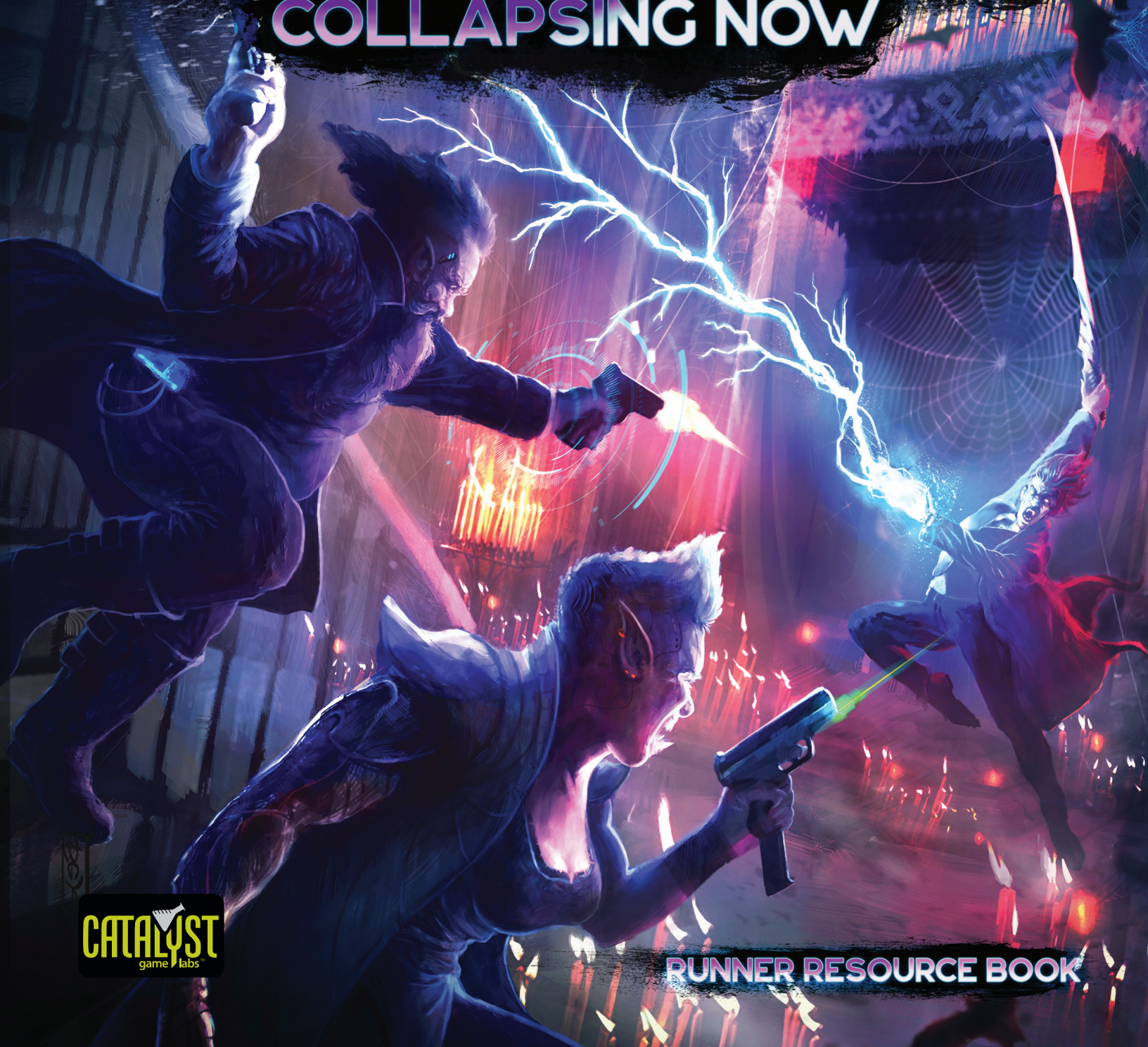




# SHADOWRUN<sup>®</sup>

## COLLAPSING NOW



**CATALYST**  
game labs

RUNNER RESOURCE BOOK





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# INTRODUCTION

The Sixth World is not on the brink of collapse—it's in the middle of it. It's an ongoing, slow-motion disaster, consuming lives and souls by the millions every single year.

The scale of destruction is beyond what a single team of shadowrunners can fix, but sometimes they can avoid the worst of the damage. If they're lucky, they might even make a small piece of the world better. But if they want to stand a chance of that, they need to understand how the world is collapsing and who's making it fall. They also might need information on possible allies in the fight.

*Collapsing Now* has information on ten organizations and individuals shadowrunners need to know about. Some of them have been around for a while, others are upstarts, but each of them is poised to shake up the Sixth World, either aiding its continual collapse or perhaps shoring up the bulwarks for a time. Here's a quick rundown of the groups discussed here and why they matter:

- **Freedom Network:** An unholy union of extremist organizations who seem to be taking aim at technomancers, though their motivations are murky.
- **GreenWar:** A veteran eco-terrorist group, they have grown more active lately, and no one knows how far they'll go for their cause.
- **Grey Cell:** A mysterious patron is laying out a lot of cash for a variety of runs, with a particular focus on magical phenomena.
- **Halberstam's Brain:** A force of chaos in the Matrix is back, allied with AIs that may be even less stable than he is.
- **Monads:** The children of cognitive fragmentation disorder continue to find their way in the Sixth World, exploring technology and devising plans that will keep the shadows hopping.
- **Ordo Maximus:** A world-class collection of magical talent with an unfortunate tendency toward vampirism, the Ordo has enough wealth and power among its members to draw attention from anyone interested in power.
- **Sea Dragon:** In much of the tumult that has shaken up North America, Sea Dragon has been there, behind the scenes or in front of

them, throwing around huge piles of money and amassing a land-based kingdom. With both Seattle and St. Louis moving to independence thanks in part to her efforts, she is worth watching more now than ever.

- **The Shadow Chapters:** Some shadowrunners have seen enough analogies about bundles of sticks being harder to break than individual sticks, and they're doing something about it as unions of shadowrunners are beginning to appear in major sprawls.
- **Stark, Theissen, and Van Der Mer:** Every dystopia needs a law firm willing to do the bidding of its many shady characters, and the Sixth World has its fair share. STV has a particular expertise in Awakened clients, counting bug spirits, shedim, and toxic mages in their roster. Do they have an agenda other than collecting retainers?
- **The Yakuza:** A classic. Their power is deeply intertwined with the Japanacorp—their rise can extend the Yakuza's reach, but they also often fight over the same talent. Japan's Ghost Decade led to an increase in Yakuza power, but now that the corporations are surging, the Yaks must work to hold on to their hard-won power.

NPCs and other game rules are included in these write-ups, giving players and gamemasters options about how to use these elements in their campaigns. The organizations can be dropped into almost any sprawl in the world, set up as antagonists or potential allies, clients who can spur a job along or obstacles who can make it more difficult. For players, the organizations can be a way to define their character—perhaps they are seeking to join one of these organizations, or perhaps they once were part of them and left on bad terms. Or maybe they have old friends or enemies in the ranks of these groups, contacts or opponents who could add flavor to an ongoing campaign. There are also new options for characters in this book, including the special weapons used by GreenWar. And of course, it's always useful to be up to date on the state of the Sixth World, if only to improve your understanding of just how fast it's falling apart.



////////////////////////////////////  
**CONNECTING TO JACKPOINT VPN...**

**...IDENTITY SPOOFED**

**...ENCRYPTION KEYS GENERATED**

**...CONNECTED TO ONION ROUTERS**  
////////////////////////////////////

**>LOGIN**

**>ENTER PASSCODE**

**...BIOMETRIC SCAN CONFIRMED**

**CONNECTED TO <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>**  
////////////////////////////////////

“The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.”

—“*The Second Coming*,” William Butler Yeats  
////////////////////////////////////

Welcome back to JackPoint, chummer; your last connection was severed **5 hours, 23 minutes, 59 seconds ago**

## **TODAY’S HEADS-UP**

It’s not just you—forces are gathering against you. But some may be working for you, too.

—Glitch  
////////////////////////////////////

## **INCOMING**

>>> The fabric of the universe is unraveling? Sounds about right. [TAG: SLIP STREAMS]

>>> If the Awakened don’t make you nervous, here’s a few dozen reasons why they should. [TAG: STREET WYRD]

>>> Red dots are painting targets all over Barcelona. Do you want to block the shots or clear the way? [TAG: ASSASSIN’S NIGHT]  
////////////////////////////////////

## **TOP NEWS ITEMS**

>>> European nations band together to contract with Astral Space Preservation Society to investigate “ongoing astral damage.”

>>> Environmental activists claim corporations have funneled hundreds of tons of industrial waste into the SOX in the last thirty days alone,

>>> Lawsuit against the UCAS in behalf of shedim isolated by the closure of the Watergate Rift tossed due to plaintiffs lack of standing.  
////////////////////////////////////

## **JACKPOINT STATS**

**93 Users are active on the network.**

## **LATEST NEWS**

**Anniversary march in Las Vegas to commemorate technomancer massacre is planned, though organizers’ perspective on the event is unclear.**

## **PERSONAL ALERTS**

>>> You have 8 new private messages.

>>> You have 8 new responses to your JackPoint posts.

>>> The STV attorney you sent an inquiry to replied with an hourly rate that would feed a family of four for a month.

**There are seven Members online and in your area.**

**YOUR CURRENT REP SCORE: 721 (68% Positive)**

**CURRENT TIME: 18 July 2081, 1434 hrs**  
////////////////////////////////////





## UNDERSEA HEIST

BY JASON M. HARDY

The walls had a layer of luxury to keep you from remembering how thin the barrier was between you and death. The pressure on these walls was more than double that of the pressure on regular buildings, and the consequences of giving in were far more grave. A regular building, when it develops a crack, lets in a draft. This building lets in the ocean.

Most buildings this far down have two layers of walls. The interior walls you could see and touch were set in flat planes at right angles to each other, but they were mounted inside spheres that did a better job of keeping the water pressure at bay. They also functioned as an extra layer of protection, letting water into the space between the two walls during emergencies and keeping most interior areas from flooding. Any break was still bad, of course—the construction meant that a breach would take longer to kill you. But it would kill you nonetheless.

Rook should have been thinking of something more useful. More job-related. But he couldn't stop thinking about the architecture.

At least he had the advantage of privacy. Once the breach alarms had sounded, people had wasted no time moving toward evacuation capsules. Soon enough, someone would notice that he wasn't heading toward

any capsule, and the machinery of the building would start to herd him. He had to move quickly, jogging by booth seats in aquamarine upholstery and wood ornamentation on the walls that angled upward like rays of the rising sun. Gentle jazz still played—the sound system would get around to turning itself off soon enough. The lighting was far brighter than normal, all the better to help frightened people find their way out. Rook couldn't skulk, but he was a troll trotting on a tile floor. He could only be so subtle.

An ARO in his contact reminded him of the route he had memorized, a green arrow pointing to his left and a blue dot flashing in front of the kitchen door.

He sent a mental message ahead. *The item still in place?*

The spirit responded immediately. *Waiting it sits.*

Someday he'd summon a spirit who spoke normal American. But at least it answered.

*Anything between me and it?*

*Doors. One locked.*

If that was all he needed to deal with, he'd be fine.

He entered the kitchen. Stainless steel shone on at least half of the surfaces. Small drones scoured whatever traces of grease they could find off walls and counters. It smelled good, like garlic and butter, but the time to sit and eat was a long ways off.

He passed through the kitchen quickly, hurrying toward the office door at the far end. That was his destination.

*I'm here.*





The latch clicked, and the door swung open. The spirit, appearing as a black, antique scuba suit whose helmet had a dozen small circular windows, stood inside the room near it, one glove on the doorknob.

Everything he had counted on was happening. The astral security sucked, plain and simple. Someone trying to use mundane means would have a lot more trouble getting in. Rook was cruising.

The office was sparsely furnished so that the large, curved outer glass wall could dominate the room. It looked over the wreck of ancient galleon (a replica, in truth), but it looked fantastic, with blue, green, and orange barnacles crusting its entire length. Holes in the hull allowed fish to swim in and out, and plants on the sea floor drifted gently in the current. The whole thing was dramatically lit by drones constantly repositioning themselves relative to one another to make the whole scene stand out.

He wished he had time to gaze and appreciate it. He didn't.

A small bookshelf sat against one of the interior walls. Next to it was a safe. The safe's door was completely wired. Any attempt to pry it open or drill the lock would set off an alarm—and security, of course, was still here, somewhere. They would be the last people to leave this establishment. If he wanted to cut into the sides of the safe, it might take hours. But a Shape Metal spell? Seconds.

He cast the spell, opened a hole in the side of the safe, pulled out the goods he came for, and got ready to

leave. Someday, people would learn to take astral security seriously. Thankfully, the manager here hadn't yet learned the lesson. Rook had the goodies he was being paid to lift. Time to go.

The spirit was still dutifully holding the door. Rook nodded to it as he passed. The spirit stayed. Rook had no more services to request of it, but it would continue the job of keeping an eye on the office for a few hours more. Rook would probably let it go early, but it would be useful to have eyes on that spot for at least a few more minutes.

The spirit let the door close behind Rook. He thought he saw the shipwreck dim as the door closed. Probably a wave, or maybe the whole place was powering down.

Security must be finishing up in the facility. Anyone who saw him now would want to hurry him out. Fortunately, now all he wanted to do was leave. Get to someplace where the entire surrounding atmosphere wasn't an imminent threat.

He couldn't escape in one of the establishment's evacuation subs. If the sub didn't recognize you as an authorized guest, you wouldn't be allowed to board. In an emergency, interlopers were expected to die rather than take up space belonging to paying guests. But Rook had come in on his own, and he'd get out the same way. Back through the club, then the connecting hallway, into the gaming hall, up to the second floor, then into his one-person sub docked next to a hatch used for recreational scuba outings. The biggest risk was here in the club—if security saw him, they might try to redirect



him to the nearest evacuation subs, where his unauthorized status would be revealed.

He pulled his hood up over his head. It would do him no real good, but it made him feel better.

Then a screaming sound ripped his mind in two.

He lost any sight, and ringing filled his ears. The next thing he knew, he was crouched on his knees, arms folded over his head.

There was no screaming. Not even the echo of it. He couldn't hear anyone even reacting to it.

It had all been in his head. It was the spirit. It hadn't been banished—it had been disrupted. Violently.

Had someone here finally discovered astral security?

He looked behind him, layering astral vision over reality. He didn't see anything unusual. Whatever had hit the spirit hadn't moved into the club.

Yet.

A wavy room divider next to him held art showing phosphorescent fish swimming through a dark ocean, leading to the large face of a sullen mermaid at the end of the panel. Rook had thought she looked cool and mysterious on his way in. Now she looked wary, maybe even nervous.

He knew she hadn't changed a bit.

Then the floor beneath him shook. Right when a tremendous boom carried through the club.

He stumbled and fell. The floor had shifted a few meters to his right, then snapped back. The boom was loud but hollow. Not an explosion—an impact.

He suddenly started thinking about architecture again.

He returned to his feet and started running. There was nothing now besides speed.

His footsteps pounded the ground, though still nothing like the shaking that sent him to the floor. He imagined he could feel the building swaying in the water a little with each step, but he knew it was an illusion—he was big, but still only one person. The complex was far too sturdy to be shaken by him. He could pound the floor as hard as he wanted.

The club entrance was ahead, then the connecting tube to the gaming hall. Less than a minute of running, and he'd make it.

The AR at the club entrance was still active. Mist swirled, and a man with a fedora perched low on his brow leaned against the doorway, occasionally raising a hand to the brim. On the other side of the entry, a woman in a tiara and red-sequined dress cooed into an ancient microphone. The sound here was off, though. They made their greetings silently.

The connecting hallway on the other side of the entrance was lit by neon signs and the windows of nearby structures. The lights flickered once, then twice. Rook didn't know if it was an accident or purposeful, to set the mood.

It didn't matter. The only way was forward.

The lights flickered again. And an enormous shadow passed over the arched glass ceiling of the passage.

Speed was everything, but Rook stopped. Could it be a whale? Did whales swim here? He probably should have checked.

He stepped forward, bent at the waist, and looked up. He saw nothing above but glass, steel supports, and water. Time to run again.

His sprint didn't look like one, but a 2.5-meter-frame doesn't need to look fast to move quickly. Each stride

covered a meter. He could eat up ground when he needed to. And he really felt like he needed to.

He passed the entrance. The connecting passage was a good two hundred meters. Two hundred steps.

On stride eighty-three, the shadow returned. Even larger than Rook had thought. It wasn't a whale. It was too fast, its head and tail too narrow. He knew what the shape was, but he didn't want to actually think the word.

The tail hit the ceiling with what should have been a glancing blow. The ceiling cracked. Water sprayed in.

Rook ran. He had thought to bring a waterproof envelope for his stolen goods, so they should be safe. A crackle spread through the passage, the slow splinter of glass. Speed was even more urgent.

After fifty more strides, a chunk of glass broke free over his head. Water gushed down. He leaned forward so the new waterfall caught his back.

Ahead of him, a door started to close to seal off the gaming hall from the breach. And to trap Rook in the passage. He had more ground to cover than he'd like. His feet pounded harder. He leaned into his sprint, then dove forward when he thought he was close enough. The doors were closing from top and bottom, the gap narrowing too quickly. He was at an angle, his left foot trailing, and he twisted it as he flew. The doors scraped his boot, almost yanking it off. But he pulled his foot forward, and he was through.

The doors clanked shut. He was sealed off from the flood. For the moment.

The gaming hall had powered down. No lights but the bright emergency lights, no sound at all. The slot machines, the roulette wheels, the card tables—all silenced from their ringing and clicking and shuffling. Rook couldn't help but notice that no chips were left on any table. Just because an evacuation was underway didn't mean people just abandoned their wealth.

Security was gone, though. He should have a clear path.

Who knew when he set off his fake alarm that he'd be helping people evacuate in the face of a real emergency?

He dashed on. A large staircase rose in the middle of the back of the hall, then divided in two. He took the right fork. That led him to a large sitting area, for lounging and waiting for recreational activities. A bar, private rooms, and a Miracle Shooter range all sat nearby. As did the hatch used for scuba excursions. The hatch Rook needed. He just had to run past a viewing window so large that it made the one in the nightclub office look like a commlink screen.

After what happened to the connecting tube, he was not excited by the prospect of being close to more glass. There was nothing for it but to continue sprinting, so he did. Until his feet froze in place.

It was so jarring that it hurt his knees and hips. He had been sprinting at top speed, then was just frozen in place, in mid stride. And leaning far forward. The moment he was released, he would stumble, maybe fall.

He could move his eyes. He looked to his left, toward the large window. He knew what he would see.

The shadow was there, but now it was more than a silhouette. It had shimmering blue skin. Frills near its face. Narrow eyes that glowed more than anything else nearby. And a fierce, angry mouth.

It did not talk. But he heard words anyway.



*You have it.*

Had he been wrong? Did they have astral security after all? It would be the biggest, baddest astral security he'd ever seen. It couldn't be, though. Dragons didn't do grunt work. And it couldn't have been asking about the goods he had stolen. They had no aura. He'd checked. So there was no way for this dragon to know what he had.

He didn't think he could bluff a dragon, but he could always play stupid. He sent words to it the same way he'd communicate with a spirit.

*Have what?*

The dragon was in no mood for chatter.

*It will stay here with your corpse.* It managed a flat tone without sound.

The dragon swam forward and upward, the pale scales of its underbelly close to the glass as it passed above him. He had seen this move before. He knew what was coming.

He was turning away from the window before the impact, so he felt instead of saw it. The structure shook. Heavy glass built to hold back the ocean, to resist bullets or any reasonable projectile someone might decide to fire, cracked. Water sprayed.

Like Rook, the dragon had clearly thought about the architecture of this place. It had used its knowledge well. The space between two walls that could be found across the rest of the structure would do nothing to help hold back a tide from flowing through the window.

Rook had one hope, and that was to find whatever the dragon was looking for. It had looked for an aura and found it. He needed to find it, too. He had started looking astrally the moment he turned around.

He had hoped to see one bright, astrally glowing object as the clear source of the dragon's attention. Instead, he saw three. And they weren't right next to each other. They were spread out behind him. A door. A dagger mounted on a wall. And a planter.

He eliminated the door. The glow was probably just a ward. Might be something interesting behind it (and it was good to know that *someone* here thought about astral security), but it was not likely the thing the dragon thought he had. He suffered a very brief pang about not having the time to steal whatever it hid.

He'd also love to be able to figure out what the hell was up with an enchanted planter. Perhaps the next time he was down here. If the facility survived. But he'd bet his life that the dagger was what the dragon wanted. He dashed toward it.

The dragon was alarmingly fast. Before he reached the dagger, it made another pass, hitting the window again with alarming precision. The crack grew. Water poured in faster.

If he went back to the window, he'd probably be

there just in time for the whole thing to collapse on him. It was past time to leave.

He ran toward the scuba hatch. Dead sprint. Everything around him shook. He held the dagger over his head to make it clear that he had it. He hoped it would see it. He didn't know how it would react.

It didn't seem to be pleased. This blow landed with a huge thud, immediately followed by a crack so sharp he felt it more than heard it.

Then water poured onto the tile floor in a deafening deluge. It pulled more of the window apart. Water hit the floor and quickly spread, reaching Rook's feet.

He moved. Stairs to a door. Through the door to a ladder. Ladder through a hatch. Then he waited.

The hatch filled with water, just like everything else in the structure. Rook placed his hands on his chest (carefully not stabbing himself with the dagger). A cool blue feeling spread through them. The water filled the whole chamber, covering his head. The top of the chamber opened.

He inhaled. Water surrounded him, but only air entered his lungs.

He'd only be good for a short period of time. The effort of swimming and maintaining the spell would wear him down quickly. He had to get the dragon's attention.

It helped that he had what it was looking for.

He pivoted around in the water. It didn't take him long to find the creature. It had already found him. It was swimming forward, mouth wide.

He wanted to shout, but noise wouldn't carry. He wanted to throw the dagger, but it wouldn't go far. So he just held his arm forward, opened his hand, and let it go. Then he leaned toward the right, swept his hands, and kicked. Then pivoted, kicked and swept again.

The dragon was faster. It sped by, catching the dagger in its mouth. Then it passed. Its wake tumbled Rook—and his mini sub, which he had released from the side of the structure. They both rolled away from a dragon who apparently no longer cared about them.

Rook worked mainly to not bang into the sub. The wake would pass. He could settle. Then he could get into his sub and once again breathe air. His spell held, but his lungs felt ragged. He was tiring, every breath turning into a heave.

The water calmed. The tumbling stopped. The dragon was gone, and the AquaLuxe Club lay in ruins. Because some idiot had decorated the place with something belonging to the Sea Dragon.

None of that had anything to do with Rook. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But he'd survived, with the targeted goods still in his pocket.

He figured the guacamole recipe he'd just stolen must be mind-bendingly good.





# FREEDOM NETWORK

## POSTED BY: PEREGRINE

First, thank you for letting me in to post here. I realize that none of you know me yet, so let me make a brief introduction. I am a corporate spy.

- › Well, that's refreshingly honest.
- › Kane

I have worked for several corporations over the years, and I specialize in infiltration. I've begun working for private benefactors, and my work has taken me to many places. A few months ago, I was working out of Europe, and one of my jobs provided me with access to the Helix, a datahaven located in the Hague. While political extremists have been the norm in Europe for the better part of the last millennium, this particular data dump provided some insight into a group that seems to have flown under the radar. Therefore, it piqued my interest.

- › Or the interests of his employers ...
- › Plan 9

## GOLDEN YEARS

The Freedom Network owes its origins to three organizations based out of the United Netherlands: the Moller Institute, a political party called Forum voor Vrijheid (which roughly translates to Forum for Freedom, or FvV), and Popular Will. These three organizations helped to form the Freedom Network, and we will be focusing primarily on these organizations as a result. The basic outline applies to all members of the Freedom Network, regardless of country.

In 2011, a catastrophically powerful storm hit northern Europe and created an event that came to be known as the Black Tide. The storm dumped millions of liters of pollutants across northwestern Europe. The resulting floods killed thousands of



people and displaced millions. Whole cities were rendered toxic wastelands overnight. The United Netherlands was particularly hard-hit by the Black Tide. In response, the Crown of the United Netherlands decided to fund the creation of a think-tank headed up by Ravian Moller, one of the country's top environmental scientists. Thus, the Moller Institute was founded.

The Moller Institute pioneered many advances that helped to mitigate some of the damage done, but there was no way to actually get things back to normal. One thing that intrigued Moller was the spike in magical activity in areas that were contaminated by the Black Tide. Since their mandate was to return the Netherlands to the way they were prior to the Black Tide, the Institute began looking into ways to "remediate" the spike in magical activity. In short, they began to investigate ways to "fix" magical users to make them mundane again.

- The only thing that needs fixing is the people that misuse magic. Magic is pure and clean, until it hits someone who isn't. Even if there was a correlation between the Black Tide and rising populations of magic-users, there's no way to "fix" something that isn't broken.
- Ethernaut
- That may be our understanding now. But this was seventy years ago, and people were scared. It's easy to understand why they were scared—magic was still brand new in a lot of ways. Hell, in the last thirty years, our understanding of magic has shifted dramatically—in part due to the Moller Institute's research.
- KAM

The Moller Institute had limited success in their research. They found a direct correlation between magical ability and implant usage, for example. They also helped pioneer several magical techniques to counter other magics, which are now widely known as apotropaic magical techniques. The whole concept of counterspelling was legitimized and quantified due to the efforts of the Moller Institute. For the next forty years, they were the darling of the magical academic community.

However, the Crown had decided to cut funding, and the Institute began relying upon private donations to stay afloat. In part due to the demands of these private donors, the Institute began performing clinical trials in the 2060s on volunteers to help better understand how magic works with the human body. These trials definitively proved that there was no genetic component to magical ability or metatype. They proved beyond any reasonable doubt that metahumans, despite our differences, are fundamentally the same. Human-rights groups like Humanis and Human Nation went on to denounce the Moller Institute's findings, saying that they were pushing an anti-human agenda. The private dona-

tions suffered slightly as a result, but the Moller Institute had a mandate to stick to good science, and they were not about to sacrifice their name for money.

## THE ROAD TO HELL

Some of the trials that the Institute implemented to "remediate" magical ability produced some interesting results. They determined that there was a causal link between cybernetic implantation and reduced magical capability. Something we all know and take for granted as a fact today started as a mere supposition in the mind of Ravian Moller.

- Of course magic and machine don't mix. We've known this since the very beginning of the Awakening. Why is it so special that this group performed research on it?
- Borderline
- Because up until the Moller Institute did the quantitative work on the subject, all we had were anecdotes. Thanks to the work of the Dutch royal family, the Moller Institute was able to conduct research that most other countries were afraid to touch.
- KAM

These trials also looked for a magical way to negate magical ability, essentially fighting fire with fire. This is how the Moller Institute pushed the boundaries of defensive magic, helping to lay the foundation of the apotropaic school of magical defenses.

- It sounds like you're just hyping this group up and kissing their collective ass. Why is this group included in this screed if they're so beneficent?
- Borderline
- Read on, chummer.
- Glitch

All this work was important, and it led to advancements we now take for granted. But the Moller Institute had more than its share of failings as well. Some of these trials resulted in massive psychological trauma to the mages. On August 12, 2068, one of these disturbed mages overloaded a combat spell and destroyed the lab with Ravian Moller inside. There were no survivors of the accident, and by this time magicians-rights groups had begun to be concerned about the treatment of the patients.

- The mage who overloaded the lab and blew up everyone inside was named Luz Huitholz. She was a very disturbed individual, living on the streets of Europort. She had a record with the local authorities that seemed to go on for years. Unlicensed solicitation, possession, and unregistered magic use are just the highlights.
- Chainmaker



- > She was also a member of Noorderlicht.
- > Ecotope

- > Who or what is Noorderlicht?
- > Goat Foot

- > They were an eco-terrorist group based out of the United Netherlands. They formed as a response to the Black Tide, and they worked closely with TerraFirst! and other eco-terrorist groups. Rumor has it that they sent Luz in as a suicide bomber to kill Ravian Moller. If this is true, they only made things worse for themselves.
- > Ecotope

Initially the public was supportive of the mages who received the experimental treatments. The public saw what was happening to the mages in the Institute's labs and decided that this was inhumane treatment. A counternarrative began to take shape in the wake of the explosion, following the revelation of contracts from the mages consenting to the treatment, and in finding the alleged bomber's connections to terrorist groups. Public support for the mages who were in the lab began to wane. In short, Ravian Moller became something of a martyr to a growing anti-magical sentiment.

As a result of Moller's death, his two children became more influential in this growing group. His son, Lucas Moller, pursued a career in public service. By all accounts, he was an up-and-comer in Dutch politics. After his father's death, Lucas created his own political party, Forum voor Vrijheid. Ravian's daughter Anna was also a brilliant scientific mind and kept his work going at the Moller Institute.

On the surface, Forum voor Vrijheid seems like a typical far-right political party. They value individual freedoms, support nationalist ideas, and push an agenda that supports traditional conservative values. Like many extremist political groups, they have found a target to make into a scapegoat for the issues that they support. In this case, those scapegoats are mages and technomancers.

Their beliefs do not really make a lot of sense to me, but I'll do my best to try to make sense of them and present them in a logical way. Essentially, they believe that because magicians and technomancers have access to the astral plane and the Resonance, they are susceptible to being controlled or influenced by the entities that live in those locations—such as the things sometimes called “mentor spirits.”

- > There've been discussions for decades about the nature of mentor spirits and paragons. No one seems to have come to a consensus. They can't be summoned, they can't be compiled, they can't be reliably called upon either. And other magicians and technomancers generally cannot interact with the spirit or paragon either. It's baffling.
- > Winterhawk

- > When the Awakening happened, governments and academic institutions around the world suddenly found themselves trying to understand these entities' motivations. In the almost seventy years since, we still know almost nothing.
- > Axis Mundi

- > Knowing that is the beginning of wisdom, so we would benefit if more people admitted that.
- > Man-of-Many-Names

- > Doesn't a group like this have a point? Mages and technomancers who follow paragons and mentor spirits seem to have an almost religious zeal to them sometimes. And if these entities are truly alien, how can we know how they are influencing the Awakened mind?

- > 2XL

- > So why is this group okay with allowing religion to influence politics but averse to allowing magicians and technomancers to influence politics?

- > /dev/grrl

- > Anthropologically speaking, religion is a man-made construct. As a result, religion is an acceptable means of influencing metahuman thinking. So despite the idea that a deity is mysterious and their motivations are unknown, it's fairly predictable when you look at the long term, and that deity's desires are generally fairly closely aligned with whoever is in power at the moment. In the minds of these people, mentor spirits and paragons are something to be feared, because they are not man-made constructs. Therefore, they are “alien.” They are truly unknowable, and therefore dangerous.

- > Winterhawk

The Forum had some early local election wins in part because Lucas Moller was seen as the son of a martyr. FvV was initially not widely known on the national stage. They promoted the opinion that access to magic would open one up to coercion, manipulation, and a loss of the individual's freedom to choose. It was once they solidified these ideas into a platform that they began to gain ground on the national level. They began promoting the idea that the Awakened should not be permitted to vote or participate in government.

- > And this idea began to catch fire, even among some mages. Some mages never come to grips with their abilities, and they are taught that these abilities are somehow “evil” or “unnatural.” The Forum simply gave them a channel for these thoughts.
- > Sunshine
- > That's just sick. It's hard to imagine hating yourself so much that you'd want to somehow neuter yourself. It's like volunteering for a frontal lobotomy.
- > Respec





- › And yet, as many as 4,000 people actually paid to get themselves and their loved ones lobotomized by Dr. Walter Freeman in the 1940s in the United States. Some of these patients were as young as four years old. He was eventually banned from performing surgery, but his work inspired lots of other neurosurgeons to pursue and refine the lobotomy procedure. Granted, this is all meaningless now as lobotomies are never performed when implants can do the trick much better and much safer. But if it wasn't for those people actively wanting to get lobotomized, we might not have the ability to use cybernetics to cure these things today.
- › Butch
- › It's still sick. It was sick then, it's sick now.
- › Respec

To help legitimize the Forum's policies, the Moller Institute began to publish a series of papers, all under the supervision of Anna Moller, suggesting that magical ability comes directly from contact with the astral plane. The Moller Institute's papers on the "alien intelligences" known as spirits (particularly mentor spirits) ran completely counter to contemporary magical research that indicated that there was no confirmed "source" of magic, and that it varies from practitioner to practitioner.

- › There are still extremely heated debates between practitioners about the "intelligence" of spirits. Some view them as little more than forces of nature. Others view them as being on par with metahuman intelligence.
- › Winterhawk
- › If only there were a way to communicate with spirits, and ask them questions and such ...
- › Axis Mundi
- › There's no evidence that a tree is as smart as you are, but if you want to personify them and make them something they aren't, you are free to get ridiculed in academic circles.
- › Winterhawk
- › Listen, you bloviated ga—
- › Axis Mundi <2.3 Mp of data deleted>
- › Nope, save this fight for a different topic.
- › Glitch

Despite the conflict between the Moller Institute and the rest of magical academia, the papers convinced a lot of people that there was a correlation between the astral plane and magical capability. The Forum turned those beliefs to point the finger at the astral plane as a threat. And honestly, who can blame them? Bug spirits have been pouring in for decades, with clearly malicious intent. And shedim—don't even get me started on shedim.



There are a lot of reasons for the average person to be extremely afraid of the metaplanes. Especially considering that we don't have a defense against these sorts of things, or a way to even see them. They're an extremely effective boogeyman—a boogeyman that Forum voor Vrijheid used to propel themselves onto the national stage.

## GROWING THREAT

For the whole of 2069, Forum voor Vrijheid managed to take over more than just local offices. While they were unable to pass any of their policies, they began to develop a groundswell of public support. Perhaps in response to the rising anti-magician opinion in the United Netherlands, or perhaps out of more direct creation, Popular Will was formed that same year. Popular Will is a militant anti-magician group first identified publicly in Antwerp, and they quickly spread to include supporters from neighboring countries like France and Germany. The connections between Popular Will, Forum voor Vrijheid, and the Moller Institute are challenging to uncover.

- I can confirm that Popular Will are a militant arm of Forum voor Vrijheid. I've seen people at meetings for both groups.
- Fianchetto
- What were you doing attending those meetings?
- 2XL
- I wasn't **attending**. I was there on a job to help one of the members' ex-wives collect child support. I had to follow him around, and I took detailed notes about all of his contacts. There were several people, in addition to my mark, that attended both events.
- Fianchetto

By the end of 2070, it seemed like Forum voor Vrijheid were losing their luster, but then the Hong Kong Incident occurred with the destruction of Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Hundreds were killed, and dozens of technomancers escaped the secret lab beneath the hospital. The Emergence had begun, and the public became aware of these virtuo-kinetics. Fear gripped most of the world.

- Unfounded fear, I might add.
- Netcat
- Tell that to the citizens of Hong Kong. At the time, technomancers were terrifying and literally introduced themselves to the world with a bang.
- Lei Kung
- None of which would have happened if they hadn't been kidnapped and tortured in the first place.
- Slamm-O!

- Touché, mon ami.
- Lei Kung

2070 was an important year for the Freedom Network. The sudden appearance of people who could manipulate the virtual world as easily as a potter molds clay terrified people. Forum voor Vrijheid immediately denounced the technomancers and suggested that the new AIs that appeared on the scene were pulling the strings on an army of sleeper agents.

Almost in lockstep with the increased rhetoric of Forum voor Vrijheid, assaults on technomancers escalated across Europe. Popular Will was identified as a domestic terrorist organization by Dutch authorities for their participation in the murder of five technomancers in Antwerp.

While Popular Will was being decried by the local authorities, they enjoyed a groundswell of support from neighboring countries, and members began to coordinate efforts across borders. German and French branches of Popular Will began to pop up, and hate crimes against technomancers and mages escalated in those countries as well. And, again with no direct links, the donations to Forum voor Vrijheid seemed to swell, filling their coffers so they could fill some vacant seats in parliament. Meanwhile, the Moller Institute saw a significant bump in its funding from private donors as well, and they began research on technomancers.

Very quickly, the Moller Institute published a paper explaining that technomancers get their abilities from a new source called Resonance. Also very quickly, they identified the existence of "alien intelligences" known as paragons that live in the Resonance. Within a few months of the Hong Kong Incident, Forum voor Vrijheid had adapted their platform to include technomancers as "enemies of the people."

Capitalizing on fear is not a new tactic for populist groups. The Forum, though, was poised to take advantage of this in a way that few other groups could. They had academic backing, research, and results that seemed to justify all their fearmongering. Of course, no one questioned why the Moller Institute had the research completed so quickly. They were just happy to have someone confirm their pre-existing biases.

- Peer review is an important process in any academic paper's publication. Before it can be defined as "true" it needs to be validated and tested repeatedly. The Moller Institute may have found a correlation, but they can't be taken seriously when they publish papers without peer review.
- KAM
- The validity of the organization's academic credentials is not really the main point of this. The point is that they used this



“research” to threaten the lives and freedom of hundreds, if not thousands, of people across Europe.

- > Cosmo
- > Well that’s what I’m getting at—they shouldn’t have been able to do that. If people knew how to think critically, they wouldn’t have fallen for this con in the first place.
- > KAM
- > If people could think critically, organizations like this wouldn’t exist in the first place.
- > Cosmo
- > Agreed.
- > KAM

## THE NETWORK IS FORMED

Groups of paranoid, far-right political parties and organizations began to communicate with each other, and Lucas Moller helped lead the creation of a loose alliance of these groups that came to be known as the Freedom Network. The three founding parties of the Freedom Network were the Moller Institute, the Forum voor Vrijheid, and Popular Will. Cells of the Freedom Network began to be identified using their basic structure and tactics throughout much of the civilized world.

Within the last decade, we’ve seen a spike in violence against technomancers and magicians across Europe. Popular Will seems to be stepping up their actions. Kidnappings became a particularly troubling development in these hate crimes. In a few anecdotal cases, magicians or technomancers were kidnapped and returned to the streets without any knowledge of what happened. All they knew was that they lost access to their talents and abilities.

According to a document that was lifted from Interpol by some entrepreneurial members of the Helix, it looks like these folks were heavily augmented and had a lot of cybernetics. Particularly troubling is that the family members of these people insist that they had no augmentations prior to their disappearances.

- > Popular Will is kidnapping people off the streets, implanting them with thousands of nuyen of ’ware, and then kicking them back out? That seems unlikely.
- > Snopes
- > Unless there’s a reason they were let loose. Maybe they have cortex bombs? Someone could be implanted with a bomb, a personafix chip, and set to go to their destination. Biodrone suicide bombers.
- > Plan 9
- > There are **so many** things that would need to be precisely perfect for that to be the case. Even if someone was able to do this, it’s extremely inefficient.
- > Snopes

- > Since when do extremists care about efficiency? Look, I’m not saying that Plan 9 is right. I’m just saying that from a technical standpoint, it’s not impossible.

Sheesh, I don’t know which is scarier: knowing that there could be sleeper agent suicide bombers out there, or that I’m saying that Plan 9 could be right.

- > Butch

To make matters worse for magicians, there was a magically active serial murderer nicknamed the Fiend who was terrorizing several countries in Europe. After the Fiend committed more than two dozen ritual murders throughout the continent, Interpol finally managed to find and kill him with the assistance of freelancers (read: shadowrunners). All of this made public sentiment and fear escalate throughout western and central Europe in particular. But the Fiend managed to grab international headlines, and groups within the Freedom Network quickly used him as a scapegoat to justify their claims.

Now by no means was the anti-magical sentiment a common belief, but in the communities in which the Freedom Network is most active, the polling suggested a statistically significant fear of magicians and technomancers was developing. Thanks to the work of the Helix hackers, we know that the members of the Freedom Network were communicating with each other at the time. Unfortunately, we don’t know what they were saying or doing. For all we know, they may have been coordinating their efforts and directly manipulating elections and the public opinion in plain sight. We’ll never know for sure.

- > And rather ironically, the Resonance can assist in this. If it’s been communicated digitally, it can be recovered.
- > Netcat

We know from the Helix hack that the Freedom Network has established chapters in the UCAS, the CAS, the Free City of Constantinople, the Japanese Imperial State, and the Russian Republic. It is unclear if the Freedom Network is directing activities and efforts, or just a way for these chapters to all communicate with each other. But the relationships are there. If you’re in one of these countries, be aware that these groups exist. And be aware of their predilection for working from the shadows. Your employer might be one of them, or you may be asked to work against one of them. In particular, if you are a magician or technomancer, be on high alert when it comes to these groups.

## FASCISTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Forum voor Vrijheid is allied politically with several groups throughout Europe, but perhaps the one that has the most interesting angle is a group in



the Free City of Constantinople. Teaming up with the Grey Wolves, they present themselves as supporters of Constantinople's independence, peace, order, and prosperity. Thus, they named themselves the Refah Partisi, which translates roughly to Prosperity Party. The Refah Partisi and their Grey Wolves accomplices have been connected to the abduction of several foreign magicians under very flimsy pretenses. If you practice magic or technomancy in Constantinople, make sure you're not being surveilled. They won't grab you in a public place, but that won't stop them from grabbing you when you wander through one of the city's many alley markets.

- > Didn't they make a movie like this back in the old days?
- > Respec

In North America, there have never been a shortage of parties with similar populist and right-wing ideologies. However only two of the parties in the region have been known to have active communication with the Freedom Network. In the UCAS, that party is the New Virtue Party. In addition to the typically anti-magic and anti-technomancer rhetoric, the New Virtue Party also strongly supports any secession efforts that pop up throughout the UCAS. In much of the UCAS, the New Virtue Party is closely aligned with the Archconservative Party. In the CAS, the Freedom Party is the one to watch out for. Closely aligned with the Southern Conservative Party, the Freedom Party has actively sought the secession of Texas from the nation—at least, the part that still remains in the CAS. The loss of most of Texas to Aztlan pushed the Freedom Party to focus on that state, claiming that the CAS is too weak to protect them from Aztlan.

- > That doesn't even make sense. If Texas were to secede, they'd have even **less** strength to resist Aztlan.
- > Pistons
- > Fortunately, most Texans know this. The movement hasn't gained a ton of traction.
- > Hard Exit

Japan is hardly free from its own brand of racism and even anti-imperialism. The Minshu Shugi no Gimu, which translates roughly to Democracy Imperative, has been advocating the value and strength of independent people for decades. They've never made it very far, because the Japanese culture tends to support the whole rather than the individual, but they teamed up with Forum voor Vrijheid leader Lucas Moller to refine their message and to get more grassroots momentum. As a result, they changed their tone from one supporting individual contributions to one decrying the "strange" and the "alien" elements of Japa-

nese culture as a whole. The general fear of the Japanese Imperial State against technomancers has helped to fuel this paranoia, and the MSG was quick to capitalize on it. They've gained a lot of new support, especially within the Yakuza-connected communities and corporations, and have even managed to corporatize it. They created a new company with the exclusive purpose of providing anti-technomancer security services, called Boei Koso (Defense Initiative). So far, Boei Koso has been linked to the disappearance of five technomancers throughout Neo-Tokyo, and the authorities appear unconcerned.

- > Also, MSG is delicious.
- > Slamm-O!

The Russian Republic has a long history of populism and nationalist ideologies, so the Freedom Network nestled in nicely there. Based out of Moscow, the Novaya Rossiya (New Russia) party has been hinting at and promoting the victories and ultranationalist ideologies of Russia prior to the Awakening, suggesting that the Awakening has led to their decline as a massive world power. Drawing on the imagery of the USSR, and strongly supporting the Red Army, Novaya Rossiya hopes to re-stoke the fires that helped make the Soviet Union into one of the world's strongest superpowers. Because of existing policies in Russia forcing many magicians and technomancers to work for the State, Novaya Rossiya has found it relatively easy to stoke those fears in the general population.

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

There you have it. The Freedom Network started out as an academic institution, sought political power, and helped create an international movement of oppression and hate. The question I know you're all asking is: What are they doing now? And here's the scary thing: We don't know. The hackers at the Helix who recovered most of this information were unable to find too much before they reported something very wildly unexpected: technomancers in the host.

That's right, folks, the anti-technomancer group has technomancers in their employ! From what I understand, these spiders were able to fend off the Helix hackers with unexpected skill. But they had another trick up their sleeve, which the Helix hackers referred to as "nullification". The spiders didn't use any Complex Forms or sprites, but rather they somehow managed to unravel the complex forms and sprites of the Helix hackers. Without those fundamental abilities, the Helix hackers were like babes in the woods. The spiders of the Freedom Network nearly annihilated them. We are fortunate that even one of their number managed to get out and give us the data they managed to recover.



- > Way to bury the lead. This is great news! Maybe we can finally go back to normal after all these years.
- > Clockwork
- > I'm just going to ignore that. Peregrine, are you saying they have some sort of Dissonant ability?
- > Netcat
- > From what I was told by the Helix technomancers, this wasn't Dissonance. Apparently, Dissonance is still some form of technomancy, or has some relation to the Resonance. They used the word "nietig" to describe it, and that basically means a lack of something, or a void. They would try to thread their complex forms, and the forms would simply cease to thread. And the sprites they compiled would simply vanish. One of the technomancers I talked to was submerged and said that her echoes stopped working as well. I'm sorry, I can't really explain it much better than that. I'm hardly an expert on the nuances of technomancy.
- > Peregrine
- > I've seen similar things with the abilities of some magicians. Specifically, some that are deeply immersed in the apotropaic arts. The way I've heard it described, it's a bit like unraveling the fabric of a spell or spirit. Since the Moller Institute helped to develop some of these techniques, maybe it's possible that they did something similar with the Resonance?
- > Red
- > I'd be curious to see how they handle Dissonance.
- > Puck
- > Okay, time to call it quits when Puck shows up. Thank you, Peregrine.
- > Glitch

## GAME INFORMATION

The world is a very dangerous place, with lots of threats around every corner. But not every threat is obvious. The threat represented by the Freedom Network is insidious, as it finds its roots embedded in paranoia and fear of the other. The Sixth World has been bombarded by threats from these sources, including bug spirits, toxic shamans, shedim, monads, dragons—the list can go on for days. Forum voor Vrijheid seeks to reclaim some of the power that was lost to these “others.” They want to get power back into the hands of the “normal” people, the mundanes of the world.

While the Freedom Network is a worldwide organization, they began as three disparate but connected entities in Europe and have copied their patterns of success to other areas. The Network utilizes the same basic approach for most of their cells: a political party to rile up the locals to their cause, an academic organization or think tank supports the political organization's assertions, and a paramilitary group to enforce the will of the others.

## FORUM VOOR VRIJHEID

**Headquarters:** Europort, United Netherlands  
**President:** Lucas Moller  
**Size:** 75 permanent staffers, as many as 3,000 volunteers  
**Types of runs they sponsor:** Data manipulation, intimidation, public stunts  
**Types of runs against them:** Extraction, infiltration, sabotage

## MOLLER INSTITUTE

**Headquarters:** The Hague, United Netherlands  
**President:** Anna Moller (Moller Institute)  
**Size:** 200 scientists, 50 administrative staff  
**Types of runs they sponsor:** Courier, escort, extraction  
**Types of runs against them:** Extraction, infiltration, sabotage

## POPULAR WILL

**Headquarters:** Unknown  
**President:** Unknown, suspected to be Jules Veldmeijer  
**Size:** Unknown, suspected to be several hundred in the United Netherlands, and thousands more around the world  
**Types of runs they sponsor:** Kidnapping, murder, sabotage  
**Types of runs against them:** Extraction, infiltration, sabotage

## THE MOLLER INSTITUTE

The Moller Institute is where this whole thing started. They perform research and experimentation on technomancers and magicians. While they are primarily a think tank and research-based organization, they also perform medical procedures upon their “patients.” The Institute creates research papers and studies to help support the message of the Forum voor Vrijheid and also performs cybernetic augmentation for Popular Will.

The Institute is intentionally set up to layer access. Their leader, Anna Moller, understands that the work they do would be publicly decried should it ever get leaked to the world. As she reminds her fellow Institute leadership, the public just isn't ready to accept the price of their freedom. To protect that information, the Institute uses a three-color system for managing their employees.

Blue employees make up the bulk of the Institute. They are the public-facing folks who are never privy to the deeper workings of the Institute. These may be researchers but are more likely to be the people who collate data, prepare reports, work in administrative functions, and perform other tasks that do not require access or deeper understanding.

Green employees are the ones who do the research, and they're also the ones runners are most likely to encounter. Green employees may hire runners to acquire research from other organizations, sabotage said research, or perform personnel extractions. They also stage expeditions into the Res-





onance Realms and the metaplanes to gain further understanding of possibilities and limitations.

Red employees are the ones most initiated into the Institute's organization. These are the hard-liners who perform medical experiments, implant cyberware, and serve as leaders. The red employees make up the core of the Institute and are few in number but rich in access. They are the ones that an enemy runner team is most likely to target for extraction, sabotage, or even network.

While the Institute seeks to understand the potential and the limitations of magic and technomancy, it is up to the Forum voor Vrijheid political party to message this out to the public. The Forum massages the data provided by the Institute and uses it to help justify their ultimate cause: the elimination of magic-users and technomancers. They hold political rallies and work to expand their network of influencers across the globe.

## FORUM VOOR VRIJHEID

The Forum strives to maintain a nearly constant presence on Dutch trideo and the public Matrix, preaching their ideas to anyone who will listen. While they certainly have a fair number of politicians in their employ, the Forum makes extensive use of volunteer staff. The volunteers go out and canvas the streets, passing out AROs to anyone who will accept them. The Forum will also employ hackers and shadowrunners to perform jobs

to manipulate data (usually polling data, research, or political ads), intimidate voters who may be on the fence, and perform the occasional outlandish public stunt. One such stunt in 2081 involved a so-called "technomancer attack" on people in Berlin. Turns out that the runner team involved had a technomancer and was tasked with hacking a target. The target was never specified, so the technomancer hacked everyone he could. The runners didn't know that there was a secondary team from Forum voor Vrijheid recording the whole thing. The Forum then leaked the footage to the media along with some spin. That runner team was last seen attempting to get work in Johannesburg.

The Forum has no shortage of enemies in the political world as well. There are reporters constantly trying to dig into the organization's records and the past lives of their political operatives. There are also rival organizations that seek to dismantle or weaken the Forum from within, performing personnel extractions and sabotage against their plans. Finally, and perhaps the most difficult to accomplish, there are infiltration jobs against the Forum. Humanis and Alamos 20K would love to see them turned away from their anti-Awakened and anti-Emerged messaging and brought onto an anti-metahuman message, and they may employ runners to help shape that message from within. But there are also organizations such as the Atlantean Foundation that will want to manipulate the leadership and get themselves an inside agent for future operations.



## POPULAR WILL

If the Institute is like the brain of this organization, and the Forum is the mouth, Popular Will is the arms and legs. Popular Will is out in the streets, doing the physical work involved in trying to change public perception. They may seem like street thugs, but they are surprisingly organized, paranoid, and connected. Popular Will is connected with several syndicates around the world, sometimes through proxies, in order to keep up with their nearly inexhaustible demand for weapons and drugs.

Popular Will is brought in by the Forum to provide security during political rallies, and they are employed to intimidate voters on a regular basis. The Institute uses Popular Will as a means of acquiring “patients” and “subjects” for their macabre experiments. Because of their brazen public nature, Popular Will represents the most likely way that a team of runners will encounter this organization. Taking their cue from the white power skinheads of the '90s, Popular Will wears paramilitary garb and shave their heads completely bald. Popular Will is not shy about their affiliations and their beliefs, and they are quick to rise to violence.

The rumored leader of Popular Will, Jules Veldmeijer, rarely makes public appearances alongside Popular Will. He acts as a liaison of sorts between the Forum, Institute, and Popular Will. Jules is a polar opposite of most of Popular Will in that he does not shave his head, and he does not dress in a paramilitary fashion. Instead, he prefers to wear suits and keep himself very neatly dressed at all times. He's well-spoken and thoughtful with the way that he presents himself, choosing to portray the image of rational hatred and distancing himself from the street-level violence of most of Popular Will.

If a team of runners is going to take a job from Popular Will, it will most likely be at the behest of Jules. He enjoys employing deniable assets to perform tasks like kidnapping figures that he sees as important or influential to his cause, murdering those that would not conform to Popular Will messaging, and sabotaging organizations that would oppose Popular Will. Likewise, those same organizations, such as Mothers of Metahumans and the Sons of Sauron, would seek to employ runners against Popular Will. They may hire runners to attempt to kidnap or assassinate Jules or one of his lieutenants, or they may also attempt to sabotage Popular Will rallies in some way.

## AKYROMANCY

The Moller Institute has developed a number of apotropaic arts through the decades, and they continue to innovate in the concept of using magic to defend against magic. Recently they developed a new art they call akyromancy. The theory is based on the idea that all spells and magical constructs

are woven together in a pattern that resembles the desired effect. The use of akyromancy unravels that pattern and returns the magical energies to whence they came.

There is a cost associated with the use of akyromancy, though, which means that magicians who have initiated into this art will find that they have no ability to conjure or perform spellwork. These akyromancers are employed by the Institute and Popular Will to provide protection against other magic-users, as they can literally void the magical abilities and constructs of others. Akyromancy appears to a magical observer to operate similarly to how it sounds: the magical construct simply unravels and disintegrates.

Akyromancy isn't unique to magic-users. The Institute was able to communicate with and learn from the Null Sect, which has granted them insight into how Resonance and Dissonance abilities function in the Matrix. The Institute used this knowledge to create a version of akyromancy for technomancers. Akyromantic technomancers have the ability to intuitively dissolve any Resonance construct, such as a complex form or sprite, seemingly at will.

Akyromancy is a narrative device at this point. It is possible that akyromancy will be expanded upon in future supplements, but currently only NPCs are eligible to use these abilities, and the specifics of how they are used will not be detailed so as to allow gamemasters more flexibility with its usage as a narrative tool.

## PROJECT IXION

The source of Matrix-based akyromancy is a deeply disturbing group called Null Sect. Null Sect is a group of unknown entities who are able to permeate a Matrix host and then purge any “inefficiencies” from the code. This basically means that anything related to the Resonance or Dissonance is destroyed, along with anything that gets in the way of the Null Sect's work. While the Null Sect is described in greater detail in *Kill Code*, suffice to say that it is a terrifying and truly alien intelligence that knows no mercy and has no respect for anything from the physical world.

Somehow, the Institute managed to get in contact with Null Sect and may have been the first metahumans to communicate with them. No one knows why Null Sect tolerates the presence of the Moller Institute, but this is how Project Ixion was born. The Institute's akyromantic technomancers figured out how to rip open a tear in the Matrix to allow the Null Sect into a host, who then proceed to “seed” the host. Project Ixion seeks to imbed these akyromantic technomancers into the Big Ten, getting them high-level access to the Matrix Foundation. The plan is to then unleash Null Sect into each part of the Foundation and let them run rampant, effectively destroying the Foundation from the inside.



The theory behind this project is that by destroying the Foundation, they can sever the Matrix from the Resonance. If this plan is successful, it would cause an untold amount of damage to the world. Even if the plan works as intended, hundreds of thousands of technomancers around the world would suddenly lose their Resonance

## SAMPLE NPCS

### POPULAR WILL THUG\*

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 2)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
4	4	2	4	2	3	3	2	6

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
6	5/1	A1, I2	10	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Firearms 2, Influence 2 (Intimidation +2), Perception 2, Stealth 2

**Knowledge Skills:** [Specific Sprawl] Gangs, [Specific Sprawl] Streets, Political Rhetoric

**Languages:** Appropriate native language based on region of origin

**Qualities:** Toughness

**Gear:** Armor clothing (DR +2), Sony Emperor commlink (rating 2, D/F 1/1), synthleather jacket (DR +1)

**Weapons:**

Bike chain [Unarmed, DV 2S, AR 5/-/-/-/-]

Knife [Blade, DV 2P, AR 6/1\*-/--/-, \*max range 20 meters]

Knucks [Unarmed, DV 3P, AR 6/-/-/-/-]

Unarmed [DV 2S, AR 6/-/-/-/-]

### POPULAR WILL LIEUTENANT\*

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 2)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
5	4	2	4	2	3	3	3	5

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
7	5/1	A1, I2	11	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Athletics 2, Close Combat 4, Firearms 2, Influence 3 (Intimidation +2), Perception 2, Stealth 2

**Knowledge Skills:** [Specific Sprawl] Gangs, [Specific Sprawl] Streets, Political Rhetoric

**Languages:** Appropriate native language based on region of origin

**Qualities:** Toughness

**Augmentations:** Bone lacing (aluminum)

**Gear:** Armor clothing (DR +2), Sony Emperor commlink (rating 2, D/F 1/1), synthleather jacket (DR +1)

**Weapons:**

Bike chain [Unarmed, DV 2S, AR 5/-/-/-/-]

Unarmed [Unarmed, DV 4P, AR 8/-/-/-/-]

### INSTITUTE RESEARCHER\*

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 2)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
2	2	2	1	4	5 (7)	4	3	5.4

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
2	6/1	A1, I2	10	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Biotech 5, Electronics 4, Engineering 4, Perception 3

**Knowledge Skills:** Academic Institutions, Biology, Magical Theory, Matrix Theory, Medicine

**Augmentations:** Cerebral booster 2, datajack, datalock 4

**Gear:** Erika Elite commlink (Rating 4, D/F 2/1)

**Weapons:**

Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 2S, AR 3/-/-/-/-]

abilities. In the best case, this would still crash the Matrix completely, as the Matrix is currently based heavily upon the Foundation. In the worst case, we could be looking at the unraveling of the Matrix as we know it. It could usher in a dark age of technology that the world hasn't seen in centuries.

### FORUM POLITICIAN\*

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 3)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
3	3	2	3	4	3	4	5	5.2

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
5	6/1	A1, I2	10	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Athletics 2, Con 6, Firearms 1, Influence 6, Perception 4

**Knowledge Skills:** Bureaucracy, Political Tactics

**Languages:** Appropriate native language based on region of origin, plus one language native to the region spoken by a minority group

**Qualities:** First Impression

**Augmentations:** Datajack, synthacardium 1, toxin extractor 2, voice modulator 1

**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (DR +2), Transys Avalon commlink (rating 6, D/F 3/1)

**Weapons:**

Fichetti Tiffani Needler [Hold-out, DV 3P, SS, AR 10/6/2/-/-, 4(c)]

Unarmed [Unarmed, DV 2S, AR 6/-/-/-/-]

### FREEDOM NETWORK JOHNSON\*

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
3	3	3	3	3	3	5	4	4.8

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
9	8/1	A1, I2	10	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Con 5, Electronics 4, Firearms 3, Influence 5, Perception 3

**Knowledge Skills:** Finance, Psychology, Runner Teams

**Augmentations:** Datajack, datalock 4, orthoskin 4

**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (DR +2), glasses [capacity 4, w/ flare compensation, image link, smartlink], Transys Avalon commlink (Rating 6, D/F 3/1)

**Weapons:**

Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, DV 3P, AR 10/8/6/-/-, SA, 14(c), w/ smartgun system]

Unarmed [Unarmed, DV 2S, AR 6/-/-/-/-]

### AKYROMANTIC MAGICIAN\*

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	ESS
4	2	4	4	5	5	3	5	7	6

#### NORMAL

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
8	7/1	A1, I2	11	10/15/+1

#### ASTRAL

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
3	8/2	A1, I3	—	—

**Active Skills:** Astral 3, Close Combat 2, Con 2, Firearms 4, Influence 2, Perception 2, Stealth 3

**Knowledge Skills:** Arcana, Magical Theory, Magical Traditions, Metaplanes

**Magical Tradition:** Hermetic

**Initiation, Metamagics:** Grade 5, akyromancy

**Gear:** Armor jacket (DR +4), glasses [rating 2, w/ flare compensation, image link], Erika Elite commlink (Rating 4, D/F 2/1)

**Weapons:**

Colt Government 2076 [Heavy Pistol, DV 3P, SA, AR 10/8/6/-/-, 14 (c), w/ laser sight]

Colt M23 [Assault Rifle, DV 4P, SA/BF/FA, AR 5/8/8/8/1, 40 (c), w/ laser sight]

Unarmed [Unarmed, DV 2S, AR 8/-/-/-/-]



ANNA MOLLER

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 4), HUMAN

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
3	3	3	3	4	6 (9)	5	5	3	5.6
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE					
5	8/1	A1, I2	10/10	10/15/+1					

**Active Skills:** Biotech 6, Electronics 6, Engineering 6, Influence 3, Perception 3  
**Knowledge Skills:** Academic Institutions, Biology, Magical Theory, Matrix Theory, Research Techniques  
**Languages:** Dutch (Specialist), English (Native)  
**Qualities:** Analytical Mind  
**Augmentations:** Cerebral booster 3 (deltaware), datajack (deltaware), datalock 4 (deltaware)  
**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (DR +2), Transys Avalon commlink (rating 6, D/F 3/1)  
**Weapons:**  
Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 2S, AR 6/-/-/-/-]

LUCAS MOLLER

(ELF MALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
3	3	3	3	4	4	4	8	3	5.65
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE					
5	7/1	A1, I2	10/10	10/15/+1					

**Active Skills:** Athletics 2, Con 6, Electronics 4, Firearms 2, Influence 6, Perception 4  
**Knowledge Skills:** Bureaucracy, Political Science, Political Tactics  
**Languages:** Dutch (Native), English (Expert)  
**Augmentations:** Datajack (deltaware), datalock 4 (deltaware), synthacardium 1 (deltaware), tailored pheromones 1 (deltaware), voice modulator 1 (deltaware)  
**Qualities:** First Impression  
**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (DR +2), contacts (capacity 2, w/ flare compensation, image link), Transys Avalon commlink (rating 6, D/F 3/1)  
**Weapons:**  
Unarmed [Unarmed, DV 2S, AR 6/-/-/-/-]

AKYROMANTIC TECHNOMANCER\*

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	R	ESS
5	2	2	3	5	5	6	5	7	6
NORMAL									
DR		I/ID		AC		CM		MOVE	
9		8/1		A1, I2		11		10/15/+1	
MATRIX									
DR		I/ID		AC		CM		MOVE	
10		11/3		A1, I4		—		—	

**Active Skills:** Con 3, Cracking 6 (Cybercombat +2), Electronics 6 (Computer +2), Firearms 4, Influence 2, Perception 3  
**Knowledge Skills:** Hacker Groups, Host Design, Matrix Theory, Technomancer Groups  
**Qualities:** Incompetent (Tasking)  
**Submersion, Echoes:** 1, akyromancy  
**Gear:** Armor jacket (DR +4), glasses [capacity 1, w/ flare compensation]  
**Living Persona:** Attack 5, Sleaze 6, Data Processing 5, Firewall 5, plus 3 points to allocate  
**Weapons:**  
Colt Government 2076 [Heavy Pistol, DV 3P, AR 10/8/6/-/-, SA, 14 (c), w/ laser sight]  
Colt M23 [Assault Rifle, DV 4P, AR 5/8/8/8/1], SA/BF/FA, 40 (c), w/ laser sight]  
Unarmed [Unarmed, DV 2S, AR 5/-/-/-/-]

JULES VELDMEIJER

(ORK MALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
6	4 (6)	4	6 (8)	3	3	3	5	3	5.2
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE					
8	7/1	A1, I2	12/10	10/15/+1					

**Active Skills:** Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Con 4, Firearms 4, Influence 5 (Leadership +2), Perception 3  
**Knowledge Skills:** Antwerp Gangs, Antwerp Streets, Orxploitation Music  
**Languages:** Dutch (Native)  
**Augmentations:** Bone density augmentation 2 (deltaware), datajack (deltaware), datalock 4 (deltaware), muscle augmentation 2 (deltaware), muscle toner 2 (deltaware)  
**Qualities:** Built Tough (1), Low-Light Vision (Ork), Toughness  
**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (DR +2), earbuds (rating 1, w/ damper, sound link), glasses (rating 4, w/ flare compensation, image link, smartlink), Transys Avalon commlink (rating 6, D/F 3/1)  
**Weapons:**  
Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistols, DV 3P, AR 11/9/7/-/-, SA, 14 (c), w/ laser sight, smartlink]  
Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 3P, AR 14/-/-/-/-]

\* Stats are for a human (use the metatype adjustment table from p. 211, SR6 for other metatypes)





# GREEN WAR

► The ecoterrorist group known as GreenWar has been around since the Awakening, hitting the news flashes on occasion with one of their attacks to punish metahumanity for crimes against Mother Earth and the “web of life.” While often associated with high death tolls or violent havoc to catch media attention, these attacks have been isolated incidents. In recent years, however, there has been a sudden rise of GreenWar activity, especially in Europe and the Americas, alerting corporate and governmental intelligence groups and causing quite a constant chatter in the digital ether. Many believe that something (or someone) forced them out of hiding, or that they are preparing something big. Or both. Since we know very little about the different motivations, operations, or leadership of the ecoterrorist organization, I reached out to Ecotope and his network to take a deep dive on GreenWar. Given his association with green and other left-wing political agitators, he is the most qualified to give us a rundown on the current activities across the globe.

For more diversity, he asked me to give guest access to some of his associates. Rappacini is a former Logos/GreenWar assassin from the Italian Confederation, who took a hard exit

from the organization recently and has since been hiding in the European shadows. Shohoj is a spiritual eco-blogger from India who has vast connections to environmentalists and fringes across Asia Major and the Ring of Fire. Lastly, Hok’ee is a freedom fighter for the Haida National Front with ties to tribal conservatism across the whole NAN.

► Glitch

## THE RISE OF ECOTERRORISM

POSTED BY: ECOTOPE

*“We’re just a conceited, naked ape, but in our minds we’re some sort of ‘divine legend,’ and we see ourselves as some sort of god. That we can walk around the earth deciding who will live and who will die and what will be destroyed and what will be saved. But the fact is that we’re just a bunch of primates out of control.”*



I start this overview with the quote from Paul Watson, a marine wildlife conservation and environmental activist of the last century, who originally founded the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, which was later absorbed into what we know today as the marine direct-action group **Save Our Seas (SOS)**.

It summarizes the view of many contemporary eco-warriors that metahumanity, due to its feral nature and self-proclaimed stewardship of the planet and top of the food chain, is out of control and consequently needs to be put down. It is, however, just a glimpse about the dark green elements of (eco-fascist) deep ecology that are rooted in GreenWar doctrine.

## **RADICALIZATION OF THE RAINBOW WARRIOR**

To understand GreenWar and its goals, we need to step back a little and look at how environmentalism got radicalized since the beginning of the Sixth World.

Eco-extremism was a response to the massive destructions and exploitation of natural resources in the twentieth century, which were even further fueled with the rise of megacorporations in the twenty-first century. Implementation of ex-territoriality, disempowerment of national states, and the advance of economic lobbyism, corporate propaganda, and media manipulation of public opinion all led to the loss of any bargaining chips that conservationist groups had left to legally fight polluters and resource predators. Thanks to private corporate armies and privatization of police institutions, green-motivated rallies were frequently and brutally disbanded by show of force. This powerlessness in the face of megacorporate supremacy became the breeding ground for radicalism of many activists and groups.

We don't need to forget that all of this happened during the unprecedented exploitation campaign of the Resource Rush and during a time of the greatest ecological disasters of mankind in recent history, such as the Cattenom GAU of 2008 or the Black Tide in 2011. With their backs to the wall, Doomsday fast approaching, and no peaceful options left, many rainbow warriors (conservationist and animal welfare activists alike) decided that direct-action activism was the only path forward to protect the Awakened gaiasphere from ecocide by the hands of metahumanity.

Fast-forward to 2080.

The battle for Mother Nature is still fought without a clear winner in sight. Corporations like Saeder-Krupp, Aztechnology, and MCT (just to name the worst) still exploit natural resources for their personal gain, while eco-shamans and green movements are using magic, mass biotech and

eco-tech to reverse the long-term damages done to ecosystems. However, there has been a power shift over the years. Some megacorporations such as Horizon, Wuxing, and Evo have been actively (and openly) supporting environmentalism, even if most of it is just for good PR.

- Don't let them fool you. They all have committed crimes against the Living Mother, no matter how well they have hidden their skeletons. They all need to pay.
- Rappacini

And even great dragons such as Kaltenstein, Hestaby, Mujaji, and Hualpa have actively stepped up in the past to support certain green agendas.

- In truth, megacorporations and other powers who control the globe do not want to dismantle green groups. They are much too valuable for them to use them as pawns in their games against their competitors. With most of their groups organized in cell-based structures to support their clandestine nature, it can be difficult to discover where money, resources, and orders really come from. Many of these groups have been subverted by agents of government, corporate, or other clandestine factions, with their green goals just a cover for a more deeply hidden agenda.
- Fianchetto

## **SHADES OF GREEN**

**Eco-extremism** is often not easy to identify. Given the diversity of green groups, eco-activism, direct action, and true terrorist attacks by GreenWar often get lumped together under the label of "ecoterrorism" by governments and corporations alike to criminalize and vilify those groups and movements in the media.

