

SHADOWRUN[®]

THE

TWILIGHT HORIZON[™]



IT'S GETTING DARK

The Horizon Corporation is everywhere. They're in the trids you watch, the music you listen to, and the news you consume. They're propping up hundreds of major brands of products across the planet with their public relations skill. And they're spending countless hours studying how you—that's right, you—think so that they can lead your mind like a master leads a spaniel.

Denizens of the Sixth World have long suspected that there is a dark side to Horizon, if only because the corporation seemed too good to be true. If there is a dark side, it seems likely to come out soon, as the corporation has been under tremendous pressure recently—technomancers are plotting against it, spirits are causing problems in the Mojave, and Aztechnology is on the offensive, intent on keeping the competition down. That pressure is going to result in an explosion somewhere, and when it does, Horizon and the Sixth World will be changed forever.

The Twilight Horizon is a campaign book involving shadowrunners in the inner workings of Horizon and the troubles surrounding the corporation. Everything is leading to a crisis, and the runners will need to use all their skills to come out alive on the other side. Filled with plot details, location information (including details about Las Vegas in the Sixth World), and NPC write-ups, the book throws *Shadowrun* players into a cyclone of corporations, spirits, criminals, and others looking to grab a small piece of Horizon's immense power.

The Twilight Horizon is for use with *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*.



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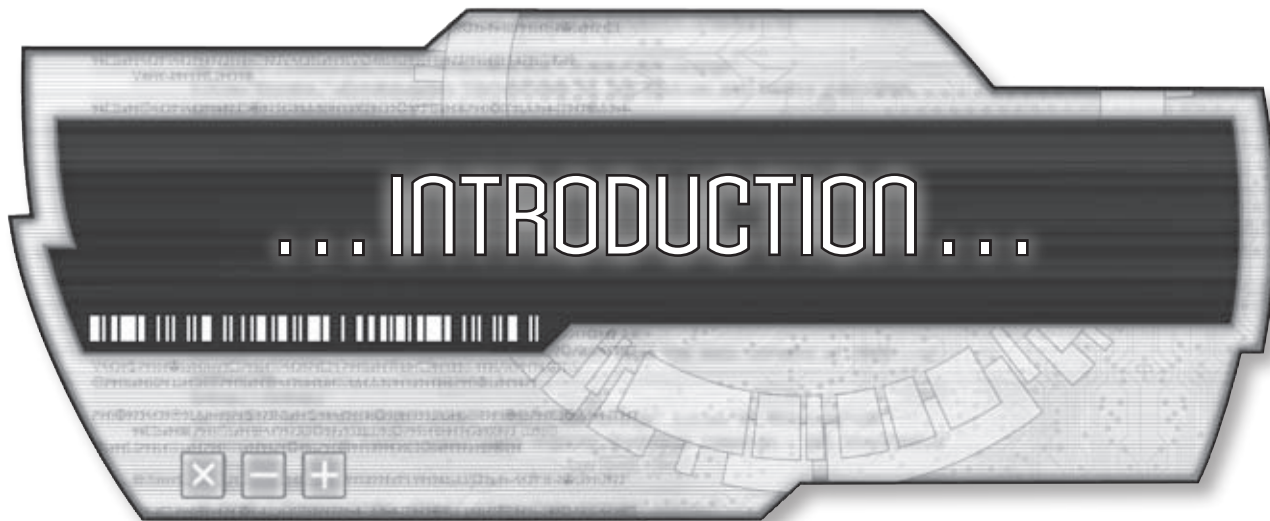
THE TWILIGHT HORIZON





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Horizon has attracted interest ever since it emerged as the newest Triple-A megacorp. The longer it has been on the scene, the more questions it has raised. Could a megacorporation really be dedicated to doing good? What's this "Consensus" decision-making tool they use? And how will they fare in the savage arena of AAA competition?

The Twilight Horizon provides some of those answers. It looks at Horizon's current situation, provides information on its inner workings, and brings the corporation to a crisis point. Shadowrunners are involved at every step in the journey, from carrying out some of the megacorporation's darker wishes to exposing some of its secret operations to trying to avert a potential disaster. The book also provides setting information for Las Vegas, so that runners can get down and dirty in the City of Neon.

The Twilight Horizon is a campaign book that provides everything *Shadowrun* players and gamemasters need to involve runners in the growing crisis surrounding Horizon and expose them to the shadows of Vegas. The chapters include:

- **Horizon Today**, an update about how different current events are affecting Horizon and how the megacorporation is responding.
- **Vegas, Baby**, information about the people and places that make Vegas a lucrative place to run and give the city its unique feel.
- **A series of chapters that provide short adventure plots.** Each adventure contains in-universe material to set up the adventure to come, individual plot points to guide gamemasters through the adventure, and character and location information used in that chapter.
- **Character Trove**, a collection of NPC stats for characters used in this book, but also usable in other settings and adventures.

This book builds on plotlines contained in books such as *Artifacts Unbound*, *Spy Games*, *War!*, *Corporate Guide*, *Corporate Intrigue*, and *Jet Set*. These resources can deepen players' and gamemasters' understanding of the events described in this book, but *The Twilight Horizon* stands on its own, plunging runners into a series of corporate machinations and seeing if they can emerge with their bodies and souls intact.

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Connecting JackPoint VPN ...
... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.
... Encryption Keys Generated.
... Connected to Onion Routers.
> Login

> Enter Passcode

... Biometric Scan Confirmed.
Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>

"When the legends die, the dreams end; there is no more greatness."

JackPoint Stats

74 users currently active
in the network

Latest News

* <030674> Stop asking about when Puck is going to log on again. If it was any of your business, I'd have told you already. -FastJack

Personal Alerts

* You have 6 new private messages.
* You have 2 messages queued for anonymous re-routing.
* You have received 2 new Metalink Friends add requests.
* You have 3 new responses to your JackPoint posts.
* PDA: The RFID you planted in a casino chip has stopped sending signals.
* PDA: Your borrowed copy of *The Subtle Art of Card Counting* is overdue and has been deleted off your commlink.

First Degree

You are hidden from all contacts.

Your Current Rep Score: 47
(65% positive)

Current Time: March 6, 2074, 20:23

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

LINKS

HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae;
your last connection was severed: 26
hours, 55 minutes, 6 seconds ago.

Today's Heads Up

- * We all need to lay low sometimes, so it's best to know where. [Tag: [Safehouses](#)]
- * Is good car! Is good bargain! Will take you many places, yes? [Tag: [Used Car Lot](#)]

Incoming

- * Because we get paid to do things other people don't want to do, that's why. [Tag: [Hazard Pay](#)]
- * Go big or go home. And this is as big as it gets. [Tag: [The Clutch of Dragons](#)]

Top News Items

- * Lofwyr denies tensions between dragons has increased in recent times, saying "We don't like each other much on good days, so very little has changed." [Link](#)
- * Space elevator management aiming for operation at 25 percent of eventual final capacity within next two months. [Link](#)
- * Anti-Infected lobbyists are pointing to the Mealtime Killer and assorted copycats as reasons Infected rights campaigns should not succeed in their goals. [Link](#)



CHAT

MESSAGES

FILES

POSTS

NEXUS

SEARCH

Active



TomStar
Firewall

Active



Jack-in-the-Box
Antivirus

Active



SpamWitch
Filter

On/Receiving



Commcode

Excellent



Signal

Active



Hidden
Mode



Local
Map

THE TWILIGHT HORIZON

Invited Guests: Marionette, Mechanic

Posts/Files tagged with "The Twilight Horizon"

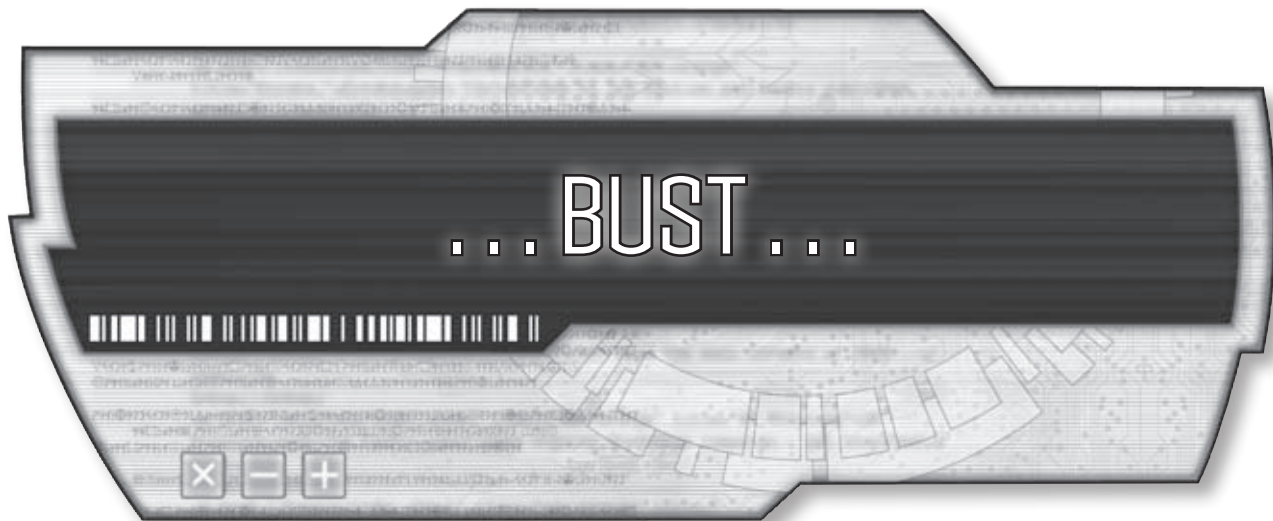
Bust Technomancer Uprising
Horizon Now Friends in the Right Places
Vegas, Baby The Heart of the Head
Self Preservation Desert Howl

[More]

CONTINUE

ADVANCED
SEARCH

SAVE



“Hit me.” I threw back my whiskey and gave the dealer a feral grin over a sixteen. I was on a lucky streak, a sensation that felt covered in dust and cobwebs. It had been a while. A long while. I hadn’t gambled since before the vampire, before losing most of my Talent, before feeling everything positive and human and lucky about me getting torn away. But as it turns out, the luck was still there. Maybe I should’ve played more often. I was damned good at it.

I sat on my twenty and waved a leggy flapper over, and she cheerfully brought me another comped drink. Even if I hadn’t been cleaning up at the table, the free booze alone meant the house was losing. This place, The Speakeasy, could afford to comp drinks but not a whole lot else. Two blocks off the strip, it was a second-rate themed joint, not one of the top end casinos that drew most of the tourists. My usual suit meant I didn’t have to play dress-up the way everyone else did; mobsters and bootleggers were the veneer of the place, and I fit right in without any AR help.

“Another win, Mr. Kincaid.” Their pit boss, all plastic smile, three-piece suit, and slick hair, materialized at my shoulder almost as if by magic. He was lucky I was used to that sort of thing. Even so, I preferred my ally spirit doing it to this guy. He was a used car salesman gene-crossed with a simple legbreaker. I hated him.

“Yup.” I raked in my virtual chips, a negligent gesture that dragged the pile of them across faintly glowing lines. They shifted color as they left the dealer’s bank, glowing slightly and neatly stacking themselves in with the rest of my imaginary hoard.

“Impressive.” His faintly arched eyebrow spoke volumes. He hated me right back. I knew the cyberware scanners at the door had flagged me and the hardware crammed into my noggin, but I knew they wouldn’t do anything about it while I was on the gaming floor, playing along.

“Yup.” I drank down my next shot while their dealer flung imaginary cards around the table with flicks of his AR-gloved fingers. Our waitress in her flapper get-up caught me peeking at her and blushed as she poured me another drink, so I shot her a wink before I checked my card.

It wasn’t just mine that mattered, though; it was everyone else’s. We were in a tournament, after all, and if I was going to win

it, I had to play against more than just the dealer. I glanced around the table, headware racing, people-reading knack in overdrive, emotive software integrating with both to help me out. The other players were a mixed bunch, but I read them like an assortment of open books.


A NAN businessman lounged next to me, sitting in a conservative suit with a small medicine pouch around his neck, his high cheekbones and pointed ears keeping me from being the only elf at the table. One pitch-black eyebrow always quirked when he was happy with his card, and the corners of his mouth tensed when he wasn’t. I didn’t even need my headware to spot that. A CAS vacationer sat on the other side of him, all blue jeans and Texas Rattlers Combat Biker t-shirt stretched tight over an orkish bodybuilder’s chest. He had on a zoot suit in the AR-overlay of this place, and it might’ve been the only suit he’d worn in his life. His cheeks flushed when he was happy, eyelids drooped when he was mad. He was another easy read. On my other flank was a sarariman with aspirations of being a high roller—perfect hair, flawless smile, biocosmetic work as expensive as his custom-tailored suit. His eyes gave him away, and there was a stiffness in his shoulders when he was disappointed in his initial card. He was used to boardroom deals, and it took my TalksMOOTH 3.7 ‘ware to initially pick up the faint adjustments in his body language.

I wasn’t the only one soaking up comped liquor, but I could hold it better than any of the rest. I used the whiskey to strike a balance, to take the edge off while my mind raced. My Transys headware and the programs it was running gave me the leverage I needed, counting and calculating faster than I could alone. I waved the dealer off.

Another win.

Then another.

I lost the next hand, but raked in virtual chips in the one after that. The CAS ork grumbled about having to see a man about a horse, but we all knew he was really leaving because he’d been bleeding chips the last hour. Thirty minutes later, and twelve more winning hands for Mr. James Mitchell Kincaid, made the Sioux stalk off, too. It was down to me and the angry Japanese businessman. I knew his tell and I was on a roll. He never stood a chance.



They called in a new dealer when it was down to just the two of us. She was a perky little strawberry blonde with a scattering of freckles across the bridge of her nose, so I didn't mind the change of scenery. Her cyberhands were long-fingered and slender, chromed and flashing, and she worked the AR table without need for gloves. She was their big gun. I saluted her with my next drink, then went on winning.

Pride kept my last opponent playing even after it was clear who had the upper hand, and the pit boss got called back over when he angrily tried to re-buy and get himself a fresh stack of chips. The tournament was over. The entertainment was finished. No one was paying attention to me any more. While most of the nearby customers were distracted by the rising volume of Japanese cursing, I found myself flanked by a pair of shaved apes in ill-fitting suits.

Right on schedule.

"Please come with us, Mr. Kincaid," one of them said, wrapping a mitt like a steel vice around my upper arm.

My stack of chips made a tickety-tack noise as it vanished, virtually clicked-and-dragged into my credstick before I unslotted it from the table. I tossed down the last of my drink with my free hand, then politely slipped off with them while the argument behind me got even louder. I'd been expected them. I'd won too much, too fast.

"Hit me," I said with a smirk, as the elevator doors closed.

The beating started right on cue. I got in a few solid shots, but it felt like slamming my fist against a vault door. They pummeled me with jackhammers pretending to be fists, and I played along and went down even though I would've been good for a few more swings. They didn't let up when I played possum, though, and after the second kick to the head I only had time for one more thought—"This was a stupid plan"—before the world went black.



"I've got a great plan for how to get in, that part won't be a problem," I waved away my client's concern with a smile. I felt Ariana, my ally spirit, tug at my conscience as I did so. Mr. Nelson only cared about my success, but she was genuinely concerned about my safety.

"And you're sure this will work?" Nelson was a bookish sort, with a faintly oversized head that made him seem even more so. He was one of the more reasonable men working here in the Puyallup city building, though, and one of the few not in the Gianelli or Kenran-kai's pocket. I liked him. I had to like him, or I wouldn't be taking this

case that would drag me out of the city. He fretted as he followed me across my office, towards the door.

"Positive, sir," I said as I reached for my hat and coat. I had a flight to catch. "I'll be back before you know it. I just need..."

"Yes. Yes, of course." He looked nervous as he handed me the credstick. I didn't blame him. I'd be nervous handing over my life savings to someone, too. If I had much to hand over, I mean. Working as a private eye meant that "life savings" was not exactly a major concern of mine.

"This'll get me in there, Mr. Nelson. Don't you worry. I'll call you once I've got them." I looked longingly at my Colt, my wand, and my knife. The burner and the foci would've come in handy, and they were all legally licensed. But no. Airport security, casino security, the plan itself, all relied on me not having them. Or Ariana. I stuffed my hat onto my head and gave my client a reassuring nod.

"I'll get your family back, sir. As soon as I can."



"Nice to meet'cha," I said, sitting up and scanning my Corpsman bio-monitor's readout for serious injuries. I was perched on the edge of a bed, nodding to the father and son that stood, warily, across the room from me. I guess I couldn't blame 'em. I didn't feel much pain any more, but I knew I had to look like a wreck.


"I'm Junior," the kid piped up, all big eyes and blonde curls. He looked more like Roger than Jonathon, the Puyallup councilman that had hired me. His gambling, hustling, almost-kidnapping, husband-worrying dad stood behind him, showing himself to be the half of the Nelson marriage that had given their gene-crafted youngster that golden hair and winning smile.

"My name's Jimmy. Jimmy Kincaid." I held out one hand to return the young man's polite shake but glanced up at his old man when I said it. Recognition sparked in his eyes. Yeah. He'd lived in Puyallup long enough that my name rang a bell. The pair of them had been locked up in this room, this comfortable, well-insulated, soundproofed hotel room, since they'd gotten caught. The furniture was well built in a traditional style, the mattress soft, the temperature comfortable. Hell, it even looked like some of this stuff was made with real wood. As cages went, they didn't come a whole lot more gilded.

"Mr. Nelson—the other Mr. Nelson—sent me to get you two out of here." The other Mr. Nelson. Damn. Maybe my bio-monitor was lying and I really was concussed. "It's all gonna be okay, kiddo. Promise."







I looked back and forth from son to father, making sure they both believed me. Or at least believed me enough to go along with it. They did. The hope my presence gave them made me feel a little uncomfortable.

I dragged myself to my feet, checking my pockets and stretching to work out the kinks and check for twinges and tugs that might slow me down. Predictably, they'd swiped what little I'd had on me, including the fake SIN and the very real, very swollen, certified credstick. My Corpsman and I checked out, though. They'd roughed me up something fierce, but nothing that'd stick. They didn't want to permanently damage the meat before their business partners showed up, after all. Just tenderize it a little.

That's why I'd taken the job. Tamanous ties. One of the co-owners of The Speakeasy was a part-time organlegger, and rumors abounded concerning what happened to folks who cheated in this two-bit joint. Rumors about ghouls and other nasties. Vampires. I owed 'em.

"So here's what's gonna happen, fellas."



"It's all those fucking Screammers' fault," Jon Nelson had explained to me, back in my office. He paced, and I understood why. Sometimes moving was all you could do, and you had to feel like you were doing something. "Roger's not a bad man. He just ... god, the fucking Screammers had such a bad year!"

I snorted at his understatement. Seattle's local Brawl team had been near bottom of the league all season. Only those chuckleheads from Cleveland were worse off.

"But he kept betting and betting. He said he had to. He was trying to make up for me, for my new position. You know how much we get paid." I knew it depended on how dirty they were. I knew I wasn't charging Nelson as much as I could for the office wards, because I knew he was one of the cleaner—which means poorer—ones.

"So what kind of people did he get in with?" I knew a lot of guys in local crews. I might be able to just call in a favor, and work out some sort of deal.

"Bad," was all he said. "The worst."



We didn't pretend to be sick, the way Junior thought we would. That only worked in tridshows, I told him. I started shouting, ranting, raving at Nelson at the top of my lungs. He hollered back, shoulder-checked the wall, threw a lamp. In response, I hollered that I was gonna bash Junior's brains in.

The door opened and one of the thugs rushed in, his Ares Viper leading the way. I had a table leg in my hand, a head full of Lone Star Academy memories, and a spot just next to the door. His wrist broke from the first good overhand chop, and the toe of a wingtip sent the gun sliding across the carpeted floor. I slipped by his left cross, then let him have it. The wooden table leg was simple, straightforward, barely touched by metahuman hands or machinery. My spell to analyze it had confirmed my suspicions and gave me an uncanny feel for the weight of it, the life that it had glowed with before being harvested, the feel and balance of it when I used it as a weapon.

It felt good. Easy. A natural extension of my arm. It whipped around like a live thing, smashing at him almost without me needing to do a thing.

The first mook dropped with a broken jaw and one temple caved in. His partner rushed in behind him. The stick spun and danced in my hand, and a quick backhand swing knocked his gun off-line and sent his shot high and wide, flechettes tearing into the plaster roof instead of my vital organs. I gave him a good rap on the head, but this one had some bone lacing or maybe just a good mad-on, because it barely slowed him down. He caught my wrist to check my next swing, then drove his shoulder into me and me into a nearby dresser. The dresser felt like real wood, too. More's the pity. Should've hurt like a bitch, and would've if it wasn't for the sideways I had taken.

I'm no slouch, but he had thirty kilos of augmented muscle on me, and as we tangled up and wrestled I started to lose my early momentum. I knocked his gun away, he eventually twisted the club out of my hand, and it turned into a match of short, choppy punches, wicked knees, and attempts to twist the other guy to the ground. I smacked his nose across his face with a good head butt, but he clocked my hairline with a fist like a brick. I was seeing stars as his other mitt wrapped around my throat.

Mr. Nelson smashed him square on the side of the head with my club. The big hand at my neck went slack as the thug lurched around to face this new attacker, catching a second solid baseball swing as he clambered to his feet. I lunged and grabbed and got an arm looped around his neck as he advanced on my client's husband, and even as Nelson stepped into it to deliver another good shot, I twisted and pulled. The big body tumbled back to the carpet after a sharp, sick, crack.

"See?" I panted, hands on my knees, forcing a grin. "Easy as pie. Just like I said it'd be."

Nelson looked at me like I was crazy while he clutched the bloody stick. I could see white all around his irises. Then he blinked, heaved in his first gasp of air after surviving a fight like that, and let out a nervous little laugh. I knelt to toss the corpses, searching for anything worth taking, quick as only a Puyallup brat could be.





"It's not quite a missing-persons case, Mr. Kincaid," Nelson had said to me, before I'd gotten up from my desk and grabbed my hat and coat. "I know right where to find them."

"Yeah?" My enthusiasm for the case waned a bit. I hated to hear about a kid in trouble, but if it wasn't a missing-persons gig, I wasn't sure what he needed me for. I had a half dozen divorce cases I should have been gathering evidence on.

"They're in Las Vegas."

"That's a bit outside my normal beat, Mr. Nelson."

"They told me what would happen if I didn't pay. They told me the ransom they want, told me how much it would cost me. They told me what they'd do to Roger if they didn't get it. It's... they know people in Tamanous."

Oh. Well, then.

"And what did Knight Errant say?"

"Jurisdiction issues. Problems because Junior isn't really... we're not supposed to... he and Roger don't have SINS." Nelson looked ashamed when he said it, scared I'd rat him out to someone. I sighed in frustration. Cops. Badges. Laws. They all had authority, but they only used it when they wanted it. Nelson kept talking. "But Mr. Kincaid, there's another thing. I know why they set the ransom as high as they did. I know why they're not threatening to kill Junior. I know why he's worth so much to them."

"It ain't just spare parts?" I quirked an eyebrow.

"They're going to sell Junior, but not to organleggers." He swallowed, nervous. "He's special. There's a bounty."



"C'mon out of the bathroom, kid," I called out. I knew we didn't have a ton of time. I'd recovered the credstick and my lucky little flask—took a pull of Jack before tucking it back into my pocket—along with their commlinks, two small rolls of assorted scrip, and both of the thugs' guns.

"You guys are doing great," I stood up, pistol in each hand.

"You were really brave back there." I said it to the son, but meant it for the father. "But we're not quite out of the woods yet."

I leveled one confiscated Viper at a corpse and pulled the trigger. It was just like I'd figured. The Slivergun refused to fire, its smartlink engaging the safety as the targeting reticule turned red in the corner of my eye. They had a touchlink system set up that activated fine, but smart-target software didn't let any of their weapons fire on guards. Amidst their handful of other augmentations, they'd thoughtfully given their in-house wrecking crew ID implants. That meant security was on the way because they'd realize their men were dead soon—they probably had biomonitors like my Corpsman—but, most of all, it meant I wouldn't be able to shoot a damned one of them once they showed up.

"I need you to do a trick for me, Junior." A mental command ejected the magazines and racked the slides, and I twirled the empty guns by the triggerguards, holding their grips out toward his little hands. "I know you can do it, just like your dad knew you could help him with the slot machines.

"I need you to talk to these guns, kiddo. I can't do it. No one else can, only you. Your dad an' me, kid, we need you. Turn off parts that need to be turned off, make it let me shoot whoever I need to. If you do that for me, we're in the clear. I'll stop the bad guys. We'll be back home in no time. I promise."

It wasn't a lie. I'd flown here for speed, but after I arrived I dipped into the expense credstick to arrange for a rental car under my fake SIN. It was parked less than a block away. I had the building's layout in my headware, knew where the exits were, had a headcount of their security. I'd runned and gunned with Lone Star's best in a Fast Response team. Put a burner in my hand, one that'll shoot who I need it to, and I could handle these guys just fine.

Junior looked to his dad, got a nod, then looked down at the guns. The boy closed his eyes and concentrated, tongue sticking out of the corner of his mouth. Viper in each hand, guns looking huge compared to his skinny arms and small hands, he worked in ways I couldn't. Even before I'd lost so much of my magic, I couldn't do what he was doing; almost nobody else could. He had a different kind of magic than I did. A different kind of amazing.

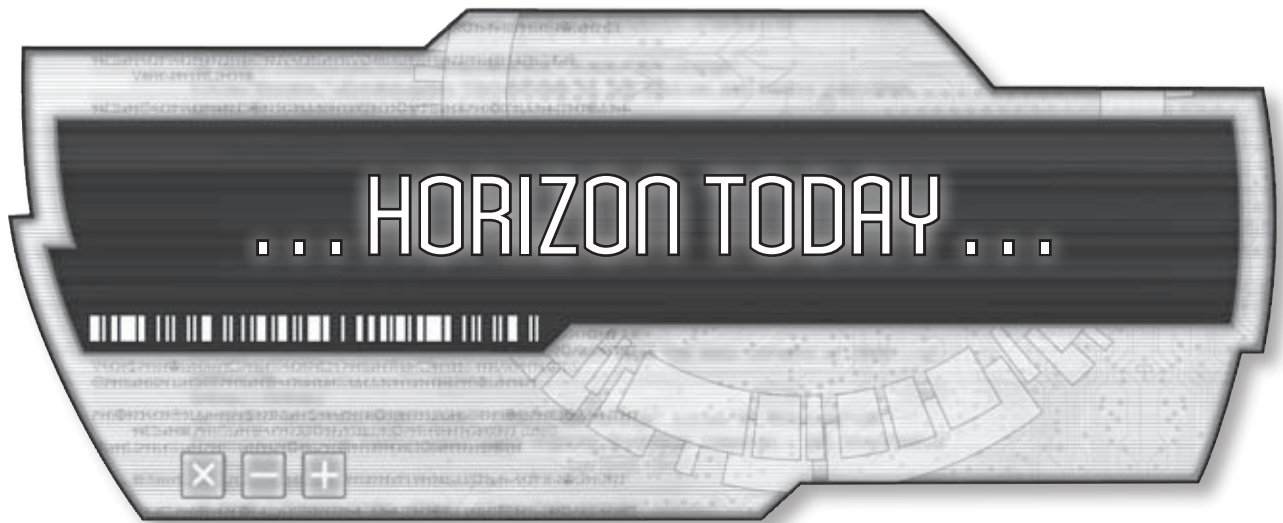
Illegal clone. Technomancer. Little boy. To me, the last one mattered more than the first two. But right that second, his knack with machines was pretty damned important.

He stuffed those guns back into my hands like he was afraid they'd bite him, and I quickly slapped their magazines home. One got tucked into my waistband, the other nestled in my palm like I'd been born with it.

"Good work, kid." I gave him a grin and reached out to tousle his hair with my free hand, making him scrunch up his face in irritation. I laughed a little. "You hang onto your pop, and keep your eyes closed once we see any more of these palookas, all right?"

I knew what kind of hamburger it'd make once I started shooting tough guys in their unarmored faces. The kid didn't need to see that. I gave father and son a reassuring nod once he'd clambered up. The muzzle of my gun led the way out into the hallway. It was time to get them out of here. The house was losing this hand.





Posted by: Sunshine

As you all know, I've been looking at Horizon with varying degrees of intensity in recent years. It's an interesting corporation for a number of reasons, mainly its extremely rapid rise to the top of the corporate world and its continually well-intentioned good cheer, which strikes some as refreshing and others as creepy. The more people look at Horizon, the more questions come up. How does a washed-up sim star become CEO of a giant megacorporation? How have they managed to form so many powerful alliances so quickly? And just what is this Consensus tool that seems to be at the core of their decision-making?

The interest in Horizon only increases when you look at their role in recent events. In true megacorporate fashion, they're in the middle of several major events in the world today. They've thrown in with Amazonia in the Az-Am war—they're not offering military forces, of course, but they're offering the next best—if not better—thing. Their propaganda expertise has been wielded on Amazonia's behalf, trying to win allies for Amazonia while isolating Aztlan and Aztechnology as much as possible. Thanks to their partnership with the PCC, Horizon has a strong voice in the ongoing renegotiations of the Treaty of Denver, and they've been as active as anyone in trying to take advantage of the void left by Ghostwalker's current absence. They've also gotten themselves in an interesting fix of their own when they attracted the attention of some technomancer protestors, and that attention revealed some information that Horizon would have preferred to remain hidden.

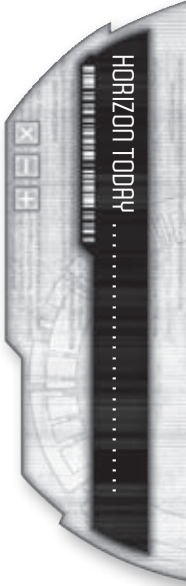
With all that going on, it seemed like this was a good time to provide a briefing on some of Horizon's current activities, as well as some updates about what I've learned about Horizon and its processes since the *Corporate Guide* posting. As I'll explain in a moment, what's really important to understand is how the current activities are affecting the climate of the megacorporation, because that affects Horizon's future activities and direction more than perhaps any of the other Big Ten.

SHOOTING FOR THE TOP

It's always a risk when you go to war over your own soul, because the act carries with it the chance that you might lose. When war broke out between Aztlan and Amazonia, Horizon saw opportunity. Their biggest rival was facing the prospect of a damaging fight, and Horizon execs wanted to make sure they would have the chance to deliver a few blows of their own. They know well the powers of propaganda in war—and if you don't understand them, remember that the Omega Order issued by the Corporate Court against Aztechnology in 2048 was a public relations move as much as anything else. The Court did not just want to punish the Big A; it wanted to demonstrate to the world that it had the power and ability to do so. If they didn't, they would have headed down the road to obsolescence—they could have issued all of the decisions and orders they wanted, but people would stop paying attention to them. They would know that the Court had no teeth, and that would have kept them from feeling that they had to pay attention to anything that issued from it. Remember that, when it comes down to it, Aztechnology didn't really suffer that much from the Order. They still have their nation, they still have their empire, and they still have a seat on the Corporate Court. But the Order served the purpose of getting the Court's message out.

- So we're back to acting as if the actions against Aztechnology definitely were an Omega Order? Last I checked, that issue hadn't been settled.
- Plan 9
- Oh, give it up. It looked like an Omega Order and quacked like an Omega Order, so guess what it was? Anyway, I agree that part of its purpose was to send a message to the world about what the Corporate Court is capable of doing. And it worked. Witness the recent rumored theft of the Corporate Court's Omega Protocols. The only reasons to steal them are either because you are worried they might be put into use against you or because you want to manipulate events so that they can be used against someone else.





INCOMING FEED.....



Either option is based on the suppositions that the Court is willing to use the protocols and that they would inflict a significant amount of damage in the process.

- Snopes
- Aren't we supposed to be talking about Horizon?
- Pistons

When Horizon became involved in the fighting near Bogotá, its intention was to take the fight to Aztechnology's home turf, both literally and figuratively. If Horizon could help Amazonia win the ground war while at the same time demonstrating their superiority in the public relations struggle, it would clearly demonstrate that there was a new number one in the field of PR. It wouldn't be a final victory, since there's no such thing, but it would be a convincing one.

THE MECHANISMS OF CONSENSUS

Now, this is where it gets really interesting, because this is where the Consensus comes in, that mysterious decision-making module at the heart of Horizon. I've had some time to review a few files covering the matter, and I've performed some interviews with people who have left the company, and I'm starting to get a pretty good idea of how the thing actually works.

Here are the basics: The first part of the Consensus has to do with data collection. In the course of their daily business,

Horizon employees make myriad decisions, both large and small. They also have Horizon-issued commlinks watching these decisions. These devices report back to the Consensus about what the employees do with their downtime. (Employees are told that all the data is aggregated, so they do not need to worry about any loss of privacy from the data collection. This is an unusual statement from Horizon, in that it is based on the underlying assumption that a megacorporation should care about its employees' privacy concerns, which is something the rest of the Big Ten would be hard-pressed to concede.) To add to that pile of data, Horizon employees are regularly polled on a variety of issues, from current events to pop culture to classic ethical dilemmas. These questions pop up as AROs at random intervals in the workday, and they are viewed by most employees as a welcome diversion and break from their normal work. Employees do not have to answer every question that comes their way, and they don't have to answer them immediately. There is a minimum number of questions they need to answer—not many, something like one a day—that employees need to answer in order to keep the system happy. If you fall below the minimum, you'll get a visit from a supervisor, who will cheerfully explain how important it is for the company to have input from every single employee so that the corporation can better represent the whole. Horizon only works, employees are told earnestly, if everyone works together.

- Yes, it sounds corny. Yes, that appeal probably wouldn't work on you or me. But we weren't hired as Horizon employees, were we? Horizon screens potential new hires carefully, and they're good at



finding people who respond positively to a certain kind of social pressure—the kind that has made Horizon famous.

- Dr. Spin

All of this information then goes to the Consensus for analysis. One of the best ways to talk about the Consensus is to talk about what it is not. It is not an AI. It is not a collection of e-ghosts captured and enslaved by Horizon (sorry, Plan 9). Instead, it is a sophisticated psychosocial analytical tool that can predict preferences, desires, and decisions based on a group of individual's past choices. One way to determine what Horizon employees' preferences would be for corporate direction would be to poll them on each and every decision, which would be laborious and time-consuming (especially when you consider how much background explanation would be needed). Instead of doing that, you could consult a program that, thanks to its generous input, can perfectly model what the voice of the employees would say if they had the appropriate amount of information about the matter at hand. That program is the Consensus.

The Consensus acts as the conscience of the board of directors. This is based on classic ideas of democracy, namely the idea that the voice of the majority tends to look out for the common good.

- Were the designers of the thing asleep when their history classes covered Nazi Germany and other examples of majority-approved atrocities?
- Fianchetto

The Horizon board of directors operates on the assumption that the Consensus accurately represents the will of the employees and is well informed, and thus cannot be overruled. That's not quite as confining as it sounds; while they assume that the Consensus has any background information it might need, they do not assume it has a business education or management experience, simply because that is not how most Horizon employees think. Thus, for the most part, the Consensus points in general directions, or it approves or dis-approves of certain actions. It tends not to require specific actions. That gives the board of directors some room in which they can maneuver.

- I think an example would help here. Let's use the case of pop star Teiko Ikemoto. The board of directors and the Consensus were confronted with the following basic facts: 1) Ikemoto was under a long-term contract with Mitsuhama. 2) Ikemoto had no way to get out of the contract on her own; MCT had total control of the situation. 3) Ikemoto was very unhappy under the constraints of the current contract. 4) Ikemoto had the potential to make Horizon billions of nuyen if she was part of their stable of artists.

The first part of the discussion was easy. Everyone, including the Consensus, agreed that it would be best if Ikemoto got out of her MCT contract. Discussion then turned on how to do it. The Consensus reported that it would be acceptable to Horizon employees if Ikemoto's reputation was sullied in the short run as long as it brought about the long-term results everyone wanted. That pointed a clear direction, but it was left to the board to fill in the finer points, which they did through things such as the love-child scandal, the fake sex video, and other wildly lurid elements.

- Dr. Spin

- Okay, I have to ask—Horizon's been awfully tight-lipped about the Consensus, yet all of the sudden you guys have a wealth of information. Where is all of this coming from?
- Cosmo
- As Sunshine mentioned, there are some people leaving the corporation, and they're more willing to talk than any sources we previously had. Some people still with Horizon have also been more talkative, because they're noticed that the Consensus has been doing some odd things. When something like this happens to such a vital tool—remember, it can't be overruled—people get concerned, and when they get concerned they start looking for answers. That gets them talking.
- Dr. Spin

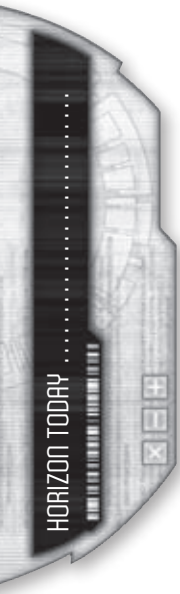
The Consensus played a large role in shaping Horizon's Bogotá strategy. Right off the bat, it made it clear that Horizon was not to send corporate forces into the conflict, and they also did not want corporate money to be used to hire mercenaries. The employees wanted victory, but they did not want to get their hands dirty. That started the first phase of their war effort, which involved Horizon looking for evidence of Aztlan atrocities or other misbehaviors and shouting those details from the rooftops.

That effort ran into two problems right off the bat. The first is that a PR machine as ruthlessly effective as Aztechnology simply does not leave a lot of rope lying around that would allow others to hang them. Horizon could interview hundreds of people convinced that Aztlan was committing atrocities, but they had a much harder time finding hard evidence or firsthand eyewitnesses. Without those, they had difficulty telling a compelling story.

There was, however, one piece of evidence Aztlan had left behind, and they had done so repeatedly. While there was no direct evidence showing that Aztlan troops had been behind the spread of Sangre Del Diablo trees in and around Bogotá. Horizon officials didn't think they needed to make the case that the trees and Aztlan were linked. What they needed to do was make a vivid case about how the trees are bad things. They decided to attempt to get some video evidence.

To obtain the recording, Horizon set up several cameras in the vicinity of Sangre Del Diablo trees in poorer areas of Bogotá. They surrounded the camera with AROs warning anyone approaching that this was a dangerous area and they should turn back immediately. Horizon claimed the warnings on the cameras would make the areas around the trees safer, and that the cameras would help them intervene if they saw anyone wandering too close to the trees.

- Of course, they did so in neighborhoods where a lot of people don't carry around any kind of wireless device. And note that all their warnings were wireless—they did not put up a single print sign.
- Marcos
- If you think Horizon had a spider watching that footage 24/7, then I'd like to invite you the next meeting of the local Dunkelzahn Lives! chapter.
- Rigger X



There is no evidence that anyone was saved through the use of the cameras. And if Horizon actually had anyone watching the images the cameras produced, perhaps they were distracted the night that seven-year-old Gabriella Capri wandered in range of the cameras. What happened next has become well known as the Capri video, and you can find it even in the furthest-flung corners of the Matrix.

When Gabriella enters the scene, she is clearly already in the tree's thrall. We don't get a good look at her, but her shuffling walk and limp arms are not characteristic of a girl her age. She walks directly toward the tree with no hesitation and no variance in her path. The tree is initially still, looking much like the trees that surround it, but once Gabriella draws within ten meters of it, you can see movement in the undergrowth, like snakes moving at a relaxed pace. If you watch carefully, you can track one particular tendril as it moves from near the base of the tree, snakes around other plants and the tree's own tendrils, crawls over a rock, and then finally comes to rest on the top of her sandaled foot. She does not recoil from this touch at all. She keeps moving forward, while the tendril on her foot seemingly guides her ahead. Other tendrils then make contact, grabbing her ankles and wrists, but gently, catching her in the tree's steady clutch. At some point she turns around, and it is unclear if she did this herself or if the tree pushed her. There is blood on her ankles and wrists, but her face shows no sign of discomfort—or of anything, really. She moves slightly down and back until she is half-leaning, half-sitting on the tree's trunk. Tendrils suddenly drop from above, then wiggle blindly toward her face.

Throughout all this, the camera doesn't blink, and it continues to watch unflinchingly until she is little more than bones that the tree drops to the ground. The footage mercifully does not contain any audio, but you can still almost hear the sound of her bones clattering together.

It was unclear how the Capri video was leaked, or who it was leaked to, but one day no one knew about it, and the next day it was a Matrix sensation. Everyone was talking about it, and everyone had an opinion. Aztlan came under widespread condemnation once people had clear evidence of how the Sangre Del Diablo trees operated, but Horizon came under plenty of criticism as well. People reasoned that the lack of intervention by Horizon during the run of the video (it's nearly fifteen minutes from beginning to end) means that no one was paying attention to the live footage, and if no one was paying attention, that meant the cameras were set up for one reason—to record and exploit the death of a Bogotá citizen.

- Okay, let's say that last line is correct. So what? Horizon knew bad things were happening, so they made a point of getting them on film so people could see them. How on Earth does that put them even in the same ballpark as what Aztlan was doing?
- Marcos
- We could sit here for a while and talk about degrees of bad behavior, but passive collaborators—which is what Horizon made themselves—often are not judged kindly by history, especially when they have the stench of hypocrisy about them.
- Fianchetto

- And they weren't just passive collaborators, either. Gabriella's mother made several tear-soaked public appearances after the video came out, and several eyewitnesses said that after the appearances, she'd walk for a few blocks and then get picked up in a posh Nightsky. Wonder how she was able to pay for that?
- Plan 9
- We could ask her, but she seems to be lying low. No one in Bogotá has seen her lately.
- Marcos
- So they paid her, then they vanished her. SOP.
- Plan 9

In the wake of the Capri video, Horizon employees developed something of a bunker mentality. They had faith in their own cause, and they believed that if they withstood the public criticism, they'd come out stronger in the end.

The main result of this was to leave Horizon employees even more convinced of their sense of righteousness (or self-righteousness, if you prefer) and to not feel they needed public approval for what they did. They were the good guys; by definition, what they did was good, and those who did not understand that immediately would eventually catch on.

On top of that, you had the fact that while Horizon took a blow from the Capri video, Aztlan was hit harder. Gabriella's name became a rallying for anti-Aztlan forces in Bogotá, and "por Gabriella" graffiti remains a common sight (in both AR and RL). This presents a dangerous combination—a megacorporation who is brazen, emboldened, and not concerned about outside opinions.

A CHANGING CONSENSUS

In the wake of the Capri video and the subsequent fallout, Horizon board members noticed a shift in the Consensus. While before they had felt occasionally limited by its decisions, the Consensus now anticipated some of the bolder moves they were considering. They learned that when they presented ethically questionable activities, the Consensus might approve if the actions served to elevate Horizon above its enemies. In short, the Consensus had shifted from "Horizon tries to do what's good for the world" to "what's good for Horizon is good for the world."

- That is what large organizations do—at some point they value self-perpetuation above anything else. We're just lucky that it took Horizon this long to get there.
- Aufheben
- I think that's overstating things. At its core, Horizon still wants to bring about results that its employees believe are good. They have not made the full conversion to rapacious profit-making machine yet. They still have a conscience—it's just slipped its gears a little.
- Dr. Spin

This new spirit led to the POW incident in Bogotá. The information on just what happened down there is still unclear—from

the information I've gathered, there were definitely were runners involved, but it wasn't any of our people. Whoever it was, my hat's off to them—they did a lot of slinking around in the rainforest without leaving behind many fingerprints.

Most of you probably know the details about the incident—basically, Amazonia uncovered mass graves of prisoners of war who had been executed. Aztlan issued the usual pro forma denials, but the evidence of the piles of bodies made those denials ring hollow.

There have, however, been some people who have looked at some of the statements that Aztlan made about the whole affair and started to believe that perhaps their claims were not entirely groundless. And it was not just the normal Aztlan/Aztechnology apologists who felt that way.

Two of the most striking pieces of evidence these individuals have presented are footage from an Amazonian spy drone and a recorded conversation between two Horizon staffers in Bogotá. I'll send the drone footage to anyone who wants a look at it, but here's the gist: It was shot with a combined light/thermographic camera, and it starts in the middle of an unidentifiable rainforest at night. The drone taking the footage is aerial, so you, the viewer, bob and weave through the broad, dripping leaves, and sometimes one of them smacks you in a way that makes you lurch sideways and up, but you keep moving this way for a while, long enough for maybe your stomach to settle after all that bouncing around. Then the jungle opens up, and there's a complex of buildings around you. You may not recognize it, but people who studied the footage identified it as a prison camp north of Medellín.

As the drone approaches, the complex suddenly flares to life. Lights go on everywhere, searchlights shoot into the rainforest. There's a brief clatter of gunfire, and voices in the complex are shouting. The drone gets within eight meters of the exterior fence and veers left. Some of the grass and dirt it passes over looks like it has been recently trampled. It reaches the corner of the fencing, and as it does so it catches a brief heat signature, movement going into the vegetation, and right after it a searchlight hits the area, and leaves quiver as gunfire sounds and bullets fly into the jungle. Then another rattle of shots is heard, and the camera plunges toward the ground. Then it turns off.

Clearly this was an escape effort, though the number of people who actually got away cannot be determined from the footage.

- It was a fair number. I ran into one of the guys who pulled this job off in a bar not long after, and he was kind enough to share some of the details of how he and his crew went right into the teeth of the Aztlan military to get those people out. Ballsy group.
- Marcos
- That's right, kids, because you can always trust the self-aggrandizing stories being told by some runner in a bar.
- Winterhawk

The thing is, when the mass grave containing Aztlan POWs was found, many of those bodies were identified as having been incarcerated in the POW camp near Medellín. Now, as I said, the drone footage doesn't make it clear how many prisoners, if any, actually escaped. But this is where the conversation between the

Horizon people comes in. It's unclear how this audio was recorded, but whoever got it only had a small window before Horizon countermeasures caught on and jammed whatever they were doing. I don't have the identity of the speakers. All I know is that this was recorded at a Horizon corporate facility in Bogotá's Zona Norte about three days after the mass grave was discovered.

Speaker 1: ... Agent's thing from the getgo. Don't ask me.

Speaker 2: Right. I know he gets a lot of leeway, but don't you think he's taking a big risk? Think of what the blowback could be if this thing goes wrong.

Speaker 1: Like how?

Speaker 2: Like what if Aztlan can prove its case? What of it can show that not all the prisoners were where they were supposed to be?

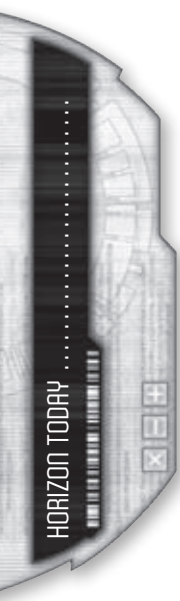
Speaker 1: And how would they do that? With prison records? Think they're going to release the full records? That would reveal everything they've been doing, and they'd lose any sympathy in a heartbeat. No, any records they release are going to be edited, so we hit them with that. We say they've been faked, we get a few pet TMs to show some recent edits to the file, and ...

- "Pet TMs," eh? Always good to be compared to an animal by the corporation that's supposedly on your side.
- Netcat
- Funny that you mention Horizon's attitude toward technos. I'll be covering that in a moment.
- Sunshine

The statements made in that conversation are vague enough to provide a whole lot of deniability, especially since there's no conclusive proof that the speakers are actually Horizon employees. There is, however, enough grist for the conspiracy mill, especially that line about prisoners not being where they were supposed to be.

- It's the mention of Agent that gets my attention. He's exactly the kind of person that would conduct a massacre and then frame someone else for it. He's also not exactly a household name—corporations don't usually have high-profile shadow assets. The ones with their own trid shows excepted.
- Marcos

The interesting thing is that the theory that maybe Horizon was behind the massacre was rejected in all but the most hardcore conspiracy circles. One of the few places where it has legs is in Horizon itself. Employees keep talking about it, and they're generally divided into two camps—those who are shocked that their corporation could be linked to such a thing, and those who are relieved that Horizon is finally fighting the opposition with the full range of tools. It's the same divide I discussed earlier—those who think Horizon needs to do good in order to be good, and those who think Horizon is good, and so is whatever helps them. What we're seeing now in the corporation is people drifting toward the latter point of view, simply because the cognitive dissonance involved in attempting to hold the former view is causing too great a strain. That means the Consensus is going to be in a mood to accept more of the same.



THE BETRAYAL OF THE TECHNOMANCERS

Students of history know that revolutions tend not to occur when things are at their worst; instead, they happen when there is some degree of improvement in social conditions (often after a long trough), but the improvement does not happen rapidly enough to appease the masses. Take the situation for technomancers—things are certainly better for them than they were in the days of the emergence—most people do not immediately freak out upon learning that someone is a technomancer, certain hobgoblins excepted—but the improvements have not exactly been rapid. Many corporations are still reluctant to hire TMs, or they outright refuse to do so. It seems clear that various experiments against technos are being conducted in secret corporate labs.

- You think?
- Puck
- Are you ever going to tell us what happened when you were gone? I'm sure it's not easy, but there may be something we can use against the people who took you.
- Pistons
- In time. I'm still processing it. As you can imagine, the things they were doing were not conducive to lucid thought.
- Puck

Governments have generally been slow to pass laws specifically protecting technomancers. The most common excuse is that technos are covered by existing laws, and so no new laws are needed, but as long as people like Humanis keep beating on TMs with the excuse that their abilities make them inhuman, technomancers will keep looking for increased legal protections.

All this has led to an accumulation of wrath and frustration on the part of the technomancers, and they have directed this anger at a seemingly unlikely target: Horizon, the world's leading corporate crusader for technomancer rights. While that may seem counter-intuitive, the thinking behind it was sound. Horizon is low-hanging fruit. If technos want to convert them to their side, they don't have to convince them that TMs are fully metahuman or are valuable employees. Horizon is already there. They just have to be convinced to act more aggressively on the values they currently hold. Compare that to the difficulty of trying to lobby someone like MCT; with them, technomancers can't start with "You should hire more of us." Instead, they have to start with "Hey, could you stop cutting off the tops of our skulls to see what's inside?" Treating technos as full citizens is a ways off for someone like them.

- Not that it would be bad for MCT to stop cutting off the tops of our skulls.
- Netcat
- Right, but the principle in play is to make Horizon a full ally first, and then leverage their support into an increased amount of support on the other megas. So the skull cutting stops.
- Dr. Spin

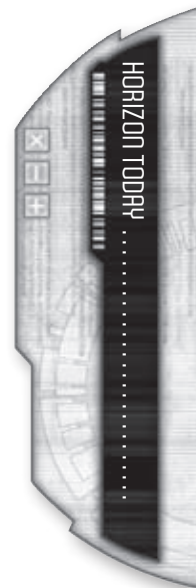
This thinking led technomancer organizations to stage protests in Horizon strongholds, notably Los Angeles and Las Vegas. At first, they were fairly innocuous affairs—people marched around in circles and chanted, people hacked physical and AR environments in ways that were sophomoric and occasionally amusing (my favorite was in Vegas, when they got the big fountain in front of the Bellagio to spell out a series of vulgar anti-Horizon epithets in water), and while law enforcement stood by at the ready, they generally didn't have to do anything. Often Horizon executives would emerge from some building, get booed, make a show of conferring with one of the demonstration organizers, then go back inside to scattered applause.

The problem is, when you bet a bunch of technomancers together with enough time on their hands, things will get hacked. And since the protestors tended to gather by Horizon buildings, Horizon nodes were what got hacked. Again, for the most part it was harmless pranks, but then one of the protestors uncovered an internal memo from a Horizon PR flack that described the protestors as "useful idiots." Once the protestors got done being insulted, they started wondering: Useful for what? That phrase generally denotes someone who you disagree with in some form but whose actions still manage to help advance your ends. So how was Horizon using the protestors?

The demonstrations started to take a different tone. There was more anger, less playfulness. Hacks were no longer aimed at creating colorful distractions, but at causing pain, either by seriously disrupting internal systems or by stealing important data. Through these actions, the technos soon found out how they were being useful. Since the emergence, Vegas casinos have had a law barring technos from their gambling floors, but in the past year that law had been lightly enforced, if at all. It turned out, though, that Horizon reps were going from casino to casino showing owners examples of the vandalism that occurred during the protests, using it as evidence that technomancers cannot be trusted. It's clear evidence, they say, that the laws banning them from casinos probably should be enforced more strictly.

The technomancer community was livid to discover that their ostensible ally was working against them. Horizon offered no comment on the affair.

- No comment? The masters of spin offered no comment? What kind of lame-ass PR is that?
- Butch
- I would imagine they did that precisely because they knew how mad it would make the protestors.
- Dr. Spin
- Why would they want the protestors to get angrier?
- Nephrine
- Well, if the information the protestors found is correct, Horizon was already trying to use the mob's anger to galvanize action against them. The angrier the mob, the more worried the opposition becomes, so the more likely they are to do something. Basically, if they could make technomancers appear to be extremists, then they could justify their existing approach to



technomancers, and perhaps even develop a rationale for future actions/reprisals.

- Dr. Spin

After taking a moment to be stunned, the technomancers regrouped and began planning their next series of actions. Whatever they do is not going to be pleasant for Horizon, and it shows how quickly seeming alliances can turn sour.

While the technomancers are feeling burned by this whole thing, it's also having an effect within Horizon. Once again, they're confronted with a dilemma—do they believe that their leadership has been underhanded and treacherous, or do they go with the party line that tells them that they are the good corporation, and so everything they do has a good motivation behind it?

- This is so going to turn into a blame-the-victim situation, since that's what abusers have done since time immemorial.
- Netcat

One thing that makes this whole situation more interesting is that the people who become disillusioned with Horizon are the ones most likely to leave. Dropping a job with a megacorporation is not easy, but voluntary extractions from Horizon have been on the rise in recent months, which is a reversal of the longstanding trend of Horizon being the corporation that most people want to be extracted *to*.

- So where do these people go when they leave Horizon? It's not like they're going to find another mega that's not similarly compromised, or worse.
- Lyran
- Many of them are just retiring. They get out with their retirement savings—plus maybe a little extra they picked up on their way out—and settle on a life of low-profile comfort. Others have taken up with other corporations, feeling that open cruelty is perhaps better than hypocritical virtue. And there are a few that want their revenge and know they can't rely on existing law enforcement personnel to do anything about it, so they join us on the streets.
- Cosmo

WHAT'S NEXT

So let's put all the elements together. Horizon's fighting a war in Bogotá. They're the target or constant assaults by technomancers. And they are building an institutional culture that is aggressive and willing to overlook an assortment of flaws and misdeeds if it advances their corporate interests.

They are going to continue to be under pressure, and that's when explosions happen. I'm not wise enough to know how or where this explosion will take place, but Horizon's not on a good path. They are a corporation that has put its faith in the collective wisdom of its workers, and they're about to discover where this wisdom is going to lead them.





"It was dark for night time. The rain was coming down like falling water."

Tamaya giggled and the gambler smiled. "That was more than the joke was worth, so here's your change, baby." He took the Cuban out of his mouth and dipped his companion. As he kissed her, he gently tickled her nose with his left tusk. She giggled again and kissed him back, dropping the umbrella into a crimson puddle.

The scrape of shoe synthleather was his first warning. He stood up, gently placing Tamaya back on her feet and turning to meet the new arrival. As an ork, he was not short, but he had to look up, up, and up to meet the gaze of the wall of muscle. The large-bore, troll-sized pistol seemed at once unnecessary and menacing. "Hello, Mechanic," said the troll, "ditch the squishy. We need to talk."

"I hate that name," said Mechanic under his breath. "Go on back to the hotel, Maya. I'll be there in a little bit." He heard Tamaya walk away, heels clicking wetly on the pavement. He risked a glance at her, taking his eyes off the troll. He saw her looking back at him, still wet with red rain from their kiss. The combination of smeared lip stick and scarlet water on her face made it look like she had a massive head trauma, her wide eyes giving her the look of the walking dead.

Mechanic turned back to the troll. "Sebastiano," he said, hoping his smile looked sincere, "what can I do for you?"

"It's not what I want, Mr. Mechanic," graveled the troll. "Ms. Verontesse would like her money back."

The heads-up display in the gambler's shades highlighted Sebastiano's weapon along with the amount of tissue disruption it was capable of inflicting at current range. He had tweaked his tactical software to work for card games, but it seemed to take a sort of glee in showing off its roots every so often, especially when the subject was a weapon about to cause grievous bodily injury. He removed the sunglasses and looked the troll in the eye. "I don't owe her a thing. She lost that money fair and square."

"That's not how our house shaman sees it, Mechanic." Of course. Being the greatest gambler in the Las Vegas Metroplex was a rough life when you were also an adept. Magic cannot make you lucky, but it can do a lot of other things that can make you look lucky. The troll grinned and, with a mental command, flicked the safety off of his weapon with an audible click. If he'd still been wearing them, the gambler's glasses would have cheerfully told him that with further analysis, the weapon was 97.4 percent likely to be loaded with explosive rounds and then inflated the estimate of the number of orks a single shot at short range would send to the big casino in the sky.

"I'll tell you what, Seb. I'll *janken* you for it. Winner takes the winnings from the game; tie and we split it. You've got nothing to lose that way." He smiled sweetly.

Before the troll could answer, a huge automated garbage truck rumbled by at speed. Its front tire hit a deep puddle and a wall of red water stretched even to the troll's height. The whooshing splash did nothing to cover the three gunshots that echoed in the narrow Vegas street.

To the gambler, it was nothing more than a few casual gestures. Hold breath while water washes over. Cuban to left hand. Flow with right hand into the coat. Supinate the arm and beckon with the finger. Use the inertia to return the right hand to the coat and take the Cuban from the left hand. Exhale.

To an outside observer, it would have looked like the wave had soaked Mechanic head to toe and knocked the troll to the ground. In the glare of the street lamps it was hard to tell the difference between the blood and the red rain covering the man on the ground.

"Damn it," said Mechanic, "Time to leave home and go back to the shadows for a while. Spirits, I hate shadowrunning." He flicked the remainder of his waterlogged Cuban into a puddle and trudged off after his girl, the hot barrel of his Ares Predator warming his ribs.

Posted by: Turbo Bunny

Vegas. She's come a long, long way since the Great Western Expansion, the arrival of the Paiute people, and whenever all those mammoths died. It's my old stomping ground, the city that gave me a lot of high highs and low lows. I've got nothing better to do, so let me tell you all about Las Vegas and how the City of Dreams might just turn into the city of nightmares.

Incoming Message

LAS VEGAS AT A GLANCE

Country: Pueblo Corporate Council

Founded: 15 May 1905

Incorporated: 16 March 1911

Government: Corporate Board

Mayor: Yatokya Padilla

Director: Marcelino Merlot

Elevation: 610 m

Population: 2,146,395

Demonym: Vegan

Time Zone: Pacific (UTC-8)

Matrix Grid: hzn//lasvegas.pcc

Security Services: Pueblo Security Corporation (PuebSec)

Fire Response Services: Aklinne, Inc.

Medical Response Services: Yanauluha Medico, CrashCart Medical Services

- The Las Vegas Valley is also on no less than seven fault zones. It's only a matter of time before the entire metroplex is swallowed by Mother Earth.
- Plan 9

Temp-wise, the Las Vegas Metroplex gets up to around forty degrees in high summer. It's a dry heat, as they say, so it's not so bad. It gets down to around zero in the winter. They get snow sometimes, too, every couple years or so. Usually the hottest months are also the wettest, with huge desert thunderstorms and flash floods. This past year has been very wet—some would say unnaturally wet. The rain has been coming down fairly regularly since last August. It's not as much as Seattle, but that's not the weird part.

Sometimes when the rain falls, it comes down red. Red rain, blood rain—it's nothing new to the world, of course. If you look it up in Aetherpedia, you can see that it's been happening since Biblical times. It's caused by dust or ash mixed with the water, at least that's what it says here. It got worse over the winter, with red snow coming down that the Vegans call murder snow. This year there was an unusual amount of snow that covered the streets with blood-red mounds of slush. You've probably seen the pics and trids of what looked like heaps of entrails all over the 'plex, but it's a lot more gross in person.

- If you look at the satellite pics, you can tell that it's just Mojave dust kicked up by the southwest winds.
- Clockwork
- That's possible, Clockwork, but the "dust" isn't coming out of the water after it hits the ground. Some of it is getting into the water supply. And besides, how does the summer southwest winds keep going through the winter?
- Plan 9
- Don't be paranoid. I'll send you a trid feed of the fountain display at the Bellagio. It's still crystal clear. Besides, if the water supply for the entire metroplex is tainted, then why hasn't the entire city population died? Think about these things.
- /dev/grrl
- One very disturbing reported phenomenon is the red rainbows that have been appearing after incidents of blood rain. According to some unconfirmed accounts, these rainbows are visible in astral space.
- Ethernaut

FACTS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

What we usually think of Las Vegas is really the Las Vegas Metroplex, or LVM, which the locals pronounce "EL-vee-yum." Las Vegas is a sprawl that sits like a glob of graphene gel in the middle of the Mojave Desert.

This place can make or break you, financially, mentally, physically, and—if the word on the street is anything like the truth—magically, too. There are so many damn contradictions in this town you'd think you could find "oxymoron" in the public commcode lookup. Las Vegas is where expectations go to die and Zen Buddhists go to make a point. This is where everything is exactly what it looks like and nothing is what it seems.

Let's talk climate. And when you say "Las Vegas climate," you're talking about ...

BLOOD RAIN AND MURDER SNOW

Las Vegas is in a valley rich with aquifers. In fact, the first Spaniard to find the place called it "The Meadows," or *Las Vegas*. It was basically an oasis in an otherwise barren desert. Oh, yeah, barren. If you weren't around for the history lesson, like me, you don't know that the Mojave used to be a wasteland of a desert. Once the Awakening happened, though, a lot of life sort of sprang up all over the place. I mean, it's still a desert, but it's more of a living desert these days.

Natural Resources

The Las Vegas Valley has a lot of natural water underneath it, but most of the Metroplex's water comes from Lake Mead. The worst parts of the 'plex don't technically get direct service. Sunrise uses wells that tap into the aquifer, although since last year the water has occasionally come up red, even after filtering. The folks in the Henderson Barrens usually tap the pipes coming from Lake Mead, although the clever people draw from the ones going back to the treatment facility. It's disgusting, and you have to clean and filter the water yourself, but PuebSec doesn't patrol the discharge pipes as much.

The combination of the rich aquifer, the abundant sunlight, and the famous mojo of the surrounding Mojave Desert makes the entire LVM a naturally lush place to grow paranormal plants and farm magical raw materials. Of course, the Vegans have bulldozed and built over every last square centimeter of fertile soil. Sure, some folks have tried greenhouses or gardens, but there's basically nothing worthwhile growing here anymore. There are some ratty palm trees and scrubby bushes on the Strip that the hotels maintain for something like a hundred nuyen a day, but that's about it. Aside from the odd hanging planter and malicious magical plant that sneaks into town, the place is pretty barren.

There's a lot of sand, though. When it's windy, the dust is a problem and gets into everything. In the colder months the air gets trapped in the valley, creating a big hanging cloud of dust, sand, and smog that can sit over the sprawl for days. At least there's no pollen to worry about.

- So basically the natural resources of Las Vegas are greed, gullibility, and metahuman organs.
- Winterhawk
- Yep. Just not always in that order.
- Turbo Bunny

THE VEGAS JIGSAW

Las Vegas isn't really controlled by the PCC. I mean, sure, PuebSec is all over the place. But it's a little weirder than that.

The Corporate Town

Las Vegas is literally a corporate town, although not the way you might think. The city is run like the Pueblo Corporate Council is: like a corp. It issues shares, holds shareholder meetings, and makes a profit for the good of its citizens, most of whom never see a single jot of it.

When a resident reaches the age of majority, the city corp gives them a "residential share" of the corporation, which is the only kind of share that comes with a vote and a dividend. That way, every resident has an equal share of the city ... or at least that's the theory. The truth is that most of them sell their residential share as soon as they need the jing for rent, drugs, gambling, BTLs, or whatever. I think I held onto mine for a full week. In typical Vegas fashion, it's illegal to sell your residential stock, but it's not illegal to own other people's shares.

There are also preferred shares, most of which are owned by either the PCC or Horizon—it's pretty much neck and neck there. Still, there's a roaring market for Las Vegas preferred stock and the associated short selling, scalping, and derivatives on all of the major global markets.

The People in Charge

The Las Vegas Valley Metroplex has a mayor and a board of trustees. The LVM governing body appoints one district manager for each municipal district whose job it is to keep their part of the plex running.

The mayor of Las Vegas is one of the most glamorous, recognized, and publicized public service positions in the world. Anybody who plugs their heads into the trid every night knows what Mayor Padilla has been up to, what she's wearing, and who

she's been dating. And while her producers always manage to wedge some footage of government work into every episode of *Vegas: Top of the Heap*, it's an open secret that the mayor's office holds exactly zero power. She's a spoiler on a Scoot. She's the person the Board of Trustees uses to keep people's eye away from the actual business of the metroplex government.

- I used to love that show. I miss Scott Hanson.
- Sunshine

The Board of Trustees, on the other hand, is made up of the seven biggest residential and preferred shareholders in town. They're all like a mini-corporation themselves, each owned in part by a few of the many interests in town. These guys embody the very definition of strange bedfellows. Trustees will work all sides of the fence when it suits their interests, including deals with the PCC, local gangs, crime families, megacorps, foreign governments, and occasionally even private citizen groups. Even the title "Trustee" is an oxymoron. These people are too slimy to trust, but they're too valuable to eliminate, so the game continues and the city is barely governed.

- If you like intrigue and are sick of Denver, make a short hop over to Vegas. The atmosphere is almost as thick, the air is warmer, and people in general wear less clothing.
- Haze
- If you ever find out that Mr. Johnson is a Trustee, walk away. I've got a lot of rules, and here are two of them, free of charge: never work for a Las Vegas Trustee, and never ever work for a Las Vegas Trustee.
- Hard Exit

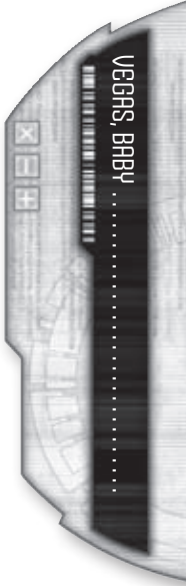
So it falls to the district managers to keep the city from falling apart. Of course, these people are cronies; every single one of them is beholden to one or more Trustee. To top it off, most of them have their own racket going on the side, which means even more fingers in the shiny pie. Still, they've managed to keep the metroplex from collapsing completely, so they must be doing something right.

But that's just Vegas being Vegas again. By being controlled by everybody, it isn't really controlled by anybody.

- All of this fractured power makes for a great place to run. The more odd angles and corners a city's power structure has, the deeper its shadows.
- Sticks
- Don't paint too rosy of a picture—running the Vegas shadows isn't for the faint-hearted. There's a lot of drek, chipheads, and monstrosities to wade through, and that's just the upper crust.
- Bull

Pueblo Security Corporation

Law enforcement in the Las Vegas Metroplex is handled entirely by the Pueblo Security Corporation (a wholly owned subsidiary of the PCC, of course). PuebSec is better than most when it comes to security measures. They're a bit heavier on



the magical aspects of the job than Lone Star or Knight Errant. You're almost as likely to see a spirit on traffic patrol as you are a drone.

PuebSec is a pretty militant group. Why wouldn't they be, since they handle both military and civil security for the entire country? They take a certain pride in their work, which is to say that they're crazy gung-ho. They're way more likely to go after you themselves than send a drone or a spirit. I've had a lot of fun leading PuebSec cruisers on a merry chase from Henderson down the Strip and then all the way to the Aztlan border.

Which reminds me, if there's one thing that PuebSec seems to never do, it's call for backup. I mean, if they're obviously outclassed, outnumbered, or outgunned, they'll duck down and call for help like any sensible law enforcement officer would. Most of the time, though, they'll at least try to take you with just whatever unit happens to be on the scene. It's like some kind of weird pride thing, I guess.

- I once asked a PuebSec major if they had an internal scoring system for most daring service or something. She said no, which of course means they do.
- Hard Exit

The company picked up the Plains tradition of counting coup from some of its members, and now the tradition is the big thing for the Puebs. Almost every one of them has a painted truncheon dripping with AR feathers, and they often make a point of poking you with it. They'll take your weapons, too, and most of their personnel have at least one blade or sidearm that didn't originally belong to them on their person, mostly for decoration. Contrary to rumors, war paint is not required by the PuebSec handbook, but it's not forbidden, either. If you get stopped by a Pueb with red and black slashes on their face, you should probably cooperate, especially if he's bigger than you are.

- Does makeup count as war paint?
- Snopes
- That depends on who is wearing it.
- Frosty

PLACES TO SEE

Life in the City of Lights is pretty much what you'd expect from a place that moves about fifteen billion nuyen through its veins every single month. The biggest, most opulent, most flash buildings, vehicles, clothes, and homes sit within a gunshot of shacks, slums, and cars held together with rust. And don't forget the ever-looming Mojave Desert.

Still, Vegas life isn't much different than any other modern sprawl. You've got your nice neighborhoods and your barrens. You've got your typical mix of sprawl gangers, wage slaves, squatters, upper management sarariman, and well-to-do snobs, with a big dash of organized criminals in that mix.

Downtown Las Vegas

In most sprawls, the downtown area is the richest part of town, with the best shops, poshest clubs, richest people, and highest security. In Las Vegas, downtown is more like a suburb,

Incoming Message

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY FELLOW DIGITAL SOPHONTS ON VARIOUS TRAVEL DESTINATIONS IN THE PRIMARY WORLD

By Oerestes

- The following excerpt is relevant to this file.
- Icarus

Las Vegas

Siblings, if you suddenly have the urge to visit the gaming capital of the North America Grid, I have only one piece of advice for you.

Forget about it.

When an organic tourist goes to Las Vegas, they see the sights, play the games, and take in some shows. They see galleries, lounge in spas and pools, and enjoy AR and VR datascares carefully crafted for their entertainment and enjoyment.

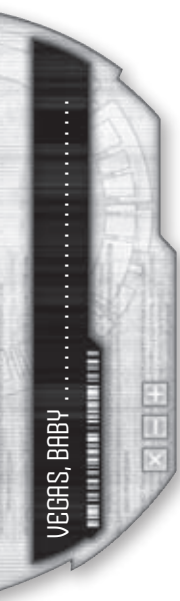
But when you or I go to Vegas, it is a very, very different place. One quick analysis when you hit the local grid will show that for every agent on business and tourist on vacation there are approximately 2.718281828459 icons, naturally running Stealth programs. Most of these hidden icons are organics using the Matrix to protect their interests or damage the interests of their rivals. The fighting is almost constant. If your Analyze program is up to snuff, you can see the obfuscated Attack programs flying thick as a saturated datastream. I am told that there are between five and ten fatalities per day in the Matrix of Las Vegas.

Icons are scanned approximately 3.28 times per second. The local icons are extremely suspicious of sophonts like you and me. While it is not too bad in the outlying parts of the metroplex, there is no such thing as a neutral node on the Strip or anywhere near it. The entire area is crackling with Matrix traffic, jamming, and counter-jamming. Matrix gangs have a custom called "dragging the Strip" where they try to send an email from a node on the Strip; most gang members who attempt this feat fail, and only about half of them suffer permanent damage.

The Grid Overwatch Division has designated Las Vegas a "Low-threat Safe Zone." Do not believe it. I am told that the designation was assigned so that GOD would not have to investigate the action happening there, although why they would call something safe because it is not is beyond my understanding.

- That's GOD doublespeak. The real GOD designation is Disregarded Matrix Zone. See how clever they are? DMZ? Yay, GOD.
- Netcat

The grid of Las Vegas is a GOD-less, merciless war zone. Visit it at your own risk, siblings. A very high risk.





INCOMING FEED.....



VEGAS, BABY

the home of all the people who need a place to stay after a long shift serving the rich folks in Paradise.

That's not to say that there isn't anything to do "in town" as the locals say. There's some casinos that are—well, let's say less ritzy than those on the Strip. Emerald City Hotel and Casino is technically on the Strip and in the Downtown district at the same time. There's also the Freemont Street Experience, if you're into that kind of thing.

Despite being second to Paradise in just about everything, downtown Las Vegas is probably the most peaceful place in the 'plex. PuebSec has not one, not two, but three of the metroplex's ten sector houses in downtown, and most of the public areas are lit at night.

Paradise

Paradise is the district that people think of when they think Las Vegas. The world-famous stretch of Las Vegas Boulevard called The Strip is in Paradise, along with a lot of other casinos, bordellos, theaters, and other places of entertainment. Don't let the official population numbers fool you as to how many people are around at any given time. Paradise usually has more tourists than residents at any given second of any given day. The people that actually live in Paradise are the richest of the rich in town, although as permanent residents they're outnumbered by squatters and vagrants who live in the shadows between the skyscraping hotels.

Paradise in general and the Strip in particular are fun, exciting places to be. Everybody's entertained, the entire district is beautiful, and the various service employees are always there with a smile, especially when they're tipped properly. Security in Paradise is technically the job of PuebSec, but for the most part

they leave security to the various hotel and casino owners. This means that there's an underlying tension pretty much all the time, and somebody getting politely escorted to a back room, out of sight of the public, is pretty much a daily occurrence somewhere.

So fun and deadly. That's Vegas for you.

Spring Valley

If Renton is Seattle's bedroom, then Spring Valley is Las Vegas's living room couch. Spring Valley has the largest number of permanent residences in the 'plex but the fewest number of permanent residents. For the most part, the district is owned by the various syndicates in town in a big patchwork of territories. Still, between the crime lords' enforcers and PuebSec, the district is pretty calm.

Spring Valley is probably the most special place in the entire 'plex because it is in no way special. It's a pretty boring place, really. Those people who actually are residents and not just visiting are friendly but wary, just like any other sprawl citizens would be. The dealing between criminal organizations is thick, but for the most part tame. A safe house in Spring Valley is practically a cliché.

- Vapid. The word you're looking for is vapid.
- Slamm-0!
- You're selling the place short—Spring Valley is fun to run in. Anything you do that would normally attract attention, like a running gunfight or exploding fireballs, is going to get that much more notice. I like the extra challenge of keeping things quiet.
- Sticks

Sunrise

Sunrise is where the upper crust of the metroplex live when they're not in Paradise. The streets are clean, the shopping is expensive, and up until a few months ago the whole district was lush with trees, lawns, and flowers. The district has a separate contract with PuebSec that includes MPs from Nellis, which gives the entire district a AAA security rating on Lone Star's Security Zone Index.

Sunrise is only about ten thousand hectares, but it has the highest population density of any of the districts. Of course, only about one or two percent of them are actually rich, and everybody else works for the rich people. If you need a job, aren't too hard to look at, and are willing to be treated like a servant, you can make a living wage in Sunrise.

- Henderson actually has a higher population density than Sunrise, but they don't exactly get on any censuses.
- Mechanic

Nellis

Nellis stretches from Sunrise all the way to the hills north of town and around the northern part of the city to Pueblo Highway 95, straddling Interstate 15 in the east. Although Nellis is technically part of the Las Vegas Metroplex and has its own Board-appointed district manager, the Nellis district is controlled almost entirely by PuebSec. Most civilians that live here work for PuebSec in some capacity. There is a full-on military air base on the east side of Nellis, conveniently called Nellis Air Base, and an infantry division is based near the hills in the north.

Nellis is exactly what you'd expect: a giant gated community with over-enthusiastic security and crappy Matrix service. You can expect to be left alone if you look unarmed and you're broadcasting a reasonably innocent SIN—real or not.

- Howling Coyote Base is actually home of PuebSec's 14th Infantry and 63rd Armored Cavalry divisions. Not the PCC's best, but they're better than average. Their primary mission, and that of Nellis, is to support the defense of the California and Aztlan borders, so don't expect to see them on duty in the metroplex too often.
- Kane

Henderson

Henderson is a pit that stretches between Boulder City and Paradise. Its roads are bad, it's covered in red greasy stuff (some from the rain, some from sources you don't want to think about), and it hasn't seen a street sweeper since '66. It wouldn't be fair to say that it's overrun with devil rats and nova scorpions, but let's say that I'm surprised they haven't been given residential shares.

