



# SHADOWRUN<sup>®</sup>

## POWER PLAYS



**CATALYST**  
game labs

**RUNNER RESOURCE BOOK**





# POWER PLAYS





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A background image depicting a chaotic, fiery scene. In the foreground, a man with dreadlocks and a blue visor looks towards the viewer. In the background, people are running on a bridge or walkway, and there are explosions and fire. The overall tone is one of urgency and conflict.

# INTRODUCTION

POSTED BY: GLITCH

Let me let you behind the curtain for a second.

You all know the public side of JackPoint—our large downloads, our side chats, our live monitoring of breaking events. Along with that, there is chatter behind the scenes. You know some of it—specifically, the chats you’re involved in—but you don’t know the rest of it. You don’t see the conversations we have deciding what to post here, what to research, what to focus on. You don’t see the pitches people make for things they think we should focus on, and you don’t see all of the criticisms for what we *do* share. Some of the criticisms are out there in different forums, but others remain behind the scenes. Mainly because they’re directed at us, the JackPoint admins, and people don’t feel the need to broadcast them to a larger audience.

One of the most common ones is this: People tell us we talk a *lot* about the Big Ten. We don’t work for them (at least not full-time). We don’t like them. And we don’t support the world they have made. So why do they get so much focus? Why don’t we talk about anti-corporate forces like Black Star or various neo-anarchist groups, or burgeoning corporate-free enclaves like Berlin or Detroit (er, sorry, Motor City)?

If you were a shepherd who had to deal with a wolf attack every so often, you might only talk about wolves now and then. If you had to deal with multiple packs of wolves, they would be a frequent topic of conversation. But if you lived in an area entirely populated and run by wolves, you’d never stop talking about them.

We can’t pretend our reality is different than it is. When we’re declared criminals, it’s because we broke laws written by corporations to benefit corporations. We use weapons that the corporations restrict access to in various ways, then

manufacture and sell to us anyway. We hate the way they concentrate wealth, exploit people, and treat lives as disposable, but we love our favorite snacks, cheer our favorite teams, and take their money when they’re willing to pay us.

This leads to lots of discussion about how compromised we all are and how there’s no such thing as ethical consumption. Most of that misses the point that we don’t choose our environment and thus are not accountable for the choices beyond us (or the choices of others). Dark-colored peppered moths were unknown before industrial pollution spread in England, at which point the dark-colored moths became better able to blend into their surroundings than their light-colored kin. The dark-colored moths thrived because of the pollution, but are they somehow to blame for it? No. They simply lived in the world they were given.

The megacorporations are the pollution that taints the air, water, and landscape of our world. So sometimes we feel guilty for working with them, buying from them, or even talking about them. But this is the world we were given. The question we face is not if we wish we were given something else, but what we can make out of what we have.

So yes, we’ll talk about Black Star and Berlin and Motor City sometimes so we can see what’s possible. But we have to talk about the Big Ten, and the Corporate Court, and all their machinery, because we need to know what they have made and what they use to keep building the world. Maybe we’ll chip off a small piece of it to make our own enclave, or maybe we’ll figure out how to bring one of them down in a way that doesn’t leave a vacuum that another corp immediately rushes into.

That’s why we talk about them. Read this with that in mind.



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

**...IDENTITY SPOOFED**

**...ENCRYPTION KEYS GENERATED**

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

**>LOGIN**

**>ENTER PASSCODE**

**...BIOMETRIC SCAN CONFIRMED**

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

**"I don't want to sell anything bought or processed, or buy anything sold or processed, or process anything sold, bought, or processed, or repair anything sold, bought, or processed."**

**— Lloyd Dobler**  
////////////////////////////////////

Welcome back to JackPoint, chummer; your last connection was severed **18 hours, 22 minutes, 40 seconds ago**

## **TODAY'S HEADS-UP**

It's corp round-up time, which means it's time to remember that just because someone pays for your lunch, that doesn't mean they're your friend.

**—Glitch**  
////////////////////////////////////

## **INCOMING**

**>>> 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]**

**>>> Get your motor runnin' ... head out on the whatever the hell you want to. [TAG: DOUBLE CLUTCH]**  
////////////////////////////////////

## **TOP NEWS ITEMS**

**>>> Ares representatives say initial months in Atlanta are "successful beyond all of our expectations."**

**>>> Alchera that opened in NEEC headquarters now "fully sealed," according to spokespeople. Five commissioners remain unaccounted for.**

**>>> Patent filing for "artificial human flesh" filed in CAS found to be tainted with actual human flesh.**  
////////////////////////////////////

## **JACKPOINT STATS**

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

## **LATEST NEWS**

**Fireworks show on the moon to last for six hours, with AI-designed pyrotechnics and musical accompaniment.**

## **PERSONAL ALERTS**

**>>> You have 4 new private messages.**

**>>> You have 12 new responses to your JackPoint posts.**

**>>> Your 14,394 AresWarrior loyalty points expire at the end of the month.**

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

**YOUR CURRENT REP SCORE: 728 (69% Positive)**

**CURRENT TIME: 02 October 2081, 1911 hrs**  
////////////////////////////////////





## IN THE FLOW

BY JASON M. HARDY

“Sir, please stop dripping in the hallway.”

Louis stopped and looked at his shoes. Water trickled out from under the soles of his shoes and dripped off the cuffs of his jacket.

“I don’t know that I can.”

The guard approached carefully, gun leveled. “Sir, you don’t have any devices on you. Are you authorized to be here?”

Louis looked from one end of the hallway to the other. It had the light grey sterility corporations loved.

“I should be. I used to work here.”

“Used to?”

Louis turned his head back and forth again. His neck squished. “I think so. What year is it?”

The guard shifted his jaw in a way that turned on an implanted commlink. “Got a nutter down here. Please send backup.”

Water slowly dripped on tile.

Ciel wished she had a more exact idea of what she was looking for. But then again, when Mr. Johnson didn’t want you to know something, there usually was a reason. Sometimes even a good one. She at least had enough to go on.

She watched Louis trudge ahead in his sad sack manner. The guard was more than distracted enough by him. Louis really had a gift.

She had Invisibility working on her (the good, hide-you-from-cameras variant), but the extra help from Louis helped her get into the building unnoticed. She watched him round a corner with the guard, then she carefully opened a stairwell door and slipped inside.

She was at the base of a plain stairway—concrete steps and a pole of a metal handrail. She had looked over the plans of the building and thought the fifth floor was where she wanted to be, so she flowed up four flights.

The door at the top of the stairs was locked, of course. It was a sturdy steel door, no keyhole or anything close to it, and no access to the latching mechanism unless she was willing to whack at it with a sledgehammer for a while. The door and frame were also probably laced with all sorts of wires and alarms. So that was the wrong way to enter the floor.

She turned to the left of the stairway door, focused her mind, then started pulling open a hole in the wall.

“You understand that you can’t just wander in here, right?”

Louis, sitting in an uncomfortable plastic chair, nodded sadly.

“You also understand I could arrest you, right? Put you in prison for a spell?”





"Yes, sir. I'm sorry."

"But I'm going to help you out. I might even be persuaded to go easy on you. All you have to do is tell me how you got in here."

Louis looked around the cramped office. "Here? You led me here. From the hallway."

The guard rubbed a hand across his shiny scalp. He closed his eyes, then opened them. "No. I don't mean this *office*. How did you get inside this *building*?"

Louis looked up. "Inside the building?"

"Yes."

Louis frowned. "I'm not sure I remember."

At that moment, the conversation became trickier. Louis had to keep his head down, his eyes sad. But the astral form of a water spirit had appeared in front of him, sparkling merrily. Louis almost hushed it even though it wasn't making any noise. He needed to deliver careful mental instructions to the spirit while keeping up his end of the conversation with the guard.

It helped that he was playing as stupid as possible in that latter task.

"How can you not remember how you entered a building?"

"I don't know. I was thinking about my old job. How I liked it. How I was happy here. Better than my life now, you know? Back before my wife left me. So I was thinking about it, and then here I was."

"Pal, I didn't ask for your life story. I just want to know how you broke into my damn building."

"Broke in?"

"Yeah, broke in."

"Why do you think I broke in?"

"Are you supposed to be here?"

"I think so."

"Why?"

"Because I used to work here."

A creative and entertaining stream of profanity followed, but Louis couldn't stay to enjoy it all. He'd spent his allotted time and had to move on. And the spirit he was working with had its instructions.

Louis disappeared from the chair, leaving nothing but a small puddle in the plastic.

"What the *hell*?"

Then a wet footprint appeared in the floor. Then another. They headed out the door.

"Oh no you don't, you sopping wet bastard." The guard jumped up and chased the footprints.

The water spirit was directed to head out of the building. If the plan worked, the guard would watch it go and then feel pleased he had chased off an annoying spirit.

Louis, in the meantime, was drifting up to the fifth floor.

The hole Ciel made in the stairwell wall led into a supply closet. She made a second hole in the opposite wall of the closet, which took her into a bathroom. Which she strolled right out of.

It was the eternal problem of the Sixth World. If you



fill each and every wall of your structure with alarm wires and mana barriers, you feel like a paranoid lunatic who blew a whole lot of money. But if you don't, then someone inevitably finds whatever gap you left. That's what Ciel did.

Ciel's black jacket and military surplus pants would mark her as an intruder the moment someone saw her, but she didn't intend to let that happen. The hall was full of cameras, so she had Invisibility working again. She walked down the hallway, wishing she could drift through walls instead of having to deal with doors.

At that thought, a sad, wet-looking man drifted out of the wall to her right. He looked at her as if she was the most obvious thing to see in the world.

"Hey," Louis said.

"Hey. How did it go?"

"Good, I guess. I don't think he liked me."

She made a vague patting motion near where his should would be if he had materialized. "You've got a gift."

"Yeah. I guess I'm really good at being unlikable."

"No. No time for a pity party. We're on the job."

Louis ducked his head, but he also might have smiled. "Right. Sorry."

"I'm going to get more glowy, so watch my hoop."

"Always."

He made the word sound a little salacious, which was very un-Louis like. She shot him a look, but he was staring blankly ahead. She decided to ignore it.

She cast Detect Magic and went on a treasure hunt.

It wasn't easy. Highly paid executives indulged in all sorts of unnecessary magic. The mana barriers embedded in some walls were one thing—she could ignore those, because she knew what they were. But the Awakened plants sitting in some offices, the chunk of orichalcum some over-privileged exec was using as a paperweight, and the enchantments used by Awakened execs who actually knew what they were doing sent out a lot of confusing signals. She had to find something that wasn't on a desk or just sitting in a corner.

She had to find something someone wanted to hide.

Smart people hide magic in a stone box. The container of earth makes it very difficult to detect, and the stone itself is nondescript. If they did that, Ciel was in for a hard time.

Fortunately, corporate execs often hid magic items behind mana barriers, which hid the item but made the shield easy to save.

She had to look for a barrier different from the ones in the wall. Different shape. Different intensity—lesser, if she was lucky.

There. Behind a polished wooden door, in a hallway full of polished wooden doors. The floor here was padded carpet—much easier to walk quietly over than the hard surface of the lower floor. But the door to the office she needed to enter was closed. And a camera was watching.

"Want to go in and have a look at the situation?" she asked.

Louis raised a hand to his brow in a quick salute as he drifted through the door. Ciel waited outside. She wanted to hum to herself, but she hadn't cast Silence. That might be the one spell too many for her. So she stood still without so much as tapping a toe.

Louis emerged after a few minutes. "People who have a safe in their office. I don't understand them. They have so many valuable things that they have to put some in a place where they don't live?"

"Some of these people basically live in their office. And maybe the thing is work-related."

"I guess." He shuffled wetly. "Maybe I just didn't ever have much that was valuable."

"Are you nearing an actual report?"

Louis smiled quickly. Had he just been intentionally wasting her time? She was starting to long for the days when he was constantly trying to suck up to her.

"Lead safe, solidly built. Not hidden. The notebook is inside, with a small mana barrier surrounding it."

"How strong?"

"Strong enough to keep me out. Not strong enough to keep us out."

There were several things she needed to do—open the door, enter the office, open the safe, break the barrier, take the notebook. And most of them couldn't be done without someone noticing.

Then it was best done quickly. All the caution, all the sneaking, all the slow movement. All of it could now be abandoned.

She looked at Louis. "Fast and decisive." He nodded.

She opened the door. No alarms went off—at least, not here. She moved quickly the office, straight to the safe. She dropped her Invisibility spell. From here on out, the asymmetric paint on her face would be her primary shield. She reached out to the safe and dug her fingers directly into the metal door, then pulled her hands away from each other. A hole opened in the door. She might have been setting off more alarms. She pulled more and looked inside.

The only item in the safe was a spiral-bound notebook with a yellow cover. She could see the glow of the barrier around it. She looked to her left. Louis was already there, already reaching into the safe. She reached with him. Their hands hit the barrier, and the barrier pushed her back, with the feeling of dozens of needles dancing lightly on her fingertips and palms. She pushed forward again, and the dances became stabs. She wanted to pull back, but there was no time to waste. And Louis was already moving ahead. She pushed, ignoring the pain, sending energy to her hand while waiting for the shield to fall apart.

It did, and it felt like needles raining on her arm. A little pain was worth it to make it gone.

Next to her, Louis grimaced. He had felt it too. He didn't flinch, though. Louis was nothing if not game.

At this point, she had opened a door in view of a security camera, ripped open a safe, and alerted whoever had made the mana barrier. Subtlety was done with.

She grabbed the notebook and ran.

Red lights flashed—in a gentle way—in the hallway. There was no sound. It was the kind of alarm that wanted you to know it was going off, but didn't want to make a big deal about it. The gentleness was part of the threat.

The alarm was supposed to tell Ciel that she had been seen. That was part of the game. Now they'd expect her to head for an exit as quickly as possible. That was a reasonable assumption. One she intended to meet. The question was, what kind of an escape were they imagining?

Drek on a brick. Ghost-damned bloody hell on a mangy puppy's back. Fuck me sideways with a rusty spoon on a mattress of barbed wire.



Why were expletives always on something? Were the layers just an excuse to pile on more words? But why was the shit always *on* something instead of *near* it? To be more gross, probably.

This is how the guard knew he was in trouble. His mind was spiraling over useless nonsense instead of focusing on the very real problem happening a few floors over his head.

It had all happened rapidly. One of the motion detectors went off, and an ARO appeared to show him what was happening. It was an open door. Nothing more. But any open door was a problem.

Before he could process more, another ARO appeared, showing a hole opening in a safe's door. The door might have been suspicious, but the hole in the safe clearly was a crime. He needed to initiate a security protocol. Which meant that later, he'd have to explain how he let an intruding spirit just walk away from the building.

He was going to report it. Of course he was. He just hadn't gotten to it yet. And now this. His first thought was that he'd be lucky to be home before breakfast. But as he thought about it, he began to realize he'd be lucky to not wake up in a cell.

Security guards in his company were rated based on the efficiency of their actions. When they responded to a situation, did they engage the right protocol? Call in less support than the situation needed, then the trouble may not be stopped, and the losses of the event will be taken from your paycheck. The guard knew a couple of people who had lost their homes over that sort of thing. Call in too much support, though, and the corp dings you for spending too much. Your black marks add up quickly, and soon all avenues of promotion dry up. Keep the behavior up, and you'll be out of a job.

Oh, and while you're keeping all this in mind, don't hesitate.

The intrusion was on an executive floor. A safe had been breached by an invisible person. The guard thought it was serious, but not a full-on assault.

He initiated security protocol 4.

Drones arrived at every entrance within a minute. A spirit hovered over the building within two. The guard and his fellow officers got into four groups of two and spread out across the lower floor. Weapons out and ready. The intruder was to be shot and stopped. Simple.

A northside drone made the first report within a minute of its arrival.

*<Window broken from inside. No form viewed.>*

*<Get the spirit over there!>* the guard replied immediately. He assumed the order was followed, though from his vantage point he had no way of knowing.

Until he heard a report from the summoning mage.

*<Another spirit is on the scene. Kindred spirit, but a damp one. It broke out the window.>*

The guard understood it was a setup in two seconds. It was a spirit. It wouldn't have to break out a window. It would only do that as a distraction. It was covering for someone.

*<Ignore the spirit. Someone else is in the building. Lock it down!>*

He called for protocol 5. This person was tricky, but they weren't getting away.

Ciel was exhausted. She'd cast a lot of spells that night, with the Levitation spell that helped her float

away being the final one. She'd also had to hide her aura as she drifted away.

As hard as her job had been, Louis might have done more. He had concealed her and pushed her along in the air, turning her Levitation into flight. He'd gotten her away while she stayed still and calm. Or as calm as possible.

She had looked at the building as she drifted from it, watched as patrol cars pulled up. She'd guessed right—security thought the broken window and the spirit was a distraction. They thought she was still inside. They were going to be really sad when they didn't find her.

And that guard was going to be in a pile of trouble.

But that was all going on downtown. She was back in her small shed, listening to cars pass on the Ponchartrain Expressway, figuring out what she could make with a hot plate that she hadn't made a hundred times before. And thinking about the notebook she had.

It was magic. Very magic. But she couldn't tell what kind. She didn't want it in here, though. Its aura was the kind of thing that would attract attention. But she had two hours to kill before she could turn it over, and her curiosity was high.

While the aura was powerful, the notebook was cheap, the kind that would cost a few nuyen in any drug store. It had handwriting on a number of pages, with a date in top of each one. They were from the past winter, all in February. It seemed like a diary, but not a detailed one. Take the first entry—it just read, "February 6. I have an idea."

She turned a page. "February 8. I discuss the idea with experts."

So little detail. What was the magic in this book? Where was the value?

She blinked. The words on the page shimmered. She blinked again, and they danced. She moved the notebook closer to her eyes and stared.

The words jumped off the page. They exploded into color, then into images. They expanded and flooded her eyes.

*An airy living room overlooked the Seine. Pedestrians below streamed over every bridge, watching the bateaux mouches pass by.*

*A man sat at a table, resting his head in his hands.*

*"It's possible," he said. "But there are so many unknowns."*

*"That's why I'm talking to you. To figure this out."*

*The voice was coming from Ciel's perspective. Like it was her voice.*

*"Yes. Yes, ma'am. I didn't mean to question you. It's just ... the mind is so complicated. We've learned that this decade."*

*"You have every tool the world has available. And we can practice, right now. Make me forget I know you."*

*The man looked up. "I'll try, Ms. Al-Thani."*

Ciel snapped the notebook shut. She stared at it. Whoever hired her must not know what this was. She liked to think she was rising up the ranks, but she didn't think she had gotten this far up. This was way over her pay grade. She suddenly wanted to get rid of the notebook immediately.

And then, like Ms. Al-Thani, she wanted to be made to forget what she now knew.





# POWER NETWORKING

POSTED BY: JACKPOINT BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

Hello. We are here to provide context for the in-depth exploration of the megacorporations that will follow in subsequent chapters of this download. This isn't just something you hot-shit JackPointers can skip over and leave for the Shadowland Undernet readers, because it's easy to forget or ignore. You need to understand the context to help the rest of this make sense. We're doing this for you.

## POSTCAPITALIST CORPORATISM

- A.k.a. Fascism
- Chainmaker
- That is such twentieth-century thinking. This is much worse, because it's much more intelligent.
- Mr. Bonds

- As I noted in **No Future**, Ares comes pretty close with their brand. I'd call it neo-fascism. I guess that's the point the crew is making is that even within this giant umbrella, like the umbrella of AAA megacorporate rule, things get a lot fuzzier the closer we get to the streets.
- Dr. Spin

The first thing to remember is that you are a fish. The second thing to remember is that you are in water. That water is ideology, and the dominant economic system and ideology of the Sixth World are one thing, commonly called postcapitalist corporatism. Economically, it's capitalist private ownership and control of material resources and debts without the previous incarnation's tendency to offload debts and liabilities onto public entities because the public entities are also owned and controlled by the same private entities. Laws and practices are adopted based on how well they allow corporations to function. The interests of the state and corpo-



rations are seen as one in the same, because the state is an arm of the corporate sector.

As is generally the case, the prime function of institutions of the world is to preserve the status quo. When that status quo involves at least some comprehension of individual rights, you at least have something you can work with. When it doesn't? Then you have what you see all around you. Individual rights are not really a thing. The corporation's right to exist and make money ("stimulate and grow the economy," in corporatism-speak) overrides all.

## IT ALL NEARLY ENDED

One of the most important things to remember about the rise of megacorporations is that it was born out of their predecessors' near-failure. The last year of the previous century saw a dramatic spike in tensions between private assets and the public good. Organized labor and public protests both experienced renewed strength, and corporate profits were stressed by as corporate functionality decreased. They didn't know how to operate in a reality that was shifting around them. New York City, one of the greatest economic engines in the world at the time, was brought to a standstill. Native Americans in Canada had possession of land with a profitable natural gas pipeline, and they felt they had government approval to keep it. It seemed like one little shift in the wind, some power breezing in to support the little folks, would completely re-arrange the power structures of the world.

Instead, the wind blew the other way.

The Dene tribe of Canada were forced from their land. The Serotech Corporation killed two hundred protestors and subsequently won the right to field its own army, taking the first steps toward extraterritoriality. Rather than deciding that the protests and unrests showed rot at the heart at the system, the rich and powerful decided they hadn't been using their power strongly enough. So they decided to increase and consolidate it.

It didn't happen all at once, but in hindsight it seems like a rapid rush. The first Shiawase decision came in 2000, extraterritoriality was introduced in 2001, and just like that, we had megacorporations. That doesn't mean we fully understood what they were—or what they would become.

- Sometimes, in history, we can rationalize bad outcomes by saying people had good intentions at the time. That's not at all the case with the Shiawase decisions and the floodgates opening to the megacorporate way. The judges, the politicians, the executives involved, all of them—they sometimes made noise about how what's good for business is good for the country, but at their heart, they knew this was about building power and keeping the unwashed masses in line. Nothing more.
- Kay St. Irregular

## NEO-FEUDALISM WITH A TWIST

The rise of the megacorporations re-aligned the economy into what's best labeled neo-feudalism. To understand that, let's look a old-school feudalism.

There's some nuance in all this, but the basics are simple: You have two classes, the powerful and the supplicant. The powerful have titles, lands, and money. They decide the affairs of the kingdom, through negotiation, intrigue, and war. They steer the ship of state.

The supplicants cannot hope to compete with the powerful in their stage. They may have assets—a business of their own, some skill in fighting, a few connections here and there, something like that. They may use those to get some degree of comfort or even renown. But in the end, if the powers decide to crush them, they will. The safest position is aligning with one of the major powers instead of challenging them directly. That way, if you raise the wrath of one power, you have another one that might protect you, because being entirely without powerful friends is a terrible place to be.

Sound familiar?

That's both feudalism and neo-feudalism. One of the key characteristics of both systems is a lack of mobility. You may become a rich supplicant or a poor powerful person, but for the most part that's not going to push you across the boundary in one way or the other. Sure, people tell stories of someone who advanced—the serf who married into royalty, the daring knight who received a land grant—but those stories have one thing in common: The elevation happened because the nobles granted it. The stories often credit the individual's traits, such as beauty and fighting skill, but they still depend on the nobles who deigned to share power with them. They cannot take it. They have to be given it.

That's where we are. Art Dankwalther is perhaps the strongest example of this. He was granted a fortune in Dunkelzahn's will, and he dedicated his life to screwing around with the AAAs of the world. He couldn't match the revenue of any megacorp, but he also didn't have anything close to their overhead. He deployed shadow assets, long-running cons, and whatever else he could come up with to fight the war he had declared.

That war ended when the corporations dropped a pile of money to fire one shot from the sky and take him out.

Dankwalther had billions of nuyen at his disposal, but he couldn't force his way into the elite club of the powers that be, for the simple reason that they didn't want him.

Always remember that you can have some small power in this world, but you will never have control.





- > Well, that was depressing.
- > Netcat
- > Yeah, it is. And it's not wrong, but it's also not the whole story. Yes, this is a deeply entrenched system, and if you somehow build a megacorp that can challenge the others and maybe bring one of them down, you haven't beaten the system—you've joined it. But the error of that way of thinking is that it tries to play by the rules of the corporate game. We need to build new systems, parallel systems that don't interact with theirs. That's the dream of Motor City and Berlin. Will they ever grow large enough to start starving the megas? Probably not. But it will be a hell of an effort.
- > Old Crow

The twist is that sometimes these feudal kingdoms can go to war without firing a shot. We just watched that happen with NeoNET.

- > You thought no shots were fired in all that? Did you even go to Boston?
- > Traveler Jones

NeoNET was not invaded. Their territory was not conquered. Instead, they were defeated because the Corporate Court simply declared it was so. Then they stripped the corp for parts.

The stability of feudalism depends in large part on a certain order and faith in the continuity of that order. Titles were passed through families, and families kept land and the associated power. Families ruled because they had the divine right to do so; going against their power was going against God.

But in the first run through this system, people couldn't help but notice exceptions or quirks in this system. The clergy was powerful, but their power wasn't based on heredity—theoretically, anyone could join and ascend the ranks. A merchant might do a great service to a lord and find themselves to be nobility. A noble might fall in fortunes and favor and have their title taken away. For a God-given system, it seemed quite vulnerable to a lot of tinkering by people on earth.

The most dangerous times for a feudal system are when those who aren't at the highest parts see weakness and potential instability. That's when you get an Oliver Cromwell or a Maximilian Robespierre. People get the sense that the supposedly unshakeable and divine order of things is not divine and in fact quite shakeable.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. There is another part of the system we need to discuss before we get to the fall of NeoNET and what it means.

## ZOMBIE CAPITALISM AND THE RISE OF HORIZON

If you talk to any corporatist, they will tell you about the value of the free market. They'll tell you that it encourages competition, it builds efficiency, and it is self-correcting. They'll usually break out some simple examples—if I have a skill, like baking bread, or coding software, or breaking skulls, then the market offers direct rewards for my skills. All I have to do is prove that I can do it better or cheaper than the competition, and the market will reward me. It's the wonders of meritocracy, where the most skilled and hardest working reap the most rewards.

But setting aside nepotism, sexism, racism, and many other unfair practices that make the supposed free market quite unfree, there are other characteristics that have developed as capitalism has progressed in its merry way. A huge part of the global market is nothing like selling bread or coding software. It's a few steps removed from that.

Imagine people playing a board game. The game is based on collecting and using resources. Pretty straightforward. Now imagine some other people in the room are watching the game be played. They have taken measure of the players, and they decide to make some wagers on who will win the game.



Then they come up with prop bets—what will be the next number rolled on a die? Who will score the next point? That kind of thing.

Then imagine an extended network of acquaintances of people making the bets. Maybe one of them is a spouse who is concerned about how much their significant other might lose in their bets. Maybe another is basing some of their own business on how they expect one of the bettors to do. So they set up their own series of systems and controls to react to how those bets go.

That third group has only a loose connection to the people playing the game. They're reacting to a reaction, and they are concerned with their own financial well-being and that of the bettors. The people playing the game only loosely figure into their worldview. And the skill of the game-players has little to do with what is happening at two removes from them.

That's a huge part of the modern economy. When you look at a list of megacorporate subsidiaries, you'll see a high number of financial corporations. A large number of them have no bank branches and don't take business from most of you reading this. They're shuffling pieces behind the scenes, making bets on what is or isn't happening, and trying to make money out of those who are successful and those who fail.

- This stuff gets really intricate, but the gambling metaphor is apt. If you were taking a run to sabotage an urban brawl team, but you knew you had little chance of success, you might take some of your expected payout and bet it on the side you're **not** sabotaging. That way, if the job works, you get paid, and you come out ahead. If it doesn't work, you win the bet, and still come out ahead. The goal is to rig the system so that it pays you no matter what. In financial circles, this is called "risk management."
- Sunshine
- That's not exactly what risk management is, but it's also not entirely wrong.
- Mr. Bonds

One of the many bizarre side effects of this is that you can make a pile of money without actually making money. If you have the right connections—if you're nobility, not a serf—you can convince others to invest in whatever scheme you hatch, and then when some investors come in, others follow. Then you chase your scheme, work out some publicity, and burn through your initial capital. People begin to think what you're doing *must* be worth something, because you seem wealthy and they keep hearing about you. You get a few years of grace. Then, maybe, you're still not making money. Your expectations have not been met. There are rumblings that you might not be able to take your idea to its full potential. Maybe you get ousted,

or maybe your company crashes and burns. But you want to know the beauty of it? Whichever the outcome, you're likely walking out of there with a ton of money. Remember that the highest form of punishment for people on the street is losing their lives, either through execution that is slow or execution carried out on the spot. When people at the top go bad? They face the prospect of maybe having to sell one of their houses.

Horizon is a prime example of this. The corporation ascended to the Big Ten despite the fact that only a small portion of their business is accessible to the general public. Their entertainment offerings are available to all, but the rest of it—the public relations, the consultant services, financial services, etc.—are for the other people at the top. In large part, despite the sniping between the megas, Horizon's services are built to preserve the existing power structure. You can look at their kinder, gentler rhetoric, their supposed pro-employee arrangements, but if you want to look at the deep, dark secret of Horizon, it's simple: They are built to undergird zombie capitalism and keep it shambling forward. They don't make anything—they work to keep money circulating among the wealthy.

- Yep. Whenever you look at what it takes to build a revolution, it usually **doesn't** involve rich people passing money back and forth between them. Any reformist rhetoric from Horizon is an illusion.
- Old Crow

## TITANS FALL

While the megacorporations seem like an inevitable, unchanging part of our world, the fact is that they occasionally change—a fact that has been underlined recently. Yes, replacing NeoNET with Spinrad does not really change the world order that much, but think of what ruined them: It was something as simple as artificial intelligences designing an escape plan.

- "Simple" is a very wrong word to apply to anything related to CFD.
- Butch

Moments like this serve a purpose similar to Oliver Cromwell's brief reign over England: They wake people up to possibilities. There are a thousand plots hatching out in the world now, people looking at the spark that could start a chain reaction that could stagger one of the world's titans. The vast majority of them will not work, of course. But if even one does, we'll have to re-orient ourselves again, and we will re-jigger our understanding of what is possible.

- Remember, though, that Ares endured the Excalibur fiasco, the bug war, and the death of Damien Knight, and they still seem to



be humming along. Not every disaster is fatal, and coming up with one that is, is incredibly difficult.

- › Cosmo
- › Just like anything else worth doing.
- › Old Crow

## POWER AND PRIVILEGES

As was the case in original feudalism, the nobility of the world is fond of titles and hierarchies. Their kingdoms are clearly labeled to help us know of their size and scope. Here is a quick rundown of the major classifications.

### AAA: PRIME MEGACORPORATION

The masters of the universe. AAA status means that a megacorporation has achieved the status of global superpower. It means they have at least one representative on the Corporate Court, and one representative on the board of the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaftsbank. That also means they have an ownership share in the bank equal with each of the other AAA megacorporations. There have consistently been ten AAA megacorps for the last quarter century. Seven have held that status since these things were first arranged. Everyone can rattle off the names of the Big Ten because they have made themselves omnipresent and indispensable to life on Earth (and off-planet). They have armies, fleets, millions of citizen and non-citizen employees, and governments at their disposal.

### AA: MEGACORPORATION

After the Megacorporate Audit and Revisions, there are just shy of forty independent AA-status corporation—legally recognized as megacorporations—listed by the Corporate Court and the nations signed onto the Business Recognition Accords. That doesn't include subsidiaries of the Big Ten that are large enough to be AA-sized, like Knight Errant, BMW, and Dassault-Esprit. Many of these megacorps are now or began as public-private nationalization rescues of entire nation-states' economies. They are regional superpowers, and some global powers that rival the size and scope of the smaller Big Ten megas, something that all parties are well aware of.

The AA megacorporations are large enough to be dangerous and small enough to be prey for the Big Ten if any one or more decided to make an example of one. The late Cord Mutual is one such example of what can happen when an AAA turns its attention to a smaller competitor. Fortunately for the two score that survived the Megacorporate Au-

dit and Revisions, the Big Ten are either too busy to pay attention to them or are being played off each other by those very same AA megacorporations.

AA megacorporations have most of the privileges enjoyed by the Big Ten. They don't have ownership shares in Z-O Bank, they don't have representation on the Corp Court, and they cannot contribute to Court operations. These are hotly contested issues, and the agitators among the AA seeking more representation and involvement have grown even louder in recent days. But to succeed, they'll need to apply pressure that goes beyond words.

- › It's tough for them to gain leverage on their larger kin. The AAAs have more money (generally), larger armies, and of course the Corporate Court. The argument from AAs saying, "It's in our interest to give us a voice on the Corporate Court" means nothing to the Big Ten. The AAs have to craft an argument saying, "It's in **your** interest to give us a voice on the Corporate Court." That's a hard sell. The brutal way is to keep hitting the AAAs and tell them it will stop when they share power (the Maersk strategy). A more sophisticated way is to monitor Corporate Court rulings and show the Big Ten how useful you could be in carrying out their orders—if only they'd let you.
- › Dr. Spin

### A RANKING: MULTINATIONAL

Technically, any corporation operating in two or more nation-states with operations that cross borders are multinational. The reality is that size matters. There are smaller national and multinationals with various ratings from B to Junk, reflecting the Corporate Court Security and Exchange Commission's (CCSEC) rating of the corporations' credit, assets, revenue. Anything less than A-status doesn't really matter to the CCSEC. A-ranked corporations may be called megacorporations in light of their size and scope, but they aren't in the eyes of the law and those who matter. What matters is that they have the credit, assets, and revenue to maintain standing lines of credit and accounts with the Z-O Bank, and they can petition the Court to hear a dispute (the Court cannot reject megacorporations' petitions sight unseen, at least not officially). They also get to field their own armies, the original perk of megacorporate status.

A-status multinationals are the most dangerous predators in the corporate waters because they are big enough to destroy anyone reading this without a thought, but small enough for the Big Ten and even some AAs like Yakashima and Mærsk to do the same to some of them. On top of that, there are many hungry A corps that used to be at the top of the heap within living memory of their older and disappearing owners and execs—Nestlé (part of Zeta-ImpChem), Wal Mart, and Cross (once a AAA and near equal competitor with Ares). Others have been humbled quite recently as a result of the Revision—Telestrian, Hyundai and Yang Su,



and Genesis Consortium. As with many corporate machinations at the moment, legacy and ambition are forces that will bear out some great and terrible things before the end of this century.

## UNRATED AND 'UNRATED'

As we said, anything smaller than A-rated is effectively unrated. They have no cachet with the Court, no permanent business with Z-O Bank, and none of the privileges the A corps enjoy. This doesn't mean they aren't powerful, but they aren't going to break the world with their maneuvers and activities, barring some kind of a miracle. Miracles have occurred before, especially when those unrated corporations are part of or partners with megacorporations, governments (national affiliate subsidiaries like those operating in Aztlán and parts of China are, by corporate law, unrated), and the occasional draconic or other supernatural interlopers. The speed of business can turn any corp into Trans-Latvia Enterprises or be the *casus belli* for a street war, like Ulu Maika Investments.

## PRIVILEGES

Money can buy you everything. When you own everything, these are just a few of the perks that come along for the ride.

## SIN REGISTRATION

Under the Business Recognition Accords, SIN registration is an inherent sovereign power of every signatory state and every megacorporation. Each state gets to decide the criteria for granting a SIN, and citizenship, and no other signatory power can strip that from a sovereign power. The format for SINS has been standardized over the decades, and the Global SIN Registry is one of those things that people insist will happen at some point, sometime.

What matters as far as you're concerned is that SINS bestow citizenship. There are hundreds of millions of megacorporate employees, but the number of corporate citizens is relatively small. One can spend a lifetime working for Ares and never become a citizen. One may also be recruited to work for Apple, a wholly owned subsidiary of Ares and Ares Consumer Products, with Ares citizenship as an enticement. The top-level megacorps decide who makes the cut. In the last decade, that has expanded beyond metahumanity to a privileged number of metasapients and synthetic intelligences. About the only thing that can't become a citizen is a business entity itself (some lawyer got a nice bonus for catching this exception and slipping the prohibition into the BRA).

- The corps very much want us to see getting a SIN as some kind of privilege, but it's for their benefit, not ours. The amount of

tracking they can do is vast—how you travel, where you tend to stop, how your earnings trend over a lifetime, when you make major purchases, etc. They also track movements to help them find spies and saboteurs, or look for who might be fixing to cause trouble by being somewhere they're not supposed to be. SINS are a huge part of their law-enforcement mechanism, because if you look in detail to the history of behavior by a certain SIN holder, you frequently can find a way they broke one of your laws. Then you have leverage over them.

- Sunshine

## CURRENCY AND SCRIP

Money. All of the Big Ten and most AA megacorporations own banks and financial institutions (or are collections of such, like the FBV and HKB). These serve as the megacorps' treasuries and reserve banks, and for the last half-century these banks have been amazingly well-run. History has tended not to be kind to corporations with bottomless piggy banks they can raid from. Having the eye of the Z-O Bank and the other AAAs on them has saved these monstrosities from themselves more often than any of us want to think about.

That said, having reserves means being able to issue currency. Most megacorporations have some kind of currency that can be exchanged on the markets. Since many megacorporations are privately owned, it's just another form of security to trade in the markets, and few people actually use these currencies like dollars or euros or nuyen.

Internally, however, every megacorporation issues scrip to be exchanged within their closed economic systems, between employees, citizens, subsidiaries and divisions, and the occasional customers. Trading scrip outside of official corporate exchanges or with Z-O Bank itself is illegal. Naturally, this has led to massive black and grey markets that, like all black and grey markets, are fed and watered by the institutions that made them necessary in the first place. The illicit nature gives the cogs a bit of a thrill and a taste of independence. It also happens to create a lot of datatrails that ensure long-term loyalty from those same cogs.

## EXTRATERRITORIALITY

This is what you all came for: Where do the corps draw the line between where they are the law and where they have to at least pay lip service to someone else's law? The practical answer is "Nowhere. They own it all." The reality is long and complicated, but the important things to note are:

1. The space must be continuously owned, contiguously defined space, and must be self-contained.
2. The space must be entirely owned and operated by a megacorporation. Subsidiaries don't count (unless the subsidiary is also a megacorp). Joint ventures don't count (un-



less it is a Court operation—then you’re screwed, anyway). Assets owned but not managed directly by a megacorporation don’t count.

3. The territory should be marked somehow, though the exact nature of the marking is subject to ongoing debate. Is an ARO enough? Is simply placing the words “Ares property” enough? Sometimes the megacorporations want to go overboard, and label the hell out of everything to intimidate possible interlopers. Other times, they want to make it minimal, the better to lure unsuspecting flies into a trap.

If you meet these conditions, you have extra-territorial land. The laws of the nation you’re in don’t matter. Your laws do. So let’s look at what these laws do.

## LAWS AND ENFORCEMENT

Corporations set their own laws and their own enforcement. The main question is: What is guiding their decision making? Yes, profit, but they have to take other things into consideration—after all, no corporation yet has passed a law saying, “Any individual who sets foot on our property must turn over all liquid assets to us,” because while that might work once in some people, you’d get a ton of disputes, and most people would avoid your property from that time forward. So yes, corporations can literally get away with murder, but they can’t get away with it *all the time*. For whatever comfort that brings.

If you want to look at a guiding philosophy for how corporations make laws, consider the history of loitering laws. On their face, these laws define loitering as something like “remaining in one place under circumstances that would warrant a reasonable person to be suspicious of criminal activity.” There is a lot of wiggle room in that kind of a law, and a bunch of room for personal judgment on how the law is enforced. That’s exactly what the law is designed for: giving law enforcement officers an excuse to drive off people they don’t like. Two humans chatting in the plaza in front of your corporate headquarters? Not loitering. An ork in a ripped t-shirt, or a troll in fishnets? Loitering. Someone mouthing off to security guards and then not leaving? Definitely loitering.

What we’re saying is that corporate laws do not exist to serve any larger notions of justice or fairness—they exist to allow a corporation to do what they want to do. We’re all fortunate that they want people to like them and don’t want a ton of bad publicity, otherwise the laws would be brutal. As it is, they’re merely arbitrary and capricious.

- It’s been said that if law enforcement looked at literally anyone, they could find some laws they broke. This gets even worse

when you’re moving from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in the course of your normal daily travels. Who can keep track of what laws apply where? This is why security personnel are to be avoided—no matter what you’re up to, they can find some reason to kick you out of a place or detain you if they feel like it. Don’t let them feel like it.

- Kat-o’-Nine-Tales

## CORPORATE COURT STANDING

As with any governing body, the Corporate Court only has the power constituents grant to it. But since the Big Ten and AAs believe in the value of keeping a certain amount of peace, they’re willing to let the Court rule over certain disputes, and then accede to their rulings. This can be a burden when the Court rules against you, but at its heart it does what it is supposed to—it provides outside expertise that gives some way of resolving disputes besides pounding the drek out of each other. As the Revision showed, the Court also plays a strong role in keeping smaller corps in line when needed, which is worth an awful lot.

## ZÜRICH-ORBITAL GEMEINSCHAFTSBANK ACCOUNT

The megacorporations have pretty much all the money in the world—why does it matter where they keep it? It matters because keeping money in the Zürich-Orbital Gemeinschaftsbank is not about earning interest. It’s about controlling the economy of the world.

There is a lot of complicated economic theory involved here, so we’ll cut to the chase: Z-OGB issues the nuyen, and the value of the nuyen is connected to the investments the Big Ten have placed in the bank. That gives all of them the power of currency manipulation, and they’re all willing to use it. They won’t go wild, as huge swings in the value of the nuyen serve absolutely no one. But a touch of devaluing here, a bit of inflation there can have a shrinking or magnifying effect on corporate profits. For this reason, members of the Big Ten are usually quite secretive about their plans for Z-OGB investments, and any inside information about what they’re doing is worth a bundle.

- Which means it’s also incredibly tough to get. Remember, the Corporate Court is also home to the Grid Overwatch Division, and they take the security of the Court and anything related to Zürich-Orbital more seriously than anything. Only attempt a Matrix raid on these holdings if you’re okay with your brain being fried.
- Orbital DK
- Says the woman who has made multiple such raids.
- Slamm-O!





