up, but you can tell their hearts weren't in it. They just don't care anymore. Nobody is talking, and even **Johnny Ugly**, the bartender, seems weighed down by the general despair.



You wouldn't be in a place like this before sundown, when the action usually picks up, except for a call from one **Noggin**, a fixer with contacts at **Renraku**. "A simple job," he told you. "Find a girl who's run off with a valuable and bring the prize back. **Ugly's**, one hour." You don't know whether or not you'll take the assignment, but **Noggin's** got a good rep. And the biz sounds like a slice.

The door to the bar cracks open and sunlight flashes in. Everyone raises a hand to their eyes and then the door swings shut, returning the place to its comfortable gloom. **Noggin**, well-dressed in a **Yotama** business suit, walks over to your table

and pulls up a chair. He glances around the bar and shakes his head. Then he puts his fingertips on the table and says, "Here's the score. There's an exec at **Renraku** who needs a personal job done. **Daniel Simpson**. I checked him out for you. He's clean as an Elven baby's bottom. He's never dealt with runners before and I'm sure he never thought he'd need their services."

**Johnny Ugly's** hulking form appears beside **Noggin**, pad in hand. "Nothing today, thanks," says the fixer. He then reaches into his pocket, pulls out 20 nuyen and hands it to **Ugly**. Without a word, the bartender is gone, and you know that he won't be back to bother you while **Noggin** is at the table.

"He wants this quiet. Real, real quiet. Which is why he tracked me down through **Renraku's** offices and wants to hire you. He wouldn't give me the specifics. Just that he gave a present to a girl, and now the girl is missing and he needs the present back. Without knowing the details, I couldn't negotiate a price, of course. He wants to meet you at the **Renraku** building employee parking garage, floor B3, section **Green 4B**, at two-thirty. He'll be wearing a red and black tie. He downloaded a visitor's pass to me."

From another pocket, the fixer draws out a blank magnetic keycard, which he sets on the table. It's a guest pass that will get someone who doesn't work for **Renraku** into the employee garage. "The card has a one-time entry code on it. As far as I can tell, there're no bucks, no data, no murder, just love gone sour."

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Most shadowrunners are going to know that *nothing* ever turns out to be as simple as it seems, but by starting the adventure off calmly, the group will not be prepared for the strange twists the plot will take. And part of the fun of **Missing Blood** is in building the horror ever so slowly.

**Noggin** says he promised to send some shadowrunners to meet **Simpson** at the **Renraku** garage. They're still under no obligation to accept the job even if they agree to this initial meeting.

**Noggin** has presented the information he considers primary to the players' considering the job. He has also done some background research on **Simpson**, and will pass on the following to the shadowrunners if they ask:

- **Simpson** is the son-in-law of **Henry Thomas**, a senior president at **Renraku**.

- **Simpson** began as a district manager of distribution, not a common entry position, got bumped up to a **LUCAS** sales vice-president, and hasn't moved since. That was ten years ago.

After **Noggin** takes off, the group has just enough time to get over to the **Renraku** building. If they don't own a car, they ought to rent one to make it look right.

# UNDERGROUND MAN

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

There's not much traffic in the Renraku parking garage at mid-afternoon. Even the late-lunchers have gone back by the office by now and they won't return for their cars until quitting time. The garage, buried beneath the Renraku building, is cool and comfortable compared to the heat outside. It's well-lit by white fluorescents. The large concrete pillars of the garage provide quick hiding places when a surveillance camera pans by you.

Within moments of arriving, you hear voices. Looking toward the source of the sound, you see two men. One is about 38 years old, balding and with a bit of a paunch. He wears a red and black tie, and so is most likely Simpson. The other is tall, commanding, and silver-haired. The two men are walking toward an elevator leading upstairs. The sound of their voices is distorted by the echo of the cavernous garage, but the older man's words are quite audible.

"So, how are things with my daughter?"

Simpson, bowing his head slightly as he speaks, says something that you cannot make out. He is obviously nervous. "Fine, fine."

The older man slaps Simpson on the back and then pushes the button for the elevator. The doors slide open and he steps in. When Simpson says something, the older man turns to face him. He looks confused for a moment, then smiles and says, "Fine. Clear your thoughts. And Daniel, if you ever want to talk, feel free to come to me. I might know more about what you're going through than you realize." Then the doors shut and the older man is gone.

Simpson turns around and peers into the garage, obviously trying to see whether his shadowrunners have arrived.

**Simpson will wait patiently until the shadowrunners reveal themselves. When they do, he is slightly startled but glad to see them.**

"My name is Daniel Simpson," he says with a nervous laugh. He starts to extend his hand in greeting, but thinks the better of it and pulls it back to his side. You quickly realize that it wasn't only the presence of the silver-haired man that made the pudgy exec nervous. Simpson is simply a nervous guy. "I'm glad you could make it. I suppose you're wondering why I asked you to come here." He waits for a response and then clears his throat. "I have a slight problem. I recently purchased an expensive gift for...a friend of mine. Or someone I thought was a friend. I've discovered that I need the gift back. Quickly. Within three days, actually. However, this friend of mine, this ex-friend, has vanished. She didn't return my calls yesterday and today her answering machine didn't pick up calls.

"Her name is Victoria Dellling. This is what she looks like." He produces a photo and hands it to you. It shows a young woman in her mid-twenties. She has a pale, heart-shaped face framed by curly black hair. She's quite striking. If your tastes run toward this innocent type, your heart is now throbbing. The photo shows her seated on a blanket in a park. There's a picnic basket and a bottle of wine alongside her on the blanket.

"Her address is 1414 Mayfair, Apartment 2W. It's in the Hollywood neighborhood of Redmond. I'd go myself...but I'm afraid there may be trouble.

"The present I gave her is a necklace—a one-of-a-kind necklace by the jeweler Dante. It's called Blood because it's made with rubies and scarlet metal. I need it back within three days...By six-thirty, here, on Friday. If you get it for me, each of you will earn ¥1,000 nuyen. I can pay you ¥2,000 now, and the balance on Friday."

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The two things the shadowrunners might want to look into are the fee and Simpson's story.

If the player characters want more money, have them choose one among them to handle the bargaining. Though Simpson is nervous, negotiating is what he does for a living and he will proceed cautiously. He wants to stick to his price, but does not want to alienate the shadowrunners.

Have the player character make an Opposed Success Test using his Negotiation Skill against a Target Number 4. (Simpson's Negotiation Skill is -2 because he is scared of dealing with the shadowrunners. (See **Shadowrun**, p. 59)

Simpson's fee is also currently conditional upon recovery of the necklace. If the player characters raise the issue, he will pay them half the fee for trying to get the necklace even if they fail to bring it in by Friday. No die roll is required.

Simpson will not meet with or have any contact with the shadowrunners until Friday evening, Period. He feels shaky enough about the whole situation as it is. He arranges to meet the runners at the Glass Onion at 6:30 P.M. to pick up the necklace.

It is obvious from Simpson's story that he is holding back information. If the shadowrunners ask him to fill in some of the details, he says only, "I'd rather not go into it."

If they want to pry, the characters can make either an Etiquette (Corporate) or Psychology Skill Test against Simpson's Charisma of 4. Each character can try more than once, but each additional test increases the target number by 2. The player characters will have to earn Simpson's trust before he will reveal the intimate details of his life.

**Successes**

1

**Results**

"Victoria is, or rather was, my mistress. We have been seeing each other for a year now. But now I'm sure that she was just waiting for an expensive gift and was planning to leave me the minute she got it. Once I gave her the necklace, she vanished. Now I want Blood back."

2 - 3

"To top it off, my wife Lucille somehow found out about the necklace. She threw the receipt in my face yesterday and demanded to know about it. I panicked and said that I had bought it for our wedding anniversary, which is Friday, and which is why I need the necklace back in three days. I think she hired a private detective to follow me."

4+

"My father-in-law got me this job at Renraku, but my wife hates me for not making 'more out of myself' here. Now I can't leave her because I'd lose my job, but I thought Victoria really loved me..."

Simpson means everything he says. He's a chaotic mess of love and hatred for this Victoria gal.

From here, the shadowrunners can investigate Victoria's apartment and the detective who was following Simpson. If they want to check out Victoria's apartment, go to **Available Now**, on p. 12. Her place is in the Hollywood section of the Redmond Barrens. If they want to track down the detective, go to **Legwork**, p. 42.

**DEBUGGING**

The only thing that can really go wrong here is that the shadowrunners might not want the job. Remember that Simpson really needs the runners' help. If they start to walk, he will raise his offer by ¥500 nuyen. And then he'll plead with them. Play it really broad; let Simpson get down on his knees and beg. If they still don't want the job, pull out **Sprawl Sites** and start generating random encounters.



# AVAILABLE NOW

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Victoria's address at 1414 Mayfair is a six-flat building along what once was a tree-lined avenue. (These brittle sticks of scraggly wood sprouting sparse yellow-green leaves hardly qualify as trees any longer.) The neighborhood is definitely not fancy, but you've seen far worse.

A sign on the front door reads "Apartment for Rent — Available Immediately." The window curtains of the apartment on the west side of the second floor are completely drawn back and it looks as though no one is living there. You notice that the window of the east apartment on the second floor is filled with cats looking out. Sometimes one cat leaps down from the sill and another takes its place.

**If the shadowrunners arrive at night, some of the apartments have lights on, specifically apartments 2E, the "cat apartment," and apartment 2W, Victoria's old apartment. If the shadowrunners ring the bell to apartment 2W, they are buzzed into the building and are met by the landlord at the doorway to Victoria's apartment. The landlord, Gary Lawson, is in the apartment sweeping, mopping, and cleaning up even late into the night (he wants it to be ready to rent to someone else.) The apartment is empty and contains no clues. All the information will come from Lawson. When Lawson first meets the runners, he thinks they are potential renters and wants to show them the place.**

The man at the door to the apartment is a short fellow wearing a polka-dot shirt with the tails hanging out. "Hiya!" he says with a broad smile. He wipes his hands on his paint-stained pants. "I'm still straightening up, but this place'll be ready for occupancy by tomorrow. Why don't ya come on in and take a look around?"

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Use the Store Owner on p. 119 of *Sprawl Sites* for the landlord.

Use the Small Residence Archetype on p. 33 of *Sprawl Sites* for the apartment.

The shadowrunners can start questioning Lawson as soon as they meet him, or they can walk around the apartment and casually ask about the former tenant, why the apartment is available immediately, and so forth.

Lawson has a nose for money and will put out his hand for some greasing as soon as he's aware that the player characters are really here for information. Bambara already questioned him Monday morning so he knows info about the girl is hot. Exactly when Lawson will realize that there's money to be made from

the runners is the gamemaster's call, but here's an example:

**SHADOWRUNNER:** (casual tone): So what happened to the last tenant?

**LAWSON:** She just left. Don't know.

**SHADOWRUNNER:** What happened to her stuff?

**LAWSON:** (pause, sizing up the situation): What's it worth to you?

Lawson will answer any questions the characters put to him as long as he gets ¥25 nuyen a pop. The shadowrunners can try to strong-arm him, but he'll call out for help and at least one of the building's tenants will call Lone Star. (If this happens, four Lone Star cops show up. Use the *Street Cop*, p. 171, *Shadowrun*. All wear Armor Jackets, Ballistic 5, Impact 3. They are armed with Fichetti Security 500s, Damage 3M2.)

**If asked about Victoria, Lawson says:**

"Strange kid. She moved in here just under two years ago. Never saw much of her. I remember that when she signed the lease, she seemed kind of scared. Not of me—just in general. Then, over the last couple of years, she got more and more confident—you know what I mean?"

**If asked what happened to her, Lawson says:**

"Well, she'd just paid up her rent at the first of the month, and then Monday morning, I got a call saying she'd be moving out. It was some guy. Said he was a friend of hers, that she had to move quickly. A death in the family, he said. We met here later in the day and he had a letter, signed by her, to break her lease. I was told to keep the security to make up for next month's rent because she didn't give enough notice. Then a moving van showed up and they took her stuff. So if I can rent the place, I make more money—right?"

(Lawson does not remember the markings on the van.)

**If they ask about Victoria's friends, Lawson says:**

"She and the old trog in 2E seemed to get along. Outside of that, I don't know. She kept to herself. That's the safest play in this part of town."

**If they ask about anyone else coming around to inquire about Victoria, Lawson says:**

"Funny you should mention it. A detective, geez, what was his name, Zamba or something, came around Monday after the moving crew left. He wanted to know what happened to her, too. Good-looking guy. Irish or something. Tall, with curly red hair. Gave me some creds and took off."

(If the group does not inquire whether anyone came around asking about Victoria, Lawson says, "Would you guys be interested to know that someone else was around digging up on the girl?" This should prompt the characters to learn that detective Patrick Bambara was searching for Victoria as well.)



## DEBUGGING

The shadowrunners don't get a lot of concrete information from Lawson, but they should get the impression that something is going on. Maybe Victoria already pawned the necklace and took off. Or maybe there's a deeper mystery...

It's important, however, that this impression be planted. If the characters fail to ask questions, have Lawson notice that the shadowrunners do not seem really interested in the apartment. Let him suggest that if they're looking for information, he might be able to help them. That should get the ball rolling.

If the cops are called in, let the sirens tip the runners off and give them time to get away. The time pressure on this adventure is too tight to let them languish in jail.

The real problem that might arise here is that the player characters simply get discouraged. After all, if Victoria did run off with the money from the necklace, there's little chance of finding her by Friday. She could be in Europe by now. If that happens, let Lawson suggest that they talk to Mr. Dent across the hall. Lawson knows that Dent and Victoria were friends and maybe her neighbor can provide more information.

Once the shadowrunners have talked with Lawson, they might want to question Mr. Dent. **The Cat Troll**, either on their own initiative or through Lawson's suggestion. (You might want to read the players the **Tell it To Them Straight** section from **The Cat Troll**, p. 14, even if they weren't planning on stopping there. It might encourage them to stop and knock at the door.) If they want to locate the detective who was looking for Victoria or following Simpson (it's Bamba in both cases, though they may not know that yet), go to **Legwork**, p. 42.





## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

As you leave the empty apartment, you hear the cry of a cat from behind the doorway and then the sound of scratching against the wooden door. Gruff and deep, a voice from behind the door says, "Come on, honey. She's gone now."

**If the players decide not to question Victoria's neighbor, this section is over. If they knock on the door, continue on below.**

You hear the click of several bolts from behind the door and then the doorknob turns. As the door opens, the chains are drawn taut across the opening. Standing about two and a half meters high is the unmistakable form of a Troll whose one visible eye peers out at you. "Yes?" says the Troll.

Before you can answer, a cat slips through the doorway and rushes across the hall to the door of Victoria's apartment. It starts to cry out and scratch at the door.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Mr. Dent is an old Troll who lives with about 18 cats. (Use the **Ork Shaman**, p. 115, from **Sprawl Sites**, but dump the skills and give him Unarmed Combat 3. Yes, it's an Ork Archetype, but you only need the numbers, so just pretend it's a Troll.) A retired factory worker living off his pension and savings, Dent is a big guy, but gentle. As Victoria's friend, he is worried about her now. Her sudden disappearance makes him fear that she's in trouble with the law, or criminals, or both. When Dent and Victoria first met, she tried to talk about the Universal Brotherhood. Dent had never heard of them and assumed it was just another polclub, something he strongly dislikes. He didn't want to hear about her involvement with the organization ever again, but now he's certain that the polclub is the reason she's in trouble.

Before Dent will trust the player characters enough to open up about Victoria, one of the runners must make a successful Charisma Test against the Troll's Willpower of 6. For each subsequent test made by anyone in the group, add a +1 to the target number. The following conditions also apply.

-If the shadowrunners get the cat and pass it back to Dent through the doorway, they get a -2 to the target number.

-If they don't retrieve the cat of their own initiative, Dent asks the runners to pass it back. If they do, they get a -1 to the target number.