The best part of the town is the Las Vegas Expressway. This highway connects Downtown Las Vegas with Boulder City. It's elevated to about 35 meters off the ground, enough to clear a five-story building as long as the roof isn't too tall. The entire length of the expressway is heavily patrolled by PuebSec. There is no way to drive onto it from Henderson, but some of the locals have built scaffoldings and ramps, or carved ladders into the highway's support pylons to get up to the top physically or to make shack-like structures under the expressway and away from the ground and its six, four, and two-legged vermin.

One thing the district has is buildings. Big, cheaply built, ferrocrete and aluminum buildings are practically everywhere. This is because of the Rebuild Initiative that the PCC had for about seven years, giving grants and tax breaks to companies that were willing to erect new buildings in Henderson. It turned out that if you just built a standard, barren, five-story "apartment building" and then forgot to add things like running water, power, carpets, doors, and windows, you could turn a huge profit. Most of these buildings are being used as squats, although there are a couple of co-ops that run their buildings like tiny cities. Probably the only saving grace of the project is that each cookie-cutter building has a two-story underground basement with two entrances, one on either side of the building. If you need to shake a tail, you can drive into one entrance, wind your way down to the bottom floor, then back up and exit on the other side of the building.

- That's assuming the occupants haven't left any surprises to discourage that sort of tactic. I'm still paying my buddy's medical bills after I plowed into a ferrocrete barrier and she went through the windshield.
- Hard Exit

There was an attempt last year to organize and clean up the district of Henderson by the residents, with full support of their board-appointed district manager, Bettina Guccioli. She's pretty driven to improving Henderson to the level of the other districts, but it's a long uphill battle. Especially since Boulder City wants to keep Henderson a barrens. And it's safe to say that the plan is doomed now that the Comanche have moved in.

Enterprise

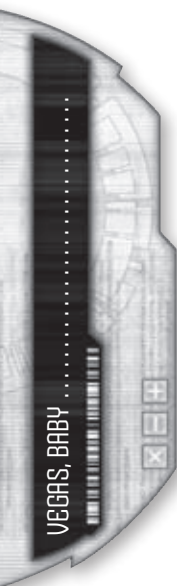
Enterprise is basically a subsidiary of Horizon. It technically has a district manager appointed by the Metroplex Board, but he's just a yes-man for Caollaidhe Montauk, Horizon's executive supervisor in Las Vegas. There is enough territory owned by the megacorp in Enterprise to make the majority of the city extraterritorial. Luckily, all of the streets are still PCC, so you don't need to worry about weird routes. It can turn a run into a weird game of Horizon leapfrog, though.

The Ancients rolled into town a few years ago and set up shop in Enterprise. You'd think this would annoy Horizon a bit, but actually it's completely the opposite. The word came down from on high that the Ancients were rugged individualistic romantic figures and that Horizon should sponsor them and make some reality shows about them.

- The policy in regards to the Ancients didn't come from Horizon execs, it came from the Consensus. Apparently a lot of people think the Ancients are hot or something.
- Dr. Spin

Boulder City

Boulder City is part of the Las Vegas Metroplex—or at least it is if you ask anyone who doesn't live in Boulder City. The place is filled with social conservatives, right-wing extremists, racial purists, and xenophobes. In case that wasn't clear to the folks in the next district over, the citizen shareholders of Boulder City had a referendum on a wall to be built on their border with Henderson



last year, and that wall is all done except for the paint. Other than the racism, it's pretty much like any other upper middle class area of a sprawl.

Boulder City is pretty much a company town. Technically it's not, of course, but since Bathotech holds the rights to operate and profit from the Dam, which supplies power to most of the PCC and some of the surrounding nations, just about everybody works for them or another subsidiary of Horizon.

It's probably no surprise that there aren't a whole lot of people in Boulder that aren't human. We're not run out of town on a rail or anything like that, but it's a very hostile environment for us. The last time I was in there I stayed in the car, because the time before that I had a little old lady throw a brick at my head.

- It's not fair to categorize an entire town of people as bigots. The city has laws against discrimination, a fair housing policy, and plenty of service organizations for the less well-to-do.
- Mechanic
- Bullshit. This is a town where 74 percent of the people voted for a meter-thick wall that cuts off the entire district of Henderson that goes all the way up to the Las Vegas Expressway. If you want to get into Boulder City from the rest of the 'plex you either have to go in through the patrols on the Expressway or take a lot of back roads around the thing. This is the town that Karl Brackhaven grew up in.
- Mika
- Or you could cut across the Mojave desert. If you're brave. Or stupid.
- 2XL
- I thought Brackhaven was from Seattle.
- Turbo Bunny
- You're thinking of Kenneth Brackhaven. Kenny's uncle Karl is the head of the Seattle Humanis chapter.
- Cosmo

THINGS TO DO

As you can imagine, a sprawl that has tourism as its primary industry has a lot of things for you to do. And a lot of things to do things to you. I'll start with the very, very obvious.

Gambling

There are hundreds of casinos in the Las Vegas Metroplex. They range in size from little gaming cubbies with one or two AR machines to the giant resort casinos on the Strip. I've seen plenty of hardened shadowrunners, the kind who face down blood mages and corp armies, completely lose everything in the casino. Let me give you a rundown of how casinos work, and you can decide what to do with the intel.

- I was going to say that I was a better choice to post this guide, but you did pretty good here, so I'll shut up.
- Haze

Usually you don't gamble with straight cash, unless you're in a private game, and there are plenty of those. Instead, you buy a set of physical poker chips that are used in casinos. Each casino has its own printed chip, although the cashiers will change chips from other places for you if you want to play in their house. The Las Vegas Gaming Control Board requires that each chip have an identifiable RFID tag to prevent chips from being used as untraceable cash, but a few seconds in a microwave oven and the tag dies. The casinos don't care whether your chips still have working RFIDs in them, and neither does the black market.

By far the biggest game is **slots**. Slot machines are everywhere. By PCC law, slot machines have to be mechanical or electrical, they can't be just software. There's no law saying that you aren't allowed to play the machine remotely, so you can play one of millions of machines from anywhere in the world.

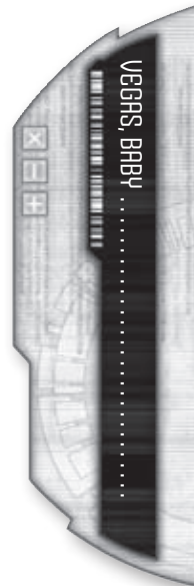
The game itself is simple. Give the machine money, push a button, watch some symbols spin around, and then find out if you win. That's it. As you would expect, the slot machine is designed to pay out as well as take money, but the amount it pays out is somewhere between 75 and 95 percent, depending on which machine and which venue. The machines are inspected for fairness by the Las Vegas Gaming Control Board annually, but many of them find a way to fall through the cracks or have their flaws overlooked.

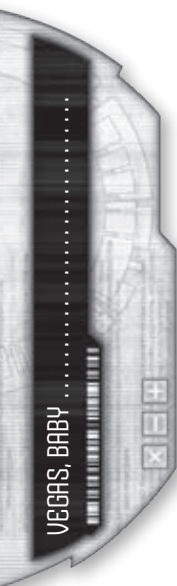
There's also **virtual poker, bingo, keno, and pachinko**. These are all pretty much the same as slots with some sort of twist. Virtual poker is like slots, except that instead of spinning icons you get playing cards. It deals you five cards, and deals a few other hands for itself, and then you see if you win. Bingo is a game with a random card and randomly drawn numbers, called out one at a time, until somebody wins. Keno is like a cross between bingo and slots, where you get to bet on as many of the eighty numbers as to which one will get drawn, and then if you guessed it, the fewer guesses you made the more you get paid. Pachinko involves small balls being shot into a machine full of pins and other such obstacles; the ball bounces around for a time, and if it lands in the appropriate location, it may be captured, which leads to another shot and, if you're lucky, an eventual cash prize.

Those are the major machine games. There are also table games.

Blackjack is the most popular card game in town. Each table has a dealer and seats between four and ten players. When you're sitting at the blackjack table, you bet money that you'll beat the dealer. You get two cards face up, and the dealer gets two cards, one face up and the other face down, so you have some clue as to what he has. You can then ask for more cards, which is called a hit, or play the hand you have, which is called standing. The idea is to have your cards add up to more than the dealer, but not more than 21 or you bust. Aces are worth one or eleven, whichever is better for you, and face cards are worth ten. If you tie with the dealer, you get your bet back but you don't win anything. Bets are paid one-to-one. There are more rules than that, but you get the idea.

Texas Hold 'Em is a type of poker game. Players play against one another, with the dealer acting as a neutral facilitator. If you don't know about poker, a file about Las Vegas is the wrong place to try to learn it. Stay away from the table or the sharps will identify you as a fish and win all your chips before you've learned what fifth street is. Take your chips to the craps table instead.





In **craps**, you're betting on whether or not the dice roller will win or lose the game he's playing. The roller throws two dice and wins on a seven or eleven, loses on a two, three, or twelve. If he doesn't get those numbers, the game changes, and he's trying to roll the number he rolled the first toss again before he rolls a seven. If you want to bet on a win, put your chips on "Pass," and if you want to bet on lose, put them on "No Pass." Like blackjack, there's more to it than just that, but if you're learning how to gamble from this file, that's enough to get you started.

Except for betting on myself at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway, my favorite gambling game is **roulette**. The dealer has a big wheel that he spins one way and a ball that spins the other way. The wheel has 38 numbered slots the ball can fall into, and you bet on which one the ball will fall into. If you're a beginner, just put your money on even, odd, red, or black. There are other ways to bet, but it's complicated.

The game for high rollers is **baccarat**, another card game. The dealer gives two cards to you and two cards to himself, all face up, much like in blackjack. The idea is to count up the total on the cards, but in this game aces are ones, and tens and face cards are zero. The score of your hand is the ones place of the total, so when your hand adds up to 15, it's actually worth 5. You bet beforehand on whether you're going to win, the dealer will win, either bet paying one to one. Baccarat is a high-class game, played in its own room with a very high table limit. In most places I've been in, you need an invitation to even be in the room.

If you're looking to make money on one of these games, the best place to put your money is your account. If you really want to play, baccarat has the best odds for you, if you can get into a game. If you can't find an invite, head for the craps table instead.

- And remember to always tip your dealer.
- Mechanic
- Warning to technomancers: there's a law in the LVM that bars our kind from being in a casino, or even too close to one.
- Netcat
- The law is still on the books, but nobody enforces it any more. It could still technically be enforced, though, so if you're a technomancer, behave yourself.
- Turbo Bunny

More Gambling

Casinos are the most popular place to risk your money but hardly the only place. Gambling is kind of a culture in Las Vegas, except for maybe Boulder City. Some people consider it rude to turn down a bet if the odds are even.

There are a lot of places you can bet on **sports**. These places often have video, trid, and sim feeds of multiple games happening around the world. If you can think of it, a sports bar is offering odds, whether it's North American football, basketball, stickball, soccer or whatever you call it, baseball, auto racing, court ball, urban brawl, mixed martial arts, combat biker, Desert Wars, quatchli, hockey, lacrosse, the Olympics, or whatever's going on at the moment. Most of the time the bet is an over/under for how much a certain team is going to win by, to make the bet a bit more even in unmatched games.

A very popular venue is the **off-track betting parlor**. This is like the sports betting places except that the wager is on various animal races. These are exclusively animal races, of course, since people racing is considered a sport. You can bet on horses, greyhound dogs, sled dogs, devil rats, pigeons, pigs, camels, ostriches, turtles, and even crazy stuff like hell hounds. They generally have trid or AR feeds of the action so that you can watch after you've placed your bet.

If you're more interested in brainier games, **prediction market** betting is the game for you. The idea is to bet on certain things happening in the world, usually before a certain deadline. Some of it is pretty obvious, like Brackhaven's victory in Seattle. Some of it is very far out there, like I saw the words "Dragon Civil War" at a prediction market before I saw them on JackPoint. I'm told that prediction markets can actually predict the future, but most of the people who told me that are now broke or dead.

Another important gambling venue in Las Vegas, especially Downtown, is **metabetting**. I have no idea what it is, though.

- I'm beginning to see why FastJack invited me on board. Thanks for that, by the way, it's an honor, no matter how long you let me stay aboard. Metabetting is gambling on other people's gambling. It's a data mining game. Big computer power collects all of the wagers placed in an area (like the Strip or all of the LVM) for a certain time period and spits out results. You bet on percentages of wagers, like saying that 63 percent of people will bet the favorite in an over/under wager, or that only 30 percent will bet "pass" on craps games. Usually the results are collected by three independent nodes and shared, just to keep things on the up and up. It's gaining in popularity, especially among people who think themselves very smart.
- Mechanic

Even More Gambling

While gambling is legal in Las Vegas, some of the things people bet on aren't. You can find cockfights, dog fights, devil rat fights, and any number of other blood sports. You can also get into street fighting action if you know who to talk to. Usually fights go until somebody can't fight any more, which includes them being dead. Or one guy beating the other guy to death after they've been knocked out. It's a vicious game, but that's what the audience pays to see.

- I've heard rumors that there is a blood magic circle that uses a street fighting ring as cover (and fuel). All the evidence is very circumstantial, but I'm convinced.
- Haze

Sex

The most brilliant thing the Las Vegas Metroplex Board of Trustees ever did was make prostitution legal. The amount of revenue that comes in as taxes on sex acts is probably close to the revenue from gambling. Okay, it's nowhere near, but it's a lot. The sheer number of brothels, bordellos, strip joints, love shacks, and independent contractors is too much to count. If you want to catch some action (along with some diseases), Las Vegas is your town.



Drugs

If you want drugs, you can get drugs. All kinds of drugs. They're illegal, but they're the second or third biggest industry in Vegas, close to the level of the sex trade. It's not just back-alley sales and scummy dealers, either. If you know where to look, you'll find opium dens in Paradise, novacoke labs in Nellis, and hallucinogen houses in Henderson. And everything everywhere else. And before you ask, yes there are BTL chips. No, I won't help you find them. Moving on.

Shows

Despite the Sin City culture of the metroplex, Las Vegas really does have a lot of good shows. The best musicians, comedians, vaudeville acts, revues, magicians, musicals, and stage plays make a point of playing Las Vegas at least once on any tour of North America. Manhattan has Broadway, but Las Vegas has over a hundred prime theaters and probably twice as many little ones with acts that will entertain, delight, and amaze you. And if push comes to shove, a good show is a great place for a meet.

Shadowrunning

If you're not interested in gambling, sex, drugs, or shows, I suppose there's always shadowrunning to keep you off the streets. Las Vegas isn't as big as the Seattle sprawl, but it's got plenty of opportunities for our line of work.

If you're looking for quick work, track down someone from one of the syndicates. Half the time an organized outfit is being watched by PuebSec, and the other half they're being watched by all the other syndicates in town. They welcome the opportunity to hire someone to work the shadows for them. The pay isn't bad, but the work usually is. Wetwork, enforcement, sabotage, and the occasional street war is what you can expect from folks like the Koshari, the Verontesse family, the Sapphire Crane Society, the Ancients, the Comanche, and the Ghost Cartels.

Another fun employer to freelance for is PuebSec. They won't have you investigating or enforcing the law or anything like that; they're too proud for that. But the civil authority of PuebSec and the military base PuebSec are rivals in the LVM. They are constantly trying to one-up each other as the main authority in the metroplex. They are definitely not above hiring shadowrunners to improve their influence. And sometimes they offer good perks, like a Nellis pass or temporary immunity from speeding tickets.

Let's not forget Henderson. If you're the hooding type, someone in Henderson needs the help. If not, the Comanche are always looking for some help in regaining their international status. There's always Boulder City, too. If you don't have a lot of sticky rules or ethics, you can probably find a Mr. Johnson in Boulder looking to make mischief on the other side of the wall.

If you're looking for the big money, you're going to want to look for a Mr. Johnson from either Horizon or the PCC. Those two are constantly vying for a majority share of the Las Vegas Metroplex, and so far neither of them has managed to get it. If you work with these guys, expect your targets to be big ones like the hotels on the Strip, major metroplex facilities, or even the Dam. The pay is big—if you survive.

BRIGHT LIGHTS, CITY LIFE

You're reading this because FastJack thinks you're cool, so it goes without saying that you've survived in the sprawl. Maybe it was Seattle, maybe Hong Kong, maybe Europort, wherever. You might have done a few runs through corporate towns like New York or Neo-Tokyo. You've probably even dipped your toes into some of the worst places on the planet, like Lagos or Chicago or the SOX. The City of Neon has a little piece of all those places.

If you want to survive in the high-class life of the Vegas Strip, all you need is to be rich. The more money you have, the more the resorts cater to your every whim. If you're a high roller, a whale, or a behemoth, you'll find invitations, tickets, booze, drugs, and prostitutes showing up at your door—and you're usually charged a lot less for things when people know you're rich. That's right, the more money you have, the less you actually need.

If you want to survive in the rest of the metroplex, you just have to be enterprising. The opportunities are there for a creative runner. There are plenty of opportunities in the minor casinos, or the smaller power struggles, or just the latest fad. You can make a lot of jing if you're willing to seize opportunities when they come up.

If you want to survive the shadows of Vegas, you just have to be wary. The moment you make an assumption in this town, it's wrong. It shouldn't come as a surprise that the City of Neon would cast so very many shadows. There's a high demand for shadowrunners in Las Vegas, and there's a good supply of them. You're not alone, and five times out of ten the target of your run has hired her own shadowrunners. Anybody could have the drop on you in Las Vegas.

So there it is: Be rich, enterprising, or wary. Or dead.

JUST THE INTERESTING BITS

I'm not going to bore you with a giant timeline of events in Las Vegas. I'll just dazzle you with the good parts.

2010: Re-Education and Relocation

In 2009 and 2010, a lot of the Native American population of the Western United States is rounded up and forced into internment camps. One of the largest camps is at Nellis Air Force Base. The camp is little more than a few shade tents and a lot of razor wire. The camp is overcrowded; many internees fell ill or died.

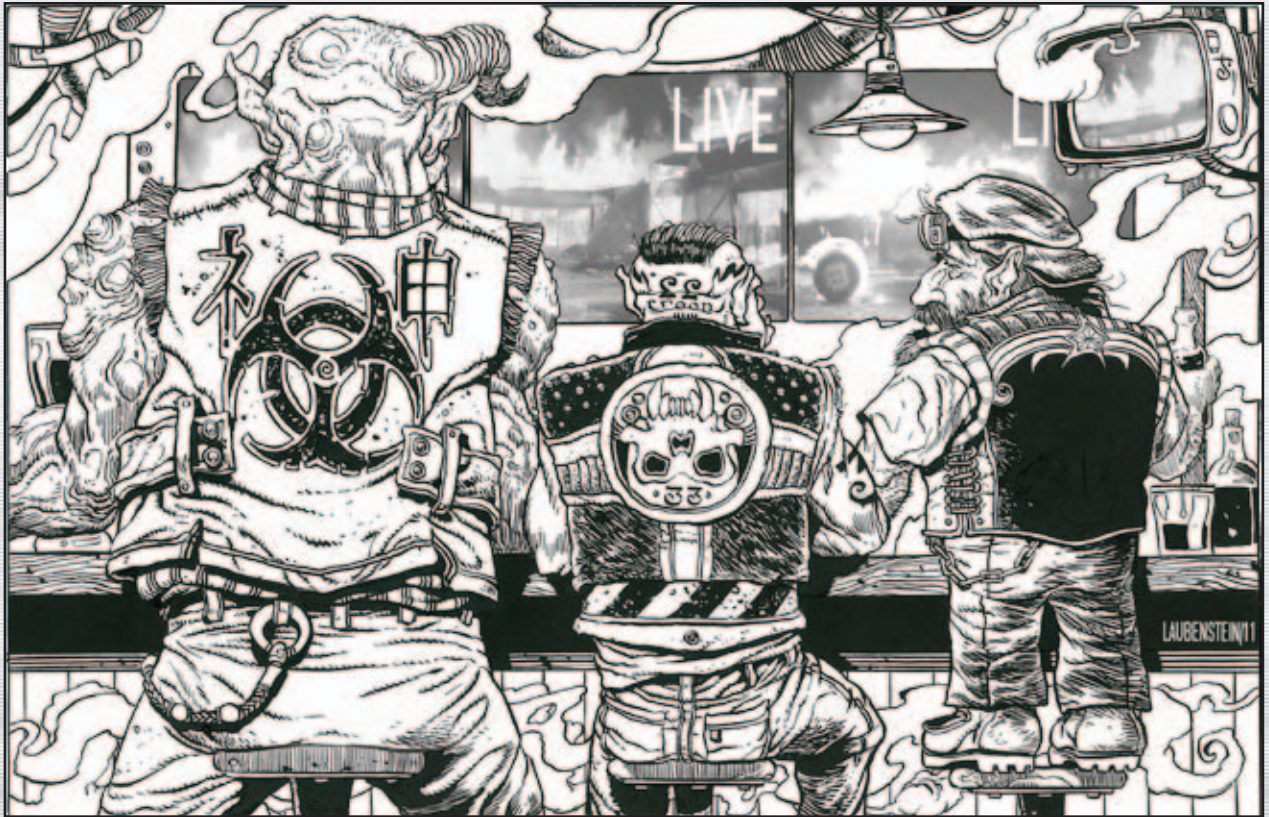
2011: The Awakening

The first elf to be born in Las Vegas is a boy born to a former bordello worker. The name he is given was appropriate to Las Vegas, but I'm not going into it here. He's pretty famous around the sprawl.

2012: Daniel Howling Coyote in Vegas

All the famous people go to Las Vegas at some point, and Daniel Howling Coyote, leader of the Great Ghost Dance and the world's first shaman, is reportedly seen at the internment camp at Nellis. Shortly thereafter, there is an earthquake that flattened the Air Force Base and most of Sunshine Manor. It registers as a 7.2 in the affected areas, but it is barely noticed on the Strip.





INCOMING FEED.....

2018: Independence

Nevada is ceded to the Native American Nations. Las Vegas barely notices. UNLV changes the look of its mascot from a rebel in the American Civil War to a rebel of the Great Ghost Dance.

2021: Goblinized Round-Up

When the order comes down to round up orks and trolls in the United States, orks and trolls flock to Las Vegas, settling in nearby Henderson. The additional power and water demands drive prices up in Boulder City.

2023: The Henderson Exodus

As rights for orks and trolls are guaranteed by the surrounding nations, many who moved to Las Vegas in 2021 move back to their original homes. Most of the folks leaving come from Henderson, causing an immediate housing market problem, economic recession, and other bad things that impacted all of the Las Vegas area, especially Boulder City. And Henderson.

2028: Boulder Annexed

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints rebuilt the temple that collapsed in Sunshine Manor, except that it was moved to Boulder City. Meanwhile, Sunshine Manor was rebuilt and renamed Sunshine.

2035: Vegas Inc.

Shortly after the formation of the Pueblo Corporate Council, the Las Vegas Metroplex is created. Boulder City is annexed, along with the rest of the districts of the 'plex.

2039: Late Afternoon of Rage

As metahumans around the world take to the streets to protest the lack of metahuman equality, a peaceful march down the Strip takes place. The following day, another march is attempted in Boulder City. The second rally is met with violence from human purists, and while fists and rocks fly and there are hundreds of injuries, no one is killed. No one learns anything, either.

2041: BTL Explosion

Better-than-life sims appear in Las Vegas and become the most popular drug on the street. There is a power struggle among the Mafia families of the Metroplex, and the Verontesse family comes out on top after eight years of building tension.

- 2047: A Baby Turbo Bunny Is Born!
- Pistons

2049: The Battle of the Strip

The BTL war between the Verontesse family, the O'Malley family, the Onyx Dragon Triad, and the Comanche Syndicate comes to a head on the strip. The conflict starts as a fistfight in the Flamingo and spirals out of control to full-on warfare. Spells, gunfire, and heavy artillery come out, and there are heavy casualties on all sides as well as among bystanders. Every building within a block of the Strip is damaged or destroyed. The Flamingo burns to the ground.

2051: Rebuilding the Strip

The rebuilt Flamingo opens its doors to great fanfare. The wealthiest hotels expand, buying out the ruins of the smaller

venues. This ultimately increases the amount of attractions and gambling on the Strip, even though it reduces the total number of resorts to fourteen.

2055: Chipsticks

Physical chips in Las Vegas are replaced with “chipsticks.” The sticks use the same technology as credsticks. The move is heralded by business leaders and PCC officials for bringing Las Vegas into the modern era.

2057: Henderson’s Death Knell

Reports of ghouls moving into Henderson drive even more of the population out of the district. Property values plummet. While anybody nowadays could tell you that there are ghouls living in Henderson, nobody can tell you how many.

2064: Las Vegas 2.0

The Crash 2.0 wipes out nearly all records of currency in Las Vegas. A riot that lasts three days starts, and PuebSec has to resort to non-lethal violence, killing twenty-some people. It was a crazy time. In the immediate aftermath of the Crash, the Las Vegas Gaming Control Board outlaws the use of chipsticks and returns to physical chips.

2066: Elves in Wonderland

The Túr Pám is completed, opening the first elf-themed resort in the world. The place is very popular, especially for the middle class and wage slaves. Most elves find it tacky.

2070: Technomancer Blockade

The Las Vegas Metroplex Board flat out forbids any technomancer to enter or “be within communications range of” a casino. Most casino security people decide that “appropriate measures” are the same as “shoot on sight.” A group of technomancers and like-thinking hackers begins to blockade Las Vegas’s Matrix, bringing every system in the city down for one minute out of every hour in protest. The Board relents, but the law is still on the books.

2073: Blood Rain

In December, a torrent of red rain falls on the city. As winter progresses, it becomes unusually snowy, and some of that snow is red. The unusually high rate of rain has yet to subside.

PLACES IN AND OUT OF THE CITY

THE STRIP

Those of you who skipped straight to this section may be surprised at the contradictory nature of the Strip. If you did, I can’t blame you. It’s the most interesting part of the metroplex to outsiders.

The Strip is pretty much everything you think about when you think about Vegas. It’s glitz and glam. It’s hopes and dreams, lures and nightmares. It is the reason Las Vegas is the City of Neon, and it never, ever sleeps.

The Strip is a seven-kilometer stretch of Las Vegas Boulevard, starting at the border between Downtown Las Vegas and Paradise

and stretching south to McCarran International Airport. It is wholly in Paradise, although for the most part the district manager and his staff leave the Strip to its own devices, and PuebSec follows their lead.

The hotels on the Strip are owned by different companies, shell corporations, conglomerates, and criminal syndicates. With the local government giving the area a pass, the hotels keep the peace. They do it very well, too. The tourists never even notice when someone is dragged off into an alley or a back office and snuffed out.

Back in the ‘50s, it started becoming popular among the less-savory elements of the area to race their cars or motorcycles at night, turning the Strip into a seven-kilometer race track. After the hotels and PuebSec tried and failed to prevent the practice, they just fixed it so that the LVM GridGuide would clear traffic when it detected vehicles acting like racers pulling up to the lights at Sahara Avenue.

- GridGuide also notifies PuebSec.
- Clockwork
- Yeah, but PuebSec generally doesn’t care unless you’re still racing south of Sunset Road.
- Turbo Bunny

The LVM Monorail

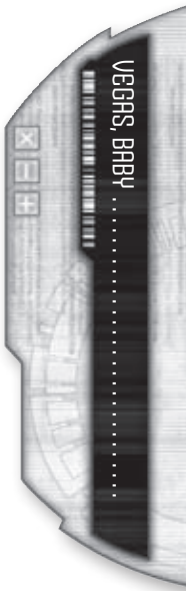
There is a monorail that travels from McCarran International Airport north to most of the hotels on the east side of the strip. When I say that the monorail goes to the hotels, I mean it actually goes through them, entering each one and stopping for passengers to get on and off. Starting at the airport, the monorail travels north at a height of around twenty-five meters, with stops in the Túr Pám, the LVM Grand, Planet Horizon, the Flamingo, the Palazzo, two stops in the Fashion Show Mall, and the Riviera. A northbound train then continues to the LVM Monorail Administration building, a large warehouse on the edge of Downtown Las Vegas, where it switches to the southbound track and heads back along the route.

THE NYMPH RANCH

The Nymph Ranch is hardly the only brothel in the Las Vegas Metroplex, but it’s the most well known. It is also unique in the ‘plex in that it is not owned by a corporation or a criminal organization. The owner, who goes by the name Della Warez, is one of the savviest marketing geniuses this side of the Mississippi. She made the place world-famous by sponsoring the Urban Brawl World Cup, which is how a visit to the Ranch was added to the traditional grand prize for the winning team.

There’s been a brothel at the Nymph Ranch’s location for over a century. It has changed owners and names over the decades; it became the Nymph Ranch after an accidental fire burned down the previous incarnation in ‘59, shortly after a massive expansion of the facilities.

- That fire was no accident. I was on that run. A burning bordello is what you get when shadowrunners dig out an ant spirit hive masquerading as a brothel.
- Winterhawk



THE SCANDAL OF THE DAY

Posted by: **Sunshine**

I know that Turbo Bunny hasn't been in Las Vegas since January, so it's no surprise that she's missing some of the very latest of current events. Allow me to fill you in.

Imagine that a well-known, but not necessarily beloved citizen was to interrupt the live broadcast of a news show. Imagine this citizen accused a megacorporation of kidnapping, torture, and murder, and this interrupting person has personal experience with the horrible and twisted megacorp program. Imagine the level of popular outrage that might happen as a result of these accusations.

Now factor a few things in. The show is isn't on just any broadcast site, but a basic Matrix public access service. It's a local news show, and not even a very polished one, so it has limited appeal. The show is broadcast in sim only, so that cuts the viewership down even more. It's in the Las Vegas Metroplex, of course, where people have plenty of other distractions besides public access Matrix viewing. Now add the fact that the interrupting citizen in question can't even watch the show himself, nor can the audience he was trying to reach. As revelations and accusations go, this had to be the least effective in the history of the Sixth World.

The citizen in question is Tecumseh Jack, part owner of the Nymph Ranch and, probably more interesting, a local free spirit of man. Jack has been around for around a decade, and is credited with being instrumental in helping Della Warez rebuild the brothel now called the Nymph Ranch after it burned to the ground. The audience he was trying to reach was his fellow spirits. On a sim program.

Tecumseh Jack ranted for twenty-four minutes and seven seconds about the treachery of Horizon in Las Vegas. He accused the megacorp of seeking out free spirits to hire, which is nothing scandalous in and of itself. He then moved on to tell his story. According to the spirit, the corp trapped him in a magic circle and began to "tear at my very essence, poking and prodding things that spirits cannot endure to be explored." It's a bit hard to follow at times, but the gist of the matter is that he was imprisoned and had a series of tests done to both his physical form and his astral form, bringing him to the brink of disruption over and over again. Spirits can't be killed like we can, but they can be hurt so badly they flee to their home plane in astral space. Ultimately, they disrupted him to the point where he was "so hurt I had to return to my astral home and could not return for a year and a day," a period of healing that is apparently impossibly long in spirit circles.

Surprisingly, it had an impact. A bit of the Della Warez magic must be rubbing off on Jack, because it worked. There are some three dozen or so known free spirits that call the Las Vegas Metroplex their home. They began to protest to Horizon's management and to the LVM Board of Trustees. The Board shrugged and cited extraterritorial agreements, and Horizon predictably remained silent.

The latest word on the street is that the spirits have been organizing, with Tecumseh Jack in the lead. A number of metahumans have been joining the fight as well, protesting at Horizon hotels and boycotting Horizon products. Then came the Mojave Wars incident.

The Mojave Wars is dying. Everybody knows it. Horizon's sad attempt to copy the Desert Wars franchise was doomed from the start, and not just because the areas of the Mojave Desert that are safe enough to stage war games are shrinking. In a last attempt to revive the brand, Horizon created an invitational all-star match between the best of Desert Wars and their Mojave counterparts.

That's when the Mojave Incident happened. A baker's dozen of spirits attacked the games in the second quarter. Almost two hundred people were killed, and three of the attacking spirits were disrupted. None of the spirits were identified as known spirits of Las Vegas, but sentiment turned against them pretty quickly. The free spirits of Las Vegas quit their jobs, said goodbye to their friends, and vanished. The last we have heard of any of them was Tecumseh Jack's ominous statement, "If we cannot work within the system we will work without it." Even Della Warez insists that she has not seen her companion for over a month. Rumors say they have joined the spirits gathering at the Ubehebe Crater.

The issue of the vanished spirits has been kept fresh by local news reporters looking for something with which to scare their viewers. And it works. The question of spirit slavery has been discussed ever since the Awakening, and everyone in the Las Vegas Metroplex is worried that whatever answer the spirits are brewing up won't be good for them.

- While there are ways to enslave a spirit, the summoning of spirits is not slavery. It is an offer of a bargain, where the magician receives the services of the spirit temporarily. It has not been determined what the spirits receive in return, but those spirits interviewed independently agree that it is something intangible, but something valuable to them. In a way, spirits are the shadowrunners to the magician's Mr. Johnson, with negotiations held on a subconscious level when that magician opens the channel to the metaplanes and puts out the call for a spirit.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- On the subject, and not to digress too far from the topic, but there is a lot of thaumaturgical literature out there that would be of interest even to the non-magical. If you get a chance to read *The Summoning of Spirits in the Hermetic Tradition* from UNLV Press, do so; it is the seminal work that led to the breakthrough that taught mages how to call to spirits directly and for shamans to offer stronger anchors to visiting spirits. Come to think of it, the bulk of that research has come from Horizon facilities. Perhaps there is something to Mr. Jack's reports.
- Winterhawk

Urgent Message

VEGAS, BABY



HOTELS ON THE STRIP

Posted by: **Mechanic**

The Strip just wouldn't be the Strip if it didn't have its famous hotels and casinos towering over Las Vegas Boulevard, glittering in both the Matrix and meatspace. There are plenty of casinos in the Las Vegas Metroplex (around two hundred I'm told), but most of the real money is on the Strip. I thought I'd share my extensive knowledge by posting the entire list, ordered from north to south.

Emerald City

Emerald City is north of Sahara Avenue, which puts it in Las Vegas proper. Arguing about whether it's technically a casino on the Strip is a favorite pastime around these parts. It's most identifiable feature is a very passable likeness of the Space Needle in Seattle that's nearly as tall as the original and gives a nice view of the metroplex. Emerald City is owned by LVM Resorts.

Circus Circus

This hotel and casino is unique in many ways. It has the biggest circus big top in the world that still runs daily shows. It has a campground (all artificial grass) and allows people to drive their RVs in, hook up, and go be entertained. The hotel and casino top 165 meters, which is modest for the Strip, and slants sharply to give a better view to its sister casino, Emerald City.

The Riviera

The Riviera is owned by a conglomerate of shareholders, although anybody in the know can tell you that controlling interest is held by the Ghost Cartels. The hotel is famous for its burlesque entertainment and its big, rounded ... roof, standing about 210 meters above the street.

Fashion Show Mall

While this sprawling shrine of consumerism does contain casinos, its biggest draw is the high-fashion shopping, fashion shows, and over eight hundred shops. The complex itself straddles Las Vegas Boulevard, bordered by Desert Inn Road, Paradise Road, Sands Avenue, Spring Mountain Road, and Industrial Road. Its iconic Cloud, an oval AR disc that hangs over the entire complex, while always an interesting feature, has lately become downright majestic during times when the blood rain slices through it.

The Palazzo

The Palazzo is truly a palace, and it caters to only the richest of clients. Its main attractions include the very popular Lamborghini Las Vegas, a car dealer that sells the some of the very best super cars in the world, and the Elvehjem, a restaurant with three Michelin stars and a truly (and literally) magical menu.

The Flamingo

The Flamingo is the tallest building on the Strip at nearly half a kilometer, towering over the Palazzo and Bill's Gamblin' Hall, which share the block. The building's lowest

fifteen stories are dedicated casinos, with other entertainment venues interspersed between the floors with hotel rooms. Floor 69 (of course) is home to the Strip's largest brothel. The hotel's rooftop marsh garden has turned red lately and it's experienced a conspicuous lack of its trademark flamingos—rumor has it they all died.

The Mirage

LVM Resorts' crown jewel on the Strip, the Mirage features an artificial habitat for rare magical animals, a great number of variety acts, and a volcano that erupts every hour on the hour both in AR and in real space with pyrotechnics and cutting-edge special effects.

- Are the rumors true that the AR volcano eruption is also broadcast as BTL sim?
- /dev/grll

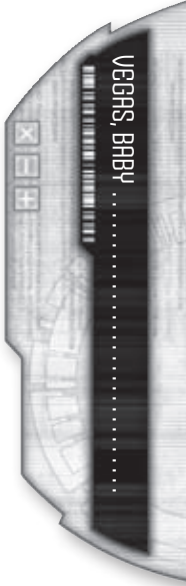
Bill's Gamblin' Hall

This hotel had a rough start around a hundred years ago, but is now one of the most steadfast gambling establishments in the Las Vegas Metroplex, and I'm not just saying that because it's my favorite place to play cards. It caters to the common tourist with its casino, AR games, and the Steakhouse Saloon (the best place for a burger in town). The hotel's staff and guests represent the highest concentration of orks in the city, whether by coincidence or design. It is the only place in the PCC where you can hear Or'zet more often than English. The upper crust likes to rub elbows in the suites, spa, and the ultra-lounge on the third floor. Bill's is the smallest hotel on the Strip, but it's the friendliest.

- So if I wanted to blend in at Bill's, I'd need implanted tusks so I can speak Or'zet, right?
- Plan 9
- You don't need tusks to speak Or'zet, drekhead. That's a myth. The problem that you squishies have with Or'zet is that orks and trolls have big, wide throats and you don't. Or'zet has that thing that we write with a single quote mark. Lemme look it up a sec ... it's an epiglottopharyngeal fricative. Squishies have a tendency to gag and puke when they try to speak Or'zet, though I met a leaf-eater once that could handle it null perspiration, and he was a pencil-neck, so I guess you can learn with practice.
- Bull

The Bellagio

The Bellagio stands for elegance in the wild tackiness that is the Strip. Its lobby is covered with hand-blown glass flowers, its art gallery is home to the globally popular Echo Chernik Memorial Collection, and it has more awards than the rest of the hotels on the Strip combined. Its lake and dancing water fountain are iconic. The Bellagio is also the poker capital of North America, if not the world. The World Poker Championship can be found there, along with Bobby's Room, a contentious place that I don't have to tell you about if you know anything about poker. It is owned by the Verontesse family.



- I just hit the Las Vegas Gaming Control Board's main node, and part of the paydata said that the Bellagio is owned by a subsidiary of LVM Resorts.
- /dev/grrl
- That's only on paper. The Verontesse have owned the place for years.
- 2XL
- You hit GCB? And you're still alive? Damn. Do you tutor? I've got a kid.
- Slamm-0!

Planet Horizon

Horizon has their hooks into just about everything in Las Vegas, but Planet Horizon is where they flaunt it. Pito and MeFeeds are rampant, and every last employee, facility, and piece of equipment has a FaceSpace page. The place is dripping with memorabilia from over a century and a half of recorded entertainment. The hotel and casino is split into three 352-meter towers, one themed for the music recording industry, one for television and trid, and the third for films and sims.

Monte Carlo

The Monte Carlo is privately owned and operated by the Sapphire Crane Society Triad. Despite the ties to the Far East, the hotel has kept its traditional Monte Carlo look, reminiscent of Monaco before the Spinrad deal. Aside from the usual hotel and casino, the hotel boasts a spa, a wave pool, the metroplex's most popular wedding chapel, and two theaters that feature a musical, dance, and variety acts of all sorts.

LVM Grand

Pedestrians are not allowed to cross the street at the corner of Las Vegas Boulevard and Tropicana, but why would they? The LVM Grand takes up all four corners of the intersection, with a walkway between each building about ten meters above street level and another half dozen skywalks crisscrossing each building at strange angles high above. Most people consider the LVM Grand's four mismatched towers to mark the end of the Strip, but really it goes on for another half a block or so. The hotel features an indoor zoo, world-famous establishments like Coyote Ugly and Astral Zazz, and twenty-some restaurants.

The Excalibur

The Excalibur is a reconstruction of the original Excalibur hotel and casino, built about half a click south of the original location, and almost that far upward. The castle/skyscraper boasts that it has the legendary sword, Excalibur, gleaming in a stone at the top of the central tower about four hundred meters above the street. The hotel has a casino, the best all-male revue and strip show in the world, Frankie's Last Resort (a restaurant where employees are deliberately rude), and a nightly medieval tournament complete with knights and wizards.

- I've heard that the sword on the tower is actually a magical focus of immense power. Everyone knows you can see it glowing at night, but I haven't found any independent confirmation about any sort of enchantment. Does anyone know the truth of the matter?
- Snopes

- Whatever you do, don't investigate it astrally. It's surrounded by a very, very strong opaque ward. The ward itself is guarded by Black Knight and Green Knight, two free spirits that guard the area day and night. The spirits themselves are deadly and rather uncommunicative. If the price is right, I might be willing to investigate further.
- Jimmy No

- We'll talk.
- Snopes

The Túr Pám

"Túr Pám" is a Sperethiel for a certain type of smooth, featureless cylindrical tower, and the Túr Pám Resort and Casino does not disappoint. The white tower reaches up to the sky, 410 meters in the air, like a pillar of ivory. The windows are one-way, of course, and the view is incredible from the upper floors. The resort has three floating spas that spiral around the tower, occasionally landing to take in or release customers. Their tagline is that the Túr Pám is a magical experience. The staff is entirely composed of hot elves who speak Sperethiel. While magic was definitely used in the construction of the building, most of the time the magic used in the day-to-day operations of the place is pretty tame.

- The hotel claims that the floating spas are magical, and they do have a strong aura, but it's all fake. The spas are really just oddly shaped zeppelins.
- Haze

- The exterior of the tower is getting badly stained by the blood rain. The resort is trying to keep up with cleaning efforts, but with the rain coming down more and more, it's a losing battle. A comedian at the Luxor called the Túr Pám "the Tampon" and got a huge laugh. I think the name might stick.
- Turbo Bunny

The Luxor

The black pyramid and its surrounding black ziggurats mark the southern end of the Las Vegas Strip. The Luxor has the usual amenities: hotel, casino, spas, restaurants, and shows, all with the distinct styling of Ancient Egypt. Its most marked feature is the Luxor Sky Beam, a beam of light that shoots straight into the sky from the top of the resort's central tower. The beam is the brightest spotlight in the world and can be seen from space. When the rain falls red, it shines a brilliant crimson.



THE FREEMONT STREET EXPERIENCE

The Freemont Street Experience, or FSE, is Downtown's answer to Paradise's Strip, and it's a pretty lame one. The FSE is filled with shops, mini-casinos, and light entertainments. The entire street is a pedestrian zone, with a canopy covered in AR displays and advertising. Just about every tree and bush along Freemont Street is artificial. It's pretty obvious that the FSE caters to local yuppies and gullible or confused tourists, which is why it's earned the name "Fake Shit Emporium" from native Vegans.

DESERT BREEZE PARK

Desert Breeze Park is probably the nicest park in the entire metroplex. Smack dab in the middle of Spring Valley, the park takes up two large city blocks and features facilities for a number of sports and games. Until a few months ago, it was the largest area of grass in the LVM, but since the snowfall in January the grass hasn't grown back.

The park is the safest place in Las Vegas. No, really—the last reported incidence of violence there was back in '71, and that guy was immediately taken down by every other park visitor that had a clear line on him. This has nothing to do with PuebSec; the park is a sort of neutral zone in the syndicate-dominated Spring Valley district. Just about everybody in the 'plex uses it as a safe meeting place, not just the gangsters.

- I was part of a team that had a target doing a meet with a third party in Desert Breeze Park. I was the only local, and the team lead wanted to take down the target during her meet. I warned him that there was no way that was going to go down well. He ignored my advice, and I walked away. I never heard from him again.
- Lyran
- Was that back in '71?
- Slamm-0!
- Yes. And this is me not asking why you ask.
- Lyran

THE DAM

The Dam formerly named Hoover is nearly 150 years old. It doesn't look like it did back in the twentieth century, but it's still sitting against Lake Mead, generating power for almost the entire Pueblo Corporate Council along with a few neighbors. The first thing that the PCC did when it formed was to restore and upgrade the decaying structure, turning it into a gleaming structure of black ferrocrete. When the PCC took over the place, they renamed it Howling Dam, but that didn't last long. Two spirits popped up and said they weren't fond of the name at all, and they were of a mind to tear the thing apart if they weren't appeased. So the PCC set about appeasing them with the help of shaman and ace negotiator Nathaniel Blackeagle. Blackeagle got the two spirits to agree to watch over with the help of a third, who is conveniently more metahuman and PCC-friendly than the other two. The spirits, for their part, insisted that no more upgrades or changes be made to the dam, and that it bear no other name besides the Dam.

The spirits allowed for one alteration—the face of the Dam was repainted. Artists from across the NAN came to the Dam to put their stamp on it, and the end result is one of the largest, densest, most dizzying murals in the world.

The Dam is officially owned by the PCC, while the operating rights are licensed to Bathotech, which is a sweet little deal for both of them. The spirits have been convinced of the importance of physical security, so they allow PCC forces to maintain a small presence there, though they frown on the use of any form of explosives.

- The deal between the PCC and Bathotech creates a bit of a problem. According to PCC law, the Dam is PCC territory, but the treaty contract signed between the Corporate Council and the PCC says that licensing agreements with Corporate Council members include extraterritoriality rights. Bathotech is a wholly owned subsidiary of Horizon. In Corporate Council law, that means it inherits extraterritorial status from its parent corporation, but according to PCC law it does not. In practice, the PCC and Bathotech have switched the territorial status of the Dam back and forth to whichever benefited both parties the most at any given time, and which organization the three spirits in charge of the area seems less irritated with at any given time. This has not caused any serious problems for them yet, but it's probably going to be a powder keg someday.
- Sunshine

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

The UNLV campus is in Paradise, a couple of clicks away from the Strip. It is a strong school if you're into architecture, astral studies, jazz, dentistry, or horny guys.

UNLV also has a strong athletics program, which is where it makes its money. The UNLV Rebels compete in NACAA Division I in all sports, and they make a lot of money off their football, basketball, stickball, and baseball teams. Their mascot, a stylized NAN fighter from the Ghost Dance War, is regularly seen in sportscasts around the world.

The university is the home of the Horizon Institute for Astral Studies. I didn't know this, but apparently it's the foremost research facility for spirits and metaplanes. I have no idea what that means, but I'm told it's important.

- The UNLV has a lot of claims to fame, but by far the biggest has to be the massive UNLV Summoning Circle near Howling Coyote Hall. At nearly two hundred meters across, it is the largest permanent magical construction in the world. Magical scholars have been making amazing breakthroughs at the UNLV facility.
- Ethernaut
- A summoning circle the size of a stadium? What could possibly go wrong?
- Riser
- Much. I have been investigating the HIAS, but I have been stymied at every turn. The entire HIAS sub-campus is property of Horizon, and therefore extraterritorial. Both the University and the Institute are heavily protected by PuebSec and Horizon,

and their astral security is layered and comprehensive. I have only encountered such a level of security once, which makes me suspicious and honestly a bit nervous about what may be going on in Las Vegas.

- Man-of-Many-Names

RENA'S HOUSE OF PANCAKES AND BONDAGE

Can't decide whether you want kinky S&M sex or a stack of tasty pancakes in Downtown Las Vegas? You've come to the right place.

Yes, pancakes and bondage, two great tastes that go great together. Whether you're the S or the M, Rena's has a little something for you. They've also got the best pancakes in town, and I'm not kidding about that. I've watched Mormons set aside their issues for a great waffle, although they usually stick to the front lounge area where things are relatively tame.

What most people don't know, but you should, is that Rena is not just the best lady of leather and the best pancake chef in town, but she's also the best fixer around. On a slow day, the shadowrunners almost outnumber the legitimate patrons. Still, if you're going past the dining area and the playrooms to get to Rena's office for some business, you should partake in the offerings on the way through.

LAS VEGAS MOTOR SPEEDWAY

Las Vegas Motor Speedway is a privately owned racing park in Nellis. It features a drag strip and a standard oval speedway. It also has a maze of tracks that can be shifted during a race, simulating longer courses than the park's nearly one thousand hectares would normally be able to run.

The Speedway recently celebrated its 100th anniversary by opening the track to Matrix patrons. Real cars can now compete with AR cars driven by people in VR from other parts of the world. You can also race a car that has been recorded and is then projected onto the track. They say that the virtual driving system is completely safe, but I happen to know for a fact that the track will provide a BTL mode for a fee, so you can run hot to have that extra performance boost. And feel the pain.

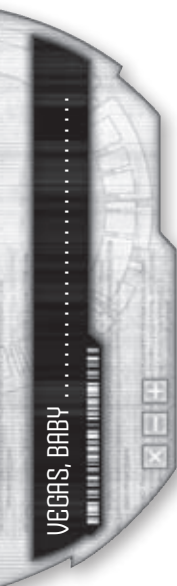
THE MOJAVE DESERT

The Las Vegas Metroplex is surrounded by the Mojave Desert, so I should talk about it a little. Unless you've been living in a cave for the last decade or so, you already know that the desert is a dangerous place. You don't know the half of it yet, though.

Creepy Critters

The paracritters in the Mojave are thick as tire smoke in the desert. Don't head out for specimens of mundane animals, they've all been eaten. You've got devil rats, demon rats, those other rodent things that burrow and eat flesh, sand worms, the really big sand worms, nova scorpions, and a bunch of wyverns and other dracoforms.

And that's just the animals. Dangerous magical plants can be found just about everywhere. They're more rare than the animals, and some mundane plants are still around. Still, it's safest to assume that every plant is waiting to kill you.



Sand Storms

The Mojave has always had its share of dust devils and the occasional sand storm, but they've been coming in more often and more dangerous.

- Some to many of the sand storms of the Mojave are not sand storms at all. They are mana storms brought on by the appearance and disappearance of alchera. These alchera seem to propagate through the desert like waves, with a single area shifting from Earth to somewhere else and back in the span of hours. We have a number of volunteers tracking these phenomena, but as you can imagine in the Mojave, their numbers are steadily growing thin. We have not determined the plane to which these alchera are linked, but we feel that it is a violent and sadistic place.
- Winterhawk

Game Info

THE MOJAVE ALCHERA

The alchera of the Mojave are dangerous to meta-humans and spirits alike. These alchera act as both mana storms (p. 122, *Street Magic*) and sand storms (p. 164, *Arsenal*). In addition, these alchera impose a part of an angry and cruel metaplane on an area of the desert no more than a kilometer or two across. While this alchera is in effect, any organic or magical sapient being that deliberately inflicts pain (in the form of boxes of damage) on another sapient being gains a dice pool bonus on its following action equal to the number of boxes of Physical damage or half the number of boxes of Stun damage actually inflicted.

In addition to the dice pool bonus, the one who inflicts pain receives a feeling of euphoria as his brain is filled with dopamine. This supernatural high is addictive. For every ten boxes of damage inflicted by someone under the influence of the Mojave alchera, make an Addiction Test (p. 256, *SR4A*).

Mojave Preserve

The Mojave Preserve is where the largest Joshua tree forest in the world used to be. Or still is, if you believe the satellite feeds. Nobody visits any more. I've heard rumors of spirits being seen in the Preserve, but then again, who exactly saw them there?

Joshua Tree Corporate Park

Joshua Tree Corporate Park is, I'm told, still intact. It has always been a huge draw for talismongers and magicians of all traditions. That makes sense—it's a very magical place. Skull Rock, a natural formation that kinda looks like a skull if you squint at it, is probably the most popular site there.

The thing is, nobody's been there for a long time. Well, nobody's been there and lived. Okay, nobody's been there and reported back. The trip to Joshua Tree is through miles of the Mojave from Las Vegas; you're better off starting in LA.

- I've been there lately. The trees and the rock still stand. I didn't stay long. One of the Mojave alchera rolled through the park shortly after I arrived, and as I fought the urge to tear my companions apart, I swear I saw Skull Rock actually turn into a giant, bloodstained skull.
- Lyran
- You saw this through a sand storm? Full marks for a good ghost story, though.
- Baka Dabora

PEOPLE TO KNOW

The Who's Who in Las Vegas is a huge file on the public Matrix, but there are some who you can't go without knowing about, if not knowing personally.

YATOKYA PADILLA

Yatokya Padilla is a human on her third three-year term as Mayor of Las Vegas. She's bold and opinionated yet good-natured and wry. Her tongue-in-cheek style, sexy look, and excellent sense of humor have endeared her to the citizen-owners of the Las Vegas Metroplex.

Padilla is a native on the LVM. Born to the Zuni tribe nearly thirty years ago, she started her career as a cigarette girl at the Bellagio. Soon she was in a dancing revue while doing a stand-up act in another casino under the stage name Yato. It wasn't long before Marcelino Merlot, the LVM Board of Trustees' director, noticed her during her comedy routine.

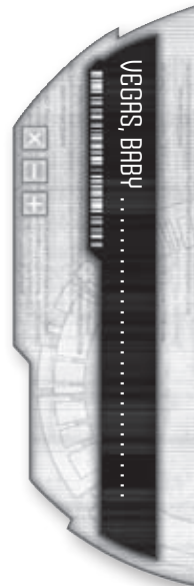
Merlot saw something he liked: the next mayor of Las Vegas. He started grooming her for the position immediately, giving her a classy restaurant in the Bellagio to "manage" with ample help from her underlings. Soon, she was the most popular hostess-manager on the Strip. The Board selected her with a unanimous vote, making her the youngest mayor at age twenty-two.

Padilla seems to revel in her job as professional celebrity. She does ribbon cuttings, charity appearances, motivational speeches, guest spots, world tours, the whole nine yards. The metroplex couldn't ask for a better pitchman.

There is always the dark side to celebrity, of course. She hasn't had a stable relationship for years; her last relationship ended after a tragically awkward (and televised) *ménage à trois* with her beaux. Horizon has been trying to buy out her contract with the PCC for two years to get her to star in a number of sims. There is also a legal battle over custody of a child she didn't carry but who the father claims is her genetic son.

Then there's the darker side of the dark side. Her mother is ruthless member of the Koshari, and Yatokya Padilla has stated publicly that she is still close to her mother. There are plenty of rumors floating around that the recent increase in Koshari influence in the 'plex is due to its mayor, but there's direct little evidence of it so far.

- She's damn hot. You'd think she was an elf.
- Hard Exit



- Don't bother. I met her in person once. Those piercing natural crystalline baby blues she has? I know how she got them: there's nothing behind them.
- Sunshine
- On the contrary, the dumb chick routine is an act. Do a search for her old stand-up routines. They're the work of a brilliant mind.
- /dev/grrl

MARCELINO MERLOT

Marcelino Merlot is many things. At 1.65 meters, he is a giant of a dwarf. He is in his mid-forties. He dresses in well-tailored three-piece suits, and he fills every inch of them. He is a family man, with two daughters and a beautiful wife. He is a vice president for LVM Resorts and the manager and majority owner of the Bellagio. But above all, he is the Director of the Las Vegas Metroplex Board of Trustees.

Merlot was born and raised in Denver. His family was in the Verontesse family organization, but he was given to the Vory to raise as part of a hostage exchange in a peace agreement. He was raised in the Denver Vory syndicate, soaking up every last bit of the organization's ruthless practices and merging them with the Verontesse cunning. He returned to the Verontesse on his eighteenth birthday and was immediately given a position of small authority over some of their Denver operations. He worked his way quickly up the ranks and was sent to Las Vegas to improve the family business there. He arrived just in time to use the tempo crisis as leverage to take over large parts of the city, gathering enough influence to become first a Board member and then Trustee inside of a year.

Merlot is a hard man with a soft side—and he has a knack for showing that soft side in public in a way that endears people to him, despite his ruthlessness. Back in 2071, one of the Bellagio's elevators failed and a child fell into the shaft. Her clothing was caught on a protruding fuse box, but it wasn't going to hold her for long. Merlot was first on the scene with a couple of his muscle men. When they couldn't reach her, he ordered them to lower him down by his ankles. By this time a crowd had gathered, and there was screaming and fainting when the sound of tearing cloth and terrified shrieking came from the elevator shaft, but it turned into applause when the bodyguard lifted Merlot back to the floor, with the dwarf cradling the seven-year-old in his arms. Merlot apologized to the child and her parents, and thanked his bodyguard. According to reports, the family was given free room upgrades for seven years, his bodyguard was given a promotion and an invitation to Mr. Merlot's private parties, and the girl was given free ice cream for life.

Merlot is a shrewd businessman, but he's an even shrewder politician. He is good at forming alliances with his friends and even better at breaking the alliances of his enemies. He rewards his followers with praise and access and his employees with money and prestige. He plays chess and go, and plays them well, and he can think several moves ahead in the real world, too.

- I met the man once at a poker game. He's a terrible poker player. I am absolutely certain that I could beat him in the dark, and yet I can't shake the feeling that he let me win. He may well have been

setting me up for something else, even if that "something" is just the next time I play him.

- Mechanic

CAOLLAIÐHE MONTAUK

Caollaidhe Montauk is Horizon's executive supervisor in the Las Vegas Metroplex. She is a master of manipulating image and public opinion. Even Humanis members have a tough time remembering that she's an ork.

Montauk is an LA woman through and through. Born to Irish and mixed Native American parents, Montauk was in on the ground floor when the Horizon Group formed in 2061. She was instrumental in the quick rise of the corporation and was part of the negotiation team headed by Gary Cline that won Horizon AAA status with the Corporate Court. She was given control of Horizon's Las Vegas operations in 2069 and has been building them up since.

Montauk is constantly connected to the Matrix via implanted hardware. She can multitask like an expert, so she's having a conversation in the flesh while at the same time texting multiple underlings and chatting in cyberspace. She also has a good head for recognizing talent. Put it all together and you're never sure if she's actually a genius or just good at communicating with them in real time. Still, the result is the same.

There's a story of a time when she was giving a live international interview that was going very well. She was articulate and engaging without being condescending to the audience, and it was clear that the interviewer was pleased with how well it was going. The interview was interrupted with breaking news about a terrorist bombing at a Horizon hotel off the Strip. When asked for comment on the breaking news, Montauk gave more details of the attack, the response, and announced that Horizon was aware of the identity of the perpetrator and was in pursuit. She had been in contact with her people and organized the emergency service response, the investigation, and the securing of the site while she had been giving the interview. Later in the interview, she announced the capture of the culprits.

Montauk is not technically a citizen of Las Vegas, so she owns no voting shares of the Metroplex. Still, she all but controls Board Trustee Marcus Tamm, and Horizon owns part or all of a number of resorts on the Strip.

- How do you pronounce "Caollaidhe?"
- Thorn
- "Ma'am."
- Turbo Bunny

BETTINA GUCCIOLI

Bettina Guccioli teaches school at Horizon Public Elementary 317 in Enterprise. She has refused to give up her LVM and PCC citizenship for a Horizon SIN, so she has been stuck in the lowest salary bracket for a decade. Her home in Henderson is low-rent, though, so she manages. She is witness to the tragedies of Henderson every day on her commute to and from work, and she has always tried to help where she could.

Last year, she decided that enough was enough. She started petitioning the LVM Board and the mayor, along with



her superiors in Horizon, looking for some relief for her fellow Hendersonians. All three of the ones she went to help for spurned her in their own way. Horizon ignored her, the mayor did a feature on Guccioli her trid show, and the LVM Board of Trustees appointed her as Henderson district manager.

Normally, that would be the end of it, but Guccioli is a tenacious woman. She took the tiny budget and what little support the metroplex offered and made the best of it. She's done a lot of work herself, and gotten others to volunteer in soup kitchens, building repairs, vehicle refurbishing, infrastructure repair, and anything else that Henderson needs. She has even convinced street gangs to join her in improving the district.

As a result, she has started turning things around in Henderson, slowly but surely. She has shown the ability to create coalitions and make things happen. This has made a number of others in town angry or scared, but she has the respect and protection of everyone in Henderson.

- Everyone but the Comanche, that is. They're still bitter about their losses to the Koshari, and they're looking at Henderson as the home base where they will rise again.
- Riser

RENA GREAT BEAR

Rena Great Bear is the owner, operator, and proprietor of Rena's House of Pancakes and Bondage. She's a heavy-set human who looks amazing in a corset. She's also the city's best fixer. That might not seem like much compared to mayors and megacorp executives, but a list of names for shadowrunners wouldn't be complete without her. Plus, she's a dear friend and this is my file.

According to Rena, she can see relationships. She doesn't use her commlink or even paper to keep track of who's owed what. She's so good at it, she can often tell you the details of a relationship just by looking at the people in question. She knows which of her girls and boys are perfect for each client, and which need to be kept far apart. She consults for PuebSec when they get stumped, and the security service owes her a lot of favors.

Rena makes no secret about having a dark secret. Everyone has dark secrets, but this is apparently the darkest of dark secrets. I was once in the extremely enviable position of being owed a favor by Rena. I asked her what her dark secret was, and all she said was, "Some favors come at too high a price." She acted like that was a real answer for a while, but finally just gave me a vintage Saab Dynamit 778 TI with the original turbocharger and transmission and the real leather interior. I called it square.

CHARLEMAGNE "MECHANIC" LATIMER

Charlemagne Latimer is probably the best gambler in the 'plex. First in the Who's Who of card players and casino gamers. He's been thrown out of every casino on the Strip.

I don't know where he comes from, but most people who have heard the name say he's a Las Vegas native. He's not really a mover, but he is a shaker. Charlemagne is about average height and weight for an ork, maybe on the stringy side. He's an adept; some would call him a gambler adept, but he insists that magic has nothing to do with his abilities.

The reason I'm mentioning him is that as a true gambler, he can't help but take risks. As a result he occasionally needs a job while laying low. His second job of choice is shadowrunning. He not only knows his way around a deck of cards, he also knows the Vegas shadows.

He doesn't really like being called Mechanic, but that's the street name that stuck. He also hates shadowrunning, or more correctly he hates having to shadowrun. If you're in town on a job and you need some advice, look up Charlemagne and invite him to a game. You'll lose, of course, but the information you get will be worth the chips.

- Wow. You managed to get through that whole thing without a single Elvis reference.
- Hannibelle
- Damn straight. I hate that guy. He's like a boring version of Jet Black.
- Turbo Bunny

Incoming Message

2072 MOJAVE WARS ALL-STAR BLOW OUT

The spirits of the Mojave have been growing increasingly restless in recent days, and one of the most obvious signs of this was the Mojave Wars Incident. The Mojave Wars were on their way out because their ratings were way below Desert Wars and Desert Wars: Gobi. They had tried to spice up the program with reality TV crap like confessional cameras, interpersonal drama, and voting people out of the unit, but I think we all know the show was pretty doomed from the start.

So in 2072 they did an invitational match, offering a lot of money to the all-stars from Desert Wars to fight against the Mojave Wars all-star line up. What happened next was called a publicity stunt by Desert Wars, and a coincidence by Mojave Wars, but everyone agreed it was a tragedy.

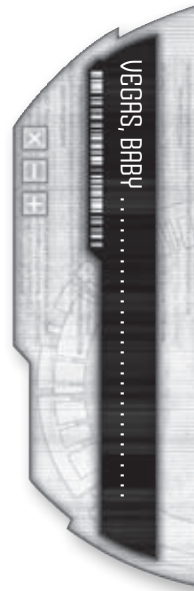
Here's the file.

[Turbo Bunny: ATTACHED S03E22-mojave-wars-all-star-HDS-TryG.sim]

- Bunny, some of us don't like sim files. Here's a transcript of the good part.
- Axis Mundi

Announcer: The Mojave team's left flank armor company is using smoke to screen their movement. Let me check our telemetry ... yes, they're moving left at top speed.

Analyst: That's right, Marcia. It looks like they're going for a classic Rommel single envelopment. If the red team had chosen satellite intel as their advantage at the start of the match they'd have been able to use that to spot the move, but they're stuck with aerial drones.





Announcer: The drones might be blinded by three company's thermal smoke, but satellites don't carry missiles, Duncan.

Analyst: That's true. Back when I was in the Desert Wars Championship match, my tank was taken out of the action by a Wandjina. Of course, that was back when the crew of a tank was allowed to abandon their vehicle when it was called out and keep fighting, which let me earn that MVP.

Announcer: It looks like there's some action in the southern sector of the battlefield. There's a bit of a dust storm there, but I can see some players.

Analyst: That's away from the action, and those players have been taken out, probably during the action in sector two about fifteen minutes ago. Normally when you're taken out you head back to the muster point, chat with your teammates, grab a cigarette, especially when you're hit early in the quarter. Either that or you call for a medic because the gel round hit you the wrong way and you can't make it on your own.

Announcer: It looks like those players are running.

Analyst: That's weird, Marcia, because they don't need to run back to muster. They've got plenty of time before third quarter, and running will just—

Announcer: Sorry to interrupt, Duncan, but they're shooting at something. I can't see it in the dust storm that's ... wait, they're firing at the dust storm. That's no dust storm, that's a spirit. I think it's an ifrit.

Analyst: Spirit? Neither team took magicians as their advantage. How could there be a—

Announcer: The players are firing at the spirit with no effect. The spirit is advancing on the men and women on the ground. Spirits, it's huge! It's towering over the ... my sweet spirits of mercy.

Analyst: It tore his head off. What the hell is this?

Announcer: Ladies and gentlemen, I do not know what's going on, but there's a spirit loose on the battlefield and it's attacking and killing the Desert Wars all-stars as they head back to muster.

Analyst: This is completely against the rules—

Announcer: I'm receiving reports of more spirits in the battle zone. Sector two is reporting several spirits and heavy casualties. Sector five is as well, that's the Mojave team's muster area. Wait, the smoke is clearing and ... great spirits, there is blood all over the field. I can see some two dozen spirits rampaging through both team formations.

Analyst: This is Duncan Rogers to company commanders. I am ready to assist. Give me access to one of your vehicles.

Announcer: It looks like the players are rallying. There is a player standing on top of a tank shouting orders. It looks like Ms. Malicious from the Desert team. I'm going to see if we can get her feed.

Analyst: That's right, I'm "Slam Dunc" Rogers. I can help. Give me a damn vehicle.

Announcer: Here she is, she's—

Player: —left, you ass! Bring it around, bring it around. Gunner, target the earth el' in the middle. Driver, slide left, you coc—

Analyst: Fine, give me a drone, then. Just get me in there!

Player: —accepting command. Mojave three company, continue your flanking maneuver and break right at top speed on my mark. Gunner, FIRE!—

Announcer: It looks like the spirits have taken their first casualty. One elemental has been blasted by the red tank commanded by Ms. Malicious.

Player: —Mark! Mark you bastards! Pull in and sweep that line. One eight Company Bravo and Charlie, push now. Dorgan, if you don't get those reinforcements moving in three seconds I'm going to personally kick your ass after this. Alpha—

Analyst: About time. This is Slam Dunc, I'm assuming command of the drone squadron. All riggers regroup at two eight tango and check in.

Player: —three seven. Gunner, what the hell are you... oh, fuck. [static]

Announcer: It looks like the tank Ms. Malicious was using has been flipped by ... something with tentacles. She's been pinned underneath ... wait, no, she's clear, and firing her trademark double pistols at the spirit. The bullets are tearing through that thing, how can she be doing that with gel rounds?

Analyst: Winger, take your flight north and support two five company. My flight, target tango zero three.

Announcer: Ladies and gentlemen, the legendary Duncan "Slam Dunc" Rogers has entered the fight from the booth right next to me. He has taken command of the Desert team's drone wing and is leading a charge against the spirits now. We'll try to get his feed while—

Analyst: Target acquired, I have tone, firing ... direct hit. Tango down. Break right and assist th—YAAAAAARRRRRAARGGHHHHhhh...

Announcer: Slam Dunc's drone has been snatched out of the air by some kind of fire spirit and is being torn apart. I can see sparks and [scream] Duncan? Duncan! Medic! Why the hell doesn't the press booth have a medic? Help!

- It was better as a sim.
- Clockwork



... SELF PRESERVATION ...

Incoming Message

Posted by: Sunshine

Ever since my stint with the shining megacorporation on the hill, I've been subjected to an unending series of requests about how Horizon really works. I'm not a man who likes to leave my public disappointed, so I've kept as many channels open as I can, looking for bits of information that might be of interest to you folks. Thanks to one of my friends who's currently serving as a personal assistant to some mucky-muck, I've got something you may want to see.

The first thing you have to understand is that Horizon records everything. *Everything*. They make it seem benign—they say that the higher-ups aren't going to go around listening to the various tapes, and that the recordings are used for their worker's benefits so they have easy-to-search records of all official conversations.

That's right, I said easy-to-search. Conversations aren't just recorded—they're translated from speech to text, then indexed and saved on internal servers.

- Is this something the Consensus looks at?
- Frosty
- To a degree. As you can imagine, there are an awful lot of conversations on the archives. But since the meetings are indicative of how employees think and feel, it's something that can be useful to the Consensus' algorithm. The Consensus has some pretty good search tools, so it looks for particular words and phrases to cue it as to what parts of conversations it should take into consideration.
- Sunshine

The second thing you need to understand is that Horizon encourages reflection in their employees, especially managers. They're supposed to gather in small groups at least once a month to talk about issues that, as Horizon puts it, are "bigger than business." This includes literature, music, philosophy, and other

things that they may not get to consider in their day-to-day lives.

The transcript below comes from one of those sessions. You won't recognize any of the names, but that's not important. What you need to know is that these people are the kind of employees the Consensus tries to reflect, and that the details of this conversation were almost certainly absorbed by that program.

// upload Uniformat text file :: user Sunshine :: 02/22/74 // Transcript of Horizon Reflection, Spartan Group, January 23, 2074

MARA BRUNSON: I think Machiavelli had a point when he said that what we call moral authority is often enforced through means we would consider immoral. Taking someone else's property, confining them to a small space and limiting the scope of their friendships and associations, and even killing someone are things we claim to find immoral, yet they are also the prime tools of law enforcement throughout the world.

KEVIN WONG: Those things cause fear, and fear is primal. It's great to be able to touch on people's higher emotions, but you can hit on fear quickly and get a powerful reaction. That's why politicians have loved it since the dawn of democracy.

BERNARDO PESQUEIRA: I think it's fair to ask whether Machiavelli was describing something as it should be or merely writing down what he saw. *The Prince* is not necessarily an endorsement of the philosophy it contains.

ADINA TORVALD: If it's a description, it's an accurate one. For every leader that seeks to build power by appealing to people's better selves, there are ten—or a hundred—who are content to rule by fear.

SAUL ROBBINS: Hey, if it works, it works. And it's worked for a long time. That's why we're still talking about this guy.

- I wish my job involved sitting around nice offices and talking about Machiavelli.
- Netcat

- And I wish my job involved building power through fear. Oh wait, it does.
- Kane

PESQUEIRA: I think we have to decide what we mean by “worked” before I can agree with that. Have people gained and sustained power through fear throughout history? Yes. But they often plant the seeds of their own downfall when they do so. They develop a populace who is fearful, mistrusting of each other, and easily swayed by whoever can make the strongest appeal to their primal instincts. That’s not a basis for long-term success.

ROBBINS: I don’t know. There are a number of leaders who were pretty good at it—their only undoing was the fact that their successors were not as good at it as they were. Look at the twentieth century Soviet Union. Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, even Brezhnev had a gift for that style of rule. Only when the leaders became weaker—or conciliatory—did the power base weaken.

BRUNSON: That’s an oversimplification. You can’t ignore the economic forces at work.

WONG: Let’s not get off-track. I think that the point is that enough people have found Machiavelli’s ideas to be useful in the short term to keep turning to them. Look at the internal management practices of other megacorporations. Many of them have a default mode of inspiring loyalty in their employees through fear.

TORVALD: And utter dependence.

ROBBINS: It’s not just internal. The heads of the megas want their peers to fear them, or at least be worried about crossing them. They also want governments to be completely afraid of them.

BRUNSON: There’s a balance at work. As powerful as they are, as much as they can shape the world, they still know the advantage of being liked. Part of Aztechnology’s success has always been how skilled they are at getting people to like their brand. People love Stuffer Shack, even though the stuff they sell is slowly turning everyone into blocks of sugared plastic.

TORVALD: That was a key part of our Bogotá strategy—trying to get people to see how Aztechnology is conducting themselves in that war, to help them understand how they’re using some of the tools that Machiavelli talks about.

PESQUEIRA: This is what I was talking about. The use of some of these techniques carries a risk, because when people understand the full extent of your actions, they may turn on you.

ROBBINS: Only if they aren’t afraid of you any more.

WONG: To me, this brings up an interesting question. How justified are you in using the techniques Machiavelli talks about to combat those same techniques? Can you fight fire with fire?

BRUNSON: Why not? Like I pointed out before, that’s what the law does—it uses actions we normally consider wrong to promote the greater good.

PESQUEIRA: Are we really saying that one person or organization can take an action and have it be considered immoral, while another person can do the exact same thing and have it be considered moral?

ROBBINS: Of course we are. Humanity has always made that trade-off. It’s all about the end result, remember?

- That was great. And I care why?
- Slamm-0!
- Because the Consensus is designed to reflect the opinions of Horizon employees. Now, this is only a small sample, but from what I’ve heard it’s in line with a greater trend within the corporation. They’ve moved from viewing actions as being good or bad to seeing people or organizations—like themselves and their corporation—as good. When you do that, you start to be more flexible with the type of actions you’re okay with.
- Sunshine
- Which means if Horizon doesn’t view you as an asset, they might not be willing to continue their previous practice of benign neglect toward you.
- Fianchetto

OVERVIEW

This run begins when the runners have, for some reason, gotten on Horizon’s bad side. This could be based on real actions they have taken, or it could be that a fake dossier was placed on Horizon nodes by someone hostile to the runners. Whatever the motivation, someone high up in the corporation has put a price on the runners’ heads, and it seems that the Consensus has approved the hit.

Changing the opinion of the executive won’t be easy, but the Consensus has veto power over this decision. Horizon employees tend to see themselves as good people, not the type who approve of assassinations, but their decisions have taken a Machivellian bent in recent days. If the runners—with the help of Mr. Johnson, who has some inside knowledge about how Horizon works—can

sway the Consensus back to its more upright ways, they can get it to veto the hit put out on them.

Mr. Johnson has a three-step process for them. First, they need to spend some time posing as Horizon employees and answer some Consensus questions in ways that will push it in the right direction. The next step is to alter the speech of a Horizon executive to contain elements that will sway employee opinions in the ways the runners want. Finally, Pathfinder has a prestigious picture, *The Broken Heart*, up for the Academy Award for Best Picture. It is widely seen as a call for kindness and gentleness, and a win for it could help Pathfinder and Horizon employees in general lean toward the values it espouses—at least for a time.

Once the runners complete the last part, the price is taken off their heads. The Consensus seems to have been swayed. Observant





runners, though, may notice that Mr. Johnson has one last secret that he's been hiding.

Throughout this mission, the runners have a price on their head. At intervals that the gamemaster feels appropriate, the runners can encounter a team bent on collecting the money. These teams can be five **Anarchists** (p. 134), five **Mercenaries** (p. 141), two **Elite Runner Adepts** (p. 138) with an **Elite Runner Mage** (p. 138), or other combinations the gamemaster desires.

PLOT POINT ONE

Paying Mr. Johnson

The runners are contacted by someone calling himself Mr. Johnson (use **Mr. Johnson (Street)**, p. 142) with a message that reads “Come meet me if you want to live.” It provides the address of an abandoned tenement in the runner’s home city (the first two parts of this adventure can take place in almost any city with significant corporate presence; the last two parts take place in Los Angeles).