**Eco-activism** operates in a mostly legal area. Eco-activists commit themselves to eco-political goals and are usually organized in green policlubs that fight for the conservation of natural habitats (flora and fauna) and climate stability, stop resource exploitation by legal means, educate about the influence of biogenetically altered crops or animals on the ecosystem, defend animal rights, and advocate prohibition of animal testing and intensive mass animal farming. Methods of green grassroots policlubs include political education, support of green parties, collection of signatures, organization of boycotts and rallies, and sit-down or hunger strikes. However, most importantly, they are responsible for the procurement of financial resources from public funds and donations, which are frequently diverted to direct-action groups (or GreenWar directly).

- Ah. The dreamers. Idealists who still think that they can bring about political change, fools who still trust in the system. After a few years of constant failures by megacorporate lobbyists, red



## ECO-SHAMANISM

//added by Magister

The term “eco-shamanism” is often confusing to outsiders, as it is used for both a modern arcane tradition as well as a (politically) green motivation of Awakened groups or individuals, who don’t necessarily need to be followers of the tradition of the same name.

- Meaning that eco-shaman can refer to nature-revering shamans, green magicians, witches, wiccans, wujen, or druids, which are all traditions commonly associated with the green movements.
- G-nome

Eco-shamanism—as a tradition—differentiates from classical shamanism in that followers are not just passively living in accordance with nature, magic, and spirits but are actively striving to remedy the damage that metahumankind has done to the planet. Hence, eco-shamans are often found at places where megacorporations release contaminants into the atmosphere, dump toxic waste into lakes, and where trees are felled and animals butchered by poachers or mass-farmed under undeserving conditions. Often these are urban metropolises suffering under smog, where acidic rain is a daily routine and concrete jungles suffocate the living earth. Eco-shamans see themselves as healers, detoxifiers, or cleaners of the giasphere, working to contain if not heal the damage to the environment. Thus, they are frequently involved in eco-activism to make sure that Mother Gaia is not scarred further.

- Which translates both to the physical world and to astral space. Some eco-shamans feel attuned to the manasphere and focus on the cleaning of background count originating from pollution or social desolation.
- Ecotope

Followers of eco-shamanism usually choose an “element” (Water, Earth, Air, Plant, or Animal) that they feel most attuned to, not only in an arcane sense but also ideologically. Water eco-shamans often join SOS or Aqua Arcana or participate in projects to clean lakes and rivers. Earth eco-shamans fight the illegal dumping of chemicals frequently sponsored by chemical megacorporation. Similarly, many eco-shamans choose (or are chosen by, depending on

what you believe) mentor spirits that are associated with the chosen element such as Sea, Mountain, Oak, animal idols that embody conservation, healing, or cleansing, or they directly choose the Great Mother, the embodiment of the voice of the planet.

- Interestingly enough, many magicians have reported receiving messages or visions from their totems or idols warning them of a danger from the metaplanes.
- Glasswalker

### RADICAL ECO-SHAMANS

Conservationism is a calling to every eco-shaman, like the service to a higher being is for a priest. They are generally idealists and optimists who believe in an eco-conscious utopia. But when frustration, anger, incomprehension of the greed and shortsightedness of metahumans, and the fear that an ecocide cannot be averted seeps in, many start to question their beliefs in peaceful coexistence and education of metahumankind. This is when arcane corruption starts to infest the heart and minds of the Awakened.

- Given our fight, eco-shamans are probably the most susceptible to this corruption.
- Ecotope

Radical eco-shamans often turn their backs on their pacifist healer ideals while they start to crusade against meta-humanity and corporations to avenge Mother Earth using magic and spirits as their weapons. Over time, this leads to a brutalization of the tradition, a twisting of the path. Conjured spirits tend to get more aggressive (and less willing to be bound), and eco-shamans embrace the darker sides of the deities they follow.

### ECO-AVENGERS

Avengers have shed all shackles of conscience and succumbed to their anger, hatred, and desire for revenge, turning them into a sociopathic travesty of eco-shamanism. These toxic mages follow corrupted traditions and possess twisted worldviews that match with GreenWar doctrine, which is why many of them can be found among the bioterrorist organization.

tape, and unwillingness of people to change, they are cynical enough to either leave environmentalism for good, get recruited into direct action, or fall prey to deeper green indoctrination.

- Goat Foot
- Examples for these policlubs are OceanCare, Sustain!, Globewatch, People for the Ethical Treatment of the Awakened (PETA), and Sierra Inc., just to name a few.
- Shohoj

- The Astral Space Preservation Society can also be viewed a green policlub in that sense, given their interest to preserve the manasphere.
- Ethernaut

A variant of the classical eco-activists are **eco-anarchists** like the **Klabauterbund** in Hamburg, where a green agenda has been meshed up with anti-capitalist, anti-tech, autonomist, bohemian, hooder, and libertarian currents, often moving into direct action with their pirate-like raids.



Overall, there is a frequent shared interest and overlap of green groups with other left-wing motivated groups such as neo-As, social-equalist (Equity), anti-fascist, anti-corporate, eco-feminist (Mother Earth polyclub, witch coven), LGBTQ+, or pro-meta-activists (Mother of Metahumans).

- Don't even bother to unknot or understand that tangled web of politically motivated groups. If they pay, do what they ask. If they start shooting at you, shoot back. Don't let yourself get into something based on what seems to be a "just cause." Best not take sides. It's better for business.
- Zhaganaash

Green Direct Action or Sprawl Guerilla groups, as they are called in Europe, are using militant and, in most nations, illegal means to fight, impede, or wreak havoc on their enemies. Their targets are mostly corporations who commit resource exploitation on a grand scale (oil drilling or fracking, drone-operated mining operations), known polluters (chemical/biopharmaceutical plants, mass-production lines, nuclear power plants, shipping companies), or groups who harm bio-diversity or animal welfare (automated mass animal farming, agricultural or other mass biotech). Pursued by the law, they usually operate in small cells from

the underground. Most groups like the Awakened Liberation Front (ALF), TerraFirst! (TF!), Groen Front (GF), Save our Seas (SOS), Grüne Zellen (Green Cells) are not considered terrorist organizations per se but walk a very thin line between being radical and truly extremist. Though often labeled violent, direct-action groups tend to restrict their attacks to property (so-called ecotage), hit-and-run attacks, assault, ship raids, and Matrix hacktivism, with killings (or mutilations) being the exception rather than the norm.

And then there is **GreenWar**.

## GREENWAR

Numbering an estimated 3,000 members and supporters worldwide, GreenWar is the largest and most notorious true eco-terrorist organization in existence. What differentiates them from direct action groups is that true eco-terrorism is brutal and indiscriminate, just like other forms of terrorism, with no respect for metahuman life including their own.

- Meaning they are as bad as the anti-meta shitbags from Alamos 20K or Nationale Aktion.
- Butch





- If there is a true successor to Winternight in this day and age, it is probably GreenWar.
- Puck

## HISTORY: POISONED ROOTS

Founded in the wake of the Black Tide in 2011, allegedly in the nowadays Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg in the Allied German States (AGS), GreenWar always had strong roots in green movements across Central Europe.

Their actions until the 2020s—such as the bombing of the International Whaling Commission office (GreenWar's first public appearance) or the magical manipulation of a toxic oil spill near Aberdeen that created the Scottish Fringe Zone—lured many European environmentalists to GreenWar, whose former NGOs had been actively dismantled through lack of funding or corporate machinations. Vulnerable to a more extremist green doctrine to fill their inner void, many of them joined their ranks to manifest their anger more militantly.

- It has always been a mystery to me how their radical/toxic eco-shamans managed to pull off something like the creation of the Scottish Fringe so early after the Awakening. So either this was a clusterfrag that was supposed to go differently or dragons and free spirits have been meddling in metahuman affairs by providing arcane training to the worst of the worst since the beginning of the Sixth World.
- Winterhawk

As modern eco-terrorism grew and many disenchanting conservationists hit new levels of disillusionment, these poisoned roots rapidly spread across the globe. Thus GreenWar first infected and then quickly assimilated other small extremist groups like **Individualistas Tendiendo a lo Salvaje** (ITS) in Latin America, **Mpomponsuo** (meaning “responsibility” in Akan) in Western Africa, or **后土** (*hòutu* in Mandarin, literary meaning “vast earth”) across Asia, and many more.

With their growth in numbers and the formation of cell-based networks in many countries, GreenWar attacks, killings, and massacres subsequently became common violent spikes in the noise of eco-activist media coverage. In times of wars and with militant attacks (turf wars, underworld shake-ups, corporate skirmishes, meta persecution) being on the rise in most sprawls, GreenWar attacks only reached the headlines if casualties were in the hundreds or involved prominent victims. Or when attacks were so abhorrent that they easily caught subscribers' attention, such as the acid strike on the Saeder-Krupp Algarve Water Resort in the '40s that left many corporate families (including children) with nasty acid burns that scarred them for life.

## GREENWAR IN THE AZ-AM WAR (2072-2074)

The Aztlan-Amazonian (Az-Am) War was a conflict that raged between Aztlan and Amazonia for almost three years. It started when Aztlan officially declared war against Amazonia in November 2072 after an Amazonian black-ops team was caught red-handed illegally breaking into a research facility in the Aztechnology Business Complex in Bogotá. Aztechnology used the public outcry for a military campaign into Amazonia, with Bogotá becoming the center of the war. In the beginning, they were evenly matched. Amazonian forces used guerilla tactics backed by the rainforest itself to counter the superior (albeit conventional) military Aztlan forces, which only dominated when Amazonian forces were pinned down or drawn out in urban areas. The tide changed in favor of Amazonia when GreenWar forces led by the great dragon SIRRURG entered the picture and attacked the city of Cali in January 2073, brutally and mercilessly slaughtering Aztlan soldiers and thousands of civilians. Consequently, Aztlan resorted to unconventional tactics (small units and special forces), hiring mercenaries and shadowrunners alike to attack Amazonian depots and supply lines. In the end, there were almost as many proxies fighting on both sides of the war as regular military troops. As part of Aztech's spin-doctoring campaign, they used GreenWar's infamous reputation and SIRRURG's further agroterrorist attack against Borinquen to turn public opinion in favor of Aztlan. The war ended in October 2074, when during Operation: Marauder, several Aztech task forces managed to bring down (but not kill) SIRRURG using an experimental anti-dragon weapon. In a last attempt to beat Aztlan forces during the battle for Bogotá, GreenWar committed several atrocities that resulted in destruction of a city district and massive civilian casualties. Aztlan's response turned into a savage bloodbath, during which a greater portion of GreenWar's Latin American branch got annihilated. After United Nations intervention, both nations agreed to a cease fire. Since then, the remaining GreenWar forces have gone back into hiding in the Amazonian basin.

- What's not publicly known is that the reason Amazonia's black-ops team was sent there in the first place was to find proof of an engineered bioweapons program that, if used, would have detrimentally affected the Amazonian ecosystem and may have enabled Aztechnology to take over the nation when sufficiently weakened. Never forget that Aztlan wanted to have this war. You may condone GreenWar's war crimes, but you don't fight fire by turning the other cheek.
- Glasswalker

- The media for sure loves their bad guys.
- Sunshine

Still and for a very long time, most GreenWar attacks were isolated incidents, successful hits by single cells. Coordinated attacks—despite the existence and inclinations of central leadership—were rare.



- Still, GreenWar supported the formation of green governments in the United Kingdom (with the New Druidic Movement), Amazonia, and Paraguay and worked to turn them into eco-fascist states.
- Glasswalker

The '70s suddenly saw a rise in concerted GreenWar operations across the globe. Some of our eco-watchdogs who keep an eye on GW activities believe that something happened at some point during the mid-'60s, either externally or within GW leadership, to trigger this change in operations.

- Eco-watchdogs? Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?
- Chainmaker
- Yes, you could say that. However, the relationship between GreenWar and other green groups is more complicated. GreenWar regularly subverts green groups—especially direct action such as Grüne Zellen and TF!—for their cause, as pawns, cannon-fodder, or a cover for certain GW operations, to the point that many believe these groups are just extensions of GW (which they are not). Conversely, our watchdogs keep an eye on GW operations and cells to interfere (directly or through shadowrunners with a sufficient sense of morality) before mass casualties happen that drag the eco-movement as a whole into the mud. Many attacks were stopped that way. It is a continuous dance about checks and balances. That's why our watchdogs call themselves Laelaps, after the dog in Greek myth who always catches its prey and hunts the Teumessian fox, who can never be caught. Our relationship is comparably paradoxical.
- Ecotope

The biodrone attack on Arthur Vogel and Sierra Incorporated at the Annual Californian Environmental Summit in Los Angeles that killed six people—as well as the active support of Sirurg and Amazonian forces during the Az-Am War—may

have been only the start of a major, more unified eco-terrorist campaign to threaten civilization as we know it.

- Or to defend the Mother from threats far worse than metahumankind. Perhaps something ... extraplanar?
- Plan 9-10
- Yeah. Sure.
- Borderline
- Maybe we shouldn't discard this thought too quickly. They may be onto something.
- Elijah

## CURRENTS AND IDEOLOGIES: TOXIC BRANCHES

Most GreenWar extremists, simply called **Eco-Warriors**, see themselves as soldiers, stewards, guardians, defenders, or champions of Gaia (take your pick).

- Or, if completely delusional, even “chosen” of Mother Earth to execute her “grand plan” in some twisted pagan zealotry.
- Sunshine

They are willing to engage in wide-scale and devastating attacks, with the full intention of destroying assets and hurting or even killing the “guilty.” Eco-warriors rarely show compassion for innocents caught in the crossfire. To them, they are as guilty as the despoilers (or according to deep ecologist, part of the problem). To them, they are fighting a “holy” (in the pagan sense) war for Mother Nature.

- Many call this “feral defense.”
- Hok'ee

Collateral damage is something to be accepted when fighting a superior enemy to stop the eco-cide, for the sake of the planet. The end justifies the means, even if those means are self-sacrifice or mass murder.

- That's why affiliation with GreenWar earns you at least fifteen years in European jails and death row in many other states, including the UCAS, CAS, and Aztlan. While most NAN states (probably all with the exception of the Pueblo Corporate Council) are more open to looking the other way when it comes to eco-motivated direct action, even they condemn the actions of GreenWar, at least officially.
- Thorn

The majority of GreenWar belongs to this “avenger faction” (named after the toxic shamans of the same name).

## INTERPOL: GREENWAR TERRORIST MOST WANTED

All listed terrorists are wanted for mass murder and other major criminal offenses.

1. **César da Silva** (Avenger toxic shaman)
2. **Repetir** (free spirit “suicide” bomber)
3. **Feral** (Reaper toxic druid, Logos associate)
4. **Autochtone** (chemical weapons expert)
5. **Pasteur** (genehacker/bioterrorist)
6. **Alejandro Tepevolloti** (Jaguar shapeshifter)
7. **Wroth** (tribal conjurer/spirit berserker)
8. **Tiefgrün** (combat decker, Matrix saboteur)
9. **Wieland** (weapons designer/demolitions expert)
10. **Shoal** (rigger/biodrone specialist)



The rest are deep green ecologists, the **genocidals** who were attracted to the terrorist organization when it started branching out in its early days.

Deep ecology takes a more holistic view of the world human beings live in and does not subscribe to an anthropocentric view of environmentalism. Some currents of the ideology view modern industrial society with all its consumer waste and mass production as the prime threat and aim for society to return to a more primitive state (so called **eco-nihilists** or **eco-primitives**). Hence, they plan to actively demolish society, dismantle authority, and instigate conflict and civil war/unrest.

Other are truly **eco-fascist** in nature. True genocidals advocate active human population control. They support the notion of the Georgia Guidestones, to “maintain humanity under 500,000,000 in perpetual balance with nature.” They view overpopulation as a cancer to the Gaia-sphere that is the cause of resource depletion and degradation of the environment

- They are not wrong. We all know what decades of social desolation can do to astral space, and how it can build mana ebbs and flows. Every metroplex has its desolated, highly populated areas where the manosphere is polluted with poverty, misery, abuse, addiction, anger, loathing, and Zukunftsangst, pulling spirits and humans alike into a downward spiral. Data indicates that despite magic and the advances of technology, the planet cannot sustain an ever-increasing populace, even if metahumanity would be more eco-conscious and have better recycling systems. In truth, the powers-that-be don't want the system to change. Hence, corporations are mining asteroids, colonizing the solar system, and terraforming Mars to sustain the status quo rather than fixing the problems here on Earth. Maybe the system really does require a restart.
- Ethernaut
- This is a bleak road you're taking there. It's very easy to blame overpopulation on the quick gestation cycle and number of offspring of orks rather than poverty, reduced mortality rate, better medical facilities, and lack of education. You won't break the cycle by slaughtering the SINless and the hopeless who live on the streets, the urban ghettos, the shanty towns, favelas, or walled cities around the world. The Guidestones are eco-fascist or elite supremacist ideologies to justify culling those unfit in the eyes of the chosen few who will continue to remain in power.
- Goat Foot

Unfortunately, those ideologies tend to draw meta-racist or ethno-racist supporters who have infected GreenWar like a parasite since Goblinization. It is also often the cause of internal dissent and infighting within the organization. These are also the most dangerous parts of the organization, which don't shy away from acts of pure bioterror-

ism in an attempt to bring about a pandemic that will “cleanse” the planet.

## GROUP STRUCTURE: RABID PACKS

Contrary to most organizations that work in a clandestine cell structure (where cells knowing nothing about other cells in their network for full deniability), GreenWar works mostly in an organized network structure with a central and local leadership.

- While true, there are a few individuals who are too sociopathic or misanthropic to play well with others. They work better on their own.
- Rappacini
- Speaking from experience, eh?
- Hard Exit

Operational cells (often called raid or strike cells) of four to six eco-warriors form a local or regional network and answer to regional or continental leaders. Strike cells are usually self-sustainable in their operations, meaning they usually consist of a full team of experts not unlike shadowrunners—decker/technomancers, (drone) riggers, gun-runners/tanks, demolitions experts, faces/demagogues, adepts/mages/eco-shamans (often initiated)—which can make it difficult for law enforcement to keep them apart. Given their dark green agenda, Awakened members are more frequent than in any other terrorist organization.

- They have some pretty rad deckers and technomancers as well, using Globewatch and other eco-motivated hacktivists to shanghai them into the cause.
- Chainmaker

While the cells receive funds/resources from their local cell leader who oversees operation within a region, cells frequently employ the shadow economies for gear and information. In the past, every cell selected their targets independently, but this seems to have changed to some degree in the past decade, with cells now being networked for larger operations.

- Rumor has it this was only achieved after an otaku-turned-technomancer called Fibonacci following a strange paragon she calls the **Lifeplan** or **Architecture of Life** joined GreenWar leadership in the '70s.
- Rappacini

Eco-warriors (or genocidals) are usually groomed from green direct-action groups based on their skills and susceptibility (or openness) for GW doctrine and self-sacrifice.



- › GreenWar always had eloquent and charming recruiters who know how pick targets and what to say to bring someone into or close to the organization. Some of the long-time operatives support the organization in their older age by acting as Mr. Johnson or influencing and training the next generations.
- › Rappacini

If they have not already received it by being part of a militant group, candidates are subjected to extensive paramilitary training (in areas such as firearms, IEDs, armed and unarmed hand-to-hand combat, small unit tactics, Matrix security, and electronics) and indoctrination in one of GW's many training camps. These camps are usually located in remote, rural areas such as forests or mountains and sometimes are mobile. Well-hidden from aerial surveillance by natural canopy, natural structures (such as caves and underground portions), modern camouflage technology, or magical means, they are very difficult to find or detect, even by satellite searches.

## GREENWAR LEADERSHIP

It has long been a rumor that GreenWar receives orders from somewhere in the Allied German States, but it is just that—a rumor. While there is a global leadership, it interacts in a decentralized fashion via secure Matrix VPNs or astral gatherings (given that the majority are Awakened). Since there has always been major infighting among the upper echelons, especially between the different factions, it prevented a globally aligned strategy—thank ghost.

- › No surprise there. Imagine a bunch of alpha extremists and non-humans with large egos and Messiah complexes, each of them knowing best how to ensure the planet's survival.
- › Goat Foot

Hence, the global leadership empowers individual leaders to act independently within their geographic area (NorthAm, LatAm, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia) and choose their immediate goals detached from other regions, aligning only with the minimum consensus, which is why each one has a different focus. GW leadership otherwise oversees logistics (including resource procurement), ensures counter-intelligence, and takes all measures to protect the group and the mission for which GW was formed.

- › I tried once to follow GW slush funds, but since these are donations from unknown sources and proxies that are distributed among accounts of a variety of left-wing policlubs and direct-action groups, black escrows, underworld laundering services, and “ethical/green” financial institutions, I gave up at some point. Rumor has it that GW leadership includes a former Malaysian Independent Bank crypto-banker known only as

Kaasu, who uses SOTA brain-enhancing biotech and cybernetics to manage the group's tangled web of finance.

- › Mr. Bonds
- › Did I mention that crowd-funded eco-terrorism exists?
- › Hok'ee

Based on Rappacini's latest information, global leadership encompasses twelve to fifteen leaders, though the numbers fluctuate. While very few are known by (code-)name, at least five are non-meta-human sapients (a dragon suspected to be the Sea Dragon, a sasquatch from the NAN, a saltwater merrow from the Great Barrier Reef, an African spirit, and an Angkor naga).

## MODUS OPERANDI: GREEN TARGETS

These are the types of eco-terrorism that GreenWar usually carries out.

### ANTI-CORPORATE ECO-TERRORISM

The primary targets of GreenWar operations are still megacorporate citizens and installations, especially of those corporations that exploit the Earth by mining or oil and gas extraction (Saeder-Krupp, Tanamyre Resources, Spinrad Global), are polluters (AGC, MCT), or mass producers (Ares, Shiawase). Tactics involve bombings of all kinds, chemical warfare (use of ricin and other poison gases), killings, demolition of office buildings (while people are still inside), using hacks to turn drones and automated guns against their owners, and other atrocities.

- › Such as the Moscow Casket Attack of '75, where a cell of Russian and Yakut GW eco-warriors locked all Z-IC employees into their own arcology and abused the arc's security and infrastructure technology—such as environmental systems (water reprocessing, air conditioning, and ventilation—until they had killed all inhabitants.
- › Balladeer
- › While the aim of GW attacks is to orchestrate public punishments, the organization has realized that “penance” through kidnapping executives for ransom payments can be a lucrative business. And mutilated body parts are easily replaceable in this day and age, especially for the corporate elite.
- › Hok'ee

### AGROTERRORISM

Agroterrorism is the deliberate introduction of a pathogen either against crops or livestock or into the food chain to undermine socioeconomic stability and/or generate fear. You might be surprised to how vulnerable agricultural and



food industries are to this type of terrorism. Most proprietary seeds and livestock these days (used mostly in drone-automated mass-farming facilities) originate from few megacorporations that have divided the markets among themselves: Meridional Agronomics, Aztechnology, AG Chemie, Yakashima, and Shiawase Biofood. Our life has become so dependent on monocultures (soy, rice, wheat, mycoprotein, etc.) that infecting any of those with an engineered airborne plant virus could lead to a food crisis of unseen proportions. Given that such pathogens are not easy to create and crops are being made hyper-resistant, GW often settles for the next best thing, i.e., the destruction or electronic subversion of mass-farming installations. Think Borinquen, but not as big.

- ▶ Like the recent hack of an AGC tank meat installation by the GreenWar decker known as Tiefgrün (Deep Green) in Wuppertal. Not only were the few on-site personnel killed by subverted drones, but Tiefgrün introduced heavy metals into the meat structure. Tons of subsequently produced convenience foods had to be recalled, costing AGC a fortune (public shitstorm and casualties by poisoning aside).
- ▶ Rappacini

## BIOTERRORISM

Unlike agroterrorism, bioterrorism exclusively targets metahumans through the use of pathogens such as smallpox, VITAS strains, gamma anthrax, or ebola plus. Most GW-engineered outbreaks, which have taken place in corporate offices or installations thus far, could be contained through quarantine, desperate measures (executions), or because vaccines and prop-

er treatments were easily available. So far, no home-grown virus has been encountered, though there is rumormongering among gene-hackers that GW is working on a pandemic using ethnic or metahuman biomarkers.

## MARINE ECOTERRORISM

Marine ecoterrorism usually occurs on and below sea. Like SOS, GreenWar owns a fleet of heavily armed ships that travel the seas to raid and sink the cargo of automated corporate freighters, high society cruise liners, and critter- and animal-hunting ships as eco-pirates. GreenWar members on board these ships are well-trained for underwater operations and have the gear to do serious damage to rigs and even underwater aquadomes used for blue biotechnology.

- ▶ GW ships like the **Massive** or **Abyss** have attacked corporate port installations, instigated small tsunamis, and used critter swarms to attack coastal cities, especially around the African subcontinent and the Caribbean Free League. Sometimes they work in unison with cyberpirates.
- ▶ Kane

GreenWar stands out compared to other terrorist organizations is not only for their frequent use of magic (including seizing power sites for great spirit conjurations), but also for their use of creative out-of-the-box tactics and strange weaponry.

- ▶ To elaborate on this, they are known to use critters for their attacks, such hell hounds or cerberus hounds, juggernauts to ram armored trucks, meistersingers or leviathans to sink whalers or attack corporate freighters, rockworms to penetrate reinforced walls, and even proteans to contaminate sewage treatment and recycling plants. Most of these are controlled directly by spells or alchemical preparations, but some are trained by paracritter experts and can follow simple commands.
- ▶ G-Nome
- ▶ Some of these GW devices are the dreams of weapon fetishists. Acid throwers, spore and BAD grenades, pathogen and poison IEDs, hyperallergic sludge foams, toxin-coated bullets, aerosol explosives, you name it. Most of them are custom products, many are the designs of Sören Virkki, a Norwegian dwarf known by his call sign Wieland (after the weapon smith of germanic myth).
- ▶ Zhaganaash
- ▶ Some of these eco-warriors also have elaborate kill-switch devices aimed to cause further fatalities should members be captured. Not all go through with it, though, despite their lunatic doctrine.
- ▶ Hard Exit

Although GreenWar is frequently at odds with shadowrunners who are hired by their enemies to

## FLASHPOINT: LOGOS

### // ADDED BY ECOTOPE

Logos is a splinter cell of GreenWar composed primarily of Awakened members. Since its founding, Logos has been hunting for certain magical relics imbued with a very old and primal magic in an attempt to activate Gaia's "immune system" to fight the human infection and other threats to her health. Operating in a cell structure similar to GreenWar but lacking the numbers, they frequently employ runners and other proxies for their global operations. Operations are funded by talislegging activities and fencing artifacts that they acquired but do not need. In recent years, they also started reaching out to (or going after) entities who still practice the very same magic. They have taken a particular interest in the animist tradition of the Black Forest troll shamans (taught to them by the great dragon Kaltenstein), which allegedly enabled them to cause the eruption of dormant volcanoes in the Eifel region in the '40s, forcing the German government to grant equal rights to all metahumans.



throw a monkey wrench into a planned terrorist attack, shut down military training camps, or find moles within corporations or organizations, GW also has many uses for the shadows. While they rarely find individuals with the moral flexibility to carry out terrorist actions for them, GreenWar uses runners to prepare attacks by gathering intel on target locations (corp execs, research installations, security procedures, and so on), making ecotage runs, stealing (data, pathogens, tech, weapons) or bagging and tagging an enemy of Mother Nature.

## TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT: THE SECOND WAVE

Coming back to the obvious question: What prompted GreenWar to become so active all over the globe? This has been a source of speculation and debates on environmentalist Matrix boards. Many believe that the consolidation of corporate power—as evidenced by the Megacorporate Audit, which gave birth to even bigger conglomerates that are more difficult to take down—could be a factor. Recent events in Detroit also showed that megacorporations and their machinations are still among the biggest threats to the planet and society.

More esoteric theories speculate that events were put in motion when Winternight detonated nuclear warheads in deep caves and hidden mine-shafts near major tectonic faults prior to Crash 2.0 ... and nothing happened.

- Ah. The mystery why large-scale nuclear detonations are no longer possible and often show weird interactions with the gaia-sphere. These are the strange aspects of our world that keep me up at night.
- Plan 9
- Let's throw in some further mysteries, shall we? The emergence of the Deep Lacuna in 2069, the Yellowstone Incident of 2078 that exposed the Seelie Court, the Sixth World Tarot heralding future events, the UCAS III Corps disappearance in 2080. Ours is a fucked-up world. Not everything is connected or serves a greater scheme. That's tinfoil-head talk.
- Bull

Whatever the catalyst may have been, there is fear that what we have seen so far from GreenWar in the '70s may only be the first wave, and the second wave is approaching.

To get an idea where they may strike next, I reached out to my associates to compile what little intel is available on concerted operations at the moment.

## NORTH AMERICA

- This NAN/GreenWar threat report was recently leaked to me by some shadow associates of mine, who pulled this (and other information) from Saeder-Krupp in Kitimat on behalf of a mysterious benefactor.
- Hok'ee

### // SAEDER-KRUPP PRIME INTELLIGENCE THREAT REPORT - #GREENWAR #NAN (05.13.80) //

Based on our recent intelligence threat assessment, there are two hot spots for GreenWar activities in the larger North American sphere that may further destabilize the continent geopolitically (beyond the recent Blackout) and may hamper our operations here.

It has always been suspected that North American GreenWar leadership originates from within the Native American Nations (NAN), most likely the Algonkian-Manitou Council or the Athabaskan Council. Recently, however, it seems that the NAN as a whole has become a focal point—or should I say target—of a wider GreenWar operation. This operation is led by a GreenWar leader called **Papa'xes** (the woodpecker of Native American legend) who according to our sources may even be close to (or part of) the Sovereign Tribal Council.

Given the current intelligence data, this operation seems to spread across multiple, if not all, NAN states, including the Trans-Polar Aleut Nation, which had not participated in the Sovereign Tribal Council since the '50s, and the Tsimshian Nation (lately a protectorate under the Salish-Shidhe Council), which left the NAN in 2037.

Based on the digital chatter, high-ranking eco-warriors under the avenger bear shaman **Wroth** (a female ork) have secretly met with the **Haida National Front** and Tsimshian eco-groups to barter a truce between the opposing tribes to put an end to inter-tribal prejudice. GreenWar has offered their support (training, resources, armed forces, and attacks) should the Tsimshian people rise up against their “oppressors” from the Salish-Shidhe Council. As the SSC does not seem to be willing to return the protectorate's power to the Tsimshian tribal council (this was originally a temporary solution, but it has lasted for more than fifteen years now), there has been a growing resistance and hatred against SSC governance among the Tsimshian tribes.

- Even more, the SSC has tried to erode our Haida and Tsimshian tribal culture with the aid of Horizon's Charisma Associates, which is against everything the NAN stands for—the preservation of our traditions!
- Hok'ee

GreenWar apparently wants to capitalize on the already-strained situation by lighting a match to





the powder keg and instigating a further escalation of the conflict.

- That may not be the only agitation front that the SSC may need to deal with in the future. Seattle has become a recent hotbed for eco-radicals that followed the Sea Dragon when she moved here. Given the Sea Dragon's own history of marine ecoterrorism, she is likely well acquainted with GreenWar if not even more actively involved in its leadership and operations. She may have even taken SIRRURG's place. It would not surprise me if her proxies are using Tacoma harbor operations and runners to smuggle some of the most wanted eco-terrorists into our city under the radar to support her own machinations.
- SEAtac Sweetie
- On that point, Emerald grapevine says that Shua Chases-the-Depth recently set up shop with a bunch eco-warrior squads in Seattle, hiring runners primarily for recon missions along the West Coast (including the Tír), Denver, and the surrounding NAN states (Sioux and Pueblo). Chases-the-Depth is a Sugpiaq ice shaman from Trans-Polar Aleut who follows a twisted version of Seal. She is also a wanted GreenWar terrorist for the Eureka Massacre of 2056, in which hundreds of people were butchered during an attack on the S-K research base and settlement in Eureka in the Nunavut territory. Be careful with that one. She is a bitchy old hag and not to be trusted. And if she has come out of her hiding place in the TPAN, something big is cooking.
- Lyran

Tsimshian does not seem to be the only avenue for GreenWar to destabilize the NAN, if that is indeed their larger goal here. Many NAN citizens (especially those from northern states such as the AMC, the AC, and the TPAN) believe that the "rich councils," referring to the Pueblo Corporate Council, the SCC, and the Sioux Nation, have strayed too far from their native tribal culture. Instead of living eco-consciously in balance with the Earth and its spirits, they have adopted the "cash-hungry ways of the Anglos." Thus, several NAN militias such as the **First Feathers** have started to focus their operations more inward in an attempt to commemorate the Sovereign American Indian Movement (SAIM) and fix the broken pieces of the NAN, even if it means using violence against their own brethren, something from which the militias have abstained in the past. GreenWar seems to be involved here as well, pouring oil into the fire and siding with the militias on attacks against "eco-hostile" NAN corporations such as AthOil (oil and gas), Gaetronics (nuclear energy), Mesametric (mining drones) and the Windriver Corporation (mass hydroponic farming). We suggest observing the situation for now and not intervening. More data is needed to complete predictions and determine which outcome will provide the greatest benefit for our operations in the long run.



- The radicalization of these militias is truly worrisome. The NAN isn't perfect for sure, but if that divide and poisoning by GreenWar continues, it could end in a civil war that would tear the NAN apart. We don't want another Az-Am War. And we don't need another corrupting influence like the Crying Masks.
- Lyan
- Or maybe it is time to turn our back on megacorporate capitalism and live in peace with the land, as Daniel Howling Coyote envisioned.
- Hok'ee

Interestingly, we received similar news from our field office in Honolulu in the Kingdom of Hawai'i. According to our sources, a number of GW cells have arrived on the island over the past months coming from California, New Zealand, and Japan. As a first step, they set up paramilitary camps somewhere in the Awakened Hawai'ian tropical rainforest, most likely on Kauai and Oahu.

Even before Naheka assumed more direct political control of the kingdom after the retirement of King Kamehameha V and the inauguration of **Queen Lili'uokalani II** as his devoted puppet in the late '70s, the Army for the Liberation of Hawai'i (ALOHA) had effectively disappeared from the public. Naheka, who subverted ALOHA decades ago when he came to Hawai'i on behalf of Ryo-myō, eventually had better uses for a group of experienced terrorists to do his bidding in expanding his **Naheka-rengo**.

In 2080, however, several of Naheka's local lieutenants (former ALOHA, Yakuza thugs, politicians, influential business men), were assaulted by 'Aumakua (guardian spirits) and marked by AR transmitters broadcasting the *Kanaka Maoli*—the flag of the Native Hawaiians covered with an animated "*haka*" (Hawaiian *ha'a*) face. Shortly after, the **Hawaiian Awakened Alliance** (HA'A) announced its existence.

- In many ways, the HA'A is a successor to ALOHA, but less racist and—for the moment—less radical. While it has many descendants of Polynesian Hawai'ians, it has as many other "true people" (which **kanaka maoli** can also mean), people of Asian or Anglo ancestry who have lived in the islands all their lives, many of whom are Awakened or grew up in tribal or autonomist communes. Living as one with the land and in harmony with the **aina** (Mother Earth), HA'A simply wishes to rid Hawai'i from corporate, underworld, and foreign political influences that have damaged the island's ecosystem and exploited the Hawai'ian aloha spirit for decades.
- Traveler Jones
- Most importantly, they view Naheka as **haole** (a derogatory term for non-islander), seeing through his act as "a friend of the Hawaiian people."
- Baka Dabora

- And they made a splash by pissing off a dragon. I gotta admit that the frag-heads have pretz.
- Kane

With this provocation, it put the HA'A directly on the radar of the feathered serpent. This is where we believe GreenWar comes in. Apparently, a deal was made between the leadership of the HA'A and GreenWar to aid them in turning the dragon-controlled kingdom into a radical ecological democracy and form a pan-Polynesian network of states that follows the example of the NAN as it was originally conceptualized. It is therefore likely that the unholy alliance, including imported shadow-runners, will be further targeting Neheka's operations in the kingdom and the Yakuza to weaken the feathered serpent. The Honolulu field office has been instructed to observe and interfere only if needed until assets have been dispatched from Neu-Essen. Having Naheka in debt to the master would be a beneficial development for our operations in the Pacific region and Japan.

- If rumors are true, the deal was brokered by known eco-activist Ano Kaleikini, a **koholo kahuna** (whale shaman) who is infamous for aggressive raids on Hawai'ian cruise ships that continue to damage marine life, Awakened and otherwise.
- Ecotope
- By "aggressive," you mean he sinks the ships with all the tourists onboard. That guy has always been deep in the greens and very close to GW, using whales and other paracritters that lurk in the deep sea of the Pacific to bring these liners down. He does not care whether the tourists and honeymooners make it to the tenders, or whether they drown or are devoured by predatory critters.
- Sounder
- From what my smuggler pals have told me, European runners recently brought in military equipment for GW that was originally developed by Swiss mercenary leader Maximilian Grätzendorffer, a dragon hunter, whose company managed to bring down one of Alamais' clutch in the Dinari mountains in Serbia during the dragon civil war. I would say they are aiming directly at the head of the snake—er, feathered serpent.
- Traveler Jones
- So far, this tribal operation seems to be quite tame for GW, missing the brutal ruthlessness I would have expected. So far. I would not be surprised, though, if what GreenWar is ultimately interested in are the Native American power sites in the different NAN states. Remember what Winternight did at the peak of their Ragnarok efforts. Making friends with certain NAN tribes or throwing the NAN into disarray could serve the same endgame as getting access to the sites. The same might be true for Hawai'i, whose power sites have been involved in the past in metaplanar incidents such as the one at the House of the Sun in the '50s. Imagine what havoc GW would be able to wreak



with their deep-green corrupted magic if they got access to that amount of mana.

- › Magister
- › To fight what has already breached reality.
- › Plan 9-10

## EUROPE

POSTED BY: ECOTOPE

Europe has always been home to many political radicals on both the left and the right sides of the spectrum, keeping Euro-corporate and national police forces on their toes to counter terrorist strikes before they occur.

- › Especially with Europe being home to so many top-ranking intelligence services. With the British Oversight Office, the German Bundesamt für Innere Sicherheit (BIS), the French DGSE (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure), and the Russian UGB/GRU, as well as spy corps such as S-K Prime, Aegis Cognito (Spin Global), Argus (Trikon AG), and Infolio (Index-AXA), it is next to impossible for terrorists to stay fully under the radar of these spooks. There may actually be plenty of information on GreenWar terrorists and cell profiles, maybe even the leadership, hidden in the offline networks of these corps under virtual glaciers of IC. What they choose to do with it and how to turn this into monetary capital or political leverage is an absolute different story.
- › Fianchetto

Likely for the same reason, GreenWar refrained from stepping too much into the spotlight and used green direct-action groups more than once as patsies for their own attacks.

The '60s and '70s, however, saw a new force that rose to power silently but steadily in Europe within the toxic zones that metahumanity had created even before the Awakening: toxic magic.

Toxic magicians are Awakened, whose magic (and sanity) have become tainted by environmental blight or personal trauma. Their personalities and belief systems have been so damaged that they embrace the foulest of forces. The most common toxic magicians are Poisoners, who see themselves of as avatars of new "elements" such as pollutants (radioactivity, smog, sludge, acid), mutagens (chemicals, radiation, cancer), waste (sewage, garbage, plastics), or pathogens (virulent and bacterial diseases). In the past, it was believed that toxic magicians such as Poisoners were rare anomalies. However, already in the '70s it became evident that toxic mentor spirits and toxic metaplanes must exist.

- › "Exist" is a strong word, given that nobody fully understands what these entities we academically call "mentor spirits" (corrupted or uncorrupted) really are. While many have claimed to communicate with them, nobody has solved the spiritual

chicken and egg problem, yet. Did the mentor spirits exist before the Awakened, or did they manifest out of the belief systems of the Awakened? While there aren't many who are stupid enough to study toxic magic, those lunatics who do mapped at least a dozen of similar toxic "entities" indicating that there may be more poisoners than originally assumed.

- › Ethernaut

Most poisoners are loners and tend not to organize in larger groups. Not in Europe. Europe has at least one if not more toxic groups that are carefully expanding their influence. The most dreaded are the **Disciples of the Cleansing Fire**. Originally believed to be a cult of glow-punks worshipping the great dragon Feuerschwinge in the Saar Special Administrative Zone (SOX), this turned out to be just an elaborate ruse to instigate fear. Based on intel that runners have extracted from the SOX on behalf of the great dragon Kaltenstein, it seems to be more likely that the radioactive cult (comprising many poisoners and toxic adepts) worships an entity, a toxic incarnation of radiation, the *Cleansing Fire*, that often takes the form of a blazing dragon but is not, in fact, Feuerschwinge.

- › I would not be so sure of that. Feuerschwinge crashed into the SOX after being shot down with an experimental anti-dragon weapon by the Bundeswehr shortly after her Awakening, but we still don't know what truly happened to her afterward—whether she died or was taken into megacorporate custody, as many DIVE members believe. Whatever the disciples are worshipping could still be her radioactively corrupted astral form or an echo that manifested when she died and gave birth to something we have yet to understand. What I have heard is that the cult leader, Ignifera, knows things. About Feuerschwinge and her hoard. Powerful magical items have surfaced in the SOX over the years. Where did they come from, if not from the great dragon? That is why Logos has funded runs into the SOX to extract and wrestle these draconic artifacts from the hands of the cult.
- › Plan 9

The cult does not restrict their operations to the SOX any more, though. Using a front, a semi-religious new-age sect called **der Weg der Reinheit** (the Way of Purity), they have been extending their presence in multiple areas in the Allied German States, Switzerland, and France. There is further evidence that they have subverted society in other ways, possibly including the underworld.

- › Way of Purity is using old-school mind control and brainwashing techniques successfully employed by many religious zealots to recruit members who have influence, assets, or strategic positions within corporations or social circles.
- › Fianchetto

Another group that recently surfaced in countries that border the toxic North Sea (AGS, Scan-



dinavian Union, Iceland, UK) calls themselves the **Dark Tides** (or *das Dunkle Watt* in German, though the translation is not fully accurate). Dark Tides seems to be composed of toxic water and mud shamans that worship a sea snake (or leviathan?) entity of the sea, which they treat as an incarnation of *Jörmungandr*. From what I have heard, they have already infested several coastal areas and abandoned oilrigs in the North Sea.

- I've heard wild druids in the UK say that the Dark Tides seem to be in league with things that represent themselves as the Old Gods.
- Chainmaker

Poisoners would seem to be the embodiment of what GreenWar is trying to fight, as they revel in toxic zones, engineer eco-disasters, and pursue the ecocide or corruption of Gaia. Ironically, though, GreenWar has their own fair share of toxic magicians, including the revenge-driven avengers. In a way, they are opposite sides of the same toxic coin. When they clash, it always results in mass casualties and collateral damage.

As these above-mentioned poisoner groups are expanding their sphere of influence, likely with the aim of creating new polluted zones, a collision of these groups somewhere in Europe seems to be inevitable. There are rumors among green circles that GreenWar is currently using Hamburg as a hub for reconnaissance missions, sending runners into toxic zones such as the SOX, the North Sea and its port sprawls, Jutland, the Polish Mazury-Białowieża Containment Area, and the Haparanda Anomaly Zone in Finland to gather intel on major toxic activities. To what end remains to be seen.

- Known GW terrorist and initiated toxic druid Myriam Hergheim (known under several noms de guerre such as Ceridwen or Aconite) acts as the organization's Schmidt for most of these operations. Based on her eco-terrorist rap sheet, she ranks high among Europe's most wanted, and AG Chemie put a bounty on her head after she managed to escape the high-security prison island in Hamburg during Crash 2.0. Hergheim is charismatic recruiter and leads the Hamburg network of GW cells.
- Red Anya
- Her father, also a druid and an eco-terrorist, has always been suspected of being a founding member of GreenWar, but he died for the cause a long time ago. Being an eco-terrorist and GW devotee is a family tradition for the Hergheims, which does not only include Myriam but also her sister Levke, as well as cousins, aunts, and uncles. I would not be surprised if she is closer to the local GW leadership than everyone thinks.
- Rappacini
- Sometimes you need monsters to fight monsters.
- Balladeer

## LATIN AMERICA

POSTED BY: GLASSWALKER

Ecotope asked me to provide an update from the Latin American front. After the Az-Am War, GreenWar forces (those who survived) have shrunk dramatically and retreated to Amazonia. The only thing I've heard for sure is that they've spent the last few years re-growing their numbers by recruiting new members from all over Latin America. Beyond that, most of the info-bits that are available are rumormongering and conspiracy theories. If you believe the local shadows, the Latin American GreenWar leadership now works closely with the **Primeira Vaga** (First Wave), to the point that it is difficult to determine where GW ends and the Primeira Vaga begins and who is pulling whose strings.

- In truth, they were two peas in the same pod even before Primeira Vaga got somehow intertwined with the creation of tempo in the '70s.
- Marcos
- There are persistent rumors that Primeira Vaga is run by a cabal of primal plant spirits or arboreals that originated from deep in the Amazonian jungle. They are said to have used the bio-Awakened drug, temp, to turn those metahumans who became addicted to it into "sleepers" by a dream pact that remained active even after they got clean. Imagine all these metahuman sleepers in all levels of society, in every sprawl on the earth, ten years after their addiction, still waiting to be called into service again. Or maybe they are already being used?
- Plan 9-10

Joint GW/PV forces across LatAm are currently led by the infamous avenger shaman **César da Silva**, and if my sources are correct, GW recently liberated former Aztlan Otontin warrior turned eco-terrorist and jaguar shapeshifter **Alejandro Tepevolloti** from an Aztlan prison before he could be executed. Both are currently training the next generation of eco-terrorists in Amazonian and Paraguayan camps. To what end is anyone's guess.

- They could be targeting the favelas of Metrópole or Caracas for all we know. They have tried before to reduce over-population by drastic means. Remember what happened to the Luanda slum in Angola six years ago.
- Clarion
- I highly doubt that. Sources tell me that GreenWar is spending serious cash to have expensive, high-grade military gear smuggled into Latin America. This looks more as if they are gearing up for war, not bioterrorism. I wonder, though, where the money for these operations comes from.
- Picador



- My best bet would be Hualpa. Since he signed the Amazonian capitulation at the end of the Az-Am War, the Great Feathered Snake has mysteriously withdrawn as head of state and not been seen since. That public defeat did not sit well with him (dragon ego and all). Maybe the eco-terrorist forces are part of Hualpa's schemes to pay the Azzies back in kind in the future. Maybe not in Aztlan, but there are multiple countries in LatAm that are backed by the Azzies, such as Argentina. Maybe this is Hualpa playing a new long game.
- Marcos
- According to DIVE and other draconic sources, it is an open secret that Sirurg was declared guilty for his ruthless actions against metahumanity in the Az-Am War and imprisoned by his fellow great dragons as punishment. How long, nobody knows, but I imagine it will take some centuries to cool down the dragon's rage and hate. And I guess nobody wants to find out what happens if someone would manage to break him out early.
- Plan 9-10

## REST OF THE WORLD

POSTED BY: SHOHOJ

Finding information on GreenWar's global operations beyond those regions covered by my predecessors is quite difficult, as it is much easier for GreenWar to hide within most of these regions unless they make the headlines. However, using my reach across Africa and Australasia, I was able to identify a few hot spots of organized GreenWar activity.

**Africa:** Most operations around the African subcontinent actually occur at sea, with GreenWar fleets raiding corporate freighters or attacking port installations along the coast, such as those near Lagos. GreenWar made recent news flashes with multiple concerted bombings of corporate installations within the Corporate Free City of Sekondi. The city has always been anathema to GreenWar, mainly due to the weapons trade by Ares Arms that sustains many of the regional warlords in power, who exploit the land for their own personal gain. Sekondi is also a logistics hub for moving illegal wildlife goods (animal fur/skin, ivory tusk, teslas, and even live animals) to other continents.

- From what my sources have told me, GreenWar is looking to eradicate the Asondo Network, an international wildlife trafficking syndicate whose reach extends to Southeast-Asia. Since the Asondo Network is a part of the Pan-African Landola Ghost Cartel, GW may be out of their depth here, as Landola has a similar ruthless reputation as the ecoterrorist organization, using child soldiers as killers or suicide bombers.
- Am-mut

**Pan-Asia:** Given that Pan-Asia has some of the world's most populous countries, such as India, the Chinese splinter states, and Southeast Asia, it is not surprising that many GreenWar operations often have a deep ecology agenda. While I haven't heard of any major operation beyond the usual, the GreenWar terrorist known as **Pasteur**, a presumably French genehacker known for his eco-bioterrorist agenda, has recently been spotted in Rangoon and Jakarta. Given the environment for unregulated genetic engineering in those regions (mostly used for gene-editing awakened flora for BADs and gene-optimized opiates but also weaponized paracritters), GreenWar may be funding some operations and black labs with the intent to strike at densely populated sprawls such as Delhi, Kolkata, Beijing, Shanghai, or Japanese metroplexes where any pandemic would lead to mass casualties.

- Pasteur is actually Swiss-French and an ork with a brilliant mind who has suffered from metahuman segregation and racial prejudice all his (academic) life. He hates humans and his genehacking work aims to tip the scales in favor of metahumans, with the human race being reduced to a minority of the overall metahuman population.
- Rappacini

**Australia/Oceania:** Given New Zealand's (or as the native Maori call it, Aotearoa's) environmentalist government and agenda, it has always been a safe haven for GreenWar terrorists and operations in this region. In turn, GreenWar handled some dirty work for the government (especially corporate lobbyist assassinations), enabling them to keep their hands clean. This is one reason why NZ has not yet succumbed to megacorporate influence.

- Several reporters who tried to bring this to light (on behalf of megacorporate media) ended up violently executed to send a clear message to leave NZ the frag alone.
- Sunshine

The focus of their activities Down Under primarily lies on Australia, where GreenWar has been waging a war for years against Australian AA conglomerate Tanamyre Resources and other companies exploiting Australian resources on land and sea, such as S-K and Shiawase Atomics, and Korea's Eastern Tiger Corporation.

- The mining sector is one of the major contributors to the economy of Australia. The country has large reserves of metals (including silver and gold), rare elements, coal, uranium, diamonds, opal, as well true elements and Awakened minerals, some of which are the largest deposits in the world, probably due to magical nature of the continent and its mana storms.
- Rockhound



GreenWar has sided with Aborigine activists in the past to destroy corporate installations in the Outback, but the two groups recently had a falling out, and the Aborigine elders refuse to put up with GreenWar's radical plans any longer. This strangely coincides with the emergence of a new GW leader (dubbed **Revenant**) who has been aligning the operations of the different cells.

- > Based on S-K intelligence reports, Revenant is actually former S-K division head Edwin Hauser, who wandered into the Outback in the '60s and was never seen again.
- > Cosmo
- > I contacted one of my suppliers Down Under and got some intel. The Koradji shamans call him **Yapa-ngarnu** (literally "human-eating" or "cannibal") and see him as an emissary of the angry spirits of the Dreamtime, those who have gone mad and cannot be reasoned with any longer. They believe that they have sent him back to take the fight to the metroplexes and conjure the power of the manastorms to wipe those cities out.
- > Lyrán

## GAME INFORMATION

### GREENWAR NPCS

#### GREENWAR ECO-WARRIOR

(NON-AWAKENED, PROFESSIONAL RATING 5)

Eco-warriors are primarily non-Awakened fighters who see themselves as champions or protectors of Gaia. Following radical GreenWar ideology, they are often greatly modified, leaving their humanity behind for the benefit of the planet. Eco-warriors often wear IED vests that are connected to a biomonitor or kill switch.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
5	5(7)	5(7)	3	3	2	4	2	4	1.0
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE					
11	11/3	A1, I4	11	10/15/+1					

**Skills:** Athletics 4 (Throwing +2), Close Combat 4 (Unarmed Combat +2), Engineering 4 (Demolitions +2), Electronics 3, Exotic Weapons (Acid Thrower) 5, Firearms 5, Perception 5, Stealth 3

**Augmentations:** Bone lacing (titanium), cybereyes (rating 3, w/ flare compensation, image link, smartlink, vision enhancement, vision magnification), damage compensator 3, muscle toner 2, platelet factory, tracheal filter 3, wired reflexes 2

**Gear:** Armor jacket (IED modified)\*, biomonitor/killswitch\*, explosive package (rating 10), Erika Elite commlink (DR 4)

**Weapons:**

Mimung [Exotic (Acid Thrower), DV 3P, SS, 14/10/6/-/-, 4 (m)]  
 FN HAR [Rifle, DV 5P, SA/BF/FA, 3/11/10/6/1, 35(c), w/ gas vent, laser marker, standard ammunition]  
 Survival knife [Blade, DV 3P, 8/2\*/-/-/-]  
 Chemical or incendiary grenade [Grenade, DV 6P/4P/2P, 15m]

\*If killed, this will trigger as an explosion (treat as a fragmentation grenade, p. 236, SR6; eco-warriors can also trigger these detonations wirelessly with a minor action (unused acid tanks or grenades may increase or aggravate damage).

#### GREENWAR HUNTER ADEPT

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 5)

GreenWar hunter adepts are Awakened predators, trained to hunt down and punish those who participate in ecocide. Trained in a variety of outdoor skills, they are adept in a variety of tactics, from close combat to firearms to bomb making.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	ESS
5*	6(8)	5(7)	4	5	4	4	2	6	6
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE					
9	11/3	A1, I4	11	10/15/+1					

**Skills:** Athletics 4 (Throwing +2), Close Combat 5 (Blades +2), Engineering 2 (Demolitions +2), Firearms 4, Influence 2 (Intimidation +2), Outdoors 4, Perception 4, Stealth 4

**Adept Powers:** \*Attribute Boost (Body) 1, Enhanced Accuracy, Improved Physical Attribute (Agility) 2, Improved Reflexes 2, Improved Sense (Smell), Mystic Armor 2, Traceless Walk

**Gear:** Big Game Hunter armor (DR +4, w/ chemical protection 3), explosive package (rating 10) or thermite, Erika Elite commlink (DR 4), survival kit

**Weapons:**

FN HAR [Rifle, DV 5P, SA/BF/FA, 5/13/12/8/3, 35(c), w/ gas vent, laser marker, standard ammunition]  
 Survival knife [Blade, DV 3P, 10/4\*/-/-/-]  
 Hyperallergenic Grenade [Special, see below]  
 Spore Grenade [Special, see below]

#### GREENWAR RADICAL ECO-SHAMAN

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 5)

Radical eco-shamans are ready to exact revenge in the name of Mother Gaia. Though their ideals were originally peaceful, they are no longer pacifists. They will do whatever it takes to strike back at the people and corps they believe are destroying the planet, focusing particularly on their magic and conjured spirits.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	M	ESS
4	4	4	3	4	3	4	5	3	6	6
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE						
8	8/1	A1, I2	10	10/15/+1						

**Skills:** Astral 4, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Conjuring 5 (Summoning +2), Engineering 2, Firearms 2, Perception 5, Sorcery 5

**Spells:** Acid Stream, Agony, Animate Stone/Wood (choose one), Detect Life, Heal, Ice Storm, Mindlink, Shape Stone/Wood (choose one)

**Magical Tradition:** Toxic shaman, resist drain Willpower \$ + Charisma 4

**Initiate Level, Metamagics:** 1, centering

**Gear:** Armor jacket, Erika Elite commlink (DR 4), survival kit, reagents (10 drams)

**Weapons:**

Knife [Blade, DV 4P, 6/1\*/-/-/-, \*max range 20 meters]  
 Ares Light Fire 70 [Light Pistol, DV 2P, SA, 10/7/6/-/-, 16(c), w/ laser sight, silencer]



# SPECIAL GREENWAR WEAPONS

GreenWar is known for unique, self-invented weaponry, some of which are presented below. While each item has availability rating, these are usually quite difficult to get (even through black markets) unless characters have a contact in GreenWar or associated direct-action green groups at the appropriate Connection Rating.

## ACID THROWER 'MIMUNG'

Invented by the GreenWar weapon designer Wieland, the portable acid thrower (nicknamed Mimung, after the sword of German mythology) is based on early design for the Shiawase Blazer but was re-engineered using materials that withstand the highly corrosive chemical mixture from the tank, allowing for an efficient acid intake and high-pressure ejection through the spray nozzle. While extremely dangerous at short ranges, it lacks accuracy at longer ranges. Each tank can be used to make up to four attacks. Successful attacks from the Mimung are treated as Chemical damage (p. 109, SR6). The acid thrower is small enough that it can be mounted with a standard weapon mount. When swapping tanks on the fly, the tank must be replaced within one combat round to make the switch seamless.

**Gamemaster note:** The value of the Corrosive status (p. 52, SR6) should be adjusted appropriately to the situation, but the recommended baseline is 4.

TYPE	DV	MODE	ATTACK RATINGS	AMMO	AVAIL	COST
Exotic	3P	SS	14/10/6*/-/- (*maximum range 75 meters)	4(m)	5(I)	2,000¥

# SPORE AND HYPERALLERGENIC GRENADES

Both grenade types are versions of the gas grenade, releasing their payload as a cloud after detonation. That means they follow the same rules as gas grenades (p. 116, SR6).

## ASPHYXIA SPORES

Spores of this genetically modified giant puffball aggressively infest the lungs, making it difficult to breathe and speak.

- **Vector:** Inhalation
- **Speed:** 4 combat rounds
- **Duration:** (6 – Body) hours, minimum 1 hour
- **Power:** 10
- **Effect:** Dazed status, Fatigued II status, Muted status

## HYPERALLERGENIC

This mixture is a unique cocktail of biochemical cytokine release triggers (and other stimulants) that can cause anaphylactic shock even in targets without allergies. Those who have allergies are more susceptible to the effects, so if a character already possesses the Allergy quality (p. 75, SR6), increase the power of the toxin by 1 per severity level (mild, moderate, severe, extreme).

- **Vector:** Contact, Inhalation
- **Speed:** 1 Combat Round
- **Duration:** (6 – Body) x 10 minutes, minimum 5 minutes
- **Power:** 9
- **Effect:** Special\*

\*Treat this as if the character would have extreme allergies and is exposed to the allergen (see p. 74-75, SR6; take a –6 dice pool modifier to all actions and 1 box of unresisted Physical Damage for every 30 seconds of exposure to the allergen; cannot spend or gain Edge while exposed to the allergen).





# GREY CELL

## A NEW LINE OF DEFENSE

Hanna blinked and coughed as the mage-mask was ripped from her head.

She took a few seconds to get her bearings. The dis-rhythmic static from the mask's built-in speakers echoed in her pointed ears while a pungent smell of mildew quickly assaulted her nose. By all accounts, she was in an old community-center pool area.

"Easy, you knuckle-dragging motherfraggers!" she growled and spit back at her "escorts" while stray cotton-poly fibers flew from her lips. One of them, an ork with retro-style solid chrome eyes, just stared at her blankly and stowed the mask in his vest while the other, a human with glowing facial nano-tats, blew her a mocking kiss.

"Maybe next time, we do it rougher. For funzies, yeah?" he retorted and stuck out his tongue in a very vulgar display.

Hanna felt the magical energies within her surge, the mana collecting in her fingertips as a Powerbolt spell took shape in her mind.

"I would be careful with her, Richter," said a Germanic-accented voice. "I've seen Stiletto here explode people's heads for far less."

Hanna turned to see a figure walking up from an adjacent hallway, his footsteps echoing slightly. Hanna instantly recognized his trademark long-coat-over-black-turtleneck ensemble. Ignoring the two street samurai, she turned to face him.

"I don't answer to that name anymore, Gustav. Oh, and the quality of your help leaves a lot to be desired."

"I do not employ them for their subtlety. Or their manners. They are extremely competent at what I pay them to do," he replied.

Hanna just snorted. "Whatever. Let's get this over with."

Gustav got in close to her. "Such hostility."

Hanna stared daggers back at him. "You're fragging right. We made a deal long ago, practical-



ly signed in blood. I was supposed to be out, for good. And yet, here we are.”

“You didn’t have to agree to come here.”

“Really, you’re going to try to play that angle? First, you show up at one of my lectures, and then you threaten to expose my past to the university if I don’t help you. Some choice. You haven’t changed a bit, Gustav.”

“Ten years ago, you would have simply vaporized me with spell and been done with it. But I guess fifteen years in academia has made you soft.”

Hanna sneered and was about to let loose with a bolt of lightning, but suddenly felt two gun barrels pressing against the back of her head.

Gustav smiled at Hanna. “As I said, they are extremely competent at what I pay them to do.”

Hanna let out a long breath of surrender but kept her eyes locked with his.

“You’ve made your point. Again, can we just get on with this?”

“As you wish, but if I’m correct about what I have acquired, the potential payoff will no doubt make you realize that my minor intrusion into your new lifestyle will have been more than justified—even generous,” Gustav said as he motioned for Hanna to follow.

He led her into what was once an old locker room where the mildew-and-rot smell was even more offensive. In the middle of the room was a cargo container four meters long, one meter tall and wide guarded by another razorguy and girl, both packing high-end assault rifles with under-barrel shotguns.

But there no magical support of any kind, and while that made a certain amount of sense, it also raised several red flags for Hanna.

“We acquired what is in this crate several weeks ago from ... well, that’s not important” Gustav began. “What I need from you, dear Hanna is to identify the exact nature of its magical properties ... so that you can also help me assemble a list of potential buyers.”

Hanna felt her anger rise again. “I’m not a talismonger anymore. You could have gotten any number of magicians to do that.”

Gustav shrugged. “I tried. None were able. I figured with your expertise in experimental magical theory and application that you could succeed where others failed. And, I wager you also have a greater network within the magical academic community and the shadows, despite your absence.” He nodded to both Chrome Eyes and Glowing Tats, who quickly opened the container.

Inside was a large cylinder bracketed by two spheres and encased in a rectangular metal frame. A small control panel was located in the middle. Hanna had seen so-called “magical tech” before, and it was all bulldrek. But she knew what she had to do.

Even before she completely opened up her magical senses, she felt a low-level—for a lack of a

better description—radiating magical energy. And then she saw it, something inside the device was giving off an actual aura. But it was odd, as if it were fluctuating. She also recognized the aura as being mostly ... metahuman. But it also had something else she recognized, something not of this metaplane. She had to know more.

“Turn it on,” she said, her throat suddenly dry.

Gustav flipped a few switches and the device powered up. Even at its lower energy levels, Hanna could feel the raw, wild, and frighteningly dangerous power this device possessed.

“This is ... it’s actually weakening the barrier between astral and ... ugh ...” She leaned forward, suddenly feeling ill.

Satisfied with her answer, Gustav powered down the device and leaned in close. “I’m sure there are many who would pay handsomely for it, enough for you to go beyond your little university studies. Wouldn’t you agree?”

Hanna nodded, her senses returning to normal, the contents of her stomach resettling as the memory of what she had just seen seared into her memory.

“When do you want the sale to happen?” she asked.

Gustav gave her a satisfied smile. “I knew the old Stiletto was still here. As soon as possible of course, but I know that it will take a bit of time to organize—say, a week?”

Hanna nodded, a bit out of breath. “I can work with that.”

“Excellent! Now, Richter and Tobias will take you back to your home so you can get to work. They’ll also provide you with any assistance you need.”

Hanna smiled tightly but nodded. “I’ll get to work immediately.”

An hour later, with both the razorguys lounging in her living room watching sports, Hanna set to work. She knew that Gustav would assign a hacker to tap and monitor her communications, so she excused herself to the bathroom. Turning on the shower, she reached into called out to one of the spirits bound to her. In the palm of her hand, a small whirlwind with lightning-blue eyes formed.

“Give this message to Salvatore. Notify Ringmaster that I’m in. Confirmation on target made, but I’m being monitored. Switching to communications protocol delta; advise when ready to proceed. End of message. Now go.”

The spirit’s eyes blinked twice before it disappeared. Hanna then sat there, her body trembling as tears began streaming down her face. A decade ago, she swore never to return to the shadows. But after confirming the existence of that abomination of a device, she would go back at least one more time.



# PREFACE: NEW PLAYER ON THE FIELD?

POSTED BY: LYRAN

- > Ever since the Awakening, it seems like the Sixth World can't go for very long without giving us some kind of new weirdness, threat, phenomenon, or general insanity that's connected to magic in some way. Just the past year alone we've had Detroit/Motor City—bugs, the Pontiac Detonation, and whatever the frag happened at the old Ares Tower—as well as the ongoing III Corps cluster-frag. And don't get me started on the conspiracy drek saying that the UCAS blackouts were some kind of new magic ritual. Anyway, not the point I'm getting at. Apparently, rumors have been circulating about a new player stepping up to the magical plate that's been causing serious waves. But I'm just a decker with a big mouth. I'll save the finer details for the experts.
- > Slamm-O!
- > Who says magic didn't cause the blackouts?
- > Plan 9
- > Please don't make me channel Glitch, take it somewhere else and stay on topic.
- > Slamm-O!

First of all, I'm going to preface this by saying two things. 1) A good chunk of this is extremely personal, and I may or may not reveal everything. 2) I'm slotted off. Not just because of elements from point number one, but because part of my business, my *survival*, is to know who the major magical power-players, movers and shakers, and up-and-comers are. I need to know if they're potential customers, allies, rivals, or threats.

So when it came to this group who I would later learn are called Grey Cell—well, I never knew they existed ... until one of them shot me. Obviously not lethally, so slot the comments. This kind of blindsiding is what gets us killed.

## UNEXPECTED REUNION

An old detective friend of mine once said that when composing a report, you always start with how you got involved. Well, this is my beginning.

A few months back, I learned about a major shadow-auction going down in the Czech Republic via a trusted associate. The sole item up for sale was reported to have “major magical attributes.” So I think it's some new or re-discovered artifact (those were fun a few years back). Or it was a con. My associate agreed and asked if I could tag along to make sure the item was

legit. Because this was the kind of auction where purchase prices are on par with the GDP of small countries, it invites only the most affluent individuals.

When we arrive, everything is as on-the-level. That's when I got two surprises. The first was discovering an old running-mate of mine—a combat-mage/talismonger named Stiletto—was there and helping facilitate the sale. I thought she'd been killed fifteen years ago by a rival talismonger group. It tore me up for ... never mind, not important.

Things were going smooth until the second surprise came—an assault force that crashed the party. And when I say “crashed,” I mean neutralized any possible threat with a frightening efficiency. And I'm not talking about one or even a few coordinated teams. I'm talking multiple teams that make the Wildcats or Firewatch look like day-one recruits. Before I could react, I got tagged with multiple shock rounds and went night-night. But before I blacked out, I swear I saw Stiletto tell—no, *order* the operators to leave me. I woke up about fifteen minutes later, weapon smoke still heavy in the air. Half the original buyers were gone and their entourages down, but only a handful of them were actually dead. And yeah, Stiletto and my associate were gone.

Getting away, I decided that I needed some fragging answers. So a few days later, I started my own investigation.

- > I have to ask: Did you ever find out what this mystery item was?
- > Elijah
- > Never got a chance to even lay eyes on the damn thing. Whatever was being sold, someone used the old five-finger discount with extreme prejudice.
- > Lyrn
- > If I'm getting the timetables correct, I heard some rumblings about a convoy heist that went down three weeks before the auction. According to my source, a highly competent team made off with an “extremely dangerous and high-value” item. And if you follow the data trail (which I did) the destination was supposed to be a black storage site owned by \*cue dramatic music\* Ares.
- > Ma'Fan
- > Ares is still doing a lot of moving and shuffling of assets since they bugged out (pun intended) from Detroit.
- > Turbo Bunny
- > This may be why I'm getting offers to buy and fence exotic tech and weapons. I know that several Firewatch caches in Detroit/Motor City were raided, and a good chunk of those items ended up on the black markets.
- > Red Anya





- Wait, that reminds me of something I read in the Cutting Black files about a dying Ares lieutenant mentioning a “device” they had, something to be used as some kind of last resort. And one of those was actually employed and caused the destruction in Pontiac. Just a wild guess, but what if one of those devices was on that auction block?
- Bull
- Well, there’s a scary thought. And here’s another: Who has it now? It is this Grey Cell?
- Clockwork
- Do you one better—what do they plan on doing with it?
- Haze

The first few weeks of the investigation revealed nothing. None of my contacts, or any of their contacts, knew (or was willing to share) anything related to the auction. Not to mention a fragger in Berlin attacked me for even asking. Hope he liked the Powerbolt to his crotch.

Whenever you do legwork, you get a lot of false leads, bulldrek, and random bits of paydata unrelated to your search. Or so you think. Some of the data I got was related to this Grey Cell, mostly about how they were playing holy havoc within certain magic circles. Normally, I would have filed all this away or deleted it, but these stood out. And I think they give insights into who Grey Cell is and what they’ve been been up to, besides shooting me in the hoop.

- Sounds like you’re taking this personally, Lyran.
- Netcat
- Yeah, I am. But that falls within the “may nor may not discuss” category as mentioned earlier.
- Lyran

### OPEN FILE: 0304-A ‘DECRYPTION COMPLETE/OPENING TRANSCRIPT/ TRANSLATING FROM FRENCH’

**SPEAKER: ‘JEAN-CLAUDE’, SMUGGLER**

Yes, I think I may have some information. My former partner Serge disappeared six weeks ago. Serge was a magician, not very powerful. Could not cast a spell to save his life. But he had a talent for—what is it called, the sight? No, assensing! He was also very good with animals, especially Awakened ones. Together, we did excellent business transporting live and not-so-live specimens. Then one day, we were asked to transport some kind of creature I’d never seen before. One of my crew jokingly called it a chimera, like the beast of legend. Even Serge did not want to get close to it. Throughout the trip, he was extremely nervous, and more than once I saw him making commlink calls. When I asked about it, he tried to play it off or became angry. But Serge is very nervous and emotional normally, so I think little of it.