-If they refuse to get the cat, Dent enters the hall and tries to catch it. Again, if the runners try to use force, someone will call the cops, as in **Available Now**, the previous section. Once Dent has the cat, he returns to his apartment and shuts the door

in the runners' faces. If they still want to try to talk to him, they get a +2 penalty to the Charisma Test.

If the characters succeed in getting into the apartment, they find its layout is identical to Victoria's. The furniture is Troll-sized and looks comfortable though well-worn. Cats are all over the apartment, and many come up to rub against the runners' legs. Dent gestures for the player characters to sit even though the chairs and sofa are covered with sleeping cats. "Just push them out of the way," he says. "They won't mind."

The Troll is still holding the cat that ran out into the hall, petting it with one massive hand. The cat is black with one white paw. "Nazgul still thinks she can go home." Dent explains that the cat, Nazgul, was Victoria's. Saying that she'd be away from home on Sunday and Monday, she asked whether Dent would feed the cat for her. The next day, the moving crew arrived. The Troll couldn't believe Victoria would move without saying goodbye, nor can he conceive that she'd leave without Nazgul. He goes on to say that Victoria was one of the kindest people he ever met, always lavishing him with warmth and attention.

He can confirm that Victoria moved into the building almost two years ago, and he also knows what Lawson meant about her apparent gain in confidence. "She had a...very horrible childhood. Victoria's mother killed Victoria's father and then turned the gun on herself. Right in front of the child. Victoria was only twelve at the time. Of course, she blamed herself...whether for divorce or violence, the young always do. She was sent to several institutions, but it's rare for a child that age to be adopted. They kept her until she was eighteen, old enough to be sent out onto the streets. She might have turned to prostitution, but she didn't. Instead, she went from one dead-end job to another, never giving up hope that she'd eventually fit in somewhere.

"When I met her, she was already on the upswing," Dent smiles. "She was into tarot cards, you know. She went regularly to a Madame Ullshia. I think the whole thing is silly, of course, but then, I live with dozens of cats to keep me sane. It amazes me to what lengths people will go to find some reason to stay alive. My cats need me, so that's mine.

"There was something else she mentioned when I first met her. A group of people she had just joined. All those polclubs and whatever just make me uncomfortable, so I didn't want to talk about it. People spending so much time hating everybody else just so they can feel they belong. I didn't want to know about that part of her life, and so she never brought it up again. I don't know if it was Madame Ullshia's advice or the polclub, but Victoria blossomed. She glowed. I saw her change from a frightened child into a confident, competent woman."

If the runners ask what she did for a living, Dent says, "I

think she worked for her polyclub, but of course she never discussed that with me."

Dent was not questioned by Bambra.

At this point, the adventurers could start **Legwork** to find Bambra (p. 42) or visit **Madame Ullshla**, whose address is in the phone directory under "Psychics." Her establishment is about ten kilometers south, along 282, in the Touristville section of Redmond.

## DEBUGGING

The only thing that can go wrong here is that the group treats Dent or his cats rudely or that they just pass by the door completely. In either case, they blow their chance to learn about Victoria's connection with Madame Ullshla (and some background data on Victoria). This won't crash the adventure, however, for they'll find out about the tarot-card reader from Bambra.



# MADAME ULISHIA

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

**If the shadowrunners have found Bamba or have been to the detective's office, do not use this section if the group wants to visit the tarot-card reader. Instead, go to Family Feud, p. 24.**

Most of the buildings on this street are run-down. Some houses are boarded up, but you see fires glowing through the cracks. Windborne garbage floats gently down the sidewalk while deckheads engrossed in their own reality wander aimlessly through gaggles of tourists staring in embarrassed fascination. The psychic's shop is a storefront on the first floor of a dilapidated apartment building. A plate glass window is completely covered by a faded lavender curtain. In front of the curtain is a neon pink sign proclaiming: "Madame Ulshia/Fortunes Told/Advice Given". A cardboard sign on the door says "Open".

The door opens and a middle-aged man with a grizzled beard leaves the shop.

**When the characters go up to the door and knock, or simply enter:**

A female voice calls out, "Coming!" The door opens to the smiling face of a woman in her early thirties, wrapped in a patchwork of dingy scarves. If she would take the time to comb her hair and scrub some of the grime off her face, she would be beautiful. "You need information?" she asks. "You've come to the right place. Come on in!"

She steps aside and opens the door, revealing a large room decorated with second- or maybe even third-hand throw rugs, pillows, and paper lamps. Black with tarnish, incense burners spew out trails of smoke, giving the air a heavy, sticky sweet smell. A low table in the center of the room is surrounded by pillows. She gestures to the table and scurries over to it, taking a seat on a stained and tattered pillow. She smiles kindly as you settle onto your own pillows. The table is covered with a dirty white cloth. A smudged crystal ball sits on a silver stand, with a greasy-looking deck of tarot cards alongside.

"Now," she says warmly, "what can I do for you?"

## BEHIND THE SCENES

This section introduces Madame Ulshia, whose true nature will be revealed later in the adventure. It also shows some of the tactics of the Brotherhood; for example, the whole business about not fitting in is a hook to attract recruits. Meeting up with Ulshia also puts the Brotherhood on the tail of the shadowrunners, so things will start heating up very soon for the group.

Madame Ulshia is actually Rekratr, a Fly Spirit. His host

body was a Human named Sheila Benson, a woman of mystical bent who joined the Universal Brotherhood because she wanted to gain more spiritual power. She was a voluntary possession and became a perfect "flesh form" with the ability to mask her aura. Rekratr's Queen decided that he should adopt the trappings of Benson's mysticism and work the "tarot-card side of the street" to pull in recruits for the Brotherhood.

Benson's possession was special because it was the first "flesh-form" possession of a person who was pregnant. The Fly Queen decided to let the pregnancy go to term to see what sort of creature the child would become. Rekratr has been in charge of raising the child. It is now three months old and is a perverse mixture of Human and Insect parts.

Because the child is not possessed by an Insect Spirit, its existence is tricky to justify. Some of the more simpleminded hives would not comprehend the Fly Queen's curiosity, and so the Queen keeps the child a secret from other Hives.



## MADAME ULISHIA/REKTRACIR (Force 6)

B Q S C I W E R Attacks  
8 10 10 — 5 1 (6) 13\* 8M2

Powers: Aura Masking

CONDITION MONITOR	
Physical	Mental
Unconscious / Paralysis / Death	Unconscious / Paralysis / Death
Seriously Injured	Seriously Injured
Moderately Injured	Moderately Injured
Lightly Injured	Lightly Injured

If the group wants to check out the shop, used the map found in **Family Feud**, p. 24, for locations and security. The group should be discouraged from crawling about the shop in this scene, and if they try to force their way into the back, Madame Ulishia will threaten to call the police.

**If the characters ask about Victoria, the Spirit realizes that they might be onto the Brotherhood and decides to throw them off the track until he can report to his Queen:**

Madame Ulishia eyes them up and down and asks who they are that she should reveal any information about one of her clients. She makes it clear that she never gives out confidential information about the people who come to her—unless it is very important. She then holds out her hand, palm up, saying, "How important is it?"

Rektracir wants the shadowrunners to think the woman they are dealing with is just a greedy charlatan.

For ¥25 nuyen, she tells the characters that Victoria is a lovely but confused girl who is still seeking her destiny. She began coming for readings about two and a half years ago. She comes once a week, and her next reading is scheduled for Friday.

For ¥50 nuyen, Madame Ulishia tells the characters the above information and mentions that Victoria has seemed apprehensive of late. When Ulishia recently read in the cards that someone was following Victoria, the girl said that she believed that she was, indeed, being followed.

For ¥75 nuyen, Ulishia tells the runners that a detective named Patrick Bamba came around asking about Victoria last week. She suspected that Bamba is the person who was following Victoria, and so told him nothing. (Rektracir is giving the shadowrunners a target for their investigation to keep them away from him.)

Madame U. says she has no idea where Victoria is now. If the runners question her about the polliclub Dent mentioned, she claims no knowledge of it, either.

**If the characters ask for a tarot card reading after expressing their curiosity about Victoria, Madama Ulishia says:**

"I can only do readings for those who truly believe in the cards. If you want information, I can supply it from my own memories. There is no need to use the cards." She refuses to do a reading, for Rektracir wants to get the shadowrunners out of there as fast as possible so he can go to the Queen with a report.

If the characters came in posing as customers, Ulishia picks up the tarot cards and asks one member of the group to draw nine cards, one at a time, and place them on the table face down. Ulishia turns the cards over one by one, uttering little "hms" and "aahs" as each card is revealed.

Rektracir is beginning his normal tarot card schtick, which he uses to lead people toward the Universal Brotherhood. If the potential recruit does not buy the routine, it means that he or she was not Brotherhood material to begin with and it is no loss if the person never returns. Rektracir usually does not mention the Brotherhood until the third session. The psychic continues:

"Very sad," she says. "I see that you come from a past of uncertainty, that no matter where you are, you never seem to fit in. You were always special, better in many ways than other people, but different. And for this, you were shunned. And now something is troubling you. Tell me a bit about your past. It will help me see your present and future."

**Let the player character talk for a bit about his character's past. It does not matter whether he makes it up on the spot or tells the truth. Ulishia goes on with the same routine:**

"Ah, yes. Now you are confused. You know there is... something you are trying to find, but at times it seems as though you never will." The players might at first think that the woman is referring to the necklace, but it is just part of the routine about looking for a place to "belong." Rektracir has been doing the scam long enough to sense whether or not a customer is buying the routine, and so he suddenly realizes that the player characters came for something besides help from the "other side."

Madame suddenly stops and says, "I think there is something else you want, something not from my cards." Rektracir holds his ground and will not continue the reading. If the shadowrunners ask about Victoria, he happily gives the information described above.

**If the characters ask about Madame Ulishia's magical ability:**

Madame Ulishia will claim that she is a follower of the Rat totem and that her vision abilities flow from Rat. This is a good cover, because the unkempt, dirty state of the house, which is due to Rektracir's actual Spirit orientation, is equally in keeping with the behavior of a Rat shaman. It also explains the magical barrier surrounding the nursery, should any magician accidentally discover it in astral space. If asked directly, Ulishia/Rektracir will claim that the astral barrier is protecting her Lodge.

**If the characters try to assess Madame Ulishia or her shop:**

Rektracir has the ability to Mask his aura. If an adept attempts to assess Ulishia, let the dice roll and tell the mage that the woman is quite ordinary. If the mage is an Initiate, he can make a Magic (B) Test (6 points for Rektracir's Force and 2 points for Rektracir's child, an unnatural thing that should not have been born.) Remember to subtract 5 (Rektracir's energy) from the Initiate's grade to determine the number of successes required to get any information. If the Initiate gets some success, he sees Rektracir's true form, a creepy-looking, human-sized fly.

(All the information about Adepts and Initiates is from **The Grimoire**. If a copy is not available, no problem. It just means that any mages in the group are automatically Adepts and so cannot get any info anyway.)

A map for Madame Ulishia's place is in the **Family Feud** section, p. 25. An assensing character will not notice anything out of the ordinary other than the fact that all the rooms, except for the main room, are filled with trash and decaying garbage. Madame Ulishia is not a very tidy housekeeper. The child is kept in a secret room (the nursery) that has no obvious doorway, so an assensing character should not encounter it. On the off chance that he decides to pass through the walls that surround the nursery, he runs into a ward with an Astral Barrier Rating of 10. Such barriers are not uncommon in residences of shamans and mages, and Ulishia has already claimed to be a Rat shaman.

Attempts to attack the barrier will activate a Force 6 True Form Male Fly Spirit, which will attack the character astrally. If the character is able to defeat the Fly Spirit and break through the barrier, as per the Magical Barrier rules on page 91 of **Shadowrun**, he will be able to view the child. See **Family Feud** for details.

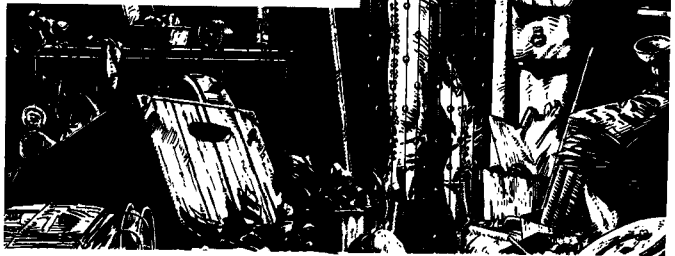
From here, the group is ready to start **Legwork**, p. 42, as they search for this detective that everybody's been talking about. Having just learned his name from Madame Ulishia, they could look up his office address to see if he's in. In which case, go to **Stakeout**, p. 19. If they already did their legwork and found out where Bamba is holed up, it's time for **Crossfire**, p. 28.

## DEBUGGING

The only thing that can go wrong is that a mage in the group might somehow make a hot enough die roll to get a glimpse of the real Rekracir or to break into the nursery. In such case, the runners will know a lot about Ulishia/Rekracir before they should. If this happens, go immediately to the attack in **Family Feud**, but use four Ant Warriors, two to attack the nursery and two to attack the runners.

If the players' team is a cautious one, let them see Rekracir's true form to give them the creeps. Because they won't know what the drek they just saw, they'll probably have the sense to want to back off for a bit to gather more information.

If the group decides to attack, well, more power to them, but they've got a good chance of getting the stuffing knocked out of them. Let Rekracir wallop them for all he's worth and force the group to retreat.





## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Bambra's office is located in Ravenna, a lower-class neighborhood in central Seattle. Bambra's got a corner office on the third floor of a six-story office building. Painted in gold letters on each of the windows are the words "Pat Bambra, Private Detective." There are a few shalkujn wandering around, a few kids parked in an electric-red Westwind, blasting the street with the audio track of a new Mercurial release, and a squatter or two wandering aimlessly, but nobody touches off that sixth sense in your spine. In an apartment above you, a man is shouting at his wife to stop crying. One thing you know, chummer, is that Bambra must love being a detective, because nobody lives in a place like this for the atmosphere.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The most important part of this street set-up is that the kids in the car are true-blue Universal Brotherhood members. They're brainwashed enough to do almost anything the Brotherhood superiors ask. The five kids are also former gang members.

They have been sent to stake out Bambra's apartment. If Bambra shows up, their orders are to splatter him. If anyone goes into Bambra's office, they are to assume these people work for Bambra and the kids are to ice them, too. The punks will not retreat. Each one believes he's immortal and will go on fighting even though his buddies are dropping like real estate prices in the Barrens.

The gang members are wearing denims and leathers in bright reds, yellows, and oranges. Most also have dyed hair. The kids range from 15 to 18 years old. The gamemaster should not describe the gang members unless the shadowrunners say they are going over to deal with them. Remember that players usually realize an object or person is important when the gamemaster lavishes attention on it. The gang member stats are in **Switching Targets**, p. 22.

Before the shadowrunners go anywhere or do anything, ask everybody for an Intelligence (9) Test. The kids are just there listening to music, but if any runner succeeds at the test, he or she notices that the purple-haired kid with the scar on his cheek keeps glancing at Bambra's office.

If the runners question the gang members, they meet up with the most confident bunch of street punks they've ever encountered. Most street gangs base their confidence on either a fear of appearing cowardly or a nihilism so deep they simply do not care. These guys, though, look as though they're actually happy about life. They almost leer at the runners, daring them to mess up their good time. They curse good-naturedly at the shadowrunners, telling them to get the frag away from their car.

The kids are under orders not to start trouble with anyone but their assigned targets. If the shadowrunners start a fight or begin asking the punks if they've got any interest in Bambra, the smiles drop and the guns are out. Just like that. Like they were programmed or something.

The player characters might decide to stake out the office themselves, whether they notice the punks or not. If they hang out watching the apartment, give them the Intelligence Test again, but this time the Target Number is only 6. If they spotted the punks before, they don't need to make a die roll to know that the kids in the car are also scoping out Bambra's office.

The punks might spot the shadowrunners. Have the runner in the area with the lowest Stealth Rating make a Stealth (5) Test. If the test fails, the gang members know that the runners are checking out the office and thus are officially meat. The Ares come out and it's time to duck.