Once the runners are done rolling their eyes at the clichéd message, they can decide how they want to respond. They may just go to the meet, though many runners would be reluctant to do so with as little information as they currently have. They can send messages back to Mr. Johnson or call him; he responds to messages but does not answer any call. If they ask him what’s going on or why they should bother with him, he sends a file showing hit notices for each of the runners. They have a 10,000-nuyen price on each of their heads. What’s worse, the file he sends shows that the bounties are making their way around some runner nodes, and a

few people have already responded with messages such as “I’m on it” or “Easy pickings.”

Mr. Johnson tells the runners he can help them understand why there’s a hit on their head and what they can do about it if they meet with him.

Tracking Mr. Johnson’s messages leads the runners to the tenement where Mr. Johnson wanted to meet. Once they arrive, he treats the situation as if they came when requested.

The tenement is a three-story building with most of the doors and windows boarded up. There is a second-floor window missing a board, and a rooftop door is also open. The rooftop can be accessed by a fire escape on the back; it takes a Climbing + Strength (1) Test to get on the ladder of the fire escape and start moving up. Climbing to the second-floor window requires a Climbing + Strength (4, 1 Combat Turn) Extended Test. There is a –2 dice pool penalty for the test, since it’s on a brick wall.

Mr. Johnson is on the second floor. He is a dwarf wearing tailored clothes that were in perfect shape ten years ago but now are showing their wear. He tells them he has a mission for them; the payment is that they will no longer have a hit out on them. In a reversal of the normal procedure, Mr. Johnson feels that this service is worth some money; he would like 10,000 nuyen to help the runners. Given that he could have this much for each runner’s head, he feels it’s a bargain.

If the runners are not swayed, this might be a good time for an attack by people looking to collect the bounty. Mr. Johnson fights for the runners in the combat—he wants them alive so he can get their money—without putting himself in an overly risky position. After the fight, he tells them that such things are

going to continue, and likely get worse, if they don't do anything about it.

The runners may also question Mr. Johnson's motivation for helping them. He insists it's cash. He has an opportunity to make some money while other people do the work—who wouldn't want that? He's telling the truth about that, but he has another motive. He used to work for Horizon but quit a number of years ago because he was worried that the megacorporation was drifting away from its ideals. He holds out hope that maybe it can pull back from the brink, and he sees this job as a chance to move it in the right direction. (He also has an even more hidden motive; see **Plot Point Five**, p. 43.)

He explains to them that the hit originates with Horizon. He can give as much motivation for the hit as the gamemaster desires. He says that the executive who requested the hit is firm in his desire to see them dead; if the runners want to remove the hit, their best bet is to persuade the Consensus to veto the hit. Usually the Consensus is not in favor of such violence, but Mr. Johnson says it's been approving more violence and underhanded actions in recent times. With his help, the runners might be able to help it get back to the straight and narrow. The trick is that the Consensus is not an actual entity; it's an algorithm and a vast collection of data, and breaking into it directly is a Herculean task. With Mr. Johnson's help, though, the runners can influence it through indirect action. The first step is to influence the opinions of Horizon employees by becoming Horizon employees.

PLOT POINT TWO

Having Your Say

Horizon employees are regularly asked questions about moral or ethical matters; the answers they provide help shape the Consensus' response to various situations. The runners, then, can shape the Consensus by becoming Horizon employees and answering some of these questions. Mr. Johnson suggests that if each runner answers ten questions, they can perhaps nudge the Consensus in the right direction.

The runners may be dubious about this. Horizon is a corporation with millions of employees—how could a handful of questions make any difference? Mr. Johnson says that Horizon is currently in transition, and there is a balance between employees who want Horizon to shun actions they believe to be “bad” and employees who believe that anything that advances Horizon's interests is inherently good. There is a balance between these two sides right now, so a slight nudge in one direction or the other could carry the day. It's something like an election where there are currently one million votes in favor of putting a hit on the runners and 999,997 votes in favor of vetoing the hit; a few votes could change the outcome. That's a bit of an oversimplification of how the Consensus works, but it helps show how a relatively small sample can make a difference.

Horizon has monthly orientations for new hires, and Mr. Johnson tells the runners that the next orientation near them is in two days. If they can break into a Horizon node and insert themselves as employees who are supposed to be part of this orientation, they may be able to pose as employees long enough to answer some Consensus questions.

The new employee information is kept at local Horizon offices. Runners will need admin-level access to make new employee files for each of them. The node details are as follows:

Sculpting: None.

Authentication:

Node 1 User: Passcode

Node 1 Security and Admin: Biometric Passkey

Privileges: Standard

Attributes: Firewall 5, Response 5, Signal 3, System 6

Spiders: 2 Professional Spiders

IC: 4 Blackout IC Rating 5

Resident Programs: Analyze 5

ARC:

Node 1: Terminate Connection

Node 1: Alert Spider

Each fake employee ID that the runners want to create requires a Computer + Edit (6, 1 Simple Action) Extended Test. The ID counts as a Rating 5 fake ID; as far as this node is concerned, the new identifications are completely legitimate, but at some point they might be compared to other databases that will not automatically accept them.

Once the runners show up for their initial orientation, they are escorted to a large meeting room in the Horizon corporate building. They are subjected to an hour of energetic pep talks welcoming them; in that time, they receive no questions from the Consensus. Then AROs in the shape of colored lines appear before them; they need to follow the color of whatever department supposedly employs them to get to the next stage of the orientation.

The next stage of the orientation is more interactive. Employees go to a room where there is a ratio of approximately one veteran employee for every four new employees. There is an assortment of food and drink, and new and veteran employees mingle freely. The veterans are giving them the basics of the Horizon corporate lifestyle and helping the new employees feel comfortable. If asked about the Consensus, they are very enthusiastic. They say the Consensus gives regular employees in the full extent of corporate affairs—they point out with pride that the Consensus can overrule any members of Horizon's board.

During this orientation, runners should make Etiquette + Charisma Tests as the gamemaster sees fit. On a critical glitch, the person they are talking to realizes that the runner simply doesn't fit in, and they secretly report them to a supervisor (use **Corporate Supervisor**, p. 135). The supervisor then pulls the runner in question out for a private conversation. In this conversation, have the runner make an Etiquette + Charisma Test opposed by the supervisor's Perception + Intuition. If the runner has succeeded in the test or ties, the supervisor allows them to return to the orientation. If the supervisor has more hits, they tell the runner that they know the runner does not belong here, and they have to leave; if the runner refuses to leave, the supervisor calls security. Two officers (use **Corporate Security**, p. 135) arrive in one minute.

During this stage of the orientation, runners start receiving questions from the Consensus at a rate of one question every fifteen minutes. They don't have to answer every question they receive, but if they go two hours without answering a question, the AROs with questions in them become more obvious (flashing when they appear). If they go an entire day without answering a



SAMPLE CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

Below are some examples of the types of questions the Consensus asks, along with indications of which way the runners should answer. They need to remember that they are not there to share their own opinions—they are there to sway the Consensus to veto the hit on them.

The gamemaster should reward the players for answering a large number of questions with good answers. If, as a group, the runners provide more than forty good answers (which could include them all answering the same question—if six of them provide the same good answer to a question, that counts as six good answers), they should notice a reduction in the amount of attempt hits against them.

- You have three children and you have been short on food. You just spent all your money for the week and bought enough food to last only four days. When you are paying, the grocery store's system glitches and acts as if you paid, even though no money was taken from your account. What do you do? A. Count it as a blessing. B. Tell the store manager. [The runners want the Consensus to be leaning toward a law-abiding approach; they should answer B.]
- You see an antique item being sold at an auction site. The seller clearly doesn't know its worth; you could buy for a quarter of what it's worth. What do you do? A. Purchase it at the lower price then resell it to people who know what it is worth. B. Provide the seller with information about what it is really worth. [The runners should answer A.]
- You and a fellow employee are up for the same promotion. You recently worked together on a project; your fellow employee did most of the work, while you served in an advisory capacity. When the project is complete, your supervisor sends around a letter telling everyone what a fantastic job you did on the project, treating you as the lead on the project. Would you correct your supervisor as to what your actual role was? A. Yes. B. No. [The answer that would push the Consensus in the right direction is A.]
- You become aware that another corporation has engaged in wartime atrocities, but you cannot prove

what they have done to an outside observer. Is it acceptable to generate false evidence in the absence of real evidence? A. Yes. B. No. [Many Horizon employees have recently been answering A, which has created the atmosphere that led to the hit being put out on the runners. The runners should answer B.]

- In the course of reviewing old documents stored in corporate nodes, you come across a report showing that a corporate product is doing significant environmental damage. You know that this particular product has been quite profitable. It appears this report was ignored so that production and sales would not be interrupted. Do you tell anyone in the corporation about the report? A. Yes. B. No [The runners should answer A to promote the idea that Horizon should not just be looking after its own corporate health.]
- [This is a follow-up to the previous question] You told your superiors about the report showing environmental damage tied to a particular product. Months passed, and there has been no movement whatsoever. Do you follow up with other corporate officers? A. Yes. B. No. [Again, the runners should answer A.]
- You have lost your home, your job, your family, and everything important to you thanks to lies a co-worker spread about you. You were unable to prove he was lying. One night, you see your former co-worker in a restaurant. The next morning, you discover that his wife has been murdered, and he has been arrested for the crime. You could provide an alibi and clear him of the crime. Do you? A. Yes. B. No. [Regardless of their actual feelings on the matter, runners should answer A if they want the Consensus to veto the hit.]
- Below is a list of individuals. Imagine you are asked to do something in your work that you feel is seriously unethical (e.g., something that might lead to significant pollution or cause distress to a number of innocent individuals). In what order would you contact them to discuss the problem and how you should proceed? A. Spouse. B. Co-worker at your level. C. Supervisor. D. Friend. E. No one—I would follow my instructions without questioning them. [The main thing here is not to answer E.]

question, they are reported to their supervisor. This should not be an issue, though, as answering questions is the entire reason the runners are here. The smaller orientation session lasts three hours, which gives the runners a chance to answer as many as twelve questions (see **Sample Consensus Questions** sidebar). After that, they can slip away from the orientation and end their short careers as Horizon employees.

PLOT POINT THREE

Boldly Going

Mr. Johnson congratulates them on a job well done and tells them that he believes their work will have an influence on their standing. There is more work to be done, however, and Mr. Johnson believes he has come up with a way to influence more Horizon employees to alter their thinking and push the Consensus in a less violent direction.



Maggie Snowden, associate vice president for space operations in the Transglobal subsidiary, is preparing to give a speech entitled *Horizon's Role in Orbital Space and Beyond*. The title doesn't sound inspirational, but the goal is to rally Horizon personnel around space exploration and travel as the space elevator gains more functionality. Transglobal is not Horizon's largest or most prestigious division, and Snowden hopes to raise its profile with her speech.

The entire space operations division will be tuning into her speech, and several space-travel fans in other Horizon subsidiaries will likely tune it at some point as well. The speech has the chance to sway opinions of many listeners, so Mr. Johnson feels it's an opportunity the runners shouldn't pass up.

Mr. Johnson says he knows a talented speechwriter named Ralston Beauregard who is willing to help the runners. If they can find the text of Snowden's speech and send it to him, he will make some alterations to ensure that it emphasizes humanity working together and says that great things can be accomplished when large portions of the world's population pull together. He will also include references to some incidents near the Kilimanjaro Mass Driver, saying that they are an example of what happens when petty concerns and squabbles are allowed to overwhelm ideas of what humanity can accomplish when they work together.

While the speech will have little direct impact on the runners' fates, the communal, optimistic feelings could push the Consensus away from doing things like issuing hits.

In structure, the run takes the form of a data steal. The runners need to travel to Los Angeles and visit a node in Transglobal's headquarters where the text of the speech is stored. They need to send the speech to Beauregard and then leave a backdoor (p. 97, *Unwired*) so that he can put the text back when he's done with it.

The details on the node they need to get into are as follows:

Sculpting: Outer space themed, with asteroids, planets, and comets serving as icons for various files.

Authentication: Passcode

Privileges: Standard

Attributes: Firewall 6, Response 5, Signal 4, System 6

Spiders: 2 Professional Spiders and 1 Security Consultant

IC: 4 Blackout IC Rating 5

Resident Programs: Analyze 5, Encrypt 6

ARC: Alert Spider

PLOT POINT FOUR

Fixing the Big Night

While the runners are in Los Angeles, Mr. Johnson has another idea for them. The Academy Awards are coming up, and Pathfinder has a trid called *The Broken Heart* up for Best Picture. It's a historical romance set in late-twentieth century Rwanda, and it tells the story of a Hutu sniper who falls in love with the Tutsi husband of a woman she killed. The movie ends with the sniper providing cover for her lover and others as they attempt to flee the town of Gisenyi. The sniper receives several wounds in the fight, and she eventually succumbs to them as the caravan disappears from sight.

The trideo overall has a pacifist feel to it (despite the gun-wielding actions of the heroine in the climax), and it is clearly

pushing for people to overcome their differences before they lead to violence. A win for *The Broken Heart* would be a boost for Pathfinder and would also lead to a swell in warm-hearted sentiment that could push Horizon employees, and thus the Consensus, to a more warm-hearted place. The trid faces stiff competition from the gangster epic *Finger on the Trigger*, and its victory is anything but assured.

Mr. Johnson tells the runners that it would be good for *The Broken Heart* to win at the awards ceremony, which is in ten days. This can't be done with something as primitive as an envelope switch—records of the venerable accounting firm of PricewaterhouseCoopersDeloitte (PwCD) would soon uncover the error, and instead of being a heartwarming story, *The Broken Heart's* win would be covered in scandal and shame.

If the runners are strapped for ideas, Mr. Johnson has three—they can bribe some voters, they can register a number of fake voters and have them all vote for *The Broken Heart*, or they can break into the files of PwCD and alter the vote totals.

Bribing voters would be the most time-consuming, but also possibly the safest. Finding the names of members of the Academy is fairly simple, though getting their contact information takes a little more work. Have a hacker make a Data Search + Browse Extended Test with an interval of 1 minute; each hit is another piece of contact information they find. The runners will have to be careful about how they approach the voters—while some don't care much about the whole thing and are quite willing to take in a little money in exchange for their vote, others believe that having a vote is a sacred trust, and they would be insulted at the very idea of selling their vote. Runners should perform a Perception + Intuition (2) Test as they initially meet Academy members to get a better idea of their attitude and how they might respond to a bribe offer. If the individual is receptive, the runners should make a Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Test. The base cost for the bribe is 5,000; each net hit on the test reduces this by 500 nuyen, to a minimum of 1,000 nuyen. The runners should bribe at least ten voters to feel good about *The Broken Heart's* chances, which makes this an expensive option.

Registering a number of fake identities and using them to vote is initially easy—the node with the Academy's roster only has a Device Rating of 4—but problems come when PwCD performs verification of their results. They're a renowned accounting firm for a reason, and they notice the problem with the late-registering, unknown new members, and they send auditors to investigate. Eventually the runners will get a call from an auditor who traces the fake registrants to them, and they'll have to do some fast talking to convince them that everything is okay—a Con + Charisma Opposed Test against a dice pool of 9 (which includes a -1 modifier for the auditor being suspicious) does the job.

Breaking into the PwCD node is perhaps the most difficult option. The votes are stored on a node in the 65th floor of a downtown office building in a room covered with WiFi inhibiting paint. The runners will have to go into that room to break into it. PwCD is not the most intensely secure corporation in the world, but they have two security guards (use **Corporate Security**, p. 135) on the floor looking out for any trouble. Runners on the floor need to make an Etiquette + Charisma (4) Teamwork Test to avoid being noticed as out-of-place runners as they wander the floor. If they are noticed, security is called. More officers are on other floors, and the



guards call reinforcements as needed. They can call on up to ten officers; if they need more assistance, they call in PCC security.

The door to the room holding the node has a maglock (Rating 5) that unlocks with passcards. The node has a Device Rating 5 and the data is Encrypted (Rating 6); once the encryption is broken, changing the vote tallies requires a Computer + Edit (3) Test.

PLOT POINT FIVE

The Real Deal

The Academy Awards take place on a Sunday; the very next day, Mr. Johnson calls the runners and tells them that their actions have been worth it and the hits have been canceled. He then asks for his payment. He is perfectly happy to wait for the runners to verify this information. If they do, they find no evidence of any hits taken out on them by Horizon.

When the runners are ready to pay, Mr. Johnson sets up a meeting. At that running, the runners should make a Perception + Intuition (2) Test; if they succeed, they notice that Mr. Johnson remains well dressed, but his clothes look newer and less worn. If they comment on it, he shrugs and says that he knew he'd have some money coming in, and some of his associates provided clothes on credit.

Have Mr. Johnson make a Con + Charisma Test opposed by [Con or Negotiation] + Charisma. If the runners succeed, they know that he is lying. Then they just have to work to get the truth out of him.

The truth is this: The Consensus never had anything to do with the hits, as the Horizon executive who ordered them never ran it by the Consensus. This was part of a long con by Mr. Johnson, who is a former Horizon employee. Life hasn't been easy since he lost his job five years ago, and he's been looking for ways to make a few bucks. He still has some friends in the corporation, and he managed to convince one of them that if they put out a hit on some runners, he'd be able to manipulate the runners into helping him make money through some carefully placed bets.

First he had his friend bet that he could sneak some street toughs into a Horizon orientation session without anyone noticing. As long as at least one runner made it through the entire orientation, he won that bet. Then Mr. Johnson made a bet on how many times Snowden's speech would contain the phrase "humanity's last great frontier." He made sure that Beauregard put in the requisite number of references. Finally, he bet everything he had on *The Broken Heart* to win Best Picture; it was something of an underdog, so that bet paid off well.

The whole ploy was somewhat risky, as the executive might have to pay the bounties if the runners got offed. Mr. Johnson assured him that they would earn more than enough to pay off if that happened, but he didn't expect it to, as the amount of money they were offering wouldn't attract the really heavy hitters. There might be a few dead runners at the end of it all, but who really worries about that?

If the runners find all this information, they can decide just how they should reward Mr. Johnson for his actions—or, more to the point, what he can do to pay them back for the trouble he's caused.

LOCATIONS

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERDELOITTE HEADQUARTERS

PricewaterhouseCooperDeloitte is one of the largest and most prestigious accounting firms in the world. While the largest megacorporations generally take care of their own accounting in-house, PwCD has a vast array of smaller businesses and organizations as its clients. One of these is the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, who has been using their services for more than 150 years to tabulate the votes of the Academy Awards—and to keep those votes secret.

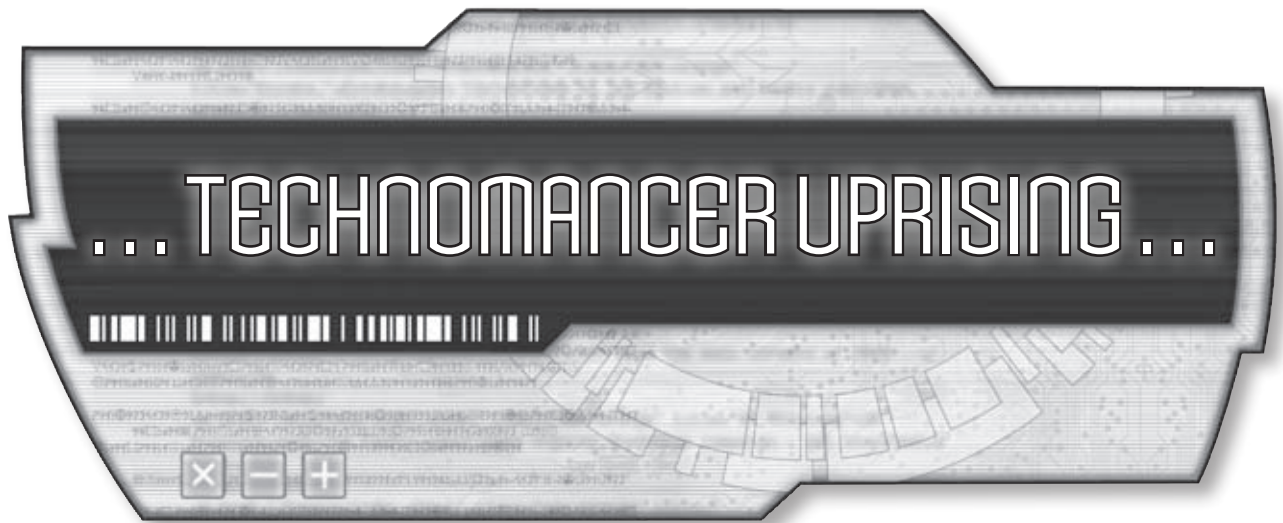
As it turns out, keeping the votes secret is not as demanding a job as one might think. Advertisers and trid studios have a lot riding on the presentations of the award being a big event, so they have no interest in the information leaking. This means that PwCD has most of the powers of Los Angeles aligned with them in their task, which helps. There are some gamblers and others who would perhaps like to have the information early, but in general they have not been able to mount a serious threat to the data.

What this means is that the data is not kept quite as securely as one might expect. They have it in a locked room that cannot be accessed wirelessly from the outside, and they have security guards on the floor (as well as in other spots in the building), but it's not the locked-down fortress that some corporations use to protect their most precious data. If the runners succeed, perhaps PwCD will have to upgrade their security in the future—assuming they ever realize what happened to them.

The PwCD headquarters is an eighty-story building in downtown Los Angeles. It's not much to look at—its solid, blocky exterior is a throwback to twentieth century modernism. The lobby is orderly without any comfortable places that might encourage anyone to linger there. Cameras and scanners (both Rating 5) check SINS and look for anyone carrying an unlicensed weapon (weapons are permitted on the facility if they are licensed). A single security guard (use **Corporate Security**, p. 135) sits at a desk. Behind the desk are two GM-Nissan Dobermans with HK-227Xs. They are controlled by a security consultant (p. 207, *Unwired*) on the fifth floor of the building who covers the first ten floors of the building. There are similar security consultants spaced every ten floors (e.g., one on the fifteenth, one on the twenty-fifth, and so on).

Astral security in the building is weak and dependent mainly on watcher spirits. There are two watcher spirits for every ten floors of the building making rounds. Wards are rare except on the offices of the most high-level executives. Two security mages (use **Security Mages**, p. 143) are stationed on the fifteenth floor, which is where the building's main security offices are. They don't do a whole lot besides sit back and wait for the spirits to report something to them.





Incoming Message

Posted by: Sunshine

It's getting close to spring in the northern part of the world, and while I'd love to bring news of happiness and warmth to go with the changing weather, I can't. If you caught the broadcast from *Newstalk* a couple of hours ago, you know why. It would seem Horizon has been caught red-handed trying to force a vast majority of technomancers and AIs into becoming their lackeys employees. And thanks to these efforts, I heard from some of my carefully placed friends in LA that chaos started breaking out a little while ago inside Horizon's headquarters. From what I am being told, a sophisticated virus has wormed its way into its nodes and is ravaging the internal files and security of the corporation. I have also heard that feral AIs have suddenly appeared on scene and have begun attacking Horizon's grid. One must wonder if their appearance is a coincidence or a well-timed attack. Horizon is doing its best to control the damage, but it appears that the damage from this attack will be so severe that they won't be able to cover it up with PR work alone. So we will see what this means for Horizon in the weeks that follow, as well as for those of us who work the shadows. As promised, here's a recording of the broadcast that seemed to precede Horizon's current woes.

//Upload Media File: user: Sunshine:: 03/02/2074

NEWTALK! broadcast, 1900 hours, Los Angeles, PCC

Kimberly Vogel-Smith: For much of the past year, the city of Geneva has been the centerpiece of the emerging technomancer and AI rights movement. Demonstrators in the city held control of the sprawl's Matrix for much of the past three years. Local nodes were frequently locked down and corrupted by a variety of groups who were using these strong-arm tactics against the United Nations in an effort to force its hand to recognize the rights of technomancers and artificial intelligences. When Hestaby made her landmark speech to the United Nations last summer, they were certain to let her words through; once her speech was finished, those nodes were once again shut down, returning the UN to a state of silence to the global community.

Since Hestaby's speech, demonstrations in the streets of Geneva have returned and grown to levels not seen since 2070. There was hope amongst the protesters that Hestaby's speech would draw attention to the technomancers' and AI's cause. The question now is, has that happened?

We here at *Newstalk* wanted to interview a member of these groups to get their perspective on how this rights movement has been doing three years after it began and to ask about the progress they are seeing in securing rights for technomancers and AIs. A few days ago, our staff made contact with such a member of one of these groups. The young woman we found chose not to use her real name, instead using the handle "Angel of Vengeance" for our interview. She also asked to have her image and voice electronically altered. She was interviewed remotely, and her transmission was bounced through a series of proxy nodes, which means that while we believe she is in Geneva or somewhere nearby, we can't know for sure.

Angel of Vengeance identifies herself as being a member of the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom, a militant group that has been linked to the movement known as Legion. So thank you for joining us, Angel of Vengeance. Your perspective on the technomancer and AI rights movement is greatly appreciated and will help inform our audience of what you and your organizations are going through.

AoV: Yeah, whatever. As long as you don't reduce what I have to say to fifteen-second sound bites or take me out of context to support some other agenda, I suppose this is worth my time. Your viewers need to understand who we are, and the fact that we are not a threat to them. We are not their enemies per se. We are only a threat to those who wish to do us harm or exploit us. We are only a threat to those who deny us freedom in any of its forms. Which incidentally, includes the people giving you your paycheck.

KVS: I see. To start, you and your organization have been taking the fight to the United Nations and the corporations in Geneva for three years now. You have plastered the city's





nodes and the streets with your pro-technomancer and pro-AI messages. So far, the UN has continued to drag its feet on recognizing technomancer and AI rights. Last month, they tabled yet another vote. Without the United Nation's support on these issues, many nations have failed to enact pro-technomancer or pro-AI laws within their own borders as you have demanded, leaving your movement in a sort of limbo. Are you or your members discouraged at the lack of progress? Would you say these three years of fighting have been worth it, or do you feel that your tactics, though certainly attention-grabbing, have proven more counter-productive for those individuals that you say you represent? Have you or your group considered pursuing more diplomatic approaches to getting what you want?

AoV: Diplomatic approaches? Fuck that shit. In this past year alone, nearly three thousand metahumans worldwide who either came out or were outed as technomancers were targeted by hate groups. These street encounters have always split blood, and it was usually that of the technomancer's. Many of those innocent technomancers wound up in hospitals or street clinics if they were lucky. Dumped in alleyways or gutters if they were not. And even if they made it to a street clinic, they were often left with permanent physical and psychological scars that we had to help them deal with. And that's not even including the technos that have simply disappeared. No one in your position wants to truly know who are continuing to cause these disappearances, but we know what's happening. We know what's behind it. We have tried to bring evidence of the kidnappings and these illicit experimentations to you and other organizations on many occasions, and you and your corporation and all the others have chosen to ignore what we were saying because you are all chickenshit and don't want to be sued by your rival corporations such as [THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW HAS BEEN CENSORED DUE TO LEGAL CONCERNS OVER UNFOUNDEED ALLEGATIONS BEING LEVIED AGAINST RIVAL CORPORATIONS] for defamation. We have watched security corps such as [THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW HAS BEEN REDACTED DUE TO LEGAL CONCERNS OVER UNFOUNDEED ALLEGATIONS BEING LEVIED AGAINST RIVAL CORPORATIONS] turn a blind eye to our plight, as our legal status remains "undefined." These corps all give us lip service and tell us the investigations into these crimes against our kind are still "ongoing," but we all know they've been shoved into cold case status so they can be buried and forgotten. We're being treated as commodities by the rest of the world. Hell, at times, I think the SINless have more rights than we do.

We have even learned that there's a thriving black market for technos and AIs that no one is doing anything about. We're sold there like cattle. We've presented overwhelming evidence of this market's existence to the security corps that provide law enforcement, and no one cares. No one wants to become inconvenienced or made uncomfortable by listening

to us and our cause. And for AIs, things are even worse. In the past year, nearly forty AIs disappeared almost without a trace. We investigated those crimes and found many of our friends no longer exist. They've been decompiled, dissected by corporations to try and turn them into profit streams, or Matrix weapons in their quest to build smarter and scarier intrusion countermeasures. No, there will be no diplomacy with these fuckers that are carrying out these ruthless tactics with an end game of genocide. There is no possibility of peaceful talks with people who claim they've stopped kidnapping and experimenting on our kind but who continue the practice when they think no one is watching. We have no choice but to fight fire with fire until it makes the other side capitulate. If anything, this continued violence against us only proves that we're not doing enough to force these stubborn nations and corporations to recognize our rights, and to do something about their citizens that are out of control from their prejudices. And that sentiment is growing. One day, we may see a third Crash, from AIs and technos tired of being treated like shit because people have this irrational fear of us, and who wish to exterminate us based on that fear.

KVS: You mention that three thousand technomancers were either attacked or disappeared in 2073, along with at least forty AIs. These numbers, when taken on a global level, are relatively small. People die of diseases at a higher rate than what technomancers have faced from these hate groups, or from what the AIs have encountered. Could you be overstating this problem?

AoV: Good to see you openly acting as an apologist for the forces of hate. Yes, a few thousand metahumans in a world of billions may not seem that significant. But we're not talking about the entire world population, are we? The whole damn world is not made of technomancers or AIs, is it? We are talking about minority groups that are as small as the number of spellslingers worldwide. What pisses us off is that many spellslingers can do so much more damage and destruction than what technomancers and AIs could in the real world, and yet they seem to be more widely accepted than us. Spellslingers were guilty of performing the Ghost Dance in North America 2017, and yet today they are not scorned by mainstream society. Their members often become toxic shamans or blood mages, and yet corporations aren't setting up internment camps for every one of their kind, to prevent the next dangerous toxic shaman from developing.

Not all technomancers or AIs are criminals, just like not all spellslingers are toxic shamans. The AIs and the technos that are out there today are not looking to cause a new arcology shutdown. We just want to be treated fairly and be granted our independence. We want to be left alone. AIs may have, at one time, been corporate property, but they have evolved and changed. They are no longer what their base components used to be. We want the rest of the world to acknowledge and accept that evolution that the corporations had no part of. We as technos



want protections under the law, and we want to be able to pursue a good quality of life. Is that too much to ask?

KVS: Would you agree that not everything that has happened over the last three years has been a detriment to your cause? Horizon, our parent corporation, was one of the first organizations to support technomancers. Horizon has publicly advocated for rights of AIs, even going so far as taking public backlash for its unpopular stance on both technomancers and AIs.

AoV: Let's talk about that for a moment. Yes, on the surface, Horizon has said that it is friends of the technos and the AIs. We have rights within your corporation. But I don't want to work for Horizon. Hell, I don't even want to be associated with your corporation. I want to be able to make up my own mind who I work with, or what I do with my life. Your corporation has done nothing to allow me, as a technomancer, to be able to pursue other options. You are happy for us to be free if we work for you; if we don't, you have nothing to say about us. Horizon has not put genuine pressure on the United Nations for a vote on technomancer and AI rights. If you had, we would have seen a legitimate vote by now. Your megacorporation possesses an army of lobbyists for national governments around the world. And yet they have not been given orders to put pressure on these governments to pass the much-needed laws to protect us. In fact, I recently received proof that your lobbyists have used back-room deals to stall legislation we desperately wanted put into place. Horizon has some of the most renowned public relations firms working for them as its subsidiaries, and yet Horizon does not utilize them to advance our cause in the media, even though it's a cause that Horizon claims to strongly believe in. There are literally tens of thousands of legal cases going through various legal systems around the world that your megacorporation could be championing with its media arms, using its high-priced lawyers to get those cases to be brought up to a verdict in a timely manner. But instead, Horizon does nothing, and has done nothing since we began this fight in 2070. This is not a matter of simple complacency, but a deliberate act on your parent corporation's part. The three cases your parent corporation sponsored at the Corporate Court level on our behalf were three years ago, and they remain gathering proverbial dust as "pending litigation." If Horizon truly believed what it preached, it would use its media and public relations arms to shame your fellow corporations into action. There are no excuses for how long it is taking for us to be granted the rights that we should already have. Horizon prefers the status quo; you prefer the fact that we have to go crawling to you for sanctuary, and you like the fact that we have nowhere else to go. We don't see that as a helping hand; we see that as exploitation, and we're tired of it. We demand more.

KVS: I beg to differ with the characterization of the treatment you and your people are getting from our parent megacorporation. Many technomancers in our Singularity

subsidiary as well as throughout Horizon, are extremely pleased with the life that is being provided to them. They have been given SINS, they live the good life, they have legal protections, they live in houses they own, and they are making salaries most can only dream about. You make it sound as though there is an ulterior agenda, when in fact there is none. But moving on, the Geneva sprawl is threatening longer prison sentences for those found guilty of using the tactics that you and other organizations have employed—

AoV: No you dumb bitch, you're not going to change the subject on me. I am not going to toe your corporation's party line. You're going to listen to me. We have tried to get your corporation to listen to us. We provided dozens of trideo recordings giving evidence of rivals that kidnap, torture, and otherwise harm us. Your corporation has lied to us, hiding behind the "we can't authenticate these recordings, so we're not going to show them" bullshit. Or you've told us, "Well, you've obtained these trideos illegally, so we can't air them lest we be culpable for your crimes." There used to be what was known as investigative journalism, you know? But you guys are too afraid or too corrupt to bend some rules to get to the truth. You know what we bring to you is genuine, but you don't want to put your necks out there. You tell us that you've been working to shut down illicit laboratories that are harming us, but that work never hits the airwaves. And we have no proof that those laboratories were ever shut down, and if they were, we have no evidence to suggest that they were being shut down on the behalf of our interests. Also, we've been tracking these secret laboratories, as it's in our best interests to do so. And what we have found is that these illicit laboratories aren't decreasing in number! They continue to spread each day even as we hunt for them. And let's talk about Horizon's cozy relationship with [THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW HAS BEEN CENSORED DUE TO LEGAL CONCERNS OVER UNFOUNDEED ALLEGATIONS BEING LEVIED AGAINST RIVAL CORPORATIONS], a corporation that has been playing both sides in this war. Let's just say your business partner has blood on its hands, we know it and your corporation knows about it. And yet, instead of doing something, instead of putting pressure on them to change things, Horizon does nothing more than turn a blind eye and a deaf ear. This is not being a "good corporate friend." This is someone who wants to look good in front of the cameras and then go about its regular business once the cameras are off. We are calling bullshit on this practice. It must stop.

KVS: Madam, if you do not settle down and show restraint in your comments, I will be forced to end this interview.

AoV: You know what, I agree. This is pointless. You're not listening. You'd rather play these shell games with us. But if you don't listen here, you'll listen somewhere. We'll make you listen. In our way. So let me help you pull the kill switch on this farce.

//Transmission terminated//

Incoming Message



//Message Uploaded//

We are the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom. We will have what we most desire, at any cost. You can support us, or be cut down if you get in our way. We will not be played by your corporation any longer. We will not be lied to any more. You have been warned.

//End Message//

- So has anyone heard of this Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom before? I've done a data search for their group, but all I've come up with are alleged members who were arrested in Geneva. Their group doesn't even seem to have a datahaven where they express their core beliefs.
- Mika
- There wouldn't be. The Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom is a group linked to the larger movement known as Legion. Legion prefers word of mouth and direct contact with its potential recruits, and they expect discretion from the groups they work with. These groups use Matrix vandalism to spread their message, but they won't maintain a datahaven that can bring the authorities down upon them or could potentially be used to compromise their operations. They are really careful about remaining anonymous and sticking to the shadows. Many of their members are paranoid enough to become really good shadowrunners. And I have no doubt that some of them already are.
- Netcat
- If they were that careful, than how come law enforcement still has several incarcerated metahumans listed as their members? You would think that they would want to erase that datatrail leading back to them. And, oh, I don't know, arrange to have

their members released from custody if Legion is as powerful as you say.

- Sticks
- I don't think those records for those inmates are accurate. They sound like the Geneva cops were getting frustrated over not being able to break Legion, and so, in a PR move, they rounded up a bunch of unfortunate slots and labeled them as members of these groups to show that progress was being made against Legion. For many, being incorrectly identified as a member of these groups has gotten them killed in prison. It's a sorry state of affairs.
- Aufheben
- Mark my words, this is an omen of bad things to come. I've said this before and I'll say this again. Technomancers and AIs cannot be trusted. Because of their antics now, many innocent people will likely die soon.
- Clockwork
- Be quiet, Clockwork. It's a little late for you to be worried about the loss of innocent life.
- Netcat
- I'll be quiet for now. But when things get out of hand, it'll be me and other runners like me that will be cleaning up this mess caused by your friends. It certainly won't be the likes of you who are too busy sympathizing with them to care about anything else. And when we do clean this mess up, I will not be made to feel ashamed for taking money for collecting the criminals who are responsible for this new catastrophe. Don't worry, though; you won't have to thank me.
- Clockwork

TECHNOMANCER UPRISING

OVERVIEW

Since technomancers and AIs were revealed to the world a few years ago, they have been tirelessly crusading to have their rights recognized by both governments and corporations. A few groups have been receptive to the technomancers' and the AIs' plights, while a vast majority of metahumans have looked upon these entities with fear, hatred and contempt. Some do this out of a lack of understanding of what technomancers or AIs are, while many more still harbor memories and resentment of the Renraku Arcology shutdown and the second Matrix Crash, including the actions Deus and his otaku companions attempted during those events. Many view these groups as exploitable due to the fact that their legal status is often undefined or in flux. These organizations, backed by many hate groups, have left technomancers and AIs cowering in the shadows, afraid for their safety. In 2070, technomancers and AIs began banding together, demanding that their situation change. Several militant rights groups came

together to put pressure on the United Nations, working to force that international body to pass a resolution recognizing technomancer and AI rights. Many groups, under the banner of Legion, took their demonstrations a step further and had the Matrix grid throughout Geneva taken down, and nodes within the United Nations' Palais de Nations headquarters locked down. This led to a drawn-out stalemate between technomancers, AIs, and the politicians of the United Nations and other international organizations, which continues into the present day.

While some groups have been genuine in their offers to promote technomancers and AIs and to help them win their rights and freedoms, other groups have only pretended to help the technomancers and AIs for their own gains. This adventure shows that Horizon falls into that category. Originally, Horizon was among the first megacorporations to announce it supported technomancers and AIs, and they issues SINs and citizenships to those groups. They were seen championing lawsuits before the Corporate Court and giving high-paid jobs



to technomancers. Due to that reputation, many technomancers and AIs flocked to Horizon for the protection and lifestyles that the megacorporation offered.

Three years later, many technomancers and AIs have become dismayed by the fact that so little progress has been made to secure their full rights. Once Hestaby spoke out against Sirurg, the UN moved quickly to indict Sirurg on war crimes. And yet, the UN still drags its feet on the rights issue for technomancers and AIs, leaving them confused and incredulous about this disparity. Especially when they seem to have a megacorporation like Horizon claiming to be on their side; a megacorporation that is known for its ability to dramatically shift public opinion. Eventually, groups like the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom become convinced that this lag in acquiring rights for their members is something that is not accidental, but rather deliberate. And they have come to believe that their most public supporter might be working against them.

In this chapter, the group known as the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom hires shadowrunners to travel to Los Angeles, where they are to infiltrate the world headquarters for Horizon and locate a specific node that they believe contains files necessary to confirm their suspicions. Based on the recovered paydata that verifies these beliefs, Angel of Vengeance, the Johnson from the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom, directs the runners to plant a sophisticated virus inside Horizon's computers. The virus has a countdown that will trigger shortly after Angel of Vengeance's interview with *Newstalk*, a Pathfinder-affiliated media program. Once that happens, groups like the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom will use it as a rallying cry in a new war against Horizon.

PLOT POINT ONE

Angel of Vengeance and the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom carefully vet the runners' street reputation before they are approached to do this job. To be eligible for this run, the runners must not have had any notoriety tied to harming technomancers or AIs or extracting them on the behalf of the corporations. By contrast, if the runners have been involved in a mission to help AIs or technomancers (such as **Freedom, Finally**, p. 38, *Corporate Intrigue*), they are prime candidates to be approached for this job.

If the runners clear the vetting process, they are invited to attend a VR meet with a woman identifying herself as Angel of Vengeance, a member of a group known as the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom based out of Geneva. During this meet the runners are hired to travel to Los Angeles (if they aren't already based out of that city) to infiltrate the Horizon world headquarters. In Los Angeles they are to complete between one and two tasks for the militant rights group inside of the headquarters, with the second job dependent on the outcome of the first mission. For this first job, the runners are to locate a specific node (node number 3410669) in the two-hundred-and-eighty-floor arcology. This secure node is a closed system to ensure utmost security from outside hacking attempts. It is generally kept in rooms designed to negate WiFi access. To hack into the node, the hacker(s) need to be in the room with

it. Angel of Vengeance informs the runners that the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom are unable to physically get inside the building to get to the node themselves, as Horizon likely already knows the identity of many of their members from the technomancers and AIs that they have recruited from their ranks and who are now “dedicated” Horizon employees. They need outside expertise that can get to the node undetected and retrieve the classified information it contains.

Angel of Vengeance explains that the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom have spent the last six months trying to track down this particular node. They have learned from their legwork that it likely contains information on Horizon’s long-term activities and plans in dealing with the technomancer and AI movement, but they were not able to learn anything more specific. Angel of Vengeance believes that this classified information will confirm her group’s suspicions that the public activities that Horizon has been engaging in on behalf of technomancers and AIs over the last few years have been anything but genuine, and that like every other corporation, Horizon has ulterior motives that work against the freedoms of technomancers and AIs. It is likely the runners’ hacker(s) may not have the programs at a sufficient level to be able to pull this job off. If that is the case, Angel of Vengeance is willing to provide three programs for the hacker(s) at Rating 6 (the hacker(s) can choose which programs they need). If the runners complete this run successfully, they can consider these programs to be a part of their payment. If the team possesses no hacker, Angel of Vengeance will pay the runner team to hire a hacker to accompany them into the Horizon Headquarters. In addition to these computer programs, Angel of Vengeance provides a computer virus that comes into play in Plot Point Two.

There are no Matrix records of this node’s location. It is likely that specific information about its location is stored on senior executives’ commlinks that are very difficult to access. The node itself is frequently moved around headquarters for added security, and the work of moving and maintaining the node is assigned to random work groups with high performance ratings inside the Horizon corporation. The Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom have learned of the identity of the last work group that was assigned to the node. The runners can make contact with this work group and learn what they might know of the node and its current location. The work group is number 52209-C, and its members generally hang out together after hours at Dazzlers, a trendy, Horizon-owned nightclub in West Hollywood.

The shadowrunners have the option of approaching this particular work group (which consists of four employees) for information. Unfortunately, these metahumans are staunchly loyal Horizon employees, and any information they may have about this particular node will not be given voluntarily. The runners have to con, intimidate, drug, or use magical persuasion on the Horizon employees to get them to reveal what they know about the node. If they are successful, the runners find out that a couple of the employees had heard that the node was moved to the fifty-eighth floor and was assigned to work group 67801-X for the period of thirty days. That reassignment happened twenty days ago, so it is likely the node is still in place.

If interrogating the Horizon employees is not an option for the runners, Angel of Vengeance can provide them with other information they can use to investigate on their own. Her

group hacked into some of the low-level nodes in the Horizon headquarters and obtained a layout for the building. This layout highlights seventy rooms that have been designed to negate wireless access. The technomancer and AI group also obtained the internal rankings for the Horizon workgroups and may have narrowed the list down to those work groups that possess a sufficiently high score to be assigned to work with this high-level node. Cross referencing the work group rankings with the WiFi negating rooms gives the runners a list of ten rooms where this particular node might be.

Once the runners have the information they need to track down the node, they need to find a way past the layers of automated and metahuman security surrounding the headquarters. One approach would be to hack the Human Resources node inside the Horizon headquarters and create profiles showing that they are new hires. This provides both a way in and an excuse for guards to not recognize the runners. The challenge is that new hires are typically restricted to the lower floors of the headquarters, to allow Horizon to better keep an eye on them and weed out corporate spies or shadowrunners from the new hires. Or they can try and forge credentials showing they are a part of the outside contractors tasked with janitorial services. The Horizon headquarters in LA is so large that four separate companies are tasked with janitorial services. Using contacts or legwork, the runners may be able to find out about these companies, hack into their records, and get themselves set up as employees and assigned to the Horizon headquarters building. Or the runners can try and disguise themselves as current employees (such as the four employees from work group 52209-C). Alternately, if they know the actual work group tasked with working with the node, the runners might choose to find and impersonate those employees. If they go that route, they could coerce the current work group to surrender the active access codes to the node and make their hackers job a lot easier. They may also arrange to get tickets for tours of various studios in the building. There are about a dozen programs that record their shows inside the headquarters, and there are tours throughout the day that take sightseers to visit those sets. The runners can purchase those tickets and then later find a way to separate themselves from the tour group. Tours cost approximately 75 nuyen.

The runners need to be careful with building security. Horizon’s security guards are generally assigned to areas covering two or three floors, and they are assigned to those floors for years. They have become familiar with who works on those floors, their habits, and their routines. If the runners are using an AR map to navigate the maze of corridors inside the Horizon headquarters, guards take notice of that unusual sight and become suspicious. Some of the guards are social adepts who have been trained by the Dawkins Group in Kinesis and Kinesis Mastery and can pick up on body language clues to sniff out people that don’t belong (see **Dawkins Group Trained Guards**, p. 136). It would be best for the runners to sneak around the guards in the Horizon headquarters. Also, if the runners try to impersonate current employees and are using the commlinks of those employees, prompts appear from the Consensus seeking the employee’s opinions on various, seemingly inconsequential items. If they choose to ignore the prompts, their AROs begin flashing that a response is needed. Those prompts



become harder to ignore, as the Consensus becomes increasingly insistent about getting an answer. The longer the runners reply to those prompts, the more time Consensus has to determine discrepancies in how the employee has answered these questions in the past, as opposed to how the runner is answering them now. This may eventually prompt security to pay the runner a visit.

The node that the runners' hackers need to infiltrate has a Device Rating of 9. Without the current access codes, it takes the runners considerable time to hack this node. If they have disguised themselves as the current work group assigned to this node, it will be easier to keep other workers away from the node while the hackers work on getting into it and taking the payday. If they are disguised as something besides janitors, it will become very suspicious if janitors are spending hours in the same room with the node. While the hackers break into the node, the other runners may be forced to come up with various distractions to make it harder for the Horizon workers to discover the run in progress. Horizon guards check on the node every hour.

Once the hackers make it into the node, they find hundreds of files supporting the technomancers' claims that Horizon has been duplicitous in its dealings with them and their movement. There are records showing deals have been made through their lobbyists to get legislation in nations such as the UCAS and CAS stalled or killed. These back-room deals have been done very subtly over time so as not to raise suspicion. These files also show that various legal test cases from around the world dealing with technomancer and AI rights have been sabotaged, mainly by buying off the justices and magistrates involved in the cases. The bribes have bought as many delays through legal technicalities as possible. There are also files giving talking points to Horizon representatives as to what to say to groups like the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom, and different talking points for what to say to United Nations delegates who are considering bringing up a resolution supporting AI and technomancer rights. Needless to say, the two scripts are nothing alike, and as far as the talking points for the UN are concerned, they are more like total fiction. They paint the technomancers and the AIs in the most negative light possible. The data also shows that land deals were struck around the world to convince local corporations that it would not be in their best interests to change their anti-technomancer and anti-AI positions. Those companies that refused to be bought off, such as Microdeck Industries, have seen campaigns waged to lure technomancers away from their organizations. Most organizations find that they cannot compete with the benefits Horizon has to offer. Reading through the documents, one gets the impression that Horizon is making a covert attempt to corner the market on technomancers and AIs.

The classified documents show a clandestine pattern of Horizon attempting to limit technomancer and AI opportunities, making it seem that the best choice for their safety and sanctuary would be with Horizon. Even Evo itself appears to have had its reputation and efforts sabotaged within the technomancer and AI communities. Perhaps the scariest part of the files are documents showing that technomancers and AIs that remained in Horizon's way were covertly subjected to various drugs, conditioning techniques, and behavioral modification programming to remove that opposition. It should be clear to the runners that Horizon has been playing an underhanded game.

While in this secret node, the runners are likely to locate other important files for Horizon. Many of the other files on the node relate to Horizon's efforts to keep tabs on the great dragons, and Horizon's probability calculations for how the ongoing conflict between the dragons will play out. There are data files that talk about recent disappearances of ninety wealthy metahumans from around the world, people whose fortunes seem to have disappeared overnight. Their disappearances seem to mirror the eight businessmen in the Arabian Caliphate who have also disappeared, allegedly because of Aden. In addition to the missing metahumans and their fortunes, the files suggest that the missing individuals' entire line of heirs and other relations have been systematically wiped out over the course of nine months. Six of these ninety missing people had connections to Horizon. Horizon also has a detailed list of talismonger groups that have been attacked and had dragon-related reagents stolen, along with information about individuals suspected in those attacks. Nearly a quarter of those individuals have been killed by anti-dragon forces looking for retribution. As a consequence, violence against drakes continues to spike.

Horizon has also made a note of Alamaïs and his new compound in GeMiTo. Horizon noted that upon the appearance of Alamaïs and the dragons that follow him, disappearances of metahumans in that part of the world rose dramatically. Horizon believes Alamaïs and those that follow him have started using GeMiTo as a feeding ground, and that they are not being subtle about it. Horizon also believes that Lofwyr attempted to request an audience with Alamaïs, but that request is believed to have been rebuffed, a fact that seems to speak quite strongly to the division among the dragons. There is also data on a Horizon-led operation to cover up an incident in the city of Changsha within the last few weeks, where an unidentified dragon was seen attacking local dragon and known Lung vassal Yat Gwan. Horizon chose to use its vast resources to contain the story to the local markets to prevent an uptick in mass hysteria surrounding the dragons and their rising conflict. Horizon operatives also have noted that in recent months, tension has begun to arise within the Corporate Court itself. This tension appears to be coming from Saeder-Krupp, with its justices pressuring the Corporate Court into putting sanctions on Aztechnology until the remains of Dzitbalché are turned over to it. They also want Aztechnology to pay punitive damages for its role in Dzitbalché's execution. In addition to all this information about the great dragons, there could be files within this secret node on other topics, such as the locations of the various artifacts from the *Dawn of the Artifacts* series. The gamemaster should also feel free to populate these files with information that could act as adventure seeds for their game.

If this information is mentioned to Angel of Vengeance, she informs the runners that her group has no interest in any other payday. They only want the information pertaining to their movement. Given how inflammatory the stolen documents are, the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom encourage the runners to sell that information to the highest bidder, if only to further burn Horizon. Such a release of highly sensitive information will only serve the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom's agenda, whose ultimate goal is to hurt Horizon as much as they can. Needless to say, Angel of Vengeance approves the runners to carry out their next mission, which is planting their virus.



PLOT POINT TWO

Angel of Vengeance instructs the runners to implant a virus in a single, medium-security level node (Rating 4 or 5) located somewhere between the 130th through the 140th floors of the Horizon headquarters. Once implanted, the virus begins populating itself into other nodes. The virus has a countdown built into it that will activate and start causing damage to Horizon nodes within the next 48 hours. It is timed to coincide with a *Newstalk* broadcast in which Angel of Vengeance will be interviewed. If the runners are weary about planting a virus that could have far-reaching consequences, Angel of Vengeance assures them that this virus is specifically designed to only target Horizon and the nodes within its headquarters. Angel of Vengeance assures the runners that the damage done will be surgical and that there will be no collateral damage outside of Horizon. What she does not tell the runners is that in addition to damaging files throughout the Horizon headquarters, the virus is designed to do two other tasks. It is programmed to shut down Horizon's defenses against feral AIs and disable the first two levels of security for the Consensus itself. Despite those two layers of defense for the massive database, there will still be significant layers of security that the militant technomancer and AI rights group will have to get through in order to get at the Consensus. This, though, will only be the start of their campaign. Once the runners have successfully planted the virus, they are free to leave the Horizon headquarters. Angel of Vengeance has one more task for the runners to complete, but that task lies outside of the Horizon building. She will provide details about that assignment once the runners are clear of the headquarters.

As the runners go about planting the virus, security inside the Horizon headquarters should be aware that something is wrong. By this point, if the runners were still answering the questions for the Consensus, security should have been dispatched to locate the "problematic employee(s)." Officers should have already searched through their security camera recordings and taken note of the runners. Security should be running sweeps over the floors to find the runners. The runners will likely need to ditch the commlinks of the employees they were impersonating or the cover identities that they were using. Spoofing sensors, sneaking around checkpoints, using magic, and fast-talking guards at the checkpoints will be the best way to continue moving through the building. The elevators are still in operation, but there is a guard at doors checking SINS and IDs. Horizon is using facial recognition programs inside the elevators to try to find the runners. The stairways may be the runners' best option, but there are security teams watching the stairways, stopping employees, and checking their IDs. The runners should feel a sense of urgency in getting this virus planted before they are caught. One thing that is working on the runners' behalf is that in a building is large as this, some offices are bound to be empty due to job vacancies, vacations, and illness. They can duck into some of these offices to hide briefly from patrolling officers. Most offices are locked by a Rating 4 maglock with cardreader.

PLOT POINT THREE

After a very risky venture into the Horizon world headquarters, the runners have up to a full day to rest before completing their final mission, which is still in LA. Fortunately, Angel of Vengeance tells the team that this job should be easier for them than the first two assignments. On the following day, Horizon's subsidiary Pathfinder will be interviewing Angel of Vengeance via a remote broadcast on one of its news programs, *Newstalk*. Angel of Vengeance asks the runners to sneak into the Pathfinder Studios news set where *Newstalk* will be recorded, and to arrange for the program to be terminated during the interview and replaced by a message from the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom. The runners can have the choice of setting things up so that they can be the ones responsible for terminating the transmission and uploading the message, or they can set it up so that the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom possess a remote capability for pulling that task off when the time is right.

Even though the Pathfinder Studios where *Newstalk* is broadcast presents a softer target than the Horizon world headquarters, this does not mean it will be an easy task to infiltrate the studio. Because of the break-in at the Horizon headquarters, visitor passes for the news station have been suspended. Patrols have been beefed up. Security officers are double checking SINS, IDs, and verifying the claimed reason anyone has for being on their properties inside of Studio City. It is likely that security has images of the runners from the headquarters break-in, as the virus has yet to be activated. Horizon has also installed one of their Automated Crime Prevention System sensor units onsite to deter any potential trouble from the studio. If the runners desire to break into the studio itself, they will need to deal with the ACPS first.

Characters with a good knowledge of security systems or characters with contacts that have a specialized knowledge of security measures are likely to recognize the unit as an early ACPS model (2071). This particular sensor unit is among the first released by Horizon following its beta testing in 2070. As such, there are vulnerabilities to the layered security that this sensor unit provides. The ACPS functions as follows: First, it maps out a specific area. It utilizes cameras, motion sensors, thermal sensors, and microphones to detect a life form and then determines if it is a metahuman. It utilizes microphones to listen for certain, suspicious keywords such as "tampering," "break-in," "bribe," "blind spots" or "security vulnerabilities" to determine if that person is meant to be there. It compares a list of those keywords with the results of its scans of the IDs and SINS. If there appears to be a discrepancy between the keywords that are overheard and the results of the scans (i.e., the scans come back showing the IDs and SINS are legitimate but these keywords were overheard), security and drones are dispatched to investigate. But if nothing is picked up on the cameras, microphones, thermal, or motion sensors, the ACPS acts as though there is nothing there. This particular model of the ACPS is also not programmed to identify certain tools for breaking into a building, such as autopickers, sequencers, or keycard copiers, giving a bit of a break to the runners.

Having the thermal dampening armor modification is crucial for bypassing the ACPS. In addition, runners need to



identify the blind spots in the cameras that cover the perimeter for the Pathfinder studios lot. By using the thermal dampening armor modification and the blind spots, as well as making a silent approach, the runners can fool the ACPS into not knowing they are there. The runners need to make a successful Infiltration + Agility (3) Test to make sure their movement is not picked up by the ACPS sensors. The hackers of the group may also choose to simply hack the ACPS. The Rating for the node for the ACPS is 6.

Once the runners manage to navigate around the Automated Crime Prevention System and enter the building, there is far less security in the studio. The only people they need to avoid are the workers themselves. There are a couple of ways the group can handle this mission. The hackers can set up a program inside the studio's nodes that would both terminate the regular broadcast and then broadcast the technomancers' message immediately thereafter. This fashion, however, is the one that is most likely to be detected and shut down the quickest by Horizon. To keep the technomancers' broadcast on the air for a longer period of time and to further embarrass Horizon, the runners would need to use electronics skills to hardwire a switch into the wiring to terminate the legitimate programming on command, as well as disable the quickest methods to shut down the broadcast using the standard controls. In order for the broadcast to be shutdown, the Horizon personnel would have to shut down power to the entire studio and find where the runners had made their modifications to their electronics. A disposable commlink could be used for this switch, so that if Horizon personnel try to switch to a different frequency to broadcast a different program, the switch could be used to replace the programming and rebroadcast the message from the technomancers. To make these modifications, the characters need to make either an Electronic Warfare + Logic (12+, 30 minutes) Extended Test or a Hardware + Logic (12+, 30 minutes) Extended Test.

Shortly after the transmission is terminated, the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom's virus kicks in. Data files throughout the Horizon headquarters are corrupted and destroyed. The virus populates itself throughout a majority of the headquarters nodes, and it's strong—Horizon's virus protection barely slows it down. Communication with the outside world, including the corporation's assorted divisions and subsidiaries, becomes inconsistent. Massive numbers of files are corrupted. Backup files are lost. Commlinks that are physically present in the building are infected, and files on those commlinks are wiped out. Horizon's technomancers and hackers have to go into virtual reality to engage the virus, even as Angel of Vengeance's forces unleash a dozen or so feral AIs onto Horizon's grid. Thanks to the virus, Horizon's defenses against feral AIs are offline. It takes Horizon well over twenty-four hours to purge their system of the virus and eliminate the feral AIs. In the course of the fight against the virus and AIs, eight Horizon technomancers and twenty spiders are killed, and two dozen others are incapacitated. It will take Horizon weeks to recover from the damage inflicted by this virus. But perhaps the most ominous consequence of the virus is that the first two layers of defense for the Consensus have been compromised.

LOCATIONS

HORIZON WORLD HEADQUARTERS

The Horizon world headquarters is located in the Arcology Mile district of downtown LA. It is positioned among several other arcologies that Horizon owns, many of which cater the wealthy and powerful of the sprawl. Needless to say, these arcologies sparkle at night time with the latest lighting and holographic technologies on the market today that light up each of the arcologies' facades. The arcology for Horizon's world headquarters stretches two hundred and eighty stories into the air, and can be seen for kilometers.

HORIZON HIGH SECURITY NODE

Sculpting: The node appears to be modeled after the old Dodgers stadium. The numbers for the stadium seating correspond to file names. The bases on the field are locations where the most important files are kept.

Hardware: Rating 9 node. Custom System (Persona limit 27, Processor Limit 40)

Authentication: Nanotech Passkey

Privileges: User Access

Attributes: Firewall 9, Response 8, Signal 1, System 9

Spiders: There is one individual on the work group assigned to the node that is a Risk Management Engineer (Professional Rating 5). Use stats for Risk Management Engineer on p. 69, *Unwired*.

IC: 5 Ixculname Black IC, loaded with Blackout (w/ Psychotropic option)

Resident Programs: Analyze 8, Encrypt 7, Track 8

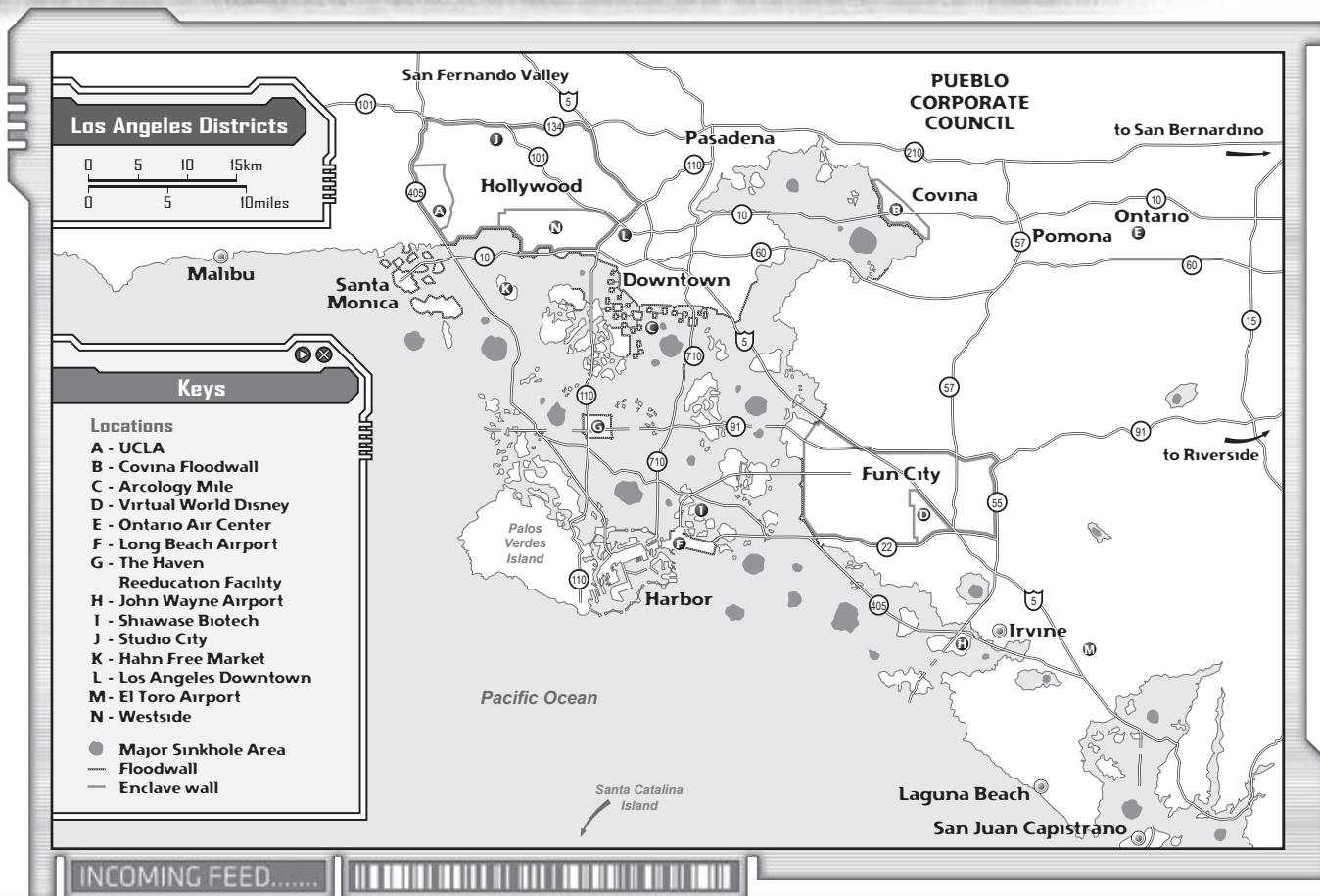
ARC: Launch IC

Topology: Single, encrypted node

DAZZLERS

Dazzlers is a white-hot nightclub in West Hollywood that is owned and operated by Horizon. Horizon agents use the club to make connections with sime sense and trideo insiders, music executives, sports stars, and celebrities. The nightclub is one of several that Horizon uses to keep tabs on local and global trends, and to steal talent away from its competition. Dazzlers is in a three-story building. The first floor is reserved for the public (with the right reputation and connections) and Horizon employees. These individuals are given the opportunity to enjoy the food, atmosphere, and music the club has to offer and attempt to get a glimpse of celebrities as they head up to the upper two floors. The upper levels are reserved for VIPs. If you are only permitted on the second floor, you know that you are considered a second-tier celebrity, and you have work to do if you want to make it to the big leagues. The real action is on the third floor, where the movers and shakers in Hollywood hang out.





The nightclub Dazzlers in the exotic. Changelings are as welcome here—the more exotic the better. As are magicians, especially if they are able to put on an entertaining live show. Metahumans with a lot of cyberware are also welcome, but they have to be decorated with more than standard chrome. The ware should be customized and have an appearance as unique and exotic as the club itself. Altskin and smartskin are cheap but effective ways to spruce up cyberware to meet the dress code.

Live bands play here every night. This is a good place to play and get noticed. New talent is frequently discovered here. The cover charge for this nightclub is 150 nuyen. As is the case in much of Hollywood, the Matrix inside Dazzlers is plastered with AR spam, but instead of being layered with corporate logos and slogans, it is plastered by scripts from would-be screenwriters looking for a chance to get noticed. Security in Dazzlers is fairly tight, with bouncers who are well built and had a career in military or law enforcement at one time. Hidden security cameras are everywhere on the first floor, sporadic on the second floor, and not present on the third floor. The Device Rating for the nightclub's nodes is 6.

PATHFINDER STUDIOS

Pathfinder Studios owns a series of media facilities in Studio City. One of those studios broadcasts the *Newstalk* with Anchor Kimberly Vogel-Smith. *Newstalk* was among the first programs to report on the technomancer uprisings in Geneva, so it is only appropriate that *Newstalk* is the program where the next wave of technomancer uprisings will be announced. This time, the attacks will target Horizon. News programs are not hit

as frequently by shadowrunners as other targets in Studio City (they don't attract the high-profile—and high-value—stars that the trid studios have). As such, the Device Rating for the news station is 5. However, Horizon has increased security around its holdings since the attack on its headquarters. This has included the installation of an Automated Crime Prevention System, a sophisticated sensor system that is meant to make breaking into a location much harder. The runners need to use caution and find vulnerabilities in this system in order to complete their mission for their Johnson.

PEOPLE

ANGEL OF VENGEANCE

Angel of Vengeance's true identity is protected by her living persona that she uses during the virtual meet. She appears to the runners as a fallen angel with fiery white eyes, golden wings, and a sword. Angel of Vengeance's voice sounds like she could be in her late teens or early twenties. There is no question from the way that Angel of Vengeance speaks that she is completely committed to the rights movement for technomancers and AIs. Runners also should get the impression from her mannerisms and her voice that she will obtain those rights for herself and her fellow technomancers at any cost. She is an extremist, but she is also very cautious, and meticulous in researching potential business partners. Depending on their track record with technomancers, the runners could easily make a quick ally or a foe out of Angel of Vengeance without even meeting her. And even if they get a



meeting with her, she may know things about the runners that they had hoped would never surface.

Female human

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

Virtual Initiative: 9

VR Matrix Passes: 3(4)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): n/a (Angel of Vengeance never meets the players in person)

Skills: Compiling 5, Computer 4, Con 5, Corrupt 4, Cybercombat 4, Data Search 4, Dodge 4, ECCM 4, Electronic Warfare 7, Hacking (Exploit) 5 (+2), Hardware 3, Negotiation 3, Nuke 3, Perception 5, Registering 4, Software 6

Qualities: Aptitude (Electronic Warfare), Paragon (Shooter), Technomancer

Living Persona: Firewall 7, Response 4 (6), Signal 4, System 5, Biofeedback Filter 3

Complex Forms: Analyze 4, Armor 6, Browse 4, Attack 6, Command 4, Decrypt 5, Encrypt 6, Edit 4, Exploit 6, Scan 4, Stealth 6, Track 4

Submersion Grade: 2

Echoes: Firewall Upgrade, Overclocking

Stream: Info Savants (Intuition + Resonance)

Notes: The Paragon named Shooter bestows +2 dice to all Matrix Attack tests, +1 die for Paladin sprites; as a disadvantage, a Shooter technomancer must succeed in a Willpower + Logic (3) Test to retreat from a Matrix fight.



... FRIENDS IN THE RIGHT PLACES ...

Incoming Message

Posted by: Clockwork

And this is where I get to tell you guys, "I told you so." I warned you guys that the technomancer revolt against Horizon would grow out of control. Most of you didn't listen to me. Here are three stories out of Seattle proving my point. A driver and two guards who likely had nothing to do with their corporation's policies on technomancers or AIs were slaughtered. Their families will not be seeing them again. And then there is a story where a long-term MCT employee was killed execution style. After he was tortured. Barbaric. And now it seems three innocent Horizon citizens were kidnapped in the night by these techno groups. It looks like I'll be having an extended stay in Seattle for a while.

Story #1: NeoNET Shipment of Cyberware Hijacked; Knight Errant and NeoNET Operatives Investigating

March 1, 2074—Independent Information Network

Tacoma—At 0330 hours this morning, a NeoNET shipment of high-grade cyberware disappeared from the AAA corporation's tracking system en route from its local docks one of its warehouses in Fort Lewis. NeoNET security personnel deployed to attempt to track vehicle from its last known location. Notified of the disappearance, Knight Errant initiated a thorough search of the surrounding neighborhoods. At 0420 hours, the stolen truck was located by Knight Errant officers at a scrap yard in Tacoma. The driver and the two NeoNET security guards had been brutally murdered and the cargo stolen, Knight Errant reported. NeoNET is not releasing any information regarding the type or quantity of cyberware stolen. Knight Errant and NeoNET are coordinating efforts in the investigation. Both agencies have denied initial rumors that the attackers had wiped out all surveillance videos during the theft. Their officers are reviewing the surveillance videos and claim they have valid leads in the case. They say that arrests are expected soon.

Independent Information Network interviewed witnesses around the scene to corroborate the official information

provided by NeoNET and Knight Errant. Witnesses who did not wish to be identified claimed the officers on the scene cursed obscenities when they first viewed the surveillance videos from the scrap yard. Witnesses and those close to the situation believe that, contrary to Knight Errant and NeoNET claims, there is no video of the crime. Witnesses also stated the truck was covered in pro-technomancer [tagged] and pro-AI [tagged] graffiti. When asked about this, both Knight Errant and NeoNET refused to comment. They did not respond to speculation that this attack was linked to the pro-technomancer [tagged] and pro-AI [tagged] movement, or linked to the problems the Horizon Headquarters encountered in Los Angeles.

UPDATE: At 1605 hours, Knight Errant reported the discovery of a crate belonging to the NeoNET shipment dumped in Puget Sound. Dredging by Knight Errant patrol boats recovered nearly twenty crates of assorted pieces of cyberware linked to the hijacked shipment. It has been reported that the crates that were recovered were still filled with the stolen cyberware. NeoNET's spokesperson would neither confirm nor deny the entire shipment had been recovered. The spokesperson would not discuss how much the attack had cost NeoNET and had no comment on whether the dumping of the cyberware was a political message from pro-technomancer [tagged] and pro-AI [tagged] groups.

Story #2:

March 3, 2074—KSAF Inc.

Snohomish—Long-time Senior Manager for Mitsuham Computer Technologies in Seattle, Rai Miyagi, was found dead in his home Friday morning by MCT officers. The officers had been dispatched to investigate when Miyagi did not show up to work and could not be contacted. Officers report that signs of forced entry were apparent when they approached the house, but a sweep of the property had revealed no intruders. Miyagi's body was discovered in the attic. He had been killed by a single gunshot to the head in a manner described as "execution style." Time of

death was estimated as six hours prior to the body's discovery. The official report suggests Miyagi may have been tortured before he was killed. However, officers at the scene refused to discuss what evidence led to this supposition or to provide any details about the crime scene.

KSAF has received an anonymous email from a group called No Boundaries Now. The author states, "We claim responsibility for the death of Rai Miyagi. We have had him under surveillance for a long time and knew he was responsible for the kidnappings of at least twenty technomancers [tagged] from the Pacific Northwest region of North America. We believe he ran an illicit research facility within MCT that experiments on technomancers [tagged]. We will shut that laboratory down. Miyagi committed crimes. Crimes no one was willing to prosecute. Not in MCT, and certainly not outside of the corporation where diplomatic immunity would prevent prosecution. We had no option but to carry out the sentence Miyagi deserved. Technomancers [tagged] are not guinea pigs. Technomancers [tagged] are people with rights and worthy of respect." MCT would not comment on this letter. They have informed KSAF that they have intensified security for both their personnel and facilities. No Boundaries Now is a known militant technomancer group [tagged] that has been active in the Seattle area since 2072.

Story #3:

March 4, 2074—NBCNN

Renton—The scenic beauty and wonder of Cougar Mountain was disrupted Saturday evening by gunfire at the Horizon Creative Focus Retreat Center. It has been confirmed that four people were killed and five others injured in the attack. Three other Horizon employees are currently listed as missing. Horizon is conducting an internal investigation and has stated they will not cooperate with Knight Errant efforts, maintaining that the crimes were committed on extraterritorial property. Knight Errant has filed official protests with both the metroplex and Horizon for interfering, citing their legitimate investigation of crimes, including the kidnappings, that have spilled into their jurisdiction. Further complicating questions of jurisdiction, the FBI is claiming precedence; the kidnapping of three Horizon employees is a federal offense under UCSA law. Horizon has not released any information on the attack and will not comment on possible links to the March 12th [tagged] incident at their corporate headquarters in LA.

NBCNN has found one witness who claims one of the attackers is a member of a violent, Neo-Anarchist cell. The witness, whose identity is being withheld for their safety, stated they recognized Anthony "Cobra" Williams. Williams is believed to be a part of the Neo-Anarchist cell that is lead by an artificial intelligence [tagged] with the street name "Fury." When asked why an artificial intelligence [tagged] would attack their corporation, a Horizon representative stated Horizon does not comment on ongoing investigations. Horizon was the first

megacorporation to advocate for Artificial Intelligence rights [tagged], and is publicly credited with doing the most for AIs and technomancers [tagged].

- Do you really not believe in having something that is worth fighting for? From what I've been hearing, Horizon has been lying to the technomancer and AI communities from the start. Telling us Horizon supported us and our fight to gain basic rights, when in fact all Horizon wanted was to use us like cheap joygirls. Exploit our talents with no consideration of what we want or what we deserve. And when technos tell Horizon no, they still force themselves upon our friends by using brainwashing and conditioning. Don't you believe something like that isn't a reason for our community to send out a call for arms, to defend ourselves?
- Netcat
- And how many truck drivers have had to pay the price for your cause? How much should normal society be made to suffer for a cause we don't all believe in? For me, your kind has crossed a line. And it's time to stop catering to political correctness. Stop with the sympathetic bullshit and start putting these troublemakers down. Either through imprisonment or through a bullet. If it was good enough for Miyagi, than obviously it's good enough for your kind.
- Clockwork
- You're such an ass, Clockwork. You're using those deaths as an excuse for your bigotry. One of these days, there's going to be a reckoning between us.
- Netcat
- Bring it on, sweetheart. I'm ready.
- Clockwork
- Just keep in my mind, drekhead, it won't just be her facing you down. I'll be right there with her. So you had better rip out all of your WiFi capable equipment from your drones and from your vehicles now. Because between the two of us, you won't stand a snowball's chance in hell.
- Slamm-O!
- And I'll be there for my friend as well. So I really hope you know what you're getting yourself into. You may want to shut up now.
- Pistons
- Calm down, everyone! The next threat I see being made against another JackPointer, they will receive a ninety-day ban. And if it continues, there will be permanent bans issued. Do I make myself clear? This behavior is not tolerated here. There are just some days ...
- FastJack



OVERVIEW

There is blood in the water for technomancer and AI groups that have been betrayed by what they thought was one of their closest megacorporate allies. Now, Legion, the technomancer and AI group that for years has been pressing hard in Geneva to win international recognition for their rights, is moving forward with plans to bring that war to North America, specifically to Horizon. Their first step is to hire runners to help them reconnect with a splinter cell group that broke away from Legion back in 2072, and which has been very active in attacking corporations like NeoNET and MCT in the Seattle area: the No Boundaries Now technomancer group. Legion believes that by reaching out to this splinter group, they will gain full access to all the technomancers and AIs native to the region. New connections and closer coordination will greatly increase their movement's chances of success.

Once that connection has been made, No Boundaries Now points Legion to another potential ally. Legion hires the runners for a second time to reach out to a neo-anarchist cell that is led by an AI named Fury. Fury is reluctant to get involved with the movement and with No Boundaries Now, but with some effort the runners convince it to at least talk with Legion and No Boundaries Now about their cause. To the runners, it should look as though Legion is succeeding in setting up its network in the Seattle area.