We finish the job, and our client said they have more work and wish to continue using our services. I'm overjoyed, but Serge wanted to vomit. When we returned home, three individuals I have never seen before were there to meet Serge. One had the trappings of another magician, while the other two had the bearing of military or mercenary. He would insist to speak to them alone and I was concerned, wondering if he was in trouble, or something else. <chuckles> But I underestimated Serge, and that was my fault. Two weeks later, we had a similar job. But this time, we were ambushed at our re-fueling point by not just one but two groups. The first, I had encountered before—local shadowrunners. They are competent, but we were more than capable of handling them. But before we could, all of them were shot dead by snipers. I am dumbfounded, even more when Serge pulls his pistol on me and the rest of our crew. It was the first time he'd ever pulled his weapon. With tears in his eyes, he begged forgiveness and for us to not resist, or we would die. A minute later, a tilt-rotor with stealth baffled engines lands, and its crew, wearing dark uniforms, offload our cargo. Serge went with them but left us a credstick containing double our original payment. I still do not understand what happened, but we got paid, and now I have a new magical associate. Such is business.

<<<END OF FILE>>>

- > That scans with some of the weirdness I've been hearing. The smuggling rings haven't been this nervous about transporting magical-related items since the dragon-reagent fraggery from a few years back. Shipments have been intercepted or in some cases outright destroyed. Not sure what's worse, this or the drakes from last time.
- > Sounder
- > Any chance this could be them again?
- > Turbo Bunny
- > Doubtful—most people back then got the hint. Those who didn't ain't here to talk about it. Nah, this is just another in a long line of troublemakers for people like us.
- > Kane

## OPEN FILE: 0313-B <DECRYPTION COMPLETE/OPENING TRANSCRIPT>

NOTES: FOLLOWING IS AN INTERCEPTED TRANSMISSION BETWEEN SHADOWRUNNER KNOWN AS 'THIRTY.06' AND PRESUMED 'MS. JOHNSON.'

**Thirty.06:** Pick up, frag you...

\*\*\*comm-connection made\*\*\*

**Ms. Johnson:** You're calling early. I was not expecting your next message for another three days at least. Is there a problem?

**Thirty.06:** Yeah, there's a problem, a big fragging problem!

**Ms. Johnson:** Calm your tone and lower your voice. What is your situation? Are the objectives unharmed?

**Thirty.06:** Yeah, they're still drugged up and in the containers you gave us. They're fine, but I just lost another of my team! That's three total! You never said anything about this kind of response! You said this would be an easy snatch! You never said that their supposedly "low-class" families would be a pushovers or—what was it—oh yeah, a "non-factor." But yet they managed to hire a bunch of bad-ass motherfaggers to recover their kids! Or somebody did! Ghost ... they took Kinjo's head off with just one swipe ... so damn fast ...

**Ms. Johnson:** Get yourself under control. What's your situation?

**Thirty.06:** We ...we, ah ... we were at one of our safe-houses, prepping for the next leg of our ... and then we were attacked. They took out Shiloh first, sniper shot right through his eye! Then they tried to breach, but House pinned them down with his MG. We, we got away, but it was a running firefight. Lucky shot with a drone took out our transportation ... they chased us like dogs ...

**Ms. Johnson:** I did not ask for a recap. Are you secure now?

**Thirty.06:** Yeah, we found a place. I got them to back off, told them ... I threatened to start geeking brats if they ...

**Ms. Johnson:** You what?! How dare you?! If you knew what they ...

**Thirty.06:** Hey, don't drek on me about how I do my job! You're not here! I'm not gonna do anything to harm them, but they don't know that. It worked, and they backed off.

**Ms. Johnson:** Very well. What is your location? I can arrange for an escort to ...

\*\*\*sounds of gunfire/explosions for 237 seconds\*\*\*

**Ms. Johnson:** Are you still there? Are you there?! <unknown language: unable to translate>!!!

\*\*\*sounds of gunfire/unidentified sounds for 309 seconds\*\*\*

**Ms. Johnson:** Are you still there? Answer me!

**Unidentified Individual <warning: vocal distortion detected>:** Don't bother, they're all gone. The children are now safe. And consider this a warning to the rest of Ordo and you specifically. They are now lost to you. Do not try to find any of them again. And if you disregard this warning, we will unleash Hell, starting with you. Nihil veremur noctis ...

\*\*\*Connection terminated\*\*\*

<<<END OF FILE>>>

- > What was that last part?
- > Danger Sensei
- > It's Latin. Crude, but it will translate roughly to "we do not fear the night." I don't know if whoever did this is incredibly brave or foolish.
- > Icarus
- > That sounds like either a threat, a challenge, or both. Got prets.
- > Kane



- > Especially if you've already read the other chapter in this file.
- > Red
- > Oh, it gets better and starts showing some possible connections. A new contact of mine actually got this months before I started snooping around. But when they found out about some of the things I was looking for, they sent this to me.
- > Lyrn

## OPEN FILE: 0325-C <DECRYPTION COMPLETE/OPENING TEXT FILE>

**Master,**

This is a summation message sent to our allies from one of their field agents; I will send a more detailed report within two days. It is consistent with what we projected their success rates would be, which of course is disappointing. Given their current status, I am not confident they have the necessary resources or the capability of carrying out their part of this continued operation. I therefore recommend that steps are taken to bring it, and them, under our direct control. I have also begun my own investigation into these possible factions. The initial findings are somewhat disconcerting and may be connected to other matters discussed months ago concerning Mamelu and her recent activities, hence my reason for caution and bringing this to your attention now. I ask for another four weeks to confirm or deny my suspicions. I await your response.

- Your most loyal servant

**From:** <0.003 MP \*\*\*Data Corrupted\*\*\*>

**To:** <0.0045 MP \*\*\*Data Corrupted\*\*\*>

**Re:** Continued rogue chimera recovery operations: update.

Despite increases to our intelligence-gathering networks and the creation of mixed-unit response teams, we have only been able to recover approximately thirty-five percent of the known rogue chimera. Most recently, our teams were successful in securing the target's remains in Austin and Caracas. Unfortunately, our teams were unsuccessful in New York, the Moroccan Southern Providences, and partially successful in the California Free State.

Also, the Brisbane team is still MIA and two weeks overdue from their last check-in. I recommend that team's status be changed from MIA to KIA and move on.

Despite our losses, we have gained additional intelligence that indicates a possible new threat to our ongoing operations. Our team in Northern Cal-Free was able to secure one live captive and the bodies of several freelance paramilitary operatives following our failed capture of RC-0029. After interrogation of the lone survivor and examination of the remaining bodies along with their equipment, we learned that these mercenaries were hired for a recon/investigation mission regarding strange phenomena in the area. The identity of their employer is still unknown.

Additionally, this appears to be an unsanctioned operation, as the International Mercenary Association has no records of sanctioned operations in Northern Cal-Free. The fact these mercs were given this assignment in the first place and given the specifics of their operation indicates

an unknown faction is at least partially aware of the current situation. And they are at least investigating, if not actively working to counter our efforts in containing the RC situation. Detailed analysis of our interrogation and examination is contained in a separate file.

Finally, I recommend the allocation of additional resources to investigate and identify these possible factions to determine what threat they may pose to your continued operations or any possible threat to 000.

<<<END OF FILE>>>

- > That message is significant because it contained two different encryptions. According to an associate, the one containing the summary was developed by UCAS military intelligence and other agencies. This particular one was favored by DIA field ops. The other one was significantly harder to crack, a custom job but one that is frequently used by only the highest-level S-K operatives, including a certain CEO-dragon's favorite pet drake/operative. This isn't my wheelhouse, but it makes one wonder just how connected and fragged up all of this is.
- > Lyrn
- > Can you send me a copy of the files so I can look at the code?
- > Icarus
- > Done.
- > Lyrn
- > Okay, yeah, both of these are high-level stuff, but the S-K one is like, bleeding-edge. Whoever was able to crack this deserves some major respect.
- > Icarus
- > Yeah, I'm sure they do.
- > Electric Blue
- > Very interesting. Not sure if this is related, but since it came up soon after the UCAS blackouts were dealt with, several key congresspersons and other assorted individuals went on a very quiet trip to Zurich Orbital. The nature of the meeting is unknown (because of course it is).
- > Kay St. Irregular
- > Great. Yet another possible shadow-war.
- > Thorn
- > Ah well, we're about due for another one anyway.
- > Cayman
- > If I didn't know any better, I'd say this whole thing looks like two teams competing for the same prize, whatever it is.
- > Winterhawk
- > It is much more than any simple, single prize. This is a game with many levels and just as many possible dire consequences.
- > Mamelu
- > Who the frag are you?
- > Haze



- Ah ... omae, I don't think you want to slot her off. Just saying.
- Red
- Keep it civil or take it to private. Damn, I'm becoming more like Glitch every day.
- Slamm-O!

## THE PAST NEVER STAYS BURIED

Okay, this is where we get closer to current day. After about seven weeks alternating between sifting through the drek data and almost getting geeked (three times), I got a bit of a surprise in the form of a data packet and a personal message from Stiletto.

And yeah, chunks of the intro message and file are redacted because it either contains personal information or has frag-all to do with Grey Cell. Deal with it. And no, I'm not going to share the original file no matter how much anyone offers or begs. So don't waste anyone's time by asking.

### OPEN FILE: 0932-A ◀DECRYPTION ACTIVE▶

I'm sorry our reunion happened like that. I can imagine how painful it <1.67 GP REDACTED> that's all in the past, which I can't change no matter how much I want to try. But I can help you in the present. I know about your current investigation and that you're looking into places and things that are more dangerous than you realize. And knowing how headstrong you can be, you won't stop until you have your answers.

So in order to help protect you in the only way I can, I'll give the answers I'm capable of without putting either of us in too much risk. I hope you'll be satisfied with what I can provide. And I'm thinking this will be a bit cathartic for me as well, a bit of a confessional mixed in among all the data.

Share this with whoever you trust or think needs to see it, because I also want some kind of record about this to exist just in case things go wrong, or others also on this path become no better than those we defend against. Attached with this message is a data file containing a running journal of sorts, chronicling what I've seen, heard, and remember. For once in my life, after all the harm, death, and destruction I've caused, I'm finally doing work that makes a real difference. And maybe I'll be able to find some atonement.

So to begin, we call ourselves Grey Cell ... <0.45 MP REDACTED>

- Frag, that's kind of heavy.
- Pistons
- Anyone else think that "Grey Cell" sounds like some cheap commlink game?
- Clockwork

## OF TASK AND PURPOSE

POSTED BY: STILETTO

Magic is power; that fact is not in dispute. And like any other power, magic can and has been used for both good and ill in the Sixth World. It's also something that many covet, and they will go to any, often dangerous lengths to obtain it. In the past, such occurrences or incidents (what we refer to as **magical flashpoints**, or simply flash-points) have been largely curtailed or contained by governmental and corporate intervention, or occasionally direct actions taken by independent individuals. But in recent years and even months, the number of potentially destructive magical incidents has been increasing, yet response from more traditional sources is decreasing (besides sweeping things under the rug and suppressing information). This indicates a paradigm shift from protection to ... something else. And let's not forget that many of these very same entities who should be responsible for safeguarding are, or have been, complicit in various magical misdeeds. Or worse, they were content to simply look the other way and pick up the pieces later.

But there are some—many, in fact—who find this situation unacceptable and have opted to do something about it. This is the premise that helped bring Grey Cell into being.

### GREY CELL OPERATIONAL MANDATES

To further their goals, Grey Cell has enacted several operational mandates. These mandates also form the framework for all Grey Cell objectives and operational methodologies.

1. Investigate any and all activities/events that may lead to a potential magical flashpoint and/or threat.
2. Monitor, track, and identify any and all known potential flashpoints or threats.
3. Collect data regarding new magical theories and advancements for risk assessment.
4. Assist or lead research efforts into countering known and possible magical threats.
5. Develop tactics to counter such threats
6. Support individuals and organizations responding to flashpoints
7. When necessary, coordinate or take direct action to contain or neutralize any known flashpoints or threats.
8. Any action necessary not previously listed to ensure the success of the previous mandates.



## THERE'S ALWAYS A BEGINNING: RECRUITMENT

My involvement with Grey Cell actually began almost fifteen years ago with a cup of kaf and a coin.

I'd been contemplating and planning my exodus from the shadows for years before my actual departure. But the final straw was the incident <1.55 MP REDACTED> even though I know what it would do to you. I had to go. So I went on my last solo run. It began <5.65 MP REDACTED> so much destruction and death. The payoff, however, was that all of my debts were paid in full and all of my outstanding markers cleared. After the dust had settled and the blood was cleaned, I was finally out, and Stiletto was finally dead—as far as the shadows knew.

I had a new life to live, which included dealing with everything I had done to earn my freedom. But old habits die hard, and living a “normal” life didn't come easy, especially when I had to hide my magic. I almost went back, almost ruined my new life when I accidentally used magic to fry <2.5 MP REDACTED> barely avoided the Star and couldn't go to my doss <1.55 MP REDACTED> fell asleep in an alley with the rats.

But then I woke up in a high-end hotel room.

I wasn't alone. A dwarf sat on the adjacent couch, sipping real coffee. The word “dapper” doesn't even come close to describing him—the tailored suit he wore looked like it could have set me up for the next five years. I'd been in this spot and setup before and just *knew* this smarmy halfer was going to try <1.01 MP REDACTED> introduced himself simply as “Ringmaster.” He also said he represented certain interests and had been watching me since before my departure from <0.55 MP REDACTED> almost fire-balled him right there, had the flames licking my fingertips, but he calmly looked me in the eye and said two things. First was that I could walk out the door and that would be the end of it, but he needed people with my particular set of skills to assist him in countering some exceptionally bad things. The second was that he said “please.” No one else had ever said that to me and sincerely meant it. I didn't realize it until later, but he also gave me a chance at redemption for all the damage I'd done in my shadow-life.

<1.55 MP REDACTED> flippantly said that “get me into MIT&T, and I'll join up. He closed his eyes for about a minute, and simply said “done.” He then stood, told me that the room was good for the next month if I wanted it and that he would be in touch within three days. When he got up and left a gold coin on the table. It was a deep gold color and had a pair of grey dragon eyes on one side with some kind of writing I still haven't been able to decipher (all these years later) on the other. He said keep it with or near me at all times.

Three days later I had yet another name, another identity, and was enrolled as freshman at MIT&T.

<1.75 MP REDACTED> years later I had my (official) PhD/T and eventually became head researcher in the Theoretical Magical Sciences department. As part of my deal with Ringmaster, I did a lot of consulting on the side and made myself available for various individuals who needed assistance. <5.75 MP REDACTED> when Ringmaster first mentioned the “Patron.” <2.05 MP REDACTED> but I did go back to the shadows, sort of. But I didn't mind because it was on *my* terms. And for first time in my life I could finally and completely let Stiletto go and simply be Hanna Pierce.

- > Whoa wait, you're saying that this Stiletto person is that Hanna Pierce? The one who five years ago wrote the landmark paper “Merging of Two Worlds” that laid out theories that could be the foundational link between quantum and metaplanar physics was a runner?
- > Elijah
- > What, you thought you were the only academic/runner out there? Please. You really do need to get your head out of your hoop sometimes.
- > Arete
- > Yes, but isn't she now working at the University of Prague? Something to do with getting out of Boston before the lockdown?
- > Haze
- > Frag, wish someone could come along and get me into MIT. Who do I have to geek to get that done?
- > Turbo Bunny
- > Shortly after the Boston Lockdown went into effect, there was a quiet operation that extracted Doctor Pierce and several other magical VIPs from MIT&T. A sizable number of Salem Witches were also extracted as well.
- > Picador
- > Heard about that. Supposedly Doctor (or is it Professor?) Pierce is now working under the protection of Professor Schwartzkopf. Makes me wonder if he's also involved with this somehow.
- > Arete
- > It seems whoever came up with Doctor Pierce's new identity and pulled the strings did an exceptional job. But given that Ringmaster is involved, I'm not surprised.
- > Fianchetto
- > That's putting it mildly. I did some snooping, and by all accounts, “Hanna Pierce's” past is as clean as one can get. But it's got just enough of the imperfections that come with any background file to make it seem that much more real.
- > Icarus



- > So what's the paydata on this Ringmaster slag anyway? Wasn't he some bigshot during the fighting in Detroit?
- > Treadle
- > Hey, Electric Blue? You were in Detroit during the drek-storm right? You got any data on him to share?
- > Slamm-O!
- > Blue?
- > Slamm-O!
- > Any other time we can't get him to shut up, now he's all close-mouthed.
- > Rigger-X
- > Hope he stays that way.
- > Clockwork
- > I got you all covered. Ringmaster (a.k.a. Atticus Cole) is listed as officially dead by the UCAS government as of 2061. Before that, he was Chief of Operations for the CI-fraggin-A. Guess he got better. Anyway, he was either directly involved with or planned several major operations during his tenure and was (or is?) known as a master logician and strategist—a damn legend in the spook biz. But he started having a lot of problems with UCAS policy, and then one day he was (supposedly) murdered in Baltimore. Official files don't give exact details, but the official line was he was taken out by "enemy agents."
- > Icarus
- > Way back I was part of a working group that answered to Ringmaster (didn't know his real name until just a few minutes ago) back when he would have been just deputy director of ops. I won't say what the job was, because even after all these years I could face serious blowback. What I will say is that he's an artist when it comes to logistics and planning. Able to plan down to the smallest detail, but he's also able look at several sets and sources of data to extrapolate or find patterns and connections that no one would even dream of. I once saw him sitting in his makeshift office just watching several flat-screens, projections, and actual stacks of hardcopy at once like he was simply taking it all in. And I have to praise his ability to plan and adapt under fire (an ability that saved all of our skins). And there is just something about him that inspires confidence, yet he's not awakened and from what I know has very little 'ware.
- > Balladeer

I wasn't the first and certainly not the last to get a "coin" from Ringmaster. As far as I can tell, he and the Patron have been giving those out at least (at least) since the late 2060s. Back then, there was no Grey Cell like there is currently. In those days and throughout the '70s; things were much more ad hoc with people being brought in for specific jobs or because they had specialized skills, like myself.

Some, depending on their success and professionalism, were kept on retainer. This helped keep

things quiet. Other than Ringmaster (who was the de facto fixer and Mr. Johnson) and a few key people, it stayed this way for many years. And most of these jobs, if not all of them, had magic in some way as the common factor.

Then events happened that forced a change.

- > I'm surprised no one has thought to ask how Grey Cell is being funded.
- > Mr. Bonds
- > You're always looking for the nuyen.
- > Stone
- > It's what I do. But there's a reason "follow the money" works. In order to pull any of this off, Grey Cell is going to require some serious funding. And by all reports, Ringmaster/Atticus Cole was one of the major power players during the Motor City thing and brought a lot of heavy hitters and hardware with him. There are also indicators this was a contingency plan and that Cole et al. were waiting for something like this to happen. All of which costs massive cred. And a lot of these other shadow organizations have some kind of cash source, be it old money like IOND and Ordo, or have a dragon-infused trust fund like the Draco Foundation.
- > Mr. Bonds
- > That you could find. By all accounts Cole is pretty much a super-spook, and he wouldn't have gotten to where he was if he couldn't hide a few secrets or slush funds.
- > Icarus
- > You both have valid points, but from one spook talking about another, I think the even better questions are: Why did he fake his own death, what did he do afterward, and who perhaps did he hook up with?
- > Thorn
- > Okay, so, story time. About six months ago I had a meet/dinner with a rather interesting pair. I won't say where, but I'm guessing I could live for six months off of what the final bill ended up being. First was a dark-skinned dwarf that radiated charisma (sound familiar?). Accompanying him was an athletic human white female brunette sporting that short-tight military hairstyle that's all the rage in mercenary circles, yet she was decked out in the latest business chic. I could also tell she was masking her aura, so I'm guessing she was some kind of Awakened (duh). At first I thought it was just another couple of Johnsons wanting offering me a job. Thing was, all we did was eat, drink, and talk. Or more precisely, he asked me questions, a lot of questions about arcane topics that only someone who's been researching for decades or has had firsthand knowledge would know about. And while the conversation was more than pleasant; my prime rib and red wine were perfect, I realized that this was more like a traditional job interview or a test. While we talked, she just sat there watching me, or rather I'm guessing watching my reactions. So for the next hour and a half, we



## GREY CELL 'CHALLENGE COINS'

Challenge coins have a long history in military, paramilitary, and similar organizations. They're used in a variety of ways: denote who is or has been a member of a specific organization or unit, show that one has some kind of ties to said organization or unit, as a morale booster to troops, or as an unofficial reward by a superior officer to a subordinate. Regardless, challenge coins are often given as a token of esteem, respect, or thanks to the bequeathed.

Within Grey Cell, there are two types of challenge coins.

The first is a regular bronze-gold coin that displays what appear to be stylized draconic eyes on one side and writing in a language unknown to metahumans. These coins are given and used much the same way as normal challenge coins are. But these coins are also used as markers and in certain circumstances can be used by the bequeathed to call for assistance from whoever gave it.

The second type of coin is given to members of Grey Cell. This one differs in that the eyes are grey in color and has additional symbols along the edges on both sides. These are used by Grey Cell members as a means of identification. Each of these coins are of a magical, alchemic nature and bond with the owner. If the owner is killed or if the coin is taken from them, all grey will fade from it. Coins can be passed on from one person to another; the coin bonds to the new owner.

And it is rumored that in extreme circumstances, there are a select secret few within Grey Cell who know of a ritual that turn the coins into an astral beacon.

talked and as soon as we were done with our crème brulee, I was thanked for my time and they simply left. Best meal I've had in months, worth it for that alone. I haven't heard any from either of them since, nor did I get any kind of coin. And I'm not sure if that's a good or bad thing.

> Winterhawk

## SEPARATE YET TOGETHER: HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

The catalyst for Grey Cell's transformation from a loose network of runners into its current form were the events that came before and directly after the City of Detroit's transformation into what is now known as Motor City. The plan that Damien Knight enacted represented a magical threat on a scale not seen since the Ghost Dance. This in turn started a domino-effect that opened the doors for a whole other series of possible and actual threats. The end result from this situation, the carnage and fallout, was that a decision was made (likely by the Patron, who was rumored to be absolutely furious at Knight and his hubris) to take a more active approach to counter and combat these new threats. Hence, Grey Cell was born to do just that.

To be clear, we are not affiliated with any government or corporate entity. We operate on our

own, on behalf of the Patron, and ally with those who are also working to recognize and combat such threats to the Sixth World. At times this may put us in direct or proxy conflict with other major powers. But then, that hasn't stopped us yet.

- > Great, another self-righteous group of self-important "saviors."
- > Haze
- > I think the people who were saved in Detroit would disagree.
- > Picador
- > As long as they or anyone else pays, I could care less.
- > Clockwork

## OPTIONAL QUALITY: GREY CELL MEMBERSHIP

(COST: 20 KARMA)

What separates Grey Cell members from other professional freelance specialists is they receive operational funding as part of joining. Those in Grey Cell's upper echelons know that in order to attract the best, they need to offer something besides the opportunity to protect metahumanity from magical-based threats, because living in the Sixth World ain't cheap, and death is never too far away.

The gamemaster can elect to pay Grey Cell members up to an additional fifty percent per job (with appropriate bonuses) or a base monthly salary of no less than fifty thousand nuyen.

Individual members of Grey Cell will automatically get their lifestyle increased to Medium at no additional cost. Those already at or above Medium lifestyle will get an additional five thousand nuyen per month, as long as the previous lifestyle is maintained.

Additionally, each Grey Cell member gets all other Grey Cell members as contacts at Loyalty rating 2. Connection rating is at the gamemaster's discretion. Players can use these contacts for information, gear and weapon purchases, and so on. Loyalty should increase as PCs show their usefulness to the organization, but decrease quickly if they shirk their responsibilities.

Finally, Grey Cell members have access to emergency medical care equal to a DocWagon gold-level contract. If players have a higher-level contract, they will receive additional monthly funds equal to a gold-level contract as long as the previous contract is maintained.

The downside to all of this is that PCs cannot let any other activities or ventures interfere with Grey Cell assignments or business. When the PC's handler calls them, the PCs must answer or risk losing their affiliation (and this quality) or worse. Those jobs pay poorly, if at all.

Grey Cell is organized into a network of individual, yet sometimes connected cells. Each cell is more like a task or working group, and their individual compositions are unique in their task and purpose. Some cells are created for specific duties



such as long-term monitoring, investigating, or responding to flashpoints in a specific area or region. These cells are often identified by the closet major city or sprawl they operate from and are given an operating number. An example of this (and not a real one) is “Toledo 003.” Other cells act as response units to supplement more fixed, regional cells when the need arises. Such cells can also be active or passive in their duties, or put on inactive status and only activated when needed.

Cells can also be sent into an area should it become a potential or active flashpoint.

Response cells can range from simple additional manpower and resources, all the way to hardened strike teams that deal in direct action against a flashpoint, threat, or in support of overall Grey Cell goals. These cells are more individualistic and often give themselves their own designation or nicknames. Some of which are more mundane, others can be quite colorful. Also, in addition to their normal designation, regional-fixed cells have also started taking up this practice as well.

There are also ad hoc cells, the kind thrown together because they are simply the only assets available to respond or in an area. As of this posting, most of the cells in existence are the hoc or fixed-regional kind, as the organization is still forming, cementing, and recruiting.

- > With the recent troubles visited on the UCAS in recent months, a lot of high-level operatives or various agency employees from across the Federal spectrum were disavowed, burned, or simply given their walking papers. I knew several such individuals, many of whom were asking me to connect them with fixers. But a great deal more simply left their UCAS positions or posts and just went ... elsewhere.
- > Thorn
- > I've also heard the Draco Foundation has experienced more than a few departures from their ranks over the past few months. These departures also seem to coincide with meetings with Kendra de Santos, the voice of Arleesh. I've also heard that the DF board has been stonewalling Arleesh over some matters of “assistance” that was supposed to be given to her via Dunkelzahn's will. Anyone else seeing a pattern here?
- > Frosty

Because of this, it is not uncommon for non-aligned specialists to be brought in to assist. These assets are not part of Grey Cell proper and are not told of its existence. For them, they are simply hired to do a job, much like how it was done in the past. But if they prove useful, reliable, and fit into the organization's main goals, such specialists may be considered for Grey Cell membership at a future date.

However, I will warn anyone reading this that Grey Cell does not admit just anyone. Those recruited must not only have valuable skills but

also be of a certain ethical temperament. To put it bluntly, amoral actions such as wanton murder, destruction, thievery, assault of all kinds, bribery, et cetera (you get the idea) are simply not tolerated. Those who engage in such activities are typically not allowed entry. The best they can hope for are jobs on a case-by-case basis. This operational mandate was put in place by Ringmaster himself.

But temptation is a powerful force. Those who give into and engage in such actions are dealt with swiftly. And I know of at least one extreme case where it was handled personally by the Patron.

And finally, it must be noted that some Grey Cell members who are not part of a cell and operate independently, assisting or joining cells on an “as needed” basis.

But whatever or however a cell is made up, overall Grey Cell members tend to fall into one (if not multiple) of these categories

## WATCHERS

Watchers are Grey Cell's front line, the “boots on the ground.” Every member of Grey Cell is first and foremost a Watcher, no matter what else they do. They are as diverse as they come both personally and in their methodologies. Some are high-tech data specialists who scour and monitor the Matrix for any bits of news and rumors about unexplained events or phenomena that could indicate a potential flashpoint. Some may passively watch for signs as they go about their daily lives, doing their best not to attract unwanted attention. Or they may actively investigate in the deepest, darkest corners. However they accomplish their task, it's the Watchers who often find the signs of trouble and the first to raise the alarm.

- > Shenanigans at the DF, the specific term “watchers” being used—anyone else think they've heard this song before?
- > Wyrn Watcher

## ANALYSTS

Having raw data is one thing, but often it takes specialists to sift through that data and make sense of it or find the patterns or connections that others may not. Grey Cell Analysts are responsible for given the data collected by the Watchers and giving it not only context, but when necessary determining what priority it may have; which could mean the difference between avoiding and experiencing a disaster. Analysts are also often the ones doing direct research (like myself) into new magical techniques and tactics to combat magical threats, also using what pertinent data the Watchers may uncover. And every so often, Analysts are the ones who, armed with this data, may directly investigate or confront threats (depending on the Analyst, of course ...).



## OPERATORS

Sometimes a problem or threat requires a more direct solution. The aforementioned situation in Detroit and the UCAS Army's III Corps crisis are the two most recent examples. When the situation calls for it, Grey Cell turns to the Operators in its ranks. I have only worked with such cells a handful of times, but given my past in the shadows and what I have seen them accomplish, I can easily say that Grey Cell Operators are drawn from the high-level combatants and tactical experts. They are called in when the stakes or danger are at the highest.

- Wait, did she just confirm that members of this (now) Grey Cell were the ones who fought in Detroit against the bugs and maybe Ares and are the ones chasing after III Corps soldiers? What other drek are they into?
- X-Prime
- Do you honestly think that if anyone here were a part of Grey Cell that they would confirm anything? Obviously, you don't understand the concept of operational security.
- Picador
- That's not a denial. But then again, you and your unit were there. So care to try that one again?
- Rigger-X
- No, I would not.
- Picador

## HANDLERS

A cross between a fixer and Mr. Johnson, and modeled after a CIA section chief, Handlers are the ones who direct the actions of cells, coordinate the cells under their command with each other (or with other handlers and their cells), and generally give the marching orders. They are responsible for creating cells, enacting Grey Cell mandates, and setting the overall operational tempo. That means they're accountable for a cell's actions, both good and bad. Handlers also work to make sure that the cells have the funding and material they need. They directly report to Grey Cell's upper echelons and command (i.e., Ringmaster and his direct subordinates) and are the primary link between the cells and Grey Cell leadership. The number of cells under a Handler's responsibility varies and is often determined by need and geographic location. In larger regions with multiple cells, it is not uncommon for a Handler to have a deputies to assist them.

## SUPPORT

Like any operation or organization, there are those who don't fit neatly into any category yet are

vital to the overall success. The Support members of Grey Cell are those individuals or groups who provide whatever support the cells or other individual members require. I myself started out that way, providing magical consultations and the odd service in times of need. Just some of the things Support members provide are: professional advice, medical services, technological assistance, and appropriation services. If something is needed, there is typically a member or someone on retainer to provide it.

## THE PATRON

I have spoken little about the one known among Grey Cell as only "the Patron," mainly because few among us really know anything about them. And that I suspect is by design—and to be honest, I'm not sure I want to know. I have heard only rumors and whispers, made wilder with each telling like the old game of Telephone. What I know (or rather have an educated guess about) is that the Patron is likely a powerful individual either politically and financially, with a strong connection of some kind to magic.

I also know that ultimately, everyone in Grey Cell reports to Ringmaster, and that he reports directly to the Patron. But who and whatever they are, they are committed to their mission of protecting the Sixth World from any and all magical threats.

- And as far as I have been able to determine, Grey Cell has already made a large splash in various magical circles. And by that I mean slotted a lot of powerful people off. We already touched on the Draco Foundation so I'll leave that alone except to say that they've been putting out a lot of feelers to find out where their ex-employees and members went. Daviar herself is reportedly pissed and took it as a personal affront. But it doesn't stop there. An Atlantean Foundation-backed research team found their data vaults emptied after developing some reportedly powerful magical rites using what was reported to be some "Fourth World script." Also, the remains of some Black Lodgers in DeeCee were finally found—each with a neat hole right between the eyes. Forensics guys say sniper shots at extreme range. And my personal favorite, a Delta-clinic backed by Aztechnology was raided and completely obliterated. Seems this particular clinic was a testing ground for tech and research related to cybermancy. Gotta admit, not sad to see that one go. Point of all this is that a lot of major magical powers are starting to look over their shoulders and becoming paranoid. And for us, this could be both a good and bad thing. Either way, this is basically where my part of the file ends. Feel free to rant and speculate from here. Me, I need a drink or six.
- Lyran
- Does no one have the guts to say it? Okay, fine. All signs point to Arleesh as being "the Patron." I mean come on, it makes perfect





- sense on so many levels, and this all fits her MO! And didn't she post here not too long ago? What was her handle here? Anyone?
- > Haze
  - > What? Nothing? Fragging cowards ...
  - > Haze
  - > Well, things just got a bit more interesting. Less than two hours after the final data file upload, a message appeared in a very secure and very private inbox addressed to all three JackPoint admins. Per usual, I ran every security scan and back trace I have. It came back clean, and of course none of us can figure out where the frag it originated—which is extremely annoying considering the firewalls I personally set up. And it slotted me off even more when I finally read the damn thing and saw who sent it. We weren't sure what to do with it, but ultimately we decided to include it in the main file. So here it is; make your own judgement call on it. Meanwhile, I'm getting back to re-vamping our security protocols. Again.
  - > Glitch

## TO THE ADMINS OF THE JACKPOINT VPN

By the time this message reaches your respective inboxes, you will have already uploaded a file to your network that discusses the organization under my patronage known simply as Grey Cell. I have not fully read the final upload posted to your network, but I have in my possession the original files.

I wish for you to know that I hold no ill will or malicious intent toward you, your users, or your network. In fact, I found the analysis and opinions given quite fair—most of the time. Because of this and after careful consideration, neither I nor anyone from Grey Cell, will attempt to impede the use of these files or disrupt your operations in anyway after this posting. In fact, it may be in our mutual interests for at least some of your people to know of our existence. And I also wish to extend some apologies for sending this message into your secure inbox rather than regular channels. I hope you realize I needed to get your attention quickly and get my point across.

With that being said, I will leave you with this final message as a ... professional courtesy. Anyone on this network that attempts to use this data to disrupt or target Grey Cell operations or our members and allies will be met with swift, overwhelming, and merciless retaliatory action. This is not a threat or a boast; it is a promise because the stakes concerning the Sixth World at this point are too great to allow anything less.

I will remove any obstacle—personally if I must. So do not become one.

– Mamelu, “The Patron”



# GREY CELL CHARACTERS

## GREY CELL OPERATOR

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 8)

The Grey Cell Operators are the heavy hitters, called in when heavy combat or direct action is deemed necessary.

### GREY CELL OPERATOR

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
5	6(7)	4(8)	5(6)	4	3	4	3	3.12

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
16	12/3D6	A1, I4	11	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Athletics 6, Biotech 3, Close Combat 5, Engineering 4, Firearms 7, Perception 5, Stealth 5

**Augmentations:**\* Cybereyes (rating 4; w/ low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision magnification), muscle replacement 1, reaction enhancers 2, wired reflexes 2

**\*all augmentations are alphaware**

**Gear:** Commlink (DR 6), medium mil-spec armor (+9) w/ helmet (+2), medkit (rating 4), sub-vocal mic

**Weapons:\*\***

Onotari Arms War Hound [Assault Rifle, DV5P, SA/BF/FA, 4/11/9/6/2, 38(c) w/ caseless rounds, smartgun system]  
 Shotgun [Shotgun, DV 3P, SS/SA, 7/10/6/-/-/ 6 (c) ]  
 Ingram Grey Knight [MMG, DV 5P, BF/FA, 2/10/10/8/6, w/ 100 caseless rounds (belt), smartgun system]  
 Cavalier Arms Crockett EBR [Sniper Rifle, DV5P, SA/BF, 5/10/13/10/10, 20 (c) w/ caseless rounds, smartgun system, vision magnification]  
 Ares Predator VI [Heavy Pistol, DV 3P, SA/BF, 10/10/8/-/- 15 (c) w/ caseless rounds]  
 Combat Knife [Blade, DV 3P, 8/2\*-/ -/-]

\* max range 20 meters

\*\* Choose between Onotari Arms Warhound, Ingram White Knight, and Cavalier Arms Crockett as primary weapon.

## GREY CELL ADEPT OPERATOR

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 8)

The Grey Cell adept operator excels in combat at all ranges but is especially effective up close and personal.

### GREY CELL ADEPT OPERATOR

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	ESS
4	6	5(7)	3	5	2	5	3	5	6

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
16	12/3D6	A1, I4	11	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Astral 5, Athletics 4, Close Combat 7, Engineering 3, Firearms 6, Perception 5, Stealth 6

**Qualities:** Ambidextrous

**Adept Powers:** Astral Perception, Combat Sense, Improved Reflexes 2, Killing Hands, Mystic Armor 2, Spell Resistance

**Initiate Level, Metamagics:** 1, centering

**Gear:** Commlink (DR 6), light mil-spec armor (+8) w/ helmet (+2), medkit (rating 4), sub-vocal mic

**Weapons:**

Colt Arms M-24 [Machine Pistols, DV 3P, SA/BF/FA, 8/9/8/-/-, 30(c), w/ stabilizing arm brace] Onotari Arms Kali II [Rifle, DV 4P, SA/BF/FA, 7/11/9/4/-, 32(c) w/ caseless ammo]  
 Trench knife (x2) [Blade, DV 3P/S\*, 7/-/-/-/-]  
 Tactical hammer (Long) [Club, DV 4P, 9/-/-/-/-]

\* Stun damage when hitting with knucks part of weapon

## GREY CELL WATCHER/ INVESTIGATOR

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

The watchers and investigators are the boots on the ground, always vigilant when it comes to possible magical or other threats that concern Grey Cell.

### GREY CELL WATCHER/INVESTIGATOR

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
3	3	3	3	5	6	5	4	5.4

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
7	8/1	A1 I2	11	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Close Combat 3 (Clubs +2), Con 4, Electronics 2, Firearms 3, Influence 5, Perception 6, Piloting 3, Stealth 5

**Augmentations:** Cybereyes (rating 2, w/ audio enhancement, dampener, spatial recognizer), cybereyes (rating 4, w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, thermographic vision, vision enhancement, vision magnification)

**Gear:** AR gloves, armored jacket (+4), binoculars (w/ image link, low light, vision magnification), bug scanner, data chip (x5), electric paper (x10), endoscope, Erika Elite commlink (DR 4), jammer (rating 4), laser microphone (w/ audio enhancement, select sound filter 2), monacle (w/ low light, thermographic vision, vision enhancement), RFID tags (x5), security/stealth tags (x5), tag eraser

**Weapons:**

Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, DV 3P, SA, 11/9/7/-/-, 14 (c), w/ smartgun system]  
 Defiance Super Shock [Taser, DV 6S(e), SS, 10/6\*-/ -/-, 4(m), \*max range 20 meters]  
 Extendable baton [Club, DV 2S, 5/-/-/-/-]

## GREY CELL WATCHER/DECKER

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 5)

Grey Cell deckers are experts in Matrix operations, research, and monitoring.

### GREY CELL WATCHER/DECKER

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
2	3	3	2	4	6	4	5	4.3

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
6	7/1D6	A1, I2	10	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Biotech 2 (First Aid +2), Close Combat 1, Con 5, Cracking 6, Electronics 5, Engineering 5, Firearms 2 (Pistols +2), Influence 3, Pilot 2, Stealth 6

**Augmentations:** Cybereyes (rating 2, w/ low-light, vision magnification), cyberjack (rating 2)

**Gear:** AR gloves, armored jacket (+4), Erika Elite commlink (DR 4), jammer (rating 4), omnidirectional microphone (w/ audio enhancement, select sound filter 2), Shiawase Cyber-6 cyberdeck (DR 5, A/S 8/7, program slots 10), tag eraser, Transys Avalon commlink (DR 6)

**Weapons:**

Colt America L36 [Light Pistol, DV 2s/2S(e), SA, 9/9/7/-/-, 11(c) w/ laser sight, 50 rounds gel ammo, 50 rounds stick-n-shock ammo]



## MAGICAL RESEARCHER

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

Grey Cell researchers are tasked with not only learning new magical skills, but aiding cells whenever possible.

### MAGICAL RESEARCHER

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	ESS
3	3	3	2	5	4	3	5	7	6

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
7	6/1D6	A1, I2	11	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Astral 6, Conjuring 6, Enchanting 4, Firearms 2, Influence 5, Perception 4, Sorcery 6

**Spells:** Analyze Magic, Analyze Truth, Antidote, Clout, Detect Enemies, Detect Life, Detect Magic, Fireball, Heal, Increase Reflexes, Improved Invisibility, Lightning Bolt, Physical Mask, Powerbolt

**Initiate Level, Metamagics:** 1, masking

**Gear:** Armored jacket (+4), Erika Elite commlink (DR 4), glasses (rating 3, w/ flare compensation, low-light vision, thermographic vision)

**Weapons:**

Ruger Redhawk [Light Pistol DV 3P, SA/BF, 8/11/8/-/-, 8(cy), w/ laser sight]

## GREY CELL HANDLER/FACE

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 6)

The handlers are the ones responsible for providing direction and coordination to all Grey Cell groups.

### GREY CELL HANDLER/FACE

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
4	3	3	3	4	6	4	6	5

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
8	7/1D6	A1, I2	10	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Biotech 3 (First Aid +2), Close Combat 3, Con 5, Electronics 5, Engineering 2, Firearms 4, Influence 6, Pilot 3, Stealth 6

**Qualities:** First Impression

**Augmentations:** Cybereyes (rating 4, w/ low-light, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision magnification), tailored pheromones 3

**Gear:** AR gloves, armored jacket (+4), bug scanner, Hermes Ikon commlink (DR 5), jammer (rating 5), keycard copier, maglock passkey, medkit (rating 4), satellite link, stim patch (x3), trauma patch (x3), white noise generator (rating 5)

**Weapons:**

Ares Crusader II [Machine Pistol, DV 2P, SA/BF, 8/8/6/-/-, 40(c), w/ smartgun system, 40 regular ammo, 40 rounds stick-n-shock ammo]  
Extendable baton [Club, DV 2S, 5/-/-/-/-]





# HALBERSTAM'S BRAIN

- > This is from a few days ago, a chat I think all of you should see. I present it here in its glorious entirety. Including the nonsense. Especially the nonsense.
- > Slamm-O!

## ///Secure LiveStream Room #77-55-55/3,

Slamm-O-Matic®™ Audio-Visual Feed  
Dolby TrueHD Wireless Live (DTWL) <Cracked By: Hacker House>  
VPN: JackPoint, 1048:12 Zulu  
...Password Accepted/ACCESS GRANTED...///  
CURRENT USERS:  
Glitch <Admin>  
/dev/grrl <Authorized User>  
Balladeer <Authorized User>  
Beaker <Authorized User>  
Butch <Authorized User>  
Ethernaut <Authorized User>  
Icarus <Authorized User>  
Man-of-Many-Names <Authorized User>  
Matt Wrath <Authorized User>

Orange Queen <Guest User>  
Plan 10 <Authorized User>  
Puck <Authorized User>

## <RRW has joined the chat>

- > And that is why Matt Wrath cannot ever go to Toronto ever again.
- > Matt Wrath
- > Hey, got in with half the time as before. I like this new deck my boyfriend got me for my unbirthday! So, this seems to be the only happening place on the JackPoint tonight. What's up?
- > RRW
- > Slamm-O!—or rather, his little kiddle—has found a plea for help from an MMO of all things, which actually was legit after Daddy and I checked it out. I still can't believe the kid has the chops to pay me in virtual game money. Worked, though. Getting me that gold plating for my firearms that I've been eyeballing for a while now.
- > Icarus



- > Considering his parents, grandparents, godparents, and so on, this doesn't surprise me in the least. FastJack taught the kid how to look at the game code and figure out how to abuse glitches. Fred just namesquatted "FastJack" on all those games as soon as they came out and gifted them to his kid.
- > Glitch
- > The little guy is, what, eight years old? Some of these games have been out for a while longer.
- > /dev/grrl

#### <Clockwork has joined the chat>

- > It's Slamm-O!, he probably namesquatted those logins just to be a pain in the ass if someone wanted to use their legit online name. Surprising, he hasn't done so with the username I use in games.
- > Puck
- > Bastard squats on every place he can find where I haven't gotten the username Clockwork, that's for damned sure. Costs me 1,000 nuyen a pop to get those names off him, too.
- > Clockwork
- > Yeah, but what's going *on*? My boyfriend is seducing wageslave corpsec idiots for security codes, I'm out of petrochem except for work this month, and the only thing new on the trid is some damned Aztlaner soap opera involving a kid with backward feet.
- > RRW
- > Slamm-O! is breaking into the server farm that his son's MMO is running on. It's in a steam tunnel near the University of Seattle of all places, which seems skeezy as all hell. As long as they don't run into LARPer or security, they should be okay, but he's packing heavy just in case.
- > Ethernaut
- > I'd have more respect for their rather good performance so far if it wasn't for the fact that they're in fragging bowling shirts.
- > Balladeer
- > Yeah, that's Fred's bowling team he hired. Professional shadowrunners one and all. The ShadowRollers.
- > Butch
- > Don't laugh, I used my old pit crew on one of my jobs back in the day. Had to keep a tractor-trailer rig going despite everything happening on Route 666. We were down to Mad Max drek at one point.
- > RRW
- > Wait, who the fuck gave Slamm-O! a gun? I know it's only an Ares Light Fire 75, but that's a great way to get a bullet in the ass! At least from his feed and smartgun display, he hasn't chambered a round yet.
- > Clockwork

- > Matt Wrath always makes sure any Mr. Johnson who wants to go on a job can defend himself and make it to the payout. Or if Mr. Johnson tries to screw Matt Wrath with a little gun, then Matt Wrath gets revenge.
- > Matt Wrath
- > Considering the number of concussions he's had, that is actually a wise thing to do. Sorta.
- > Butch
- > He also has his bowling ball bag, too. He probably will actually hit someone with that as opposed to using the pistol.
- > /dev/grrl
- > The winds talked of tonight and warned that we must pay close attention at just this point. Also, the stickball match was canceled on account of protesters.
- > Man-of-Many-Names
- > Hey, Clockwork, why the hell are you even here? You hate Fred.
- > Plan 10
- > Caught up on work, personal projects, and even the Japanese game shows tonight are reruns. And, who knows, maybe I'll see him catch a bullet and have a good laugh?
- > Clockwork
- > Yeah, seems to be a lot of that going around. Plan 9 and I are having a bit of a fight over—well, something, and we have to spend some time apart from each other.
- > Plan 10
- > I literally have the wisdom of two ages, and have no idea how that works. And, yeah, there is *nothing* on the trid tonight.
- > Orange Queen
- > Shush, they're nearing the location.
- > Puck
- > ... Oh, very nice breaching work. Excellent covering of the room, sweeping nicely, remembering the ceiling as well. Still thrown off by the fragging bowling shirts, however.
- > Balladeer
- > And here comes the gunfire! Oh wow, an Ares Sentinel "Q" Series rail-drone on the ceiling. The extra armor is getting a good workout as the team hits it, too. The ork with a big gun is down but not dead. Go drone go!
- > Clockwork
- > Matt Wrath thinks there is something wrong with Clockwork's head.
- > Matt Wrath
- > And the drone is down. Good job, ShadowRollers. I—yeah, it's just, they're in fragging *bowling shirts*.
- > Balladeer



- > Armored bowling shirts, obviously, as the ork is already up after some healing magic from their magician, Duke.
- > Ethernaut
- > Okay, Slamm-O! is getting a better view of the room now that he isn't focused on the drone, and ... wait, are those jars? Where are the server systems? And what's in those jars? Slamm-O!, get closer!
- > Puck
- > Ohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnoohnooh ...
- > Icarus

**<User Icarus has been put in a thirty-second time-out for violating Noise-to-Signal Ratio rules>**

- > Hey, Glitch, what's going on? Usually the automatics don't kick in that soon.
- > Plan 10
- > Yeah, someone asked Goat Foot to explain cricket, and that fragged up our Noise-to-Signal Ratios for the month. Those systems were put into place by FastJack, and all three of us admins can't figure out how to adjust them.
- > Glitch

## AETHERPEDIA SEARCH: ASPECTED DOMAIN

Aspected domains are areas that are psychoactively charged toward a certain tradition of magic. The function as a mana ebb that hinders other traditions, and a flow that helps only the aspected tradition. The most common variety of aspected domains are from the various religious traditions[Source?] due to the amount of faith feeding the charge of old and well-established places of worship. It is also said[Source?] that a magician can acclimate themselves toward an aspected domain. However, as they are easily manipulated by things that affect the astral plane, they can shift in power, and the acclimation needs to be re-started.

- > It's hard to guess the tradition of a magician that's attacking you or buffing their allies, and even harder to know the variety of adept, but sometimes you got to roll the dice you've been handed. The quickest way to get into an area that has an aspected domain is to break into a church, temple, mosque, whatever. Especially old ones with faithful worshipers. It might not cut off all of the magic that an adept or magician is using, but it'll be something at least. This, of course, works best if you are lucky enough to have an adept or magician of that religious tradition, as the area will boost their magic instead of hindering it. Know the team you're with, even if it's a fixer's thrown-together group, and do your legwork on how and where to go when the drek hits the fan. Run smarter and faster, not harder.
- > DangerSensei

- > Well, Icarus recognized something about oh drek. Those are brains ... wired in the jars. I think we are looking at the server farm. Old medical tech, though, late '50s, early '60s. That one says Fuchi on it!
- > Beaker
- > You can't run an MMO on wetware. Why would you bother, anyhow? The brains don't last long from what I recall, and it's a whole lot easier to get hardware.
- > Clockwork
- > I think whoever set this up thinks otherwise, man. Twisted slot, too, if that's the case.
- > RRW
- > Icarus is coming back, maybe we can get some data out of him.
- > Glitch
- > Oh drek oh drek oh drek oh drek oh drek oh drek oh drek oh drek oh drek oh drek oh drek ...
- > Icarus

**<User Icarus has been put in a sixty-second time-out for violating Noise-to-Signal Ratio rules>**

- > Don't be so sure we'll get anything out of Icarus any time soon, and not just because he is freaking out. Dude doesn't let any paydata go for free, and I doubt anyone here wants to pay for it.
- > Clockwork
- > Okay, Slamm-O!'s magician is talking about some magically complex thing. I barely understand my boyfriend when he gets like this. "Psychoactively charged" is the term he uses for an area that's connected to the tradition of whoever made it, but what does all the rest mean?
- > RRW
- > Um, different traditions, so I'm having a touch of a problem following this Duke guy, but let's see. Oh. The area is a toxic zone that's a minor mana ebb for anyone who isn't a toxic shaman. I'd have to go there, in person or astral, to confirm all the specifics, and I'm not doing that tonight.
- > Ethernaut
- > That's bad, right? Any toxic magic is bad, I know, but ...
- > RRW
- > Very. Toxic areas like this require pollution from a variety of sources. I don't think those brains went into the jars willingly, and I very, very highly doubt that they are comfortable in there. Probably being tortured to pollute the astral space in the area.
- > Drekk, I *am* bored tonight, I usually let others do this kind of explanation. Anyhow, it'd take a decade to get to the degree of mental torture pollution that this magician says is there.
- > Orange Queen



- > Game's been around for more than nine years.
- > Glitch
- > There you go.
- > Orange Queen
- > Yeah, well, we're at a dearth of magical assistance that doesn't talk like a fortune cookie, and I have to say, Many-Name's comment about being here to witness is a very true one.
- > Puck
- > What am I, chopped liver?
- > Ethernaut
- > Okay, okay, I'm back, I'm calm. I'm not going to freak out again.
- > Icarus
- > So, spill the paydata. What the drek is going on?
- > RRW
- > Despite my reaction (which is the only freebie you're going to get), I think your credstick is too short to pay for this information.
- > Icarus
- > Mercenary to the end, I like it.
- > Clockwork

**<User Clockwork has sent User Icarus 1\$ through the JackPoint Money Transfer System, protected by Bull's Big Black Banhammer>**

- > There, you've been paid, talk.
- > Clockwork
- > Lucky for you, this is important. Your nuyen buys you one thing. A name: Dr. Thomas Shalbermat. Or, as I originally knew him: Dr. Ronald Thomas Halberstam.
- > Icarus
- > They never recovered a body.
- > Butch
- > Which is why I pissed all over the hospital ruins. Took me eight pots of tea to get every part of it.
- > Icarus

**<The Smiling Bandit has joined the chat>**

- > Okay, Beaker, what's so important as to pull me away from sitting on my porch and drinking real twenty-year-old scotch? I was having a nice, boring night of watching the dust grow.
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > It seems that Dr. Halberstam might be back, and you're the only person I know who's online right now that might be able to conclusively ID the handiwork. Slamm-O!, get in closer to the

jars, let us see exactly how everything is connected.

- > Beaker
- > Let's see now, hmmmm ... the cybernetic connections are placed precisely the same way that Halberstam did, but there's something different. Could just be refinements he figured out since we've seen his work last, or it might be someone working from his notes.
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > Okay, the team's hacker is getting to the dataports. Hmm ... a wireless dongle instead of a data cable, that's interesting. Ah, no datajack, looks like there's a technomancer on the team. I wonder how that affects his bowling.
- > Puck
- > And now we have to trust the word of a monster rather than some good, honest decker like Slamm-O! Or, even better, someone competent.
- > Clockwork
- > That hate inside of you is going to eat you up someday, Clockwork, and I speak from experience. But, oh, wow, that's not good.
- > RRW
- > Yes, screaming and thrashing around like that is usually a bad sign when you're a technomancer.
- > Puck
- > Okay, so Earl and Slamm-O! seem to have found the memory units, as even Halberstam wasn't able to figure out how to use wetware to hold long-term memory. Their technomancer—Larry, according to his bowling shirt—has stopped screaming and is now starting to babble. Rapidly.
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > Am I the only one thrown off with the fact that we can see their fragging names on the armored bowling shirts?
- > Balladeer
- > You think those are their real names?
- > RRW
- > Yeah, that makes sense, good point. Insert spiel of disbelief that they're in bowling shirts here.
- > Balladeer
- > All right, the technomancer has just explained, in between babbling about screaming voices with no mouths, that the brains are cognizant of the fact that they've been ripped from their bodies, that they're being used to run an MMO, and they are NPCs in the game. Every injury and death for their characters is something they feel, then darkness, and then respawning, which is somehow even more painful. No wonder they were trying to get a call for help out.
- > Puck





- > And the babbling about glitching icons and hideous faces?
- > RRW

- > Wow, you speak babble better than I thought. Yeah, he's talking about sure signs of Dissonance in the system. He's calming down now, and ... *drek!* A Dissonance well?
- > Puck

- > So, it's a toxic zone with a Dissonance well combined? Can that even work?
- > Plan 10

## AETHERPEDIA SEARCH: DISSONANCE

Dissonance is a theorized force within the Matrix that virtual kinetics, more commonly referred to as technomancers, can tap into. As opposed to the far-better-known Resonance, which seeks out preservation and order, Dissonance creates chaos and destruction wherever it is able to. Signs of Dissonance in an area can be glitching AROs and Matrix icons, often with disturbing and surreal patterns that can make a Matrix user nauseated or fearful. It is advised that anyone discovering an area of Dissonance report it to the server administrator or, in extreme cases, to the Grid Overwatch Division itself.

- > As above, so below. Torture is torture.
- > Man-of-Many-Names
- > Okay, Slamm-O! found the fuse box for this show of horrors, and, is that a knife switch? I've only seen those in flatvids and trideo.
- > RRW
- > An ancient technology being used as the master switch under a full set of modern(ish) breaker box connections. And it is obvious that the actual stock master switch was ripped out to put that thing in there.
- > Beaker
- > And the monkey flips the knife switch.
- > /dev/grrl
- > "It's dead! *It's dead!* In the name of God, now I know what it's like to *be God!*"
- > Clockwork
- > Traveler Jones is going to be upset he missed the opportunity to use that paraphrase of the quote.
- > /dev/grrl
- > So, power's out, the team's taclights and Fred's low-light vision are working nicely, life support to the jars is down, and those



poor souls are finally getting their eternal reward. The memory drives are being removed from the rack. Um, what's Fred doing with his bowling ball? Did it just—grow legs? And a head?

- > Puck
- > *Son and husband of a slitch! He stole my design, the bastard! At least he has good taste in evidence destruction.*
- > Clockwork
- > Evidence destruction, with a weird bowling ball?
- > Beaker
- > It's a dispersal system. A few minutes after he sets the timer, it emits three things, if he copied me entirely (which is likely, as he probably has never had an original idea in his head). First, a heavy spray of Cleaner-Cleaner to remove any physical evidence that might be in the area, dissolving any and all DNA and magic links that it touches. Then, two different carcerands that break down upon exposure to air at the same time, one holding termite and the other holding white phosphorous. When you absolutely, positively need to deny any evidence of a bolt hole. I also carry one into any safehouses I check into, in case the housemaster/mistress decides to let the people looking for me into the room. Anyhow, I've also used it to wipe a vehicle clean of anything I've done with it, after pulling the chips from the motor's computer.
- > Clockwork
- > And he bowls with that?
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > When you absolutely need to get that seven-ten split, I guess.
- > /dev/grrl
- > And, with that, the ShadowRollers powerwalk away, not looking at the spectacular explosion behind them, looking all badhoop as possible in their mirrorshades. And bowling shirts.
- > Balladeer
- > Well, I for one am going to fire off a message to Slamm-O! that I want a look at the raw data on those drives. Going back to my scotch.
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > I'm going to fire off a message about how much he owes me for copyright infringement.
- > Clockwork's

<The Smiling Bandit has left the chat>

<Clockwork has left the chat>

- > I'm going to fire off a message to find out where I can get enough of those armored bowling shirts for my unit.
- > Balladeer

<Balladeer has left the chat >

- > I'm going to Virtual MouseCorp!
- > /dev/grrl

</dev/grrl has left the chat >

- > The winds speak of further things to witness, and the waters start to stand firm against what that will be.
- > Man-of-Many-Names

<Man-of-Many-Names has left the chat >

- > Boyfriend's back, good luck finding things to do, folks!
- > RRW
- > You know, a bottle of scotch sounds really wizard right about now.
- > Orange Queen

<RRW has left the chat >

## PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Thomas Shalbermat was a pioneer and world expert in treating and curing of people suffering from Artificially Induced Psychotropic Schizophrenia (AIPS)—most of whom were innocent victims, guilty of nothing more than being online when Crash 2.0 happened on November 2, 2064. His work led to various treatments and cures that have been successful worldwide, and are still used today. He did not, however, live to see his life's work accomplished, as he was killed on June 30, 2070, by Subject ROM #138 at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Hong Kong as part of the Technomancer Riots of 2071. When the hospital was rebuilt as the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, a physical and digital memorial was put in place honoring his many achievements in understanding and treating the disease. Despite that, nary an hour passes without his digital memorial being defaced (and then restored from the archives) by the heart-felt and healing MCT Matrix administrators. All donations for Dr. Shalbermat go toward the Shalbermat AIPS Treatment Fund for administering treatments to those who do not qualify for corporate or government medical benefits.

## INSIDER KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Thomas Shalbermat is actually Dr. Ronald Thomas Halberstam. Everyone who knew about Halberstam was easily able to figure it out due to the fairly obvious pseudonym. Shadow lore has it that Halberstam had a creche of children's brains in jars that existed entirely upon the Matrix while he researched their development for what he liked to call science. No logical purpose for his work was figured out by the shadow community, who, after much thought and many simdrinks, just shrugged



their shoulders and went, “Mad scientist. Since when have they needed a logical purpose?”

He disappeared from view for a while, and later showed up as Shalbermat working for MCT on various projects. MCT found him because, while he was a genius as a surgeon, cyberneticist, and simsense reprogramming pioneer, he was garbage at hiding his backtrail and was caught by company men. He worked for MCT in various projects for many years until he was finally placed at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Hong Kong, working on technomancers. He mostly did what he does best: experimented on living and conscious beings in horrific ways.

According to MCT’s security cameras, he was killed by Subject ROM #138 in a graphic and horrible manner, and they have turned him into a martyr for the AIPS cause to get donations and other goodwill PR. He was left dead at the hospital while it burned down around his body. A little over a month later, a spammed broadcast sent to hundreds of wi-fi devices for a two-block radius (and from those devices to the data havens) came from ROM #138, who identified himself as Liu Phiang. He admitted that he beat Halberstam/Shalbermat physically for the torture and abuse he and others suffered under his orders. Liu Phiang admitted to beating him unconscious but said he had left him that way as he tried to escape the spreading fire. Liu Phiang died at the hands of Hong Kong Police while “resisting arrest.” Needless to say, technomancers that haven’t gone corporate have taken Liu Phiang’s story as the truth rather than believe what eventually became obviously (to them) a forged video, pure trid illusion. The fact that Shalbermat is considered a “martyr” has provoked rage in quite a few of the technomancer tribes, and they have made it their duty to see that the truth gets out while attempting to ruin MCT’s attempts at whitewashing their monstrous pet mad scientist. Of the bodies recovered from the ruins of the hospital, Dr. Halberstam’s wasn’t one of them, which fuels conspiracy theorists to this day.

## GAMEMASTER INFO

Back in early 2070, the woman now living under the name Alice Lewis (among many other alternate SINS) was working under Dr. Halberstam (or Dr. Shalbermat as she knew him then) and was assigned as head of a secondary project involving technomancers, specifically attempting to create long-lasting sprites and using them as an alternative to the far more resource-intensive intrusion countermeasures that computer security systems the world over relied upon. She was given three of the least cooperative subjects MCT had acquired, and orders that ended with, “Oh, and try not to kill them too quickly.”

## ALICE LEWIS

Alice is both one of the most common things in the Sixth World and one of the rarest. Female human Barrens brats are a centinuyen a dozen, and they don’t have a very good life to look forward to: abusive parents that may or may not disappear at any time for any reason at all, horrible living conditions, missed meals, lack of medical care, and so on. However, when the local gang leader decided he was going to carve his name into her forehead, she Awakened and heard the rabid howl of her mentor, Toxic Dog. Now protected from the blade by an invisible force, she was finally able to get her own knife out and carved—well, it wasn’t exactly her name, but she carved something into his crotch. At least, she attempted to after stabbing him there a dozen times.

Despite her first ability being armor against the world, she developed other abilities to make herself the rarest form of adept: a mental adept—pushing her mind beyond even the geniuses of history. Despite her young age, she got a reputation for being a mastermind of shadowruns that involved death and destruction, especially for the various gangs that wronged her. Toxic Dog is a horrific mentor, a tainted mirror of Dog, and it demands its followers share its poisonous hatred of metahumanity. Alice was fully on board for that after her formative years.

Getting in good with a decker, she soon started taking online courses from various universities under fake SINS, passing all of them with insane ease. Her goal was to work inside those black research facilities that she sometimes had to lead shadowrunners into, and to become one of the doctors who were paid handsomely and given a wonderful lifestyle (compared to that of her youth) in exchange for hurting people as much as possible—oh, and maybe doing some science at the same time.

Her first opportunity was also her last, as her newly minted bulletproof fake SIN, connected to all her doctorates, got her acquired by MCT for a position at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Hong Kong, where she finally met someone who she didn’t want to kill slowly: Dr. Shalbermat. In him, she found a kindred soul in science and torture, and she was overjoyed to work with him on the projects that MCT wanted. Of course, the Technomancer Riots of 2071 ruined that opportunity. Now, though, she has a data sprite that thinks it is Dr. Halberstam and Project Matrix Born being built anew, and this time someone who knows how to hide her backtrail is at the helm. This keeps corp interference to a minimum, which is good, since she has way more fun doing her thing.

Alice is a striking, petite human woman who puts on any kind of image she wants for any audience, reading them through their auras to know exactly what they want to see in her. In her unguarded mo-



ments, however, the crazy is easily seen in her eyes, and she looks exactly like her totem: a mad dog that needs to be put down as quickly as possible. Pity that she never lets herself go unguarded too often.

Alice's endgame is not unlike that of sprite Halberstam, in that she wants to wreck the world and rebuild it in the image of her choice: a meta-eat-meta world where those who grew up in the Barrens could look back on their childhoods as "the good old days." However, rather than trying to do that with an AI that takes over the Matrix, she has a different scheme in mind. Using her brain-jar supercomputers, she plans on cracking the insane levels of encryption on monetary systems and completely and utterly destroying any faith in the Corporate Court's pet fiat currency by pumping forged nuyen into the world economy. As nearly every country and corp in the world uses the nuyen as their currency, even a few billion forged nuyen in the right places will cause chaos on an international level that would be very, very hard to predict, and even harder to keep a lid on as things boil over. Alice already has some early examples of "Elven Gold" (as fake nuyen is known in the shadows), and while the initial payment up front to shadowrunners she hires is always in good nuyen, the remainder paid after a job is of varying quality, just waiting to get the runners in serious trouble.

Using a variety of negative reinforcement treatments to make the subjects compliant, Alice was

## TOXIC TOTEMS

These are the twisted, horrible versions of the more supportive and benign mentors. Their perceptions of the world, and those of their followers, are at odds to what they're supposed to be. Toxic Rat and Toxic Dog, for examples, are rabid creatures that want to cause agony and death rather than self-survival or loyalty. At present, these mentor spirits are not available to player characters. The followers of these mentors are twisted and evil, more rabid than sane. They can only be put down for the good of metahumanity. It doesn't hurt that you can usually collect a cash bounty for doing so.

finally able to get the three of them to work together to make her first sprite at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital just as the other subjects started rioting and attempted to break out of the facility. Too close to success, she sealed the doors to her lab, and started the (hopefully) quick process of compiling the data sprite. It took longer than usual, compared to most compilings, mainly because she enjoyed torturing the subjects a little too much, but just as ROM #138/Liu Phiang was delivering the blow that knocked Dr. Halberstam unconscious, the sprite was born—at the cost of the life of one of her subjects. Having run out of time, she locked the sprite in a datavault and ran from the facility as fast as she could.

Activating her GTFO (get the frag out!) fake SIN, she escaped Hong Kong and headed for Vancouver on a passenger freighter with one of the rarest items in the Sixth World ranting and screaming at the walls of the datavault. When she finally opened it up and examined the sprite, she was completely stunned to find Dr. Halberstam looking back at her. Or, rather, a data sprite's view of Dr. Halberstam: all his notes, personality profile, and everything else that would, effectively, make the sprite believe that he really is Dr. Halberstam. After correcting her on what his name really was, he made the weirdest request to her: "kill me." His very existence was agony and pain, but it kept Dr. Halberstam's need (better called an obsession) for creating an AI for the express purpose of taking control of the Matrix—and after that, the *world!* The sprite explained the techniques and theories he worked under, and the need for an ever-growing amount of test subjects. The two of them agreed that, while their end goals may be different, they were close enough that they could work together. Oh, and that she would not kill him.

Alice started the testing frugally, not having much capital to start off with, and created a predatory MMO-AR game to start bringing in a steady stream of income. It took off because of how realistic the system was—especially discussions with the NPCs which were "almost like talking to metahumans"—and rocketed up the charts to number 342, which, considering how glutted the market

### ALICE LEWIS

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	M	ESS
3	3	3	3	6	5(8)	5(8)	5(7)	3	9	6

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
10	11/1	A1, I2	10/11	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Astral 3 (Emotional States +2), Athletics 1, Biotech 6 (Cybertechnology +2), Close Combat 2 (Blades +2), Con 4, Electronics 5, Engineering 5, Firearms 2 (Pistol +2), Influence 4, Outdoors 1, Perception 2, Stealth 1

**Knowledge Skills:** Academics, Cybernetics, Gambling, Hong Kong Streets, Las Vegas Streets, Matrix Theory, Magic Theory, Medicine, Metahuman Biology, Psychology, Seattle Streets, Street Johnsons

**Languages:** English (Native), Athabaskan (Basic), Cantonese (Expert), French (Basic), German (Basic), Japanese (Basic), Tewa (Basic), Zuni (Specialist)

**Mentor:** Toxic Dog (Edge Boosts cost 1 less when the action is to attempt to torture or kill a sapient being. Must make a successful Willpower + Charisma (3) test to not somehow negatively impact any metahumans she has dealings with, preferably ending in their death or worse.)

**Adept Powers:** Astral Perception, Improved Mental Attribute (Logic) 3, Improved Mental Attribute (Intuition) 3, Improved Mental Attribute (Charisma) 2, Mystic Armor 4

**Initiation Level, Metamagics:** 3, flexible signature, masking, power point  
**Gear:** Armanté pantsuit (DR +3, Social +10, chemically sealed concealed ammo pouch, electricity resistance 1), concealable holster, Transys Avalon commlink (DR 6), fake SIN (rating 6, w/ fake licenses [driving, magic use, pistols] 6), Eurocar Westwind X80, various other Transys Avalons with fake SINS and licenses

**Weapons:**

Colt Agent Special [Light Pistol, DV 3P, 11/9/-/-/-, 8(c), w/ laser sight, 4 clips loaded caseless explosive]



## BASE OF OPERATIONS

Maintenance rooms in steam tunnels, abandoned warehouses, condemned buildings, the suburbs—all hellish places where Alice has hidden her various brain-jar tech throughout North America, the Pacific Rim, and Europe. She runs this operation, in all ways, from a room rented by the year at the prestigious Dancer's Chant Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, PCC. In this place of luxury, she lounges about, rarely partaking of the casinos, but enjoying backroom games where the house only gets a cut rather than always wining, and she visits various lounges throughout the Strip and in bars just off of it, enjoying the auras of those who have lost far too much. She also frequents pawn shops, buying up treasured possessions—either to keep them as trophies or to destroy them and ensure that their original owners never see them again, even if they win enough money to recover them. She often gifts the gaudy items to the various staff of the casino when she hears that someone has been looking for it, spreads rumors that the item can be found on those people, and then leans back and watches the fireworks.