If the group waits for three hours, they automatically realize that the kids are doing more than hanging out. After that, nothing happens unless the gang members spot the shadowrunners. The player character with the worst Stealth has to make that Stealth (5) Test every three hours to see if the kids spot them.

If the characters do not notice that the punks are watching the office or decide to ignore them and go on up to the office anyway, then they go to **Loop de Loop**, p. 20.

## DEBUGGING

This scene is set up so that the characters probably will not spot the gang members. If it works out that way, the punks will attack the shadowrunners in the office with guns blazing. See **Switching Targets**. If the runners take care of the gang members in this section, no combat occurs in the next one.

If a firefight develops on the street, four cops will arrive in about three minutes (use **Street Cop Contact**, p. 171, **SR**.) They're wearing Vests with Plates (Ballistic 4, Impact 3) and are armed with Browning Ultra Powers [Ammo 10 (clip), Damage 4M2.] If it looks like there's going to be a major firefight, four more policeman are called in for back-up. They arrive two minutes later.

If there's a fight, some of the characters can duck into Bambra's office and be real quiet. This means running **Loop de Loop**, p. 20, with a pretty intense time pressure (the cops could spot them at any second). The shadowrunners could also take off for awhile and return when things have cooled off. In this case, assume any gang members that didn't get geeked got picked up by the cops.

If the shadowrunners get dumped into jail, they must somehow get themselves out. Simpson will not get involved.

# LOOP DE LOOP

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The metal door to the office is locked. Printed on the door in silver letters are the words "Pat Bamba, Private Detective." The door has an electronic lock.

**Getting through the lock requires an Electronics (4) Test. Each extra attempt adds 2 to the target number. The door can also be forced. Its Barrier Rating is 8. If the shadowrunners blow the door off the hinges during business hours, the cops arrive as in Stakeout, p. 19. If it is night-time, nobody really wants to leave their vidscreens to report the noise.**

Bamba's office has been tastefully decorated in mid-21st century Over-Worked Bachelor. Stuffer Shack wrappers, sheafs of paper, piles of clothes, and scattered computer manuals dot the office landscape. To the right of the door is an area sectioned off by a sheet hung over a rope. Enclosed here are a cot, a bureau, and some jackets and shirts hanging on a hook. There is also something reminiscent of an archaeological dig, which, upon closer examination, turns out to be a sink.

Bamba's desk has a video-phone unit, a vid-deck, a screen, and a table-top computer. Several video chips are stacked on top of the computer. When you glance at the labels of the chips, you find that all are prerecorded cinemas. Some of the titles are vaguely familiar as century-old classics such as "The Maltese Falcon," "The Big Sleep," and "Laura." You also notice that one chip, unlabeled, is already in the deck, which is connected to the screen.

There is also a box filled with chippies, or micro-audio chips. A Sony Pocket Secretary, also with a chip in it, sits near the box. The recorder is on top of a yellow legal pad. The top page is blank.

That's what you get from the glancing around, chummers. Time to get to work.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The shadowrunners have found the office/apartment just as Bamba left it when he realized that Victoria was mixed up with the Universal Brotherhood. Two big chunks of information are contained on the tapes as well as a clue on the legal pad. A map of Bamba's office is in **Switching Targets**, the next section.

**If the shadowrunners examine the pad with eyewear or even make a pencil rubbing, they may see the impression on the top piece of paper:**

When you look down, you see the word "Victoria" written many times on the pad and that hearts have been doodled onto the sheet.

## If the shadowrunners play the video chip:

There's a crackle of static, a time/date stamp from last Sunday flashes on the screen, and then an image of Victoria talking into a phone fills the screen. She's even lovelier than in the photo.

"Danial," she says after a slight pause, "I'm leaving this message for you at work...because I'm afraid that you'd try to talk me out of what I'm about to do if we spoke in person. You might even succeed. So when you...well, I guess it is Monday morning when you're seeing this..." Victoria smiles and says, "Good morning!" and then looks serious once more, her attempt at lightness only emphasizing her concern. "I'll be gone for a day or two. I just wanted you to know that I'm all right. I also...wanted to thank you again so much for the necklace. Victoria smiles and touches the necklace gently, "It's so beautiful, and it made me realize how much you care about me. And when I come back, I'm going to tell you...some of the things I haven't told you about myself. I know I can trust you with everything now."

Victoria's eyes light up and she seems like a child about to embark on a fantastic journey. "I'm very excited. Madame Ulshia has told me that this is something I shouldn't pass up. She said to me 'Victoria Delling! This is your moment. Seize it! So I'm going to. I love you. Goodbye. Talk to you soon.'"

The tape then turns to static. A moment later, the static forms once again into the image of Victoria Delling—and the message you just saw begins again.

If the player characters check, they discover that the chip has a loop programmed into it. It will play the message over and over again until the machine is stopped.

## If the shadowrunners examine the audio chips:

Each is hand-labeled with what appears to be the name of one of Bamba's cases: "The Fairchild Kidnapping," "The Thompson Diamonds," "The Ravenna Assallant," and so on. The chip already inside the recorder is labeled "The Simpson Affair." If the shadowrunners play any of the chips besides "The Simpson Affair," they hear Bamba mumbling random thoughts to himself. Usually there is the background noise of distant traffic, suggesting the tapes were made right in the office, with lots of other voices in the background of other sections. These portions are usually at the scenes of robberies, murders, or interviews with clients.

Bamba's musings generally consist of ruminations such as, "What are we going to do about this one? Hmmm. The killer didn't leave prints, but he's leaving handwritten messages. No. Can't be his. Who's writing them? The victims. Wrong, Bamba! Wrong! You know they're all the same handwriting!" He seems to argue with himself a lot.



**If the shadowrunners play "The Simpson Affair":**

The chip is a record of Bambra's assignment to tail Danial Simpson. By re-cueing the chip and fast-forwarding at random intervals, the group can get the gist of what went on.

The case began two months ago when Lucile hired Bambra to follow her husband. Most of the audio notes are the detective mumbling into the microphone that Simpson is without doubt the dullest human being he's ever encountered. Bambra has tried for six weeks to dig something up on the guy and failed miserably. Simpson didn't seem to have a single vice. Though he did lose Bambra every once in awhile at a shopping mall or some other crowded area, Bambra never got the feeling that Simpson was doing it on purpose.

"On the other hand," Bambra noted, "it's the guys who look straightest who have to be letting it out secretly. He's too clean. But I hate this kind of work. Forget about the money. I'm telling Mrs. Simpson her husband's clean."

When he went to cancel the job with Mrs. Simpson, the tape recorder was on:

"Mr. Bambra," a woman's voice says, "not only do you come highly recommended, but you've already invested a great deal of time into learning about my husband. I'd like you to follow this through. I'll double your fee."

"Mrs. Simpson..."

"Quiet. I spend my husband's money as I choose. Now, is there anything I might do to help things along?"

"Well, there is something...but it's illegal...and a bit risky"

"Oh, posh. Anything to get this business over with and that man out of my life."

"I'd like to tap his office phone..."

"An excellent idea! It's a shame you didn't think of it sooner."

"Well, I did. But it's illegal."

"Yes, yes. I think we covered that well enough. But it seems to me that the real problem is getting a tap onto anything at Renraku. They have such a tight security system."

"Well, yes. That's where you'd come in. Most of the security is based on trying to keep information thieves out. I'd like you to put the tap on your husband's phone sometime when you go to visit him."

"Visit Danial? But I never do such a thing."

"Well, go visit your father and slip in the tap during your visit. I'll teach you how to do it."

Bambra then taught Mrs. Simpson how to tap the phone and she successfully set up the tap.

The next important entry is from just last Friday when Bambra followed Simpson into Crawford & Crawford. He saw Simpson purchase the necklace and decided that it couldn't possibly be for the man's wife and must be for Simpson's mysterious mistress. Contacting a dealer friend, the detective asked him to crawl into the jewel store's credit records. The dealer came through, and on Sunday afternoon, Bambra gave a copy of the receipt to Lucile Simpson.

After that comes a click of the machine being turned off and then back on again. Bambra says, "I'm back in the office now. There's a message from Simpson's tap...which I'm calling up right now..." Then a bit of silence followed by a woman's voice.

If the characters play the video tape before playing the audio tape, they immediately recognize the message from the video. If they haven't played the video yet, read them the video message above (leaving out the visual bits, of course).

Right after the words "You might even succeed," the characters hear Bambra say in an awed whisper, "She's beautiful." When the message is over, they hear him mutter, "Come on, Pat. Get a grip on yourself. Remember, trust your sidearm, not a woman. But did you see her? Yes, I saw her. She seems absolutely wonderful. But so did Hotama. Hey, maybe it's time we let the wound heal. What am I thinking? Oh, boy. This is bad. I haven't...Oh frag!" The tape recorder is then clicked off.

When the sound comes back up, Bambra is talking to himself again, apparently pacing the floor of his office. In the background is the sound of Victoria's message on a loop.

"Monday. Forgot the recorder again. All right. First, Lucile blew it. She told her husband about the receipt and he came up with the anniversary nonsense. Got to find Victoria before he does. This is terrible of me. I know...I know I'm not usually like this, but if I can prevent her from giving that necklace back, the guy'll be ruined and...well, I don't know. I want the girl, as they say. But where is she? The landlord said she'd moved out. Wrong, you idiot. Someone else moved her out. Should have talked to the guy with the cats. Wake up, will you! We know she wasn't moving because of the message to Simpson. And this Madame Ullishia. Whew! But there was something about the way she spoke. No. Not that. The words. Something about her routine—reminded me of something—What? Can't remember. Think, might be important. Belonging. Something from my past. Jeez, distant memory. Echoing. Belonging. Hotama. Right. Sometime around the breakup with Hotama. Frag, five years now. Where did I hear that? Wait...Oh, no...Victoria wouldn't have gotten mixed up..."

The machine clicks off and that is the end of the chip.

Once the shadowrunners have had a chance to go through the material in the office, it is time to switch to a new scene. If they didn't deal with the gang members outside before entering the office, it happens now with **Switching Targets**, p. 22. If the gang members were already dispatched and the player characters have the information from the office, they have several options. If they want to pay a visit to Madame Ullishia (either a first visit because Bambra seemed to think she was important, or a second visit because the psychic claimed she had no idea where Victoria went, whereas Victoria credits Ullishia with helping decide what to do), go to **Family Feud**, p. 24. And if they want to try to find Bambra himself, go to **Legwork**.

**DEBUGGING**

This scene is almost foolproof because all the runners have to do is press a couple of buttons and download a lot of information. This scene should be a lot of fun for the gamemaster. Make sure to read the scene out loud once before **Missing Blood** even begins. That will give you a feel for what is going through Victoria and Bambra's heads when they're speaking their messages. The more expression you put into the reading, the more entertaining it will be for the players.

# SWITCHING TARGETS

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Have each character make a Reaction (4) Test. The number of successes determines how aware the player is of what's going on with the Brotherhood gang members. Read the description to each character according to his successes in decreasing order. The information in parenthesis gives the game effect of the test's outcome.

Successes	Result
3+	You hear someone whispering down the hall and then the footsteps of people trying to be quiet. You have a moment to swing into action. (The character has one turn to set up a position and take any actions that can be completed in one round.)
2	You realize that someone is at the door and is about to come crashing through just as the door swings open. (The character can react normally on the turn of the attack.)
1	You hear the door swing open and hear someone scream out, "The icemen cometh, dudes!" and realize that it's shootout time. (The character can dodge, move, and so on normally, but all his tests for the first turn are at +2 to their target number because he was caught slightly off-guard.)
0	The word, chummer, is "Oops." You hear the door crash open, someone shouts something, and then bullets are whizzing by your face. (The character is surprised, per the rules on page 64, <b>Shadowrun</b> . The character does not even have a chance to pull out his weapon until the next turn.)

### As soon as someone gets a good look at their assailants:

Diving for cover, you realize that these punks were the kids listening to music out in the car. They're armed with heavy machine pistols and look determined to geek you.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

No matter how careful are the shadowrunners at hiding their presence in the office, the gang members are going to realize that the people they just saw enter the building are now in the dick's office. At that point, all five get out of the car, one at a time, casual-like, and begin sneaking up to the office.

### BROTHERHOOD GANG MEMBERS

B Q S C I W E M R Armor  
5 6 5 6 5 4 5.7 — 5 0/1

**Dice Pools:** Defense (Armed) 5, Defense (Unarmed) 5, Dodge 6

**Skills:** Armed Combat 5, Etiquette (Street) 4, Firearms 4, Stealth 5, Unarmed Combat 5

**Cyberware:** Hand Razors (5L2), Retinal Modification: Low-Light

**Gear:** Ares Crusader MPs (40 (clip APDS), 2 extra clips, 4M2, -1 to ballistic armor), Throwing Knives (Str + 2)L1, Synth-Leathers (0/1)

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious	Fractured skull	Headshots	Stunshots
Wounded	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded

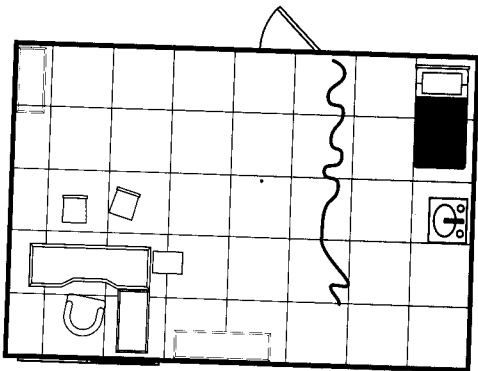
CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious	Fractured skull	Headshots	Stunshots
Wounded	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious	Fractured skull	Headshots	Stunshots
Wounded	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious	Fractured skull	Headshots	Stunshots
Wounded	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious	Fractured skull	Headshots	Stunshots
Wounded	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds	Minor wounds
Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded	Lightly wounded

## SWITCHING TARGETS



# Bambra's Office



- 1 Meter

The Brotherhood has armed the punks with Ares Crusader machine pistols, equipped with APDS ammo. It is common knowledge that APDS is not something found on the street. That should alert the players that the punks are not acting on their own.

Though the runners cannot hide their presence, they can beat the ambush. If the shadowrunners have somebody watching the street from a window, he's going to notice the punks getting out of the car one by one. Or if a player character is on watch in the hall, the ambush will probably not happen because the rest of the shadowrunners will be warned.

Remember that the gang members are not stupid. Let them respond to the shadowrunners with a bit of tactical savvy. For example, if a runner at the window is staring down into the street, one of the gang members might spot him (Opposed Skill Test, a gang member's Intelligence against the lookout's Stealth). The kids could then drive around the block and try to approach the building from an angle not visible to the runners.

If the gang members are captured, the runners can question them, *but they will not reveal that the Brotherhood sent them*. Any Interrogation Test has a Target Number 17 (5 for their Intelligence, +6 for an enemy, and +6 for revelation of the info being disastrous to the NPC), a virtual impossibility. Their story is that Bambra has made himself the enemy of a local protection racket run by Mally the Melon, who sent them to rough up the detective. The gangers claim they thought the shadowrunners were muscle hired by Bambra. Make sure to make a few Interrogation Skill Tests so the shadowrunners *think* they are getting real information.

After the fight, the player characters can try to track down Bambra or go see Madame Ullishla. If they want to find Bambra, go to **Legwork**, p. 42. If they want to visit the psychic, go to **Family Feud**, the next section.

# FAMILY FEUD

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

If this is the first time the players have been to Madame Ullishia's, start with the following paragraph and then skip down to the third paragraph in normal typeface.

Most of the buildings on this street are run-down. Some are boarded up, but you see fires glowing through the cracks. Windborne garbage floats gently down the sidewalk while deckheads engrossed in their own reality wander aimlessly through gaggles of tourists in embarrassed fascination. The psychic's shop is a storefront on the first floor of a dilapidated apartment building. A plate glass window is completely covered by a faded lavender curtain. In front of the curtain is a neon pink sign proclaiming, "Madame Ullishia/Fortunes Told/Advice Given. A paper sign on the door says: "Open."