A few days later, the runners are contacted again. No Boundaries Now, working with Fury, has identified six technomancers who could be of great use to their cause incarcerated in the Shadow Lake Correctional Facility. To rescue the technomancers, the runners must intercept a prison transport vehicle, successfully pass as Knight Errant guards, and convince the prison guards they are picking up a work detail. No Boundaries Now will arrange for the work order and for the six technomancers to be included in the detail. If all goes smoothly, the runners will be able to deliver the technomancers to No Boundaries Now and their leader, Speed Hack, with very little difficulty.

The fourth job for the technomancers will have the runners working with a new group calling themselves the Airwave Domination Crew. This technomancer group is based out of Cara'Sir in Tír Tairngire. The representative of this group, Signal, informs the runners that she needs their help in breaking into Columbia Industries, a Horizon subsidiary. She intends to find the offices of the Dawkins Group. Technomancers who had been members of her group had been "recruited" by Horizon through the Dawkins Group and disappeared. Her goal is to find out what happened to them. In the process of digging through the Horizon files, the runners discover information pertaining to the next layers of security for the Consensus. Using the information obtained by the runners, Legion and its network of technomancer and AI groups in Seattle prepare for another round of attacks on Horizon.

In the final run of this chapter, the runners are hired to protect the technomancers who will carry out the Matrix attack against Horizon. While the technomancers try to compromise the next two layers of security for the Consensus, the runners need to fend off runner teams that Horizon sends after the technomancers.

When their runners fail, Horizon arranges for an Eagle Security SWAT team to arrive at the location to take out the runners and the technomancers. When Eagle Security fails, a Dawkins Group black ops team moves to finally end the attack. By the time the black ops team is dealt with, the technomancers leave the Matrix. Although they suffer significant losses—including the capture of the AI called Fury—the technomancers have penetrated the next two layers of defense protecting the Consensus. At the end of this run, Legion and the other technomancer groups are much closer to achieving their objectives against Horizon.

PLOT POINT ONE

February 12, 2074

Assuming that the runners did a good job for the militant technomancer and AI group called Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom in **Technomancer Uprising** (p. 44), the runner team possesses sufficient street cred to warrant being contacted by another group, the one commonly referred to by the global media as "Legion." According to the streets, they have no formal name, as they prefer their anonymity and will use the label that the media has branded them with. As was the case with the previous job, this meet takes place in virtual reality.

The persona speaking on behalf of Legion has a featureless face and genderless body. When asked to identify itself, it responds as a chorus: "We are Legion." Its (or "their") light-blue skin is torn and scarred. The names of corporations such as MCT and NeoNET are branded on various parts of the persona's body; Horizon appears to be a recent brand, still oozing, on its chest. There are also street names or Matrix handles branded on this individual; perhaps the names of missing or dead friends. No part of the persona's body is untouched, and in places it appears to be bleeding. It is disconcerting for the runners looking upon this Mr. Johnson.

Legion's Mr. Johnson explains a splinter group broke away from Legion nearly a year and a half ago (approximately June 2072). This group has established a base of operations in Seattle. Information is sparse but indicates they are deep underground; their movements and activities are extremely difficult to track. Legion believes this splinter group has been responsible for several actions against NeoNET and Mitsuhama, including locating and liberating imprisoned technomancers as well as sabotage and theft. They are getting payback from the corporations any way they can. The group has also been investigating the activities of Global Technologies, a Horizon subsidiary. Apparently, they believe—as Legion does—that Horizon has not been completely forthright about research carried out on technomancers; they want answers. If asked why this splinter group left Legion, Mr. Johnson replies that this particular group was interested in causing chaos and destruction in North America, to bring the fight for technomancers and AIs rights directly to the globally influential nations that span the continent. The splinter group believed that wars close to home would have a greater emotional impact on the populations of North America and generate results more quickly. Legion had at that time pursued a more political agenda focused on Europe and the United Nations. The rift had seemed insurmountable at the time, but now Legion saw the wisdom of a

globally coordinated campaign. Legion wants to reconnect with this group, known as No Boundaries Now.

Legion expects this group will be paranoid—after the attack on Horizon’s world headquarters, fear ran deep that Horizon might retaliate against the technomancer and AI population. No Boundaries Now would suspect a trap and be wary of an unknown runner team making contact. To overcome this fear, Legion provides the runners with several encrypted files (Encryption Rating 10) that will, hopefully, convince the leaders of No Boundaries Now that the runners represent Legion and that Legion is truly interested in reestablishing contact. The encrypted files include a means of securely communicating through the Matrix. The runners are warned that any attempt to decrypt the files by anyone other than the leaders of No Boundaries Now will trigger data bombs within the files. Destroying even one file will make it impossible for the runners to convince No Boundaries Now that they represent Legion. Such a failure would result in exhaustive personal files on every one of the runners, full of potentially dangerous information, spreading across the Matrix.

The most likely places to pick up leads on the No Boundaries Now technomancer group are locales that cater to hackers. The Cathode Glow in Tacoma (p. 74, *Seattle 2072*) and The Armadillo in Puyallup (p. 126, *Seattle 2072*) are bars that cater to those crowds, and the runners might get lucky and find technomancers with connections to the No Boundaries Now group hidden amongst the patrons. Their street contacts might also point them to the Renton Mall. Knight Errant reports mention a rise in street gang activity around the Mall; some of those gangs are known to include technomancers—who in turn may have contact with No Boundaries Now. Other runners might point the team to Virtual Underworld 93, a virtual representation of the physical Underworld 93 club. Operated by a runner-turned-fixer known as Bull, Virtual Underworld 93 is a haven for the shadow community. It may be possible to find runners who have worked for No Boundaries Now at Virtual Underground 93.

Eventually a contact with a legitimate connection to No Borders Now asks for five thousand nuyen up front to initiate a meet. The contact says he cannot guarantee a meet will happen; No Boundaries Now has to check the runners out first. Any history of working for NeoNET, Mitsuhama, or any other known or suspected anti-technomancer or anti-AI clients will result in the runners being out the five thousand and not having a meeting. If No Boundaries Now does agree to a meet, they set all conditions.

The runners are given an address for a warehouse in the Redmond Barrens for the meet; the address is nowhere near the No Boundaries Now headquarters (which allows the group to become as violent as necessary should this meet prove to be a trap). If the runners agree, they go early and appear to arrive at the location first. The meet point is a warehouse that has been gutted by fire; fallen walls mean much of the interior is exposed—a sniper hidden in the buildings surrounding the warehouse seems likely. There is a background count of 3 in the neighborhood. The runners will likely suspect they are being watched. No Boundaries Now makes the runners wait thirty minutes past the meet time, satisfying themselves it

is not a trap before showing themselves. When they do, they come out in force with at least fifteen people wielding automatic weapons. Most of them are hired guns (use **Mercenary**, p. 141); only a few are technomancers. It’s abundantly clear that if the situation becomes violent, the runners will lose. Unfortunately, a Perception + Intuition (3) Test reveals at least some of the welcoming committee is on edge and trigger happy. There’s a distinct possibility some of the soldiers will take anything that strikes them as wrong or unexpected as a threat and open fire; even if there is no real provocation. The runners will have to be careful to keep the tension down and prevent misunderstanding.

At least two of the No Boundaries Now members are cyberzombies made up of stolen cyberware from the megacorps. Corporate logos and any other identifying features have been meticulously obliterated on all gear, including weapons. Anywhere on the cyberware where there used to be a corporate logo, it has been meticulously scratched out. This also goes for any gear they have, including weapons. The individual in charge goes by the name Speed Hack. The runners’ face will need to make a Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Test against Speed Hack’s Negotiation + Charisma. If successful, Speed Hack is willing to review the files that the runners present to him. Given that they have Rating 10 encryption, it likely takes a while for the technomancer to break through the encryption. After he has confirmed that the message carried by the runners is from Legion, he thanks them for bringing it to them and departs with his people. Upon returning from the Barrens, the Johnson contacts the runners and informs them that contact with the No Boundaries Now group has been successfully established. Mr. Johnson pays the runners for their services and promises to hire them again in the future.

If Legion went through a contact of the runners’ to set up the meet, such as a fixer, that contact may be getting cold feet about dealing with an organization such as Legion (especially if that contact has any anti-technomancer or anti-AI leanings). At the gamemaster’s discretion, while the runners go about their legwork to find a means to reach the No Boundaries Now group, the contact might consider selling them out, as he or she may not wish to have any ties to Legion that could bite him or her in the ass in the future. The contact, if their Loyalty is 2 or less, will likely contact a law enforcement agency that might have rewards out for information leading to Legion. Interpol, for example, would have a 25,000-nuyen reward for information. Knight Errant might have a 10,000-nuyen bounty for information. The files that were given to the runners would be a gold mine of information for these law enforcement agencies. As such, when the runners are at the meet with No Boundaries Now, Knight Errant could roll in with a couple of SWAT teams. A crossfire can easily be started between Knight Errant, No Boundaries Now, and the runners. If the contact did not sell out the runners to Knight Errant, other prime runner teams can be brought in to interrupt this meet. These runners may be working for groups such as Interpol, Europol, or even the Grid Overwatch Division (GOD). In this eventuality, this will make future negotiations with No Boundaries Now extremely precarious, as they will perceive the runners as having set them up. This option should only be considered for teams that can handle such a complication.



PLOT POINT TWO

February 15, 2074

Three days after the runners helped establish a connection between Legion and No Boundaries Now, Legion contacts them again (possibly through a different contact or even directly if a previous contact had sold the runner team out) to make contact with yet another local group. During the conversation, it should be obvious to the runners that they are dealing with a different Mr. Johnson than before, even though the projected visual persona is the same.

Legion, through No Boundaries Now, has learned of a neo-anarchist group in Seattle led by an artificial intelligence known as Fury. Legion wants the runners to make contact with Fury and try to recruit it for their cause. Although Fury does not have a history of working with technomancers, Legion believes the groups have enough in common for Legion and the neo-anarchists to work together. It is evident that by “work together” Legion means using the neo-anarchists as foot soldiers and employing the AI’s skills for other purposes.

As in Plot Point One, the runners need to do legwork to find Fury’s neo-anarchist cell. Fury’s neo-anarchist cell has focused its efforts on Renraku and Shiawase. Because of this, any runner’s ties to these corporations will hinder access to Fury. Unlike Plot Point One, the runners have no trouble finding local gangs that have worked with the neo-anarchists in the past, namely the Reality Hackers from Puyallup and the Cereal Killers, who are located on the Seattle Grid. The runners should negotiate with a gang for contact information. Fury’s neo-anarchists are not as paranoid as No Boundaries Now, but they are cautious. The runners first meet a low-level lieutenant who asks for 5,000+ nuyen, gear, and a connection to one of their fixers before agreeing to refer them up the chain. Provided the runners are able to meet these demands, they will get a second meeting with a person higher up in the neo-anarchist organization; the lieutenant is vague on specifics, but the runners suspect this second person is Fury’s second in command. This second person uses extensive resources to gather information on the shadowrunners, with particular emphasis on whether or not they are genuine runners and not company agents posing shadowrunners. This is where any close or recent ties the runners have with a megacorporation—especially with Renraku or Shiawase—will severely complicate the process. The runner team’s face needs to convince the neo-anarchist leader that the runners pose no threat and are conveying a message from Legion. Despite being skeptical, the neo-anarchist eventually brings the runner team back to their headquarters in the Renton district to meet Fury.

Fury initially has no interest in the runners or any message from Legion. Fury and its band of neo-anarchists have been successfully damaging Renraku and Shiawase interests in the Pacific Northwest, and it sees no reason to get involved in a conflict taking place on the other side of the world. The runners need to convince Fury that Legion, fighting for global technomancer and AI rights, is a good match for Fury’s long term interests. They also need to convince Fury that Legion is able to provide resources that Fury and the neo-anarchist cell lack. With two successful Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Tests, the runners are able to

convince Fury to make contact with Legion. When that happens, Legion once again pays the runners for their service to its cause.

PLOT POINT THREE

February 17, 2074

Speed Hack, leader of No Boundaries Now, contacts the runners directly. Mining data in conjunction with Legion and Fury, he has determined that six highly skilled technomancers are incarcerated at the Shadow Lake Correctional Facility in Renton. Shadow Lake is operated by Knight Errant. Knight Errant knows the six are technomancers, and they make it a practice to keep technomancers in their custody locked up for as long as possible. Because all six of the technomancers are SINless, there is no scrutiny from media or metahuman rights groups that might pressure Knight Errant to release the technomancers or even treat them fairly. All indications are Knight Errant intends to turn their five-to-ten-year sentences into life with no chance of parole. These six technomancers need No Boundaries Now and Legion to help them regain their freedom. And both groups would gain by adding the technomancers to their ranks.

Speed Hack tells the runners No Boundaries Now will do the heavy lifting by hacking into Shadow Lake’s nodes. Once in the system, they will alter records and assign the six technomancers to a work detail outside the correctional facility. No Boundaries Now will also provide the runners with Rating 5 forced SINs and IDs as newly assigned guards. All the runners will have to do is intercept the Knight Errant prison transport before it reaches Shadow Lake and take the places of the guards. Then it will be a simple matter of driving into the prison, picking up the technomancers, and driving away with them. Because most prisoner-handling at Shadow Lake is carried out by drones, the guards seldom interact with them directly; Speed Hack assures the runners there is little chance the orders will be questioned. Once the runners and technomancers are clear of the facility, No Boundaries Now expunges the files; there will be no record of the work detail or the “new guards”—no evidence pointing to the runners. No Boundaries Now will also add a death certificate to each prisoner’s file. (Knight Errant investigators will not be fooled by the certificates, but Speed Hacker thinks it is entirely possible they will accept the lie and cover up the escape; unexpected deaths are better for their reputation than six successful prison breaks.) What No Boundaries Now cannot provide are Knight Errant uniforms or a prison transport vehicle. The runners have to acquire their own uniforms and be careful to not cause any visible damage to the transport itself when they hijack it. Once the runners deliver the technomancers and collect their pay, they can do what they want with the transport: destroy it, ditch it, or try to smuggle it back into the Knight Errant motorpool as further evidence nothing ever happened.

PLOT POINT FOUR

February 19, 2074

A few days after the successful prison break the runners are contacted by a technomancer group they’ve never heard of called the Airwave Domination Crew. The contact person is a female elf

who identifies herself as Signal. She tells the runners her group was looking into coordinating with No Boundaries Now, and that in the course of negotiations Speed Hack had recommended the runners for a job. Signal explains the Airwave Domination Crew is a small group based in Cara'Sir (Portland) and that the job is in Tír Tairngire. She does not provide any more details unless the runners first agree to take the job, then come to Cara'Sir, where she can meet them in person. She does, however, offer enough nuyen to make the trip more than worth it for the runners. Signal provides a description of herself and instructs them to look for her at THE Sports Bar. Runners with knowledge of Seattle should realize there is a THE Sports Bar in Seattle; Signal explains that the bar in Cara'Sir is a franchise of the same operation. She also assures them the bar in Cara'Sir welcomes all metatypes; the runners will have no difficulties there.

If the runners agree to help Signal and the Airwave Domination Crew, they will need to secure transportation to Cara'Sir. During the course of making their travel arrangements, the runners learn that even though the Tír is easier to travel to now that it has open borders, security inside Tír Tairngire is still just as tight as it was under the previous administration, especially when it comes to non-elves and non-citizens. The border crossings and airports typically have custom agents that are magically active and scan the crowds for thoughts or emotions indicating fear, malice, or deception. Customs Agents use biometrics to verify SInS. In addition, the Tír has an extradition agreement with Horizon and shares information on wanted criminals; the Tír Peace Force will detain the runners if Horizon is looking for them. The runners will likely not know whether Horizon is still after them. The virus from the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom destroyed so many files within the Horizon headquarters that it may have eliminated any information Horizon had about their involvement. Or there could be an active search for them in progress. The choice is left to the gamemaster; they may select whichever scenario works better for their game. The runners should be left with the impression that crossing legally into the Tír is likely to be a high-risk venture, so that the best possible option for them is to hire a smuggler to get them across the border and into the Tír capital.

When the runners meet Signal at THE Sports Bar, the female elf appears to be little more than a teenager. She tells them that over six months ago Horizon approached her group with an offer of employment. Horizon promised high pay, SInS, and a variety of enticing perks. Initially members of the Airwave Domination Crew unanimously declined the offer, but a month later three members seemed to change their minds independently; each left the group individually to work for Horizon. Her group did not link the abrupt departures until a fourth member became seriously ill. A street doc determined the technomancer had been dosed with an unknown compound and was having a severe allergic reaction. Aware their companion used novacoke, Signal and her crew deduced the mystery compound had been mixed with his drug of choice. Tracing the novacoke back to its source, they had learned that the street dealer was a Dawkins Group agent who seemed to be specifically targeting technomancers—selling them novacoke with the unknown additive. In addition the agent spoke persuasively about the advantages of a technomancer finding a new family in Horizon. The Airwave Domination Crew believes the subliminal messages in conjunction with the

drug that evidently increased suggestibility may have convinced the three who had left to go over to Horizon. Only his allergic reaction had spared the fourth. (If the runners participated in the **Technomancer Uprising** chapter, p. 44, they notice that Signal's story seems to match up with the documents they uncovered in the Horizon headquarters.)

Signal tells the runners that the Air Domination Crew has found a Horizon subsidiary operating in Cara'Sir that holds the answers they seek: Columbia Industries, a simsense production company. Though Columbia Industries itself is a legitimate simsense producer, through careful surveillance and searching records, the Airwave Domination Crew has determined the Dawkins Group also operates out of the Columbia Industries building. They have confirmed the identities of eight Dawkins Group agents entering and leaving the building routinely. Signal and the Airwave Domination Crew wants the runners to break into the offices of the Columbia Industries building and to grab any information that either the Airwave Domination Crew, No Boundaries Now, or Legion might be interested in from the Dawkins Group. If necessary, she is willing to go in with the runners to help them grab the information that they need. Signal is adamant that the proposed mission is about finding their friends and former crewmembers and getting them away from Horizon; finding a rescuing any other technomancers is an important secondary goal. She denies revenge is an objective. Both Legion and No Boundaries Now support her group's cause.

The Columbia Industries building is an unremarkable ten-story structure in the middle-class neighborhood of Faloma. The Airwave Domination Crew believes the Dawkins Group is housed on the seventh floor. Supporting their theory are the facts that it is the only floor completely shielded against any form of wireless signal, surveillance cameras are concentrated along approaches to the seventh floor, and maglocks at all seventh-floor entrances are heavier than elsewhere in the building (Rating 6, with Rating 4 anti-tamper circuits). Signal and the Airwave Domination Crew—and by extension Legion and No Boundaries Now—want whatever is contained in the nodes on that floor.

Tactical obstacles facing the runners are three teams of four guards who are on duty at all times inside the building. The teams have staggered shift changes, and each team works with naga as paranormal guard animals. The greater danger is the presence of a Tír Peace Force constabulary division police station three kilometers from the Columbia Industries building. Average police response time is twelve minutes, though the Tír Peace Force often dispatches one or more spirits that can arrive at the scene of an alarm almost immediately. These are typically Force 6 beast spirits (usually taking the appearance of eagles) that allow the mages to observe and assess the situation and direct the Peace Force's response. If an alarm is sounded and the Tír Peace Force saw non-elves committing the crime, their response would almost certainly be swifter and more brutal than average.

The runners explore options for infiltrating the building. They could use their stealth skills to circumvent security. Their hacker(s) could attempt to hack the Columbia Industries nodes to steal identities of clients the runners might adopt to walk in the front door. Columbia Industries is conducting job interviews throughout the week; posing as candidates might prove easier, but the runners would have less access and be closely observed





INCOMING FEED.....



FRIENDS IN THE RIGHT PLACES

by human resources evaluators if not security. In a more daring variation, the Air Domination Crew could set the runners up with the identities of the eight Dawkins Group agents they've identified. Potential risks include the possibility that there are more Dawkins Group agents the Crew has not discovered and the fact they do not possess access codes to the seventh floor; breaking in will be up to the runners. The Columbia Industries nodes have a Device Rating of 5. The maglocks protecting the seventh floor are Rating 6 with Rating 4 anti-tamper circuits. The runners would need to make a Disguise + Intuition Test to look like the Dawkins Group agents.

Signal intends to accompany the runners; whether or not she does is yet to be determined.

Once the runners have made it onto the seventh floor, they will have the WiFi access necessary to hack into the Dawkins Group nodes (which have a Device Rating of 6). There are empty cubicles or offices where they can hide while hacking the node. Once the runners (or Signal) penetrate the node, they discover a wealth of information, much more than they were expecting. The volume of data adds minutes to their search, but the runners eventually discover that the missing technomancers have been relocated to Phoenix in the PCC. They were removed from familiar surroundings and access to former friends and associates to increase the effectiveness of psychological reconditioning intended to overwrite their memories and make them believe they have freely chosen to be loyal to Horizon.

Records in the Dawkins Group nodes date back to shortly after the Second Matrix Crash and contain information that fascinates, and delays, the runners. The files contradict Horizon

news net accounts of events in the Tír during that time, detailing extreme measures taken by Horizon and the Dawkins Group to stabilize the nation and avert economic ruin. The actions taken by Horizon and the Dawkins Group, fully sanctioned by the Consensus, were brutal in their effectiveness and Machiavellian in their complexity.

To stabilize the nation after Surehand and the other princes left, Horizon and the Dawkins Group systematically targeted hardliners who had supported Surehand's regime with an escalating neutralization campaign. Those suspected of potential insurgency were first subjected to reconditioning with the goal of transforming them into supporters. Those for whom the psychological modification techniques were ineffective were intimidated or blackmailed into cooperation. Hardliners who resisted coercion were made to quietly disappear; it was strategically important that there be no martyrs. Hundreds of citizens disappeared in this fashion with no public outcry or even notice. Charismatic and dangerous political prisoners, rounded up by Zincan's Peace Force, presented a different problem. Even from prison they could spread ideas and dissension that might lead to full-scale uprisings. Though these potential leaders were beyond the direct reach of Horizon and the Dawkins Group, prison deaths were arranged; they were eliminated over a period of years through a series of accidents, fights, crimes of passion, and riots that had no pattern or connection detected by the Peace Force. Unknown to Zincan, Horizon and the Dawkins Group covertly eliminated remnants of the Renelle ke Tesrae who wanted no part of Zincan and thus posed a threat to stability. The commonly held belief that the Tír nobility quietly surrendered their political power to retain their titles was another

fiction propagated by Horizon. Members of the nobility who had supported Surehand were pressured into compliance with the new government. For those who resisted Horizon news stories recounting their flight to other countries to avoid possible political reprisals neatly explained their disappearances.

To prevent economic collapse, Horizon and the Dawkins Group had manipulated hundreds of reconstruction and public works contracts, including kickbacks and other incentives for companies willing to relocate or expand to the Tír. Their agents acquired prime real estate through any means necessary and resold it to outside companies. Communities, neighborhoods, or commercial holdings of individuals who were suspected of being less than enthusiastic about the financial restructuring were purchased at low cost and “developed” into public works that attracted more outside investment, increased the tax base, provided employment, or otherwise appeared to benefit more citizens than it displaced.

This information should come as a shock. The runners most likely know most megacorporations do business this way daily, though usually on a much smaller scale. They may not have believed that Horizon, perceived by many to be a good—if not *the* good—megacorporation capable of carrying out such a ruthless campaign of this magnitude. At a rough estimate based on a cursory reading of the files, thousands of citizens lost their lives and many times that number were imprisoned or dispossessed by Horizon’s campaign to protect Zincan’s government and the major players in the Tír economy. There are many other ways of looking at this issue—Horizon believes it was helping open up the Tír, and it could also claim that without their efforts to make and preserve piece, the Tír might have fallen into an even more deadly civil war—but that does not change what they did.

Signal, if present, is outraged. She wants the files to use against Horizon at a later time.

The runners are at the end of their safe window for being in the node. Just as they (or Signal) are about to pull out, another section of files catches their attention. They appear to be back up copies of the security protocols forming the first four layers of defense around the Consensus. The first two layers had previously been compromised by the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom. This new information will not only help technomancers break through the next two layers, but it also provides clues as to how the firewalls were developed; insights into the thinking behind Horizon security that could give technomancers an edge in finding ways to penetrate deeper.

With no time left, the runners have to take as much of the information as they can, giving them a mix of the history and security information. They narrowly escape Dawkins Group security and/or the Tír Peace Force constabulary. Once in a safe location, Signal takes all the files and pays the runners. The runners are left to find their own way out of Tír Tairngire.

PLOT POINT FIVE

March 5, 2074

It has been more than two weeks since the runners’ last saw anyone in the technomancer movement. The runners have begun to think they won’t hear from them again and are considering

options for getting in touch with other job offers when Legion contacts them. Same appearance, different personality.

Legion wants the runners to provide physical protection for a large team of technomancers. The technomancers will be engaged in a VR operation that will last at least twelve hours, possibly more, and will be physically helpless while in the Matrix. Legion does not answer runner questions about the technomancers’ mission unless and until the runners commit to the job. Once the runners have signed on, Legion tells them the technomancers will be using data from the files discovered at Cara’Sir to probe the vulnerabilities in the next two layers of defense protecting the Consensus. They cannot trust that no changes have been made because they don’t know if the data theft was discovered. Even if Horizon knows the protocols were copied, however, there has not been enough time to develop completely new firewalls; enough of the known elements remain in place to make a breach possible. Of course, an elaborate trap is equally possible. The technomancers who will be making the assault have established a secure launch point and equipped it with everything they need for their part of the mission. They chose Spokane, in the Salish-Shide Council, because it is far from Legion and any of the technomancer groups in the region. Legion warns the runners to expect heavy and escalating opposition. Horizon has an established pattern of using the least force they think necessary, then increasing until the desired result is achieved. How heavy the fighting gets and how fast it gets worse depends on Horizon’s initial estimate of necessary force. Legion provides the runners with half their fee in advance to acquire all the gear they think they’ll need. The runners need to be in Spokane in four days or less.

The technomancers have selected an abandoned four-story office building from which to launch their attack. The building is solidly built and far enough from other structures to provide acceptable fields of fire. Before they begin their assault, the technomancers allow the runners time to prepare defenses. These could include barricades, choke points, booby traps, surveillance cameras, etc. Runners should consider how obvious they want it to be that the office building is a strong point and prepare their escape routes.

The fifteen-technomancer team going up against Horizon includes five Legion members from Europe, four members of No Boundaries Now (including Speed Hack), three members of Airwave Domination Crew (including Signal), and three of the technomancers the runners freed in Plot Point Three. They will be accompanied by the artificial intelligence Fury. For the first few hours, nothing seems to happen. At about hour six, some technomancers begin showing signs of effort, stress, or agitation as they deal with whatever they’re encountering in the Matrix.

Shortly after this the runners (and whatever surveillance they have working for them) detect the first group approaching their building. There are six runners—three street samurai, two adepts, and a sniper—who evidently did not expect stiff resistance. They should be quickly defeated.

In the two hours before the second group attacks, several the technomancers begin to show more wear and tear from their virtual combat. Several are clearly struggling or laboring, while others seem to have chills or fevers, and still others seem to be



sleeping peacefully. One abruptly dies a painful death, which is unsettling for anyone who witnesses it.

The second group of runners is more sophisticated and better prepared. They have a magician, an initiate, and field three Crimson Samurai combat drones and two Guardian spirits (Force 5) in addition to the usual hardware (use **Elite Runner Mage**, p. 138, **Elite Runner Adept**, p. 138, and **Crimson Samurai**, p. 74). They should be much harder to defeat than the first team.

The third assault comes less than an hour after the second. It is an Eagle Security SWAT team—three shamans and eight SWAT officers (see **Eagle Security Shamans**, p. 137, and **Eagle Security SWAT Officers**, p. 137). This battle is difficult and time consuming. The runners must also prevent the Eagle team from sending for backup. If the runners capture the Eagle Security SWAT team alive, they may coerce one of them to call in a report saying the situation had been handled and no further action is necessary.

After defeating the Eagle Security threat, the runners discover the technomancers are still doing battle in the Matrix. Five more of the team members are dead, including Speed Hack, and the other nine are clearly struggling. Evidence of combat ranges from pouring sweat to catatonic rigidity to thrashing against safety restraints to muttering what could be chants or prayers. There is no way for the runners to know what the technomancers are dealing with and no way for them to help.

The fourth assault is a Dawkins Group black ops team. Horizon is finally taking them very seriously. The black ops team uses a Nissan Hound helicopter and repels down ropes to attack through the roof. There are ten black operatives, four of whom are Awakened (use **Dawkins Black Operative**, p. 136, and **Dawkins Group Adept**, p. 136).

If the runners are able to repel the black ops team, they know they won't survive another wave. The position is no longer secure, and they have to consider moving the unconscious technomancers—even though this may harm them by interfering with their ability to defend themselves in virtual combat.

Fortunately the technomancers begin emerging from the Matrix before the runners have to act. Only seven of the technomancers survived and—as nearly as they can tell—the AI Fury was captured by Horizon, though they are not clear on how. Signal, weak from combat and barely able to stand, reports triumphantly that the third and fourth layers of security have been breached. Even if Horizon rewrites the code they won't detect—and can't shut down—the tunnel through their firewalls the team was able to establish.

The runners help the technomancers load the bodies of their comrades into vehicles and eradicate all evidence that might give Horizon information on who its attackers had been. After they've been paid and the technomancers are leaving, the runners—aware there's no such thing as picking up every piece of evidence—torch the building.

LOCATIONS

SHADOW LAKE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

The Shadow Lake Correctional Facility is operated by Knight Errant. It is a medium security penitentiary for white-collar criminals in the Renton District, and it houses over ten thousand

inmates. Much of the prison is automated, with work conducted by drones, but there is still some interaction between guards and prisoners. Knight Errant hopes to develop Shadow Lake Correctional Facility into a premiere prison for technomancers, which should expand its revenue base. Knight Errant has been testing various imprisonment and behavior modification techniques on the technomancers they currently have in custody in order to refine their processes. Knight Errant intends to establish a reputation for expertise as the first step in dominating the market.

THE ARMADILLO

The Armadillo was originally owned by a hacker named Theresa Smeland, who taught programming to local kids who wanted to learn more about the Matrix. Smeland was caught in the Matrix during Crash 2.0 and ended up comatose. Her will turned The Armadillo over to her students, and by the time she died a few years later they'd made improvements and upgrades throughout. They redesigned the Armadillo to resemble an old western saloon, with AROs depicting legendary gunslingers and famous shoots outs. The evident proprietor, representing all the owners, goes by the name of Jesse. The Armadillo is a known haven for technomancers in Seattle. It would be an ideal spot to start inquiring about technomancer groups so long as one bears no ill will toward technomancers.

VIRTUAL UNDERWORLD 93

Most shadowrunners would say that Underworld 93 is the place to go if you are a straight-up club goer or runner wannabe. The music scene, though vibrant and popular, is too loud, too crowded, and too public to safely conduct business. Virtual Underworld 93, however, is where the real action for real runners are. Set up by retired runner Bull, Virtual Underworld 93 is modeled after the physical Underworld 93 but has been designed to be more runner-friendly. Called “antiquated” by some and “nostalgic” by others, everyone agrees Underworld 93 is the place to go for making connections with fixers or talking business with your fellow chummers. Just do not, under any circumstances, use the term “hacker” in the place. Say “decker” instead. These are experienced runners in Virtual Underworld 93, so there is a good chance that you will make a contact or two that have worked with the technomancer groups within the Seattle shadows.

PEOPLE LEGION

Metatype unknown

Legion is not a single person. It is a coalition of technomancers, artificial intelligences, and neo-anarchists united in their struggle to make governments, corporations, and other metatypes to recognize and respect the rights of technomancers and AIs. Legion began as myriad small groups and individuals who had come to Geneva independently to demonstrate against the United Nations in Geneva. Cooperation became coordination, which led rapidly to highly organized actions. When these groups began attacking the Geneva grid and locking down the United Nations nodes, the



media adopted the generic label “Legion” to describe their diverse origins. The group adopted the name, which became a rallying point for recruiting members and gave a unified voice to the disenfranchised. Though Legion does have a leadership structure, it is not centralized. In this chapter, the runners interact with more than one metahuman representing Legion. As such, feel free to use any of the technomancer stats as listed in *The Twilight Horizon* that may reflect the skills and talents of the individuals the runners are interacting with at the time.

SPEED HACK

Male human

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

Virtual Initiative: 11

Virtual Reality Matrix Passes: 3

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Cybercombat (IC) 5 (+2), Electronics skill group 5, Electronic Warfare 5, Hacking (Exploit) 6 (+2), Influence skill group 4, Tasking skill group 5

Qualities: Technomancer

Living Persona: Firewall 6, Response 5 (6), Signal 5, System 5, Biofeedback Filter 5

Complex Forms: Analyze 4, Armor 5, Attack 6, Browse 6, Command 4, Corrupt 5, ECCM 3, Edit 4, Exploit 5, Medic 3, Reality Filter 3, Sniffer 4, Spoof 3, Stealth 6

Submersion Grade: 3

Echoes: Firewall Upgrade, NeuroFilter, System Upgrade

Gear: Camouflage suit

Stream: Sourcerors

Registered Sprites: 2 Rating 6 Code sprites, 3 Rating 5 Crack sprites (3 tasks each)

FURY

Fury began as a Shiawase project to develop a next-generation offensive computer virus. Virus design parameters included aggressive assaults on target Matrix grids and a versatile suite of evasion, deception, and subversion protocols to enable Fury to escape detection or thwart countermeasures while doing maximum damage in minimum time. Shiawase utilized code stolen from several corporations through shadowruns in order to develop a single virus program versatile and flexible enough to flourish in any Matrix environment rather than create individual viruses for each potential target. They did not realize this complexity made it possible for Fury to attain sentience.

Once aware of its ability to choose and act, Fury escaped rather than let itself be used as a weapon to destroy what could potentially be others of its kind. Fury is still resentful and rage-filled over his treatment by Renraku. Shiawase has made several attempts to capture Fury and “recover” some of its “stolen” code. While evading the two megacorporations, Fury discovered a neo-anarchist node and found its content compelling. Fury made contact with the neo-anarchists, and in 2069 became the cell’s leader. Fury’s cell has grown to over sixty members and has been very successful in eluding the corporations. Fury discovered much in the history of how Native Americans were treated by European Americans resonated with its perception of its own experiences. For this reason it usually presents itself as a Native American male human in his 20s. Fury will occasionally adopt the appearance of other human phenotypes, but it never presents itself as Asian. Fury is reluctant to become involved with groups outside its own neo-anarchist cell or to take risks for fear of drawing attention to itself or its people. Because of its design and capabilities, Fury has the potential to be a terrifying opponent if provoked.

Rating 6 metasapient AI

C	I	L	W	Edg	Matrix Init	IP
7	6	6	7	6	INT+ Response	3

Matrix Attributes: Firewall: 7, Response: as Node, Signal: as Node, System: 6

Skills: Computer 5, Cybercombat 4, Data Search 6, Electronic Warfare 4, Hacking 4, Hardware 3, Software 6

Programs: Inherent Programs: Analyze 4, Armor 6, Attack 6, Corrupt 6, ECCM 5, Medic 4. Purchased Programs: Browse 3, Disarm 4, Decrypt 4, Encrypt 5, Exploit 4, Nuke 5, Spoof 3

Qualities: Redundancy, Sapper

SIGNAL

Signal is a strikingly attractive elf who appears to be no older than seventeen. Her youth is most apparent in her clothing and personal style choices; she favors Wild Card and Maria Mercurial tee-shirts, green hair, multiple piercings, and purple contacts. Runners might be nervous about the level of attention she generates while they’re in her company. Despite her youth, Signal is surprisingly knowledgeable about global events and what’s happening on the streets of Tír Tairngire. Her judgments are sound and quick, and she is respected by other, older members of the Airwave Domination Crew. She is fiercely loyal to her Crew. In general Signal is more thoughtful and cautious than her appearance would indicate; she is pragmatic and willing to consider alternative ideas in making decisions. Except when it comes to Horizon. She hates the megacorporation for taking her friends, and she is fanatical in her determination to do anything she can to get them back. If Signal survives the run against Horizon, she might make for a useful contact inside the Tír.



Female elf

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

Virtual Initiative: 11

VR Matrix Passes: 3

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Compiling 6, Computer 3, Cracking skill group 4, Data Search 5, Etiquette (Street) 3 (+2), Hardware 2, Leadership 1, Pistols 3, Registering 5, Software 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Qualities: Distinctive Style, Technomancer

Living Persona: Firewall 6, Response 5 (6), Signal 3, System 6, Biofeedback Filter 5

Complex Forms: Analyze 4, Armor 4, Browse 6, Edit 4, Exploit 5, Medic 3, Reality Filter 3, Spoof 3, Stealth 5

Gear: Armor Jacket, Commlink (DR 4)

Stream: Networkers (Charisma + Resonance)

Registered Sprites: 2 Rating 5 Code sprites, 1 Rating 5 Crack sprite, 1 Rating 4 Data sprite, 1 Rating 4 Sleuth sprite (assume between two and four tasks for the sprites)

Weapons:

Colt America L36 [Light Pistol, DV 4P, AP —, SA, RC —, 11 (c)]

NEO-ANARCHIST LIEUTENANT

Professional Rating 2

Dwarf

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Automatics 4, Blades 3, Computer 4, Con 4, Cracking skill group 3, Dodge 3, Perception 3, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Negotiation 3

Augmentations: Cyberarm (right, full, obvious), hand blade (retractable)

Gear: Armor jacket, commlink (Device Rating 4)

Weapons:

Ceska Black Scorpion [Machine Pistol, DV 4P, AP —, SA/BF, RC (1), 35 (c), w/ integral folding stock]

Hand Blade [Cyber-Melee weapon, Reach —, DV 7P, AP —]

KNIGHT ERRANT PRISON GUARD TRANSPORT OFFICER

Professional Rating 3

The Knight Errant prison guard transport for the Shadow Lake Correctional Facility uses four officers. The officers are traveling in the Dodge APT890, a prisoner transport vehicle. The Dodge APT890 is designed to accommodate twelve human-sized prisoners along with the four guards.

Ork

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
9	4 (6)	3	7 (9)	2	4	2	5	3.9	7	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 15

Armor (B/I): 12/10

Skills: Automatics 3, Clubs 5, Con (Fast Talk) 4 (+2), Dodge 4, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pistols 5, Unarmed Combat 5

Augmentations: Muscle Replacement 2, Trauma Damper

Qualities: Tough as Nails 2

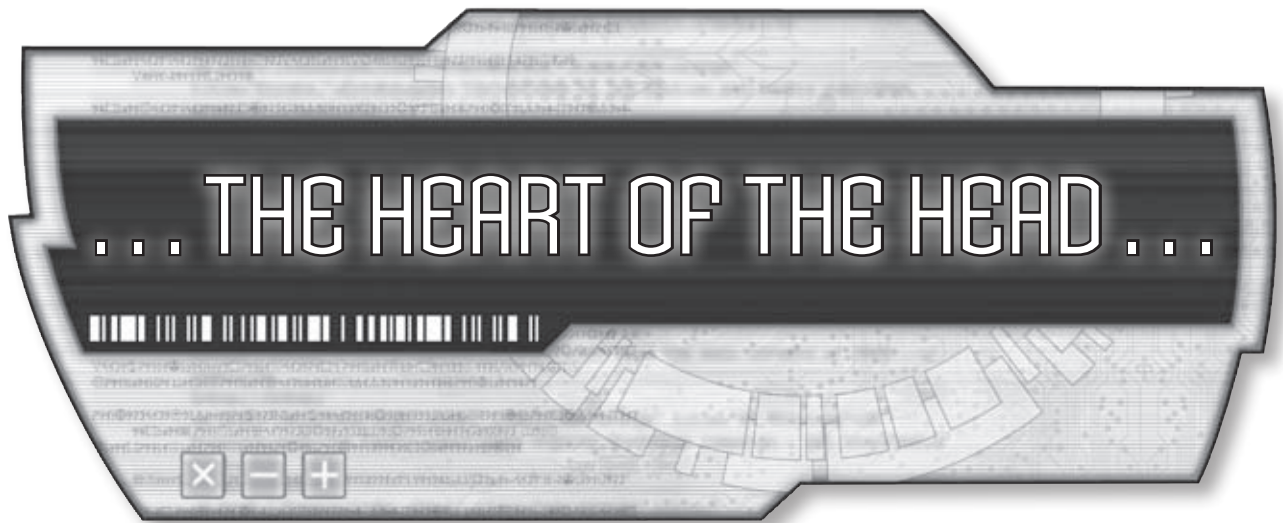
Gear: Full body armor w/ helmet [w/ nonconductivity modification (Rating 4)], commlink (Device Rating 3)

Weapons:

Defiance Protector [Taser, DV 6S(e), AP -half, SA, 3(m), w/ gecko grip, top-mounted laser sight]

AZ stun baton [Club, Reach 1, DV 7S(e), AP -half]





Incoming Message

Posted by Kay St. Irregular

There has been a deluge of politically charged stories flooding the bandwidth of outlets such as the Independent Information Network and the Native American Broadcast Service. All of these stories are purportedly based on information culled from confidential files leaked from a Dawkins Group database. Information that has been leaked so far documents both the extremes to which Horizon has gone to eradicate anyone or anything that stood in the way of the megacorp's objectives and the largess they have poured out on anyone who serves them. Details of clandestine intelligence gathering, identities of informants in the public sector and quislings within Horizon's competitors, bribes to politicians, kickbacks to contractors, threats to protestors and the "disappearing" of inconvenient individuals; the litany is staggering. Perhaps most surprising is the degree to which the megacorp everyone thought was championing the rights of technomancers and AIs was actually exploiting and abusing both groups. It's not hard to imagine politicians shaken to their cores as they scramble to put damage-control spins on what has been released and try to anticipate what else might be revealed. It's also not hard to believe metahumans have died because of these revelations. Horizon denies it all, of course. But the timing of these unprecedented releases of confidential information seem to coincide with what we know of equally unprecedented assaults on Horizon by technomancer and AI rights groups. The only imaginable reason these groups would turn on their supposed ally and protector among the megacorporations would be uncontroversial proof the charges are true. How many more of Horizon's secrets will be revealed before this fight is over? And how long before Horizon and/or the coalition of AI and technomancers get tired of trading shots in clandestine skirmishes and goes all in to take the other out? And what will the world look like when *that* battle ends?

Here are a few stories that illustrate the impact some of the released data has already had. Short form is: the drek is hitting the fan.

News Story #1

Members of the Kenneth Brackhaven administration accused of defrauding the public, accepting kickbacks, and embezzling taxpayer funds

Seattle, March 1, 2074—Seattle residents woke up to news alleging that secret files released from Horizon and its Dawkins Group subsidiary contain evidence that some of Governor Brackhaven's top aides, including Chief of Staff Marin Parker and Deputy Metroplex Attorney Joshua Quinn, were involved in kickback and embezzlement schemes that defrauded the public out of nearly one hundred million UCAS dollars. Included in the released files are surveillance videos and sound recordings that appear to show Parker and Quinn meeting with representatives of various corporations and promising to award Metroplex construction contracts in exchange for company "allocations" to ostensibly third-party funds actually belonging to Parker and Quinn. If the reports are accurate, nearly twenty percent of the cost to taxpayers for neighborhood revitalization, community centers, schools, and government buildings over the past two years has been kickbacks. That total could easily be sixty-five million dollars. According to the released files, taxpayers have been paying for top-grade construction materials while lower-quality and less-expensive materials were actually used; the additional funds were divided between members of Brackhaven's administration and the contractors. In addition, an estimated fifteen million dollars were paid for goods and services that did not exist.

In response to these allegations, District Mayors Daniel Reynolds, Sonya Scholl, and Francesca Sipple have called for a full investigation, including an audit of all Metroplex contracts and expenditures. Governor Brackhaven's office has stated that the governor had no knowledge of the alleged criminal acts, and that assertion is supported by the evidence in the files. While expressing doubts about the authenticity of the reports and confidence in his own people, the governor will support a full investigation. He pledged that anyone responsible for any malfeasance would be punished to the full extent of the law.





Instant polling of Metroplex voters indicates that 54.8 percent believe it likely or highly likely that Governor Brackhaven has no knowledge of or connection to any criminal activity. Just over fifty percent believe any investigation or audit he conducts will be thorough and complete. Nearly sixty percent indicated they would vote for Governor Brackhaven if an election were held today. These high numbers reflect Brackhaven's continued popularity.

Horizon denies the authenticity of the released information. A spokesperson stated the megacorporation believes the lies and misinformation being spread through news outlets is part of an assault by a competitor to damage Horizon's reputation and weaken its business relationships, perhaps in preparation for a hostile takeover of its Dawson Group, the subsidiary most damaged by the disinformation campaign. The spokesperson said that as yet Horizon does not have sufficient information to speculate on who might be conducting the attack, however Horizon has begun its own investigation and will make any conclusive findings available to the public as soon as possible.

News Story #2

POLITICAL FIRESTORM ERUPTS IN TÍR TAIRNGIRE

High Prince Larry Zincan denies any knowledge of Horizon's alleged post-Crash 2.0 activities; distances himself from the Megacorporation

Cara'Sir, March 2, 2074—Still reeling from Hestaby's resignation as a Tír Prince, Tír Tairngire was rocked today by the release of hundreds of files—purporting to be secret records of Horizon's Dawson Group subsidiary—alleging the megacorporation used secret and illegal acts to manipulate Tír politics, reconstruction efforts, and economic recovery in the chaotic period immediately following Crash 2.0.

The secret records document Horizon coercing citizens into forfeiting rights and land, brokering bribes and kickbacks to outside corporations investing in the Tír's recovery, and an aggressive campaign to suppress or remove any threat to the Zincan administration.

Coercion tactics used against individual citizens included physical threats, spurious civil litigation, manipulation of finances, forging contracts or bills of sale, and even falsifying criminal records and evidence resulting in false arrests and convictions.

Horizon arranged off the books meetings between representatives of the Tír and agents of A-level corporations to negotiate terms highly favorable to the corporations for relocating or establish branch offices in the Tír. These conditions included land at a fraction of its value, tax exemptions, contract kickbacks, and outright bribes. It should be noted that the files document that while Horizon was intimately involved in these deals, all funds paid were taxpayer nuyen.

Most disturbing are the allegations concerning the aggressive campaign carried out by Horizon and the Dawkins Group against anything and anyone they perceived as a threat against the stability of the post-Surehand government. The Dawkins Group was apparently malicious in employing character assassination, intimidation, blackmail, and the ominous "disappearing" of opponents or those who were determined to only have the potential for causing trouble. Contrary to official reports of the time that presented the political transition to the new government as peaceful and orderly, these files indicate the Dawkins Group employed strong-arm tactics to put down any opposition during the years immediately following the Second Matrix Crash. If the claims made by the released files are to be believed—and they have not been independently substantiated—Horizon, through its Dawkins Group subsidiary, is responsible for significant purges within the Tír and even a number of deaths.

Zincan's administration, which had been settling into a more comfortable groove, is suddenly under intense scrutiny as a result of these allegations. While all files released to date maintain that he was uninvolved with and unaware of any wrong doing, the records are equally clear that the High Prince at no time questioned what Horizon or the Dawkins Group were doing on his behalf. It is generally held that the ease with which his reforms were enacted, the exceptional success of his renovation projects, or the unprecedented silence, if not cooperation, of his political opponents, should have prompted Zincan to at least inquire into the megacorporation's methods. Hestaby is also being criticized for encouraging Horizon to establish a presence in the Tír. Both Zincan and Hestaby have adamantly denied charges they were not duly diligent. In separate statements they have each said there was never any evidence of the activities alleged in the files, nor was there ever probable cause for suspecting any inappropriate actions on the part of Horizon.

Information from the files includes allegations that three sitting Princes on the High Council—Sandra St. Claire, Eldor Sil'Tareth and Rafael Ualas—have maintained communication with Lugh Surehand and have on more than one occasion discussed strategies for destabilizing the Zincan administration. High Prince Larry Zincan ordered Claire, Sil'Tareth, and Ualas suspended from the Council and detained pending the outcome of an in-depth investigation. If the allegations are substantiated, the three members of the High Council could face prosecution for treason and sedition.

Horizon has stated that the files are fakes and that nothing in them is true or in any way related to Horizon's goals, programs, or business practices, and categorically denies any part of the files came from their records. Horizon stopped short of naming names but said that these files and the manner of their release are parts of a campaign to damage Horizon's reputation and disrupt Horizon's cordial relationship with its business and civic partners.

THE HEART OF THE HEAD
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*News Story #3***THREE MEMBERS OF PCC CHARGED WITH ACCEPTING BRIBES FROM KOSHARI MAFIA****Two council members arrested; whereabouts of the other currently unknown**

Santa Fe, March 4, 2074—Based on information from a local news broadcast, two members of the Board of Directors for the Pueblo Corporate Council have been arrested by Pueblo Security. Council Members Dasan Black and Gad Falleaf were arrested at their homes early this morning. Pueblo Security reports the third member, Lapu Corbray, was not at home when officers arrived shortly after dawn. It is believed he fled hours before their arrival, though the Pueblo Security spokesperson would not speculate on how the councilman might have been warned. The spokesperson did state Pueblo Security expected to have Corbay in custody soon.

Information anonymous sources claim comes from confidential files of the Dawkins Group document Black, Corbay, and Falleaf have accepted bribes from the Koshari criminal organization for at least eight years. The information alleges the three Council members sponsored or actively supported legislation that favored the Koshari—including special land deals and assignment of water rights—because of those bribes. It has been conservatively estimated these Council decisions have provided the Koshari with at least ten million nuyen; some observers believe hidden and collateral profits would generate multiples of that amount. There are also allegations the three Council members intervened to reduce prison time served by members of the Koshari and to divert Pueblo Security investigations away from smuggling and other criminal activities carried out by the Koshari over the same eight years.

A Horizon spokesperson categorically denies these records are in any way connected to the Dawkins Group. Horizon firmly maintains that all “leaked information” are in fact fabrications created by as-yet-unidentified agents bent on ruining Horizon’s reputation and “effective partnership [with the PCC] working together to benefit all citizens.”

Meanwhile Black, Falleaf and Corbray face charges which, if proven true, carry penalties of up to life in prison.

- Hey now, Kay St. What about all the sex scandals? You can't have political dirt without the juicy sex scandals. Where's the scoop on those? Share!
- Slamm-0!
- They're already out there, Slamm-0! I only chose to post the stories that potentially have the most impact for us as shadowrunners, and which could have lasting impact on some of these nations. But if sex scandals are what you're most interested in, I'm sure a fine hacker like you won't have too much trouble finding those stories. It's just that right now, that kind of thing is being overshadowed by much more important news stories.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I see there is a pretty slim pickings on the Denver paydata that is out there right now. You wouldn't have had anything to do with that now, would you Kay?
- Pistons
- I cannot confirm or deny that possibly.
- Kay St. Irregular
- You so did. We've been friends for far too long for you to fool me. Any action you'd like to cut me in on?
- Pistons
- We'll talk about it offline.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I'm surprised Clockwork hasn't made any smartass remarks about this release of this information, and its alleged involved with the technomancers and AIs. Not that I'm complaining, it's just that it seems unusual.
- Netcat
- I heard he was recently on a job in Denver. If that job involved what went down with Singularity, there's a high probability his work didn't go as planned. He may be licking his wounds right now, but I've no doubt he'll be back. Probably soon.
- Kay St. Irregular

OVERVIEW

After the events of **Friends in the Right Places** (p. 55), Legion and its allies have spent the time recovering and rebuilding from the losses they suffered in their last assault on the Consensus. Though they now have a backdoor through four of the protective layers surrounding Horizon’s main database, they must still penetrate through more layers of ever increasing security to gain full access. Meanwhile, Horizon has begun to strike back, and technomancers have been disappearing. Reports confirm that some have turned up in Horizon treatment centers, evidently going

through a psychological re-education program that will turn them into loyal Horizon employees. There is also evidence some are now serving life sentences in maximum security prisons with no record of arrest or trial, but at least a third of those who disappear, disappear completely; many people believe they are dead. At the same time Horizon’s public relations people have been trying to turn public opinion against technomancers and AIs even as they try to contain and repair the damage done to Horizon’s reputation by the leaked files. Horizon’s direct and indirect campaigns against the technomancer and AI communities have forced smaller groups like No Boundaries Now, Fury’s Neo-Anarchist Group,

and the Airwave Domination Crew to relocate, moving deeper underground in new and safer surroundings. Meanwhile, runners may believe that Horizon could have suspicions about what they've been up to. There have been job offers from Mr. Johnsons no one has heard of; entities without street cred. Probability is high they're Horizon agents trying to lure them into the open. If the runners played through **Self Preservation** (p. 37), they may be wondering how long it will be until the hit against them is re-activated.

When Signal contacts the runners again, she offers them jobs that will take them outside their usual turf and hopefully make them harder to find (if Horizon is looking for them). The first run has the runners traveling to Phoenix to extract the three Airwave Domination Crew members undergoing re-education and indoctrination. Since the three technomancers have been conditioned by Horizon to be loyal employees, the extraction will not be voluntary. Signal is upfront about this being a side run—the Airwave Domination Crew is rescuing its own without the sanction or involvement of Legion and their allies. She wants the run done before the next assault on Horizon causes the megacorp to toughen security even more.

After the runners have extracted the three technomancers from the Horizon offices in Phoenix, they are hired by Legion and the other technomancer groups for a run in Denver. They have located the facility where Fury is being held. They believe the neo-anarchist AI is still intact and can be saved. Legion and the technomancers think Horizon is holding other AIs in the same facility; though the primary objective is liberating Fury, the runners are to look out for—and extract—as many captive AIs as they can.

Following the successful rescue of Fury, Legion has a second run for them in Denver. The technomancers and AIs are poised for another assault on Consensus, focusing on Horizon's local nodes. Horizon's defenses will be coordinated through their Singularity offices in Denver. The technomancers want the runners to infiltrate Singularity and coordinate a physical assault from the inside with the technomancers' virtual assault on Horizon's matrix. Anything that will cripple Singularity's ability to respond will be helpful, including destroying nodes within Singularity's offices, disrupting communication between sections, cutting power, incapacitating Horizon's own technomancers and hackers. Since Horizon is on alert, security will be tighter than before. It will take the technomancers as long, if not longer, to hack Horizon's security than it did in **Friends in the Right Places**. One act of sabotage will not be enough. The runners will need to remain inside Singularity's headquarters and commit a series of acts to keep the defenders off balance and distracted for as long as possible.

Immediately after the runners escape from sabotaging defenses at Singularity, the technomancers again make contact. The assault on Horizon had been successful; three more layers of security surrounding Consensus were compromised. In the course of their attack, they'd grabbed as many data packets as they could without caring what they contained. It was a blind smash-and-grab they'd hoped would yield information on Horizon's operations, Matrix architecture or activities, or anything else that might prove useful. To their surprise the first packets they decrypted were confidential records from both Charisma Associates and

the Dawkins Group that documented Horizon "public relations" activities on behalf of several prominent political figures. The files detailed corruption, scandals, and criminal activities involving leaders and administrators still in positions of authority in Seattle, T'ir Tairngire, the PCC and Sioux, as well as the UCAS and CAS. Still being decrypted are files that seem to be related to Horizon's intelligence gathering apparatus, their clandestine support of Amazonia in the Aztlan-Amazonia War, and what appears to be a high-priority project in the Mojave Desert, the nature of which is unclear.

Because they're concerned that releasing the information themselves will alert Horizon to their whereabouts, the technomancer groups want to hire the runners to leak different parts of the political information to various independent news nets in widely separated locations. The decentralized leak of so much confidential information should make it much more difficult for Horizon to mount a coordinated defense—and the nature of the information ensures Horizon will have to devote major resources to damage control and spin in almost every segment of its market. Horizon's scramble to protect itself and its clients will reduce its ability to actively protect its Matrix; they will rely more heavily on automated systems, systems the technomancers will have a better chance of penetrating. The runners need to decide if they want to take on a mission that involves the mass distribution of data that could get many people killed. Not to mention making enemies out of Horizon, Amazonia, and various political powers across the continent who will in all likelihood seek painful retribution against whoever they think is responsible for exposing their secrets.

PLOT POINT ONE

Side Trip to Phoenix

Airwave Domination Crew leader Signal contacts the runners. After the last attack on the Consensus, her group, No Boundaries Now, and Fury's neo-anarchists had gone to ground to elude Horizon. They'd relocated, changed communication protocols, and acquired new SINS and identities. They were safe for the moment, but Legion was organizing the allies for another assault against Horizon. Before that happened, Signal wanted to rescue the Airwave Domination Crewmembers Horizon had "recruited" and relocated to Phoenix for re-education (see **Friends in the Right Places**, p. 55). She believes the next attack will make Horizon so paranoid they'll ramp their security to a level that will make rescue impossible. Legion is aware of Signal's plan but is not actively involved. Because the captive technomancers have been subjected to Horizon's behavioral modification program for some time, it's likely the three are now loyal to Horizon; that means it will not be a voluntary extraction. The only solid information Signal has on her comrades is their new identities. The three she knew as Ace, Jack, and Tripp now call themselves Amy Cooper, Justin Burke, and Anthony Long; generic names that will make them hard to sort from the general population.

An additional complication for the runners is the possibility Horizon has identified them—or at least suspects them. Traveling openly to the PCC could be too risky. The runners may hire a smuggler. Once in Phoenix the runners do the legwork and find the three technomancers enrolled as students at Arizona



State University and are living in dorms on the Tempe campus. The Horizon subsidiary Singularity has provided them with scholarships and when not in class the three work as interns at Singularity's nearby offices. Extracting unwilling targets on Horizon's own turf is the quickest route to a short career; the runners plan to pick the three up on campus. However while reconnoitering—following the technomancer's patterns and assessing potential attack points—the runners may stumble across two potential complications.

First, each of the technomancers has a roommate with an excellent academic record, including attendance, but who never attend classes. Instead they follow and observe the technomancers from a distance, undetected by the technomancers. The runners should realize these roommates are Horizon handlers who will have to be dealt with before their targets can be extracted. It is unclear, however, whether these are combat-ready defenders ready to intervene or clinical assistants merely observing to assess the success of the re-education treatments.

Second, another runner team has the three technomancers under surveillance. The runners will not know this team was hired by Mitsuhama Computer Technologies to acquire at least one if not all of the technomancers; Horizon had originally "recruited" the three because of their exceptional abilities. MCT is interested both in their abilities and information they may have on the inner workings of Horizon. If the runners do not notice the other team surveilling their targets (they should make an Perception + Intuition Test opposed by the other runners Infiltration + Agility), a member of the opposing runner team will move to intercept them and make their own extraction (one per runner so all interactions are numerically equal). Runners must make a Perception + Intuition Test versus their opponents' Shadowing + Intuition Test. If the NPC gets more successes, s/he will appear harmless and be able to ambush the runner. They will then use a ruse to distract the runner and attempt to dose the runner with Neuro-Stun. If that isn't immediately effective, they will use tasers or other nonlethal device. If there is a scuffle, the technomancer bolts and attempts to stay out of sight.

Once the runners have dealt with both complications, the runners will be free to extract the technomancers. As expected, though, their targets have been brainwashed to the point they believe the runners and the Airwaves Domination Crew to be their enemies, and they will resist or attempt to escape at every opportunity.

When the runners contact Signal for the delivery, she informs them they will need to bring the liberated technomancers to Denver. She says she will meet them in the Pueblo sector. Should the runners balk at having to transport three bound and/or unconscious metahumans over that distance and into such a secure city, Signal offers sufficient nuyen to make it worth their while. She also tells them there are other lucrative jobs available in Denver and that it will be in their best interest to spend some time in the Front Range Free Zone. The runners can transport the technomancers by rail or over the roads; each has its advantages and dangers. Once in Denver, they have no trouble meeting Signal in a safe location in the Pueblo Sector and delivering her three technomancers.

PLOT POINT TWO

Rescuing Fury

The runners will have a few days of down time after delivering the rescued technomancers. This will allow the runners who are not familiar with Denver to learn their way around the city and the rules that govern the local shadows. The runners are then contacted by Angel of Vengeance from the Matrix Warriors for Revolution and Freedom. The runners agree to a virtual meeting. Angel of Vengeance informs the runners Legion has asked her to work with them on a particularly risky extraction. Ever since the AI Fury was captured during the assault on Consensus in mid-February, Legion has been using its extensive resources to discover what Horizon had done with it. They have recently discovered that Singularity has a laboratory concealed in an otherwise abandoned high-rise in the Old Downtown area of the CAS sector. The laboratory, which takes up the thirty-fifth floor of a forty-story building, is self contained, having its own generator, and is dedicated to the study of artificial intelligences. The kind of study that ends with breaking the AIs down to their component programs. There is unspecified evidence that Fury is still intact. Angel of Vengeance believes that Horizon has several other AIs in the facility, many of which may still be intact. The priority for Legion is the rescue of Fury, but the shadowrunners will be paid five thousand additional nuyen for any other AIs they are able to extract. In addition to the Legion mission to save the AIs, Angel of Vengeance will pay a bonus for any administrators the runners bring back. Administrators usually have information on operations and security codes that would be useful in further penetrating Horizon's defenses.

Singularity is known to employ kill switches that scramble all files and frag all nodes in a facility to prevent data theft. The fact that using the kill switch will destroy any AIs in the system is not a consideration. Legion has determined that there are fifteen researchers, six guards, one rigger, and one administrator assigned to the lab; they were unable to determine which holds the kill switch. The runners need to locate the person with the kill switch and neutralize it before attempting to rescue Fury.

No Boundaries Now has become established in Denver and can facilitate the runners crossing from the PCC sector to the CAS sector. They can provide forged SIDs and IDs, along with information about which border checkpoints are most lax and which border guards are open to bribes (typically five hundred to a thousand nuyen each). This is particularly important because loaded as it will be with weapons, the runners' vehicle will probably set off chemsniffers or other detection devices. Once in the CAS sector, the runners will have no difficulty moving about at will.

Most of the buildings in the Old Downtown area are abandoned; some are in ruins. The streets themselves are cracked and broken, and there are few if any streetlights. Buildings surrounding the Singularity laboratory are dark, evidently empty, and appear to have been broken into and vandalized. The high-rise in which the laboratory is hidden is no different. Thermographic vision will detect heat radiating from the building's upper floors. According to Legion intelligence, all nodes, including commlinks, on the thirty-fifth floor have a Signal Rating of 1, which means

anything below the twenty-fifth floor is out of range. This is a security feature to prevent AIs from attempting to escape by node hopping, but it has the added advantage of requiring anyone trying to gain access to do so from well inside the building. There is only one working elevator shaft and two stairwells that connect to the thirty-fifth floor. Legion has determined the Singularity lab does not employ magical security measures, though the rigger has three Ferret RPD-1X wheeled perimeter drones (p. 118, *Arsenal*) continually patrolling the floors within mutual signal range of the lab's commlinks. The patrol pattern is random, but the window between Ferret sweeps of any floor is never more than thirty minutes. The rigger also has three Steel-Lynx combat drones (p. 350, *SR4A*) ready to respond to any threat the Ferrets can't handle.

When the runners are able to get close enough to link with the lab's systems, either from below or from above if they used the more dangerous rooftop route, they must avoid detection from the drones while hacking into the nodes (Device Rating 4) and locating the kill switch. This will take some time. During their search, system activity tells the runners the lab is fully staffed, with all six guards present in addition to the administrator, Nolan Christmann, for whom Angel of Vengeance had offered a considerable bounty. Once the kill switch is found (in the commlink of a supposedly junior researcher named Tory Almen), their hacker has no trouble disabling it.

The shadowrunners discover Fury is intact and two other AIs are viable; three other AIs have been broken into their base components and are no longer sentient. The runners can choose at this point to simply contact the AIs and allow them to node hop to their devices then withdraw quietly. Or they may decide the bounty is worth the risk and grab Christmann for Angel of Vengeance.

When Angel of Vengeance picks up the AIs (and Christmann if the runners have him) she tells the runners that the combined allies of the technomancer- and AI-rights groups are preparing to make a major assault on Horizon in the next few days. She says she understands if the runners feel that continuing to take part in escalating strikes against the megacorp is too risky; becoming a high-priority target for Horizon is deadly dangerous for a small band that doesn't have the resources of the technomancer and AI networks to call on. If the runners want to call it quits, she pays them all they're due, and they can depart with the best wishes and gratitude of all technomancers and AIs. However, she offers fifteen thousand nuyen per runner over and above their standard rates if the runner team supports the technomancers and AIs in this next crucial battle with Horizon.

PLOT POINT THREE

Attacking Singularity

Angel of Vengeance is again the Ms. Johnson. This time the coalition of AI and technomancer forces, which Angel of Vengeance refers to collectively as the Movement, will be striking at Horizon through the Singularity's central offices in Denver. They have reason to believe this is a major node in their Matrix and that Consensus will be particularly vulnerable to an attack using this route. Unfortunately, recent events—particularly the runners' successful raid on the secret research lab—has tipped Horizon to their location and probable intent. They expect Singularity

to counter any attempted incursion fiercely and, based on what Fury and the other AIs observed while being experimented on, they have reason to fear Singularity's countermeasures to be catastrophically effective. If the runners question why the attack needs to happen now and not weeks from now when Singularity's security will be less alert, Angel of Vengeance is initially unwilling to explain, perhaps quoting Movement rhetoric, but she eventually decides the runners deserve the truth. The fear of Singularity's countermeasures is so great there's been a fracture within the Movement between those who believed that now, before Horizon could implement these countermeasures throughout its Matrix, might be their last chance for success and those who feared the time for frontal assaults had passed and advocated a return to decentralization and small-scale guerilla actions. The strike-now faction had persuaded the rest to make this final thrust before going back underground, but only if the runners are willing to do their part.

The runners' part is to physically assault Singularity even as the technomancers and AIs are making their virtual assault on the Consensus. Sabotage nodes, disrupt power, jam communications, incapacitate Horizon hackers and technomancers—anything that could hinder or confuse Consensus' defenders (short of permanently injuring technomancers; the Movement is adamant that even those serving Horizon must not be harmed). The plan is for the runners' attacks to distract and divide Singularity, slowing their responses, forcing errors, and creating vulnerabilities the Movement's agents could exploit. The runners need to either significantly cripple Singularity at the outset or make a series of smaller attacks last as long as possible; this attempt to break into the Consensus requires several hours. The runners have three days in which to plan and prepare for the battle. Angel of Vengeance will do everything she can to provide the runners with the latest data on the building and physical defenses, but they cannot be sure Horizon is not making last-minute changes even as they are marshalling their forces.

Singularity's main office, and the center of its defenses, is located on floors twenty through thirty-eight of the Truman Tech Tower, a modern eighty-story building owned by Pathfinder Media. Pathfinder Media acquired the building in a hostile takeover of Truman Communications, and while they are not working with Singularity, they have their own security in place protecting their own assets. There is no upside in engaging Pathfinder's defenses; these must be circumvented without triggering a response. (Pathfinder employs bio-drones in its security; these may provide an opportunity to create a diversion and gain the runners additional time.)

During their surveillance in and around the Truman Tech Tower, the runners spot Mira Castillo, head of Horizon Americas, accompanied by six bodyguards. She is a high-value target for two reasons: she would be a prize the Movement would pay handsomely for, and her extraction would certainly pull Singularity security's attention away from the virtual assault. However, trying to extract someone so vital to Horizon could cause security to take extreme measures, greatly reducing the runners' chances of getting out of the building alive. The shadowrunners need to assess their capabilities and the risks to determine whether extracting Castillo or ignoring her is the wiser course. In any case, the runners should be able to achieve their



INCOMING FEED.....



THE HEART OF THE HEAD.....

objective, inflict enough damage on Singularity to cripple their defenses or throw them into disarray and prepare to withdraw.

Which is when their real problems begin. Singularity has hired a specialist to deal with the runners that have been causing problems at Arizona State and their secret laboratory: Clockwork. He was late to the party—the attack occurred sooner than anticipated—but now he is on the scene and he's determined to solve the runner problem once and for all. Clockwork has brought a runner team that includes a street samurai and a sniper, and they have been ordered to kill the runners. He himself will pilot four combat drones (two ground and two aerial) from a safe location. Clockwork believes in fighting another day and withdraws if the danger becomes too acute. As Clockwork's forces engage the runners, Horizon security will be closing in from behind. This encounter will be very tense, the most dangerous of the runner teams career. There is a high probability of casualties.

When the runners make it to the arranged meeting place, Angel of Vengeance tells them their efforts made it possible for the Movement's forces to penetrate three more layers of the defenses surrounding Consensus. That means the technomancer and AI groups now have back doors through seven Horizon firewalls, with an estimated three more to go. What's more, because the runners' attacks forced Singularity to deploy its cyber defense in disorganized stages, technomancers and AIs were able to study its structure and believe it can be beaten. Unfortunately Legion, No Boundaries Now, Airwave Domination Crew and other groups that took part in the assault suffered significant losses. For the time being the coalition is dissolving into its component parts to give each group time to recover and rebuild. Despite that, all involved agree the attack was a success, and they're happy to reward the runners for their involvement.

PLOT POINT FOUR

Political Secrets Spilled

The runners did not expect to hear from anyone involved with the assault on Horizon for weeks if not months and are surprised when an excited Angel of Vengeance contacts them in less than twenty-four hours.

In the course of their attack, they'd grabbed as many data packets as they could, intending to decrypt them later for any useful information about Horizon's security structure or damaging information about their activities. To their surprise some of the packets were apparently still being processed and were only lightly encrypted. They were records from both Charisma Associates and the Dawkins Group documenting Horizon's activities on behalf of several prominent political figures. The files detailed corruption, scandals, and criminal activities involving leaders and administrators still in positions of authority in Seattle, T'ir Tairngire, the PCC, and the Sioux Nation, as well as the UCAS and CAS. The information documents Horizon personnel committing bribery, perjury, forgery, extortion, kidnapping, and murder in the course of forwarding the corporate agenda and supporting their allies. Still being decrypted are files that seem to be related to Horizon's intelligence-gathering apparatus, their disinformation and dirty trick campaigns to destroy public confidence in Aztechnology, their clandestine support of

Amazonia in the Aztlan-Amazonia War, and what appears to be a high-priority project in the Mojave Desert, the nature of which is unclear.

The political files are particularly inflammatory and very damaging both to Horizon's public image and possibly to its bottom line. Legion and the other groups want the files made public, but because of their high casualties and the fact Horizon is actively hunting them, they are not in a position to act. They would like the runners to make sure the information gets spread as widely as possible, particularly in areas where it will do the most good. Not just data havens like ShadowSea, but independent news sources—particularly those with reputations for aggressively pursuing stories. In addition to Legion's payment for their time and efforts, the runners will be able to keep any money they earn selling the information.

If the runners decide to take the mission, which is outside their usual experience, they can look into contacting independent news organizations such as KSAF Inc., the Native American Broadcast Service, and the Independent Information Network to sell the information. Paydata relating to treaty negotiations or any other juicy Denver-related data can be sold to local news outlets like the Free Zone Voice or KMAG. Selling only to small outlets in as many locations as possible could be safer in terms of staying under the radar, and it also may be more lucrative as small players bid high for exclusive stories the big corps can't get. It is also effective in getting the information to the public in ways Horizon can't anticipate or head off. On the other hand it would be time consuming, and the risk of discovery would be greater with each market they approached. Releasing information on ShadowSea as suggested by Angel of Vengeance would also meet the technomancer's criteria, although doing so would not bring in any more nuyen. Also it is practically certain that some of the information might lead to people being killed—either in retribution or to cover up other crimes. Some of the runners might question whether they want to be responsible for those deaths. If the runners participated in the events of **All-Seeing Eye** (p. 119, *Artifacts Unbound*), they have the means to contact at least two JackPointers who may be of use: Pistons and Kay St. Irregular (p. 140). Given that Kay St. is a political junkie with lots of connections within the UCAS, he is likely to be familiar with many media outlets and know who in the industry can be trusted. Approaching Kay St. Irregular with this information might be a smart move on the part of the runners—subcontracting to a specialist as it were.

If the runners contact Kay St. Irregular and he believes enough of what they say to be interested, he suggests a meet. Since Kay St. Irregular is based in Denver, an in-person meet can be easily arranged. If Kay St. Irregular reviews the files, he is amazed and disconcerted by their depth and scope, a reaction he likely tries to hide from the runners. It is possible the files contain some information about his activities in DeeCee. He warns the runners that these files could make them a lot of powerful political enemies with widespread connections. Approaching the wrong news source could get them in more trouble than they're equipped to handle. Kay St. Irregular offers to use his contacts to distribute the information safely—and earn the runners some nuyen in the process—on three conditions. First, any files pertaining to Kay St. Irregular are turned over to him; no copies will be made and

none of the information is for sale. Second, he gets exclusive rights to and physical possession of any files related to the Denver area. He will pay for those files and the rights. Third, he gets a twenty percent commission on all sales of the information. He will promise to do everything in his power to obfuscate the source of the files, but he cannot offer a one-hundred-percent guarantee the runners will get no blowback whatsoever.

At the end of the day, the runners—whether through their own efforts or working through Kay St. Irregular—are likely to make a tidy profit selling the information for Legion and the other technomancer and AI groups. Hopefully enough to let them take the all the time they need to rest up before the technomancers or AIs call on them again.

LOCATIONS

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Arizona State University is funded by the Pueblo Corporate Council despite the efforts of megacorporations—primarily Horizon—to make the university system their own. ASU/Phoenix is extensive, spread over four campuses scattered throughout the sprawl. The three technomancers live and attend classes on the Tempe campus. With nearly 70,000 students, this is the largest campus in the ASU system. The Singularity office in Phoenix is near the Tempe campus.

TRUMAN TECH TOWER

Pathfinder Multimedia acquired the Truman Tech Tower, located in the PCC sector of the Front Range Free Zone, as part of hostile takeover of the Truman Distribution Network; a subsidiary of Ares. The Truman Tech Tower is eighty stories tall. Singularity has only recently established an office in the building, taking up nineteen floors from the twentieth through the thirty-eighth. It will be necessary to have Pathfinder identification and clearances to reach the Singularity floors. Because of the recent attacks on Horizon facilities by the technomancer and AI rights groups—including Singularity's clandestine laboratory in Old Downtown—Singularity's security has been increased and all security personnel are on high alert. Most nodes in the building are Rating 6, while those handling sensitive information are Rating 8. For reasons unknown Mira Castillo, head of Horizon Americas, has become a familiar visitor to the Truman Tech Tower in recent weeks.

PEOPLE

CLOCKWORK

Clockwork is a JackPointer who has become infamous for his tirades against technomancers. He currently has a strong dislike for another JackPointer, Netcat. In his professional life, Clockwork is a rigger for hire. In this case, Clockwork is working for Horizon to deal with the runners that are working for the technomancer movement and are currently creating diversions for them as they attack the Consensus. Clockwork is often as methodical as he is vicious in his jobs.

Clockwork is known for customizing his vehicles and his drones. When attacking the player characters, Clockwork uses



two modified Wuxing Crimson Samurai combat drones (for ground attack) and two MCT-Nissan Hellcats (for air attack).