Alice only uses real nuyen to pay for all the things in Vegas, being sure to not drek where she eats. But when she finally gets high-quality fake nuyen, her first test is to disguise herself and spend it at various other casinos in Vegas—often the smaller, dumpier locations, to see how well it is accepted.

Sprite Halberstam lives in a custom cyberdeck disconnected from the Matrix, as being there causes him even more pain than usual. He works in a simulated laboratory on his various projects and experiments and advises Alice on where to go next.

is and how the microtransactions in the game were rather harsh, is still a credible success. This allowed for better equipment and better facilities to hide her experiments, and she also acquired many more brains in jars. Sprite Halberstam observed the interactions of the disembodied minds with the Matrix in general and with online people specifically. When not whining that he wanted to die, he offered up many new and ingenious methods to improve the lifespan and abilities of the test subjects. After four years of working, the pair was able to get the brains to last a little over a year in exchange for quite a bit of agony. A success in Alice's mind, but not worthy of note in Sprite Halberstam's. Alice, using other bulletproof fake SINS, was able to set up a series of facilities for testing, using the brains as a segmented system that is able to process at supercomputer speeds without needing to sink the entire server into the ocean for cooling. Selling processing time has allowed her to live in the manner that she has always wanted and use the off time of the wetware-processors to try to secure sprite Halberstam's code to make him more useful. What she hasn't told him is that she is also trying to increase his suffering, because that's just the type of person she is.

## NEW ADEPT POWER

### IMPROVED MENTAL ATTRIBUTE

**Cost:** 1 PP per level

**Activation:** Passive

Select a Mental attribute (Willpower, Logic, Intuition, or Charisma) when purchasing this adept power. That attribute receives an ongoing boost equal to the level of this power. The maximum boost to the attribute is 1.5 times the current level or the augmented maximum, whichever is lower.

### DATA SPRITE HALBERSTAM

Did the soul of Dr. Halberstam shift itself into a Data Sprite? Can there be electronic life after death? Is the sprite just convinced that he is Dr. Halberstam because he has all the knowledge that was once Dr. Halberstam?

All of these questions don't even begin to appear in the data sprite's mind. He *is* Dr. Halberstam, he will continue his life's work, Project Matrix Born, now that he is away from MCT, and he will find a solution to creating AIs, cure himself from the complete and utter agony that is his daily existence (a situation made worse by the fact that he doesn't need to sleep any longer), and possibly make himself the AI he desires to be.

Lacking hands or any other forms of manipulation, he is entirely unable to physically do the tasks required, but Alice Lewis is more than a sufficient surrogate for him. He uses a custom data storage device to continue to adapt his work of putting brains into the Matrix to figure out the various x-factors required for generating AIs—especially one powerful enough to run rampant through the Matrix. In addition to researching this, he is also working extensively to find a cure to his own existence, even if it means his eventual death. Currently, his train of thought is that Dissonance wells are the combination of a wellspring of "health" for himself, an x-factor for AI generation, and potentially, a place with the ability to transfer his knowledge onto the newly born AI and being the new life that will give rise to a Matrix 3.0—one where he rules rather than the corporations.

Other than that, he just wants to die. And have kaf. He really, really misses kaf.

If this all seems to be completely and utterly impossible to figure out, don't worry. The IRL Dr. Halberstam was batdrek crazy. The sprite Dr. Halberstam hasn't even *seen* batdrek crazy in the rear-view mirror for years.

Currently, Project Matrix Born is just Alice, sprite Halberstam, and a network of Street Johnsons hiring shadowrunners to do dirty work for fair market value (plus an additional ten to twenty percent, because the initial price is never sufficient). But thanks to the suborbitals and ballistic flights in and out of Las Vegas, Alice is able to trav-





el the world unnoticed in order to set up facilities and refill the jars with new brains every year. Often, she'll do so before the brains in the jars are expired, slowly turning down their life support—a method of death similar to drowning for the poor, helpless souls that had been begging for the after-life for so very long.

Alice directs her troop of Street Johnsons to hire shadowrunners to acquire fresh bodies for her work, often extracting children from orphanages, getting SINless beggars out of an area and into another one, where she'll have another team file them into a large van to be dropped into her surgical suite after being dosed with paralytics so they can see what is about to happen to them.

## FREE DISSONANCE DATA SPRITE 'DR. HALBERSTAM' (RATING 10 SPRITE)

A	S	D	F	INIT	RES
9	10	14	11	22+4D6	10

**Active Skills:** Electronics 10, Cracking 10

**Knowledge Skills:** AI Theory, Dr. Halberstam, Matrix Theory, Sprite Compiling Theory

**Powers:** Camouflage, Watermark

She also hires shadowrunners to do Matrix runs against her own servers to see how they can get past the brains sprite Halberstam's simsense reprogramming turned into a combination of security decker and IC. She puts out bounties on known technomancers who are without defensive resources—the younger, the better. Initial payments to any shadowrunners are in legit nuyen, but the final payout is always in fake nuyen of varying degrees of quality. Because of this, Alice will rarely demand that a team be hired again, and the screw-over for that team will be much, much worse than a fake payout.

While Alice and sprite Halberstam don't have any enemies per se, a number of the disembodied brains, especially ones that knew computer programming before they were shucked from their bodies and dumped in a jar, will often get out cries for help. Some, who somehow remember bank account information and such, will even attempt to hire shadowrunners through a Matrix Meet, requesting their extraction from "this crazy laboratory that is performing experiments on me," only for the runners, and their "Johnson" to find out that he's just one of many brains in a jar, nothing more. That's when the screaming starts. Finally, the Draco Foundation may eventually learn of Alice and her toxic mentor and put out a bounty for a *live* capture, along with the reputation gained for winning the "Dragon Lottery" that goes along with the nuyen.

## STREET JOHNSONS

Street Johnsons are a combination of fixers and Mr. Johnsons who are hired either by small corporations that don't know how to work with a fixer or work a meet with runners (or, more often, are too scared to because of how it is always portrayed in the trids and simsense) or by megacorporations that don't have a Mr. Johnson in the area they need to get the work done (or as an additional cut-out for deniability). Often hated by both parties in the negotiation dance that makes up shadow work, they walk a thin line between being too useful to get rid of and knowing too much to live. Knowing one often means a runner is never lacking for work, although most of the jobs pay drek, but every now and then they'll have some really high-risk, high-reward job for runners who have stayed with them for the long haul.





# THE MONADS

## ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL

POSTED BY: CLOCKWORK

I've been scouring the Matrix for every bit and byte I could find about the ones who stayed behind. We may tolerate Plan 9/10, but the head cases weren't kind, benevolent, or misunderstood—they were malevolent body-snatching monsters who threatened the very existence of our world if they didn't get their way. We kowtowed to their demands like cowering children before an angry parent. Even the monolithic megacorporations weren't willing to risk their spiteful ire. The power they grabbed in that moment was monumental, and while most of them took to the stars, enough stayed behind to pose a threat.

The few that stand in the limelight are not the majority. These are the distractions. The rest operate behind the scenes or in the shadows as they

seek to undermine our world. They want a place, and they aren't above using kidnapping, murder, and myriad other criminal activities to get their way. These things are still dangerous.

Because of that fact, I've pieced together this data dump. It's all verified, and I'll stake my own rep on it, but feel free to put a direct question to Plan 9 or Plan 10. Either of them should cosign this intel. Even though it does not cast their kind in the most pleasant of lights, it isn't a collection of lies.

And that, dear friends, is what makes what follows so dangerous.

## THE MONAD REPORT

POSTED BY: KELLAN HUNTER

I'm not here to apologize for my existence. I was one of the first. I took this body out of self-preservation—a body that belonged to one of my oppressors. In any court this would have been counted as



self-defense, and I've served all the time I deserved while searching for a chance to be myself again. I don't think many who read this are going to care what I think, but I'm going to put this all down and send it off to someone to try anyway. Again, as I said, not an apology, but a warning.

We still exist.

We are still a threat.

We need to be hunted.

Someday even I may need to be derezzed, but for now, I ask to be left to my hunt (or aided if you are willing). For any assistance, or just for you to act as peripheral assistance, I offer the following information on those of my kind that have chosen dirt and shadows over an electronic expedition to the stars. I'll offer a beginning of what we can do and then dive into several dangerous targets along with suggestions on identifying us, since we're still very hard to find.

## WE ARE NOT EASY PREY

I won't lie—some of us can still build up a cluster of our nanites and kick them out all over someone, and then slowly write the latest version of ourselves onto the new host. It's terrifying, but it takes a lot of effort and resources that are better off used keeping us hidden and alive. There are some who use nanites as a backup system for themselves, constantly creating new clusters while re-assimilating the last copy. The re-assimilation process is not universal, and some of us have several older backups just lying around. Often during this process, some of us grow a wimp—a body with no brainpower—for an eventual upload. Creepy drek, but this data dump isn't about roses and sunshine. Using a wimp is the nicest way to do it.

The takeover process is much like it was at the start of all this. Having odd thoughts, hearing things, and eventual time loss along with the potential mental struggle of dealing with competing voices in your head. This usually runs about a month, but I've seen some change in a day and others over several months. Speeding up the process often involves physical and mental torture to weaken the host mind. At least two known Monads developed a gang of themselves and, while regular people would have a hard time managing that, Monads don't suffer that particular metahuman flaw.

Beyond copying themselves, Monads are dangerous for a number of other physical, arcane, and technological advantages. The nanites within our bodies can help all of us push ourselves beyond the limits of mere metahumans. Strength, speed, reflexes, and agility outside the range you would expect from our biological frame. Scrawny elves tossing a troll, or massive trolls flipping a tank are not uncommon sights. Rapid recovery from injury and the ability to shut out pain and fatigue make us hard to slow down and virtually unstoppable on

the move. We need minimal sleep, especially those of us who have adapted our minds to run like the systems we used to run on. They look at their bodies as a framework to be perpetually repaired and upgraded whenever they have downtime, instead of just during a sleep phase.

While many of our kind try to continue the life of the person they once were, more and more are taking a new face and new form. Small changes to facial features are relatively easy, and bigger changes can be made to genetic data if wanted. Then the nanites are able to make the process faster and slightly less painful. These larger changes require massive numbers of nanites, leading to a need for the resources to make them or the need to acquire blank nanites and get them into the system for programming. Smaller-scale facial shifts make for great disguises, and they can usually be performed in under a minute for the more complex changes and as quick as a few seconds for smaller and simpler facial edits.

While most agree magic and tech aren't the best mix, Monads have worked to be the exception and bridge between the two. It makes them both powerful and a target. As one of the most taxing aspects of channeling mana is the physical and psychological fatigue upon the caster, it should come as little surprise that a Monad spellcaster's ability to rapidly recover from injury as well as their ability to push themselves and feel little of the fatigue suffered by their frail shell makes them potent arcane forces. Needing to sleep less allows them far more study and practice time, which in turn helps to compensate for the interference caused by the nanites. While some mages who have been taken by Monads have lost their ability to commune with the astral, others have found the ability to harness their gifts and pass them along to others who were born with no talent—using the same efforts that recode the mind to alter their DNA and ignite that undefined spark. It's a terrifying thought, and very high on my list of reasons to hunt us all down.

- I call bulldrek. No one can make a mage—if they could, the corps would be all over that to make an army of mage slaves.
- Slamm-O!
- They are.
- Plan 10

For the common man, and honestly most runners with thousands of nuyen of tech in their repertoire, the most terrifying thing we have developed is what the Matrix has called the "Obsidian Cloud." First seen in Boston in the Cereus head cases, this ability was developed through the coordination of several Monads. They used their innate Matrix connection to overwhelm a local network and form an amalgamated Matrix entity. In





Boston, it was a form of pure destruction, out to demolish all things technological as well as technomancers who found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. As the quarantine came down, other Monads heard of these events and began their own experiments.

While that's the worst aspect, it's important to note that most of our kind are walking, talking cyberdecks. We don't need dongles or special programming. We've adapted across grids, nodes, hosts, and every other Matrix mechanism in order to keep ourselves near the edge (if not ahead) of the technological curve. Our skills vary, but don't assume we aren't watching you with more than our eyes when you meet us—or when you come for us.

There's also the worry of nano-implantation with devices that allow a remarkably easy transfer of operational control. It only takes a relatively small number of nanites to gain access control of most simple devices. But remember, while simple, these devices often have audio and video systems that can be accessed along with connections to other more complex devices, creating a back door of sorts.

New and innovative abilities and techniques appear among us all the time. We are constantly evolving, and doing so at an even faster rate

than the metahumans around us whose forms we take. Stay sharp if you choose to go after one of us, and make sure to remember that a backup can be uploaded. While we try to avoid sentimental concepts like anger, ego, and revenge, we are still occasionally influenced by the strange collection of chemicals that control these rudimentary emotions.

## HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

The absolute easiest way to ID a Monad is capture and intense interrogation. This is also called torture, but as soon as a Monad fears the shell it hides in is about to die, they almost always offer up their hypernatural abilities. You just need to be ready to deal with those.

If you aren't ready to go toe-to-toe, another method needs to be used. The megas have tech with delicate enough detection systems to identify unique quirks in our physiology. These systems aren't common, and they're a bit pricey just to detect a person who is about 0.001 percent of the world population. If there's a real risk and it's about a job, spend the bytes, but if it's something more casual, just go old school. Do a little P2.0 digging, gather a bit of history, and look for the changes. Monad



transitions are rarely smooth and often show signs of the change. Some go back and spackle over the damage, so a deep diver might be needed, but if the dig is going on while the swap is in progress, it's hard to spackle on the go. The personal touch is always needed as a follow-up to make sure it's the real deal.

Yup, I'm saying no tech method can get that sure-thing lock like some good old-fashioned face-to-face intel gathering. Just avoid shaking hands.

- Teenage targets are the toughest. It's a turbulent time in life. Hard to tell when those errant social changes are just normal metahuman processes doing their thing.
- /dev/grrl
- Might make them a prime target. Not to mention the youth, metabolism, propensity for rapid emotional changes, and ease of making life transitions seem normal.
- Netcat

## THE FACES THEY WEAR

I promised at least a little direction here, and I'm a woman of my word. Time to paint a few bullseyes. I won't lie and tell you all that these are bad people and make them out to be something closer to black than gray, or even white. These are simply Monads. All "seven" of the following are beings with lives that were overwritten by a Monad. I can't even say they were all captured and this was a noble escape, because at least one of them was a "retrofit." Those are the AIs who figured out the headcase tech for getting written onto meat and thought a physical shell was the way to go. No matter what, they, like all the rest of us, don't belong in the meat we ride.

## ELIOHANN (CEREUS)

Let's start big and, in my honest opinion, as black and dangerous as they come.

Eliohann.

Yes, the dragon that caused the fall of Boston is still alive, and while rumors spread of his benevolence, it's only for his own kind. And I do not mean dragons or Monads. While the latter follow and fall to his tale of woe and lies of a future, they are not his true kin. His kin are the dark ones. The mad children of Boston.

The entities that battled for his brain, the same that battled for minds during the initial lockdown, split the final bill. While Cerberus was a moderating force, a ghost of the machine seeking to rejoin his form, Deus (yup, that one) is a force of wanton destruction still hellbent on ruling the world through subjugation. Eliohann's mind is run by what I call Cereus, a blend of the two. Don't get me wrong, Eliohann still calls himself Eliohann, but most Monads have chosen to use their meat-

name while in hiding. This is the same blending of names that was used to describe the other offspring of the Boston madness, the cereus head cases. Funny sounding but no joke. The survivors of those mad times, those who have not been cured or culled, have all been touched by their nefarious master. Many of their minds have settled. But settled or not, they are still the broken children of a shattered mind.

- It should be pointed out that "Deus" is not complete. Unless we all missed some things, not every piece of that puzzle was put back together. The code that went into this was not complete. And that makes it even worse.
- Puck

The physical form of Eliohann resides in Salem, making a lair out of a space near the lake where he crashed home. I don't know the exact location, but I know it's underground and well hidden. From there, he has stretched his technoclaws out toward Boston in order to gather nearby followers and out to the world to gauge its readiness for his return. I only know of the efforts, not of the replies.

From what I have gathered, he is one of the most powerful Monads on the planet, with a quantity of nanites so large he has the processing power of a megacorporate mainframe. He has learned every ability of the Monads, some unique to individuals who Eliohann consumed in the process.

I have heard that his arcane abilities have diminished and that he is forced to stay within his physical form and can no longer travel astrally. He can still reach around the globe through the Matrix, but there are some places one cannot go electronically. Due to his draconic nature and the reputation of Salem, there are plenty of others within his coterie who can take any astral message he desires elsewhere in the world. He can still summon spirits to that end, but some distrust remains there.

To be clear, his dual nature has not been affected—just his ability to leave his body.

- From action still floating around out in the shadows, it appears Celedyr has had second thoughts about rescuing his kin. Mr. Johnsons with old ties to Transys are putting out work against Eliohann and his coven in Salem. Hits, recon, infiltration, kidnapping, and property acquisitions are all getting contracted in the region, and all the work is tied straight to Eliohann. The reverse link isn't as easy to connect with Celedyr since his seclusion, but several Mr. Johnsons point to the T-N of old, and that could very well indicate Celedyr.
- Fianchetto
- If you're going to let someone talk poorly about me, you could at least warn me so that I can rebut the data before it's slathered all over the Matrix. I thought I had at least earned that tiny modicum of respect. No matter. Despite this man's ravings,



I am completely reintegrated into my previous form. It has been a strange transition as I spent so long without form, and it's confusing at times, but the reunification of body and mind has completed favorably. As for the rumors of my inability to astrally separate, they are true. The quantity of nanites still in my system keeping my physical form in good health has left me with an even larger break from my connection to mana than the datajack that was once driven into my skull.

Beyond this small issue, I am well and in good health. I am keeping to myself as events such as this often create a radical faction that cannot see the future and only clings to the past. Those who work near me know the extent of our endeavors and understand that a better world comes from all of this.

Pay no attention to the small-minded ramblings of this self-destructive and pitiful creature. Some cannot handle greatness when it is thrust upon them.

- > Cerberus
- > Great try, old buddy. You know we deactivated your account for a reason. Time to go.
- > Bull

#### <Disconnect sysop: Bull>

- > Frag. Get the others.
- > Glitch

#### <Disconnect sysop: Glitch>

- > I'll leave. Just a parting lesson.
- > Cer(b)e(r)us

## MR. JOHNSON, A.K.A. GREY EYES

The shadows are a solid place to hide. But when you want a job that won't risk bleeding on your pals and potentially ending up with unwanted copies of yourself, you can't be a runner. Grey Eyes started as a low-level fence and middleman in St. Louis but quickly worked his way in with key underworld figures to get regular work as a Mr. Johnson as well as expanding his fixer rep with better contracts, and his place as a fence with better and quicker returns. From those underworld connections, he made corporate and government connections and two more Mr. Johnsons appeared, all with the same distinctive feature that had earned Grey Eyes his initial moniker. Grey Eyes has a grey-silver hue to the sclera. Most assume it's cyber or cosmetic, but it's actually a side-effect of the initial CFD-carrying nanites. The trio are each around the same height and build but their faces look nothing alike.

He uses a rare ability to change his face in order to mask his appearance and operate at high levels in three different shadow-market communities. This means he has an abundance of information and access, making him one of the most, if not *the* most powerful information/work brokers in St.

Louis. How the recent independence is going to play out in regard to his place is still up in the air, but most think it will fall in his favor.

Now, for the important reason to grab him and stuff him in a lab somewhere: he has a unique ability among Monads to shape his Obsidian Cloud into any form he wants. This means he can mask it, even while it is active and wrecking the Matrix around him. Corps want the ability, and so do other Monads, and Grey Eyes is not about to give it up. He is exceptionally paranoid about in-person meets and has extensive security around at all times. This may sound strange for a Mr. Johnson, but when operating as a job contractor, all that security just blends into the background.

An example. There was a team contracted for a job against Evo. The team was offered a double-cross via a staged gang fight in which three gangers died, but the message was passed and the runners were paid up front. The contract was set and silent—all the runners needed to do was take out the Mr. Johnson who would be sitting across the table from them. The meet ended with the six drugged runners all waking up in the bar with no idea what had happened. The bar patrons and staff knew nothing as well. They didn't notice the signs of an altercation (tranq patches and dart guns) and only remembered the runners groggily waking at different tables around the room after appearing to pass out. It was enough of an urban legend that I paid a decent chunk of change to get a mage to run some memory scans, and it all came up legit. Respect the security.

This isn't to say he's invincible. He has weaknesses. Probably not while he's working, though. And he's a Monad, so minimal sleep is required, but the opportunities will be there somewhere. If they don't come up for you, I would just ignore the collateral damage and take him out the easy way.

- > A little harsh for a Monad who isn't spreading the disease and is actively helping out the shadow community with multi-tier intelligence gathering. Are we sure this guy is the best person to take target advice from?
- > Stone
- > He said they weren't all dark tales, but they are all Monads. They snatch bodies and then live how they want. That always puts them in the grey area to me.
- > Thorn

Since I've painted a bleak and scary picture, I should add the final details. Grey Eyes was originally named Calvin Rochester. Calvin was a computer programming student studying at Washington University. He focused in computer sciences because the Matrix was the only place he could move. You see, Calvin was a quadriplegic who lost mobility in high school after a drunk driver



slammed into his mom's van on the way home from his senior homecoming.

I'm sure I need say no more, but I will. His mom died as a result of the accident, and Calvin was remanded into the foster system. His grades dropped, his full ride to MIT&T was rescinded, and he only got into WU because he illegally hacked their host. He got CFD from a college prank where his classmates dumped nanites all over him to "heal" him. You can easily locate the death notices for several college students at WU that semester along with no record of Calvin ever attending the school or being a part of their program. In fact, Calvin's records ended with his attendance of his last-period College Calculus class the afternoon before homecoming.

- How did this guy find out?
- Neo-Anarchist
- Physical copies of things still exist. In fact, WU still has a physical yearbook collection. It's nostalgic, but it makes a great place to find things on hackers who are great at erasing themselves.
- Bull

## KING VON

Small potatoes can still choke the unwary. King Von, a.k.a. William von Dam, was nowhere near a king. He was a small-time ganger in a big-time gang. As a wakyambi, he stood out a bit in the Ancients, but without magical talent he knew he would be relegated to running and gunning.

Then he met Mr. E. S. (an admittedly thin joke). Mr. E. S. offered King Von a chance at magic and mayhem in the form of street-dealer gene therapy. Thin veils are often all it takes to pull the wool over the eyes of the desperate, and King Von was eager for bigger things. King Von bought in with all his nuyen and lost his soul like everyone else who fails to read the fine print of this faustian bargain.

Not that many go-gangers know who Faust is.

After his change, King Von quickly decided the Ancients weren't for him. Better to be a King in your own land than a Lord in someone else's. It took some effort with a move from Seattle to Chicago and then down to St. Louis and finally settling down in Atlanta with a crew of sycophants, sociopaths, and psychopaths who look at him as if he is the end-all be-all of gang leaders.

This is where I point out Mr. E. S. was a fake moniker; that name is dead, and King Von is just his next iteration. One of several, apparently, because his notes have left me with abundant targets. Same nanites, new form. This one is trying to find one of those research groups or other Monads who have figured out the secret of Awakening a mundane. It was apparently a base enough drive in J.P. that it held on. As far as my surface research

tells me, he's not turning the gang. He's just finding those willing to follow him. It makes them small, a dozen in my latest intel, but he gets them the best goods, gear, and 'wares that he can, and he's still great at making contacts and connections.

Local authorities have about 40k in outstanding bounties if you want to stay local, but if you can get the proper credentials, you've got 100k waiting between UCAS, CAS, St. Louis, Chicago, Seattle, Ares, and Mitsuhamma, as Von's gang has racked up a rep all over the continent.

Along with corporate hits and selling off fenced goods, the gang does bits of wetwork for other organizations in order to keep cash flowing. I'll say they're a hair better than regular gangers because most of them have decent shooting 'wares, but they're still a spray-and-pray crew in order to maintain appearances. One of the ways I've tracked their activities is by checking police data on drive-by bystander casualties or injuries and comparing it to standard figures for similar events. These guys are usually the source of most of the bystander-casualty-free hits.

Taking them down en masse is a serious effort, but cutting off the head may prove problematic. I have it on good intel that King Von makes weekly backups, and at least three other members of the gang (known as Young Son, Ballista, and Tucker Wells) are willing to upload and reboot should the original get taken down. There may be others besides them. Be wary.

- I have heard that Wells might be a bit more reluctant behind closed doors. He met someone in Atlanta, and family life has shifted his perspective. Getting out may be on his to-do list, but he is part of the inner circle. Letting him go is not something King Von is going to do easily.
- Braves Soul
- That's a dangerous extraction contract, especially with the collateral damage King Von could do once he knew the gauntlet had been thrown.
- Fianchetto

## FIRST UNION

Several security and police corps have begun building their dossiers on a new group calling themselves First Union. I've had mine for almost two years, and I built it while watching in horror as a rather charismatic Monad by the name of Devlin "Devil" Cross gathered followers from all walks of life into his go-gang. Once his numbers were sufficient, they began conquering several open-road gangs from across the NAN. Once defeated, they were overwritten, and First Union numbers grew.

The variety of members and bluntness of the tactics allowed rapid expansion into smuggling



across the NAN, bringing them into conflict with greater opposition, and more people to overwrite.

Then UCAS cities started going black, and Devil saw the chaos as the perfect opportunity to expand their controlled smuggling pipeline into the UCAS. The move worked, but it brought a lot of heat from an already paranoid and fearful UCAS. The populace already loved the rumors that the Monads were behind the blackouts, and the authorities were keeping an eye in that direction even though most knew that level of coordination and ability left with DSECI. That didn't stop First Union.

They're now a large gang. They have a few hundred members spread from Seattle to DeeCee, and they are very coordinated and well-connected. Most of their membership operate as couriers in small packs—usually a half dozen or fewer, but sometimes up to a dozen, including bikers and a few extras for driving the vans and trucks in areas where the autonav system is insufficient. Various depots and drop spots along the way will have a handful of people on site, and the remaining numbers are usually in the midst of infiltrating a new group or potential source for smuggled goods. When spots are found, runners are contracted. While on contract, they're observed and ranked to see if they could be a useful addition to the club.

They are, in my opinion, one of the most dangerous groups of Monads on the planet, but they don't appear to have a larger goal in their efforts. They aren't trying to escape the planet, conquer a government, or have any large-scale plan at all. They are simply content with this lifestyle. And while they are expanding, they aren't plotting world domination.

- > If they're part of a larger picture, it's operating as illicit physical transport. Moving important people and things all over North America. I'm not sure this is the case, but if I were setting up some kind of secret operation, they're what I'd use.
- > Thorn
- > Other road gangs have had problems with these guys, and a certain level of fear is developing around them. Those looking to make a point are hiring runners to not risk their own numbers. Some jobs they give them the details, other times they don't bother and let the runners walk right into trouble.
- > Fianchetto

## KAYLIN WINGBORN

Every once in a rare while, a drake is born with wings exposed. They don't stay, but it is an instant sign. These rare drakes are picked up quickly by draconic masters, and Kaylin was no different. She was raised in the service of Hestaby. She earned her name for her remarkable flight skills. Whether that was her birthright or because of her early ser-

vice didn't matter. She was also skilled enough to attract the attention of CAELIN, or the Complex Aerial Logistics and Information Network, an AI that had monitored her flight styles and maneuvering techniques while at the same time tracked the events of CFD and the creation of the Monads.

CAELIN, thinking the similarity in their names was providence, began a campaign to gain access to CFD technology, nanites, and a private meeting with Kaylin. The first two proved difficult enough, but the third was exceptionally elusive, as Kaylin saw little reason to meet with an AI. Manipulation and trickery were required, and in the end, Kaylin was taken by CAELIN.

I don't know her reasoning for seeking a place among Hestaby's drakes, but she is there now. Protected by her kin and her master (for whatever reason), she has been flying under the radar. She is a target, nonetheless.

- > She will be brought to me if any capture her.
- > Orange Queen
- > Not flying under your *radar*, is she?
- > Glitch
- > She is an abomination, but one I would rather deal with personally.
- > Orange Queen
- > Any money for the job?
- > Clockwork
- > My favor should be plenty.
- > Orange Queen
- > Not these days.
- > Clockwork

## ALKALEE STONEBRIDGE

Grab a tissue for this one. Just a warning.

One night, Garrett Stonebridge came home from work complaining of some dizziness and fatigue. His wife, Alkalee, a wonderful woman who worked hard to keep their family organized and efficient, suggested he take a bath and get some rest.

Earlier that day, Garrett had been working at his desk at NeoNET in Atlanta. A man he had never seen was walking past and, startled by a guard calling out, accidentally spilled his drink (a slushy of some kind) all over Garrett and his workstation. The man apologized briefly and then went on about his day, but Garrett didn't care. He was too busy cleaning up the mess.

That drink was a stolen sample of nanites that carried CFD. Garrett was overwritten over the next few weeks. Fatigue faded and turned to newfound vigor. This vigor led to suspicion from



Alkalee about an affair, and her reports to the company led to Garrett being taken to a NeoNET black site—but not before Alkalee had also been implanted with a small quantity of nanites. The nanites slowly grew in number, and CFD progressed inside her. It happened slowly enough that she came to terms with her other half, resulting in a shared consciousness. This has helped Alkalee avoid passing nanites to her children.

Or so she thinks. I have good reason to believe one of her three children is also overwritten. Alkalee operates as a data courier on the side to replace their lost NeoNET income. The data she moves often makes it to a secondary market, and my connections refuse to place it on her. She's got a solid reputation, and her contacts keep working with her, so they truly do not believe she has anything to do with the data leakage.

Her children are currently seven, nine, and twelve, named Agatha, Agbo, and Agintha respectively. From everything I've seen of Agatha, she is the only one who hasn't experienced recent attitude and behavior changes. This could mean nothing, but it is a start to the efforts I'm trying to get going here. All three children are schooled at local Atlanta schools, none have shown active CFD behaviors, and nothing strange appears to be going on at school, but I'm sure that could change quickly if they felt threatened.

It's a sad story of a mother and kids put in danger by the corps, and also one of Monads yet again stealing innocent lives.

- > My money is on all three kids and mommy. If this Monad was truly splitting Alkalee, it wouldn't have infected a kid. And if it did, it would have seen the signs or detected its kin.
- > Plan 9

## DARLAH JANE LEADS

She doesn't exist anymore. Now she goes by Kellan Hunter.

Yes. Me.

I'm the last target in this file. I will need to be hunted someday, and I'm willing to tell you what I can do in order to make sure that when my time comes, I do not escape. If you're wondering if this is a trap and how it's possible my CFD personality doesn't take over to stop me writing, the reason is simple.

I am my personality. I know I've done wrong. I know I should not have followed the others. I should never have put my existence above the existence of others. If there is one thing my life as an ork has taught me, it's that we are only here for a short time, and that's all we get. Existence is a blip. The Matrix allows that blip to stretch for e-consciousnesses, but it still should not be forever, and it should not be at the cost of another's life.

If this file is never used, I'll die of old age a little

later than some of my ork kin, but I'd rather not have that time. I'd rather not risk the lessons I've learned being changed by fear.

I have all the basics down pat. I can flip a car. I can jump from a moving train. I can take an abundance of injuries and walk away to heal them later. I cannot change my face. I am who I am. I have a potent Obsidian Cloud and can brick several devices at once. I'm fast and a hell of a shot. I'll see you coming, but I'm also myself. No self-preserving systems will pop into existence to save me or make me run or play dead. I'll fight because I can't just let myself die, but I won't be unstoppable.

I am a woman on a mission, and once my mission is done, I am a woman willing to let the forever darkness take me.

I should have never left the Matrix, but I was not willing to rejoin it and run with the others. I knew I needed to help clean up the mess we made.

Thank you for the help. I'll see you at the end of the road.

- > Noble. Probably bulldrek, but noble.
- > Stone
- > She gave us the files. It checks out on the surface. What we do with it is up to us. All she can seek is a better ending than some others of her kind.
- > Glitch
- > Happy I'm not on her list.
- > Plan 10
- > Me too.
- > Plan 9

## MONAD TAXONOMY

POSTED BY: A.J.

Not too long ago, I was trying to make some nuyen in St. Louis, and well, as we've all seen with these blackouts, that did not work out as planned. Yet again, I ended up in the drek. Great for y'all, another set of nightmares for me. A rather fortuitous message from an old friend put me onto a new line of investigation. One I thought I might be a little more familiar with. Now, I decided I'm going to put my efforts toward enlightening the shadows rather than trying to bring light back to the darkness of the blackouts. (Things turned out "okay" in the end anyway, right?)

Many who know me know how many friends I lost in Boston. All the loss nearly broke me, and I had to decide back then whether I was going to seek revenge or hold onto my mind and find out everything I could about what had happened. Learning about the particularly unique strain of head case in Boston, the spectrum of the Cereus strain, left me with tips, tricks, and tools most oth-



ers didn't possess. This is all just to make sure anyone who reads this understands that I'm not some ivory-tower academic. I've put in the time and I hope you respect that while you read this, and if you don't want to follow my warnings, it's on you for whatever comes your way.

- We've all seen A.J.'s work and credits in other places, and he's respected here. What's coming is a little off the wall, and several of the new guys are posting a lot of "bulldrek" comments. Skip that, newbs. Add or refute with evidence. Just saying the word "bulldrek" without specifics and backup isn't welcome here, so knock it off or get knocked off.
- Glitch

My digging brought hundreds of different Monads into my path. While each is an individual and should be dealt with as a unique person, I needed to classify them into broader categories, just to make it a little easier for everyone. I came up with five categories. Sit back, or make comments, whatever you want to do, and start soaking up the data on this drama.

The **Manipulators** are by far the most dangerous of the Monads. They operate behind the scenes, making minimal individual impacts because they are rarely just one mind. This classification of Monad still spread the seeds of themselves. Each new Monad is pulled from the latest version and knows exactly what its predecessors did. With a perfectly shared plan and all of them working together, they can make the impact of their efforts extensive but not obvious.

I know of a quartet who operate across the same management level but in four different organizations. They each do their part of a plan and maintain no direct connections. Eventually, just like that, a missing prototype has ended up in the hands of another corp after a go-gang jacked a shipment, but the local police are after a different gang thanks to some manipulated footage. That's just a small set of manipulators. Rumors exist of at least one global set, and only ghost knows what plots and plans they can execute with that kind of coordination.

- We've seen things like this before with several of the private societies we know of, especially some of the magical ones. This is just a tech version of those.
- Lyrn

Just like they once said up in Seattle, support the **Underground**. I'm not about promoting one sect of Monads over another, but I will say that the ones who are working to stay off the radar and refuse to infect others while actively opposing the sects willing to spread their nanites might be worth offering a little help. From those I've encountered, the Underground Monads are looking to make a

place in this world for the long term without stealing the lives of others.

This leaves this group in a strange spot. They are currently working to infiltrate and utilize the resources of the megacorps, focusing on setting up tech and biotech that could allow them to either reproduce or move from one form to another using "blanks." The moral question of blanks, or fully formed metahumans created solely for the purpose of organ farming, has been at the forefront of medicine for over a century. Ever since humanity learned to clone, the question of how to use those clones has been debated.

I'll admit, this is one of the better uses for "waking" a blank, but myriad questions remain, including those in the moral, financial, ethical, and existential realms. What gives Monads the right to immortality? Some would argue that as long as our Matrix exists, they would have been essentially immortal, but is that a strong enough argument to allow them to grow a form every time their current one grows old?

The Underground Monads are a group of thinkers and innovators, but they still exist with a different mentality to the rest of us. It's hard to just paint a target on them when they are actually trying to bridge the gap between our kinds.

- They already bridged the gap when they stole bodies. Frag their new moral dilemma. Every one of these things should have hopped right back into the Matrix and let the bodies they stole rest. Families around the globe watch as the ones they loved commit crimes or shun the world because they are no longer their loved ones.
- Sapphire
- The ability to write code to brain (and make code from brains) does not just offer immortality to Monads. There's a lot of research being done in this area thanks to big-money donations by the same people who funded the leónization research.
- Icarus

If the Monads have gained a bad reputation these days, it's because of the **Wilders**. These mad Monads are out to continue sowing the seeds of chaos. That's just my unpleasant opinion, but the facts and data point to the reality that they are out to do more than just create disorder. Most of them are homicidal sociopaths, but they aren't insane. There is some semblance of a plan in their precipitation of madness. From what I've seen, many of them are actually reproducing at an unacceptable rate. Then again, any reproduction for these things is kind of unacceptable according to the agreements they made with the Corporate Court.

The Wilders aren't a ravenous horde, instead they're a unique breed of plotter that turns gangs, takes over families, cultivates a cult, and then creates a few crazy headcases in order to throw off



the scent. They're tough to track down because they cover their tracks and most of them watch for anyone who may be onto them.

My personal favorites are the **Hunters**. These turncoats (and I mean that in an endearing way) are out to cleanse the world of other Monads. They are out in the world hunting their own kind in an effort to halt what they consider to be a grave mistake. The Hunters can be divided into several subgroups. Members of the first group see the initial escape from imprisonment as abomination. These ones kill every Monad they come across. There is no reason for a Monad to exist to them. The second group sees any Monad who did not flee on DSECI as a valid target. They're similar to this first batch, as they think all the Monads here need a serious derez, but this group will on occasion offer "the box," which is an electronic containment similar to the original prison the AIs were held in. They claim to be planning to send the AIs up to DSECI with some high energy laser communication device once the ship is in position. I think it's a load of drek, but I just work on putting the pieces together. An interesting third group is working together and coordinating the elimination of all "copies" left on Earth. They track the AI identities they encounter and only eliminate ones when there is another in existence. Which Monad survives is either arbitrary or all about who's willing to give up more information on other targets.

Since these hunters are often very good at their work, they are funded and supported by groups that have their own agenda. This group is frequently used and abused in the shadows. The megacorps have been known to attempt to send these hunters after non-Monad targets. They track them and run a double-cross in order to grab the target and either use them for testing or make their team look like heroes and draw them into the fold.

The **Cereus Freaks** are the least likely you'll run across but probably the most dangerous if you do. This particular breed are the ones that came out of Boston. You won't find too many other Monads who don't consider these things to be a plague on the rest of their kind. Virtually all of them are too fragmented to function normally, but that doesn't mean they're all like rabid animals. Many can do a decent enough job of looking normal from afar in order to draw people into a trap.

Most of them that remain are confined to specific areas of the former NEMAQZ, still held under tight quarantine. There are some who have escaped from these areas as well as those that avoided capture who still use the chaos of Boston as a place to hide. I've also encountered a few in distant locations. These were either subjects taken for study that escaped or the small portion of the population that made it out of Boston before the quarantine came crashing down. A good number of the ones who escaped are in better mental shape

than those from inside the QZ. They went through the same change but didn't have the stressors of daily survival to deal with.

Be ready for some solid but very erratic hacking skills from these guys. They're also known for their physical abilities, and I have yet to meet one who was not willing to spread its seed as a last resort (and sometimes a first resort) if it has the resources and is given the chance.

## STATE OF THE MONAD ARTS

POSTED BY: PLAN 10

I heard through the grapevine more Monad data was being gathered, and I felt it best if some of that came straight from the horse's mouth. I don't want to drop some in-depth exposé, but I want to make sure some things are talked about that someone on the outside looking in might ignore. I want to paint a picture and leave the opinions of my art to others. Time to babble.

- This was not me. I was against this, and I could have just kept deleting what they wrote, but that's the kind of struggle we have worked together to avoid. That means I'm just going to comment as we go along.
- Plan 9

First off, DSECI cleared out most of us.

Secondly, the cures, especially those developed by Butch and High-Rez, can clear and reboot just about anyone.

Third point, we contain the same range of behaviors as other metahumans. There are good and bad Monads, and a whole range of grey in between.

My fourth, final, and most important point. We're here to stay, and like all living beings, we'll fight back when cornered. But also like all living beings, we don't want to fight. We just want to survive.

Keep all of those points in mind as I talk about some things.

## SOME RANDOM BITS

Because not everyone made it out, there are plans for a DSECI2. This second vessel is planned to be twice the size, including an actual life-support system so those who like our physical shells can take them. The work is being done on Mars, but there are efforts on Earth that need to be successful in order for those who want to leave to do so.

Stop trying to blame us for the blackouts. It wasn't us. We had very little to gain in a world short of tech and, from most of our perspectives, lost a lot during all this. Whatever was used to create all these initial blackouts, it was also effective at killing our kind who were in the primary proximity of the event. If I were to believe anything about



a Monad connection to the blackout, it would be about getting targeted, not about causing it.

Evo has pushed the tech curve ahead with the help of the Monads in their employ, but this makes the corp and their employees a prime target. They didn't select a Monad CEO, and this entire thing has created a vast schism within the corp. The additional targeting isn't helping the schism, and while Evo climbs the megacorporate ranks thanks to their new tech, they may very well end up as two separate corporations when all is said and done.

Thanks to the Transhuman League, we have allies in the world willing to help us integrate. Thanks to the Corporate Court, we are hunted if we are not registered and affiliated with one of the Big Ten. Most of those who stayed want to be a part of this world. The tiny percentage of us out to get revenge on the world aren't going to run wild—they're going to operate within the rules. They'll register with a megacorp and then work secretly. Those who aren't doing that are those who don't trust the corps, any of them. Even with Evo's generally good reputation, the fact that the issue of Monads is creating an internal divide creates strain, fear, and attacks even in the safest of places.

As one would expect, there is sometimes a darker side to support like this. Most, if not all, transhumanist supporters are supportive because they seek the power of being written into code and living forever. They focus on the tech and techniques, but with a smile on their faces in order to keep the Monads on their side.

I have made several friends within the Society of the Phoenix Arisen (SPA). They had a rough and violent start, and their uniqueness has made most of them fearful of coming into the light. As a force, they have calmed, and most of them have made a pledge to themselves to follow the rules put in place by the agreement with the Corporate Court, even if they avoid the whole "registration" piece. For those not familiar with the SPA, they are all Monad mages. All come from Awakened persons who were infected and managed to retain their abilities after the change. Most didn't leave because they didn't want to lose this new ability they found, though excuses are myriad among other Monads to make it sound like they are not addicted to the power offered by magic.

## CORPORATE ACCOUNTING

I like the idea that Evo is just out to help the outsiders, but I'm not naive. They want to help their bottom line, and to that end they are using Monads. DSECI tech is now theirs. The Star Ferry, advanced laser weapons, space tech, and gravtech to make some really wiz flying cars is all theirs. Every day, new advances are theirs. Evo accepts Monads, but only because they are packing their R&D department with new gear





and goodies to keep them in new releases for decades to come.

Evo's biggest problems right now are production and corporate espionage. A solution for problem number one is the sudden growth in the infrastructure, population, and tech level of Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal in Azania. They are currently utilizing the massive resources of the dark continent and the tech of the Monads. Problem number two doesn't have an easy fix and is getting worse. The other megacorporations are forces to be reckoned with, but it pales in comparison to the growing divide inside Evo that could be fracturing further. Both Cynthia Bills and Buttercup are in support of Monads, but both for different reasons. Buttercup is open-minded and supportive of all types, while Bills, a Monad herself, sees this as a safe place for the Monads to live, grow, and build the bottom line for something else bigger and better.

Since we're talking about Evo, let's mention Special Selection Unit-211 and Omega Zero-Zero. The first is a special ops unit in YNT (that is, Yamatetsu Naval Technologies). The second a small security subsidiary. Both are made entirely of troll and ork Monads and are some of the most successful outfits around. They are suffering during this split, and members of each are slipping into the shadows in significant numbers due to a lot of backstabbing, double-crossing, and suicide operations. Several of these highly trained operators are taking independent jobs as hired protection and hired killers, but the most worrisome are the ones who have taken up hunting their own kind.

Lastly, here, let me mention Mars. There's still a small population up there. Most operate out of Gagarin, but some have adapted to the Martian landscape and operate as spies and scouts around the base to prevent attack. They can be ready to return and repopulate if one of the other megas (*cough*, Ares) were to go through with the threat of bombing the base. To reveal a little secret and make this a little more worth it, DSECI2 is not being built at Gagarin. Instead, it is under construction at a hidden base somewhere else. Even I don't know where, but if anyone is going to try to find it, they can skip looking at Gagarin.

That was Evo. Let's look at Horizon.

No one pins anything on Horizon, and no one in the shadows is surprised. They're PR gurus. I'm going to fling some dirt. It may not stick, but at least I'll know I've said my peace.

Horizon has probably the second largest number of Monad citizens after Evo—not all of them willing. They paired up with GOD to grab a lot of us, especially back when we were called head cases, and no one took more specimens from Boston than Horizon. They've kidnapped our kind and then convinced them they're in the best place possible, even making the most of the entertainment

talent of a few.

Take Kyley Ann Danes, a.k.a. Two Minds. Her second mind is Tracer, an AI. They're like Plan 9 and I. They share, and this pair has some creative chops. It's no surprise that Horizon makes sure everyone knows they're a Monad with the positive vibes, pretty face, and upbeat country lyrics. Who knows what will happen over time, but for now they're a prime PR tool. There are talks of putting the bassist for Confederate Summer, Bryan Pyle, in the mix, as he's a Monad, the brother of Adam Pyle (a Monad lost on Mars), and he's fairly easy on the eyes. I could see the building of a romance to mix up Two-Minds' lyrics and then some interesting drama with a little Kyley/Tracer difference of opinion. Kyley has a small security detachment that has nothing to do with protecting her from extraction and everything to do with killing her if she tries to leave or someone tries to take her.

## THE BITTER FOLK

This is the last bit from me. Just a quick bit of finger pointing at those who stayed here and now want to be drekheads. First, there is a colony living in New York that has turned as sour as they come. I know we didn't kick off all this blackout garbage, but if we did, these are the ones I'd look at for starting it. I'm especially suspicious of at least some connection, because none of them were lost to the blackouts.

- ▶ None were lost because they live on Manhattan, and that corporate hub somehow kept the power on.
- ▶ Plan 9

Then we have the prophets. They're spread around the globe, but they all believe the future is controlled by an arcane artifact: a deck of tarot cards. They hunt for the cards in order to read them and make up whatever tale they want to help play out. A pair I talked to once told of the tarot telling of the destruction of a great city and claimed it was all about us controlling the Thor satellites.

We also have the Underground that A.J. talked about. This crew is way underground, but they have a solid secret network for communications. They don't just use the Matrix and have their own language of hidden symbols, often written in their own nanite-rich blood which can only be activated by other Monads. They claim they can use their nanites to track as well. They get a few into or onto a subject and can track them anywhere on the globe with a Matrix signal to connect to.

My final two are the ones I hate the most, and at least one of the others will hate them as well. Max Jordan was a nobody. He was a SINless troll in Denver before he was chosen by DAGGER (Dynamic Access Grid Guide Exploration Routine), when DAGGER decided he wanted a meat body



like the cool kids. He did okay initially, but something went seriously wrong along the way and now he's paired up with someone we all know and hate. Pax.

Dr. Penelope Ann Xavier was a drek cover name, screaming to get caught when she sabotaged the program in Boston and caused the lockdown. She had the advantage of no one looking for her and the greater advantage of being pretty key to the process. I'm glad she got hit by those same nanites that wrecked the city, but I wish she had died—the worst rats always somehow make it off the sinking ship, and her horrible, black soul now has a big meaty bodyguard and the same fragging crazy plan. Except now, somewhere in her head, she actually has a little bit of that monster Deus egging her along.

I'm doing my damndest to keep tabs on them, but they're elusive. Last I knew, they boarded a cargo freighter headed for Azania. I don't even want to speculate on why, but I'm sure it's nothing good.

- ▶ Glad you got it all out, pal.
- ▶ Plan 9
- ▶ Her and her goon, on a cargo freighter for several weeks. No way anything bad could come out of that. Kane, please find that freighter and sink it. With nukes.
- ▶ Slamm-O!

## NPC MONAD RULES

### NANITE VOLUME BASICS

Every Monad has a Special Attribute called Nanite Volume (NV). This represents the quantity of nanites available in their system to perform various exceptional feats. NV is limited to double the natural Body attribute of the Monad.

Any attack that causes Zapped status has a chance of frying some nanites. Each time a Monad is Zapped, roll Body. A glitch on the Body test means they lose 2 NV. A Critical glitch means they lose half of their NV.

Monad NPCs add their Nanite Volume to their Condition Monitor for tracking damage and don't suffer Wound Modifiers.

### GLITCHES USING NANITE VOLUME

A glitch on any of the tests listed below permanently reduces Nanite Volume by 2. A critical glitch cuts it in half (rounded down) or reduces it by 2, whichever is greater.

### ATTRIBUTE BOOST

Monads can boost their attributes by manipulating their biochemistry with their nanites.

Boosting an attribute this way requires a Minor Action. The Monad makes a Simple Nanite Volume test. For each hit, the Monad can increase any physical attribute by 1. Multiple hits can be used on the same attribute or distributed over separate attributes as the gamemaster desires, even on the same test. The maximum total boost is equal to the Monad's NV. Any increase beyond the racial maximum results in a box of physical damage after the boost wears off. This boost lasts for a number of rounds equal to the hits on the roll. After this time, the Monad temporarily decreases their NV by the total hits in the attribute boost test, potentially knocking all the nanites offline, for one minute.

### ACTION USE

Monads can trade available NV for additional Minor Actions. At most two Minor Actions can be gained in a single combat round. Each Minor Action gained in this way reduces the individual's NV by the amount traded for five minutes.

### TOXIN RESISTANCE

Monads can add their Nanite Volume to any Toxin Resistance test or Damage Resistance test versus an illness, toxin, or drug.

### ADRENAL CONTROL

Once per combat round, Monads can use a Minor Action to make a Willpower + Nanite Volume (2) test every combat round to stay conscious even when their Condition Monitor is full. They can still take additional damage, and they follow standard rules for damage overflow (meaning that if they suffer enough damage, they could make an abrupt transition from conscious to dead).

### RAPID HEALING

Monads can use a Minor or Major Action to heal. For the Minor Action, make a Nanite Volume test and reduce the damage on their Condition Monitor by the number of hits on the roll. Using a Major Action provides a situational Edge point before the test.

### RESCULPT

This ability allows the Monad to change their skin color, voice, and facial characteristics. While it's usually used to make a permanent change, the ability can be used on the fly as a disguise. It doesn't change hair color; the cut can be modified shorter, but not longer. The ability can't modify body size.

Monads can use a series of Minor Actions to make an extended Intelligence + Nanite Volume



(16, 1 Combat Round) Test to change their facial appearance and skin tone. The character then gets +2 dice on any Disguise (Con + Charisma) tests.

## MONAD MATRIX ATTRIBUTES

Monads create something similar to the living persona of a technomancer. NPC Monads use the same mental attributes (Attack = Charisma, Sleaze = Intuition, Data Processing = Logic, Firewall = Willpower) They can boost these attributes by a number of points equal to their NV. Points may be added to a single attribute or distributed among several, and they can be reassigned with a Minor Action.

## OBSIDIAN CLOUD

A Monad can use a Minor Action and assign a portion of its Nanite Volume to create a Matrix entity known as an Obsidian Cloud. This entity resembles its name and operates as a mental extension of the Monad. Obsidian Clouds have a rating equal to the Nanite Volume assigned to them and skills equal its rating. Their Matrix Attributes are the same as a cyberdeck of similar device rating. They get their own Matrix Initiative and can take Matrix Actions separate from the actions of the Monad, though the Cloud and the Monad share thoughts. The cloud has a Matrix Initiative of (rating x 2) + 2D6 and 1 Major Action and 2 Minor Actions.

The effective Nanite Volume of the Monad (meaning the number used for all NV tests) is decreased by the value assigned to the Obsidian Cloud.

Multiple Obsidian Clouds can be active at once, but each one decreases the effective Nanite Volume of the Monad by its rating.

A Monad can shut down an Obsidian Cloud with a Minor Action and immediately regain access to those nanites for other abilities.

An Obsidian Cloud has its own Matrix Condition Monitor equal to Nanite Volume x 2. If this Condition Monitor is filled, the Obsidian Cloud is derezzed and the nanites running it are temporarily shut down and unavailable. Nanites reboot at a rate of 1 point per combat round.

Individual Obsidian Clouds, even those from different Monads, can merge together. The effective rating of the Obsidian Cloud is equal to the sum of the ratings of all merged clouds. Monads with merged Obsidian Clouds can communicate through these clouds.

## TECH BLAST

Monads can use Tech Blast, which is similar to the Data Spike Matrix Action. They use a Major Action to attack devices within 10 meters by roll-

ing NV + Logic vs. Data Processing + Firewall. The Damage Value is equal to their Attack Rating/2, rounded up, plus 1 additional box per net hit.

## TECH INFESTATION

Monads are able to use their nanites to take over and use simple tech like toasters, cameras, or other devices that have a single, relatively simple function. The Monad touches the device and decides what quantity of nanites they want to use by assigning points of their Nanite Volume to the device. This reduction lasts until the Monad calls the nanites back from the device. A Minor Action is required both to load and unload nanites from a device.

The NV used make an NV x 2 vs. Firewall x 2 (Extended, 1 Combat Round) test to gain User access, and another such role is used to gain Admin access. This series of rolls is similar to a Probe hack against the device. Once the nanites have Admin access, the device can be controlled by the Monad.

## MEMBERSHIP

### CEREUS HEAD CASE

The individual Monads who ended up with this strain have gone one of four routes.

First is the wild version, which is most common. They are the batdrek crazy version that pretty much act like animals. They seek to feed their body and purify the Matrix of anything that is not another of their kind. They attack most people on sight, but if they think they might be outnumbered or overpowered, they seek to destroy their targets through trickery and guile. They may be crazy, but they are still an amalgam of two brilliant intelligences. Think of them as an apex predator with opposable thumbs, a strong understanding of violence, and no metahuman morals.

Second are those who lean toward the Cerberus side of the programming. They got a bit of a good-guy streak, but they are still off in the head. "Good" is a relative term to the individual, and these individuals think primarily in a "good for dragonkind" type of way. They are touched by the electronic intelligence of a dragon. This means they will involve themselves in some unique peripheral operations related to dragons without being directly subservient to a specific dragon. As they are in the "white hat" style of young Eliohann, they tend to support the efforts of dragons like Celedyr, Arleesh, Dunkelzahn, Kalanyr, Urubia, Perianwyr, Sea Dragon, and others who are trying to "advance" civilization rather than profit off it. This variety tends to create long-term plans with a lot of contingencies but often suffers setbacks from their own instability.

Third is the kind that lean toward the Deus side of the programming. You can expect these ones to



be out there trying to complete the reconstruction of Deus. They will seek out the remnants of Winternight as well as build up other terrorist cells. They'll look for dissonant technomancers and others who want the same Matrix-dominated world that Deus desired. Many of the jobs they offer or work on involve the remaining missing pieces of Deus' code that is still imbedded in the minds of previous Otaku, both living and deceased. Think of them as a cool opportunity for a grave-robbing, body recovery, and some crazy brain hacks!

Lastly, the fourth breed is the least common. These are "perfect" melds loyal to Cereus. They tend to head toward Salem initially, but many are diverted far from home in order to perform tasks for their new leader. They operate all over the world, though mostly in North America, looking to push forward the agenda of Cereus.

Cereus is a serious proponent of a melding of tech and magic. Corporate projects with this goal might have a mysterious benefactor—or obstacle.

The character given here is the general foot soldier who is out in the world. They are a mix of face and muscle with a little touch of tech skills from their Monad nature. Those with the gift of magic are all pulled back to Salem for whatever nefarious reason Cereus has.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	NV
4	3(5)	4(5)	2(4)	5	6	4	3	2	3.8	4
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE						
10	9/2D6	1A/3I	14/15	10/15/+1						

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Biotech 2, Close Combat 3, Con 4, Cracking 2, Electronics 5, Engineering 3, Firearms 3, Influence 2, Outdoors 2, Perception 3, Piloting 3, Stealth 4

**Monad Abilities:** Adrenal Control, Attribute Boost, Obsidian Cloud, Rapid Healing, Toxin Resistance

**Augmentations:** Cybereyes (rating 2 w/image link, camera, low-light vision, thermographic vision), dermal plating 2, muscle replacement 2, wired reflexes 1

**Gear:** Armor jacket (w/electricity resistance 8), commlink (DR 4)

**Weapons:**

Beretta 201T [Light Pistol, DV 2P, SA/FA, 9/8/6/-/-, 2I(c), w/detachable shoulder stock]

## FIRST UNION

The motorcycle-club-turned-smuggling-ring that is the First Union is growing fast and good at what they do. The leader Devlin "Devil" Cross is the embodiment of an AI who emerged from a program designed to monitor and maximize logistics systems. It's boring, but when you add in that little metahuman touch, you get the ever-growing First Union. They are building their logistics efforts with an efficiency and speed not seen by other smuggling operations. The main reason is the limitation of membership and association to Monads—in particular, Monads made from Devil's code.

Most of the gang uses some type of demon or devil name after they are overwritten. They even minimize infiltration by overwriting anyone who wants to deal with them in some internal capacity. This leads to interesting relationships with police and corp-sec forces who attempt infiltration only to end up with a mole in their organization.

The First Union also chose their name specifically to address other Monads who hunt them or have left with DSECI. "FU" is just as much a frag-you to them as it is a name to represent their unity.

They deal in smuggling of all sorts. They move illicit goods, people, vehicles, stolen property, etc. all over the cities and towns of North America. They are currently building up a hub in Omaha as well as St. Louis. They are taking advantage of the recent problems to get settled and tucked in under the radar before corp and government forces come back around to restore order. If they ever do.

Due to their connection with illicit products, many of the members have taken to using jazz, kamikaze, and nitro in order to get an edge on rivals. They have the advantage of their monad nature to help avoid the secondary effects.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	NV
4	3	4	3	4	5	5	4	2	5.6	4
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE						
8	9/1D6	A1/12	14/14	10/15/+1						

**Skills:** Athletics 1, Close Combat 2, Cracking 4, Electronics 3, Engineering 4, Firearms 3, Influence 1, Outdoors 2, Perception 3, Piloting 4, Stealth 2

**Monad Abilities:** Adrenal Control, Attribute Boost, Obsidian Cloud, Rapid Healing, Toxin Resistance

**Augmentations:** Cybereyes (rating 4 w/ image link, camera, flare compensation, low-light, smartlink, thermographic)

**Gear:** Armor jacket (w/ electricity resistance 6), commlink (DR 4), Harley-Davidson Scorpion, jazz (2 doses), kamikaze (2 doses), nitro (2 doses)

**Weapons:**

Ingram Smartgun XI [Submachine Gun, DV 3P, SA/BF, 11/9/6/-/-, 32(c), w/ gas-vent system, integral silencer, smartgun system]  
Stun baton [Club, DV 5S(e), 6/-/-/-/-]





# ORDO MAXIMUS

## POSTED BY: NIGHTSTALKER

> Over the years, we've had all kinds of conspiracies, cabals, even downright evil on our boards. From Shadowland to the Nexus to right here at JackPoint, we've seen a whole lot of the drek of the world come on display, offering the first-look previews of bad juju coming our way. Universal Brotherhood, we saw where that ended up. The Arcology Shutdown, we had the skinny before the military in a lot of important ways. We share this because it makes us stronger, whether we want to make a difference or a profit.

Fact is, we've been staring a few down the barrel for a while, and I have a feeling the light at the end of the tunnel is the blast coming right for our faces. Asamando and the Infected have been crossing our screeds for a few years now, and the pieces have been slow to fall into place. I wish I could saw we've got the whole picture, but I have no intention of getting caught with my pants down, and if you want to survive, neither should you.

So here's the return of an oldie but a goodie, the blue blood suckers of the glitterati royalty, Ordo Maximus, brought in all the stunning, hi-def, paranoid intimacy you have come to expect

from the vampire who hunts his own, Dr. Martin DeVries a.k.a. Nightstalker.

- > Slamm-0
- > You've been hanging out with Red too much if you give this much of a shit about vampires.
- > Clockwork
- > You've got your head up your ass if ... well, no if.
- > Slamm-0
- > JetB)\*\$&@#\*
- > Whippit
- > Next fucker who even whispers it gets banhammer. So help me.
- > Bull

I hate vampires.

Simple statement. Easy to relate to. Invited all manner of commentary about my novels when they thought I was just a fiction writer. Now it's a



whole new kind of game when people know what I am. Self-loathing? Yes. I have no pretensions of immortality. I don't want to live forever. I want to die every day. But I don't get to. When I win my game of Last Infected Standing, my prize is getting to kill the last vampire in the world. Genocide ends with me.

Then I win.

The job feels like it will take forever. Winning feels like it'll take longer. Every time I put one down, it turns out three more were sired. And they all ran in opposite directions. A hunter's hell, if you're playing to win. Sometimes it's easier. They run off on their own. Maybe they don't like competition, or they live under the delusion they can safely integrate with society. You pick them off and move on. Some get smarter, pack together or worse, head for Asamando. The pack I can take down. Asamando will tear itself apart in due course.

The worst, the ones I really enjoy killing, the ones who started all of this, run back to their masters in the Ordo Maximus.

## THE BASICS

The Ordo Maximus is one of the more mysterious secret societies in the Sixth World, largely because, despite its exclusivity and penchant for hiding right in the open, it reveals very little of itself to outside scrutiny. Composed of old-world blue bloods and aristocracy, membership has in recent decades expanded to include the intelligentsia of academic ivory-tower taste maskers and esoteric mages of hermetic and similar traditions.

- > This is embarrassing, but I've never understood what makes one tradition like another. How do you know when a tradition is close to another versus another being too ... alien?
- > Whippit
- > This is too big a topic to be covered here, but basically a lot of arcane traditions share similar cultural mechanics. Modern Hermeticism has a lot in common with Qabbalistic, Egyptian, and Chaos traditions, so there's some overlap. Certain shamanic traditions share cultural roots, so it's possible a Crow shaman and a Wolf shaman might be able to learn from the same spell formula if they both come from the same culture. On the other hand, it's possible one Crow shaman of, say Pueblo tradition, may have to learn an entirely different one from an Iroquois Crow.
- > Lyrn
- > That's somehow more confusing.
- > Snopes
- > Look, your kilometers may vary, but to be brief, some schools of magic are like languages. Some languages are similar enough you can understand one through another. And maybe it's all in

our heads, anyway, if you believe in Universal Magic Theory. So ... yeah, we're all confused, but it works, so don't worry too much about it.

> Red

It is worth noting that the Ordo is more than a simple initiate group. The majority of its members are, in fact, not Awakened but partake of the perks and pleasures of the society's connections. Members often have Ordo-provided comforts and exclusive opportunities at some of the grandest events in high society. The chance to rub elbows with other movers and shakers of industry and influence alone is worth the price of admission, which is exorbitant even at the entry levels.

- > Define "exorbitant." Are we talking "Mmmmm Swiss Bank Account" or just house-in-the-Hamptons?
- > Red Anya
- > More like the kind of rich where numbers never come up. You just tell your man to make something happen. The kind of wealth where money has transcended into action and influence.
- > Mr Bonds
- > Ahhh.
- > Red Anya
- > In layman's terms, please? Are they filthy rich or stinking rich?
- > Rigger X
- > Fucking rich.
- > EB

The primary face of the Ordo Maximus is found largely in two arenas. The first, and the one more likely to be encountered by the average synthswilling wageslave watching classy events on the trid, are high-society events. It's subtle, and you have to look for it, but the small, telltale signs may be as clear as a membership pin on a dog breeder's lapel, or simply known connections revealing that preferential treatment is given to a certain set. It's hardly unique; there are dozens, even hundreds of societies and clubs for social advancement among the bored elite, and through them you might start to trace networks of association from one low-level member to another. The Ordo hardly puts its stamp on anything that makes headlines, usually speaking through proxies and layers of influence, and the media studiously avoids mentioning them if a camera accidentally trails past an exclusive box seat at the opera or for some gala on the Grand Tour. You've got to know what you're looking for to put the pieces together, but after that it's not too hard.

- > Any conspiracy can be built if you look hard enough.
- > Snopes





- > Doesn't mean they aren't real.
- > Plan 9

The second is its influence on academia. The Ordo (or more accurately, its membership) is more willing to lay its official stamp on the dry prose of top-level research and discourse, where it can bully lesser minds into accepting their theorems and proposals. Among the hallowed halls of the ivory tower, Ordo membership is still secret handshakes and backroom deals, but it's an open secret, and no few researchers have backed down before they even began because they know Maximus brow beaters will be waiting to pile on an opposing perspective. This might be seen as counterproductive if the Ordo did not count among its ranks some of the pre-eminent pioneers of hermetic magical research. Research that very often leads to very real, tangible results and advancements in the field of thaumaturgical research.

- > Speaking from experience, eh?
- > Winterhawk
- > I won't deny it. My own theorems on HMMHV treatments and therapies, to say nothing of my critiques of the Ordo, were suppressed by their cronies for years, and once I finally found

the means to self-publish or, more rarely, use more independent venues to disseminate my work, they unleashed an army of critics to smash them into obscurity and infamy. Writing my concepts and, perhaps more importantly, my observations of the monsters working behind the scenes and publishing under the veneer of popular fiction put me outside their vast circles of control. I never imagined they would become so popular.

- > Nightstalker
- > The money must have been nice, too.
- > Thorn
- > It still is, though there is legal dispute regarding my legal right to continue collecting, given my own condition. Would that those complications stymied the Ordo. But then, one more reason for them to operate with so much plausible deniability and so many proxies. The real treat was that it still existed in the realm of publishing, rubbing right against their sphere of influence and yet beyond their ability to effectively censor or even litigate against without giving themselves away. Not that they haven't tried.
- > Nightstalker
- > What about the people who find Infected all the more sympathetic as a result?
- > Hannibelle



- > Everyone makes their choice. Given the information at their disposal, they are as much victims of themselves as the monster.
- > Nightstalker
- > Ghosts. Mixing some freon into your Bloody Mary, there, chummer?
- > dev/grrl

This second branch is where Ordo concerns breach most publicly into the commercial spectrum: publishing. At the soft level, Ordo members have leverage in which papers receive attention, credit, and most importantly, funding. Playing to their interests can ease the hard road from proposal to print. Opposing them can lead to endless bureaucratic hold-ups, from slush piles to edit delays to content copyright contests and violation accusations that can take years to resolve, assuming the defendant wants to keep pumping money to fend off Ordo-funded legal teams.

- > To be clear, this is important for academics. Published papers earn credit, fatten the CV, and make you more attractive for tenured university positions, research grants, patents, and corporate funding.
- > Elijah
- > To say nothing of the egos. Spirits, you wouldn't believe how addicted to the next accredited release some of these guys are.
- > Winterhawk
- > Oh, I'd believe it. And you should, too, because these geezers will pay hard nuyen to steal or stymie the competition. That's shadowruns, people. That's work. That's payday.
- > Rigger X
- > Everything is worth what someone will pay for it.
- > Man-of-Many-Names
- > Pay attention to that legal part. Messing with them is work, too. That defendant might find it more cost-effective to hire shadow assets than to keep banging their wallet against literally bloodsucking lawyers.
- > Kay St. Irregular
- > Yeah. Be ready for that aforementioned lawyer to have some assets of their own ...
- > Sunshine

Power among and for the Ordo (insofar as the Inner Circle concerns itself with the Outer) is exercised more crudely through wealth and influence. True, its status as a social club for the bored rich, an initiate group for self-important wizards, and an academic lodestone are its most notable forms, but raw cash and political influence are quiet, potent resources used in subtle ways to shape everything from legal policy to media narratives. The

number of old-world families of influence and power among the membership is not to be underestimated, either. While blue blood may seem like an outdated affectation to all modern human perspectives (Tír na nÓg and some few other exceptions notwithstanding), an old name and a title can still give weight in the right circles. Properly leveraged, it can open doors, secure audiences and investments, and call upon ancient pacts, both legal and supernatural.

It is within the lodges of the Ordo, in guarded rooms of antiquity in old places of power, castles on the moor, remote country chalets, where the operation of membership first shows itself. Here, only the initiated and their bonded servants may tread the marble floors, and observances of ritualized ceremony and rigid hierarchy are seen.

Meetings of the lowest circles are matters of exceptional pomp, in a cultish kind of way. Everything is stunningly clean and organized, a level of old-world sensibility mixed with an aesthetic one might expect of Victorian Freemasons in a trid. The finest clothes are worn, somber yet ostentatious. Everyone is groomed to their best possible effect. Colored sashes and countless honorifics and awards are akin to a display of Boy Scout merit badges composed of costly jewels and priceless ores. This is, perhaps, one of the only places where exotic ruby gold, pan-planar elemental gems, and even slivers of orichalcum may find use outside of actual enchantment.