If this is the characters' second visit to the shop, start with this paragraph and continue:

Except for some new burned-out deckheads, the neighborhood looks the same as last time you were here.

Approaching the shop, you hear the sounds of splintering wood, shattering glass, and something crying out in pain.

Give the shadowrunners a chance to set up however they want. The first characters through the door (or the plate glass window, depending on their sense of gratuitous violence) get the following description read to them.

The shop is a shambles. The central table has been knocked over and a wall mirror is shattered. Madame Ullishia is lying face-down, motionless. Another body, possibly that of a man, lies in the corner. A black-haired man wearing a battered suit stands over Ullishia. He has her right arm twisted completely back over her shoulder blades. You see the splintered bone of the arm jutting out through her skin.

The man looks up at you. His eyes are shiny black, obviously some sort of cyber job. You've seen replaced eyes before, but these are even more alien and the sight is unnerving. His teeth are also artificial. It takes you a moment to find the word for what he's got. They're mandibles, the pincers that insects sometimes have. They jut down from the roof of the man's mouth and push the flesh of his lips aside. They click twice and the man drops the arm. Then a second man enters the room from a back doorway. He has the same teeth and eyeware. From his posture, it's obvious that he is surprised to see you, but he quickly tenses for combat.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The two enforcers are Ant Warriors from an Ant Totem Hive. When the Ant Queen discovered that Rekratrax was doing something for his Queen that was out of normal bounds, she sent in some warriors to restore the natural balance. They were ordered to eliminate Rekratrax and the child/thing. Two of the warriors took on Rekratrax while the other two assaulted the nursery. In the ensuing battle, Rekratrax killed one of his attackers before dying. The Fly Spirit guarding the nursery also destroyed a warrior before it died. The surviving warriors found the Insect/boy mutation born from Rekratrax's host body and smothered it to death. Madame Ullishia and Rekratrax are now no longer of this world.

However, there remain two Ant Warriors to be dealt with, and they will do everything in their power to kill the shadowrunners (and brother, they've got plenty of power.)

### FLESH FORM ANT WARRIORS (FORCE 5)

B Q S C I W E R Attacks  
9 9 x 4 11 — 5 2 (5) 7\* 11MB

\*Receives a +5 initiative bonus

Dice Pools: Defense (Unarmed) 10, Dodge 9

Gear: Lined Coat (4/2)

CONDITION MONITOR	
PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious Fleeting Pain	Unconscious Fleeting Pain Severe Damage Severe Wound
Severely Wounded	Severely Wounded
Wounded Injured	Wounded Injured Severely Wounded
Lightly Wounded	Lightly Wounded

CONDITION MONITOR	
PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious Fleeting Pain	Unconscious Fleeting Pain Severe Damage Severe Wound
Severely Wounded	Severely Wounded
Wounded Injured	Wounded Injured Severely Wounded
Lightly Wounded	Lightly Wounded

The warriors attack with their hands because their spiritual force combined with their hosts' bodies makes their hands more powerful than most weapons. Remember that the warrior's Unarmed Combat Skill is equal to its Reaction, in this case 10.

After the warriors have been dispatched, the shadowrunners can search the place to find out what all the ruckus was about.

The Ant Warriors do not have the ability to Mask their aura. Anyone who examines them astrally will see that the men are truly powerful, Human-sized ants.

## ULISHIA'S SHOP

### THE MAIN ROOM (1)

This is where Madame Ulishia did her tarot card readings. On the floor are Madame Ulishia's corpse, at least one Ant Warrior, and any shadowrunners who didn't make the grade. The rest of the room's contents—tarot cards, incense sticks, and pillows—are of no importance.

If anyone wants to examine the corpses astrally, it requires a Sorcery (4) Test because the host bodies of the Insect Spirits are dead. The mage or shaman will have to search the flesh for spiritual residue.

### Successes

1-2

2+

### Result

The bodies were recently possessed by Spirits.

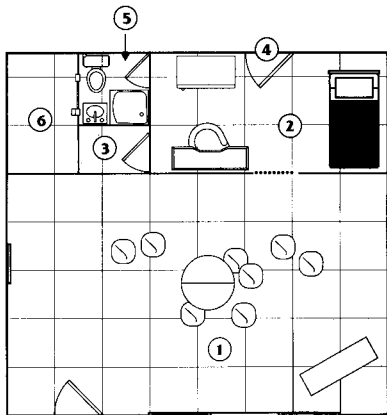
The Spirits were of a kind the mage has never encountered in his studies. Something about the spiritual residue is simply wrong.

If the shadowrunners examine the corpses of the Ant Warriors physically, they discover that the eyes and teeth are not cyberware. The mandibles grow out of the mouth, and the eyes are not mechanical.

### ULISHIA'S BEDROOM (2)

This back room, separated from the main room by hanging beads, has a bed, a refrigerator, and a desk. The refrigerator is stocked with fresh fruits, vegetables, and steaks. However, rotting garbage and trash are piled up all over. The smell is awful.

If the player characters search the desk, they find a small notebook with the label "Child" on the cover. Opening it, the characters discover journal entries of only a few pages. The first entry is dated three months ago.



**MADAME  
ULISHA'S**

..... - Beads

 - Refrigerator

 - Pillow

 - Secret Door

 - 1 Meter

When the characters find the journal, give them the **Player Handout** labeled **The Child Journal**. The word "Pré" in the journal notes is Rekraci's written shorthand for the Ant Queen at the northside chapterhouse, but it is not her true name.

#### CLOSET (3)

This closet contains Madame Ullishia's clothes, which are more like costumes than normal street clothes. Almost everything is in a jumble on the floor, but there is also a heavy blue box on a shelf built at the top of the closet. If the shadowrunners open the box, they discover it to be filled with flyers for the Universal Brotherhood. Once the player characters open the box and examine the contents, give them the **Universal Brotherhood Flyer** handout, if they have not already received one.

#### BACK DOOR (4)

The back door is made of thick metal and has a heavy metal bolt. The bolt is difficult to lift off the door and nearly impossible to break through. It has a Barrier Rating of 12.

#### BATHROOM (5)

The bathroom contains a sink, tub, and toilet, all of which are as filthy as the rest of the house. The charred remains of the fourth Ant Warrior lie here. Under the sink is a cabinet filled with cleaning products, toilet paper, and diapers. A wall contained a hidden door, which has been ripped away. The hole leads to the nursery.



#### NURSERY (6)

When a character enters the nursery, read the following:

Stepping through the hole in the wall, you enter a small room, no more than two by three meters. Against one wall is a crib brightly painted with bears and brownies. Leaning against the bars of the crib is a brown teddy bear. Extending from beneath a pillow is the arm of an infant.

There is no motion, however, and approaching the crib, you realize that not even the fingers are moving. The pillow is creased from pressure applied to it. Even as you reach for the pillow, you steel yourself against the knowledge that underneath is an infant that has been smothered to death.

The pillow is soft in your hand as you raise it to confirm your fears. When you see what is there, you draw back in horror.

Lying there is a corpse, its face expressionless as though in a calm sleep. Its mouth is slightly parted, but draws in no breath. Its face is that of a baby's, a boy about three months old. But its eyes are those of a creature—silver and multifaceted. Though its arms and torso look human, its legs are black and thin, the appendages of an insect, covered with sharp, coarse hairs. You notice that its chest is too large, layered with bulges beneath the flesh, like some sort of ridged armor.

You know immediately that the thing in the crib is not the result of cyberware but something wholly unnatural, a horror that never should have seen the light. At the same time, you are sickened by the murder of an obvious innocent. The image of the monstrous child in the crib will haunt your dreams for weeks to come.

The group is now left with a lot of loose ends. If they haven't yet tracked down Bamba, they can start **Legwork** and attempt to find him. If they want to look into this Universal Brotherhood business, also go to **Legwork**. If they decide to visit a chapterhouse of the Universal Brotherhood without doing research, go to **The Science of Silence**, p. 31.

#### DEBUGGING

The fight in the first half of this section is a pretty straightforward affair. The only hitch can occur if the Ant Warriors cut too large a swath through the runners. If the player characters start taking too much damage, let Rekraci be just alive enough to rise up from the ground to start a last-ditch effort to clear out his base of operations. He should take an ineffectual swipe or two at the shadowrunners, but put most of his efforts into trashing the warriors. Don't bother rolling the dice for the non-player character combat. If the situation comes down to this, it's time for the bad guys to get cleared out quick.

If most or all of the shadowrunners get wasted in this combat, have them grab new Archetypes, buddies of the first batch of runners, who decide to find out who wasted their friends.

If the runners want to try to track down information about the identities of their assailants and Madame Ullishia, they are out of luck. The best they can learn from the SIN IDs they get from the corpses is that Ullishia is from California Free State and the other two are from the CAS. Trying to punch through to another nation's ID files and track everybody's data is going to take longer than they've got.

# SCOPING OUT SUPERDAD'S

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Superdad's is on the first floor of a run-down and apparently deserted office building in Kingsgate. The sign outside proclaims GL LS—LIVE G RLS! In spurting neon letters. Upon entering, you see that the sign is true—barely. There are girls, two to be exact. They are moving perfectly out of time to the music on a stage set behind a U-shaped bar. Along the walls are tables with built-in stools. A door to the bathroom is to the right of the bar. To the left is an emergency exit, an office, and a dancers' entrance.

The lights on the stage are red, and the girls emotionally gird to throbbing hits from three months ago. The bartender, a young kid, seems chipped up pretty high on something. He tosses the bottles in the air and shouts "You?" while pointing his finger at anyone who's just finished a drink. A man and a Dwarf are watching a football game on a trivid set strategically over the dance area. They are definitely more engrossed in the game than the girls. Each time the L.A. team makes a break for their goal post, the Dwarf screams, "I will kill you! I will kill you!" at his companion, the words heavily accented with Portuguese. If they lose the ball, he slams his arms against the bar and drives his forehead into his fists.

The place is packed with about 20 men, all watching their drinks more than the girls or the game. Most appear to be blue-collar workers, with a handful of truckers.

### If the shadowrunners got a description of Bambra, add:

You scan the crowd, but see no one matching Bambra's description.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Bambra is in the back office. He's a friend of the co-owner, Fernando, the Dwarf with the strong ties to the L.A. Griffins. No one but Fernando and his brother, Speedo, the bartender, know that Bambra is in the place. Use the **Bartender Contact**, p. 163 of **Shadowrun** for both Fernando and Speedo. The map for Superdad's is in **Crossfire**, p. 28.

If the runners ask any of the men about Bambra, they get only blank shrugs. If they talk to the dancers, the girls will sway their hips and look at them with feigned interest, but really have no information to give. They hang out just long enough to find out whether or not they're going to get some nuyen transferred to the credsticks hanging from the cords around their necks.

If anyone roughs up a customer or one of the girls, 15 of the patrons will actually intervene. Superdad's is where they go to relax and get the frag away from the turmoil of the outside

world. Anyone bringing it inside isn't going to be very popular. Use a combination of 10 **Dockworker Contacts** from p. 109 of **Sprawl Sites** and 5 **Human Pedestrian Contacts** from p. 116 of **Sprawl Sites**. The patrons treat the situation as a brawl and draw no weapons. If a fight breaks out, Speedo is on the phone to the cops in a flash. Because Superdad's is a favorite cop place, they show up in a couple of minutes. Use the **Street Cops** from **Available Now**, p. 12.

If the shadowrunners ask Fernando about Bambra, he eyes them warily and says he knows Bambra, who was in earlier but left hours ago. If the shadowrunners persist in their questioning, they will notice Fernando trying to catch Speedo's eye.

At this point, Speedo casually attempts to push a button under the bar. Speedo isn't a casual guy, however, and the runners have little difficulty catching the action. The button activates a buzzer in the office and is Bambra's signal that heat has arrived and he better fraggin' move his Irish butt.

If the runners talk to Speedo, first he shouts that he has no idea who they're talking about, and then keeps asking them if they want a drink. He'll wait until he thinks the shadowrunners aren't looking and then press the button. Again, the shadowrunners easily notice this.

As soon as the shadowrunners make a break for the office, Speedo hits the button again and Bambra is breaking for the back door of the office.

If the shadowrunners remember that they are in a public area with average guys who really don't give a frag about other people's problems, this section should move along smoothly. If, however, they treat the people in the bar the same way they would a group of ninja assassins out for their blood, then work the scene against them, with the mob rising up against the runners and the cops arriving real soon. The player characters should be warned that roughing up everybody they meet is a bad way to conduct business. Shadowrunners are so-called because they work in subtle ways and with a degree of aplomb. If they simply broke people's fingers every time they needed information, they'd be called thugs or enforcers.

If a fight does break out, Bambra will stick his head out from the back office to see what the commotion is. Someone on the players' team should spot him. Bambra will then run for the back door and lead the group into **Crossfire**, the next section.

If the shadowrunners go directly for the office or sneak around the back alley to the office, go to **Crossfire**. If they don't do anything about checking out the office, even after seeing the button pushed, wait a few moments and then tell them they think they hear gunshots from outside. When they move to investigate, they hear the shots coming from the alley behind the bar. If they investigate, go to **Crossfire**.

# CROSSFIRE

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

If the team goes to the back office, read the following:

You enter the office, a small room crammed with a cot, a desk, and a stack of boxes filled with bottles of beer. At the same moment, the rear door of the office slams shut. You race through the door and you're out in an alley behind the bar. You see Bambra to your right, long coat flapping wildly as he races for the street. A sudden squeal of tires heralds a car swerving into the alley, its headlights cutting a blinding swath through the darkness. The car screeches to a halt and Bambra dives for cover behind a pile of garbage cans.

The doors of the car open and you can just make out four legbreakers with automatic weapons setting up to rake the alley with lead.

If the team wanted to cut off Bambra's escape through the back door and either entered the office from the back door or approached it from both the front of the bar and the back door, read the following:

You enter the office and find a small room crammed with a cot, a desk, and a stack of boxes filled with bottles of beer. A tall, thin, red-haired man is lying on the cot. He leaps up immediately, and goes for a gun in his coat pocket. His left hand is in a cast and his face shows the bruises of a recent battle. Seeing that he is outnumbered and outgunned, Bambra freezes and raises his hands.

"All right," he says. "if you're going to waste me, fine. But first tell me what you did with the girl."

At that moment, a thug crashes through the door with a machine pistol and opens fire.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

At this point, Bambra assumes that the shadowrunners are goons sent by the Brotherhood to finish up the beating he escaped earlier. In fact, the Brotherhood's goons arrive just after the shadowrunners.

The four goons are Universal Brotherhood enforcers (natch). They aren't possessed and they don't know nothing about no Insect Spirits. They're just well-trained men of violence who realized that their lives were empty until they joined up with the Universal Brotherhood. Now they're fulfilled, well-trained men of violence who do the Brotherhood's bidding.

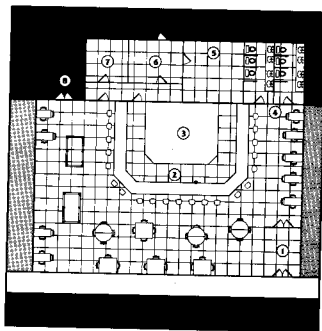
## BROTHERHOOD ENFORCERS

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
5	4	4	3	4	3	6	—	4	4/2

**Dice Pools:** Defense(Armed) 1, Defense(Unarmed) 3, Dodge 4

**Skills:** Car 3, Etiquette(Street) 5, Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 3

**Gear:** Scorpion MP's (25 (clip APDS), 1 extra clips, 4M2, -1 to ballistic armor), Secure Long Coat (4/2)



## Superdad's

- ① - Main Entrance
- ② - Bar
- ③ - Dance Area/ Stage
- ④ - Restrooms
- ⑤ - Stock Room
- ⑥ - Office
- ⑦ - Changing Room
- ⑧ - Emergency Exit
- - Buzzer
- - 1 Meter



If the fight is happening out in the alley, the four thugs were rushing to Superdad's after getting a tip (they did break fingers, by the way) and pulled into the alley to park. They spotted Bambra just as they arrived and decided that the shadowrunners were the detective's backup.