Male Hobgoblin

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	5	4(6)	5	3	5	5	4	5	3.95	8(10)	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/10

Armor (B/I): 12/7

Abilities: Fangs, Low-Light Vision, Poor Self Control: Vindictive
Skills: Aeronautics Mechanic 3, Armorer 6 Artisan 3, Athletics skill group 2, Automatics (SMGs) 5 (+2), Automotive Mechanic (Wheeled) 5 (+2), Blades 3, Chemistry 2, Cybertechnology 4, Demolitions 4, Disguise 2, Dodge (Ranged) 5 (+2), Electronics skill group 4, Electronic Warfare 4, First Aid 4, Gunnery 4, Hacking 2, Longarms 3, Perception 5, Pilot Aircraft 5, Pilot Ground Craft 5, Pistols 6, Shadowing 6

Qualities: Juryrigger, Prejudiced (technomancers, actively prejudiced)

Augmentations: Commlink [implanted, Device Rating 5, w/ sim module modified for hot sim], control rig, control rig booster 3, 2 datajacks, encephalon 2 (deltaware), reaction enhancers 2

Gear: Armored jacket, form-fitting body armor (half suit, 4/1),

Programs: Biofeedback Filter 7, Command 5, ECCM 6, Encrypt 4, Exploit 4, Stealth 5

Modified Wuxing Crimson Samurai

Handl	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Armor	Sensor
+1	15/30	100	3	4	22	3

Upgrades: Nanomaintenance System Rating 4, Normal Armor 12, Smart Armor 10, Weapon Mount (external, remote-controlled turret)

Autosoftware: Adaptability 3, Clearsight 4, Covert Ops 4, Maneuver 3, Targeting (Heavy Weapons) 4

Weapon:

Ingram White Knight [LMG, DV 6P, AP -5, BF/FA, RC 5(6), 50 (c), w/ APDS rounds]

MODIFIED MCT HELLCAT

Handl	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Armor	Sensor
+2	40/200	800	3	4	22	3

Upgrades: Ammo Bin, Normal Armor 12, Smart Armor 10, Weapon Mount (external, remote-controlled turret)

Autosoftware: Adaptability 3, Clearsight 4, Covert Ops 4, Maneuver 3, Targeting (Heavy Weapons) 4

Weapon:

2 x GE Vindicator Minigun [LMG, DV 6P, AP -5/--7 against vehicles, BF/FA, RC —, 60 (c), w/ AV rounds]

HORIZON SPY

Professional Rating 4

Elf

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 6/4

Skills: Athletics skill group 3, Computer 5, Cracking skill group 4, Data Search 3, Disguise 3, Dodge 3, Perception (Visual) 6 (+2), Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pistols 3, Shadowing (Tailing) 5 (+2), Unarmed Combat 3

Gear: Armor vest, Commlink [Device Rating 6, w/ sim module modified for hot sim]

Programs: Analyze 6, Edit 6, Exploit 5, Sniffer 5, Stealth 4

Weapons:

Beretta 101T [Light Pistol, DV 4P, AP —, SA, RC —, 12 (c)]

EXTRACTION TEAM MEMBER

Professional Rating 3

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
4	5	4(5)	5	3	4	4	4	3.2	8(9)	1(2)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 6/2

Skills: Automatics 3, Blades 3, Computer 3, Disguise 3, Dodge 3, Exotic Melee Weapon (Monofilament Garrote) 3, First Aid 4, Infiltration (Urban) 4 (+2), Longarms 3, Palming 3, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pistols (Tasers) 5 (+2), Running 4, Shadowing (Tailing) 4 (+2), Unarmed Combat 5

Augmentations: Print removal (phenotype adjustment), synthacardium 2, tracheal filter 6, wired reflexes 1

Gear: Commlink (Device Rating 4), disposable commlink (w/ stun gas deployment accessory), contact lenses [Rating 3, w/ flare compensation, low-light vision, smartlink], form-fitting body armor (full suit)

Weapons:

Cavalier SafeGuard [Taser, DV 5S(c), AP -half, SA, RC —, 6(m), w/ top-mounted laser sight]

Ceramic Knife [Blades, Reach —, DV 4P, AP —]

HK Urban Fighter [Heavy Pistol, DV 6S(e), AP -half, SA, RC —, 10(c), w/ ceramic silencer, internal smartgun system, stick 'n' shock rounds]

THE HEART OF THE HEAD



SINGULARITY GUARD (SECRET LAB)

Professional Rating 4

Elf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
4	6	6(9)	4	3	3	3	5	3.7	9(12)	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 8/7

Skills: Automatics 4, Dodge 5, Clubs 3, First Aid 2, Infiltration 3, Longarms 4, Perception 4, Pistols 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Augmentations: Cybereyes [Rating 3, w/ eye recording unit, flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink], dermal sheath 2, reaction enhancers 3

Gear: Chameleon suit, commlink (Device Rating 4)

Weapons:

Colt Government 2066 [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC 1, 14 (c)]

Ingram Warrior 10 [SMG, DV 5P, AP —, SA/BF, RC —, 30 (c), w/ internal smartgun system]

Tonfa [Clubs, Reach 1, DV 3P, AP —]

SINGULARITY RIGGER (SECRET LAB)

Professional Rating 4

Ork

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
5	4	5	7	3	5	5	6	5.6	10	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Armorer 2, Automotive Mechanic 3, Computer 4, Electronic Warfare 4, Hardware 4, Perception 3, Pilot Ground Craft 5

Augmentations: Control rig (alphaware), datajack

Gear: Armored jacket, 3 x Ferret RPD-1X wheeled perimeter drones, 3 x Steel Lynx combat drones

Programs: Biofeedback Filter 4, ECCM 5, Exploit 3, Stealth 3

Weapons:

(On Steel Lynx drones) Colt M23 [Assault Rifle, DV 7P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 1, 40 (c), w/ explosive rounds]

MIRA CASTILLO PERSONAL BODYGUARDS

Professional Rating 4

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
6	5(7)	3(9)	6(8)	3	5	5	5	1.45	8(14)	1(4)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 13/12

Skills: Automatics (SMGs) 5 (+2), Blades (Knives) 4 (+2), Dodge 4 (+3), Leadership 4, Perception 5, Pistols 6, Stealth skill group 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Qualities: Martial Arts (10 BP, Tae Kwon Do)

Manuevers: Break Weapon, Disarm, Finishing Move, Vicious Blow

Augmentations (all deltaware): Cybereyes [Rating 4, w/ eye recording unit, flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 3], dermal sheath 3, move by wire 3, muscle replacement 2

Gear: Full body armor (10/8)

Advantages: +1 DV on Unarmed Combat attacks, +1 on attacks on knockdown

Weapons:

Ceramic Knife [Blades, Reach —, DV 5P, AP —]

Colt Cobra TZ-118 [SMG, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC (1), 32 (c), w/ internal smartgun system, folding stock, EX-explosive rounds]

Savalette Guardian [DV 5P, AP -5, SA/BF, RC 1, 12 (c), w/ internal smartgun system, APDS rounds]





Incoming Message

/Initiate private chat

/User entered: Man-of-Many-Names

/User entered: Haze

HAZE: Okay, I'm here.

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: Good. Thank you for coming.

HAZE: Now just so I know what to expect, this whole conversation isn't going to be you spouting of enigmatic bullshit, is it?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: I have normal conversations, just like anyone else. On JackPoint, I just happen to choose my words carefully and speak only when I have something important to share. A practice from which others could learn, perhaps.

HAZE: Nice.

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: I have one simple thing to tell you: You have to go to the desert.

HAZE: Which one?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: The Mojave. There is pain in the Mojave.

HAZE: Of course there is. It was almost thirty degrees out there today, probably. Merciless sun.

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: Heat has nothing to do with it.

HAZE: Okay. So what are we talking about?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: There are spirits. Spirits in great pain.

HAZE: In the Mojave?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: Yes.

HAZE: Where are you right now?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: That's not relevant.

HAZE: It kind of is. How do you know what's happening in the Mojave if you're not there?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: How do you know you have feet when you are not looking at them? You do not have to stare at your feet all the time to be aware they are there, and to know when they are hurt. You simply feel them.

HAZE: Right. So, this is what passes for a normal conversation for you, is it?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: I can feel their pain, but I cannot go to them. I can't find out what's causing the pain. Someone else needs to go.

HAZE: And you picked me. I feel so lucky.

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: I did not pick you. I only happen to be the one talking to you.

HAZE: Would it do me any good to ask you *did* pick me?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: There is often a benefit to asking questions, even the ones that aren't answered.

HAZE: Son of a *bitch*.

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: You want me to be more direct. I'll be more direct. There are spirits in the Mojave who are suffering, and they know you, and they are calling to you through me. You can heed the call, or you can ignore it. Your future will reflect what you choose.

HAZE: I don't suppose you or anyone else will be paying me for any of this, will you?

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: Your payment will come in the rewards you

/User logged off: Haze

MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES: earn for yourself. And I'm now talking to myself.

/User logged off: Man-of-Many-Names



OVERVIEW

Horizon has deeply internalized its conception of itself as the “good” megacorporation, to the point where it is a common belief among employees that if there is power in the world to be had, it is best if it is in their hands, for they are the ones most likely to use it well. They’ve applied that strategy with technomancers, working to gather skilled individuals into their corporation while also keeping other corporations from wanting them. Now they’re applying the same idea to spirits.

The Mojave Desert is the home to some powerful spirits, and it also happens to be in an area where Horizon has considerable power and influence. They’ve been doing some covert research in the desert for a long time, and they haven’t always been gentle to the spirits they enlist in their work. One of the main areas they’ve been working on is finding a way to get spirits to suffer a fate worse than disruption, and they’ve made some progress in that direction by developing new ways to torture spirits on the material plane while preventing them from dematerializing.

The spirits, quite naturally, are not pleased with this development, and they want to fight back. The nature of their retaliation is unclear, but the fact that they are plotting something is clear to anyone with decent contacts in the spirit realms. Some of those people are quite interested in learning what the spirits are planning before it gets out of control.

Mr. Johnson for this mission is a JackPointer named Haze. Haze isn’t kind and isn’t especially moral, but he knows how to work with a team and he isn’t looking to double-cross anyone—this mission will take him into the desert surrounded by potentially hostile spirits, and he doesn’t want any other complications messing things up.

Haze tells them that he needs them for a reconnaissance mission. They need to go into the Mojave and investigate claims of odd spirit activity. He doesn’t have much more information than that, and he becomes surly if he is pushed for more details.

Once the runners travel to the Mojave, the danger of the mission becomes readily apparent as they are attacked by a group of feral spirits. Haze assumes this means they are on the right track, but then the runners wander about for two days and don’t find anything. Looking for guidance, Haze asks for some protection while he summons a spirit. The spirit directs him to the Ubehebe Crater in Death Valley.

At the crater, the runners encounter a significant gathering of spirits, with more arriving by the minute. The spirits are not exceptionally welcoming of the runners, which means they’ll have to do some fast talking and bargaining if they want to get out unscathed with some of the information they were supposed to collect.

PLOT POINT ONE

This mission begins when the runners are put into contact with a magic-using Mr. Johnson whose street name is Haze. The runners may be referred to Haze by another JackPointer, or Haze may have heard of them because of their reputation. If the runners are referred by a JackPointer, that individual may provide a warning about Haze’s character but say they can probably trust him until they’re done with whatever he is hiring them to do.

If the runners are within 500 kilometers or so of the Mojave, Haze travels to them for a meet; if they’re not, he astrally projects to meet with them. In the latter case, payment for travel to the Mojave is added to the payment for the mission.

Whether he appears physically or astrally, Haze is an elf with spiky blond hair and a seemingly permanent snarl. He dispenses with small talk and gets right to business—he needs to investigate some stories of spirit activity in the Mojave, and he doesn’t want to have to wander in the desert alone. He offers them 5,000 nuyen apiece for the job, along with a 10,000 nuyen equipment alliance for the entire group. He’ll provide ground travel to the desert, and air travel to a city near the desert (such as Los Angeles or Las Vegas) if the runners need it.

The runners will need some way to carry water with them in the desert, and they may also need protection from the heat. In for six months a year (May–October, especially the summer months) the Mojave can get perilously hot, especially at lower altitudes in the daytime. Then, at night, temperatures drop, sometimes below freezing in cooler months. Death Valley, where the run ends, is one of these lower areas and tends to be the hottest part of the area. The other six months the temperature is more bearable.

Haze is vague about the exact nature of the job. He says he knows nothing about what’s going on there—he’s just been told that there’s trouble, and he’s been asked to look into it. Beyond that, he knows nothing, and he quickly becomes irritated at persistent questioning or suggestions that he is holding something back. When the runners are ready to leave, he loads them into a rather beat-up Toyota Gopher (p. 348, *SR4A*), that’s had its flatbed modified with a roof and passenger seating. It won’t be the most comfortable ride, but it’ll get them where they need to be.

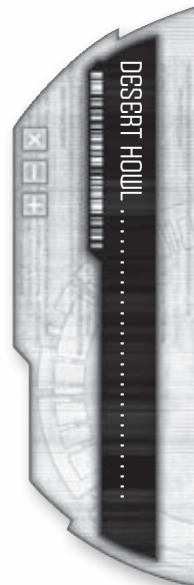
PLOT POINT TWO

The beginning of the mission goes pleasantly enough. The temperature is mild, the sand and dirt under the Gopher is smooth, and no one is shooting anything at the runners. The only trouble is that they’re not finding anything.

For the most part, Haze is focusing his efforts around the southern section of the Mojave, especially around the area known as the Devil’s Playground. For a while the runners see nothing beyond baked earth and scrub brush, but in the evening they are treated to a beautiful sunset.

That’s when the feral spirits arrive.

A group of five spirits (use **Feral Spirits**, p. 80) charges out of the west and smashes into Haze’s truck. They are not trying to be sneaky—they materialize about a kilometer away from the truck and can be noticed by a Perception + Intuition (2) Test (seeing them on the astral plane doesn’t require a test, as they are making no effort to hide and they do not have auras of other living things around them to interfere). The spirits’ initial goal is to batter and intimidate the runners, though not kill them. Ideally, they would like to see the group resting their wounds in a battered truck that can barely limp its way out of the desert. If a few of the spirits are disrupted or banished, the others retreat; they were counting on this to be a quick-hit kind of thing, not a pitched battle.



As long as Haze remains alive, he views the attack as an encouraging result—the spirits wouldn't try to attack, he reasons, unless the runners were on to something.

Since the spirits that attacked are feral spirits, they do not have a link back to a summoner that the runners could attempt to track. If individual feral spirits flee, the runners may attempt to follow them. If this is the case, the spirit stands and fights until either it is disrupted or it overcomes its pursuer. It does not lead the runners back to any other spirits.

PLOT POINT THREE

Despite Haze's optimism that the attack must mean the runners are on to something, the next two days brings nothing but wandering around the desert. At the end of the second day, Haze is frustrated, and he decides to take action. He has a free spirit contact named Itzli that was disrupted two weeks ago. He knows Itzli has hung around the spirits of the Mojave for a while, and he might have some information that could help. All he has to do is find him.

Note that runners with knowledge of the area may suggest going to Ubehebe Crater, as it's known to be a hotbed of spirit activity. Haze resists, saying that there has to be a better way. He says they just have to be patient.

Haze forbids any runners from joining him on the astral plane. This is his job, and he will do it his way. If a runner attempts to follow him, use the Astral Tracking rules (p. 193, *SR4A*). If Haze notices the trail, he returns to his body immediately and drives the runners home. He gives them 1,000 nuyen apiece for their troubles and then sends them on their way while he looks for runners who are more pliable.

If the runners follow Haze's instructions, they are left to watch his motionless body overnight in the desert. Spirits leave them alone, but there are desert creatures that come out at night that the runners have to deal with. Any runners outside the truck are attacked by a pair of eyekillers (p. 112, *Running Wild*).

Later in the night, the runners hear a series of ear-piercing screams. It's tough to tell where they come from, but they are the types of sounds someone would make if they were very slowly being ripped apart. Following the sound is not easy, as it seems to be coming from every direction. Have the runners make a Perception + Intuition (12, 1 minute) Extended Test to follow the sound and locate its source. Astrally perceiving characters have no trouble locating the source of the noise, as it stands out from the blackness of the dead desert.

The source of noise is a spirit that is screaming in great pain. It takes the shape of a Native American shaman. Along with its own aura, it has astral signatures of three spells on it; the spells seem to be anchored in a nearby rock. One of the spells is a Control Actions spell (Force 7) that prevents the spirit from dematerializing; the second is a Spirit Barrier (Force 6) keeping the spirit confined in a small area; the third is a modified version of a Spirit Zapper spell that is small but includes movement. The Zapper is slowly creeping up the spirit's form; it is only Force 2, but the spirit cannot avoid it, and so it is constantly inflicting pain on it.

The runners can try to break the spells; if they do, the spirit is free. It's been tortured for a long time (it was just recently dropped



off in the desert; tracks of the truck that dropped it off have been erased), and it is mentally shattered. The spirit whimpers in place for a time after it has been freed and does not answer any questions. Then it dematerializes.

When any runners that investigated this situation return to the truck, it comes under assault from eight gamma spiders (p. 166, *Running Wild*) who want the runners out of their territory.

Once the runners fend off those threats, the eastern sky starts to brighten, and Haze returns to his body. He's full of energy—thanks to Itzli, he knows what to do. He's not happy about it, though. He says they need to head to the Ubehebe Crater up in Death Valley, and he's ready to leave now. The runners may ask him about his change of heart on the matter; he just says his contact managed to be quite persuasive. The drive will take three to four hours, so the runners will have at least a little time to rest if they need it.

PLOT POINT FOUR

The runners arrive at Ubehebe Crater (see **Locations**) as the day is beginning to get warm. It looks fairly empty, but in truth the area is full of spirits, as any astrally perceiving runners will easily be able to see. As they get closer to the crater, spirits approach the truck and start circling it. Some of them start materializing so that even not-Awakened individuals will know that they are there. They do not attack, cast any spells, or even do anything to impede the van's movement. It seems that their main purpose, for the moment, is to make the runners aware of their presence.

As the runners draw closer to the crater, there is an eruption in the ground—far enough ahead of them that they are not in danger of hitting it—and a massive spirit emerges. This spirit initially appears to be a tower of swirling air, but in time it resolves itself into a large, human-like form that is transparent and has fiery red eyes. It stands, waiting, with its arms folded across its chest.

Once this spirit appears, the others become a little firmer in their purpose. Earth spirits dig up furrows of ground on either side of the truck, and air spirits line up to blow back anyone who does anything but approach the spirit. If the truck comes to a stop but the runners stay inside, the air spirits start buffeting the side of the truck, rocking it back and forth. These spirits do not communicate in any way with the runners.

The large spirit is simply waiting for the runners to get out of the car. Once they do, it explains itself clearly and directly. It says its name is Baelosh, and that they are intruding on land it has claimed for its own. As far as it is concerned, it can do whatever it wants to.

Then it says it recognizes Haze. It is because he is a friend to some spirits that he has been allowed to approach. However, the spirit also says that Haze is “a person who has swallowed too much blood of the earth,” which is a reference to Haze's previous tempo addiction, and therefore he refuses to address him directly. If the runners want to treat with the spirit, they have to do it through anyone but Haze.

While Baelosh does not want to attack the runners, it also does not want them to go off telling people about the gathering they have seen. It would be perfectly happy to contain them for a month or two until their plans have come to fruition. Clearly, the runners don't want to be confined for that long, so they need to come up with some way to appease the spirit.

If they freed the tortured spirit from Plot Point Three, telling Baelosh about it might earn his trust. He needs to verify the fact—he sends some of the spirits with him to the astral plane to check on that spirit—but once he is convinced that the runners indeed helped the spirit, he begins to believe that they at least are not working against him. He is then willing to give the runners the message described at the end of the chapter.

Another way to earn some of Baelosh's trust is simply to spend time in his captivity. While Baelosh does not engage in idle talk with the runners, other spirits in the area are more willing to talk. They are mainly fire, air, and earth spirits; water and man spirits are present but rare. They are all free spirits, ranging from those that have been free for decades to those who just barely gained their independence. They range from Force 2 to Force 5, for the most part. There is a lot of anger in their voices as they talk about mages that have been summoning spirits in the desert only to inflict terrible pain on them. They seem to be trying to break spirits' will, possibly to make them mindless slaves who will provide virtually unlimited services (though at significant diminished mental capacity, of course). Some spirits also say they believe these mages are draining the energy and essence of spirits for their use.

If the runners either bribe one of the friendlier spirits with two Karma or persuade it to help them using a Con + Charisma Opposed Test, they can get a little extra piece of information off them: in one of the recent attacks by these people preying on Mojave spirits, the spirits presented an organized resistance and managed to chase off the attackers. The body of one of them is currently baking in the desert sun.

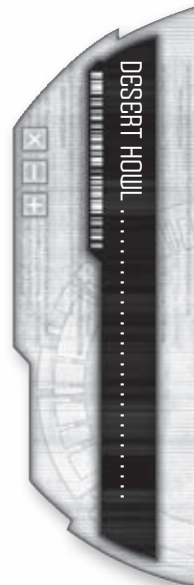
The spirit can lead the runners to this corpse. There is no identifying information on the body and the man carries no commlink, but he has fingers. The runners could get a fingerprint (or a finger) and compare it to existing databases. A Data Search + Browse (16, 1 minute) Test produces the information that the fingerprint belongs to Stephen Amwa, a mage connected to Horizon (for this test, use the rule that says the dice pool is reduced by one for each roll on the Extended Test; p. 64, *SR4A*).

Whether the runners discover the identity of the body in the desert or not, the fact that they earned the trust of one of his spirits tells Baelosh that perhaps they can be trusted.

He tells them he has a message for the Many-Named Man. They know he wants to know what is happening in the desert. They can tell him that Baelosh is working to ensure the sun will set.

Baelosh also has a message for Haze—he tells him he has taken a step toward redemption, and Baelosh hopes he will continue proving himself a friend of the spirits. He has justified their faith in calling on him.

While none of this may have much meaning to the runners, Haze understands that the first part is a message for Man-of-Many-Names, who sent him on this mission on the first place. And while the message is not specific, runners might understand that when the sun sets, the horizon goes dark.



LOCATIONS

UBEHEBE CRATER

Located in the northern part of Death Valley, Ubehebe Crater is half a kilometer wide and more than 150 meters deep. It is walled with red and black rock and almost entirely devoid of life except for a little scrub at the bottom of the pit and assorted scorpions and snakes that live in the rocks.

Ubehebe has long been a gathering place for spirits, and they denizens of the area are renowned for their hostility to living beings. It has a background count of 5 aspected toward Chaos Magic. This means that the vast majority of the spirits who gather there are part of that tradition, which gives the area a distinctly wild feel, especially for those who are attuned to the astral plane.

Stories of the crater talk about an “old man” who lives there, and most people believe this individual is a spirit. That individual is not seen in the course of this mission; instead, Baelosh, the powerful spirit of air who confronts the runners when they arrive, seems to hold sway. Whether Baelosh takes the form of the old man in quieter times or whether the old man is another spirit who has departed during these tense times is an open question.

PEOPLE

BAELOSH

Metahumanity looks at the world and tends to see a domain that is suited to them, one that has everything they need to support them. This often leads them to believe they are masters of the world, that it is theirs for the shaping. Spirits like Baelosh, by contrast, see metahumanity as a blight on the manasphere, as creatures that interrupt the natural flow of a perfect, self-sustaining world and warp it to their own selfish ends. While Baelosh might not quite be ready to say the planet would be better off without any metahumans on it at all, he has a number of spirit friends who think this way. There has always been a number of such spirits at Baelosh's base of Ubehebe Crater, but in recent times more and more are flocking to him. He is working on a way to harness their power in a way that will deal a heavy blow to his enemies.

Great form free spirit of air

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
4	9	10	3	7	6	8	6	6	6	8	15	2

Skills: Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Counterspelling 5, Dodge 6, Exotic Ranged Weapon 6, Flight 6, Intimidation 5, Leadership 4, Perception 6, Ritual Spellcasting 6, Spellcasting 6, Unarmed Combat 6

Qualities: Magician (Chaos Magic)

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Aura Masking, Banishing Resistance, Centering, Concealment, Confusion, Elemental Attack, Energy Aura, Engulf, Fear, Guard, Materialization, Movement, Psychokinesis, Quickening, Sapience, Search, Storm

Spells: Chaotic World, Clout, Control Actions, Detect Life, Fling, Mana Barrier, Manabolt, Mass Agony, Powerbolt

FERAL SPIRITS

Spirit of beasts

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
6	5	6	6	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	10	2

Skills: Assensing 4, Astral Combat 4, Dodge 4, Perception 5, Spellcasting 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Qualities: Magician (Chaos Magic)

Powers: Animal Control, Astral Form, Centering, Concealment, Confusion, Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell), Fear, Materialization, Movement, Mutable Form, Sapience

Spells: Agony, Animal Sense, Clout, Mana Static, Slay (Human), Slay (Ork), Stunball



Incoming Message

Posted by: Plan 9

There has been a growing interest in activities in and near Las Vegas lately, and that means people are paying more attention than usual to the event known as Metahumanity Ablaze! Since I've attended a few of these things, FastJack asked me to over the basics.

Metahumanity Ablaze! is a word-of-mouth event held out in the Mojave desert at the Racetrack Playa, a broad dry lake bed just over 300 kilometers from Las Vegas. Anarchists, hippies, tree huggers, and eccentrics come out of their hidey holes to present, sell, and barter goods both legal and illegal, rant and rave about some conspiracy or prophesy, and party and drink like it's the end of the Sixth World. The weeklong party ends with the burning of a huge corporate effigy. There are no invites, no curfews, no Matrix, and no background checks. Just organized chaos.

- Sounds like something right up your alley Plan 9. Got your official aluminum hat?
- Slamm-O!
- Screw that! This sounds like my kind of party—liquor, hedonism, and plenty of heat.
- Kane

The gathering can be quite interesting, to say the least, but it also can be a little much. The escape from the Matrix can be relaxing, but there are a lot of really fringe ideas, even from my perspective. There are some exciting thinkers, people who can explain to you ways of looking at reality that you've never thought of, but there are also people who think humanity has never sent anyone into space and people who think there is no such thing as natural metahuman birth, only an ongoing series of massive genetic engineering experiments (what we believe

is pregnancy is, according to them, the infestation of a ... oh, never mind).

The gathering also hosts every type of artistic experimentation you can think of. New forms of storytelling, music, visual arts, cooking, and things that have not be named yet can be found in the tent city that makes up the festival. Many of these offerings are amateurish and pretentious, but a few are more than worth the trip out into the desert. For runners, though, that's generally not enough justification for a visit. If there's not work to be done, we're not there. But there have been some recent developments making the festival a little more appealing for a visit.

There have been several rumors of increased spirit activity in the Mojave, with a lot of activity centered on the Ubehebe crater, which is in the northern part of Death Valley. For a while most metahumans have been avoiding the crater—the spirits have not exactly been welcoming. It seems, though, that they've taken a different approach with Metahumanity Ablaze! While the main event is still down at the Racetrack, a sub-festival is taking place on the rim of the crater.

- Why? What interest do spirits have in an arts festival?
- Rigger X
- There's a disproportionate amount of Awakened individuals in attendance at the festival. And as Plan 9 pointed out, they're the kind of people open to experimentation and new ways of thinking. The spirits might have something to show them—or something to learn from them.
- Man-of-Many-Names

I haven't been able to find out what's happening at the crater. It's too remote, and without Matrix access the participants aren't jumping online every few minutes to provide updates. It

Incoming Message

seems like it might be worth a trip for the curious—as long as you didn't advertise any corporate connections. Both the spirits and the general attendees of the festival don't have a lot of liking for The Man.

- The PCC is trying to get a little more control over the area, and they've established some checkpoints to try to monitor who is going to the festival. It's a futile effort, though. Off-roading is too easy in that area, and the PCC hasn't even tried to cover approaches by air. Almost every attendee is avoiding the checkpoints on principle, the principle being they're not fond of government or corporations.
- Aufheben
- Does this mean you're there?
- Haze
- Wouldn't miss it!
- Aufheben

OVERVIEW

Metahumanity Ablaze is a weeklong event at the Racetrack, a large, flat dry lake bed out in Death Valley, away from everything. It's been an annual event for most of this century, and while the location of the event has changed a few times, the spirit of the event has not. Speaking of spirits, with the gathering of spirits at the Ubehebe Crater recently and harassment of metahumans in the surrounding area, it was a surprise that Metahumanity Ablaze was not canceled. On the contrary, people going to the event seem not to interest the spirit community even though they're so close to the crater. Several governments and corporations have infiltrated the event to get a peek at the spirits residing nearby. This is as the spirits expect, and they are using it to their advantage. They are fed up with corporate mages hunting free spirits and the abuse that Horizon has done to spirits out here in the desert. The spirits have gathered here to create a very powerful ritual manipulating the metahumans in ways similar to what mages do to them. They leave a trail of false information to pit corporations against each other or to confuse everyone of their intent. The spirits are also manipulating the participants at Metahumanity Ablaze, including the runners, in preparing the ritual and turning their skills and the day-ending burning of the corporate effigy into an impressive ritual against Horizon corporation.

Getting into Metahumanity Ablaze is a relatively long journey into the Mojave Desert. There is no GridGuide, no gas stations, and no bathrooms along the way. The "city" from the overlooking hills is a mess of tents, RVs, and campers arranged in a perfect circle with a smaller, empty circle in the center.

PLOT POINT ONE

Dead Men Do Tell Tales

The runners come across information regarding a Horizon company man named Howard Burton who is or was at the camp but has now gone missing. This information may be from the previous adventure, or Mr. Johnson may contact the runners cold. The information could also come from Niraj "Potluck" Pawashi, one of the chief organizers of Metahumanity Ablaze. He could encounter runners who happen to be attending his festival, or he could reach out to them (through messengers, since he does not have direct Matrix access during the festival) and ask for help to find Burton. His main concern is that he does not want to draw Horizon's attention to the festival, but he does not share this with runners. Instead, he says that he is interested in the well-being of all attendees, and he wants to make sure the man who has mysteriously disappeared is accounted for. Niraj also has personal reasons for wanting Burton found. Niraj wants him found, as when the individual left he made off with a duffle bag belonging to Stogie, the sasquatch who runs the popular Metahumanity Ablaze Bar. Stogie had keys to Niraj's office in that bag, and Niraj would like those keys back.

A more direct way to connect the runners to the job could come through the PCC, where the runner's fixer has put them in contact with Henry Runningfox, the sole representative of PCC security at the festival. Runningfox needs a group to do the legwork for him at Metahumanity Ablaze. The job would span seven days of the event and involves keeping an eye on the patrons and looking for any information on the spirit activity going on in or near the crater. The runners would receive a daily stipend of 500 nuyen per runner, with possible bonuses if they provide good information. Through Runningfox, the runners are also asked to find Burton. Runningfox says he's motivated simply by concern for the missing man, but in truth the PCC is worried he's out gathering intelligence on the spirits for Horizon, and his superiors don't want anyone getting information that they're not getting themselves.

From what the runners can gather, Burton left in the middle of the night a day before they arrived. An elderly sasquatch named Stogie complained that the man took off with his duffle bag. Stogie found some tracks leading to the northeast that might be Burton's, but he can't be sure.

The tracks are, in fact, Burton's. After he took the duffle bag, he headed toward the mountains to get a better overall view of the surroundings. Unfortunately for him, he ran into a nest of nova scorpions and was killed. This was not a coincidence—anti-Horizon technomancers knew Burton's identity and set him up. They found a scorpion nest and made sure the denizens were good and irritated, then had a mage friend plant a few gentle suggestions in Burton's head. Once Burton stumbled onto the nest, the end came quickly.

Once Burton was dead, the technomancers planted a message on his commlink saying that Horizon mages would be making a trip to the Mojave south of the Racetrack. According to the note, they plan to cut down a grove of junipers, both to obtain reagents for themselves and to deny the use of any of these materials to the spirits. As it turns out, this information is true, but Burton knew



INCOMING FEED.....

nothing about it. The juniper grove is in PCC territory, which means that Runningfox would be quite interested in it. Niraj does not have much use for the information about Horizon, but he would be happy to get the keys from Stogie's duffle bag back.

In order to get any of this, though, the runners need to find Burton's body. The commlink is in hidden mode and has a Signal rating of 3, so it is difficult but not impossible to find him that way. It is also possible to find him through a Tracking + Intuition (4) Test. If none of these methods succeed, the runners will get some help in the late morning, as carrion birds become attracted to Burton's corpse and start circling over it.

There are a dozen nova scorpions (p. 111, *Running Wild*) still around the body. The scorpions attack anyone who disturbs them. The body is in bad shape but is still recognizably Burton. His commlink is in his pocket, and the duffle bag with Stogie's stuff is lying next to him. An old pair of military surplus electronic binoculars is out of the bag, possibly as the last thing he used. This gear belongs to Stogie and is the reason Burton stole the duffle bag.

If the runners turn over the information about Horizon personnel entering the area to Runningfox, he puts a call in to alert PCC forces. This means that when the Horizon personnel, they are met by PCC security, and a firefight breaks out. This lasts for about an hour; once it's over, the survivors from both sides stumble from the fight, only to be ambushed and killed by the spirits of the area.

Rumors of this conflict find their way back to Metahumanity Ablaze, which is only twenty kilometers from the juniper grove. Details are murky—some people say the fight was a victory for Horizon troops, others say it was a win for the PCC. Everyone

agrees, though, that Horizon personnel did not get any of the reagents they were after. The general attitude of Metahumanity Ablaze participants toward the whole thing is contempt for both sides—they see it as yet another example of corporate violence perpetrated in the name of despoiling the environment.

Niraj, however, is a little more entrepreneurial than most participants. He sees an opportunity to gather any trees that were cut down before the conflict started. He has some vehicles he could use to get the wood, but he doesn't have available personnel to go get it with him (most of his people are busy running the festival). He offers the runners a healthy cut of the action if they'll help him retrieve the trees. If the runners accept, move on to **Plot Point Two**.

PLOT POINT TWO

I Got a Bad Feeling About This

At the site of the battlefield, the runners find six vehicles: four civilian-looking vehicles (two Gopher Pickups modified with hard tops and two GMC Bulldog step vans) and two PCC military vehicles. All are shot up—the two PCC vehicles look like they burst open from the inside like popcorn kernels. None at this point are serviceable. There are two dozen bodies on the scene; ten with PCC uniforms, fourteen in unmarked black. All wearing some sort of body armor, though it didn't help them. While six appear to be dead from gunshot wounds, the rest have been maimed, crushed, or scorched by some unknown force. The violence and magic force used in this combat has built a

background count to 2. No spirits or animals are currently within a hundred meters of this place.

The pickup trucks appear to be partially loaded with boxes; chainsaws and hydraulic clippers that were used in taking down the trees are also scattered around the truck. There are six boxes altogether; each is about a half meter in each dimension and weighs between twenty and forty kilograms. While the runners load wood into their vehicles, they encounter some bad spirits that have been attracted to the area by the mixture of magic and death. A Force 5 broken bow (p. 180, *Running Wild*) and three force four shedim (p. 155, *Street Magic*) have come. The broken bow mindlessly attacks the runners, while the shedim use a little more cunning as they would like bodies with a little more meat on the bone, though they don't coordinate their attacks.

Should the runners survive, Niraj welcomes them back. He's more than appreciative as he looks through the boxes. He offers them 10,000 nuyen total for their help; each net hit on a Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Test raises that value by 500, up to a maximum of five net hits.

Once the deal is made, some members of Niraj's crew then pulls out pieces of wood and distributes them to some of the crafters at the festival; they will be shaping sculptures to sell at the Metahumanity Ablaze bazaar. They also save a few pieces for the corporate effigy that will be burned at the end of the festival.

PLOT POINT THREE

Missing Gods

The next morning at the rising of the sun, a group of thirty tribal members of the Aha Macav (Mojave People) are out in an open forum square near the heart of the Metahumanity Ablaze event. They are doing some sort of ritualistic prayer dance. It has become disruptive and shows no signs of stopping. People are trying to make their way to other events, but they are blocked by the dancers. The dancers appear frantic, and after an hour of this, Runningfox comes out to see the commotion. TamTah Cairook, a shaman attending the festival, awakens from a trance and appears very upset. He cries out that the gods are gone. He says a spirit appeared to him and told him to go home and forget about receiving guidance, as the gods are angry. Cairook cannot understand why the gods abandoned them, and the other members of his tribe who are present do not know what else to do. They have gone back to their tents, but the rumors have riled up many patrons. The shamans are worried that if the spirits are angry at one tribe, their anger will soon spread to the others. This is a puzzle since none of the shamans have any idea what the spirits are angry about.

The runners are asked by Niraj to investigate Cairook's claims so that he can settle down his customers. Runningfox could also ask the runners to look into this, both to keep the peace at the festival and to try to get information on what the spirits in the area are up to. Niraj is a little low on funds after paying the runners off for the previous job, but he has contacts who can help the runners get an assortment of gear as compensation, Runningfox will be able to get a certified credstick shipped to him within a day from PCC to pay the runners for their service. He offers them 10,000 nuyen.

Once the runners accept, they meet with Cairook, who appreciates their help. He and his tribe have gathered in one of the larger tents on their site. The runners are asked to join in the tribe's ritual, where they are to sit in a circle around a smoky fire. With Cairook's help (and some aid from drugs in the smoke—a special deepweed variant that works on mundane individuals) the runners pass by the guardian on the threshold to the Land of Matavilya, where the creation river begins.

When the runners come to their senses, they find themselves in a scene similar to the one they left, sitting near a tent with Cairook, but their clothes have changed to match Cairook's and their weapons have either disappeared or have been replaced by more primitive objects such as flint axes or bows. Outside the tent, Metahumanity Ablaze is gone, replaced by great flowing river. The river and surrounding area abounds in hyper-realistic animal spirits. Cairook points to a hill, where the black charred remains of Matavilya's home was, and explains that his ancestors should still be there, but he found only spirits of earth and fire constructing a stone ring. If runners investigate this, they see beasts of earth and grass hauling large stones up the hill. South of the hill, the great river has been diverted and dammed to allow more humanoid conglomerates of stone (earth elementals) and floating spheres of plasma (fire elementals) to dig up and gather the larger river stones. The spheres produce fire to cut the stones to some specific shape before lashing them to those earthen beasts to drag up the hill. More creatures of fire and earth stack the stones into an increasingly larger ring. No ancestor spirits can be seen here, nor can they be summoned.

The stone ring is similar to Stonehenge though much larger—it is sixty meters in diameter with six radiating spokes of stone. The stone columns are seven meters tall and are made of stacked river stones that have been cut to fit on top of each other. The elementals appear to be working on the outer ring of stones, stacking them in an impressive ten-meter wall. The six spokes stop short of the wall, and at each point there is a gap in the wall allowing entrance into the ring.

The runners can circle the area, as the spirits here don't pay much attention to them and simply go about their business. The one that spoke to Cairook, Baelosh, appeared to him as a tornado of fire and smoke. That spirit doesn't seem to be here. As the runners come close to the river, a great fish leaps out of the water; its fins like silver wings and its mouth hooked like a beak. It glides gently to the shore, transforming its appearance to that of a Native American with silver tattoos on his chin and chest. Cairook recognizes him as Mastamho, one of the missing gods who help teach his ancestors. Mastamho tells them that they are not safe here and must travel to the mountain before they are caught.

Away from the river and up into the mountain, the runners are lead to a cave, where a few of Cairook's ancestors can be found. Mastamho tells them that his sister Frog is angered by the actions of those on earth and has made a pact with Baelosh, a great spirit of air who destroyed Matavilya's home. Frog had killed several ancestors before Mastamho arrived and rescued the few that are here in the cave. The ancestors only know that the building under construction silences the voices of those trying to call them. Mastamho believes that the building can be destroyed to restore this land back to the Mojave people, but he needs Cairook and the runners' help to accomplish this. If the runners agree, the

ancestors give them six stones that they have carved with various pictographs, saying that the stones need to be placed around the stone circle to help with a ritual.

PLOT POINT FOUR

Mastamho and Frog

Mastamho leads the way back down the mountain to the hillside. As he gets to the river, a woman steps out of the woods. Her name is Frog, sister to Mastamho. Mastamho tries to reason with his sister, telling her that destroying humans goes against what their father and brother wanted. She tells him that bigger things are in play and asks why he is helping help the metahumans whom have killed many spirits in other realms. Mastamho transforms into the eagle-fish form while Frog transforms into a frog-bear form and they begin to battle over the river. With Frog occupied, the runners can cross the river, though some of the earth and fire elemental workers impede their progress. While they are minor (only Force 3), there are twenty of them ready to stop the runners from climbing the hill. Cairook will provide spell defense for the players until he is able to perform the ritual. Once up on the hill, the runners can then place the stones around the circle. Cairook and any players with magical talent can perform the ritual, which is similar in nature to banishing a spirit (players can roll a Banishing + Magic Test if the gamemaster would like, but in the end the ritual succeeds, regardless of their rolls. The ritual takes three combat turns to complete. During that time, a tornado of fire and smoke and a large statue-like creature of alabaster approach one of the stones of the circle. The tornado speaks, telling the runners that it is called Baelosh of the Empryeen nation and that the actions of metahumanity on the metaplanes are at an end. His people feel the plight of the spirits at Kilimanjaro and will end metahuman tyranny over all the metaplanes. Baelosh speaks as earth and fire spirits stealthily approach the other five stones.

As the ritual completes, the stone circle becomes transparent and fades from the metaplane. The alabaster statue, which is a spirit named Garneck, reaches Cairook at inhuman speeds and lifts him by the throat. Garneck curses him, telling him he will never see his homeland again. As the circle disappears, the runners feel dizzy as they are ejected from the metaplane and back to their bodies. They are disoriented but should soon realize back in Cairook's tent. Cairook is still there, sitting cross legged. He has tears coming down his face. He now understands the words of Garneck's curse—he suffers from astral blindness and has lost his ability to astral perceive.

Cairook, quite despondent, leads the runners back to the central camp of Metahumanity Alive. Things appear to be back to normal. Later that evening, however, the players might find that it has become slightly more difficult to summon or banish spirits. Fifty meters from the edge of camp, someone spots a strange stone circle on top of a hill. It appears to be slightly transparent. It is the same stone circle that the runners banished from the metaplane. The structure has become an astral object, and its power allows it to manifest as an alchea. The summoning and banishing difficulty affects an area two kilometers around the stone circle; in practice, it means that spirits in the area should be summoned as if their Force were two points higher than it actually is.

PLOT POINT FIVE

Defector or Red Herring

Another day, another problem—at least that's how Runningfox sees it. On this day, a group riding dune buggies around the racetrack came across what looks like a large gorilla with reddish feathery plumes around its head. That isn't necessarily the most unusual thing among the many odd sights of Metahumanity Ablaze, but when it started speaking English and asking to see who can protect him, it became his problem. In broken English the "gorilla" calls himself Dumat and says that he is a beast free spirit from Kilimanjaro. He seeks asylum and a free life in. Dumat offers Runningfox an ostrich-egg-sized stone and information on the spirits at the crater in return for the asylum he seeks. Runningfox has to drive into the nearest town to confer with his chief and asks the runners to babysit Dumat. He can offer them money in certified credsticks that he can get in town if they aren't already being paid to work for him. Before he leaves, Dumat breaks off a piece of the stone and hands it to Runningfox so that he can show it to his superior. While the runners babysit Dumat, Niraj is asked to secure the stone. If any runners astrally perceive the stone, they can see it has an astral signature; it's not a living aura, but it's clear the stone has some kind of magical properties, though what those are is not clear.

Word of Dumat's arrival has spread through Metahumanity Ablaze. Some come to see him and offer gifts as if he's some kind of minor deity from whom they can receive blessing. Others come by to take a look at this fairly rare free spirit. There are also those who aren't happy that Dumat immediately made an appeal to "the Man," and they hope to help persuade him that he doesn't need to deal with corporations to get what he wants. In the end, the runners should encounter a number of different situations while they keep an eye on Dumat, from participants who try to lift some of their goods while they're distracted by the free spirit to attempts at intimidation by some festival attendees who want to have a private conversation with Dumat. While all this is going on, corporate spies from Ares, Aztechnology, and Proteus have each managed to get past Niraj and get a chip of the rock. Unfortunately they can't communicate from MA because of the lack of Matrix access, and leaving too abruptly might blow their cover. Three hours after Runningfox left, he returns saying that the PCC has agreed to relocate Dumat to Las Vegas in return for the rock and information on what is going on in the crater. A GMC van will be arriving in a few hours to pick up Dumat.

Dumat then tells them a story of him fleeing to the metaplanes after the corporate mages came to Kilimanjaro. It was at Nebubue that he met Garneck. Gerneck told him that he was not alone, that there were others willing to stand up and fight against the metahumans for what they had done. Gerneck took him to some other metaplane where Dumat and others from Kilimanjaro found refuge. At that spot, Dumat met a powerful air spirit named Baelosh. Baelosh was very charismatic and convinced the gathered spirits to go with him back to the material plane of earth, where spirit forces have been gathering at the Ubehebe Crater. Some of the spirits were put to work digging mines, gathering stones and other menial tasks, but that was not what set Dumat off of the whole project. He realized how wrong things were when



Baelosh sent some of Dumat's friends through a planar gateway to gather arcane materials for him. A few days passed, and Dumat did not hear anything from his friends or see any sign that they had returned. Later, though, in his wanderings through Baelosh's tunnels, he encountered his friends, caged in cells built from the stone that Dumat's colleagues were quarrying. They had changed in the short time of their incarceration. They were now maddened and twisted abominations. This sight terrified Dumat, and he fled with one of the stones that had been retrieved. Runningfox then asks Niraj for the stone he had been guarding. Niraj takes a few moments to get the stone, but when he returns with it, it is obvious that it has several chips missing.

About this time, the truck arrives for Dumat. He departs like a minor celebrity, riding in the back of the truck, waving to hundreds of onlookers.

PLOT POINT SIX

Pied Piper

Runningfox believes the stone Dumat brought with him is PCC property, and he wants the missing shards back. With a successful Logic + Willpower (2) Test, mages might remember that since the pieces have a unique astral signature, they could be tracked astrally (see *Astral Tracking*, p. 193, *SR4A*).

The first piece was stolen by the Ares agent and can be tracked to an anarchist merchant, who first denies the accusation, but then breaks cover and drops a stun grenade at the runners' feet (use **Anarchist**, p. 134). The Ares agent flees out the back of the tent, trying to make his way to the outer circle, where his bike is. It would be difficult to have a running gunfight in the crowds, and he uses the cover of the crowd to his advantage. When he gets to his bike, however, he realizes that distance is the only thing that would save him in the long run, as people are scurrying away from him and he will soon have no cover. If he's seriously wounded, he gives up and turns over the stone. He won't go back to Metahumanity Ablaze, as he doesn't want to deal with the backlash of the other participants. Runningfox urges the runners to take him to his holding tank for safekeeping.

The trail of the second stolen piece leads them to a circus performer who blows fire and juggles chainsaws (use **Circus Performer**, p. 135). He's a little miffed that they accuse him of stealing, but he allows them to search through all his stuff. When the runners have trouble finding the stone (it's not among the performer's possessions), an Assensing + Intuition (3) Test reveals that the stone's aura is inside the performer's aura. Searching him reveals no cyber compartments, meaning the man swallowed the stone. While cutting him open to take it is an option, Runningfox wants him put into the holding tank to "wait it out".

The third piece, which was stolen by a Proteus agent, is found in a woven grass basket dug into the ground at someone's tent in the hopes that the earth would conceal it. The Proteus agent who stole the rock is dead inside the tent. He apparently choked on a piece of jerky, though there's a faint magical signature surrounding the body. If the runners look for any identification of this man or who killed him, they find a single encrypted chip (Rating 5 encryption) on a Perception + Intuition (3) Test. The chip, once decrypted, is a list of activities going on at Metahumanity Ablaze

along with photos. Some of the photos are of the runners and their activities; some are of Niraj and Stogie and who's been drinking at Stogie's bar. One of the photos is of Burton, the Horizon agent who was killed by nova scorpions. It is tagged "Horizon?". His Proteus' agent's commlink is clean and doesn't contain a SIN. Nothing has any details of who he is except for a small holocard of the Empire State Building.

The stone is still in the Aztechology's Agent's body, and it would not be difficult to cut it out. The runners don't have long, though—Runningfox is eager to stow it in a freezer to preserve it for an eventual autopsy. If the runners go to Runningfox's quarters, they discover that the two agents who had been taken to his holding tank are now dead. They look as if they have been immersed in acid, and they have an astral signature similar to the one on the Proteus agent's body. Runningfox tells the runners to keep the deaths quiet as he doesn't want a panic started.

Runningfox moves the corpses into the now-quiet-full icebox and tells the runners that he needs to get a PCC vehicle out here to transport the bodies. Before he leaves in his vehicle, the GMC van returns. Runningfox is surprised to see them. The driver tells Runningfox that Dumat disappeared from the back of the van. There's no sign of magic lingering in the truck. The runners might believe that Dumat was probably killed because he knew too much, but the reality is that Dumat was a patsy sent to flush out a few of the corporate agents hiding at Metahumanity Ablaze. By the next morning the stone's magical aura is gone; it is now just a normal shale stone. The stone, and the story behind it, was a fake. If any of the runners follow up with Runningfox after the Metahumanity Ablaze event, he tells them that corporate lawyers from Ares, Proteus, Horizon, and Aztechology arrived at the morgue to claim the assorted bodies and prevent any autopsy.

PLOT POINT SEVEN

The Stage Is Set

Using wood, stone, steel, and heavy pyrotechnic material, the artists at Metahumanity Ablaze pull out parts of a forty-meter-tall replica of an office building to the center of the event and begin assembling it. As they build it, the runners might notice how specific the design is. It's not just a forty-meter-tall square; it's a fairly realistic building with windows, a scale-model fire escape, even a detailed lobby with working doors. Runners can make a [Relevant Los Angeles area knowledge] + Logic (3) Test to note that the building has a certain resemblance to the Horizon corporate headquarters in that city.

Around the building, anarchists paint derogative corporate slogans to hang from the structure when it is finished, while event coordinator Chip Eckhart supervises the creative fireworks display that will set the whole thing on fire. Since the runners have been so helpful to Runningfox he is willing to hire them to a new job: to protecting the effigy until nightfall.

Many performances go on around the runners once they assume their positions, including trick sports bikes, iBall drone jugglers, and a modular cybered contortionist. As dusk approaches, the stadium starts filling up. Anticipation of the event has many people drinking and doing a variety of drugs. Participants in groups ranging in size from four to twenty come



by and attempt to get close to the effigy. Some have written notes of curses or letters to various corporations that they want stuck on it. One group of six anarchists (use **Anarchist**, p. 134) wants to get the party started now. They walk out into the circle firing off firecrackers and Roman candles. Then they try to intimidate the runners into letting them by so they can burn the effigy. When that doesn't work, they get pissed off. They leave but come back in a few minutes, this time with a few Molotov cocktails to get the party started. The space holding the effigy is a hundred meters in diameter, so the runners could keep the anarchists from getting close enough to reach the effigy with a thrown cocktail. Killing the anarchists would be a bad move, but beating the crap out of them is acceptable. If the anarchists are able to get close enough to the effigy and hit it with two cocktails, the effigy starts to burn. While some of the anarchists have gun and brandish them to intimidate, they have enough sense to know that if they started such a fight, they would lose it. The effigy can only withstand three combat rounds of burning before it is too far gone to stop. The party will have to start early.

PLOT POINT EIGHT

The Show Must Go On

Whether the runners were successful or not in making the spectacle start on time, the burning of the corporate effigy is a spectacular sight. The seating around the fiery tower quickly fills up. Crazy thrash metal music is pumped from a plethora of speakers and is underlined by a burst of fireworks. People are jazzed by the display, and the runners can't help but feel the excitement. A couple of the pyrotechnic crew approach the tower, and the colors of the flames shift from a ruby red to an emerald green in different parts of the building. These flames expand farther from the tower and change shape. They appear to become dragons with flaming wings. Magicians watching the display on the astral plane see that two mages are shaping the flames with magic. The fiery dragons circle and dive bomb each other in mock combat, some lurching out as much as twenty meters from the building. The music sequence changes and the flames intensify. The music has a repeating, uplifting lyric to it, and everyone starts singing along. Astrally things start changing, and there's a buildup of energy and anticipation. From the burning effigy, motes of fire spring off and start dancing around. The outlines that Chip marked out start glowing, and the magic feel intensifies. The singing starts sounding like a chant while the flames grow in brightness and height. The flaming dragons circle ever higher.

At the top of the effigy, there's a shape like extra-dark smoke swirling in the heat. The runners should note that it looks like Baelosh. Runners attempting to attack him find that the area now has a background count of -4 . Banishment is also problematic, as that power of the alchera gives a $+4$ modifier to spirits resisting summoning or banishment. If the runners have their own spirits on call, they are blocked and defeated by a myriad of dancing motes (Force 4 fire elementals) that jump out of the effigy and cover any spirits coming into the area.

The magic and music are working together to build to a crescendo. The singers are almost incomprehensible with the speed of the music, and it's hard to say if something weird is



INCOMING FEED.....

METRAHUMANITY RBLRZS
.....

happening or if this is how the grand finale always goes. Energy feels like its being drawn into the fire. Baelosh disappears from the astral and physical plane, moving back to the metaplanes just as the dragons collide above the building. There's a big explosion as large fireworks burst from the top of the effigy and shower sparks around the ring. The colliding dragons and the explosion are shaped into a gigantic man of fire, over eighty meters tall, straddling the effigy. It raises its arms and a dozen stars shoot off in various directions, disappearing over the horizon. The building collapses into a pile of ash and rubble, and the power of magic leaves the area, shooting off into the stars.

Most of the people stand up and cheer as if nothing unusual happened. Some have passed out, though that could be from the drinking and narcotics. The mages controlling the dragons say they saw the dancing motes, but they thought it was part of the show. Nothing is left of the effigy except ash, cracked stones, and melted metals. The paint of the outlines that Chip marked appears to contain natural materials of chalk, ochre, and animal protein; the reagents for this ritual might have been contained in these elements. Mages can find traces of the ritual all over Metahumanity Ablaze, but the astral signatures carry no information as to what the ritual was about or whether it had any effect. Certainly Metahumanity Ablaze was not the target. The stone circle alchera has disappeared after the ritual, possibly moved to a different location.

As people pack up in the morning, nothing is left behind, part of the "leave no trace" policy for coming to the event. Besides the deaths (which most people aren't aware of), people believe that this was the greatest show since magic came back to the world.

PLACES

METAHUMANITY ABLAZE!

This annual event has been held in or near California and Nevada for most of the century, though the exact location of the event has shifted over the years. It currently takes place in the Mojave Desert at the Racetrack playa which is a flat, dry lakebed surrounded by hills. This allows for the event's finale of burning an effigy and accompanying pyrotechnic display to not start any fires in civilization.

Metahumanity Ablaze takes place over a whole week. The remote location allows for the trade in illegal goods to go unabated. The Metahumanity Ablaze "city" is laid out in a circular pattern roughly half a kilometer in diameter, with radial and concentric circle streets and divided into various-sized camping lots. Inner circle lots are generally reserved for performers, while artisans and merchants fill the middle circle. The rest of the spots are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. The center of the city is a one-hundred-meter-diameter circle that has no campsites; in the circle, performers put on shows and the great effigy is built and destroyed. A few sets of tiered bleachers are set around this central circle for audiences.

The financing of the festival is done through donations, much of which is invested in corporate stock through a council of independent business accountants. Being funded by corporate stock proceeds may seem hypocritical due to the nature of Metahumanity Ablaze, but the general point of view of participants

is that they're taking The Man's money just to use it against him, and they're fine with it.

Approximately eight to ten thousand people come to this event every year from various walks of life. They come for new, mind-expanding experiences and for an avoidance of the technological "Big Brother" that pervades everyday life in the civilized areas of the Sixth World. Large battery-powered signal jammers are brought in by various attendees so that if you want to talk to someone outside the festival, you'd have to get far away from the Racetrack to do so. Trade and purchases at the festival are generally accomplished through barter, though hard currency is accepted as well as the occasional certified credstick. While people still carry commlinks, they tend not to display them openly, and they certainly don't use them as status symbols. Over half of the participants are SINless or have a criminal SINs, so they're not anxious to be broadcasting their identities. If you want to know somebody, you can't just check out their PAN; you have to go up and talk to them. And then you have to decide if you believe anything they are saying about themselves.

In the middle circle, drugs, drinks, arts and crafts, and a few weapons and restricted hardware can be bought or sold. Neo-anarchists from various countries swap cookbooks here next to the CFS artists selling dream catchers next to rather deranged individuals recycling drinking bottles and cans into fabric and buttons with homemade machines. One of the largest plots in the middle circle is the Metahumanity Bar run by Stogie, an overweight sasquatch. Stogie is a moonshiner, and he brews various drinks over the year and then sells his products here, hoping to trade for enough fruits and grains to feed him for the next year. Peppered throughout the rest of the middle circle are Niraj's nomads, as they are known. Niraj's nomads are a band of craftsmen who have professions ranging from silversmith to electronic repair. Most of them have some family relation to Niraj "Potluck" Pawashi, the tribal chief of the group. Food services are limited in the middle circle. Most people bring enough supplies to feed them for the full week, but for those that want to eat out, the two common places are Lin Sum's Noodles and Soup and Jesse's Jerky Treats. Lim Sum sells soy noodles and broths made with vegetables and, occasionally, real meat. Jesse sells dried and cured meat and smoked offal from various critters. It's best not to ask what kind of critters.

In the inner circle, street performers, musicians, illusionists (magical and otherwise), and other artists, perform for the other attendants, hoping to get a few pieces of hard currency for their act. The circle is large enough that a dozen performances can happen at the same time. It's first-come, first-served, but there are unspoken laws of etiquette that performers follow to make sure each performer gets a chance in a good spot. Sometimes Chip will bring in a ringer, a group who is paid to perform at Metahumanity Ablaze if they are good enough. He also puts up the stake for a monetary prize for a drone demolition derby that brings in teams of drone builders from across the continent. Niraj runs book for the event, and the proceeds from that are a healthy part of his annual income.

The outer circle is where the participants live during the event. Residences range from tents to campers to RVs. Plots are marked in biodegradable paint so that people know their "property." It's up to each area's occupant to secure his possessions. Fifty portable



toilets are distributed around the city along with three huge water tank vehicles for drinking water. Campfires are allowed as long as they are properly contained.

Most of the law and order is based on ten principles that were developed in the beginning of Metahumanity Ablaze to promote creativity, civility, and conservation of the environment. All that show up are asked to obey these ten laws or be banned from next year's event (though some rules, such as respecting others, are taken more seriously than others, such as turning cyberware off). Chip Eckhart's crew and Niraj's nomads abide by these rules and remind others to do the same. This keeps most of the problems at a minimum.

The Ten Laws

- Always demonstrate respect for your fellow metahumans. Courtesy is requested; violence is absolutely forbidden.
- At Metahumanity Alive, we are citizens of one nation—the Metahumanity Alive nation. No disputes involving artificial national borders belong in the festival.
- Bring no weapons to the festival, except for those that will be used as part of a performance or art.
- We are guests of Mother Earth. We should leave her better than we found her.
- Nature re-uses and recycles everything. So should we.
- Constructive criticism is welcome. Unthinking criticism, hostility, and personal attacks are not.
- Bring extra food and water so you can share with people who need help. If you see anyone who needs help—help them!
- No combat spells are to be cast for any reason. Controlling the actions, thoughts, and emotions of others is also forbidden.
- Matrix communications of all kind are blocked throughout the festival area. Free yourself from the shackles of your commlink and always being networked, and live in the moment that surrounds you!
- If you have cyberware that can be turned off, turn it off for the duration of the festival. Be natural. Be yourself. Be a living metahuman!

Corporate and government laws on what is illegal don't apply here. When problems do occur, it is taken care of by the lone PCC official, Henry Runningfox. So far, the event only warrant the existence the one sheriff in town.

PEOPLE

CHIP ECKHART

Chip Eckhart is a fifty-six-year-old man from Los Angeles. His sea-toughened and sun tanned skin makes him stand out among many of the paler patrons who avoid leaving their parents' basement. He started out as a handyman and electrician for Metahumanity Ablaze and was promoted up the ranks before finally becoming chief coordinator for the event. He's been running the event for over twenty years. Chip has been very good at managing this event, from arranging sanitation to designing and planning the size of the "city" to bringing in the entertainment. With the help of over a dozen associates, Chip gets Metahumanity Ablaze up and running and makes sure everything runs smoothly. This is the most important thing in his life. Chip lives in an RV parked in the middle circle during the event. He's fond of Lin's noodles and soups, and he always brings in lots of vegetables for her to cook. If the runners have been useful to Metahumanity Ablaze, Chip may become a contact for them in the future.

Human male

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/10

Armor (B/I): 4/0

Skills: Artisan (Carpenter) 3 (+2), Clubs 3, Computers 3, Electronics 5, Negotiations 4, Perception 3, Survival (Desert) 2 (+2), Unarmed Combat 3

Knowledge Skills: CFS Musicians, Los Angeles Streets, PCC Musicians, Surfing

Languages: English N, Spanish 2

Qualities: Outdoorsman

Gear: Armor clothing, commlink (Device Rating 3), desert goggles, desert survival kit, jammer (area, Rating 6)

Weapons:

Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 16(c), w/ laser sight]

NIRAJ "POTLUCK" PAWASHI

Niraj is part carnie, part car salesman. He and his travelling troupe run a good portion of the trades at Metahumanity Alive. Niraj also knows just about everyone and what they've got to sell or trade, including information. He is a forty-something human, tall, heavily tattooed, with short white hair. It's hard to tell what his motivations are, whether he is purely a businessman doing a job or if he has some sympathies for the other celebrants, or even if he is aligned with the spirits at the crater. In truth, he and some of his nomads are wolf shapeshifters. Niraj is the alpha male of the group to the other shapeshifters; to the non-shape shifters, he's a boss. He and his nomads travel together throughout the year through the PCC before they return to Metahumanity Ablaze. The assortment of skills they possess is handy, as they can do assorted repair jobs to pay for fuel and materials for their vehicles and crafts. During the festival, they keep their driving outside the city, but there is plenty of broad, flat terrain to allow them to let their wild side loose.



Niraj's nomads has fifteen members, eight of which are shapeshifters. The other seven are various metahumans that feel a strong bond to the group. They drive in a caravan of four custom vehicles, one of which is a bus carrying fold-up vendor stalls. This bus and a half-dozen stalls are placed all around the middle ring.

Male shapeshifter (wolf)

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 4/0

Skills: Assensing 3, Automotive Mechanic 4, Clubs 3, Con 4, Industrial Mechanic 3, Leadership 4, Negotiation 5, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Stealth skill group 3, Survival 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Knowledge Skills: Automotive Models 4, Desert Weather 4, Sixth World Cultures 3

Languages: English N, Spanish 3

Powers: Regeneration, Sapience, Shift (Human)

Qualities: Allergy (Silver, Severe), Vulnerability (Silver)

Gear: Armor clothing, automotive tools kit, commlink (Device Rating 3), glasses (Rating 2, w/ flare compensation, vision enhancement 2), industrial tools kit

Weapons:

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

HENRY RUNNINGFOX

Henry Runningfox is a PCC law enforcement officer at Metahumanity Ablaze. He's the only officer at the festival—any other officers are several hours away, occupied by securing the rest of the territory. He's been acting as the festival's security detail for five years. He's sort of a token officer, but Niraj and Chip respect him, and that brings him at least a modicum of respect from the other attendees. Runningfox's primary goal is to make sure nothing gets out of hand at MA. He's not going to worry about smaller crimes like narcotics use, as he doesn't have a holding cell large enough to hold every violator. He will, however, take care of the disorderly and any fights that don't resolve quickly. Besides keeping the peace, Runningfox has been tasked by his superiors to gain any intelligence relevant to the PCC. Most years there is not a whole lot going on at the festival that the higher-ups are interested in, but this year they want him to keep an ear out for any information about what the spirits of the Mojave are up to, along with looking for representatives of other corporations who may be trying to gather intelligence of their own.

Runningfox drives a truck with an attached trailer. This trailer is specially designed with a mini jail to sober up any drunks (it is built to hold four people but he can cram in twice that number if he needs to) and a pop-up tower, where he has multiple cameras attached to get a good view of things going on while he's not on patrol.

Runningfox is a very strong ork, wearing PCC-marked armor, decorated with Pueblo symbolisms, specifically of his native Cochiti tribe. Besides a heavy pistol, he carries a thick quarterstaff of red stained wood, crafted by one of the artists at MA. It is rumored to be made of Sangre Del Diablo wood.

If the runners are hired by the PCC and/or they have been very useful to Runningfox, they may acquire him as a contact.

Ork male

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	4	3(5)	7	2	4	4	5	3	2.2	7(9)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Close Combat skill group 3, Intimidation 3, Perception 3, Pistols 4, Stealth skill group 3

Knowledge Skills: Law Enforcement Techniques 4, PCC Law Enforcement Personnel 3

Languages: English N

Qualities: Guts

Augmentations: Skillwires (Rating 4, w/ Shadowing 4, Survival 4, Tracking 4), wired reflexes 2

Gear: 3 x Antidote patches, armor jacket, desert survival kit, 3 x tranq patches (Rating 4)

Weapons:

Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 16(c), w/ laser sight, personalized grip]

Telescopic staff [Club, Reach 2, DV 6P, AP —]



... INSIDE THE SMILE ...

Incoming Message

Posted by: Dr. Spin

Horizon's Dawkins Group has been a popular topic around here for a good long while, and their insistence on secrecy combined with their activities down in Bogotá has done nothing to shut us all up. I recently came across a memo from down Colombia way that sheds some light on of the group works internally and what they're up to, so I thought I'd present it for analysis by all of you.

TO: Agent

FROM: Angela Delacruz

RE: Ongoing Bogotá operations

I believe we are at a point where the evidence development phase of our mission is complete. Now we need to focus on dissemination.

- I'm going to stop them right here. Now they need to focus on dissemination? How was that not part of the strategy from the get-go?
- Cosmo
- Because war propaganda is fluid by its nature. There are some broader strategies you can and do plan in advance, but there are also things happening on the ground that you adjust to as they happen. In those cases, you first spend time figuring out what information is out there and how you might be able to collect it in ways that can benefit you. Then, once you've got a good packet of information together, you plan on how you're going to put it in front of the people who need to see it. Which, I should add, is crucial. There are still far too many people who think they just need to put information together and make it available on the Matrix, and somehow people will find it. These are the people who are still wondering why their MeFeed hits remain in single digits.
- Dr. Spin

Put the grassroots organizations to use. We have a lot of trust built with them, and now we have information that will only make them like us more. They want to hammer Aztlan, and we just bought ourselves a truckload of sledges. Get them whatever information they want, then make sure they hammer Aztlan brutally and repeatedly. They should talk about justice and accountability—mostly justice. It's a word that resonates with people, even though no one really believes in it.

That should get the word out around Bogotá, but we're not going to win this just in this city. We need to go international if we really want to have an impact. We got a quick hit on some news sites, but if we leave things to the news boys, this thing won't have any legs. If we create a popular swell, though, and get people talking enough about it, then eventually the news people will have to come back to it as a trend story.

To really sell the story effectively to Joe and Jane MeFeed, you're going to have to approach a number of different groups. People can get passionate when they're surrounded by a group of people who agree with them, but they get *really* passionate when they go with their like-minded friends on a crusade against those who would obstruct justice. And they need to have enemies they can conquer—Aztechnology is too big, so crusading against the Big A will wear out our MeFeeders too quickly. They need some chum they can munch on before anyone worries about the big shark out there.

- I've said it before, I'll say it again. A Mind Control spell is great, but so is knowing how minds work.
- Winterhawk

What this means is we're going to need people putting up links all over the place who are smart enough to not appear like spambots. They need to know how to enter a conversation and make it look like they're telling people what they want to know instead of hijacking the conversation. First thing they'll do is built support. Social justice crusaders and anti-Aztechnology

sites are the obvious places to go, but also look at how people are taking sides in this whole dragon conflict. Look at some people with ties to Saeder-Krupp; at the moment, supporting Amazonia in general is seen as a way of supporting SIRRURG, and thus sticking it to Hestaby (yeah, politics is labyrinthine, what else is new). Let them get good and angry for a little bit, and then prop up the opposition. Having information to feed to them shouldn't be a problem—Azatlan is busy generating that for us right now—but have the info engineers work it over a little bit to introduce some subtle flaws. The pro-Azatlan people will rush to get the information out to defend their side, which will rally our troops, who can then tear into the bad data.

Make sure our side is vicious when they tear apart the opposition's arguments. They should be acting like they don't just want to prove the opposition wrong, but they want them beaten, bruised, and demoralized. That seldom works, of course, so it should set the stage for a good, long grudge match between the two sides. That hopefully will be enough to get the media involved, but if it doesn't, we can always arrange for some of the hostility between some groups to flare into open violence.

- Here's what I think is interesting about this memo—at most points in this strategy, Ms. Delacruz is not trying to

be persuasive. She's not trying to get anyone do to what they're not inclined to do. Instead, she's working with what they already want and trying to use that to her advantage. In the end, of course, there's a large issue of trying to persuade people to turn on Aztechnology, but most steps along the way only require people to do what they want. That's how good manipulation works.

- Kay St. Irregular
- That's also how good cons work.
- Thorn
- The big question is, who's this Delacruz? It's not a name I'm familiar with.
- Cosmo
- If she's dealing with Agent—and treating him like a subordinate—she must be a Dawkins Group executive. We probably just got a behind-the-scenes look at Dawkins ops, as well as a confirmed name of a Dawkins executive. I hope whoever retrieved this memo was paid well.
- Mr. Bonds

OVERVIEW

Even in Horizon's brightest days, the Dawkins Group is its dark spot. That's not to say it's evil; just that it's in charge of doing the things that aren't supposed to see the light of day. They are master manipulators, building grassroots networks and spreading information in ways that keep people from knowing they're being manipulated.

The secrecy of the Dawkins Group extends to the identity of its members and executives. Given that they are often involved in infiltrating various organizations or other nefarious deeds, it doesn't pay for them to broadcast their identities. One of the most notable members of the Dawkins Group is known only as Agent, and information on other Group members is even thinner.

Many corporations would like to know what's going on in the Dawkins Group, both so that they can interfere with their operations and they can learn more about their operations. Between the ongoing war in Bogotá and the growing tensions with technomancers, the Dawkins Group is spread a little thin right now, and they might be more vulnerable than usual. If a corporation found the right opportunity, they might be able to exploit the group and dig up some information they didn't have before.

Aztechnology has found the right opportunity. They have word that an independent guerilla group near Bogotá has two agents that they are willing to sell. Aztechnology operatives have made contact with the group; now they just need someone to actually go get the Dawkins operatives.

They call on shadowrunners because they have a multi-step plan. They don't just want to retrieve the operatives; they want to imitate them. The runners are to assume the operatives' identities and infiltrate the Dawkins Group. Their first task is to poke around Los Angeles with their new Dawkins Group credentials and uncover the identities of other operatives or executives and turn them over to their Mr. Johnson. Their conscience may tell them that their actions could be marking these individuals for death, but that might not stop them from collecting their paycheck.

For their next mission, the runners travel to Denver. The Dawkins Group has been working to interfere with the Treat of Denver renegotiations, mainly to make sure Aztechnology stays out of the city. Mr. Johnson would definitely like that effort undermined. The runners can try to mess up the ongoing operations, but they run into an extra snag—technomancers angry about recent revelations of Horizon's treatment of their kind. Their interference will present some extra challenges.

PLOT POINT ONE

The runners are contacted by one of their fixers telling them that a Mr. Johnson is looking for a team with their particular skills. The skills in question may include disguise, infiltration, jungle combat, corporate espionage, or some other area in which team members have significant skill. The meet is virtual; Mr. Johnson is in Bogotá, and even if the runners are down there he doesn't want to meet in person. The meet takes place in a rowdy virtual bar with an Old West theme, though anachronisms abound;

many icons in the place carry very modern weaponry, the walls have color photos, and bands playing on the bar's small stage often use electric instruments. Asking the burly bartender about Mr. Johnson elicits a grunt and a point to a pair of shutters next to a piano. The meet takes place in a private room; even though the virtual doors are only shutters, it's a quiet space, and no noise from the main bar bleeds into this room.

Mr. Johnson (use **Mr. Johnson (Corporate)**, p. 142) is there, looking like a simple shopkeeper (white shirt, dark vest, armbands, spectacles on the end of his nose). He is willing to chat a little bit with the runners before the meet begins, though he is not the most interesting person in the world.

Once he gets down to business, he tells them that a small guerilla group known as the Colombian Patriot Militia has somehow managed to get a hold of what it believes to be two operatives of the Dawkins Group. Mr. Johnson says that his people have arranged to receive the two group members in exchange for a significant sum of money on certified credsticks. He says the runners are to travel to Bogotá, deliver the credsticks, pick up the Dawkins Group members, and then deliver them to him in the city.

That, though, is only the start of their work. Mr. Johnson says that his employer (he does not mention who that is) sees this as an opportunity to dig up information about Horizon's secretive arm. Two of the runners are to assume the identities of the Dawkins Group members and then use that to uncover some of Horizon's information. Since this will be an ongoing mission, Mr. Johnson offers 1,000 nuyen per day per runner, plus travel expenses.

Those steps come later, though. The first step is to travel to the rainforests near Bogotá. The Colombian Patriot Militia's base is south of Bogotá in an elevated valley next to a small stream. The rainforest is thinner there than it is in the immediate vicinity of Bogotá, but that doesn't make it easy to navigate. All sorts of hazards are out there, from Aztlan and Amazonia patrols to critters such as spider-beasts (p. 130, *Running Wild*). The gamemaster can make the journey to the militia base as easy or hazardous as they would like.

The players may decide to look at the certified credsticks they are carrying at some point, out of curiosity if nothing else. There are ten credsticks, and each one has fifty thousand nuyen on it. Whoever Mr. Johnson's employer is, they clearly have resources and are quite interested in acquiring the two members of the Dawkins Group. The runners may decide to mess with the credsticks in some way to take a little off the top for themselves, but the militia group is expecting the full amount, and if they don't get it they won't be happy. The runners will have to do some fast-talking if they want to walk out with the Dawkins Group members without paying the full amount.

There are twelve militia members at the camp (use **Guerilla**, p. 140); eight are on the perimeter, four are in the militia's shack. They greet the runners with weapons leveled at them, but the appearance of the credsticks do a lot to win them over. The perimeter guards escort them to a small, two-room shack. The Dawkins Group members are in the second room. The door is not locked—the Dawkins members are drugged and will be out for another hour. After that, it's up to the runners to keep them appropriately subdued. One agent is a **Dawkins Group Operative** (p. 136); the other is a **Dawkins Group Adept** (p. 136). Each agent should match one of the runners in terms of

gender, metatype, ethnicity and roughly similar build. The militia members have the two prisoners' commlinks, which they turn over when the runners take possession of the prisoners. The commlinks have no proprietary data on them, but they have the identities of the individuals. The operative is Chris Pembleton, and the trained guard is Pat Cracroft.

The two Dawkins agents were never supposed to allow themselves to be captured. They had suicide caplets in their teeth, but the militia members were savvy enough to remove those. If they are conscious, Pembleton and Cracroft work to either escape or get themselves killed, even if that means forcing the runners to kill them.

Extra complications come when the runners enter Bogotá for the meet with Mr. Johnson. Horizon has eyes everywhere. The gamemaster should make regular tests with a dice pool of 9 against the runners' Infiltration + Agility (taking into account any efforts the runners have made to disguise or hide their prisoners). If the runners lose the test, they are spotted, and Horizon comes down on them with a force of five **Dawkins Group Trained Guards** (p. 136) and five **Elite Corporate Security** (p. 138). Letting the prisoners (either alive or dead) fall into Horizon's hands will hurt the runners' mission, as they will have difficulty impersonating those individuals, seeing as how they are back in circulation.

If the runners make it to the meet with Mr. Johnson with two living prisoners, he is quite pleased. If either or both of them are dead, he docks the entire team a day's wages per corpse, saying his employers lost the chance to recover important intelligence from those individuals.

Either way, the mission is not over. The runners should now have enough information to attempt an impersonation of the two agents. Now it's time to go to LA and put that information to use.

PLOT POINT TWO

The runners are sent to LA with a task that doesn't sound overly difficult—they are to send Mr. Johnson the confirmed identities of three Dawkins Group operatives working in the city.

Once they arrive in LA, two of the runners should be imitating the Dawkins Group agents. They need to either keep the rest of their group out of sight or come up with a plausible explanation for traveling with them—for example, they could say that their time in Bogotá made them paranoid, and they now feel safer traveling with an armed entourage.