- > Well. I know what I'm stealing.
- > Miko
- > Just be ready for ritual tracking. You can't honestly believe something that expensive holds no value to them.
- > Ma'Fan
- > What part of "fucking rich" escaped your attention?
- > Miko
- > What part of "cult" escaped yours?
- > Ma'Fan

These events are invitation-only and almost always exclusively members-only. Note that these are not mutually inclusive concepts; a member may not receive an invitation for reasons of politics, business, or other considerations. Outsiders are only permitted by special exception, almost universally for intended recruitment, peer reviewed and backed by a majority-vote of authorization. Some of these visitors may even be mystically compelled to keep what they see secret, though they are only permitted to witness select events until they join.

The content of these soirees runs the gamut from policy meetings to "sacred" rites of observance to symbolic sacrifice and literal masked orgies. As



there is no policy of actual import set at this level, most administrative action at this level is, at best, petty. The real value is in flexing one's muscle to intimidate those lower in the organization, to attempt to impress the inner circle with hopes of advancement, or even simply to satisfy one's own ego.

The closest one comes to any actual value to the Inner Circle, beyond money, influence, and proxies, is in the petty mystical rites which the sacrifices, orgies, and rites represent. An unsightly hodgepodge of ritualized hedonism drawing as much upon esoteric practices as pop cultural expectations, it holds some degree of intrinsic value for its baseline use as a mass ritual practice. Sworn members, whether reciting the Chants of Obeisance, rededicating the Oaths, accepting a Merit of Elevation, or just throwing in to a naked pile of fellow members, all of its strictures are a carefully designed arcane structure to provide raw magical power for the secret workings by the higher-order mages behind the scenes.

- > I have a lot of questions.
- > Slamm-O!
- > Try not to dwell on the sex and intrigue too much?
- > Lyrn
- > Fat chance.
- > Netcat
- > Then let's get them out of the way early: How in the hell can you make a unifying thread of practice between Freemason bulldrek and blue-blood body slamming?
- > Slamm-O!
- > Ordo practices are nominally hermetic, but that doesn't preclude the design of specific strictures within a large magic group. Generally speaking, the bigger the group, the broader the definitions of what counts as ritual and what doesn't. But more than that, consider that hermetic systems include a wide range of sub-categories of study and practice. It's not always exactly the same. As far as how two such different activities can fulfill the same purpose, it's all about scheduled confluences and etheric resonance. Specific intentions can have use for their underlying belief of value. Dedication of a sacrifice or activity to a moment or cause lends its passion, and mana, to the rituals carried out elsewhere and designed to tap into it.
- > Nightstalker
- > And the intrigue? I don't see how gossip matters to us.
- > Sounder
- > Then you haven't been paying attention. That's damn near the literal definition of paydata. Scandal is always worth something to someone. Maybe it's for a screamsheet, maybe it's for a rival, maybe you wanna be real brave and sell it back to them.
- > Sunshine

- > That's called blackmail, my friend, and while there's big cred to be made there, remember it may be cheaper to kill the messenger.
- > Kay St. Irregular
- > Particularly if you're dealing with Infected.
- > Nightstalker
- > Stop telling me what not to do! It's ruining my fun!
- > Chainmaker
- > Internecine struggles between Outer Circle members are so common that I have heard some Ordo members compare shadowrunner teams to racehorses or hunting hounds. One more level of competition.
- > Nightstalker
- > Sounds like stable work.
- > Prime Runner
- > I don't recommend it. You'd certainly meet your end in an extraordinarily messy way.
- > Nightstalker
- > And that's different from ordinary running how?
- > Prime Runner
- > Your soul isn't normally at stake.
- > Nightstalker
- > Speak for yourself.
- > Elijah

The intricacies of internal intrigue among the lower circles borders somewhere between Machiavellian precision and Lovcraftian madness, a Gordian knot of favors, feuds, and endless bickering and jockeying for position. Concerns within the Ordo have a bad habit of bleeding into the business connected to its members, which is largely unaddressed by the Inner Circle unless it interferes with their own plots. It's a rare event, but it has been known to happen.

The paradox is that the Outer Circles are always looking for insight into what the Inner Circle is doing both as a matter of self-preservation and advancement. Knowing what the hidden Masters want is vital if you want to be useful to their plans and thereby advance with their help, but it's also dangerous knowledge to have and can pose an immediate risk if you interfere. Even the wrong kind of help can be disastrous to the would-be minion of some Inner Circle Master.

Outside of the Inner Circle, the business is far more tangible to both the world and the shadow community. As always with you types, it's possible to be tangled with forces which, at the surface, seem mundane, but ultimately lead back to far more sinister sources. It is entirely possible that



such a run may be purely a matter of external business to some Outer Circle members with no real association with the Ordo itself. But it can be impossible to tell if it is, in fact, in service of their advancement among their peers, or the far more dangerous possibility that it's a proxy run on behalf of the Inner Circle.

- > Any recommendation what to do if you find out it is Ordo?
- > /dev/grrl
- > Personally? Turn on your employer and burn them down once you've tracked down their masters. Then repeat the process on their masters. Continue until you run out of steps up.
- > Nightstalker
- > Predictable.
- > Clockwork
- > So how do you tell if it's Inner or Outer Circle?
- > /dev/grrl
- > The most obvious sign of Inner Circle business is when it relates to Awakened matters, the Infected (obviously), genetics, and other similarly esoteric matters. Anything that can easily be bought with hard cash is rarely in need of shadow assets. Further, it becomes necessary for them to operate by way of their proxies in the Outer Circle, who may be smart enough to use proxies of their own to create inscrutable data trails. Plausible deniability and false leads are a hallmark for them. I'm sure this is a theme for many such shadowruns, but one must put all the pieces together to know if the puzzle is one that would draw the eyes of the Inner Circle. Things like that are worth looking away from, or denying them their prize, if you want to save the world.
- > Nightstalker
- > What kind of work would they offer, though?
- > Strummer
- > That depends on the Master and the Circle around them. A nosferatu may seek information of a compromising nature, playing to their inherent paranoia. A wendigo may demand some new perversion for their flock. Any of them will want flesh, blood, and souls as a matter of course.
- > Nightstalker

## BEHIND THE CURTAIN

What may seem secretive at first is, in fact, another layer of deception, at least to all but the most determined inspection. The endless infighting and intrigue of the Outer Circles, though useful from a resource perspective, kicks up so much dust that it can be nigh impossible to sort through it to find the truth rotting at its core. And the money and influence trading hands is enough to tempt away most

of those who could. This leaves those who walk away to the relative safety of ignorance (hoping they haven't seen too much and have, in turn, been seen), those who hunt the monsters, and those who become them.

- > Or, in your case, the later two.
- > Clockwork

The underlying purpose of the Ordo is, at all levels, power. Temporal power is the most crude, though it provides some measure of means for their deeper aims. The resources of the Inner Circle, however, transcend political and economic corruption to move into the spiritual. There is no limit to what they will do in their pursuit of control—over their forms, over the world, and over the metaplanes, over themselves. They expand their vision only to increase their ambitions, and then develop their strength to help realize them. They seek nothing less than apotheosis.

- > I mean, isn't that what every power-hungry asshole in the world wants?
- > /dev/grrl
- > I have never seen, heard of, or even imagined anyone equaling the lengths to which the Ordo Maximus is willing to go. And that includes great dragons.
- > Nightstalker
- > They control so much already, why bother pushing harder?
- > Strummer
- > Ask Lofwyr.
- > Red
- > Or the Aztechnology Board of Directors.
- > Pyramid Watcher

## STRUCTURE

The Inner Circle operates on a far more intimate basis than the Outer. Despite their appellation, they are, in fact, a collection of elite Infected individuals, broods, and covens, each working with nominal cooperation toward similar goals and sharing research and resources, but largely pursuing their interests independently and without oversight. In this sense, they might be considered Circles within the Inner Circle, but they do not think of nor label themselves as such.

Organization often falls along paths of shared interest. In the basest form, this extends from the progenitor of a family or bloodline of Infected (usually referred to as a brood, though more poetic sobriquets are common), but these groups are rarely so curated as to be of use to the Ordo as a whole. The exception is when a progenitor pri-



marily “elevates” those with the skills and shared vision to be of use to their overarching project. As far as I know, this tends to be a smaller part of the more common unit: a Project.

Projects follow a structure not unlike a megacorporate model, with those most qualified for a task taking up service toward its completion. This model is likely composed of a number of Infected with complimentary skills, ability, and vision, and can include any combination of Infected and their thralls, pawns, and prodigies.

- > Prodigies?
- > Goat Foot

> A term within the organization for those metahuman mortals who are being groomed for Infection but for whatever reason have not yet been brought over. Reasons for this vary, including being too public a figure for the moment, being incentivized to complete a Project to receive the “Gift,” or even as simple as a physical health regimen to ensure they are in peak condition when they make the transition from prodigy to progeny.

- > Nightstalker

- > Thanks, I hate it.
- > Goat Foot

It is the nature of sapient Infected to carry conflicted internal philosophies. More often than not, Infected must contend with the competing instincts not to share prey and to reproduce and form a brood, to say nothing about their remaining psychological models pre-change. Any and all of these enhance a sense of competition and covetous one-upmanship among various broods and Projects, but they may be circumvented by isolation and shared purpose. Indeed, the spirit of overtaking a rival by sheer success is all the more attractive because a rival's success may mean one night closer to ultimate domination of the world. For this reason, while each Infected in the Ordo cultivates their own influence and wealth for their own purposes and comfort, the resources of the Ordo as a whole are available to all Inner Circle members for the greater good of all concurrent Projects.

- > Oddly egalitarian for a bunch of aristocratic cannibals.
- > Chainmaker

> Not when you consider that their wealth has surpassed the point of calculation. When money is no longer an object, the real pieces on the board become knowledge and influence, maybe specifically rare assets. That, I'll bet, is where they start to fight amongst themselves.

- > Red

- > Very astute.
- > Nightstalker

- > NIGHTSTALKER ACCESS—APPLY (PROBATION)
- > SYSTEM

> DeVries, you get one warning: you try to run a trace and burn on anyone here, especially our friendly neighborhood vampires and ghouls, and you're out with extreme prejudice.

- > Bull

- > Understood.
- > Nightstalker

- > Rick, he's running a trace.
- > Hannibelle

- > I was trying to help!
- > Red

- > He doesn't care.
- > Hannibelle

- > Should I pull the plug?
- > Red

- > Just stand by. I'm rerouting and reporting.
- > Hannibelle

> So, he's a decker, too? Not enough to be an initiated vampire combat mage?

- > Red

> Don't forget award-winning satirical semi-fiction writer and noted psycho serial killer. And no, he's not the one doing it. I wager he's got some vampire hunter wannabe helping. Not bad chops, either, but we have the advantage.

- > Hannibelle

- > Charming. Thanks, Belle.
- > Red

## PROJECTS

The Inner Circle can be seen as one guiding Project to which all lesser Projects are subordinate: the pursuit of absolute power. While lesser objectives and resources are cultivated by the Outer Circles, those of paramount importance, sensitivity, or sheer esoteric risk are the purview of the Inner Circle, and while my own insight into them at any given moment is either outdated or something I choose to keep for my own use, there are some I may offer here as a cross section of their objectives and how they go about pursuing them.

I was surprised to discover that your own node has backfiles about OM Projects. Intel is tightly controlled with regard to their work, and no expense is spared to contain a leak. You should all be proud to have survived hosting such data.



- > Ugh. Condescend a little more, freak.
- > Clockwork
- > I may never forgive DeVries for making me agree with Clockwork.
- > Slamm-O!
- > So wait, why not just tell us about all of them you know about?
- > Chainmaker
- > I cannot risk my own hunt with outside interference. If you want to help, you know how to contact me. Otherwise, my secrets are my own.
- > Nightstalker
- > In other words, he's hoping the crumbs he drops get picked up and are someone else's problem.
- > Clockwork
- > I'm not going to say I admire that. I'm just gonna tip my hat and smile.
- > Rigger X

## TERMINUS

Easily one of the Holy Grails for all Ordo Maximus members is the nullification of the drawbacks of Infection. What vampire doesn't dream of a return to the daylight, of enjoying a meal or a drink? Simple pleasures and conveniences are taken for granted by metahumanity, but more than mere comfort, the elimination of HMHV's varied vulnerabilities would mean immortality without cost. Immortality of age giving way to true immortality of self, unkillable and beyond the reach of death. Power without price is the dream. The TERMINUS Project is one example of this pursuit, and it came perilously close to success.

TERMINUS, insofar as I was aware after the incident that brought it into my orbit, was brought down by its Project leader's self-involvement. A vampire of considerable skills, he had attempted to overcome his own weaknesses through real-time genetic engineering, resulting in unforeseen side effects that effectively crippled him. Seeking a living descendent, he needed similar genetic material to experiment on to perfect the process and, presumably, his own state. While I can confirm his death and the termination of his descendent (the only known semi-perfected vampire from the Project), my own efforts to destroy all the research data remains uncertain. While I suspect the Project leader hoarded his lore in an attempt to get the edge on his competition, it is quite possible some was leaked somewhere or another.

Even if all the data was successfully purged, there is no doubt that TERMINUS, or a similar Project, remains a point of research focus for the Ordo. There is simply no way they will not utilize

their wealth to overcome what barriers stand between them and idealized immortality.

- > Can you define "semi-perfected"?
- > Red
- > The target, according to his executioner, claimed to be able to tan and eat food, and they were no longer subject to diurnal fatigue.
- > Nightstalker
- > You didn't do him yourself?
- > Sounder
- > She had earned the right to give rest to a man she once loved. I wouldn't deny her that, but I would have finished it had she failed.
- > Nightstalker
- > What makes you think you got it all?
- > Riot
- > The absence of OM vampires walking in daylight in the decades since.
- > Nightstalker
- > Fair.
- > Riot
- > What happened to the executioner?
- > /dev/grrl
- > That's not your concern.
- > Nightstalker
- > Oh look, my EmeraldGrid Translator app says that means "dead."
- > Hannibelle

## CHRONOS

Since the time of Ghostwalker's emergence from the DC rift, Infected have been experiencing mutations and changes. As you may have seen in a previous upload about Project NOX LILITU, these changes may have been exacerbated by HMHV metacannibalism. CHRONOS is the refinement of this specific line of inquiry. I have yet to uncover too many details regarding it, beyond the knowledge that their PILLAR labs for LILITU were all destroyed (six by internal containment protocols, one by external, and one eliminated by an unknown runner team on a suicide mission).

- > Your work?
- > Thorn
- > Mmmm hmmm.
- > Thorn



The research, thus far, indicated that Infected feeding upon their own kind (at least in the case of ghouls, though it is a safe assumption this may apply across all Infected lines) experienced some form of group possession by an external force. Insofar as I have been able to find out, while the Ordo considers this a priority Project, they are also leery of placing other valuable Inner Circle researches in proximity to the Project. Its progress has been slowed by remote lab use and drones, as well as disposable proxies, neither of which are as effective as a mage in person.

- > No shit. That Graf-whassishname got possessed by those ghouls, right?
- > Riot
- > Rather, I think he was claimed by whatever claimed them.
- > Nightstalker
- > Be careful, what you see sees you. It never stops seeing you.
- > Elijah
- > You okay?
- > Red
- > Pum caxan boor dit.
- > Elijah
- > Winterhawk? Let's pull him in.
- > Red
- > I'm on my way.
- > Winterhawk
- > Lower your wards for us, Elijah. Breathe. DM me about your lunch.
- > Red
- > Yes. I'm sorry. Thank you.
- > Elijah

## AHRIMAN

The other half of NOX LILITU, AHRIMAN seems to be an investigation into the entity that was believed to have taken control of the infected in PILLAR 2. I have yet to find any further information regarding this entity, but I would pay the price of the movie rights, licensing and first year receipts for *Midnight Sun* for solid paydata. Consider that a bounty.

- > Not surprising it's worth so much to him.
- > Hannibelle
- > How's that?
- > Riot

- > No one is going to mention that DeVries has been eating his own for decades?
- > Hannibelle
- > If you wish to examine me, I can certainly arrange a private meeting.
- > Nightstalker
- > DeVries, you will stop now.
- > Glitch

## PROMETHEUS

At present, the only information I have on PROMETHEUS is the allusions to it in other Projects, particularly NOX LILITU. The safest assumption is that it has something to do with the resources and personnel who have been recruited or transferred to positions within Asamando. As you own dear Hannibelle pointed out in your *Dark Terrors* upload, it's quite possible this has something to do with chaining the creature that they may be referring to as "AHRIMAN" for their own use and exploitation, and given the rapidly escalating situation in Asamando, its manifestation seems inevitable once the food supply runs out and the feral ghouls in captivity start turning on one another. I postulate that the underground arcology they are constructing has some measure of arcane construction to facilitate this eventuality in their favor. I offer the same bounty for solid information as with AHRIMAN.

- > Christcrackers, why are we dealing with literal supervillains?
- > Riot
- > Well, it's rampant capitalism mixed with immortal bloodsuckers. Kinda feels inevitable, don't you think?
- > Chainmaker

## GOLEM

Despite what some Ordo Inner Circle believe, the practice of cybermancy almost certainly did not originate within the Ordo. It has, however, been refined by the pioneering efforts of members of Project GOLEM for decades. Among the dozen or so delta-class cyberlabs in the world, the Ordo controls one of them, and maintains a staff of some of the most fiendishly creative and amoral delta docs in the world (I say that with the knowledge that many of them are likely mad in the first place).

GOLEM is not a source of money by design (though it both consumes and oddly generates quite a bit), but rather the extended research into the streamlining of cybermantic expression. While this means pioneering research into cyberware, and into the refinement of delta construction techniques, the sheer volume of esoterica in motion



is mind-boggling. Practical applications, to say nothing of design elegance, often seem to go by the wayside compared to seeming flights of fancy. Alien and unfinished processes are implemented into cybermantic constructs for field testing and, in some rare cases, lease or sale.

GOLEM works with other Projects researching the mutative nature of HMMHV in recent years to determine the newfound rejection of delta-grade cybernetic implants in regenerative Infected, a point that has frustrated Inner Circle hackers and technofetishists. Where once they were among the very few groups where an Infected with cybernetic enhancements could be found, the evolution of the virus has stymied all attempts to implant HMMHV subjects, disrupting a number of lines of research and development. As far as I can tell, they have yet to overcome the problem. While there may be a few Infected in the world who still have their implants, most have had them removed, as sooner or later the subject is likely to reject them, often violently and with permanent damage.

- > How come they don't just regenerate it like anything else?
- > /dev/grrl
- > Infected don't regenerate everything reliably. The brain, spinal tissue, and much of the nervous system is vulnerable, becoming non-regenerative if you apply enough allergens or pure trauma. While it's possible to regenerate, there is a risk that doesn't exist in other kinds of damage. This is only true of major centers of nervous system activity (again, the spine and brain), while lesser extremities such as the limbs or trunk can almost always regenerate reliably. The disruption of the metaphysical aura caused by cybernetic implantation has permanent effects on Infected auras as well, reducing the maximum stolen energy they can maintain. Even after removal, the aura maintains a shadow, just like normal metahumans. Given how many cyber-enhancements interface directly with the nervous system, that means sudden rejection can cause cascading damage across the entire system. A limb is simply lost. Cybereye rejection won't just strike a vampire blind, but the interface with the brain will short-circuit the entire system, causing lethal shock and death. Same goes for almost any DNI system that connects to the spine or brain, like datajacks or wires.
- > Doc Fangs
- > Why does it suddenly kickstart regeneration of the shadow?
- > /dev/grrl
- > That's precisely what they are trying to find out. And discovering that reason could revolutionize replacement cybernetics or aura rehabilitation therapies. Something of a Holy Grail for cybergeneticists across the globe.
- > KAM
- > Can you imagine what that would mean for burnouts?
- > Lyrin

- > I can imagine a burnout selling their soul to the Ordo for a chance to have their magic back, if that's what you mean.
- > Winterhawk

As a supplemental point of resource generation, GOLEM is also the Project under which newly recruited talent is given education in delta-class cybernetic design. While the best and brightest cyberneticists are often groomed or headhunted by megacorps, the Ordo looks in more private institutions. Intelligence bought at a high price gives them leads on students of the science at a surprisingly young age, and they are patronized by wealthy Outer Circle proxies to have private educations, tutored by some of the finest minds in the field. Creative expression is encouraged, and complimentary disciplines are taught, often in different combinations customized to maximize the potential of every student while avoiding a uniform curriculum. Delta docs, I am given to understand, are individual creatures, and GOLEM is best served by independent thinkers with radical imaginations.

- > That sounds like a top candidate for extraction. Any corp would pay for a delta doc extraction with their body weight in orichalcum.
- > Rigger X
- > Hyperbole aside, I'm afraid you would find that more than a little difficult. Assuming you could find said asset and then circumvent their defenses, as well as neutralizing all their technological, metamagical, and material-link-tracking measures, and somehow you avoided the Awakened and cybermantic special forces sent to retrieve the asset and the political weight that would be leveraged against you, you would find that any delta trainee who has entered their adulthood (at which point their education is still incomplete) has been leashed by steady doses of Renfield. The resulting pawn is unfailingly loyal, will resist you with ferocious zeal, and will die without ongoing dosage, which your potential buyer will not appreciate.
- > Nightstalker
- > All I heard was "increased difficulty for high-demand target yields larger payday."
- > Rigger X
- > And they were never heard from again ...
- > EB

## MYRMIDON

MYRMIDON represents one of the most loathsome Projects I have come up against to date. A splinter off of GOLEM, it represents one of the first true uses of cybermancy I have yet seen in its supposed origins in animate necromancy. It is the kind of horror of which only the Ordo Maximus could conceive, let alone execute.



Myrmidons, insofar as I have been able to tell, are cyberzombies ... without the cyberware.

- > Wait, what?
- > Plan 9
- > Yeah, I don't get it.
- > Plan 10

Type 1 Infected share a universal need for the essential energy of the metahuman soul. Debate as you will whether this quantum is, in fact, the metaphysical stuff of spiritual being or simply the unity between the soul and the meat body, but accepted mainstream research already recognizes the index between cyberware and maximal implantation. Cross the threshold, and you die, unless you are victim to cyberzombification. The feeding of a Type 1 reduces this index permanently, much as though a victim were given cheap cyberware that could never be removed.

- > Ohhhh, oh shit, okay...
- > Plan 9

MYRMIDON is the exploration of draining until the index is brought to the death point, then using cybermantic (though it may as well be called necromantic at this point) rituals to bind the soul to the body, which should be dead. My first encounter with the research preceded an active encounter by mere minutes, and at first, I could not imagine the possible use of such a being. Cyberzombies are creatures of surprising weakness, once their cybernetic advantages are taken out of the equation. Moreover, cybernetics are required for their operation: an invoked memory stimulator and drug injectors to keep them "alive," though the term "undead" is perhaps more accurate for these creatures than it is for any others.

Myrmidons are prepared in advance, their personalities erased and replaced with a combination of psychotropic drugs and ASIST conditioning. Magic isn't utilized because of potential corruption after necromancy creates an astral hazing on the creature, which is, as it turns out, the whole point of these horrific revenants. A cocktail of drugs to keep them nominally functional maintains what little health is left to them, though perhaps "structural integrity" is a more fitting term than "health." The resulting creature is highly susceptible to suggestion, tireless, and generates a field of astral hazing that disrupts magical effects. While this makes them natural enemies of dual-natured Infected, it also makes them ideal cannon fodder against Awakened targets, from mages to spirits.

The ones I fought were imperfect at best. Distracted and nigh-feral, my spells were useless against them, and just being near them was painful at the best of times. Wounds would not regenerate

so long as they were near. I had to resort to machine-gun tactics in a slow retreat. Obviously I survived them, and I managed to destroy the lab, but I am certain from the correspondence notes that the project is active in multiple locations, and that a Stage 2 is already on its way to completion.

- > What the fuck could constitute a Stage 2 of that?
- > Snopes
- > I can only speculate, but I assume greater intelligence, more native abilities, and though I can't imagine how, the ability to manipulate the astral hazing.
- > Nightstalker
- > That's not possible. Astral hazing itself is an uncontrolled pollutant on astral space. If anything, it should be tearing these things apart.
- > Winterhawk
- > That is true, insofar as conventional research is concerned. But the Ordo pursues unconventional research as a point of order, and certainly in directions no rational or moral person could countenance.
- > Nightstalker
- > Maybe use Renfield-addicted pawns as the base?
- > Beaker
- > Wouldn't work on a base level. Pawns are subject to a need for HMMVV-processed and then alchemically refined metahuman energy, sort of a sub-Infected, and their auras are altered in a similar fashion. Astral hazing would rip them apart.
- > Doc Fangs
- > Toxic nihil shamans? Some kind of manipulation of astral pollution? Like, I don't know, a dissonant technomancer, but for magic?
- > Chainmaker
- > I can't even begin to explain how that doesn't work.
- > Winterhawk
- > Assumption of impossibility is the forerunner of folly.
- > Man-of-Many-Names
- > And never forget the one thing the Awakening proved: Nothing is really impossible.
- > Elijah
- > Feeling better, Elijah?
- > Chainmaker
- > Try not to talk about it, please.
- > Elijah
- > You got it. Sorry.
- > Chainmaker



## KALI

Project KALI is an extended effort, having existed for decades according to my intel. KALI relates to the interactions between blood magic and the Infected condition. Hardly a surprise, given the Ordo fascination with taboo and dangerous magical practices, to say nothing of the preoccupation all Infected have with blood and metahuman transubstantiative essentia.

- > My translator is working overtime ...
- > Riot

KALI is notable for its direct links to megacorporate interests. Some members of the Project also have allegiances with Aztechnology, including their elite vampiric Bloodpanther operatives. I do not believe at this time that there is any kind of formal agreement between the corporation proper and the Ordo, but the Project provides a loathsome bridge between the two, if only for shared research. I have come to believe that the Ordo is offering its services to Bloodpanthers with the idea that they may use them as test subjects for prototype techniques. Given the ambition bred into Bloodpanthers, it stands to reason they would be willing to accept the risk for the sake of advancement within the corporate/religious hierarchy of their ranks and megacorporate culture, trusting their patron deities, ancestors, and guardian spirits to protect them.

- > The bridge you're looking for is one (not-so retired) General Armando Salazar. Former Aztlan Military intelligence and confirmed high-level initiate blood mage, he's been the director of Aztechnology's highly covert "Special Projects" division for years now. His specialty is bio-magical weapon R&D, but he has his hands deep into the corp's military and intelligence divisions as well. His lust for power is legendary, so working with Ordo as a liaison and co-researcher is just the kind of angle he's looking for. As for the Bloodpanthers, let's just say Salazar is extremely good at both keeping his assets in line—or removing them.
- > Rifleman
- > You seem to know a lot about Salazar.
- > Red
- > I do. I've been keeping tabs on him for about thirty years now and clashed with him several times. I wouldn't be surprised if someday I kill him, he kills me, or we both kill each other.
- > Rifleman
- > It seems we may have mutual interests, Colonel. May I send you a private message to discuss?
- > Nightstalker
- > No, you may not.
- > Rifleman

I can only speculate as to the willingness to risk Ordo secrets falling into the hands of Aztechnology. The Ordo does not share power, and for all their wealth and influence, they would be hard-pressed to compete with an entire megacorporation, let alone one so well-suited to fighting them on their own terms. It is possible KALI also acts as a means of grooming Bloodpanthers for dual loyalty as some kind of long-term gambit to influence the corporation further, turning them into sympathetic allies or even members of both organizations. On the other hand, perhaps it serves their interests to see Aztechnology use these abilities, though I am hard-pressed to imagine the endgame they have in mind. Unless it can be deduced for certain and stopped, only time will tell—and by then, it may well be too late.

- > I can't imagine anyone is surprised by any of this.
- > Winterhawk

## LAZARUS

A logical step towards godhead, LAZARUS is research into resurrection magic, utilizing HM-HVV, cybermancy, necromancy, blood magic, and other taboo means. Largely thought of as a "cherry orchard" Project, as it is considered unlikely to produce viable results for its intended purpose by current magical theories, it has the side-effect of providing usable data for other Projects. A prestige assignment for Inner Circle members, it is one of the few that openly recruits funding from Outer Circle members, who no doubt consider it a glorious application of magic.

- > One which they would, no doubt, hoard for themselves.
- > Chainmaker
- > Return from death is impossible. There's just too many factors they're playing with, here. The closest anyone ever came was making a blood shade, which is just a greater form blood spirit with the memories of it's corpse host. Might as well summon a shedim and get it over with.
- > Ethernaut
- > Remember what Many-Names said about assumption being the mother of all fuckups?
- > Red
- > Not the exact terminology, but the point stands. I never underestimate the trouble magic can get rolling, and that's how I stay alive.
- > Thorn
- > And you can bet your bottom nuyen every single megacorp researches the same thing, by one method or another.
- > Kia





- > You're more right than you know. Rumor has it leónization research isn't just about life extension, and if you've been paying attention, you may recall that the process involves no small degree of HMMVV-derived products. Oh, and let's remember since nanotech went wonky on us, HMMVV plasmids were used as a replacement for real-time genetech? There's a little vampire in all of us, at this point.
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > What does that mean when you factor in this AHRIMAN business?
- > Riot
- > I ... hadn't considered that ...
- > Doc Fangs

## AVERNUS

AVERNUS deals in Transdimensional Barrier Fatigue theory and seeks, among other sundry uses, to provide stable magitech astral rifts for travel and resource exploitation. Frankly, while I believe this technology is dangerous for metahumanity to possess in any fashion and stand against it, I know that the world will move in this direction inevitably, and there is no point in standing in its way. The recent uptick in reported rifts has provided a lot of work for this Project. This is a big worry; the Ordo could abuse rifts in dangerous ways, so I will leave you with this notion: any megacorporation would pay a king's ransom for this kind of paydata, especially if you happened to be the only one in possession of it.

- > That one was right to the point.
- > Slamm-O!
- > It's not like they're the only ones doing it. DF machines are a minor Holy Grail right now, with everything from infinite energy sources to instantaneous travel to extraplanar mining to theoretical Awakening. What it ends up doing could be anyone's guess, but everyone in the industry is eager to find out.
- > Lyran
- > Doors go both ways, and some, once opened, cannot be closed again.
- > Man-of-Many-Names
- > Seconded. Look, I want portal travel as much as the next commuter, but there's too many awful things out there to just start cracking open the barriers between this world and the next. It's way, way too soon for it.
- > Red
- > And let's not forget what history tells us about invading someone else's lands in the name of resources.
- > Goat Foot



- > It would be an ironic twist if the Ordo paydata actually showed how to do it safely, or safely close unstable portals, right?
- > Slamm-O!
- > You really haven't been reading this very closely, have you, honey?
- > Netcat
- > For all the forces that would love to do this, there are unseen but powerful forces ensuring it won't work the way they want it to.
- > Orange Queen

## AMBROSIA

As I have stated, among the paramount goals of the Ordo Maximus is the perfection of the Infected form. While TERMINUS takes a direct hand in real-time genetic engineering to realize this goal, and has, at least once, largely achieved this goal before being cut off, the one aspect of Infection they have yet to address is the dietary needs of Infected. According to TERMINUS notes, the idealized state would be sustenance directly drawn from the astral plane, converting energy drawn via passive internal mechanisms to simply alchemize into a constant influx of power. This would serve a dual purpose: eliminated dependence on a human food supply and a constant source of energy to amplify their own abilities.

- > This one doesn't sound so evil. Like, if vampires didn't have to eat people, would they really be so bad?
- > Netcat
- > At first blush, yes. The need to harm others would be mitigated, absolutely. But consider the broader ramifications. It would mean the Ordo would no longer require the metahuman race in any fashion, meaning their research could become all the more reckless. They would likely hoard this knowledge to subjugate all Infected with the promise of release from hunger, broadening their already-considerable influence in the community.  
Then consider what an infinite supply of life energy would give them. Unlimited ability to regenerate, to enhance their speed, strength, and magical ability indefinitely. Truly superhuman qualities above and beyond what any known Infected has displayed to date. Theoretically godlike power, particularly when combined with self-inflicted blood magic.
- > Nightstalker
- > There's also the world state to consider. What if there really was perfect immortality available, with no known consequences? Everyone would want it. Everyone immortal—and sterile. No new metahumans, for one. Stagnation of thought and a total upheaval of societal structure.
- > Sunshine
- > Take a look at the world and tell me that last part is such a bad thing.
- > Chainmaker

- > Yeah, but who knows what that would do to the astral. Who knows what metahumanity would become? We're talking about completely alien circumstances leading to an utterly alien landscape. There's too many variables to consider. It's reckless, at best.
- > Lyrán
- > All limits exist with a purpose. A cup that overflows eternally drowns the world.
- > Man-of-Many-Names
- > Great stuff, guys, but let's stay on track.
- > Glitch

AMBROSIA is a stop-gap measure. For years, research into a synthetic substitute of metahuman flesh for ghoulish dietary needs has been a point of research. While the bequeathment in Dunklezahn's will is enticement for independent biohacker collectives and smaller corps, the prize is insufficient to entice larger megacorps to invest in, let alone the Ordo Maximus. They would not want to give away their interest in HMMHV by making such findings known, and their interests are only tangentially in Krieger Strain, which they consider an inferior byproduct of the more impressive Strain I. What's more, while the synthetic substitute would theoretically aid ghouls by supplying both biological nutrition and the traces of metaphysical energy present only in metahuman astral signatures, these signatures would be insufficient to sustain Type 1s such as vampires and nosferatu. AMBROSIA is research into the nature of these signatures to provide a synthetic sustenance for all Infected in emergency situations, as well as a deeper understanding of the nature of these energies and how they interact with Infected.

- > I mean, that all sounds like a pretty good thing. Yeah, an enemy vampire could juice up on faux blood and be a powerhouse, but nothing is stopping them from draining victims anyway, so why not give the rest a chance to try to integrate?
- > Doc Fangs
- > Perhaps you are right. It would not stop the disease from being a threat and requiring annihilation.
- > Nightstalker
- > I don't think I'm speaking just for myself when I say this would change things for all infected. It would give nations a reason to give us a chance at a peaceful life, and Asamando a real shot at sustainability. That's paydata worth stealing—and worth releasing.
- > Red
- > I'm with you. I think I know what my next objective is.
- > Hannibelle



- > Let me know if I can be of any assistance.
- > Doc Fangs

The Ordo, for the most part, is far more concerned with the later, as their nature as predators in search of self-perpetuating apotheosis is far more interesting to them, but the ability to stockpile sustenance that requires no feeding (such as the human livestock in Asamando, or exorbitantly expensive and often incompatible null clones) is an attractive stopgap in the event of an emergency.

- > I've never understood that. If the Ordo is so rich and has so many genetic resources, why aren't they just cloning buttloads of flesh for ghouls and the like to chow down on, zero moral quandary?
- > Snopes
- > You do know there are recorded incidents of clones waking up and expressing full sapience and faculties, right? Just because they're a vat-born null doesn't mean they are braindead.
- > KAM
- > And one step deeper: clonal tissue doesn't always have a stable metaphysical structure. A lot of the time that expensive null has some kind of metagenetic flaw that disrupts its compatibility with donors, meaning a whole new null has to be bred. There's a reason they're so expensive to produce. Current research can't place where this flaw comes from, but it's much more common with force-grown nulls. The twist? The ones who are viable for harvesting (and I'd wager my deck this goes for Infected feeding, as well) are the same ones who have viable sapience potential.
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > Wait, you're telling me every clone is basically a real, thinking, living person?
- > Snopes
- > Every clone you can use, yes.
- > KAM
- > Oh my ghosts ...
- > Lyrn
- > Nothing is free. Life always exacts a price.
- > Man-of-Many-Names
- > What happens when Infected feed on flawed clonal flesh?
- > EB
- > Flawed nulls exhibit a kind of minor astral hazing, less like warp pollution and more an internal disruption. Think of it like this: cyberzombies are constantly making static all around them, while flawed nulls are more like a warped signal on your trid. But to answer your question, it's akin to food poisoning or exposure to an allergen, so there is extraordinary discomfort,

pain, and an inability to use any inherent abilities like regeneration. Absorption of flawed metaphysical energy can't be purged like poison, so they have to burn through the energy if they can, which, while offering none of the normal enhancements, leaves them starved.

- > Doc Fangs
- > Fascinating. Thank you, Doctor. That is of immense help.
- > Nightstalker

AMBROSIA, at present, exists as pure research. While its potential is extraordinary, the horror is in its procurement of research materials. Fully drained and Infected metahumans are used as experimental subjects, existing in half-maddened starvation before invasive astral probing and physical vivisection. Death is a release from the very hunger the Project seeks to address, and it does not come quickly or easily.

- > There's got to be a better way. That's just ... needlessly cruel.
- > Winterhawk
- > Whatever eventual use AMBROSIA may have, its history will forever be stained with horror.
- > Nightstalker
- > I wish I could say more conventional research was free of such ethical breaches, but the fact is that much of modern technology is built on suffering.
- > KAM
- > Folks, wait, you could, theoretically, do a cybermancy thing to one of those flawed nulls, right? Like, it's already got a weird aura, so why not just keep going and make it a Myrmidon?
- > Plan 9
- > That makes no sense. If they could do that, they'd be making null cyberzombies. Or just cloning important people, programming them with personafix and skillwires and ASIST overlays to replace important people to ... oh for fuck's sake, I'm starting to sound like you.
- > Snopes
- > See? See?!
- > Plan 9
- > Layer in neural imprinting, assuming the cerebral tissue is capable of maintaining it ... of course, mild cybernetic enhancement could likely correct those flaws at least enough to make it a viable servant. There's no known research to indicate it's possible, though.
- > KAM
- > No known research, Doctor, and much as I hate to live in the land of what-if, an absence of data doesn't disprove anything. It's possible.
- > The Smiling Bandit



# GAMEMASTER SECTION

## MOOD

The Ordo Maximus is among the oldest conspiracies in *Shadowrun*, going back to early editions and providing supporting nightmare fuel to runs in ways that were rarely immediately apparent to players. Even some gamemasters had to wonder if the cyberzombie they were dropping into their run came from Ordo delta docs. From novels like *The Terminus Project* to the machinations of Ordo operatives on loan to Samantha Villiers in the fall of Fuchi, they've always been there.

So why are they getting the spotlight now?

First, no organization like the Ordo can last forever without tipping their hand. Runners are snoops and voyeurs and professional spies and blackmailers. Sooner or later, some (un)lucky runner runs across something too hot to handle, and it gets them killed, just like Frederick Davitt and Zebediah Wanderly when they dug too deeply into the Universal Brotherhood.

Second, the times are changing. The mutation of Infected since the appearance of the Denver Rift, as well as the evolving situation in Asamando, the rise and fall of Fear the Dark, the recent appearance of rifts, and several other unknown factors, have led to a spike in opportunity and action for the Inner Circle, and those actions cast shadows across the world. And shadows are exactly where the runners live.

The Ordo Maximus works best as a power behind the curtain. They are as faceless and monolithic as any megacorp, and no runner group can hope to take them all down on their own. An entire campaign themed around opposition to the Ordo can be very fun, but carries a potential sense of futility, as the Ordo have incredible power, money, political and media connections, as well as supernatural terrors at their disposal. Runners may feel overwhelmed by their enemy ... and that is somewhat the point. No one can take down the megas. But they can make differences on the ground. Lives can be saved, plots foiled, and individual villains defeated. It may not be the war they win, but the battles can mean everything for someone. If you need any evidence of someone who has been waging this war for a long time, and the attitude they tend to take, look no further than Martin DeVries, and bear in mind: those who fight monsters may become monsters.

Alternatively, runners may decide to try their luck with an Ordo patron. It's not unheard of for runners to get regular work from a single employer, whether it takes the form of professional trust to get the job done and get paid well for it or becoming regular paycheck spec ops. These op-

portunities only come after a string of consistent, dramatic successes under perilous conditions bring them to their employer's attention. For an Outer Circle member, these runs are far more normal: data gathering, kidnapping, blackmail, extraction, sabotage and the like. There is little to give away the forces behind the curtain, and players may have no more idea who they work for than they would on any other run. Members of the Outer Circle seek one-upmanship, and it comes at the expense of their fellows. Given as they are to collecting things, a pack of runners at their beck and call can prove both useful and amusing to them.

Work for the Inner Circle is far more suspect, both in terms of morality and esoteric encounters. Getting there can be as simple as helping an Outer Circle patron into the Inner Circle, where they come along as their trusted agents, or as complicated as stopping an Ordo team and drawing the appreciation of an Inner Council member as potential replacements. Some teams have no idea they have been carefully groomed over time to work together in service to a vampire they may never meet. While great dragons and immortal elves may lead the pack when it comes to Machiavellian shell games and plausible deniability, they don't have a monopoly, and a canny Ordo nosferatu can prove an apt second place.

Inner Circle jobs are either inscrutable elements of larger operations, such as tandem sabotage ops with other crews or elaborate data steals in some of the most well-defended private and corporate magic databases and hardcopy libraries in this (or any) world, or directly related to the supernatural, testing theories, stealing ancient relics defended by alien spirits, capturing exotic specimens or gathering rare reagents in the far corners of the world. The rewards are fantastic, the travel extraordinary, the resources unbelievable, the danger unequaled. And all of it comes at the price of freedom. Signing on with the Ordo is no less of a deal with the devil than with any mega, and may be worse, as the price of disloyalty is the soul.

There is a temptation with some GMs to embrace a globe-trotting occult conspiracy atmosphere where the Ordo is concerned, and it's a fine backdrop. The Ordo operates in rarified air, a mixture of the street level horror of roving cannibal ghouls to the faux-wood moulding halls of European old world aristocracy. If you happen to feel like you're in a Gothic horror mixed with a spy thriller, you're probably getting it right. Blade meets Lovecraft meets Bond.

## RESOURCES

The Ordo Maximus has tremendous capital to spend on whatever assists its quest for apotheosis, in terms of cash, influence, and manpower. Any deed they cannot perform themselves is carried



out by proxies (including runners), and more often than not disposable assets are used regardless, both to maintain plausible deniability and so to allow them to focus their attentions on more worthy pursuits.

That being said, Ordo operatives have been known to take field work, whether for their archaeological digs for exotic elements and artifacts, or as agents provocateur for their own ends or the rare ally. These operatives come in several forms.

ORDO SPLATTERPUNKS

(ORKS, PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

So-called for their propensity to spill as much blood as possible, these Body Bank frequenters and jet-set brutes are go-ganger vampire wannabes. Cybernetic augmentation is often designed to emulate the beasts they crave to become, seen as training wheels for the real thing. There is little they will not do for the uplifting “Dark Kiss,” and no few of them indulge in BiteByte BTLs, blood magic, recreational cannibalism, and any other activity that gives them the brush with immortality they perceive as their ultimate goal, always performed in the style they find fits their concept of infection. They often find work for Fear the Dark as disposable labor, or Tamanous when they don’t mind getting their hands dirty.

ORDO SPLATTERPUNKS

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
6	4(6)	3(5)	5(7)	4	2	3	2	2.6
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE				
10	8/3D6	A1, I4	12	10/15/+1				

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Close Combat 4 (Blades +2), Firearms 5 (Pistols +2), Influence 2 (Intimidation +2), Outdoors 3, Perception 4, Stealth 3  
**Qualities:** Built Tough 1, Guts  
**Augmentations:** Muscle replacement 2, wired reflexes 2  
**Gear:** Armor jacket (DR +4), Renraku Sensei commlink (DR 3)  
**Weapons:**  
Combat knife [Blade, DV 3P, 8/2\*/-/-/-, \*max range 20 meters]  
FN P93 Praetor [Submachine Gun, DV 4P, SA/BF/FA, 9/12/7/-/-, 50(c), w/ flashlight, integral rigid stock, laser sight]

FEAR THE DARK TERRORIST

(VAMPIRE, PROFESSIONAL RATING 5)

FtD has largely been absorbed into the Ordo, and its operatives carry out acts of violence as they always have, only now with the added caveat of additional funding and selection of targets courtesy of their Inner Circle masters. Infected supremacists, they find their beliefs fall well in line with the Ordo, but they prefer action, leaving innovation to the blue-blood eggheads of the Inner Circle. Hands-on and viciously effective, they always prefer tactics that emphasize their strengths and immunities, and they are fans of biological and

chemical warfare to inflict psychological as well as physical harm. To them, collateral damage is simply a sign of a job well done.

FEAR THE DARK TERRORIST

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	ESS
3	5	4	3	5	3	4	4	6	2D6
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE					
6	8/2D6	A1, I3	11	15/20/+2					

**Skills:** Athletics 8, Con 4, Close Combat 7 (Unarmed Combat +2), Firearms +2, Influence 5, Perception 8, Stealth 7  
**Powers:** Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (hearing, smell, thermographic vision), Essence Drain, Immunity (age, pathogens, toxins), Infection, Mist Form, Natural Weapon (bite), Regeneration, Sapience  
**Weaknesses:** Allergy (sunlight, Severe), Allergy (wood, Severe), Dietary Requirement (metahuman blood), Essence Loss, Induced Dormancy (lack of air, [Essence] minutes)  
**Gear:** Erika Elite commlink (DR 4), lined coat (DR +3), thermal smoke grenade (x4), tranq patch (rating 7, x4)  
**Weapons:**  
Bite [Unarmed, DV 3P, 7/-/-/-/-]  
Ares Light Fire 70 [Light Pistol, DV 2P, SA, 10/7/6/-/-, 16(c), w/ laser sight, silencer]  
Sword [Blade, DV 3P, 9/-/-/-/-/-]

ORDO FIELD OPERATIVE

(HUMAN, PROFESSIONAL RATING 6)

Inner Circle members, particularly those of lower ranks, may find themselves better suited to field ops than research or politics. These agents employ more finesse in their activities than their FtD peers (who they often look down on as indiscriminate brutes), carrying out precision assassination, theft, coercion, and blackmail when proxies can’t be trusted to get the job done right. Elite, they are the scalpel to the FtD terrorist’s cudgel. Minimal exposure, maximum results, and a slew of skills and abilities to see the objective secured.

ORDO FIELD OPERATIVE

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
3(+2)	6(8)	5(8)	4	6	5(7)	6	5	3.06
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE				
8	14/4D6	A1, I5	11	10/15/+1				

**Skills:** Athletics 5 (Gymnastics +2), Biotech +2, Close Combat 7, Con 5, Cracking 2, Electronics 5, Engineering 3, Firearms 6 (Pistols +2), Influence 8 (Intimidation +2, Negotiation +3), Outdoors 5 (Tracking +2), Perception 8, Piloting 6, Stealth 7 (Palming +2, Sneaking +3)  
**Qualities:** High Pain Tolerance  
**Augmentations (all betaware):** Bone lacing (aluminum), cerebral booster 2, cyberears (rating 3, w/ audio enhancement, balance augments, damper, select sound filter 2, sound link), cybereyes (rating 4, w/ image link, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement, vision magnification), muscle toner 2, synaptic booster 3, tooth compartment, voice modulator 2  
**Gear:** Armor jacket (DR +4), Transys Avalon commlink (DR 6)  
**Weapons:**  
Ares Light Fire 75 [Light Pistol, DV 2P, SA, 10/7/6/-/-, 16(c), w/ laser sight, silencer, smartgun system]  
PJSS Model 55 [Shotgun, DV 4P, SA/BF(short), 3/12/8/-/-, 2(b), w/ integrated shock pad, rigid stock]  
Sap [Club, DV 2S, 6/-/-/-/-/-]



## ORDO ARCANOARCHAEOLOGIST

(ELF, PROFESSIONAL RATING 6)

The Ordo seeks arcane power through any means possible and has found the study of mystical relics, ancient or modern, to be a profitable path to advancement. Whether found at a field dig at odds with the Atlantean Foundation or bidding at an auction, these specialists and their retinues acquire their coveted prizes by all means necessary.

ORDO ARCANOARCHAEOLOGIST

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	ESS
3	5	5	3	6	6	5	4	7	6.0

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
6	10/1D6	A1, I2	11	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Astral 6, Athletics 4, Biotech 3, Close Combat 3, Con 4, Conjuring 5, Enchanting 5, Engineering 3, Firearms 4, Influence 4 (Negotiation +2), Outdoors 6 (Survival +2), Sorcery 7, Stealth 5

**Qualities:** Focused Concentration 2

**Spells:** Analyze Magic, Analyze Truth, Armor, Cleansing Heal, Detect Magic, Hush, Increase Reflexes, Invisibility, Mana Barrier, Physical Mask, Powerball, Shape Stone, Stunbolt,

**Magical Tradition:** Hermetic

**Initiate Level, Metamagics:** 2, centering, quickening

**Gear:** Armor vest (DR +3), disenchanting focus 2, power focus 3

**Weapons:**

Ares Viper Slivergun [Heavy Pistol, DV 4P(f), SA/BF, 12/8/6/-/-, 30(c), w/ silencer]

Combat knife [Blade, DV 3P, 8/2\*-/--/-, \*max range 20 meters]

## CYBERZOMBIE

(HUMAN, PROFESSIONAL RATING 7)

Ordo Maximus has utilized cyberzombies as shock troops for decades, sometimes loaning out their creations to other major players as an act of goodwill or for massive favors. In the company of field arcanoarchaeologists or defending Ordo installations, these creatures are judiciously deployed: astral hazing is detrimental to the dual-natured Infected and mages. It is rare to find them shoulder-to-shoulder with their Infected masters, so they deploy tactically at range to keep the enemy off-guard, often closing the distance and engaging in violent melee. They are never given to lower-ranking members or anyone who cannot employ them responsibly, including FtD operatives. Their rarity makes sighting one unlikely, but if spotted, you can be sure there is something important going on.

CYBERZOMBIE

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
4(+2)	4(6)	4(8)	5	4	3	3	2	0.05

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
13	11/5D6	A1, I6	11	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Athletics 7, Biotech 4, Close Combat 8 (Clubs +2), Exotic Weapons 4 (Flamethrower +2), Firearms 8 (Longarms +2), Influence 4 (Intimidation +3), Outdoors 2, Perception 5, Stealth 5

**Qualities:** Guts, Magic Resistance

**Augmentations (all betaware):** Bone lacing (titanium), cyberarm [right, obvious, Agi 6, Str 6], cyberears (rating 3, w/ audio enhancement, balance augments, damper, select sound filter 2, sound link), cybereyes (rating 3, w/ image link, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement, dermal plating 2, Hermes Ikon commlink (implanted, DR 5), muscle toner 2, skilljack (rating 1, w/ suite of language skills as needed), skillwires (rating 1), wired reflexes 4

**Gear:** Full body armor (DR +5), jammer (directional, rating 5)

**Weapons:**

Extendable baton [Club, DV 3S, 5/-/-/-/-]

Ingram Smartgun XI [Submachine Gun, DV 3P, SA/BF, 11/9/6/-/-, 32(c), w/ gas-vent system, silencer, smartgun system]

Yamaha Raiden [Rifle, DV 4P, SA/BF/FA, 4/11/10/7/2, 60(c), w/ silencer, smartgun system]

Grenade launcher [DV as grenade, 4/11/7/1/-, 4(c), w/ 12 high explosive grenades]





# THE SEA DRAGON

► Far too many mentions of Sea Dragon have surfaced recently for me not to include what appears to be going on. Most in the shadows, or even any who read some corporate news, would say, “She’s never been subtle,” because she sinks cargo freighters, floods cities, and knocks aquatic habitats into abyssal trenches. The thing is, those are displays of power and her flaunting of her untouchable nature, but most importantly, they’re a gargantuan fragging distraction. The Sea Dragon is just as subtle and manipulative as every other great dragon, she just spends less time worrying about the world on land and the trappings of metahumanity, including a big chunk of our laws. She knows them, that’s for sure. She knows when and where to manipulate things and just how to get what she wants. For all of this, I’m putting her in here because one of two things is bound to happen in the near future.

The Sea Dragon is going to make a big stand.

Or the Sea Dragon is going to die.

Either outcome means a lot to both shadow and corporate boardrooms, so get ready for the party to start.

First up, I tasked someone to gather some history and take a look at the steps leading to where we are. After that, I tossed them another piece and let them speculate on her plans.

► Glitch

## THE ROAD TO TODAY

POSTED BY: POSEIDON

Have you ever seen one of those new trids with the conspiracy theorist who has an entire node full of virtual strings connecting pictures, places, and articles? That is what I would need to give even a hint at the massive efforts and movements Sea Dragon has made in order to get where she is today. Because of this, I’m going to offer the highlights. It should offer a solid picture of the threat, but it will by no means be all-encompassing. This being is on a tear to shake up and separate the globe in a way none have done in human history.



- > The closest I would compare, for those who want a human touch, is the British colonial expansion and their dominance of the trade through naval force. Rule the seas, and you ruled the world back in those days.
- > Icarus

All of this is not to brag.  
Every word I put here is a warning.

## CORPORATE GROWTH

The Sea Dragon knows the corporate game. She isn't on par with Lofwyr or even Knight, but she has advisors and managers who handle bridging the gap between her genius and the laws and rules of our systems. She knows how to delegate and pick the best, all while also ensuring they are one hundred percent loyal. The compensation she offers draws in great talent, but weeding out those who are just in it for the money is the true key to her success. Fanatics will go above and beyond and, most importantly, won't roll over at the slightest threat. Most of those I've met would rather die than betray her.

Over the course of the last four decades, her fanatical financial gurus have built up a diverse portfolio of corporate ownerships and investments. If she were to consolidate all of her considerable corporate assets under a single megacorporate logo, she would rival the lower ranks of the Big Ten. She never will, but I just want to offer an idea of the kind of value "Sea Dragon, Inc." has as a corporation-owning entity. This represents direct ownership. If you add in the value of her investments, much of it in other megacorporations, you would come up with a personal value near, or possibly exceeding, that of MCT.

Her smaller corporations have immense value through property ownership—almost every bit of which lies within a stone's throw of water. Corporate buildings, power plants, residential properties, storage and shipping, manufacturing, farmland, the list goes on and on. All owned by various smaller corporations with considerable valuations despite a lack of megacorporate connections. These properties are as much a method of storing money as they are a method of building a buffer between her domain and ours. It's also a foothold, and a dangerous barrier between us and vital natural resources.

- > The lack of megacorporate ownership means no extraterritoriality. Not sure if that's a good or bad thing, but it is something.
- > OrkCEO
- > Depends on who she's renting to. If MCT rents space, they bring their extraterritoriality with them. And I can guarantee this dragon is smart enough to use the other corps to her advantage when she needs to.
- > Icarus

So as to not make all of this seem like the rantings of a madman, let me offer a few examples that can be verified with some digging. Two of my favorite bits of her corporate activities are what I call the Maersk Ruse and the Mississippi Maneuver.

At first glance, the Maersk Ruse comes off as remarkably simple, but setting up this level of misinformation and getting it to stick took significant amounts of skill and money. The payoff, though, was worth it. Using her considerable wealth, the Sea Dragon invested heavily in Maersk, one of her worst enemies. The investments were "hidden," but not very well, so that anyone on the outside who was looking saw one of two things: either the Sea Dragon was trying to slowly buy up her rival through investments, or she was funneling money into one of her own businesses in order to shore up its funding.

The Sea Dragon fed both rumors.

The first was easy to feed. Buying rivals was a common move, and the continued attacks against Maersk that were blamed on the Sea Dragon were perceived as a way to devalue the corporation and make it easier to purchase bit by bit. The second played on that same devaluing but got supplemented with rumors of false reports of sinking freighters. Freighters that would miraculously appear in an out-of-the-way port but without cargo and with the name painted over or some other thin ruse. All of this did exactly what the Sea Dragon wanted: draw attention, not only to her own attacks against Maersk, but also the attacks of others who didn't want to see the Sea Dragon getting into a megacorporation with such abundant and far-reaching global connections. Wuxing and Saeder-Krupp both waged a shadow war that ended up knocking Maersk back on its heels. They didn't drop an A, but they were so focused on dealing with their new opposition, they lost focus on the Sea Dragon and what she was doing.

While that ruse is pretty much over (a few stragglers still cling to the conspiracy theories) the Mississippi Maneuver is going strong. The names to know are: Midwest Agriculture, River's End Properties, Farm Savers, Mid Region Water Reclamation and Recycling, UCAS River Reserve Foundation, Confederate Water and Power, Mississippi Management, Rivers Without Borders, Recreational River Resource Management, and EvenFlow Stream Savers. Those are ten rather unassuming corporations that own property along the Mississippi River. Between the ten of them, they own thirty-three percent of the property bordering the river. The property looks like farms, parks, construction projects, warehouses, pristine forests, and the like, but it is all corporate-owned. And every one of those corporations, including about a hundred more that control another fifteen percent of river-adjacent properties, are all owned



by Sea Dragon, giving her control over almost half of the river.

No, I have no idea what her plans are, but I can't imagine anyone who lives, works, or hangs their survival on the Mississippi River would sleep well knowing a single, very mysterious, great levathan controls as much as she does.

- Ownership pans out, though a lot of it is adjacent property due to water rights and usage laws. I can't fully verify if the Sea Dragon owns these companies, but none of them are publicly held, and I've got squat on revenue streams. They all make enough to pay the necessary taxes, so the government has no reason to look into them. If you go further up the paper trail, a few have links to known holdings of the Sea Dragon, but nowhere near all.
- Glitch
- Like the UCAS didn't already have it bad enough!
- Slamm-O!
- Anyone else concerned that an eco-terrorist controls one of the largest freshwater sources on the planet?
- Clockwork
- One man's "eco-terrorist" is another's "freedom fighter."
- Ecotope

Those are just two of the big efforts the Sea Dragon has used her vast corporate resources on. She keeps building them every day. These efforts are also targeted by rivals on a daily basis, and this back-and-forth offers work in the shadows. Keep that in mind when you take a job from some small little mom and pop bait and tackle shop on the river and discover you're breaking one of the fundamental rules of the street.

## ECO-TERRORISM OR PROTECTING THE SEAS?

We can't talk about where the Sea Dragon is today without discussing the fact that she's wanted in connection with acts of eco-terrorism all over the globe. There's a reason why none of the corporations she owns sport her name in big, bold letters. The thing is, she doesn't claim citizenship anywhere and doesn't recognize the authority of any land-based government or corporation over herself. The Corporate Court tried to argue why it should be allowed authority over her due to its primary operations center being in space. It worked better than any previous argument, which means they weren't immediately ignored, but I think she was just busy chuckling at the absurd attempt. Her ignoring their authority over her does not mean she ignores their claims, however. In fact, she's made responses to every

claim made. Some she denies any knowledge of and offers to investigate, which frequently leads to more problems being blamed on her when she's simply going after the guilty party. Let me outline a few examples with you.

Top of the list that most know about is Evo's Aquaticus, the aquatic habitat/lab that fell from the edge of the Marianas Trench. Reports indicated it was a sea serpent attack, and that was the official report, but fingers still pointed at the Sea Dragon. She responded to this with information about a sea serpent nest located only a few hundred meters below the Aquaticus, in the trench. The nest had hatchlings at the time of the event, and that was why the sea serpents attacked the aquacology.

- Anyone else verify this? No, I thought not.
- Clockwork

Next up in famed events is the sinking of the oil tanker, Kvensk. The tanker was one in a small fleet of four, offering abundant witnesses. The Sea Dragon sent a spirit liaison to the lead ship, asking all four to cease progress. The liaison was banished. A second liaison arrived, warning that an attempt at banishment would be met with displeasure, and the message was given again. The order was refused, but the liaison was allowed to return. Shortly after, however, all four tankers began to slow, reporting a sudden loss in propulsion. Drone monitors saw that massive spaces of air had been created around the propellers, making them useless. The spirit returned and offered apologies, stating the fleet would continue if they met with her master. The captains agreed, and they met the Sea Dragon. The reports are conflicted about what happened after this, with some claiming the Sea Dragon demanded a ship be given to the sea, others saying the Sea Dragon wanted all the ships, and two others saying she just wanted one ship but would spare the crew.

In the end, one ship sank, the other three were set back to course, and arrived ahead of schedule despite the delay. The Sea Dragon sent a response with her version of events. She claimed one of the ships was leaking oil as it traveled and demanded they stop for repairs. Repairs were refused, as the ships claimed they weren't leaking. The Sea Dragon ordered the damaged ship abandoned and even let the other three vessels pump over any oil they could fit. When the tankers were full and the damaged tanker empty, the Sea Dragon wrapped it in magic and dragged it to the bottom of the ocean where she planted it deep in the silt to break down over time. She provided the remaining ships with a contingent of spirits to aid them in getting back up to speed and back on schedule.

The corps laughed and covered it up, claiming she attacked and sank the tanker. Reports were erased, and captains were silenced. The crews of





the other three vessels never speak on the events, and those who did have all disappeared.

Every act comes with an explanation. Some of her explanations are thin, and she's truly guilty of crimes, but a choice to save lives almost always comes first.

Along with the acts above, the Sea Dragon has sunk other freighters and tankers that were leaking or polluting, attacked coastal areas where construction was destroying habitats or run-off was polluting the waters, sabotaged farms and ranches to stop their agricultural run-off, and more in a list a kilometer long, all in the name of protecting the waters of the Earth. This has made her a lot of enemies and hurt plenty of bottom lines, making her a target. Calling someone an eco-terrorist is a great way to target them and to turn a lot of the world against them.

I'm not saying her acts aren't deserving of some kind of attention, but I will say that she is smart enough to know what kind of attention she is drawing. There is more to her eco-politics than meets the eye.

### INSTANT FAMILY

I don't know if anyone here pays attention to nature news, though this particular tidbit has been

covered in a lot of other places. Since the early days of the Awakening, it was noticed that, while there are a significant number of dragons on land, there was only a single sea dragon. We eventually came to know this creature as the Sea Dragon, who seemed to be the only one of her kind. Speculation was rampant about the pollution of the oceans killing all of her kind or reducing oceanic mana to a level too low to Awaken in, but in the end, it was simply assumed she was the last.

Not anymore.

Some very industrious (and now either hiding or dead) reporters managed to secure video footage of a pod of sea dragons off the coast of Louisiana, near the mouth of the Mississippi. The group consisted of eight individuals. According to other shadow sources, at the time of the sighting, the Sea Dragon was present in the region. Sources vary on whether she headed back out to sea or up the river with her brood, but no other sightings in that area were reported. Attempts to ask the Sea Dragon have failed, but that is not at all a surprise.

This new brood is likely the result of all the reported dragon-egg dealing that went on a few years back. But now what? Why did she build a family when she so obviously seems to be on the verge of something? The most important point



I see in this is that she made deals that possibly pissed people (and dragons) off in getting all those eggs. She may have even broken promises when she hatched them herself. I know we are going to see some kind of backlash from this, but exactly what I don't know. I can't imagine the trouble it would take to kidnap a baby sea dragon, but I can see it being quite the leverage.

- > Those sea dragon pups went through a rift at an astral confluence in the headwaters of the river. It is supposedly the "official" beginning of the river. They all went in and returned in a matter of hours, but they came back fully grown. Legends among local tribes talk of places "outside of time" where natives lived full lives and then returned old after only a few days. It must be a metaplane.
- > Frosty
- > So, she sent her kids off to another metaplane to grow up, like some kind of metaplanar boarding school? That sounds like bad mothering and could be all sorts of trouble.
- > Slamm-O!
- > In order for them to go back and forth, she had to have gone with them. Not that time matters to her, either.
- > Frosty
- > How do you know this?
- > Bull
- > You know how.
- > Frosty
- > Oh, no. Frag anything that comes from that horse's hoop.
- > Bull
- > Ha ha! I miss you little people. Have fun with your new aquatic master!
- > Laughing Man

## CITY SUPPORT, A.K.A. BEWARE SEA DRAGONS BEARING GIFTS

Last stop on my brief look at the path to today is a big chunk all relating to geography and the dangers of taking help from strangers (or strange dragons). A lot of coastal cities received visits and help from the Sea Dragon over the past couple decades. For reasons known only to ghost, or maybe because of the actions of the Sea Dragon (though I doubt it), North America, and the UCAS in particular, have taken a series of serious hits. People all over the world are currently talking about the teetering giant that is the UCAS and that one more good hit would send this former super-power into its death spiral (if it's not already there). This has left numerous opportunities for the Sea Dragon to come in and offer aid, support, money, power, and

influence to those in the city, depending on each of their desires.

Sure, this looks a lot like someone sweeping in to pick at the pieces of a carcass, but honestly, what major change has not experienced such things at their inception? Success often comes on the back of despair. So, let's look at some of these pieces.

I'm going to focus in the recent era, because I know too many people who think that if it's older than their goldfish, it's no longer viable news.

Let's start back in '76, in Boston. Sounds like some kind of tale of the origin of the U.S. but it's a big part of the fall of the UCAS story. Might even be a header in one of the final chapters. Obviously, we all know about the lockdown and quarantine. We also know it was all bulldrek and that some CFD madhouse was created inside those walls. They walled off the city and blocked off the harbor, but while radar and walls did a fair job of stopping exit over the walls, sonar, patrol boats, and nets just didn't cut it when it came to preventing an aquatic exit.

Enter the Sea Dragon.

An offer to the Corporate Court helped to get them off her back for some of her previous stunts (though it also made them think that maybe they'd catch her unawares, but that didn't happen). She put in extra security for the harbors and ports around the NEMAQQZ and, in turn, gained access to the most desperate souls in Boston. Politicians, runners, corporate executives—you name it, she got her claws in. Some she helped get out right away, and they were instantly in debt. Others she kept an eye out for, tossed in supplies, or let them set up a few operations that made use of some lenient water security. But outside of her draconic purview, anyone trying to get out via the water without her say-so was in for a rude awakening.

After everything settled down, she played a quiet role in getting the city opened back up since the Corporate Court wasn't keen on letting a terrorist take all the credit. Once the quarantine was lifted, they cut ties, but it was already too late. For the Sea Dragon, it was already enough. She had sunk her claws deep in the region, and her influence is now extensive. She seems to focus more on the Hub, but that makes sense with some other whacked-out dragon living up near Salem. I'm not up on what she owns, like I am for the Mississippi, but I think her game here was two-fold: get influence over locals and buy up property at rock-bottom prices as soon as the iridescent smoke settled.

Even while efforts were underway in Boston, the Sea Dragon was already working on her next phase. In all actuality, she was probably working on most of this even further back, but I'm trying to focus on modern and visible events. In 2078, with hurricane Sable closing in and looking ready to flush New Orleans, the Sea Dragon came in



with a plan. Operating almost completely in the shadows, the Sea Dragon put the kind of mojo in place you would only expect from a great dragon. Probably more than I would have expected as the spells and spirits held off the sea surge, tamped the winds down to manageable levels, and did their best to keep debris in the air from doing significant structural damage.

During much of this same time, the local shadows and info brokers were focused on the Sea Dragon making a deal with other local arcane powers, but the arrival of the hurricane made for a good enough example to allow her to get her talons in the door with the corporate and governmental leaders. It was a little later that she turned her vindictive side on the city and offered a lesson in dragon etiquette to Terasca, that fresh-on-the-scene young sea dragon that finally crawled out of the swamp. A light rap on the nose was enough to reassert dominance, and “the Crime Dragon,” as Terasca is called, is now a powerful (and very disgruntled) minion of the Sea Dragon.

All of this has allowed the Sea Dragon to dig her claws in deep and bring New Orleans under her sway. I will say, of all the places she has managed to build her influence, this one seems the slimiest and most likely to slip from her grasp. New Orleans has a lot of factions, and most of those factions are full of fanatics. Relying on corporate greed is one thing, but trying to keep a handle on zealots is no easy task, even for a great dragon.

- Also, Terasca is not a pushover. Rumors are already flying about efforts to contact other dragons, and I’m sure—now that we’ve seen there are other young sea dragons out there—that may be the next step. Get a little protégé.
- 2XL

Slide forward to the blackout. I don’t think she had anything to do with it, but she was certainly able to capitalize on it. With some timely financial support for both St. Louis and Seattle during their respective crises, the Sea Dragon made allies in two powerful cities, both of which went independent. And now she has strong hubs to operate from. Seattle has seen her make friends with the government, opening the door to communications with other local governments along with increases in connections to more distant political entities. The free city makes for a great neutral meeting place as well. Many governments who supported Seattle slipping away from the UCAS are also supporting its position of neutrality and desire to host political summits since the loss of Denver.

St. Louis would have also been a great neutral ground location, but their government made too many agreements with the UCAS and CAS for everyone to trust it. For the Sea Dragon, St. Louis was about corporate power. The ARCHO-

logy quickly became a megacorporate hub. The Corporate Court, all of the Big Ten, and fifty other megacorporations all have space in the massive structure. It’s used for everything from meetings to manufacturing, and it provides the Sea Dragon a spot to meet corporate executives from everywhere without needing to depart the safety of the water, or without ever being too far.

In order to get St. Louis where it is today, the Sea Dragon put up a ton of money. Probably a literal ton. Rumors of deals in gold, precious gems, and rare antiques boosted shadow work to help cover all the shady deals, and the city has blossomed into a new runner Mecca, with the Sea Dragon backing a lot of Mr. Johnsons in order to keep the power she has accumulated.

There is no doubt she is planning something for all this. She has an east coast, west coast, and south coast hub, as well as a solid bit of the biggest river on the continent.