If the shadowrunners cornered Bambra in the office, the situation is a little different. In this case, the thugs pulled into the alley and sent two guys to the back door and two to the front. When the thugs bust through the back door, there is a chance they will catch the shadowrunners off-guard.

Each player should make a Reaction (4) Test.

#### Successes

0

#### Result

The character is totally surprised. All he can do for the first turn of combat is attempt to dodge their shots. The character does not even have a chance to pull out his weapons until next turn.

1

The character can dodge, move, and so on normally, but all his tests for the first turn are at +2 to the target number.

2

The character can react normally.

3+

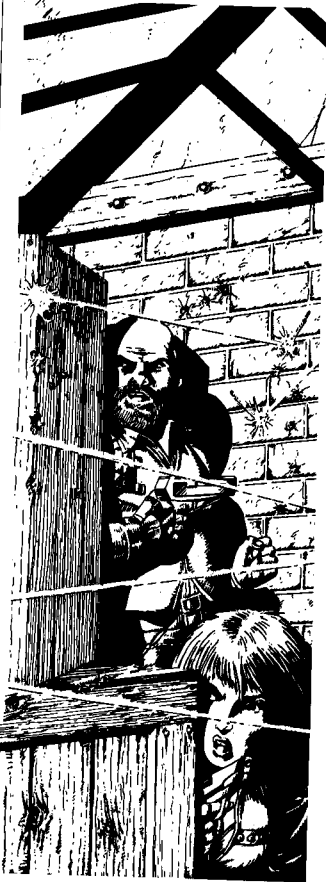
The character realizes that someone is outside the door the split-second the thugs are opening the door. The character gets one action before the thugs enter.

Five rounds after the two thugs come through the back door, the other two thugs come around to the office from the front and join in the fight.

Bambra, a good judge of character in tight spots, will shoot at the thugs and not at the shadowrunners.

The Brotherhood enforcers will fight to the finish. In the event that one is captured, he will have nothing to say, like the gang members in **Switching Targets**. The men are equipped with APDS rounds, issued to them by the Brotherhood. Again, the presence of those rounds means that something unusual is happening. It is not necessary for the goons to talk, for Bambra will gladly share his information and expose the Brotherhood connection.

Once the goons are out of the way, Bambra introduces himself to the team and asks if they wouldn't mind sitting down to share information. He suggests that they take off for a new hideout so that he doesn't get his friends in any more trouble. Once a place is chosen, go to **Battleplans**, the next section.



# BATTLEPLANS

## BEHIND THE SCENES

This section is intended to give the shadowrunners a breather so they can think for a bit. It might be necessary to give them more than one section like this. For example, the team might hold a council to determine the best course of action for getting more information on the Brotherhood, and then a second meeting to determine how best to bust into the Redmond chapterhouse.

This is also the first time the characters have a chance to talk to Bamba. He should, in effect, become a member of the team. Though they're searching for the necklace and he's going for the girl, their goals are linked and they have every reason to pool their resources. This also means that if the group went straight for Bamba and missed all the fun stuff about Madame Ulshia (starting with Victoria's apartment and going on), use Bamba to guide them back to the psychic's shop just in time to catch the end of **Family Feud**.

Now's a good time for the characters to start putting together the information they've been gathering. If they're missing some stuff from sections they skipped over, use Bamba to fill in gaps. No one knows the whereabouts of either Victoria or the necklace, of course. Though it seems certain that she's probably at a chapterhouse, the team will have to visit a Brotherhood chapterhouse or deck into their system to get concrete facts.

Bamba's main function in this section, and in the adventure, is to appeal to the group to help him rescue Victoria. The idea is to get them to turn this mercenary venture into a quest with a "higher purpose." What Bamba and the shadowrunners probably don't know yet is that Victoria is as good as dead because she's already been cocooned. But that depressing discovery should not occur until the end of the adventure. This will set them up for a big fall, for the bad guys win in **Missing Blood**, whether the shadowrunners get the necklace or not.

Here's what Bamba has to offer the runners:

-He is positive that Victoria was a member of the Redmond chapterhouse. Not only is it but 20 minutes by public transportation from where she lived, but people living near the chapterhouse say they saw her in the neighborhood.

-He won't tell the shadowrunners not to go talk to the folks at the UB, but he'll suggest that it will be a waste of time. When he tried it, all he got was beaten up. Then those "gentlemen" showed up at Superdad's. They seem to have some information about people looking into Victoria's disappearance.

-He offers to help them raid the chapterhouse. If they help him get Victoria, he'll help them get the necklace. Having seen how well he handled his gun in the fight at the stripper bar, they should realize he'd be a valuable asset.

Bamba will really push for the team's help. He will plead

("You don't understand, I've got to find her"), use logic ("We can help each other"), angry manipulation ("I always said that shadowrunners weren't just nuyen-sucking machines until I met you guys. Now I'll know to keep my mouth shut.")

If it really gets tight, try this:

"Look, I know you guys were hired to do a simple job. But here's the thing, the job isn't simple anymore. There's someone in trouble now, someone who had no idea what she was in for, someone we can help. And it's not just her. If we get her out, we might be able to find out what's going on with the Brotherhood. You've got to admit that this whole thing is pretty weird. Maybe we can help other people from ending up in the same mess. Look, we're all going in there. I'm just saying we do as much good as we can as soon as we can."

## DEBUGGING

If the characters have gotten a copy of *The Universal Brotherhood*, they might feel that common sense dictates that the whole shadowrun should be scrubbed. After all, they can't get hold of Simpson to get more money for running the higher stakes (he couldn't afford it anyway), and the UB looks like it might be the biggest piece of bad news since the Crash of '29.

That's why Bamba is so important. Use him to shift the focus from nuyen to concerns about the future of the Human race. "Look," Bamba can point out, "we don't know if the document is even true, yet. But I think we better know for sure. Unless we have something more to go on than undocumented data files, we aren't going to get anyone to believe this."

Even if the shadowrunners won't help Bamba get Victoria, he asks that they raid the chapterhouse together. Once inside, he'll go his way and they'll go theirs.

From here, the runners could go to the Redmond chapterhouse just to check it out (**The Science of Silence**, p. 31), deck into a chapterhouse system (**A Frozen World**, p. 33), or go for an attack in **Assault**, p. 36.

# THE SCIENCE OF SILENCE

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The following section is written with the assumption that the characters are going to the Redmond chapterhouse at Belmont and Waveland. If the team goes to one of the other three chapterhouses, don't sweat it. Though each chapterhouse has its own unique elements, for the purposes of this section, it doesn't matter which chapterhouse they choose. It might be necessary to revise the external description, but otherwise what happens is all pretty much the same.

When deciding which chapterhouse to visit for a casual look-see, the two obvious choices are The Octagon, which is the biggest in town, and the chapterhouse in Redmond, in the Kingsgate area where Victoria lived. If the player characters have not put together the fact that there's a chapterhouse in the same part of Seattle as Victoria's apartment building, be sure to point it out to them. This should encourage them to head for the Redmond chapterhouse.

Arriving at the chapterhouse, you find that it has been built into an abandoned four-plex movie theater. The building is large enough to house several small theaters and has two floors of office space above it. The facade has been cleaned and the building is the most attractive edifice on the block. The marquee is still in place and declares, "The Universal Brotherhood—Come in and find the power of Belonging." A few people are leaving the building and others are entering.

Passing through the doors to the chapterhouse, you see that the lobby has been converted into a bookstore and information center. There are racks of books about the "science" of the Universal Brotherhood, books on depression, books on difficult childhoods, books on repairing one's self-esteem, books containing testimonials of people who got help from the Brotherhood.

In the information booth is an attractive woman, about 25 years old, who seems to fraggin' radiate confidence and charisma. When you look over at her, she smiles at you, inviting you to come and ask questions. A sign above the booth says "Discovery Meetings Every Tuesday Night."

You notice two uniformed guards in the lobby, each wearing UB patches on his shoulders. They also sport pistols. Though the guards look relaxed, you can tell they are ready for action at a moment's notice.

The theater was a four-plex. Double doors lead to two theaters on the first floor, and staircases on either side of the lobby lead up to the second-floor theaters. There is also a small side door on the right side of the lobby. A few people are walking up the stairs, smiling happily. A man also exits from the small side door. He crosses the lobby, nods at you confidently, and exits the building.

Read the following if a runner is assessing the location astrally:

- You separate yourself from this reality and ghost your way to the chapterhouse. As you pass through Kingsgate, you are almost overwhelmed by the sense of despair around you. You pass by hovels housing people with no hope, no future, the fire of their lives reduced to a dying ember. As you approach the chapterhouse, however, the people on the street project a sense of joy and inner peace, as though a flame were kindled in their hearts. They all seem to be coming from or going to your destination: the chapterhouse.

When you reach the chapterhouse, the sense of joy and peace in the street is stronger, but an astral barrier is up around the house. There is no way for you to breach it without alerting the creators.

Wolf howls.

The last line should be read only if the magician is a shaman. Change the name of the Totem and the response as appropriate. For example: Bear growls, Eagle screams, Raven crows, Snake hisses, etc. This line is only to let the shaman know that something is not right with the place.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The map in **Assault** describes the different parts of the chapterhouse. Around the building is an Astral Barrier with a Force of 6. Attempts to breach the barrier will occasion the appearance of a Fire Elemental. Rather than attacking, the Elemental will tell the astral character that there is no need for force. The magician need only come into the chapterhouse, and the Brethren will help him with whatever is troubling him. The Elemental will then vanish. If the character continues to attack the Barrier or breaches it, three True Form Male Fly Spirits with a Force of 6 will attack. The Fly Spirits will not pursue anyone who runs away.

If the players attempt to physically enter the chapterhouse, they are in for just as much stonewalling. As the Brotherhood has already tagged the shadowrunners, either through Madame Ullishia or through the contacts who spotted the team searching for Bamba, the runners will not get past the lobby without a fight.

Everyone on the first three floors of the building is fully Human. On the fourth floor are three Human hosts possessed by Fly Spirits. Use Rekracir's stats, p.17, for these three bureaucrats.

The full stats for the building's guards are given in **Assault**, p.36.

Use the **Former Wage Mage Archetype**, p. 38 **Shadowrun**, for Judy, the woman in the information booth. Her stats

are also listed in **Assault**. Her orientation is the Prowler list of spells. She is also an Initiate of the fourth grade. Being a mage, she has a good idea of what is going down at the Brotherhood and she wants a piece of the action. Judy is currently Masking her aura. If a shaman or mage in the group wants to assense her, make a secret Magic Test against Judy's Essence of 6. To get past the Mask, the shadowrunner needs a number of successes equal to the Judy's grade (4), minus his grade. If the test fails, the mage sees a "mundane person." If the test succeeds, the shadowrunner knows the woman is a mage. If a copy of **The Grimoire** is not available, the gamemaster won't understand all this stuff about grades. Not to worry. Just play it as though none of the mage-type runners can penetrate the Mask.

Besides giving out information about the Brotherhood, one of Judy's main functions is to screen those with magical abilities, especially shamans. She will assense the team and determine which, if any, members of the group have magical abilities. If the players get into combat here, Judy will attempt to neutralize the magic-users with a Chaotic World spell.

Judy recognizes the team as the same runners who have been seeking information about Victoria Delling. Her job is to get the shadowrunners to leave as quickly as possible.

If the shadowrunners try to go up the stairs or enter any of the doors, Judy calls out to them, "Excuse me! Can I help you?"

If the team pays no heed, one of the guards steps up and says, "I believe the woman in the information booth would like a word with you."

If they still want to go on their way, Judy presses an alarm in the booth and it's time to go to **Assault**, whether the shadowrunners are ready for it or not.

If the shadowrunners go to the booth, they see that Judy is wearing a name tag. She smiles up at them and says, "Would you like some information about our organization?" If the players have yet to get the Universal Brotherhood flyer, give it to them now from the **Player Handouts** section.

"Our Discovery meetings are every Tuesday night at seven-thirty, and we suggest that anyone interested in the Universal Brotherhood attend a Discovery Meeting to find out what we're all about. Now," she says, an edge creeping into her well-trained voice, "we prefer it when the interest in the Brotherhood is genuine. You don't know how disappointed and saddened we are when someone tries to gain entry to the Universal Brotherhood under false pretense. When you've had time to think about whether you truly want to join, then please come back Tuesday."

By the time her speech is done, six more guards have entered the lobby. If the team does not want to leave, a guard approaches. "The lady asked you to leave," he says. "I don't think any of you wants trouble. There's enough of that in the world already." If the runners try anything, the guards shoot to kill.

## DEBUGGING

This scene reveals that the UB is onto the shadowrunners and that dealing politely with the cult is going to garner very little success.

If Bamba has met up with the group, he will not accompany them to the chapterhouse for just a visit. He knows they

want him and he's not about to hand himself over.

If the group decides to shoot their wad now, flip over to **Assault** and let the chips fall where they may. If this is what they want, let them have it.

If they leave calmly, the runners have several options. If they try decking into the Brotherhood systems to get data about Victoria's whereabouts, they discover that the Brotherhood data is in a **Frozen World**. They might also want to get together with Bamba and make **Battleplans**, p. 30.



# FROZEN WORLD

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The shadowrunners may want to check out the Brotherhood systems in order to locate Victoria and the Blood necklace. Each of the four chapterhouses in Seattle has its own system address, but each system is identical in design. That means the decker can use the map and map key below, no matter which UB system he accesses.

Though the system maps are identical, each system holds different information. Only The Octagon and the Redmond chapterhouses contain information about Victoria and the necklace. A copy of *The Universal Brotherhood* is currently on file in each system, so the runners can grab it now if they didn't get it in the course of their legwork.

To track down the chapterhouse computer system address, the decker must make a Computer Skill Test against the UCAS's RTG security code (that's a Target Number of 4, with a whopping 1 success required, chummer). For details on this, see **Shadowrun**, p. 100. The decker must declare which chapterhouse he's going for before making his test.

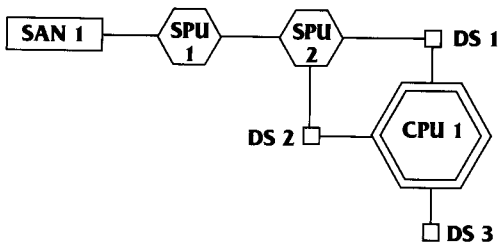
Once the decker has an LTG, he can start working his way through the system.

## UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD MAP KEY

**SAN-1:** Directory # (63-7516) Red-3, Access (modified) 6. The SAN appears as a giant orb of white light. As the decker approaches, a small sphere of light detaches itself from the orb and floats over him. It speaks to the decker in the voice of a kind but authoritative woman. "Welcome to our chapterhouse. As we are all brothers, you have every right to be here. But because some of our files, such as our bank account records, must be kept safe, we hope you will understand that only some are open to your perusal. Have you ever thought of coming to a Universal Brotherhood Discovery Meeting?"

The small white light is an Access IC and is modified to act as a tag for deckers who are in the chapterhouse Matrix. The program will be referred to as Orb for the rest of the text. As long as the little white light is following the decker, he can bypass a lot of the IC in the rest of the chapterhouse Matrix. That is, as long as he doesn't do anything the Orb asks him not to do.

If a decker approaches the SAN with the proper passcode, the Orb simply floats alongside the decker as he travels through the Matrix. The passcodes are only given out to members of the Brotherhood. Depending on the particular passcode, the Orb will give the decker different levels of access to files and data.



If a decker approaches the SAN without the passcode, Orb will let the decker into the chapterhouse Matrix, floating alongside him, pestering him about his buried angers, his feelings of inadequacy, and offering the Universal Brotherhood as a solution to all his problems. "All this sneaking around," Orb might say, "You know it isn't a decent way to live. There's no need to encourage such distrust in the world—a world already rife with so many problems. The Universal Brotherhood can help you, you know."