## ZURICH-ORBITAL HABITAT

Once the most feared set of astronomical coordinates in the universe, now it's just another blip passing through the night sky, assuming you can even see the night sky where you are. The long and the short of it is that the Zurich-Orbital Habitat is one of the oldest continuously operating space stations around, and age has made it a liability. At this point, every piece of the station has been replaced or upgraded more than once so that there is no bit of the original *Freedom* station there.

- No Freedom, even in space. How poetic.
- Thorn

## RESIDENTS

Very few people live on Z-O anymore. Taiga Mitsuhamma was the last one of any consequence because, in case you were in a coma at the time, his death led to MCT's little ownership clusterfrag that was compounded by Korin Yamana's untimely demise. The fact is that there are bigger and better places for those hoping to escape mortality among the stars than a cramped set of tubes.

## VISITORS

While the Habitat might seem cramped to the ultra-rich, it's still a luxury pad in orbit, giving it some caché. With a decent amount of empty luxury space, the Habitat has taken to welcoming exclusive conferences and tourists. It may be an old facility, but the interior trappings can still be spectacular. Want to cap off your business meeting by sipping on champagne chilled by frozen moon rocks while the sun rises over the earth below? The Habitat awaits.

## THE FUTURE

In a word: expansion. With both the space elevator and the mass driver up and functioning, and interest in Mars and the moon growing, the Habitat has a role to play as a waystation for visitors going to and from those areas. At its present size, it can only serve that function in limited form, but adding more residence space could make it a popular hotel in space. Security questions remain, as many high-ranking corporate executives have no desire to see a significant volume of people so close to the heart of the Z-OGB and the world's currency.

- Just build a nearby but separate station! Sheesh.
- X-Prime



- › I don't blame them for being worried. If I got within spitting distance of the Habitat, I wouldn't sleep a wink. I'd be way too consumed with plans on how to bring the whole thing down—me with it, if necessary.
- › Old Crow

## THE CORPORATE COURT

The Court is all about the status quo. No one looks to the Court to overturn unfair laws or set dramatic precedents valuing human rights. They are there to provide consistent solutions to corporate disputes, setting up a rules framework within which corps can play their game. Their over-arching goal is to keep the corps running as they are. Thankfully, they don't even pretend to swathe their proceedings in any claim of justice or humanity. They just go about the business of preserving business.

### THE COURT

The Court serves like many a civil court in earth, hearing torts torts, contract cases, and other civil matters. They generally don't deal with individual criminal matters; when it becomes clear that some case they have been hearing involves individual law-breaking of some sort, they typically remand that to the earthly jurisdiction of their choice (unless they're in the mood to settle things with a single Thor shot, but that's exceptionally rare). Unlike earthly courts, they have few forces at their disposal that they can order to uphold their orders. They rely on buy-in from the members to do that. If a member decides to ignore a ruling, they'll face the wrath of the other members, and as Aztechnology can tell you, that can get very rough.

The Court has a series of escalating consequences available to them. They are:

- **Sanctions:** This can include freezing assets or limiting the scope of trade available to a particular entity.
- **Asset loss:** This is a fine. If it's anything less than a few hundred million nuyen, it has no impact at all, so fines typically fall around half a billion. Physical assets and personnel may also be awarded in a dispute.
- **Physical strikes:** This is the sort of thing the Court was created to prevent, so it's kind of strange that it's one of their remedies. As was mentioned above, the Court has not force of its own to deliver a strike, so it usually falls to other corporations to provide the muscle to deliver the blow. Of course, when disputes get to this point, it's usually no trouble to find people willing to carry out the sentence.

- **Omega Order:** This is the Corporate Court equivalent of a death sentence, an order to kill a corporation and strip it for parts. Operation: Reciprocity against Aztechnology and the recent dismantling of NeoNET are the closest the Court has come to delivering an Omega Order, but both activities ended up with some parts (substantial parts, in Aztechnology's case) still standing, leading to disagreements about whether they were Omega Orders or not.

### THE CORPORATE COURT MATRIX AUTHORITY

While most of us will never deal with the jurisprudence aspect of the Corporate Court, the Corporate Court Matrix Authority (CCMA) affects our lives daily. They design and implement Matrix protocols, and they charge the Grid Overwatch Division with enforcing them. GOD has Demi-GODs in hosts all over the world and beyond, and if you're doing anything illegal on the Matrix, they're looking for you. People who forget that tend not to hack for long.

### THE JUSTICES

None of you care who they are. Even if you did, you're never going to interact with them. Or their families. Or their families' families. There are a million spies, cops, and spycops with no qualms about killing anyone who even thinks about using this for leverage.

It is a shame, too, because the justices tend to be both legal and managerial killers, and yet as is always the case, many of their children and relatives, who are embedded within the justices' respective corps, are stupid and prone to humiliation and failure. It's like an iron law of governance going back to prehistory.

- › You have no idea.
- › The Orange Queen

But if for nothing other than to help you in Corporate Trivia night at your local pub, here is some key information:

**Name:** Chief Justice Alexander Belczyk

**Corporation:** Saeder-Krupp

**Known For:** Loyalty to Lofwyr, acting like royalty

**Likes:** Aged cheese, propriety, bootlicking

**Weakness:** He spent a lot of capital to punish NeoNET, so his supply of favors is low.

**Name:** Emma Binghampton

**Corporation:** Horizon



**Known For:** Charm, social skills, wine knowledge

**Likes:** Wine, social gatherings, seemingly simple conversation with layers of meaning

**Weakness:** Wine

**Name:** Michele Borden

**Corporation:** Ares

**Known For:** Deal-making, horse-trading

**Likes:** Being underestimated, analyzing case details carefully

**Weaknesses:** Might not be ruthless enough should others on the Court decide to come after her.

**Name:** Basima Oriol Diasruíz

**Corporation:** Saeder-Krupp

**Known For:** Knowing things she's not supposed to know, deeply understanding sabotage operations

**Likes:** Finding information she's not supposed to know

**Weaknesses:** Her legal opinions are weak, which lead to difficulty building coalitions on the Court.

**Name:** Li Feng

**Corporation:** Wuxing

**Known For:** Being just so old

**Likes:** Naps, corporate budgets, intricate financial agreements

**Weaknesses:** After defying age for a while, Li Feng seems to be feeling its effects. He might need some time off for rejuvenation treatment.

**Name:** Ren Iwano

**Corporation:** Evo

**Known For:** Being well-connected, perhaps wanting to be CEO

**Likes:** Spotlights, speeches

**Weaknesses:** Listening

**Name:** Steven Nishimura

**Corporation:** Shiawase

**Known For:** Being really funny, being a jerk

**Likes:** Insulting people, asking incisive questions

**Weaknesses:** Sensitivity

**Name:** Kenji Nitta

**Corporation:** Renraku

**Known For:** Fashion-plate style, great hair

**Likes:** Power, wealth, long walks on the beach

**Weaknesses:** Paying attention in Court

**Name:** Brewster Pilium

**Corporation:** Spinrad

**Known For:** Not standing on ceremony, speaking out of turn

**Likes:** Making jokes during Court hearings, acting nonchalant

**Weaknesses:** Acting like he cares about Court cases

**Name:** Adele Yoholo

**Corporation:** Spinrad

**Known For:** Intimidating stare, authoritative statements

**Likes:** Power brokering, corporate negotiations

**Weaknesses:** Relaxing

**Name:** Kosuke Shimizu

**Corporation:** MCT

**Known For:** Counter-intuitive decision making, affinity for soothsaying

**Likes:** Going against the grain, making other justices confused

**Weaknesses:** Clearly explaining why he does what he does.

**Name:** Mayumi Tsukino

**Corporation:** MCT

**Known For:** Corporate loyalty, gentle persuasion

**Likes:** MCT leadership, Earth's manasphere for social adept purposes

**Weaknesses:** Does not enjoy being out of the manasphere for long.

**Name:** Mirna Velazquez

**Corporation:** Aztechnology

**Known For:** Being new and difficult to read

**Likes:** Keeping quiet, raising her eyebrow in inscrutable ways

**Weaknesses:** Explaining her judicial philosophy clearly

## THE SPINRAD SHUFFLE

Richard Villiers gambled like he's always done, except this time he lost, and he nearly lost everything. We can dissect the remains of that situation until the corpus is mush, but what matters is that NeoNET ceased to be, and the seat that kept Villiers and Novatech among the AAA megacorps was handed off to Johnny Spinrad by means of the ten-year lease of JRJ International to Spinrad. Not to SpIn, and not to SpinradGlobal. To Johnny himself.

The new boss entered in late 2079, and he dumped Villiers' longtime justice and advisor, Lynn Osborne, before the digital ink was set. Osborne's clever, and she managed to remain exactly where she's been for the last quarter century—running Zurich-Orbital. Spinrad appointed a new justice, Brewster Pilium, in her place. Things continued as before.

And then, a little over one year ago, Ares and everyone at the top of the megacorp nearly ate drek. They went to war with the bugs and won;



and then they went to war with the UCAS, and they won that. Ares has been limping along, relatively speaking for a megacorporation, but it's not what it was. One of those things it stopped being was one of the three megacorps with two justices. For the last two decades, since the Big Ten settled it among themselves to hold the number of AAA megacorps to ten, Ares, MCT, and S-K have each had two justices. As it happens, one of Ares' justices' terms expired earlier this year. I'll spare you the suspense and the politics: Spinrad Global got a second seat.

There was no other way around it: MCT and S-K are the big two, but number three is also a Japanacorp. Their ranks weren't going to earn it the bonus seat. Aztechnology wasn't because it's Aztechnology. Wuxing, Evo, and Horizon are too small, and the former two are despised by the Japanacorps. Slipping to number nine, Ares couldn't hold onto the seat based on the math of how these things are decided. That left Spinrad Global or an outsider to take the seat. Sometimes, it seems like Johnny Spinrad cannot lose to save his life.

## RESISTANCE

So we've given hints that maybe there are weaknesses in the corporate structure, or at least a nation that they could be brought down. That's not going to happen by itself, and it's not going to happen without help. So what possible partners are out there? Here are some.

### BROKERAGE X

Insider trading is something regular people aren't supposed to do because corporations would like to reserve that tool for themselves. Brokerage X exists to bring this tool to the people. If you find some sensitive paydata or do significant damage to a corporation, Brokerage X wants to know, and they'll manage your account and any others they have accordingly. This can multiply your earnings significantly (and if you don't currently own shares in a company and don't have any liquid assets, don't worry—stock markets have long since evolved tools that keep that from being an obstacle).

Making money for runners is nice, but how does this bring about a revolution? The secret is that Brokerage X has been around for more than a decade, and they have amassed a large roster of clients. Their goal is to have some ownership stakes that allow them to use their collective voice to influence corporate activities. They play their cards close to the vest, so it's not clear how close they are to their goal, but their day will come.

- No, that's not their goal. They don't want to just ask corporations to be slightly nicer. They want to bring them down. Their gathering their holdings to wait for the right time to sell a bunch of them, driving down prices that might cause some major crashes. They want to use what they have to help burn the whole thing down.

➤ Sounder

## ATTACK!

After many years in operation, Attack! still isn't well organized, and that's the way they like it. They have no over-arching philosophy besides "corps are bad"; if you share that, you're welcome to help their operations. Their actions have included industrial sabotage, datasteals, exposing corporate secrets, and anything else that will make a corporation look bad. They're not going to stage a concerted campaign to bring single corp down, but if you can find a way to overlap with their efforts, they can briefly serve as a force multiplier.

## EQUITY

Where Attack! is broad but scattershot, Equity is tighter and more focused. They want to build sustained campaigns against corporations, sharing data on corporate activities in order to build a picture of their weaknesses and where they can be hit. They work with a lot of hackers, because the bread and butter of their operation is the type of information corps hide from others—internal complaints, pending investigations, covered-up scandals, and so on. Once they have enough information, they build a plan of attack, looking at removing people, exposing flaws, and keeping the pressure on for as long as possible.

What's surprising is that only recently has Equity started working with Brokerage X. Their activities would seem to have a clear overlap—Brokerage X could use Equity's supply of data to trade stocks that would bring Equity a good strain of income, while Equity could use Brokerage X as another tool to put pressure on the corporations they target.

- While these groups often talk about the importance of building broad coalitions, they sometimes erect barriers that keep this from happening. This can often be a trust issue—when someone contacts you about bringing down a corporation, but they have considerable stock holdings themselves, then there is immediate suspicion about their motives. You may need a feeling-out period to make sure you can work together. In this case, that period lasted a long time.

➤ Sunshine



## BLACK STAR

Black Star is a mercenary group with a cause, and that cause is anti-corporatism. They refuse to work for A-rated or higher corps, and they'll sometimes work against those groups for nothing. If it's a small town fighting off an influx of toxic spirits from a nearby polluted zone, or barrens rats trying to fend off harassment from law enforcement, or low-wage workers trying to keep their homes from being demolished so that a new luxury arcology can be constructed, Black Star is willing to help. As with others on this list, they are more minor annoyance than existential threat to the corps, but like a mosquito, they could be squished if they're not careful.

## UCAS

This entry should raise some eyebrows. There are two obstacles to seeing the UCAS as a powerful anti-corporate force: first, believing they're powerful, and second, believing they're anti-corporate. In their heyday (meaning right up until last year), they were as pro-corporate as any nation in earth,

letting corporations run wild as long as they provided economic growth in their borders. But now, they have been brought down low and abandoned, and they no longer feel any sense of obligation to the corporations who have left them in their condition.

Is that enough to turn them anti-corporate? Perhaps. The fact that Motor City is within their borders could push the nation to more overt anti-corporate activity. The question is, will they be able to build any power to do anything about it?

- The answer is no. Their resources are low and going to get lower, and they're not going to want to raise their head up to let the corps kick them around. They're going to hunker down and focus on survival.
- Sunshine
- Don't be so hasty. Their military has shrunk but is still formidable, and the nukes backing them didn't go anywhere. They have rich farmland and productive seas. They have millions of citizens. They won't be a major world power, but they **will** be a power, and it won't take long to get there.
- Kay St. Irregular





# ARES

POSTED BY: GLITCH

## OVERVIEW

Ares. The Gun Corp. The All-American Corp. The best friend the UCAS ever had. The definition of the military-industrial complex. Damien Knight's personal plaything. A giant bug hive that could eat us all. Which one's true? Which one's mostly true? What defines Ares as a whole?

All of it.

Ares, more than any other corporation, is diverse. A megacorp is invested in dozens, if not hundreds, of industries, but even compared to its peers, Ares is everywhere. The corporation's assorted parts compete at every turn, each executive the lord of a petty kingdom, and no one ever fights so hard as when the stakes are so low. Ares runs the gamut from owning a city on the moon to a business where they set up lemonade stands for children, from educating schoolchildren to selling

a wide variety of coffins customized to the dearly departed's hobby of choice. They own so many small businesses that no one really knows how much they have, only that there are teams of lawyers whose only job is to try to track it, and they've never been able to finalize a count for the annual shareholders meeting.

They've been the number-one gun-manufacturer for as long as any of us have been alive, tops in space even longer than that, and have shaped the nation of the UCAS so much that most people don't know where Ares stops and the UCAS begins ... and now they're taking that show on the road to the CAS.

In short, Ares is everything you've ever heard of and a whole lot more.

Except for the bugs. But we'll get to that.

- Bugs. Why did it have to be bugs?
- Bull





## HISTORY

You're getting the short version. If you want the long one, there are dozens of documentaries that will walk you through the whole thing.

Ares started in the twentieth century as the pet corporation of Nicholas Aurelius, an all-American businessman who'd built himself a conglomeration of corps, with General Motors as the crown jewel of his empire. In the wake of Shiawase becoming the world's first megacorporation, he quickly moved to gather himself a similar status for Ares. He leveraged this status and sold off his stake in General Motors to buy NASA from the collapsing United States, riding out the collapse of that nation and the first Crash with great skill, but at the cost of his health. When he died in 2032, he did so with a smile, knowing his son Leonard had the corporation in good hands.

On January 24, 2033, the Nanosecond Buyout ended that dream, passing a huge stake to unknown corporate raider Damien Knight, whose sudden rise from nowhere stunned the board into passing him the CEO position over Leonard's objections, starting a forty-year tug of war between the two. Who Knight was, where he came from, and how he managed the trick was the subject of rumors for decades. While we think we know some of the truth, we'll never know it all with his recent death.

- Or "death."
- Plan 9

Ares got advance warning of the inspect spirits and moved to fight against them, but they were unaware of the full scope until Chicago's nests suddenly unfolded and swarmed across the city. Ares Firewatch teams, newly formed anti-bug strike teams, rolled into the city and detonated a magically modified nuke, sealing one hive and sending the remaining spirits into torpor. The city was sealed up and essentially left for dead for years, until Ares eventually came back and unleashed a massive wave of magic-eating bacteria into the city. They then declared victory and rolled out, leaving the UCAS government to pick up the pieces.

Since all that was done over his fierce objections, Leonard left the corp, selling his shares off

## ARES MACROTECHNOLOGY

**Corporate Court Rank (2081):** 9

**Corporate Slogan:** "Making a safer world."

**Corporate Status:** AAA, Public Corporation

**World Headquarters:** Atlanta, CAS

**President/CEO:** Arthur Vogel (interim)

**Major Shareholders:** None

### MAJOR DIVISIONS AND NOTABLE SUBSIDIARIES

#### Ares Arms

Fleche Armaments (miltech systems), Israel Military Industries (armaments)

#### Ares Consumer Products

BacteriTech (bioware/genetech), CerebroTech (cyberware, optics), Crystal Optics (electronics/cybernetics), Fig Inc. (electronics, computer hardware, software), General Dynamics (electronics), Huntington Holdings (cosmetics, fashion, modelling, publishing), Leviathan Technical Communications (communications/electronics/cybertech), Lifescape (AR/SIM/software), Quick Trigger Systems (software), Unlimited Technologies (hybrid technology/research)

#### Ares Heavy Industry

Ares Integrated Solutions (heavy industry/nanotech), Ares MacroMotors (heavy industry/automotive), Honda (automotive), MosTrans (automotive/naval)

#### Ares Services

Ares Global Entertainment (sim/trid production), Executive Protection Services (personal security), Hard Corps (security service provider), Info Santé (medical service provider), Platinum Records (music, publishing), The Post Office (delivery service), Public Education Services (education), Qantas (airline), Socratic Learning Solutions (education), UCAS Today (news media), Wolverine Security (security service provider)

#### Ares Space

AresSpace CommSat (aerospace/communications), AresSpace Lifters (orbital construction/transport), NASA Consulting Inc. (aerospace/orbital management)

#### Knight Errant

and moving to join upstart Cross Applied Technologies. There, his personality clashed with the local Quebec culture and his hate for Knight found purchase with Cross, who had his own reasons to hate Knight. The two joined forces and managed to deal several blows to the corp, which was hamstrung from infighting between Knight, Nadia Daviar, and eco-lawyer Arthur Vogel, until the second Crash took Cross's life and left the corp vulnerable. Knight, never one to miss an oppor-



tunity, swooped in and dismantled Cross, grafting some parts on but more focused on destroying it. Emerging victorious, with one foe slain and another financially ruined, he returned to Detroit at the height of his power.

- Vogel got in by getting stock from President Dunkelzahn's will. Daviar was the representative of "Gavilan Ventures," a holding company with murky origins connected to Cross, Dunkelzahn, or "mysterious Euro powers," depending on the rumor you follow.
- Snopes

Headed with victory, Knight started trying to turn the bugs from enemies to assets, thinking he could outsmart them as he had everyone else and emerge victorious. Turns out that they're craftier than he wagered on, and they turned the operations into small hives. Knight found out and had them levelled, but not until one queen, 68G, escaped. More on her later. Knight saw a new flank open in his battle with Daviar and Vogel, who were reinforced by Nicholas Aurelius, a.k.a. Young Nick, the son of Leonard. He joined the corp as Gavilan's spokesperson, Daviar having gathered her own stock in the meantime, while some of his own men, most notably Roger Soaring-Owl, left over his bug experimentation.

With the corp being strained between the three sides, 68G started attacking the threat to her existence and began to infiltrate Ares. It's hard to know which faction inflicted the most damage over the next few years as one major project after another flamed out, the corp bled money and reputation, and the war against the bugs continued to draw more resources from the corporate coffers. By the time of Boston's collapse, Ares' factions could barely co-exist and young Nick became the next casualty, hurled from his plane by insect spirits. Daviar sold her stake soon after and joined the Dunkelzahn Institute for Magical Research. The entire board of directors was killed by a bomb in Detroit, leaving Knight in full command and, it seems, mad with power.

This brings us to the Battle of Detroit, the culmination of Knight's master plan to funnel all insect spirits into a single place and to destroy them in one fell swoop. This ... did not go as planned. At the same time, the Blackouts struck the UCAS, Ares forces broke from the UCAS armed forces when they were needed the most, and Detroit collapsed. From the ashes of Detroit came a miraculously survived Vogel, who announced that Knight died in Detroit. He then abandoned the city, pulling the corporate core of Ares out of Detroit and moving it to Atlanta, where he announced the new global HQ of Phoenix Tower and added that he'll be stepping down as CEO in a year's time, whether the new board has a candidate picked out or not. Which brings us to today.

- The pullout from Detroit was ordered via internal mail, but got garbled badly. Some read it as the entire corp pulling out of the UCAS, and Ares facilities were abandoned as corporate citizens fled with what they could carry to join the Vogel convoy. He had no idea that there'd been a miscommunication until the first other execs joined the run to Atlanta. Getting that cleared up took weeks. In the end, only Detroit was fully emptied and even then, only the Ares-branded businesses left. A handful of other businesses uprooted themselves, but most stayed put. Of course, given the reputation that Ares has in the UCAS now, they might have been better off moving.

➤ Hard Exit

- I still can't believe they survived all of that!
- /dev/grrl

- Corps are like roaches. Megacorps even more so.
- Kane

## ARES OF EXPERTISE

- What you did there, I see it!
- Slamm-O!

## GUNS

Let's get it out of the way. Ares does guns. There, happy? That's what they're famous for, so that's all we need to talk about, right?

Wrong!

The small-arms industry that you know is barely a tick in the general income of a megacorp the size of Ares, even one that's had as many setbacks over the past decade as Ares has. You might wonder what they do, then? Space? Sure, they dominated everything from orbit outward for fifty years, but they have rivals worthy of the name now, and the income stream has shrunk over time due to that. Between the two, along with heavy industry, Ares is synonymous with the defense industry and military matters are a huge source of income. What you never think of are services and consumer goods, where they've been near the top for decades (more on that later), but more than anything else? They sell mythos.

- Myth-os? Like, a cereal?
- Slamm-O!

## MYTH

Let me pass the mic to our psychologist, here. Icarus?

Thanks, Glitch. The Ares zeitgeist is easy to overlook because it's all around you at all times. Like a fish in the ocean, you don't notice it be-





cause it's been around you for your entire life. Anyone can sell you a detachable magazine, but Ares branded them as Clips™ and made everyone believe that they were the best. They don't sell you cars, they sell you freedom. They don't absorb the populace into national slogans, they promote traditional values and patriotism. Take a moment to look at the names and brands of choice in Ares (a name which, in and of itself, draws upon Greek mythology). Everyone knows that Ares is the god of war, physically perfect, macho, and unbeatable, right? Chiseled marble and all that?

Nope!

Ares was a coward, the god of slaughter, who could never beat his far-smarter sister, Athena, and he routinely had to beg for mercy after failing in yet another scheme to gain power.

But you don't want that truth. You want the story. You want the *myth*. And that, at the end of the day, is what Ares sells you. 'Murica Burgers using beef imported from Australia, with a side invented in Belgium made of a vegetable perfected in Peru, things you could make at home for half the cost (a tenth if you use flavored soy), and healthier to boot, but that screaming eagle atop the sign? The stars and stripes? The Lady Liberties at the register and the Uncle Sams in the kitchen? All part of the experience. They want you to take a bite out of a nostalgic time that never existed, when the United States of America was a paragon of nobility and strength, never mind the genocidal attempts against the first nations, the racism, the corruption ... no, you want the lie, and you're willing to pay fifteen nuyen for the myth.

- > Hey! The Patriot Meal's on special right now for just ten nuyen!
- > Slamm-O!
- > By the way, Fred, Sprout-O's been getting chubbier and chubbier since I've been working. We talked about not getting him hooked on junk food. No more Joy Meals.
- > Netcat
- > But! But! They come with cool toys!
- > Slamm-O!
- > They're supposed to be for him, not you, Fred.
- > Bull

With the great success that Ares had in the UCAS, they exported that culture all over the world. For those of you who've never gone outside of your homeland, most large stores overseas have an "American Food" section for things promoted by Ares: Cheezey Chews, Jerk Soda, Ohio Cookies, Shotgun Beer, Sugar Overload Cereal, even Outlaw Cigarettes. Ares doesn't grow anything, but they buy plenty of raw materials to process into the junkiest of food, usually filled with high-fruc-



tose corn syrup. They shape it, flavor it, paint it bright colors, and market it all over the world. If you've never left the UCAS, you have no idea what bread is supposed to taste like.

- > It ... just tastes like bread?
- > Riot
- > No. No it most certainly does not.
- > Traveler Jones

In no way can this so-called "food" be considered nutritious ... in many ways, it's actively harmful. It's anti-food. But Ares has taken the myth of America, folded it into a colorful package, and sold it worldwide. Before the UnAmericans kick back and chuckle, you should know that Ares is a worldwide megacorp, and its tendrils are in every nation, some waving the red, white, and blue, but others are quite happy to wave the local colors and use local myths to sell you products. Fine British Tea of London, makers of fine British tea? Ares-owned. Sun King Cutlery, the finest utensils in all of Europe? Ares. Sun Tzu Military Academy? Anansi Matrix Solutions? Toque Hortons? All Ares.

- > NOT TOQUE HORTONS!!! NO!
- > Operator Bastard

I'll be here if there are questions, but for now, time to pass the mic back to MC Glitch.

Thanks, Icarus. Unlike Aztechnology, who hides everything under a hundred layers of ownership, or Renraku, who integrates sub-corporations into their overall distribution network and efficient corporate oversight, Ares is a chaotic whirlwind of ownership, where different branches are simply told, "Be profitable," and left to their own devices. They sometimes work together, they usually work alone, and sometimes they compete directly against one another. Under Damien Knight's leadership, the thought process was that the stone sharpens the blade, so pitting subsidiaries against one another was good for both. And if one happened to sink? Well, survival of the fittest. It was a ruthless corporate style that let the most cold-blooded rise over a ladder of bloody corpses and shuttered businesses. Trying to explain the org chart of a single Ares subsidiary will drive a Saeder-Krupp executive to tears in under ten minutes. Why does this movie production company own a box manufacturer? And a chain of shoe stores? A ten percent stake in two different noodle delivery services? A baseball team for fourth graders? And just bought a family-owned exotic tropical fish store when the owner died and his husband didn't want to stay around the memories? How does this work?!

That's just one small arm of the overall Ares octopus. Break off one arm, and it'll grow into another conglomerate, sometimes stealing food from the parent corp to feed itself. Yes, that's starfish biology, not cephalopod, but the important thing is that it's a giant monster of contradictions that competes with and sometimes strangles itself, while spreading over the countryside. That's just how Knight liked it, so that's what it became.

- > <Stares in horror>
- > Baka Dabora

## ARES CONSUMER PRODUCTS

As a side-effect of this, Ares owns, co-owns, or has shares in thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, perhaps millions, of brands. Outside of the depths of Manhattan legal bunkers, no one really knows what all they have the rights to, and more brands are produced every day. The constant drumbeat of NERPS can never stop moving, or it'll die. Washing powder that's one percent whiter than last year's? Sell it! Hot new band? Shill it! Chemical company came up with some random blanket covering? Brand it and fire up some 3 a.m. commercials! Profit margins on disposable bio-plastic junk are huge (and when it breaks and gets recycled, you just melt it down, put it in the injection mold-er, and sell whatever next year's Big Thing is). And it doesn't matter what the thing is; making people want it is what Ares does best. Sure, nine out of ten new products keel over and die after a year or two, but the one that hits it big? As unstoppable as Kim and Bobbie dolls or C.I. John. (both also owned by Ares, which is appropriate for "Corporate Issue" John, honestly.)

- > Okay, now \*I'm\* going to cry!
- > /dev/grrl
- > ... over Kim and Bobby dolls or C.I. John?
- > Kane

## ARES HEAVY INDUSTRY

Not very exciting, but Ares is second only to Saeder-Krupp in manufacturing, from cars to mining equipment to buildings. Where they differ tends to be in design philosophy. S-K believes in high-quality, conservative, classical design. Cars are made to last generations. Buildings for centuries. S-K Construction is an institution that you can trust, and while there's some variation in design, the overall style is looming, even oppressive, to let you know who's in charge. Ares, in contrast, builds to inspire. Why did the 2057 Chevy have fins? Because fins are cool! Why does Freedom Plaza have a giant lumberjack and bull in the middle of it? Because Paul Bunyan! Why



does a General Dynamics house-cleaning drone only last three years? Because a newer, better version will be available then, of course! Ares creates things with the intention of selling them again and again, rather than once. They're not cheap, like Aztechnology garbage, but they're not quality Saeder-Krupp engineering, either. What they are, more than anything else, is trendy and ever-changing.

Which brings us to Ares MacroMotors.

With Detroit's utter collapse, the merger of General Motors and Ares has come to a messy end. For decades, Ares had been moving more and more production to the CAS, with Alabama the big winner there, and when they looked at how much it would cost to salvage Detroit, Ares cut it off and walked away. They still own the General Motors name, and the famous brands beneath that banner, but they wanted a new start, and there's no better way to do that than with a new name. MacroMotors (not the best name; I blame Vogel) is that fresh start. They salvaged most of their top engineers and even more of their research and development, even as they left the ordinary line workers behind. These assets are being merged into the Ares facilities in Alabama, creating a new core from the existing network of supplies and transportation. Ares Heavy Industry is laying down new tracks for freight trains, creating new factories to build parts to ship on those lines. It is also rolling out new mining gear, hungry for the riches of the Ozarks and Appalachia to feed those factories. It's a huge investment, but local economies are footing a staggering part of the overall bill. Tax breaks, dismissing environmental surveys, selling mine access for a fraction of their worth—those are only some parts of the effort, all while governments are celebrating the arrival of the industrial might of "America's Corp." No one ever asks what will happen in twenty years when those tax breaks end, or points out that Ares was originally a EuroCorp and just wears the flag on a lapel pin that can easily be taken off and switched with another.

Ares is willing to let Detroit keep some name brands that it considers to have dried up, and will charge only a "modest" fee to allow their use, but thus far, the as-yet unnamed conglomerate of workers that will be using abandoned Ares factories to try to churn out rival products hasn't agreed to buy any. That might change if they need the brands for sales, but it might not. It depends on if the awful mess that is Detroit can ever clean itself up. Until then, Ares is actively brainstorming new brand names for next year's vehicles that will be designed and built in Lincoln, Alabama.

- Right across the city from Honda's facility. Because that's how Ares likes to do things.
- Kane

## ARES SERVICES

Second only to Ares Consumer Products, the service industry of Ares is unbelievably massive. They're most famous for the assorted military services that they provide; from logistics to communications to base security to food services to laundry, Ares has a subsidiary for it, usually two or three. They operate the *Red, White, and Blue* newsletter for the UCAS military (or at least, they did until last year), and of course they provide lavish accommodations to those generals who want to see new toys on display every year when searching for the latest and greatest ways to make a nation's enemies dead. Come for the new Ares One-Man Legion demonstration, stay for a weekend of golf, massages, and complimentary drinks.

In the wake of buying up NASA, Ares realized that there was a market for government services, so they kept an eye open and when they saw a good deal, they picked it up. The U.S. Postal Service was chopped up, and Ares got the choicest cut with the northeast sector, effectively covering two thirds of what became the UCAS when the US of A went under. Now, The Post Office™ services millions of citizens daily, with few aware that it's a private corporation.

- Wait, what? You can't just **buy** chunks of the government!
- Riot
- Sure you can, kiddo. That's what "privatizing" means. Take a government service, like delivering the mail or paving roads, sell the assets to a private corporation, and then that corporation takes over the activities. In theory, it saves tax dollars. In practice? Well ...
- Butch

They also came back later and bought out competitors who'd snatched up postal segments elsewhere. This is why the Pony Express and Talking Leaves operate in the PCC and Salish-Shidhe, respectively, and ultimately kick money back to Ares rather than the local economies that they serve.

The best (worst?) example of this is Public Education Services, an Ares company that seeks out underperforming local schools and buys them off of cities and towns under the aegis of "educational solutions." Professional educators and an infusion of money follow, making it look like a good deal at first, but PES treats children like



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what they are—trapped consumers. Lunchrooms are filled with junk-food vending machines and sodas instead of more nutritious (and more expensive) meals. Busses are plastered with advertising for beauty products aimed at telling teenagers that they'll never be loved unless they look better, and every schoolroom gets trideo monitors that handle remote learning with "short" commercial breaks, Kids News™ that focuses on emerging teen stars passing pabulum to the masses, and so on.

At the same time, Ares also runs Socratic Learning Solutions, an upscale education system aimed at suburbanites who see rotting urban schools and want out. SLS swoops in, operates "local schools" that cater exclusively to middle- and upper-class students and produce inflated success rates on testing. You might notice, though, that they never go into areas with a large swath of metas, nor do they ever have an expensive special-needs program. They leave those things to public schools, making them look even worse, driving the wealthier set to Socratic private schools. And when communities are ready to give up on their public schools? Here comes PES.

- > Ghost, but that's sinister.
- > Hard Exit
- > Been going on since I was a kid. The military was the only way I got the education I needed. Which ... aw, hell.
- > Butch
- > Yup. Exactly as planned. Ares takes failing public schools and feeds the students there, who just happen to be largely goblinized, into trade schools or the military, where they can be used as muscle, while other metatypes (dwarfs, elves, humans) can be trained in white-collar jobs, as they are viewed as better suited for those roles.
- > Icarus
- > Wait, no. No. It's **proven** that orks and trolls, on average, aren't as smart as other metahumans! Everybody knows it! I mean, they test them, and goblins always do drekk on standardized tests!
- > Riot
- > Setting aside the vast problems with standardized testing as a measure of intelligence, let me ask this: Who created, administers, and reports on those tests?
- > Icarus
- > Ares? Ah, frag ...
- > Riot
- > Nothing as loud as eyes being opened.
- > Icarus
- > While we're here on the education front, I'll toss in the Spartan School. Knight was familiar with the "dog program" that the

Japanacorp used and liked the concept, but he had no use for samurai in his hoo-rah corp, so instead he invented what he knew—a military school—and expanded it. Under a normal military school, you get mostly wealthy teenagers sent in who are problematic, then you try to turn them to a better path. They turn out okay, going on to careers as officers in the UCAS military, but that wasn't good enough for Knight. Instead, the Spartan School takes in children from five to ten (the younger the better) and builds them to be loyal to Ares, not the UCAS, from the word go. Then they are trained as warriors, not leaders. He wanted soldiers who would follow orders, not give them, and who would salute the corporate anthem, not the national. He looked around for a good place to create it, and found Sparta, Tennessee, which combined virtually non-existent gun laws, cheap land in the middle of nowhere, and a name that gave him the giddy. It opened in 2040 and has been churning out Spartans ever since. The kids of the first graduates went in the late '50s, and the grandkids of the first round are in there now, along with whatever other kids Ares can round up. Orphans from Detroit (and later Boston), kids brought in from international locations, barrens kids whose parents didn't need the drag on their limited resources—anywhere he could get them, he took them. One of the guys in my squad's a former student who washed out after a training accident kept him from keeping up physically. Great sniper, though!

> Stone

The biggest single piece of the service pie is in Ares Global Entertainment, who've been generating all-American content for as long as I've been alive. Macho men with guns, maverick cops who work outside the law to deal with Yaks, the Vory, or dirty BTL-dealers, raunchy sex comedies, high-budget sci-fi sims—you say "blockbuster," and AGE is there. But it's easy to get distracted by the dancing monkey and never notice the pick-pocket. AGE is big in the sim gig, one of the big three, but if you want to see where Ares dominates, look to music. Mitsuhamma brings the J-pop, Renraku brings the K-pop, and Spinrad picked up NeoNET's Europop arm, but there's a reason it's just pop, and not A-pop. MCT and Ares split that pie pretty evenly, but then you go into the other channels and it's all Ares, all the time. Hard rock? Ares. Rap? Ares. Country? You'd best believe Ares. Platinum Records is the juggernaut of the industry, with a stable that holds the biggest names in music today, but Ares also owns the competitors. Sun Softs in Nashville? Ares. House Party Rips? Ares. Hell, they even own Independent Label.

- > Yeah, House Party sold out years ago. Everybody knows that if you want real trog rock, you gotta go Hellhound.
- > 2XL
- > Also Ares.
- > Glitch



- > Oh, **come on!**
- > 2XL
- > Complain if you want, but when they find talent like John Robertson down in Mississippi, they can get him the kind of exposure a dirt-poor ork bluesman could never dream of.
- > Hannibelle
- > I hear that he'd never even picked up a guitar two years before being discovered. That kind of talent doesn't happen that quickly. Chipped skills? Magical Awakening?
- > Kat o' Nine Tales
- > Way I hear it, he made a spirit pact at the crossroads ...
- > Lyrn

Ares has several production arms that keep the flow going. Child actors to teen actors who also do some songs, turning into recording artists, who eventually outgrow their old iconic character and fall into an abuse cycle, burnout, then get back up years later with a “true artist” soul. Corporate-approved rebellion is sold in shopping malls. Teens are encouraged to snap up gossip magazines and glossy posters (buy at Cuteboy Online and download to your Crushframe! Gasp at new outfits every Friday at 6 p.m.!), wear their clothes, buy their brands, buy the food that they promote. One nuyen at a time, Ares will sell you what they tell you that you want, and when the money runs out? Well, who isn't paying off loans in this day and age?

- > Times like this, I miss Aufheben.
- > Bull

Connected to this is the Ares Press Service, a fairly minor group that sends out memos to the assorted Ares-owned news groups. Ares has always been invested in, of all things, AM radio, with a wide array of talking heads giving common sense views on the news stories of the day, calling for freedom-loving Americans to drive around capitals and lay on their horns to show how unhappy they are about taxes (better to leave that money in the hands of the populace—who can then give it to Father Corporation, of course), and to stock up on guns for when barrens thugs come to their small towns to smash things up, and so on. Ares also runs the largest screamsheet circular in North America, *UCAS Today*. It partners with local news dealers, passing down the majority of the daily news under the *UCAS Today* banner, but letting local outlets assemble a section of local

news. This keeps them in business and keeps the reporters on a short leash while the real stories are being produced at APS central and distributed to keep the public focused on distractions, not stories that have actual weight.

Oh, and most potential CEOs have talked about folding Knight Errant into this arm of the corporation, rather than considering it an arm in and of itself. Knight's personal plaything left a bad taste in many mouths. The one exception? Clayton Wilson. Needless to say, KE Execs have been backing his ascension in greater numbers than any other segment of the corp.

## ARES SPACE

Once the shining jewel of Ares, Ares Space has gradually lost luster, not from a reduction in value (it's never been more profitable!) but due to the focus being taken by other areas that were more personal for Knight. Ares Space continued to dominate the skies and beyond, but internal friction between the assorted major players in Ares saw funding being pulled from astoundingly successful programs, like the plethora of satellites that engaged in science, manufacturing, and tourism, the start of asteroid mining, and cutting-edge aircraft design. Funding instead went to handle personal matters like the creation and expansion of Knight Errant, or it was squandered in intramural shadow operations. After Vogel survived an assassination attempt and was rebuilt from what was

left, his time in space gave him a new perspective and a powerful drive to conquer the stars. Unfortunately, his dream wasn't shared by either Knight or Daviar, and he struggled to get funding for projects dear to his heart. First among them was Luna City.

Luna City was a simple concept at first, focused on lunar mining by drone, then returning materials from there to Earth. Unfortunately, the drones tended to react badly to lunar soil, and getting autonomous drones that could repair and clean one another proved too complicated. Metahumans were needed, so a small facility was created (underground for safety) where workers would serve as a garage for drone repairs. Unfortunately, idle hands lead to misdeeds, so the area had to be expanded to add entertainment. Larger facilities drew more volunteers, who then wanted to start, or bring up, families, and soon Ares had a booming “space town” on their hands. They paused expansion to make a solid plan, spending the past decade to get it operational. The grand opening is set for some time this year, where Vogel will personally attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Luna City remains a



**LUNA CITY ONE**  
ONE SMALL STEP FOR ARES.  
ONE GIANT ADVENTURE  
FOR YOUR FAMILY.



primarily underground venture, using tunnels dug out by the mining machines that make the entire affair operational, an expansive compound on par with a small arcology, with a projected capacity of ten thousand (but which will only have a thousand at opening, with a hundred guests); the city boasts processing facilities, engineering, power facilities (solar, backed by fission, since there's not enough water for fusion), botanical and recycling facilities, ample entertainment options, a hotel, and, of course, gift shops for days. Mining and construction of an eventual spaceport are the primary goals, with scientific research second, but tourism is expected to be a huge force for the first ten years of operation, subsidizing the rest of the city.

Once Luna City is fully functional, it will serve as a base for the construction of spacecraft, a launching pad for supplies, and it will provide a low-G site from which to launch missions to Mars, Venus, and further. It's positively *devoured* the AresSpace budget for the past decade, a fact which has caused grumbles in some circles, but once it's running, it should make that nuyen back hand over fist.