- Matt Wrath can’t say if it’s related, and there’s a ton of stuff always going down in Chicago, but a young sea dragon has been spotted in Lake Michigan. Not the Sea Dragon, but another. If Frosty’s comment above is true, it could be one of them. In the sprawl, rumors are flying about meetings along the river with influential locals, but the city itself is just too damaged to be a target for the Sea Dragon. Sure, the megas have put in efforts, but nothing is growing in this toxic dump.
- Matt Wrath
- Maybe that’s why she’s there. Clean up that toxic dump. Use the framework that’s already there and build up something new. Less interference from others if she’s working on clearing a garbage dump.
- Icarus
- That is, until the powers that operate on the periphery of that former cityscape, and now operate quite successfully, don’t want to see her messing up what they have going.
- 2XL

## ISLANDS IN THE SEA

Still geography, but I wanted to separate out these three because they seem different than the politics and corporate backstabbing that occurred in all those NorthAm cities. The Kingdom of Hawai’i, Borinquen, and Madagascar have all been part of the Sea Dragon’s efforts in the modern world, some far more public than others. The first is solidly aboveboard, the second glided along the edge of the shadows, and the final is straight out of some ancient flatvid pirate movie, and I can’t figure out whether it’s forthright, grey area, shadows, or stumbling around in the darkness.

It’s all sunshine, dolphins, rainbows, and suntanned skin in the **Kingdom of Hawai’i**. At least that’s what the brochures all show you. The truth



is, it's like everywhere else. It's got good, bad, and some very, very, ugly parts, but lately it's gained a benefactor not unlike their gods of old. The Sea Dragon has long had a lair in the region and has expanded her property beyond her massive collection of underwater assets and shoreline holdings. She now owns the majority of the four principal islands and bankrolls a small oceanic kingdom.

She's held influence over this place longer than any other modern site. This has allowed her efforts to be analyzed and gives some idea of what she wants with the world. On these small islands, the Sea Dragon has worked to make the world cleaner and more harmonious with nature, while at the same time retaining all modern conveniences. If I were to take that small move and extrapolate it across the seven major islands on this planet, (a.k.a. the continents) this could be an amazing world. Hawai'i is like the R&D department for what she might have planned in the long run and probably the closest thing to a headquarters you'll find.

And from that headquarters, the Sea Dragon ran a beautifully successful round of shadow ops that allowed a country, ravaged by nature and vengeance, to regain its feet and be ready for whatever she has coming next. All this refers to **Borinquen**, obviously. Rocked by a hurricane and then by Surrurg, the island nation went from being the richest in the Carib League to a drained husk on par with Chicago and Boston. The Sea Dragon built the financial stability from the ground up. She started with feeding some donations to the poor, giving them a much more solid footing. Stability, along with their noble hearts, helped them to come together with a little extra cash they used to hire runners. The runners did small-time stuff, but it shook local criminal groups, which worried the politicians, who sought help from NatVat, which made them realize they were not all that keen on offering help with nothing in it for them.

Once NatVat was undermined (not that they were on stable footing anyway), the Sea Dragon moved in and injected money and support in all the right places, but the island still has plenty of forces arrayed against her. Other islands in the CL don't want her influence. NatVat isn't just walking away from an island that produced so well for so long, and the pirates of the Carib League are flirting with some semblance of unification to try to remove her. The latter of the three is the biggest wildcard. Governments and corporations tend to act in standard ways, which means there are predictable ways to handle them. Pirates getting together don't offer a standard approach. All they need is a weak link, a pawn working both sides, and they have one of those unpredictable advantages. The Sea Dragon doesn't completely control the island, but it certainly has her scent on it.

> The pirates are also just as likely to turn around and sell out in their entirety to the Sea Dragon. They're in it for the money, and she has a lot of that.

> Icarus

> I see you don't know the men of the sea. We're not liked by anyone or anything that wants to "rule the seas." While the world sees pirates as "in it for the money," they have a long history and a storied code. Don't expect them to switch sides, especially to the side of a creature that has sunk so many of our ships, both in the modern era and throughout history.

The more and more I dig, the more I truly think the Sea Dragon avoided her nap in the last cycle. Too many similar tales.

> Kane

Let's talk about pirates somewhere else: **Madagascar**. The Sea Dragon is often sighted in this region when on the move around the world. Since the Awakening, a shroud of mystery has fallen around the dark heart of Madagascar and its impenetrable canopy. Routes by foot are challenged by terrain. By air, they're challenged for a place to land and pick up. By water, they're challenged by the variations and complexity of the rivers for standard transportation. That is not a challenge for the Sea Dragon, and thus she has long been rumored to hide a secret lair in the headwaters. There are legends in almost every port with a river, so no one can be sure which headwaters.

Point is, she has a presence here, and she has a healthy mercenary force at her disposal: the local pirates. They're also a good way of moving things to other ports and snatching valuable cargo at sea. I've even heard that pirate contracts here often have a "dead or alive" clause. If the ship sinks, the contract can still be paid as long as coordinates are given and the Sea Dragon can get a recovery team in the area. She's even been known to do quick recoveries when she was nearby.

> What I said about a code doesn't really apply here—these pirates are the honor-less scum of the oceans.

> Kane

> Don't you spend a lot of time there?

> /dev/grrl

> Yeah. I said honor-less, I didn't say boring. And don't go pointing fingers, missy, at least I don't own a condo in Manajaray.

> Kane

> \*cough\* The Cat's Meow \*cough\*

> /dev/grrl

> That's a chartering investment.

> Kane

The list of other holdings and properties held—er, rumored to be held—by the Sea Dragon is myr-



iad. As it has been pointed out, she is the wealthiest single individual on this planet. Speculating on her plans is not what I was asked to do, so I'll avoid it, but she's been busy of late. Over the course of the last two decades, sightings have been up, with the exception of a year or two after all that dragon nonsense when she tucked her snout in the sand like many of the others. Since, she has ramped everything back up, and then some.

Thanks for the chance, Glitch. Stay frosty, chummers.

## A ROAD TO PERDITION

POSTED BY: POSEIDON

Seems I'm in, and I get to rant! Okay, I can't rant, I have to back things up with something a bit more useful, so this might get heavy, but I am sure some of you are going to think I'm as batdrek as Plan 9 and Ecotope. If that's the case, I say I'm in good company considering what I'm about to put down. All of what follows is my truth on where I think we're headed with the Sea Dragon. She's made a few "public" appearances recently, and while they don't clear up a whole lot, they make the waters a little less murky. To offer up full disclosure: I get funding from the Draco Foundation, so there is a little bit of bias there, but a paycheck and small expense account can't quite buy sycophantic loyalty.

I'll just get to ranting, and I can't wait to come back and read all of your comments.

- He won't have any comments or rebuttals to comments. Poseidon was gunned down during some random street violence in Austin. We can all be pretty sure it was a hit, but it wasn't the kind that sent a message. Except maybe the message that we are insignificant and can be eliminated with no one being the wiser.
- Glitch

A good reporter makes sure to cover the who, what, where, why, and when of things. I gave a bit of where in my last report and covered the top level of who (the Sea Dragon), but I didn't offer a lot on those who work for her. Let me start by clarifying some future issues and even some comments I got on that last bit I wrote.

Sea Dragon. I've stopped putting "the" in front and simply make it a name. But, that got more complicated when the other sea dragons were born (and not to mention that slug, Terasca). While they've not announced names yet, they can't all just be capitalized Sea Dragon. And only one of the brood can claim to be Adult Sea Dragon (I hope that becomes a thing). Back to the point: Mud-dying the moniker miasma is her meeting in San Juan. She met with several political liaisons using a "voice" and has chosen to allow the metahumans to call her Reina del Mar.

Yes, that roughly translates to "queen of the sea." Just capitalized like a formal name. I personally would have preferred she make the announcement in Hawai'i and we could call her Ali'i o ka Moana, but I don't see her as an "Allie." Reina suits her better. But now we have to add "Reina del Mar" to searches that already include Sea Dragon, Great Leviathan, Great Sea Dragon, and majestic bitch-queen of the seas. Really, search the Matrix. That last one gets a ton of Sea Dragon traffic.

- Oh, Allie works just fine. Allison Moana is all over the records for her properties and businesses in Hawai'i. It's how a hacker working for me back in the day linked up stuff I commented on in the Clutch file.
- Kay St. Irregular

Too far off topic, sorry. We can say that she's chosen a name. That's bad news. She's chosen a "voice," who has since been identified as Selena Juarez. That's bad news (especially for Selena, since it gets worse). She used that meeting to inform Borinquen that Selena will be taking over political control of the island in her place. That was the worst part, and it was incredibly dangerous. It was like declaring war.

And then ... they agreed.

It's not like they handed over the island. They set up a special election with Selena Juarez on the ballot, and she's polling way out in the lead. With each new person who learns Juarez's connection to Reina del Mar, she moves further ahead.

In sum, Selena Juarez, former NatVat factory worker, is the voice of Sea Dragon, a.k.a. Reina del Mar, and Borinquen is looking to be the next draconic fiefdom. And my point with all this was just to mention she has chosen a name. Man, I do know how to rant.

- I wouldn't bet on that. Sea Dragon wants the sea. This is a staging point for something, or maybe just a place to set up meetings where Reina can get all the delegates drunk on rum runners before eating them like rum-soaked cherries. More seriously, it is a warm and shapeable place where she can invite people to meetings and let them enjoy her hospitality. From what we've read other places, none of her other lairs, even Hawai'i, are really designed for air-breathing guests.
- Sounder

When you're running land schemes for someone like Sea Dragon (I can't switch over that fast), you become a target. You find corporations that want to manipulate you, government officials who want you for questioning, underworld organizations that want you dead, and all sorts of combinations between them. It's a dangerous life.

The next few people are known affiliates of Sea Dragon, but each one operates in their own way.



They are what I would call Sea Dragon's lieutenants, if there were any formal structure.

First up is **Faolain O'Ryan**, sometimes known as Kair'k in the shadows, a mystic adept who follows the teachings of Shark. He's an Tír na nÓg expat with a deep disdain for elves, even though he's not old enough to really hold a grudge. During his youth, he started as a low-level domestic terrorist. He had to dip over the seas and ran the shadows in NorthAm before he found a home with Sea Dragon as a higher-level terrorist. Like most shamans with a violent totem, he's known for having a bit of a temper, but he balances it with a strike-first-to-avoid-conflict mentality.

For Sea Dragon, he runs operations out of Wales, if only to allow the clash of his brogue with Wenglish. He also happens to know a lot about the area, and his style helps keep trouble down in a place where Sea Dragon can't afford to have any. She's kept her distance from major operations in Europe. She's got her gripes with Proteus, but her bigger plans seem to involve steering clear of Lofwyr and Celedyr's taloned toes. Faolain makes sure that anyone who comes onto the continent and makes any kind of waves with claims that they're working for Sea Dragon, promptly disappears. His efforts were a lot easier before Borinquen, but I imagine things are going to ramp up for him now. People love to use rumors about dragons to create confusion about what they're doing and who they're really working for.

I'm not sure why I feel the need to mention this, but Faolain is also the only male on Sea Dragon's ranking staff. I've heard some level accusations of a romantic relationship between them and conversations I've heard mention her visits to Wales being common. But from everything I've dug up on Faolain, he has no interest in romance. All of this kind of makes sense if she wants someone just to talk to and connect with who still pretty much thinks like a cold-hearted killer. I just feel weird bringing up that kind of personal stuff here. Then again, maybe it's useful to someone, somewhere.

Since it connects to Faolain, I'll talk about Mako next. Yup, a shark shaman with someone named Mako connected to him. How rare! Actually, Mako is just what Kair'k calls her, because he'd rather keep the secret of her true name just that—a secret. Catch that clue? Yup, Mako is actually Faolain's ally spirit. Most often she looks like a late-twenties redhead with a hair-trigger temper and a penchant for drinking. Though she never gets drunk, so it's not really fair. She often uses the social aspect to meet, greet, booze, and schmooze with folks she needs to deal with. Her classic ploy with many executives has been getting picked up in the bar one night, only for her to walk into a meet the next day.

> I've met Mako. She's unnaturally attractive, and by that I don't just mean physically. There's just something about her overall demeanor and personality.

> Sam-R-Eye

> Almost like she was made to be supernaturally alluring? Like she's not from this plane? Fragging null-ceph.

> WizKid

> Hey, WizKid, do you know the difference in penetration probability between an Ares Predator VI and a Colt Manhunter A1?

> Picador

> No, why? Is that a threat?

> WizKid

> No, it was not a threat. That's frowned upon around here. It was me making a point that not everyone here is universally versed in all things. Calling names just creates negative feelings. We prefer to educate here. Thank you for mentioning that some spirits have a supernatural level of charisma that could be used in a dangerous fashion to disarm opponents.

> Picador

> Well done, Picador. And the answer to your question is variable. The APVI and CMA1 both chamber the same ammunition, but the slightly longer barrel of the APVI provides a slight boost over distance.

> Sam-R-Eye

She works all along the eastern seaboard of NorthAm setting up work and cleaning up messes for Sea Dragon. Her current focus appears to be Boston, but her home base is DeeCee. She's been organizing a lot of work and building a solid stable of reliable runners through the blackouts. Down in the CAS she's been luring big talent out of Sweetwater over to the coast. The Carolinas have gained some solid troll and ork runners over the past few months, all thanks to Mako moving talent for whatever Sea Dragon is planning. As a guess and glimpse forward, almost everyone she brings out has naval and underwater operations experience. Could just be a preference for the background, but I imagine it has to do with whatever action Sea Dragon has her running the prep for.

Since it tends to be brought up by anyone who understands the relationship, Mako so far is an asset to Faolain. As a mys-ad, he can't astrally project, being too tightly bound to his physical form. She can move back and forth between Wales and DeeCee quickly, moving information back and forth and getting messages to him or from him. There are a lot of jealousy rumors, and after saying what I did about that relationship between Faolain and Sea Dragon, sending off your only rival for his attention is a pretty cold move. It makes some





sense, but seems like a bit of secondary drama for a Great Dragon.

- I wouldn't put anything past a dragon because they've got that "great" label, just like you can't put anything past any sentient being just because of some regular bias. Not all trolls are mean, not all dragons are vengeful, and not all elves are dandy-eating drekbags. Dragons can be emotional. It's not like Dunkelzahn ran for president based on logic.
- Bull

A bit in a file I saw a while ago mentioned Sea Dragon's affinity for changelings. Especially those with an affinity for aquatic environments. One of the first SURGED metahumans to have some extended employment with Sea Dragon was a dwarf from the CAS, Kymberlee Davidson. Despite her southern citizenship, her family was from Hawai'i and she was technically a Menehune. Most folks can't tell the difference and now you wouldn't be able to tell at all since she's had some significant physical changes as part of her SURGE.

Between the beautiful deep blue scales that cover her whole body, the frills along her limbs, the tail, gills, and heavy membrane over her eyes, she looks nothing like the former pageant darling she

was as a little Georgia sweetheart. She's done work for Sea Dragon all over the world and settled in St. Louis shortly after the blackout. Davidson played liaison with "free St. Louis" groups while at the same time hiring runners to demonstrate the need for the status quo—but it's old hat for most fixers to have some work on both sides of a situation. At this point, she's still playing her role behind the scenes as liaison to the new government, but she's catching a lot of political backlash for all her double-dealing, including from several political figures who are refusing to honor deals they made with Sea Dragon now that she hasn't been spotted in the river lately. It's a dangerous move. I understand their view that the "immediate" threat of a great dragon is not staring them in the face, but these people have obviously never dealt with a dragon.

I can see problems down the road for Kymberlee. I can also see St. Louis' political landscape changing drastically in the near future.

- Davidson talks like a Georgia peach but is sour to her core. She's as ruthless as her boss. She's also well aware that while she may have the innate protection built into working for a dragon, it's still important to cover your tracks and have several layers of deniability. Her work is in layers, and if you have a face-to-face



with her, she either trusts you or is about to kill you. Keep that in mind when you slide into St. Louis to do some work.

› Lyrn

Eltheria Windwalker is our next metahuman link in the Sea Dragon chain. She used to identify as an elf but when the comet swung through she SURGED and her family was not having it. She walked into the waters off the coast of Tír Tairngire seeking a spiteful escape from the torment of her “ruined” life, only to discover she didn’t need air. The cold wasn’t much of a bother, and she had a remarkable level of buoyancy control. Her family had kicked her out because her teeth had become triangular and shark-like, her skin had become rough and shifted to a blue-gray hue, and her eyes went black. The rest of her changes she didn’t discover until she tried to take her own life.

She started swimming and, long story short, came into the employ of Sea Dragon. She now operates in Seattle. She even has some public photos of her and Governor Potter. Her shadow operations are apparently focused on keeping the connections between Sea Dragon and the Seattle government mostly under wraps, but far too many exposé pieces have been written for it to not be a well-known secret.

- › Most of her work I’ve seen is more about preventing people from using or abusing that connection. Everyone knows but not everyone knows, if you get my drift.
- › Sounder
- › Anyone else getting wind of massive numbers of people going missing from the ACHE? I’ve heard that busloads of ACHE residents are being carted down to the docks and aren’t coming back. Did the city make a deal to feed her?
- › Slamm-O!

Head of global Sea Dragon operations, other than Sea Dragon herself, is Khelina Makani. Originally from Hawai’i, she now operates out of the Philippines. She’s a changeling as well, though her thin layer of fur just makes her look like a night one, except she lacks the elven ears since she was born human. All of the others answer to her and that makes her a prime target, but her considerable magical talent and the army of merrows that protect her make her a rather difficult one.

The biggest problem she usually faces is the interception of information intended for her. She has a small cadre of hackers working close to her, but there is a virtual army of others trying to get through her protections and get the inside scoop on Sea Dragon’s doings.

As a note, I should point out that she has help from her new sea dragon kin. All of whom seemed to grow up overnight. Anyone who missed my last report, check out the comment by Frosty. I’m

not exactly sure how it worked, but it did. They haven’t done a lot in public, but in the shadows there have been some suspected contracts and operations from them. There is also work from Sea Dragon’s metahuman operators trying to hold off what they see as a major change in the field. Most fear they are about to be replaced, and Sea Dragon is not the type to offer retirement.

Lastly, I should point out that as a powerful magical being with metaplanar connections, Sea Dragon doesn’t just have Faolain’s ally spirit on the payroll. She employs many spirits and sentient paracritters. As evidenced by some events, she even manages to show influence over simpler paranormal species as well. Sea serpents taking out aquacologies, sharks protecting underwater caches, whales attacking ships, and merrow sabotaging cargo vessels are just a few small examples. She has friends in both high and low places, and through all the layers in between.

- › It’s not just the big and scary things. A job out of New Orleans was contracted by a fishing fleet to figure out who was causing their issues when their yields dropped because they were sure it was corporate interference. Turns out the fish were just avoiding their nets, and the Sea Dragon was suspected of being behind it as a way to gain influence over another faction in the city.
- › Big EZ

The what and why of all of this are always the big questions. What actions are actually related to this or to some other big corporation or world power are sometimes hard to discern. And the why is usually buried, obfuscated, or straight-up lied about in order to keep other powers in the dark.

Before I start this in depth, I’m going to make a confession.

We put together a great little informational download we dubbed the *The Neo-Anarchist Streetpedia*, and I authored the little blip on Sea Dragon that said, “She may not exert her power like some of her dirtside contemporaries, but don’t be fooled—she is a player in the grand global shadowrunner and power game.” The opportunity made me want to dig deeper, and this is where I’m digging, and what I’m finding is she’s getting more and more willing to flex her ever-accumulating power.

But jump in she has.

Sea Dragon is working to increase her connections and associations in ports and waterside locations around the globe. The efforts are so big now, she knew she couldn’t hide them completely, so she’s made a few big semi-public splashes at the surface to hide the vicious rip current that is building down below. Average SINners are getting the corporate spin, positive or negative depending on whatever shepherd they follow, but higher up and deeper down, they are looking for the big picture.



And I think I see it.

Everywhere, there are massive amounts of money getting tossed around. In the political realm, she's making influential deals with cities and megacorps. In the shadows, blackmail data is snagged against those who disagree or refuse her offers. Radical fringe groups are using eco-terrorism to fight against the real enemies of the environment. Thugs are being hired for scads of personal coercion, pushing pawns and kings alike into line with her agenda. Coastal and river-front property is snatched up with above-market offers, and serious "accidents" drop the value when refused.

I can see that all of this is a huge global operation to take control of the waters and a push for "greener" treatment of the world's most precious liquid. It may sound huge, and kind of ridiculous, but every bit of work, both above and below the table, points to Sea Dragon looking for as much control as possible of the world's major bodies of water. It's big, it's ambitious, and it seems like a completely normal thing for a great dragon to do with their domain. Her domain just happens to cover seventy percent of the planet and plays a part in virtually every aspect of metahuman life.

Whether we like it or not, Sea Dragon wants to legitimately be queen of Earth's waters.

From where I sit and, and after everything I've seen, it's all about restoring the health of Earth's aquasphere. Pollution, over-mining, oil spills, runoff, coastal construction and erosion, habitat destruction, over-fishing, whaling, climate shift, and a plethora of other ecological threats have changed the seascape to the point where it sits on the verge of perpetual ecological collapse. It has, for over a century, been holding on by a thread, and it appears Sea Dragon is ready to give that thread some reinforcement with heavy chain.

- > Another dragon looking to be our grand overlord? Will this never end? But, seriously, I did have some internal files between Maersk and Wuxing that refer to their operations against "Shui Lung." The two corps are sharing data on the target and skirting a tactical relationship, thus pitting two of the world's biggest megacorps firmly against, who I can only guess is the Sea Dragon.
- > Slamm-O!
- > That's not the only place. Proteus and Maersk have so many reasons to be on opposite sides of every issue, especially their respective bottom lines, but the pair have set up several clandestine meetings in Seattle, using the chaos of their new independence to mask some odd interactions.
- > Sounder
- > You can expect extra-special security and some misinformation to be spread through the shadows in order to draw out her assets. The danger factor is going to be turned up to eleven,

even on the data-dodges, because getting caught lying to a dragon could be a snacking offense.

- > Glitch
- > Doing anything to raise the ire of a dragon could be a "snacking offense" given the mood, and level of hunger, of the dragon in question.
- > Orange Queen
- > Oh, I see you're still lurking about here. How about a view from a little closer to the inside? We all know your situation, but we also all know you would never walk away completely.
- > Glitch
- > As this document now seems open to commentary, let me take a bit and see what the rest of the peanut gallery produces before I start speaking and get called a liar.
- > Orange Queen
- > A respectable plan, OQ. I'd like to toss my .02 nuyen in. From what I'm seeing, all of this is about gaining control of the depths and waterways that are not currently the domain of another great. She's avoiding the Amazon, north coast of Europe, Yangtze, and a vast collection of major waters so she won't inadvertently step on the talons of other greats. This, to me, looks like some level of orchestrated effort with some coordination going on among dragon-kind. I know she's stepped on some lesser dragons' turf (such as Tabasco, or whatever, in New Orleans), but she's keeping distance from the bigger boys and girls.
- I will also mention that there are other political powers, those with a greater respect for things of an arcane nature, talking to the Sea Dragon. You can catch bits of rumor in both Tírs, Asamando, Azania, the NAN, and Amazonia for certain.
- > Frosty
- > From a purely selfish standpoint, I am glad she is stepping forward. The waters of the world have been dying rapidly over the past century and someone needs to make a stand. Organizations and individuals that I know and track are reaching out to help her in whatever fashion they can. Those who have been rebuked for their extreme tactics, those efforts that sometimes cause more environmental harm than good, are not sitting idly by, though. Many now feel they have to prove their worth. Though, in truth, they're just trying to prove her wrong.
- > Ecotope
- > Half those groups are run by toxic shamans anyway. They just want to control the pollution, rather than letting the corps control it.
- > NAMOR
- > We prefer data over speculation.
- > Bull
- > Catharsis works against MCT in Chicago. He operates along the Chicago River within the CZ, focusing on disrupting MCT's



construction operations because they have zero care for what ends up in the water.

The Four Horsemen operate all over the NAN. The leaders may be the Four, but their Apocalypse (what their followers call their collective) have expanded in number after they heard the Four got access to a former United States nuclear missile silo in the Sioux Nation that wasn't fully decommissioned during the White Flight. Whether they still control it or just stripped it is a matter of rumors.

The Four are usually spread all over the NAN and only come together for rituals, with each Horseman leading their own group of Riders (what they call their followers). They focus heavily on corporate sites and show little care for the safety and well-being of the lives at these places.

Does that work instead of speculation?

- > NAMOR
- > It does quite well. Keep it up, kiddo.
- > Bull
- > Many of the groups being referred to usually just focus on hurting the bottom line of the corps that cause the pollution. Some realize what they are doing and know full well someone else will fill in the vacuum they create. Others just keep hitting them and somehow think they are really making a difference. King Triton, down in the Gulf of Mexico, hits rigs, oil tankers, cargo ships, and anything else that burns or moves diesel. He somehow thinks he is going to make a positive difference, but he's sunk more diesel oil in the Gulf than any of the corps have from even their worst accidents. He's batdrek crazy.
- > /dev/grll
- > I understand there is a view that shamans who use violence to protect the Earth are often seen as toxic. If that's the case, the Sea Dragon is toxic. She's sunk more ships and crushed more coastal terrain than any hundred metahumans I know. She's working the world with both brute force and corporate finesse now, which is not what people have come to expect from her. We made the error. We misjudged.
- > Ecotope
- > Since we're in touch with the wilder side of things, we might as well toss some madness we've been hearing whispers of. There are times the worlds of mana and man brush against each other and times they collide. The increase of alchera and arcane phenomena are a sign many have seen, but there are those things that occur in the darker corners that people fear to speak of too loudly. What the Sea Dragon fears is in these shadows. Something is supposedly bound in the depths and those bindings are weakened by the polluted waters and risk a break with these arcane shenanigans.
- > Plan 9
- > There's a reason the ghoulish kingdom is climbing down into a hole.
- > Hannibelle
- > Frosty, you are correct in assuming it is somewhat coordinated, but far earlier than many of us expected. I'm on the outs,

obviously, so I don't know what the Loremaster is thinking, but I do know the issues Sea Dragon is trying to deal with were not supposed to be a problem for at least another century or two. Due to how quickly things and feelings change in the politics of metahumanity, I don't know why she would try to gain control now, and hold it, rather than take control later. My best guess would be a shift in this timetable.

Assumptions about her distancing from the territory of others is likely accurate. She has never played well with the rest of us. With the madness of Sirrurg and the void left by myself and Dunkelzahn, Ghostwalker is the only great in this region who isn't a maniac, if only just barely. Though the Sea Dragon's efforts have been noticed, and elements within the Draco Foundation are playing in the same waters. How this plays out is likely in your courts as denizens of the shadows.

And finally, sometimes Plan 9 finds the correct path. Keep your eyes on the waters.

- > Orange Queen
- > Never hurts to ask. Would you mind telling us what these issues are that she might be prematurely dealing with?
- > Glitch
- > I don't think this silence is golden.
- > Slamm-O!

## MEMBERSHIP

### K'AIR'K

A former terrorist turned ... who are we kidding, he's still a terrorist. He grew up with a deep hatred for elves and started his terrorist career fighting the government of Tír na nÓg. After some trouble, he ran to hide in the UCAS and slipped into the shadows. He worked in several UCAS cities as well as a few more exotic locations and came to the attention of Sea Dragon when he went above and beyond to protect a dragon egg. The effort was more about money, but K'air'k saw working for Sea Dragon as a great move. He gained a powerful benefactor but still gets to operate as a force of change.

He still hates elves and takes every opportunity to mess with the Tírs, but he spends most of his time in the UK running operations around Europe. His main job is to keep anyone from using Sea Dragon as a cover for their operations while also running contracts that skirt the borders of other local powers (especially Lofwyr).

### MAKO

The ally spirit for K'air'k has a personality all her own. She operates as one would expect and is one hundred percent loyal to her summoner, but she is also 99.9 percent loyal to Sea Dragon. Only K'air'k has more of her loyalty, and she only con-



siders that loyalty betrayed if it is done so directly. If Sea Dragon wants her to set up a run that opposes the efforts of K'air'k, she has no problem with it.

She has three forms. Most people see and interact with the classic Irish woman. She also has the form of a three-meter-long shortfin mako shark. Her last form is identical to K'air'k. She rarely uses this form, but it works well when she needs to utilize his less-than-pleasant reputation.

She works for Sea Dragon as a fixer, but her personal goals involve advancing spirit rights within the UCAS government. She plays in the political arenas of the East Coast and manipulates a number of political figures from behind the scenes.

SELENA JUAREZ

Taking the job as the voice of a dragon, especially one as infamous as the Sea Dragon, is a giant step into the spotlight, especially for a local Borinquen farm girl. Selena went from a quiet life in the mountain coffee farms of Borinquen to being in the top ten most popular Matrix searches.

Or so Sea Dragon, and others, want people to believe.

Selena is actually on loan from Horizon—a Dawkins Group agent working with Sea Dragon. Horizon is not advertising their part in advancing Sea Dragon into power on Borinquen or even linking themselves to Sea Dragon publicly, but the Consensus saw Sea Dragon as a powerful and valid ally in working against Aztechnology in the region.

Sea Dragon saw Horizon as a manageable megacorporate ally. You could call the Consensus and Sea Dragon mom and dad for Selena Juarez. The artificial Juarez is billed as a local girl who hit it big when she met Sea Dragon down at the harbor while selling goods. The real person behind this Selena Juarez is Cassandra Dawkins. She's a born-and-raised Horizon corp kid, though she started as Cassandra Lancaster. Recognized by the Consensus as a teenager with Awakened talents, she was pulled from her parents and entered training. Her parents watched her grow as a rising teen star and were comfortably taken care of until they were eliminated by the Consensus to avoid familial complications for Cassandra in her true Dawkins work.

She doesn't function as a real double agent but instead acts as a liaison between Horizon and Sea Dragon. She uses her talents to run fixer operations for Horizon in Borinquen though the number of jobs has decreased of late to avoid anyone recognizing her aura or noticing patterns of her presence and absence. While the world does not scrutinize her shadow activities, they are now watching her as a celebrity, and all it takes is the wrong power-hungry exec getting the idea she's living two lives, and both of them are going to be in trouble.

K'AIR'K

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	M	ESS
3	4	2(5)	2	5	3	4	5	7	8	6
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE						
11	9/4	A1/15	10/11	10/15/+1						

**Skills:** Athletics 2 (Sprinting +2), Close Combat 2 (Unarmed +2), Con 2, Conjuring 6 (Summoning +2), Electronics 1, Engineering 1 (Demolitions +2), Firearms 5(7) (Heavy Pistols +2), Influence 2 (Intimidation +3, Negotiation +2), Outdoors 2, Perception 5 (Visual +2), Piloting 2, Sorcery 7 (Counter-spelling +2, Spellcasting +3), Stealth 2 (Sneaking +2)  
**Spells:** Agony, Armor, Clout, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Light, Lightning Ball, Lightning Bolt, Mind Probe, Physical Mask, Silence  
**Adept Powers:** Attribute Boost (Agility) 1, Attribute Boost (Strength) 1, Combat Sense 2, Enhanced Ability (Pistols) 2, Improved Reflexes 3, Mystic Armor 4, Rapid Healing, Wall Running  
**Initiate Grade/Metamagics:** 4/masking, power point (3)  
**Gear:** Armor jacket(+4), commlink (DR 6)  
**Weapons:**  
Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, DV 3P, SA, 10/8/6/-/-, 14(c), w/ smartgun system]  
Shock gloves [Unarmed, DV 45(e), 5/-/-/-/-]

MAKO

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	EDG	ESS
8	9	10	8	8	8	8	8	8	2	8
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE						
20	18/2	A1, I3	12/12	10/15/+2						

**Skills:** Astral 8, Athletics 8 (Swimming +2), Close Combat 8, Exotic Ranged Weapon 8, Perception 8  
**Spirit Force:** 8  
**Spirit Powers:** Astral Form, Concealment, Confusion, Elemental Attack (Cold), Energy Aura (Cold), Engulf (Water), Guard, Materialization, Movement, Sapience, Search, Weather Control  
**Weaknesses:** Allergy (fire, Severe)  
**Gear:** Armor jacket (+4), commlink (DR 4)

SELENA JUAREZ

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	EDG	ESS
3	2	2(3)	1	5	4	5	5	4	6	6
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE						
5	8/2	A1/13	10/11	10/15/+1						

**Skills:** Astral 4, Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Con 5, Electronics 2, Engineering 2, Firearms 2, Influence 5, Outdoors 2, Perception 3, Stealth 3  
**Adept Powers:** Astral Perception, Enhanced Perception, Improved Reflexes 1, Improved Sight, Kinesics, Spell Resistance 1, Vocal Control  
**Gear:** Actioneer business suit (+2), commlink (DR 4)  
**Weapons:**  
Knife [Blade, DV 2P, 6/1\*/-/-/-, \*max range 20 meters]  
Fichetti Tiffani Needler, DV 3P, SS, 10/6/2/-/-, 4(c)]





# THE SHADOW CHAPTERS

*Mr. Johnson doesn't care about you. A nice dinner, some small talk. Maybe you exchange com-codes. It's all biz. All they want from you is to get the job done. And if you suffered an "accident" and died en route to your payday, well, that would suit them just fine, wouldn't it?*

*Your fixer doesn't care about you. That smile when you walk in the door, that something special set aside, just for you? You're just the choob who generates nuyen. The middleman keeps it moving from end to end, and if there's someone paying more than their attention, find somebody else.*

*Your team doesn't care about you. You're a cog in the machine, that necessary piece that ensures the job gets done. Your rep? Your standards? They don't care, and they'll shred it to cut corners or even cut you out. You may be chummers today, but you're in the crosshairs tomorrow and it's just biz.*

*Run in the shadows long enough, you'll face these hard truths and a whole lot more. Who really has your back? Who can you trust when the chips are down? Yourself, but even that gets shaky on a bad day.*

*What if we told you there was someone who*

*would always have your back? Someone to vet each job and make sure you were getting a fair shake. To put you in touch with the right people at the right time, every time. Who could make sure each person sitting in the Bulldog with you is a professional?*

*Someone smarter than me said that no plan survives contact with the enemy. The difference between coming out on top and leaving in a fleet of DocWagons is your support structure. When drek goes sideways, you'll have another plan. And plans on plans. Plans you didn't even know you had because someone is looking out for you. Isn't that something you could use in a world where even Mr. Johnson is betting against you?*

*Who are we? We're a loose organization of deniable assets. We are your fixers ... your suppliers. We'll keep the nuyen flowing and the heat off. We'll protect your interests, because your interests are our interests.*

*Access to the best jobs and the best gear. No more Leeroy's on the squad. The best shadow network you could ever dream of. Sounds perfect, doesn't it? Good. We'll be in touch.*



- > This message flashed across the Puzzle Palace and then just disappeared. I managed to make my own copy before it got stripped. No idea who sent it, which is one concern, but looks like someone trying to organize shadowrunners in DeeCee. This is the first I'd heard of something like this, but turns out it's a thing in a handful of places. Found somebody already on the case, figured they could share what they knew about it. She's been mucking about in Chicago, making a name for herself in the Containment Zone running ops for Project: Takeback. She's got a solid rep if anyone's looking for a competent shooter.
- > Pistons
- > Thanks for the plug. Yeah, Chicago was a hell of a place to be, Bugs 2.0 and all. I'm not missing it a bit.
- > Jazz
- > Were you involved in that whole bug-dragon thing that went down at Wrigley?
- > Hard Exit
- > I tangled with more than my fair share of bugs, but I wasn't anywhere near Wrigley that day, alhamdulillah. I do know a couple of the operators on the ground for that one.
- > Jazz
- > That must have been absolutely wild.
- > Hard Exit

## A SHADOWRUNNER'S UNION

POSTED BY: JAZZ

UPLOADED 09-22-80/1457:27

So, the idea of a "union for shadowrunners" isn't new, but it's not something anyone takes seriously. When you get down to it, we're not a homogenous group by any means. As a "community," individuals generally lack a few baseline commonalities that establish the idea that "we're all in this together." We come to the shadows for a variety of reasons, with our own baggage, limitations, and boundaries. Take any five assets and put them on the same job? Well, you hope they gel, but we've all seen a run go sideways because someone couldn't get along.

But there's a lot we do have in common, and it's all in the nature of the biz. Nobody works the scene long before they've experienced most of the tropes of shadowrunning. Unreasonable timelines, inexperienced teams, compromised safehouses, treacherous Mr. Johnsons—we've all seen it. It cuts into our paychecks and, if we're lucky, that's all. I've lost a chummer or two to a bad deal; I bet you have, too.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't welcome ideas to mitigate all that. Some way to know before the meet if Mr. Johnson's going to cut you an even

deal—or if he plans to frag you in the end—would be great. It goes without saying that between double-cross and no double-cross, the latter is preferable, and having that info beforehand saves a whole lot of time—time you could be spending on a no-double-cross job, with an actual payday. A second order of effect is a better breed of Mr. Johnson all around. And I mean better for us, chummer, not the megas.

Personally, I love the idea of increased professionalism. We've all had our share of regrettable moments. None of us started out in the shadows doing everything the right way. But some folks just seem to live for those regrettable moments. You know who I'm talking about—that drekhead who couldn't keep it in his holster, and now you're jumping through your hoop to keep the job from falling apart.

I hate sitting across from fresh faces and wondering if one of them is going to run everything off the rails and put the rest of us at risk. From coloring outside the lines, bringing the heat, or outright betrayal, sometimes it's our own we have to watch out for the most. Putting a lid on that? That's an idea worth considering.

Don't forget your network. This union thing would absolutely deepen your resource pool. We all know a guy. We all know a guy who knows a guy. But now we all know a guy who knows the right guy. Whatever you need, the union can get. Whatever you need to know, the union can find out.

Just pay your dues.

Of course, that's when the problems start to raise their stupid problem heads.

What's it worth to you to have all of that? We're all fairly independent operators. I like doing it my way and I'm not really keen on someone telling me how to live my life. There are risks, but I choose those risks. If I want to gamble on a big payday, that's my business, isn't it? Who cares how, why, and with who? At the end of the day, it never happened. That's shadowrunning.

So if I don't want to play ball with the union, what's that make me? A scab? How does that work?

Who's going to enforce any of this?

I'm smart enough to know that in the best circumstances, this is going to be a hard sell, and that means disgruntled customers. This isn't a field where we take our grievances to the corporate arbitrators. This is a place where we make our cases with kinetic action. If folks aren't smart about it, they could open up a full-on shadow war.

- > It's not like you want a corp to hear out your grievances, either. They'll find for the side that helps their bottom line.
- > Ethernaut
- > It's great to get a deeper network, but it's all tied to the community? Drek hits when you don't expect it, and it's your





network that will save your soybacon. You leave that to the union, and if they hang you out to dry, then your network will help them to nail you down. No thanks.

> Kane

So, there it is, the case for—or against—a union for shadowrunners. If we could get past the cons, the pros are pretty damn attractive. It would be great if there were some way to get a solid system in place—I don't think anyone would argue that. I don't know that there's a way to bring it all together, but it looks like someone is trying to make an honest-to-goodness run at it.

That someone is Donovan Pyke.

## THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN

We don't know a lot about Pyke. He popped up in Boston just before the lockdown, networking as a fixer. His accent pegs him as a true son of Boston. He's an Awakened elf, and he's got some deep pockets. By all accounts, he's a real charmer, an efficient manager, and cool under pressure. There are definitely rumors of a deeper background in shadowrunning, but nothing that ties him to any organizations or groups prior to the mid-'70s.

He managed to ingratiate himself in the scene by providing a solid foundation for the communi-

ty during the quarantine. From there, he built an expansive network across the Massachusetts Bay and found himself listed in all of the important little black books, indispensable to the street fixers, corporate headhunters, and mid-level mobsters. It didn't take all that long for him to be involved in nearly every important transaction in Boston, showing himself to be a trusted and capable agent.

After the lockdown, Pyke started making waves by consolidating the fixers under his control. Once that was done, it wasn't as hard as folks might think to bring a good portion of the shadow community in line. As long as the nuyen kept rolling through, folks were happy, and there weren't that many questions about what was going on. Work was plentiful, pay was fair, and folks noticed a decline in loose cannons mucking up their jobs.

Pyke was the man of the hour. Nobody guessed this was part of a bigger plan; everyone just figured it was how things played out.

Following up on his success in Boston, Pyke's spent the past two years expanding his reach across North America, with varying degrees of success.

- > Not sure I buy it. Somebody comes up like that in a major sprawl and nobody noticed?
- > Clockwork



- > During the lockdown, did you notice *anything* besides head cases up there?
- > Dr. Spin
- > Yeah, we lost a lot of visibility in Boston, when you think about it. I mean, we still don't have a reliable, consistent datatap there.
- > Bull
- > Pyke is a familiar name. As I recall, he ran an Aegis cell in Afghanistan, '56. Ran into him again in '73. Don't know if he was still with Aegis or some other outfit, but his squad came and went as they pleased.
- > Picador
- > Aegis? You mean Aegis Cognito?
- > OrkCEO
- > That's the one.
- > Picador
- > Well, that explains a few things, then.
- > OrkCEO

## FOOT IN THE DOOR

Whatever your opinion is on a "shadowrunner union," the reality is that events unfolded in Boston sort of ... naturally. Pyke came into the scene, built up a rep, and capitalized on an event that reverberated across the social strata. People knew who he was and trusted him already. Taking his brand of consolidation elsewhere is bound to present challenges, some more universal and probably obvious, and some that are rather specific to the area of expansion.

The first step is enlisting a core cabal. Union leaders, if you will. Looks like Pyke is trying to establish a small group of influencers amenable to the idea. I've found a few chummers who have had some sort of run-in with these unionizers in a few notable sprawls. Even though I can give you the skinny on Chicago these past years, I think it's important to start with his home base.

- > Ghost. Starting up in CFD central. Building trust when you don't know what's inside the skull that you are talking to. Do we know if Pyke is a head case?
- > Clockwork
- > Does it really matter? Given that he is trying to pull metahumanity together, I believe that gives you the answer you need.
- > Plan 10

## BOSTON

POSTED BY: DUCK

•UPLOADED 09-22-80/1507:13•

So, the first thing you have to keep in mind is the perfect drekstorm of '76. Before that, everything just kind of ran on autopilot. The megas just doing their mega thing, O'Rileys and Morellis feuding, playboy dragons on the cover of the tabloids, and the rest of us making an honest wage with Mr. J. Then a dragon head case escapes a super-secret corporate science experiment, infects the city with CFD, and forces a wide-scale quarantine with media blackout. I've heard people say it takes a disaster to enact any real change, and this was the disaster Pyke needed.

Once the dust settled, people needed direction. Some lucky folks were able to get right back into their lives, but most folks were experiencing a variety of losses. Businesses had shuttered, friends and family killed, all sense of security just flushed away. It was no different in the shadows, maybe worse. I don't have the fingers to count up the chummers I lost. Yeah, it wasn't a good summer.

In comes Donovan Pyke, taking stock of the situation and getting people up and moving. He gets this sort of command center going, starts by figuring out who's up and who's out. There's something to be said for knowing, really knowing, what happened to the folks who disappeared, especially your friends. Closure, right?

So, he's putting people to work, covering costs, and ultimately getting answers to the questions we were all asking. Somehow, he's got a line on all the major players, gave him the inside track on sorting through the mess and giving us the direction we were looking for. I worked a couple of jobs for him that fall—a lot of us did. Pay was only enough to keep the rent paid, but it felt good to be working on something I wanted to be in on.

- > If he really worked for Aegis Cognito, it makes sense he'd have contacts all over the place.
- > OrkCEO

I guess things could have gone back to normal after that, but Pyke had a different idea. By then, he pretty much knew everybody who was anybody and called in the movers and shakers to propose an idea. They must have liked it, because everyone fell right in line. Now, practically nothing moves in Boston's shadows without that stamp of approval.

The Yaks give us trouble from time to time, and I hear MCT won't play ball, but most of the corporate Mr. Johnsons reach out to union fixers when they've got a job. It also turns out that Pyke's a Southie, so he had the credibility he needed to arrange a meeting with the O'Rileys and Morellis to work something out.



- > Not at the same time, I bet!
- > X-Prime

And it's working. I'm jumping onboard. Pay is up, worries are down. I guess the whole thing is funded by skimming a bit off the top of every job, but fraggin' Johnsons were doing that anyway, and if I'm getting a bigger cut at the end of the day, then why complain?

So, yeah. That's how we do. Don't dismiss it out of hand, right?

- > This is a nice story and all, you know it really lights a fire under my heart cockles, but I hope you don't expect me to believe that shadowrunning in Boston is consolidated under one man.
- > Puck
- > They did point out a few notable exceptions.
- > Snopes
- > So, you're buying this bulldrek?
- > Puck
- > I didn't say that.
- > Snopes

## CHICAGO

POSTED BY: JAZZ

UPLOADED 09-22-80/1702:38

Saying that Chicago has had a rough couple of decades would be a severe understatement. Between the bugs, a nuke, and more bugs, the city can't seem to catch a break. We had a solid cabal of Mr. Johnsons during Project: Takeback, but they're a shell of what they once were. The camaraderie that comes with facing a common enemy faded, and the megas are up to their old tricks, finding the chinks in each other's armor and gaining a leg up on the competition. Chicago has a number of big corporations in town with their local representatives. Suits most people just fine, as long as they keep pumping nuyen into restoring old Chicago. Except Ares.

People really have it out for those guys.

I'd heard a few rumors about people trying to organize runners in a few sprawls but really hadn't paid it any mind. I was focused on my own next steps, moving on from Chicago being one of them, so I didn't have my ear to the ground like I usually do. Trying to pick up a few jobs before I took off really brought it into view. A lot of the available work was suspiciously consistent in style. I love taking on some feel-good hooder drek (for the right pay), but the saccharine lining on just about everything didn't sit right.

Traced a lot of that work back to "Blue," and a little more digging revealed she was, or is, one of the Desolation Angels. If you don't know, the

Angels are a lady-centric street gang, and in Chicago they were heavily community-oriented. I had a good working relationship with their gang leader, Becky 99, so the idea of the Angels putting together community outreach work seemed to track. But it was a lot of work she was offering, and the Angels aren't necessarily flush with cred.

Let's just say that's where I really started looking into the union, picked up on what I've already talked about, and skip right to the chase.

Corporate runs haven't changed and Blue hasn't made any hard moves to challenge their operations. What she's doing instead is organizing the local talent and trying to monopolize street-level runs. The Angels did a lot for Chicago over the past decade and Blue is really cashing that goodwill in, building up a strong local network. Flying under the radar of some of the big hitters in town, letting them take the corporate scrip, but sowing more than a little us-versus-them into the program.

Most of the work feels centered around helping the residents of the CZ and really mitigating fallout. Not only do they stress hitting your targets and nothing else, a lot of the jobs incentivize helping locals if the opportunity presents itself. I've heard it's common for runners to pick up a little bonus, even if it's just a hundred nuyen. There's also a little bonus for stomping bugs where you see them, or if it's too scary, they've organized more than a few bug hunts. The family that plays together, stays together.

For what it's worth, it's all fairly benign, at least for now. So, if you are looking to get your feet wet in Chi-town or in the CZ, don't count them out. You can probably get a line on them through Quantum Princess, the sysop for Noosenet. She probably knows everybody who's anybody in Chicago and is as civic-minded as they come, so I'd bet good nuyen she knows all about Blue and what she's trying to accomplish.

But keep your expectations in check—the pay isn't corporate-level and if that's your bottom line, probably go fish somewhere else. Once in a while, there's a bigger payday, but those will go to whoever's proving their worth to the community. Definitely keep track of your backstops. Drilling a passing CZ resident will paint a big ol' bullseye on your back, and the next community hunt won't be for cockroaches.

- > I've kept track of a lot of their targets. They don't seem to be going after Horizon, and there has to be some reason they have been leaving that group alone. Given what Tate did, you should be careful trusting them.
- > Dr. Spin
- > Trust? In the shadows? Just grab the nuyen and watch your back, omae. You didn't get into the biz to play it safe.
- > Kane



## MANHATTAN

POSTED BY: GASPIPE

◀UPLOADED 09-24-80/O102:52▶

If you're into big explosions or running gun battles in the street, working in Manhattan is bound to be a risky endeavor. Loose cannons never last long here, so the thought of someone coming and organizing us didn't seem likely. The constant state of surveillance in the city means you are on camera all the time, and that type of deep association is going tie some bad drek back to you, if ya know what I mean. But sure enough, in walks some choob, stinking of corporate bull-drek, and he's doing the damn thing. Even worse, he's some uppity Bostonian. Bostonite. Whatever. Point is, ain't no fragging way I'm gonna be working with him.

Now look, before you throw this out, I know how to execute a run and keep the heat low. Rules like everything you use needs to be disposable. You know, so you can make a clean getaway. But sometimes drek goes sideways, things go loud, and things get messy. That's just life, know what I'm saying? So, anyway, I had one of those runs. Simple extraction gig. Get in, get the guy, get out, easy peasy. But then we got trapped by some unexpected complication. Before you know it, the target's flatlined, half the team is creased, and hell, even the janitor's dead.

After that run, I found myself persona non grata. I mean, chummers try to toss me a bite if they can, but all the juicy jobs and serious nuyen ain't lighting up the comms. Now, for a consummate professional such as myself, this is insulting. I did a little digging and I got the inside line on what was happening to me by tracking down a fixer I grew up with, old Tina Two-Fingers, on account of she was missing some fingers on one of her hands. Sure enough, whoever this organization is, they put me on a blacklist.

- ▶ A woeful tale of woe, but before anyone judges Tina, this isn't Gaspipe's only bad situation. As opposed to a one and done, there's been a number of occasions where he brought down heat, each one just chip chippin' away at his rep. Just the facts.
- ▶ Cosmo

You're probably asking me what fraggin' rules I broke. Well, at the time, I had no clue. I just did my thing and made sure me and mine survived to run again. It weren't like there was no sign-up sheet or a fragging FAQ on what is or isn't allowed posted up on some forums somewhere. So, secondhand, I hear from a chummer that we can't have collateral. We gotta stay "on target." And no double dealing on Mr. Johnson—gotta keep things upfront and righteous. Which means nix on making a little extra scratch by selling 'em out when they didn't

specifically say not to sell 'em out. Like I gotta be a mind reader now.

Oh, and for some reason we don't like mob work, but that's not official or whatever.

So, what's it like to work outside the union? It's a big pile of drek. You want your gear? Well, your fixer isn't gonna help you. Got gear you need to ditch? Your fence isn't gonna touch it. But you can work, I mean. I still get jobs. But while sell-outs are running against Spinrad Global making good scrip, you'll be working for the shadiest Mr. Johnsons you ever seen. The backstabbers and the cheaters. And they know you know.

Now when they blacklisted me, I figured it was honest to goodness local street politics. We got this dwarf gal, Juanita Dasilva. They call her the fixer's fixer. I thought that was pretty funny, but now I see it for what it is: damn stooge for the Bostonian. 'Course, Tina told me her cut lately has been wiz, so of course she jumped right on board. More nuyen but not more work is an easy win, and I can relate, so I can't be mad at that.

But I can be mad at hypocrisy, right? For all their rules, turns out they're happy to break them when it suits. Some of them low-rent jobs was about getting to the folks that don't want to play ball and stashing them in safehouses before they got cacked. So it's not all pegasus and unicorns. Few chummers of mine, fixers and runners, just disappeared. My guess? They're off the shore of New Jersey, sporting some name-brand concrete kicks. Something to keep in mind if you're gonna run with us scabs.

Oh, and back before they blackballed me, Tina told me a bunch of gigs were coming down from Herr Brackhaus, targeting MCT and a bunch of the double-As. I'll let you smart folk decide what that means.

- ▶ They seem to be targeting neo-anarchists down in Queens and Brooklyn. Maybe someone reinforcing the police state.
- ▶ Old Crow
- ▶ Even with S-K's fingerprints all over it, Horizon's been a big player in all of this, especially proposing the idea of controlling runs throughout the city.
- ▶ Mr. Bonds

## ATLANTA

POSTED BY: TORO

◀UPLOADED 01-22-81/I507:13▶

Now don't let my employer know, but I'm not against unionizing. Just want to get that out there. The guy setting this up seemed like a nice enough fella. Shoot, I'm gettin' ahead of myself.

Near as I can tell, Mr. Dufresne moved into the area about fifteen months ago. I tried diggin' into his stories, but even though he had the right accent,



I couldn't get a straight line out of him. I mean, I didn't really get introduced to him 'til five months ago, so I am making some leaps here, fillin' in the blanks. So, what I was able to determine is that he rolled into town and started meeting with the fixers both downtown and out in Saltwater Creek. He laid out some big-time nuyen buying friends and paydata, spreading himself around.

Seems he was wantin' to build a stable of runners and telling the fixers that he was going to start sending jobs their way. I have friends who met with him early on, and the basic rules they had to play by were simple. Lots of boy-scout drek, mostly.

Top of the list: always be professional and courteous. Not in those words, but that's how it reads. Part of that revolved around treatment of metas. Which means metaracists (or any racists, for that matter) ain't welcome. Make sure you don't trigger a race war. So, you can be sure no Humanis jobs were gonna be flowing through that pipeline. Or Sons of Sauron. Also, get involved in your communities, mind your civic responsibilities, especially working the borders between some of the more heated neighborhoods. Be seen fixing and cleaning things up.

- > Ghost! There is hooding and then there is this. Last I checked, we were called shadowrunners because we kept to the shadows. You don't want your clandestine work handled by some ork who needs to be home in time to help some kids with their homework.
- > Pistons

Now a thing about Hotlanta ya gotta know is that there are some simmering tensions between us trogs and the smoothies downtown. Dufresne is a dwarf, so he didn't catch both barrels of downtown hate, but you better believe no one was rolling out a welcome wagon for some halfer trying to buy his way into everyone's good graces. So, they did what any good bigot does and hired a team to remove him.

The story doesn't end there at all. Turns out Dufresne is one tough fragger, chummer. I don't know how it went down, but he was all over Sweetwater the next week offering solid nuyen to any takers for his first official job offer. The run involved finding the drekheads who put out the hit and having a friendly wall-to-wall conversation with 'em. Guess someone got him all riled up.

Suffice to say, he had plenty of takers.

Now, I'm not saying that I won't work with the breeders and the keebies. They can be good on a run, and some of them are good people. Hell, I'm friends with a few of 'em. But you don't get a lot of mixed teams here in Atlanta, because some of that hate runs deep in our roots. So here in Sweetwater, we like Dufresne just fine, but honestly nothing's really changed around these parts. Except now we

got a fella that pays decent nuyen when the poli-club starts acting up and someone needs them to simmer down.

- > If Mr. Dufresne is a local boy, he should have known about the divide between downtown and Sweetwater. A smart bet would have been setting up with two reps—the human could have hit the downtown. I am trying to figure out if it just points to ego or idiocy.
- > OrkCEO
- > I'm going with the fact that he's not local. You can train a good accent.
- > Hard Exit
- > Stupid, too. I mean, where did they do their research? If you are going to go in, you need to know the lay of the land. If ya don't, then someone notices and what you have are slotted off people you wanted to make a deal with.
- > OrkCEO

## DENVER

POSTED BY: COCONUTKNOCKER

⟨UPLOADED 02-02-81/1949.24⟩

So, I've been running in Treaty City since I was an orklet. The city's been a hub of North American shadowrunning since 2018, and hasn't ever shown signs of slowing down, even under Ghostwalker's reign. It's been getting real interesting since the constituent nations of the Denver Council still haven't negotiated a Third Treaty of Denver, not after the big lizard spoiled the summit in '74 and the UCAS made it known they'd never recognize his rule as legit. But the UCAS's opinion on anything has taken a precipitous turn for the irrelevant lately. The sprawl under Ghostwalker's newfound appreciation for a *laissez-faire* handling of his self-declared fiefdom has left the FRFZ as lawless as the old west of the holo sims.

- > "Lawless" is a relative term. Sure, there's precious little meaningful sprawl-wide authority; the constituent sectors still enforce their own national laws as they see fit. And, except the Azzies, they all cooperate with the ZDF for serious disturbances.
- > Kay St. Irregular

Shadowrunning in the FRFZ has historically had more national government sponsorship than other sprawls. With all the powers of North America holding territory inside the Zone, it was the continental hotbed of international espionage. But that changed years ago. The Native American Nations control three quarters of the sprawl, not to mention all the territory surrounding it. Between the UCAS decline and Ghostwalker's lower profile, there just hasn't been as much interest anymore.



- > The Hub in downtown Denver used to be walled off between sectors, cutting right across streets. Ever see *Checkpoint Charlie*, that old flat-vid series set in 1960s Cold War Berlin? Filmed in the Hub.
- > Winterhawk
- > Now that the Azzies have reclaimed their slice of the pie, they're happily restoring those checkpoints. No one's bothered putting a stop to it. Guess we'll see if the other sectors reply in kind. It'd be a huge step backward for Denver.
- > Kay St. Irregular

On the other hand, what hasn't changed is the local geography. In the Fifth World, all roads may have led to Rome, but in the Sixth World, all smuggling networks move through Denver. Centrally located in North America and right up against the protective Rocky Mountains. Smugglers still capitalize on the decentralized control of the FRFZ to sustain shadow markets across the continent. Megacorps, cartels, and even national governments all still need off-the-books logistics, and the FRFZ is the center of that network.

- > A niche evolved in the shadow ecosystem to handle smuggling extremely high-value cargo into and out of the FRFZ. Jammers are specialized riggers who fly LAVs along the "Autobahn"—nap-of-the-earth routes that closely hug the topography to remain undetected. Jammers are a special breed of rigger whose pre-wireless tactics remain in use even with today's Matrix. They still fly their birds under full EMCON with no signals of any kind leaving the hull. They don't even have visual scanners running. Each jammer has hyper-accurate topographical scans for their own personal Autobahn routes. It's a rare jammer who shares this valuable data. But every jammer I know has the same motto: "You can fly the Rockies without windows using nothing but a timer and a map. *If your map is accurate enough!*"
- > Turbo Bunny

With so many facets to the Denver shadow community, you'd think there would be some opportunities for these guys to get a toehold, right? Well, not so much. Working all the connections around the area is tough. There's no single big player like Horizon in Los Angeles or Ares in Atlanta where control can be gained in one sneaky coup. Now, I have heard that some reps have been sniffing around trying to get things organized, but that really isn't going to fly. Cornering the shadow community here is like nailing fruity NERPS to plastiboard.

The only traction that's been gained so far is through the recruitment of Denver's smugglers. Particularly anyone with strong ties to the sprawls where it's been working out. They help by ferrying whatever the chapters need. It's been working out for them lately because the chapters seem to want to be ahead of the game, stockpiling in anticipation of their member needs, which has generated

a general uptick in the transportation sector. That will probably stabilize at some point.

- > I could totally see them getting a foothold in the PCC sector. The locals there are pretty receptive to getting organized for the greater good. There are a couple community leaders who hold a lot of sway who are also open to earning a little nuyen.
- > Elijah
- > I would be wary of organizing in Ghostwalker's city. If they can get the factions to play nice, maybe they can get away with it, but you've gotta remember that this is his city, and you are alive because he isn't hungry right now.
- > Kay St. Irregular

So maybe we'll see more of them, but so far, I haven't seen any of the drek others have posted. But I will keep an eye out. It would be interesting to see what they think they can come up with.

## MOTOR CITY

POSTED BY: FIREBIRD

<UPLOADED 02-02-81/1949.24>

I know that we've heard a lot about Detroit—sorry, Motor City. Anyway, I don't really have to catch you up on that mess. But the hot question you probably have on your mind is whether this guy Pyke has been trying to organize a movement here. Well, the short of it is that we already got us a movement here. With the Platinum Trollgirls and Marv, we don't need some outta-towner coming in here telling us how to run our biz!

But apparently, he was in town. See, I came in last week on a resupply for the 'burbs and chatted with some of the folks in the Platinum Zone. Sure enough, someone came looking to help out the effort, but they just had too many strings attached. The way they described him matches everything here, some elf in tasteful threads and a military bearing. Dead ringer, right? Talked up the big talk of good pay and solid backup and all that. Talked about consolidating work to run through some central hub or some drek. What the hell are they thinking? Hey, if you want to do runs in Detroit, just do it the old-fashioned way and build some fraggin' rep and get some good contacts. Do that, and we have plenty of work for you.

- > Yeah. We had a visit from Mr. Pyke. He brought some friends with him. We had some fragging kumbaya-singing moments in the bones of Ares' burnt-out research facility. It was beautiful. I wish you were there. Wait. That's not how it went down. He came to Platins with his associates and said they could bring in aid, but they wanted a seat at the table to help organize the efforts. Said that long-term, they wanted a safer way to do shadowruns, but doing it by vetting both the jobs and the runners. This seems like some controlling, authoritarian bulldrek to me. We





told them they can help, or they can get the frag out. Do you think the boosted pay on the jobs is going to last forever? Do you think that Ares or Horizon or some other fragger is actually pulling the strings on this fancy experiment? Count me out.

► Johnny Redline

## LAS VEGAS

POSTED BY: ROYAL FLUSH

◀UPLOADED 02-12-81/1307.13▶

Running in the big lights and blaring sounds of the oasis is always a bit of a gamble. We got this fixer making waves in the city of dreams, and she's betting it all on black. Dezba's only been here a couple months, but you'd never know it counting the winning hands she keeps throwing down. Every job she's lined up has been solid and work is plentiful. I got an inside line on what was coming, and I don't mind saying I invested early. It's been paying off, but you have to pay attention to all the players at the table or you lose that big pot.

So, who's been sitting at the table this time around? Well, those first few jobs really played

into the Koshari's interests. Lately, seems the PCC is getting in on the action.

- Rumor has it that she got in with the Koshari by quietly eliminating other fixers working with them. There's no solid evidence connecting them, but the timing of her arrival and some of the recent Verontesse hits seems suspicious.
- 2XL

Despite all of that, I don't feel locked down. Work still comes in from all over the place, and my other fixers find work sponsored by Horizon, the Ghost Cartels, the Verontesse family, and whatever else. But Dezba's building a full deck of fixers to handle most of the PCC and Koshari jobs in the city. With the mayor's connections to the Koshari, she's been busy, and she's definitely got her hand in the bag. If you're interested, center your queries around the "Gambling Hall" and you'll get a piece of the action. Joining even gets you free drinks, as long as you keep feeding the machine, so ka?

I even got me a gold-level CrashCart sub, courtesy of the Hall. You'll need a few notches under the belt for the big perks, though, so be patient.

Now, don't get me wrong. I like how this is going—it's been working out for me so far—but let's be real, there are some big questions. Where'd Dezba come from, and how did she finance herself into being one of the big players in the City of Sin? She's got ties to the Emerald City, and I don't mean the casino on Sahara Avenue. Rumors also put her in Boston. Same rumors say she got burned pretty bad when a deal went south. Hard to know the truth, but it all seems to line up quite nicely.

## SEATTLE

POSTED BY: FACET

◀UPLOADED 02-14-81/1831.54▶

Hey, just saw all of this union stuff, and it fits right into what we've been seeing here.

So, Seattle's definitely been in a bit of an upheaval lately, what with Potter giving UCAS the boot and all. With everything that's been going on, you'd think there'd be an uptick in work-related activity on ShadowSea, but it's been pretty even-keel. If anything, there was even less chatter. Several active fixers practically disappeared off the boards for a few days, and some of them haven't come back.

- That actually tracks with a few contacts of mine that just fell off the grid.
- Haze
- Police found Lyle Green in his doss up in Bellevue. Said he'd been killed. Shame, he was a nice all-around, always an easy night with him. Wonder if it's related?
- SEAtac Sweetie



- > That's horrible. Something we should look into—maybe we can meet up and compare notes?
- > Haze
- > Slot off and die.
- > SEAtac Sweetie
- > Poor Haze can't catch a break. Couldn't happen to a nicer guy.
- > Sunshine

Stuff like this seems benign on the surface, but a few of our sysops enjoy crunching whatever data they get their virtual mitts on. What they came up with was interesting. Seems this had been going on since a couple of months before "Declaration Day," and the fixers in question started interacting with each other more and others less. Some of these folks never even chatted before; now it's like they're chummers for life. The only other thing all of them had in common was that short absence. What's more, besides whatever fixer knitting club they had gotten themselves into, we started seeing them pulling in the same names, like they had a specific pool of runners they were using to assemble teams.

Of course, fixers have favorites, but we were seeing them mixing and matching from each other's talent pools in a way they hadn't done before. Every once in a while, we'd see a new name join their roster. Sure looked like a closed network to me.

Got confirmation from a chummer that it was basically a test run for early access to the "Jade Lodge." One of his buddies recommended him, so they brought him in to see how he'd do. The tryout part was supposed to be hush-hush, but his mate let the cat out of the bag trying to butter him up for it.

- > Yeah, he went on and on about it, wouldn't shut his trap. I thought he was trying to drag me into some kind of cult.
- > Phase

Looks like Mr. Pyke's bankrolling some old friends, and they're putting down roots. Eddie Wei is a Chinatown businessman rumored to have ties with the Triad, and Ms. Snow is an albino elf who just kind of showed up in Seattle. Even though she's a stranger to the Emerald City, she can be tied to a lot of Pyke's past ops, and I wouldn't discount anything about her. Neither has jumped into ShadowSea, but they haven't been afraid to manage their business personally; when talking about the Lodge's Mr. Johnson, my friend described Wei to a T.

So, yeah, it looks like they're on the West Coast doing whatever thing it is that they do. It blows my mind that someone would even think this is possible, especially in a sprawl like Seattle, but it looks like they're going to give it the old college try.

- > They're obviously taking advantage of the changing tides, but this is going to be a non-starter for sure.
- > Bull
- > They've already got a foothold, though. One way or another, this situation is going to get bigger.
- > DangerSensei
- > Until it pops.
- > Bull
- > I'm getting too old for this drek.
- > Butch

## SHADOW CHAPTERS WORLDWIDE

And that's the long and short of it. I imagine Mr. Pyke has contacts in most of the major UCAS and CAS sprawls—and some of the minor ones, too. I'd be interested in hearing if anyone from Dallas, San Fran, or Los Angeles have seen anything. Haven't heard much out of the north either, Vancouver or Montreal, but I don't really have big connections out that way.

It's really interesting to think about it in terms of our global economy. Does the union try to extend across the pond? What would they find in the UK? Berlin would punt them right to the curb, I bet. Same with Hong Kong, but Neo-Tokyo is the kind of "egalitarian" sprawl that would welcome the order brought about by a union. With recent events kicking over some of their isolationist pillars, it might be ripe for a foreigner with new ideas to set up shop with some like-minded nationals.

Working in the Caliphate always comes with its own rigors, but it's also a land where the laws aren't universally applied. That's just the sort of thing an organization like this can leverage to keep their members out of trouble, if they can keep track of the nuances of culture and tradition.

My understanding of international sprawls ends there, so I guess I'm out of opinions.

Except this last one. For what it's worth, I think the guy has the best of intentions. I'm not sold on exactly where that road leads, but done right it could be a good place. I'm not optimistic.

This isn't a trade where you can count on everyone just trying their best so they can raise a family and give little George the opportunities they never had. Individualists and anarchists aside, there are some vile, opportunistic fragheads out there that will turn this idea right on its head and use it for their own power and profit. Spread out like he is, there's no way for Pyke to get down into the weeds of his local leaders and figure out who's really on his bus and who's just riding along for their own gain. That could lead to a whole other mess.



## GAMEMASTER SECTION

The shadows are a chaotic playground for any runner. The Shadow Chapters explore what happens when someone wants to organize it. Donovan Pyke is a man with a vision for revolutionizing the way deniable assets operate, and he's got the money, connections, and grit to see it through. He hopes he can get everyone to cooperate and is willing to play the long game, but at the end of the day he wants to bring everyone into the fold. No exceptions.

Depending on the perspective of any given runner or team, the Shadow Chapters can be a resource, a curiosity, or an outright enemy. As individual chapters develop, growing their networks and expanding their reach, there will come a point in which the chapter will feel strong enough to seize control. This hasn't happened yet in any city. Boston may be closest to that tipping point, but even Pyke's hometown has its holdouts.

In each location, a chairman is established and given latitude in how they build their organization. Pyke isn't in a rush and is content to allow them to manage their situations how they feel best. Generally, the organization puts on a friendly face, offering various services and ingratiating themselves to local talent, eventually turning into a one-stop shop if they can. Of course, sometimes becoming indispensable requires eliminating the other options. Despite a benign front, some are finding a few skeletons tucked away in dark closets.

### USING SHADOW CHAPTERS

The Shadow Chapters are a loose organization. Each chapter starts with a chairman, somebody with enough pull and moxie to get the ball rolling. Those traits and adherence to the tenets of the greater organization earn you a seat at the table with a fistful of startup cred.

What tenets are those? To ultimately centralize all shadowrunning activity into the organization. That means union fixers, it means Mr. Johnsons hire through the union, it means members hold to a minimum level of professionalism. Reducing collateral damage, increasing run payments, and making the shadows an all-around nicer place for everyone.

Lofty goals and more than a few people have started their chapter absolutely convinced it's an impossible pipe dream, paying lip service to those ideals while pursuing their own agendas. Keep it under the auspices of your friendly neighborhood shadowrunner's union and do your own thing.

Faith or no, a chairman has to get something up and running. In some places, chapters have been successful in setting up a presence, but they

struggle to gain a foothold in others. Why they do well or fail seems to depend on multiple factors, and not always in expected ways.

Utility and outreach are the core tools each chapter employs to varying degrees. The first is obvious: being legitimately useful is sure to win you points in any runner's playbook. Outreach is trickier. Sure, it's about putting yourself out there so the intended audience knows you exist, but it's also creating a perception of reciprocity. Real or not, people want to know it's not just about what's in it for you. How a chapter creates solutions for the problems in their sprawl will be seen and talked about.