If the decker throws a Deception program at the IC, Orb will float alongside the decker but remain silent. The runner will have the same access as if he hadn't run the utility, but he won't have to put up with the thing constantly babbling at him about the Brotherhood. Running a successful Deception also affects the Trace and Report program (see below).

If the decker runs a Sleaze, he gets past Orb, but draws a lot of trouble to himself. Orb ensures that most ice won't run against a decker unless he does something really aggressive. Traveling through the Matrix without Orb means that the decker will activate every IC the second he enters a node.

**SPU-1:** Orange-5. Trace and Report 4. This SPU controls various audio-visual equipment that is used for Discovery and Guidance Meetings.

Once the decker passes through the soft white surface of the SAN, he enters a large garden that extends as far as the eye can see. (Because the Matrix is made up of icons, the world can be made to look as large or small as you want it to). An attractive man, neatly dressed in corporate garb, is sitting on an old-fashioned wrought iron metal chair in the middle of a gravel circle about five meters across (again, the appearance of being five meters across). Before him is a table holding a small computer terminal. An empty chair is on the other side of the desk and five more empty chairs are at the edge of the gravel circle.

If Orb is still active, he says to the decker, "This is Timothy. I think you'll like him."

Either way, the man rises from his chair, smiling as he introduces himself. He asks the decker to take a seat so they may talk before he goes further into the chapterhouse's Matrix.

If the decker does not comply, Timothy sits down and types into the computer. He is activating the Trace and Report program (of course, he is the program). The decker can attempt to block the program using his utilities.

If the decker does sit down, the Icon first tells him how happy the Brotherhood is to have him as a guest. Then he asks if he'd be willing to give some information about himself. Timothy would like a name and the phone number of the decker's entry point into the system. Timothy will then type some information into the tabletop computer (he is activating the Trace and Report program). If the information does not match up or if the decker is later responsible for contradicting the rules of the system, four green-shirts appear at the point of the decker's location within ten minutes. Use the **Company Man Contact**, p. 164, **Shadowrun**, for the green-shirts.

If the decker simply walks past the icons, they will try to activate the Trace and Report and the green-shirts are immediately sent to the decker's real-world entry address.

If the decker sleazed Orb and thus is not properly "tagged" by the Access program, the Trace and Report automatically tries to run itself and the decker enters the node with Timothy still

typing into the terminal.

If the decker ran a Deceive against Orb, then the silent icon marks the decker as a person already logged with the Brotherhood. Timothy simply nods hello to the decker, smiles, then continues looking contentedly about the garden.

A small stream travels through the garden to a sub-processing unit.

**SPU-2:** Red-4. Tar Baby 3. This SPU controls the air conditioning and lighting systems for the chapterhouse as well as serving numerous I/O devices used to input and retrieve data from Datastore-1 and Datastore-2.

The decker comes to a fork in the stream. An old man sits fishing on the bank of the stream, his feet resting in the water. Little sparkles of light, which look like the sun reflecting off the water but are really data entering and leaving the system, travel up and down the forks of the stream.

If the decker is with a quiet Orb, the man smiles and nods a greeting.

If the decker is with a talkative Orb (that is, the decker is not recognized as a member of the Brotherhood), the man invites the decker to "sit a spell" with him. The man then relates a story about how he was not fulfilled in life until he joined the Brotherhood. It's got all the classic elements, including close to suicide, success but no happiness.

If the decker does not have Orb with him, the man (in reality the Tar Baby program) snaps his reel back and attempts to "snag" the utility from the decker.

**Datastore-1:** Orange-3. Killer 5. This datastore contains files on the chapterhouse's membership (or, if the decker is in the Octagon system, the membership for all four chapterhouses).

The decker follows the stream to a kind of office set up along the banks of the stream. There's a desk with a computer on it as well as a multi-line phone. A man, relaxed and competent, sits behind the desk. He greets the decker and asks what he can do for him.

The man behind the desk explains that no one has anything to hide once they enter the Brotherhood and so all files are open to anyone who wants to look at them. The files are contained in the fruit growing in the trees along the stream. To access the file, the decker need only find the apple with the subject's name carved in small letters on the skin and eat it. The icon grows back when the file is plucked. The orchard around the stream contains about 10,000 Mp (40,000 for the Octagon). If a Browse is used to search the database, the keywords "Delling" or even "Victoria" might work. The entry reads:

Delling, Victoria/Redmond Chapterhouse  
Discovery Meeting: 7-3-49  
Joined: 7-12-49  
Inner Circle: 8-21-51  
Progressing.

The decker notices another orchard on the other side of a fence. Orb or the gentlemen behind the desk explain that it contains records of donations by members of the Brotherhood. Membership is not a secret, but the Brotherhood respects its members' right to keep their incomes, or lack of income, their own business. The system icons indicate that the orchard is off-limits. If the decker attempts to get over the fence, the businessman pulls out a heavy pistol and tells him to stop. The Killer Ice has been activated.

If the decker gets across the fence and accesses "Delling,

"Victoria," or "Blood," he finds a fruit with the following data:

Donations:

Delling, Victoria

Liquidated assets:

11,000¥ of furniture and household items

157¥ misc.

580¥ clothes

120¥ jewelry

Retained:

Blood Necklace, Jewelry (Est. Value 60,000¥)

Note: Necklace is a unique piece that will remain in the Redmond chapterhouse coffers until interest in Delling has subsided or been removed. Pawling too soon could leave a trail back to the Brotherhood.

If Orb is still with the decker and he has killed the businessman, whether or not the Access program had been deleted, he begins to extol the virtues of the Brotherhood in riddling one of excess anger and the importance of belonging to the world rather than fighting it.

**Database-2:** Orange-3. Scramble. The stream leads to an area where men and women are happily arranging colored rocks across a giant, open field. They are dressed in colorful, loose clothing. If the decker inquires as to the types of files he is observing, he is told that these are financial records of the chapterhouse. They report book sales, expenses for the soup kitchen, and so on. Each file contains 3 Mp each and can be read without difficulty.

The decker also comes across a series of stone patterns that never stop shifting around. If he tries to read them, one of the workers comes up to his icon, touches it gently, like any good Brotherhood member, and says, "These are our bank accounts. I'm sure you'll understand if we don't want you accessing these. You can, of course, receive a printed report of our accounts from the chapterhouse."

The bank data file is neither but garbage. Like the other files in this database, these are the "public" reports shown to the government. If the decker gets into the file, he ascertains that the chapterhouse has 17,073¥ in the bank of Security Savings. It is a 30 Mp file to download. It has a Scramble on it so a decker will believe he's hit the chapterhouse's piggybank.

**CPU-1:** Red-7. Black IC 8.

The streams lead to a small pond with a small cottage next to it. Orb informs the decker that he's not welcome here. If the decker enters the cottage, he finds an office filled with countless cubicles. The room is much bigger on the inside than the cottage was on the outside. A few people look up and a corp type asks what the decker wants. No matter what the decker says, the icon replies, "I understand your curiosity, but you must understand that some areas are off-limits until we are certain we can trust you." The decker can attempt to run utilities to get past the businessman.

The black IC is in the form of eight green-shirts. If the IC starts taking damage, the green-shirts appear to die.

There is a door at the other end of the CPU.

**Database-3:** Red-7. Barrier 5. Trace and Burn 6. The database looks like a room containing a bank vault. There is a nervous-looking little clerk-type who throws up his hands as soon as the decker enters the room. This is the Trace and Burn. It will take off for the door as soon as it has a fix on the decker, no matter what the condition of Orb.

The vault contains all kinds of goodies contained in safety deposit boxes, but at the top of the list of interest for the decker is:

"A cache of nuyen. System operation permits transfer of funds (500,000¥) from the chapterhouse's second Security Savings account. The money must be fenced normally. For purposes of downloading, this is a 100 Mp file.

"If the decker checks the names "Victoria" or "Delling," he pulls up the following:

Notes: Delling is a dedicated member of the Brotherhood. However, despite our best efforts, she has managed to resist total acceptance and, it is suspected, is keeping major aspects of her life a secret from the Brotherhood.

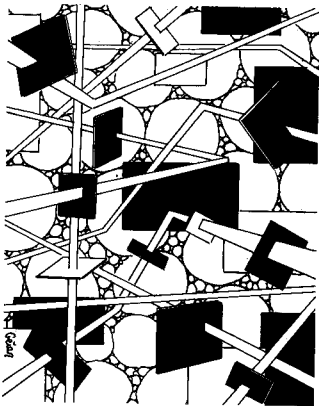
Update (8-21-51): Moments before her initiation, Delling said the word "Danial." We suspect that this might be the missing element. She never mentioned such a man before. When she does not return, this man may send investigators to track her down. No action will be taken until contact is made by outside agents. At that time, they will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Update (8-23-51): Delling has already started generating interest. Proceed with Human muscle. Rekracir has details on the description of the interested parties.

August 21 was last Sunday's date.

If the decker looks under "Wanderly" or "Davitt" or scans for *The Universal Brotherhood*, he digs up a copy of manuscript, which is about 20 Mp long. If he downloads it, give him the handout.

If the system goes into External Alert, the chapterhouse has two Major League deckers (**Shadowrun**, p. 116) who come onto the system to clean it out. They appear as a metallic ant and a metallic fly.



# ASSAULT

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

You've geared up, centered out, and locked on. The Redmond chapterhouse is your target and you can feel the familiar edge sliding into your spine. Already your breathing is picking up, your muscles are tensing, and your eyes are catching every detail around you. Something's different this time around, though. It's in your gut. Something's telling you that there's definitely reasons to be afraid.

But here you are. You're a shadowrunner and that means you take that fear and make it someone else's nightmare.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Here we go...

Following are maps and descriptions of the five floors of the chapterhouse. Note that some of the characters in the chapterhouse are only there during business hours (7:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.).

The shadowrunners' attack will catch the Brotherhood by surprise. That is, the chapterhouse is prepared to meet an attack, but they won't know in advance that one is coming at that moment. Once gunshots go off, the building will be on alert. The guards will leave their marked starting positions and head for the sound of the combat.

The location of other characters and creatures are noted in

the appropriate rooms. All of these non-player characters will stay where marked on the map.

If the shadowrunners are not going to help Bambra rescue Victoria, he will hang out with the player characters until he finds the Inner Circle Room. If Bambra goes off on his own and the shadowrunners do not look for him in the Inner Circle Room, they never hear from him again.

## REDMOND CHAPTERHOUSE MAP KEY

The chapterhouse is divided into five floors: the basement, the first floor (including the lobby), the second floor, and the third and fourth floors, which are made up of offices.

### BASEMENT

NOTE: All the lighting in the basement is dim and red.

#### Utility Room (1)

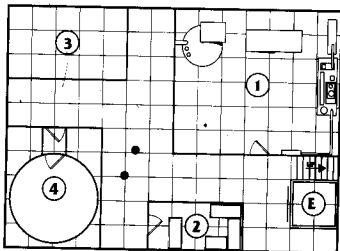
This large room houses the heating system, electrical circuits, and so forth for the building.

#### Supply Room (2)

Boxes of books, pamphlets, office supplies, and such are in this room.

#### Coffers (3)

This room houses all the valuables gathered by the chapterhouse that have yet to be liquidated. One True Form Male Fly Spirit is in the room.



### Basement

- - Guards
- ⓔ - Elevator
- - Meter



# ASSAULT

## TRUE FORM MALE FLY SPIRIT (FORCE 10)

**B Q S C I W E R Attacks**

10 11 x 4 12 — 9 1 10A 17\*(Str)M2 or Special

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest.

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Smell), Venom (Damage 10S2)

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)

The guard will smell the party approaching and prepare an ambush. As soon as a shadowrunner opens a door, the creature launches itself at the group and attacks with its venom.

The room contains 15 metal boxes. Each box contains a valuable, be it jewelry or creditchips. The value of the items ranges from 10,000¥ to 60,000¥. After the adventure, make a die roll for each item and multiply the result by 10,000¥. Blood is in one of these boxes. To get cash for the other items, follow the fencing procedures described in *After the Shadowrun*, p. 147-8, **Shadowrun**.

### Inner Circle Room (4)

When the characters approach this room, they see that the door is black with gold fittings. Upon entering the room, they become immediately aware that the hall behind the door is very warm and that the floor and walls are soft, almost alive. The lighting is now a dim blue. A strange smell is in the air, "something vaguely familiar, like yeast, something biological."

The next door leads to a circular chamber about 20 meters across. Here the shadowrunners see four Male Flesh Form Fly Spirits and the Fly Queen. The Flesh Forms are tending three bloated, bulging sacs. Looking carefully, the runners see that the sacs contain writhing Humans.

## MALE FLESH FORM FLY SPIRIT (FORCE 6)

**B Q S C I W E R Attacks**

9 10 10 — 5 1 (6) 13 9M2

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL		MENTAL	
Unconscious	Ready: Near	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL		MENTAL	
Unconscious	Ready: Near	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL		MENTAL	
Unconscious	Ready: Near	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL		MENTAL	
Unconscious	Ready: Near	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

## QUEEN

**B Q S C I W E R Attacks**

14 14 x 5 14 10 10 10 10A 22'14S3 or Special

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest.

**Powers:** Animal Control (Fly), Compulsion, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Fear, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Summoning, Venom

**Weakness:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)

CONDITION MONITOR		PHYSICAL		MENTAL	
Unconscious	Ready: Near	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

If the shadowrunners wipe out the bugs and open the sacs, they find one man and two women, one of them obviously Victoria, all in different stages of metamorphosis. Victoria's once-beautiful face is now misshapen, bulging at the cheekbones. Her hair has fallen out and her spine is hunched at the base of neck. She does not react to the characters and seems almost dead. *There is nothing the characters can do for her.* Let them try magic and what-not, making all the rolls and so on, but she is as good as dead.





# ASSAULT

### Elevator and Stairs (2)

This short hallway has stairs to the basement and an elevator up to the second, third, and fourth floors.

### Discovery Auditorium (3)

This 100-seat auditorium is the same as when it served as a movie theater. The seats remain in place and a screen stands at the front of the room. Two podiums have been added to a platform in front of the screen.

### Counseling Rooms (4)

These four rooms make up an area that was once a movie theater but is now divided into small rooms by the addition of walls. Each room contains a dozen chairs. During normal business hours, rooms marked with a (\*) currently have a counseling session going on and contain six new members to the UB and six counselors. These people will not actively engage the shadowrunners, but will run and try to alert the guards.

Use **Human Pedestrian (Sprawl Sites, p. 116)** for all the UB members in the room.

### Soup Kitchen (5)

The rear of the first floor has a makeshift soup kitchen whose entrance is from the alley behind the building. During normal business hours, there are six kitchen staffers and a dozen street people looking for a meal. Use **Human Pedestrian (Sprawl Sites, p. 116)** for the staff and **Squatter (Shadowrun, p. 170)** for the street people.

The presence of this group will, obviously, hinder the team's ability to sneak in through the back.

### SECOND FLOOR

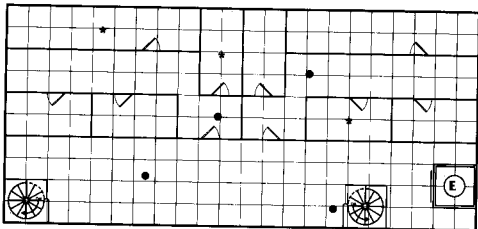
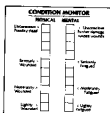
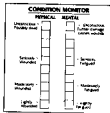
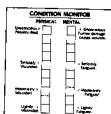
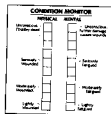
These rooms take up an area that was once two movie theaters but that has been divided into small rooms by the addition of walls. Each room contains a dozen chairs. The rooms marked with a (\*) have counseling sessions going on during normal business hours. Each contains six new members to the UB and six Counselors. There are a total of four guards on this floor.