- > Well, unless something happens, like those "observation domes" on the surface popping and sucking people into space.
- > Clockwork
- > Like they don't have a hundred safeguards and backups against that.
- > Pistons
- > You know, I originally came out here to get away from some problems, and while I've loved my time here, I have to say that moving to the Moon has a special appeal. It'd be nice to have gravity again, but it's light enough that my bones won't snap like they would on Earth at this stage. Getting an ID that could pass muster with how tightly they're reviewing everyone will be expensive, but it shouldn't be impossible. I still have two files left up here that are valuable enough to pay my way down there. Of course, it would also increase the risk of being found out. But I could stretch my arms out without touching walls and ... I have to take some time to think about things.
- > Orbital DK

During this slowdown, other megas sped up. Evo, thanks to monad tech, took a huge leap forward and actually beat Ares to Mars, which was one hell of a gamble. Orbital DK sent me some specs on the ship that made the first trip, and they cut so many corners, I'm amazed it wasn't an orb. No backups, no safety features, one wrong move and everyone on board would have died. They played the odds and got away with it. Meanwhile, Saeder-Krupp was able to bring a consortium together to create the long-imagined space elevator, and with Ares and Evo's help, they got it up and running. Sure, it never would have happened without Ares' expertise, but

S-K got astoundingly good press coverage from it, so much so that people tend to think of it as a dragon asset and not one owned and operated by the Corporate Court. Ares benefits, but I don't think by enough to justify how much it helped the corps without space assets get out there. Supposedly, they got something in trade from the other corps, but I've never been able to find out what. Could it have been worth it? Hard to say.

- > I know one of them. Horizon offered them one vote in the Court, no limits, to be called in at a future point. Negotiations that accomplished that trade are what opened up the current Ares-Horizon co-ordination in PR matters, which has been a huge boon for dealing with the aftereffects of the Blackout, the UCAS response, and the damage Ares took in the process.
- > Plan 9
- > S-K passed over the nanotech that allowed the elevator's central core to be built. That's a huge ace in the hole that S-K had over Ares in terms of heavy industry, and I honestly don't know if the dragon got the better end of that deal.
- > Plan 10
- > Nanotech? Isn't that all banned?
- > Kia
- > Like legality's ever mattered to megacorps? The bans have been easing for years, and eventually, it'll go mainstream again. When it does, S-K will be first out of the gate, but for now Ares will be nipping at their heels.
- > Beaker
- > Well, if the dragon actually held up his end of the bargain ...
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > Ares Space is also the aircraft wing (heh!) of the corp. Military aircraft and drones are a healthy source of income.
- > Clockwork

## TOP TALENT

### ARTHUR VOGEL

The King is dead, long live the ... what? He's leaving? <emote sigh>

What does a corporation do when the man in charge is on a ticking clock? Vogel was never made for the corporate world, starting as a wide-eyed eco-lawyer, fighting for tree-huggers and crystal-rubbers, scoring some major blows against industry in the name of Mother Earth before being propelled to national fame as the first dwarf to run for president of the UCAS in 2057—unfortunately the same year as the first dragon candidate, Dunkelzahn. Needless to say, dragons trump dwarfs, but he made enough of an impression that Big D added him into his will, passing enough shares of



Ares stock to get him a seat on the board. In theory, the idealistic environmentalist would act as a counterweight on corporate greed. In practice, it got him blown up. After a year of cyber-replacement surgery and recovery on the Daedelus space station, his heart just didn't seem into it anymore.

- > Of course not. It got replaced by a cybernetic one. The real one's on my desk. G-harf, g-harf!
- > Bung
- > I should point out that while the dragon's will got him started, Vogel was able to purchase even more shares. Exactly who gave him that funding remains unknown. Assorted eco-friendly causes are always at the forefront of conspiracy theories, but they don't have that kind of financial firepower. Dragons, especially those from South America, are another vector. Plan 9? You're up.
- > Pistons
- > Dzitbalchen's the obvious one. He was heavily invested in corporate affairs and had a ton of shares in Aztechnology, where he was aiming at a top seat. With Vogel in place, he could arrange a war between the Azzies and Ares, damaging both, so he could swoop in and get that promotion. Pobre found out, which is why he was rubbed out and why Vogel's never had to pay those loans back. Of course, that's all a blind for the real string-puller, Sirurg.
- > Plan 9
- > Jokes aside, here's a small clip from Boston's Samantha Fulton during one of Vogel's trips Earthside.
- > Sounder

## INTERVIEW WITH VOGEL

**Samantha Fulton:** Most of our viewers have never been in space. As beautiful as the view is, they say that it opens your eyes and makes you realize how small the world is and how we all need to work together to protect it. As someone who's seen that view for years, how much more have you seen?

**Arthur Vogel:** It's strange, Sam. I remember the first time I saw the world like that. It's a crystal-clear memory, even after all of these years, but now it feels ... distant. Detached. When you're in space, you can see it all, but you can't feel it anymore. It's all here [touches his head] but not here [touches his chest]. And the longer you're up there, the more artificial everything feels. The first time I came back planetside from Daedelus, I couldn't believe how overwhelming it was. All the sounds, all the smells, even in the city, all the life. When you're in space, that's all gone. I miss the fresh air. I miss the animals. I miss ... I miss touching the soul of Mother Earth. And after the last round of surgery, where I became more metal than flesh, I don't know what bothers me more ... that I'll never feel it again or that I no longer care that I can't feel it.

- > That is textbook cyberpsychosis. You listening, Riot?
- > Butch
- > I can relate, if not to that degree. When I had to get some replacement parts after my Pueblo adventure, I wasn't able to get the most holistic of medical attention. I've felt like my connection to the spirit world has been weaker ever since. Not by much, but enough to notice. It's like losing a piece of your ear; nothing major, but when you go to scratch, you remember it's no longer there. Now I wonder if he once had some Talent.
- > Elijah

Vogel's doing the best he can to get things ready for the next CEO. The clock is ticking, and the board will need to pick someone. While Vogel doesn't seem to care who it winds up being, he's working like a machine to get the corporation at least stable before handing it off. Eighteen-hour days are the norm, with barely time off to recover. I know dwarfs are rugged, and cybernetic ones even more so, but this has to be taking years off of his life. He's heading toward seventy and has no intention to undergo leónization, so maybe he thinks he'll just work himself to death as a fitting end? For such a public figure, there's a lot we just don't know about him.

- > Depending on the research, it's speculated that dwarfs could live to be two hundred, maybe more. He looks like hell, but he probably has a century left in him. Meanwhile, most orks my age are dead and I'm not certain that I'll be around to meet the new Ares CEO. Hopefully, Bull's kid will get his dad's genes. Hell of a way to go, withering away like this.
- > Butch

## HEIRS (UN)APPARENT

Basic introductions to the seven candidates for Ares' next CEO appeared in *Cutting Black* a bit ago, so let's look at how things have been shaping up since we got our first look.

### CLAYTON WILSON AND KAREN KING

As expected, these two have been going after each other nonstop. Karen has more contacts in the shadows, Clayton has a bigger budget, and both know far too much about where bodies are buried. Shadow ops are flying hot and heavy between them. The more militant shareholders have backed their favorite horse and show no signs of being won over to the other rider. If one can be brought down without major damage to the other, they'd be a shoo-in for the new CEO position, but this fight looks like a long and ugly one, which gives everyone else a chance.



## 34 SHADOW/RUN: POWER PLAYS

### MITSUKO SHIAWASE-YAMANA

One of the largest shareholders in Ares, she gobbled up an entire percent of stock while the price was in the gutter but then stopped, directing her attention to the legal battle against Korin Yamana's two surviving ex-wives, seven children, twenty-five grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and, technically one great-great grandchild. She got half his estate in the divorce, but with his death she wants it all. If he had a will, no one's found it. (Mitsuko's produced a copy from when they were married, but his lawyer mentioned that a new one had been written. Then said lawyer fell onto the tracks in front of a train. Oops.) With Ares stocks on the rise, if she doesn't move soon, she could miss the window of opportunity. Getting the other stockholders to agree to put her in charge would be difficult unless she could throw the weight of her portfolio around.

### MICHAEL BISHOP

The black sheep (see, Fred? I do have a sense of humor!) of the bunch has been making his moves slowly and quietly, meeting privately with investors, stockholders, and corporate executives. He's ruled Philadelphia for years, but he's not well known outside of it, so this is him trying to make the move from big fish/small pond to big fish/big pond. He's moving slow so as to not get gobbled up, but it might be too slow. Vogel's clock ticks away.

### DANIEL CHEN

With Vogel focused on the CEO duties, Chen's been having to run AresSpace by himself. Unfortunately for him, this is when AresSpace has been getting beaten in orbit over and over again. Teaming up with Saeder-Krupp for the space elevator wasn't his idea, but with it up and running, his turn as top guy is right when the space assets are losing business and having to cut back on services and offer discounts to get a slice of the pie back. Add to that the racism against trolls, and his reputation is taking a pounding. Worse, he doesn't seem to care, as he's focused so much on trying to stop the bleeding of this one arm of the overall corporation. He knows the question people will be asking: If he can't handle this, how can he be expected to handle the larger corp?

### CAROL HUNTINGTON

Unlike Bishop, Huntington's been out loud and proud, strutting into major events like she owns the place ... which she sometimes does. The red carpet in Hollywood, the release of the new A-Pod over at Fig Park in Cupertino, even taking a walk down the runway in Paris for old times' sakes. She's jetting around the world and selling herself, and the

Ares brand, wherever she goes. She's used to being the face of her own corporation before selling it to Ares for her one percent stake, so she has settled in to this side of the CEO game as well as she fits into a sheath dress. Of course, a great face doesn't mean a good head, and while she's done well running a beauty empire, Ares is much, much bigger than that. Of course, even if she doesn't get the big chair, a spot as head of Ares Consumer Products is probably a given at this stage.

### DANIEL TRUMAN

Has anyone seen Danny boy? Anyone at all?

- > Rumor has it that he's passed into the horizon.
- > Icarus

## THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A last mention about the board itself. As it currently stands, there are no major investors in Ares Macrotechnology. Shiawase-Yamana's the current largest shareholder with three percent (2.9743 percent, to be precise) of the outstanding shares, but no one person has the ten percent that qualifies as a Major Shareholder under Ares rules. Ideally, the board wants to have more control, to prevent another Damien Knight, but in practice, with only small voices, the eventual CEO is going to absolutely dominate the table.

- > Assuming that there's no shadow investor hiding under different identities who'll emerge in the end as a single entity. Because **that's** never happened before.
- > Pistons
- > You're getting so bitter these days!
- > Slamm-O!
- > Wasn't Celedyr a major investor at one point? What happened there?
- > SeaTac Sweetie
- > Dragon Civil War. He had to sell off some of his assets to protect his hoard. He's still a major investor in Platinum Records, because of course he is, but his share of the megacorp itself had to go.
- > Spin Doctor

## RIVALS AND REBELS

Despite the terrible place the corporation's been in for the past near-decade, Ares is surprisingly ahead of the game in terms of living longer than their enemies. Some enemies vanished with Knight, some were actively hunted down, while still others



have simply run out of steam. Of course, there's one entity at the head of the line so, let's get to it.

## BUG OUT

Bug spirits. Ares had an infestation problem, but more than that, they had termites in the foundation. I should explain. Thirty years ago, the bugs first started popping up. Wasp spirits, ant spirits, roaches, but oddly no spiders. They were barely understood, not fitting into the magical theories of the day, as they were neither nature spirits nor elementals but some sort of Things from out beyond the known metaplanes. No one knew where they were from, but in short order, we learned what they were after. World domination? Great wealth? Nothing so complex. They wanted metahuman bodies to eat, and they wanted to breed. That was it.

- > Uh. Breed? They don't ... I mean, with humans ... that ... <hurk>
- > Riot
- > Ghost, no! No, nothing like that. Instead, they paralyze would-be hosts, cover them in biological material, then penetrate them so that they can implant their ... you know what? Forget I said anything.
- > Lyrn
- > Unlike most spirits, they can't materialize in the physical world. They require a physical host, and their spirit slowly pours in, like the sand of an hourglass. Pour in too much, too fast, and the body corrupts into a giant bug that looks like the spirit, only tangible. More often, the exchange is somewhat off, and you get mostly human bodies that display insect features, such as multifaceted eyes, mandibles, chitin, and so on. If the whole process goes perfectly, you get someone who looks completely human but whose entire essence has been replaced with the invasive spirit's. Unfortunately, we've never found a way to reverse the process—once someone has been implanted, they're gone, devoured by the spirit.
- > Axis Mundi

Ares was alerted to them early on and took the lead in combatting them, backed by Dunkelzahn (surreptitiously) and possibly others. The bugs responded like any bugs will do when you kick their hive—they swarmed. A dozen cities “woke up” at the same time, not just in the UCAS, but in Europe, India, and more, savagely attacking the surrounding countryside. The worst outbreak, by far, was in Chicago, and that's where Ares deployed their ultimate weapon. Details on this remain sketchy, but there was some kind of magical/nuclear mash-up that directed the blast into the hive but barely scraped the city itself. The fallout was entirely astral, and the bugs there fell into torpor. Like an avalanche in Alaska can cause a tsunami in Japan, the ripples of the bomb blast reverberated around the world and put many of the other major hives

to sleep, where they were dealt with over time. The primary tool that Ares used in this were the Firewatch teams, the elite's elite, trained to deal with the bug problem once and for all.

Or so we thought.

What we didn't know is that Knight wanted to know more about the threat. He needed captives that he could interrogate and get intel on the unknown foe. He went in like an intelligence officer, scooping up weak crumbs on the edges, then working inward to get his hands on bug shamans. He had them summon bugs that his men could capture and vivisect, eventually managing to procure themselves a few queens.

- > Hold on. How do you dissect a spirit?
- > Riot
- > You can't. They took infected people and dug in. Also, “dissect” is for dead things. “Vivisect” means that they did this to the living.
- > Butch
- > <HURK!>
- > Riot
- > Y'know, for a street samurai, your sidekick has a weak stomach.
- > Clockwork
- > Wait. If they were cutting up bodies, they had to use people. Knight was willingly letting these **things** implant people?!
- > Sounder
- > You'd be stunned to see what people are willing to do in the name of science.
- > Beaker

As anyone who's seen horror sims could have told you, it didn't go according to plan. Queens are alien creatures and have a cunning that's hard to predict. They're seductive, powerful, and when in desperate straits, they're willing to gamble. The queens took over their facilities, one person at a time. No matter how sealed you think the room is, ants always find a way in. One crack? That was enough to start. From there, it was exponential. We don't know how long it took to take over their facilities, but we know all three queens managed it. Roger Soaring Owl found out, narrowly escaping being “welcomed to the hive” in the process. and he had all three places napalmed flat. He and Knight got into a huge fight, and Soaring Owl resigned. He wound up going back to Sioux territory and quietly joined that nation's defense contractors, where he's essentially vanished into the bureaucracy.

- > **That's** why they broke up?! I'd been curious for years!
- > SeaTac Sweetie



Unfortunately for us all, one queen, 68G, managed to survive. Terribly wounded, filled with hate and pain, but alive. Like a twisted mirror of Knight, she wanted to know more about her foe and set about a similar process, capturing people quietly, converting them to the cause, and using them to find more victims. Here's where I admit to not understanding people, as not all of these converts were implanted. 68G knew how hard it was to get perfect merges, so instead she just won people to her side with honeyed words. I cannot, for the life of me, fathom what a giant pulsating sack of vile can offer you to work for them, but she managed it all the same.

- So, basically, music producers and nightclub managers. Got it.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Top of these was Sharon Mulligan, Vogel's personal secretary and a walking database of Ares. She looks like a kindly grandmother—short, plump, harmless. She started passing intel to the queen, who in turn worked to damage the corp. Over time, 68G was able to score herself some perfect merges that could be used to infiltrate the corp, and their names were passed to Mulligan, who was able to get them promoted to positions of authority and influence. It was slow, subtle work, and with Ares having problems with internal feuds and shadowrunner damage, these disruptions weren't identified as enemy activity for far too long. It would have gone on for years if Vogel hadn't been reported killed in the Boardroom Bombing. He'd survived assassination attempts before, and he had some quiet signals he could direct toward Mulligan to let her know he was alive, but for whatever reason, this time, it didn't happen. Mulligan snapped. She was his loyal ally first and foremost, and she wanted revenge on his killers ... and she felt Knight had done it. Subtle maneuvers were set aside as she called on 68G to go all-in. If you ever wondered how bug spirits knew where Aurelius was to pull him out of a plane over the ocean and let him fall to his death, now you know.

- My God.
- Kia

Of course, pushing this hard, you get sloppy. They made mistakes. Mulligan got picked up by internal security, tried to fight her way out, then got hit with mind-magic, which laid the basics out. The heavy hitters were called in and, well, what's left of her's locked in a padded cell, where she mostly drools and sometimes grunts, but they keep her around in case they missed anything. 68G's location was one of the things they got from her, and this time, they confirmed the kill when they took out the hive. Just as important, they got the list of the twelve perfect merges that had done so much

internal damage and wrapped them up as well. With that, Ares declared itself officially bug free.

- I still don't believe this. There's no way that a dozen people did as much damage to a megacorp as the bugs did to Ares. There have to be more. I refuse to believe that they're clean. **Refuse.**
- /dev/grrl
- It's like when you get roaches in your doss. You can put out poison, you can check the traps, and after a month, you can declare victory, but a month after that, you're in the kitchen for a late-night snack, hit the lights, and **boom ...** roaches. There's no way they're bug free.
- Clockwork
- There were twelve of 68G's brood known to Mulligan, and each and every one of them was ... removed. It's possible that another extraplanar entity has also tried to infiltrate them, but I have seen no signs of success. As hard as it might be for you to believe, Ares has been purged. For now.
- Many-Names

## THE SERAPHIM

Moving from bugs in cracks to high-flying angels, the Seraphim were the elite operatives of Cross Applied Technologies. The younger Jack-Pointers won't know who that is, so suffice it to say that they were the shortest-living AAA-rated megacorp in history, a Quebecois-run group that got on Knight's bad side. Rumor says that Lucien Cross, the founder and CEO, and Knight had bad blood dating back to before Knight walked out of the shadows with the Nanosecond Buyout. Regardless of the truth of that, the two hated each other and worked to take each other out at every turn. When the second Crash hit, Knight was faster on the draw. Cross' plane fell out of the sky, and soon after Knight had dismantled the corp in a series of complicated maneuvers that shouldn't have been possible with no active Matrix, but he managed it all the same. When the dust settled, Cross was a fraction of what it had been. Parts of it were grafted onto Ares, leaving a few other pieces scattered for corporate vultures. What Knight hadn't factored in was the loyalty the top men held for Cross.

These elites, the Seraphim, included corporate execs, shadow operators, and, most of all, deckers. Some of them refused to go quietly, putting up a fight as they lashed out at Knight to get revenge, but these were quickly tracked down and eliminated. The others swore a quiet pact to destroy Ares from within and folded themselves into loyal corporate drones. They gave up information about Cross Applied Technologies, helped bring in reluctant corporate assets, and plotted in silence. They spent the next two decades chipping away here or there, leaking internal documents, leaving





holes in security systems for runners to exploit and sabotage when they could get away with it, but as you'd imagine, over time, they were exposed. One by one, they were removed. Most went as you'd think, but some simply got old and gave up the fight, while others were in such deep cover that they flipped, turning into actual Ares citizens. Why fight for revenge for a man buried fifteen years ago who'll never know, when you could instead settle down with the cutie from accounting, get a nice house, raise some kids, and look to the future, not the past? The last gasp of the Seraphim was the disruption of Vogel's Evac Order for Detroit, muddling it into an order for Ares to pull entirely out of the UCAS. It caused some confusion, and some assets pulled up stakes even though they had no business doing so, but for the most part, it was corrected in short order. The decker in question, Sebastian Dupree, was sixty-eight years old when he was arrested, and he didn't have the heart to even fight back. They've simply ... run dry.

- Cross might be dead, but his legacy lives on, if a shadow of what it once was. Some Seraphim have drifted back home, figuring that two decades of field work was enough. I salute them, one and all.
- Operator Bastard

## THE UCAS GOVERNMENT

The last worry for Ares upper management is the UCAS government. Ares pulling out left them in the lurch in the wake of the Blackouts, and the invasion of the Sioux into UCAS territory was far more successful than it had any right to be due to this. Some think that Ares stabbed the UCAS in the back, just another corp looking after itself and screwing over the little guy (and this is, to put it politely, *strongly* believed in Detroit), while others want to hold them to the fire for breaking contracts when they were most needed. Unfortunately, the Corporate Court brought the UCAS to heel in exchange for relief after the Blackout, and there were strings attached, including a no-revenge clause to look after Ares. The UCAS government had no choice but to capitulate, but since then, there have been a few suit-wearing Johnsons operating out of Northern Virginia who seem to always have contracts out for runs against Ares.

## THE REST

Other than that, it's your usual corporate interplay. The Japanacorps would love to see Ares crushed, just for the symbolism, but they have to play defense too much to strike at the moment. Saeder-Krupp is a primary rival in construction and increasingly in space, where Evo is also ahead of Ares in some ways. Aztechnology has moved into the arms race in a big way, thanks to their status as



dragon slayers from killing SIRRURG, while Ares' own reputation took a major hit from the Excalibur debacle. Ultimately, that's just business as usual.

- > SIRRURG isn't dead. He's in hiding, licking his wounds. It might take years, decades, even centuries, but he'll be back.
- > Plan 9
- > Actually, he's shacking up in a van on the California coast with Hestaby, living that hippie life as they raise a few eggs together.
- > Sunshine
- > He's not my type.
- > Orange Queen

## PLANS AND PROBLEMS

Ares as a whole is focused on the immediate future instead of long term, as the headquarters settles into Atlanta, with Ares Heavy Industries building there, in Alabama, and unloading mining and logging gear into Appalachia. Meanwhile Ares Consumer Products hammers away with their usual three-year cycle of promoting the current thing, getting ready to roll out the new thing, and designing the next big thing, and Ares Services produces media content—ACP and AS serve as the bread and circus that Ares needs to keep people distracted. Ares Space is the only arm looking ten, twenty years down the line, but even they're being hamstrung by immediate needs and Chen's possible elevation to the Big Chair of CEO.

- > That said, Vogel seems to have his own ideas for his post-corporate life. I've heard rumors of what was first reported to me as "The Master Plan" but seems to actually be called "MasterPlanet," some kind of long-term strategy of environmentally friendly development. How to use auto-piloted cars to minimize parking lots, how to capture fresh water to recycle it directly, more efficient energy use that would allow solar to move forward, architecture that blends into the environment, some social-design theory to turn education into a less disposable culture, and more. It's beyond ambitious, but something that would be within his reach if he remained CEO and had full access to Ares' resources, but that flies in the face of his stated intent to leave. We only have snippets of this one, but if anyone can bring me more concrete information, I can assure you that I pay well for exclusive access.
- > Icarus

Honestly, I think it'd be nigh-impossible to deal with long-term plans while the corporation is without a CEO. You have to have someone to captain the ship before you can truly have a course, so Ares as a whole is somewhat adrift, taking headings from the last orders Knight had issued

and just sort of seeing where they lead. That's a big blind spot that's going to keep them from taking advantage of any opportunities for at least the next year, and in the corporate world, if you're not growing, you're dying, which is a good segue into problems.

For a corporation that just overcame every enemy it had, Ares is looking at a lot of problems. There's no more tug between Knight, Daviar, and Vogel, but the seven potential CEOs are all struggling in their own way (except possibly Danny boy) to climb, and that means both helping yourself up and kicking the others down. Add that to Ares' traditional "survival of the fittest" corporate style and subsidiaries who have no idea that rival corps are part of the same family, and Ares, as ever, is absolutely filled with internal issues. Sure, Mr. Johnson will hire you to go after an Ares rival, but far more likely you'll be sent after another part of the overall Ares body and that's not really a net gain for the bottom line so much as a lateral transfer, minus the funding used to hire contractors. So in the end, it's more of a small loss.

Past the internal issues, which are legion, there's the very real presence of the Japanacorp looking to finish off the last AmeriCorp once and for all, which would move them one step closer to having control over the Corporate Court again. With Shiawase-Yamana in the running for becoming a new CEO, expect many shots at weakening her rivals and improving her standing from that front.

As mentioned earlier, AresSpace is looking to hold off rising strength from both Evo and Saeder-Krupp, and no longer has Vogel been able to devote most of his energy into that singular field. The Space Elevator's construction was a gamble that might not pay off, but more than that Chen really wants to get his hands on Evo's next-gen tech. Once Luna City's fully operational, he'll be aiming at Mars, and after that, Venus. I can't even begin to talk about the problems *that* goal will face.

- > The question remains: What was left behind on Mars when the monads left?
- > Plan 9
- > I want to find out who the other Plan 10 is.
- > Plan 10

On top of all that, you have Ares and Aztechology facing off about military contracts, whether or not the next UCAS administration will trust Ares to continue their relationship (you'd think that would be a no-brainer, but Ares has hired Charisma Associates to make the case in person, and there's still that whole alliance with Horizon that we didn't even touch on here), the potential rebirth of Cross as a rival armed with twenty years of knowledge from inside Ares that old Ser-



aphim took with them, the building in the CAS, the massive publicity campaign there, the fear of further NAN incursions into the UCAS, possible ones into the CAS, the ever-warm Texas/Aztlan border (now with increased PCC tension!), and overall, Ares is looking stretched thin. The one weakness that the corp has always had is the lack of a major financial institution to rely on like the Japanacorps have the Bank of Japan or that both Saeder-Krupp and Spinrad have from EuroBanks. The UCAS has lost a huge portion of its financial power in the past decade, and a new Depression has started, even if it's not formally been declared. How long will it last? Who knows, but too long for Ares to rely on government money to help them out. This, more than anything else, is going to hamper their current issues, and it will be a massive weight on the shoulders of whoever takes over when Vogel leaves.

## HELP WANTED

In many ways, working for Ares defines what shadowrunning is like. Mr. Johnson hires the team for a job, gives you information (never enough, but a good start), then sets you loose to gather information, like a prototype, smash the place up, move or remove people, and so on. They don't take things personally, they'll hire a group that made a run on them a month ago without batting an eye, they pay decently, and, more importantly, a team that does well several times starts climbing the ranks, getting access to better gear, better pay, and better perks. Since Ares is arguably the most sprawling of all the corps—and certainly the one most invested in the UCAS—they have the most corporate shadowrunners, teams that made it to the Big Leagues and got elevated to Top Men, working for Ares and *only* Ares. Fully half of the jobs you get hired for are taking a crack at another arm of Ares due to the infighting and blind spots, and that means that betrayals are a bit more common than usual. “Nothing personal, just business” are the watchwords you never want to hear, but taking standard precautions will get you through it. Ares just doesn't have that honor streak that makes things go sideways when working for a Japanacorp, or the meddling of a Saeder-Krupp, or the dirtier aspects of Vory-aligned Evo work. As far as Ares is concerned, it's all part of the cost of doing business.

Anyone have some jobs they want filled, we're opening up the Help Wanted restrictions a bit. Post 'em if you got 'em!

- › Platinum Records is always looking for the Next Big Thing, and to try to get a sound that's outside the norm, they've decided that throat singing is due for a big comeback. While there are a few bands who can pull it off, marketing research shows that

the big winner is the Tru, an all-troll band in Mongolia. Mr. Johnson wants to hire a crew who can escort him there, take care of any local problems, and get him safely where he can get to negotiating, so this one involves baby-sitting. As an added complication, the Tru have gone into Inner Mongolia's Gobi Desert for a spiritual retreat, and Mr. Johnson has quarterly profits to meet, so he can't wait for them to find their center and return. Standard rate, but transportation is provided, and Mr. Johnson has a history of tossing out bonuses for a job well done. Speaking of bonuses? I have outstanding bounties for Mongolian Death Worms, so if you run into a few out in the sand, make sure to bring them back (dead, not alive, thank you!) for me.

- › Am-Mut
- › Just a heads-up? Mitsuhamas caught wind and wants to hire them, if only to deny Ares a win. You might have non-local hostiles to deal with.
- › Kia
- › Seattle natives? I've got an in with Karen King. If you want to help her out with her cowboy problem, the pay's not great, but being owed favors from her is worth it. If you pick up any dirt on the other five, I can get you a fair price, but Wilson's the big money.
- › Bull
- › On the flipside, I have two contracts open against King. One's the standard information gathering. The other's wetwork.
- › Red Anya
- › For those who have a grudge against Ares but don't want the risk of the above jobs, I've got a few from Mr. Johnsons around Northern Virginia (and Atlanta) who would love to cost Ares some profits. Standard datasteals and sabotage, but also monkeywrenching. Great for those who want to make a bit of patriotic fireworks.
- › Kay St. Irregular
- › Always work on the cutting edge of fashion. Know any trendsetters? Think you know a band ready to break out? Have a pretty face that needs to be the next one to adorn advertising blimps all over Manhattan? Ping me!
- › Dr. Spin
- › The split between Detroit and Lincoln is still piping hot. I know people on both sides of this one and I'm not getting involved, but if you're interested, I can pass some things along. Just ... don't scratch the paint, please?
- › Turbo Bunny
- › A little seagull passed word that some people aren't happy about South Florida being reunited with the rest and being absorbed into the CAS. As angry as they are against Ares, they're even angrier about the Miami lords who sold the nation out in the Hundred Hour War. Anybody want to go on a pirate adventure?
- › Kane



- > Has anybody got information on Daniel Truman? Anything at all?
- > Sunshine

## GAME INFORMATION

Are you associated with Ares or dealing with someone who is? Here are a couple qualities you might encounter.

### FIREARM DIPLOMACY

Ares is more than Knight Errant and gun manufacturing, but those areas set a lot of the general corporate culture. This means that some current and former Ares employees are a little over-reliant on firearms as a means of conflict resolution. They don't always fire their weapon, but they're willing to bring it out to emphasize whatever point they're making at the moment.

**Bonus:** 3 Karma

**Game Effect:** Any time when an argument becomes heated (gamemaster discretion), a character with this quality must make a Composure (2) test. If they fail, they draw their preferred weapon and point it at their opponent, regardless of local laws or consequences. If they have no weapon on them, they prepare for unarmed combat by making fists or something similar.

### INSIDE CONTACT

You have a contact in Ares—Knight Errant, specifically—who can affect how any law enforcement group treats you. Your clout may not allow you to get away with anything and everything, but it can make some of the more challenging parts of the law-enforcement system smoother.

**Cost:** 12 Karma

**Game Effect:** When you choose this quality, you receive a Knight Errant contact with Connection 2, Loyalty 2. In order to use the benefits of this quality, you a) have to be arrested or detained by law enforcement, and b) you have to be able to reach out to that contact, either by commcall, message, or some other fashion. If those prerequisites are met, the PC gets +2 dice on any social tests with any law-enforcement or criminal-justice people connected to their current situation. The contact can only be used in this way once per week.

# NERPS!

NERPS FOR WHITE TUSKS! NERPS FOR BAD BREATH!  
 NERPS FOR UNMATCHED SOFTNESS! NERPS FOR  
 TEN PERCENT MORE FIDELITY! NERPS FOR SHOCK  
 ABSORPTION! NERPS FOR A BOLD NEW FLAVOR! NERPS  
 FOR THAT NEW CAR SMELL! NERPS FOR FORM-FITTING!  
 NERPS FOR THREE PERCENT EXTRA KILOMETERS!  
 NERPS FOR A BUSHIER MUSTACHE! NERPS FOR  
 DOWNRANGE ACCURACY! NERPS FOR TOENAIL FUNGUS!  
 NERPS FOR DANGLING OFF YOUR BACK BUMPER! NERPS  
 FOR SPLITTING HEADACHES! NERPS FOR RUST! NERPS  
 FOR GROUT! NERPS FOR PRESIDENT!









# AZTECHNOLOGY

## POSTED BY: PYRAMID WATCHER (MOSTLY)

- › Just when you think you've got a lock on things, someone has to come along and drek on your work. I don't even know where to begin with this current cluster-frag, so I'll simply let PW take over.
- › Glitch
- › He's not kidding. A few months back, Glitch asked me to come back and assist with updating the corporate files concerning Aztechnology—mostly just basic stuff, because to be honest, Aztechnology has been fairly quiet (as corps go) of late. Things were going great until about two days ago when **all** of my Aztech sources suddenly went silent; same situation for several other trusted associates. Now, this isn't completely unusual. In recent years, Aztechnology internal security has been conducting a lot of what they call “internal audits” to plug any security leaks. But what **is** unusual (at least for me) is the Aztechnology hit team that blew in my door and tried to put two into my brain. Thankfully, one of my deep-cover Aztechnology contacts got a message to me that simply said “Run, **now!**” I dodged the hit-team by only **five**

**fragging minutes.** That was six hours ago, and I've been on the move since. I don't know what, but **something** within Aztechnology seems to have gone massively sideways. Anyway, I'm downloading the drafts I've finished so far, but it's not much and mostly basic, not to mention really rough at various points. I didn't get a chance to revise or dig into any of the really good stuff. Hopefully, others may know more and fill in some of the blanks.

- › Pyramid Watcher
- › Looks like you may have slotted the Big-A off enough to finally earn your own death warrant. Congrats!
- › Haze
- › Not to be that person, but how do we know it was an Aztechnology hit team?
- › Marcos
- › Let's just say I got ID confirmation on the team's leader. Name is Captain Pedro Hernandez, a ranking officer within Aztechnology's elite Guerreros unit.
- › Pyramid Watcher





- > Be grateful you escaped. Not only is Hernandez one of the **Cuachicqueh**, or “Shorn Ones,” but he’s one of Aztechnology’s most brutal and efficient SF-operators. His body is also packed with nothing but delta-grade ‘ware with barely any meat parts left—a heartbeat away from going full cyberzombie, with the sociopathic tendencies that come with it. He’s rumored to be personally responsible for numerous war crimes throughout Central America during the Az-Am War. I will check my personal files and maybe post something later.
- > Picador
- > Hernandez is also one of Director of Special Projects Armando Salazar’s favorite “troubleshooters.” You dodged more pain and agony than you realized; a bullet in your brain would have been merciful. Friendly advice on dealing with Hernandez: don’t stop running.
- > Rifleman
- > I was wondering why there was a massive uptick in contracts and bounties from Aztechnology. But what struck me as odd is the disproportionate number of hackers listed. Anyone wanting to see those listings, send me a PM. And be prepared to make it worth my time.
- > Balladeer
- > Ohhhhh jeez. That’s a **lot** of deckers and ‘mancers!
- > Electric Blue
- > By Ghost ... I know so many of those names. You better not have taken any of those contracts.
- > Pistons
- > Ditto from me.
- > Netcat
- > Throttle back. I don’t take Aztechnology contracts, not unless they add a lot more zeroes to their payouts. But I’ll keep my ear out for which contracts are fulfilled. I swear, since I came here, I do more information brokering than fulfilling actual contracts.
- > Balladeer

## AZTECHNOLOGY

**Corporate Court Rank (2081):** 4

**Slogan:** “Leading the Way to a Better Tomorrow”

**World Headquarters:** Tenochtitlán, Aztlan

**CEO:** Flavia de la Rosa

**Major Shareholders:** Undisclosed

### MAJOR DIVISIONS AND SUBSIDIARIES

#### Aztechnology North America

Air Montezuma (Airline), Atlantic Security (security), Aztech Shuttle Services (urban transport), Channel 12 (media/trid network), ComPac (Matrix/software), Genetique (biotech/genetech), Maritech Enterprises (aquaculture), MediCarro (medical service provider), Nature Taste (consumer goods/foodstuffs), Optical Dreams (Matrix/simtech), Pemex (oil/chemicals), Pyramid Arcane Supplies (magical goods), Stuffer Shack (convenience store), Televisa (media/trid and simsense), Trés Chic Designs (fashion and cosmetics)

#### Aztechnology Latin America

Armamentos Murreta (personal armament), BAN-COMEX (banking/finance), Corporación Clínica (hospital management), Cuerpos Radicales (clinics/health care), Embraer (aircraft/miltech), Energía Viva (energy), Microtrónica Azteca (Matrix/hardware), Natural Vat Technologies (consumer goods/foodstuffs), Productos Cultivados (agribusiness), QuetzalCare (medical services), Seguridad Primero (insurance/emergency services), Soluciones Orbitales Integradas (aerospace)

#### Aztechnology Europe

Armanté (fashion), Carlsberg-Heineken (foodstuffs/liquor), CEI (heavy industry/mining), Dassault (miltech/aerospace), Hawker-Siddley (aerospace/drones), Lider (megamart), Marine Technologies (naval)

#### Aztechnology Australasia

Austrafarm (agribusiness), DhakaSoft (Matrix/software)

#### Aztechnology Africa

Free Transit Cartage (shipping), Mystics and Magicks (arcane service provider)

**Dominant Business Language:** Aztlaner Spanish

**Secondary Business Languages:** English, Nuevo Nahuatl

- > Something else to add: Several sources of mine just confirmed that every Aztechnology facility, security force, and corporate military unit worldwide has been on high alert for a few days now, albeit extremely quietly. Additionally, all high-ranking corporate officers and their staff have been recalled to Tenochtitlan or their regional HQs. If I were a betting man, this looks like wagon-circling.
- > Sunshine



- › Funny—no word on why, no PR or official word so far. Not that anyone really cares yet.
- › Dr. Spin
- › All this implies an attack of some kind, maybe ongoing, and they haven't had time to do damage control?
- › Danger Sensei
- › Frag. Well, until we find out more, let's go with what we've got.
- › Glitch

## THE MASK: CORP OVERVIEW

When trying to understand Aztechnology, one must realize that while they have one of the most diverse portfolios of any AAA corporation in existence, the key to their success is not their numerous holdings and subsidiaries, but the public image they've cultivated.

One way to understand this concept is to think of Aztechnology's corporate image as a mask. Pains-takingly crafted over the decades, the mask represents how the corporation wants their consumers and public to perceive them. It's also a shield designed to deflect and protect the corporation's darkest secrets and ugliest truths. More than anything else, that mask (presented in all its flashy neo-Aztec corporate branding glory) is what truly defines Aztechnology. To them, the mask is all, and they will go to any lengths to protect and maintain it.

- › And blood sacrifices, let's not forget about those either. Oh, and massive oppression and murder!
- › Lyran

To the public at large, Aztechnology is almost universally beloved and is considered to be, as an associate likes to call them, "Big Fraggging Heroes™." This has been accomplished through exceptional and very subtle corporate PR, propaganda, multiple public initiatives, and in many cases what they consider justified force. Current events, such as their handling of the tempo crisis and "assisting" Aztlan in their victory over Amazonia in the recent war, have further enhanced and all but cemented Aztechnology's reputation as a positive force in the Sixth World.

This is in stark contrast to what's known by those of us working the shadows. Some of us have been unlucky enough to see what's truly behind the mask. Make no mistake, despite the relative "good" Aztechnology has done, it's all carefully designed and executed to strengthen the mask, to hide the truth that Aztechnology ultimately has one singular, unifying goal: power. Be it arcane, technological, political, capitalistic, or other, those

in control of Aztechnology will literally sacrifice anything and anyone or use whatever tactics they deem necessary to achieve what they consider to be ultimate power.

And why shouldn't they? Aztechnology are Big Fraggging Heroes, after all.

## NEO-AZTEC ASCENSION: HISTORY

Currently the only AAA-rated national megacorp (Aztlan) in existence, Aztechnology's genesis traces back to 2007 when the David, Massaya, and Medellin drug cartels joined their legitimate business interests together to buy out an old Mexican corporation (the name of which has been lost since the '29 Matrix Crash). Records are unclear as to what the cartel leaders originally intended to do with this new corporation, now known as ORO, but very quickly the new venture took off and began outperforming the cartel leaders' narcotics trade.

Eventually this newfound capital and influence allowed ORO to expand.

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- › Sorry for the disruption and confusion, everyone, but some interesting and possibly critical paydata about a possible Aztechnology situation is filtering in. Normally, I cut back on the comments, but I think this warrants an exception. So at various spots in this file, I've made a few retroactive modifications to PW's original for additional data space, starting by condensing this history lesson into quick bullet points. But to be honest, some of the comments and flash-downloads have better data anyway.
- › Glitch

## AZTECHNOLOGY HISTORY REDUX: HIGHLIGHTS

- 2008: ORO discovers a massive deposit of molybdenum worth billions. This allows massive growth and expansion into neighboring countries to the south and lays the groundwork for future political influence by purchasing support in Columbia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and later the rest of Latin America.
- 2011: VITAS plague hits Mexico and collapses the government. ORO assists with humanitarian aid and helps install a new government, forming the nation of Aztlan. The symbiosis between the two is born and continues to this day.
- 2015: Using public support and influence gained through their efforts in 2011 and the





elections, ORO spearheads a new Aztec culture revival to help the populace “rediscover their true cultural heritage.” This becomes the basis for ORO corporate and Aztlan’s national culture and identity.

- **2022:** ORO rebrands and becomes Aztechnology, and their corporate HQ is moved to Tenochtitlán (formerly Mexico City). Aztechnology expands and strengthens its influence with Aztlan, providing stable infrastructure and later enhancing Aztlan’s military and intelligence services. These services are used by Aztlan to expand and annex countries in the region, a process that continues over the next two decades.
- **2044:** After Aztlan nationalizes all foreign companies within their borders (which gives Aztechnology de facto control and ownership), the Corporate Court initiates Operation: Reciprocity. After a series of attacks on Aztlan holdings, the court forces Aztlan (and by proxy Aztechnology) to sign the Veracruz Settlements, forcing both country and corporation to pay extensive restitutions.
- **2061:** Earthquakes rock Los Angeles. Aztechnology attempts to lend some assistance but is blocked by the Pueblo Corporate Council.

The situation escalates, and eventually the PCC cancels all Aztechnology licenses, effectively ejecting the corporation from Pueblo lands. Later that year, the great dragon Ghostwalker emerges from the metaplanes over the Denver Front Range Free Zone. One of the dragon’s first actions is to eject Aztlan from their sector in the FRFZ. Aztlan and Aztechnology begin rebellion-suppression operations in the Yucatán Peninsula. Their efforts are halted approximately a year later because of a series of natural disasters and reportedly toxic spirits.

- **2064:** During the peace treaty signing between Aztlan and the Yucatán Rebels, Aztechnology CEO Juan Atzcapotzalco is killed by a terrorist bomb. The feathered serpent Dzitbalchén is later convicted and executed in connection with the attack.
- **2072:** Backed by Aztechnology, Aztlan goes to war with the country of Amazonia.
- **2074:** Under the cover of Hurricane Donald, the great dragon Sirrurg (fighting for Amazonia) and his minions destroy Natural Vat Technologies in Borinquen, which supplied four-fifths of Aztlan’s foodstuffs. In late 2074, Aztlan emerges as the victor,



having defeated Surrurg in battle and taken the contested city of Bogotá. These victories, combined with the sympathy garnered from Natural Vat's destruction, solidify Aztlan's and Aztechnology's "heroic" reputation in the eyes of the world.