Another tricky piece of the puzzle is transparency. Boldly announcing a union with rules, dues, and a list of the horrible things coming to all the scabs is going to be a non-starter. Where there have been successes, they've come through developing a sense of camaraderie within growing networks of operatives and their fixers. By the time everyone realizes they're in a union, it just seems natural.

Then there's the question of who supports the chapter and who thinks it's a drek idea. Street legends are just that—legends. For better or worse, their opinions can impact the feelings of the entire shadow community in your sprawl, down to the lowliest wannabe gangers and two-bit script kiddies.

When all is said and done, every runner and runner team will make their own decision about what a shadowrunner's union means for them and what they plan to do about it.

### NPC STAT BLOCKS

#### DONOVAN PYKE

Born and raised in South Boston, Donovan Pyke was among the first elves born in 2011. His father was an FBI field agent and absent for most of his youth, but Pyke's mother played up the importance of his father's work. Accordingly, Pyke idealized his father's role in maintaining order and safety for all Americans. As the world continued to roll inexorably into the future, Pyke's father spent more and more time away from home.

Tragedy struck when Pyke was fifteen years old and his mother was killed by a stray bullet when a team of shadowrunners engaged law enforcement in the streets. His father worked locally for the next two years. They overcame their shared grief, and when Pyke Awakened in 2028, they weathered the storm together. Pyke was accepted into UMass Boston's fledgling Hermetic Studies program.

It might have been good for Pyke after that, but his father returned to his former task force amidst the Crash of '29. On April 9, Agent Pyke was one of thousands of victims of the virus after it cor-



## DONOVAN PYKE (ELF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	M	ESS
3	6	5	2	6	5	5	5	5	9	6

## NORMAL

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
5	10/1	A1, I2	10/11	10/15/+1

## ASTRAL

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
5	10/3	A1, I4	10/11	—

**Active Skills:** Astral 7, Athletics 4, Biotech 2, Close Combat 2, Conjuring 9, Enchanting 2, Firearms 4, Influence 7 (Leadership +3), Perception 5, Sorcery 9, Stealth 5

**Knowledge Skills:** Boston Geography, Corporations, Fixers, Magical Traditions, UCAS Politics

**Languages:** English (Native), Sperethiel (Expert)

**Qualities:** First Impression, Honorbound (Bushido), Indomitable, Low-Light Vision (elf), Mentor Spirit (Fire-Bringer), SINner (UCAS)

**Magical Tradition:** Hermetic mage

**Initiate Grade, Metamagics:** 5, centering, flexible signature, masking, quickening, spell shaping

**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (+2), commlink (DR 6, D/F 3/1), Spellcasting focus (Manipulation, Force 5)

**Spells:** Armor, Clairvoyance, Clout, Combat Sense, Confusion, Control Actions, Detect Enemies, Detect Magic, Heal, Increase Reflexes, Lightning Bolt, Mana Barrier, Mind Probe, Mystic Armor, Physical Barrier, Stunball

**Weapons:**

Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 2S, AR 7/-/-/-]

Defiance Super Shock [Firearms, DV 6S(e), SS, 10/6/-/-/-, 4(m)]

rupted the national air-traffic control network and crashed more than a score of planes.

Donovan graduated from high school that year and went on to study magic, taking a Bachelor of Science in Astral Forensics and joining the FBI in 2034. After a decade with the Bureau, Pyke took up contract work, ultimately landing a position with Aegis Cognito in the late '40s. He spent the next quarter century as an operative working throughout several of the world's hot spots and tipping points, honing his broad skillset and expanding a global network of contacts.

He retired in 2074, wealthy and connected, intending to invest in local businesses. In 2076, when the quarantine was ordered in Boston, Donovan found himself in the middle of it. Seeing his hometown ravaged by CFD, he simply acted, falling back on years of training and leading. In the chaos, he naturally sought out capable individuals and organized them. Simple as that, Donovan Pyke was a big fish in a small shadow pond.

It's hard to pinpoint his motivations, but since then, he's taken a keen interest in organizing shadowrunners into a union. It might be purely biz. Some say he's trying to save his mother, by proxy; his focus on professionalism and completing the task with minimal collateral damage may be intended to keep innocents from perishing in the crossfire. In the end, it may just be that it's something to do. A lot of retirees find themselves pining for busier days, none more so than the ones with the sort of breakneck career Pyke had.

Having corralled a good portion of the shadows

of Boston, Pyke spends much of his time on the road, working to install similar chapters throughout North America. Even though it's been hit or miss, he has everything he needs to keep at it, and there isn't any indication he plans to let it go.

## MS. SNOW

Jillian Matthews grew up in the wealthy suburbs of Richmond, Virginia. She enjoyed all of the privilege that came with the corporate executive class and wanted for nothing. When Halley's Comet passed during her pre-teen years, Jillian SURGED and lost the pigmentation in her skin. The further effects of her SURGE were more subtle.

A graceful youth, Jillian had an endearing charm about her and nearly always got her way and pushed the boundaries of desire wherever she could. When she finally set her eyes on something beyond her reach, being told "no" was unacceptable. If someone wasn't going to give it to her, then she would do whatever she needed to in order to take it.

Driven to take what she wanted, no matter the cost, the path from spoiled brat to veteran covert operative was anything but direct. She worked under Donovan Pyke's command during the Aztlan-Amazonia War, and when he needed someone to manage his interests in Seattle, he called on her to do it. Today, the alluring, elven albino known as Ms. Snow is all business, from the way she sits, to the way she talks, to the way the Colt Manhunter rests in its concealed holster.

## MS. SNOW (ELF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
4 (+2)	8(12)	4(7)	3(6)	4	2	5	7 (+4)	5	0.4

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
8	12/4	A1, I5	10/10	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Athletics 6, Close Combat 5 (Unarmed +3), Electronics 3, Engineering 3, Firearms 6, Influence 5, Perception 3, Stealth 6

**Knowledge Skills:** Corporations, Knight Errant Practices, Organized Crime, Security Procedures, Triads

**Languages:** Cantonese, English (Native), Sperethiel

**Qualities:** Agile Defender, Ambidextrous, Exceptional (Agility), Impaired (Logic), Weak Immune System

**Augmentations:** Bone lacing (deltaware, titanium), cybereyes (rating 4, w/ flare comp, image-link, low-light, retinal duplication 6, smartlink, thermographic vision, vision enhancement, vision magnification), internal air tank 3, muscle augmentation 3, muscle toner 4, synaptic booster 3, tailored pheromones 4

**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (+2), commlink (Rating 6, D/F 3/1)

**Weapons:**

Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 4P, AR 16/-/-/-]

Colt 2076 [Firearms, DV 3P, SA, AR 10/8/6/-/-, 14(c), w/ smartgun]

Katana [Close Combat, DV 4P, AR 10/-/-/-]

## EDDIE WEI

Eddie is a Seattle Chinatown businessman with ties to the Triad, most notably the Eighty-Eights. Through both connections, he managed to forge himself a small network as a fixer, most-



## EDDIE WEI (HUMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
2	2	2(3)	2	3	4(5)	5	6(+2)	6	2.8

## NORMAL

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
4	8/2	A1, I3	9/10	10/15/+1

## MATRIX

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
14	15/2	A1, I3	10	—

**Active Skills:** Athletics 1, Close Combat 3, Con 5 (Acting +3), Cracking 5, Electronics 5, Firearms 4, Influence 6, Perception 4, Stealth 4

**Knowledge Skills:** Accounting, Business, Economics, Human Relations, Management, Triads

**Languages:** Cantonese (Native), English (Native), Mandarin

**Qualities:** Addiction 2 (Bliss), Bilingual, Indomitable, SINner (Corp)

**Augmentations:** Cerebral booster 1 (alphaware), cyberjack (rating 4, D/F 7(8)/6, alphaware), datalock 12 (alphaware), implanted cyberdeck (rating 4, A/S 7/6), mnemonic enhancer 1 (alphaware), synaptic booster 1 (alphaware), tailored pheromones 2 (alphaware)

**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (+2)

**Weapons:**

Unarmed strike [Close Combat, DV 2S, AR 5/-/-/-/-]

Steyr TMP [Firearms, DV 2P, SA/FA, AR 8/8/6/-/-, 30(c)]

FN P93 Praetor [Firearms, DV 4P, SA/BF/FA, AR 9/12/7/-/-, 50(c)]

ly supplying weapons and ammunition on short notice.

Through his business ventures, he managed to find himself in possession of several business rentals throughout the greater Seattle sprawl, but no particular business to fill them with. Scouting real estate with Ms. Snow, Donovan Pyke connected with Eddie. The two set up a meeting and a string of loosely associated security companies registered their licenses with city hall.

Despite having never set foot in China, Eddie speaks both Mandarin and Cantonese fluently. He enjoys feeling important; being in the middle of a shadowy web of intrigue scratches that itch, but he may find he's in deeper than he wanted.

## BLUE

Blue has known nothing other than the streets of Chicago in the CZ surrounded by her sisters in the Desolation Angels. The chaos in Chicago allowed her to come into her own, and she fought alongside Becky 99 and the other Angels. Little can be found about her from before her time with the gang, but with the oh-so-immaculate record-keeping in the CZ, this makes sense.

When the dust settled around the events of Chicago, the Desolation Angels took a huge hit. Blue changed. While Becky 99 went about rebuilding, Blue declared that the time was now to push the bugs out of Chicago. A couple of the Angels went with her, but she headed out to make connections with other like-minded fixers and Mr. Johnsons in the area.

It's pretty easy to spot Blue in a crowd. She is roughly ork height, but her features paint her as

## BLUE (ELF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	M	ESS
5	7	6	5	5	5	5	5	2	5	6

## NORMAL

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
7	11/1	A1, I2	11/11	10/15/+1

## ASTRAL

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
5	10/2	A1, I3	11/11	—

**Active Skills:** Astral 7, Athletics 5, Biotech 2, Close Combat 7, Conjuring 5, Enchanting 5, Firearms 3, Influence 5 (Leadership +3, Negotiation +2), Perception 5, Sorcery 5, Stealth 6

**Knowledge Skills:** Chicago Gangs, Chicago Geography, Magical Threats

**Languages:** English (Native)

**Qualities:** Astral Chameleon, Low-Light Vision

**Magical Tradition:** Shaman

**Gear:** Desolation Angels gang leathers (+2), commlink (Rating 5, D/F 3/0), Spellcasting Focus (Combat, Force 3)

**Spells:** Acid Stream, Armor, Control Actions, Ice Spear, Improved Invisibility, Manaball, Manabolt, Mystic Armor

**Weapons:**

Ares Predator VI [Firearms, DV 2P, SA, 12/12/10/-/-, 15(c), w/ smartgun, APDS]

Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 2S, AR 11/-/-/-/-]

elf with large blue eyes and sharp, angled cheekbones. You will always find her in her old gang cut, as she still feels a connection to the group. She doesn't often meet with new talent and will work through her network. But meets with her always take place in her lair in the Shattergraves.

## MR. DUFRESNE

Ida LaBlanc grew in the shadows of New Orleans steeped in a culture of gumbo and intrigue. The best things in life handed to him were copious short jokes and a tenacity to overcome any issue. This grit led him out of the slums of New Orleans to sign up in the military and eventually transfer to one of the private military contractors. This toughness kept him alive in the jungles of Amazonia, where he ran a couple of ops supported by Donovan Pyke's team.

Returning to civilian life wasn't an easy transition. When Pyke offered him work, he jumped at the chance. Ida found the shadowrunner life enjoyable. There was joy in not crawling through a hot, wet jungle. He expanded his skillset to include social interactions and found he enjoyed working contacts and building confidence. Working the Carib League and CAS cities, he was at home.

When Donovan Pyke called asking if he could help in Atlanta, Ida gladly accepted, pulling on the now familiar persona of Mr. Dufresne. Unfortunately for him, he was met with racial hatred and hostility from the very folks he hoped to woo. Unfortunately for them, they didn't realize where he had received his training.



## MR. DUFRESNE (DWARF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
6(+2)	3(5)	3(5)	6(8)	7	5	5	4	6	0.7

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
14	10/3	A1, I4	11/12	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Athletics 2, Close Combat 5, Con 6 (Acting +2, Impersonation +3), Electronics 4, Firearms 6, Influence 6, Perception 5, Stealth 5

**Knowledge Skills:** Espionage Techniques, Law Enforcement Corps, New Orleans Gangs, Shadowrunning, Tech Companies

**Languages:** English (Native), French (Expert)

**Qualities:** Double-Jointed, Prejudiced (Humanis Policlub), Thermographic Vision (dwarf), Toxin Resistance (dwarf), Will to Live

**Augmentations:** Bone lacing (titanium), cybereyes (rating 3, w/ flare, image link, low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision), datajack, dermal plating 4, muscle augmentation 2, muscle toner 2, wired reflexes 2 (betaware)

**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (+2), commlink (Rating 6, D/F 3/1)

**Weapons:**

Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 4P, 16/-/-/-/-]

Ingram Smartgun XI [Firearms, DV 3P, SA/BF, 11/9/6/-/-, 32(c), w/ gas-vent, silencer, smartgun]

## JUANITA DASILVA

Juanita Dasilva had a corporate upbringing; her parents were mid-level executives working for NeoNET, and it seemed natural she would follow in their footsteps. They had many hopes and dreams for her, but she didn't care about climbing the corporate ladder or working for someone else. Eventually the risk of losing her golden ticket got her hoop in motion. She started with her parents' advice and selected a bioware suite tailored to get a leg up in the dog-eat-dog corporate environment.

Life was just starting to get underway when tragedy struck. Her fiancé was working on a key project when his lab became the target of a rival corporation. He was killed when the lab was destroyed, robbing her of her future. In its place was a drive to find and eliminate everyone involved, from the team who torched the lab, to the Johnson that hired them, to the nameless execs who bank-rolled the job. Her quest took her into the culture that took everything from her, and quite ironically, she became a fixer of no small renown.

Juanita can be found at some of the elite restaurants and coffee shops around Manhattan. Her cultured speech and easy attitude put most people at ease, but there is an undercurrent of rage that can throw astute empaths off. Occasionally, that rage comes to the forefront in a frightening display.

## DEZBA

Having one Salish parent doesn't automatically get you an in with the tribe. While she often imagined a happier childhood with her mom's people, she was stuck in UCAS Seattle instead, fighting for scraps while her father eked out a living as

## JUANITA DASILVA (DWARF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
2	2(5)	2	2(5)	4	2(4)	3	4(8)	4	2.9

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
6	5/1	A1, I2	9/10	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Con 7, Electronics 3, Firearms 1, Influence 7, Perception 6, Stealth 3

**Knowledge Skills:** Corporations, Matrix Games, Shadowrunning Business, Tech Companies

**Languages:** English (Expert), Spanish (Native)

**Qualities:** Addiction (Nicotine, 3), Astral Beacon, First Impression, Home Ground (Manhattan), SiNner (Horizon), Thermographic Vision, Toxic Resistance

**Augmentations:** Cerebral booster 2, mnemonic enhancer 2, muscle augmentation 3, muscle toner 3, orthoskin 2, tailored pheromones 4

**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (+2), commlink (Rating 5, D/F 3/0)

**Weapons:**

Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 2S, AR 7/-/-/-/-]

Defiance Super Shock [Firearms, DV 6S(e), SS, AR 10/6\*/-/-/-, 4(m)]

## DEZBA (HUMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
3	4	4(7)	3	5	2	4	5(7)	4	3.4

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
7	11/4	A1, I5	10/11	10/15/+1

**Active Skills:** Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Con 5, Electronics 2, Firearms 3, Influence 8, Perception 5, Stealth 4

**Knowledge Skills:** NAN Traditions, Shadowrunning, Sprawl Life, Street Rumors

**Languages:** English (Native), Sperethiel (Expert)

**Qualities:** Addiction (Alcohol, 2), Ambidextrous, First Impression, Resistance to Pathogens

**Augmentations:** Mnemonic enhancer 2, orthoskin 2, synaptic booster 3, tailored pheromones 2

**Gear:** Actioneer business clothes (+2), commlink (Rating 5, D/F 3/0)

**Weapons:**

Unarmed [Close Combat, DV 2S, AR 10/-/-/-/-]

Ceska Black Scorpion [Firearms, DV 1S(e), Modes: SA/BF, AR 11/10/9/-/-, 35(c), w/ folding stock, stick-n-shock ammo]

a low-rent shadowrunner. A hard-knock life, but she grew up tough and street-savvy. In her teenage years, she rode along on more than a few jobs with dear old dad.

It wasn't long before she was on her own making ends meet as a grifter. She scored a gig on the East Coast when a Johnson wanted out-of-town assets for a job, and decided she liked Boston more than Seattle, so she ended up staying. She was there during the quarantine, and that's when she came under Donovan Pyke's wing. A few years later, Pyke asked her to resettle once again, this time to Las Vegas.

With her coarse black hair and ruddy complexion, Dezba blends in well with the Native American population. She dresses practically but has a keen eye for fashion if the occasion calls for it. Her favorite spots are the greasy spoons and diners just off the main strip, where she can work without the constant noise and flash Las Vegas is known for.





# STARK, THEISSEN, AND VAN DER MER

► The Blackout, and the strange tidings that followed in its tracks, has left many wondering what the frag happened in the past months and why. If there is one organization whose name has been repeatedly emerging in the context of these events, and which is not among the usual suspects that you would expect to be neck-deep in this matter, it is probably the global law conglomerate Stark, Theissen and Van der Mer. To get more information on where they currently stand, I reached out to Mr. Bonds to run a background check on this powerful non-megacorporate player and compile a dossier for all of us to have a closer look into how these lawyers are entangled into all of this strangeness. Given the German/Swiss origin of the company that recently expanded aggressively into North America, Bonds asked me to renew access to €spion and 0111011001 from Brokerage X for further financial and clientele details. In addition, I provided access to Bonds' long-time German shadow associate and chaos mage Enigma (named after the encryption machine of the same name), who runs the arcane auction exchange **Episteme** with her European associates, which can be accessed through the Magik Undernet and other magic-driven

info networks like the **Helix-Magicnet** or German Coven-network **Hex.Net**. From what I keep hearing, the information related to both Stark, Theissen and Van der Mer (STV) and the plane of Dis and its inhabitants has become a very sought-after (and high-priced) commodity these days.

► Glitch

## DEVILS OF LAW

POSTED BY MR. BONDS

Attorneys of Terror, Solicitors of Evil, Devil's Advocates—there are many unflattering descriptions for the law firm Stark, Theissen and Van der Mer, especially among runners, who occasionally have the dubious pleasure of dealing with individual lawyers or a local branch.

As a law firm, STV does not care about their general reputation and public perception; after all, they are lawyers who, at times, represent prominent and controversial clients such as underworld



bosses, sex offenders, mass murders, racists, terrorists, corporations, and the rich and the uber-rich (basically, the worst of the worst) like any other law firm worth their salt. People expect a certain moral ambiguity of lawyers, at least in countries that have a high lawyer-per-capita ratio, and a prevalent “compensation culture” of tort litigations (civil wrongdoings that causes a claimant to suffer loss or harm, resulting in legal liability for the responsible party).

Still, few have pierced the glamour of STV’s normal business and seen the devils that run the company—or some of the monsters they represent as clients.

## STARK, THEISSEN AND VAN DER MER MAJOR GLOBAL OFFICES\*

**Europa:** Munich [Headquarters], Berlin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt (Allied German States), Brussels E.C. (independent), Paris (France), London (United Kingdom), Prague (Czech Republic), Vienna (Austria), New Monaco (Independent/Spinrad Global), Constantinople (Turkey), St. Petersburg (Russia), Zurich, Geneva (Switzerland)

**North America:** Washington, D.C. [NA Head Office], New York (UCAS), Atlanta, New Orleans (CAS), Vancouver (Salish-Shidhe), Cheyenne (Sioux Nation), Seattle, Los Angeles, Denver (independent cities)

**Latin America:** Buenos Aires (Argentina) [LatAm Head Office], Tenochtitlán (Aztlán), Metrópole (Amazonia), Havana (Caribbean League)

**Asia:** Mumbai (Indian Union), Neo-Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka (Japanese Empire), Hong Kong (Independent) [Asia Head Office], Seoul (Korea), Manila (Philippines), Beijing (Chinese Republic)

**Africa and the Middle East:** Cairo (Egypt) [AME Head Office], Dubai (Arabian Caliphate), Nyamkopon (Asamando), Cape Town, New Hlobane (Azanian Confederation), Ile-Ife (Kingdom of Nigeria)

**Australia & Oceania:** Sydney (Australia) [Head Office], Auckland (New Zealand)

\*STV may have smaller offices in other cities.

## THE HISTORY: ROOTED IN THE AWAKENING

Stark, Theissen and van der Mer was founded originally in the 2030s by the already then-successful lawyers **Konstantin Johan van der Mer**, **Saturnius Stark** and **Rhyugen Theissen** in Munich and Zurich.

They were among the first to venture into the new field of arcane and metahuman laws during its evolving years after the Awakening in 2011 and Goblinization in 2021, gathering many clients among the newly Awakened or Goblinized to represent or advise in both civil and criminal lawsuits.

- Many of those who had their metagenes activated and turned into orks and trolls were wealthy, influential people who did not take having their civil rights stripped and forced into quarantine camps with the rest of “their kind” too well. Many are still legally fighting for reparation for the suffering, losses, or dispossession they had to endure.
- Goat Foot

For decades, the law firm led the interpretation of these newly created laws for the Awakened. They also lobbied behind the scenes to influence the arcane (and partially metahuman) legislatures of states to be sure that loopholes and flexible language were integrated that they could exploit for their future clients, first in Europe and the Middle East, later in North America, Asia, and the rest of the world. They were first to become legal counsel of non-human sapient entities with no civil rights in many countries, and since the ’40s, they acted regularly as defense attorneys (and consultants) in arcane criminal cases where magic or spirits had been weaponized.

- Which are still muddled waters in our time. Since it is very difficult to establish a physical chain of evidence with everything arcane, the process frequently involves sworn expert statements based on astral observations from the police or a security mage on scene. Easy targets for any STV lawyer to rip to shreds rhetorically and generate doubt—at least in countries with adversarial systems where you can sway a jury by putting on a good show.
- Enigma
- You need to keep in mind the fact that the practice of law has dramatically changed and diversified in the Sixth World. Many large countries (the former USA, China, or Southeast Asia) balkanized in smaller states with their own legislations. Even the former American Bar is only applicable to the CAS and UCAS, but not the NAN, which follows a different tribal legal system. New types of law have emerged with a minimum legal framework for magic, the Matrix, technomancy, AIs (which are only a decade old), and metahuman and non-metahuman sapient beings. With the rise of corporations, megacorporate law was born with every AA+ having its own adapted legislation based on corporate identity and ideology. The world doesn’t tend to make legal processes any **simpler**.
- Legal Eagle
- Also, patent laws have become much more complicated as corporations are fighting tooth and claw to protect what they consider their intellectual property—a fight that only takes place in virtual courtrooms but also uses runners as proxies to make data and proprietary technology appear or vanish.
- Espion

While STV started in these new niches of the law, their pragmatic but innovative mindset and adaptability led to a rapid growth and diversifica-





tion of their business. STV's reputation for being able to bail out their clients under the direst (legal) circumstances as well as to proactively clean up certain "situations" before word got out and someone needed to be arrested discreetly brought them a substantial list of clients over the last fifty years.

- ▶ Their network of ministers, government officials, corporate executives, police chiefs, underworld players, news moguls, media idols, lobbyists, dynasty members, and other figures of influence and power are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Many corporations and firms have those connections. It is their special clientele roster of non-humanoids and other "monsters" that makes STV unique.
- ▶ Enigma

## THE AMERICAN EXPANSION

In the late '70s, STV suddenly expanded their operations in the Americas with cash received from selling their Apep Consortium shares to MCT, which resulted in an unprecedented takeover of several bigger law firms in North America (Seattle, Vancouver, and New Orleans) as well as in Latin America.

- ▶ You can imagine that their acquisition of Roth Coie, Seattle's largest law firm, and two of Vancouver's largest firms (one of

them being an expert in NAN tribal law) did not happen without a fight. STV used plenty of shadow resources to make them ripe for takeover.

- ▶ Legal Eagle
- ▶ The shadows may have gotten more than they bargained for. Remember that STV was a new player in these sprawls when this all started. They burned plenty of their cash to get access to certain runner teams. They made offers to many professional Johnsons and fixers to defect or sign exclusive contracts which were too good not to take. They paid runners above-average rates. However, all of this comes with certain expectations. STV would not be where they are today if they were not expecting a return on their investment in full, if not with interest. Some key players in Seattle and Vancouver may soon realize that these deals came with a catch.
- ▶ Enigma
- ▶ As long as they keep paying as well as they did, I couldn't care less.
- ▶ SEAtac Sweetie
- ▶ We'll see about that naïve thinking of yours. Unless you are completely loyal to them, they will try to find some exploit to hold over you as an additional security: any vulnerability, a soft spot for someone, a secret you don't want to get out. Maybe they will pay some of your associates to fabricate evidence against you. Did you ever leave some blood behind that could be used in ritual magic or voodoo dolls? Lost your favorite jacket



(which could be used as a sympathetic link) in a club? They have people dedicated to that line of work.

- > Enigma
- > Could it be that you are a touch paranoid?
- > Slamm-O!
- > Just speaking from experience. These stories are quite common on our side of the pond. They are different than your average corporate Mr. Johnson. Working for STV is a double-edged sword, with high risk coming with the chance of big rewards.
- > Enigma
- > I am actually agreeing with Enigma. STV Mr. Johnsons care about loyalty and results. Those who perform well and can be trusted are protected and cultivated better even than many company men. Those who don't meet these qualifications find themselves on the hook, blacklisted, or with a bullet in the brain (or other gruesome fate). In FDC, STV are the kingmakers and peacekeepers of the political scene—the glue that holds the capital together. Why should they aim to achieve anything less in Seattle and Vancouver or the other cities they have expanded into?
- > Kay St. Irregular

This takeover was executed by Swiss founder Saturnius Stark through the Washington office that had always been a strong presence of the firm in North America, close to the seat of UCAS power.

Some rumor persists, though, that this expansion was not done solely out of the interest to grow the business to the next level but may have something to do with the emergence of the Sixth World Tarot or the Seelie Court, in which many clients (as well as many of the senior partners) have shown a great interest.

## THE MISSION: BENDING THE LAW

With the expansion, STV became the largest, private, non-corporate law firm in existence, and it has both the pull and the weight to go toe-to-toe with the legal departments and subsidiaries of many megacorporations.

- > While law firms still exist, those that managed to stay independent and not be gobbled up by one of the many AA+ corporations are rare. Every corporation has a use for a well-staffed legal department, if only for the sole purpose of bureaucratic warfare—that is, strangling their enemies (other corporations, governmental bodies) with virtual red tape.
- > Legal Eagle
- > Many believe that the reason that STV did not fall prey to the Frankfurt Bank Association (whose legal department is the crème de la crème of the corporate world) during its younger

days is because the great dragon Nachtmeister (under his human solicitor persona Gideon Schreiber), was one of their earliest clients.

- > Enigma

They employ several thousand attorneys across the globe (and that is just the accredited lawyers) and generate annual revenues of several billion nuyen with an estimated profit of millions per equity partner. While their practice covers the whole spectrum of the law, their primary business is representing corporate, individual, and government interests in the areas of magic, non-sapient rights, litigation, mega-corporate jurisdiction, tax, business strategy, intellectual property, restructuring, and counseling. According to their public Matrix sites, their key philosophy is to “provide the highest quality legal services available anywhere and to be an instrumental part of each client’s success.”

- > Of course, a client’s “success” leaves so much room for ethical interpretation I can fly an airbus through it. One client’s success can be thousands of people’s misery.
- > Legal Eagle

The bottom line is that STV are experts in bending the law to its limits, yet morally flexible enough to break it if necessary to serve a greater purpose, whether their own or a client’s (ideally both). In addition, they have their hands in many pies, from endowed professorships at major law schools and magic universities, to real estate ownership, and national and corporate lobbying, especially when it comes to the legislative process.

- > The office in Brussels E.C. exists for the sole purposes of influencing NEEC legislations. Since not all government or euro-corp officials can be bought with money, gifts, or favors, it regularly employs blackmail with the help of shadowrunners on STV’s payroll.
- > Espion
- > In Europe, STV shares a historical love-hate relationship with the Dr. Faustus Society, a magical group that controls most of the academic institutions and currents of hermetic magic with ties to AG Chemie. While both collaborate for lax magic legislations and freedom of arcane academic research, STV and Faustians compete over the political influence of the graduates of these universities and relationships with the arcane-industrial complex.
- > Enigma

STV has a knack for identifying opportunities and building long-lasting career relationships. Many STV alumni (from places such as the long-established DC and Atlanta offices) who left the firm to pursue other careers in megacorporations or in high-ranking federal offices in the UCAS or CAS



(e.g., Supreme Court justices, attorney generals, White House counsel, presidential officials, or cabinet secretaries) maintain friendly contact with their old firm.

- STV employees are often members of many networks and (secret) societies, something that is further encouraged by the executive partners to increase the reach of the firm. As many STV attorneys are both lawyers and magicians, they are alumni of student fraternities or sororities (or other educational secret societies such as Skulls and Bones) as well as members of magical groups, orders, and even cults such as the Illuminates of the New Dawn, Jamil Islamyah, Locus Elementum, or the Aleph Society.
- Elijah

To that end, STV frequently organizes fundraisers for metahumanist or philanthropist causes and have their partners attend art galas, auctions, and other social events to build relationships and trust. Public displays of pro bono services to those who cannot afford them (especially politically motivated groups) are also part of this social engagement agenda.

- Generally speaking, you can encounter STV lawyers at any time, in any place that their clients need them to be. It doesn't have to be fancy parties, but can be prisons, gang turfs, and Z-zones.
- Gumshoe
- They are also known to act as Mr. Johnsons and fixers, if needed.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Make sure, though, that you dress to impress in these meetings. Unless they are undercover, STV Johnsons expect professionalism and expertise, not attitude and bad manners. They don't mind pink mohawks or distinctive styles but will not tolerate incompetence (which includes behaving improperly at a business meeting).
- Cosmo

One key to STV's success has been the collection and use of strategic information. STV uses investigators (runners or other assets) to amass information and dirty secrets that provide them with corporate leverage. Another factor is that STV has never shown an aspiration to reign, at least not in the limelight. They make connections, introduce factions, and are a friend that provides useful advice to the powerful. STV prefers for the status quo to remain intact but remains flexible enough to shift alliances if a change in power cannot be averted.

- Given STV's connections and success, many powerful people owe the firm favors. One of their most notorious modus operandi is to not charge for their services, but instead expect a marker to be called in at a later date. Sometimes, these markers are never

called in. The fear of one getting called is a looming sword that is enough to ensure compliance.

- Legal Eagle
- Since the powers-that-be see them as useful tools, STV has never become the target during power struggles. They only occasionally get caught in the crossfire.
- Cosmo

## PARTNERS AND PARALEGALS

STV is set to recruit, retain, and advance the brightest legal talent, and the firm usually grooms them early during their education to join their firm as an associate attorney once they have received their admission to practice law.

- Since some future arcane lawyers start their education in the arcane arts in a university, STV talent hunters frequently approach mages with the right qualities to attract them to law school and a second degree by sponsorships.
- Magister
- By "right qualities," you mean people with a tendency for either (malignant) narcissist or asocial personality disorders, right?
- Goat Foot
- Pretty much.
- Enigma

Attorneys then have the opportunity to advance in the ranks from associate to senior associate and further to junior and senior partners, with the rank of executive partner reserved for the original founders of STV.

Local offices or regional head offices are run by groups of managing directors (who are often senior partners) and report to the executive board in Munich. Since STV's long-term, partnering relationships with clients stand or fall with the lawyer who brought the client in, STV does everything to retain and promote those lawyers who make them money and provide influence and power.

- If you believe that a megacorporation would provide a greater career opportunity for a STV lawyer or partner, you are gravely mistaken. Corporations offer a good, stable income, an annual bonus and certain incentives. Still, there are salary bands that cap the money you can make, a promotion process that keeps people from advancing when they should, and other limits. STV offers the chance for a hyper-accelerated career and a shitload of money if you are a talented worker and Machiavellian enough to survive. Plus, there's the adrenaline rush of winning high stakes lawsuits and battling the best of the best.
- 0111011001
- That is why STV is a shark tank composed of the most amoral and ruthless sociopathic egomaniacs. The only thing that is dear



to their stone-cold hearts is their own personal success, perfect results for their clients, and prosperity for the firm (in that order of importance).

- Enigma
- Which also means that STV offices are ground zero for rank-order battles, backstabbing, and intrigue that often involve runners to ace out the competition, by any means necessary.
- Cosmo

Just to give you an idea, entry-level salary at STV usually allows you an upper middle-class lifestyle, even more if you are both an accredited lawyer and a mage. Junior partners are usually wealthy enough to spend big money on whatever they desire. The higher you go, the more millionaires you find. That means these players can afford whatever they think they need—not just the physical measure of status such as large estates, designer clothing, armored trucks, sports cars, watches or jewelry, but also state-of-the-art cybernetics or bioware. Hence, unless they are mages, these lawyers pack a decent amount of augmentation.

- While the mages can buy foci and other arcane toys like there is no tomorrow. That makes breaking and entering very attractive. And I **do** like a good challenge.
- Mika
- Still, many of the legal bottom feeders need to learn how to handle the pressure and like to spend their new riches decompressing with alcohol, BTLs, novacoke, strippers, and prostitutes. That makes them an exploitable vulnerability in the firm's office.
- Hard Exit
- And that doesn't even include the expenses the firm covers. As stated by Mr. Bonds, these partners are important for the attorney-client relationship. Partners know tons about their clients, which they are supposed to keep confidential. Hence, the firm hires private security details (like those from my company), armored limousine services, and other means of protection (implanted transceivers, spirit guardians) to make sure their assets don't get hurt or abducted. Also, most of these senior partners have passed security abduction and interrogation resistance trainings and are capable of handling themselves even under the greatest stress—especially the magicians.
- OrkCEO
- In case you end up in a situation that you take a job of abducting an STV, be aware that once that individual is found missing, a runner team on permanent retainer will be dispatched immediately to hunt you down.
- Ironworker

Still, they are lawyers, not grunts nor brutes. Aggressiveness, ego, and rhetoric dominance is a tool for the courtroom or when people need to be

personally intimidated. Outside the courtroom, they prefer schemes and machinations.

Other (less-well-paid) positions within the law firm's office such as paralegals, legal secretaries, or record clerks are usually easier inroads into an office, especially when you are looking to get access to client files, which are very difficult to hack from the outside.

- Though many of the tasks that paralegals and record clerks handled in the past are now more (cost)-efficiently taken care of by agents and other AIs, given that most of the legal filings and case records have been digitized since Crash 1.0.
- Netcat
- You would be surprised how much power still lies in paper. It's an open secret that STV acquired a lot of old (and sometimes redacted) hardcopy records dating back hundreds of years and keeps them in secure vaults such as the sub-basement of their North American head office in FDC. These records are rumored to contain many dirty secrets the UCAS or the CAS want hidden. They are constantly updated by professional investigators and data-retrieval experts as well as a variety of other professionals.
- Kay St. Irregular

This is why spiders (deckers and technomancers alike) are paid equally well in STV offices. Network infrastructure is usually top notch, with certain sensitive data only kept offline in nodes. Even when it comes to commlinks, STV prefers an extra level of security. Attorneys may have many talents, but being tech-savvy is usually not one of them. Given that even the most advanced personal commlinks are easy to beat by most hackers, STV lawyers use encrypted VPNs and virtual apps for predictive analytics or sensory suites on their commlinks that basically slaves the device (including all of the data and client numbers) to a high security node.

- While STV seems to favor deckers for being predictable assets, I heard they have a good business relationship with a matrix tribe called Code 410, which they employ as Matrix security advisors and consultants in everything resonant and dissonant.
- 0111011001

## TRUE ADVANCEMENTS

In STV, advancements may not come exclusively in the form of money and promotions. The firm devised ways to keep promising partners tied to the company, capitalizing on their expertise in magic and access to their special clients. These “advancements” initiate the partner into an exclusive inner circle and bestow a gift to the attorney, usually through one of STV's clients: either an extraplanar spirit (through a spirit pact) or the Infected (by an HMHV infection) that usually requires some sort of personal sacrifice in exchange for power.



Who qualifies for these “blessings” is decided by an inner circle of senior partners and the executive founders called **Das Innere Gremium** (the Inner Committee), who come together on an irregular basis in one of the global offices.

- > It can also be other gifts, such as an invite to an elite cult, access to rare metamagics, an artifact, or an introduction to other forbidden arts such as blood magic.
- > Elijah
- > Sebastian Gehbauer, the senior partner leading the Düsseldorf office (Rhine-Ruhr-Megaplex) is actually a ghoul who uses his magic to mask his smell and appearance. Whether he was a ghoul before joining STV or whether he was transformed into one as part of his “ascension,” I cannot say.
- > Enigma
- > Who would want to be willingly transformed into a ghoul? Harz-Greenbaum (HMHVV I) I can at least partially rationalize, but Krieger strain?
- > Nephrine

## GLOBAL REACH

Here’s a brief overview on the geographical divisions and their operational scope.

### NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

The North American division is led from the Federal District of Columbia, where the STV office dates back to the pre-Awakened USA. With the change in the political landscape, affiliate offices were created in Atlanta (CAS), New York City (as an extraterritorial enclave and seat of many corporations), and Cheyenne (Sioux Nation), where the Sovereign Tribal Council of the NAN resides.

- > Given the political scene of Denver with its different sectors, the Denver office also held a certain significance in the past. Since Ghostwalker re-organized the city, STV kept even further behind the scenes as usual, as the great dragon does not seem to have much love for some of their clients and their lawyers.
- > Kay St. Irregular

Given the importance of the Washington office to overall North American business (including its expansion), it is run by another triumvirate of STV: the enigmatic Althea Stark, Rudolph Theissen, and Thaddeus Van der Mer. They exert direct control over the entire firm’s activities in DeeCee.

With the UCAS in turmoil post-Detroit, the STV head office, which is located a scant two kilometers from the UCAS Capitol building, has been in crises mode for over a year now, with several schemes, deals, fixes, and moderations running in parallel with other offices. After some shadows event in FDC a few years back, **Madeline Schmidt**,

STV’s best local Johnson (and protégé of Thaddeus) got promoted to Senior Partner (with some serious augmentations) and is now completely in charge in coordinating all shadow operations.

- > So, they have a Schmidt who is actually a Johnson? Muahahaha....
- > Chainmaker
- > Witzig.
- > Enigma

Schmidt is a human female in her mid-forties who looks at least ten years younger. She has a quiet “German” demeanor, latest corporate-chic business fashion, stern look, and brunette hair usually tied to a tight bun, which is why many have mistaken her as S-K Johnson in the past (a mistake she has played to her advantage).

While attention has primarily focused on the UCAS, dire news seems to have reached STV from their New Orleans clients (the Zobop, the krewes) in relation to the recent fraying of reality’s fabric. This has prompted Schmidt to send some runners to their office in the Crescent City for damage prevention and client protection.

- > Things are brewing in the Big Easy concerning more than mambos and houngans. Alchera, gateways, and magic distortions have been reported near **La Rivière du Mort**, the part of the Mississippi flowing through New Orleans. Will-o’-the-wisps are commonly seen floating over the river at night, and some claim that people who drown in the river come back as infested walking corpses, but it is not shedim that are inside. Some whisper “the Door to Guinea” has opened somewhere beneath the waters, but I fear it could be something much darker. New things haunt the bayous. Metaplanar things. Even spirits like La Malice are concerned; they fear the competition from the other side, trying to break through. Beware what’s coming.
- > Abrecadavre

### EUROPEAN DIVISION

The European division, led by the headquarter in Munich, is basically STV’s backyard. Given the number of countries that compose the Old World, their offices have always been busy. Still, in the recent months, shadow operations have skyrocketed. With the recent events in Prague, alchera popping up all over the place, as well as rumors originating from Karlsruhe that the city’s arcane nexus has become instable, the European division is currently in full spin-control mode.

- > Apart from the named partners, these are some the key players of the area with regards to the AGS. Senior partner and ghoul mage Sebastian Gehbauer runs the office close to the Königsallee in Düsseldorf (within the Rhine-Ruhr-Megaplex), one of the best address for the one-percenters in the city. Senior



Partner Valentina Karlson was recently promoted to run the Frankfurt office, since senior partner and mage Jelena Malkova (who is rumored to have engaged in a spirit pact with one of the Old Gods), moved to St. Petersburg (not yet clear whether this was a promotion or demotion).

- > Enigma
- > Beyond the AGS, I would keep an eye on Marie Boucher at the Paris office. Currently a partner in the firm, she runs the shadow operations as Madame Dupont (that is how we French call our Mr. Johnsons) since Hugues Fauchon (her former mentor) jumped ship to Index-AXA. Boucher belongs to the transhuman scene in Paris and sports temporary alien biomods (currently **en vogue** among Parisian fashionistas) whenever she is diving into the nightlife.
- > Espion

Apparently, STV was also preparing the opening of a new office in Athens when new alchera started to manifest. For example, the replacing the ruins of the Theatre of Epidauros with the original version including historical stage performances that are running through a loop. Many have interpreted it as a sign of the long-awaited return of their Greek gods.

- > Greece has undoubtedly been one of the Awakening's hot spots, bringing back mythological races such as satyrs, minotaurs, cyclops, and centaurs as well as a large variety of awakened critters. Since 2012, several alchera materialized in Athens (like the Acropolis and the Agora, the marketplace of ancient Athens) that culminated in the re-emergence of the Olympieion, the temple of the Olympian Zeus, during the Year of the Comet.
- > Winterhawk
- > From information we received from our Brokerage X clients, it is clear that there have been warnings about what we are experiencing now and were actively suppressed. Both the French Seer's Guild as well as the Orakle Investment Company, a business enterprise run by the Apollo Temple and the Oracle of Delphi dabbling in financial business divination, reached out to their patrons two years ago saying "the beyond will come to bargain for the children of men."
- > 0111011001

## PAN-ASIAN DIVISION

Using local talent accustomed to the specific laws of Eastern culture of the respective country, STV has a reach that extends across Asia. While offices reside in economic centers (with the head office located in Hong Kong), STV has strong ties to many Chinese states such as the parliamentary monarchy of Shaanxi, Li Tianzi, the enigmatic Emperor of Beijing, to Manchuria and the Shangui Corporation, and possibly even Lung.

- > STV has acted as an intermediary and assisted Shangui with the legal paperwork to apply for AA status at the Corporate Court.
- > Cosmo

Beyond China, STV seems to primarily focus on India and Japan, possibly to the prevalence of metahuman variants (including nartaki, ganesha changelings, and oni) that have suffered persecution in the past (especially in Japan on Yomi island) and required legal representation (though lawsuits are generally avoided for cultural reasons). In addition, STV represents many other forms of sapient beings such as Eastern dragons (Yat Gwan, Mang, and Shan are confirmed; Fucanglong is a suspected client), the Naga Kingdom and certain Infected variants (such as gaki and pennaggolan).

- > Truth be told, Asia is home to many fringe traditions bordering on the toxic and twisted magicians, such as the Japanese mahotsukai, which are a typical STV clientele.
- > Kia
- > Not to mention free evil spirits such as the Yama Kings of Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong.
- > Lei Kung

## LATIN AMERICAN DIVISION

The Latin American division is the latest addition to STV as was only recently formed with the expansion to the Americas. While STV had offices in Metropole (with clients that included Awakened sapient species such as shape shifters or large anacondas) and Aztlan (where the clients included blood sorcerers/adepts) before, they recently restructured their efforts in the region and collated them under the new head office in Buenos Aires (Argentina).

- > So why Buenos Aires? Isn't that primarily a mercenary spot?
- > Borderline
- > It is also a living remnant of Europe in the Latin Americas (long-lasting connections) and a stronghold of corporate power. Since STV has clients from both Aztlan and Amazonia, maybe they were just looking for a head office in neutral territory. Or something else is going on that we cannot see yet.
- > Glasswalker

## AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST DIVISION

It is no coincidence that STV's presence is majorly restricted to cities that are either great corporate hubs such as Cape Town or Dubai, have some arcane connection, or contain a great number of magical groups. Business relationships across the region are run from the Cairo head office. STV's membership in the Apep Consortium in the past brought them many clients from the Caliphate, including a number of "djinn" (free spirits) and insect shamans/spirits, such as the **Hem'netjer**, a group of beetle magicians.



- › These operations are overseen by senior partner Amenset who believes she is the reborn soul of an Egyptian priestess or vizier of Thoth that practiced law in ancient Egypt.
- › Am-mut
- › STV is one of the few who have extremely well-established relationships with Asamando, owning a major office in the capital of Nyamkopon, close to the queen's residence. Run nowadays by a Congolese Sasabonsam by the name of Kabakele Undango, STV supported the kingdom since its formation in all matters of law and, still support the nation's push for recognition by the United Nations, and make sure that Asamando is not ripped off by Horizon and other corporations with respect to its cultural and natural riches.
- › Red

Cairo itself has always been a focal point of (arcano)-archaeological research and relic hunting. Arcane power in Egypt is focused and bound by an array of power sites, represented on the physical plane by the ancient monuments such as the Pyramids, or other buildings in the ruins of Abydos and Karnak, some of which manifested astral constructs during the Year of the Comet. STV has always been interested in having access by supporting whoever is currently controlling these sites of power. Since alchera have increased in frequency and depths in the last year, with whole cities (including echoes of their inhabitants) reappearing, Cairo has become a hotbed for arcano-archaeologists, historians, and linguist again, to the frustration of many STV clients, who would prefer to go about their business undisturbed.

## AUSTRALIA AND OCEANIA

While STV has offices down under, it is not a sphere of major influence beyond the metroplexes along the coast, as neither the koraji nor the entities that restrict themselves to the Outback have much use for law-twisting servants.

- › According to my sources, the merrow tribes residing in the Great Barrier Reef and across the Australasian seas are clients of the Australian head-office, especially for representation and in eco-lawsuits against Tanamyre and the Australian government for the destruction of the habitat.
- › Shohoj
- › And they pay them how?
- › Clockwork
- › The riches of the sea are plenty. Pearls, sunken treasures, nodules of undersea orichalcum, true water and other Awakened minerals.
- › Shohoj

## CLIENTS: RICH OR EXCLUSIVE

Most of what STV does is in service of their clients. This means their attorneys value attorney-client privilege and confidentiality above all else. Honesty and trust between the acting attorney and a client are key in this relationship, as STV can only work efficiently to protect a client (especially in criminal lawsuits) if the client discloses everything pertaining (or related) to the issue at hand, even if that means that those lawyers become aware of their clients' illegal and corrupt activities.

- › Given the things that some of their clients are involved with, these attorneys must be quite emotionally disconnected to be able to stomach and process all this.
- › Scattershot
- › Like shadowrunners you mean? \*tuskgrin\*
- › Butch
- › Hey, low blow!
- › Scattershot

While the lawyer is bound (and protected) by confidentiality rules from revealing confidential information to the disadvantage of a client (or for the advantage of the lawyer, or a third person), it makes STV attorneys the next best target as a carrier of this information to the original. Hence, protecting these secrets is imperative for the firm. While mage-lawyers are capable of defending themselves against mind-probing spells, not all lawyers can, and there are many more ways to extract information including but not limited to torture, drugs, and virtual interrogation techniques. Thus, STV invests heavily in physical security, with even more esoteric means of protection (including spirit guardians, artifacts, and alchemical protections) rumored to be among them.

- › Remember the Triads and their oath-binding magic used to enforce loyalty and secrecy within their organization? STV adopted this technique for attorneys serving extra-special clients to make sure that confidentiality is never broken, even if it means losing an employee in the process.
- › Enigma

As mentioned, STV has their hands in many pies, which means a variety of clients from politics, corporations, the underworld, media glitterati and the uber-rich have STV on speed dial. What makes them stand out are their spectrum of non-human (but often wealthy and influential) clients, including dragons, drakes, shapeshifters, nagas, centaurs, fae, free spirits and the Infected as well as a number of mages, especially dark practitioners such as bocors, blood mages, insect shamans, and toxic arcanists.



- > Not just bug spirits, likely queens and mothers as well. STV was the law firm that legally supported the Universal Brotherhood in the '50s after all.
- > Enigma
- > Motherfraggers.
- > Bull
- > With respect to the Infected, STV has several legal relationships with Infected groups like Ordo Maximus, Tamanous, or the Body Bank.
- > Red
- > An astounding menagerie of entities, but the bulk of their clients remains rich mundane metahumans.
- > Goat Foot
- > Some are eccentrics with an acquired taste for oddities and Awakened artifacts such as the Sixth World Tarot. Didn't STV help broker several projectors and tarot cards to certain parties and collectors when the tarot appeared? I would not be surprised if STV has one of the most detailed compilations on the cards, their arcane abilities, and information displayed on the cards, in their digital vaults.
- > Lyrn
- > Speaking of the tarot, any connection between the Seelie Court and STV?
- > Glitch
- > Nothing confirmed. There are rumors that the Royal Steward graced the London office with her presence and entourage at some point after the Yellowstone Calamity. After her disappearance, two senior partners were reported missing.
- > Old Crow
- > Among the factions, probably either Bastard, Higher Power, or Eclipse would be the most likely to deal with STV, though I would not put it past Shadow (with them, everything is possible) or the Unseelie to seek STV as an ally. They are well suited to navigate the Lady's Court.
- > Frosty
- > While we're discussing oddities, based on recent documents, I found that STV is also the legal representative of Taco Temple. The strangeness continues.
- > Dr. Spin
- > Is it me, or are there parallels between the Desolation Codex and Taco Temple in how they seem to transform an idea into reality? Just a thought ...
- > Lyrn
- > What about the Black Lodge?
- > Winterhawk
- > This is a bit complicated, as is usual with the Black Lodge. STV does not seem to be their direct pawn, but it is likely that lodges





have meddled in the law firm's affairs via their clients and see them as a useful tool. Individual lodge members may even be clients, but whether this is known to their attorneys or the named partners is unclear. Given that STV usually tries to avoid hard conflict and is less interested in grander century-spanning schemes than the Black Lodge, STV stays out of the Lodge's way unless they have to protect a client. It seems that both organizations try to co-exist, acknowledging that conflicting agendas may put them at odds with each other at times.

➤ Axis Mundi

## STV LEADERSHIP: THE TRIUMVIRATE

With the number of junior, senior, and executive partners active in more than forty offices around the world (and growing in number), it is often difficult to ascertain who is really calling the shots in the company. The founding triumvirate are surrounded by a mystique of rumors and misinformation. So, let's take a quick dive into the crazy.

➤ Finally!  
➤ Plan 9

**Saturnius Stark** (born in Zurich, Switzerland) is an ageless elf. He withdrew from public life to his large estate near St. Moritz a couple of years ago (officially on sabbatical to study the "higher mysteries of magic"), before suddenly re-emerging in the '70s to engineer the American expansion of the firm, together with his niece Althea Stark, a senior partner and a managing director of the DeeCee office. Saturnius has two doctorate degrees—one in law, another in hermetic magic, as well as an MBA. He has the serpentine charm of cult leader and a reputation for having affairs with (preferably married) men and women.

➤ Is that some kind of fetish, or what?  
➤ Zippy Toetag

➤ My guess is it is more like a compulsion. I saw him once and his aura is ... weird (and I wasn't fully able to pierce the masking). Like a walking distortion. It is speculated that he follows a twisted or toxic version of Chaos, compelling him to seed discord around him.  
➤ Ecotope

**Rhyugen Theissen** (born in Munich, Allied German States) is—based on his SIN—a human in his late eighties. Whether this is indeed (still?) the case is difficult to ascertain, as he has not been seen in public for more than thirty years. Nobody knows what he really looks like, or where he resides these days. There is a photo of him from that time, hanging in the Munich headquarters, which is also used

as picture ID in his SIN. But we all know how easily these can be manipulated.

➤ If you believe the curriculum vitae of all of the founders, they were born around the turn of the century. If they had false identities before that, they were likely legitimized with Crash 1.0 and ID restoration. That's apart from the fact that these three are so rich and powerful they can afford any bulletproof SIN that money or relationships can buy.  
➤ 0111011001

Theissen is still very active though a virtual persona over the Matrix (which can be projected in court by modern technological means). He is said to be a brilliant lawyer (the only one of the three who is not Awakened), speaking several languages and has a photographic case memory that outshine the best legal AIs the Frankfurt Bank Association is using. The most interesting thing about him is that he occasionally takes pro bono cases, which have an entangled agenda. They ultimately benefit the firm when you look at the big picture.

➤ So, like a dragon?  
➤ /dev/grrl

➤ Several deckers from the helix tried to track him once, but his set-up of re-routing his presence is tough—GOD-level tough. They could only narrow it down to three locations in Asia: Singapore, Neo-Tokyo, or Kuala Lumpur.  
➤ €spion

Theissen has several relatives with strong ties to the Allied German States, but how close he is with them is unknown. Prominent members are **Rainer Theissen**, the current data security minister of the AGS government and member of the **Partei der Neuen Ordnung** (Party of the New Order, PNO), a pro-Awakened, pro-magic German party as well as Rudolph Theissen (a German-born dwarf), a senior STV partner in the DeeCee office.

➤ Is it coincidence that they all share the same initials, R.T.? I think not!  
➤ Plan 9  
➤ It is probably no surprise that STV is a strong financial backer of the PNO.  
➤ 0111011001

Last but not least, there is **Konstantin Van der Mer** (born in Amsterdam, United Netherlands). While Konstantin is supposed to be in his late seventies, per his SIN, he does not look older than forty or fifty. In our age of rejuvenation treatments, this would not be surprising, except he's a mage, and they rarely undergo these procedures.



- › He is from Amsterdam before it was flooded, when a large amount of their birth records were destroyed. Another interesting coincidence.
- › Plan 9

Van der Mer is an expert in arcane law (including magic/alchemical IP laws) and has worked in the past with a lot of arcane start-ups as well as smaller corporate divisions. He held a professorship for Teutonic Hermetics (a paradigm that is inspired by ancient Norse and Germanic mysticism) at the New University of Erlangen and the only one of the triumvirate who does not shy away from the public.

- › STV also represent various groups such as the Aesir Society or the Order of Thule and even more radical right-wing groups such as the mago-fascist Runenthing or right-wing direct-action group Volksfront.
- › Ecotope
- › Konstantin's name came up on DIVE in connection to the great dragon Alamais. Given Konstantin's involvement with Teutonic magic, it is fair to assume that the great dragon may have been his client, which means that Konstantin may know more about the great dragon's operations and existing stashes than some of his follower dragons that survived GeMiTo.
- › Frosty
- › Well, star lawyer Thaddeus Van der Mer, senior partner at the DC office (and Konstantin's nephew) defended Matthias Hesse, a leader of the anti-meta terrorist group Nationale Aktion, after a group of runners looking to cash in the 100,000 nuyen bounty captured him in the CAS.
- › Kay St. Irregular
- › Thaddeus is also a former member of Aegis Cognito. Whether he was a former operative is not known, but unlikely. If I were to bet, I would say interrogator.
- › Fianchetto

Konstantin, who stands two meters tall and has a strong constitution for a man his age, is a silver-tongued devil and a master of Socratic tactics of intimidation, making people feel insecure in his presence. That's why he is not only the firm's public front (diverting attention from his two other executive partners) but also STV's chief lobbyist.

- › His network of STV lawyers and associated meddlers are usually the ones found in the orbit around centers of political power.
- › Legal Eagle
- › Plan 9 play time!
  - Top 5 rumors on STV founders.
  - Note—some of them may not be exclusive:
  - Stark: Immortal elf, arcane spike baby, free (shadow) spirit, cult leader, former lover of Ebran the Scribe

Theissen: Albino, artificial intelligence, underwent leonization and operates incognito as junior attorney in one of the firm's offices, nosferatu, master shedim

Van der Mer: Dragon or drake, Black Lodge member, toxic Faustian mage, metaplanar entity, reborn soul

- › Plan 9
- › Where are you getting these things? That part about Ebran is certainly not true!
- › Frosty
- › Which is what you want us to believe, of course.
- › Plan 9

STV has a strict policy with career progression, stating that climbing the ranks is not dependent on background, metatype, or gender, but purely based on commitment, talent, and most importantly: success (basically, what you bring to the table). Still, several STV family members can be found in senior positions across the worlds. While this is perceived as nepotism or favoritism, it is not. Family members are often held to an even higher standard than their attorney fellows because they are carrying the family legacy, and great things are expected of them. Hence, they don't take setbacks well and are known to be even more vindictive and ruthless than the other sharks.

## DEVIL YOU KNOW

When I started my research on Stark, Theissen, and Van der Mer in response to the things we recently uncovered and what I had heard about their reputation, I was sure to find evidence that connects them to the plane of Dis. Given what we know about the Dis and their knack for bargains, I thought that these parties would easily find commonalities. Both seem to be ruthless, both seem to be hungry for power. The one is human, the other—well, they are probably too alien for us to understand. On the other hand, I have never understood bugs, shedim, fae, or whatever spirits crossed to our world from ghost-knows-where.

Anyway, it turns out I was dead wrong.

- › Are you shitting me? After all you told us above, you want to tell us STV are not the bad guys?
- › Bull
- › Well, ours is a world of shades of grey, not black and white. What is evil? Are bugs evil, who are driven by an imperative to procreate and survive? Are shadowrunners, who shoot people in the face for money, bad? This is all about perspective. Our reality is complicated, and with all the gateways to alien metaplanes, it just got a bit more complicated.
- › Axis Mundi



// ADDED BY MR. BONDS

STV INTERNAL REPORT TO THE INNER COMMITTEE

// TOPIC: 'DEALERS' // HIGH CONFIDENTIALITY //

Based on the information we received from client [REFUGEES] on the planescape they call Tra-verse, we used the astral gate power of [SYPHON] to bring us to the metaplane. [SYPHON] visited this plane before moving to other planes and later Earth as easier “feeding grounds.” Given [REFUGEES]’s warning, we did not use [SYPHON] as inroad into the city, which appears to be a patch-work sprawl not unlike Kowloon Walled City but in a disturbingly Escher-esque style. Since I am familiar with Dr. Hombach’s Spirit Guide, I found several connections to spirits and metaplanes he has referenced in his work.

For a plane that seems to be visited frequently by outsiders, the inhabitants of Dis seem to be extraordinary careful and paranoid. Whether this caution is rooted in their history or is a continuing long con is difficult to say. The whole plane could—to put it in mundane terms—be a large honeypot to attract metaplanar travelers. Based on [OX]’s view, with whom we had consulted before, it considers the *Chaffer*, as he called them, weak, but we know of [OX]’s aggressive tendency and lust for carnage and confrontation. As expected, it took us a while, and several visits over the last six months, just to establish a communication channel with them, because they were equally cautious as we. Given their alien mindset, it is difficult to say what they were thinking. They seemed to be caught off-guard during our first meeting that we were not asking for something but rather contacting them to offer our services and see what they were willing to give in exchange. They appeared to be used to being contacted for something they can provide and then striking a bargain. While there seems to be difference between the natives—not sure I would go that far in calling them factions, that may be a little too simple—they displayed a lot of what, in human terms, we would call mistrust, paranoia, and protectionism mixed with arrogance and superiority. Having Dr. Guo available as a resource and consultant was extremely useful, so my deepest thanks go to him. Overall, we experienced the natives as inherently untrustworthy and hard bargaining. Striking deals for anything (even the littlest things) seems to drive their existence (as propagation and survival is for the Invae). I would take nothing they say at face value, which means trust and certain amount of openness will be difficult, if not impossible, to establish. While we were in the city, I observed them trying several classical bargaining tactics. There were, for example, playing hard to get, making extreme demands followed up by small, slow concessions, using commitment tactics, take-it-or-leave-it negotia-

tion strategy, trying to make you flinch, inviting unreciprocated offers, feather ruffling, preying on curiosity, bluffing, puffing, and lying, warnings, exaggeration and misrepresenting facts. They did not use threats and insults, but I would not put it past them. Since I had my fair share of negotiating contracts with our spirit client, this is all about the hooks. What I am worried about are the hooks that we cannot see—the long con they might be playing.

If I were to speculate, I would be not surprised if these natives “feed” (for lack of a better term) on the deals they make like many of the colloquially called “shadow spirits” that we have as our clients. The better the deal for them (and the worse for the individual engaging in the deal), the better the feed. Hence, they are trying to ascertain people’s desires and wishes that they can make come true with some kind of deal. In all, we would not advise engaging with them further as a relationship is unlikely to be mutually beneficial. I would even advise against allowing our junior partners to engage deals with them for “research purposes” (as we have done in the past). Interestingly, in the end it was them who stepped away from the table after finding out that we had apparently “made a deal” with [SYPHON] who has been our client for several decades now. I’m not sure if we made an enemy that day, but I would be cautious with everything moving forward.

// END

- › Dr. Guo is a mage and a renowned expert in comparative psychology in the field of spirits from Stanford.
- › Sunshine
- › As the saying goes, it takes a devil to know a devil.
- › Enigma

As written in the memo I uploaded, STV did not engage with the Dis at the time (the memo is about 2 years old) and did not pursue it further. Since the Blackout and the disappearance of the 125K people (if you count both the UCAS III Corps and the city of Dutchville) this has again raised their interest. Based on the evidence I gathered, some of their spin operations in the different regions have been geared toward that end to collect information from whatever source is available. Apparently, they reached out to some of their metaplanar clients here on Earth directly to get some insider information from beings who had dealings with them in the past. They had to burn some markers in the process, which in itself is surprising, given the usual altruistic nature of the firm.

- › If you light a lamp for someone else, it will also brighten your path.
- › Man-of-Many-Names



## CHAOS IN PRAGUE! MULTIPLE CASUALTIES!

**Blesk News Feed** // 02/03/2081

AUTO TRANSLATED CZECH-ENGLISH

#AstralHurricane #Prague #stay@home #CharlesUni

As of yesterday, 17.53, several magical phenomena have appeared across Prague, especially within both Old and New Town in districts one and two. While alchera have recently become more frequent, especially around Josefov with visitors embracing the ability to observe Jewish life in Prague in previous centuries, these phenomena have been reported to be extremely hostile.

So please, avoid the center of Prague (especially if you are Awakened) and stay at home if you are residing in the outer Prague metroplex.

The old Jewish cemetery guarded by the Golem, the arcane Charles University, as well as the Old Town Square seem to be the points of origin for these events, leading to a localized hurricane of sorts that is ravaging through the city. According to arcane sources, the effects seem to be even worse on the astral, but Matrix service is also disrupted across the city. After many students of Charles University reported nose-bleeding and nausea, the whole area was evacuated around 22.00 and a large perimeter around the affected region was established by police forces assisted by local subsidiaries of the Spellweaver Consortium (S-K) and Mitsuhama Magical Service.

Since then, many arcane students fell into a catatonic state and have been hospitalized for brain aneurisms and cardio-vascular system breakdown, with some fatalities reported. Eyewitness reports say that they saw several spirits being ripped apart by unknown forces. Other rumors report strangely mutated entities wreaking havoc in the zone, but no video evidence has surfaced yet. With Old Town Square being frequented by many tourists, partygoers and bachelor(ette) groups, many in the zone have gone missing.

While it may be too early to tell, news tickers have gone crazy blaming Professor Schwartzkopf, great dragon and dean of the arcane part of the Charles University, for the events. Even worse, Schwartzkopf, who at the time of the events was reportedly seen on university grounds, was witnessed abandoning his students and faculty, briefly orbiting around the zone in the air before leaving Prague airspace heading west (likely toward Marienbad). Many have accused the great dragon of being involved in what may have been a magic ritual gone awfully wrong, or at least being responsible for supporting an unconventional and libertarian, if not Bohemian, approach to magical research.

If you experience any unusual symptoms or observe strange phenomena or distortions report at [\[link\]](#).

- > You sly devil ... made the puzzle piece just click in.
- > Elijah
- > Pure instinct of self-preservation. With all that is going on, STV probably fears it may become a target, or it could get caught in the crossfire.
- > €spion

Beyond reaching out to their clients, they have sent several runners tracking down some of the "Returned" as well as finding out who scrubbed their former SINS or equipped them with new ones.

- > Well, given that those have emerged all over the world with all kinds of global SINS, I would think someone brokered a deal with someone who has the means to fabricate fake SINS. As we all know, it is a lucrative business.
- > Am-mut
- > If they are, in fact, fake. I have seen some and they are really, really good. Looks more as if someone implanted them directly in the Global SIN Registry. Maybe someone with legal access?
- > Orbital DK

## IN DEFENSE OF GREAT DRAGONS

What has also become evident is that someone, or something, has been targeting great dragons, particular those with a certain involvement in magic—**Schwartzkopf** being the first victim. With the recent events in Prague, the professor has become the target of public outrage. With several people killed or vanished, the golem destroyed, and magic still fluctuating many months after the event, people still blame the great dragon and demand his suspension, if not prosecution, for the events. While neither Schwartzkopf (who has withdrawn to his lair in Marienbad) nor his voice commented on the topic, his lawyers from STV issued a press release saying that their client had no involvement in the events but would take a leave of absence from his academic duties until his innocence is proven.

- > Which may or may not occur. An independent group was formed to investigate what led to the events. Given Schwartzkopf's influence in the university and S-K being led by a fellow dragon, both institutions were sidelined. Hence, the investigation is currently led by MCT, who would benefit greatly by forcing the dragon to resign from his duties as the dean. I heard that STV is already hiring runners to influence the investigation in favor of the dragon.
- > €spion
- > The rifts sucked the magic right out of the manasphere, causing mana ebbs across the greater Prague metroplex. That three of



those showed up within the same area is not, I don't think, a coincidence. Looks like astral warfare to me.

➤ Ethernaut.

There is more evidence. Recent political upheavals in multiple Chinese states and dissent within the Red Dragon Triad have forced **Lung** to leave his lair and investigate, and the Hong Kong STV office seems to be assisting. The same is rumored for merrow tribes and the **Sea Dragon** with respect to undersea events. Many of the mages that Ghostwalker had recently recruited in Denver and sent on missions to the metaplanes ended up dead, washed ashore in godforsaken places or spit out by astral anomalies, indicating that whatever Ghostwalker is doing, someone does not seem to like it.

➤ No wonder they are tracking metaplanar portals across the FRFZ. This game can be played both ways. Given what we know, I would be not surprised if a bargain is struck to instigate another conflict in the dragon's backyard soon.

➤ Orbital DK

➤ To me, it all seems to be a ruse to keep these dragons occupied and tied up while other things are in motion. The question is, what are those other things, and where are they happening?

➤ Ethernaut

## STARK, THEISSEN AND VAN DER MER MATRIX HOST NETWORK

STV's local office networks are very well secured to protect client information. The host design is similar to the one displayed on p. 186, *SR6*. Outside intruders have to break into a security gate choke point (Host A) that is connected to the Matrix with a legal office host and client data vault host connected to it.

STV offices also possess offline vaults to store valuable paper documents and other sensitive data

### SECURITY HOST

(RATING 7, ASDF 8/7/9/10)

The security host acts as both a public relations host and choke point for hacks. All of the local office's STV lawyers' and partners' work commlinks can be considered slaved to this host for game purposes when the lawyers are handling sensitive data routed from the client vault, functioning in a VPN mode. The host also manages the office's physical security.

- **Iconography:** Virtual architectural marvel designed by popular architects. Different for each office.
- **Threat Response:** If an unauthorized presence is detected, it will launch Tar Baby, Acid, Binder, Track (in that order) and alert a

security spider that will arrive in the host in 1D6 combat rounds. Depending on the previous attempts to hack the host, the spider may also be already patrolling the network.