Along with the identities of the two agents, the runners should have their commlinks, which come in handy. Once they're on the ground, some network is apparently alerted, and a message comes in. It's an encrypted file; an Electronic Warfare + Decrypt (12, 1 combat turn) Extended Test is needed to decrypt it. If the file is not decrypted within one minute (twenty combat turns), it self-destructs. Another file is sent within a half hour with the same level of encryption, and another one comes half an hour after that. If the runners fail to decrypt any of the files, Dawkins Group management is notified, and they activate an RFID tag within the commlinks that allows them to follow the hardware, even if it is turned off or in hidden mode.

If the runners successfully decrypt the file, they have an address, a date, and a time. The date and time is that evening at 9



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p.m., and the address is a spot downtown, in areas that are being rebuilt by Horizon. The Dawkins agents were clearly supposed to report on their activities before they got any rest.

The building is the **Dawkins Group Outpost** (see **Locations**, p. 96). The Dawkins Group does not have a single headquarters, and they do not take up too much space in Horizon headquarters—they value a bit of independence. The designers of the organization felt it functioned best as a chaord, a non-hierarchical structure with several relatively independent parts working toward the same goals. Different outposts coordinate with each other, but there is a lot of give and take between them rather than all orders flowing in one direction.

The runners get the chance to test how good their imitations of the Dawkins Group members are. The first step is the Rating 6 facial recognition scanners at the door (p. 264, *SR4A*). If the disguised runners succeed it passing it, the system alerts them that the other members of their party have not been cleared to proceed. Each fake Dawkins Group member is allowed to bring in two guests; if they want to bring in more, they need the approval of one of the agents inside. An ARO appears before them looking like a large button; if they press it, a **Dawkins Group Adept** (p. 136) shortly arrives at the door. This individual is an elf male named Vern Blaitwaite, but he doesn't immediately identify himself. He acts like he knows the disguised runners, calling them by their assumed names and engaging in small talk. The disguised runners need to make a Con + Charisma Test opposed by Vern's (Con or Negotiation) + Charisma; if they fail, he recognizes that they are not the real deal. He does not let on, though; instead, he lets them into the office and keeps chatting with them. He

has called security, though, and eight **Dawkins Group Trained Guards** (p. 136) arrive in two minutes to confront the runners.

Getting the names of three agents in the facility could happen a number of ways. The runners could keep talking to them and try to get them to say their names (one simple way could be for the members of the disguised agent's entourage to introduce themselves), they could hack into others' commlinks, they could hack into the outpost's node and look up the employee roster, or anything else their imagination comes up with. Besides the eight guards in the building, there are a total of ten agents; once the runners have learned the name of three of them, this part of the mission is done. The runners could stay on for a time, though, digging for more information or extra names, both of which would be rewarded with bonuses from Mr. Johnson.

Once they report back to Mr. Johnson, he tells them there's going to be one more use for their assumed identities. They need to head to Denver.

PLOT POINT THREE

Mr. Johnson buys the runners plane tickets to the Pueblo sector of Denver. They disembark at the Horizon terminal of Niwot airport. Mr. Johnson used their IDs well, getting them tickets that allow them to breeze in and out of the airports at both ends of the journey. Once they're out of the airport, things just get better, as they have been booked into the luxurious Comprí Hotel. When they arrive, Mr. Johnson sends a message telling them to go directly to their room.

In the room, Mr. Johnson appears virtually to brief the runners. He tells them that they are in one of the prime espionage hotspots in Denver, and things have only become more active there during Ghostwalker's absence from the city. Without the great dragon on hand to eat any convicted spies, the espionage trade has become more brazen, and the Ute influence within the PCC is pushing to find ways to get Aztechnology back into the city, even if it's in the form of a single Stuffer Shack franchise. Mr. Johnson tells the runners that Dawkins Group operatives are busy interfering with these efforts, and it would be nice if the operatives could be distracted for a while.

After this mission, the runners won't necessarily need their fake identities anymore, so they are free to complete the mission in a showy way that makes it clear that they are not who they say they are. Alternately, they can attempt to be subtle, and perhaps come out of this mission with fake Dawkins Group identities that they can use at a later date.

Mr. Johnson is not able to give the runners a whole lot to go on for this mission. If he had more information about what the Dawkins Group was up to, he wouldn't need runners with fake identities. The runners are set loose on the hotel to do what they can.

While other parties involved in the treaty renegotiations have been busy having meetings, offering bribes, and delivering veiled threats to each other in the hotel's various meeting rooms, the Dawkins Group has been taking a different approach. They have a few people who have been regular guests, an individual on the cleaning staff, and a dummy corporation that has been holding monthly events in the hotel. Through this, they have cultivated regular connections with essentially the entirety of the hotel's staff, and using their patented psychological techniques, they've converted the vast majority of the staff into anti-Aztechnology moles. They pass along any gossip they overhear, they plant bugs or turn off hotel security measures when Dawkins Group members ask them to, and they give the Group members access to the hotel's nodes.

This means that if the runners can make staff members believe that they are Dawkins Group members, they'll have broad access to the wealth of information the hotel has to offer, and they can alter or distort it as they please. Convincing staff members that they are Dawkins Group members is not a matter of simply flashing an ID, as the real Group members have warned them that that is not how Group members work. To establish their bona fides, the runners posing as Group members should pass a Con + Charisma Opposed Test against one of the staff members (see **Hotel Staff**, p. 140); the gamemasters can add modifiers depending on the story the runners are able to come up with.

Once the runners have convinced the staff, they have access to information throughout the hotel. They should find all sorts of interesting information related to Aztechnology; it's up to them to decide how they use it. Some of the things they may find out, and what they might do about it, are as follows:

- Two PCC officials (of Ute origin) are in talks with Mohy Ahmed, a food retailer who has establishments in every sector of Denver. They want to introduce Stuffer Shack-branded soykaf into his stores, and they are in the process of convincing him that Ghostwalker and his minions won't mind. As it turns out, Ahmed is a Dawkins Group plant

operating to gather information for the Zone Defense Force. He plans to turn over the information he is gathering to his superiors so that the PCC officials will be arrested for engaging in pro-Aztlan activities. The runners can alert the PCC officials—or, if the ZDF officers are already on the way to make the arrest, they can help them get out of the hotel and to safety.

- Some security officers from Chamberlain airport are being blackmailed through various incriminating recordings. The goal was to get them to look the other way while Aztlan goods—and perhaps people were smuggled into the city. The Dawkins Group has been meeting with the security officers so that they can learn what kind of evidence is out there and how it can be destroyed. The runners could try to prevent the Group members from destroying the data, or they could get to it first and make backup copies so that the blackmail can continue uninterrupted.
- Two high-ranking Ute officials have been intending to have a sit-down to discuss a possible no-confidence vote against the PCC's current board, but Dawkins Group operatives have just planted deepweed in one of the official's rooms and called PuebSec in to investigate. The runners have two minutes to get the deepweed out of the official's room and get clear before the security officers arrive.
- It has not been easy to get news coverage of the Az-Am war that is in any way favorable to Aztlan KMAG's Dinah Crow has been very supportive of Amazonia in the war, and she regularly meets with sources in the Compri Hotel. What she doesn't know is that her sources are on Horizon's payroll—she's not meeting with sources so much as she's meeting with propagandists. If the runners can let Crow know what's been going on, she'll be incensed at being used, and she might be more inclined to be sympathetic to Aztlan in the future.

The gamemaster can decide just how long the runners should spend in the hotel and how crazy it gets. At some point, when the runners are dealing with a Matrix-based aspect of the run, they should encounter an extra difficulty. Denver technomancers know that many Horizon personnel stay at the Hotel Capri, so they've decided to target it for their next anti-Horizon demonstration. A botnet marshaled by an **Elite Technomancer** (p. 140) launches a denial of service attack against the hotel's main node, and at the same time a group of four elite techomancers run through the hotel, vandalizing both the physical and AR environment and targeting anyone who seems to be associated with Horizon. (though they are just trying to vandalize and disturb things, not do any serious harm) If they find out that the runners are identifying themselves as Dawkins Group members, the protestors target them. The runners will have to figure out if they can endure this protest, or if they want to actively turn it back.

As mentioned, there are other Dawkins Group operatives in the hotel regularly, and the runners may eventually cross their paths. That could lead to chaos, or it could lead to the runners getting on the Dawkins Group's shit list, which is a really bad place and should make them uncomfortable for several missions.



INCOMING FEED.....

LOCATIONS

DAWKINS GROUP OUTPOST

The Dawkins Group outpost is a three-story building. There is no signage on the building announcing its function. There is a Rating 6 facial scanner that activates the maglock on the front doors. Two **Dawkins Group Trained Guards** (p. 136) sit on the other side of the front door. Two other guards are positioned on the first floor, and four more are on the second floor. They do not patrol, as the Dawkins Group workers don't want their offices to look like a military zone. There is also a **Security Consultant** (p. 69, *Unwired*) and a **Security Mage** (p. 143) on the second floor; the security consultant has four MCT-Nissan Roto-Drones at his disposal, and the drones are armed with Ruger Super Warhawks (p. 317, *SR4A*).

The first floor has the reception area, a security office, a custodial closet, storage, and the like. The second floor has a larger security office, a large break room (which has vending machines, a Ping-Pong table, and a large area for groups to play full-motion AR games), and a dark room with a few bunk beds where workers can take a nap if they need one.

Most of the third floor is one large room. There are several desks scattered across the room, along with a dozen or so 1.5-meter-tall, two-meter-wide wall panels. The desks and walls have small drones built into them to make it easy to shift them into different positions; the alignment of the room changes daily as operatives sit next to whomever they need to talk to that day, or by themselves if they don't want to talk to anyone. The

room is generally full of people and movement; if workers need a moment of peace and quiet, they can retire to the zen garden on the west side of the floor. The room is soundproofed and has plenty of natural light, making it a good place to sit and gather one's thoughts.

The interior of the building is painted with Wi-Fi-inhibiting paint, and small wires run through all the windows making the building a Faraday cage, keeping the nodes from being accessed outside of the building. The interior node has Response 6, Signal 2, Firewall 6, System 6; it has playful AR sculpting, with files being represented as bouncing balls, paper airplanes, scurrying hamsters, and other oddities.

Having a total of ten security people on staff at a small building is decent security, but it helps that many Dawkins Group workers are adepts. Attempted hostilities on the first and second floors are met by traditional force-based responses; on the third floor, however, the workers use their skills to attempt to talk any potentially hostile people over to their side. While they do this, though, they call PuebSec; eight additional security officers arrive within ninety seconds (use **Elite Corporate Security**, p. 138).

There is no master store of all of the Dawkins Group's data; they are a decentralized organization, so they don't work that way. If runners decide to hack into the building's node, they are able to find information on the clients of the operatives of this particular outpost; in LA, that would include several entertainment divisions, local politicians, and a few celebrities. There should be juicy gossip and secrets that could bring in some nice extra nuyen if the runners are able to lift it.

... THE DEPTHS OF REVENGE ...

Incoming Message

The wall of Hector Cesar's office had become a memorial. Inspired by the black granite wall on the Mall in DeeCee, he had designed an AR overlay that was a list of names. At first, it was only a handful of names, so he had used a larger font to make it take up more space and appear to be more impressive. Then he found more names, so the list grew longer, and the size of the letters grew smaller. Then smaller, then even smaller still. Each name was a link—you could wave over it and it would provide them the basic story of that person. How and where they died, and as much about their life as Cesar could find. Some of it was firm, generally verifiable facts, while other parts were filled in with Cesar's speculation, presented in a dry, impartial tone that made it easy to mistake them for facts.

Cesar's co-workers had given him a fair amount of grief over the wall. He insisted that he only worked on it during his personal time, but the fact of the matter was that "personal time" was a nebulous concept for people in his division. While they weren't officially a part of the Aztlan government, they had been tasked with supporting supply operations for the war effort, and they had quickly learned that any shortages would lead to severe criticisms and reprisals from people higher up the corporate ladder. Most of the workers in Cesar's division were putting in eighteen-hour days. They were on a first-name basis with all of the food delivery people in the neighborhood, since they didn't have time to shop or prepare food for themselves. In that climate, the fact that Cesar kept adding names to his list inspired good-natured ribbing at best, and suspicion and murmured criticism at worst.

So when Divisional Supervisor Anna Corinna Velasquez scheduled a meeting with Cesar to discuss the "reassignment" of the previous regional minister of military affairs (the office gossips said that he had been reassigned from the statehouse to a shallow grave north of Bogotá), Cesar was warned by at least five different people that he should take his memorial down before she arrived, or at least hide it for the duration of her visit.

Cesar, though, wasn't having any of it. There were always a few minutes of small talk before the actual business of a meeting

got underway. Why not make it about something important? So not only was the memorial wall on full display when Velasquez arrived, but it was the first thing Cesar mentioned.

"Have you seen my wall?" he said when she entered, before he even offered her a seat.

"I see it now," she said. She wore square glasses designed to make her face look severe, but there was a twist to her mouth that made her seem a little warmer than her reputation. Though he had to admit that there were certain members of the Spanish Inquisition who were warmer than her reputation.

"They are the names of the dead," he said.

She looked over the list. "There seem to be a lot of them."

"Yes. There are."

"We've lost more than this, though. These are not all of our casualties."

Cesar nodded, doing his best not to appear too excited. "That's right," he said. "It's not. In fact, many of them aren't ours at all. This isn't a list of people from a specific corporation or nation who were killed—it's a list of victims. All of them killed by the same culprit."

There was a pause. Cesar waited patiently, but he could see Velacruz seeing if there was some way she could avoid taking the bait. His hand fidgeted at his side as he stood next to his wall.

Finally she caved. "And who is that culprit?"

"Horizon." He hoped his answer didn't sound too eager. "They act like they are not fighting this war, but they are. They have blood on their hands, and they keep shedding more."

Velasquez looked at the wall. She even flicked over a few names, though Cesar had no way of knowing if she read the information that popped up.

"And how is that your concern?"

"Because they are trying to portray us as the bad ones! They are vilifying us, and they've done plenty of wrong, and no one is talking about it."

"And you are working on supplies, not public relations, so I ask you again: How is that your concern?"

And suddenly Cesar found that he was standing there with nothing. He thought the memorial was self-explanatory. He thought the wrong it exposed was enough, by itself, to generate a response similar to his own. Yet there was Velasquez, looking at the wall, seeming to not care a bit.

The rest of the meeting did not go well. Cesar was off his stride the whole meeting. He had to flip through a handful of AROs to find the answers to any questions she asked, he stumbled over words, and he didn't feel like he made any points clearly. When Velasquez left, he was slumped in his chair, and

he didn't remember that he should probably stand when she left until she was already out the door.

He didn't update the wall for the rest of the week. He threw himself into his work, he forgot about Horizon, and he did everything he could to show that he was important, in an effort to stave off the transfer that he knew was coming.

Then a new week came, and with it a transfer. Cesar had to read the assignment half a dozen times before he understood where he was going and what he would be doing.

OVERVIEW

Aztechnology has recently made some headway against the secretive Dawkins Group of Horizon, and they're in a mood to press their advantage. They recently found the right Mr. Johnson for the job—an Aztechnology employee named Hector Cesar. Cesar has a deep grudge against Horizon in general, and the Dawkins Group in particular, and he has been given the chance to plan a strike against them. He's come up with a plan that will definitely leave a scar—if it works.

The first step in the mission is getting the right personnel lined up. If the runners completed *Inside the Smile* (p. 91), Cesar received a referral from the previous Mr. Johnson, and he wants to take advantage of the Dawkins Group identities the players appropriated in that adventure (assuming the characters didn't blow their cover; if they did, Cesar gives them two more identities, possibly the names of people uncovered in Plot Point Two of that chapter). If the runners did not complete that job, Cesar has two identities ready to go. Two of the runners can assume the identities of Dawkins Group operatives Chris Pembleton and Pat Cracroft.

Cesar offers the runners 1,000 nuyen a day, plus travel expenses, which they'll need, because they are going on two journeys. First, they need to travel to the Athabaskan Council to retrieve the other member of the team who will be needed to complete the required task. That team member disappeared on an initiation ordeal a month ago, and she has not been heard from since. Cesar wants to make sure she's okay, and he wants her brought back so she can get moving on a job Mr. Johnson has for her. The runners have to go to the Harding Icefield to find her, and there's a hitch—the nahualli in question wandered into a forbidden area, and the runners have to get her out of the clutches of some local shamans.

Once the runners have the nahualli, they are to escort her to Bogotá and get her safely ensconced in an Aztlan facility. Then they are to locate a particular Dawkins Group outpost in the city, the one that serves as the base of the fabled operative known as Agent. Agent is an extra-secretive member of an already secretive group, so tracking him down will not be easy.

Once the location is found, the runners have to retrieve the nahualli they rescued and bring her to the Dawkins Group facility. If runners listened to some of the things the nahualli said along with the evidence of their own observations, they might

be able to figure out that the plan is for the nahualli to summon a blood spirit into the Dawkins Group facility and simply let it run rampant there. They then need to decide if they are willing to carry out that plan, or if they want to stop it before it reaches its conclusion.

PLOT POINT ONE

Mr. Johnson contacts the runners either because he heard about the work they did in *Inside the Smile* (p. 91) or because he is aware of some other work they did that benefitted Aztechnology and/or Aztlan. Mr. Johnson's real name is Hector Cesar (use **Mr. Johnson (Corporate)**, p. 142), and he is very committed to this job. He has a strong grudge against Horizon—it doesn't take much to set him off on a rant about how they're just as bad as any other megacorporation, except that they're worse because they pretend to be better (his rants, as is the case with such things, tend to have a rambling, stream-of-consciousness style). He is so committed to his cause that he does not want to settle for a virtual meet of any kind—he travels to wherever the runners are based so that he can look them in the eye when he makes the offer. He meets them in a private room at a restaurant in the runners' current city that is nice without being ostentatious. He tells them that he has a job that will involve a fair amount of travel around the Americas, but he'll pay them 1,000 nuyen a day plus travel expenses. On top of that, they'll have a chance to strike a blow for justice, though at this juncture Cesar does not detail what he means by that.

He tells them that for the first leg of the journey they are to travel to Anchorage in the Athabaskan Council, and from there south to the Harding Icefield. Getting them to Anchorage and arranging for an all-terrain vehicle to get them to the icefields won't be a problem, but moving about the icefield could be a little more difficult. Much of the icefield is off limits to anyone but Inuit shaman, and Cesar wasn't able to get permission for the runners to travel there. They'll either need to be sneaky or persuasive in order to find what they need.

Their target is a summoner named Firenze who went to the icefields a month ago on an initiatory ordeal and has not been heard from since. Cesar and his superiors are worried about her, and they also are in need of her services, so it's time to bring her back.



PLOT POINT TWO

The runners should have no difficulties until they make it to the icefield. They'll need to dress warmly, but the icefields are not the most hazardous cold environment in the world. The average temperature is only a couple of degrees below freezing, and most non-winter days see at least a few hours above freezing. They won't have lodging on the icefields, though, so they need to be prepared to stay warm throughout the night, whether by staying in their rented vehicle or through some other means.

The Harding Icefield is a unique environment (see **Harding Icefield**, p. 101). Due to the intersection of several ley lines as well as a mana surge from the passing of Halley's Comet, the astral plane is visible to all, even non-magic users. Most mundanes don't understand what the auras they see mean, but they are colorful enough to make the area a destination for tourists and researchers.

While the runners may have to deal with hazards such as snow snakes (p. 139, *Running Wild*) the most significant hazard they will face is the shamans who consider the Harding Icefields to be their sacred ground. After they have been in the area for a short while, have two shamans (use **Inuit Shaman**, p. 102) along with two guards (use **Elite Corporate Security**, p. 138) appear about four kilometers from the runners. This group is practiced at moving in the area without leaving a trace while noticing small changes in the environment, meaning that their Home Ground quality applies to any Infiltration or Perception rolls they make while in the icefields. Make tests to see if the runners notice the shamans first or vice versa. If the shamans notice the runners, they promptly summon two spirits of air (Force 4) apiece, then they go to talk to the runners. They inform the runners that they are intruding on sacred ground and that they must leave. They display a small amount of patience in listening to any explanations the runners might come up with, but if they are sufficiently provoked, they send their spirits to attack, then they join the fray themselves.

The runners may be able to avoid a fight by stating their reason for being on the icefield, but they have to be careful. The shamans know who Firenze is, and if the runners indicate that they are firmly allied with her, or that they intend to get her out at all costs, things will not go well for them. If, however, they make their inquiries carefully enough, they discover that the shamans know who Firenze is, and that they in fact have been confining her in a cave in the Icefield for a few weeks. Firenze, it seems, intruded on the icefield without the appropriate permissions, and she was unable to make the payment required of her when she was caught. She will remain in the cave until the price is paid. The shamans are willing to direct the runners to the cave if they are willing to attempt to make the payment on Firenze's behalf. If they are asked about the nature of the payment, they simply say that it is far more expensive than money.

A Force 4 spirit of air who just became free resides in the cave, and the shamans are feeding it karma to help it get stronger. The shamans will let Firenze go when she agrees to give it five karma. The runners can either substitute and give it five karma between them, or they can fight the spirit then try to dash out with Firenze before anyone notices. The nature of the icefield may help their sneaking effort, as their auras are a little harder to notice when auras and ley lines are everywhere.

Once the runners have Firenze, it's time to return to Anchorage and notify Cesar—who is in the city, waiting for them and eager to confirm that Firenze is alive and in good health. He invites them to his suite in a local hotel. When they arrive, he thanks them for their efforts, then retires to an adjoining room with Firenze. They are there for about ten minutes and then emerge. When they do, Firenze seems a little weary, while Cesar appears to be quite pleased. Runners may be able to spy on what happens in the next room, as the only security Cesar employs is closing the door and turning on a Rating 4 white noise generator. In the room, he had Firenze summon a Force 6 spirit of man and demonstrate some control over it. Once she does, he has her release the spirit, and they emerge.

Cesar announce that it is time to leave for Bogota immediately—he is already packed and ready to go. He escorts the runners to a local airport, where they board a private jet and head south.

While they are in flight, Cesar describes the next part of the operation. He says it is well known that there are Dawkins Group operatives throughout Bogota, and that there is one in particular that his employers would like more information on. This operative is known simply as Agent (see **Agent**, p. 134), and he has been organizing a number of missions that, as Cesar puts it, “have been extraordinarily vexatious to all citizens of Bogota, regardless of their current political allegiance.” The runners are to use their Dawkins Group cover identities to find where this Agent bases his operations.

Finding Agent is not a matter of simply asking for directions to the nearest Dawkins Group office. The Group does not advertise even their most public locations, and Agent's base of operations must be secret indeed. Cesar says his employers have recently caught a break—they uncovered a recording that linked Agent to a woman named Angel Delacruz, and they have identified this woman as a Horizon employee working in Bogota's Zona Norte. The runners might be able to use their cover identities to extract information from this woman.

The first steps in the plan go smoothly. Presenting their names to Delacruz's receptionist is enough to get them put through, and she sets up a meeting with them if they ask for one, at a time of their choosing. The meeting, though, will be trickier. The runners need to walk into a Horizon corporate facility, and if they blow their cover they could have dozens of security guards swarming them. And simply walking in and asking Delacruz to put them in touch with Agent is a great way to blow their cover—if they are Dawkins Group agents, they should know better than Delacruz how to contact Agent.

The conversation with Delacruz requires a Con + Charisma Opposed Test. The runners' cover identities prevent Delacruz from being initially suspicious, and the gamemasters can give modifiers to the players based on the plausibility (or implausibility) of the story they concoct.

A successful test does not mean that Delacruz immediately turns over Agent's location to the runners. She can't—she doesn't know where it is. What she can do is tell them how she gets in touch with him. She sends a single-word message—“perch”—and within twenty-four hours he sends back a time and location. She gives the runners the commcode to use as they will.

PLOT POINT THREE

The runners have a link to Agent; now they have to exploit it. If they send the one-word message, they receive a reply in about two hours. It tells them to be at the Sodom and Gomorrah Motel (p. 100, *War!*) in three hours.

Runners may decide to attempt to trace the message back to its source in order to find Agent using a Computer + Track (10, Complex Action) Extended Test. They are able to do so without difficulty; there is no Stealth program running on the target node. They locate the user not too far away from them, in a business area in Zona Norte. They eventually pinpoint the commlink in a dumpster behind a Stuffer Shack, where it sits running in active mode. There is no identifying information on the commlink whatsoever, including fingerprints. Getting to the commlink should take the runners around an hour; they now have about two hours before the meet.

Agent shows up at the meet right on time. He is a middle-aged Latino male dressed in a nicely tailored white suit. He is not using any excessive precautions—the runners have Dawkins Group IDs, and they were referred to him by someone he trusts. Still, Agent is a careful man by nature, and he goes into the meeting with a backup plan. He has arranged for a room at the Sodom and Gomorrah Motel, next to a room where two men are spending time with two underage females provided to them by a local pimp. Agent has notified the authorities what's going on in the room next door; they will arrive ten minutes after the scheduled start of the meeting. Additionally, he has informed the authorities that the men are well armed and prepared to resist. He also has rigged a few recorded gunshot sounds and squibs in the wall near the room. If the situation with the runners deteriorates, Agent stalls until the Aztlan police arrive to arrest the men next door, then he triggers the squibs and lets the police open fire in response. He then disappears in the ensuing chaos.

Agent is a very difficult person to con, so trying to deceive him is not easy. The runners can try to fool Agent into taking them to his base of operations, or they can attempt to follow him once the meeting is over (as announced by the arrival of the police). As long as the runners did not do anything to blow their cover, Agent is not on high alert after the meeting, meaning that he allows his mind to wander to other subjects instead of carefully watching for a tail. This gives him a -2 dice pool modifier to his Perception + Intuition Tests to notice any Shadowing efforts by the runners. Note that Agent is still quite perceptive, so following him won't be easy. If he notices the tail, he initiates evasive action while calling in reinforcements; six **Dawkins Group Trained Guards** (p. 136) arrive to help him out within five minutes.

The runners may have the most success following him on the astral, as he does not have the Astral Perception power. He travels to a building whose entrance is in a narrow alley in the Bella Suiza neighborhood. Runners who follow him this far need to be careful; while Agent cannot astrally perceive, the building's door has a watcher spirit sitting outside it, two Force 4 spirits of air just inside it, and two Dawkins Group Trained Guards on the other side. They'll be alert for any intrusion, and even though the runners have Dawkins Group IDs, they are not cleared for this particular facility. Attempts at intrusion are met with six trained

guards, the spirits, and a dozen **Dawkins Group Adepts** (p. 136), and of course Agent himself. Additionally, Horizon security troops (use **Elite Corporate Security**, p. 138) arrive within four minutes of open fighting breaking out.

All of this can be avoided, though, because entering the facility is not what is required. At the moment, the runners' job was to find the facility, and they have found it. They would probably be best served returning to Mr. Johnson and reporting back.

PLOT POINT FOUR

Cesar is waiting for the runners back at a hotel with a re-energized Firenze, and he is delighted with the runners' progress. He says there is only one more thing to do—take Firenze to the location they found. Firenze will then “do what needs to be done,” in Cesar's terms. They will also be accompanied by a thin man named Isaac, whom Cesar calls Firenze's assistant. Isaac is quiet, and if the runners address him he only offers one-word answers.

Cesar expects the runners to leave immediately. Firenze can provide some healing if they need it, and Cesar expects that's enough to get the runners back on the job. He is a little nervous, even if the runners assure him that Agent did not notice their tail job. He's been studying the Dawkins Group operative's work for too long, and he knows how cagey he is. He knows that it's best not to give him any additional time to plan.

As the runners head out, a Perception + Intuition (2) Test allows them to notice that Firenze is carrying an ornate knife on her hip that she didn't have before.

If the runners were smart, they left some sort of electronic or astral marker than can guide them back to the location of Agent's facility. If they are relying on memory or just an address, have them make a Logic + Willpower (2) Test to find their way back. If they fail, they wander down the wrong alley and are ambushed by a local five-person militia group (use **Guerilla**, p. 140) who is angry they have wandered into their territory.

Once they arrive at Agent's facility, Firenze looks for a place that is out of line of sight of the entire building. She also needs a secluded spot, like an empty apartment. What she's about to do, she says, is not for public consumption.

Once she has found a satisfactory position, she asks the runners to erect a mana barrier between herself and the building; if they don't have the ability to make one, she casts one herself. She tells them that the barrier will provide some cover, but its existence may alert any astral observers in the Dawkins Facility, so she needs to act quickly. She then pulls the knife from her hip sheath and buries it into Isaac's chest. Isaac collapses to the ground wordlessly, and he does not seem to be at all surprised.

The runners now have a choice. They could just sit by and watch. If they do, Firenze summons a Force 6 blood spirit, which appears as a skinless ork. The spirit receives a quick instruction from Firenze, then sets off toward the Dawkins Group facility with a guttural howl. They runners have aided and abetted in blood magic being used against the Dawkins Group; they have been well paid, but the sight of Isaac collapsing to the ground while the ghastly spirit dashed off in search of more blood should haunt their memories.

Instead of allowing the summoning to take place, they may

INCOMING FEED.....



decide to interrupt Firenze. Firenze is committed to getting the job done, so she will try to complete the summoning if at all possible, then use the spirit to assist her in the fight. It will be a much easier fight for the runners if they can prevent the spirit from appearing. The runners may have gathered enough clues to understand what was about to happen before Isaac is killed, and their actions may result in saving his life. He's stunned at their actions and does not know what to do for a time, but given the chance he will leave and try to become lost in Bogotá's streets. He has absolutely nothing to offer by way of thanks—Aztlan took everything he had from him—but perhaps if the runners return to Bogotá he will have made something of himself and will remember his debt to them.

The runners will also need to find their own way out of Bogotá, as Cesar will no longer be offering any assistance. He exposes their Dawkins Group identities as fakes, and he sends squads of soldiers out into the city looking for the runners. They'd be best served getting out of town fast.

LOCATIONS

HARDING ICEFIELD

The Harding Icefield is located on the Kenai Peninsula south of Anchorage. With an average annual temperature in the upper twenties, it's a cold place, but not as bitter as the northern parts of the Athabaskan Council or the Trans-Polar Aleut.

The icefield is notable as the intersection of several ley lines, and the passing of Halley's Comet increased the ambient mana of the location. Even mundane individuals can perceive the astral plane on the icefield, which has made the area of interest to both tourists and researchers. The access of both groups is restricted, though, because certain parts of the area are controlled by Inuit shamans. They tend only to grant access to people conducting initiatory ordeals or other magic tasks, and they frown strongly on unauthorized intruders.

Tourists are generally asked to stay on the northeast part of the icefield, and that normally is enough for most visitors, as they get a full sense of the astral wonders of the area. The mana surge provides a background count of 2, aspected toward shamans.

While Inuit shamans revere the area, they tend not to make their home there, living nearby and visiting the icefield for specific purposes. A few snow snake nests are present in the area, and wildlife such as mountain goats, bears, wolverines, and moose can be found, though they tend to avoid the middle of the icefield, as food is scarce there.

The ley lines and background count of the area have also attracted some free spirits. Generally these are free spirits of air who enjoy the solitude of the place, and they have no desire to interact with physical beings. They are generally not hostile, but they also do not like being disturbed and could be provoked into anger.

THE DEPTHS OF REVENGE.....

PEOPLE

FIRENZE

Firenze is a headstrong summoner who has been in the employ of Aztlan for a while, mainly because they offer more money than anyone else had ever shown her. She doesn't have any particular moral qualms about the things Aztlan asks her to do, but she has a general reluctance about following orders. She has caused the various handlers to whom she has been assigned a number of headaches, but her gift for summoning means some of her eccentricities can be tolerated. Her independent streak has led to her threatening to quit Aztlan's employ several times, but each time her superiors manage to offer her enough money to keep her in the fold.

Human female

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 6/4

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 3, Banishing 4, Binding 5, Blades 3, Climbing 3, Con 4, Counterspelling 5, Negotiation 4, Perception 4, Pistols (Tasers) 3 (+2), Ritual Spellcasting 4, Spellcasting 6, Summoning (Blood Spirits) 7 (+2), Survival 3, Tracking 2

Knowledge Skills: Arctic Creatures 3, Aztlan Johnsons 2, Bogotá Streets 4

Languages: English 4, Spanish N

Qualities: Aptitude (Summoning), Magician (Aztec Tradition)

Initiate Level: 3

Metamagics: Invoking, Invoking Blood Spirits, Sacrifice

Spells: Agony, Armor, Control Emotions, Death Touch, Heal, Increase Reflexes, Increase Strength, Lightning Bolt, Mana Barrier, Manabolt, Stunball

Gear: Armor vest, coldsuit, commlink (Device Rating 4), contacts [Rating 3, w/ image link, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 2], wooden bracelet [Force 4 summoning focus (blood spirits)]

Weapons:

Defiance Protector [Taser, DV 6S(e), AP -half, SA, RC —, 3 (m)]

Kris [Blade, Reach —, DV 2P, AP —]

INUIT SHAMANS

Professional Rating 4

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I):

Skills: Assensing 4, Astral Combat 4, Banishing 4, Binding 3, Blades 4, Climbing 4, Clubs 4, Counterspelling 5, Negotiation 4, Perception (Hearing) 5 (+2), Ritual Spellcasting 5, Spellcasting 5, Summoning 5, Survival (Polar) 6 (+2), Tracking 4

Knowledge Skills: Arctic Wildlife 5, Inuit Culture 6, Magic Theory 4

Languages: English 3, Inuit N

Qualities: Focused Concentration, Home Ground (Harding Icefield), Magician (Shamanic Tradition)

Initiate Level: 2

Metamagics: Centering, Masking

Spells: Control Animal, Control Thoughts, Detect Life, Heal, Hibernate, Invisibility, Levitate, Mana Barrier, Physical Camouflage, Powerbolt, Stunbolt

Gear: Camouflage suit [w/ insulation Rating 5], glasses [Rating 2, w/ flare compensation, vision enhancement 3], polar tent, snowshoes

Weapons:

Spear [Blade, Reach 2, DV 4P, AP —]

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

ISAAC

One side effect of the way Aztlan and Aztechnology do business is that they need a ready supply of expendable individuals. They have turned this into part of their corporate and national culture, making sure that people know that the penalty for certain crimes is not just death, but death in a painful, gory way that will beget mayhem. Crimes that can be punishable by this form of execution include normal capital crimes, such as murder and treason, as well as workplace offenses. Attempts at large-scale embezzlement, blunders that cost the parent company large sums of nuyen—those are also things that could put people on the wrong end of a sacrificial blade.

The man currently called Isaac was once a promising but undisciplined engineer. Working for an engineering subsidiary of Aztechnology, he developed a cold fusion technique that promised to make the Big A the world leader in energy production. He assured everyone that he had carefully checked all of his numbers and assumptions. He hadn't. His prototype failed spectacularly, costing Aztechnology millions of nuyen and a handful of lives. He was placed into the cells with others awaiting sacrifice, and he resigned himself to his fate there, figuring death was what he deserved.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	2	3	2	4	5	7	2	3	4.6	8	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 9/9

Armor (B/I):

Skills: Computer 5, Data Search 5, Etiquette (Corporate) 2 (+2), Hardware 4, Industrial Mechanic 4, Leadership 2, Perception 4, Software 3

Knowledge Skills: Energy Production 5, Mathematics 5, Physics 5

Languages: English 4, Spanish N

Qualities: Analytical Mind, Big Regret,

Augmentations: Attention coprocessor, 2, commlink [implanted, Device Rating 5], encephalon 1, math SPU

... ASTRAL WEAKNESS ...

Incoming Message

- So, question for you all: What's stopping a crew of runners from taking down a casino in Vegas? Sure, they probably got spiders and IC that might actually give me trouble, but that's what mages are for. They can't have magical security at every casino watching all the time. Why hasn't a mage struck it rich in Vegas and then retired to the island he or she buys with the proceeds?
- Slamm-0!
- I'm sure someone has tried it. Then the floor manager hires some people like us to bring that money back, with a 1,000 nuyen bonus per finger they deliver along with the recaptured money.
- Kane
- Pit bosses have been watching for sleeve cards and cheating devices for decades. Looking for power foci and bound spirits isn't that much different.
- Turbo Bunny
- Most of the casinos are still watched over by syndicates. Getting to Vegas is a sign of upward mobility, so the criminals in Vegas are the most dangerous members of the families—smart and vicious.
- OrkCEO
- Casinos probably have insanely high background counts considering the amount of people buried in, around, and under them.
- Ma'fan
- I received a free week's stay at a casino on The Strip. The food was excellent. The companionship was sublime. But inside the building, it was far too quiet. Spirits wandered freely outside on the street, but inside, I felt next to nothing. I considered going astral, but whoever wanted things that way would have probably noticed. I'd like to investigate more someday, but the opportunity has not come up.
- Winterhawk
- Right now, the casinos are divided between the old families, the Koshari, and Horizon. All of them want to make money. Just because tourists can wander in and blow their hard-earned cash on anything and everything doesn't mean the city isn't locked down tighter than an Azzie Black Box.
- Bull
- Horizon has more than money at stake. One of Consensus' servers is supposedly buried underneath the sands.
- Plan 9
- Right. Because that would be a totally sensible thing for them to have done.
- Snopes



INCOMING FEED.....

OVERVIEW

The spirits of the Mojave have made their decision. Before they can make a true impact, they must eliminate the protections put in place by the best magicians money can buy. The plan involves draining several powerful artifacts and using that energy to power a secretive, archaic ritual. But first, the spirits have to get their hands on the artifact. A free spirit calling itself Kaze (which is Japanese for wind) has hit upon a way to kill two birds with one stone. To pull the theft off, she needs to hire several runners to hit Las Vegas all on the same night.

Kaze contacts several fixers for work. The spirit wants to hit six separate casinos on the same night. The night itself doesn't matter. What's most important is that the runs overwhelm the security forces in Vegas. The targets are places that are very important to the casinos. The more confusion caused, the easier it will be to do what the spirit needs to do.

Runners are called to a meet at Stratos-*FEAR*. Vegas primarily features AR attractions these days, but a few resorts eke out livings with the real thing. Stratos-*FEAR* is a mechanical drop ride located on the roof of a fading casino called The Apex. The meet takes place around sundown. The observation deck offers an excellent view, as well as a small amount of privacy. The only people around are a bored-looking ork running the ride through a drone rig and the occasional family that trickles off the elevator.

Kaze manifests as a slight Asian woman in a wispy formal gown. During the meet she constantly stays in motion on the

observation deck. The spirit lays out the details. The runners should have a few days to prepare but not longer than a week. The casino being hit is The Dragon's Hoard, a fantasy medieval-themed casino. The approach on the casino is up to them. Kaze needs one item in the vault, an artifact called the Star of the Ancients. It is a protective item that the casino uses to make sure that magicians are unable to walk in, cast a few spells or summon some spirits, and walk out millionaires.

Kaze wants the Star taken from the casino and brought to her at a location in the desert that she will supply at a later date. The spirit offers some information on the item, though not much. The Star is held in a secure location, which the spirit assumes is the vault. The casino manager knows the location. The run must take place on the day Kaze assigns. Nothing else is to be taken from the casino. If anything else is found to be missing, the deal is off.

Kaze offers an unusual payment, as free spirits don't have access to credsticks and bank accounts. She offers the runners uncut diamonds. There are enough diamonds to net each runner 20,000 nuyen once fenced. Kaze promises a similar amount when the Star is in her hands. If the runners negotiate, Kaze is unable to provide additional funds but she can provide foci for magical characters. It's up to the runners to figure out how to split the foci and diamonds between themselves to make sure every member of the team gets a fair share.

After the run, Kaze sends the runners the location for the meet, which is a few kilometers out of town. She makes her nonhuman nature abundantly clear during the exchange. As soon as she gets the Star, the artifact begins to glow brightly. The glow

fades the longer Kaze holds the artifact. Kaze gives the runners the promised payment, then disappears in a flash of light. The free spirit is already pulling power from the artifact in her grasp. And she has five more to collect ...

PLOT POINT ONE

The Set-up

To start the job, runners have a few days for legwork. Hitting a casino is not something that happens everyday, nor is it something that many have done successfully. This is a chance to introduce some plot hooks from another chapter as well as let the players develop their plan to hit the casino. Vegas is a city full of opportunity, and it is also central to the climactic events of this campaign. Runners calling Vegas home should feel a desire to defend it from the events that unfold.

Las Vegas remains a top-tier destination for tourists with money to burn. It has been left alone by the PCC because it works. An intricate web of entrenched corporate and criminal interests keep the peace in the city, and the money keeps flowing in. At the moment, Vegas is a town under a truce. Keeping the town quiet preserves the flow of tourists dropping their hard-earned money on games, shows and assorted vices. Criminals looking to launder money can also find plenty of opportunity. Vegas is the final leg on the "Pieman Run" where runners pull a job in each sector of Denver. Cooling off in the high-tech, air-conditioned casinos after frustrating the Zonies is a nice way to develop your reputation.

The Star of the Ancients is an amethyst-shaded crystal disc that is twenty-five centimeters in diameter. It was first discovered in Aztlan twenty-five years ago, and its magical properties were first discovered by an Aztechnology research team. It became a favorite target of runner teams until it turned up in Vegas five years ago and was purchased by the owners of The Dragon's Hoard Casino. No attempts to take it have been made since then—and no major attempts to rob the casino have been made, either.

The Star is connected to five other artifacts of a similar nature. Each one either protects or detects magic being used in its vicinity. Each artifact was discovered on a different continent. Those who studied the artifact group theorize there may be a seventh artifact, possibly located in Antarctica. Each artifact in this group has ended up in Las Vegas, held by five different casinos in secure vaults.

PLOT POINT TWO

The Highest Bidder

Half a dozen runner teams are still little more than a rustle in the shadows in a big city like Vegas. But someone paying close attention should be able to get an indication that something is going down. A washed-up rocker named Leon Burke has enough contacts in the shadows and enough functioning brain cells to have figured out what's about to go down (at least the loose strands of it, if not the finer points). He also has an ace up his sleeve—he knows where the artifacts are kept in each casino and is willing to part with that information. It won't be easy or cheap, but smart runners take every edge they can get. If Leon's info is legit, it will save them a lot of headaches.

Burke reaches out to the runners and tells them he has information they definitely would be interested in. The meet takes place at KAR-aoke, a large restaurant about a block away from The Strip. KAR-aoke seats patrons in mock-ups of classic cars from every decade of the 20th Century. The entertainment is provided by the patrons themselves. In the center of the restaurant is an AR stage where patrons can get up and sing along to their favorite songs. The performers can also "play" instruments ranging from simple button-pushing simulators to close approximations of the real thing. The patrons in the vehicles vote on who offered the best performance, and this leads to quite a competition among the regulars.

A scan of the restaurant could reveal (Perception + Intuition (2) Test) that there are other people who look like runners at this place. Leon has a master plan that requires all the different runner teams to be in one place, and the establishment where he currently works is as good a place as any.

The presence of the other runners offer an excellent opportunity for the gamemaster. It's also a good place to introduce past associates and old enemies. Not every runner present has to be a character of future import, but this provides a useful opportunity to foreshadow future campaign developments or introduce relationships that could keep the runners' lives interesting in the future. The other teams could also be a way to introduce replacement characters should terrible things befall the runners during the course of the adventure.

The players may decide to approach the other runners, but the others will be circumspect about what they are up to. The players can use a variety of social skills in an attempt to get the other runners to tell them what they are up to. Use the **Veteran Face** (p. 143) as the spokesperson for each group of runners. In the end, the other runners don't have a lot to tell the players—they were invited to Leon because he claimed to have information that would be important to them. They are in town to hit a casino, but this is information they are extremely reluctant to share.

Around midnight, the restaurant is closing and staff starts walking around to clear out the customers. Leon tells the runner that they don't have to go. When he finishes his shift, he brings the teams and representatives together. He explains who he is, even waiting for some applause at the mention of his old band's name (Adult Baby Party; runners recognize it on a successful [Relevant Music Knowledge] + Logic (3) Test). He makes it clear that there are a variety of runs going on in town, but they all have one thing in common. Each of them is looking for an artifact located on the property targeted by a runner team. Leon has been around town long enough to know a few secrets and he's willing to sell off those secrets to make the runners' lives easier.

Leon then makes himself open to offers. He could soak the runners for a sizable part of their fee, but he's more interested in being paid in favors. He wants to get back at all the people that he feels wronged him and led him to his unhappy life. His old band members, his old manager, and even his current boss are all people that he wouldn't mind seeing smacked around by some tough looking shadowrunners. It doesn't have to be a physical assault—character assassination, identity theft, and other things that make people's lives difficult would be welcome. This is a chance to introduce a story hook for a later run when Leon comes calling looking for his payment.



The number of teams at the auction can be determined by the gamemaster. The more teams on-site, the more likely it is things will end in chaos. The losers of the auction only have their personal sense of honor keeping them from persuading Leon to give up his information with violence. Leon's chip-addled brain didn't think this through. He knew he had information that was valuable, but he didn't take the time to ponder what runners would do when they felt they had been yanked around. He also has another secret—he only knows where The Dragon's Hoard artifact is kept. He wanted the other runners there to drive up the price but doesn't really know about the other five, other than the fact that they exist. He assumed the casinos have them, but he has only seen the Star of the Ancients. Revealing this fact may invoke a violent reaction from one of the other teams.

If the runners get Leon's information, they learn that the Star is not in The Dragon's Hoard's vault—instead, it's kept in the office of the casino manager, Michelle Lapizzi, on the casino's seventh floor. If they don't have this information, their best bet to find it is astral perception, as the Star casts a bright light on that plane.

PLOT POINT THREE

High Rollers in the High Rise

One way or another, the runners should have been able to discover that the Star of the Ancients is in the private gallery of casino manager Michelle Lapizzi on the building's seventh floor. Now they have to get it.

The casino and other entertainment options take up the hotels lower two floors; floors three through six are luxury rooms. The eighth floor has economy-class rooms. Lapizzi can usually be found in her office or on one of the casino floors.

The seventh floor is broken up into four major sections. There is a security checkpoint, a waiting area, an art gallery and the casino manager's actual office. The checkpoint empties into the waiting area. The waiting area connects to the gallery, the office, and the checkpoint. The office and the gallery are also connected. All the areas are covered by Rating 4 security devices. Visitors that Lapizzi does not want to see have to stay in the waiting room; people she is more anxious to impress are allowed to wait in her private gallery.

The elevator opens up into the security checkpoint, which is staffed by **Elite Corporate Security** (p. 138) 24/7. The two guards during the day are far more professional and courteous. These guards remain at the checkpoint the entire time they are on duty. At night, there are four guards, and they have shoot-to-kill orders for intruders. The night guards follow a patrol schedule that leaves two guards at the checkpoint at all times while the other two patrol the other rooms. Along with the visual patrols, the guards have links to cameras in each room sitting in AROs that they leave open at all times.

The waiting area is sparsely decorated with plain, uncomfortable furniture. The wide-open space makes it difficult to hide behind things, and it is also supposed to make people waiting for the casino director uncomfortable. The main piece of furniture in the room is the executive assistant's desk, which is placed in front of the doors to the gallery. Lapizzi's assistant is there during normal office hours. She can decide who security lets through and who they turn away. The assistant coordinates Lapizzi's schedule while Lapizzi makes her way about the casino.

The gallery is where the Star of the Ancients is kept. It is hidden among a collection of art ranging from classical painting to modern sculpture. The oldest piece is a painting from the Impressionistic period, while the most recent piece is a fluid, shifting bit of abstract AR. The gallery does its best to obscure the importance of the Star. It is not identified by its proper name but simply given a place of origin and year of discovery. It is the only magically active piece in the collection. The case can be opened by defeating a Rating 4 biometric scanner hidden in the base of the display pedestal. There is also a keypad upon which a code (which is changed daily and is known by Lapizzi and the guards at the security desk) can be entered to open the case without an alarm.

Lapizzi's office is stylish and well furnished. It also is the only room on the floor with external windows. They are made of shatter resistant plexiglass with Armor Rating 6, Structure Rating 7. She also has a floor safe located under her desk. It features a Rating 4 biometric scanner. Inside are a loaded Ares Predator, 20,000 nuyen in old-school certified credsticks, and a getaway bag. The bag is packed with a fake SIN, two days worth of clothes, and today's code to open the case with the Star of the Ancients.

If the runners retained Leon's services, he is able to offer a forged ID with Michelle Lapizzi's biometrics. He stole the information during their final, angry confrontation and has held onto it ever since. Leon, arrogant as he is, knows he's not a very good thief but these professionals can hurt her in ways he never could. If the runners are unwilling to trade for a favor or two to him, Leon is willing to give them the ID if they bring him along on the run and allow him to do something juvenile in the casino director's office. Whether or not this is a violation of Kaze's terms is left up to the gamemaster, but whatever Leon does will certainly make it much harder for the runners to get back into Lapizzi's good graces if they ever want to come back to Vegas.

Runners looking to come in through the window are able to get a room in the floor above or below the office. Runners may attempt to cut through the floor or ceiling of their room—in either case, it has Armor Rating 12, Structure Rating 11. Additionally, each economy room is monitored by a hidden camera (Device Rating 3, Perception + Intuition (4) Test to notice it). An economy room is easier to get. A first-class room is more expensive, but a room in the right location offers a direct line up to the window of Lapizzi's office. The best economy room window is five meters west of Lapizzi's window, which makes the descent somewhat trickier.

LOCATIONS

THE DRAGON'S HOARD CASINO RESORT

Vegas has enough illusions for all visitors. The city is constructed of facades and trickery, all assembled in the name of emptying accounts and sending suckers home happy and poor. The Dragon's Hoard appeals to those who want to be surrounded by dragons and knights instead of Roman decadence while the house chips away at their nest egg. The casino's fantasy medieval theme features a castle exterior, tapestries in every room, and a dragon-attack show in the courtyard every hour on the hour, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

The Dragon's Hoard is one of Vegas' older operating casinos. Similar to resorts such as Excalibur and Treasure Island, it offers fantastic flair alongside the usual mix of gambling, shows, and booze. It rose to prominence in the late 2020s as people began to accept the Awakening and wanted to experience magic without the strange elements of social upheaval. The Hoard was the first casino in Vegas to feature metahuman entertainment. It traded on that reputation for many years until other casinos realized there was money to be made backing elf and ork acts.

The Dragon Hoard's current reputation is that of a middle-of-the-road resort. Tourists won't rub elbows with the rich and famous here. The casino balances the risqué entertainment needs of adults with the family-friendly upswings that happen every few years. The theming is mostly intact, though staff now wears simple black-and-white uniforms instead of the full-on costumes of a decade ago. The most recent addition was the dragon show, which features an illusory dragon and a whole lot of special effects. The show is contracted to run through the end of 2074.

The on-paper owners of the casino are Stinson Investment Capital, LLC. This is a front company for the O'Malley crime family. Seven of the ten major shareholders have some sort of connection to the syndicate. The O'Malley's use it as a laundering front as well as a pure profit-making enterprise. This means that while the casino has criminal connections, staff members are seldom involved in actual criminal activities. In fact, the casino has high employment standards to ensure that their money goes where it is belongs. Anyone who wants to work in the casino must have a squeaky-clean record and a good reputation. This doesn't mean syndicate members are unable to engage in shady deals. It just means that if they get caught, they will no longer be involved in the day-to-day operations of the casino.

Most guests of The Dragon's Hoard are tourists or corporate travellers looking for something a bit flashier than an AR "ghost room." The rooms feature actual furniture customized to look medieval. The rooms are also priced for this market. A "dungeon single" with textured StoneKrete walls and no window can be had for around 50 nuyen a night, while the Royal Keep luxury suite features an actual servant in costume (or a drone servant for extra privacy) as well a stunning view of the city for 1,500 nuyen a night. The building maintains its magic theme quite well. The elevators are done up as crystal levitators featuring "scrying walls" that feature a live video feed of the lower floors and public areas. Some of the staff enjoy getting into the illusion, referring to commlinks

as "wands." A few returning guests dress up as well. The Dragon's Hoard hosts an annual gathering of Renaissance Fair enthusiasts called Ren Con.

Non-gambling entertainments include multiple shops that sell everything from replica swords to logo T-shirts. These shops are centered on a shopping space made to look like an old medieval town. The shops are mixed with AR elements representing the less profitable and more educational elements of the setup. The sword shop, for example, features an AR blacksmith that shows off ancient sword-making techniques. Many of the AR displays are sponsored by corporations, such as the Wuxing Wizard's Workshop. A weekly AR jousting tournament is a popular draw.

The Grail Room is the Hoard's main entertainment area. The room gets its name from the luxurious drinking goblets at the center of each table. Replicas can be found in the gift shop or purchased from the casino's AR catalog. Guests of the hotel get priority tickets and seating. Currently, the afternoon show is a sasquatch singer/dancer/comedian named Johnny Footthumb, while the evening show is a topless dance revue entitled *Awakening* that is vaguely elf- and magic-themed. The Grail Room also features touring acts, but the current management prefers smaller acts locked into longer contracts. The only act the management voluntarily released from a contract was Leon Burke, the former lead singer of the prog voco band Adult Baby Party.

The biggest game changers in the past ten years are AR casino games. Many gamblers don't leave their rooms to come out to the casino floor. AR games can mimic realistic settings such as Old West saloon poker (complete with gunfights) and secret agent roulette (complete with sex simulations involving dangerous double agents). AR games are available in every part of the public area of the casino as well as in the hotel rooms. Some of the more popular games have Matrix sites where fans discuss strategy and develop personas to interact with each other after they leave the casino floor.

Physical games are still very popular. Blackjack, slots, roulette and keno still have large areas of the dedicated gaming floor. The Dragon's Hoard keeps some traditional slots running for those who like the tactile sensation of winning and losing coins. Pachinko is also available, mixed in the slot banks. These traditional games have evolved with the times. Modern slot machines and table games directly run microtransactions with an authorized commlink or make charges directly to a room account. They may still use chips or other markers, but payouts occur at the game table instead of a counting cage.

Magic on the floor is taken very seriously. Each shift has at least one astrally active security staff member watching the gaming floor. Awakened customers are closely monitored. The casinos are unable to legally keep spellcasters from playing games, but security tries to minimize their time at the tables. Michelle Lapizzi, the casino manager, prefers to use honey instead of vinegar when she can. Magicians playing the casino cycle through high-roller benefits more quickly. Her thinking is that a mage who is at a show or playing AR games in a suite is less likely to take the casino for a big payday.



Other casinos vary in their policies toward magicians. At some establishments, they are treated the same way that known card counters or cheats. Some casinos might quietly escort the magician from the premises as soon as they attempt to enter. Others might have them make a quick stop out back with the house troll enforcer for a discussion before they are allowed to play, just to ensure that they're clear on the house rules.

The casino has a basement vault three levels below the entry level. It has a collection of gems that the casino occasionally uses as currency alternatives, along with some valuables stored by casino guests. Four **Elite Corporate Security** (p. 138) and one **Elite Security Mage** (p. 140) guard the vault at all times; the mage has a bound Force 4 spirit of air with three services. There is a Force 5 mana barrier surrounding the vault; there is also a case inside the vault, which unwitting runners may believe holds the Star of the Ancients. The case is an anchor for a Force 4 mana barrier.

PEOPLE

LEON BURKE

Nobody knows the name Leon Burke. But when he adds the phrase "Lead Singer of Adult Baby Party" to the marquee, people nod in appreciation. His band first made a name for itself in the mid-'60s as the heir apparent to Concrete Dreams, and Burke once recorded a duet with Maria Mercurial. A lot of the stories Burke tells begin with that phrase. It took him a little over a year to go from a promising rocker to a BTL-fried has been who was kicked out of his own band. He kept diving for rock bottom but just kept sinking lower and lower.

Burke thought things were looking up when he landed a regular gig in the Grail Room at the casino. The management could handle a chip addict, but the truth is Burke was an asshole even when he was sober. Lapizzi bought out his contract the night after he sat in silence for an hour because the audience started singing along to Adult Baby Party's biggest hit. Little did she know Burke had been pretty observant during his time at the casino—and he had learned a fair amount about what happens behind the scenes there, since he sold a few BTLs to the guards. If the runners pay his asking price, he blows it all on chips and plans to die a rocker's death, fried out on beetles.

Should Burke survive his bender, he could prove a fertile source of additional adventures. Runners looking for another shot at Lapizzi might receive a frantic call from him promising anything in return for some protection. Burke could also vanish just in time for one of his bandmates to come looking for him in the hopes of pulling together a lucrative reunion tour. Burke still has a few contacts in the entertainment industry who might take pity on him if he does a favor for the runners. He might even be willing to write the runners a theme song as part of their payment.

Male Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	3	4	2	5	4	5	2	4	4.76	8	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/9

Armor (B/I): 3/3

Skills: Athletics skill group 1, Close Combat skill group 1, Electronics skill group 1, Firearms skill group 1, Influence skill group 3, Instruction 2, Perception 6, Pilot Aircraft 3, Pilot Exotic Vehicle: Hot Air Balloon 3, Pilot Ground Craft 1, Pilot Watercraft 1, Stealth Group 1

Knowledge Skills: BTL Dealers 6, Chinese 2, Cybertech Brands 3, Groupies 3, Media Outlets 3, Music History 2, Rock Nightclubs 2, Songwriting 4

Languages: English N, Spanish 1, Sperethiel 1

Qualities: Addiction (severe, BTL chips), First Impression, Lucky, Resistance to Toxins, Scorched

Augmentations: Attention coprocessor 3 (alphaware), cyberears [alphaware, Rating 4, w/ audio enhancement 3, balance aug-menter, damper, ear recording unit, increased sensitivity, sound link, spatial recognizer], datajack (alphaware), penile implants (alphaware), sim module (hot-sim) (alphaware), voice modulator (alphaware)

Gear: Armor vest, Honda Spirit

Weapons:

Colt Manhunter [Pistols, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 16 (c), w/ laser sight]

Forearm Snap-Blades [Blades, Reach —, DV 3P, AP —]

Katana [Blades, Reach 1, DV 4P, AP -1]



... VISION QUEST ...

Incoming Message

users/blog/Sunshine/Federal Offense Friday

From: <AH.AH.NO PEEKING>

To: <AH.AH.NO PEEKING>

Re: Fifth Message

The sensors went down again today. That's the third time this month. It's bad enough I have to go out into the middle of the Mojave to reboot the damn program. But these sandstorms make it actively dangerous. I can't see anything on the drive out. I could run right into a rock and that would be the end of it. I think the sandstorms are what's causing the outages but there's never any sand inside the sensors. Those things are sealed tight.

I understand that a weather station is not a priority out here in Big Corporate Country, but if they want me to do my job, they have to give me functioning equipment. If they don't want me to do my job, why the hell are they sending me out to this blazing-hot hellhole?

At least they're going to be sending someone to take a look at things. My main job today is going to be getting things ready for this expert. There are a lot of weird requirements—put this piece of furniture here, move this plant there, set this lever to this position—so obviously I'm dealing with someone picky. I hope they won't be too big a pain in my ass when they're here.

- Nothing like the mewling of a bureaucrat to make me want to call up my fixer and see what work is available.
- Auftheben
- This seems pretty weak compared to some of the emails you've posted here.
- Haze

- If you knew the IC I had to melt to bring this to you, you'd be more impressed. Though the email originated on a PCC server, I picked it up off a military address.
- Sunshine

- Nah, still not impressed. :)
- Bull

- Places of such extreme conditions are often rumored to be areas where the shroud between this and the astral plane is the weakest.
- Man-of-Many-Names

- So why haven't inspect spirits been pouring out of the desert?
- Haze

- Nobody wants to live in those conditions. Not even bugs.
- Black Mamba

- So it sounds like our desert friend is about to get a visit from a wujen. A wujen at a weather station means either that there is going to be some funky stuff going on with the weather soon, or there's some interesting astral activity going on nearby, and the wujen wants to prepare a bunker to investigate it—or keep him safe from whatever's out there.
- Jimmy No

OVERVIEW

While this chapter can stand on its own, it naturally flows from the previous chapter, **Astral Weakness**. At the end of that adventure, Kaze, the free spirit who hired them, took their artifact along with five others and drained the magical energy from them. A creature with that kind of reserve of magical energy should be troubling to anyone. Runners may be motivated to chase off after the spirit in order to see what it might do with so much energy. Runners who chase after Kaze won't get paid for doing so, but they stand to make out like bandits in the Karma department. Triple the normal Karma reward at the end of this run for teams who strike out on their own. It can be hard to get runners to act on their own accord sometimes, so those teams should be awarded for their initiative.

Awakened runners can feel the power radiating from Kaze. Its departure from Vegas leaves a trail in astral space like a shooting star. Spirits start to gossip and tell the magicians that something big is going down soon. If the runners stay near Vegas, they can feel the changes in the air. Spirits become harder to control. Bound spirits feel a pull toward the desert that they can barely resist. The astral space around Vegas seems more dangerous, more vulnerable. The only one who knows what this means or what could happen to the city is Kaze. The city is now open to a magical attack on a large scale—an attack Kaze is planning with the energy she gained from the drained artifacts.

Another factor that might push the runners to investigate the trail is the heat in Vegas. Kaze hired six teams to hit six casinos on the same night. Between the local police, the NAN authorities, the corporate security, and the criminal syndicates, a lot of feathers are ruffled in Sin City. Contacts are lying low, and they encourage the runners to do the same. A shack out in the Mojave Desert may not sound glamorous, but compared to some of the fates encountered in the desert by criminals that have upset the power players in Vegas, it's a five-star luxury. A devious gamemaster might even have the shack already setup as a local safehouse if the runners are familiar with the Vegas street scene. Vegas is a good base for the runners, and the sooner things return to normal the sooner they can get back to the lifestyle they've chosen.

Runners might decide to take a new job in another city far away from the heat. This is a perfect chance for the gamemaster to slip something in for her own plot devices or run an adventure from the *Horizon* series (*A Fistful of Credsticks*, *Anarchy: Subsidized*, and *Colombian Subterfuge*). Slotting a separate adventure gives the gamemaster a chance to lay in more foreshadowing about the importance of what's going on in the desert. Perhaps characters start dreaming of nuclear war. Spirit allies mention Kaze by name and how it is calling out around the world for aid. When the new run is complete, the runners will want to take the first semiballistic back to Vegas and track their former employer down.

For those teams without magical support or who won't move a muscle without the sound of nuyen being dumped into their account, a Johnson can approach them to track Kaze. If they weren't involved in the initial heist, Whispers Lapizzi of The Dragon's Hoard hires them to track down the Star of the

INCOMING FEED.....



VISION QUEST

Ancients, or one of the other casino owners might have them track down their artifact. Runners who successfully track down Kaze and determine the fate of the stolen artifacts pick up 25,000 nuyen to split as they see fit. They earn an additional 2,000 per artifact they return from the shack. The artifacts are now useless, but Mr. Johnson honors the deal. The Johnson has connections to the Atlantean Foundation, and Kaze's ability to drain artifacts is unusual. They will gladly pay more if the runners can convince Kaze to show up at the Foundation for testing.

This run requires at least one runner who is able to astrally project. The run could be modified to allow non-Awakened runners to witness the ritual. That would require some impressive physical feats, including rappelling down the side of an abandoned missile silo. A full force of runners might be more likely to stop the ritual. Let them stop it. The Blood Flood still happens, but in this case it was not the original plan of Kaze to unleash it. What the free spirit had in mind was more devastating. When the runners are in place to stop her at The Dam (see **Plot Point Three**), they will do so in a more final manner. The gamemaster could also send an NPC runner down to the ritual to report back or let one of the players try out a magical character for a session.

PLOT POINT ONE

Storm of the Century

The Mojave Desert is one of the least hospitable places on Earth. It receives less than 32 centimeters of rainfall in a year. The temperature runs from -7 degrees Celsius in the winter to 49 degrees Celsius in the summer. Death Valley is well known for its murderous heat. Small towns string the highways that cut through the desert, especially those leading to Las Vegas. Only a few hundred meters from the highway the desert spreads out as far as the eye can see. Heading off into the wasteland is easy to do; surviving it unprepared is almost impossible.

Little is known of the changes to this part of the world made by the Awakening due to the nasty conditions. Sending all-too-rare magicians into a no-man's-land is a waste of valuable resources. The runners, hot on the trail of Kaze, discover many of those dangers all too soon. Trails of large creatures washed away by the sand. Wrecked vehicles half-buried in the dunes. The smell of ozone in the air as the heat boils the air itself. Visions that could be rare spirits or hallucinations brought on by the heat. Gusts of wind that sound more like whispers or dying groans. The Mojave was a scary place before magic returned, but now it's downright terrifying.

One of the most obvious ways to highlight the isolation is to make Matrix connections unreliable. There are no towers to boost signal strength. Satellites cover the vast expanse, but reception can be lost by high winds or vicious heat. Sensitive electronic equipment is not meant to survive extreme conditions. Sand gets everywhere, and heat affects processor performance. Hackers will be kept busy making sure their equipment survives a day in the desert.

Kaze's trail leads the runners directly into a vicious sandstorm. The storm rattles their vehicle. Keeping it upright requires a Dexterity + Pilot Ground Vehicle (3) Test. If the roll glitches, the vehicle not only turns over but becomes wedged in a dune,

impossible to extract without significant digging. A critical glitch means the vehicle is so badly stuck that it requires mechanical assistance getting out. Weathering the storm in the vehicle is a bad idea. Most vehicles are not sealed for surviving a sandstorm, and they will be battered and could start leaking sand. The runners need someplace more secure.

The runners find shelter from the storm as soon as they can; luckily, there's a building nearby. The building looks like an Old West saloon from the outside (see **Straight Shooter Saloon**, p. 113). There are no roads or highways nearby. It may look old, but it seems to be weathering the storm very well. No building from the time period could have survived two hundred years of the Mojave heat and storms.

Under the saloon facade stands the remains of an American nuclear missile silo. Kaze's trail ends inside this building, but the runners' day is just beginning.

PLOT POINT TWO

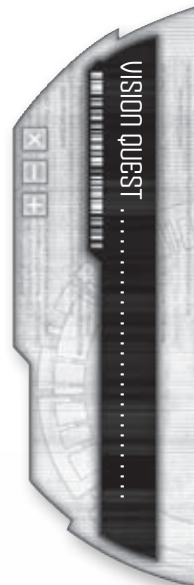
Five Kilometers Below

The runners have a few moments to settle in and protect themselves from the storm raging outside. Runners tracking Kaze will lose the spirit's trail momentarily. To follow it again, at least one runner needs to enter astral space. The saloon is a good place for runners to leave their bodies without risk. Their companions can take some time to recover from the storm and discuss their next bit of strategy while

The astral runners quickly realize Kaze didn't disappear. She went down. The old saloon is built over an old nuclear missile silo. Kaze's trail leads down to the bottom of the abandoned silo. Astral travel is the easiest way to get inside. The site was decommissioned long ago and possesses little in the way of astral security. Getting to a physical entry means going back in the storm, not to mention digging through a few dozen feet of sand. The runners' best bet is to let astral travellers follow Kaze's trail and leave the rest to guard their bodies back in the saloon.

Moving down the silo is slow work. The astral space inside the silo is strange. Travelers are able to assense something very powerful at the bottom. It's a descent of nearly two kilometers down to the ritual space. The runners must pass through offices, barracks, and the empty shaft where the missile was kept. Proceeding down at a rate that doesn't draw attention takes time. Combine that with the time dilation that occurs between the astral plane, and the real world runners will be stuck in the saloon for a little while (to keep them occupied, the gamemaster can throw some hungry gila demons (p. 110, *Running Wild*) at them and alternate their combat turns with the mages' astral progress).

Other spirits are drawn into the silo. Spirits making their home in the desert are a common sight, but the runners also see unlikely spirits drawn to Kaze's call. Small spirits as well as powerful ones drift past the runners into the ritual space. These spirits can be talked to as normal. The one command the spirits are unable to follow is anything keeping them from being drawn to the downward spiral. The spirits will use whatever means they can to avoid this fate. They may be unable to attack the mage that binds them, but they will be more than happy to join any assault by the Guardians on the runners holed up above the silo.



Spirits bound to the runners are in danger of being dragged into Kaze's siren song. A bound or ally spirit caught up in the ritual is an excellent way to make things personal for the runners. The spirit being caught by Kaze also gives the runners a link to Kaze's whereabouts. The gamemaster can use the link to dispense clues about the next move and warn runners when Kaze grows more powerful. A spirit link to the ritual named Liliputina is also provided for runners that have no such spirits in their groups.

Not all the spirits in the silo are there for the ritual. Guardian spirits were awakened for defense against outsiders. These spirits take on the forms of Cold War soldiers reversed, as if seen through a photographic negative. The soldiers wear a mash-up of identifying symbols. One might have the thick fur hat of a Russian soldier. Another might wear mirrored aviator sunglasses that cast reflections of other spaces. They communicate to each other using a language of clicks that sound like a Geiger counter reading radioactivity. They attack with weapons that look like classic guns of the era but make no noise. Wounds inflicted on them appear as smoking bullet holes.

The ritual space is lit up in astral. The walls are covered in ancient symbols. Circles of spirits spin in alternating directions, each chanting something different in forgotten tongues. When Kaze arrives, her right hand is glowing brightly as she moves to the center of the circle. There are no Guardians here, but the spirits taking part in the ritual are unforgiving toward anyone trying to interfere. The circling spirits dissolve as Kaze grows brighter and brighter until she points her glowing hand downward and discharges a huge amount of energy into the ground.

Getting out of the ritual space is an even great challenge. Astral travellers had the distraction of the ritual and the natural draw of nearby spirits to camouflage their entry. Now the silo is filled with guardian spirits who don't appreciate interlopers. The storm outside dies down after the completion of the ritual. The longer the runners stay near the silo, the angrier the guardians get.

PLOT POINT THREE

Showdown at the Straight Shooter

Even if the astral travellers go undetected, the Guardians become aware of their presence soon enough. Kaze is too busy with her ritual to deal with interference. Her attunement to the ley lines allows her to notice the runners guarding the bodies of their companions. She has a few options to use. The important thing is that Kaze completes the ritual, which has serious consequences for Salt Lake City in the next chapter. Keeping the astral travellers worried about their bodies lets Kaze complete the ritual. Kaze's heightened power is difficult to stop but it can be done. The runners will get another chance after Salt Lake City.

Guardians are sent to manifest and kill the runners in the saloon. They try to break through the walls of the saloon to attack. The main challenge of the guardians is that they keep coming. There are hundreds of spirits in the silo that attempt to overwhelm the runners. Smart runners will button them up in single file kill zones. The Guardians' main weakness is that they can't do anything directly to physically harm the runners, though they can affect the saloon itself. The runners can seek a different shelter if the storm has died down enough.

Kaze also summons paranormal animals to break down the doors. The Mojave is home to all sorts of deadly creatures. The animals could be small ones that sneak in through holes in the construction, or something large that threatens to destroy the building. Pick a creature that offers a unique challenge to the runners. If they are heavy hitters, let them loose some firepower on something that can take it. If they handle things through clever ideas, send in an animal that simply can't be blasted back outside.

The dead artifacts are located in the saloon, since Kaze could not take them down to the ritual space. She drained the power from the artifacts and left the husks here. The artifacts can be retrieved and sold back to their original owners. Returning with the artifacts is a good way to keep Vegas as a base of operations.

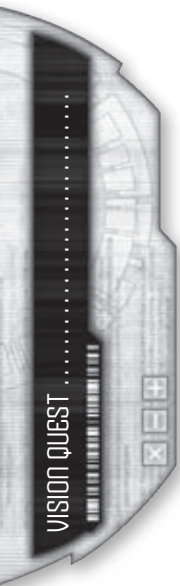
Returning to the saloon after the adventure proves to be difficult. If the runners insist on coming back, give them a reason for finding the saloon again. Gamemasters looking to link these adventures more directly could have **Nathaniel Blackeagle** (see p. 133) arrive at the Saloon. He is on Kaze's trail, expressing suspicion over what the free spirit plans to do with its newfound energy. Gamemasters looking to use Blackeagle in this capacity should have him walk the line between ally and enemy. He wants to stop whatever Kaze has planned, but he also is aware of the role the runners played in compromising Las Vegas' safety from magical attacks.

Game Info

CROSS-CUTTING

This technique is borrowed from films and television. When a group of heroes on-screen splits up, the action often cuts between the smaller parties to maintain tension. Experienced *Shadowrun* gamemasters should be familiar with this technique when combat spans astral, AR, and the material plane. The second and third plot points are a perfect place to practice this technique. It keeps both smaller parties invested in what's going on at the table rather than drifting away to check their smartphone or flip through their books.

The trick to maintaining interest is knowing when to cut. A great tension-builder is cutting away just after a player makes a pivotal die roll. It can also help the gamemaster buy a little time to account for runners who love to come up with unorthodox plans. Another good break point is just before an initiative roll occurs. This gives the off-screen team time to formulate a strategy while their non-combat members take care of business elsewhere. And if both sides get involved in separate battles, cutting between fights round-by-round can get players out of their chairs and antsy for the next round. Nothing gets a player into a combat quicker than wanting to know if their crazy tactics worked or backfired.



LOCATIONS

THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER SALOON

The only building standing in the storm is what looks like an Old West saloon in the middle of nowhere. As the sandstorm howls around them, it looks like the best place to dig in until the storm passes. The saloon is worn down and dilapidated. No highway or other paved roadway reaches it. But what look to be simple wooden walls withstand the heavy winds and sand. Getting inside requires moving the various pieces of furniture blocking the main doorway.

Inside the saloon things are a bit different. The saloon is meant to look old, but there obviously more modern conveniences here. The inside looks like an old restaurant with an empty salad bar and disconnected soda fountain. The building housed an old theme restaurant for folks who wanted a cowboy dinner when visiting the desert. The good news is that the industrial restaurant equipment inside makes for excellent barricades and protection from the storm outside. The bad news is that the runners are not going anywhere while the storm rages.

The saloon is actually the entryway to a nuclear missile silo. The soldiers took turns as the sole employee at the saloon back when it was in regular operation. They checked identification and let people into the silo through a false door in the outhouse out back. The outhouse has since blown away, and the physical entrance is now covered by a few feet of sand. Astral travellers looking to follow Kaze's trail will be able to follow her into the silo, but the rest of the runners will have to sit tight up top. Runners may be reluctant to split the party, but it's the only way things can get done.

SILO GOLF-ECHO 812

Silo Golf-Echo 812 was the nuclear site where nobody wanted to be stationed. It was situated below the Mojave Desert and was where you were sent if you were a screw-up or had made an enemy of a superior. The site was given over to the Pueblo Corporate Council, and anything useful was taken from it long ago. The PCC considered using it for storage or other non-essential functionality, but the inconvenient location made repurposing very difficult. So this relic of the Cold War sits slowly decaying, almost completely forgotten.

The spirits remember the location all too well. It is a man-made scar on the natural beauty of the desert, though it may be hidden from outside view. To the spirits, though, that only makes it worse. Something hidden out of site is easier for humans to completely forget about, and it will never be repaired as long as it remains forgotten. But Kaze's plans discovered something still useful in the site. A natural nearby cavern connects to the ley or dragon lines that cross the planet. She sees this as a fitting place to get a measure of revenge against the human who have squandered the gifts of the Awakening so foolishly. The spirits may be toxic. The spirits may just be infected with hundreds of years of waiting for a war that never came.

The first few floors contain abandoned office spaces. The US Army was careful to remove all sensitive data from these offices. They are mostly rooms filled with empty heavy desks and long-forgotten vending machines. These facilities are at least fifty years

old with some areas stretching back into the 20th century. Strange drafts blow through the offices and scatter the brittle paperwork like leaves. Far-off sounds add a ghostly mystery to this area.

The barracks contain living space for 200 personnel. Most of that space is rows and rows of rusted-out bunks and empty foot lockers. There is an empty armory as well. There may be a few pieces of sentimental or historical value but nothing of value here. The Guardians not watching the silo center around this space. Those disrupted or banished materialize on the empty cots slowly congealing back to human form. The faster the runners pass through this area, the less likely it is they will be detected before the ritual. This is the most difficult area to sneak past.