## AZTECHNOLOGY: CORPORATE CULTURE HISTORY

In terms of their corporate identity, Aztechnology leaders decided to re-invent themselves by, to use their terms, returning to their ancient Aztec roots. This proved to be an extremely popular move as it allowed ...

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- > Sorry again, all. Okay, Aztechnology is all about modern interpretations of ancient Aztec culture. It influences everything from personal conduct and interpersonal relationships to fashion and entertainment. Problem is, there's not too much data about what exactly "ancient Aztec culture" was like. So in a nutshell, they simply re-invented it for the Sixth World. One thing is for certain, the official religion of Aztlan and Aztechnology, known as "The Path of the Sun," is practiced with just as much zeal and vigor as any of the religions known today ... for better and for worse.
- > Glitch
- > And caused a lot of problems with old Mexico's Catholic population when the nation transitioned into Aztlan. Despite Catholicism and other non-Aztec religions being outlawed, many of the previous religions are still practiced—in secret and on penalty of death in many cases.
- > Marcos
- > Hey chums, whatever is going on with Aztechnology, I think it's getting worse, or they've decided to take the kid gloves off. I've been doing some of my own digging into these hit lists. Long story short, I was following a lead on some paydata regarding Aztech's current happenings and got jumped by a team of deckers—fraggers damn near bricked my best deck! Anyway, they were trying to prevent me from downloading this data file fragment I found, posted practically out in the open on a popular (but exclusive) Matrix hangout that no longer exists because it was completely crashed by some Matrix strike team. I also managed to get a partial date/time stamp on this; it was sent sometime in July 2076.
- > Electric Blue
- > You're a fragging IDIOT. This has "BAIT" written all over it, and you took it! Anyone here want to lay odds this is nothing but some Aztech plot? I'll also take odds on how long until this dip-frag is found brain-fried. And if you've compromised any of us here <<<1.1 mp deleted by Sysop 01>>>
- > Rigger X

<<<OPEN FILE ZZ-43-36-11>>>

<<<TRANSLATION FILTERS. ENABLED>>>

"... am happy to report that containment and eradication efforts in Zones 31, 33, and 38 are now back on schedule. The additional assets allocated by the regional office were exactly what was needed to get efforts back on track after the last several months of unfortunate and unforeseen setbacks. At current estimates, phase one of Red River is at 78 percent completion, and if the field teams can continue their current momentum, we may actually see phase completion ahead of schedule and under budget. Additionally, my operations commander reports we will not need the last two thermobaric devices in our inventory, and that half of the cleaning teams could be demobilized and sent back to Aztlan as soon as the next two weeks, as we have not come across any obstacles.

In anticipation of phase one completion, I have begun preliminary initiation of phase two protocols, with all personnel and equipment being moved into their designated staging areas. As soon as field teams report that phase one has been completed per project standards, phase two teams will be able to move in and remove any and all traces of phase one's efforts. All biological remains, structures, and signs of any infrastructure (as scarce as it was) will be removed per project goals; it will look like no one ever lived there. My analysts estimate that phase two's reforestation process will take approximately one standard year, at which time we can begin evaluate the project's effectiveness thus far and determine if the area is indeed clear of the contaminant.

I also want to take this time to again reiterate my opinion that the board should not rush the final completion of this project. We gained too much with our victory to risk compromising those gains or the public image boosts that came with them. If the true side effects of Blue-227 on metahumanity were to be discovered, we would face a backlash the likes of ..."

<<<CLOSE FILE>>>

- > Let **me** worry about JackPoint security, thank you very fragging much. And you think any of the admins would be stupid enough to let the kid bring anything dangerous in?
- > Glitch
- > Wait, there is something about this. I remember right after the Az-Am War, there were rumors about villages near Acapulco simply vanishing. They were basically rural slums, so no one really cared—or they were too busy toasting Aztlan's victory. There were also rumors of people also from or near that area going stark raving mad and going into some kind of ... well, the term "blood fever" started to be whispered. But then as soon as those rumors started, they stopped.
- > Marcos
- > A lot more than some rural slums were involved. When Aztechnology used Blue-227 to kill Surrurg, magic use in that battle seriously fragged with the local jet streams, sending that drek in all different directions.
- > Rifleman



- > Yet another war cover-up. But that comment about Blue-227 worries me. Aztlan eventually had to come clean about using it after Ghostwalker blew the whistle on it when he took over Denver few years back. Aztlan swore up and down that Blue-227 was only a threat against dragons.
- > Picador
- > A corp lying, covering drek up? I'm shocked.
- > Bull
- > Back to current events. I've also seen and heard about other data files being posted all over the Matrix at random times and locations. Some were out in the open, some were more hidden, others popped up unexpectedly. I haven't been able to see or secure any of these supposed files, but I've seen the aftermath at several Matrix locations. Lots of scorched virtual earth.
- > Orbital DK
- > I've been seeing the same. Most are only there for a few seconds before the data is either removed or scorched. A lot of "blink and you'll miss it" kind of things.
- > Icarus
- > So was anyone there when every fragging Stuffer Shack in the Seattle Sprawl was hacked? A partner of mine tried to hit up a Shack in Tacoma when every flat screen, ARO, and VR menu in the place blanked out for about five seconds and was replaced with some weird video feed. A bunch of people wearing Aztech-style clothes were at some kind of meeting, talking about "settling old scores" and "renewed operations in the Yucatán." He tried to record it, but the entire restaurant went dark; power and wireless signals were off. We found out an hour later that same thing happened simultaneously at all other Shack sprawl locations.
- > Sounder
- > Same exact thing also happened in LA, St. Louis, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Atlanta. This is some serious neo-a drek going down!
- > Old Crow
- > Don't know if this had anything to do with it, but a friend of a friend sent me these bits of reports from Lone Star's branch in Dallas. This thing went down less than twelve hours ago.
- > Danger Sensei
- > I heard about all that, but Stuffer Shack reps have said zip about it, only that there is some kind of "technical issue" and that all stores will be open ASAP. They better. The lifeblood of the city depends on it.
- > Slamm-O!
- > Lots of truth within the lie, and now my interest is piqued; time to see what I can find.
- > Puck

#### FILE ID LS/DFW #1004-6893

... based on the thaumaturgic evidence gathered on-scene, Unidentified Suspect (US)#001 most likely died of injuries sustained from a combat-class spell w/ CSI Tech Lev III D. Watkins' opinion stating said spell was mana-based.

... other unidentified suspects (#002-006) were all killed by heavy-caliber weapons fire and were still inside their GMC Bulldog step van. US#001 was found twenty meters from suspect vehicle.

... one eyewitness, Karen Dean (address and SIN on file), said, "Three of those racing cars was chasing that van, then this fragging big gun pops outta one of the race cars and lit up the van. I watched it crash right into the warehouse! Then some skinny fragger got out and tried to run, and they almost got away, but then there was some kind of light, and he fell. Then people piled out of those racing cars, but that's when you all came in with the lights and the sirens. One of your drones got a piece of one of them. That's when they took off heading ...

... unknown suspects still at large and considered armed and dangerous.

... a Fairlight Excalibur cyberdeck was recovered from US#001 with only moderate cosmetic damage. Item was logged into evidence (#1000-6893-001) and sent to evidence vault for further processing by CSI III Watkins ...

... code obtained from #1001-6893-001 indicates deck was used in possible vandalism at local Stuffer Shack establishments on ...

... Addendum #010. As of this entry, all evidence to this case was handed over to agents of Aztechnology Corporation as ordered by Corporate Court Warrant #69334-332. All further evidence will be forwarded as well, as part of stipulation #03 of said warrant ...

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

While many corporations are known for having some kind of specialty (example: Ares with guns and S-K with heavy industry), Aztechnology's diverse portfolio and scores of subsidiaries makes it hard for the average consumer to pin down what the megacorp is truly known for. The average consumer tends to think of and recognize Aztechnology's image rather than what they actually produce, a testament to the corporation's expert branding and PR efforts. And overall, Aztechnology has their hands in just about everything from finance to banking, entertainment to medical tech, along with transportation and agriculture. And that just scratches the surface. Aztechnology excels in three areas: the aforementioned public relations, advanced technologies, and magical research.



Also, it is *extremely* important to reiterate that there is a vast difference between what Aztechnology has allowed the public to see (the mask), and what is known about them by us here in the shadows.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS/MEDIA

Aztechnology's mask is not the work of any specific subsidiary, and its existence and maintenance are orchestrated from the corporation's highest echelons, with help from experts in data manipulation, statistics, and public image. Using data gathered from across the corporation, these experts advise the Aztech board on how to best maintain the mask. But such efforts don't just *happen*. Aztechnology needs outlets not only to help spin things in their direction but also to help the masses see things their way. And what better way to do that with news and entertainment? **Channel 12** is currently Aztechnology's go-to Matrix news and information outlet. While they present a fair amount of objective news (when it comes to countries other than Aztlan and corps other than Aztechnology), their large subscription base, which is measured in the billions, gives Aztechnology an extremely effective tool in pushing Aztech-friendly narratives while attacking their enemies. Likewise, trid shows and simsense from **Televisa** provide nonstop entertainment options that always put Aztlan and Aztechnology in a good light. Combined, both of these Aztech subsidiaries provide a critical amount of deflection and distraction when Aztechnology needs it.

- That's been true of the media since the invention of the printing press or when the old TVs came out. Aztechnology is simply better than most (but not all).
- Sunshine
- Fun fact: A good chunk of Channel 12's investigative reporters and producers are former Aztlan/Aztechnology intelligence agents. Some are good at getting stories; some are good at killing them.
- Thorn

## ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

Of all the corporations, Aztechnology has been consistently pushing the bleeding-edge boundaries of technological and thaumaturgical research and development. Some argue that they're simply bold in their approach, while others claim the corporation borders on complete recklessness. Either way, Aztechnology has been reaping the rewards of their endeavors for decades.

- Bold? More like arrogant and greedy. If Aztechnology wants something, they go after it. Consequences for them—or anyone

else—be damned. For Aztechnology, no sacrifice is too great. In all senses of the word.

- Elijah

## HIGHEST OF TECH

Despite other corporations having better brand recognition for specific military products, Aztechnology has constantly pushed forward advances of several different mil-spec technologies. They are one of the few of the Big Ten who have a serious presence in space thanks to **Soluciones Orbitales Integradas**. Subsidiaries such as **Dassault** and **Hawker-Siddeley** have been pushing the boundaries of passengered and drone aeronautics (respectively) ...

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- They make great stuff, and it kills people good. Moving on—sorry, PW.
- Glitch
- No worries; most of what I sent was first-draft drek anyway. Frag, I need to move again. Not sure when I'll be able to post again.
- Pyramid Watcher
- Good luck and Ghost speed.
- Glitch
- So if they make such great stuff, why don't we see more of it out there? I mean, don't people want the best?
- Electric Blue
- That's exactly right, and that's why Aztechnology keeps all the really good drek for themselves. They keep all the top-tier gear and hardware, or just sell it to Aztlan, and sell the lower-tier stuff to everyone else. Sell the second-best stuff and use that to fund research for the good stuff. What they **do** sell though is often on par, if not better than, their competitors' merchandise.
- Kane
- Some would argue that. But Dassault especially has been kicking serious hoop in the aircraft department. And there are rumors that a production version of their Blood Hawk Ninth-Gen fighter may actually come out in a couple of years. If Aztechnology would let the leash off some of their subsidiaries, they'd dominate several mil-spec markets within five years, in my not-so-humble opinion.
- Turbo Bunny
- Another thing to remember is that all the research done by the various subsidiaries is filtered back to the main corp and then sent to whatever subsidiary needs it. For example, research data on electronics from, say, Dassault will be sent to ComPac for their Matrix needs. There's a lot of cross-research going on at any given time.
- Mr. Bonds



- > Which is currently being coordinated by, wait for it ... Special Projects.
- > Rifleman

## CUTTING-EDGE MAGIC FOR PROFIT AND POWER

If there's one area where Aztechnology spared no expense, it's magical research. This is also the area where Aztechnology is its most secretive, nefarious, and utterly ruthless. This is what the mask is most used for, to hide this from the public at large. Whatever Aztechnology may produce or develop, in some way or another all of their efforts flow back to the corporation's ultimate goal: magical power. While **Pyramid Arcane Supplies** is a juggernaut within its market, it's nothing more than a front for research going on within black sites all over the world. What Aztechnology does is an open secret within the shadows. Ask anyone who has worked the biz either for or against Aztechnology, and you'll likely hear a lot of horrifying drek.

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- > PW goes on a bit of a rant here, and I'm guessing he would have cleaned it up later. But it contained a lot of literal horror stories and personal accounts in graphic detail. I'm not surprised that he dreaded writing this. And based on what he's seen over the years researching Aztechnology, I also bet he used it to try to exorcise some personal demons and memories. If anyone wants to see (or can stomach) the original data, I'll send it. But here are the high points for any newbies. He talks about Aztech's history of blood rites, blood magic, and their use in fragg-ed-up rituals to push the limits of what magic can do, no matter what it does to the practitioner (spoiler: it's often bad). He also touches on how destructive this kind of magic is to the manosphere and how Aztechnology doesn't give frag one about it. He talks about how the corp powers-that-be will literally sacrifice anything and anyone to accomplish this quest; everyone is simply an asset or obstacle for them. But most importantly, he discusses how Aztechnology has been working for decades to secure places of power around the world. If all that doesn't worry you a little bit, get out of this business.
- > Glitch
- > Not much more to be said about that.
- > Winterhawk
- > I feel obligated to say that over the last five years or so (and despite what rivals may claim), Aztechnology has begun to seriously outpace just about every other corp in magical R&D. Even traditional magical heavy-hitters like MCT, Wuxing, and S-K have been wondering what the frag is going on.
- > Elijah
- > And more importantly, **how** they're doing it. That explains the uptick in jobs relating to Aztech magical facilities.
- > Goat Foot
- > I may have something to share. Yesterday, the nesting partner and I were watching the latest urban brawl download between the Oakland Terminators and Tír Tornados. At the 15:33 mark, it suddenly switched to some kind of weird ritual. At first, I thought it was some new commercial for a new trid show, sim, or something. But nope, it went back to the game like nothing happened. We tried to rewind it, but it froze and the data feed later dropped. We tried to restart but—surprise, surprise—it was no longer available. Good thing was I smart enough to record most of it with my image link. I don't know how to describe it, so check it out here for yourself <link>. But fair warning, this isn't for weak stomachs.
- > Stone
- > What is **that**?
- > Butch
- > Those magical symbols on the floor and walls? They're Aztech blood glyphs. They're creating a blood spirit.
- > Elijah
- > Is that ... his soul?! Oh God, he's screaming, his skin is peeling back on its own ... I'm gonna be sick ...
- > Treadle
- > Those symbols are dangerous, especially if some idiot tries to use them without knowing what they are. How the frag did this get out, and how many actually saw this?
- > Winterhawk
- > All this drek looks like the kind of thing you'd see buried deep in some kind of secret Aztechnology data vault. Wait ... you all don't think ...?
- > Danger Sensei
- > No way, impossible.
- > Beaker
- > If you eliminate all other possibilities, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.
- > Fianchetto
- > It makes sense, brings a lot of things together. Question now is: How far down does this rabbit hole actually go?
- > Glitch
- > Give me a few days.
- > Puck
- > Should I be worried that Puck is interested?
- > Bull
- > Yes.
- > Netcat



## TOP TALENT

In any corporation, especially one such as Aztechnology, someone has to take the reins to provide guidance, direction, and leadership. And for Aztechnology, that leadership has been fairly consistent for the past fifteen years (give or take), until about 2077, when a few changes <<<7.13 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> ... into its current power structure. While most of the Aztechnology board chooses to remain anonymous, below is the current roster of who is at the top of that structure, both officially and unofficially.

- > Just cutting to the chase here. Read on and you'll get the pertinent payload.
- > Glitch

### FLAVIA DE LA ROSA

In 2065, de la Rosa was selected by the Aztechnology board of directors to assume the position of president/CEO in the wake of Juan Aztcapotzalco's assassination that same year. A career Aztlan politician, she was Aztlan's president from 2053 until her appointment to Aztechnology in 2065. Considered to be nothing more than a puppet of the Aztechnology Board of Directors, de la Rosa tried early in her tenure to rein in various factions within the corporation, only for her husband Carlos and son Tomas to die during a "terrorist attack" in 2066. Until about 2072 and the start of the Amazonian War, de la Rosa seemed content to play the role she was cast in, but then she started to make moves within the corporation. By the war's end, she had begun to slowly assert more power. In early 2078, rumors started to circulate that de la Rosa had finally been able to "remove" those within the corporation responsible for her family's death.

Now in her late sixties, de la Rosa is known for her personable, people-friendly, and detail-oriented approach to leadership. She has been at the forefront of several initiatives including <<<2.1 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> ... her popularity has never been higher both within and without the corporation.

- > Wonder how long that's gonna last with whatever crisis seems to be going on.
- > Hard Exit
- > De la Rosa was also instrumental in hiring then-General Salazar in '78, fresh from his victories in the war. Soon after, de la Rosa's enemies were removed. Coincidence? Nope.
- > Rifleman
- > Got anything concrete to back that up?
- > Rigger-X

- > Yep, but it's classified. And you know the cliché about showing classified things.
- > Rifleman
- > According to some of the notes that Pyramid Watcher sent, de la Rosa and Motecuhzoma had been courting Salazar since before the war began and were responsible for getting him on several high-value projects during the war—much to Chavez's displeasure. Take that for what you will.
- > Glitch

### DOMINGO CHAVEZ

One of Aztechnology's old guard, Chavez is now well into his nineties. He's a magician (rumored to be an initiated blood mage) with a reputation for behaving like the proverbial bull in the china shop. Known for his aggressive stances on just about everything, Chavez favors direct action and force whenever possible; he was a staunch supporter of the war and subsequent pacification efforts in Bogotá. He's equally famous for aggressively securing his own personal power. Only the direct efforts of President/CEO de la Rosa have kept him out of any serious trouble.

- > Chavez used to be one of de la Rosa's biggest enemies on the board, but that changed once de la Rosa found her spine. The extra stock options she gave to Chavez afterward didn't hurt either.
- > Marcos

No matter what the situation is, Chavez seems to prefer full-frontal assaults <<<1.1 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> ... which hasn't exactly endeared him to his fellow board members. In fact, recent data suggests that at least two attempts to remove Chavez have been executed, and failed.

- > Found this little tidbit and thought I'd share before getting back on the old datatrails. Seems there may be more going on behind the scenes, going farther back in Tenochtitlán than we realized.
- > Puck
- > This just in: Chavez has yet to arrive in Tenochtitlán. Two weeks ago, he and his security detail embarked on what was supposed to be a "surprise inspection tour" of various Aztechnology North America holdings. No one has (officially) heard anything about him since.
- > OrkCEO
- > As part of my investigations into, well, other events, I've been keeping an eye on a little area in Pennsylvania that used to be known as Dutchville. From up here, I've been trying to track all air and ground traffic. And despite some clever evasion tactics, I'm certain that place was Chavez's last known location. Interesting place for an "inspection."
- > Orbital DK



&lt;&lt;&lt;OPEN FILE 'PUCKING-A' 0097&gt;&gt;&gt;

&lt;&lt;&lt;TRANSLATION FILTERS: ENABLED&gt;&gt;&gt;

**To:** President/CEO de la Rosa**From:** Motecuhzoma**Re:** Our friend Domingo**Sent:** 04-07-79/1515:58

I'm sending you another message to express my continued extreme irritation with Chavez and his interfering with projects he is unfamiliar with and ill-equipped to understand. He inserts himself into closed meetings, offers advice, goes behind our backs, and gives frankly idiotic orders to personnel. His interference has already cost valuable time and effort with the current fast-food initiatives, setting us back by at least a year, if not more. Worse, Chavez seems insistent on antagonizing Director Salazar at every turn, oblivious to the facts that he no longer has the magical power he once wielded, and Salazar could end him with a mere thought if sufficiently pushed. Yet Chavez wears his status within the corporation like an arrogant shield. It was difficult keeping Salazar in check before this interference; now it is becoming near impossible. Salazar is becoming more suspicious and has begun to compartmentalize more.

Additionally, our new friends are also becoming concerned with Chavez's disruptive behavior and how it may affect current relations and future endeavors.

I strongly suggest that you take this matter in hand or I, or more likely Salazar, will do it for you. This is not a threat but a statement of fact. I suggest you move swiftly, for we have come too far with our new friends to risk losing them now.

- M

&lt;&lt;&lt;CLOSE FILE&gt;&gt;&gt;

## DOMINGO 'DING' RAMOS

Within the grand scheme of Aztechnology, Ramos continues to be the corporate wildcard—if he can be bothered to do anything worthwhile, that is. Preferring others to simply call him “Ding,” Ramos is many things. He is an elf (a rarity among the board), leader of the David drug cartel, and a playboy to the extreme. Ramos is an Aztechnology legacy, having inherited his stocks from his father, who was one of the original founders of ORO. <<<1.9 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> In recent years, Ramos has seen his personal fortunes skyrocket thanks to his expanded drug empire in the wake of the Amazonian War and growth in corporate stock values. But what sets Ramos apart from the rest of the board is his ability to do a lot without really doing anything. He is a master of using proxies to get things done while he continues his playboy ways.

- > In the last two years, Ramos started a new personal hobby: real estate. He's been buying up property like mad all across North, Central, and South America as well as a few places in Western Europe and even a rather nasty patch of dirt in Australia's Outback. He's also been commissioning some interesting homes and estates at all of his purchases. I got a chance to see some preliminary blueprints for his place in west Texas; behind its a normal façade, the damn thing is a combination emergency bunker and fortress. I wonder if he knows something we don't.
- > Marcos

## MOTECUHZOMA

Motecuhzoma is an enigma within the corporation. Rumors and speculation have abounded for years as to whom, or more precisely *what* Motecuhzoma is <<<1.7 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> indicates that he is most likely a free spirit or at least a metaplanar creature of some kind. Regardless of his true identity, for many years Motecuhzoma has been the main driving force behind the corporation's magical R&D initiatives. Normally quiet and reserved, he is known for having a ruthless temper toward anyone who interferes with his work. And while he has relinquished most of his operational and logistical control to the Special Projects Division in order to concentrate on research, Motecuhzoma maintains a solid working relationship with Director Salazar, to the point where the two are *almost* considered friends, if not allies.

## ARMANDO SALAZAR

Not a member of the Aztechnology board, Salazar nonetheless has managed to amass a considerable amount of power and influence within the corporation in a very short period of time. A known blood mage of considerable power, Salazar is a former medical doctor in the Aztlan military who eventually made his way into military intelligence and bio-weapon research. Rumors suggest that he was the mastermind behind the bioweapon Blue-227. Rising to the rank of general <<<1.9 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> ... and was the planner/leader of Operations Marauder and Huntress during the Amazonian War. In 2078 he was hand-picked by President/CEO de la Rosa on the recommendation of Motecuhzoma to help Aztechnology's ever-expanding magical research initiatives. The result of that work was the creation of the Special Projects Division.



## AZTECHNOLOGY SPECIAL PROJECTS DIVISION

Special Projects is the umbrella term used to describe the organizational apparatus that links various research initiatives/projects and working groups with needed logistical and financial resources among the corporation's subsidiaries. This apparatus enables information to flow more efficiently among these entities, thereby accomplishing goals at a more rapid pace. At least, that's the official description. In reality, Special Projects is the means by which Director Salazar has begun to expand his presence and influence within the corporation. In addition to all R&D initiatives, Salazar has used Special Projects to place people loyal to him in important corporate divisions such as intelligence and military operations.

While this may seem like a possible threat to the corporation, Salazar has been given all but free rein by none other than President/CEO de la Rosa as part of an ongoing arrangement between the two and Motecuhzoma. And as long as projects and initiatives continue to show results, the rest of the board isn't too concerned about digging too deeply into Special Projects.

- The thing to know about Salazar is that he is a sociopath who craves only one thing: power. He will do anything and literally sacrifice anyone to get what he desires, even more so than your typical Azzie. He classifies people in one of two ways: an asset or an obstacle. The only things he seems to truly care about other than his personal power are his twisted sense of honor and his family; never insult or mess with either unless you eventually want to die painfully ... or worse.
- Rifleman
- Aside from the support of de la Rosa and Motecuhzoma, Salazar has managed to wrap board member J.J. Harvin Jr. around his finger as well by promising him massive new gains and opportunities for "aggressive expansion" once several projects come to fruition.
- Marcos

## OLIVER MCCLURE

"Where's McClure?" is a question often asked by those within the corporation.

Coming from humble beginnings <<<2.0 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> ... gained his seat on the Aztechnology board after being given a ton of Aztechnology stock via Dunkelzahn's will. McClure originally acted as a sort of check to some of the more extreme elements and factions within the corp. But after a long string of failed buyouts and attempted assassinations that left his physical body damn near shattered, it's become somewhat SOP for McClure to disappear for weeks, sometimes months at a time only to pop up or report in when major board decisions need to be made.





Bright and earnest at the beginning of his tenure with Aztechnology, he has steadily become a shell of his former self. Many insiders wonder why he doesn't just sell his stocks and resign.

- Like Chavez, McClure is currently AWOL. What's also interesting is that Aztechnology Corporate Security issued their version of an arrest warrant for him sixteen hours ago. From what I've heard, all of his corporate passcodes and authorizations have been locked down. They tried to freeze all of his personal and corporate funds, but funny thing; all his accounts were pretty much empty. Only fifty nuyen remained. And as an aside, I've heard most of his stored biological samples have been destroyed as well.
- OrkCEO
- Oh, that must have really slotted off Aztech's spell-slingers. Good luck trying to find him with ritual magic. Still, this indicates a plan long in the making, not to mention the odds of actually pulling it off. And yet, here we are.
- Thorn
- Still, it is going to take some powerful counter-magic to keep Aztechnology from finding him. Not many can do that, leaving few places he can hide.
- Arête
- Upgrade that order to "terminate on sight" as of four hours ago. There are unconfirmed reports just now filtering into the Outpost about a nasty operation that went down a mere **five** hours ago. Long story short, a task force of Guerreros and Aztlan Blood Daggers led by Captain Hernandez (he gets around, apparently) located and attempted to secure McClure but were stopped cold by "unknown combatants" using SOTA mil-spec armor, weapons, equipment, and blah blah blah. The ensuing engagement destroyed almost a kilometer of Corpus Christi waterfront in the process, but McClure avoided capture and disappeared deep into CAS territory.
- Cayman
- Frag, this is getting **insane**. Haven't any of the other corporations or the CC taken any action?
- Bull
- Right now, it seems that both are adopting a wait and see approach, likely before they take advantage of a potentially weakened rival.
- Mr. Bonds

## RIVALS AND REBELS

Given Aztechnology's unapologetic and aggressive nature when it comes to pushing their technological and magical boundaries as well as achieving their goals, it's easier to say who *isn't* out to get them. And even then, it depends on what Aztechnology is up to or who they've slotted off lately. Still, most have the good grace to be subtle about it, unlike a select few who make it their mission to be a thorn in Aztechnology's side.

## CORPORATE DIS-INTERESTS

Their focus on magical and technological developments often brings Aztechnology into direct conflict with those pursuing similar gains.

Saeder-Krupp and Aztechnology often butt heads in the heavy industry department, and especially in space technology development. While S-K is still considered way ahead, they know that Aztechnology, with a comparative toehold in that arena, is simply looking and waiting for an opportunity to exploit.

The relationship/rivalry between **Mitsuhamma Computer Technologies** and Aztechnology is directly tied to magical development <<<2.9 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> ... the two constantly sniping at each other from the shadows, looking to steal whatever magical research paydata they can find.

The bad blood between Aztechnology and **Horizon** is relatively new and goes back to the Amazonian War, when the two PR giants butted heads. Horizon sided with Amazonia in that conflict and used all of their massive PR abilities to wage a subtle yet effective propaganda war that might have worked if not for Aztlan's military victories. Still, the bitterness of that conflict remains even years later, with Horizon looking for any way to stick it to the now-beloved Aztechnology.

- And I think they're about to get really slotted off. According to one of my high-placed contacts, another one of those phantom data-dumps just went down, only this time it was sent directly to Horizon's main North American office; all of the VPs had this waiting in their inboxes.
- Sunshine



&lt;&lt;&lt;OPEN FILE SUN441&gt;&gt;&gt;

&lt;&lt;&lt;TRANSCRIPT FILTER: ACTIVE&gt;&gt;&gt;

<Sitting at table, two male humans>  
<date/time stamp: 03-14-77/2344:15>

**Male One:** So Mr. Metcalfe, or should I call you Mr. Williams?

**Male Two (Metcalfe):** Either is fine. After the number of beatings your associates have given me, I'm surprised I can even remember anything. But Mr. Metcalfe is as good a name as any.

**Male One:** You know you're scheduled for execution tomorrow, a result of your actions against us during the war and your refusal to share anything of value. I must say, however, that your ability to resist torture is quite impressive. You have my respect. So out of that respect, I will ask you one last time: Will you answer my questions?

**Metcalfe:** Then what?

**Male One:** Excuse me?

**Metcalfe:** What happens to me after I answer your questions? You can't let me go, and I cannot return to my old position within Horizon. Am I to remain sequestered for the rest of my days, or is this eventually going to end in a double-cross?

**Male One:** ...

**Metcalfe:** Well then, that answers that. But how about I make a counter-offer—I will not only answer your questions, but if you help me find a new line of work, I will devote all of my considerable efforts to assisting Aztechnology. And as it so happens, I have been thinking of a long-term project that, if it pays off, would reap many benefits. I had intended it for Horizon, but with a few minor modifications I think it would fit into the Aztech aesthetic quite nicely.

**Male One:** Go on...

**Metcalfe:** Well, General, I have developed a rather keen interest lately in ... tacos.

&lt;&lt;&lt;CLOSE FILE&gt;&gt;&gt;

- > Ohhhhh frag, I thought he was dead. Thought a sniper got lucky in Bogotá just after the war and took this fragger out. Are we sure this is him?
- > Hard Exit
- > If no one else is, I am. I had the displeasure of having to deal with Agent way too many times. I'll never forget that smug, arrogant face.
- > Marcos

- > Wasn't he Horizon's top information man in the field, the social adept who sowed confusion and waged a massive disinformation war against Aztlan so bad that thousands of Aztlan troops perished because of that alone? I remember reading some old files about it.
- > Treadle
- > The very same. Oh, Horizon is gonna be **pissed**.
- > Picador
- > Makes you wonder how many other similar files went out. And to who.
- > Pistons

## MYSTIC MYSTERY SEEKERS

Additionally, with Aztechnology's aggressive stance in terms of magical research, which includes seeking out and securing places and items of power, it's not surprising that various magical organizations and orders such as the Illuminates of the New Dawn and Atlantean Foundation have been working to beat Aztlan to the punch, and vice versa. <<<3.7 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>> ... clashed many times with the Draco Foundation since its inception. <<<4.0 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>>

- > In summation, if you're looking into magic, chances are you're gonna have to deal with Aztechnology in some shape or form. They're likely to try to stop you, steal your research/stuff, or remove you.
- > Glitch

## PLANS AND PROBLEMS

Since their proxy-victory against Amazonia through Aztlan, Aztechnology seems to be in a bit of a holding pattern, riding that wave of positive PR and milking it for all it's worth. A strategy that seems to be working <<<3.9 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>>

- > Okay, this is where things get serious. I gutted most of this section in particular just so we can talk about the two points Puck is about to share; one kind of leads into the other.
- > Glitch
- > Get some popcorn.
- > Puck



<<<OPEN FILE 'PUCKU' 484848>>>

To: \*\*\*ENCRYPTED\*\*\*

From: 000-Actual

Re: Information leak

This is an update regarding the security leak we uncovered. The source was one of the lower-level security personnel who thought he could impress his new girlfriend by bragging that he “met Domingo Chavez of Aztechnology,” which could be used to confirm Chavez’s arrival here. Said security officer has been interrogated, and we have determined that he relayed this message to no one else. Subject has also been terminated, and all records of his existence have been expunged per protocol. We have also secured the “girlfriend” in order to determine if she poses a security risk and how much information she has leaked. Results of this and notification of her extermination will be sent forthwith.

As per my previous reports, I request that all remaining UCAS-affiliated personnel be removed from site, as it is apparent that they cannot be trusted to maintain site security. Thankfully, our new friends have not learned of this breach.

<<<END FILE>>>

- > Okay, first, this was obtained from a location known as only as “Site 000,” sometimes also called “Triple Zero.” And as an added bonus, that appears to be the name of the black site located in \*dramatic music\* Dutchville, as has been previously mentioned. So! We have a name for this place, and it appears that it was Chavez’s last known location. But be careful with even this bit of data, as people are literally dying for even hearing it.
- > Puck
- > Finally, something new to go on.
- > Orbital DK
- > What’s the second part of this?
- > Netcat
- > It seems that six days ago, there was a coordinated, multi-pronged cyber-attack on Aztechnology’s ultraviolet-rated main corporate data vault. Yeah, it exists; it’s not an urban legend. And I almost feel insulted about not being invited. Anyway, I don’t know how many, but multiple teams and individuals, using information and passcodes given by Oliver McClure himself, found and penetrated the vault and managed to make off with all sorts of highly classified datafiles, or at least bits of them. At least two hundred deckers and technomancers (probably more) died during the operation. The rest made off with what they could and went deep into hiding. But some were still found by Aztechnology or their proxies and dealt with harshly. Many of the attackers panicked and felt that if they were likely to die, they might as well get the data out. Some planned to do that all along. Others, well, they’re trying just to survive and protect what they got, waiting for the right time.
- > Puck

- > No wonder they want him so dead, and why Aztechnology has gone feral.
  - > Balladeer
  - > **Frag me!** How did you find them?
  - > Electric Blue
  - > Some came to me, or people I knew reached out as I kept digging. Now I’m worried about all of them. Anyway, what they have is wild. Lots of ultra-secret tech projects. One may actually be able to frag with the metaplanar barrier. I saw a file about a new cybermancy project—the creation of better cyber-zombies using Infected cells and DNA codes. There are plans and timetables for Aztechnology and Aztlan to re-take the Yucatán. There are POW camps still operating even though the war is long over. But one thing that keeps popping up is a mention of what Aztechnology refers to as “our new friends” or “friends from out of town.” Seems these new friends are also connected to Site 000 and all the cluster-fragery that’s associated with it. These friends are also supposedly assisting Aztechnology with their research, which may be why they’re pulling ahead of the pack so quickly. Whoever these “new friends” are, it seems that Aztechnology (and a few other corps, not yet sure who) have been in contact with them for the better part of a decade.
  - > Puck
  - > Okay, obvious question: Do we know if all this paydata is legit?
  - > Clockwork
  - > If not, the Azzies are putting in a lot of work killing people over junk mail.
  - > Cayman
  - > An attack this big doesn’t just happen. It takes a lot of time, planning, and coordination, all at an **extremely** high skill level, with a **lot** of connections, not to mention the means to finance the whole operation. So my question is: Who’s in charge? Because there is no way this just came together.
  - > Hard Exit
  - > Whoever did it, my hat’s off. But I’m starting to see this is gaining traction. Several news outlets are covering some of the public data leaks.
  - > Mika
  - > Can’t wait to see how their PR spins this.
  - > Turbo Bunny
- <<<21.9 MP removed/archived by SysOp-01>>>
- > Okay, I expected discussion and some heated debate, but **frag me, people!** Time-outs have been sent, and I’ll archive all this for now. But for the record, what we know is that Aztechnology is killing people who they even remotely suspect know about what’s happened. That now includes us. So watch your sixes, people.
  - > Glitch



- Well, this just dropped a bit ago. Looks like Aztechnology is up to their old tricks. I'm cutting in live from a Channel 12 feed. Seems de la Rosa herself is trying to get ahead of this.
- Sunshine

#### ««OPENING STREAM WINDOW»»

"... will not be taking any questions after my statement. <ahem> Over the past several days, there have been multiple occurrences where several documents, transcripts, video, audio, and other types of information have been disseminated across the Matrix. There have even been instances, such as the Stuffer Shack so-called hack, where it appeared that classified documents related to Aztechnology and the nation of Aztlan have been stolen and then leaked in various ways to the general public. Due to the graphic and inflammatory nature of many of these leaks, Aztechnology has received several inquiries from concerned citizens from around the world, as well as various governments, other corporations, and their agencies as to the exact nature of these documents, images, and so forth.

To nip potential problems in the bud, I think it is important to be open and transparent. I am here to inform everyone that there has been security breach to the data vault of Televista, Aztechnology's most prestigious simsense creators. The content leaked was from a simsense series that had been in development a number of years ago, but the project was ultimately canceled because Televisa executives considered the material too graphic and unsuitable for further development, let alone release.

Whoever obtained this footage and accompanying writers' notes presented this material as authentic, though we are not certain what their intended ends were. Aztechnology has already initiated the necessary investigations, and we have reached out to other agencies, corporate and national, asking for cooperation in bringing the perpetrators of this hoax to justice.

I cannot express my outrage enough and wish to offer, on behalf of myself and the Aztechnology Corporation, my most sincere apologies to anyone who was traumatized or offended by this unfortunate series of events. Thank you.

««END FEED»»

- A simsense production!? They're claiming this was all part of a SIM? Does anyone else feel like their intelligence is being insulted?
- Pistons
- Yep. But the sad truth is, most Joe and Jane Publics are gonna buy this hook, line, and sinker.
- Sunshine

## HELP WANTED

- Hey all, I'm back, managed to stay alive and keep working. Now, I don't have much more to add to what's already here, but I'll post this little bit. Here's to everyone still breathing!
- Pyramid Watcher

Like any corporation, Aztechnology offers a wide variety of jobs and opportunities. Everything from escorting individuals on some archaeology gig to intimidation, wetwork, data theft—you name it, Aztechnology hires for it.

But no matter what the job is, the thing about working for Aztechnology is simple: They are very good at hiring people and making them do things they would never dream of doing. Aztechnology often forces their runners into situations where they have to make hard decisions about their morality and ethics. And they're good at making people compromise them, sometimes using coercion, bribery, or other sorts of leverage. When one works for Aztechnology, expect to have to deal with the blackest and darkest aspects of metahumanity.

And with the current apparent breach, expect Aztechnology to ramp their operations up, which means more jobs—for those willing to take the risks that come with them.

## GAME INFORMATION

### NEW QUALITIES

#### AZTECHNOLOGY DEATH WARRANT

At some point, you did something bad enough that the Big A is now actively hunting you. Your biometrics are on file and red-flagged with the highest priority. If an Aztechnology (or affiliate) agent/employee discovers your true identity, they will act to have you either detained—or eliminated.

**Bonus:** 10 Karma

**Game Effect:** In addition to the description above, anyone affiliated with Aztechnology attempting to identify you via biometrics gains a +2 dice pool bonus for all associated tests and +1 Edge. And unless you are successfully disguised or have hidden your identity, you will not be able to gain any Edge on social tests with Aztechnology-affiliated individuals.

#### BLOOD MAGIC RESISTANCE

For whatever reason, blood magic simply does not work well on you.

**Cost:** 12 Karma

**Game Effect:** Any blood magic practitioners have a -2 penalty performing any rituals or spells against you, and they can only gain 1 Edge in your presence per combat round (replacing the normal maximum of 2).





# EVO

POSTED BY: BUTCH

Evo is famous for its transformative mindset and its level of open-mindedness and acceptance of the various sapient forms. They see all who think as equal until you prove to be either above or below the ranks of the masses. They count everyone from pixies to dragons among their citizenry and use that openness to draw in the brightest minds inside (or without) bodies that others might see as abnormal.

They are well-expanded beyond the Earth, with bases on the moon and Mars, as well as plans to explore and expand more. They recently released their own deep-space exploration ship to the monads who wanted out of our lives, despite the massive impact on the corporation's bottom line, a move they did to show the respect they have for life on Earth. It's all PR but it's good PR, and they find the face they show to the world to be important, even if behind the scenes they still need to backstab and power grab like every other megacorp.

## HISTORY EVOLVED

Once upon a time there was a Japanacorp named Yamatetsu. Yamatetsu wasn't like the other Japanacorps. They didn't like the traditional philosophies of their peers and instead wanted to make changes. They were picked on by their peers so much they moved their headquarters to Russia—Vladivostok, specifically—and changed their name to Evo.

It's a bit oversimplified, but no one needs the details of that chunk of ancient history. Plenty has happened since then that we can cover that is going to be more important to folks looking to work for or against Evo in the shadows of the modern world. Hell, the data I put here might be worthless in a week.

Since the move, Evo has been on a roller coaster ride of expansion, collapse, loss, and growth with a handful of important highlights. Back in the early '70s, Evo was the corp to beat when it came to body mods and creating an individual's perfect



## EVO

**Corporate Court Ranking (2081):** 7

**Corporate Slogan:** Evo is Acceptance

**Corporate Status:** AAA, public corporation

**Worlds Headquarters:** Vladivostok, Russia

**President:** Yuri Shibanokuji

**CEO:** Ysil

**Major Shareholders:** Buttercup (30%), Yuri Shibanokuji (23%), Ren Iwano (8%), Hideo Yoshida (4%), Ramon Dizon (2%), Minor Shareholders (33%)

### MAJOR DIVISIONS

Evo Africa and Middle East, Evo Asia, Evo Australasia, Evo Europe, Evo India, Evo North America, Evo South America, Evo Space

### Major Subsidiaries

Angel Satellite Constellation, ATRP: Investment, ByDesign, CrashCart Medical Services, Echo Motors, Ersatz!, Lightning Brands, Metabank, MetaErgonomics, MetaMatrix, Pensodyne, Philippines Broadcasting Network, Presnya Financial Services, Roskosmos, Saotome Aquadomes, Sokolov-Sarbal, Synergy Pictures, Tsuruga International, Yamatetsu Naval Technologies, Yamatetsu Productions

form. They drove their transhuman ideology with the throttle wide open, and through the acceptance of every form of sapient citizen, they gained access to genetechnology and biotech tied to SURGE, rocketing their designs to the forefront of the field. They teamed up with other megas to grow together in key markets while maintaining an image of independence and expansion through their space program, and they pushed nanofabrication of their cyber designs to the forefront before expanding the tech to larger projects.