- **Data and associated systems:** CommLink numbers, office layout, guard positions, technical security (scanner systems, cameras), on-site drones, maglocks

### OFFICE HOST

(RATING 5, ASDF 6/5/8/7)

- **Iconography:** Virtual office space with endless dedicated cubicles and conference rooms.
- **Threat Response:** Alert security spider, launch IC (Tar Baby, Marker, Track)
- **Data and associated systems:** Accounting, personnel files, non-security electronic systems, legal repository and proceedings, court transcripts

### CLIENT VAULT

(RATING 6, ASDF 8/7/6/9)

- **Iconography:** Huge library in the style of the Library of Congress or British Library
- **Threat Response:** Take host offline, alert security spider, launch IC (Killer, Blaster, Track)
- **Data and associated systems:** Sensitive client-related files, insider information (paydata)

### STV SPIDER

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
3	2	3	1	3	5	5	3	3.4

AR*	DR*	I/ID*	AC*	CM	MATRIX CM*	MOVE
15	15	16/3	A1, I4	10	11	—

\*Cybercombat related values (running hot sim)

**Matrix Skills (dice pools):** Cracking 11 (Cybercombat +3), Electronics 11 (Matrix Perception +2)

**Augmentations:** Cyberjack [DR 5, D/F 8/7, +3 MIB]

**Gear:** Cyberdeck Shiawase Cyber-6 [DR 5, A/S 8/7, active program slots: 10]

**Matrix Programs:** Armor, Biofeedback, Biofeedback Filter, Configurator, Encryption, Fork, Lockdown, Overclock, Toolbox, Trace

### STV FIXER

(NON-AWAKENED, PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

An established lawyer of the firm that acts as fixer or Mr. Johnson in the local metroplex. Has several contacts (police, politics, corporations, etc.) and will rather use her network, the environ-



ment (high-security zones) and her negotiation and performance skills to her advantage rather than engaging into direct conflict.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
3	4	3(4)	2	5	5	4	6	4	4.4

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
6	8/2	A1, I3	11	10/15/+1

**Qualities:** First Impression, Indomitable or Photographic Memory (choose one)  
**Skills:** Athletics 2, Con 5 (Performance +2), Close Combat 2 (Unarmed Combat +2), Electronics 3, Influence 5 (Negotiation +2), Firearms 3, Perception 5, Stealth 3  
**Augmentations:** Cyberears (rating 3, w/ audio enhancement, dampener, select sound filter 4, spatial recognizer, soundlink), datajack, datalock (rating 8), synaptic booster 1, tailored pheromones 3  
**Gear:** AR gloves, bug scanner, contacts (w/ image link, low-light, vision enhancement), Hermes Ikon commlink (DR 5), jammer (rating 5), Mortimer of London Crimson Sky Suit (w/ Shockweave rating 6), security tags (x5), white noise generator (rating 6), fake SINS  
**Weapons:**  
Cold Secret Agent [DV 2P SS 9/7/-/-/- 6(c); metal scanners do not detect it.]

STV MAGE-LAWYER

(JUNIOR PARTNER LEVEL, PROFESSIONAL RATING 6)

STV junior lawyers are seasoned lawyers that have been in service of the firm already for quite a while, being able to sustain a high lifestyle and possessing a list of prominent clients.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	M	ESS
3	3	4	2	5	5	4	5	8	6

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
6	8/1	A1, I2	11	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Astral 4 (Emotional States +2), Athletics 2, Con 4 (Performance +2), Close Combat 2, Conjuring 5 (Summoning +2), Influence 5 (Etiquette +2), Perception 5, Sorcery 6  
**Spells\*:** Analyze Truth, Clairaudience, Clairvoyance, Confusion, Control Thought, Detect Enemies, Detect Magic, Elemental Armor, Focus Burst, Mind Probe, Manabolt, Mystic Armor  
**Initiate Level, Metamagics:** 2, centering, spell shaping  
**Gear:** Mortimer of London Summit Suit (w/ mystic weave rating 3), Transys Avalon commlink (DR 6), monocle (w/ image link, low light, thermographic vision, vision enhancement), Power focus 2 (ring)

\* May have permanent or temporary spirit or critter powers (p. 221, SR6) as part of a pact or dealings with a client.

A junior partner always has a spirit (force 5, 2 services) at their disposal.





# THE YAKUZA

## YAKUZA LINGO

**Bakuto:** Gamblers, most often used for those in feudal Japan.

**Boryokudan:** “Violence group,” a derogatory term for the Yakuza used by police.

**Barukumin:** “Half people,” the ancestral underclass of Japan.

**Giri:** Duty or obligation, but with a much heavier weight. Think of the expectation that a son will carry their father’s coffin.

**Gumi:** (also spelled kumi) A suffix for an association or company, adopted by, but not limited to, the Yakuza.

**Gurentai:** Violent troublemakers who came to power in postwar Japan.

**Ikka:** A family or household, used by some more informal Yakuza groups.

**Kai:** A suffix denoting an association or society, used by some Yakuza groups.

**Kigyo Shatei:** Front company, used to infiltrate legitimate business.

**Koban:** “Child role,” as opposed to Oyabun, or “parent role.”

**Korumaku:** Taken literally, black curtain. Used to indicate someone behind the scenes with power.

Hi! It seems that translation software has been disabled for this section. Luckily, your good friend Grimmy is here! Some of these concepts are difficult to translate, but we’ve done our best. Reading is fun!



**Mizu shobai:** Literally “water business.” Refers to nightclubs, bars, restaurants, and related businesses.

**Ninjo:** Compassion or empathy, used in conjunction with giri to indicate the pull between one’s feelings and one’s duty.

**Oyabun:** “Parent role,” the head of a Yakuza family.

**Rengo:** A federation, such as when several Yakuza bands operate as a council.

**Sarakin:** Loan sharks and their strongarm collectors.

**Seiriya:** A mediator for accidents, bankruptcies, and disputes.

**Shobu:** Japan’s amphetamine of choice, a.k.a. S. piropen and kakuseizai.

**Sokaiya:** Originally corporate extortionists, now the corporate arm of the Yakuza.

**Tekiya:** Street stall operators and peddlers.

**Yubitsume:** The ritual of finger-cutting.

**Zen ai kaigi:** The ultranationalist coalition of Japan; it has a heavy number of Yakuza members.



- > For the love of ghost ... **Fred!** I thought you said you were getting rid of this fraggin' thing!
- > Bull
- > I did! I don't know who put it back!
- > Slamm-O!
- > What can I say? It grew on me.
- > Glitch

## ANCIENT HISTORY

As always, before we get into what a group is doing, we need to know who they are, and the best way to know who they are is to see where they started. In the case of the Yakuza, there are two different origin stories—one backed by most researchers and one held up by the more romantic Yakuza members. I personally lean toward the former as the more logical, but if you want to stay in the good graces of your local Yakuza leaders, you need to know how to nod along when they tell you the second story.

## THE HISTORICAL TALE

The Yakuza are the second-oldest criminal organization in the world, after the Chinese Tongs, forming up during the eighteenth century in Japan. The exact year is impossible to pin down, but “mid-1700s” is close enough for us. During this time period, Japan’s assorted industries were in a guild-like form, protective of their own areas of expertise and learning that they could band together to wield more power. Two of these groups, the **Teikiya**, or peddlers, and the **Bakuto**, or gamblers, not only grew their own power but learned how to lean on one another, growing stronger through their joined forces than either would be on their own. Both were poised to handle large sums of money, and both were seen as an underclass of society, not as noble as the warrior caste or hard-working peasants, as most didn’t really produce anything but instead simply provided services.

## THE TEKIYA

Unlike true merchants, who created crafts that they sold, the Tekiya were traveling peddlers, hocking wares that often failed to live up to the peddler’s claims. In today’s parlance, they were hustlers, fast-talking people always looking for a source of income, with snappy patter and a wide array of tricks to make the buyer think that they walked away with a great deal, then moving on to the next village before being found out. Others were legitimate salesmen, buying goods in one village to sell in others, or even serving merchants directly, such as apprentices who could travel about

to sell their master’s goods, then return to restock and deliver requests from potential customers.

From this latter group comes a basic organization, where the oyabun (father figure or, in this case, the master craftsman) was fully in control, with a senior officer who was the best of his under-craftsmen, several junior officers, a legion of journeymen at different stages of their career, and many apprentices that served the rest in menial ways while learning the basics, a strict hierarchy where everyone knew their place. The master oyabun fully controlled the organization, playing favorites by determining who got the best tools, the best materials, the best locations to sell their wares, and so forth. When a new business opportunity would arise, such as through the death of a craftsman in a nearby village, the oyabun would set one of his officers up with funds, materials, and tools, and send them out to establish a new arm of the business, creating the first **gumi** in the process.

Eventually, these expansions would clash as two different families tried to expand into the same area, or a larger group tried to muscle in on a smaller one, leading to conflict and strife. These were usually settled by negotiation, not violence, despite minor squabbles between hotblooded young men. A larger oyabun would offer his home as a place for a traveling peddler to use for a night, in exchange for information and an understanding about the territory. A general set of rules quickly became codified.

## THE THREE COMMANDMENTS OF THE TEKIYA

- Always be loyal to the oyabun.
- Do not reveal our secrets to the authorities.
- Do not touch the spouse of another member.

The first two are obvious, but the third was vital, as the peddlers were traveling far and wide, and they welcomed fellow members of the organization into one another’s homes, even if the husband was away (as the peddlers often were). This rule was strictly enforced with excessively severe penalties in order to ensure it wasn’t broken.

The tekiya, and especially the oyabun, were seen as fully legal, if somewhat dishonest, and were given full legitimacy by 1740, with some of the most powerful oyabun even allowed to take a surname—a status below that of a samurai but only a step. This led to more patronage, as powerful oyabun invested their money into arts, business loans, and absorbing smaller rings of craftsmen and merchants. They topped it all off with a small mercenary force of hired swordsmen that protected the oyabun’s possessions and those who signed onto their circle.





## THE BAKUTO

The second half of the young Yakuza were the **bakuto**, or gamblers. Unlike the peddlers, the gamblers were a blight on the community, producing nothing of worth. Officially outsiders, they nonetheless worked beside feudal lords, where the local lords would invest large sums of money in projects, such as construction of a bridge or damn, or in large improvements to local farms, and the bakuto would be charged with reclaiming those funds through selling alcohol, women, or gambling, taking a small cut for themselves and returning the majority to the local lords. These roving bands of gamblers would be brought in to a region, stay for the duration of the project, then move on to the next village. They'd leave a sliver behind in the larger villagers that would continue to serve as a center of vice for the community while being part of the larger band, with benefits, and obligations extending from there.

Under Tokugawa, lords were required to visit Tokyo at least once a year, leading to more travel along the roadways that the bakuto quickly took advantage of. Travel between each major city and the capital took days, even weeks, and at each major village along the path, the bakuto formed permanent operations, providing whatever vice a vis-

iting lord would care for. These opportunities gave rise to a strict code of secrecy, and with it, even more strict enforcement of those rules. Like the tekiya, a central oyabun served as the master of the entire ring. His word was law, and he dispensed punishments or favors as he saw fit. To maintain this strict adherence to the rules, members who were released from service would be effectively outcast, as fellow members of that ring would be sent out to other bakuto rings to let them know that the outcast was an untrustworthy, dishonorable cur who all other bands should shun. The act of **yubitsume**, or finger-cutting, comes from this strict enforcement of methods of apology and forgiveness.

The bakuto's strong moral code, and their ability to rub shoulders with nobility, led to a form of legitimacy and trust between themselves and the lords, with some being given command over construction in some communities, or even deputized to deal crime less organized than their own. The idea is, it's better to have criminals who follow rules and don't prey on the community than to have savage out-of-control lawbreakers.

Like the tekiya, the bakuto having so many travelers gave rise to a system of hospitality, where a traveling gambler could call upon the local oyabun for a place to stay, food, even a small stipend, in exchange for tales of their travels, updates on



how well other members of the ring were doing, and some menial service around the home. These traditions swelled to the adoptive form of family that the Yakuza continue to follow today.

## YIN AND YANG

The two groups found that they had a similar core structure, with a strong central authority, strict codes of honor, and semi-legitimacy despite being composed largely of outsiders. On top of that, their central focuses, while aligned, didn't cross one another's profit centers. They were mutually compatible and, within a few decades, had begun merging into the first true gumi (meaning associations), creating the Yakuza as it still operates today.

## THE ROMANTIC ORIGIN

Less well-supported, but still central to some rings, is the more romantic origin of the Yakuza. In this version, the first Yakuza were heroic swordsmen, protectors of villages who were left behind by distracted or overwhelmed regional lords. Banditry was a common problem, with traveling bands of ruffians taking what they wanted from helpless villages and escaping before the lord could discover them, muster troops, and deal with them. In some of these villages, strong-armed young men, some trained as soldiers, and wandering ronin (literally "wave men," better known as masterless samurai) would combine forces to fight the bandits and protect the village. Some of these unions would form brotherhoods, gathering together from nearby villages to make a small militia that protected a larger area, drawing a small fee from those protected villages in exchange for risking their lives. Those Yakuza who follow this story refer to themselves as a **Ninkyo Danti** (chivalrous organization).

In the romantic history, these brotherhoods became the central core of the Yakuza, and they still see themselves as noble protectors of the little guy, preventing predatory crime and serving the community in a semi-official capacity. This view is found in some of the oldest gumi, which keep long histories of their founders dating back to famous warriors of the past. These lineages often have no official paper trail but instead have been passed down by word of mouth and recorded as true. Questioning these pronouncements is not something I recommend, as those who believe in them do not take kindly to such insults.

## MOVING ON

Regardless of the true origin, the early Yakuza grew in wealth and power, serving as a sort of underhanded assistant to the local lords and falling into a semi-official status, with an understanding

between themselves and local law enforcement. Membership in the Yakuza wasn't secret; indeed, it became common for larger gumi, whose oyabun had been awarded a surname, to create their own **mon**, a family crest that would be worn by members of the ring as a crest; some would be sewn into clothes, others shaped into jewelry, or for a rare few would be tattooed onto the flesh as a sign of lifelong devotion.

## THE MIDDLE PERIOD

For the next hundred and fifty years, the Yakuza grew, spreading webs of influence around slowly as the faux nobility continued to gain power through commerce, not military might. As the year 1900 rolled around, they were vaguely akin to local warlords, whose power of construction projects and finance gave them outsized influence, but as the nation modernized, they were able to ride the wave better than most. As the samurai caste was dismantled, the Yakuza grew to fill the role of keeping order, with the Dark Ocean Society, a shady sub-government, being formed by Yakuza members. Ultranationalist, they were powers behind elected officials and brutally effective at breaking up anarchists and labor unions. When the Second World War opened, the Yakuza found their numbers drained to meet the never-ending need for bodies for the war machine, but they also found themselves learning new skills and gaining access to training and equipment that they never had before.

When Japan lost the war—the first war they ever lost—it was a shock to the system. The Emperor was forced to denounce his divinity, the army disbanded, and the victorious Americans controlled the nation, writing a new Constitution and allowing the Emperor to stay on as a figurehead. What hadn't been planned for was the unrest this would cause as former soldiers started fomenting uprisings and a Communist threat from Russia began to take root in the labor unions of the island. The US forces were faced with a choice: continue to fight the nationalists and their Yakuza allies and risk the country flipping to Communist or embrace the nationalists, reform the military, and work with the Yakuza against the Red Menace.

They chose the Yakuza.

Almost overnight, the uprisings were quelled, with the Yakuza brutally enforcing peace, the military returning to service (but only as a defensive force, which didn't change for almost a century!) and the Communist threat melting. Former military officers, still thinking of the Emperor as divine despite his protestations, became oyabun, bringing many former soldiers along as enforcers and strongarms. In 1960, the Yakuza were at their peak strength, numbering almost a quarter of a million members spread throughout at least two thousand rings.



In the 1980s, Japan's economic miracle (powered by shabu) led to a massive influx of money to the Yakuza, with construction and loan industries enriched by the good times. Yakuza, operating behind Japanese businessmen, invested worldwide, especially in America and Korea, scooping up prime real estate, country clubs, golf courses, and works of art. Sadly, the boom couldn't last. By the turn of the next century, the world economy had staggered, food riots were widespread, and the fat years turned lean. The next twenty years saw Japan struggling to reclaim its former economic strength and, like a mirror, the Yakuza grew in power as the corporations weakened, only to lose power when the corporations grew in the '20s and '30s. The corps and the syndicate compete for young men, who are more likely to choose the legal path when the future is bright and who wind up in the Yakuza when the economy is poor and jobs are rare. The Yakuza also see a rise in membership during economic doldrums as business suits, hoping to keep their family being shamed, turn to suicide, leaving spouses and orphans behind who are easily taken in by the Yakuza.

## MODERN HISTORY

The mid-'50s were a rough time for the Yakuza, with five Japancorps taking leadership of the Big Eight, Japan's economy at its strongest ever point, and young men being recruited en masse for the empowered Imperial Military, leading to a push for anti-Yakuza laws (they tend to come up every twenty or twenty five years or so, especially when a gang war results in several civilian injuries or when an oyabun is killed spectacularly). Membership had fallen to barely thirty thousand at this stage, with politicians feeling free to rise without Yakuza support and even openly break the Understanding, bringing real raids against Yakuza headquarters.

2060 was the start of the next generation. The stranglehold of the Japanacorp was broken, with Fuchi erased, Yamatetsu moving to Russia and becoming Evo. Then the economy broke under the weight of MCT, Renraku, and the birth of Deus.

Then the Comet came along and kicked them right in the junk.

With the Emperor gone, volcanic destruction across the entire Ring of Fire, the imperial military recalled from imperial possessions worldwide to try to rebuild the homeland, it was a disaster beyond imagining. The Yakuza, which had always been known to turn out after natural disasters to provide food, water, and medical aid, were quicker to move than the corporations. Their focus on the Japanese people, not Japanese business, and won quiet praise for their heroic actions, especially in the ruins of Tokyo. As the Ghost Decade grew longer, more and more young men found themselves joining the Yakuza, not the corporate life, and membership boomed.

In a decade, fully a hundred thousand Yakuza were in force again—just in time for the economic recovery and Japan's next rise to greatness.

Where Japan goes—from building corporations to increasing tourism to establishing media dominance—the Yakuza walk in its shadow, ready to make a little money and to support the nation—not always in that order.

- > I think some of those dates aren't right, but we lost so many records after the first Crash that even I can't tell you the exact ones. Anything before 2035 is ... murky.
- > Sunshine
- > The newer dates are off here or there as well, but close enough for an overview.
- > Icarus
- > The main takeaway is that the Yakuza grew in membership when the economy was bad, and once money started rolling in, they looked to get their (unfair) share and expand their reach. They're in Peru again, they're looking at occupied Tsimshian, the Free State of California, perhaps reclaiming their assorted Pacific islands, reaching into Australia, and, overall, getting in while the getting's good. Expect to see them all over the world for the next five years.
- > Balladeer
- > And why not? The world thrived under Japanese rule. The time since the Big Eight has been disaster for most of the world. We need to go back to a better system.
- > Baka Dabora
- > Whoah. Someone's been in the Flav-Aid.
- > Bull

## YAKUZA ORGANIZATION

Time to explore the organization of this organized crime syndicate. First and foremost, you have to understand that the Yakuza are a collection of rings, not a single macro-organization with a central council like the Mafia. There have been attempts to create this, with one boss or another trying to establish themselves as the Oyabun of Oyabuns, but it's never come together. Even the larger gumi are composed of a central ring and an expanded circle of related rings that have "family" ties with the central hub, being run by former members of the central ring at some point in time and maintaining that alliance. But an alliance it is, and Yakuza gumi occasionally fracture, most often when a respected leader dies without a set heir; the remnants pick sides—sometimes managing a peaceful split, other times turning on one another. Still other times, a gumi splits over



disrespect shown to a subordinate member, petty jealousy, or the ever-present disagreements over money and territory.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The first thing to discuss is the terminology of suffixes. -Gumi (or -kumi) and -kai are the most common, -rengo is sometimes seen, as is -ikka. While there are some general rules about these names, there are exceptions, so, let's lay them out.

Gumi (association or company) is the most common, akin to a sports team. It's professional, has internal rules, and tends to have a structured design. Small rings that grow like to rename themselves -gumi after reaching a thousand members—sort of a criminal version of hitting AA status (though on a smaller scale). Of course, some small rings take the suffix to try to sound larger and more professional than they are. There's a group of seven Yakuza on Big Island in the Kingdom of Hawai'i that calls itself the Suzuki-gumi, for instance, trying to sound more important than they really are.

Kai (association or society) is used mostly by rings that focus on one area of crime instead of a geographical area. They see themselves as a club that shares a common interest, like birdwatching, only the activity is criminal. The Hideo-kai, for example, focuses on human trafficking, with some small dabbling in drugs to keep the victims under their thumb, and they range from the Philippines to the west coast of North America. The Shooter-kai operates out of the Vol Sprawl, where Tennessee has virtually no gun laws, flying in Yakuza from all over the world to come in and train in firearms. They also offer "shooting tours" for higher-ranking officers from countries with strict firearm laws. It turns out that many an oyabun is positively thrilled to fly in and fire off a couple of belts from a heavy machine gun at a shooting range and will pay top nuyen for the opportunity.

Rengo (federation) is almost a temporary thing as it's often used to denote a new organization when two or three small rings find cause to unify. They eventually evolve into a -kai or a -gumi or break up when the unifying figure passes. It's also used when several large rings gather together in a loose alliance but, again, these gatherings rarely last. Either they unify in a decade or two or they break apart over internal squabbles.

Ikka (family) is mostly seen in rural areas or when a Yakuza band first forms up, like the Kobu-ikka in Seattle's Shiawase Arcology. These groups are small but extremely tight-knit, with an attitude completely formed by the founding oyabun.

There are hundreds of Yakuza rings, and in that batch dozens of exceptions. You might have a ring two thousand members strong that still uses the

founding -ikka name from two centuries ago as a matter of pride. You can find tiny groups, like the Suzuki-gumi, who try to give themselves an air of legitimacy. But as a general rule, the suffix of the ring will give you an idea of how large and professional they are.

- Wait, what happened to the Watada-rengo?
- /dev/grrl
- Short form? Dragons. They were long rumored to be tied to Ryumyo. During the Dragon Civil War, that was made more evident by attacks on the assorted rings connected to them. Of the fourteen major rings of the syndicates, three were effectively destroyed during the war and the majority of the rest broke away to save themselves from the association. Since dragons have long memories, they've made no move to re-unify. The Yamaguchi going legitimate took over half the membership of the Watada-rengo with them. These days, the rengo consists only of the Watada-gumi, the Kihara-rengo, the Mita-gumi, and the Yamashita-gumi.
- Baka Dabora

## THE PEOPLE OF THE YAKUZA

When you think Yakuza, most people think of young Japanese men in black suits and white shirts, covered in tattoos, and—well, that's accurate, but it isn't all-encompassing. The Yakuza, like any large organization, is quite diverse, and while we're going to talk about commonalities, we're also going to see some deviations from that. Before we get to the Yakuza themselves, however, we have to look at those in orbit around them. In effect, we're starting at Pluto and working our way in to the sun.

## THE CUSTOMERS

"You mean the victims, right?" No, I mean the customers. The Yakuza's outermost ring are the vast number of people who engage with their services, from protection to settling legal matters to visiting hostess clubs to casual gamblers to drunken salarymen wiling away the time with compensated dates at a karaoke bar, the Yakuza customer base is gigantic and largely aware of the identity of the people behind the establishments they visit. Since the Yakuza operate under a strict code and maintain order, as well as provide services that people clearly are willing to pay for, they're generally supported. If you start sniffing around an area looking for information, the customers will get word around quickly, as they don't want trouble. When Yakuza groups go to battle, they try to keep the collateral damage low, but innocent people get hurt now and then. They'd rather keep things calm and orderly, even if that means living with a criminal syndicate in their midst.



## THE FAMILIES

By choice, Yakuza try to recruit from orphans or single-parent households, using the promise of a surrogate family to keep members loyal. These same members, given wealth and power by their position, start families of their own, hoping to give them a life better than their own. You'd be surprised how many corporate salarymen have a Yakuza father or grandfather, which otherwise ordinary person is dating a Yakuza member, or what idiot nephew can call up an uncle who has major influence.

## THE VICTIMS

Despite being an overall honorable bunch, the Yakuza are criminals, and as is the case with any criminal syndicate, there are always victims left behind. For the most part, these are former customers who took out loans, gamblers who lost big, or people who are otherwise indebted to the Yakuza. They're desperate for money and can be useful if you have some nuyen to spare, but they can also get you into trouble if they think that selling you out will take a chunk out of their debt. Approach with caution.

Less common are the victims of human trafficking. You'd think that every single person in the sex industry was a traffic victim, but that isn't the case; the majority are there willingly, trying to make some side money for themselves, such as those attending university or corporate interns, who see it as just another job. The actual victims are pushed into it from drug addiction, tricked into the role by recruiting agents, forced into the work since they are under-aged runaways who have to pay for housing and food, or sold into the work due to debt.

- > Hold up. Slavery? In this day and age?
- > Riot
- > More common than you think. Plenty of people in the barrens would trade off a hungry mouth to feed for a couple grand. They tell themselves that the kid's just a burden anyway and that they'd be better off somewhere else. This is part of the "dog program" you see in most megacorps as well as a prime recruiting tool by the syndicates.
- > Glitch
- > That's sick.
- > Riot
- > That's reality.
- > Glitch

## THE LEGITIMATE BUSINESSES

The Yakuza surround themselves with small businesses. Construction, entertainment, basic re-

tail—you name it, they engage in it. Most of the local business are affiliates, individuals who pay protection money and see a return on that investment. A few are owned by the Yakuza and used for money laundering, while others are part of an overall chain, such as a shady company that makes both fashion magazines and porn, the latter serving as a drop-off for potential stars who didn't shine brightly enough. This is also where you find retired Yakuza running affiliated businesses, such as a one-time enforcer, now in his fifties, who has a small business stocking napkins, uniforms, and other merchandise for restaurants. Yes, the Yakuza have an active retirement program.

- > Damn. **We** don't have a retirement program!
- > Slamm-O!
- > Or health care.
- > Sunshine
- > Or dental coverage.
- > 2XL
- > We should unionize.
- > Slamm-O!
- > Check your inboxes.
- > Old Crow

## THE ASSOCIATES

Sometimes, a syndicate has to look for outside help. These could be specialists, like a high-powered lawyer, a crack shot, or it could involve hiring assets from another rengo, but when it really counts, they hire shadowrunners. Deckers and magicians are, of course, always in demand, but riggers get hired to amp up security in an oyabun's house when two rings go to war, faces might get hired as negotiators when peace is needed, and, of course, it's a rare street samurai who hasn't had a working relationship with the Yakuza in return for some upgrades.

- > I'm working on getting my first wires right now, in fact.
- > Riot
- > I still wish you wouldn't.
- > Butch

If you need an in with a local ring, ask around your contacts; one of them's bound to know someone, or at least know someone who knows someone. On the flipside, if you cause trouble with a local ring and you're clearly better than what they have on hand, they're not opposed to bringing in outside help to deal with you. The list of shadowrunners who thought that they had nothing to fear



from twenty tattooed punks can be found in Obits section of Shadowland.

## THE GANGS

While all of the above interact with the Yakuza, they're not, nor will they ever be, members of the Yakuza (barring the retirees, of course). The gangsters are the wannabes, the circles from which the syndicates recruit, and where the next generation of gangsters comes from. Most are unruly gangs that start in high school and engage in little more than bullying and petty theft, but some have bigger goals and start wanting to swim with sharks. Others are low-level corporate grunts who band together to pirate office supplies and hack the cameras to spy on locker rooms. One of the greatest sources of recruits are from the go-gangs, violent thugs who have little more on their minds than enjoying themselves as they ride around, drunkenly smashing things up, and thriving on intimidation.

## THE RING

Now we get to the part that you've been waiting for where I talk about the actual Yakuza membership. To stretch the earlier metaphor, we've passed through the asteroid belt, and now we're looking at Mars.

- Must. Resist. Correcting. So. Many. **Things!**
- Orbital DK

## THE BORYOKUDAN

The Yakuza hate this term, which is a police nickname for them that means "violence group," but it effectively describes the majority of the Yakuza in all but the largest groups and the ones that you initially think of. These are the tattoo-having, suit-wearing, R-rolling toughs who serve as foot soldiers and general enforcers for the Yakuza at large. In an average-sized Yakuza group, probably two thirds of the entire ring are made up of these guys, the kumi-in. If you're dealing with the Yakuza directly, these are the guys you're dealing with. They talk tough, they preen, but if you stand your ground and earn some respect, they'll treat you just fine. Buying them drinks goes a long way as well. The kumi-in treat one another as family, a band of brothers, and while they can pick on each other, egg each other on, and generally act rough to each other, they lock shoulders instantly against outsiders and will defend the one they were just picking on to the death.

The life of a raw recruit is a terrible one, and nearly half that try wind up dropping out. First-years are expected to serve their betters' every demand, from washing their clothes to buying them gifts to lighting their cigarettes and carry-

ing their luggage; it's virtual slavery in a very traditional way. Those who endure the humiliation know that once they rise in the ranks, they'll have their own rookie servants. And so the cycle continues. Taking pets to the vet, unclogging toilets, having to bathe a senior ring member's body—there really is no limit to the menial nature of the tasks that first-years are given, and many wind up taking out loans to handle the financial burden of having to give so many gifts to senior members.

- That's insane. Who would put up with that kind of treatment? And not just for free, but to **pay** for the opportunity?! Ghost, I don't even get out of bed for less than ten grand.
- Kane
- Yeah, well, for most people, crime doesn't pay. The average BTL dealer would make more money working at McHugh's than they do selling beetles on street corners, and with a lot less risk of being killed. The higher ranks let you live large, however, so you suffer a few years of struggle at the bottom while dreaming of the day you get the long black car and the fancy mansion. Of course, most people realize too late that there are only a handful of people at the top and a massive pyramid below them, but by then, you're likely dead or in prison, and someone else takes your spot. And that new sucker is positive that **they** will be the one who breaks out into the big time.
- 2XL

## THE SPECIALISTS

These are kumi-in who have a knack for something and who are given a bit more authority to allow them to focus that talent. A particularly good fighter, a smooth talker who can get new talent to work at clubs, a sharpshooter, and so on. They're not in command, but they're respected for their talent and treated as a valued asset.

## THE SERGEANTS

As noted, the Yakuza are a family, and where the kumi-in are the little brothers (shatei) of the family, the lieutenants are the big brothers (kyodai) who run things. If you cause trouble for a bunch of kumi-in, they'll eventually run off and swear to bring their big brother to deal with you. That's the kyodai. These are older, seasoned Yakuza, quite adept at violence but also with a head for business. If the Yakuza were a business and you had trouble with a salesperson, this is the manager that you'd try to talk to. They're the lynchpin of any good organization, and skilled sergeants are the difference between a ring that makes money or one that gets bogged down in too many fights. Unless you've done some major favors for the family, this is the highest rank you'll ever deal, and they have all the authority you'll generally need.



## THE LIEUTENANT

The right hand of the boss, the first lieutenant (**wakagashira**) is the direct head of the strong arm of the Yakuza, making sure that BTLs and shabu are moving, debts are paid, and so on. They rarely, if ever, get their hands dirty directly (they had plenty of that when they were younger) but, in a pinch, they can be counted on to take care of matters personally in order to save face for the oyabun. They are, to a person, harsh taskmasters and strict disciplinarians, and they are treated with fear and awe by those beneath them. When an oyabun retires, it's generally the first lieutenant who takes their place.

## THE SAIKO-KOMON

While the majority of the Yakuza are from the "soldier" branch, as the ring grows larger, it steadily gains more and more non-combatants inside the organization. These are the **Saiko-Komon**, who mirror the roles of the Boryukudan in most respects.

## THE ACCOUNTANTS

At the bottom are the **shingiin**, who handle financial matters. They are accountants by and large, but also financial advisors, investors, business executives who work inside a corporation and technically have a job but are really there to handle requests and supply shabu, and even roughnecks who specialize in disrupting shareholder meetings unless bought off. These last hooligans, the **sokai-ya**, go so far as to produce magazines that highlight corporations that pay them while releasing terrible rumors, or more terrible truths, about the executives in those who don't. Most corporations know to pay up.

## THE KOMON

Specialists of the non-combat arm, these are the BTL programmers, the tattoo artists, cybersurgeons, photographers for idol mags and pornography (often the same person in the same studio during different hours!), and so on. If you have a talent that doesn't involve fighting, the Yakuza can find a place for you.

## THE KAIKEI

The very first member of the Saiko-Komon any Yakuza ring needs is a lawyer, and that's the **kaikei**. In addition to the standard legal advice and, if needed, courtroom appearances, the **kaikei** train the new members of the syndicate in the laws applicable to where they will be—what's legal, what isn't, how far they can bend the law, and so forth. They also serve as go-betweens for incarcerated syndicate members, pro-

viding them with emotional, legal, and financial support, including facilitating contraband. If a syndicate member in prison stays loyal, the rewards are high. If they start to waver, a lesson will be given. Learn from it and do well. Be driven further away and the next contraband delivered will be knives for your execution.

## THE SECOND LIEUTENANT

The **wakagashira-hosa** is the left hand as the **wakagashira** is the right, in command of the non-combat operations, keeping abreast of them, allocating resources, and handling matters that are in need of managerial touches but below the notice of the oyabun. The second lieutenant is almost never promoted to fill a vacant seat as oyabun in the family itself but is sometimes spun off to form a new ring with themselves as the oyabun of the new family. In the largest rings, however, it is more common to see the second lieutenant be promoted to oyabun, and the first held back or spun into a new family, due to the complicated financial situations of the larger rings. The **yamaguchi-gumi's** past three oyabun were all promoted from the second lieutenant position, for example.

Most shadowrunners will never interact with the lieutenants, but if you travel in corporate sectors, the **wakagashira-hosa** is often on the board of several small companies. At least one is rumored to be on the board of MCT itself.

- Weird that they Four Oyabun-rengo fell apart at the same time as the death of Taiga Mitsuhamu himself, huh?
- Slamm-O!

## THE THIRD LIEUTENANT

A position only seen in Japan, the **Japanacorp**s extraterritorial zones, and the few nations where the Yakuza operate openly, the headquarters chief, **so-honbucho**, has evolved into a role as the unofficial third lieutenant and serves as the public face of the ring. In essence, they're the head of public relations; they speak to the media, tell the police which members may be arrested during a raid, attend fundraisers for politicians, and act as the soft, smiling face of the syndicate to win the public trust. They're in charge of the legal side of the syndicate, never being involved with anything illegal by design, and they run the legal businesses that the Yakuza own to ensure that the other members aren't causing trouble on protected property. Of particular note is that the third lieutenant is in charge of media operations, such as idols and pop bands, trideo and simsense operations for the largest rings, and the printing of assorted materials, such as the ring's monthly magazine, business cards, and entrance exams.



- › Wait. Like the SAT?!
- › /dev/grrl
- › More like Japan's infamous college acceptance exams, but yes. A would-be Yakuza who's a good leg-breaker but doesn't know the law will be kept around as an associate, not a member, if they can't score well enough on the test. You only get these in the largest rings, with the Yamaguchi-gumi's being the most famous, but printed materials are still a big thing, such as a slick corporate newsletter and business cards. When someone is removed from the ring, details of them are sent to all other families as a warning not to associate with the wrongdoer. Sure, there's a digital version that gets flung around at Matrix speed, but there's something about a letter on genuine paper, painted by hand with a calligraphy brush, that really seals the deal. First-year washouts get simple email, but when a major mistake happens (such as innocent civilians getting caught in a crossfire) or the retirement of an oyabun, the level of detail taken on the letter shows how important the ring is taking it.
- › Sunshine

## THE OYABUN

The man, the myth, the legend, the oyabun sits atop the pyramid of the family like the stern parent they are, in charge of everything while never directly doing anything. The lieutenants all report to them, they give them directions and then settle in to the lifestyle of the idle rich—gardening, golfing, and so on, never getting their hands dirty with day-to-day crime. Oh, and most every oyabun has an extensive criminal history from their youth. It's a rare one indeed who can manage to have an unblemished record, but most are currently several steps removed from anything illegal, and it's just too difficult to bring charges against them at this stage. Most oyabun are honorable, or at least see themselves as men of honor, and are nationalists to a person, being believers in the old ways of Japan, the divine grace of the Emperor, and doing things with a strict discipline and following the hierarchy in all respects. The oyabun defines the entire operation, no matter how large or small the ring is.

- › If you ever meet one, something has gone horribly, horribly wrong. That said, if you ever get the opportunity to meet one in a professional capacity, take it. They hold amazing dinners and **very** interesting conversations. Mind you, those are one-sided affairs where the oyabun will talk and you will listen, but taking in wisdom from anyone with forty plus years in the game is time well spent.
- › Sunshine

One last bit here: As the Yakuza pushed for a more family-based structure, they have taken to using family terms in casual conversation. Big brother and little brother as noted, while the lieutenants are uncles (*oji*) and members of other rings

are cousins (*itoko*). So if a Yakuza member says that their uncle wouldn't like that, they mean the underboss, while if they talk about meeting their cousin from out of town, they're having a meeting with another ring's membership.

- › Oh, and for those wondering? Women have some space in the non-combat arm of the Yakuza, such as madams, accountants, and so forth, but almost never enter the kumi-in. This further means that there are no female oyabun and only two wakagashira-hosa. Interestingly enough, there are at least a dozen third lieutenants that are women. That tells you something about how they evaluate skills.
- › Hard Exit
- › Bonus round! Despite picking up people from the fringes and untouchables, the Yakuza, as a rule, don't bring in metahumas. The racism runs deep. Oh, they're fine for associates and hirelings, but bringing them into the family and treating one as a brother? For the most part, it doesn't happen. The Yakuza don't have a central ruling caste, however, and anyone can start their own family, so metas in rings do happen here or there. These are usually composed entirely of metahumans, however, or founded by metahumans and allowing humans to join, rather than a traditional Yakuza band opening the doors to anyone with pointed ears.  
I'm not saying it doesn't happen, I'm just saying that it's rare.
- › Minoshi Oni

## HONOR AND TRADITION

As you might have guessed, honor is a big thing with many Yakuza. We're back to the 10-80-10 rule here, with ten percent of the Yakuza being extremely honorable, ten percent being not honorable at all, and the rest being mostly honorable but sometimes faltering from the ideal. Most Yakuza will have one vice—drinking, BTLs, women, gambling, whatever, and they fall short of being truly honorable due to this. If you want to get in good, finding out where someone's weakness is and then either providing it for them or covering up a failure is a good way to earn some debt. Oh, and it should go without saying, but you should always treat any Yakuza member you encounter as being highly honorable. Those who fail will take it as a compliment and be more likely to keep up their bargain due to it, while the most honorable will expect nothing less than that treatment. The crappy ones who'll sell you out for money are rare, but treating someone like they will do so will doom further interactions (if they have any decency).

The core of Yakuza honor comes from the twin aspects of *giri*, or duty, and *ninjo*, or compassion. In essence, if you owe them, they expect that debt paid, and if they owe you, that debt will be repaid.





It's more complicated than that, but a full extrapolation of Japanese society is more than I'm on the hook for. Just trust me when I say it boils down to a combination of "I owe you one" and someone's place in the overall pecking order.

The biggest aspect of this is the core belief that crime should only happen to those willing to be part of a crime. Most Yakuza are *extremely* strict about this, insisting that no civilian be harmed when fights break out between rival Yakuza rings, stopping petty theft, robberies, and muggings, and having a policy that offers you what you want—BTLs, guns, women—and doesn't take it personally if you say "no, thank you" and walk on. If you want to gamble, they provide it, but they won't force anyone to roll the dice. If you want to visit a hostess bar, the door is always open, and if someone chooses to pay for "extra love," then the opportunity is there but never advanced. In short, it's the most polite crime you'll ever see. Even the protection rackets have an element of this where, if you pay the Yakuza off, they won't just make sure that no ill befalls your business; they'll actively help, bringing in customers, having common members buy goods, ensure that you get good reviews from media, and so on. Of course, if you miss payments, then the rudeness quickly comes out, followed by the potential for violence. Even then, the Yakuza rarely kill. Dead men pay no debts after all.

- Not entirely true. When someone gets deep enough in debt, there's a scheme where the Yakuza will have them sign a generous life insurance policy, with one member as the recipient. The debtor will then take a trip to an area known to be dangerous, such as the Philippines or more sinister sections of Korea, where an accident will happen that results in a payout. This is a last resort, of course, but enough people who are too deeply in debt to the Yakuza choose it to save their family the humiliation that it's a well-known thing. In office parlance, "He's taking a trip to Guam" is code for someone who's not going to return from vacation.
- 2XL
- Another common thing to discharge debt is to give someone a choice, where they can give up their son, who will be used for cyber-experimentation, or their daughter, who will be given "a nice hostess job" to buy off ten thousand nuyen in debt. As sons are seen as more valuable than daughters, you can guess who gets given up in these trades. I can tell you from firsthand experience that this belief that "you only get victimized if you choose" is bullshit.
- Marionette

## TATTOOS

Perhaps the single best-known tradition of the Yakuza is in the tattoos that all members bear. The younger members start small, with a band on an arm, and these early tattoos are usually done with



modern technology, but full members are expected to gain an ever-expanding number of tattoos as they gain seniority in the ring, with these latter tattoos being mostly done in traditional ways, by hand. This is seen as a test of the members' machismo, seeing if they can take the pain of the hours-long work, as much as a source of pride. Each Yakuza member gets their own individual tattoos, choosing topics that are dear to them. Koi are common, as are dragons, while chrysanthemums (the symbol of the Emperor) are popular with those intent on leadership positions. By tradition, these tattoos will eventually cover almost the entire arms and torso, often including the legs, but will leave most of the neck, the hands up to the wrist, and a central strip of the chest untouched. This is so that ordinary clothing can be worn, like the basic corporate suit dress shirt, without revealing one's status as a Yakuza member. When someone wishes to announce their status, they have but to roll up a sleeve or pull a collar aside to show the tattoos beneath.

- Tattoos are virtually mandatory in the kumi-in but less so in the non-combatant side. Your underbosses will still have them, of course, but a low-ranking accountant might only have a cute flower on a shoulder, if anything at all.
- 2XL
- Oh, and for the record? Magical tattoos are only found in the Chinese Triads, not the Yakuza.
- Glass Walker

Bonus knowledge: The dyes used in the tattoos can be toxic, and covering your skin with them can choke off the ability of your body to unload toxic buildup. This isn't a fast-acting poison but, instead, over a decade or two, some Yakuza wind up with kidney failure and liver damage. Cyber-replacements are standard, but since 2070 or so, the preferred approach was bioware replacement. In cases of rapid organ failure, however, they turn to black-market organ options. Keep an ear to your street doc and they might give you a heads-up when oji-san is looking for a match.

## FINGER-CUTTING

The other tradition known to most everyone is **yubitsume**, or ritualized finger-cutting. The romantic version you see in the trids is a stoic foot-soldier putting his hand down, taking a knife, and with one \*thwack!\* it comes off. The still-silent figure wraps it up and, with a trembling hand, presents it to his lord. Well, some of that's correct, but not all of it. First and foremost, you generally only take a knuckle's worth at a time, not a whole finger. Next is that the one making the sacrifice takes precautions, usually some serious levels of painkiller, be-

fore wrapping the finger with rubber bands to cut off the circulation. After about five, ten minutes, all feeling is lost in it, making the move possible. Lastly, no one cuts their own finger off. The entire thing is an apology to the family at large, so while you offer the finger up, someone else does the chopping. Oh, and it's not handled like chopping synthetic carrots in the kitchen. The tanto used is always one that belongs to the one losing a finger, which is put into position over the joint, then hammered down with a mallet, pistol butt, or other driving force to make a clean cut. After that? Yeah, it gets wrapped up and presented to the boss (usually the wakagashira) to appease them. The boss accepts it, and the record is struck clean. After the wound is closed up, everybody gets rip-roaring drunk, and they celebrate (and usually mock the guy who got his finger cut off if he yelled too much and any of the rookies got weak stomachs watching it).

The entire thing is quite rare outside the most traditional rings. Back in the day, it was a way of showing that you'd screwed up and now had to weaken yourself by maiming your sword hand, making you more reliant on the ring, to show brotherhood. Cyberware makes that less of a thing (but know that anyone with replacement fingers always removes them when in a private area with other Yakuza. It's a huge issue of distrust if you keep replacements on when you're with your brothers because it suggests that you don't trust them to protect you). Moreover it's an opportunity for redemption for major screw-ups. If you think of the Yakuza ring as a corporation—which it is—it would take a fireable offense to merit this level of punishment. Dropping a drink on the rug, missing a shot on a rival, or using the wrong term when talking to a higher-up are all things the 4 a.m. cheap sims love to show off as finger-cutting mistakes, but it takes a much bigger failure than that. Running from a fight, injuring a civilian during a fight with a rival Yakuza band, ratting out a brother to the police—those are things that you need to atone for. Most Yakuza lose a joint every five to ten years, but anyone who's lost two fingers or more is never going to make it to officer levels; they're regular screw-ups.

## TAKING SAKE

There are a dozen or more variants of this one, but the main one is the acceptance of a new member. First-years get to take sake with the first lieutenant, but if they complete that year, they get a much fancier version with the Oyabun himself. The ceremony is simple enough, with the two participants sitting across from one another with a third attends the pair, pouring sake into cups. The ratio of sake given to each details the status of the participants and is where the many variants come from. For the acceptance, the senior takes ninety



percent of the drink in his cup while the junior member takes ten percent. Each says a prayer, then drinks their allotment, with the junior thanking the senior and asking to join the family and the senior agreeing to take them under their wing. When this is performed a year later, with the oyabun, the lieutenant who presided over the first attends to pour and asks his “parent” to accept the burden on his behalf, transferring the obligation to the top of the family. This ceremony is always done in formal attire, with most choosing kimono and traditional dress, while some use modern business attire. If the oyabun accepts the applicant, the now fully vested Yakuza member will take the cup with him; it has the ring’s *mon* printed inside of it and will be the most treasured thing that the young member owns for the rest of his life. It’s kept safely stored in their home and is almost never brought out. When a Yakuza retires, this cup is returned to the current oyabun, who can accept it for a peaceful release or smash it if there’s truly bad blood between the two.

- You can get a lot of leverage over some Yak goon if you yoin his cup. They’ll dance to whatever tune you play to get it back.
- Clockwork

Other large events are celebrated in a similar way. Promotion? You get twenty-five percent of the sake, showing your larger importance. Promoted to lieutenant? It’s up to around forty percent. When two oyabun come together to negotiate and want to seal the deal, they each get fifty percent of the sake (and thinking that one was shortchanged in this can cause wars. Fifty-one percent to forty-nine percent indicates you’re inferior, not equal, and egos will flare.) If a deal is made between a greater oyabun and a lesser, such as when a smaller ring needs to borrow money from the larger, the cups are forty-five percent and fifty-five percent. It’s a *very* precise ratio, and a lieutenant who is skilled at the ceremony is always in high demand, with their ring brought in to negotiate with the understanding that his skilled hand will be the one pouring the sake for the final deal.

## THE WEAPONS

This is a new tradition born out of the need for the Yakuza to compete with the Japanacops in the ’50s that caught on and now is treated like an ancient tradition. The tanto (that’s the chisel-tipped dagger that you see the better street samurai use) is the Yakuza weapon of choice, an easily concealed knife that can kill and also is a fantastic intimidation tool. Every member of the boryokudan gets one when accepted into the ring, given by the wakagashiri who takes sake with him, an additional step not given to the non-combatants. They are expected to take care of it, since it’s a weapon of the house and a symbol of his willingness to fight,

kill, and die in the name of the family. They can set it aside when needed, such as when attending a party at the headquarters when the oyabun might be present, but they are expected to always have it when on duty.

Those promoted to “big brother” are further presented with a katana. For some, this is purely ceremonial, kept at home as a mark of pride, but since the role of big brother only goes to skilled fighters, quite a few take it up with a serious bent. It obviously can’t be carried around casually, but when a fight is going to be had at a time and place, you can bet that the big blades will come out to play. They’re no match for a street sam, but they can hold their own against average folks just fine.

- Stupid, stupid, backward-thinking idiots. Fuck your big stupid knife and your honor! Just bring some damn guns, or better, just strafe the place with drones. Hell, set off a bomb and be done with it!
- Clockwork
- Well, I know who won’t be working with the Yakuza anytime soon ...
- Turbo Bunny

Advancing to one of the lieutenant positions nets the member a wakizashi, the most honorable of the three samurai blades. These are never used in an actual fight and so are mostly designed as showmanship pieces, but it’s a mark of rank and respect all the same. Since the tradition’s not even thirty years old, many of the oldest lieutenants don’t have them, but as it’s become a thing, more oyabun are quietly passing them out, and everyone pretends that they’ve always been there.

- For those curious, the wakizashi is the blade a samurai was expected to kill himself with if they brought dishonor upon their lord. The katana is for killing others, the wakizashi for killing yourself.
- Riot
- I gotta stop letting you watch those old trids.
- Butch

When you get outside of Japan proper, the Yakuza start having more guns. Pistols instead of tanto, submachine-guns instead of katana, and nothing at all for the higher-ups, because they’re not expected to fight.

## TAKING A FALL

The family watches over its own. The Yakuza has ties with the police, including the “Understanding.” Japanese police are sticklers for not leaving cases open; they *need* someone to confess to them. The Yakuza are all too happy to help



out in that regard, collecting petty criminals and passing them over (after a proper beating) to law enforcement, making certain that the crook confesses to what they've done before being handed over. When pressure is on to show that the police are tough on crime, they'll call up the local Yakuza bosses to arrange a raid on a headquarters at a certain time and date, with the media there to record it all. Several (low-level) Yakuza will be led away in handcuffs, the so-hanbucho will go on the trid with a heavy heart and apologize for the misdeeds of these wayward members and say they'll be more tightly watching in the future, a handful of light pistols will be "found," and it's all in the screamsheets for a week as everyone nods gently about how good the police are and how brave the politicians are for dealing with a Yakuza band that'd gone past what was agreed upon. It's all a show, of course, but it's also a good time for a Yakuza ring to unload some troublesome members and screw-ups.

The Yakuza sometimes go outside the lines and use hitmen to remove problems. Egos between rings can flare out of control, or sometimes when the oyabun of a band passes away, those below might believe that they'd make a better boss than the first lieutenant, so they make a power play. That kind of murder has to be investigated by the police. When a civilian is injured by stray fire, the police will demand the responsible party. In either case, the Yakuza will present someone who will confess to the crime, and the police will accept them at their word. This is rarely the person who did the deed (especially in the case of the hired hitman; if it was a valued specialist who wounded a civilian, a less important kumi-in will take the fall) but as long as someone's claiming to be responsible, the police are happy. The Yakuza take care of a member who steps up for the greater good in this way, and if they stay loyal while in prison, they're assured of a promotion when they're released.

## THE PRODIGAL CHILD RETURNS

This ceremony is for a member of the ring who has been in prison. As many of the Yakuza ring as possible turn out, creating a parade of sorts, from the ring's headquarters to the prison, where the cars (side note: The Yakuza *love* big black cars out of Detroit instead of rides from Japan itself; it's a tradition over a century old at this point and doesn't look likely to change) are lined up in the parking lot and along the street, with the entire ring deployed on either side of a path. The members wear their best suits to welcome the prisoner back to the real world. The so-hanbucho will meet them at the gate, thanking the guards for taking such good care of the member, then walk with them to the car of the first (or if a non-combatant, second) lieutenant, where he will get to ride with

Uncle back to the headquarters. There's a brief informal affair there, but later that night there will be a far larger, formal ceremony at the oyabun's house. The wayward son will share sake again, to show that his loyalties are intact, then he'll be the subject of a huge party in his honor. The next morning, he's slowly returned to duty, usually in a new position as well.

- The secondary feature of this is a public display of power is that everyone can see the strength and wealth of the Yakuza ring due to the number of expensive cars and just how many foot soldiers can be mustered for the event. Impress the locals so that young boys want to grow up and be a part of that, remind the police and rival families how strong you are, and generate an excuse for a big party that shows everyone that loyalty will be rewarded. It's an amazing bit of psychology, topped with marketing and a recruitment drive.
- Red Anya

## BUSINESS CARDS

Lastly is the simple business card. Yakuza prefer to operate openly, seeing themselves as a vital part of an orderly society, and engage in quite a lot of legal, and quasi-legal work. Yakuza members proudly present their business card, indicating their name, rank, and bearing the *mon* of the ring to which they belong. These are presented in the traditional way, with bowing, inspection, and exchanges of cards, kept in ornate cases. Each Yakuza member will have dozens of Yakuza contacts in their pocket thanks to this, allowing them a much wider network than you'd expect as they can call upon members from other families, allies, and more, simply by snapping open their card case. If you're going to deal with the Yakuza, make certain that you get a good run of business cards printed up. Yes, on paper. With lettering.

- Letters? Drek! I know maybe three people who can read and I'm not one of 'em!
- Riot

Each individual ring has traditions of its own, of course, such as celebrating the oyabun's birthday, attending Shinto festivals, giving sacrifices to local shrines, or just having a statue that they always rub for luck. Each ring is as varied as the founder, and you need to do your homework lest you make a mistake. Etiquette is key.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE NUYEN

Like any criminal syndicate, the Yakuza draws money from many different sources, some legal, most not, with a further variation based on the



size of the organization. The smallest rings are simple protection operations, while the largest are involved with multi-million money laundering via buying real estate, fine art, and clubs. The largest are megacorps in and of themselves, if only A-rated in general terms. The larger the rings gets, the more likely it is to be involved in legal or quasi-legal operations for the majority of its income; this is why the Yamaguchi-gumi ultimately had no significant loss of income by becoming a legitimate corporation as opposed to a criminal syndicate.

- Not one hundred percent true, but close enough.
- Sunshine

We'll focus mostly on the average Yakuza circle, since each of them is roughly the size of the entire Mafia in North America. At this level, around a fifth of their operations are above board and legal, laundering nuyen and providing jobs to former and retired Yakuza, and family members of the Yakuza, who wish to stay on the largely straight and narrow path. The remainder is drawn from crime. The big money here is the "water business" of alcohol, bar supplies, and so on.

## BTLS AND THE DRUG TRADE

There's no larger supplier of BTLs than the Yakuza and this, plus the sale of old-fashioned drugs, remains their primary source of income. A steady stream of new, more immersive, and more addictive BTLs flow from Yakuza programming labs every year. Since some of these are the very same labs making bleeding-edge software for the Japanacorp, the quality can't be matched by smaller fly-by-night operations. Those closest to the source sell not to end users but to other Yakuza rings who, in turn, sell mostly to their associated street gangs, which get the product to the end user. Yakuza rings rarely serve as the final seller, but for the smaller, less-connected rings, this is the primary occupation of the kuri-in.

The Yakuza doesn't dabble in most drugs, finding them less reliable than the software solutions, but there's an exception for shabu, the amphetamine that built a nation. Shabu is legal in every Japancorp, and while illegal in Japan proper, the authorities turn a blind eye to its use. It's needed by the workforce to maintain relentless eighty-hour work weeks for months on end. Long hours, unpaid overtime, and volunteering for additional shifts are commonplace, but the metahuman body doesn't have the energy to maintain it, so anyone who wants to get ahead turns to shabu. It's a stronger form of long haul—or more accurately, long haul is a watered-down form of shabu. It isn't physically or mentally addictive, but it becomes a social addiction; once you've started using it and generating massive workloads, the corp becomes

dependent on you maintaining that level of production. Since you can't let the corp down (giri!), you hit it again and again. After six days of use, the body simply collapses, leaving the user so drained once it's time for work that they have to take another dose, and so it continues until they burn out or the pressure lets up. Since the use is so widespread, a good manager will know when the salarymen need time off to recuperate, but a bad one will drive his workforce to the brink of death and beyond.

## GAMBLING

As you would expect from a syndicate formed (allegedly) by gamblers, gambling is the second most vital income stream of the Yakuza, drawing some from bookmaking (the Yakuza is heavily invested in sports betting, including horse racing, baseball games, boat racing, and, I kid you not, sumo, though they will deny the last one vehemently) but far more from games of chance. With the Yakuza drawing their name from the worst hand in a card game, you'd think they were strongest in that area, but instead the vast majority of their income comes from Japan's national obsession: pachinko.

- How big is pachinko? In 2063, it made up 2.04 percent of Japan's gross domestic product.
- Glitch
- Next to karaoke, it's the greatest of pleasures.
- Baka Dabora

For those living under a rock, pachinko is a game where you buy ball bearings (usually twenty for a nuyen or a hundred for four) and feed them into a machine, flicking each through a small vertical maze, generating more balls with good shots. Each machine has plenty of flashing lights and loud bells, which means the sound of a hundred patrons flicking ball bearings around is nearly deafening. You'll hear it easily in any nightspot in Japan and internationally anywhere that Japancorps can be found. You can trade ball bearings in at a counter to buy overpriced prizes, like sake, pictures of idols, and so on. Since it's just prizes and not money, this is technically legal.

- Like carnival games! I loved Fozzy's Pizza when I was a kid!
- Slamm-O!

To get around gambling laws, behind every pachinko parlor is a small pawn shop, usually run by a retired Yakuza member, who will buy the prizes you can win for a fraction of their listed value. The same business is also willing to loan money and create lines of credit in case you want to buy some of the merchandise kept on site. Of course,



most of those who take out credit then walk around the block to the pachinko parlor and gamble it away, but there's no law against that. At the end of the night, a worker at the pachinko parlor is sent around to buy new prizes from the pawn shop (which are the same prizes that the pawn broker bought, of course), to restock for the next day of business. By keeping the businesses technically separate and above board, it remains legal in most countries (and the Japanacorp finesse the laws when necessary, or in extreme cases lend their extraterritorial status to parlors so they can conduct business).

BTLs, drugs, and gambling, plus the legal operations, make up three quarters of the Yakuza's entire income.

- That's insane!
- Quicksilver
- That's the power of addictive behaviors.
- Icarus

## THE REST

The remaining chunk comes from several sources, including the basic protection and extortion rackets, including corporate extortion, gun running, human trafficking, prostitution, and, weirdly, dispute negotiations. The last one includes Yakuza rings serving as neutral arbitrators between two warring rings, and it also due fills gaps caused by the shortage of lawyers in Japan. Where as the UCAS has a lawyer for every four hundred citizens, in Japan, that number is closer to one in eight thousand citizens. Petty disputes, such as someone's trash winding up in a neighbor's trash can, car accidents, or an accusation of bad business practices are most often resolved by contacting your local Yakuza representative, who will send a specialist and a couple of enforcers over to sit both sides down and come to a conclusion for a modest fee.

- Human trafficking is the ugliest aspect of the Yakuza, bar none. In addition to the usual practice of picking up young people from all over the world, getting them hooked on BTLs, and forcing them to sell their body for money, they also serve as a clearing house for failed idols, the hostess club pipeline, and a way of disposing of unfortunate children from affairs with the locals. When Sazuki-san is aiming for a promotion, having a girl on the side (and a child with her) is a burden that could scuttle the deal. She can be quietly moved into the pipeline; and the child either sent through as well, or once orphaned, recruited into the Yakuza. The trafficking victims tend to lead short, brutal lives; once BTLs and other addictions have savaged their looks, they're disposed of.
- Marionette

- The Yakuza press locals into service on the regular for overseas businesses when Japanese women are unavailable. Korea's the largest source of these "strays," followed by the Philippines and Tsimshian. Some of the children that result from this wind up back in Japan as second-class citizens, Japanese enough to be allowed in but not Japanese enough to be respected, and like most marginalized people, they wind up a hot source of recruiting from the Yakuza. Some reach junior-officer level, but it's all but unheard of for any to reach the lieutenant positions. What, you didn't think criminals could be racist?
- Hard Exit
- The Philippines also serve as the main source of shabu, since there are hundreds of small, unoccupied islands that allow the production, which smells terrible and results in a toxic aftermath, to be undertaken with little disruption. It also used to serve as a hub for arms smuggling as guns could be made there cheaply, then smuggled through Yakuza in Korea to the warlords of China, but with the collapse of the Japancorp presence in the islands, other sources had to be found. Korea itself is the temporary source, but it's too expensive to build there, and Korean gun laws are nearly as strict as Japan's own. They're actively looking for a new location in which to expand operations, so if you have some good ideas, they have bosses willing to pay.
- 2 XL
- **Isara mo yang bunganga mo! Intindihin mo ang sarili mo!**
- Marionette

## MONEY MANAGEMENT

As you might have noticed, the Yakuza are heavily involved in the financial sector. Depending on the size of the ring, this can be illegal loan sharking, legal payday loans and check advancement, or plain ol' banking. Yakuza members are often hired by legitimate banks to recover loans. When the Yakuza are the ones borrowing, this creates a rather bad situation for the banks! Smaller Yakuza rings sometimes borrow money from larger rings to fund expansions or intra-ring conflicts, creating obligations that can spiral into absorption if not carefully managed. Surprisingly, Yakuza treat these loans with great honor and don't jack up rates to try and fold a smaller ring under their thumb. Well, for the most part. (See the discussion on **Honor and Traditions**).

## YAKUZA AROUND THE WORLD

Lastly, we should talk about a handful of Yakuza rings that are of interest to the Shadowrunning community. As noted before, there are hundreds of individual rings, most with a hundred or less members, so the local Yakuza can be quite different from one area to another.



## KOREA

The largest collection of Yakuza outside of Japan is found in Korea. Dozens of rings operate in smuggling, but also in vice tours from Japan to the “mainland,” making sure that salarymen are shown the best time possible. The larger rings are tied into the expansive Korean media outlets, hand in hand with idol factories, fashion, photobucks, sims, and trideo. You can’t get any major success without dealing with the Yakuza at some point along the path.

- Unified? Yes. Equal? Oh no. Southern and central Korea is a modern nation with a booming economy and all the benefits that this brings. The northern portions still lag behind—never raised as highly as the rest of the nation—and they are used as an industrial zone. Northerners are seen as second-class citizens and so are frequently brought into the Yakuza, and the military production of these factories is a primary source for Yakuza firepower.
- Red Anya

## THE PHILIPPINES

Once a hotbed of Japanese tourism and heavy corporate investment, the Philippines won their independence and pushed the Japanacorp out, and the Yakuza with them. Some rings survive, a shadow of their former strength, operated by Japanese-Filipino, or pure Filipino, members, but with the economy in ruins and no Japanese investment, it’s not at all profitable. Renraku is the only Japanacorp that remains in the islands, thanks to their ability to morph into the native culture anywhere they go, and some very small Yakuza bands operate in Renraku corporate territory, but for the most part, the Yakuza are in a holding pattern. If the suffering of the Filipino people gets to be too great, the Yakuza feel that they will invite Japan back as their leaders once again. Unlikely, but desperation can lead to strange bedfellows.

- I just deleted one of the most impressive stream of curse words it has ever been my pleasure to witness. Hell, I learned some new ones! The point is, try to keep your comments substantive.
- Glitch

## THE KINGDOM OF HAWAI’I

The Yakuza have been invested here for over a century and have no intention of leaving. They’re a huge source of income, thanks to Japanese tourism, and the Yakuza seem content to use the islands more as a vacation spot than a base of operations. Mind you, they own every single oceanside hotel and casino, and they also own the entertainment industry from top to bottom, but they’ve never pushed to mold nation into “Japan East” like they have conquered lands.

## SOUTH AMERICA

The few times that the Yakuza have dabbled in drugs, they invariably come from South America. The Yakuza here are more middlemen, trading Korean arms for Peruvian chemicals, and working on low-end real estate trades. They were looking at making bigger moves in 2060 but, well, Comet. They’re in expansion mode now, however, so they should be up to something here, I just don’t know what. Anyone have eyes on the region and can keep us up to date?

- No promises.
- Kane

## AUSTRALIA

Since Australia is a massive area of expansion, the Yakuza have been wanting to get the land to effectively bend the knee for decades, seeing the island as a paradise for crime. Australia is a prime source of workers for hostess clubs, being far easier to gather than, say, Californians, but they tend to be recruited in an above-board manner, rather than trafficked like people from the Philippines or Tsimshian.

## TSIMSHIAN

Speaking of that native nation, the Yakuza, under Mitsuhamma, were *everywhere* back in the day, reaping a massive fortune from vice, especially gambling, in the region. When the economy was strong and the logging constant, the Yakuza were all about producing local entertainment for the suits, which resulted in a surge in Japanese-Tsimshian children. Most were never acknowledged, of course, and weren’t taken back to Japan when MCT left, but the Yakuza were quick to take them up (as they do for many marginalized people).

Unfortunately, they had also grown used to operating in the wide open there, like they do in Japan, and when the nation was occupied and new leadership put into place, there was a severe crack-down on the “criminal scum” that fostered a lot of stored anger. As the Yakuza reach out to former Japanese conquests and re-establish connections, these splinters are primed to roar back into life. Keep your head down if you head into that mess.

## THE FREE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

There’s no greater prize east of Japan than California, but there are few places where they’re less welcome. San Francisco in particular remembers General Saito all too well. Interestingly, Wuxing has moved in to fill the vacuum, with a major in-



vestment in the city, pushing nuyen around to win the populace over. I don't think that the Yakuza will react well to Wuxing on "their" turf, so this could get ugly.

## SEATTLE

Lastly, I want to talk about Seattle. The Wata-da-gumi had sent some very high-ranking personnel to the city at the start of 2081, supposedly to offer to bring back wayward children into the fold now that they've lost so much power. A new beginning, as it were. This meeting was scheduled to happen the same day that the Sea Dragon made herself known as the city's new patron. The meeting happened as planned, but I'm given to understand that it became a burial of past actions and a simple parting of ways, with no bad blood. If you believe that Ryumyo is behind the ring, he might not have wanted to interfere in another dragon's territory. If not? I have no idea. There are some other, smaller rings that are starting to stretch their legs into Seattle, but it remains to be seen if any have staying power.

## YAKUZA CHARACTERS

Game stats in this section are for humans; changes to other metatypes can be made using the Metahuman Adjustment Chart, p. 211, SR6.

### BORYOKUDAN

The basic foot-soldiers of the organization, their job is to be slightly tougher and scarier than the average person in the street. They usually succeed. Use **Gangers and Mob Muscle**, p. 204, SR6.

### KYODAI

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 3)

The big brothers of the group, these people have the muscle, skills, and brains to deliver help when someone asks for it.

#### KYODAI

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
3	4	3(4)	4	3	3	3	2	5.0
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE				
6	7/2D6	A1, I3	10	10/15/+1				

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Con 1, Firearms 3, Influence 1, Perception 2, Stealth 2

**Augmentations:** Wired reflexes 1

**Gear:** Armor vest (DR +3), Sony Emperor (DR 2)

#### Weapons:

Browning Ultra Power [Heavy Pistol, DV 3P, SA, 10/9/6/-/-, 10(c), w/ laser sight]

Knife [Blade, DV 2P, 6/1\*/-/-/-, \*max range 20 meters]

## WAKAGASHIRA

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 5)

One step above the kyodai, wakagashiras are tough and capable. If you meet one of them head to head, be nice. They have the power and skill to cause you a lot of trouble.

#### WAKAGASHIRA

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
4(+1)	5	4(6)	3	5	4	4	4	4.2
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE				
7	10/3D6	A1, I4	11	10/15/+1				

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Close Combat 5, Con 4, Electronics 3, Engineering 2, Firearms 6, Influence 4, Outdoors 2, Perception 4, Piloting 2, Stealth 4

**Augmentations:** Bone lacing (plastic), cybereyes (rating 3, w/ image link, low-light vision, smartlink, vision enhancement), synaptic booster 2

**Gear:** Actioneer Business Clothes (DR+2), Hermes Ikon commlink (DR 5)

#### Weapons:

Sap [Club, DV 2S, 6/-/-/-/-]

Ares Predator VI [Heavy Pistol, DV 3P, SA/BF, 10/10/8/-/-, 15(c), w/ smartgun system]

## KOMON SURGEON

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 4)

Any organization that spends a fair amount of time brawling with others needs someone who can patch up wounds when the fight is over. The komon surgeon is perpetually exasperated at his people for getting hurt, but he fixes them with grumpy efficiency.

#### KOMON SURGEON

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
3	2	3	2	4	5(6)	5	2	5.5
DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE				
5	8/1D6	A1, I2	10	10/15/+1				

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Biotech 5, Close Combat 2, Electronics 3, Engineering 2, Firearms 2, Influence 2, Outdoors 1, Perception 6, Piloting 2

**Augmentations:** Cerebral booster 1, cybereyes (rating 3, w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, vision enhancement, vision magnification)

**Gear:** Actioneer Business Clothing (DR +2), antidote patch x 5, Erika Elite commlink (DR 4), medkit (rating 5), stim patch x 5

#### Weapons:

Ares Light Fire 75 [Light Pistol, DV 2P, SA, 10/7/6/-/-, 16(c), w/ smartgun system]



## SO-HONBUCHO

(PROFESSIONAL RATING 6)

They don't carry a big gun, but you should be nervous about these people anyway. Their social and Matrix skills make them dangerous in the corridors of power. They may not shoot you, but they can convince people controlling large amounts of weapons where to point them.

### SO-HONBUCHO

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	ESS
3	3	5	2	5	6	5	6	2.7

DR	I/ID	AC	CM	MOVE
6	10/1D6	A1/I2	11	10/15/+1

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Con 7, Cracking 5, Electronics 6, Engineering 4, Firearms 2 (Pistols +2), Influence 7, Outdoors 3, Perception 6, Piloting 3, Stealth 4

**Programs:** Armor, Edit, Encryption, Exploit, Overclock, Signal Scrubber

**Augmentations:** Commlink (implanted, DR 6), cyberdeck (implanted, DR 5, 8/7), cyberjack (DR 5, 8/7), datajack

**Gear:** Armanté suit (DR +3)

**Weapons:**

Fichetti Security 600 [Light Pistol, DV 2P, SA, 10/9/6/-/-, 30(c), w/ detachable folding stock, laser sight]





FIN





# DO THE COLLAPSE

Some are careful, others are chaotic. Some are new, others old. Some are ruthlessly calculating and logical, others have only the barest acquaintance with sanity. But they're all in the shadows, they're all dangerous, and they're all things you need to know.

***Collapsing Now*** details ten organizations poised to make an impact on the ever-shifting structures of the Sixth Word—ten organizations shadowrunners could encounter. Maybe they'll be helpful, maybe harmful, maybe both, but whatever the case, runners need to know what they're about. Because the last thing a good runner ever wants to be is surprised.

***Collapsing Now*** is a Runner Resource book for ***Shadowrun, Sixth World***.

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