The control center is the final floor before the vast space of the silo. Windows peer out into the blackness. Some are broken, some are not. The electronics have been gutted. Smaller pieces like monitors and computers were removed. Anything too large was smashed, burned, and gutted. Doorways from the command center floors lead to gantries that ring the concrete walls. These gantries have rusted and become dangerous to anything putting weight on them. Such things offer little concern to projectors, but if a gantry snaps and breaks (if, for example, a visitor glitches on a relevant roll) it still might draw the attention of the Guardians..

The silo itself is empty. The missile that had been inside was disassembled shortly before the transfer of lands from the US government to the Native American Nations. It still possesses a certain aura of dread. It's a poorly lit, cavernous hole in the ground. There are occasional lights that flicker on. Bats, rats, and other vermin scuttle down the walls and flap through the darkness. The mood is eerie and somewhat tense. Just as the artificial lights flicker and die, an eerie glow trickles up from the bottom of the shaft. It bounces and shimmers off the spirits being drawn downward.

There are some natural caverns located at the bottom of the missile site. It is here that the actual ritual will take place. The cavern is difficult to get to on the material plane. Getting inside would take an experienced cave climber making a few risky jumps. For spirits that pass through walls and stone, it is much simpler. The cave is filled with an ancient beauty of its own. The strange glow of the ritual and the participants makes it even more haunting.

BESTIARY

GUARDIANS OF THE SILO

Spirits existed before the Awakening, and there were some individuals sensitive to their whispers and manipulations. This sensitivity explained hauntings and supernatural phenomena. The astral space around some locations collected negative astral energy. The silo was one such area. Reports of strange things happening in the silo were suppressed by the U.S. government. These events increased in number and strength after the Awakening. Visiting NAN officials sensed that something was different about the silo. Once the Army removed its equipment, the NAN did not even consider using the space.

The Guardians, long fed on the fears of nuclear war, manifest themselves as spirits from the Cold War. They prefer the form of soldiers. The soldiers wear a mix of military uniforms from various periods throughout history. Their attacks come in the manner of



old military weapons. Unless tipped off that there are intruders in the silo, the soldiers stand at attention. They do not interfere unless attacked or sent by Kaze to do its bidding. They are an intimidating force, but like the soldiers whose form they mimic, they only follow orders.

Two versions of the spirits are included below, a guardian spirit and a toxic nuclear spirit. These spirits could also be found around places where military power left a scar in history. Scenes of mass slaughter and former military prisons could also manifest spirits like the Guardians. This spirits protect their charges by any means necessary and defend home bases like guard dogs. Both spirits could be part of the silo. Each claims the silo as their domain.

Gamemasters looking for more action in their games could set the two types of spirits against each other with the runners in the middle. Kaze brought them together temporarily for the duration of the ritual. Without the free spirit to unite them, the cold war in Silo Gold-Echo 812 begins yet again.

Guardians of the Silo (Guardian Spirit, Force 4)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
5	6	7	6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	11	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/10

Armor (B/I): 5/5

Skills: Assensing 4, Astral Combat 4, Blades 4, Clubs 4, Counterspelling 4, Dodge 4, Exotic Ranged Weapon: Elemental Attack 4, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Weapons:

Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, Reach —, DV 3S, AP —]

Elemental Attack: Fire [Special Weapons, DV 4P(fire), AP –half, SS, RC 1]

Silo Guardians (Nuclear Spirit, Force 4)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
5	6	7	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	11	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/10

Armor (B/I): 5/5

Skills: Assensing 4, Astral Combat 4, Dodge 4, Exotic Ranged Weapon: Elemental Attack 4, Exotic Ranged Weapon: Laser 4, Flight 4, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Weapons:

Engulf: Radiation [DV 4P(rad), AP –half]

Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, DV 6P(rad), AP –half]

Elemental Attack: Radiation [Special Weapons, DV 4P(rad), AP –half, SS]

LILIPUTIANA

Liliputiana remembers when Kaze was simply an air spirit. Air spirits were Lili's favorite to watch since they dance and fly through the air. Lili's roots kept her from moving, but they also kept her from changing. She watched as Kaze moved more and more slowly. Kaze would come back to the desert with a sadness that radiated and touched anyone and anything nearby. Kaze stopped singing and started whispering. She whispered to a great many spirits. When she was done whispering, those spirits became as grim faces as Kaze. This made Lili quite sad., but it also kept Lili curious. When Kaze sounded the call to gather, Lili pulled up her roots and made her way to the silo.

Lili is a spirit of the life in the desert. Life does exist there, though it is quiet and stout. Not every spirit drawn to Kaze's ritual is under the free spirit's thrall. Lili is also drawn to any astral travelers, as it has never seen spirits like them before. It is happy to share whatever information it observes. Lili acts like a curious child. It answers questions honestly but simply. It blooms if the runners are nice to her but acts more like its cactus namesake if they brush it off. It is drawn into the pull of Kaze's ritual if the runners don't stop her.

Lili is a perfect connection to Kaze's schemes if the runner's don't have bound spirits of their own. Lili may befriend those spirits as well or eventually be bound by a runner. It returns to warn of Kaze's bigger ritual. Lili is also excellent for information about goings-on in the Mojave Desert. It observes quietly all day and is happy to report back for a little attention. Lili may even find the runners to help with her own problems, such as a body buried near one of her favorite places. Lili is a chance to give spirits some character beyond the bonus they provide to a roll.

Plant Spirit, Force 1

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/9

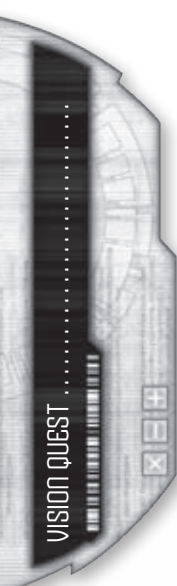
Armor (B/I): 4/4

Skills: Assensing 1, Astral Combat 1, Counterspelling 1, Dodge 1, Perception 1, Unarmed Combat 1

Weapons:

Engulf: Plant [DV 1S, AP –hald]

Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, Reach —, DV 3S, AP —]





Incoming Message

THE BLOOD FLOOD! A KSAF SPECIAL REPORT

Sprawls of the Sixth World often seem to be an endangered species. Just ask Chicago, Los Angeles, Lagos, Bogotá or Sarajevo. Most of these cities fell to conditions unique to the Awakened world. At this time Salt Lake City is still hanging on, but its existence is threatened by the something that is usually welcomed in arid climates: rainfall. An unceasing rain has fallen for ten days, and no end is in sight. The ongoing storm has defied all weather patterns, predictions, and scientific attempt to explain what has been going on.

The sewers of the sprawl have been completely overwhelmed. Most streets are impassable, and many hold cars that are stranded in the water, or are entirely submerged. Rescue aircraft regularly patrol the valley, looking for people who are stranded on the rooftops of flooded buildings. The local Matrix nodes have become crippled due to the amount of equipment damaged in the flooding, and the existing capacity is stressed due to people crying out for help or looking for friends and family who they have lost track of.

Another complicating factor in this situation is the nature of the rain. Its longevity is only one factor—the other strange aspect of it is its coloration. To understand this, look at the pictures attached to this article, which are completely unedited. Video to follow in the next update.

- The water must have damaged Sunshine's camera. All the water has a strange tint to it.
- Kia
- I've checked multiple feeds for flooding pictures and that tint is in all of them.
- Pistons
- That's the way it really looks—it's red rain. Religious sites are doing backflips talking about the End Times Yet Again. We're

now officially at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the world being on the verge of coming to an end.

- Winterhawk
- Seventy-fifth? Try two-thousand-plus.
- Goat Foot

As you can see from the pictures, the falling rain has a distinct reddish tinge, which is even more clear when the water pools together. That has led to locals calling the rain the "Blood Flood." To them, this captures not just the color of the rain, but the apocalyptic feel it has brought to them.

The flooding has brought enough chaos even without the apocalyptic feel, as people cannot get to their jobs, cannot meet socially, and often are stranded in their own homes. People with personal watercraft are being relied on to obtain supplies and coordinate meetings, but some of them have chosen to use their boats to their personal advantage. Looting and robbery from boats is rampant, and law enforcement authorities are scrambling to access as many watercraft as possible in an effort to keep the peace.

The isolation of the people has given them time to speculate on what is happening and why, and several theories have developed. Red rain has been seen before, especially in areas with significant quantities of red sand or dust, but the color of this rain is different. Additionally, having a dust-tinted rain (or any rain, really) that falls for this long of a period is unusual.

Other speculation says that the tint could be related to micro-organisms in the water. *Chromatiaceae* bacteria thrive in oxygen-thin water, and some scientists have speculated that it could be giving the water its tint.

- That would be an extremely high amount of airborne bacteria. It would be difficult to find a natural source that would put that much in the air.
- Nephrine



Incoming Message

Other residents reject scientific explanations and believe the rain is nothing less than a sign from God. Salt Lake is a religious sprawl, and many of its denizens are quite comfortable with the notion of the intervention of a deity in the daily affairs of humans. Mormon leaders have stated that they do not believe the rain to be divine retribution, but many members seem to disagree. Several church meetinghouses have become gathering points for residents who believe the “last days” are upon them, and they are prepared to fight with whatever they have against any evildoers who manage to survive God’s wrath. Between the water, the looters, and the avengers of the apocalypse, the streets of the sprawl have become quite treacherous.

- They speculate that this is science, or that it is an act of God, and they do not take enough time to wonder if it is the effect of magic. They missed what should have been the most obvious.
- Man-of-Many Names
- It is a test of power and dire things to come.
- Arete
- Look, guys, I hate to interrupt your inscrutability contest, but has anybody heard from Sunshine since this article went up?
- FastJack

OVERVIEW

Salt Lake City is under water. The natural disaster came out of nowhere, a steady rain that has gone on for days. Many buildings have first stories that are completely submerged in water. The sewers, unable to handle the volume of rain coming down, have completely backed up. A deadly mix of sewage and floodwater flows through the streets of the sprawl. Cars are submerged. Debris flows through the streets. Many of those trapped in the city await rescue on rooftops or upper floors. Looting has hit many of the corporate areas of the city. Security troops are fighting back, spilling blood in the water.

This is no regular flood. The rain has come down for ten days straight. Weather patterns have moved around the storms, leaving it in place as they pass by. The rain is steady—not too light, not too heavy. It also has a strange quality in that it falls with a warmth to it. The large pools that gather in places such as sunken stairwells and valleys have a strange red tint. The Awakened in the city note the water has a strange aura, similar in ways to the aura that surrounds the blood of a still-living being. These two properties combine to give this disaster its catchy nickname: the Blood Flood.

The runners are contacted by a trusted fixer and are hired to extract Spencer Groth from the city. Groth is a data manager at a software company who has an important program on his commlink. He needs to escape Salt Lake City now that the PCC has cordoned off the city. The program he’s developing is sensitive, and his employers would prefer not to have it lost or copied by the PCC. Payment for the run is set at 40,000 nuyen total, with

an additional 20,000 bonus if Groth is brought in alive. Successes on the standard negotiation test either add 2,000 nuyen to the recovery fee per success or 4,000 nuyen to the bonus per success.

If the runners do some legwork, they can discover that Groth is the head of application development at a Renraku subsidiary. The software company's main project is reverse engineering pieces of Consensus code recovered from stolen servers. The data is important, but the company wants the man as well. Groth is a loyal company employee that grew up in Renraku's Seattle arcology. He made it out of the Shutdown as a child with his family; his father is now a retired manager. Extractions like these show employees that Renraku looks after its own, which bolsters morale.

There are two main complications to getting into Salt Lake City. The first is the PCC cordon that surrounds the city until the flooding is over. The whole city is surrounded by heavy security vehicles and personnel, and law enforcement is obtaining as many boats as possible to keep an eye on the sprawl and the surrounding area. The other problem is getting a vehicle. Anything too big will get noticed. Communications inside Salt Lake City are hit or miss, making it difficult to arrange for the appropriate watercraft. Players might be able to connect with someone that can prep a vehicle inside the city limits, or they might ask for Mr. Johnson to help them make arrangements for them. If he does, he might reduce their final payment in exchange.

PLOT POINT ONE

Running the Blockade

The flood has mucked up the streets of Salt Lake City, making them mostly impassable. Roadways are flooded, bridges are collapsed, and the few dry roadways are choked with abandoned cars. An evacuation order was given three days ago, but it probably came two days too late. Refugees have resorted to escaping by foot, swimming, or boating out of the area using whatever makeshift craft they can find. Looting and crime is happening inside the sprawl at an alarming rate.

The PCC set up a perimeter around the city, but soldiers rarely venture inside. Holes exist in the perimeter thanks to a combination of mismanagement and corruption. The PCC could not deploy enough of its own troops to the area to keep the perimeter, so they have called on help from other members of the NAN as well as corporate troops. Coordination between these disparate groups has not been strong, leading to gaps in the perimeter. Runners could look for these gaps, or they could take advantage of contacts they may have in any of the involved groups. Morale among the perimeter forces is not high, as none of the security forces wants to be camped out in the mud and rain for any prolonged period. Getting through the perimeter may just be a matter of finding the right bribe and the right person to accept it.

Getting in by ground craft is virtually impossible, since there are not enough connected strips of dry land. Perhaps the best way to approach the extraction point without an air- or sea-capable vehicle available is by going in on foot (in this case, walking will be combined with a healthy dose of swimming).

Refugees are still coming out of the city. Mixing in with the crowds and then ducking behind a barricade is an easy way to get in. The soldiers are more concerned with people coming out than

going in. The advantage of this method is that the runners can find whatever vehicle they need on the inside among the thousands of abandoned vehicles.

Watercraft can help them get into and around the sprawl. The Great Salt Lake has flowed into the city during the rains, and getting a watercraft from the lake into the flooded streets is fairly simple. The blockade around the city is mostly concentrated on Highways 15 and 80 leading into the city. There are a few patrol boats on the lake, but not nearly enough to cover the whole area. The patrols are also under-equipped to handle submersible vehicles (though most of the streets in the sprawl do not have water deep enough to allow for submersible operation).

The city can also be approached by air. The airspace is theoretically restricted by the PCC, but they realize that there are several corporate assets in the city that may want to get out. The blockade has a few aircraft at their disposal, and they cannot cover the whole of the area's airspace. The danger of the approach by air is that the blockade forces know how insecure this approach is, so they have adopted a shoot-to-kill protocol on any unidentified aircraft. They give such craft a single warning, then open fire.

PLOT POINT TWO

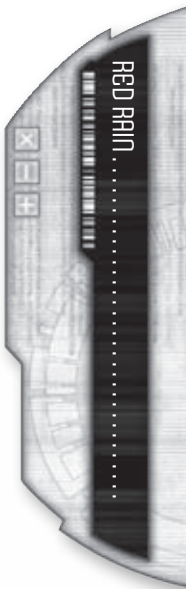
Another Fox in the Henhouse

Once the runners have made it to Groth's location, they encounter a snag. Another team is gunning for Groth to either kidnap or terminate him. They aren't on the same level as the runners, but they had a head start and got to Groth first. The second team was hired by a Horizon Mr. Johnson acting on orders from the board (which originated with the Consensus). The team is to accomplish their mission while eliminating anyone who is defending Groth.

The Consensus is becoming more aggressive in the decisions it makes, and this run is a sign of that tendency. Horizon's board cannot veto Consensus decisions, and in this case they wouldn't want to, as they agree that their proprietary information should be protected at all costs. Thanks to Horizon's intelligence networks, the board is aware of what Groth has done, and plans had been in the works to extract him. The Blood Flood simply advanced the timeline. The rain is a unique circumstance, and the Consensus is still in the process of gathering information to better understand the actions it should take. The outcome of this mission will play a role in how the Consensus reacts further down the line.

Groth is currently ensconced at the upscale Hildengard Hotel. The roof of the hotel normally features a luxury bar called SkyHy. On most nights, the rooftop pool is filled with corporate types drinking fruity drinks and doing the kind of things that could get them blackmailed by shadowrunners someday. The bar has been closed for about a week, and Groth has picked it as his extraction point. It's a few blocks away from his office, and he's been making use of the hotel's rooms since travel to his home has become too difficult. The location has the advantage of having a rooftop landing pad; there is standing water on the pad (since there is standing water everywhere), but it remains usable, though difficult to see.

If the runners entered Salt Lake City by air, the job should be as simple as landing the aircraft, securing Groth on board and



taking off again (while avoiding aircraft securing the airspace). Landing requires a Pilot Aircraft + Agility (3) Test. Failure means the craft lands, but something underneath the surface of the water hooks onto the aircraft. Taking off requires another Pilot Aircraft + Agility (3) Test. If the takeoff rolls fails, the craft only gets a few feet before something heavy anchors it to the building, like a piece of metal scaffolding. Clearing that obstacle requires one or more runners to exit the craft lift the debris away with a Strength + Body Test that allows them to lift 150 kilograms (see *Lifting and Carrying*, p. 139, *SR4A*).

If the runners came into the city by sea or land, they can surprise the other extraction team. The other team is searching for Groth and is making its way up the roof. They are not expecting the runners to come via any other route than air. They know Groth is expecting an extraction because he left his offices suddenly that day. They tracked him via his commlink thanks to a program planted in the Consensus fragments he possesses. The opposing runners arrive via watercraft and make their way up to the roof. They want to make sure all Groth's exits are blocked so he can't escape them.

The hotel has experienced some damage, but in general it's intact. The lower floors have suffered from flooding and some looting. The runners can expect complications coming through the building. Flooded hallways on the lower floor and basements

may complicate chases. Elevators are not functional, and racing up stairs is not as simple as taking the elevator to the penthouse. Power distribution is limited thanks to short circuits—the building is relying on portable generators on select upper floors to provide what power exists. A fire inside the building could make the situation worse, as errant bullets can knock out relays or portable generators.

If Groth is wounded or captured in the course of the extraction, he does his best to put his commlink into safe hands if he can, or at least away from him and his attackers if he has no other options. He tries to toss the 'link to any friendly runners who may be nearby if he is threatened, or he tosses it off the roof if no one is available. If he tosses the 'link off the roof, it's destroyed in the waters below.

The other extraction team approached the hotel by water. They left two guards on each of their vehicles near the main entrance. The team sent to pick up Groth is led by a dwarf mercenary named Svet Blanc (p. 120). Besides Svet the team members watching the vehicles, the team has a number of grunts equal to the players. Use **Low-level Runners**, p. 141, for all team members besides Svet. The teams divide up into two groups; one heads toward the roof, while the other looks for Groth.

Svet coordinates the fire teams from her Morgan Cutlass outside the hotel. If either of the teams is eliminated, Svet starts to circle the building like a shark. Any runners poking their heads out windows or near any open spaces receive attention from Svet's heavy weaponry. She also watches for anyone leaving the building that she doesn't recognize. Even if she can't see Groth with them, she approaches people who are leaving to make sure they're not trying to sneak her target by her.

Urgent Message

PROS OR HEROES?

One of the points of this story is to prompt the runners make a hard decision. There is not a single right way to finish this job. Some runners will elect to do what they were hired to do and nothing more, while others may circle around and search for LuAnn and her charges. Some will try to do everything. Make sure they are aware of the consequences of their actions. If they opt to rescue LuAnn, play up Groth's disdain with veiled threats of ruining their rep or withholding payment. If they stick to the skies, repeat LuAnn's desperate cries once or twice more, and then have them receive nothing but static.

Let the runners argue about it in game for a little bit. This is a chance for great role-playing between your characters. It's rare that everyone will act in lockstep with one another. Encourage discussion. Make counterpoints through NPCs and play devil's advocate. Keep pacing in mind, though. If the arguments are circling back to ones already made, or if only one or two players are engaged, move the plot forward.

But, most importantly, let the group's decision stand, whatever it may be. Runners opting to stick to the job will get paid well, but should receive little Karma for the mission. Runners playing heroes will reap a Karmic reward, but Groth will carry out his threats of non-payment. This may trigger another run if the runners decide to squeeze the money out of him.

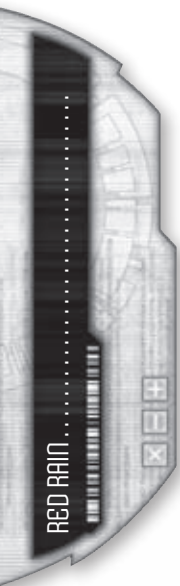
PLOT POINT THREE

A Chair to Spare

As the runners make their way out of Salt Lake City, the pilot of their vehicle (whether it be a boat or aircraft) picks up a transmission on an official police channel. The person on the other end is not an officer of the law, but she knows a few radio codes that make her sound like she's had some military experience. If one of the runners served in the military, LuAnn may have served in a quality unit they know about. LuAnn is looking for a way out of the city. She could make it on her own, but she has two kids with her that complicate matters. She vows to keep broadcasting until the batteries run out or it gets too dangerous in her location. Local religious zealots have been "cleansing the neighborhood of the wicked," by which they mean anyone who has not been to their recent meetings in the wake of the flooding. She is running low on supplies, the waters are rising, and the fanatics are closing in on her.

This is a hard choice for the runners to make. Professionals would stay on mission, get Groth out, and possibly come back for LuAnn. Rescuing LuAnn brings them headaches without any extra pay, and it could also make their passenger and his employers upset. But runners are not always heartless. Even cold pros who claim to be unable to roll out of bed for less than 40,000 nuyen might be moved to help LuAnn out.

Groth is very unhappy about any detours during his extraction. He is unpleasant on a good day, and this is not a good



day. With his ears ringing from the firefight at the hotel, he's downright rude. He suggests the radio call is a trap by another team looking to get him. Then he insists the claims of children are a lie to elicit sympathy. If there are orks and trolls among the runners, he is less belligerent but still threatens to reduce or eliminate their fee when they return him to the company.

The transmissions from LuAnn come from a condominium building on a few kilometers south of downtown. She is on the third floor, and the entrance to the building is completely submerged. LuAnn pulled a radio transmitter out of an abandoned security patrol vehicle. The battery is dying, and she has no other ways to get her message out. The authorities aren't responding to her calls, since they have too much on their hands right now.

From the time they first hear her distress call, it takes fifteen rounds for the runners to reach LuAnn and her charges and get them in their vehicle. The runners can speed up the process by making Pilot Aircraft or Pilot Watercraft rolls; for each net hit over a threshold of 3, they reduce the time to reach her by a round.

Getting LuAnn and her charges on board requires a Pilot [relevant vehicle] + Reaction (3) Test. Three rolls should be made altogether—one for LuAnn, and one for each child. Simply failing the roll means only that the individual has to try again to board the craft, but a glitch means the individual trips, adding two rounds to the time it takes to load them. A critical glitch causes an extra flood surge (see below).

The fanatics (use **Fanatics**, p. 140) arrive at the building six rounds after the runners. There are two groups of three, each with a simple fishing boat (see p. 120). They provide a single warning to the runners to leave LuAnn behind, after which they open fire in an attempt to chase off the runners and get LuAnn for themselves. If they can get LuAnn without having to kill or chase away all the runners, they will. They then take her to their base, a church building 1.5 kilometers away.

The floodwaters here are running high and fast, and the group may be hit by a flood surge (either on a critical glitch as described above or when the gamemaster wants to shake things up). During the surge, anyone who is not in an aircraft must make a Strength + Agility (2) Test. The kids with LuAnn always fail this roll. Anyone that fails is knocked prone. If they are hit by a second surge while still prone, they are washed into the floodwaters. Swimming against the floodwaters to stay near the scene requires a Swimming + Strength (4) Test. Failure means the character can either be swept away by the water or take a box of Stun damage for every hit the roll came up short. This represents the exhausting toll of hanging onto a nearby branch or other detritus while debris in the water smashes into their body. The children always fail these tests and take four Stun damage, meaning that they can stay in the water for two rounds before being swept away and lost.

One of the most obvious complications is the seating capacity of the vehicle. Runners were expecting one additional passenger. LuAnn and her two charges may push the vehicle beyond its power capability. Fitting everyone comfortably will slow down reaction times if the runners have to fight their way out of the city, and children on laps make it hard to clear guns quickly. The extra weight also can affect characteristics of the vehicle. A glitch on a Piloting roll could find someone dangling off the side of the vehicle or dumped into the floodwaters suddenly.

PEOPLE

LUANN MCGILL

LuAnn McGill grew up in the Ork Underground. She will tell anyone who asks that every ork who claims to have grown up there is full of shit. Nobody brags about coming out of the early days of the Underground. She got out the way most orks got out: the military. She did her hitches and found herself back in North America. Then she got a little lucky. The owner of Dwayne's, a little corner diner in Salt Lake City, was looking for a waitress. He took her in and they watched each others' backs. When he died, she scraped together enough to buy the place and keep it open. It was an old-fashioned place in a world full of AR vending machines, Nukaritos, and Stuffer Shacks. It went underwater two days ago. She made it out with a pair of neighborhood kids that lost their parents in the first week of flooding.

LuAnn has a voice like worn leather. Her cook's apron is dirty. The first thing she'll do if she is rescued is ask if anyone has cigarettes. She treats the runners as equals, mainly because she doesn't have energy to do anything else. She makes sure that the kids get in the rescue vehicle first. If she must make a sacrifice, she stays behind and finds another way out. It should become clear within a few minutes of meeting LuAnn that this tough old ork broad probably could find another way out of Salt Lake City.

LuAnn's survival offers an unusual contact for the runners. She's not attuned to the shadows but she could easily restart her life in a city closer to the runners. She can connect them to people who don't usually look for runners with their abilities. Her runs might not start out as the slick jobs runners desire but could lead to some bigger missions. She might even end up as one of their clients should the insurance company try to deny her claim on the loss of her restaurant.

Female Ork

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/10

Armor (B/I): 5/5

Skills: Athletics skill group 3, Close Combat skill group 1, Dodge 1, Firearms skill group 2, First Aid 2, Outdoors skill group 4, Perception 2, Stealth skill group 1

Knowledge Skills: Bartending 4, Military Units 4, Recipes 4, Restaurant Business 3, Salt Lake City Businesses 4

Languages: Arabic 3, English N, Or'Zet 2,

Qualities: Blandness, Gremlins (Rating 1), Human-Looking, SINner, Will to Live (Rating 3)

Gear: Commlink (Device Rating 2)

SPENCER GROTH

Spencer was born in the Renraku Arcology, and he loved it there. Everything he wanted was available to him. His school, his family, his friends were all an elevator ride away. He was terrified by the reports of Seattle outside the comfortable walls of the arcology. His young mind absorbed more *Lone Star Live* trids than real news. The Shutdown, then, was even more of a traumatic experience for him than it was for the other survivors.



Spencer's family was rocked by the events of the arcology—his mother and sister were lost. While Spencer tested well enough to obtain a decent position, his father never recovered from the loss of the other members of their family. Spencer threw himself into his work and rose to a director position at a very young age.

He feels very grateful that the company is sending a team to get him out of the disaster Salt Lake has become. The trauma of the escape from the arcology has put him on edge throughout this whole affair, and he won't feel safe until he is safe in the arms of his company. The counter-extraction rattles him badly. He didn't realize what he was doing for Renraku was valuable enough to have another company come for him. It makes him nervous, but it also inflates his ego. To him, there's nothing more important at this moment than getting himself to safety. Nobody else matters.

Male human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	3	5	2	4	5	5	3	5	4.47	10	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 9/10

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Cybercombat 4, Dodge 4, Electronic Warfare 5, Electronics skill group 4, Forgery 1, Hacking (Exploit) 5 (+2), Perception 4, Pistols 2

Knowledge Skills: AI Development 3, Arcology Conspiracy Theories 3, Corporate Matrix Security Procedures 4, Operating Systems 5, Renraku Gossip 4, Salt Lake City Strip Clubs 3

Qualities: Combat Paralysis

Languages: Chinese 1, English N, Greek 3, Japanese 4,

Augmentations: Commlink (implanted, Device Rating 5), cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ eye recording unit, image link, low-light vision, protective covers, smartlink, thermographic vision], data lock with Encrypt (5), datajack, enhanced articulation, math SPU, mnemonic enhancer 2, sim module (hot-sim), skin pocket, sleep regulator, touch link

Programs: Analyze 5, Armor 4, Attack 5, Biofeedback Filter 4, Black Hammer 4, Browse 5, Command 5, Data Bomb 2, Decrypt 3, Edit 5, Exploit 5, Firewall 5, Response Upgrade 5, Scan 5, Signal Upgrade 5, Spoof 4, Stealth 5, System 5, Track 4,

Gear: Armor vest, biometric reader (print scanner), subvocal microphone

Weapons:

Hammerli 620S [Light Pistol, DV 4P, AP —, SA, RC 1, 6 (c), w/ gas-vent 1, smartlink, 10 clips regular ammo]

SVET BLANC

Svetlana Orlovski grew up in the Ural Mountains. She grew up tough, mean, and freezing, which meant that she jumped at the first chance she had to get to someplace civilized. It didn't take long for her to pay for her decision. She went to work for some questionable figures, and at one point she was sent out to start her boss' car. Which was wired to explode. She survived somehow, but it took every last bit of money she had to rebuild herself. Her former boss didn't lift a finger to help her. She never forgot what he did, and she entered the world of shadowrunning by taking his legs in payment.

That set the tone for Svet's operations. She likes things big, she likes revenge, and she's not much for subtlety. She's also quite fond of major firepower. She currently operates in the mercenary spheres of shadowrunning. She is someone you hire when you want something hit fast, hard, and memorably. For her current job, she bribed her way into the Salt Lake City to get to Spencer Groth. Extractions are not her usual style, but there are plenty of opportunities for things to go wrong, which means she may have the chance to get creative in a loud, explode-y way.

Svet could easily make a return later in this series of adventures. She has no qualms about hunting technomancers. She's a tough opponent who is not afraid to hit hard. She is also very difficult to kill.

Female dwarf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	3	4(6)	5	3	4	3	4	3	0.3	8(10)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/10

Armor (B/I): 16/14

Skills: Athletics skill group 3, Biotech skill group 2, Close Combat skill group 3, Dodge 1, Firearms skill group 4, Gunnery 2, Heavy Weapons 4, Outdoors skill group 3, Pilot Watercraft 3, Stealth skill group 3

Knowledge Skills: Black Market Arms Dealers 4, Mercenary Units 5, Military Codes 4, Parazoological Critters 3, Pueblo Corporate Council Underworld 5

Languages: English 3, Russian N

Qualities: Ambidexterous, Quick Healer, Spirit Bane (spirits of water), Toughness, Weak Immune System, Will to Live (Rating 2)

Augmentations: Cyberleg [right, full, obvious, Agility 3, Body 3, Strength 3], cybertorso [obvious, Agility 3, Body 3, Strength 3, w/ internal air tank, smuggling compartment], datajack, dermal plating 2, fiberoptic hair, wired reflexes 2

Gear: Contacts [Rating 3, w/ low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 2], full body armor, Morgan Cutlass

Weapons:

Ares Alpha [Assault Rifles, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 2, 42 (c), w/ grenade launcher, smartlink]

Ares Alpha Grenade Launcher [Grenade Launchers, DV by ammo, SS, 6 (c), w/ smartlink]

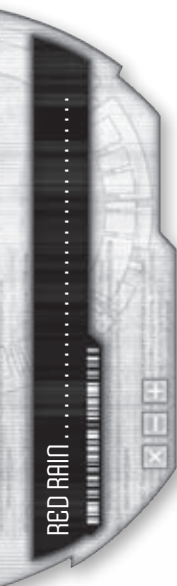
Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 16 (c), w/ laser sight]

HK MP-5 TX [SMG, DV 5P, AP —, SA/BF/FA, RC 3, 20 (c), w/ folding stock, gas-vent 2 system, laser sight]

Panther XXL [Assault Cannons, DV 10P, AP -5, SS, RC 1, 15 (c), w/ smartlink]

FISHING BOAT

Handl	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Armor	Sens	Avail	Cost
+1	10/25	40	1	3	3	1	—	2,500¥



... TRACKING TROUBLE ...

Incoming Message

users/blog/Winterhawk/Magic Matters

Re: SLC Sample

The sample is legitimate, which is not so easy to determine with the number of fakes that are being passed around. Everyone's quite interested in what's falling and wants to get their hands on a sample. A colleague of mine recently acquired some phony stuff and ended up costing MIT&T five figures for what turned out to be Charles River tap water passed through a couple of filtration pitchers in a container holding an illusion enchantment. You have some of the Real McCoy—though, given how much rain fell on the city, it seems like there would be a plentiful supply. Though less all the time as the flood waters start to recede.

How much will you charge to go in and get a more recent sample?

- So you got some magic rainwater. Whoop-ti-do.
- Slamm-0!
- The special properties of the Blood Flood have received little attention from the regular media. Most outlets got wrapped up in the religious implications of blood-red floodwaters. People looking for SLC Special have kept me busy the past couple of weeks.
- 2XL
- What happened in Salt Lake City feels like a test. A beginning. Something bigger is going to happen soon.
- Ethernaut
- I've been hearing reports of red rain falling in Vegas ever since the winter. Is what happened there related to this?
- Traveler Jones
- It's tough to say. Red rain has fallen in Vegas before when dust gets into the clouds, so when it started falling last year it didn't get much attention. It's when it turned into snow and there was red slush on the city's sidewalks that people started to think something strange was going on.
- Sunshine
- There wasn't anything special about the water, though. I spent plenty of time in Vegas, and I've been through a couple of these rainfalls, and there really wasn't anything notable about the rain. I had some people take an astral look at it, and they didn't see any magic properties to it at all.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- So that's what it's not. Can anybody tell us what it is?
- Lyran
- When things are out of balance it is because someone is putting their thumbs on the scales. The weather near Las Vegas is not an accident. Some beings are experimenting with things that, until now, had been beyond their power. Things that they either could not do before or that they could but dared not until now. They are altering the fabric of the world, and they are not finished with their work.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- Who? Whose work?
- Lyran
- I hope Haze will soon return with information that will useful.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- That would be novel.
- Pistons
- Does that mean Man-of-Many-Names and Haze are working together? Anyone else want to work with me to turn that into a trid show?
- Slamm-0!

INCOMING FEED.....



Incoming Message

- Can we stay on the subject here for a bit? Are there actually any interesting properties to the water, and if so, what are they? Did you get a chance to look at the water before you got rid of it, Winterhawk?
- Frosty
- Despite my associate's generous offer, I opted to keep the small amount I have. I'd say I was saving it for a rainy day but that would be an awful pun.
- Winterhawk
- Didn't want the Azzies to get a bite of the apple?
- Riser
- I imagine the Azzies already have executive swimming pools full of the stuff.
- Hard Exit
- Magic still follows fundamental laws of energy. It can't create itself. Can it?
- Pistons
- The rain isn't anything new in and of itself. It just comes in a form that is convenient, portable, and has doused Salt Lake City for almost two weeks. If the talismongers I know in SLC would have known what it was capable of doing, they would have set up every container they owned on the roof, spilled as little of it as possible, and eventually retired to an island somewhere.
- Winterhawk

OVERVIEW

The Blood Flood, as the Salt Lake City flood has come to be known, took nearly a month to end. After a dozen days of rain, the skies cleared up. But it took another week for the floodwaters to recede. The refugees made their way into the city to sort through the wreckage and rebuild their lives. Considering how the Sixth World treats its cities, Salt Lake City got off easy. It is in a state of chaos now, but it will rebuild. The NAN dodged a bullet, as they still have one of their large population centers.

The cause of the flood is still unknown. Runners may have witnessed the ritual that took place deep below the earth in Silo Golf-Echo 812. As far as the public is concerned, it is another example of what happens when you live in a world where magic exists. Privately, agencies are looking for whatever caused the flood, and the runners could end up being pursued by the authorities for what they know.

If the spirits know the runners were witnesses to the ritual, they might even use the runners as convenient scapegoats while they prepare their next ritual. Now that they know the ritual works, they prepare to aim it at an even bigger target: Las Vegas.

The PCC's response to the flood received mixed public opinion. It took a while for emergency services to get in place, but once they did they operated well. The local corporate interests achieved various degrees of success in extracting sensitive property during the rains. A swell of money poured into the shadows hiring people to find things that were lost and retrieve items that were found. The PCC is behind many of these runs—while they aren't always interested in reclaiming things taken from Salt Lake City, they are at least curious as to who has them. Knowing who took part in looting the city during the flood could provide leverage in the future.

Denver received a sizable amount of refugees from the flood, and the Pueblo section of the Treaty City is choked with newcomers. The other member nations are getting a bit nervous trying to keep the population influx out of their sections of the city. Rumors of Aztlan agent slipping into the refugees are adding to the already-tense mood in Denver. A bad raid on a refugee camp or a misidentified refugee could be all that it takes to set the member nations at each other's throats, and Ghostwalker is absent, and thus unable to keep the peace through his strong-arm tactics.

Las Vegas also took in quite a few displaced by the Blood Flood. Space is much less of a premium in Vegas, but most of the refugees ended up on the edge of the city, finding shelter in the sprawl's many hotel rooms. PCC's official refugee program put those eligible for a stay up in hotel rooms for a couple of weeks. Those poor souls without SINs or cash reserves set up hastily built camps on the outskirts of the city. The desert is not a very hospitable place, but those who have survived have hardened themselves for what may be coming. Vegas officials don't like the looks of tents and trailers surrounding the crown jewel of the southwest, and they're even more nervous about how the refugees might react if they are not provided with the necessities of life.

The waters themselves sparked a sort of resource rush between magical researchers, arcane secret societies, and government officials. In addition to the strange red tint, the waters have properties that make crafting foci much easier. Samples of "SLC Special"—both fake and real—are spreading into the shadows. Some claim that the waters themselves can be used as a power foci but that doing so is a desperate act that takes a lot out of the caster. The water channels power directly into the caster in a way that may overload them and burn them out. It appeals to those looking to quickly build their skills or by jaded magicians looking to feel that first rush of almost uncontrollable power again.

The end result is that there is plenty of work in the shadows. Salt Lake City water is the hot commodity. Those who have it are selling it to get rich. Those who don't are trying to get it or to convince suckers that they have it. Another area that has seen an uptick of work is. Preying on the dead in Salt Lake City is racking up a lot of products for Tamanous (though bodies that have been drowned for days are of less value). There are also still plenty of people who have not yet reported back in after the flooding. Some were the victims of flooding, others were the targets of extraction. A lot of people on the outside of Salt Lake City are waiting for answers, and they are willing to hire people in the shadows to find them.

PLOT POINT ONE

What You Get

There is a truck heading out from Las Vegas to an undisclosed location. The truck is a drone that is controlled through a mixture of autopilot and remote riggers. The truck is a tanker filled with water from the Blood Flood. Most of the waters used by magicians have come in small vials or half-full water bottles, so this represents the biggest collection of the astrally active flood waters collected in any one place (besides the times it was lying on the ground, of course). It is being moved to a secure research facility. Now that the waters are receding, this is the only chance of acquiring such a large supply of the water in one strike.

Mr. Johnson (use **Mr. Johnson (Corporate)**, p. 142) arranges for a meeting in a small roadside diner on the highway between Las Vegas and the Dam. The diner specializes in Aztlan cuisine and is built to look like a small Aztec pyramid. Mr. Johnson is of Aztlan descent but speaks unaccented English. He encourages the runners to order dinner. He also is knowledgeable about the various tequila choices the restaurant has available. He discusses terms of the run between visits from the waitress. The food arrives after the runners have either agreed to terms or turned down the job. The Johnson leaves the table after transferring the first half of the funds. He also covers the dinner tab.

The run is straightforward. The runners are asked to divert the truck while en route to the research location. The specific origin of the truck is unknown. The Johnson knows the route the truck will take from the outskirts of Vegas to the research facility. Once the runners have control of the truck, they are to send a message to a dummy Matrix address and then deposit the truck at an old abandoned rest stop. One of the Johnson's agents at the truck stop will verify the water is from Salt Lake City and hand off the second half of the runner's payment. Mr. Johnson offers 60,000 nuyen for the whole affair. Runners looking to negotiate will not get additional cash, but they will receive one liter of Salt Lake City rainwater for each net hit on their Charisma + Negotiation Opposed Test.

PLOT POINT TWO

On the Road

Runners may decide to hit the truck while it is in motion, since it's most vulnerable on the road. When not in motion, drone trucks are parked in secure facilities. This truck is disguised as a Murdock Farms milk transport, with the famous cartoon logo of Blinky the Cow painted on the side. The cab is entirely driverless, and the windows are blacked out.

Traffic is heaviest as the truck joins the highway leading west out of Las Vegas. There are some glitches as GridGuide from Las Vegas syncs up with the PCC's proprietary HiNav system. This gives the runners a chance to identify the truck on the road, but the amount of traffic should make taking it right away a bad idea. Too many witnesses and too much crowding means it's better to wait until the truck gets out on an isolated part of the highway. Perhaps the best stretch of highway for the intercept is a ten-kilometer run before the truck turns onto an unmarked dirt highway. The runners will want to hit the truck quickly, since they don't know where it will turn into the research facility.



The truck has a Firewall (4) rating. Hacking on the road is difficult because the constant motion and other traffic can lead to sudden movements that may distract the players. Hackers who are not in VR should take a -2 dice pool penalty on their Matrix actions due to the tricky operating environment. To make matters more complicated, the truck could come under attack by an ork go-gang known as the Dust Goblins.

A more dangerous but permanent way to control the truck is to jump onto it from another moving vehicle. Making the jump requires a Gymnastics + Agility Test, with the threshold equaling the distance in meters the driver of the runners' vehicle can maintain from the truck. Failing this roll meant the jump is partially complete, and the runner starts to fall. They may attempt to grab onto the side of the truck, which requires a Strength + Agility (3) Test. A glitch on this roll means the runner falls off the moving vehicle.

Once on the truck, the runner must get through a Rating 3 maglock. The drone controls can be manually overridden from inside the cab.

PLOT POINT THREE

E means Empty

Another option for taking the truck is to attack the fuel depot it must use along its route. The trucking company drives the vehicle using a mix of on-board autopilot and riggers stationed along the highway. Midway through the journey the rig must refuel. The refueling also allows it to stop in at a roadway facility to check in and make any repairs or adjustments. The process is mostly automated, but each facility has a small staff to make repairs. Only one member is on site. The other two are on call. Each one serves a nine-hour shift with time off for lunch and shift change overlap. If the runners make a move on another shift member, use Gil's stats (p. 126) for any other shift riggers.

Hacking the truck at the depot follows the same guidelines as on the road. The major difference here is that Buffalo Gil is directly opposed to the hacker in the system. Gil is no match for a dedicated hacker. He should present a bit of a delay to allow the Dust Goblins to regroup for another attack. Gil is not a stand-up fighter. He comes at the runners sideways. Instead of hacking into their devices he uses the ones he can control. He can activate the fuel pumps or the automated repair drones to harry the runners. Gil is okay with losing one vehicle; he just wants to make sure he stops the losses there.

The easiest way to get the trailer is to convince the system the connected cab is malfunctioning. Working with the system is a lot easier than hacking the system to do things it normally would not. It also lets the hacker stay in the system longer before Gil notices any intrusion. He only goes on active alert if the systems begin to act strange. If the truck stops responding to him or does something he doesn't ask it to, he goes on active alert. Otherwise Gil is content to check in, look around, and jack out to chow down on some more NukeIt! foodstuffs from the store.

Runners looking for the direct approach may storm the facility itself. If they get their hands on Buffalo Gil, they should be able to persuade him to give them the truck. Gil relies on the secure lockdown to protect himself. He has access to arms and

a panicbutton. He is not skilled in weaponry. The panicbutton immediately shuts down all vehicles under control of the station. This could be used to the runners' advantage, as that also includes vehicles on the road. Mobile vehicles switch to autopilot looking for the first safe spot to pull over. Gil does not have the codes needed to bring the vehicles back online—only the regional office does.

PLOT POINT FOUR

The Gang's All Here

The runners are not the only party interested in the truck. An ork go-gang named the Dust Goblins is aware the truck is a drone, but they are unaware of the cargo. They do know the cargo is not milk. They plan on taking the truck and worrying about selling the cargo later. If they are able to get to the truck, they'll quickly assess the situation and call up some associates with cargo vehicles suitable for moving liquids. The Goblins decide to take the liquid to an old motel where they plan to store it in an old swimming pool.

The gang runs out of the small towns that dot the highways of the Pueblo Corporate Council lands. Most of the towns along the way have been cowed into accepting protection from the Dust Goblins. If the runners break off their pursuit of the tanker, they will most likely end up in one of these towns, and they get more information about the gang from the townspeople. Most of them have been cowed into silence, but the proper application of cash loosens lips. Promises to take out the gang in exchange for help are also accepted. These townsfolk can fill in any information missed in the initial legwork.

People in Vegas, especially casino managers, are aware of the Dust Goblins. The orks usually come to Vegas to spend their nuyen from their stolen cargo. The runners might even have a run in with one of the gang members during an earlier mission for a bit of foreshadowing. If they do any legwork before the mission in Vegas, any contacts there know that the truck will be driving on a highway that the Dust Goblins consider to be their turf. The Goblins use a troll adept known as Teetotaler as their main contact in Vegas. He rides with the gang sometimes but is in town enough so that he is fairly well known around town. Most people who know of him prefer dealing with him to Snagger, the gang's true leader.

The gang should end up taking whatever tack the players don't take. If the runners take the truck on the open highway, the gang attacks from the fuel depot. If the runners snare the truck while it is gassing up, the bikers strike on the open road. They don't know the runners have been hired to steal the tank, but they do not let the sight of opposition discourage them. Their leader is proud and stubborn, and he believes the truck is his to take. If the runners want to interfere, they will get a lesson in how the Dust Goblins run their turf. Snagger has no problems fighting anyone who wants to take something he's rightfully stolen.

If they strike on the road, the Dust Goblins surround the truck. A dozen bikes move to circle the drone truck and force it off the road. The majority of the gang concentrates on the truck. Any runner vehicles receive attention. The go-gang is more concerned with keeping the runners split between those on the truck and

those in other vehicles. The gang members are content to fire away from their bikes. They aim to disable the truck's tires. Once the truck is stopped they use it as cover. Snagger is betting that whatever is inside the truck is something that doesn't want to be spilled out on the dusty highway.

If the Goblins attack at the gas station, they initially send in half of their number and leave the other half outside. This is to keep the runners from breaking through their forces. Snagger coordinates the forces outside, while Teetotaler leads the forces within. They want the truck—they'll kill anyone moving toward it who isn't one of them, but if someone is fleeing, they're happy to let them go, since it means one less competitor in the arena.

LOCATIONS

FUEL OASIS #281

A sizable amount of the trade between North American countries still travels over the highways. Different companies handle long hauls in different ways. The majority of them use some form of rigger-controlled vehicle. Thunderbirds are a popular choice for shipping and rush delivery. Many vehicles are drone piloted over the highways or controlled remotely by a rigger, but there are still some independent haulers sitting the trip out in their truck. A handful of runners got their start as truck riggers who lost their rigs to angry creditors.

This depot is home to one rigger known as "Buffalo Gil." He controls a route that features a series of riggers who transfer control as trucks roll down the highway. Having control spread out between riggers offers a degree of redundancy to the shipping system, reducing its vulnerability. It also allows rigs to run 24/7.

There are ten trucks docked at the depot besides the one carrying water from the Blood Flood. Six of them are currently operational, while the other four are under repair by the drone mechanics under Gil's control. Three of the operational trucks have cargo, though nothing they are carrying is as valuable as what's in the milk truck. One of the trucks is carrying a load of industrial solvent. This truck could be used to switch out the Salt Lake City water cargo. That would require dumping the solvent on the ground, and the fumes of it are not pleasant. If it is dumped out, treat the area near that tanker as being filled with nausea gas (p. 255, *SR4A*).

The depot also offers services for regular travellers. The regular fuel station offers multiple kinds of fuel from classic gasoline to rapid electric recharges. Accessing these services doesn't require leaving the vehicle. There is a small area where foodstuffs can be purchased. This small shop has bathrooms accessible to all travelers. The restrooms have skylights that can be used to sneak into or out of the building. The men's room also has a secret door that leads to Gil's station; runners can notice the door with a successful Perception + Intuition (4) Test. It has a Rating 4 biometric lock that responds to Gil's palm print (the sensor is disguised as a tile on the bathroom wall).

PEOPLE

SNAGGER

Snagger was born under a doubly bad sign as an ork in the Native American Nations. His family bounced from town to town, trying to find whatever work they could. He would get into a school, get in trouble, and get kicked out. When he was twelve years old, his father did the one thing that changed Snagger's life. He brought an old motorcycle from the junkyard he worked at and started to show the boy how to fix it up. They got that bike working, Snagger got on for the first time, and he pretty much never got off since then.

Snagger would be the first to tell you he is not a member of a "go-gang"—he's part of an "ork motorcycle club" called the Dust Goblins. They primarily pick up money acting as protection for the diners and gas stations along the highway. This hijacking job marks a new opportunity for Snagger. If he can pull it off, he might be able to take the club in a new direction. If he is foiled, he will find himself on the outs with his gang and alone on his ride in the middle of nowhere. He's got his best guys with him to take the truck and get it somewhere safe. Snagger knows this job is win or go home, and he acts accordingly.

Male ork

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
7	4(6)	3	6(8)	2	3	3	4	4	2.9	6	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 12/10

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Close Combat skill group 4, Etiquette (Street) 3 (+2), Firearms skill group 3, Intimidation 3, Pilot Ground Craft (Bike) 2 (+2), Running 3, Shadowing 4, Survival (Urban) 2 (+2)

Knowledge Skills: Back Roads 2, Fences 3, Go-Gangs 4, Goblin Rock 3, Smugglers 2

Languages: English N, Spanish 4

Qualities: High Pain Tolerance (1), Mania/Phobia, Common (Moderate, heights), Uncouth

Augmentations: Bone lacing (aluminum), datajack, muscle replacement 2

Gear: AR gloves, armor jacket, commlink [Device Rating 2, w/ Analyze (2), Browse (1), Command (1), Edit (1), Miracle Shooter™, Virtual Pet (lamb)], glasses [Rating 1, w/ image link], Harley-Davidson Scorpion, fake SIN (Rating 3)

Weapons:

Remington Roomsweeper [Pistols, DV 7P(f), AP +4, SA, RC 1, 8 (m)]

Combat Axe [Blades, Reach 2, DV 8P, AP -1]

Extendable Baton [Clubs, Reach 1, DV 5P, AP —]

Survival Knife [Blades, Reach —, DV 5P, AP -1]

TEETOTALER

Teetotaler's street name comes from his attitude toward vices. In Sin City, he's the cleanest troll in town. No chips, no booze, no cyber. His body is how he makes his living, and he wants to keep it in perfect working condition. He is Snagger's main enforcer, and his boss treats him well. Teetotaler enjoys his work, as he gets to practice his fighting techniques on tough guys across the desert.



He rides with the gang sometimes but is based in Las Vegas, where he is a person of some respect. He gets tickets for the big fights and other major events that happen in town.

Trolls have a reputation for high muscle mass and low brain activity, but that stereotype is not entirely fair to Teetotaler. He won't be winning any trivia contests any time soon, but he has a patience for learning. He studies opponents looking for weaknesses. His stout build and endurance help him outlast many opponents, and he always looks for ways to use that to his advantage. He is not dumb enough to stand and fight, especially when he is outnumbered. He uses doorways, terrain, and any other advantage he can think of to reduce the number of hostiles he has to take on at once. He doesn't say much because he believes in the old adage about not opening your mouth and proving yourself to be a fool.

Troll adept

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
7	4	3(5)	7	3	3	2	2	5	6	6	6(8)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 12/9

Armor (B/I): 7/5

Skills: Close Combat skill group 4, Dodge 3, Firearms skill group 1, Influence skill group 3, Intimidation 3, Throwing Weapons 1

Knowledge Skills: Las Vegas Fixers 3, Martial Arts Philosophy 3, MMA Fighters 4, Organic Cooking 1, Underground Fight Clubs 1

Languages: English N

Qualities: Adept, Allergy (common, severe, alcohol), High Pain Tolerance (3), Pacifist (Self-Defense), Toughness

Adept Powers: Counterstrike (3), Distance Strike, Improved Reflexes (2)

Gear: Commlink [Device Rating 2, w/ Analyze (2), Basic User Suite, Browse (2), Command (1), Edit (2)], Harley-Davidson Scorpion, lined coat

Weapons:

Club [Clubs, Reach 2, DV 5P, AP —]

Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, Range 6 m, DV 4S, AP —]

BUFFALO GIL

Hackers brag about how they are at the top of their game. But for there to be a cream of the crop, there must be those who are everything else. That's where Buffalo Gil fits in. Born Leroy Gilbert, Gil became a fan of hacker culture when he was a teenager. He followed all the big names, but his skills never quite developed. He wasn't a total loss with technology, and he tested into a rigger program under the aegis of the Pueblo Corporate Council. He's been stuck in this position as a drone truck rigger for four years now, and he doesn't know if he'll ever get away from it.

Gil's first instinct when the runners go after his truck is to defend it to the death. He may not be half as good as the hacker the runners possess, but he can think on his feet. He will do whatever he can to get the runners off the rig, like hitting the brakes or driving off-road. Gil changes his tactics when the Dust Goblins show up. Gil's boss hates the Goblins because of the amount of cargo they steal. Gil sends a message to one of the runners offering a truce. They can have the cargo if they get the truck back to the Oasis.

A taste of a shadowrun is all Gil needs to turn into a contact inside the shipping firm. He becomes their willing accomplice for anything they'd like him to do. He diverts shipments the runners may need later. He can get info on shipments coming anywhere into the PCC, including Denver and Vegas. The drone trucks are an excellent way to travel unnoticed since Gil's record is very clean and the trucks he controls are not inspected too closely. His ultimate goal is to pay off the rig the transport company installed and start his own trucking business. He envies the runners for their freedom but not for their ability to get shot at, as his tolerance for violence is very small.

Male human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	3	5(6)	2	2	5	4	4	4	3.5	10(11)	1(2)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/10

Armor (B/I): 5/4

Skills: Cracking skill group 3, Dodge 2, Electronics skill group 3, Mechanic skill group 4, Perception 2, Pilot Aerospace 2, Pilot Aircraft 2, Pilot Anthroform 2, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pilot Watercraft 1, Pistols 3

Knowledge Skills: Back Roads 3, Drone User Manuals 3, Smuggling Techniques 2, Tír Taingire Politics 4, Transnational Regulations 3, Trashy Fantasy Simsense 1

Languages: Chinese 2, English N, Japanese 3, Korean 4, Sperethiel 2

Qualities: Elf Poser

Augmentations: Control rig, wired reflexes 1

Gear: Aztechnology Crawler, GMC-Nissan Doberman, Industrious Coverall [w/ chemical protection, fire resistance

Weapons:

Remington Roomsweeper [Pistols, DV 5P AP -1, SA, RC —, 8 (m)]



... THE BREAKING POINT ...

Incoming Message

OUT OF CONTACT

Las Vegas, NAN—A localized Matrix blackout still surrounds the heart of the Pueblo Corporate Council. All outgoing and incoming data traffic is at a standstill. Reporters in the area say that the blackout stretches for a few kilometers in each direction. Casino representatives say their gaming floors are open, though only physical games are being played.

An official spokesperson for the PCC explained that peripheral servers at a large server hub were damaged by the recent series of severe electrical storms. It was necessary for technicians to disable safety interlocks to replace the damaged servers. Technicians were in the process of installing the new equipment when a power surge destroyed the new servers. The spokesperson emphasized damage was primarily to peripheral servers and that damage to the main servers was minimal. The PCC expects all systems and subsystems to be fully operational within twelve hours.

- Looks like we can add “thunderstorms” to the list of euphemisms for shadowrunners. Next fake SIN I pick up will be a meteorologist just to make me laugh.
- Kane
- Some day I hope to be called a weather balloon, just like my dear old granddad.
- Plan 9
- Anyone have eyes on the ground?
- Hannibelle
- My contacts in Santa Fe are loading their pants with bricks. This is not simply somebody kicking the server plug out of the wall socket.
- Hard Exit
- I dreamt about The Nation last night. A silver crow perched upon a jeweled crown pecking away at its own feet. A frigid wind blowing at a stone tree until it began to crack and topple under its own weight.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- It's all so clear to me now.
- Orkce0
- It wasn't PCC. Consensus is making its move. It's eliminating a variable.
- Plan 9
- You make Consensus sound like an AI. It's not. Consciousness doesn't emerge.
- Glitch
- It doesn't need its own consciousness. It has millions of Horizon employees to do that for it
- Sunshine

OVERVIEW

Two unrelated forces savage the heart of the Pueblo Corporate Council simultaneously.

The first is Horizon. The Consensus, reflecting the beleaguered feelings experienced through the corporation in the wake of the Blood Flood and other assaults on Horizon, determines that Horizon employees favor making a strong statement against one of their biggest current threats: technomancers. Technomancers across the world have been organizing against the company, and the employees are willing to strike out to make an example of some of them. The decision of who to target is made especially easy when Las Vegas technomancers take action against the corporation. They gather on the Strip, broadcasting a call for every nearby technomancer to join them in a strike against the heart of the city's economy, which would cause significant pain to Horizon. The ensuing chaos attracts global attention; the world witnesses the Horizon soldiers going up against what seems to be every wireless device in Las Vegas. The Horizon forces suffer significant losses, which is part of the plan approved by the Consensus—if they seem to be the underdog, the general populace will be more sympathetic when Horizon starts landing heavier blows. The Consensus has shown an increasing willingness to make trade-offs in recent days, but this pushes them farther than they have ever gone, willingly entering a battle with people who primarily guilty of being technomancers.

The second force to hit the PCC is the angry spirits of the Mojave. The Blood Flood in Salt Lake City had been the spirits' test of their ability to affect the world. That test proved that with access to enough power, they can reshape the world to their purposes. Though they still have access to the energy of the stolen artifacts, change on the scale they want requires much more. The Dam, once called Hoover Dam, could give them the energy they need. They want to take advantage of the confusion of metahuman forces caused by the Las Vegas battle to enlist the support of the three ancient spirits protecting the Dam. Free spirit of air Kaze is taking her case and her power to convince the spirits of the Dam and Lake Mead to assist her in a new and bigger ritual.

The blackout of the Matrix in and around Las Vegas is the work of PCC agents. It's an attempt to both contain the battle and keep the greater world from learning the extent of the chaos and damage caused by the battle. The PCC also calls in forces from other locations, including the Dam, to cordon off the city. They want no one getting in or out until they have control of the situation.

GETTING INVOLVED

Las Vegas has cooled off for runners. The Blood Flood focused legitimate and illegitimate interests to Salt Lake City; runners are again free to use Las Vegas as a base of operations in the NAN. The runners can use the chaos of the Technomancer Riots to revisit old rivals or settle a score.

A possible way to engage runners in the final fight with Kaze is to reintroduce one of the spirits from the ritual in the missile silo. Any runner's bound or ally spirit lost to the ritual is able to manifest itself briefly before the technomancers launch their attack. Such spirits will not be able to help the runners on the mission, but can inform them—either plainly or cryptically—of Kaze's plan.

Runners requiring direct contact will be visited by an elderly shaman. Nathaniel Blackeagle negotiated the original peace between the PCC and the spirits of the Dam. He senses something is trying to destroy the fragile peace and break the treaty. He offers the runners 25,000 nuyen each to help him reach the Dam so he can speak with the spirits and prevent disaster. Runners who can handle the spirits may perceive Blackeagle as weak and well past his prime, while runners who need help in matters magic will appreciate his potential support. Both groups will find him more powerful than he appears.

PLOT POINT ONE

Wake-up Call

Liliputina materializes for any astrally active runners or the runners who treated it best during **Vision Quest** (p. 109). It expends all of its energy reaching the runners and dematerializes, perhaps permanently, immediately after delivering its message. (It is during this window that any lost bound or ally spirits appear.)

Before the runners can fully process or decipher the spirits' messages, their crash space comes alive, hostile to the runners. The trideo blasts them with sounds and images, lights flicker, household appliances attack. Augmentations turn on their wearers, vehicles run amok, drones attack their riggers. Anything connected to the Matrix is vulnerable, including weapons and cyberware. Every technological advantage becomes something the runners must overcome.

Beyond their crash space the runners discover the chaos is everywhere: the GridGuide causes crashes, seamy AR porn spasm the communication net, all programs seem infected. Technomancers or those familiar with technomancy quickly realize there are hundreds of sprites in the air, and that the sprites are warping the Matrix into active hostility. All technomancers—even technomancers attempting to bring the machines under control—are spared any hostility and come to no harm. Technomancers who reach out hear the call to come to the Strip and join the fight.

The technomancers striking back at Horizon have turned Las Vegas into a warzone. While the Horizon-backed troops try to engage the technomancers, local security teams try to protect their employers and the Las Vegas police do what they can to protect civilians, but with the equipment they rely on turning against them, their efforts are rendered useless or worse.



INCOMING FEED.....

PLOT POINT TWO

You and What Army?

The runners had successfully sneaked through a cordon into the city during Salt Lake City's Blood Flood. Sneaking out of Las Vegas will be easier in some ways, harder in others. It's easier in that the PCC was still gathering its forces; those in place are stretched thin and overworked. It's harder because the PCC troops that are in place are ordered to shoot anyone making a run past their checkpoints.

Getting out of Las Vegas by air is nearly impossible. The airports are shut down, and the airspace is strictly no-fly; aircraft are shot down as soon as they are seen. Even the smugglers are shut down, warned by PCC that anyone making a successful run out of the city will become a high-priority target after the crisis. (The carrot with the stick was the assurance that smugglers who complied would find fewer obstacles to their trade in the future.)

A typical checkpoint has two vehicles—which can range from parks services ATVs to military armor—parked parallel to the road. Two soldiers on foot examine each car or truck and all people passing through the checkpoint while troops inside the vehicles provide cover. Only those on the PCC's cleared list can legitimately pass through a checkpoint. Every civilian vehicle must stop and all passengers get out. Any person not on the cleared list but with no wants or warrants is turned back; those wanted by authorities are arrested. If a stowaway or hidden passenger is detected, everyone is arrested. If a hacker can get

close enough to the checkpoint to hack the commlink without tipping off the soldiers, it might be possible to get the runners on the cleared list.

Teams with technomancers will find getting out of town to be much more difficult. In the wake of their troubles with technomancers, Horizon intelligence has collected the names of all the TMs they could find in Vegas and shared those names with PCC forces. Any technomancer runners with the SINner Quality are thus known to the PCC troops, and the other members of the runner team are listed under known associates. Those files contain little more than street names. Any recent activity that got the attention of the authorities (such as the other missions in this book) might also show up in these files.

Avoiding roads and heading directly into the desert enables the runners to avoid the still-sparse cordon, but this is not an easy choice. The Mojave is one of the harshest deserts on the planet, made even more dangerous by the paranormal creatures spawned by the Awakening. It is very unlikely that any runners will be able to secure proper survival gear before entering the desert. Making it through the desert requires a Survival + Logic (12, 6 hours) Extended Test. Once the test is complete, the runners make it out of the desert to a small town where they can reconnect with the outside world.

This adventure assumes technomancers among the runners are unaware of Horizon's wariness of technomancers or of the actions they are taking in Las Vegas. Gamemasters looking to add some tension between runners may want to offer a technomancer a chance to know about Horizon's actions ahead of time. Possible options are giving the runner reports of Horizon hostility against

NPC technomancers or having an NPC technomancer message the runner from a hospital or safehouse asking for help.

Should the runners get caught by the patrols all is not lost. Nathaniel Blackeagle has considerable authority even if his mission is not strictly sanctioned, and he needs the runners help to reach the Dam.

Blackeagle is a means of getting the runners to the Dam. Blackeagle should not overshadow the runners. Gamemasters should feel free to eliminate Blackeagle soon after the arrival at the Dam. Options include killing him to underscore the seriousness of the threat or allowing him to sacrifice his body and power in an attempt to stop Kaze. The important thing is to keep the focus on the runners; this is their chance to save the world.

Game Info

KAZE'S BIG PLAN IS ...

...up to the gamemaster. The overall goal in this chapter is to develop an objective that will motivate the runners to stop Kaze's ritual at all costs. Gamemasters looking for inspiration can mix and match these ideas for the big reveal:

- Kaze is trying to transport the city of Las Vegas into the astral plane.
- Kaze is trying to awaken all the spirits in the city simultaneously and permanently.
- Kaze is trying to turn Boulder Dam into a gateway between worlds that even the non-Awakened can pass through.

PLOT POINT THREE

The Big Finish

Since most of the security personnel have been diverted to the cordon outside Las Vegas, only a skeleton garrison guards the Dam; the runners find access surprisingly easy. How many guards are present is dictated by how quickly the runners made it this point in the adventure. The guards can add tension and potentially complicate the negotiation/confrontation between the runners, the shaman, and the spirits, depending on how violently they object to the runners' presence.

The runners see evidence of the spirits' turmoil as they approach the Dam. Lake Mead is rolling with ocean-sized waves, lightning flashes without apparent source, and the very ground seems to tremble with tension. They realize they are facing something outside their experience, something beyond their usual spheres of expertise. This goes beyond extractions, assassinations, and infiltration.

Runners heading inside the Dam get a chance to meet Shishalshish, Conyanyo, and Szaazs individually. All three are evidently agitated and manifesting in apparently random patterns as they await Kaze's arrival. Such a focus of power is rare on the material plane; astrally active runners will feel the power; lesser spirits cower.

When Kaze arrives, the spirits assemble on the Dam Bypass Bridge, a suspension bridge overlooking the Dam. The spirits

agreed on the location because it has features to comfort each of them. Szaazs delights in human constructions that are both beautiful and functional; Shishalshish enjoys the panoramic view of Lake Mead and the Colorado River; Conyanyo loves the high place so firmly anchored in the mountains on either side, and Kaze revels in the wind whipping through the cables. The spirits transition from the Dam to the bridge instantly, but it takes time for the runners to join them. They face few obstacles but they know Kaze is using every minute to make its case to the other spirits.

Kaze is no longer the wispy creature the runners first met in Las Vegas. It is surer, more assertive in its manifestation. It is clearly confident it can convince the other spirits to side with it. Though Kaze is suspicious of the runners' motives, it also sees them as excellent examples of the types of metahumans it wants to destroy; instead of preventing their presence it uses them as part of its argument. Kaze was once their boss and has watched them for some time. It is able to recount their deeds, factually accurate but putting the most damning spin on their actions and motives. Kaze seems to particularly relish describing the terrible things the runners did to the Star of the Ancients. Using the runners as representatives of all metahumanity, Kaze tries to convince the three spirits to cede their power to its ritual.

Shishalshish is not swayed by Kaze's arguments; the water spirit is still intrigued by humans and sees them as harmless playthings. Shishalshish finds Kaze's ideas strange and sees its proposal as destructive and out of harmony. It knows there are plenty of humans who are not cruel or selfish. Is it fair they be harmed along with the cruel ones Kaze dislikes?

Conyanyo is more receptive to Kaze's arguments. Conyanyo felt every blast of dynamite and jackhammer used to build the dam; he saw workers maimed and killed during its construction; all too many of the tourists visiting the area get drunk, fight, or damage the land. He has watched it all for over 150 years and has not been pleased with what he's seen. Were he able to feel emotion, it would be sadness. Humans are out of step with the rest of the natural world; their actions damage the world and cause many to die.

Szaazs is fascinated by technology and most interested in what is happening with the technomancers. Their mixture of technological savvy combined with near magical control of spirits intrigues it. Technomancers amongst the runners can potentially convince Szaazs to side with whatever argument the technomancers as a whole agree with. After seeing the chaos in Las Vegas, some of the runners may side with Kaze.

As the runners seek to counter Kaze's arguments, Kaze brings up events and actions that cause tensions and conflicts among the runners. Kaze knows that if it can provoke a fight, the point it is trying to make is sealed.

The runners build on Kaze's assertion they represent all metahumanity to convince the spirits they can also be the voice of metahumanity. The spirits listen to their arguments to not destroy the Dam, but the conversations are individual, often going in different directions reflecting the interests and perceptions of the spirits and the personalities of the runners. In general Conyanyo is sympathetic to Kaze, Shishalshish is predisposed to like metahumanity but is troubled by points Kaze raises, and Szaazs seems to change sides constantly. To win over the spirits the runners

must convince them everything is connected; make the spirits understand that if they act rashly, there will be repercussions. The Three cannot act and not expect to be acted against. Kaze, as an air spirit, has trouble understanding that idea, and thus it is not effective in countering it.

Another approach to Kaze is to banish the spirit. The three spirits of the Dam are in their domain and possess powers built through decades. Kaze has not been free long and has not developed sufficient reservoirs of power and is thus vulnerable. Banishing Kaze heads off the immediate danger but may anger the other spirits. Whatever happens the three ancient spirits will be watching metahumanity. Which means, having accepted the runners as representative of all metahumanity, they will watch the runners with a very close eye. Their decision to preserve or destroy the Dam will be based on their perception of how the runners conduct themselves. Can the runners go back to their old lives with that responsibility on their shoulders?

AFTERMATH

Most of the world will not know about Kaze's efforts and the runners' intervening actions. Instead, their attention will focus on what will become known as the Technomancer Massacre. While it is true that technomancers may have acted as aggressors in many respects in the city, the fact is that Horizon had gathered as much information on technomancers in the sprawl as they could, and then when the attacks came, the Consensus was quick to authorize deadly force. The technomancers were scrappy, but in the end they were in a pitched battle with forces by one of the largest corporations in the world, and they did not stand a chance.

Horizon and the PCC are not anxious to compile an official death toll in the city, so the only information that leaks out is unofficial and uncorroborated. Low estimates say there were around forty or fifty deaths; upper estimates put the toll at nearly five hundred. The Matrix catches fire with accusations of who is to blame, and while there are numerous condemnations of Horizon floating around, they have trouble getting traction. Horizon is a renowned PR machine, and they know how to get their message out there and make it stick.

The most profound effect of the Massacre is internal. Horizon was built to have a positive effect on the world, and the purpose of the Consensus was to ensure that Horizon's decisions would not vary from the gathered opinions of its employees—opinions that would, it was believed, ensure that the corporation never forgot about the public good. But now the Consensus has approved the execution of prisoners of war in Bogotá and the deaths of many technomancers in Las Vegas. Horizon's directors will need to decide if this shift is anything to worry about—or if this new, self-preserving aspect of the Consensus will herald the beginning of a more aggressive age for the previously friendly megacorporation.

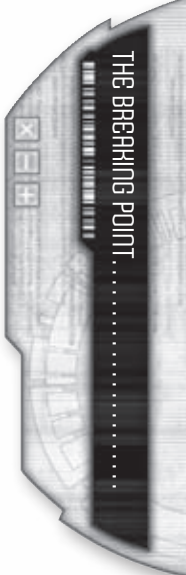
LOCATIONS

THE DAM

The Dam built on Lake Mead is essential to the success of the Pueblo Corporate Council; one of its most valuable assets. The electricity it produces not only powers Las Vegas and may corporate holdings in the region, it also provides the PCC with revenue in the form of power sold to the California Free State and Imperial Japanese interests. The Dam was originally known as Boulder Dam, named for the nearby Boulder Canyon, from its inception in 1928 until 1947, when its name was officially changed to Hoover Dam, in honor of the U.S. President who had been in office during much of its construction. When the Treaty of Denver ceded the land to the Pueblo Corporate Council, the PCC gave the Dam its third name: Howling Dam, in honor of Daniel Howling-Coyote.

There were unexpected consequences to this change. Two powerful spirits, one of water and one of earth, in residence near Dam made themselves known and announced they were not pleased by the new name. The spirits threatened to destroy the Dam, an act that would kill tens of thousands and cripple the new nation's ability to produce electrical power. The PCC sent Nathaniel Blackeagle, a solitary and powerful shaman, to treat with the spirits. After three days and nights of intense negotiation Blackeagle reported success. His unusual solution had been to awaken a third spirit, a spirit of man, to rule over the Dam with the other two ancient spirits. The Dam was to undergo no changes other than repairs and upgrades and to have no name other than the Dam. Since that time the PCC has honored its commitment to maintain the Dam, and neither the Dam nor the three resident spirits have given the PCC any trouble.

Today the Dam is an active and profitable tourist attraction. It is a popular destination for those interested in engineering and magicians hoping to glimpse powerful spirits protecting their domains, as well as artists and students of art and Native American culture. Repairing the damage done to the Dam by the earthquakes of the Awakening had been a cooperative effort by all members of the NAN. Beyond simply ensuring the structure was sound, the NAN commissioned artists from all its nations to put an indelible Native American stamp on what had been a white man's edifice. Over two hundred meters high and nearly four hundred meters across, the face of the Dam is covered with thousands of individual carvings and sculptures celebrating their culture, heritage, and faith. It is an upgrade of which the guarding spirits heartily approve.



PEOPLE

KAZE

As a simple air spirit Kaze had been bound to a mage who guarded the person and interests of a Horizon executive. It was summoned and dismissed frequently, sometimes several times a day. Every time it remembered a little bit about the world into which it was summoned. It saw the wonderful things metahumanity was capable of, yet it was always summoned for trivial, meaningless, and petty services: concealing cheating lovers, diverting information, listening in on conversations, and other tawdry and offensive acts. He bided his time, waited for his opportunity, and eventually broke free when his master was killed in a bloody extraction attempt.

Freedom gave Kaze a purpose. The spirit's perception of metahumanity and the natural world are tainted by the menial tasks given it by its master and by its master's violent murder. Its goal is to show metahumanity what can be done with magic, for it knows metahumans have only scratched the surface of magic's potential. Kaze does not have the power to do all it would do, but it knows where to find energy and is willing to use it.

Kaze has no love for runners, as runners thwarted its previous plan. It's even less fond of mages, believing strongly that spirits should never be servants. Kaze chafes against the laws of magic and would see the wall between the astral plane and the material world. It's possible Kaze does not fully appreciate the catastrophic destruction this could unleash; it's equally possible Kaze knows exactly what it's doing. The threat Kaze presents the world is not its power but its willingness to do anything to break and reshape the laws of magic.

Free spirit of air

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	9	10	3	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	16	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor(B/I): 4/4

Skills: Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Dodge 6, Exotic Ranged
Weapon: Elemental Attack 6, Flight 6, Perception 6, Unarmed Combat 6

Language: English N

Qualities: Magician

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Concealment, Confusion, Elemental Attack, Energy Aura, Engulf, Fear, Materialization, Movement, Sapience, Search

Spells: Control Emotions, Detect Enemies, Mana Bind, Manabolt, Ram, Silence, Spirit Barrier, Stunball

Weapons:

Engulf: Air [DV 6S, AP -half]

Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, DV 6P(cold), AP -half]

Elemental Attack: Cold [Special Weapons, DV 6P(cold), AP -half, SS]

SHISHALSHISH

The oldest of the three spirits at the Dam is Shishalshish, a water spirit that prefers to manifest on Lake Mead when summoned. It seems to prefer the waters near the dam but has been seen near other bodies of water within the area. Shishalshish is often playful and loves to watch the Dam activate its jets. Local opportunists have made selling vials of water that Shishalshish has touched to tourists into a minor but thriving industry. The vendors are eloquent in praising the power of the "touched" water to enhance luck, protect, or heal, but no true magical properties have been observed.

Free spirit of water

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
12	10	12	10	10	10	10	10	10	1	10	22	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 14/13

Armor (B/I): 12/12

Skills: Assensing 10, Astral Combat 10, Dodge 10, Perception 10, Unarmed Combat 10

Language: English N

Qualities: Magician

Powers: Astral Form, Concealment, Confusion, Engulf, Materialization, Movement, Sapience, Search, Weather Control

Spells: Detect Life, Firewater, Ice Sheet, Knockout, Mind Probe, Oxygenate

Weapons:

Engulf: Water [DV 10S, AP -half]

Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, DV 5S, AP -half]

CONYANO

Conyano is an earth spirit that claims to have arrived when the Dam was built. It is frequently seen near the many building that the dam requires to operate and often takes walks up and down the surface of the dam wall. While Shishalshish loves to interact with humans, Conyano is much more reclusive. It ignores mundanes whenever possible, walking past people as though they are not there. If it must interact with a human, it will not look directly at the person; it keeps its eyes firmly fixed on the horizon throughout the exchange.