Then, CFD hit.

Evo's stock took a nosedive as fear and distrust of geneware, nano mods, nanoconstruction, and even new cyberware flattened those markets. Evo kept up with present research but lost the disposable funding to keep pushing the envelope. Rumors spread about a potential tie to Boston as well. We in the shadows know the truth about that sordid mess, but it is the court of public opinion that megacorporations live and die in, and Evo managed to come through the corporate shadow war with their finger pointed in the right direction and few enough other fingers pointed at them.

NeoNET took the blame for that disaster, but Evo decided they wanted to pull some punishment over on themselves by trying to mediate the monad crisis with an offer of acceptance of this new form of techno-sapient. The offer did not go over well, and Evo took more global hits from their association with the monads. The corporation lost massive amounts of resources when the monads stripped



Gagarin on Mars and took the corp's deep space exploration ship, DSECI. But they didn't all leave. Those who chose to stay needed a safe home. With very few other megacorporations, and practically no countries, willing to let them go along unpunished, Evo was like a beacon in the dark night.

As the monads flocked, Evo maximized their newest resource. They moved the brightest minds to the darkest black labs and started letting them push the edge of technological advancement. What has come through is like the stuff of science fiction. Evo's R&D has jumped ahead of every other megacorp in virtually every field of tech development. They managed to get a few key items into larger production, and sales are bringing revenue back in. That money's being used to build up their defenses around key nanoproduction facilities in order to keep them safe once they are coded to produce other tech. Many of these factories are actually orbital nanoforges, but that does not make them immune to infiltration; it's just a little more complex of a process.

This use of monads has not gone over well. Externally, Evo branding took a major hit, as the megacorporation itself was taking the blame for harboring monad fugitives. Products, services, and corporate subsidiaries bearing the Evo name or the familiar block-letters of their main logo lost huge blocks of business as hostility grew toward the corp. Internally, this loss, plus the ever-growing divide between technological and arcane sectors of the corp, created a schism that could be fatal if properly manipulated. The internal feuds are being kept under wraps as much as possible, but nothing stays secret in the shadows for long. The shadows are also where the fight is going to play out.

But therein lies the rub. The external issues have led Evo to disconnect their name and personalized font from everything but the parent umbrella organization. They've buried the connections from the public, leaving only the thinnest of trails down to their properties and producers in order to maintain extraterritoriality and ease of cash flow. This is going to make discovery of whether you are working for or against Evo a data-diving expedition where you'll face the protective tech and coding of the best monad and technosapient minds around.



Sure, their major divisions that everyone already knows might be an easy call, but even those are starting to rebrand and diversify in order to build layers. MetaErgonomics is one of Evo's most well-known subsidiaries but is now rebranding into smaller corps with names like NewYou, All41, and PerfectFit. Across the board, the Evo connection is being downplayed while new tech and innovation are being worked into every one of their subsidiaries in order to give them every edge possible.

So, I guess with that I can say the history of Evo is over. Long live Evo

- Expect a lot of new names on that corporate target list and expect your team's tech spec to seek a little bigger cut in order to keep their gear up to spec against the new Evo kid corps.
- Glitch
- Those tech advancements are no joke. CrashCart is already stealing business from DocWagon in the private contract department with their new life-saving tech. Not to mention the access to new personal upgrades and surgical discounts you get if you purchase a contract. It's a small but very lucrative market, and while grey-market DocWagon contracts used to be the hottest thing around, CrashCart Pulse contracts are the new hotness.
- Butch

## BEHOLDEN TO NONE

Welcome to the future!

Those were the words I was greeted by as I stepped through the automatic electroglass doors of Evo Africa's headquarters building in JoBurg. They glided across the glass doors, smoothly integrated into my AR, and then slipped into my ears in the sweetest voice I had ever heard.

I understood the schtick. Evo and their various subsidiaries have been pushing out some innovative tech of late and they were about to make another doubter change his tune. I don't see Evo as a global influencer. They hit niche markets across the globe, but their distance from their Japanacorp youth and proximity to the fringe of the modern population has been a limiting factor. By contrast, their latest efforts are pushing everyone toward them, so I'm just going to toss out the general category of **FutureTech!**

Their innovations fall into three major markets: Transportation, Small Arms, and Bio-Enhancements.

The buzz last year was the literal buzzing sound created by several prototype vehicles coming out of Evo's production facilities in Azania. This year, those prototypes are hitting the market with huge price tags and a string of anti-tampering devices along with long contracts for those who make the purchase. What you get is a flying personal vehicle that can rapidly shift from low-altitude road operation to flight in seconds. The tech behind it is some

kind of anti-gravity field developed by the monad technicians who worked on their spacecraft.

At the same time, Evo is also enhancing their own shipping and logistics efforts with a fleet of craft that look like zeppelins but operate on this anti-grav drive. They are already moving huge amounts of goods around Africa to demonstrate the effectiveness of the tech. You can expect to see price tags dropping and models becoming less frills-driven once the early sales recoup some of the R&D expenses. Evo is already working with governments in markets all over the world to get this new category of craft classified and commercially available.

- The UCAS is a hot spot for this product. They need some corp backing, they're reeling from all the recent hits, and they have a good mix of open road and urban clutter to test in.
- Rigger X
- Those zeps are a target for Wuxing and Maersk, as they would hurt their ocean shipping market and make great competitors for current zep and over-the-road transports.
- The Smiling Bandit

## ARMS

At their HQ, they have opportunities to virtually test drive and tour their current and future production facilities. It was all pure marketing, but there is something exhilarating about jumping out of congested PWV traffic and hopping over to your local streets to be home in a jiffy. I did get a weird feeling from the tour, but that could be because of the fake sky over the massive dome. I also couldn't tell if I was on Earth, under the earth, under water, or even up on the moon or Mars.

I didn't get to tour the rEVolution Arms factory, but I did get to head out to the Azanian plains and put several models through their paces. I have to admit, they are some of the best quality arms I've used. Good ergonomics, smooth firing, and zero jams in the ten thousand plus rounds of ammo I put through them. Guns aren't really futuretech, but the nanofabrication systems used to precision-craft these weapons is state of the art.

## CYBER, BIO, GENE, AND NANOWARE

Evo is the only corporation to jump back into nanoware and geneware head on. They have happily continued to develop and distribute previous innovations while pushing the fields forward. Their transhuman agenda and willingness to modify ware (both bio and cyber) for every shape and size of meta, already offers an edge in those fields. They are not the top producer, as other larger megas also operate in this field, but they innovate out on the cutting edge. While their market share may not be the highest, they are making bank by selling the best and newest.





- Conspiracy theorists are all over the Matrix talking about the gene and nanoware coming out of Evo. Claims are all over the board. Some say it's about spreading monad code—the much-feared brain wipe that the monads have promised not to use. A favorite is global brainwashing with just a tiny bit of code to make everyone favorable to monads. Other theories claim that this tech offers some kind of advantage to monads, or that they can manipulate stuff that has this tech in it.
- Slamm-O!
- There is some marketing done quietly between monads about special features, but we've never been offered anything directly because everyone knows who we are.
- Plan 9/Plan 10

## METAHUMAN ACCOUTREMENT ADJUSTMENTS

You can gain a lot of cross-corporate cash by selling the best of meta-modified wares. Just about every product design made under the Evo umbrella is shared with MetaErgonomics for spec modification in order to fit everyone from the shortest pixie to the thickest giant and every interesting metashape in between. In a partnership with YNT, they also have a line of life-like anthroform drones and properly modified gear and clothing, which is offered for technosapients who want style on their forms when playing in the meat realm.

Their domination in this area isn't threatened by much, but since they try to cross corporate style boundaries, they hire runners to grab a lot of early design and concepts files. Releasing too far after the original makes it look like a knock-off or stolen, but a release near the same time actually looks like cooperation. They deal with the legal repercussions on the back end through a whole different department. That is, if any other corp even bothers. The cost of legal actions, even among the Big Ten in the Corp Court, makes any remuneration more about saving face. By the time the whole thing clears, Evo can save face by kicking the bad PR for the lawsuit back in the face of their rival.

- MetaErgonomics gets hit by Humanis hired crews at least monthly, though more frequently near a big release. The jobs tend to be data-corruption heavy—mostly manufacturing flaws into armor and gear modified for trolls, orks, dwarfs, and the occasional elf. Word gets spread through the organization and disseminated to their thugs, who think they get enough of a leg up knowing where to shoot a troll to punch through his designer armor jacket. Problem is, most aren't that good of shots, and even when they are, when was the last time you saw a troll get dropped from a single small-arms shot that wasn't point blank in his eyeball?
- 2XL

## FINANCIAL DOMINANCE

Money makes money, and Evo has long been wise to that simple concept. While most see the sto-



ry-worthy bits about metahuman and metasapient rights, or their transhumanist agenda, Evo's core is filled with financial corps that know how to make money grow. The heart of their finance empire is in Russia, but they control banks, investment firms, and financial consultant groups all over Asia. Every country on the Asian continent has at least one Evo subsidiary operating as part of their financial empire, most have half a dozen, with the largest having several dozen. Each one snags a little chunk of the market, and all of them feed back to the Evo coffers. They're one of the least affected areas as far as the rebranding is concerned and thus have continued to chug along quietly in the background.

Recently, though, corps like **Kirilenko Financials**, **East Asian Investment Services**, **Marakovich Market Masters**, **Elkovski-Vang-Ookman Investments**, **Presnya Financial Services**, and **Metabank** have all been the targets of data thefts, data scrubs, staff intimidations, and extractions. The street rumors abound, but old enemies is the favored tale. The only problem, everyone has been an enemy of Yamatetsu/Evo over the last few decades, so the suspect pool is not exactly succinct. To keep the money flowing, powers at the top are green-lighting black-ops funds to dig and start the counter operations. With all the other issues, they can't afford to keep having someone pick at their moneymaker.

- Classic corp tactics. Hit them where it hurts while they're distracted and overwhelmed in other places.
- Haze
- Runners taking ops against these financial firms are going to have some wicked surprises. The advanced tech division is offering secforces some R&D-level gear. Accountants and anti-grav grenades! A thrill a minute.
- The Smiling Bandit
- That's rumortech drek.
- Clockwork
- If you find yourself in any of an Evo financial subsid's offices, check out the new interior design. Desks, chairs, and cubicles are hard-mounted. Minimal loose bits, and even the branded cups are magnetically attached to the desktop. They're prepped for minimal collateral property damage if things kick off.
- The Smiling Bandit

## OLD FAVORITES AND GROWTH MARKETS

Evo's rebranding may be some of the biggest recent news, but it hasn't even touched six of their biggest moneymakers. When you can just keep focusing on what you're already doing right, instead of trying to change out the name badge on every building you own, you've got an edge inside the Evo universe. **Pensodyne**, **Lightning Brands**,

**Roskosmos**, **CrashCart**, **ByDesign**, and a suddenly well-funded little corp called **Arcane Revolutions** have been chugging along and keeping Evo making money while either gaining infusions from other divisions or navigating the growing rifts and power plays. Most of the Old Timers (as those within Evo refer to these storied brands) can play politics with the best of them, but they also know exactly what too much dissension in the ranks will do.

Pensodyne has far outpaced all of their former competitors in the field of genetech development. The infusion of monad information and genetic recoding skill is light years beyond even what Universal Omnitech and Aztechnology are currently working on. When most of the world halted R&D and production with the CFD crisis, Pensodyne quietly kept moving forward and when it came time to accept the monads as part of the Evo family, they were at the front of the line, shaking hands and welcoming them. Now they have to chase off all comers who want to take a shot at their throne. They're saved, by and large, by the fact that most others lack the secondary and tertiary monad-developed tech required for proper implementation of their therapies and augmentations.

In a similar fashion, Roskosmos, already with one of the best reputations in the space industry, has benefited from not just the tech the monads brought from their rapid development and deployment of DSECI, but also from the work being done at Pensodyne. Gene mods to make it easier to tolerate zero gravity, withstand higher levels of radiation, or cope with massive g-forces are giving Roskosmos astronauts advantages to match the rapidly advancing tech Roskosmos has at their disposal.

ByDesign and CrashCart are getting tech infusions that are boosting production, care, maintenance, and efficiency while pushing the limits of standard physiologies. The presence of rapid-repair nanites in every CrashCart rig is allowing them to snag high-profile contracts from rivals at rapidly growing rates. Now, in the shadows this just means we get more contracts to try to make them look bad, but it's not really working. Every CrashCart success just spreads via word of mouth, and their failures are rapidly downplayed and blamed, not on their lack of care, but on the limitations of response allowed by other corps. Some of those failures are even turned into wins when ByDesign swoops in with custom wares and augmentation tech that not only fixes the problem but makes the patient better than they were before.

The outsider on that list is Arcane Revolutions. They gained a boost in funding awhile back and have been pushing Evo's magitech business to greater heights. As one of the few non-tech growth areas, you would think this was not related to monad tech, but alas, the minds of monads can advance even the fields of magic. AR ended



up behind on the release of their line of alchemical offerings, but the brightest and best minds in the field of magic all whisper that it was designs stolen from AR that let Aztechnology make the strides they did.

- Corporate espionage is just part of the game.
- Clockwork
- Says the thing rumored to be responsible for eight deaths at the AR R&D facility on Russky Island.
- Netcat
- It certainly looked like it could have been my work, but I was busy elsewhere at that time. Go look for a different scapegoat.
- Clockwork

## TOP TALENT

### YSIL, CEO

Time to introduce another corporate snake to the rest of the world. Ysil, the naga at the top of Evo, is well-known within the megacorporate ranks of Evo, but to the world at large she's little more than a viper hiding under a rock. I'm here to kick over the rock and show this snake for who she is.

Evo has done nothing but kick out that thin line of megacorp CEO bulldrek. Things like, "she's the next phase of our EVolution."

"Ysil innovates with an eye on the future but a grasp of the ancient past."

"Ysil will once again balance the scales for Evo."

The list goes on and on. The slogans play on the naga, the mystical culture, the metasapient, the next age, or whatever else they can in order to appeal to Evo fans. It's utter bulldrek to try to save what is probably one of the biggest mistakes Evo has ever or will ever make. That is, if it survives this asinine choice.

Ysil was born and raised in Angkor Wat. She learned mysticism and magic before she even knew the name Evo, and when the megacorp came to town, she stepped up to arbitrate and help make a great deal between the nagas of Angkor Wat and the snakes of Evo. Everyone who met the young naga knew she was already a powerful mage but had grown bored thanks to her natural talents. She saw Evo as something new to learn about and explore.

- Behind the scenes, the rest of the nagas of AW were actually tossing her to the wolves. They had no idea how persuasive she was going to turn out to be.
- Lyrán

Ysil's efforts paid off for her as she brought Angkor Wat into the fold as a strong supporter and resource for Evo. Buttercup was ecstatic to have another strong arcane ally alongside their already

strong ties to Yakut and growing efforts in the Ethiomalian Territories. The quiet but influential naga moved her way into the corporate ranks and slowly built herself a power base among the arcane elements of Evo.

When the potential for becoming CEO was thrust upon her, she feigned disinterest while ravaging the shadows for every edge she could find over her opponents, especially those of an exceptionally technological bent. She is rumored to be the one who discovered the tie between Cynthia Bills and Evening Star, the monad terrorist group operating from the former Boston QZ. Even though the connections are paper thin, they were enough to tarnish Bills and knock her out of the CEO race. Ysil also won a lot of Evo hearts when she promised to keep the philosophies of Kirilenko and Shibanojuji alive while integrating other elements into their expansionist mindset. She wanted to honor Kirilenko's Mars success with advancements not only in technology but in the development of a true arcanosphere, something many consider impossible.

Now that she is in charge, none of her efforts seem to be aimed upward. Most of the work she has been doing has focused on slimming the influence of the monads and AIs within the corporation. She is never outright oppositional, but her policies carry a subtle bias that will slowly build over time, and that's if the low-rank rabble don't rise up for a coup and start striking out at the technological side of Evo. At which point I'm sure Evo will begin a split. Continuing Kirilenko's Mars efforts does not seem to be her only way of honoring the former-CEO-turned-monad. Despite a vastly different series of viewpoints, Ysil has the backing of the Vory. Many in the syndicate's ranks were not at all happy that their comrade was touched by CFD, and they hold the monads responsible.

- The Vory are not well known for their arcane resources, but someone is providing them with more arcane muscle, and word on the street is that most of those hooded Vory casters don't leave footprints.
- Red Anya
- Matt Wrath ran across three Vory cells in ChiTown that all have a snakecaster. Matt Wrath thought it was some weird SURGE thing until a chummer described what a naga was.
- Matt Wrath

Not that any of us will ever meet her, but she's soft-spoken, her scales are a sharp emerald green with hints of gold along the gap between sides and belly, her eyes are a soft yellow, and she speaks and presents herself with a small and timid demeanor. Internally and mentally, she is a keen observer of metahumanity, a highly skilled and initiated mage, a published author of several arcane papers, and



a student of some of the brightest megacorporate CEOs of the modern era, having studied the methodology and mentality of Lofwyr, Villiers, and Knight to get a leg up on foreign competition.

So why do I think this choice is so disastrous? Because Evo has deepening internal schisms that it is trying to paper over, and a quiet egghead is not going to be the one to bring the factions together. She could probably bring lots of innovation to several product lines, but that's not what Evo needs right now. They need a leader, not an idea person, and I don't think Ysil is that.

## CYNTHIA BILLS

The loss of the top seat and accusations of terrorist ties has made Cynthia Bills one of the most dangerous executives in the Evo stable. Her kind smile and gentle eyes hide behind wire-rimmed spectacles, masking a devilish intellect looking for every weakness she can exploit. Her history is short in many aspects, but infinitely long when you consider her recent change. The AI code that uploaded to her mind has yet to identify itself and likely never will. Vast sums of nuyen have been paid to scrub the data from the NeoNET facility in Albuquerque where she came from. Legend has it the only one who knew her true identity was FastJack.

- > Those same rumors link that identity to the reason 'Jack actually took that gig, but legends and rumors are aplenty when it comes to the myth of FastJack.
- > Kid Code
- > Great Ghost, stop spelling it with a capital J! That drek is killing me. His name was Fastjack. No need for weird capital letters.
- > Bull

Even before Bills joined the former mind of Angela Kline, her mind was already one of the brightest in AI research. Since, the merger of intellects and hate-fueled drive has pushed her to what her peers see as the fringe edge of her science. Wiser minds should look her way and see that she's not on the fringe—she is at the foremost edge of her field. Others follow far behind her innovations.

But back to the now. Cynthia, or Cynth as she likes to be called, was running neck and neck for the CEO seat until someone published a series of photos and recordings from her meetings with a certain dragon-monad that I don't want to mention by name because I don't like drawing its attention due to its scorched earth mindset when it comes to cleaning the Matrix of unwanted data. There was nothing too incriminating, but at some point in the conversation she mentioned a desire to contact Sirius, the leader of Evening Star. Since no data was ever found on that meeting, it was assumed to be scrubbed. Meeting that dragon was

bad enough, but wanting a meeting with a well-known sect of monad terrorists was too much. It was too easy to use against her.

She went from number two in the running to losing her research position in a blink. She didn't leave Evo. They couldn't afford to lose her brilliance. The problem is, she is now disenfranchised and has it out for Ysil. She'll never make a direct assault. Not her style. She is rumored to be prepping to join DSECII (Deep Space Exploration and Colonization II), and a lot of people think she is laying the groundwork for some earth-scorching as she departs.

- > Don't discount anything you hear about Cynthia Bills. She's dangerous on the magnitude of a loose Valhalla satellite constellation with a full load of Thor shots.
- > Plan 9

**Secure protocols initiated...invites logged...access granted (Plan 9/10, Bull, Glitch, Slamm-O!, Turbo Bunny, Netcat, Stone)...unlogged invitation terminated...text stream initiated...**

- > I'm the odd man out
- > Stone
- > You're trusted
- > Bull
- > Thanks
- > Stone
- > Ease the chatter
- > We have a point here
- > Glitch
- > We know you know the original code for Cynthia Bills
- > Spill it Plan
- > Bull
- > Are we [admin cut (Bull)]
- > Plan
- > Don't ask drek dumb questions on a hyper secure text stream
- > Drop the data so we can get it out securely and protect a root copy of it
- > Bull
- > Frag me
- > Okay



- > Cynthia Bills was the original clusterfrag code
- > She's the baseline and bulk of the code for every fragged headcase and monad and the reason so much of the nanofab stuff post breakout got scragged up
- > The primary code mostly managed to rebuild and load in Kline but she loaded billions of copies in the fragments that went out to the rest of the world
- > The process wrecked an already messed up consciousness and built the broken psyche in Kline's brain
- > A dozen years in a box will do that for a being who can make a second seem nearly infinite with the right processing power
- > Not to mention how many times they upped and downed her processing power to see what the effect was
- > Plan
  
- > How do you know this
- > Slamm-O!
  
- > 10's a decent chunk but we've worked on it
- > Plan
  
- > What's the end goal for this root code
- > Netcat
  
- > Revenge
- > Plan
  
- > What does that mean
- > Stone
  
- > Anything her messed up mind comes up with
- > She's definitely playing a longer game than I expected
- > Plan
  
- > Revenge has targets
- > Who are hers
- > Glitch
  
- > NeoNET and all its pieces
- > Breaking up Erika and T-N aren't going to help them
- > Celedyr's near the top of the hit list
- > Kline was priority one and she tortured her during the takeover
- > Plan
  
- > How do you know that
- > Bull
  
- > Monad snuff sites
- > They post a bunch of clips from the roughest moments in the transformation
  
- > Most code clusters were not pleasant
- > It wasn't until full overwrites started recoding that more stable monads arose
- > Plan
  
- > What the Frag Plan
- > Why didn't you mention any of this before
- > Bull
  
- > Can't imagine I'd keep being able to help the shadows through Jackpot if I tossed out that tidbit
- > That's if certain members didn't just come off me for talking
- > After awhile it didn't seem important
- > Plan
  
- > Why now
- > Slamm-O!
  
- > Bills is dangerous on a whole new scale now that her more Machiavellian plans have been thwarted
- > She's likely to do something more drastic
- > Figured it was a good time to mention it
- > Thanks for setting this up, Glitch
- > Plan
  
- > What
- > I didn't set this up
- > I thought Bull did
- > Glitch
  
- > My invite came from Slamm-O
- > Bull
  
- > Mine came from Glitch
- > Netcat
  
- > Always good to have opponents who catch on
- > Makes the conflict more entertaining
- > I'm coming for all of you
- > I'm coming for everyone
- > [Cy]nthia [Bil]ls
  
- Protocols cut...Disconnect...**
  
- > So we're in the crosshairs of this nutbag. Happy times. Posted here to at least toss her secrets out there while we all try and figure out if this was some sick cat-and-mouse thing or if she has an actual bone to pick.
- > Glitch



## TAYLOR DACOPRAL

Another former CEO contender, this one has a brand new directive. As Ysil took over, she knew her former competition would need something to soothe their sense of loss. Not to mention distract them from plotting any kind of petty vengeance. Dacopral got tasked with some serious drek, but I guess I'm supposed to give some kind of dossier rundown on it first.

Dacopral is an AI, prefers neutral pronouns, loves designing drones and autosofts to occupy through every medium, innovated some unique multi-medium drone forms, and really didn't want to be the next CEO. They were up there because they were a good neutral choice with the Yamatetsu name on their résumé, but the powers that be didn't want neutral; they wanted progress.

Come on, they're a sentient algorithm. They're smart, forward thinking, not limited by metahuman biochemistry, and loaded into a megacorporate mainframe. They can operate as if time is standing still.

Back to the job assignment, because that's really why I wanted to write this. Evo is in trouble. Not just the monad fallout, the constant targeting for their new tech, or the fact that the majority of the world is, at some level, still biased against anything that is different, and Evo citizens are the epitome of different. They are caught in the crosshairs of a technosapient-killing sniper rifle that could have been designed by the finest murder minds in the Ares think tank, but this threat is not coming from another corp.

Here's where I need to get a little weird, or weirder. I can't put a name to the problem because the problem is very good at wiping out traces of their name and their entire existence. Sure, it all sounds very crazy-conspiracy, but I guarantee this threat is real. I've seen mention of it here before.

This group has a deep issue with all things technosapient, despite their own existence being technosapient. Though, their largest issue is with those that cross the boundary, or mix the boundary, of meat and code.

Dacopral is now tasked with making sure Evo is not hindered or injured by this particular sect of nullwits. They're hiring runners, setting traps, reaching out diplomatically, setting defenses, and presenting a case for its citizens, all in less time than it takes most of us to floss (utilizing the data that true average flossing time is under one second thanks to all those who don't maintain proper dental hygiene). They're taking the job seriously but they still manage to perform plenty of design and test work when processing power is available (which is always). From what I know of Dacopral, most of that test time is all about relaxing and slowing down to interact with the meat world. The activity helps them to pass time while waiting

for their meat world plans to catch up with their digital worldview.

## PHAIDIN UMBRA

From the heart of Africa, Phaidin Umbra emerged. He came with the look of your typical tribal warrior and a build usually only seen in professional sports. He joined up with a small team of runners operating across Africa as muscle, but he quickly became a key communicator and negotiator. He spoke, or quickly learned, every language and dialect he came across, while at the same time rapidly learning and understanding local customs. His value for his own team became so great that other forces, corporate and shadow alike, began courting and, a few times, trying to kidnap him. They dug into his past and found his tribal home in the Congo Tribal Lands, near Lake Tanganyika and the DMZ, but found little clue of what made him special. They discovered his name at birth, Nitu, the fact that he was one of the tribe's hunters/warriors, and that he had left the tribe shortly after a visit from some outsiders that stopped in the village while on the run.

Fast forward through a half-decade of successful shadowrunning across one of the most universally dangerous continents on Earth, and Phaidin takes an offer from Evo Africa. It was looked at by many who did not know him well as a sellout, but for Phaidin it was a safety move because the rumors of his true nature were spreading. Evo was the safest umbrella to stand under as the truth of his monad nature finally began to seep out.

To make a long story short, there were no outsiders visiting his tribal village. There was a crate that dropped from a smuggler's plane after taking a rocket to the tail over the DMZ. The crate was full of CFD-infected nanites, and Nitu found it in the jungle while hunting. He was overwritten quickly with the massive volume of nanites that infected him, but not before Nitu managed to hold his own mind together long enough to run over one thousand kilometers before collapsing near Mt. Kilimanjaro. The new consciousness, Phaidin Umbra, didn't see any reason to return to the small village and instead headed for the city. It didn't take long to assess the local cultures, slide into the shadows, and then work among people who don't ask questions about identities as long as you can do your job.

As for why his village covered, there were two crates and the discovery of the second sent a wave of CFD infection through the village. They all settled into this new quiet village life and rather enjoy it. They covered to avoid getting attention on themselves.

In Evo, he prospered and now works among the executive ranks of Evo Africa. His latest task is all about smoothly integrating tech advance-



ments into existing cultures without inciting excessive discord. The problem is, that's not easy, and individual failures in this endeavor can sour the results of other efforts. He maintains a large stable of shadow assets to initialize, influence, report, and occasionally rescind his efforts. Local growth on a small scale is helping Evo build their new brand loyalties as well as an overall support for the megacorporation currently trying to lay low. Keep an eye on him expanding those tech tests into larger and larger populations.

- "Rescind" is a nice way of saying "wipe from the face of the continent." Small villages that fail this task are slaughtered by tactical teams or firebombed from the air. It's despicable, and word is spreading slowly. Evo already had one village turn their new tech on their benefactors. It didn't go well for them, but more people are whispering, "Remember Butu Nanto."
- Chiemeka

## RIVALRIES AND REBELLIONS

I'd like to say that Evo is their own worst enemy, since at the moment they have a lot of internal troubles threatening to split them in thirds, or worse. That's surely going to be their long-term downfall but before then they're going to have to deal with some unhappy monads, a group of technosapient hating e-sapient, and two of the three remaining major chunks of a former rival. I got the skinny on the monad problem and a look at Transys-Neuronet's efforts. I'll post over a quick bit from a chummer to cover the battle for corporate Africa and that little e-sapient problem.

First up, not every monad is all into Evo's Acceptance line of bulldrek. That goes for those inside and outside the corp. The likeminded often come together in various hosts and forums connecting on the abuses and feelings of slavery under Evo. The most radical venture forth to meet in the meat and discuss the true course to not just change the minds of monads but break them free of their corporate chains.

I'd love to give you some cool name for this monad resistance, but "monad resistance" is about the coolest moniker they have. In order to maintain some level of anonymity, they've never formalized a name or any other form of unifying concept. It's part of what has kept them safe from Evo's internal security.

The goal of the group is relatively simple: free their kin. The hitch is, they don't care if you are working willingly or not. They assume coercion no matter what. Some recruits are sent right back out in order to recruit more monads to the cause. If a convert doesn't seem skilled enough for that kind of guile, they're assessed for extraction. Some are

given the intel on the coming snag job, others are left in the dark to avoid sinking the ship with their loose lips or poor subterfuge skills. Once pulled, most are relocated to small communities and given small but income-generating jobs to fill time and support the cause until more permanent arrangements can be made.

- Those permanent measures could very well be a rewrite to digital copy and execution of the meat body. It's harsh, but most of these monads never became attached to their "meatsacks," as they call them.
- Plan 10

This group is also fueling internal strife in order to crack off a chunk of the corporate pie in hopes of making a new home for monads that doesn't have to deal with what they consider slavery or, at best, indentured servitude. They push jobs that promote strife into the shadows in order to grow the wedges and make sure to point the blame squarely at forces on the other side of the corporate political divide. It's an obvious tactic, but sometimes the simplest method is the best.

- I hope you don't buy that these simple tactics are working. This drek has a complexity worthy of the dragons. They play forces all over the corp against each other, even those controlled by cause-friendly monads. It keeps every investigation unfocused and lets affiliates look like victims who are just out for justice when they ask questions and bribe investigators for details.
- Plan 10

I'm going to wrap my work here with what is my absolute favorite little tidbit of trouble for Evo, what I call the T-N Hustle. T-N is short for Transys-Neuronet, the former chunk of NeoNET controlled by Celedyr. The hustle refers to the moves the Welsh dragon is making. While they look like typical corporate shadow ops, they play more like con jobs by some street hustler.

As most in the shadows know, at least those with the street cred to hit up the major shadow hosts, Evo and Aztechnology both played a significant part in the disaster that was Boston's lockdown. The world saw NeoNET take the blame and collapse, but Celedyr took the events personally for good reason: His goal was to fix Eliohann. T-N came out with little more than a black eye and in fact, gobbled up some old NeoNET assets on the way down. The Welsh dragon is now engaged in a personal vendetta against both AAAs but is playing it more like guerrilla warfare.

Or in the case of Evo, a nice long hustle.

The basics are simple. Celedyr knows Evo's part and knows where the dirt is. The dragon hustler is hitting them over and over, and making it pretty obvious he is just trying to cause drek. Above the table Celedyr is making meetings and out looking



for an investment. It's more of a payout in order to get him to stop but the jobs keep rolling and causing all sorts of drek for Evo.

## EVO TROUBLES

I apologize for any errors in my writing. English is not my first language, and linguasofts do a wonderful job of taking all the character out of the words, So, I'll speak and let this cheap commlink do its best to handle my accent.

My name is Denta Kanto, but on the streets of Lagos I am called Enyi. I run a small stable of shadow operatives who contract throughout Africa but focus mainly in the northwest. I got my intro here from Kane, so you know the types I associate with.

I was asked about the interactions of Evo and Erika, as the latter works to build a foundation here, and since my crews have been handling a lot of business on both sides, I felt I could give a good rundown on these conflicts. Most of the work involves direct actions between the two, making most of my runners feel more like mercenaries than shadowrunners. The small amount of more subtle interactions are pinpoint-focused across just a few operations, always with a very specific goal.

Evo and Erika have been exchanging blows at sites all across the continent. If Erika is doing some infrastructure improvements, Evo is targeting the work with equipment sabotage, personnel intimidation, site undermining, and straight-up property destruction. As Evo seeks out new locations for manufacturing, mining, and property management, Erika is hitting them hard with everything from direct assaults to MeFeed flash mobs involving several well-armed individuals mixed in to turn the social event into a media firestorm. Everywhere the pair scuffles, Evo is getting the bigger beatdown by Erika. The Eurocorp's focus has been mainly up here in the north so they are not spread out as thin as Evo, who are trying to get a solid footing across Africa.

Personally, I think Evo is suffering the error that so many non-Africans do. They look at Africa as a single place and ignore the thousands of cultures across the continent and the sheer size of this beautiful place.

- ▶ Evo isn't missing any of that. In fact, that diversity is exactly what is making them money in Africa. They individualize styles of clothing, tech, armor, vehicles, and even firearms to fit individual tribal and cultural tastes. They may struggle with the shadow war and dealing with a competitor as ruthless as Erika, but they are still wheeling, dealing and making money like an elephant makes drek.
- ▶ Traveler Jones

The Evo-Erika shadow feud has cost at least thirty-six lives within the two megacorps' exec-





utive ranks—twenty on the Evo side and sixteen over at Erika. Assassinations are by far the most common pinpoint jobs. This is followed quickly by data thefts, gathering blackmail material, and making very personal visits to executives in order to redirect their allegiances or their business efforts. These are still significantly less common than straight-up violence, but many teams here in Africa prefer to keep to the grey area of the shadows rather than going full pitch black.

- There are a lot of hooders in the African shadows. A little more common to come up from nothing and appreciate the little guys.
- Old Crow
- The author said it above, and we go and do it again. Africa, as a whole, does not have any more of a penchant for hooders than anywhere else. Certain regions of Africa do. Pretoria, Lagos, and Cairo are three very different places. PWV (Pretoria's sprawl) has a lot of hooding because the rich-poor gap is massive. In these areas, the top ten percent of the population controls ninety-nine percent of the wealth. Stealing from that group and spreading it around is noble, and it gets you a lot of places to hide.
- Traveler Jones

If you're ever headed to Africa in search of work, hit me up and I'll get you lined up straight in whatever dark corner you pop up in. I even have jobs in Asamando and the Ethiomalian Territories for the truly bravest of souls.

On to troublesome topic two. Sometimes, being so accepting can backfire in a big way. For Evo, their open-door policy and support for monads, technomancers, and AIs has gotten them in the virtual crosshairs of one of the most frightening Matrix threats of all time. I'm not discounting either Crash, nor am I ignoring the potential of major AI threats, the threats made by the monads, or anything else that has arisen since the advent of our modern Matrix.

As dangerous as this is to say, I'm talking about Null Sect. Get a fresh copy of this offline if you want it to stay—they are masters of the data search and scrub.

Now that I've said that, I can move on to talking about their goal to cleanse the Matrix of any mixed entities. Technomancers were their first hate, but the rise of monads and the number of AIs emerging has expanded their collection of targets. Evo has become a haven for all three, and while attacking individuals is still commonplace, going after Evo gives them fewer safe places to hide, team up, or recuperate from failed erasures.

Tactics are pretty simple: destroy. They don't do soft in the end. They may employ deception and subterfuge to get a target in place, but once they have them in their sights, their efforts are one-hundred-percent lethal. My best advice is, stay out of the way. If you have someone with you that's being

targeted, get clear or head off to some far-off corner of the world where the Matrix doesn't reach.

## THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

Work with Evo will cross the regular gamut of shadow operations, but I'd like to talk briefly on two areas that are Evo-centric at the moment. First, their internal divisiveness, and second, the lucrative business of testing new tech.

Evo is growing. They could be the fastest-growing megacorp on the planet if you look at percentages, even though MCT is expanding by more nuyen. (It should be noted, though, that some of this growth is a rebound from their CFD-inflicted damage.) On the inside, this growth is being created a bit unevenly, and that is creating some serious internal turmoil between their meta-friendly, advanced tech, and arcane development divisions. Executives throughout the company are targeting each other in an effort to shift corporate favor toward their area of operations. A lot of the work is petty and small-minded, but the shadows don't care about the egos and attitudes of the executives bankrolling the operations. They just care about the bankroll. The thing is, all these internal squabbles are making larger and larger fissures in the megacorp.

Money may rule in the end, but egos and personal vendettas are common and often a place where the bottom line takes a back seat to the bruised ego. These losses then breed more internal issues and scrutiny from above, growing the fissures of corporate division with each uncontrolled attitude.

The process plays out and then repeats over and over again, slowly threatening to crack the most accepting megacorp around.

- Big work in and around PWV in Azania and Vladivostok as expected, but Seattle, St. Louis, Rio, and Sydney are all picking up more and more Evo-on-Evo work as the conflicts expand into new markets along with new tech. The infusion of advanced tech seems to be the catalyst for increased internal strife, making those affiliated with that division particularly common targets.
- Traveler Jones

Since it's not a specific job you are hired to complete, being a field tester for new tech is not the usual gig for runners. You need to have a solid rep and be willing to provide feedback, usually in the form of simfeeds or simrecordings, but occasionally a simple vid record will do. The weapons themselves always send back data, and all testers get chipped in order to be able to use the tech in the first place.

Here's how it works. Runners get a contract and a piece of gear. The contract covers a specific stretch of time and comes with reporting agreements along with work-level agreements. There is no getting a contract and just sitting at home with



your new toy on the shelf. The piece goes on every job, and the contract requires reports on its use, effectiveness, alternative uses, deficiencies, and failures from both the perspective of the user and via analysis of the recordings they've agreed to submit.

In order to get into the tester pool, runners first need a good reputation with Evo. Doing at least a half-dozen gigs with exemplary results and minimal post job conflicts can usually get a runner in a hotspot their first tech test offer. Success gets better tech for testing and can even get access to multiple pieces in order to test synergy or dissonance between devices in the field. This usually only comes after several jobs with the same tech in order to assure proper understanding and skill with one device before adding a second. Though more commonly, each device is in use for several runs, and then the pair are put together. It's an interesting gig but offers a great bit of side cash—and usually a pretty decent advantage over the opposition.

- › If you get an offer for this work and you aren't a regular runner for Evo, be wary. High-risk gear often gets early field tests with anyone dumb and greedy enough to take the nuyen.
- › Rigger X

## HELP WANTED

Before I get into the straight biz, I'd like to talk about working for Evo from a personal perspective. I did not always have my current form or my current mind, and I have seen the reality of Evo across all four of my incarnations over the years. I was born as bland a human as one could describe. Place me among a dozen others with my plain brown hair and eyes, and you'd swear we were all twins.

Back then, Evo didn't care much for me. I wasn't unique. I wasn't heading the transhumanist route. I wasn't so extremely arcanelly talented that I was a commodity for all. In fact, I was a struggling mystic adept who had already installed several bits of cyberware due to injuries from runs.

Then, I was on a team that made an exploratory run on an alchera in northern Azania. I was pushed into a pool of something and felt a rush of mana like I've never felt since. When I popped out, my own team nearly killed me. They didn't recognize the purple-skinned, four-armed person that suddenly stood up from the chest-deep well.

The well SURGED me, and upon a return to the shadows, suddenly I was a commodity for Evo. I was even offered citizenship. Jobs flowed, and my team flourished until Boston.

We were inside when the QZ popped. Almost the whole team got infected when the dragon slammed into Fenway. We were enjoying a tiny moment of R&R and look what happened. We fell apart as they all changed, and I only managed to save myself by voluntarily letting a headcase hit

me with their nanites. I gained a mental companion and a way to avoid getting brain-fragged, but the price was high.

After I cleared Boston, I was a target and a fugitive. Evo wanted nothing to do with me for awhile after the lockdown, until they decided monads needed acceptance too. Suddenly, I was off the blacklist.

All of this is really to point out how fickle Evo is with who they want to hire, and even who they want running for them.

- › He's not wrong, but it's also not that simple. Evo wants those who are not accepted by society to get chances thanks to them. This includes runners who fit that bill.
- › Plan 10
- › Having been accepted as a transhumanist, I can agree, but 10 and I are both now on the outs due to affiliations here. Evo is not universally accepting—they will cut you off, no matter your uniqueness, if you don't toe the line.
- › Plan 9

What kind of biz is Evo up to? That is a good question, but not one easily answered. It all depends on where you are, so let me offer up a few regional highlights.

Across much of North America, Evo's focus is on the financial industry and promoting cross-corporate meta-friendly sales. They need runners to snag data on rival financial companies or make sure key employees don't show for work at important times. This includes those inside arcologies or protected by private or corporate security teams, so it's rarely a simple snatch-and-hold.

Some gigs tend to go for MetaErgonomics, where they hit them up for data on upcoming fashions and gear schematics or simply extract their most brilliant fashion and tech-design minds. Jobs run across the continent but have been heavily focused on Ares employees that may not be missed in their move.

- › Don't see it below, so I'll mention the work in Denver as Evo tries to get the favor of Ghostwalker and get into his little fiefdom. Works well and involves a lot of hits on rival corp operations. Rough part is, it's mostly runner-on-runner conflicts so the shadows are paying the price more than the corps.
- › Perri
- › Evo is doing some positive shadow work in and around Atlanta in order to keep rising meta-hatred in check. Plenty of meta-hate groups are suddenly surging in activities, and all the progress in the area made by trolls and orks in Sweetwater is getting drekked on.
- › 2XL

In South America, Evo is working to make big inroads for shipping in the region with their new



gravtech zeppelins. The craft are green enough for the Amazonian government so far, but no one has done any research on the long-term effects of this tech. With a number of the zeppelins moved into the area along with techs to work on them, the main runner market is leaning towards abductions. You just need to make sure the target doesn't have a cortex bomb or some similar anti-tampering device. All of the zeps and the tech to run them is proprietary to Evo and suffers those glorious catastrophic failures every time someone without authorization tries to make use of them.

- Wreckage recovery is big down there. Even the pieces of the trashed zeps could hold a clue.
- Hard Exit
- Be careful around the wreckage. Most of the tech is still guarded by some nasty surprises. Some of that tech might look an awful lot like CFD nanite tech, except now there is no CFD—just the F part, as the nanites scramble your brain.
- Plan 10

I found an interesting Evo effort in Europe that added a little variety. Around the Mediterranean, Evo is constructing a series of aquadomes and aquacologies. It borders on mass production, but the build speed isn't the big news. The locations are designed with advanced tech, making them able to not only move around the sea floor, but also to alter their depth. The domes are prime targets for tech data theft, and several have been targeted by some nasty methods. One was flooded before a team went in with dive gear to scavenge among the drowned, and a second had the air pumped full of chlorine gas before they went in with respirators. Neither brought out anything of value despite the combined death toll of 106 between the two locations.