### BROTHERHOOD GUARDS

**B Q S C I W E M R Armor**  
4 5 3 3 4 5 6 --- 4 (3/2)

**Dice Pools:** Defense(Armed) 1, Defense(Unarmed) 4, Dodge 5  
**Skills:** Car 3, Etiquette (Street) 7, Firearms 5, Military Theory 2, Psychology 4, Unarmed Combat 4

**Gear:** Ares Crusader MPs (40 clip APDS), 2 extra clips, 4M2, -1 to ballistic armor, Secure Ultra-Vest (3/2), Flash-Pak, Anti-Flash Goggles.



## 2nd Floor

- - Guards
- ⊙ - Elevator
- - 1 Meter

## THIRD AND FOURTH FLOORS

These rooms are all offices filled with desks, water coolers, file cabinets, computer systems, and so forth. There are two desks per office on the third floor. The chapterhouse operations are on a 24-hour schedule and there is someone at every desk.

Everyone on the third floor is a pure Human. Use the **Mr. Johnson Contact**, p. 170, **Shadowrun**.

There is nothing of value in the offices. The records are coded so deeply to disguise the building's income that they would be useless as proof of any wrongdoing.

There are two guards on each of these floors.

## BROTHERHOOD GUARDS

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **M** **R** **Armor**  
 4 5 3 3 4 5 6 — 4 (3/2)

**Dice Pools:** Defense(Armed) 1, Defense(Unarmed) 4, Dodge 5  
**Skills:** Car 3, Etiquette (Street) 7, Firearms 5, Military Theory 2, Psychology 4, Unarmed Combat 4

**Gear:** Ares Crusader MPs (40 clip APDS), 2 extra clips, 4M2, -1 to ballistic armor, Secure Ultra-Vest (3/2), Flash-Pak, Anti-Flash Goggles.

## DEBUGGING

First off, if the characters die here, so be it. Dealing with the Universal Brotherhood is like that.

Second, if the team isn't going to help Bamba get Victoria out, he'll hang out with them until he thinks he's found out where she is (the doorway leading to the Inner Circle) and then go off on his own. Before doing so, he says sincerely, "Thanks for helping me get me this far."

Later on, the group will hear gunshots and maybe a scream coming from the Inner Circle Room. If they do not go to investigate, they never see Bamba again.

If they go to his aid, they find him dead on the floor of the Inner Circle Room, his chest ripped out. One of the Flesh Forms is munching on a leg.

The shadowrunners make it out with their lives and maybe the loot, and then it's off to **Picking Up the Pieces**.

### 3rd Floor

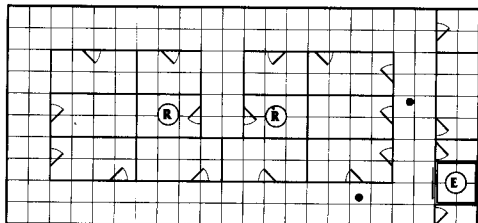
CONDITION MONITOR	
PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious + Heavily Injured	Unconscious + Severe damage Severe wounds
Seriously Wounded	Seriously Fatigued
Moderately Wounded	Moderately Fatigued
Lightly Wounded	Lightly Fatigued

CONDITION MONITOR	
PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious + Heavily Injured	Unconscious + Severe damage Severe wounds
Seriously Wounded	Seriously Fatigued
Moderately Wounded	Moderately Fatigued
Lightly Wounded	Lightly Fatigued

### 4th Floor

CONDITION MONITOR	
PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious + Heavily Injured	Unconscious + Severe damage Severe wounds
Seriously Wounded	Seriously Fatigued
Moderately Wounded	Moderately Fatigued
Lightly Wounded	Lightly Fatigued

CONDITION MONITOR	
PHYSICAL	MENTAL
Unconscious + Heavily Injured	Unconscious + Severe damage Severe wounds
Seriously Wounded	Seriously Fatigued
Moderately Wounded	Moderately Fatigued
Lightly Wounded	Lightly Fatigued



## 3rd & 4th Floors

- - Guards
- ⓔ - Elevator
- Ⓡ - Elevator
- - 1 Meter

# PICKING UP THE PIECES

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

You've got no trouble getting through the rush-hour crowds, arriving quickly at your meeting spot, the Glass Onion. Simpson is standing there in the lobby, looking expectant and in high spirits. He almost seems to be standing up straight.

"Do you have it?" he asks as you approach. "Wonderful, wonderful! Lucile will be so happy. Thank you so much. Did Victoria...? No, don't tell me. I don't want to know where she was, what she was doing. You know... I think this whole thing was really for the best. Victoria was just some tramp looking for quick cash. She was never going to make me happy. But when she left, I had to examine what it was that was making me unhappy. I talked about it with my father-in-law—I'd never really been open with him before—and that night, the night I hired you, he took me to an organization that I think is really going to help me."

Smiling, Simpson takes out a credstick with the balance of your fee on it. Then he turns and walks off to his car, whistling.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

One of the runners may want to warn Simpson of the dangers of the Brotherhood or to argue for more money because of the run's unexpected dangers. Remind the runner that it is unlikely that Simpson would believe any of the strange circumstances surrounding the Brotherhood. Worse, the man might pass the word that the team was involved in the Redmond chapterhouse raid to the Brotherhood superiors. As it stands, the Brotherhood will have a tough time tracking the runners down. Simpson is their only potential leak, and as long as the team members keep their mouths shut, he'll never know.

If the runners try to take their knowledge public, the attempt is doomed to fail. The Brotherhood's Brethren are too well-entrenched to allow a full public disclosure. Anyone to whom the runners tell the story will mysteriously die: the data will be wiped from the Matrix and the Brotherhood will come after the runners with major muscle.

If the shadowrunners lie low for awhile, the Universal Brotherhood will not make a huge effort to find them, nor will they have much success. The runners should not underestimate how powerful is this enemy, however. At some future time, the gamemaster should weave a couple of scenarios around the Brotherhood's attempts to burn the runners, but not right away. One reason shadowrunners can do what they do is because it's hard to extract revenge against people who don't officially exist.

As an aside, trying to fence Blood will not work out for the runners. Blood is an item too unique to be disposed of easily. It would be like trying to fence the Mona Lisa. The target number for finding a fence who would even touch it is 10. Moreover, the runners will have a +4 added to their Target Number for the Negotiation Test. Finally, the Brotherhood would probably track them down through a fence. Running the shadows is no easy life, and sometimes it isn't even rewarding.

## AWARDING KARMA

If the runners get to the chapterhouse coffers, they're going to be rolling in enough nuyen to help them maintain a low profile for some time. There's also some Karma to be awarded for achieving certain goals in the mission.

Getting the Necklace	5
Getting a copy of <i>The Universal Brotherhood</i>	3
Going with Bamba to the Inner Circle	2



# LEGWORK

## USING THE TABLES

During the course of **Missing Blood**, the shadowrunners might have to do some legwork to get more information, dig up clues, or follow up leads. This is done either through personal contacts or by digging into the Matrix or public access datanets. In this adventure, the player characters should focus their research on the whereabouts of Patrick Bamba, a detective who apparently has some idea of what's going on, and the Universal Brotherhood, which the characters know to be involved in the whole mess, but not to what degree or in what way.

If the characters want to track down Bamba, see **Irishman On The Lam** below. If they want to find out more about the Universal Brotherhood, consult **Behind The Brotherhood**. Each section includes a table showing what information the characters can gather during their legwork.

Any character may talk to a contact once every two hours. All success tests have a target number of 4 and all are unresisted. The die rolls are frequent because **Missing Blood** occurs during a short time span (it's a three-day mission, after all). The shadowrunners are going to have to work every contact they've got in the city. Skills that permit legwork include the appropriate Etiquette Skill (Street, Media, and so on), Computer or Decking, and Negotiation or Interrogation.

Keep a running total of the group's successes from each contact. When the total reaches a given number, give them the information indicated in the appropriate section.

For example, three characters are doing legwork one night. One uses Computer Skill, another uses Etiquette (Media) to plumb his media contacts, and the third is out in the bars using his Etiquette (Street). The first couple of hours they roll 1, 4, and no successes, respectively. Their total so far is 5 successes, allowing them to gather information with a Success Rating of 5 or less in the particular section of the adventure they are investigating. Two of the characters continue for another two hours of work. They each get 2 more successes. The total on that section is now 9 (5 + 2 + 2), and they get all the information with a value of 9 or less.

Keep separate totals for each section. If two characters are after the **Irishman On The Lam** and another is checking details contained in **Behind The Brotherhood**, total up their successes separately. Successes collected in one section do not count for clues in another.

There are two ways to use the legwork tables. The first is to simply make the success tests and read off the information. There is nothing wrong with this and it keeps the adventure moving along. If the gamemaster wishes, he can also use the tables for impromptu scenes. That means fleshing out the circumstances of the test for which the shadowrunner is using

his appropriate skill as well as the information he receives.

For example, a shadowrunner is using his Etiquette (Street) Skill to find the **Irishman On The Lam**. This means that he's using his rougher, streetwise contacts to dig up dirt and possibly the current location of Patrick Bamba. If the character makes some successes, it means that somewhere out in the dark streets of Seattle the shadowrunner has gathered some information. Let's say that he got 10 successes. That's enough information to discover that Bamba is hiding out because he knows that somebody with muscle is after him, and enough successes to also find out where this guy is.

The gamemaster decides that the shadowrunner is at a bar called O'Malley's (that's right, he's just making it up as he goes along), a popular hangout in an Irish neighborhood near Bamba's office. You start the scene with the runner asking a bartender if he knows a guy called Bamba. The bartender directs the character to a shifty-eyed guy named Phil, slitting with a bunch of his friends in the rear of the bar. The shadowrunner has to go back there, make friends with Phil, or buy him off, threaten him, or whatever else the gamemaster decides, to get that information. A scene develops between the two characters as the shadowrunner tries to get the information from the non-player character, who is trying to get something (cash, a favor, a drink, whatever) in return. Realize that Phil might be Bamba's best friend and thus not predisposed to spill information to a total stranger, or he might just have heard a juicy tidbit of data and will sell it to the highest bidder. It's up to you, chummer.

The Idea Is to bring the information from the legwork tables to life by making the shadowrunners interact with NPCs instead of just reading it cold off the table. Examples of characters giving out information in **Missing Blood** are the meetings with Dent and Lawson at Victoria's apartment house. Each exists primarily to give the player characters data, but each has an environment, quirks, and a point of view about the subject at hand.

In this way, the gamemaster can plug in non-player characters from other adventures (Ferret from **Dreamchipper**, for example, or other characters that he has invented for previous adventures) into **Missing Blood**. If the runners have to track down one of their familiar contacts to get the dirt on Bamba, it will add a depth to the gaming world. The Seattle of **Shadowrun** will have that much more substance when the various elements of the shadowrunners' lives have continuity rather than appearing once and then disappearing forever.

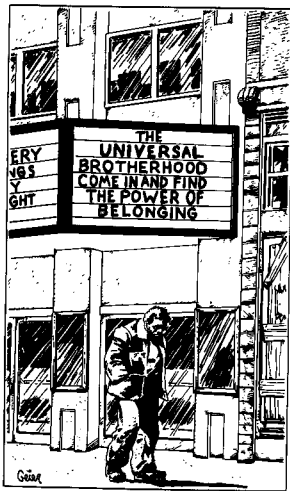
Legwork scenes also offer good opportunities to weave in other aspects of a shadowrunner's life. For example, let's say that in another adventure one of the shadowrunners owed a great deal of money to a loan shark. If one of the loan shark's enforcers wanders into O'Malley's while the runner is questioning Phil, that character would suddenly have two problems to

deal with: pumping his Informant for dirt and trying to avoid being spotted by the enforcer. All because of a simple little bit of legwork.

When setting up such encounters, keep in mind that the scene is intended to add color, not to be another series of tests to get the information. Thus, if the character is dealing with Phil to get his information that Bambra is hiding, the shadowrunner should leave the scene with that information. There's no need to make more tests during the scene. It should simply be the gamemaster and the characters roleplaying the situation. If the runners play the scene really well, however, it might merit them some bonus successes so that they end up getting more information than the original Legwork Success Test would have yielded.

We have compressed all the Legwork information into tables because there is not enough space to develop a full scene for each piece of data on the tables. If the gamemaster decides to roleplay a scene, he knows his characters and game situation more intimately than anyone else.

On the other hand, if it's time for the story to gain some quick momentum or the gamemaster is not comfortable inventing scenes on the spur of the moment, he can simply use the tables or perhaps create a combination of scenes and straight Legwork Tests.



## IRISHMAN ON THE LAM

This section comes into play if the shadowrunners start to look for Patrick Bambra, the detective hired by Danial Simpson and a man who is now on a personal quest to rescue Victoria Delling from the Universal Brotherhood.

As the runners accumulate successes, the gamemaster begins to give the team all the clues up to and including their current Success Total.

If the characters already have Bambra's name (which they can get from visiting **Madame Ulishta**), they automatically start with 6 successes.

•If the shadowrunners find out where Bambra is and want to go talk to him, go to **Scoping Out Superdad's**, p. 27. The Target Number is 4.

### Successes

### Result

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 4   | A detective named Patrick Bambra has been working on an extramarital affair case for an exec at Renraku. It pays pretty well, but he doesn't like the job. The runners also get a description of Bambra from the <b>Cast of Characters</b> section if they remember to ask what he looks like. |
| 5   | Bambra has a good reputation, but is more than a bit of a romantic. He often throws caution and good sense to the wind when he decides to help someone who he believes is being victimized.  |
| 8   | Bambra is on one of his quests. This time it's a young woman who needs to be rescued. What's interesting is that Bambra has apparently not been romantically involved with a woman for years, but now he seems to be in love.  |
| 10  | Bambra has gotten himself into a bit of trouble. No one knows exactly what the trouble is, but there's some muscle out after him. He's lying low for awhile.   |
| 12  | A good friend of Bambra's, a decker named Toggle, was scraped off his terminal earlier in the day after getting shorted by some vicious ICE. Word is that Toggle was doing a favor for Bambra at the time.   |
| 14+ | Last anybody heard, Bambra is holed up at a bar called Superdad's, a stripper joint in the Kingsgate area of the Redmond Barrens!  |

## BEHIND THE BROTHERHOOD

This section should be used if the characters want to get background information about the Universal Brotherhood.

As the team accumulates successes, the gamemaster begins to give them all the clues, up to and including their current Success Total. Much of this information is available simply by doing a search of the datanets.

Remember that nobody in Seattle is much concerned over the Universal Brotherhood. People know it's a semi-religious cult, but that's about as far as their interest goes. If the shadowrunners dig down deep enough, however, they start to discover some exceptional details about the Brotherhood. Most specifically, this involves information about the Brotherhood, two writers, and the destruction of a tavern.

The following Legwork information does not include what is available through checking into the Universal Brotherhood's private Matrix or an actual visit to a Brotherhood chapterhouse. If the shadowrunners decide to undertake either activity, go to *Frozen World*, p. 33, or *Science of Silence*, p. 31, respectively. The Target Number is 4.



## Successes Result

- 2 The Universal Brotherhood has four chapterhouses in Seattle. The largest of these is The Octagon, a ten-story building on the corner of Eighth and Westlake Avenues. A second is in the Redmond Barrens neighborhood of Kingsgate, at Waveland and Belmont. The third is in Puyallup and the fourth is in Everett.
- 4 The characters dig up an eight-year-old newspaper article. Give them the Player Handout labeled **Here Comes the Brotherhood!**
- 8 The Universal Brotherhood is a non-profit corporation with a total UCAS cash flow of under one million nuyen. The Brotherhood claims to have about 300 chapterhouses in North America, and another 100 chapters worldwide. The Brotherhood is well-connected. It seems that one of their members, a supply officer at Fort Lewis, has been shipping them machine pistol APDS rounds and Flash-Paks.
- 11 Earlier this spring, a Seattle freelance writer named Zebediah Wanderly was asking around about the Universal Brotherhood. People remember Wanderly's investigation because he was killed in a bomb blast in Grodin's Tavern at the time of his investigation. The official story claimed that a dealer discovered Wanderly planting a bomb in the bar's basement and that the bomb went off when the dealer tried to interfere.
- 14 Some people remember seeing a file labeled the Universal Brotherhood on the Shadowland net in June last year. It was written by Zebediah Wanderly and Frederick Davitt. It flashed on the screen for about three minutes and then crashed when the local server hub was destroyed by an explosion. If the shadowrunners want to find out about Frederick Davitt, give them the Player Handout labeled **Freelance Newswriter Mugging Victim**. Information about Wanderly's death is impossible to dig up at this time.
- 16 Some folks aren't too sure that Wanderly set the explosion in Grodin's Tavern. At the time of the bomb blast, Grodin's was the location of the local Shadowland server hub. The runners also get the **Lone Star Memo** handout.
- 18 Word has it that some folks managed to get a copy of the Wanderly/Davitt file, but none has come forward to reveal himself.
- 20 An anonymous source leaks a copy of the *The Universal Brotherhood* to the shadowrunners. At this point, give them a copy of Wanderly and Davitt's correspondence and research.