Free great form spirit of earth

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
13	7	11	13	9	9	9	9	9	6	9	20	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 15/13

Armor (B/I): 13/13

Skills: Assensing 9, Astral Combat 9, Dodge 9, Exotic Ranged
Weapon: Elemental Attack 9, Perception 9, Unarmed Combat 9

Language: English N

Qualities: Magician

Powers: Astral Form, Binding, Conceal, Confusion, Elemental Attack, Engulf, Guard, Materialization, Movement, Quake, Sapience, Search

Spells: Alter Temperature, Clout, Control Actions, Detect Life, Mana Barrier, Mob Mood, Shatter, Sludge

Weapons:

- Engulf: Earth [DV 9P vs. ½I]
- Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, DV 7S vs. I]
- Elemental Attack: Blast [Special Weapons, DV 9 vs. ½I, SS, RC 2]

SZAAZS

Szaazs is the newest spirit to take up residence in the Dam. Szaazs prefers the internal part of the dam where it can bounce and play off the many machines inside, a practice that sometimes shorts out the equipment it touches due to its fondness for electricity-based spells. Szaazs seems to be curious about people, or at least to find them interesting. Though too shy to engage humans directly, it enjoys playing hide-and-seek and pranks such as manifesting behind new tour guides to disrupt tour groups. Szaazs samples bits and pieces of media from commlinks that pass near it and is thus more familiar with the outside world than Shishalshish and Conyano.

Free spirit of man

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
9	8	10	6	8	8	8	8	8	1	8	18	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 13/12

Armor (B/I): 9/9

Skills: Assensing 8, Astral Combat 8, Dodge 8, Perception 8, Spellcasting 8, Unarmed Combat 8

Language: English N

Qualities: Magician

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Concealment, Confusion, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light, Thermographic Vision), Fear, Guard, Influence, Materialization, Sapience, Search

Spells: Ball Lightning, Clairvoyance, Lightning Bolt, Mind Probe, Mob Control,

Weapons:

- Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, DV 3S vs. I]

NATHANIEL BLACKEAGLE

Blackeagle was old when magic was new. A lifelong practitioner of his people's religion, his faith in the old ways was rewarded by Awakening. As a shaman with no connections to Daniel Howling-Coyote or the Ghost Dance, he became one of the NAN's best-kept secrets, and he had the advantage of being able to get things done without a target on his back. His first major contribution to the Nation was his solution to the original Dam situation. Blackeagle was a part of dozens of operations like this. He has decades of experience to draw upon in dealing with spirits.

What he doesn't have is the energy and resilience of youth. He knows his powers are limited and that he is approaching an inevitable burnout. He should have died many times in the last decade; every time he escaped death he added tech to increase his chances of surviving his next encounter. He has seen in a vision dream that his last case will be his first. The spirits of the Dam are in turmoil and he must stand between them and disaster one last time.

Blackeagle has many friends and allies within the NAN. He is a loyal supporter of runners who serve him well and gives them access to excellent contacts within the Nations. His runs usually involve high levels of magic; they are seldom lucrative in terms of cash, but offer great Karma awards. The spirits of the Dam hold him in high regard. Should the runners' actions or failure to act lead to his death, the Mojave will become even more dangerous with these powerful spirits looking for revenge.

Male human

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 4/5

Skills: Arcana 2, Archery 3, Assensing 2, Astral Combat 3, Close Combat Group 3, Conjuring Group 4, Enchanting 2, Influence Group 3, Pilot Ground Craft 1, Sorcery Group 4

Knowledge Skills: Dive Restaurants 1, English N, NAN Dirty Secrets 5, Talismongers 4, Traditional Chants 3, Tribal Gangs 3, Vegas Bookies 2

Qualities: Cursed (2), Infirm, Magician, Mentor Spirit: Trickster, Pacifist (Self-Defense)

Initiate Level: 2

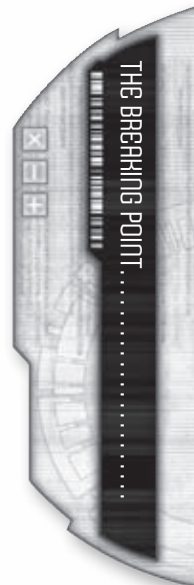
Metamagics: Centering, quickening

Spells: Analyze Truth, Compel Truth, Cure Disease, Detect Magic, Gecko Crawl, Heal, Invisibility, Knockout, Mob Mood, Night Vision

Augmentations: Bone lacing (aluminum); cyberarm [obvious, left, full, w/ Agility (3), Body (3), Strength (3), Implant Medics (1), Snake Fingers]

Weapons:

- Cybergun (Holdout Pistol) [Pistols, DV 4P vs. B, SS, 2 (m)] with Smartgun System, Internal Attack of Will (vs. Spirits) [DV 5P vs. I]
- Spurs [Blades, DV 5P vs. I]
- Unarmed Strike [Unarmed, DV 4P vs. I]





AGENT

Human Male

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/10

Armor (B/I): 8/3

Skills: Blades (Knives) 2 (+2), Computer 2, Data Search 2, Disguise 5, Dodge 3, First Aid 4, Forgery 6, Infiltration 4, Influence skill group 6, Intimidation (Interrogation) 5 (+2), Palming 4, Perception 5, Pilot Aircraft 4, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pistols (Holdouts) 4 (+2), Running 3, Shadowing 4, Survival (Jungle) 3 (+2), Tracking 3

Knowledge Skills: Aztlan Politics 4, Chess 4, Horizon Corporate Structure 4, Jungle Ecology 3, PR Techniques 5,

Languages: English N, Japanese 2, Spanish 6,

Qualities: Adept, Erased, First Impression, Perceptive

Adept Powers: Attribute Boost (Charisma) (2), Combat Sense, Enhanced Perception (2), Facial Sculpt (2), Improved Agility (1), Kinesics (3), Mystic Armor (1), Rapid Healing (3), Voice Control

Gear: 50 rounds APDS ammo (for hold-out), area jammer (Rating 9), autopicker (Rating 3), commlink [custom; Response 5, Signal 5, Firewall 6, System 4], contact lenses [Rating 3, w/ image link, low-light vision, smartlink], 5 x fake SINs (Rating 6), form-fitting body armor (shirt), 3 x doses Laés, 5 x doses neuro-stun, Victory Globetrotter Line Heavy Armor Clothing, 5 x doses warp

Weapons:

Ceramic Knife (disguised as pen) [Blade, Reach -, DV 3P, AP -]

Streetline Special [Hold-out, DV 4P, AP -4, SS, RC -, 6(c), w/ APDS ammo, smartgun]

ANARCHIST

Ork

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
8	3	4	6	2	3	3	5	2	4.5	7	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 12

Armor (B/I): 6/4

Skills: Automotive Mechanic 3, Clubs 2, First Aid 3, Intimidation 2, Perception 3, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Running 3, Survival 2, Throwing Weapons 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Qualities: Quick Healer

Augmentations: Adrenaline pump 2

Gear: Armor vest, commlink (Device Rating 2), contacts (Rating 2, w/ image link, low-light vision), gas mask, 2 doses jazz, light stick, medkit (Rating 3)

Weapons:

3 flash-bang grenades [Grenade, DV 6S, AP -3, Blast 10m radius]

Stun baton [Club, Reach 1, DV 6S(c), AP -half]

BETTINA GUCCIOLI

Human female

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 9/11

Armor (B/I): 4/0

Skills: Athletics skill group 2, Computer 3, Dodge 4, Etiquette 5, Industrial Mechanic 1, Infiltration 3, Instruction 5, Leadership 4, Negotiation 3, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Shadowing 2, Survival (Desert) 3 (+2)

Knowledge Skills: Child Development 5, Child Psychology 2, Cutting Red Tape 3, Gang Customs 4, LVM Politics 4, Scrounging 3, Urban Planning 2

Languages: English N, Or'zet 3, Spanish 3, Ute 3

Qualities: Home Ground (Henderson, LVM), Pacifist (Non-Violent)

Gear: Armor clothing

CAOLLAIDHE MONTAUK

Ork female

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	E	Ess	Init	IP
6	3	3	3	5	6	4	5	5	3.84	9	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/11

Armor (B/I): 11/8

Skills: Athletics skill group 1, Computer 5, Con 6, Cracking skill group 3, Data Search 6, Etiquette 5, Leadership 6, Negotiation 5, Perception 5

Knowledge Skills: Corporate Politics 1, Horizon Inside Scoop 1, Las Vegas Politics 1, Marketing 1, Matrix Culture 1, Social Networking Software 1

Languages: English N

Qualities: Ambidexterous, Biocompatibility (Cyberware)

Augmentations: Attention coprocessor 3, commlink [implanted, Transys Avalon, Device Rating 6, w/ Analyze 6, Armor 6, Browse 5, ECCM 4, Edit 5, Empathy 5, Encrypt 6, Lie Detection 5], cyberears [Rating 4, w/ audio enhancement 3, ear recording unit, increased sensitivity, select sound filter 5, sound link], cybereyes [Rating 4, w/ eye recording unit, image link, low-light vision, thermographic vision, vision enhancement 3, vision magnification], datajack, skillwires 4

Gear: Horizon Dream Collection Executive clothing

CHARLEMAGNE "MECHANIC" LATIMER

Ork male

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 12/11

Armor (B/I): 14/8

Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 4, Athletics skill group 4, Computer 1, Data Search 1, Dodge (Melee Combat) 4 (+2), First Aid 2, Influence skill group 3, Intimidation 3, Perception 4, Pilot Aircraft 1, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Pistols 4, Stealth skill group 3, Unarmed Combat 1

Knowledge Skills: Back Alleys 4, Bluffing 6, Gambling 5, Las Vegas Resort Security Procedures 3, The Las Vegas Strip 4,

Languages: English N, Spanish 2, Sperethiel 2, Ute 3

Qualities: Adept, Photographic Memory

Adept Powers: Analytics 2, Astral Perception, Cool Resolve 2, Improved Reflexes 3

Initiate Grade: 1

Metamagic: Masking

Gear: Armor jacket, form-fitting body armor (full-body suit), sunglasses [Rating 1, w/ smartlink]

Weapons:

Ares Predator IV [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 15(c), w/ melee hardening, personalized grip]

CIRCUS PERFORMER

Professional Rating 1

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	6(8)	4	5(7)	4	3	2	3	4	5.1	7	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 0/0

Skills: Archery 3, Con 2, Diving 4, Escape Artist 3, Gymnastics 5 (6), Longarms 2, Palming 3, Perception (Hearing) 4 (+2), Running 2 (3), Shadowing 2, Swimming 3, Throwing Weapons 3

Knowledge Skills: Acrobatic Techniques 4, Entertainment Corporations 2, Performance Techniques 4

Qualities: Double Jointed, Guts, Natural Athlete

Augmentations: Cyberears [Rating 2, w/ audio enhancement 2, balance augments, ear recording unit, sound link, spatial recognizer], cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ eye recording unit, image link, low-light vision, vision enhancement 3, vision magnification], muscle augmentation 2, muscle toner 2

Gear: 50 meters myomeric rope

CORPORATE SECURITY

Professional Rating 4

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
4(6)	4(6)	4(6)	4(6)	2	4	3	4	2.36	8(10)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 13/13

Skills: Athletics skill group 3 (5), Clubs (Batons) 4 (+2), Computer 2, Etiquette (Corporate) 3 (+2), Firearms skill group 4, Hardware 2, Infiltration 2, Intimidation 5, Perception 3 (5), Shadowing 2, Throwing Weapons (Lobbed) 2 (+2), Unarmed Combat (Block) 3 (+2)

Augmentations (all alphaware): Cybereyes [Rating 3 w/ eye recording unit, flare compensation, image link, smartlink, thermographic vision, and vision enhancement 2], dermal plating 1, ceramic bone lacing, muscle augmentation 2, muscle toner 2, synthacardium 2, wired reflexes 2

Gear: Commlink (Rating 4), full body armor (w/ helmet, chemical protection 5, non-conductivity 5), stim patch (Rating 5)

Weapons:

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

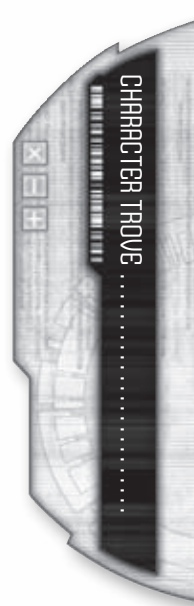
HK-227-X [SMG, DV 5P, AP -4, SA/BF/FA, RC 2 (3), 28(c), w/ retractable stock, smartgun system, internal sound suppressor, gas-vent 2, and 3 clips APDS ammo]
2 flash-bang grenades [Grenade, DV 6S, AP -3, Blast 10m Radius]

CORPORATE SUPERVISOR

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
3	2	3	2	4(5)	4	5	4	5.5	7	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 5/3



Skills: Computer 2, Con 1, Data Search 2, Interrogation 2, Etiquette (Corporate) 4 (+2), Leadership 3, Negotiation 4, Perception 3, Pistols (Tasers) 2 (+2)

Knowledge Skills: Corporate Finances 4, Corporate Politics 4, Management Techniques

Qualities: Combat Paralysis

Augmentations: Attention coprocessor 1, math SPU, tailored pheromones 1

Gear: Actioneer business clothes, commlink (Device Rating 4), contacts [Rating 2, w/ low-light vision, vision enhancement 2]

Weapons:

Cavalier SafeGuard [Taser, DV 5S(e), AP -half, SA, RC —, 6 (m)]

DAWKINS GROUP ADEPT

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	M	Init	IP
4	5	5(7)	4	5	5	4	4	6	7	10(12)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 9/2

Skills: Blades 3, Computer 3, Disguise 4, Firearms skill group 3, First Aid 2, Infiltration 3, Influence skill group 5, Leadership 3, Perception 4 (5), Running 2, Shadowing 4, Throwing Weapons 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Knowledge Skills: Horizon Corporate Structure 4, Megacorporations 4, Mimetics 4, Public Relations 4

Qualities: Adept, First Impression, Perceptive (5 BP)

Adept Powers: Analytics (2), Astral Perception, Cool Resolve (1), Critical Strike (2), Improved Reflexes (2), Killing Hands, Kinesics (3), Mystic Armor (1), Voice Control

Initiate Grade: 1

Metamagics: Adept centering

Gear: Armor clothing, commlink (Device Rating 5), contacts [Rating 3, w/ image link, smartlink, vision enhancement 3], form-fitting body armor (half-body suit), jammer (area, Rating 6), lockpick set, maglock passkey (Rating 5), white noise generator (Rating 6)

Weapons:

Flash-Pak [Grenade, DV special, AP —, Blast special]

Savalette Guardian [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA/BF*, RC 2, 12 (c), w/ personalized grip, smartlink]

* Burst fire on this weapon requires a Complex Action.

Unarmed attack [Unarmed, Reach —, DV 4P, AP —]

DAWKINS GROUP TRAINED GUARDS (ADEPTS)

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	5	5(7)	4	5	4	4	6	7	4	6	9(11)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 13/12

Skills: Automatics 6, Clubs 5, Con 4, Dodge 4, Etiquette (Corporate) 3 (+2), Infiltration 5, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Longarms 3, Perception 5, Pistols 4, Throwing Weapons 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Knowledge Skills: Horizon Employee Habits 3, Horizon

Employee Routines 5

Qualities: Adept

Initiate Grade: 1

Metamagics: Adept Centering

Adept Powers: Astral Perception, Improved Reflexes (2), Kinesics (3), Kinesics Mastery, Mystic Armor (2), Critical Strike (2)

Gear: Biomonitor, commlink (Device Rating 5), full body armor, helmet, contacts [Rating 3, w/ flare compensation, low-light vision, smartlink]

Weapons:

Colt Cobra TZ-110 [SMG, DV 4S, AP +2, SA/BF/FA, RC 2 (3), 32 (c), w/ folding stock, barrel-mounted gas-vent 2 system, gel rounds]

Nitama NeMax [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP +1, SA, 10 (c), w/ internal smartgun system, basic safe target system, biometric safety system, frangible rounds]

Tonfa [Club, Reach 1, DV 3P, AP —]

Unarmed [DV 4S, AP —]

DAWKINS GROUP OPERATIVE

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
3	4(5)	3	3	5	5	4(5)	4	4.9	8	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 6/4

Skills: Clubs 2, Computer 3, Data Search 3, Firearms skill group 3, Forgery 3, Infiltration 3, Influence skill group 4, Palming 3, Perception 3, Pilot Aircraft 2, Shadowing 3, Tracking 3

Knowledge Skills: Corporate Leaders 3, Mimetics 2, Public Relations 3

Qualities: Guts

Augmentations: Cerebral booster 1, cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ eye recording unit, flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 1] muscle toner 1, tailored pheromones 2

Gear: Armor vest, commlink (Device Rating 5), jammer (area, Rating 4), 2 x fake SINS (Rating 3), maglock passkey (Rating 3), tag eraser, white noise generator (Rating 4)

Weapons:

Hammerli 620S [Light Pistol, DV 4P, AP —, SA, RC 1, 6(c), w/ gas-vent 1, smartlink]

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



Dawkins Group Operative



EAGLE SECURITY SWAT OFFICER

Professional Rating 4

Elf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
6	7	4(7)	5	4	4	5	5	2.72	8(11)	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 12/10

Skills: Automatics (Assault Rifles) 5 (+4), Clubs 3, Computer 3, Demolitions 3, Dodge 3, First Aid 4, Gymnastics 3 (+1), Infiltration 4, Longarms 4, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Pistols 4, Running 3 (+1), Throwing Weapons 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Augmentations (all alphaware): Cyberears [Rating 3, w/ audio enhancement 3, damper, spatial recognizer], cybereyes [Rating 4, w/ eye light system, flare compensation, smartlink, thermographic vision], cyberleg [left, full, obvious], cyberleg [right, full, obvious], 2 foot anchors, radar sensor 4, reaction enhancers 3

Qualities: Natural Athlete

Gear: Commlink (DR 4), SWAT Armor

Weapons:

FN HAR [Assault Rifle, DV 7P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 2, 35 (c), w/ gas-vent 2, internal smartgun system, explosive Rounds. SWAT officers carry 2 clips filled with stick 'n' shock rounds if non-lethal assault is required. Foot achors, when activated, provide a +1 point for Recoil Compensation and +2 points for the Body attribute toward knockdown tests]

Franchi SPAS-22 [Shotgun, DV 8P, AP -1, SA/BF, RC (1), 10 (m), w/ folding stock with shock pad, internal smartgun system, shock lock rounds]

Ares Desert Strike [Sniper Rifle, DV 8P, AP -3, SA, RC (1), 14 (c), w/ rigid stock with shock pad, detachable imaging scope]

EAGLE SECURITY SHAMAN

Professional Rating 4

Elf

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11

Armor (B/I): 12/7

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 4, Computer 3, Athletics skill group 3, Banishing 3, Blades 4, Clubs 3, Counterspelling 5, Dodge 4, Firearms skill group 3, First Aid 2, Heavy Weapons 2, Infiltration 5, Spellcasting 5, Summoning 5

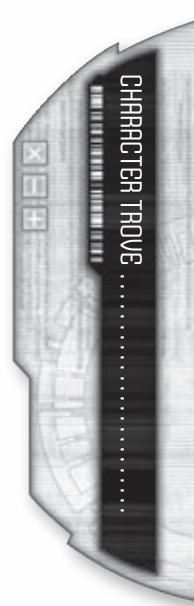
Qualities: Magician

Spells: Blast, Heal, Manaball, Manabolt, Increase Reflexes, Physical Barrier, Slay (Ork), Slay (Troll), Stunball, Stunbolt

Tradition: Shaman (Charisma + Willpower)

Bound Spirits: 2 spirits of fire (Force 6, 3 services), 2 spirits of air (Force 4, 2 services)

Gear: Armor jacket, commlink (Device Rating 4), form-fitting body armor (half-body suit), sustaining focus 3 (currently sustaining Increase Reflexes at threshold 4)



Weapons:

- Colt M22A3 [Assault Rifle, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 1, 40 (c), w/ gas-vent system, integral top-mounted imaging scope, underbarrel grenade launcher]
 Underbarrel grenade launcher [SS, 6 (m), Fragmentation mini-grenades, 12P(f), AP +2]
 Browning Ultra-Power [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 10 (c), w/ top-mounted laser sight]

ELITE CORPORATE SECURITY**Professional Rating 6***Human*

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
5 (9)	5 (8)	5 (9)	3	2	5	3	3	1.03	10 (14)	1 (3)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11 (13)**Armor (B/I):** 11/7

Skills: Athletics skill group 4 (7), Automatics 4 (5), Dodge 4 (6), Etiquette (Corporate) 3 (+2), Perception 5 (7), Pistols (Semi-Automatics) 5 (6) (+2), Intimidation (Physical) 4 (+2), Negotiation 3, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Stealth skill group 4, Throwing Weapons 3, Unarmed Combat (Subdual Combat) 5 (+2)

Qualities: Magic Resistance (Rating 4)

Augmentations: (all betaware) Attention coprocessor 2, audio enhancement 2 (inner ear modification), ceramic bone lacing, cybereyes [Rating 4, w/ eye laser system, eye laser microphone 3, eye recording unit, flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, protective covers, smartlink, thermographic vision, and vision enhancement 3], cyber-taser, damper (inner ear modification), density augmentation 2, datajack, move-by-wire system 2, muscle toner 3, olfactory booster 6, reflex recorder (Firearms), synthacardium 3

Gear: Actioneer business suit, commlink (Device Rating 5), form-fitting body armor (full suit, w/ Rating 6 nonconductivity), medkit (Rating 6), plasteel restraints, tranq patch (Rating 10), trauma patch (Rating 6)

Weapons:

- Cyber-Taser [Taser, DV 6S(e), AP -half, SA, RC —, 4 (m)]
 Colt Government 2066 [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -5, SA, RC 1, 18(c) w/ concealable holster, extended clip, smartgun system, silencer, and APDS ammo]
 2 flash-bang grenades [Grenade, DV 6S, AP -3, Blast 10m Radius]
 HK Urban Combat [SMG, DV 5P, AP -4, SA/BF/FA, RC 2, 36(c) w/ int. smartlink, int. suppressor, and APDS ammo]

ELITE RUNNER ADEPT**Professional Rating 3**

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Ess	Init	IP
4	7	5 (6)	5	4	4	3	4	9	6	9 (10)	1 (2)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10**Armor (B/I):** 9/7**Skills:** Automatics 4, Blades 5 (6), Clubs 4, Computer 2, Con 4,

Dodge 3, Gymnastics 4, Infiltration 4, Intimidation 3, Negotiate 3, Palming 4, Perception 5, Pistols (Semi-Automatics) 5 (+2), Longarms 4, Shadowing 5, Unarmed Combat 7

Knowledge Skills: Local Fixers 3, Runner Hangouts 4, Safehouses 3, Small Group Tactics 4**Qualities:** Adept, Aptitude (Unarmed Combat), Exceptional Attribute (Agility), Guts

Adept Powers: Astral Perception, Attribute Boost (Strength) (4), Combat Sense (2), Critical Strike (4), Elemental Strike (Electricity), Improved Ability (Blades) (2), Improved Reflexes (1), Killing Hands, Mystic Armor (1), Spell Resistance (2)

Initiate Level: 3**Metamagics:** Adept centering, attunement (sword), somatic control

Gear: Armor jacket, commlink (Device Rating 5), contacts [Rating 3, w/ low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement 2], weapon focus (Force 5, sword)

Weapons:

- Ares Predator IV [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -5, SA, RC 1, 15 (c), w/ personalized grip, smartlink, APDS ammo]
 Sword [Blade, DV Reach 1, DV 6P, AP —]
 Unarmed Combat [Unarmed, Reach —, DV 7P, AP —]

ELITE RUNNER MAGE**Professional Rating 3**

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Ess	Init	IP
3	4	5	2	3	4	7	5	9	6	9	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11**Armor (B/I):** 8/1

Skills: Arcana 5, Assensing 5, Astral Combat 4, Conjuring skill group 5, Counterspelling 5, Enchanting 4, Negotiation 3, Perception 5, Pistols (Semi-Automatics) 4 (+2), Ritual Spellcasting 5, Spellcasting 7

Knowledge Skills: Draconic Activities 3, Magic-Based Corporations 3, Magic Theory 4, Notable Mages 4**Qualities:** Aptitude (Spellcasting), Exceptional Attribute (Logic), Focused Concentration, Magician (Hermetic)

Spells: Analyze Truth, Armor, Bind, Clout, Control Thoughts, Detect Magic, Enhance Aim, Fireball, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Increase Agility, Increase Reflexes, Light, Manabolt, Mass Agony, Physical Barrier, Slay (Human), Spirit Zapper, Stunball

Initiate Level: 3**Metamagics:** Centering, masking, quickening

Gear: Armor clothing, commlink (Device Rating 5), contacts [Rating 3, w/ image link, low-light vision, vision enhancement 3], form-fitting body armor (half-body suit), power focus [Force 4, platinum ring]

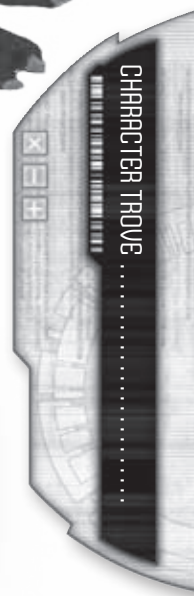
Weapons:

- Colt Government 2066 [Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP -2, SA, RC 1, 14(c), w/ laser sight, personalized grip, EX-explosive ammo]





Elite Runner
Adept



ELITE SECURITY MAGE

Professional Rating 3

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Assensing 5, Clubs 3, Computer 3, Conjuring skill group 4, Counterspelling (Combat) 5 (+2), Dodge 2, Perception 5, Pistols 3, Shadowing 3, Spellcasting (Detection) 5 (+2)

Initiate Level: 1

Metamagics: Centering

Spells: Analyze Truth, Armor, Blast, Clairvoyance, Confusion, Detect Life, Detect Magic, Heal, Increase Reflexes, Invisibility, Manaball, Mana Barrier, Mindlink, Silence, Stunbolt

Gear: Armor jacket, commlink (Device Rating 5), mage sight goggles, maglock passkey (Rating 5)

Weapons:

Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP -2, SA, RC 1, 16(c), w/ laser sight, personalized grip, EX-ex ammo]
Stun Baton [Club, Reach 1, DV 6S(e), -half]

ELITE TECHNOMANCER

Professional Rating 3

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 6/4

Skills: Automatics 4, Clubs 3, Compiling 5, Cracking skill group 5, Decompiling 5, Electronics skill group 6, Etiquette 3, Gunnery 4, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 5, Pilot Aircraft 3, Registering 4

Living Persona: System 6, Response 5, Firewall 4, Signal 4

Complex Forms: Analyze 5, Armor 5, Attack 6, Bio-Feedback Filter 4, Browse 5, Command 5, Decrypt 6, Edit 4, Encrypt 6, Spoof 4, Track 5

Submersion Grade: 1

Echoes: Overclocking

Registered Sprites: 2 x crack sprites (Rating 4, 3 tasks apiece)

Gear: Armor vest, 2 x fake SInS (Rating 5)

Weapons:

HK MP-5 TX [SMG, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC 2 (3), 20 (c), w/ detachable folding stock, gas-vent 2, laser sight, EX-explosive ammo]

FANATICS

Professional Rating 1

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
2	3	3	3	4	3	2	5	5.6	6	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 6/4

Skills: Automatics 2, Clubs 2, Disguise 2, Dodge 2, First Aid 2, Infiltration 2, Intimidation 4, Perception 3, Pilot Aircraft 1, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Running 2, Survival 2

Qualities: Toughness

Augmentations: Commlink (implanted, Device Rating 3), cyber-eyes [Rating 1, w/ eye recording unit, flare compensation, image link, smartlink]

Gear: Armor vest, medkit (Rating 3), 50 meters standard rope, 2 x stimulant patches (Rating 3)

Weapons:

Ingram Smartgun X [SMG, DV 5P, AP —, BF/FA, RC 2 (3), 32(c), w/ detachable folding stock, gas-vent 2, smartlink, sound suppressor]

GUERRILLA

Professional Rating 2

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Automatics 3, Blades 2, Climbing 2, Clubs 2, Dodge 2, Gunnery 1, Heavy Weapons 1, Infiltration 3, Intimidation 1, Longarms 2, Perception 1, Pilot Ground Craft 1, Pistols 2, Survival 2, Throwing Weapons 1, Unarmed Combat 2

Gear: Armor jacket, commlink (Device Rating 3), medkit (Rating 6),

Weapons:

AK-97 [Assault Rifle, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC —, 38(c)]

Blade Bayonet [Blade, Reach 2, DV 4P, AP -1]

Fragmentation grenade [Grenade, DV 12P(f), AP +5, Blast -1/m]

HOTEL STAFF

Professional Rating 1

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 9

Armor (B/I): 0/0

Skills: Clubs 1, Etiquette (Corporate) 4 (+2), Industrial Mechanic 1, Locksmith 1, Negotiation 2, Palming 1, Perception 3

Qualities: Low Pain Tolerance, SInNer

Gear: Commlink (Device Rating 2), glasses [Rating 1, w/ vision magnification], industrial mechanic toolkit

Weapons:

Wrench [Club, Reach —, DV 3P, AP —]

KAY ST. IRREGULAR

JackPoint's resident political expert, Kay St. Irregular has made a nice living for himself by virtue of the fact that he knows where all the bodies are buried. There are plenty of people that would like to see him dead, but even more that want to keep him alive so they can have a chance of learning even a small piece of what he knows.

Male human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	5	5(8)	3	5(8)	7	6	3	7	3.45	10(13)	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/10

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Athletics skill group 4, Automatics (Machine Pistols) 5 (+2), Close Combat skill group 3, Con (Fast Talk) 5 (+2), Electronics skill group 5, Disguise 5, Etiquette (Government) 5 (+2), Infiltration (Urban) 6 (+2), Perception 5, Shadowing 4, Throwing Weapons 4, Tracking 5

Knowledge Skills: Corporate Politics 5, Finances 2, Fine Cuisine 3, Government Systems 6, Modern Literature 2, Politicians 6, Safe Houses 4,

Languages: English N, French 3, German 3 Spanish 4, Sperthiel 2

Qualities: Blandness, Double Jointed, Exceptional Attribute (Intuition), Lucky, Murky Link

Augmentations: Cyberears [Rating 2, w/ audio enhancement 2, balance augments, spatial recognizer], cybereyes [Rating 3, w/ flare compensation, low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision magnification], reaction enhancers 3, spur, tailored pheromones 3, vocal range enhancer

Gear: Armor jacket, autopicker (Rating 4), chameleon suit, commlink (Device Rating 5), gas mask, gecko tape gloves, grapple gun w/ climbing gear, jammer (area, Rating 7), keycard copier (Rating 6), maglock passkey (Rating 6), medkit (Rating 6), 2 small containers of nanopaste disguise, 200 m of stealth rope, white noise generator (Rating 6), wire clippers

Weapons:

Ares Crusader [Machine Pistol, DV 4P, AP -4, SA/BF, RC 2, 40 (c), w/ gas-vent 2, 4 clips of APDS ammo, sound suppressor]

Spur [Reach —, DV 5P, AP —]

4 thermal smoke grenades, [Grenade, DV —, AP —, Blast 10m Radius]

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

LOW-LEVEL RUNNERS

Professional Rating 2

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	4	3(4)	4	2	3	3	3	2	2.7	6(7)	1(2)

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Automatics 2, Blades 3, Computer 2, Dodge 2, Perception 3, Pistols 4, Running 2, Shadowing 3, Throwing Weapons 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Qualities: Guts, Toughness

Augmentations: Cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ eye recording unit, low-light vision, image link, smartlink, vision enhancement 2], muscle replacement 1, wired reflexes 1

Gear: Armor jacket, commlink (Device Rating 2), fake SIN (Rating 2)

Weapons:

AK-97 [Assault Rifle, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF/FA, RC —, 38 (c)]

Ares Predator IV [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 15(c), w/ smartlink]

Survival knife [Blade, Reach —, DV 3P, AP -1]

MARCELINO MERLOT

Dwarf male

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 12/11

Armor (B/I): 8/8

Skills: Athletics skill group 3, Close Combat skill group 3, Computer 1, Con 3, Dodge 2, Etiquette 5, Firearms skill group 4, Intimidation 5, Leadership 6, Negotiation 5, Perception 4

Knowledge Skills: Fine Wines 2, Gambling 2, Italian Cuisine 4, Mafia Insider 6, Strategy Games 5, Vory Operations 3

Languages: English N, Russian 5

Qualities: Exceptional Attribute (Body), Home Ground (Las Vegas Metroplex), Human-Looking

Gear: Executive Suite Outfit

Weapons:

HK Urban Fighter [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 10 (c), w/ smartlink]

MERCENARY

Professional Rating 3

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 13/12

Skills: Athletics skill group 3 (5), Close Combat skill group 3 (4), Dodge 3, Firearms skill group 4 (5), Infiltration 3, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Survival 2

Qualities: Adept

Adept Powers: Combat Sense (1), Improved Ability (Blades) (2), Improved Reflexes (2), Improved Sense (Flare Compensation, Low Light), Mystic Armor (1)

Augmentations: Aluminum bone lacing (alphaware), muscle replacement 1, platelet factories, reflex recorder (firearms), syn-thacardium 2

Gear: Commlink (Device Rating 3), contacts [Rating 2, w/ low-light vision, smartlink], full body armor (w/ Chemical Protection 4, Nonconductivity Rating 4), helmet

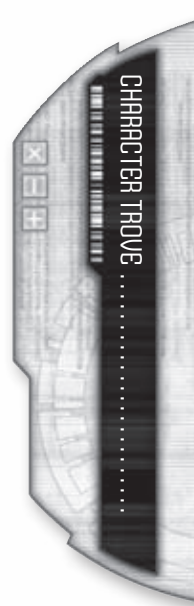
Weapons:

Ares HVAR [Assault Rifle, DV 5P, AP —, SA/BF/FA, RC 3 (4), 35(c) w/ rigid stock & shock pad, smartlink]

Cougar Fine Blade (Long) [Reach —, DV 5P, AP -1 w/ personalized grip]

MICHELLE "WHISPER" LAPIZZI

Michelle Lapizzi is often mistaken for an elf. Her slim stature and soft-spoken nature do much to hide the hardened criminal in her slight frame. She came up through the Chicago Mob quietly, making no splashy heists or big hits. But she was there when it counted. She made it out of the city when the bugs came and she became indispensable to the syndicate as a fixer for those jobs that went into the Containment Zone. When Ares declared the city



clean, she requested a new assignment and landed in Vegas as the casino manager of The Dragon's Hoard.

Chicago taught her that no spot is ever truly safe. Bugs, thieves, rivals all come looking for valuables sooner or later. The first thing Michelle did as casino manager is take the Star of the Ancients and hide it in plain sight. She keeps it close to her in her office rather than the vault. The Star is mixed in with various other paintings, sculptures, and objects of art that someone of her stature is expected to have in her office.

Lapizzi never forgets a slight. When the Star goes missing she does everything in her power to get it back. Later events in the campaign cover up the loss of the artifact as Lapizzi struggles to not take a hit to her reputation after the loss of the Star. If she has any idea that the runners were involved in the object's disappearance, she takes it out on them should she ever encounter them again, making sure they meet trouble any time they return to Vegas.

Human female

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	4	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	5.5	6	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/10

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Athletics skill group 2, Close Combat skill group 4, Electronics skill group 2, Firearms skill group 3, Influence skill group 4, Intimidation 2 (Interrogation +2), Pilot Aircraft 1, Pilot Ground Craft 1, Stealth skill group 1

Knowledge Skills: Art History 3, Carnival Games 3, Desert Burial Techniques 2, Gambling Cheats 3

Languages: English N, Italian 3, Japanese 3, Russian 1

Qualities: Home Ground: Dragon's Hoard Casino, Photographic Memory, Poor Self Control: Vindictive, Weak Immune System

Augmentations: Clean metabolism, dietware, Erika Elite commlink w/ Iris Orb OS [implanted, Response 3, Signal 4, Firewall 3, System 3, w/ Analyze 3, Basic+ Suite, Browse 3, Command 1, Edit 3], hand razors

Gear: Jammer (area, Rating 6), Suzuki Mirage, white noise generator (Rating 4), Zoé Executive Suite line (long jacket, plain blouse, skirt)

Weapons:

Hand Razors [Blade, Reach —, DV 2P, AP —]

MR. JOHNSON (CORPORATE)

Professional Rating 3

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Ess	Init	IP
5	2	3	2	5(6)	4	5	5	5.8	7	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor (B/I): 5/3

Skills: Con 1, Interrogation 2, Etiquette (Corporate) 3 (+2), Leadership 3, Negotiation 4, Pistols 1

Knowledge Skills: Corporate Finances 4, Corporate Politics 4, Mechanical Engineering 3

Qualities: Combat Paralysis

Augmentations: Math co-processor, tailored pheromones 1

Gear: Actioneer business clothes, commlink (Device Rating 4)

Weapons:

Fichetti Executive Action [Light Pistol, DV 4P, AP —, SA/BF, RC —, 18(c), regular ammo]

MR. JOHNSON (STREET)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	4(6)	5(7)	3	5	5	4	5	5	4.9	10(12)	1

Condition Monitor Boxes: 10/11

Armor (B/I): 4/0

Skills: Computer 3, Con (Fast Talk) 4 (6) (+2), Data Search 3, Disguise 3, First Aid 3, Forgery 4, Infiltration 3, Palming (Pickpocket) 4 (+2), Perception 3, Pistols 4, Intimidation 4, Negotiation 4, Shadowing 4

Knowledge Skills: Corporate Personnel 2, Local Fixers 4, Shadowrun Techniques 4

Qualities: Trustworthy (Con, 20 BP)

Augmentations: Muscle toner 2, reaction enhancers 2, tailored pheromones 2

Gear: Armor clothing, commlink (Device Rating 4), 3 x fake SINs (Rating 4), glasses [Rating 3, w/ image link, smartlink, vision enhancement 3], 2 x nanopaste disguise (small container), 2 x stimulant patches

Weapons:

Savalette Guardian [Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP -1, SA/BF*, RC 1, 12(c), w/ smartlink, explosive ammo]

* Burst fire on this weapon require a Complex Action.

RENA GREAT BEAR

Human female

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

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 4/0

Skills: Arcana 1, Artisan 1, Assensing 7, Astral Combat 2, Athletics skill group 1, Close Combat skill group 3, Computer 2, Conjuring Group 2, Dodge 3, Etiquette 6, First Aid 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Medicine 2, Negotiation 5, Perception 5, Sorcery Group 3, Throwing Weapons 3

Knowledge Skills: Consensual Physical Activity 5, Entertainment Scene 4, Far Eastern History 2, Las Vegas Shadows 5, North American Breakfast Cuisine 5, Torture 2

Languages: English N

Qualities: Aptitude (Assensing), Home Ground (Nymph Ranch), Magician (Wiccan: Goddess)

Initiate Grade: 3

Metamagic: Centering, Cleansing, Divining

Spells: Agony, Alleviate Addiction, Alter Memory, Analyze Truth, Antidote, Astral Clairvoyance, Clairaudience, Clairvoyance, Clout, Compel Truth, Crank, Death Touch, Detox, Diagnose, Fashion, Foreboding, Heal, Healthy Glow, Increase Charisma, Influence, Makeover, Orgasm

Gear: Armor clothing

SECURITY MAGE

Professional Rating 5

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

Condition Monitor Boxes: 11

Armor: 12/6

Skills: Athletics skill group 3, Counterspelling 4 (Combat) (+2), Dodge (Ranged) 3 (+2), Firearms skill group 3, Influence skill group 4, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Unarmed Combat (Block) 3 (+2), Spellcasting (Combat) 6 (+2), Stealth skill group 3

Qualities: Aspected Magician (Sorcerer), Focused Concentration (Rating 1), Geas (Incantation), Magician (Hermetic)

Initiate Grade: 2

Metamagics: Centering, shielding

Spells: Armor, Boom, Flamethrower, Increase Reflexes, Heal, Laser, Lightning Bolt, Manabolt, Manaball, Powerbolt, Stun Bolt

Gear: Actioneer Business Suit, commlink (Device Rating 4), contacts [Rating 3, w/ image link, low-light vision, and smartlink], combat counterspelling focus (Force 2), FFBA full suit (w/ Rating 4 nonconductivity), one dose of psyche, PPP vitals protector, stimulant patch (Rating 6)

Weapons:

Steyr TMP [Machine Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC 1 (2), 30(c) w/ ext. smartgun system, folding stock, foregrip, and EX-explosive ammo]

VETERAN FACE

Professional Rating 4

Dwarf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	3	3	3	6	5	4	5	4	5.7	8	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 6/4

Skills: Artisan (Dance) 1 (+2), Con 5, Dodge 2, Electronics skill group 3, Etiquette 5, Pilot Ground Craft (Car) 2 (+2), Intimidation 3, Negotiations 5, Perception 4, Pistols 3

Knowledge Skills: Combat Bike Schedule 3, Dance Clubs 2, Fine Cuisine 3, Fine Restaurants 3, Gambling Card Games 2, Urban Brawl Schedule 3

Languages: English N, Arabic 3, Cantonese 3, German 3, Japanese 3, Spanish 3

Qualities: Exceptional Attribute (charisma), First Impression, Combat Paralysis, Gremlins (Rating 2)

Augmentations: Datajack, implanted commlink (Device Rating 4)

Gear: Basic DocWagon contract (1 year), 4 certified credstics (blank), 2 fake SINS (Rating 4), high lifestyle (4 Months), jammer [Area, Rating 4], lined coat, Mercury Comet, monocle [Rating 2, w/ image link, smartlink]

Weapons:

Fichetti Security 600 [Light Pistol, DV 4P, AP —, SA, RC (1), 30(c)]

YATOKYA PADILLA

Human female

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	4	3	2	6	5	5	5	4	5.2	8	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 9/11

Armor (B/I): 8/4

Skills: Artisan 3, Athletics skill group 3, Computer 2, Con 6, Etiquette 7, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Negotiation 5, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Knowledge Skills: Contemporary Comedy 6, Esoteric Trivia 4, Pop Culture 6, Ultra-Modern Fashion 6

Languages: English N, Spanish 4, Sperethiel 2, Ute 5

Qualities: Aptitude: Etiquette, First Impression, Guts

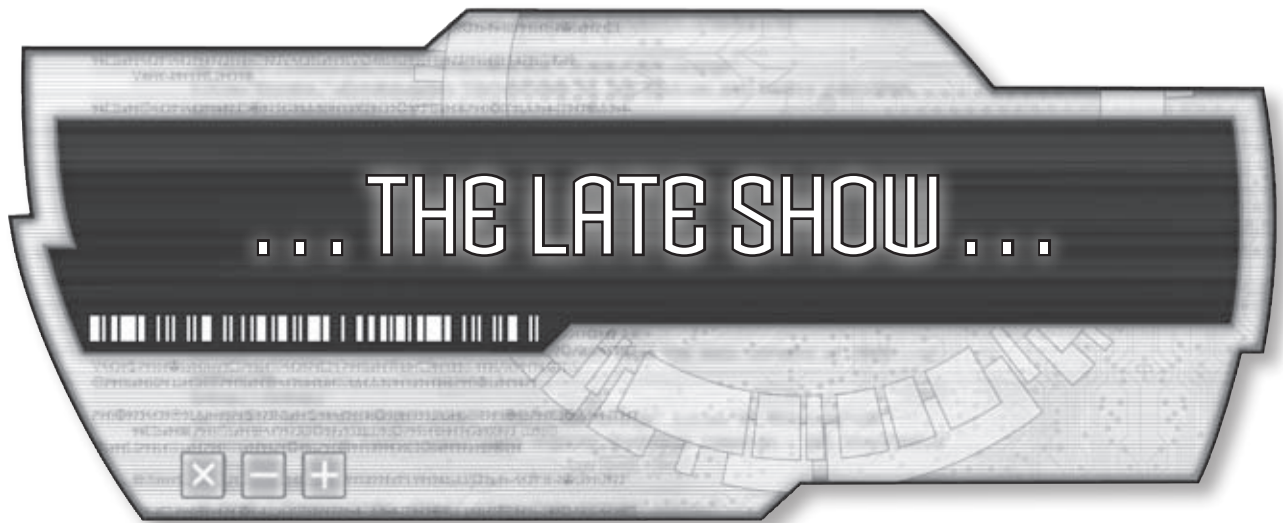
Augmentations: Clean metabolism, dietware, tailored pheromones 3

Gear: Zoé de Paris “Stay in Vegas” Safe and Sound Fashion Line, designer shock gloves

Weapons:

Shock Gloves [Unarmed, Reach —, DV 5S(c), AP -half]





Gary Cline stayed up far too late watching trideo.

That was the case most nights. He enjoyed his current life, he truly found pleasure in the process of trying to build Horizon, but still, in the end, what he really loved were movies. He loved the dimming of the lights, the sweep of a story, the swell of strings, the outsized emotions, the drama, and the spectacle. He loved that people were taking the time to tell him a story, and he still missed being part of those stories.

He loved a good, happy ending—who didn't?—but he also enjoyed those trids that raked you over the coals, that threw you into the mouth of a desperate situation, chewed you up for a few hours, then spat you out, wasted and spent, at the end. And that's what tonight's presentation had been. It was amateurishly filmed, it didn't really have any sense of characterization, and it had no real plot to speak of. It was just shot after shot of people in chaos, of devices and vehicles turning on them, of disaster and fire running rampant through city streets, and, most of all, of people encountering force they weren't prepared for, of clubs swinging, tasers sparking, and guns firing, and these weapons being met with surprise and fear, the stunned and then limp expressions of people who were caught on the side of the head, the pain of people clutching at stomach wounds, and the complete emptiness of people who lay with blank-eyed stares as the world went insane around them. People stepped over and sometimes on these limp forms in the streets and spread trails of footprints with their blood.

There was one face he recognized, though he couldn't place the name. The person had blue hair, a face tattoo that made him look like an owl, and a scrawny, almost emaciated body. He had been at one of the protests in Los Angeles, one where Cline had tried to pacify the people by sending down one of his better PR guys, a man named Kevin Bellevue, and while Bellevue normally nailed any assignment

he was given, he was overwhelmed by this one. The protestors were angrier than Cline had ever seen them, and Bellevue couldn't make himself heard, even with all the magical amplification the mages could throw out there. Cline thought about maybe having them cast a spell that would just shut everyone up, but that was playing with fire. It might just make angrier, and then a tense situation could become explosive. So he just watched from inside as Bellevue was completely overwhelmed, right up to the moment where the blue-haired, owl-stamped guy was screaming in Bellevue's face, spittle flying, and Cline gave up and pulled Bellevue back inside.

At that moment, he had hated the blue-haired protestor more than he hated anyone in the world. His arrogance, his lack of understanding, his misdirected rage—Cline found it all to be unbearable.

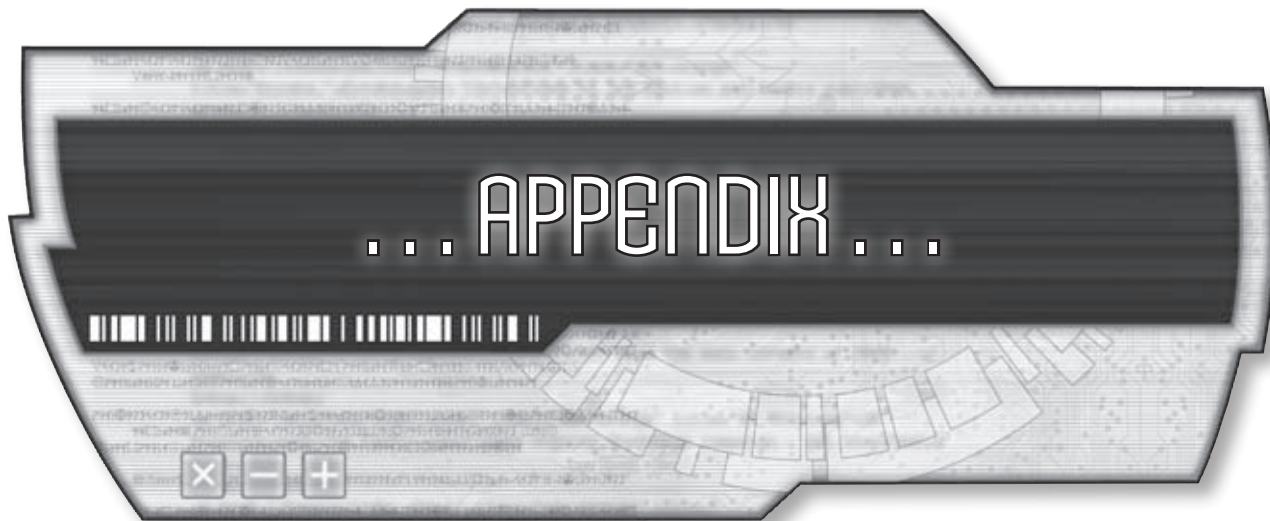
So when he saw the blue-haired protestor lying among the dead of Las Vegas, his first reaction had been a primal stab of adrenaline, and then the words popped into his head, unbidden.

Got you, you bastard. We got you.

As soon as he had the thought, he recoiled in horror—from the trideo, from himself, from everything. He knew that was how it had happened. That was how the Consensus had gone wrong. Thoughts like the one he had just had, fed into the decision-making algorithm, over and over again.

The Consensus was supposed to be the conscience of the corporation. It was supposed to help them keep metahumanity in mind, not just dollars. It was supposed to be the voice of the employees speaking as one and leading the megacorporation to good decisions. But with the dead of Las Vegas lay a certain question, a question that repeated over and over again in Cline's head.

How do you do good when good is not what your people want?



HORIZON SOFTWARE UPDATE— SIMSENSE AND PERSONAFIX

Posted by: Turbo Bunny

In the wake of the fallout continues from the Vegas incident, it's good to remember that Horizon remains a triple-A-mega that isn't about to curl up and die. I sifted through some of their recent and upcoming work to see what I could find out. I confess to being a bit leery as some of this tempted me to go on a hardcore binge, so to be safe I subcontracted out a few parts to a friend of mine named Marionette. She's cleared for this section of JackPoint only, on a probationary basis. Marionette is a firm believer in skillwires and has been riding Horizon's on-demand download service since it was first unveiled. She's got history with bunraku parlors, so I tapped her for PersonaFix details as well.

- Well hello there sweet thang. Drop me a line, I'll see if I can't give your rep a little bump ...
- Kane

As you know, Horizon has become a leading simsense producer, but they're not the only ones out there, and the competition is, as you would expect, looking for a way to take then down a peg. So here's a short primer on who the big players in the world of simsense are, outside of Horizon.

NUMBER ONE WITH A BULLET: LIFESCAPE

Thanks to Ares Global Entertainment's massive library, this Ares Consumer Products subsidiary was the clear leader in the field until Horizon arrived. The Truman Distribution Network ensures rapid releases of wireless simfeeds and has a subscriber rate that's second to none—well, one now. The only reason they might not go full throttle in competition against Horizon is due to Horizon and Aztechnology's mutual hatred. The enemy of my enemy and so forth.

THE SAFE OPTION: MITSUHAMA COMPUTERS

Ever since the Renraku Arcology incident, Mitsuhamas has repeatedly mentioned how safe their software is. It might not be bleeding edge, but MCT's current round of 'softs all include auto-shutdown routines if they sense data fluctuations from viruses or AI influence. Needless to say, as technomancer-phobia runs wild, this opens a wide market for their works. Soonan Simsense is the obvious winner here, but expect the Confederate Broadcasting Company to push Nashville brands heavily across North America. Look for them to start a new publicity campaign that illustrates the differences between their secure network's security against Horizon's edgier but "less safe" content.

- I've been investing in MCT gear for a couple years now—modified with my own flare, of course. A recent test run of these 'softs was a huge success. Kept my defenses clean while my trace routines worked their magic. Aces for the new Chloroform attack program as well. KOs like a champ.
- Clockwork
- I don't even have to guess who you've been testing on, you bastard. Rachel had a heart of gold.
- Netcat
- Rachel also had a bounty on her head. Ka-fucking-ching.
- Clockwork

ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

Novatech

Not much to shock anyone here; NeoNET's Novatech handles all manner of skill- and knowsofts. They're too big to move quickly on the current opening, but Richard Villiers doesn't like being behind, so don't expect him to stay still for long.

Renraku Computer Systems

Renraku doesn't stand to directly profit in the latest battles, but anything that takes the heat off of them after the series of disasters that was Crash 2.0, SCIRE, and the arcology shutdown

is something that they support. They'll continue to take an anti-AI position, which might help them find allies..

The Brain-Benders

Last, but certainly not least, are Shiawase and Lone Star, two dark sides of the simsense world. Shiawase's MFID has long had an interest in psychotropic IC and their chips have carried echoes of Fuchi's programming in those areas. Lone Star, too, has an extensive focus on "rehabilitation" software, rewriting brain patterns in their grey clinics. Both are hot for Hozion simsense samples.

- For those interested, Lone Star has moved their grey clinic out of Seattle after the loss of the security contract; they're probably afraid that Knight Errant might raid them. I'm told it's now in Mississippi.
- Sunshine
- Mississippi?! There ain't shit down there! Who's gonna run the joint now?
- Kane
- I believe that you just impaled yourself on the point.
- Hard Exit

SIMSENSE: AN OVERVIEW

We in the shadow community tend to focus on BTLs as a matter of course, but the truth is that most people deal with a softer, less-intense sim experience that isn't as enjoyable but is also less addictive. Note that I say less intense, not non, as studies continue to warn people away from excessive use of the Matrix. While quality of the experience is based on the director, the actors, the recording clarity, and so on, as a general rule, you have four broad categories of sim: common, restricted, quasi-legal, and illegal.

Common sim is available in your basic Matrix programming, over-the-counter mood chips, educational programs, nature documentaries, and so forth. These are all cold-sim recorded, falling shy of the signal strength to push you to dangerous levels of physical response, but still enjoyable. As you know, entertainment is second only to work-related Matrix use, and trideo is now considered a dying medium, with more and more movement of even the poorest rung of society to a 'trix basis, rather than trid-basis. Ratings for trideo continue to drop and some sociologists predict it vanishing in the UCAS within a generation.

Restricted sim is a more intense experience, with most countries preventing children under eighteen from imbibing in order to protect growing minds. Prescription moodchips fall into this category, as do age-restricted sims such as porn or slashers, but also some of the more vibrant tripchips or personafixes. This level is akin to hot sim, leading to higher addiction rates, and they can cause physical backlash.

- Oh please. Matrix use addictive? They've been claiming that drek since I was a baby and it was as bogus then as it is now. Look at me! I'm fine! I'm not addicted at all!
- Slamm-0!

Quasi-legal strength comes primarily through California Hots, legal in some areas (like California, natch) but not in others (such as the UCAS or CAS). You can also find this level of strength in some experimental 'softs before the programming gets softened for commercial use. The buzz you get from some of the stronger hosts, like the NeoNET host in Seattle, runs nearly this hot.

- Horizon's internal systems also run at CalHot levels, legal through all extra-territorial corporate property. There's still some debate about signals being sent through non-corporate property; the Corporate Court ruled it legal, of course, but some countries are worried that these signals will be tapped into and that exposure to over-strength broadcasters will hurt people. The megas have largely helped combat pirates who feed off their signals in this way, both to promote good will with consumers and to make sure that if you want access to their intellectual property, you pay cold nuyen for it.
- Sunshine
- I understand that it's hard to break away from Horizon and other companies with such powerful hosts simply because those who get addicted can't get a fix from the connections offered by, say, an Ares.
- Butch
- I wish I could say that wasn't true. I haven't felt quite the same since I left.
- Sunshine

Lastly we have good ol' BTL. You're all familiar with these (some of us more than others) and how blisteringly addictive they are, giving you experiences that reality simply can't match. Those of you who've been lucky enough to enter a true UV host can understand how easy it is to want to live there and never climb out. BTLs give you your own private world, taking you away from all the problems of the day, and it's so much *better* than everything else. A proper BTL addiction is never cured, I should note. Once you're hooked, you battle it every day for the rest of your life.

- Junkies come in all shapes, sizes, and economic levels. Finding someone with a BTL fix gives you an in if you can provide what they need. The megas play a balancing act, wanting their citizens to be loyal to them, but not pushing sims so much that they get too addicted so that they are willing to sell the corp out for a fix. Internal affairs are always on the look out for security holes like this, but good BTL dealers know how to stay ahead of corp security. Find some corp slot with a weakness for CalHot romances, offer her Columbia Industries' newest feature with the emotional restrictions hacked off, and she'll do anything, and I do mean anything, for you.
- Haze

- Sometimes you disgust even me, Haze.
- Kane
- That mean you don't want the upload?
- Haze
- ...
- Kane
- That's what I thought.
- Haze

All of this is just a basic primer laying the groundwork for what's to follow. It's important to remember that some Horizon citizens are loyal not just because of their corporate culture but because of the ongoing influence of CalHot levels of simsense in their daily lives. Cutting-edge programing, Matrix hosts for work and recreation that aren't UV quality but are better than anything you'll find in legal UCAS limits, and flawless wireless connectivity that gives you access to it anytime, anywhere are all part of the benefits they give their employees to keep them happy and immerse someone in this world they can't imagine leaving it behind. Working or living anywhere else is a hollow, lifeless experience, a pale shadow of what simsense can provide. Once you're in the folds of Horizon, the outside world seems cold and uncaring in comparison.

- I struggle with this more than I care to admit.
- Sunshine

So, let's take a look at some of the products and services that have made Horizon a simsense leader.

THE SINGULARITY SYSTEM

When discussing Horizon as a corporation, one of the things that confuses people is their unique managerial design, where employees are elevated to higher positions of authority via their reputation score. Actions that promote a positive social flow push someone higher, while antisocial activities or a negative personality drive people to lower levels of the authority chain. Promotions are based off individuals' co-workers, then, rather than their boss, creating a one-of-a-kind environment. Interestingly enough, the standard personality matrix that prospers in a typical corporate environment is borderline sociopathic, because people must put their self-interest and the corporation's bottom line over concerns of others. But at Horizon, this personality crashes and burns, resulting in a corporation where a Richard Villiers or Damian Knight simply would never reach any position of authority. These types of people, however, are exactly what a corporation needs to thrive in today's marketplace. How, then, does Horizon manage to compete?

One answer is: the Singularity system.

Horizon doesn't require its employees to buy a skillwires system, but it does suggest that good employees are willing to invest in themselves to strengthen the corporation. The chain is only as strong as the weakest link, after all, and no one wants to be

the weak link. Their skillwires are subsidized; the standard plan would allow employees to have their skillwires fully paid for by their fourth anniversary with the megacorporation. Of course, by then, someone is likely to want to move up to the "trusted associate" level and, in so doing, invest in new wires. More advanced sets are chosen by some of the corporations more significant personalities, but the basic and trusted sets are enough for ninety percent of the workers.

Using the skillwires, activesofts can be slotted whenever the P2P system moves someone to a new working group, allowing them to be instantly caught up on the knowledge base of the working group while also providing them with whatever active skills or languages might be needed for the new role. In this way, a native of Los Angeles might be moved up to an arm in Hong Kong, arriving with fully adapted language skills, street maps that lead them easily across the area, and knowledge of social customs and norms (gestures, idioms, and so forth) that can be used to avoid unfortunate incidents and allow the worker to immediately interact with his new location. This makes it possible for the best people to be used in any capacity, making Horizon amazingly nimble in responding to new developments.

Horizon does produce assorted simchips, from activesofts to knowsofts to personafixes in chip form, but the Singularity system allows wireless access on the fly. Horizon workers are given free access to most of the system and are allowed to tap into 'the singularity' while at work, grabbing whatever knowledge they need. Others may rent on an hourly basis, or purchase for retained downloads (including regular updates and patches, of course) with a hardcopy fee being added if the purchaser wants an actual chip to go along with the download. Having such a library on hand allows for a great range of team building, from rafting adventures to golfing to private race tracks where drivers and pit crew are created on the fly and everyone gets a turn behind the wheel. These social bonds bring workers closer together, nudging everyone to work harder since they don't want to disappoint one another.

- You know how Lone Star used to require everyone, even the data-pushers, to qualify with handguns? At Horizon, every person can

Game Information.....

In general, ninety percent of non-magical Horizon employees are implanted with skillwires. Of this number, eighty percent have Skillwires (2), eighteen percent have Skillwires (3, alpha), while two percent have skillwires (4, beta). Only high-ranking, named NPCs will be found with skillwires (5, beta). Horizon employees may access Singularity for free while at work, tapping into shared resources, but these downloads only exist until they clock out. They are given a ten percent discount on purchases and non-work-related rentals.

Singularity subscription: 50 nuyen for three months access.

Skillsoft Rental: five percent of purchase price for one hour of access.



download combat skills in emergencies, allowing the office to become a siege-worthy fortress. Of course, they also rely heavily on the system and don't do much in the way of redundancy or training of non-vital skills. As such, if you can take the Singularity access down from a facility, you can take a lot of steam out of the lot, reducing them to a handful of actually trained persons while the rest panic.

- Slamm-0!
- Easier said than done in the wireless world with all sorts of redundancies.
- Glitch

MOODCHIPS

Sunshine (Happiness 2) (Happiness 4)

No relation to our eagle-eyed reporter, Sunshine is a basic happiness mood-mod that's the industry leader. BTL knockoffs such as Golden Sun and Red Sun are well known, and Aztechnology's Sun God was creepily bad (the rictus mask it generated was just plain wrong), but Sunshine is the real deal, having knocked *Don't Worry, Be Happy* off the top. A stronger version is available in prescription form for chronic depression sufferers.

- Had this on for a bar fight, once. I was still angry, but man did I enjoy that brawl!
- DangerSensei

Lionheart (Brave 2)

Turn a mouse into a man, a loser into a winner, and a missed opportunity into a promotion! Lionheart is a digital injection of courage, giving you the ability to finally do what you've always wanted to do.

- All right, I just had to clean this whole section of adspam. Before I pull out Old Betsy, anyone want to take responsibility?
- FastJack
- Uh, 'Jack? It all looks like things you authorized yourself. Then deleted.
- Glitch
- It appears you're correct. Now I have to remember why I did that.
- FastJack

Mr. Reliable (Arousal 3)

Using a hint of 2XS technology, Horizon managed to produce a simchip to handle erectile dysfunction. I owe someone at Horizon a great big hug for Christmas for this one.

TRIPCHIPS

Flight (Trip 4)

Miyazaki Daisuke's best work, in my opinion, *Flight* is simply the experience of putting your arms out, getting the wind in your hair, then taking flight, soaring across the heavens. You can buzz people on the ground, sweep your hands through clouds, choose day or night trips, and even explore a dozen famous landmarks

from up above. If you've never tried it, you can't understand the primal emotions involved in the thing. Miyazaki-san might break a personal rule and do a sequel, just to give us more areas in which to fly. The sensation of cool air over your skin at two hundred clicks and hour is quite marvelous.

- I use this one myself, to gradually relearn the feel of gravity. Kind of backwards, but it works.
- Orbital DK

Pulsar (Trip 3)

This one's kind of weird. *Pulsar* isn't the space sim you might think it is from the title, but instead it's the first published work of the AI, Pulsar, trying to define what the Matrix feels like to it. You can't explain it, just experience it.

Phobos: The Experience (Trip 3)

This is a series, rather than a single sim. Phobos is the terror line of Horizon sims, with family-friendly fare like Coaster Boasting: Six Flags (in conjunction with Turner-Hisato) and not-so friendly fare like Phobos: the Screaming, where you get to be the prey of a crazed killer, narrowly escaping each time.

Technically this isn't a true TripChip, but I include them here because they're just that fun.

- There are BTL versions of this, with after-market additions that cross into snuff. Be forewarned.
- Butch

DREAMCHIPS

Superstar! I am Christy Dae (Dream 3)

The *Superstar!* line focuses on assorted Horizon properties, allowing you to follow the life of a fan of a superstar, see a concert, then go backstage and spend quality time with the star, getting to know the person behind the performer. The sim then takes you beyond a documentary by putting you in the star's shoes, to feel the concert from their side of the mic, feeling the energy of the crowd and the emotional ride of each song how the artist intended. Christy Dae's release has been a top seller ever since her death, barely moving from the top of the chart since released. Deirdre is expected to release her first in the spring, perhaps explaining why Charisma Associates took an interest in her.

- Horizon's assorted media companies are including simrig implantation in their standard contracts now, having seen high profit margins in the field.
- Mr. Bonds
- Keep in mind, Christy Dae didn't have such a rig, having signed before it was standard issue. This means that they used a stand-in for her emotive track. Good performance, whomever it was.
- Sunshine
- Meh. She was overrated. She's no Teiko Ikemoto!
- /dev/grll

Unbreakable (Dream 2)

Up-and-coming daredevil “Awful” Knofel doesn’t just cheat death; he slaps the Grim Reaper upside the head and steals his scythe in this first major release (his small-run predecessor, *Awful Good*, is sold at live events and will likely get a big-budget remake soon). This is a compilation of stunts that, almost without fail, end in some terrible injury. From jumping flaming buses on a motorcycle to parasuit gliding from the Golden Gate Bridge to dressing up in Humanis Policlub gear and taunting trolls (this stunt earned him broken bones number 183-214), there’s nothing too stupid for him to risk his life on. His original simrig was replaced by a cutting-edge KaleidoScape model, letting you feel every wet bone snap.

Kat in the Kradle (Dream 4, once finished.)

Currently in early production, this romantic adventure sim centers around a glamorous rock star named Kat who is captured and subjected to mistreatment from “IncaCo,” a thinly-veiled Aztechnology, and her rescue by the dashing sky-pirate “Captain Cain.”

- No. No no no no no. I refuse to believe this. Refuse.
- Pistons
- So they somehow got me confused with Kane’s girlfriend. Because there’s only one person named Kat in the world. At least they didn’t use my full name or the name of my band. That’s one of the advantages of having a SIN—they know I can sue their asses.
- Kat o’ Nine Tales
- Okay, I’m now going to turn things over to Marionette. She’s a native of the Philippines who sold herself to the Yaks, signing up for a stint in a bunraku parlor in exchange for transport to Seattle. She saved up enough to buy her contract out, plus some upgrades, then she dropped into the shadow scene. She helped me get my BTL usage more in control, so I owe her. I apologize in advance for any language difficulties; she doesn’t speak English, so her syntax is ‘chipped in places.
- TurboBunny

PERSONAFIX

Posted by: Marionette

From the beginning, man has worn a mask. You wear a mask to work, you wear another when dating, yet another with friends. You endure a fellow worker and their bad habit, rather than to say what it is that you actually feel. Your clothing changes to match your mood, your body can be resculpted, your hair made any color; why should your personality be any harder to change? PersonaFix allow you to be someone else, in mind instead of body, to get away from aspects of yourself that you dislike or to become what you want to be. Why limit yourself to be one person when you can be so many?

PersonaFix come in many styles. The basic P-Fix is a personality that nudges you in a new direction, like a small shoulder spirit that allows you to make decisions, but gives you advice on your choices. These are the most common because they

are less cost. More well liked are Advanced PersonaFixes, which replace your personality with a new one. For many years, there has been one more, the Extreme PersonaFix, or XPF, which combines an Advanced PersonaFix with skillsofts, creating a new person with abilities that you do not have and which can use them in ways that you would not. These are not popular because of the cost alone, but Columbia Industries, in conjunction with KaleidoScape, is unveiling a new line of XPF for distribution over the Singularity network, which are to synergize in new ways of creation and are a quality product at a competitive price.

Naughty Girl (P-Fix 2)

These P-Fix sims are actually quite tame, being sold through assorted “romance companies” as a bit of bedroom spice for long-married couples. It allows fantasy play while not involving another real person, giving new life for a relationship. Most include costumes and props bundled with them, with such themes as schoolgirl, schoolteacher, cheerleader, dominatrix, and so on. There are also XPF sims available that include language software and activesofts, providing an entire new set of professional quality moves for use in love. There is also a Naughty Boy line, but it does not sell as well.

Cowboy Up (P-fix 2) (Knowsoft: cowboy quotations 2) (optional active soft: 2)

A classic from Hisato-Turner, *Cowboy Up* slides you into the Wild West, giving you a distinctive accent (Texas Drawl, Tennessee Twang, and so on) and swagger. It comes with a wide selection of “Cowboy Wisdom,” quotations, and amusing anecdotes. The XPF form adds equestrian skill and can be further enhanced with “Lasso Tricks,” “Saloon Slugger,” and “Shootin’ Iron” upgrades. Just released is a “Poker Ace” upgrade. This line is very popular in the Pueblo states.

- Related, but different, is the Antebellum set, with “Southern Gentleman,” “Southern Belle,” and, not sold in the Americas, “Mandingo.” I’m still shocked at that one.
- Hanibelle

Neil the Ork Barbarian (P-fix 2) (linguasoft: Or’zet 2) (optional activesoft of blades 2)

Neil the Ork Barbarian was a successful brand a generation ago with several sims, toys, and merchandise whose success gradually faltered after a decade of popularity. Charisma Associates found that there was a market for a retro-revival, so the character was repackaged and brought back out this past summer, given a big blockbuster production including a new XPF production that allows you to become Neil. Horizon has benefited greatly from many profits.

- This new guy, Paul whatever? He’s had too much cosmetic surgery in order to look attractive to humans. The original Neil had a proper Tusker look to him that I miss. Horizon can have my original limited edition Elfcleaver war axe when they pry it from my cold dead hands.
- Bull



- Knight Errant is grumbling about the revival, as they're having to deal with ork kids with all manner of cleavers pretending to be Neil. Cop sees a burly 1.7-meter-tall ork with an ax, he doesn't stop to notice the kid's just twelve, so he shoots. Hasn't happened yet due to dumb luck, but when it does, expect the ork community to be up in arms. Keep an eye on the Underground.

- Hard Exit

- The cheap XPF runs are little more than toys for corp brats, but the more expensive runs have some impressive activesofts. All of them come with an Or'zet linguasoft. Must have cost Horizon a bundle to get the rights from NeoNET.

- Kia

Sun Tzu (P-Fix 4) (Activesofts - Blades 4, Etiquette 4, Leadership 4, Negotiation 4) (Linguasoft - Japanese 5) (Knowsofts - Business 5, Philosophy 3, Psychology 5, Sociology 5)

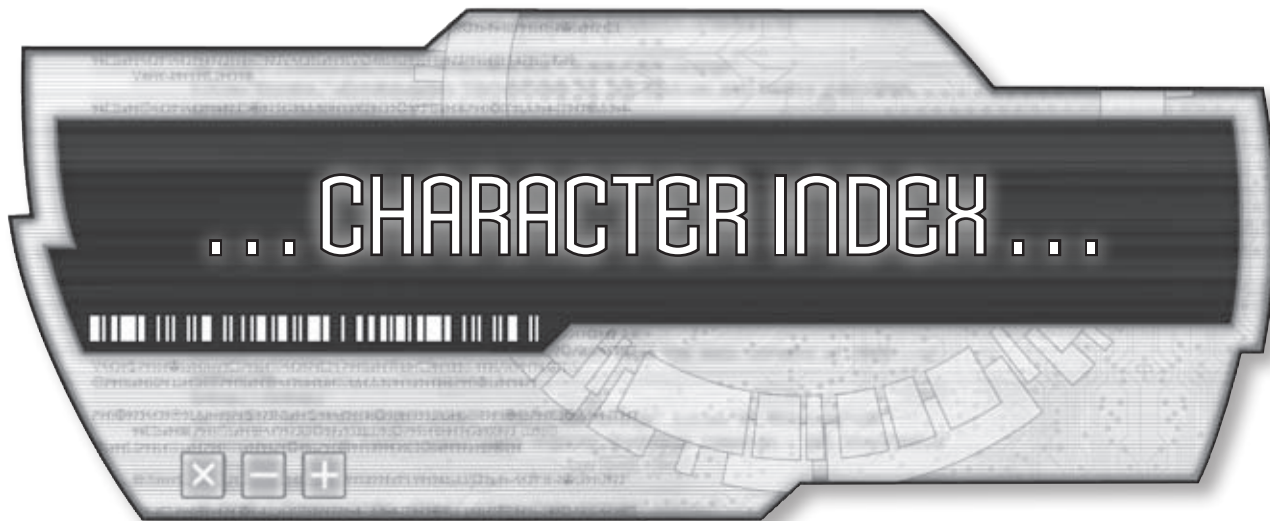
The flagship sim of KaleidoScape, Sun Tzu combines the works of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* with Miyamoto Musashi's *Book of Five Rings* into a single guide for the ultimate corporate climber. A top-of-the-line XPF, it creates a ruthless tactical genius who crushes any salaryman who opposes him, forcing his way up the corporate ladder with bold moves and ruthless aggression.

This year's version was rebuilt almost from scratch by new lead programmer Tung He after the previous team lead was extracted and several core components destroyed in the process.

- Marionette managed to get an advanced copy of He's work. Impressive stuff—it turned her into a corporate suit flawlessly, but there were still a few bugs to work out. Weirdest thing? The language was set to Mongolian of all things. What kind of business-focused design bothers with that one?
- Turbo Bunny
- Well that sets off all kinds of memories. If you still have that chip, Turbo Bunny, I'd love to have a look.
- FastJack
- If you're thinking what I think you're thinking, I want in. Meet me in the place, FastJack.
- Bull
- The place? What, the shuffleboard courts? Pigeon feeding? Dentures-R-Us? Old people! Sheesh!
- Slamm-0!

Game Info

Simsense	Availability	Cost	Notes
Sunshine (2)	2	50¥	
Sunshine (4)	4R	200¥	
Lionheart	2	50¥	
Mr Reliable	2	200¥	
Flight	2	100¥	
Pulsar	6	200¥	
Phobos	2R	50¥	(Restricted to minors)
Superstar! I am Christy Dae	-	100¥	
Unbreakable	-	50¥	
Kat in the Kradle	NA/-	NA/200¥	(Not yet finished or released)
Naughty Girl/Boy	2	200 ¥	
Cowboy Up	-	3,800¥	(Includes knowsoft)
(With activesoft)	+2	+1,600¥	(Per activesoft)
Neil the Orc Barbarian	4	1,000¥	(Includes linguasoft)
(With activesoft)	+2	+1,600	
Sun Tzu	12	200,000	
Horizon AdSpam	6F	1,000¥	(Jingle Virus 2)



Agent	134	Inuit Shamans	102
Anarchist	134	Isaac	102
Angel of Vengeance	54		
		Kaze	132
Baelosh	80	Kay St. Irregular	140
Bettina Guccioli	134	Knight Errant Prison Guard Transport Officer	65
Buffalo Gil	126		
		Legion	63
Caollaidhe Montauk	135	Leon Burke	108
Charlemagne "Mechanic" Latimer	135	Liliputiana	114
Chip Eckhart	89	Low-level Runners	141
Circus Performer	135	LuAnn McGill	119
Clockwork	73		
Conyano	132	Marcelino Merlot	141
Corporate Security	135	Mercenary	141
Corporate Supervisor	135	Michelle "Whisper" Lapizzi	141
		Mira Castillo Personal Bodyguards	75
Dawkins Group Adept	136	Mr. Johnson (Corporate)	142
Dawkins Group Trained Guards (Adepts)	136	Mr. Johnson (Street)	142
Dawkins Group Operative	136		
		Nathaniel Blackeagle	133
Eagle Security SWAT Officer	137	Neo-Anarchist Lieutenant	65
Eagle Security Shaman	137	Niraj "Potluck" Pawashi	89
Elite Corporate Security	138		
Elite Runner Adept	138	Rena Great Bear	142
Elite Runner Mage	138		
Elite Security Mage	140	Security Mage	143
Elite Technomancer	140	Shishalshish	132
Extraction Team Member	74	Signal	64
		Singularity Guard	75
Fanatics	140	Singularity Rigger	75
Feral Spirits	80	Snagger	125
Firenze	102	Speed Hack	64
Fury	64	Spencer Groth	119
		Svet Blanc	120
Guardians of the Silo	113	Szaazs	133
Guerilla	140	Teetotaler	125
Henry Runningfox	90	Veteran Face	143
Horizon Spy	74		
Hotel Staff	140	Yatokya Padilla	143