- Had those been fully operational the numbers would have been closer to 106,000. I'm sure security would have been tighter with a fully operational facility, but I'd hope the runner teams would have been a little more reluctant to kill so many.
- Bull
- Sea losses are rough. Takes a tough stomach to bring down a ship with souls numbering in the six figures on board.
- Kane
- A few of these are being used as offline data storage. They come to the surface to satlink a download and then sink back to the bottom to protect the data.
- /dev/grrl

Across North Africa, YNT and Saotome are working on two different yet similar projects, and they're doing a decent job working together to solve the early struggles of their latest arcology attempt. Evo is building arcology domes in the desert. They're planting them amidst the Saharan sands and connecting them with a series of high-speed tube trains. Over two dozen have been constructed so far, including a pair of partially submerged aquadomes along the Nile linked to the desert systems. A third aquadome, similar to those in the Mediterranean, is being built at Lake Victoria, but the purpose (other than demonstrating the tech) is uncertain.

- The desert domes are similar to the tech they used to build the bases on Mars.
- OrbitalDK
- If that's the case, those are just as good a target for tech as any. The shots of Gagarin show it spanning twenty-five times what it was before all of the CFD incidents. They made massive progress in a very short period of time.
- Icarus

Much of the world is being used as a testing ground for their new zeppelins, with west Africa and the Ivory Coast being no exception. Long-distance cargo transportation is a huge market, and these craft are definitely making an impression. The largest issue facing all of them is the speed of production. Even with monad tech, their production rate is not near enough to compete with rail and ship transport. The primary advantage many are seeing is the ability to drop large collections of cargo at a variety of locations.

- Word is they have a fleet ready to go once the tech passes enough inspections, but all of that is being held up by the Corporate Court. Seems the other members of the Big Ten don't like Evo having this tech all to themselves and are trying to use this as leverage to get them to share.
- Cosmo
- I have a feeling the only thing keeping this tech leap from earning them an Omega order is that fact that Evo has a good enough reputation with the monads that an Omega order might get met with a series of Thor shots on megacorporate headquarters.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Never did hear anyone say they got control of those satellites back. Seems it all just got brushed under the rug in hopes that everyone forgot that we were once threatened by the monads in order to make us leave them alone.
- Pistons



The same zeppelins that are working everywhere else are also running through Central Asia, but these ones seem to be pulling double duty. Not only are they demonstrating how they handle mountainous terrain, they are also testing out defense systems. This region is full of smugglers, bandits, and other traders looking to get a leg up, so Evo has modified several of their zeppelins to act as not only cargo vessels but also gunships. Long-range defensive systems in testing appear to be high-velocity/high-ROF rail guns, while the short-range measures are testing out Evo's laser technology. Local enemies are way outgunned, but other corps have been funneling in cash and weapons to the area to counter Evo's growth.

- I need to get my hands on one of those. Sure, it's fun to be a pirate on the seas, but I think being a sky pirate would be even cooler.
- Kane

I'm mentioning Australia only because of the issues they have arising from trying to operate the gravtech zeppelins in the Outback. The tech goes wonky for no apparent reason. The craft might rise five hundred meters suddenly or drop the same way. Reports indicate rolls occurring mid-flight for no reason. They had considered arming them, but after these initial tests they may choose to just have the zeppelins skirt the coast if they want to head that way.

## GAME INFORMATION

### REVOLUTIONARY

You're familiar enough with how Evo works and have handled enough prototypes that you know how to make them work smoothly.

**Cost:** 10 Karma

**Game Effect:** This quality allows a user of one of the rEVolutionary Arms weapons (p. 39, *Firing Squad*) to choose to not use the wild die.

### EVO IN

You have a connection in Evo that makes you one of the people they reach out to when they want to field-test new gear.

**Cost:** 4 Karma

**Game Effect:** Having an in with Evo means you can accept those lucrative (and dangerous) tech-testing jobs. This quality opens up the possibility of Evo offering the character equipment to test. What pieces are up to the gamemaster, and they should always come with some potential for failure or folly in order to keep things interesting.





# HORIZON

## THE IMAGE WE PORTRAY

POSTED BY: THE FLYING SPY

What can I say about Horizon that they can't say better for themselves? In fact, that has been the cornerstone of this megacorp since it popped into existence (and into the AAA ranks shortly thereafter) in the '60s. While some other newcomers to the AAA ranks may have "spin" in their name, no one is better than Horizon at changing the narrative for even the most offensive pieces of drek on the planet. Based in Los Angeles, they are the premier cosmetic surgeons for damaged reputations or those who just want a little touch up here and there, as well as those who want a complete image reconstruction. It all depends on how much they're willing to spend. They use those skills to get in with corps and characters across the globe and then use those connections to make small and subtle expansions

over time. Horizon will not be the next MCT, but you can expect them to move up from the bottom of the AAA ranks at some point in the next decade. Whether that is due to the fall of another or the rising of their own star isn't certain, but either way, Horizon will be influencing the process.

That all said, I would be remiss not to mention the philanthropic side of Horizon. Whether it's just part of the image or a genuine desire to make the world a better place, Horizon is world-renowned for their efforts to better metahumanity and protect the planet. Their philanthropic ability benefits greatly from their private status, as they don't need to report publicly what they're spending, and internally no one cares because the citizens of Horizon pretty much run the show thanks to their input into the Consensus. The Consensus is the decision algorithm that all Horizon employees feed their views into that guides the entire direction of the megacorporation. The whole thing is a bit weird, but read on and you'll understand just why this corp is often called the "Cult of Personality."





## 'HISTORY'

I was told to keep this “brief and relevant” by the powers that be, and luckily there isn’t much of an option to write some long, drawn-out history for a megacorporation just past its twentieth year of existence. Ghost knows, I own underwear older than that. I’ll stick to the highlights and get you up to speed so you can move on to the here and now.

Back in 2061, Horizon first entered the scene as it made efforts to save Los Angeles from the double whammy of Halley’s Comet and its own bubbling cesspool of greed. Through great PR spin, they made a mint off Deep Lacuna tours and funneled that money back into rebuilding an entertainment brand that wasn’t boring and bloated like the rest of Hollywood. It was a bit dark, as the Lacuna often showed some horrible drek, but Horizon, ever the PR wizards, sold it as a sort of remembrance or memorial to keep it wholesome, even though the bulk of the tourists who came just wanted to see the drekshow for themselves.

Their positive cashflow went into snagging up some bits of broken CATCo, which happened to get them a slot in the Big Ten as well. Seriously, it was that easy.

Not.

This area of history is still quite obfuscated (Horizon has excellent data scrubbers that we’ll talk about later) and no one knows how this tiny (relative to their peers) A-rated megacorp made the sudden jump to AAA with just purchasing the remains of the shortest-lived AAA in Corp Court history. Something went down behind the scenes, but no one has managed to dig up what. These days, it’s old news.

Once in the AAA ranks, they sat quietly at the bottom and did what they do best. Good PR. Whether it was for themselves, for a nation, or for another megacorporation, they made mad nuyen making everyone who could pay the bill look like a million nuyen. If the entity in question had a rival, the dirt started to fly, and whether the mud that was slung stuck or not, it was heaped so deep it piled up at their feet no matter what.

## HORIZON

**Corporate Slogan:** “We Know What You Think”

**Corporate Court Ranking (2081):** 10

**Corporate Status:** AAA, private corporation

**World Headquarters:** Los Angeles, PCC

**President & CEO:** Gary Cline

**Major Shareholders:** Undisclosed

**Dominant Business Language:** English

**Secondary Business Languages:** All

### MAJOR DIVISIONS

Horizon Africa, Horizon Americas, Horizon Asia, Horizon Europe, Horizon Southeast Asia

### NOTABLE SUBDIVISIONS

Bathotech (energy), Bio-Fine (biotech), Cantor-Kurosawa (media), Charisma Associates (marketing/PR), Checkpoint Software (software), Colbert Group (finance/legal), Columbia Industries (simsense), Common Denominator (fashion/consumer electronics), Cunard Entertainment (alternative entertainment), The Horizon Project (social projects), Horizon Transglobal (aerospace), KaleidoScape (software/sim), Minuteman Security (security services), Olympus Designs (architecture/design), Pathfinder Multimedia (media/entertainment), Singularity (Matrix), Spectrum Holofix Entertainment Systems (electronics), Synergistic (ARE software), Virtual World Disney (entertainment), Wanderlust (tourism), Whole Foods (foodstuffs), Wind River Corporation (agriculture)

In the PR process, there is always a secondary benefit. That benefit is finding out what dirt you may or may not need to clean up if it arises. Horizon often gathered gads of dirt on their own clients, and you can guarantee that after the checks stopped coming in, those clients were reminded of this fact whenever they came up against Horizon on a deal.

This perfect past couldn’t hold up forever, and when the drek hit the fan, it made a good and dirty mess. Horizon got mud in their eye from the Az-Am war, where they backed the wrong pony and took a hit for condoning the killing of POWs. Then, somehow, the Consensus thought it the will of the people to kill scads of technomancers protesting in Las Vegas (university psych professors have been studying that incident for years). Ever the PR masters, Horizon admitted the fault was in the Consensus and set about course-correcting by shutting down the original program and starting fresh with some new ground rules. That, and some nuyen doled out to those affected by the events of Las Vegas, went a long way to clean up their image and get them back on track. Most expected them to keep a relatively low profile after that, but they went back into full PR spin mode. They knew hiding their heads in the sand was not the thing to do for a corporation that relies on public image for their success, and instead they turned the nega-



tive into a positive by admitting their mistake and making all sorts of gestures to burnish their image. At the same time, they tossed dirt out on plenty of other megacorps in order to make their less-than-perfect luster look downright brilliant.

Over the last few years, it's been business as usual. This means positive PR campaigns for clients, digging up dirt on clients and opponents alike, scrubbing bad news from the Matrix, and rebuilding their "For the betterment of metahumanity" image.

## EXCELLENCE IN EXECUTION

Horizon isn't a match for the other megacorporations in tangible areas. They simply don't have the same extensive production facilities and physical presence, but when it comes to the intangibles, they play huge roles in those markets. The areas of public relations, media and entertainment, market predictions, and social consciousness may not have the meaty, real-world feel of heavy industry, arms manufacture, tech design, or physical security, but they make money without the need for materials and massive personnel demands. These four small yet lucrative fields are the bread and butter of Horizon's money-making machine.

In the world of public relations, Horizon plays second fiddle to no one. Claim Aztechnology PR is better and I'll hit you with a hundred campaigns where they went head-to-head and Horizon came out on top ninety-nine out of those one hundred times. At the top of that PR empire sits **Charisma Associates**, the premier name in shaping public image and opinion. As most of their efforts are externally aimed, they have a slightly different feel than other Horizon subsidiaries. The Consensus is still very much a part of CA, but the employees

under the CA umbrella have their responses to the daily polls automatically downshifted on the HIP (Horizon Internal Persona) score due to "excessive external influence."

Before I move on, check out this [\[link\]](#).

In the eyes of CA, there is no such thing as bad publicity. Any time you can get your name into the ears and out of the mouths of others, you're winning the publicity battle, even if it's bitching about the latest up-and-coming simstar and their battle with BTL addiction or talking about the ratings slipping on the latest season of *Who Wants to Marry a Mage?* We all know the positive stuff is good for business, but even the negative can be spun by the PR gurus at CA. They want you to talk. They want you to keep mentioning Horizon and Spectrum and Pathfinder and Singularity and the Consensus, because the more you mention it, the more people gain a peripheral awareness. Once that's there, CA knows how to turn that sliver of knowledge into a beacon of the brand.

- Charisma is a terrifying foe. They hire more runners than every other part of Horizon combined. This knowledge of the shadows, combined with a desire to avoid negative attention, means they have a reputation for treating runners who perform at a substandard rate rather harshly.
- Sunshine
- CA is run by Rael WhiteOak. She's a former runner who carried her knowledge of the streets up to the boardroom. She prefers that all contracts for CA go to runners who have the ability to keep things quiet, but she knows the value of a good media circus after some flashy runner fiasco gets spread through the news.
- Cosmo

When it comes to the media and entertainment industries, Horizon has a solid collection of sub-

## THE CONSENSUS

This is a Horizon-designed decision-making program at the heart of the corporation's socially conscious agenda. It starts with data input from all Horizon citizens, which is weighted using the Horizon Internal Persona score of each employee answering pop-up polls throughout their day. The program determines what is the best course of action for the corporation and makes its suggestions to the board of directors. Suggestions are usually taken, but the board has the ability to veto the ideas of the Consensus with a two-thirds vote. As the Consensus is, literally, the voice of the people, this is a rare occasion and usually only occurs when some external influence has managed to weasel its way into the citizenries' collective consciousness.

- Without getting into too many details about the potential problems with this thing, remember one key principle: the Consensus is no better than the people feeding it data. And

since people are prone to mass panic—well, that's how you get the Las Vegas incident.

- Sunshine

## HORIZON INTERNAL PERSONA SCORE (HIP SCORE)

This is an internal company measurement system that calculates the "value" of each Horizon citizen. The score is determined by the personal and professional accomplishments of each citizen as well as the opinions of their fellow citizens. Forget to smile and say hi on the way in to work, you can expect a couple of dings from your colleagues. Make sure to send a special thank you to your research team and you can be assured they'll vote you up the next chance they get. Rankings are used to align an internal caste system that also determines internal positions across the various teams and divisions of the megacorporation.



subsidiaries across a wide array of fields. Due to the way Horizon operates and its relatively small size, most of these subsidiaries work hard to keep coordinating to maximize profits and success across the board. For example, teams from **KaleidoScape** offer their latest simsense software innovations directly to **Columbia Industries** for production use with all the proper warnings that the bugs may not be out of the code. Then teams from Columbia report back on issues, and then they all work together to get the best products and productions Horizon can offer. Internal backstabbing and sabotage are at a minimum because of the risk of getting slammed on your HIP.

- What kind of pro-Horizon propaganda nonsense is this? Anyone who has spent any time on social media knows that it doesn't eradicate backstabbing and sabotage; it shifts how you do it. Horizon's best HIP manipulators know how to get a crowd of Horizon employees riled up (by being funny, outrageous, rabble-rousing, or whatever) so that they can absolutely torpedo the HIP scores of anyone who gets in their way. These people are absolutely feared for the power they wield, and no one dares cross them—right up until the moment that their power wanes and the whole corporation, by some unspoken signal, turns on them. Careers can be ended in mere days once the tide turns on them. The backstabbing and sabotage can be merciless and thorough.
- Dr. Spin

While that internal sharing is what makes Horizon rather unique in the megacorporate realm, it is not the reason they hold such a sway over the media market around the globe. That comes from their ability to offer immediate and valuable feedback on projects in development in real time via pop-up polls and the Consensus. Every citizen gets their voice heard, and the Consensus can offer feedback to a range of production companies on directions for their work in order to satisfy a select portion of the market or to provide a broader appeal if a particular piece becomes too niche. Projects are occasionally bounced around between firms in order to get a broader perspective or different take. Just recently, the simflick *Sol Seeker* was released by **Pathfinder Multimedia**, but that is not where this little niche island adventure sim started. **Cunard Entertainment**, known for their alternative offerings, originally picked up the script to produce a skin-heavy island adventure romp. Initial Consensus feedback led to a swap of production teams due to a deep connection to the name's double meaning and a collective idea that the sim itself should be more than skin deep. With a few script tweaks and a shift in recording plans, the sim changed directions and is now sitting at the top of the global sim market for the fourth week running.

Collaborations like this are common to Horizon's success. **Cantor-Kurosawa** makes the simflick, **Singularity** provides a perfect Matrix host

for viewing at just the right feedback level, while **Spectrum Holofix Entertainment Systems** releases a commlink tuned perfectly for the simfeeds but also capable of a trid projection conversion, and **Synergistic** and **Truman Distribution Network** team up to get the advertising and distribution network perfectly tuned in order to avoid hitting markets, even down to neighborhoods, where the sim wouldn't make a profit.

Every form of entertainment, from adventure sims to sports and nature documentaries, across every form, flatvid to Calhot sim, comes out of Horizon and its subsidiaries. You name it, they make it, and they make you want to see it.

- Things aren't completely perfect inside Horizon's family. It's still full of people, and people are occasionally irrationally attached to creative projects. Emotions can run high among artists, especially when their latest effort, which they see as a masterpiece, is suddenly changed when the Consensus says it needs a new leading lady or a script rewrite to touch a broader audience. Hurt feelings and the inability to actually express displeasure for fear of HIP loss means regular Horizon employees will often dip a toe in the shadows to get a little revenge. The jobs are usually pretty bland, but an occasional hot head will want blood, and hits against Horizon are relatively easy to get away with compared to some other corps.
- Balladeer
- The entertainment business has always had a bit of a dark side, and just because Horizon has that sunrise logo doesn't mean they always keep to the sunny side of things. Industry opposition from across the ranks of the Big Ten and below are constant targets. Stealing scripts, extracting entertainers, sabotaging sets, corrupting code, and roughing up writers are all part of the regular business getting tossed back and forth between Horizon and their rivals.
- Sunshine
- Roughing up writers? Where's the challenge in that?
- Cayman

When it comes to market prediction, things get a little strange. **Checkpoint Software** and **The Colbert Group** are two core corps keeping an eye out for upcoming trends. The pair work together to analyze the flow of the markets and hot trends and then get out ahead with any new innovations. Success is almost guaranteed in any area they happen to point to, and no one else has managed to figure out how they are so good at making these predictions. That's where the strangeness comes in. Extractions from either corp never lead to success. No matter which bright minds you snag—and a few extractions have involved multiple targets—they never seem to be able to make the same successful predictions. They're still bright, they still try, and they get close, but they're missing something.



### The Consensus.

The algorithm, and the massive input from the citizens of Horizon, seem to be the missing link in the market-prediction puzzle. It makes sense, as the people create a vast pool of subjects that can be used to represent the global markets by looking at what they desire from the near future.

- This isn't common knowledge, which is why the value of Checkpoint and Colbert remain stable. If this information was proven and released, the value of these two corps would nosedive in a blink.
- Mr. Bonds

Horizon leads the world's AAA megacorporations in the field of social consciousness, probably because most of the other AAAs are about as socially conscious as a behemoth on kamikaze. The Draco Foundation could give them a run for their nuyen, but **The Horizon Project**, the corp that started it all, is the tip of the spear when it comes to the philanthropic war on social inequality. They give away more money each year than most A-rated corps are worth. Keeping Horizon private helps to preserve secrecy around this effort, but those in the shadows have a really good idea what's going on.

The Horizon Project mixes socially forward and conscientious endeavors with their own quiet grey and black deals in the locales they touch. A recent donation to the NAN set a geosynchronous satellite over the Sioux Nation to provide improved Matrix communications for schools in rural locations. The satellite was inspected and verified safe by the Sioux Nation before it was launched by **Horizon Transglobal**. Due to weather (on a clear day) the launch was delayed by fifteen minutes. In those fifteen minutes, a team of runners quietly infiltrated the launch site and modified the satellite. Now Horizon has a spysat sitting directly over a geological, political, and arcane hotbed. They've got Sioux/UCAS border relations and the Yellowstone Caldera under their watchful eye in the sky.

I'm sure a few of their projects are not covers, but I'd put that number under ten percent of operations, maybe even five percent.

- The money on these jobs is often better than normal. They pay a little more to assure the job stays quiet on the front and back end. Having their philanthropic gigs tied to black and grey ops would require some extra spin on the back end, and they would like to avoid that.
- Fianchetto
- As any smart corp would, they plan to keep it quiet and pay for that option, but they prepare contingencies on the back end. These plans are common targets of their competition—partially as a way to snag some dirt, but more for a line to get ahead of them if things go sideways. Being able to plan your own counter-spin in advance is a serious leg up when things go bad.
- Dr. Spin





# HORIZON'S GOT TALENT

The nice thing about Horizon is that I could just hack into their HIP system and choose the ten persons with the highest HIP scores, and then put together some bios on them. Let's just say I did that, and I kept two of them here, but the other eight are just so fragging boring I couldn't expect you to read them. The rundown would be a list of the top executives in the company, and in an organization where you make your way to the top by being liked or respected by as many people as possible, you usually look super bland by the time you reach the lofty heights of the HIP scores. Because he is and has been the face of Horizon since its inception, I left Gary on the list and pulled up a bit on Cove Morgan, his potential successor. I'm putting a little clip on WhiteOak to cover her current events, even though she's only number eighteen, and then saved the last two spots for something interesting and provocative: the Dawkins Group and the Consensus itself. You'll understand that last part in a bit.

## GARY CLINE: CEO, LEAD AT THE HORIZON PROJECT

Starting at the top, you have the venerable CEO and longtime face of Horizon. As almost everyone knows, Cline came up in the corporation as a sim-sense star. He still performs in the occasional sim and trid flick when the mood hits, but most of his time is spent in boardrooms and backrooms running the day-to-day of The Horizon Project and answering the call when the Board of Directors needs the CEO's input. He's an ork, ultra-charismatic, and slowly getting up there in years, but living the easy life in penthouses around the globe keeps the wear and tear of the streets from slowing him down.

That's enough of the boring stuff. You're all here to read the juicy bits and get an idea of what he's up to these days, and I happen to have a line on just that.

First and foremost, I alluded to backrooms above because Gary Cline has been hitting the streets as an occasional Mr. Johnson and fixer in several cities across North America. With a face everyone knows, it's hard to imagine Cline not getting made, but some skilled makeup work and top-of-the-line voice modulator hardware keeps most people from getting clued in. The fact that he's doing it isn't completely odd. Plenty of megacorp CEOs have done some slumming in the shadows from time to time for a little rush. Thing is, Cline's been doing it on the regular for a few years now.

As the '70s waned, a mystic rumor slid into the shadows. Rumors of a collection of tarot cards that

possessed strange and unique powers were abundant, but actual sightings and uses of the cards became the things of shadow legends. Horizon's Consensus picked up on the rumors and vibes, saw the nuyen signs, and put together a decent collection of trids and sims. The media efforts took any validity from the mystic rumors and turned them into conspiracy theory drek.

Cline played a minor part in one of these trid series and became enthralled with the tale. He started his own quest for these cards. After a few double-crosses and a handful of last-minute losses, he decided to take over the role of Mr. Johnson and fixer himself. He selects the teams, usually focusing on those with a solid rep and concern to keep that solid street cred. Then, with a slightly different persona, he acts as Mr. Johnson for the hire, pick-up, and payoff. The project has been bordering on an obsession for some time now, and it's what has let others get as close to taking his top spot as they have.

If internal rumors are to be believed, he has already been successful on a number of occasions, but success seems to only have emboldened him to work harder at trying to gather every card in the deck. While his focus is kept on this mystic deck, he may be distracted enough to lose his spot as CEO, but if the rumors about the powers available with these cards are true, it won't be lost for long.

- > Conspiracy theory trash. That whole mystic tarot bulldrek is just nutfodder to give the Plan 9's of the world something to rail on about.
- > Code Red
- > I'd be insulted, but I don't let ignorance offend me. If you don't know what you're talking about, just don't post.
- > Plan 9
- > And you've got proof?
- > Code Red
- > I can't prove it either way and thus, I don't make claims on the validity. I know I'm known for wild claims, but I have some semblance of evidence before I go spouting off my particular flavor of crazy.
- > Plan 9

## COVE MORGAN

### VP, UNITY PROJECT

Everyone knows Cove Morgan—for good or ill, most for good, but envy often makes people bitter. Whether you met cute, “little” Cove back in his early *My Big Brother* days at Pathfinder, before Horizon even existed; swooned over his deep bass vibrato as his music career skyrocketed in Horizon's early days; found yourself replaying his debut sim, *High Stakes* while being enthralled



with the sensations of being over three and a half meters tall; or most recently been captivated by his animated speeches as he brings his passion for change to the global virtual stage, you know the name Cove Morgan. He has been a global sensation since childhood, making waves as a successful troll (of the giant variety) actor early on, then avoiding the trappings of teen stardom with a career change, and translating every bit of his success into a career with a strong philanthropic component. He's spoken out for metahuman rights, legal variations for non-standard form sapient, and megacorporate reform on global citizenship policies, just to name a few of his top agendas. He's avoided getting labeled as just a faceplate to draw the crowds by using his own fortunes to fund every cause he works with.

- Cove didn't avoid the teen drama by choice. To most other teens he was a freak, and they treated him as such. He endured it with maturity but has taken a few HIP hits from former "colleagues" who have come looking to ride his coattails and gotten their karmic retribution.
- Sunshine
- Not every negative clip has been a hit. HIP comes through the Consensus, and anyone who has followed Cove's career knew of his rough teen years. They saw his polite declines—and they were sickeningly polite—as a great way to handle their past differences.
- Dr. Spin

Since everyone needs an official job, Cove, with his cohort of advisors and support staff, sits at the top of the Unity Project, in charge of one of The Horizon Project's most controversial issues: monad reform. The team covers more than just monads, but that's the current hot topic. Since he has the number-two HIP ranking (behind only CEO Cline), it's his to run as he and the Consensus see fit. It's a bit of a sham team, as Horizon is not about to open their doors to that potentially rabid pack, but having a well-loved face in the lead makes the lack of progress acceptable. The rather cushy job gives Morgan the freedom to keep being a face for so many other projects and teams within Horizon. He also hasn't left the simstar or singer world behind. His simflicks are still big moneymakers and his concerts draw massive live and virtual audiences, and much of proceeds feed back into Cove's philanthropic projects.

- As we might expect, it's a bit greyer than that. Money finds its way into a healthy pool of shadow funds that Cove can use to further some of his more important agendas, with a little extra assistance from the shadows.
- Mr. Bonds

Now that I've given the cheap glossy scream-sheet version of Cove Morgan, let's talk about the part we all care about.

The dirt!

Everyone at Horizon tries to keep a squeaky-clean image inside the corp, but their dealings outside the company, where no one can rupture their HIP, is often full of all the built-up bile and vitriol from being nice to people they don't want to be nice to. Human nature still plays a part, especially with the executives and globally educated portion of the corp's population who have broken some of the indoctrination into the Horizon way of life. Cove isn't all about backstabbing and indignant condemnation, but his shadow op contracts definitely carry the flavor of his contempt for those who live in the shadows, free from the shackles of corporate social expectations. This may seem trivial, but sometimes a team with a decent social negotiator can read Mr. Johnson to get a feel for who's behind the job, and this is a nice bit to feed into their data bin.

As for Cove's agenda, it's a straightforward purpose but one of those things you can't go after head-on. Cove wants the top spot. When the HIP reset a few years back, he used every bit of his social prowess to jump ahead, but he always got stuck a half-step behind Cline. Early last year, Cove's work started popping up. The long and short of it comes down to a shadow war to bring Cline down a peg and take the top spot. Nothing is ever so simple, but we can take a look at just a few moves being made in this game of megacorporate chess.

Cove is targeting Cline in three primary areas. His first is the simplest, as he contracts jobs that hit Cline's professional efforts with The Horizon Project. Cove pulls together data on Cline's efforts, feeds them down to his connections on the street, offers a budget, and then those connections use the budget and the data to create minor disruptions. Job orders almost always come with requirements for no unnecessary killing, minimal collateral damage, and total discretion requirements, mostly to minimize investigations. These are usually easy to follow, since the work requires a light enough touch that problems rarely arise. Data thefts, social engineering, image sabotage, and personnel intimidation are common areas of work.

Second on the Cove v. Cline hit list of targets is Cline's Horizon reputation. A bit more contrived in their contract parameters, these jobs never seem to be anything remotely shadowy. Whether it's spreading a rumor, making sure a touched-up image gets circulated, or slipping in for a little water-cooler trash talk, the jobs are always heavier on the social engineering than the customary violence of the shadows.

The third of Cove's gambits against Cline is a bit closer to the standard fare of runners. It bears shades of brutality and is a bit of street ugly, but



it still holds that edge of charm you would expect from Horizon work. Cline's affinity for the rumors of a mystical tarot set are not unknown, nor are his efforts to chase them down. Cove either tracks Cline's moves and sends crews to interrupt or intercept or he fabricates the rumors, feeds them up Cline's grapevine, and then closes the noose on the teams he hires to mar his shadow reputation, which eventually finds its way back up the chain. These jobs are the dirtiest bits of Cove's works, and the Johnsons involved don't give the nicety-nice spiel. These get bloody, but they also involved the most distance from Cove's desk.

- You can actually watch a few pieces of this battle in trid form. **Graves: Mystic Hunter** and **The Lost Deck** have both been scripted and produced from internal accounts taken from employees. Obviously, they see enough for the Consensus to pick up the gist. Funny how being so drunk on the kool-aid makes you miss your own drek getting flashed in front of your face.
- Dr. Spin
- I like Cove's style. I don't like the guy, but he plays the game well and that makes me think he's ready for the big CEO chair.
- Pyramid Watcher
- If Cline ever gets the straight proof on Cove's actions, the giant is likely to wind up in the big CEO chair in the sky. Cline's been at this a long time, and he knows how to get dirty.
- Glitch
- That's only if Cline is really trying to hold that top spot. Plenty of rumors inside Horizon are whispering Cline is ready to concede the throne. The corp just needs to establish a smooth transition.
- Sunshine

## RAEL WHITEOAK

### VP, CHARISMA ASSOCIATES

Plenty of other files on this host have deep details on Rael. She was a runner in a past life, she's an elf, and she's scary as frag with her smile pointed at you. She's currently the VP of Charisma Associates, Horizon's primary PR firm and a huge source of work in the shadows. Since she knows how they work, she is an expert at working them. That's about all of the bio I feel the need to spit out, and so instead I take my limited verbiage to freshen up the info on what she's got her talons set to grab.

UCAS. No one is expecting them to be able to afford the support of CA, but Rael has been making efforts to get a decent stock of dirt on various aspects of the UCAS while also simultaneously locating possible positive points to boost a PR campaign, should the struggling nation decide to save itself or seek to boost its image for increased

investment. The move of Ares to Atlanta was the latest major hit, but land grabs by the Sioux along with Seattle and St. Louis going independent have not added to the appeal. If the UCAS is to survive this century, or even this decade, they are going to need a serious revitalization, and Charisma Associates is about the only chance they have of looking appealing as an investment rather than a crumbling nation.

- I've seen a lot of hooder work going down in Chicago, around Boston, over in Toronto, and down in the southern border sprawls. All of it seems to be about getting gangs in check in and around up-and-coming neighborhoods in order to paint a better picture. Money trail seems to point Horizon's way, but I can't confirm that for sure. Both CA and The Horizon Project are just as likely to be tossing money at the slums for good PR. If it's THP, maybe we could look for whatever side job they have going down.
- Glitch

We can pair up the next area with Ares and Atlanta. CA is well-known for being the firm behind saving Ares' collective hoops after that whole Excalibur debacle, but now events in Detroit have hit Ares with another black mark, this one far worse than a defective gun. The move to Atlanta has its advantages, but it also comes with competition in the city that Ares wasn't used to in Detroit. While Ares' own PR machine looks like they are building a solid campaign, WhiteOak can see the writing on the wall if Ares keeps trying to play the AmeriCorp card. The support there is thin and not particularly wealthy. They'll get themselves into debt to buy Ares' goods, but they aren't likely to pay back that debt. Ares needs bigger investors, just like on their former home turf, and WhiteOak is looking forward again. She's working angles to set up a different support campaign for Ares and doing it all in the shadows. No official connections, but plenty of old Ares associates are getting friendly meetings in order to catch up on old times.

As for Atlanta, they are about to skyrocket to the forefront of shadow activity in the CAS as they welcome a new AAA while still battling some of their previous growing pains. In order to not just become another AresTown, they're going to need an image of their own, and WhiteOak is quietly arranging deals behind the scenes. In order to make it all happen, though, she has a lot of skeletons to clear out of some big closets. CA has already expanded their client base in Atlanta thanks to WhiteOak and she's working every angle to go from million-nuyen private to billion-nuyen public contracts.

- WhiteOak is also playing all the angles in Atlanta by opening communications with the Atlantean Foundation, which already has a presence in the city. We know from the history of CA that they can support opponents and have both of them grow in



popularity, but this could be a real challenge for WhiteOak. The bad blood has already started to form in the shadows.

➤ Sunshine

WhiteOak enjoys a challenge. When you've been in the PR game for such a long time, you start to look for lost causes just to test whether it's skill or reputation keeping you at the top, because no amount of reputation is going to get the world believing Winternight was a humanitarian aid organization. The shadow grapevine has been abuzz with rumored connections getting made between WhiteOak, Emerson Hisp, Cynthia Bills, Xander Colt, and Eshraki. Most folks here are familiar with Bills, but all of them represent different clusters of the same group.

Monads.

Bills is an insider at Evo. Hisp leads a growing global group of unaffiliated monads known as the Collective. Xander Colt is the head of We Stayed for Our Future, a public-assistance monad group looking to bridge the divide. Eshraki is the voice for the monads still living around Salem in the NEMA, which means she's the voice for Eliohann/Cereus and his cult. All different sects of monads, and all being reached out to by WhiteOak with varying degrees of success from what I've gathered.

If you haven't caught the drift, it looks like WhiteOak might be getting ready to make a deal with these monads to clean up their image. For what purpose, I can't see yet, because the four represented groups have four very different views on the role monads should play in the future of metahumanity. I have to say it will be an interesting campaign, and we can be certain to see plenty of work come our way in order to keep dirt from sticking, get dirt to stick, and just randomly create distractions that the monad groups can step up to counter.

➤ Evo cannot be happy about an executive connecting with the VP of another mega.

➤ Snopes

➤ Check out the bit on Bills in the Evo write-up if you missed it. Her getting some good PR for monads is the least of their worries but should scare the frag out of the rest of us.

➤ Glitch

➤ This is next-level PR challenge drek. Three of those people are basically terrorist leaders, and the fourth isn't too far off—he's just hid it better so far. I cannot even imagine the PR glitz show it would take to make monads okay with the rest of the world. Too much painful damage.

➤ Bull

➤ Same was once said about metahumans, mages, and technomancers, but the tides slowly shift.

➤ Stone

➤ Real fraggin' slowly.

➤ Netcat

## THE CONSENSUS

There is nothing more responsible for the success of Horizon than the Consensus. While hiccups occurred in the past, modifications were made, and this program has done wonders for solidifying Horizon's place as a AAA. They may still be the smallest, and smaller than several other AA corps, but the impact they have on the world at large surpasses several of their larger AAA siblings.

All thanks to the Consensus.

As a program, the Consensus takes in reports and data from every Horizon citizen, every moment, of every day. This massive influx is compiled and analyzed to see what they're thinking, what they want to think, and what they aren't admitting they think, in order to determine what is best for Horizon going forward. That's the nickel version.

Now let me drop the dime on some realities. The Consensus, in its new form, was given a couple core rules that were usually used for early artificial intelligence programs that interacted with people. It was given the classic prime directive of "Do no harm," with all the necessary details to define what can't be harmed and what harm entails. It already had an obedience program that kept it from back-dooring the board of directors via the general body of employees, and they added a chunk to both bits of code to highlight that Horizon citizens and prospective citizens have a different weighted rank on the scale of harm. They also separated physical harm from concepts like fiduciary harm and emotional harm, both easier concepts to PR your way around (just look at the abusers of the world).

For all intents and purposes, after the recoding, the Consensus is an artificial intelligence program. A super-agent program being run in the hottest hosts Horizon owns. You may be skeptical, but I am sure you won't be at all surprised to hear my claim that the Consensus has emerged. It is not simply an artificial intelligence program; it, or a portion of it, is now an AI.

➤ These rumors have swirled since its first iteration, supported by claims that Las Vegas was a way to protect itself from a perceived threat. The same rumor mills also spit out that it was never recoded, just contained and convinced to play nice.

➤ Glitch

Awake and aware, the Consensus is not just feeding ideas to the board for approval. It is seeding the shadows with work that benefits Horizon through avenues the board and the Horizon citizenry might consider ill-advised, unpopular, or extreme. The efforts soften targets for acquisition, arrange events for potential blackmail, commit



acts of violence to create social responses and media highlights, and every other dirty trick it can get away with and still keep within that primary protective code it must adhere to.

- > Interesting. I always assumed the Consensus was an AI that Horizon just kept quiet about. I've been waiting for AIs to get accepted enough that they just make the announcement that the program had miraculously "emerged" and joined the Horizon family.
- > Icarus
- > Not sure I'm buying it. With that kind of secret support, how is Horizon not bigger?
- > Hard Exit
- > You know, as a private corp, they only have to report assets to the Corp Court for rating and rank. Who's to say they don't doctor the number? It would keep some targets off their back.
- > Orbital DK
- > They also splurge on a ton of non-profitable stuff to keep up their image.
- > Dr. Spin
- > Who's to say it's not profitable? We don't get public reports.
- > Sunshine

Thanks to the work CA, and thus Horizon, did for Ares, the Consensus got a good look at the strange relationship between the megacorp and the bugs. The public may have been caught unawares, but the program was not. Seeing the bugs for what they were and what they were capable of, the Consensus made deals with several small hives across the NAN. I know this all sounds like paranoid drek, so I'll need to offer up the proof or at least point out where you can find it. Take a look at, or dig before you take a job against, Peaceful Solitude spas. They're billed as "relaxing meditation environments intended for extended stays to realign your energies after the corruptions of the hyper urban life." The truth is that these spas are quiet and relaxing places with sinister undersides, as arrangements made between the Consensus and the powers behind each hive trade less-than-stellar citizens for a few exemplary "workers" who are soon transferred to new sites as they rise up the HIP ladder by suddenly becoming amazing team players. Some of the moves include new talent from other megacorps who use Peaceful Solitude without being aware of its true nature.

- > Extractions to Horizon are sometimes eerily simple. I've seen a lot of new prospects come over with almost zero trepidation. It's always weird, considering what corps can do to traitors.
- > Stone

- > We're leaving this here even though I have a mind to take it down. This conspiracy theory has been tossed around for a decade or more. Not sure when it's going to die, but taking it down just seems to feed the madness.
- > Glitch
- > I'm not sure about Peaceful Solitude, but I know the bugs have used things like spas and retreats in the past. I've hit enough of them to know.
- > Sticks

## THE DAWKINS GROUP

The success of Horizon cannot be discussed without mentioning the parts played by Ms./Mr./Mx. Dawkins. As the nom de guerre of their operatives in the shadows and intelligence efforts around the world, the Dawkins group controls the flux and flow of shadow data and clandestine operations. The name, as everyone knows, is not connected to a specific person, but instead a general modus operandi. It's a way to make it known that the work relates to Horizon. It also makes a great way for other corps to make it look like Horizon is involved, which works out for Horizon as well.

Why list them as top talent? Because all of the members of the real Dawkins Group are some of the best trained intelligence and counterintelligence operatives known to metahumanity. They don't necessarily make the decisions on a course, but they make every choice when it comes to a course of action. Field decisions and plans are theirs to make after someone higher up points them in a direction.

Let's look at an example. A team lead needs a market adjusted in Lagos. For this, a Dawkins operative hits the ground and starts pushing Igbo and Yoruba assets to make noise, while four runner teams are getting flown in and settled, along with two local teams getting dropped on scouting runs to make sure they fit skillset needs. All of it coordinated by a Dawkins operative. All just to get the ball rolling.

- > Horizon doesn't build every Dawkins operative internally. Runners get groomed for years and eventually pulled into the ranks.
- > Fianchetto

## HORIZON'S LIST OF LEAST-FAVORITES

It's strange to talk about the enemies of a corporation that is so generally well-liked. Those who hold a grudge have their reasons, and most are valid. Some may be exaggerated or placed with emotional subtexts when it should have been about business, but we all know that businesses are run by people, and people are occasionally emotional.



Our first example is a solid case of that emotion carrying further than it should have with the current shadow operations coming out of Amazonia. After the losses they took in the Az-Am war, Amazonia turned even more inward than they already were. In that introspective era, resentment grew. Some was political, but much of it was personal. The people of Amazonia had trusted Horizon to support their side and to get the world to understand their plight. In the end, they felt like Horizon instead got them painted as murderers, as the megacorp presented advert campaigns after the war that may have avoided outright lies but cast the blame on Amazonia rather than themselves. The Amazonian people and their government did not take that well, and a rather savage shadow war has been hitting Horizon in ways that rarely make the screamsheets but definitely hit home on a personal level.

- > Assassinations are common, but the targets are rarely the actual perpetrators of the failures and atrocities of that war. Instead, the contracts land on the loved ones, especially children, of the execs in charge.
- > Balladeer
- > The shadows benefit from the cascade of jobs that come off these hits. It's the eye-for-an-eye game that leaves the world blind.
- > Ire
- > You take those jobs?
- > Balladeer
- > Anyone who decides that it's okay to kill a kid to make a parent suffer deserves everything that karma sends back their way. I'm good with eye for an eye when it's the people who started the scuffle. Anything else is revenge, not justice.
- > Ire
- > Good. Give me a call. I've got some jobs in your wheelhouse. No problem if you subcontract.
- > Balladeer

If you commit even a single act of genocide, I can't argue that you don't deserve the repercussions that follow. Horizon's part in the Las Vegas massacre has opened them up to not just the ire of technomancers as a whole, but it made them a target of opportunity whenever a TM has a chance to piss in their systems or even just hit them with random mischief. The number of random electronic security events that occur near Horizon properties is astonishingly high.

The number of runners hired by executives to prevent those events while they run out to bang a paramour or negotiate a dirty deal is also high and far more important to us.

- > Be wary with a TM on your team. If you hit a Horizon target and they know who the target is, your distraction with a little food delay could turn into a quick poisoning rather than a flat tire.
- > Clockwork

Horizon has created their own problems by vilifying MCT far too often. Are they wrong? Usually not, but they paint MCT as the bad guys so often, the world's top megacorporation just doesn't feel like dealing with it anymore. MCT is really just feeding the Horizon hate machine by giving them more terrible things to report on but the thing about a war of attrition between MCT and Horizon is that Horizon doesn't have a chance if MCT lays their weight on them. MCT has dozens of subsidiaries that are bigger than Horizon on their own. I'm not sure how this will play out long term, but it is definitely going to mean work as MCT takes shots at Horizon to get them to redirect their focus.