# CAST OF CHARACTERS

## DANIAL SIMPSON

Danial Simpson is a pudgy executive who is afraid of... well, just about everything. He wanted a good job and beautiful wife so he could stop being afraid, but that backfired because he really doesn't like his job, so he doesn't get promoted, so his wife doesn't really like him.

His love for Victoria was the flash-in-the-pan kind. As soon as things got sticky, he was ready to hate her. He feels used by her, not seeing that he used Victoria in ways she could never even have conceived.

If the shadowrunners somehow make contact with Simpson before Friday, he is mortified and stutters out that he is late for a meeting. Play this character as a pathetic simpleton.

### Attributes

Body: 2  
 Quickness: 2  
 Strength: 2  
 Charisma: 3  
 Intelligence: 4  
 Willpower: 2  
 Essence: 6  
 Reaction: 3

### Skills

Computer: 5  
 Etiquette (Corporate): 3  
 Negotiation: 6

### Dice Pools

Defense (Armed): 1  
 Defense (Unarmed): 1  
 Dodge: 2



### CONDITION MONITOR

#### PHYSICAL      MENTAL

Unconscious >

Possibly dead

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< Unconscious.

Further damage

causes wounds.

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## PATRICK BAMBRA

Bambra, 28, is not the most innocuous of private dicks. Well over two meters tall, he is very thin, with a boyish, freckled face topped by a mop of curly red hair. He dresses as well as he can, with thin ties and lined black dusters. The gals usually think he's cute to handsome.

He went into the detective business to solve puzzles and to help people. Like Victoria, Bambra is a bit of a romantic. He grew up watching the old detective flicks, which is where he learned about combining romantic cynicism and doing good deeds. To date, he's had a few cases such as rescuing kidnapped children and the like, but he must also take sleazebag assignments to pay the bills. The Simpson affair is definitely one for the sleazy side of the ledger, but Lucile Simpson seemed ready to fork over plenty from some unlimited bankroll, and Bambra could not afford to turn down the work.

After a particularly painful love affair during his teens, Bambra swore off women. His friends even kidded him about it: "Never trust a woman more than your sleazebag, Pat." Throwing himself into his work, he became moderately successful. All that changed the moment Bambra saw Victoria's face on her message to Simpson. His imagination immediately kicked into high gear, for here was the woman he'd been waiting for. He watched the tape incessantly, studying, lingering over the way she smiled, listening to the music in her voice, and falling deeper in love.

Bambra is determined to rescue her from the Universal Brotherhood. He definitely does not have anywhere near the full story, but he does know that something bad is going down there. Once he knows the shadowrunners aren't trying to geek him, he'll try to enlist their aid in rescuing Victoria. At the very least, he'll ask for cooperation because finding the necklace could mean finding the girl, or vice versa. If the runners manage to dig up The Universal Brotherhood file, knowledge of the monstrous danger will only spark Bambra's code of honor, making him more determined than ever to rescue Victoria. The runners will probably be able to talk him out of throwing his life away, but it will not be easy.

**Attributes**

Body: 4  
Quickness: 4  
Strength: 3  
Charisma: 3  
Intelligence: 6  
Willpower: 4  
Essence: 6  
Reaction: 5

**Dice Pools**

Defense (Armed): 1  
Defense (Unarmed): 6  
Dodge: 4

**Gear**

Lined Coat (4/2)  
Ares Predator II [15(Clip), Laser Sight, 6M2]  
Shock Glove (5L3)

**Skills**

Biotech: 2  
Car: 4  
Computer: 5  
Etiquette (Corporate): 3  
Etiquette (Street): 4  
Firearms: 6  
Negotiation: 6  
Stealth: 5  
Unarmed Combat: 6



**INSECT SPIRITS**

Following are the game stats for the Insect Spirits described in *The Universal Brotherhood*. Alert readers will notice some differences between the information given here, that given in *The Grimoire*, and what the shaman Man-of-Many Names told Zeb Wanderly. These are not inconsistencies; they simply reflect the fact that—wise though he may be—Many-Names does not know everything. For example, the entries for "Flesh Form" spirits also refer to what Many-Names and Zeb came to label "Human Form". These forms represent occasions when "the merge was good," with little or no manifestation of insect form.

Note, too, that any character possessed by an Insect Spirit loses control to that Spirit regardless of whether the "the merge was good." This information is not known to any character in the *Shadowrun* universe. The Brotherhood perpetuates the myth that a good merge leaves the host in charge in order to recruit voluntary hosts.

**FLESH FORMS**

The Mental Attributes and Reaction of the Flesh Form version of any Spirit are the same as for the True Form, but its Physical Attributes are equal to those of the host plus the Spirit's Force.

A Flesh Form Soldier does not have any of the Powers of the Spirit nor does it have the Spirit's Weaknesses.

**ANT SPIRITS**

Ant Spirits are highly social and cooperate exceptionally well within a single hive. Ant Spirits are also territorial, leading to intense rivalry between hives.

**TRUE FORM SOLDIER ANT**

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Attacks
F+1	(F+4)x4	F+4	—	F	2	(F)A	F+5	(Str)M2 or Special

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Smell), Paralyzing Touch, Venom  
**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)

**TRUE FORM WORKER ANT**

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Attacks
F-2	Fx3	F+2	—	F-1	1	(F)A	1*	None

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Smell), Skill  
**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)

**ANT QUEEN**

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Attacks
F+5	(F+6)x5	F+6	F	F	F	(F)A	F+10*	(Str)S3 or Special

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest.

**Powers:** Animal Control (Ant), Compulsion, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Fear, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Paralyzing Touch, Summoning, Venom  
**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### FLY SPIRITS

Fly Spirits show no caste system. All members of the hive are male except for the Queen. These males serve as either warriors or workers; in neither role are they as skilled as Ant Spirits.

#### TRUE FORM MALE FLY SPIRIT

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **R** **Attacks**  
**F** (F+1) x4 **F**+2 — **F**-1 **I** (FA) **F**+7' (Str)M2 or Special

\*In astral space, receives a +10 initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest.

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Smell), Venom

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)



### FLY QUEEN

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **R** **Attacks**  
**F**+4 (F+4) x5 **F**+4 **F** **F** **F** (FA) **F**+12' (Str)S3 or Special

\*In astral space, receives a +10 initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest.

**Powers:** Animal Control (Fly), Compulsion, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Fear, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Summoning, Venom

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### TERMITE SPIRITS

Termite Spirits show a caste system similar to that of ants; it is composed of queens, workers, and warriors. Termite workers are adept at burrowing and can build cement-hard "mounds" and "towers" by mixing sand with their saliva to make a fast-hardening, concrete-like material. They are less territorially ambitious than ants, but are ferocious in defense of their own territory.

### TRUE FORM SOLDIER TERMITE SPIRIT

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **R** **Attacks**  
 F+1 (F+4) x4 F+5 — F 2 (FA F+4) (Str/M2 or Special)

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Smell), Paralyzing Touch, Venom

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)

### TRUE FORM WORKER TERMITE SPIRIT

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **R** **Attacks**  
 F-2 Fx3 F+3 — F-2 1 (FA 1) None

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Smell), Skill

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)

### TERMITE QUEEN

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **R** **Attacks**  
 F+5 (F+6) x5 F+5 F F F (FA F+1 0) (Str/S3 or Special)

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest.

**Powers:** Animal Control (Termite), Compulsion, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Fear, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Paralyzing Touch, Summoning.

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### WASP SPIRITS

Wasp Spirits have no caste system, and there can be multiple females in a single hive. Only one—the Queen—reaches sexual maturity. Males are territorial and not overly intelligent. Females have a malign intelligence, especially the Queen at egg-laying time. A Queen must lay her eggs in the body of a host creature who has been paralyzed with a toxin she secretes. When the eggs hatch, the larvae—young Flesh Form Spirits—feed on the host and eat their way to the outside world.

### TRUE FORM MALE WASP SPIRIT

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **R** **Attacks**  
**F** (F+4) x4 **F**+3 — **F**-1 **I** (F/A **F**+5) (Str/12 or Special)

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Smell), Venom

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)

### TRUE FORM FEMALE WASP SPIRIT

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **R** **Attacks**  
**F**+1 (F+4) x4 **F**+4 — **F** 2 (F/A **F**+5) None

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest

**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Smell), Venom

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)

### WASP QUEEN

**B** **Q** **S** **C** **I** **W** **E** **R** **Attacks**  
**F**-4 (F+5) x5 **F**-5 **F** **F** **F** (F/A **F**+12) (Str/13 or Special)

\*In astral space, receives a +10 Initiative bonus, and a +5 when physically manifest

**Powers:** Animal Control (Wasp), Compulsion, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Fear, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Paralyzing Touch, Summoning, Venom

**Weaknesses:** Reduced Senses (Sight), Vulnerability (Insecticides)



# PLAYER HANDOUTS

LONE STAR NETLINK (16:47:06/05-10-51)

E-MEMO

TO: Wallace Haygood, Commander, 25th Precinct, SEA  
FROM: Capt. Judith Bentz, Arson-Sabotage Dept., 25th Precinct, SEA  
RE: Grodin's Tavern fire

Wally, we've got final IDs on everyone caught in the fire. Only two victims are of interest. They were both found in the basement. One was Juli Parkhurst, streetname of Icepick. We've had her tagged as a drek-hot shadow decker from way back. The other was Zebediah Wanderly. Guy used to be a journalist for Newsnet, but hasn't worked for three years.

Word on the street is that he got tied in with some runners a while back, and they were all involved in some pretty heavy action, maybe even network. (Off the record, Wally, we think he geeked his old partner, Frederick Davitt, but we don't have enough evidence to push it.)

This is how we read the Grodin's fire. Wanderly was hired to take the place out. He carried in the explosives and set them in the basement. Parkhurst caught him in the act and they got into a fight. Somehow the explosives got triggered, killing Wanderly, Parkhurst, and the people upstairs. We did find traces of explosives and primer in the pockets of what was left of Wanderly and his clothes. At this point, there is absolutely no doubt he was trying a torch job.

I understand somebody told you Wanderly had a chip on his person when he was found. I scanned the chip myself, but it was blank. Probably erased by the heat.

I know it's not the best solution, but I think we should soft-pedal this thing. We have no way of knowing who hired Wanderly to do the job. We know who his old associates are, but we'll never get anything out of them. If we put on a heat wave, they'll just drop off the face of the earth. I'll keep them under discreet surveillance, but I suspect we'll never know exactly what went on.

**Recommendation: No Further Action**

**Authorization Code: 02974-4-NFA**

**Capt. Judith Bentz**

May 29

The child was born yesterday. I called the chapterhouse when my host went into labor and the Queen sent others to assist me. It was uncomfortable giving birth and it reinforced my sense that the Queen is asking me to do something wrong—unnatural. At the same time, I know it is my duty to serve her.

The thing had a great deal of trouble breathing for the first six hours, but then it settled down. I will be surprised if it lives and relieved if it were to die.

June 7

The breathing problems reappeared today and the creature almost died. But once again, it seemed to come out of it all right. I wish I were not responsible for it. The recruiting already keeps me busy enough. But the Queen is right that it would be too dangerous to keep it at the chapterhouse.

June 9

The thing cried most of last night. I find it very disturbing to have it nearby. It is not one of us.

June 24

I realized that I have been remiss in the notes. But there is almost nothing to write and I don't like dwelling on it. The creature continues to grow. I have discovered that it seems to like heat the most I grind to something just short of a liquid. The breathing problems stopped a week ago. Though it's hard to judge, it seems quite healthy.

July 4

Apparently Pri is suspicious. Somehow she discovered that my host body had been pregnant. She asked my Queen about it. My Queen said that the creature was killed months ago, before it was born.

July 18

It almost died last week and the Queen was furious. She says she wants to know what happens to it, that this project is important to her. Her curiosity will ruin us.

She put most of the blame on me. The creature, she says, has

a Human side that needs nurturing—emotional nurturing that can only come from physical contact. She demanded that I use my host body to hold the child, play with it, feed it! I do not want the thing near me, but I will obey my Queen.

July 26

The creature is doing much better, though sometimes I know that it knows I do not want it. Does it sense that it does not belong to this world? So many of the Human parents who come here, male and female, tell me how their children drain them. I am not surprised. They disgust me.

When I pry, to bring out their despair, I find out that their parents must have felt the same way toward them. The Humans, many of them at least, pass on cycles of rejection. They are our fodder and I am only now beginning to fully appreciate why they come to the Brotherhood.

August 4

Pri has not given up her suspicions. She sent some of her minions, useless creatures, to ask me about my recruiting methods. They could not stop snooping about. I distracted them enough to keep them from spotting the door, but it was not something I wish to deal with again. I must check with the Queen.

August 6

Tempers flared at the council meeting. Is the creature worth it? That hive will waste everything we built in Seattle. Why must they meddle? Perhaps we are fools to trust them.

Even as I write the words, I know why. I distrust the actual abomination as much as they distrust the possibility of it. A flesh form without a spirit. What happens if we can't control it?

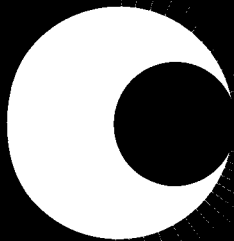
August 14

A client heard the creature crying through the walls today. I told her it was a spirit weeping for the woman's unrealized potential. Worked wonders.

August 15

I think Warriors were investigating the shop earlier, walking around outside. Must get word out to the Queen. I don't think Pri will ever give up until she discovers the truth





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INNER ABILITIES!

JOIN THE  
UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD  
TO BUILD A BETTER TOMORROW!

# ATTENTION SHADOWRUNNERS!

It's a big sprawl out there and no one can see it all. Look closely at one thing and you're turning your back on something else. That's just the way it is.

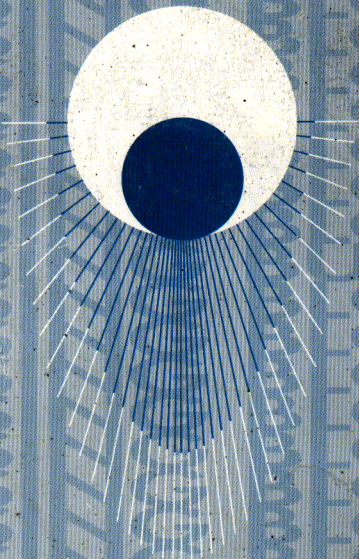
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These articles should *not* deal with any shadowruns described in published adventures. Follow the format found in the pages of the Seattle News-Intelligencer at the back of several Shadowrun™ books.

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# MISSING BLOOD



Chris Kybasik



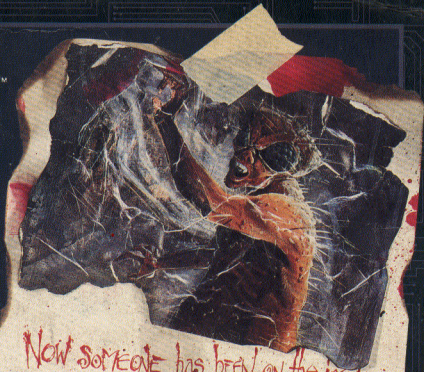
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