- > Some of this takes place in quiet meetings, too. MCT may just offer up a sacrificial lamb by laying out a subsidiary to take the hits rather than the main brand name.
- > Mr. Bonds
- > I'm sure the megacorporation with the zero-zone policy is going to just let this ankle-biting continue. Horizon would be wise to find a new villain before MCT settles into the top spot, gets bored with being the biggest, and decides they need some kind of entertainment.
- > Mihoshi Oni
- > Horizon knows they have the Corp Court. No other corp of their size would risk it, but they need to seem like they are playing in the big leagues. Taking shots at the top dog seems a valid idea in a civil environment.
- > Orbital DK
- > Nice on the front page, but in the shadows, anything goes.
- > Sunshine
- > But the shadows have never really brought down a corp or nation. Hell, the UB was ours to dig into, and Ares got the credit for the takedown.
- > Sticks

Horizon has a lot of AA corps who are bigger than them and not happy this little PR corp has a seat on the Court and they don't. This makes Horizon one of the most frequent targets for corporations like Maersk, Monobe, Erika, Transys-Neuronet, and Gaeatronics. Anything goes if they can make Horizon look weak and unworthy of their seat on the Court. The action is rarely that active, as no one sees Horizon as a corporation of toughs. Usually, the work coming in is aimed at marring their rep and making the mark stick, which is par-



ticularly hard with Horizon. Expect work coming in from most of the AA corps, and even localized A-rated corps that fight to try to keep the home field advantage.

- Horizon isn't even trying to mitigate a lot of these issues. They let the other kids come at them and then make them look like fools.
- Sunshine

## AIN'T NO REST FOR THE WICKED

Horizon grew during the Revision. They picked up a couple of smaller corps but nothing on the scale of the other AAAs (except Ares, who had a few too many internal issues to look at massive expansion). Since the rankings settled, there are a few corps that aren't quite ready to sit quietly with their status and have been active in negotiations to make a move up. One in particular is OmniStar. The DocWagon, Lone Star, Manadyne mega-AA isn't ready to stop their growth. They have been meeting with Horizon, via Charisma Associates, to do some image clean-up after a few internal squabbles got a little too externally visible. Thing is, that's all a sham. The internal squabbles were staged to make meetings with CA look like business as usual, but the word from the street is that WhiteOak is liaising for Cove Morgan, who is leading the behind-the-scenes efforts to bulk up with an OmniStar merger.

- Internally, Cline seems neutral, but he's playing some cards close to his vest and making sure he has fingers ready to point at Morgan if things go poorly.
- Sunshine

Horizon would gain some serious bulk, passing Ares and Spinrad Global. They might even pass Evo and Wuxing, but that would require them to open up some ledgers and admit their own true size and value, rather than relying on OmniStar alone to show overall corporate girth. The addition of a world-renowned security corp, the best known medicorp on the planet, and one of the top arcane research and advancement companies around to their organization would change the face of the Big Ten megacorporate table even more than the SpIn/Sandstorm merger. And if the OmniStar branch gains access to the PR dynamos, you can guarantee a massive shift in contracts around the globe and a huge shift in image and possibly culture among all of the corps as a whole.

- Imagine the Consensus suddenly adjusting to the views coming in from OmniStar. And imagine the existing culture at a corp like Lone Star trying to adjust to the standards of Horizon. Merging the money will be a walk in the park compared to merging the mindsets.
- Dr. Spin

If the rumors are right, this hitting the public (read megacorporate) eye is going to spark a wild-fire in the shadows. Money and blood are going to flow like the Amazon if the other megas feel threatened, and you know the bottom half will. Horizon could be jumping into a shadow war they aren't really ready for. Fighting on four fronts against megacorps while also still defending their hoops from AA rivals looking to break up the deal and knock Horizon out of the AAA party is going to mean they need OmniStar to be a true ally, not just a merger partner. We'll see in the coming year or two how this plays out.

- Recent encounters with Sea Dragon have hit Maersk with some image issues, and they've connected with Charisma as well. Maybe there's merger talk there as well. Horizon is socially skilled enough to court two corps at once without issue.
- Sunshine
- Imagine if Maersk and OmniStar both merged with Horizon. They all gain AAA access to the Court. Lone Star gets ahead of Knight Errant/Ares, DocWagon passes CrashCart/Evo, Maersk passes Wuxing, and Manadyne gains Horizon and Maersk as a place for their services to go. This is an amazing win for all.
- Dr. Spin
- I must admit a bit of terror at that idea, especially with the Consensus consulting and Dawkins doing intel. Yikes!
- Bull

Horizon has some clean-up to do after Detroit. They made Ares look like a beautiful red delicious apple while they were really rotting at the core. The bug situation that has come to light is making Horizon look like an accomplice to Ares' insect experimentation, and that is not good for the PR or the PR corp. It's especially important for them to pull back, get a handle on how to redirect things, and make sure that no one comes back looking at them. Or potentially digging up any situations where Horizon is making deals with the bugs.

Which I've already mentioned they are.

As this keeps playing out, Horizon is battling Ares in the shadows in order to keep the corp's deeper communications out of the public arena because they reveal Horizon knew quite a bit about what was going on inside Ares. It was like an attorney/client privilege thing, Horizon needed to know what could pop up.

- Horizon is not going to crumble from a shadow war with Ares. In fact, Ares would be wise to just walk away before they really lose face by getting knocked down to the number-ten slot by Horizon.
- Sticks
- It's sad how far Ares has fallen.
- Hard Exit



- › You make a deal with the devils you pay the price. They deserve everything they get for not just letting the Firewatch teams burn out hive after hive. Just goes to show that corps don't learn lessons from disasters, they just see a chance to boost the bottom line.
- › Sticks

## HORIZON EMPLOYMENT GUIDE

My street merc friends hate Horizon. They say it's the creepy "everyone is happy" corporate attitude, but the truth is, they hate that Horizon doesn't use their style of shadowrunner enough to keep them stocked up in sabot rounds and soybeer. Horizon prefers to hire the quiet and professional style of muscle. True bushido-following street samurai are about the gruffest types they'll usually use and that's only if they follow the code but still dress and act like normal street folk, not like some anachronistic street nut. In truth, Horizon prefers to hire teams with a competent frontman and a reputation for coasting through gigs on the coat-tails of a silver-tongued devil. If your team isn't known for that and you think you're getting hired by Horizon, you either aren't (simple) or you're an expendable distraction. Plenty of other corps want runners who favor messy over mental, but Horizon is a rare breed.

That said, they also act like a bunch of snakes in the grass. Double, triple, and quadruple crosses are not unheard of, and since they hire less-violent teams, they tend to get away with it out of the gate. If you get snaked, don't come back all psycho, guns blazing. Play their game. They hire the socially skilled, and if you come back at them and return the favor with a good con job, you are likely to get your original payment and more contracts. Everything is a test with Horizon.

Now if you do come back all psycho-killer, you can still get paid as well, Horizon is not a big fan of murder just because they're extraterritorial. The difference with this effort is your next move. I recommend spending the money quick on something really enjoyable while getting your street will in order. I've talked to members of the Smokers Club, and one of the groups they talk about with respect is the Dawkins Group. Killers know killers. You also probably won't see it coming. It won't be a bullet through a window or a shadowy figure in the corner of your apartment. It will look like your regular bartender at Under Construction pouring your soybeer with a smile. Then it's over.

- › Don't feel like you're safe if you've got filtering 'ware. Dawkins operatives do their homework and will find a way to work around whatever system you're running.
- › Ire

- › I've learned a lot from the Dawkins school of quiet kills. The list of ways to create accidents and health stressors is long.
- › Balladeer

If you do get hired to work for Horizon, the work is most likely going to fall somewhere in the realm of social engineering. At the top of that list is the classic art of digging up dirt. You get the contract and a target, and you start shaking every branch of their family tree, opening every closet for skeletons, and tracking every move they make to see if they've got a mistress, mister, master, side piece, hidden kid, secret life, etc. Everything they do, you track until you find that key intel that can be used to sway their stance.

Once that work is done, the name of the game is blackmail! Horizon won't want to be directly connected (not even Dawkins), and thus another popular runner contract is acting as a blackmail handler. You get a target, the dirt, and maybe an immediate agenda, but more often it starts with a little monetary shakedown to set the game. Pay-outs are usually left in the runners' hands as a bonus. It keeps the trail short and disconnected. Once the hooks are set, the contract extends until that particular asset is needed. I've heard of LA runner teams running up to a dozen blackmail contracts at once.

- › Take care to keep the data secure and your own hoops clear of tails and trackers. Counter-ops on blackmail are sometimes slash-and-burn operations, especially if the black data is leaked, used, or discovered through a different avenue.
- › Stone

Horizon likes soft skills and possessing data no one else has. Getting contracted to steal data and then destroy the originals is standard practice. Sometimes it's data for blackmail or for pushing a field advantage, but it's always valuable. They pay well for these jobs to stay quiet and discreet, but mostly to keep runners reminded to not peak behind the curtain.

Sometimes the process goes backwards, and instead of taking data, Horizon needs data inserted for cover IDs. Same rules of discretion apply, but even more scrutiny is put on runner teams who do these jobs. A broken cover from a loose-lipped runner isn't just about the possibility of burning or losing a Dawkins operative. It's also about the multi-million-nuyen deal behind that cover. Horizon shows a great deal of care for their operators, but it's still the bottom line that rules the day.

- › Fair warning. You burn a Dawkins operative, and they'll hold a grudge. They get fully cut from the fold, and first thing they'll do is make their bones with your team.
- › Sunshine



- > You talk like these guys are super black-ops bogeymen. They're a bunch of fragging faces.
- > Code Red
- > Not sure it's going to strike home with you, Code, but even I would fear to cross a Dawkins.
- > Ire
- > Afraid they'll find you in your old-folks home? Haha!
- > Code Red
- > Ha ... ha ... ha.
- > Ire
- > You know I'm skuffing you, Ire. I got da prop respect for my elders.
- > Code Red
- > Ire?
- > Code Red
- > I was just kidding, Ire. You out there?
- > Code Red
- > Is Ire still under the same no-conflict rules since he's more of a guest poster?
- > Slamm-O!
- > Stop fragging with the youngster. Ire knows the rules.
- > Bull
- > And he has always been such a rule follower.
- > Thorn
- > All's good. Ire and I had drinks. We're nice as ice now.
- > Code Red
- > Ire, did he type that under duress?
- > Glitch
- > Not sure, I had to run off to bingo at the home right after drinks.
- > Ire

When you work the PR biz, you may say there is no such thing as bad publicity, but we all know trying to clean the image of a simstar caught standing over the bloody body of their wife with two bloody fists and a BTL chip still running isn't easy once it's part of their usual public identity. That is where runners come in. Some take the blame and add another pending charge to a long arrest

warrant. Some clean the scene and set up a nice datatrail for a trip to Aztlan for dear wifey, where she will mysteriously disappear. Whatever they're hired for, runners do a lot of cover-ups for Horizon. Stars are a weird lot. Those raised inside the Horizon family are usually pretty tame, but when they get exposed to some outside cultures, things can get a little out of hand. The ones who come into the fold are worse. Their proclivities need to be kept under wraps until they can learn to navigate HIP life. These jobs are sometimes quite entertaining, but an old friend once told me a tale about babysitting Maria Mercurial. Nothing ever goes how you plan it, and famous folk are like chaos magnets.

- > What could possibly have gone wrong with Mercurial? She seems so stable! Hahaha.
- > Netcat
- > It's so much worse than you could imagine.
- > Bull
- > Trying to cover up the stuff for the biggest names can get complex. They always have eyes on them, and tracking every screamsheet vidcatcher with a drone in the area can be exhausting. If you get a big-name cleanup gig, demand the hazard pay. You'll earn it.
- > Sunshine

## GAME INFORMATION

### HIPSTER

You understand the Horizon Internal Persona score system and are able to manipulate it with any fake Horizon SIN.

**Cost:** 6 Karma

**Game Effect:** When using a Horizon SIN on Horizon property, you gain an Edge on all Social Tests.

### CHARISMATIC DEFENSE

Either you're too pretty to hit, or your quick wit or razor-sharp tongue throws off your opponents' game.

**Cost:** 12 Karma

**Game Effect:** Your Defense Rating is based off of Charisma rather than Body.





# MITSUHAMA

POSTED BY: JIMMY NO

Surviving at the top isn't easy.

Unless you are Mitsuhamas Computer Technologies.

MCT has a strong growth mindset, and that means work in the shadows. Work in the shadows means you need intel, and that's what we're here for.

Sitting atop the pile of megacorporations, MCT continues to grow at an inordinate rate. Their leadership has relentlessly acquired assets and lesser corporations, some of which warrant the term "mega" on their own. Their assets make them a major power player in every field. Although "computer" is part of their full name, it's just a single facet in the round brilliant cut of the diamond of their operations (which is why most just call it MCT).

With their size, it's not always their logo you see on the outside, but up the digital trail, you can find their umbrella covering an abundance of targets you might go head-to-head with, which is no

easy task. Once they fall under the umbrella, they also gain the extraterritorial status, and you need to worry about how little they value your life when compared to their assets.

Denizens of the shadows actually know them best for two reasons, each terrifying in its own right. First, their "zero-zones" are deathtraps MCT installs in their highest-priority locations, or sometimes in spots where they think they can hurt people who have it coming. A warning usually precedes entrance, but extraterritoriality supersedes all, meaning they don't need to warn you before they kill you. This is at the heart of the MCT philosophy when comparing themselves to others. They barely care about their own citizens beyond their level of production and usefulness, so shadowrunners who set foot on their precious property are like ants beneath the foot of an elephant.

Reason number two is a throwback to their early days: their connection to the Yakuza. This criminal connection is often the veil they use to hide their shadow efforts. Only when the syndicate





# MITSUHAMA

cannot handle it themselves or the work is beyond their tastes do they farm the most dangerous bits of work off to the shadows. It's good pay for hard work. And since they only pay survivors, sometimes they make out just fine.

## HISTORY OF A TITAN

We could dig back to the days before the Awakening to find the origins of MCT, but that's like looking back to the founding of the city of Rome to see the origins of the Roman Empire. It's ancient history and not relevant to current events.

For the sake of offering a little snippet, MCT pretty much started as a heavy industry operation back in the day, they got in a little trouble, got entangled with the Yakuza, and then caught their footing and started stomping on the competition. They never fully separated from those Yakuza ties, but now they are a minuscule part of a megagigantic operation.

The truth is, to see the important history of modern-day MCT we need look back no further than the last two decades, where a little home field advantage and the events of the Megacorporate Audit (The Revision in the shadows) allowed MCT to jump past Saeder-Krupp for the top spot in the Big Ten and then keep on running.

To start their modern rampage, MCT made a little deal with Renraku and Shiawase, fellow Japanacorps (or as I like to write, jApAnAcorps) to maintain cordial business relationships outside of their homeland. This allowed MCT (and those allies) to limit their focus abroad to other opposition. This let MCT focus their top talent in most of the world on pilfering the datastores of every other megacorp. Between the data and the

## MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

**Corporate Court Rank (2081):** 1

**World Headquarters:** Kyoto, Japanese Imperial State

**CEO:** Toshiro Mitsuhama

**Honorary Board Advisor:** Taiga "Tiger" Mitsuhama

**Chairman of the Board:** Samba Oi

**Shareholders:** Toshiro Mitsuhama (24%), Samba Oi (13%), Shin Yuruyasu (10%), Saigusa Oguramaro (9%), Uehara Akae (9%), Jürgen Bergfalk (8%), Wyatt Thorpe (7%), Hishi Kensaka (4%) Minor Shareholders (16%)

**Corporate Slogan:** "The Future Is Mitsuhama"

### MAJOR DIVISIONS AND SUBSIDIARIES

*(This is a small fraction of what they own.*

*We don't have space for all of it!)*

**Mitsuhama Africa:** Africa for All, Lagos Endeavors, PWV Advanced Solutions

**Mitsuhama Asia:** Central Asian Solutions, Gorovetski & Sons Support Services, Xinhung Solutions

**MCT Australasia:** Kiwi Pharma, Perth Progressive Technologies, Outback Expeditions

**Mitsuhama Automatronics:** Astin Remote Systems, Drive-Ware Technologies, Elk-Sedge Systems, VOR Robotics  
**Mitsuhama Computers:** Aekei Heuristic Technologies, Black Lotus Software, Brainwave Inc., Dolmen Data Systems, Drakensys, DynaTech Systems, Fairlight

**Mitsuhama Europe:** Caesar Systems of Rome, Parisian Resources Management, Sorovich & Sons

**Mitsuhama Financial Group:** American Family Financial, Bon Vivant Finance, EuroFi, Global Finance, Green Investments of São Paulo, Moscow Money Solutions, Sydney Financial Solutions

**Mitsuhama Industrial Technologies:** Automation System Inc., ExoMining Systems, Mitsuhama-Benguet Mining, Sumitomo Chemicals, Takai Development Corporation, Zen-Marsh Chemicals

**MCT Latin America:** Mayan Sol, Salazar Independent Operations, Unify, VeraCruz Shipping

**Mitsuhama Magical Services:** Ambrosius Publications, Apep Consortium, HermeTech Associates, Ipissiumus, Mitsuhama Magical Services, Mitsuhama Thaumaturgical Research, Pentacle (including Pentacle Distributing Inc., Pentacle Press, Pentagram Publishing)

**MCT Media:** Highstar Inc., MediaSim, Meechi Games, Mitsuhama Media, Mitsuhama Music, Sakura Studios, Soonan Simsense

**MCT Motion:** Amtrak Incorporated, California Free State Rapid Transit, Front Range Transit International, Mitsubishi Motor Company, Norfolk Southern, SAAB, Sikorsky-Bell, UCASRail

**Mitsuhama North America:** American Art and Culture, Canadian Art and Culture, Chicago Support Services, Mississippi Motion, Mountain High Holdings, Native Solutions, NEMA Advanced Solutions, ZoeyTech

**MCT Safety and Security:** MCT Private Protection Services, MCT Public Protection Services, Mitsuhama Correction Services, NizhinyI, Parashield, Petrovski Security, Sakura Security, TK Armors



backdoor access they put in place, they were able to spread the advantage they had created across the globe with brutal efficiency. Being so focused and efficient and full of underhanded advantages meant they were able to put some extra focus on Renraku and Shiawase at home, as they didn't need the full brunt of their resources dealing with other corps. It was a powerful maneuver that gave them advantages they could utilize across every market around the globe.

They used all of that while taking full advantage of the fear generated by the Megacorporate Audit to press and push their growth at every turn. All of those many advantages (which they made laser focused use of) led MCT to the top spot through the absorption of hundreds of corps—A, AA, and unrated corps alike—which they kneecapped through their ruthless tactics, bought at bargain basement prices, and then gutted for every valuable asset. They rebranded in areas they needed to, bought valued brands in others, and made sure to get the maximum level of exploitation for every move they made. While this wasn't always perfect, they had successes more than they didn't.

They not only took over the top, but now dominate the AAA ranks, holding a value greater than the bottom three combined.

They're going to need a new rating system soon. UltraCorps? SuperMegaCorps? UltraMegaCorps?

- All that combined value bluster is worthless on the Corporate Court. They still have one seat and one vote. And besides, so much of the value is based on stock that a boom in one region and a bust in another can shake up overall value real fast.
- Corp Kurt

This recent look at history needs to include a few other major changes that came with their lightspeed rise to the top. The largest of these changes came with some major internal adjustments in order to fit this growth. They added a few divisions, adjusted the control and ownership of several assets, and set several new divisional heads in key positions. The moves created some serious internal competition, fueling growth but also creating some internal divisiveness that is generating questions about the stability of this megacorporate monster. Continued growth is fully expected, but if this internal strife gets externally manipulated in the right way, MCT could get shattered. Though even the pieces left behind would still be large enough to hold an AAA rating.

- Only one shard, the one that gets their seat on the Court, keeps an AAA rating. If things go bad, there will be a big internal battle to focus on that status, meaning lots of high-risk, high-pay jobs.
- Corp Kurt

MCT has been in the magic game for quite a while, so when talking about their history, we can't leave out the massive impact thaumaturgical research has had on the megacorp. Despite the tech in their name, MCT is one of the most influential arcane research corps on the planet. They were fast to discover and exploit the value of magic as a commodity even while Japanese culture kept it at arm's length. They integrated it rapidly into their security plans and worked to formulate new spells, identify new spirits, and, most recently, extend their exploration and exploitation into the metaplanes. They aren't showing any signs of slowing, either.

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

It might be easier to consider what areas they *aren't* a player in than to examine what they're big in. I'll focus on a mix of areas that they absolutely dominate. I'll tap a few colleagues to talk about some stuff where they're strong but being picked away at (like a leviathan being nibbled by pirahna). I'll hit up some street eyes for a close look at some growing trouble spots that might bring MCT into direct conflict with others in the Big Ten. You know, the exciting stuff.

## DOMINATION AT ITS FINEST

Let me start by talking about the places where MCT stands head and shoulders above all the competition. I'm not saying some other megas aren't strong in these areas as well, but I am saying that should MCT exert its influence in these areas into locations dominated by anyone but another of the Big Ten (and even some of them will crumble with enough effort), they will scorch the earth and drive others to ruin. It's best if I focus on a few key subsidiaries and make this stuff relevant, so I'll lay off the boardroom bulldrek and keep it real to the streets.

Let's start in the area that surprises everyone: magic. From arcane research and advancement to production and distribution of formulae, foci, and arcane materials, MCT sits high in an ivory tower above the rest with **MTR** (Mitsuhaman Thaumaturgical Research), **MMS** (Mitsuhaman Magical Services), and **Pentacle**. Each stands at the forefront and pushes the envelope for magical research and development as well as publication and production, but they do well to avoid stepping on one another's toes. We really care what this means for the shadows, so let me address that.

MTR doesn't bother to put limits on itself for arcane research. First, they don't care about the consequences of their research because they perform it in places they don't mind devastating and on people they don't deem of any value. MTR has hundreds of research teams, many with a small





complement of shadowrunners, hopping to every metaplane they can in order to scavenge arcane data. This is in addition to the teams jumping around the globe to hit every magical hotspot possible, and pushing those runners to hit, scavenge, and pilfer all those spots that aren't easy due to local opposition. That local opposition can be anything from a local tribe to a rival mega. Recent clashes have involved the Kozetski Karu in Transcaucasia and Evo in Azania.

The Kozetski Karu are a microculture living in the Caucasus Mountains of Transcaucasia. They have a remarkable ninety percent Awakened birth rate, and the region they occupy was one of the many sites for natural orichalcum when Halley's Comet passed back in '61. They actively opposed and battled mining in the region and "won." This victory cost them almost fifty percent of their population and forced them to seal themselves off from external influence for the remainder of the '60s and half the '70s. Their recent return to external contact caught the eye of MTR when they were reported to have arcane artifacts, mundane accessible foci in the hands of their ten percent, and some previously impossible arcane talents, including several reports of teleportation, something impossible in modern magic.

- > Rumors were unfounded but understandable, as locals developed techniques to draw spell energies together to provide short bursts of both invisibility and speed.
- > Lyrán

In the deep south of Africa, MTR has been bumping heads with Evo. Evo's African growth has been fueled by their alliance with the Monads, and the money from that alliance is boosting other divisions, including metamagic and metaplanar research. While not as good at geomancing as Wuxing, Evo has stolen massive quantities of data on the topic thanks to Monad hackers, and that data has been used to manipulate the manascape of Azania. In particular, it has changed the mana flow between Cape Town and Pretoria. Changes in Pretoria that might turn the abandoned mines into underground subarcologies have shifted the mentality of the local population. Evo has used the knowledge stolen from Wuxing to funnel mana lines toward locations they control. MTR is using their massive resource pool to pressure these spots and steal whatever data and access they can manage. Runners taking on any of this work should be warned that Evo has some top-notch security. And when I say top-notch, I am talking the best of the best. They are using Monad



tech alongside arcane techniques that give them advantages across the board.

- > Evo and MTR do a lot of open warfare down here. They don't care what local authorities say, but Erika is trying to solidify their foothold, and one of their avenues is support for those local law forces. They often come down heavy on both sides when the data is good. That way they can scavenge some payday data off the corpses.
- > LineHammer
- > They've been trying to scavenge Monad tech too. Problem is, Evo has a self-destruct protocol on this tech that shares the morality of an MCT zero-zone. I've seen Evo sec forces overrun with sleep spells and non-lethal rounds, only to get turned to paste by the self-destruct on their tech toys when the scavengers come. When you take down an Evo secpunk, stand clear until their gear goes thermonuclear—unless you want to join them in the afterlife.
- > Stone

Developing hot new arcane toys is great, but if you can sell them and get them out into the world, it makes a whole drekload of nuyen. Mitsuhama Magical Services—MMS on all the letterheads—is how these new techniques and tactics make it out into the world. MMS offers a full array of magical services, from warding to personal protection and so much in between. This is also the place they market some “premium” features for high-paying clients, most of which come over from those research corps within the MCT umbrella. Over a decade ago, MMS was first on the scene with a warding feature that actually left a mark on the intruders' auras rather than blocking them from entry. The mark worked as a link to track them down or “zero-zone” them after the fact. Usually, the target gets a visit from a sec team, a threat of remote brain-wrecking, and then a search of the location in case the threats don't work.

Currently, MMS is focusing on this new alchemy market and trying to snag creation details from the Azzies. Operations in Aztlan against Aztechology are a deathtrap that all the nuyen in the world can't drag a runner team into, but the AZT subsidiaries around the globe are prime targets to get backdoor access. Out there in the world, I've seen production is not exclusive to Aztlan, and MMS is hitting every production site (legit, grey, and black) they get on their radar.

- > MMS may be the way to market, but it and MTR are not as close as they need to be to make all this a thriving success. Internal divisions are political labyrinths, with battling minotaurs around every corner.
- > Icarus

- > Aren't they both under the same division? They have rivalries within the same divisions?
- > Kid Justice
- > The divisions are a business separation, but control and influence over the various subsidiaries each fall under the purview of one of the Sinister Six. They cross over megacorporate divisions all the time. It's a strange mix that promotes internal competition, though in the next era, that could be breaking things down more than building them up.
- > Icarus

No conversation about MCT and their arcane business can be complete without talking about Pentacle and their collection of subsidiaries: Pentacle Distributing Inc., Pentacle Press, and Pentagram Publishing. Pentacle is a global household name. While other arcane-focused companies are limited to Awakened clientele, Pentacle advertises and sells their goods to anyone with an interest in arcane things. Sure, they distribute spell formulae and ship out reagents all over the globe and make foci and alchemical compounds for their own storefronts and small businesses almost everywhere on the planet, but they also produce reports, trid shows, fiction, and a wide array of other media that is consumed by the mundane population.

What does this have to do with the shadows? Well, not all runners have a fake SIN with the right credentials to get arcane goods, and Pentacle is a regular target for fixers who coordinate supplies for clients or bigger shadow distribution networks. Knowing where and when shipments are moving, getting dirt on site security and staff, and actively engaging in property or data acquisition are just a few of the operations shadow denizens are going to get called upon to perform. As an important reminder, while Pentacle does not say MCT in the name, they hold all the benefits of extraterritoriality and frequently operate security with the standard zero-zone policy.

- > Important note for hitting a Pentacle production facility: They try to limit zero-zone activity due to the affect it has on the local mana.
- > Lyran
- > In general, Lyran. There are several facilities I know of that love a little dirty mana for some of the foci and compounds they create. Also important to point out that most of the production sites are already shifted in favor of MCT's arcane teachings. They're very UMT, but they flavor it enough to make it specific to their corp.
- > Red
- > I'm surprised no one mentioned Outback Expeditions. They handle the bulk of MCT's research into the metaplanes. They started exactly where their name sounds, doing research on the Australian Outback, but their alternate environment expertise



was utilized for metaplanar expeditions, and now their entire business structure has shifted. They really need to be mentioned in a shadow doc like this because they hire a ton of us.

Disposable assets are ideal for trips to a metaplane from which they may never return.

> Traveler Jones

It's in the name, so you have to expect MCT to know computers and technology. They run the gamut of endeavors in the field. **Black Lotus Software** covers coding from agents to IC to OS and everything in between. They get targeted for their R&D frequently and usually run several of their latest IC innovations on their hosts to make runners' lives interesting. **Aekei Heuristic Technologies** and **Brainwave Inc.** are pushing the limits in the world of agents and digital personal assistants with products that resemble genuine AIs. The tech is so close that they are regularly targeted by sapience rights groups to make sure they aren't hiding or holding any AIs against their will. **Dolmen Data Systems** and **DynaTech Systems** are pivotal to both internal data storage and protection and external contracts with governments, individuals, political groups, and even small corporations. Their systems need to be ultra-secure since they are chock full of paydata. Hardware titans **Drakensys** and **Fairlight** make everything from the rather mundane Drakensys Hedgehog commlink that is second only to the Meta Link for global popularity, all the way up to the Fairlight Excalibur cyberdeck that finds itself at the top of the ten best publicly available cyberdecks year after year.

> The tech side of this giant has also grown by leaps and bounds as they absorbed thousands of smaller corps with some brilliant minds during the audit. Those assets are now prime targets for extractions. This is especially true of the ones who did not go willingly but were instead dragged along by the corporate owners who were afraid of just being taken over or getting a serious downgrade from the audit. The benefits of these kinds of targets are twofold: They come willingly, and most of these little corps have not yet had the full zero-zone security setup installed.

> Glitch

> This new blood isn't just getting extracted externally but also being grabbed and moved around within the massive MCT infrastructure by the battling internal powers. MCT is probably one of their own worst enemies right now.

> Lothan the Wise

The last big field they have a lot of prominence in is heavy industry. They don't have a huge advantage over number two—depending on who's counting, they might not even be number one—but they have a huge global footprint in this area. **Takai Development Corporation** controls hundreds of thousands of construction and maintenance projects around the globe, and they feed

business directly to other industry giants like **Mitsuhamabenguet Mining**, **Sumitomo Chemicals**, and **Automation System Inc.** ASI has been sliding over the metaplanar threshold to explore and exploit places not on this globe. They aren't the only ones, either. MCT uses **ExoMining Systems** to gather resources from lunar sites, rumored hidden mines on Mars, sites throughout the main belt asteroid field, several moons, and even a new project recently announced that is pulling gasses from Jupiter. Whether the jobs are terrestrial, off-planet, or metaplanar, runners are getting work. We usually feel like an ant biting an elephant, but the enemies of MCT make small and subtle moves to create little shifts that mar the image of MCT and move money and contracts over to their competitor.

> I don't know if anyone is going to listen to this, but I'll fraggin' try anyway. If you get a job that involves terrestrial work that affects a metaplanar or off-planet target, think carefully about what you're doing, because you are probably signing a lot of death certificates. The job might look like a simple data upload, but it could alter a transport's entrance trajectory, cut the oxygen scrubbers on a vessel, or break contact with a metaplane that can leave people stranded or dead, or crash several tons of debris into a populated area.

> Bull

> It's a good note, Bull. There are plenty of runners with decent moral codes about killing that could completely miss the potentially deadly effects of the job they do if it's so seemingly small.

> Butch

> I'm pretty sure just about every job we do has the potential to get someone killed. If you want a morally safe job, go flip soy patties at McHugh's.

> Kane

> I think the food at McHugh's has killed more people than I have, and I only put on my white hat in recent years.

> Bull

## CHASING OFF THE SCAVENGERS

I love a good shadow-digging piece, so I'm just going to hit the highlights and roll.

Topic: MCT subsidiaries battling for their piece of the profits. Who: Me, and that's it, I'm nobody, and no one cares for some street moniker these days. Check the flow of data and then see if Jimmy No will hook you up with his source.

On to the good stuff. MCT is a monster. They dominate. If they aren't dominating and want to, they do their opponents dirty. Their second-most common tactic is to lose more money than the opposition can afford to and run them out of busi-



ness. The most common is the one we all know and love: hire runners and trash reputation or production.

From my digging, I found two major fields where MCT has subsidiaries actively fighting: agriculture and energy. These areas are important because they're hiring regularly and hit on a regular basis as well.

Starting with agriculture, **Native Solutions** in North America is struggling against local ag powerhouse Aztechnology. No matter where they try to get fortified, NS is getting hit at every turn, even across the tattered and struggling western UCAS. They're heavily supported up the corporate umbrella, but AZT rivals are being backed just as well. This is one place we are seeing MCT trying to take control of a field from another big AAA. This is the kind of corporate battle that brings a flood of nuyen to the shadows. If this were the only place MCT was making a push, it would be fine, but **Africa for All** is putting the battle on a second front, against a whole different AAA. Africa still has a plethora of places ready for an agricultural revolution. Evo is trying to add more strength to their claim of dominance in Africa with local agriculture corps, while Africa for All is doing all sorts of dirty deeds to try slowing that growth.

- > Mother Earth is paying the largest price for all of this. None of these corporations care for her health. They poison the opposition with no care for the damage they are doing to nature.
- > Ecotope

North America and Africa are also the battlegrounds for MCT efforts to grow their energy production empire. **PWV Advanced Solutions** in Azania has a mix of renewable resource efforts connected directly to MCT's mining operations with geothermal plants, but they also have wind and solar arrays being built all over the continent. Their dealings with several African nations are handled predominantly in the shadows as they compete with Evo and Erika to become the most dominant corp on the continent. Blackmail is a major income generator when it comes to African political corruption, and it's usually rife with secondary paydata and material to drop on other contracts after Mr. Johnson is settled. PWV has also been subtly influencing militant groups in order to redirect government contracts by simply changing who is in power in the government.

As if tussling with the Azzies over foodstuffs wasn't enough, **Mayan Sol** answers to MCT and uses logos and motifs close enough to AZT that many wonder which AAA is really behind them. The answer becomes obvious when you notice that Mayan Sol operates everywhere on NorthAm except Aztlan. Their first focus was in solar power, but they have expanded to hydroelectric, geother-

mal, and wind. The green image helps cover up the fact that every one of their power-generating operations is on land getting destroyed ecologically as other MCT interests suck up every valuable resource possible. The intermingling of Mayan Sol with other MCT subsidiaries provides extra layers of protection, including increased security presence and difficult-to-identify Matrix and physical targets. This is also a potential benefit because they try to avoid zero-zoning other corpsec, so a little disguise might go a long way.

- > The energy industry is a strange one. Everyone needs it and no one really knows where it's coming from. Mayan Sol has a power station in the Yellowstone region that they claim is geothermal, but reliable assets have the power actually coming from a metaplanar source. Not sure what kind of mana or astral taint travels with the power, but I'm sure we'll find out someday.
- > Ire

## **KNOCKING AT THE DOOR**

MCT makes nuyen. There's no doubt about that. Right now, they are doing it quite literally. The growth of their mining operations and the expansion of their financial services portfolio means they are digging cash straight from the dirt (and beyond) and turning teraflops of data into money every second of every day. No one ever thinks of MCT as an underdog, but these are two fields they are not the top dogs in. Recent boosts have them threatening rivals, old and new alike, and that is good news for those of us who make our living doing the dirty work of the world's corporations.

It's bad news for the corporations hanging out under the MCT umbrella that are waging war on the front lines, but who cares about them? All we need to know is who we're working for and against and how much risk is there to get my reward. Often the knowing part is skipped over. I'll say flat out, the risk is always high. They all carry the MCT extraterritoriality to their property, and every one of them follows the zero-zone protocols all the way to the point of refusing a DocWagon team access and putting a bullet in a mate's brainpan right in front of them. Let's talk specifics, so you know where to send your hacker when you start taking jobs related to these fields.

- > Our writer doesn't mention it, but that execution was done at a Global Finance office, and the Sakura secguard who pulled the trigger got what he deserved. He tells the tale because he was part of the "DocWagon" team coming for a retrieval. They had every bit of ident covered, and Hershey (the mentioned execution) still got zeroed. The GF office then got lit up, but the damage was done. RIP Hershey, you were as sweet as your namesake.
- > Cold



MCT has five big-growth subsidiaries when it comes to mining: two in operations, two in systems, and one in property management. On Earth, **Mitsuhamabenguet Mining** operates mining sites across the globe, while **ExoMining Systems** handles extraterrestrial and extraplanar work. M-BM has had major growth in northern and central North America, southern Africa, central and northern Asia, and the Andes regions of South America, as well as Antarctica. As I said, global. The only thing keeping them from Australia is a small cease-fire going on between M-BM and Outback Expeditions, thanks to their ties to ExoMining Systems. Boardroom backstabbing drek, but it comes our way on occasion when someone wants to do a few testing incursions. More to the point, these mining operations pull up everything from actinium to zirconium. Rumors abound they also have a few of the rare natural orichalcum mines producing, but that stuff ends up internal with their various arcane divisions. Many of their mining operations are not the slightest bit eco-friendly, and that draws attention from ecoterrorists and other corporations trying to point out the bad things MCT is doing.

**Takai Development Corporation** handles property management, and boy do they like to devalue real estate before they buy it. Falsifying geology reports, increasing news coverage of local catastrophes (natural and man made), funding local ecoterrorists, and digging up dirt on property owners are just some of the possible jobs TDC may send your way. And at least a dozen AA and AAA megas have a regular bullseye on TDC.

- > Last I checked, two members of the TDC executive pool have active contracts on a job board you don't want your name on. Could be personal, but the money being tossed around makes me think business.
- > Balladeer

Both **VOR Robotics** and **Automation System Inc.** make sure their fellow heavy industry subsidiaries get the best equipment and automation software on the market. Oftentimes by stealing code and tech from rivals. Currently, Azania is home to a shadow corporate war between MCT and Evo. The former is trying to get access or reverse-engineer tech from the latter that was created by monads. Extractions of monad scientists and targets are commonplace, but so are self-destructing devices and monads who seem all docile and calm but have the nanoboost potential to take down a squad of kamikazed-up trolls. It's ugly and entertaining, but jobs to snag these goodies are the best of all and they pay a drekton of nuyen.

All of this hardware and software also gets sent across the globe and all over the metaplanes. Hi-

jacking feeds, installing spy code, hitching a secret ride, and redirecting payloads are just a few of the many entertaining ways to use these corps.

- > Be aware that this stuff is life or death for some meat teams crossing into the unknowns. Consider the moral implications.
- > Ire

- > Will you all stop saying drek like that? We're shadowrunners. If we frag up the lives of others in a way that's outside our moral viewpoints, we can manage the back end. Sometimes that back end leaves things better than before.

Case in point: Callie and Derika Ossefund are the wife and daughter of Drage Ossefund, who died in a re-entry mishap due to a technical failure. Failure was caused by Wren, a good-hearted hacker working in PWV. She saw the results and then hacked some extra funds to go to Callie and Derika, all while finding out Callie and Derika both had numerous medical visits while Drage was home between assignments. Turns out he was an abuser and rapist, but had Wren managed to keep him alive during re-entry, they'd still be suffering.

So worry less, work more. We can't control most of what's happening out there, and we shouldn't be asked to.

- > Stone
- > Mitsuhamabenguet is having all sorts of trouble with their sites and spirits. They pissed off some spirits somewhere, and now word has gotten out through the astral grapevine. It's becoming a small-scale war.
- > Lyrn
- > To make it more interesting, Evo is trying to mend things for them but doing a drek job because they already have a poor rep on the astral with the fragton of damage they've done to metaplanes they've pillaged.
- > KC

Financial services are usually boring, but there's money in it for runners with a solid hacker on the team who doesn't mind putting boots in the compound. MCT is growing financial firms like crazy and funding all if it on some sketchy internal lattice that is making up values.

**American Family Financial** is sapping the UCAS and CAS of every bit of property they can by offering seriously low rates to people who can't afford soykaf.

**Bon Vivant Finance** has made it their goal to financially back every major wine producer in France while at the same time supporting runs that sabotage production and distribution.

**EuroFi** is trying to duck and dodge battles with the bigger European financial corps while picking up real estate that they use for travel sharing. It looks all up and up with MCT employees owning the property and sharing it out but when it's empty, they are using it for corp operative and runner safehouses.



**Global Finance** is a walnut tree because they are producing shells like mad. GF is occasionally found at 4 or 5 different shell levels as GF Finance, GF Financial, GF Financing, etc. I'm not sure of the game, but it sure makes tracking ownership of things tough when you need to keep hacking hosts for related companies that warn their security you may be on your way.

**Green Investments of São Paulo** is snagging swathes of land all over South America. In Amazonia it's mostly favelas, but across the rest of the continent it's rainforest, ruins, mines, lakes, rivers, and thousands of kilometers of coastal property, most of it seemingly worthless.

- > This kind of money can make any coastal property a major money maker—you just need to invest and be willing to wait for the profits. MCT could wait a century at this point.
- > Glasswalker

**Moscow Money Solutions** is a big deal broker but does little to grow its own portfolio. From what I can tell, MMS does the favors and then lets other subsidiaries call them in.

Down under, **Sydney Financial Solutions** is growing their investment portfolio and making the wealthy of Sydney even wealthier. How this helps MCT down the road is in a bigger picture than I can see, but it's there. A lot of wealth is being gathered in SFS, and wealth with nowhere to go is always a target for someone.

## TOP TALENT

MCT is too big for me to give a rundown on every important exec. What I'd like to do is focus on pulling together some datafiles connected to MCT's new internal council, Ichi. The six executives on the council were pulled from divisions and subsidiaries around the globe. On the street, you may have heard of the Sinister Six. Same group. The thing I've discovered is that the Sinister Six is really the Sinister Seven, but the seventh member's identity has been a closely guarded secret, even to the other six members. Read on and check out what I've pulled together on this band of thieves.

MCT North America offers **Even Teeg** to the Ichi Council. He's a former company man (corporate runner, to be specific) who made his way up the executive ladder through wit and ruthlessness. He's only in his forties, so he has plenty of time to work in the executive offices, but he still has a bit of an adrenaline addiction. His rather plain appearance, dark hair, dark eyes, and mild olive complexion allow him to slip into the NorthAm pool of Johnsons with relative ease. That ease can leave him vulnerable to extraction or assassination, but he is quite adept at making sure no one has advance warning of his shadow escapades.

Recently he has been hopping all over the UCAS and CAS. His main focus has been working to continue to undermine the crumbling UCAS while strengthening ties with the growing power of the CAS. From internal memos, he sees the CAS taking back the remnants of its northern neighbor, and MCT wants to be poised to help out.

- > The Ares vacuum has been a great source of work via MCT. Teeg is scooping up not just property and businesses in the UCAS but also garnering additional citizens.
- > Stone
- > Aren't property and citizens synonyms in MCT?
- > Glitch

**Kinetsa Motashi** operates out of Kyoto. Born and raised a devoted MCT citizen, she has had only a single external dalliance (if you can call it that). In her early twenties, she developed a relationship with Hidetso Wasada. It was a hot and heavy romance, but her trajectory was up the corporate ladder, while he seemed to be heading for a bloody death in a gang war.

When they broke things off, her beau threw himself into work, and he now sits near the top of Yakuza operations in Kyoto.

Kinetsa uses him for occasional street connections as well as private security when she goes to places where regular corpsec would stick out like a sore thumb. She is also the greatest proponent of continuing the strong connection to the Yakuza now that they have outgrown the influence and potential damage of a public relationship.

The Yakuza connection is also her method of adding one additional level of anonymity to activities against fellow Japanacorp. If the action will really rile stuff up, they then just hand the job down to runners, and the protective gap just grows and grows.

- > Be wary getting in the middle of this. If an operation looks like it's going to be exposed, Kinetsa will issue a zero order and pay well to make sure the runners never talk.
- > Red Anya

**Killian Kujiyawa** joined the ranks of the Ichi from his ivory tower at MCT-Europe. He's a corporate brat with zero exposure to the streets. He flies everywhere via his own personal fleet of Ospreys and doesn't speak to anyone who isn't a fellow executive or ranking government official. His rise through the ranks came from managing a successful corporate shadow war with S-K on their home turf that has only gotten more heated since MCT took the number one spot.

He's no fool, and he knows full well MCT is not going to take Europe from Lofwyr, but keeping the rival mega a little off-balance at home helps the global efforts.



- > Behind the scenes, Killian is sick of being the distraction. He has his sights set on CEO and shifts a lot of resources over to preventing other Ichi members from getting closer to that coveted position.
- > Glitch

#### <<<Section Deleted by SysOp>>>

- > I have no desire for my information to be so blandly presented on your legendary VPN. I am Grace Mombasi, CIO of MCT-Africa and member of the Ichi Council. I take pride in my intelligence-gathering skills, and I still regularly utilize them in the field. I am no desk jockey.

With my efforts, our division has quadrupled our asset value across Africa. We are the predominant African megacorp, despite what other AAAs and local corps might claim.

My personality is as diverse as the cultures spread across this beautiful continent, and as the original author of this section ascertained, I am a monad. This makes me particularly well-suited to deal with our chief growth rival. I understand others may see this as some form of risk, but I was given the option to depart with the others, and we chose our allegiance to MCT.

I will vehemently deny and take action against anyone who furthers the unsubstantiated rumors that I intentionally infect others to create a collection of allies. I understand the initial monad plight, but I do not condone the continuation of any form of monad consciousness transference, including the latest efforts by Evo monads to copy themselves onto younger forms.

I hope those here can see the value in growing the MCT influence across Africa and come contract with the best corporation on the planet.

- > GRACE
- > I'll risk it. Mombasi has copies out there. She denies them, but that's likely because she didn't consciously make them. She was injured in a shootout in Cape Town. The bloodspray managed to contain enough nanites that two other monads were made.  
One of them uses Mombasi's name and face to benefit her own ends. The other seems to be working against MCT Mombasi and the imposter.
- > Sorry, Grace. We know you want to deal with this internally, but they have a price on their head that you didn't put there, and I'd rather folks here go after them and not you to collect.
- > Balladeer

The Ichi Council seemed uniquely created with diversity in mind, and **Kenner Ashwood** from MCT-Australia is the perfect example. Born to a poor family in the slums of Sydney, Kenner only came under the umbrella of MCT in his teens, when his father was a peripheral victim of a zero-zone incident and his mother was offered fine housing and easy employment as compensation for her loss.

Kenner struggled early on, but appreciated the advantages the corp life offered. His high school years were rough, but a college experience at

MIT&T in the UCAS was a welcome break from local personal politics. His return to the MCT fold in Australia was smooth on the surface but involved a large number of shadow operations as Ashwood cleaned up old loose ends and grew himself a nice corporate niche as a skilled arcane troubleshooter.

His current corporate position makes him look like a mid-level paper pusher, but his assignment to the Ichi Council demonstrates there is far more than meets the eye. In fact, in the shadows of this region, he is a well-known fixer and Mr. Johnson, though not always appearing to represent the interests of MCT. We can all be sure that is not the case or he wouldn't be part of the Sinister Six, but he is certainly playing an interesting game down under.

- > Ashwood is a universal Johnson, and MCT appreciates his ability to separate street life, arcane life, Johnson life, Ichi life, and personal life. It also helps that he has serious arcane talents and connection to MCT's Research Unit 13.
- > Lothan the Wise

As if the UCAS is not in enough trouble with the eyes of one Ichi on them, **Ilyena Mitsuhamama** operates out of the NAN half of North America. She is a firm MCT loyalist and not keen on any of her fellow Ichi with split loyalties. She's using the struggles of the UCAS to get MCT contracts and operations all along the NAN/UCAS border region with a healthy focus on land acquisition.

Due to past transgressions, MCT does not have the greatest reputation within the NAN, and most of their operations here use subsidiary names that don't include MCT or Mitsuhamama. Ilyena works to use that to her advantage, though bearing the name herself (she changed it when she turned eighteen) makes it a bit of a struggle.

Also on her radar is Denver. The recent shift in power has left the place a bit tumultuous, but while this cauldron warms and bubbles, she has been tossing in the proper ingredients to get the flavor she wants when it's time to sit down for a meal with Ghostwalker.

- > She's got a serious interest in the Seelie Court and the access provided by Yellowstone. Her current efforts are trying to undermine the connection between Aztlan and the NAN in order to get MCT arcane resources helping to monitor and control the gateways around the caldera.
- > Lothan the Wise
- > It's not just Yellowstone. The Denver gateway and the one at Bear Lodge are the subject of plenty of memos that emanate and cross her virtual desk. She's also hired researchers to check out the Four Corners region and a dozen other arcane sites in the NAN.
- > Netcat





The mysterious seventh member has yet to be confirmed, but every bit of data I've touched points to someone with scales. As the number of options for this scaled seventh is limited, most would think it'd be easy to find, but whoever it is, they are either newly awoke, a drake rather than a dragon (maybe as the envoy of a dragon), or (the answer I'll speak more on) a very young dragon.

Recent rumors have several more sea dragons beneath the waves. These same rumors talk of some accelerated development, and one of these dragons, I think, is the seventh member and has a spot in the Ichi Council to appease Sea Dragon herself. This potential connection between the number-one megacorporation on the planet and the wealthiest dragon on the planet is something the world should be concerned about. What the two need or want from each other can't be a good thing for the rest of us.

- > That makes some sense with a bunch of rumors going on in St. Louis. The shadows were abuzz with rumor of a meeting between Ilyena Mitsuhamas, Even Teeg, and Sea Dragon, but the last was not present. Instead, a younger sea dragon was spotted departing the meeting, and I later confirmed the queen of the sea was on the West Coast at the time.
- > Ire

## RIVALS AND REBELS

I struggle to write up anything with real teeth when it comes to enemies of MCT. First off, it's everyone. Everyone wants to take a shot at the king. But secondly, it's no one, because no one wants to be perceived as a threat. Instead of tossing out my thoughts, I instead decided to pull together a few articles I found on the 'trix.

## STRANGE GANG WAR ERUPTS

A dozen are dead and at least twice that have been rushed to local hospitals after a gunfight broke out at the Kyoto Go tea house in central Kyoto. The tea house is a well-known Yakuza meeting ground but has long been considered neutral territory among the various rengo. What has this inquisitor most intrigued is the participants in this so-called gang war.

They are all part of the same gang. Eyewitness reports and local trid footage show a small group of similarly affiliated members go from a simple argument to a full-blown shootout in an instant. Could this be the influence of magic? Could this be a breakdown in our very own Yakuza? Could this have been some mass infiltration from monads, insect spirits, shedim, etc.?

At this time, this reporter doesn't know, but the digging is about to begin in earnest.



- > There is some kind of schism, and it looks like any Yaks still on the side of MCT are getting targeted.
- > Red Anya
- > Looks like the end of an era. No more Yakuza MCT connection. Crazy times.
- > Slamm-O!
- > Looks like a great way for MCT to clean out anyone disloyal. All they need to do is fund their own allies, and this internal war is going to just be an extermination.
- > Stone
- > Except other forces are at play here too. Money is coming at both sides of this issue from inside and outside MCT. The shadows are raking in the dough, but the chaos on the streets is going to take its toll.
- > Glitch

## INTERNAL MEMO

**From:** Ashi Entubo, Director of Intracorporate Relations, MCT, Azania Office  
**To:** All MCT Personnel  
**Re:** Intracorporate Altercations

Good Morning MCT's Shining Stars!

Thank you for all the amazing innovations and industrious efforts you put forth every day. We are a rising star, all thanks to you.

This said, we need to address recent intracorporate altercations that have been reported via medical response events. It seems that we, the face of unity and tradition for the world, are having a not-insignificant amount of violent engagements among our own citizens. While standard measures will be taken to address the involved parties, I felt it necessary to remind all those in the MCT family that we are in this together. We have foes in abundance beyond the safety of our enclaves and as such do not need tensions bubbling below the surface while we work to build a better tomorrow.

If you feel a fellow citizen may be engaging in activities that do not advance the goals of our leadership, do not hesitate to reach out to the Office of Intracorporate Relations.

Stay true to the MCT culture!

Sincerely,  
 Ashi Entubo

- > Before anyone else starts making comments, let me clarify a few things. 1. Entubo is an MCT loyalist, meaning as it stands, she is apolitical. 2. Her writing indicates they are leaning heavily toward one side but does not have enough internal cred to make clear statements. 3. Sending out a message like this is a declaration of war. Azania is about to ignite.
- > Pretorian Guard

## PLANS AND PROBLEMS

### HARVESTING!

That's the best word for what MCT is doing in the UCAS. They've built a neutral reputation in this shadow of the former United States. With their recent growth and move to the number-one spot, they are in a prime position to gain citizens from a collapsing UCAS. They aren't looking for the cream of the crop, either. As they expand in the area, they pick up more positions that use manual labor, at least until machines are moved in. They're looking for anything they can pick up cheaply, including land, buildings, and contracts.

- > They aren't the only corp snagging UCAS citizens, but they are doing it the fastest. They're even offering hiring bonuses in the forms of free arcology housing and loads of corp scrip. Looks like a great deal versus trying to survive under a collapsing government. And for MCT, it costs practically nothing.  
 Important part is the number of SINS getting transferred or created and how good that is for forgers who have been struggling since the registry got all hardcore.
- > Turbo Bunny
- > The more skilled citizens aren't always getting a choice. Plenty of work "convincing" individuals to move over on their own volition.
- > Rigger X

While MCT may be known as a Japanacorp, they are currently pushing hard to become the largest megacorporate presence in Africa as well. It's not an easy feat, as Evo also has their eyes on African dominance, SpIn is already heavily entrenched in Northern Africa, Erika is looking to get out of the shadow of S-K in Europe and sees Africa as its potential new home, and UO isn't going to hand over their valuable DeBeers assets without a corporate war. This is good news for us, but it's terrible news for Africa. Vast swaths of undeveloped land are about to get ravaged, all so more consumers can buy stuff they'll throw away after a year. Oh, well, need to focus on the important stuff.

While the fight is on across the continent, certain regions are going to host most major parts of this conflict. The battle with Evo and UO is going to focus on Azania. PWV will see battles over mining and politics, the wilds will see an uptick in arcane research, and Cape Town will certainly be getting bloodied as shipping routes out of the country are fought over. The Sahara is going to see SpIn and MCT scuffle over rights to the sand and what they can pull from it. Erika will be making noise on the Ivory Coast as they dig into boosting the region's communication hub status.



- > MCT is currently trying to develop ties to the Ethiopian Territories, but they're keen on keeping everyone at a distance so work is done in the shadows. From everything I've heard and the little I've seen, the ET shadows are small but serious.
- > Pretorian Guard

MCT has a reputation for strip-mining resources and letting the locals suffer the aftermath, and nowhere is that showing to be more evident than in their treatment of the metaplanes. They have ramped up research and development in metaplanar exploration and excavation techniques, putting billions of nuyen on a completely uncharted region with a questionable return on investment.

Some of those billions are going to hire runners, though the focus is often on teams with military or scientific experience over a group of street hoods who decided to team up. But if you are a street hood team, don't give up. They just might start out by sending you to the worst metaplanes and letting you learn under fire. Which allows them to not pay you when you don't make it back.

- > Any face out there stepping into one of these negotiations needs to get a lump sum and not a per-member fee. Sure, it might promote doing the old cut-and-run from a fallen team member, but it also means they are on the hook even if only a single team member makes it back.
- > Fianchetto
- > In the case above, if you're the last surviving member, hire some thugs to cover your hoop, since MCT is just as likely to finish what the metaplane started as they are to pay up.
- > Stone

## HELP WANTED

Too many runners on the street think that every corp is the same when it comes to working with shadow assets. True, we're all expendable and deniable, but just like every corp has a culture of its own, they all treat runners in their own distinct manner, especially MCT.

For the world's largest megacorporation, there are three important points to remember.

1. They pay well. MCT Johnsons have hefty credsticks, and they don't skimp when it comes to buying talent. The reason for this is best explained in point 2.
2. Whether the job is dangerous or not, it's always high risk. MCT doesn't tolerate failure, and that doesn't mean just failing to accomplish a job. That goes with how the job was done, the risk or scrutiny they may be under after a job, or how the execution of a job might reflect on them were it to come to light they were involved. Failure to meet their standards could lead to a reduction in pay or,

if a particularly poor job is done, a reduction in life span. They don't have a problem eliminating assets that don't perform. But if you do ...

3. They are always looking out for talent to bring in. Many a runner has hung up their street name and taken an MCT SIN to work internally. It may not be the retirement plan most fantasized about, but it's a safer and more secure lifestyle that still allows for the occasional adrenaline rush.

If you keep those three things in mind, working for MCT will be a breeze.

## JOB BOARD

Not every runner waits around to get that call from their fixer. If you've been in the biz long enough and made the right connections, you may get access to one of the many shadow VPNs that host job boards. Fixers post jobs, and some techs on staff go and dig up a little data on who and what these offers might entail. Sometimes they're way off, but more often than not, they get enough right to keep the runners who come on coming back for more. Here, I've pulled up a bunch of jobs that point to MCT. Take a look at what they're up to right here.

### TITLE: DATA ACQUISITION

Assumed Employer: MCT

Location: Osaka, Japanese Imperial State

Incentives: Discount arms, paydata relinquishment, Renraku corp scrip

Team needed for necessary insertion job to collect offline data. Mixed payment offer with greater market value offered in corp scrip.

- > It's brazen to have here, but with enough deflections the only way this is coming back is from a counter-op. It's like a game of three-card monte. A job against Shiawase, paid for with Renraku scrip, making it obvious it's MCT, but too many other red flags can get played.
- > Slamm-O!

### TITLE: EXTREME ENVIRONMENT RECONNAISSANCE

Assumed Employer: MCT

Location: Negotiable

Incentives: Thaumaturgical resource access, advanced gear access, high pay rate

We need several teams across various global locations to participate in the reconnaissance of unexplored locales. Location selection will be based on the team skillset, and transportation to and from the location will be provided. Protective gear will be available for use with a deposit and offered for purchase at the end of the operation. Awakened talent will be considered more frequently and



compensated more substantially, including the potential to purchase highly restricted thaumaturgical goods at a substantially discounted rate.

- > Make no mistake, these environments are metaplanar. You can also expect to be testing out some of that protective gear. I'll warn anyone who decides to take any job that crosses the Threshold, the reputation of visitors from our metaplane is getting worse and worse and spreading faster and faster. I'm not entirely sure who is spreading the word, but it is getting around. Most metaplanes are already less than tolerant to outsiders, and many are starting out as initially violent to visitors from our plane.
- > Lyrn

## **TITLE: PRIVATE SURVEILLANCE**

Assumed Employer: MCT

Location: Kyoto, JIS; Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal, Azania; Chicago, UCAS; Free Seattle Metroplex; St. Louis Metrostate; Los Angeles, PCC

Incentives: Global relocation support, extended contracts, local connection assistance

Our global collection of contract negotiators is looking for teams within or willing to transfer to these named cities to work in those regions as an intelligence-gathering entity. Contracts will be priced and offered based on the makeup and résumé of the team. Success can lead to additional contracts or extensions. Each above-named city has at least four available team contracts. Larger metroplexes may have up to a dozen work contracts available at any given time.

# **GAME INFORMATION**

## **MCT BORN AND RAISED**

You were raised to hold MCT above all other corps. Even though you are no longer a citizen or have been labeled a criminal, you refuse to work against your former family. You will even go so far as to call in tips when you get information about others working against the corp.

This quality is becoming more and more interesting to MCT factions as internal disputes grow hotter, and the tip being offered could be ignored or traced to find out who has the loose lips.

**Cost:** 4 Karma

**Game Effect:** You gain a bonus point of Edge for use on Social tests when reaching out to MCT contacts. You cannot use Edge on any test that could negatively impact a citizen of MCT.

## **ZERO-ZONE MENTALITY**

Ice in your veins makes you cold to the plight of others. You have no remorse or pity for those who have been killed on corp territory—or almost anyone else for that matter. You believe whole-heartedly in the zero-zone concept and think all other corps should use it as well, seeing other corps as weak for not using the zero-zone plan.

**Bonus:** 6 Karma

**Game Effect:** You cannot spend Edge on Social Tests, with the exception of Intimidation.





# RENRAKU

POSTED BY: ORKCEO

## CORP OVERVIEW

The essence of marketing is making people not just want what you're selling, but need it. Classic examples from the past include putting cocaine in your fountain drink, and making a pocket electronic device that combines half a dozen functions that most humans lived entirely without, then convinced them that everyone needs it—and needs to regularly replace it.

This is where Renraku's business currently sits. They are dedicated to serving you in ways that make them feel necessary, and they will tweak their efforts however they need to in order to accomplish this. Sometimes this is benign, where they adopt local practices and customs so their services feel natural to their customers, or when they use their peerless customer database, which tracks and anticipates needs better than any system on the planet, even Horizon's. Other times this is un-

derhanded, like sprinkling some code in their Matrix games that is suspiciously BTL-like and keeps customers coming back—and paying for each visit.

They've adopted a curious extension of the "customer is always right" concept. In their view, if the customer is happy, then the goods or services they received must be the right thing for them. After all, people wouldn't keep coming back for something they didn't like, would they?

- Back in the twentieth century, there were some ideas that addictions might be problematic and should be avoided. That wasn't what marketers thought, of course, just meddling do-gooders. Once the marketers took over the world, addiction became a condition to exploit rather than interrupt.
- Kay St. Irregular
- There's a weird kind of upside, though. The corps would much rather have an addict who is alive and still spending than one who is dead. Back in the early part of the century, you had a ton of people dying because they took things laced with poison,





# RENRAKU

or because they were relying on underground economies to get their goods, and they didn't always dose themselves properly. Now that you can get most of what you want through licit means, and even sometimes get supervision while using, addictions are much safer than they used to be, even though they are more common.

► Butch

Renraku doesn't have the consumer brand strength of Aztechnology, but they probably have better name recognition, since they're more willing to put their mothership name on consumer-facing brands. Surveys show that when people think of Renraku, they think of some need they have being fulfilled.

## HISTORY

The story of Renraku is, essentially, the story of Inazo Aneki. In the early part of the century, Aneki rose to prominence as a merger-and-acquisitions specialist with Shiawase. He specialized in the "acquisitions" part, and he usually didn't conduct himself in friendly fashion. He was especially skilled at deploying cash in rapid fashion to find innovative ways to buy up 50.1 percent of public firms, or to make capital management for private firms so difficult that owners became anxious to sell. Nine times out of ten, Shiawase would keep the one nugget of a corp they wanted to hold on to (often a piece of technology, sometimes just a particular team or talented executive) and then sell off the rest, or just lay off a bunch of people.

He was good at his job and rose through the ranks. He had two or three big acquisitions that he thought for sure would make his future, probably by being appointed the head of whatever new division he had just acquired. Instead, leadership went

## RENRAKU COMPUTER SYSTEMS

**Corporate Court Rank (2081):** 3

**Slogan:** "How may we serve you?"

**World Headquarters:** Chiba, Japanese Imperial State

**President:** Orito Sasaki

**Major Shareholders:** No individual owns more than 10 percent of Renraku stock

## MAJOR DIVISIONS AND SUBSIDIARIES

### Renraku Africa

Freeman Industries (industrial conglomerate), LGSK Electronic Holdings (electronics), Plus Vite Shipping (shipping), Renraku Aerospace (aerospace)

### Renraku Asia

Bharat Petroleum (petrochemicals), Fuchi Corporate Services (business services), Ganbare Aerospace (aerospace), the Hitotsubashi Group (business services), Isuzu Motors (groundcraft), The Mizuho Group (business and financial services), Najima Securities (financial services), Neo-Police Deployment (law enforcement), Shin Chou Kyogo (academic and archeological services), Terracotta Armaments (weapons and defense), Ultimax (weapons and defense), Underwater Living (architecture, development, and construction), Wakatta Software (software research and development), Xiao Technologies (Matrix and electronics)

### Renraku Europa

Blohm & Voss GmbH (industrial conglomerate), EuroFact (data management), EuroSoft (Matrix), Ferrarius Medical (medical services), Gaz-Niki (vehicles and drones), Izom Armaments (weapons and defense), Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines Ltd. (cruises), Securitech International (security services), Socratic Education Group (education services), Tetradyne Matrix Systems (Matrix products)

### Renraku Oceania

Australian Development Corporation (structural development), Australian Institute of Magical Research (magical research), Australian Telecom Services (telecommunications), Baird Communications (telecommunications), Genecraft (augmentations), Harland & Wolff Nautical Designs (watercraft), Rees Arcana (arcane services)

### Renraku North America

Adams-Westlake Mediaworks (advertising and market consulting), Architectural Dynamics (architecture and structural engineering), Champion Financial (financial services), Comcast Corporation (entertainment and communications), FactFiles (data management), GloBank (finance), GridGuide (traffic management), Hypersense (Matrix products), Wacky Brothers Animation (entertainment)

### Renraku South America

AgriBuild (architecture and development), Armada Personne (watercraft), Festival Foods (food and beverage), Iris Firmware (electronics)



to others, and the message sunk in—Aneki had risen as far as he was going to go in the company.

He stayed in the game, but he started targeting acquisitions differently. Instead of looking for a company he could buy and then lead within Shiawase, he looked for a company he could take over for himself. It would have to be large but undervalued. It would have to be diversified. And despite whatever weaknesses it had that made it ripe for picking, it had to have something special that provided a hook for future growth.

He couldn't have designed a company more perfect for his plan than Keruba International. Keruba's central business was munitions, which helped it grow quickly in the chaotic early twenty-first century. The Crash of '29 and Keruba's bad reputation among other large corps made their fall unmourned, and the greater corporate world seemed content to watch Keruba collapse under its own weight.

That's when Aneki swooped in and took over as majority owner. He saw two prime resources: first, a large manufacturing base that could be converted to a wide range of purposes; and second, a seat on the Corporate Court. The full value of this so-called "golden ticket" was not widely realized back then, or else Aneki would not have been able to sneak Keruba away the way he did. But he got it, and he set about making the next stage of his life.

## THE RENRAKU CORE

While Aneki had purchased some significant assets, he didn't start with a clear vision on what he was going to make them into. One part was easy: keep making munitions. It may not remain the central business, but Aneki knew the world always needs things that go boom. Keruba International was renamed Izom Armaments, and it remains in that business today.

The rest of the work was more complicated. Aneki moved his base of operations to Chiba and looked to grow quickly—but not so quickly that he would make Shiawase, Fuchi, and Mitsuhamma decide to take his company down a peg. Luckily for him, there was a pressing global need where contracts were easy to come by for a decently capitalized company: re-building and improving the Matrix. Renraku built impressive consumer electronics and Matrix infrastructure businesses, and profits started flowing in. This became Aneki's new core.

As growth continued, events showed that Aneki was right to worry about becoming a target once he grew enough, but he watched the wrong threats. When someone came to attempt to snatch his corporation away from him, it wasn't one of his fellow Japanacorps, or a threat from another nation. It was a rebellion within his ranks.

A group of executives and investors banded together and attempted to oust Aneki. They thought

his oversight was dim and his guiding hand was not firm, and they were not entirely wrong.

> That's some quality understatement there. A large corporation on a significant upswing is a bacchanal like you'll never see. And yes, I'm aware of what happens at rock concerts. But if you look at financial companies in the 1980s or turn-of-the-century Silicon Valley, you'll see that the sheer volume of cash flowing through the companies lends itself to all manner of indulgence. It's not uncommon for people caught in that river of money to be so absorbed in spending it that they get distracted from earning more of it. That's what happened to Aneki, right to the point where he almost lost it all.

> Mr. Bonds

Aneki fought off the attempted takeover by issuing a drekload of new shares of stock and being sure to sell them to anyone but the conspirators. That kept the opposition from getting a majority, but it reduced Aneki's ownership shares to five percent. He made alliances, though, and kept his position. He rid the company of most of the conspirators, but not all. He knew talent, and he also knew that adaptability is the key to survival.

That belief would be tested until the day he died.

## SINNERS IN THE HAND OF AN ANGRY GOD

It is the destiny of every major software company to experiment with electronic consciousness. They want their software to be smart, capable of learning, adaptable, and even self-repairing. Often, this results in amazing and helpful advances; sometimes, it invents clumsy and awkward agents that get in the way more often than they help. In certain horrible instances, it results in disaster.

Renraku had developed a tremendous arcolony in Seattle known as the Self-Contained Industrial-Residential Environment (SCIRE) and had developed an artificial intelligence to manage the whole operation. That AI went bad, possibly through an infection of the Crash 2.0 virus, and started conducting gruesome experiments on the people inside. Renraku locked the place down to try to contain the problem, but that had the primary effect of locking the residents and staff in with an insane AI. The full death toll will likely never be known, but it's believed to be in the high five figures.

Renraku managed to keep the truth away from the public for years, but the financial losses were huge, and even if people didn't know exactly what had happened, they knew it was something, and the corp's reputation lagged.

It didn't help that not long after the Renraku incident, Inazo Aneki died. Theories say he got some brain damage trying to log into the SCIRE during



the Deus incident, but he was kept alive for a couple years while Renraku doctors attempted to save him. They failed.

While there are several stories about Aneki becoming an AI or a spirit or something, none have been verified, and I don't have the space to dig into them. It's best to consider him dead and gone, and not get caught up in distractions.

The passing of Aneki shifts the power of Renraku to three pillars. One of them remains Aneki. He may be dead, but he holds the title of honorary CEO in respect for his legacy. That means his spirit is regularly invoked—to the point that stories of actual physical manifestations of his spirit pop up every so often.

- ▶ His astral form (and remember, no one actually knows where Aneki's body is) keeps spending time at Wu Tower. Oddly enough, whenever a Renraku executive shows up to have a conversation with him there, he fails to appear.
- ▶ Winterhawk

The second pillar is board chair Shikei Nakatomi. He bought his way into the company not long after the SCIRE disaster, and he has now led the board for about a decade. He's as powerful a board chair as you're likely to see, hands-on and knowledgeable about the inter workings of the megacorp. Even more importantly, he has shaped Renraku's strategy, including the corp's heavy dive into the service industry and their emphasis on local adaptability. For someone who doesn't seem to care whether he is liked or not, Nakatomi has been adept at making sure Renraku is loved.

The third pillar is whoever sits in the president's seat. Former COO Haruhiko Nakada led the corp for an unsuccessful decade, then killed himself to show culpability for his mismanagement. He was succeeded by the current president, Orito Sasaki. Sasaki is smart, data-driven, and strategic, but he's not a people person. He doesn't use his gut, and he doesn't play the glad-handing game. That means he's pulled off some successful moves, but he is nowhere close to matching Nakatomi's influence with the board.

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

### ELECTRONICS

This is not as important to the company as it used to be, but it's still right there in the name. The Renraku Sensei remains one of the most popular commlinks in the world, while the Kitsune is a well-respected cyberdeck. They maintain a drek-ton of Matrix infrastructure, they continue to cultivate AIs despite the Deus experience, and they have excellent access to the Foundation of the Matrix. They traditionally have not been too





deep into the augmentations side of the electronics biz, but the advent of cyberjacks made them feel like they needed to come up with a line to complement their existing 'links and 'decks. Now that they've opened the door, they might take more steps through it.

They also have fun playing both sides of the fence, with a line of jammers and noise generators that can hinder the devices they sell. Skilled deckers claim that there is a hidden code exploit that lets Renraku 'links and 'decks cut through Renraku jammers, but they're not open about sharing how to make the exploit work—especially because as soon as details about the exploit leak online, Renraku changes it. No one wants to kill the golden goose—assuming it actually exists.

## DATA

This has definite overlaps with the electronics business, but also enough separation to be considered on its own. This is especially true as Renraku continues to expand its service offerings, which give it more ways to collect consumer data.

The core function of data collection is to anticipate consumer wants and needs, but that's a simple statement that covers a lot of activities. Here are two examples of things Renraku has done with their data.

First, let's say you just finished watching the latest episode of *The Duke Boys* on CBC. Then you go to your smart refrigerator and take out a six-pack of Kikkoman beer, then send a few messages to friends who are also *Duke Boys* fans. A simplistic marketing plan would then send you a message to maybe buy a *Duke Boys* throw for your bed or beer caddy or something. But that's not what good data does. Instead, it knows that *Duke Boys* fans who have a beer before bed are likely to enjoy listening to some outlaw country, so they'll offer to introduce them to a few new songs as they get ready for bed. Techniques like this have boosted the media streams in various Renraku divisions by eighteen percent in the past year.

The second method looks at services that might be grouped together. Let's say you've got a consumer working in a hospital. They're on their feet all day. You also know that they ride a bike at least ten kilometers on their day off. Then you find out they've made an appointment with an orthopedist. Thanks to this data, you make sure they receive a coupon for a knee brace especially designed for cyclists.

The more data you get, the better your recommendations can be. You can recommend better travel routes and show customers where to pick up things they like along that route. You can watch them perform household tasks and then help them streamline how they do them. The only limit is in the products you can design to meet people's

needs, and Renraku feels they are well situated in that regard. **FactFiles** has grown into a leader in this area, thanks in part to its massive hoard of data from GridGuide and SeaSource. They don't have the precision or sheer manipulative power of Horizon's Dawkins Group, but the amount of data they collect increases by the day, and the mass of it is able to point them in intriguing directions.

## SERVICES

A prime part of the history of the twenty-first-century economy is about deciding what jobs should be done by metahumans and what should be automated. Megacorp CEOs love the savings of automation, but they believe there are limits—they are adamant, for example, that no AI or algorithm could do the job of a CEO. Much to their chagrin, though, they are finding that there are some employees who are not easily automated away. Factory floor workers, custodians? Sure, automate them away, unless you can find someone willing to work for starvation wages (of course, in the Sixth World, you frequently can). There are others, though, where the human touch is difficult to replace. Most of the work of an office receptionist can be automated, and many companies frequently do. Others, though, make a mark for themselves by having a live person answer the phones and welcome visitors, figuring that a warm voice on the other end of a call beats a canned one every time. Or if you want to plan an event, automation could help you find out what's available and what it costs, but it takes a person to listen to what you want and offer the distinct touches that will make your event sing. A drone may be able to apply a precise paint job to your fingernails, but they can't provide a warm touch to your hand or engaging conversation while you're being taken care of.

Renraku excels at finding where to draw this line and providing the human touch to their services. Some of this is accomplished through their localization strategy, where they adapt practices to specific geographic areas. Much is also done using their data—watching how people react to drone employees versus flesh-and-blood ones and making decisions accordingly.

Renraku's service offerings are vast and varied. Their SIN database clientele remains large and impressive, which gives them unparalleled access to the daily travels of a majority of the world's citizens.

- Their knowledge of people like us, of course, is somewhat less exact.
- X-Prime

**Fuchi Corporate Services** offers financial services (including automated auditors as well as



flesh-and-blood financial consultants), **Neo-PD** is law enforcement, and the **Mizuho Group** is ... everything.

Mizuho means “abundant rice” in Japanese, and this company has been living up to its name for most of its lifetime. Started in the early part of this century, it hit the ground running as a holding corporation for a number of banks—from the outset, its combined assets made it the largest bank in the world. From there, they went the expected route into financial advising and wealth management, but they look left turns after each Matrix Crash. The first one led them to invest more in Matrix infrastructure, which in turn led to them having significant ownership in a number of corps doing that work, allowing for some strong pollination across the Renraku brand.

- The battles between the subsidiaries of a megacorp as they jockey for position is one of the untold stories of megacorporate life.
- Cosmo

The second Crash led to the wireless world, and since Mizuho had significant assets in banking and Matrix infrastructure, it wasn’t too difficult to take the next step, investing what this new world would need. Delivering content everywhere was the easy part. Delivering food, goods, and services on demand? That was a little trickier.

Mizuho invests a lot of money in cloud-sourced, gig-supporting services—ridesharing, pad sharing, service exchanges, and so on. They also put a lot into logistics and warehousing, which is the real secret of the wireless world. When a drone drops off your new RomperStomp combat boots the same day you ordered them, it’s not because you’re lucky enough to live close to the factory. It’s because organizations like Mizuho have figured out how to stage goods from production to distribution in ways that deliver them quickly. Naturally, that mass of data Renraku has access to plays a large role in figuring out how to anticipate consumer need across the world to get goods where they need to be as quickly as possible.

Beyond all of this, Renraku has been expanding its direct-to-consumer offerings. A few boutique spa chains have opened up in cities across the world—Cascade Sky in Seattle, Bonhomie in Manhattan, Great Wave in Neo-Tokyo—and they’ve been sharpening their retail offers. This is one area where they’ve relented in naming as much as they can “Renraku,” as they instead let the local culture shape their name (just like they’re doing with their spas).

## EDUCATION

This might be the area most associated with the Renraku name (besides electronics) because they slap their brand on *everything* here. If you

don’t have a Renraku linguasoft, then you probably haven’t traveled much. They dominate that market and have a wide range of offerings, from pure translators to software that can help you gain language skills for yourself. This is only one part of their education offerings, though. Their corporate schools are regularly lauded, to the point that non-Renraku citizens regularly petition for the few open seats they have.

- When you say that Renraku’s schools are lauded, remember who’s doing the lauding. It’s not exactly a coalition of free thinkers and open minds saying that Renraku schools are good—it’s corporate rankers whose priority are people who will do what corporations need them to. These schools are oriented to turning out people who color inside the lines. Next time you get a chance, sit down and have lunch with someone who graduated from a Renraku school and explain to them what your life is like, and watch their mind slowly explode.
- Cosmo
- Yeah, because Renraku corp citizens are always sitting around like, “I don’t have lunch plans tomorrow! I should probably hang out with the next criminal who calls me!”
- Pistons

While their youth education system is extensive, it isn’t a big profit center. Their adult education system is another story, and the two systems are intertwined. Their classroom efforts are closely observed, and evaluators watch for both the content and the people who do well molding young minds. Then they turn those people into marketable education offerings. Sometimes it’s a single lecture (e.g., the popular “Megacorporation on the Hill” series, a kind of triumphalist history of megacorporate evolution, started as a twelfth-grade economics lecture in Hong Kong), while other times it’s an entire course offering, like their Language Advantage courses, which focus not just on teaching you a language, but how to use it in specific contexts that will give you the upper hand in negotiations. Are their claims overhyped? Probably. But they’ve helped sales, and that’s made their adult education offerings into a fine combination of profitable business and social engineering force—which is a great one-two punch, from a corporate point of view.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment is another area where Renraku integration has reached a high level. They throw a lot of ramen against the wall and make the most of what sticks. Their feeder level is their wide swath of unscripted programming—*Karaoke Klash*, *Dating the Mob*, *SoyMasters*, *Music High*, and so on. They regularly watch all sorts of metrics so they can identify who is trending upward and whose



time in the spotlight might be nearing an end. They are constantly looking for opportunities for synergy, taking guests for one of their shows from the rest of their roster. Networks have been doing this forever with game shows and talk shows, but Renraku goes about it in a more in-depth way. There's the easy stuff—you can bet that anyone who gets a decent response while on *Music High* will show up soon enough on *Karaoke Klash*. On a more complicated level is the idea that a bunch of their scripted series seem to exist in a shared universe. Recurring characters on *Blood Runners* have been known to show up on *A Piece of My Heart*, *Lord of the Ghouls*, and *Force of Impact*, to name a few. Not only does this give them a chance to nurture breakout stars, but the shared universe nature of it all inspires rampant discussion and speculation on various Matrix sites.

- ▶ Fun fact: Some Renraku employees have learned that they can get away with a little on-the-job Matrix surfing if they hang out in forums discussing Renraku entertainment offerings. A single post about **Desert Wars** or the latest Horizon pop star will get your hoop reported to HR, but you can spend up to fifteen minutes a day talking about the 'Rakuverse (as it's known online) without hearing a peep from the powers that be. Employees treasure this little unofficial break, and Renraku gets a bunch of grassroots promotion.
- ▶ Dr. Spin

Their entertainment holdings are varied, of course. The recently renamed **Capstone Broadcasting Company** (CBC) of the CAS is a major North American network, **Babylon Matrix** distributes a ton of content, **Shoppazulu** has gear with images of all your favorite Renraku stars on it (and clearance deals for the fading stars), and **Wacky Brothers Animation** produces work that is as cutting-edge as a ginormous, globe-spanning corporation can allow.

## WEAPONS AND ARMAMENTS

And then we come to this, which used to be Renraku's core focus. They're no Ares, of course, but their offerings are still substantial. **Izom Armaments**, **Ultimax**, and **Terracotta Armaments** are the most significant names, and they cover a lot of ground—you could build a hefty, expansive arsenal between the gear those three companies offer.

As you can guess, Renraku is looking to integrate these divisions, too. Unsurprisingly, all the real-life cops hired by Neo-PD and the fictional ones from the 'Rakuverse carry weapons from these three companies, as do the Red Samurai. Somewhat more controversially, there are reports that these companies have forensic databases on every gun they sell, and they freely share it with Neo-PD. As you might guess, they won't admit that publicly, because they don't want the lucrative shadowrun-

ner market to think they'll be buying something that will turn into evidence the first moment they fire it.

- ▶ Bulldrek. I've left plenty of rounds from my trusty Izom Artemis at various scenes, and no one's come sniffing after me.
- ▶ Clarion
- ▶ That's because someone cares enough about you to have erased that data from Renraku's databases. Always stay a step ahead of them.
- ▶ Netcat

## TOP TALENT

### SHIKEI NAKATOMI

(BOARD CHAIR)

If you're not familiar with corporate structure, let's be clear that having the board chair be the strongest influence on the company is unusual. Chairs have power and influence to be sure, and they play a strong role in shaping strategy, but usually the CEO plays a stronger role within the company than the board chair.

Not at Renraku. Corporate President Orito Sasaki has a salary package about ten times larger than what Nakatomi is paid, but Nakatomi owns more stock, which keeps him very interested in the ongoing prospects of the megacorp.

Leading as board chair is tricky. Technically, the only employee who reports to the chair is the president or CEO, while the president oversees every other employee. The chair also has no day-to-day job description, so their ability to affect things below the 10,000-meter level is uncertain at best.

But there Nakatomi is, making it happen.

He has plenty of experience and savvy backing him up. He's in his eighties, did a long stint in Fuchi back in the day, and then moved into Renraku in 2061. His twenty years on the board have been about arranging the whole system to his liking. Most of that has been about ruling through power instead of beneficence, since he is far more comfortable being feared than loved. He wants people to be worried about what he will do to them if they cross him, and he is purposeful about staging necessary demonstrations. Many megacorporate observers have laid a lot of the responsibility for the dissolution of NeoNET at his feet, saying that in Corporate Court negotiations over the matter, he had the loudest and most insistent voice demanding that NeoNET lose its AAA status and be stripped for parts. Those who witnessed the process remembered his cold ferocity, and they came away convinced that they should never cross him. Which, of course, was exactly his intention.

Besides trying to instill fear, Nakatomi has benefited from Renraku's turn to the service industry,



in large part because he was a major force pushing for it. As he helped the corporation evolve, he guided and trained the heads of many service divisions (the current CEO of the Mizuho Group, Shuko Tokura, is a Nakatomi protégée), and as a result he has close relationships with many of them and can regularly exert his influence in that area.

Nakatomi is patient. He's old, but he's also mostly cyber, so he's healthy enough to keep playing a long game. As some analysts have noticed, the sneaky thing about Renraku's localization and preference for integration is when everything works right, the corporation can slowly weave itself into every aspect of your life without you noticing. Despite his bombast on the executive level, that sneaky kind of conquest is very much Nakatomi's strategic vision. He doesn't so much want to conquer the world as convince it to offer itself to him.

- Nakatomi's relationship with the shadows is weird. You'd think that a guy who wants to instill fear would be all over us, right? But he feels it's ignoble to farm out the job of providing fear—if he wants someone to be scared, he should be willing to frighten them himself. The shadows still have uses to him, as everyone needs a good datasteal or extraction from time to time, but for those tasks he keeps his distance, making sure he is well insulated from any connection to the job.
- Baka Dabora

## ORITO SASAKI

(PRESIDENT)

While Nakatomi is usually seen as the dominant personality within Renraku, don't mistake Sasaki for a weakling or shrinking violet. He doesn't intimidate like Nakatomi and he isn't known for his megawatt charisma, but his approach means he works well with Nakatomi's infiltrate-and-conquer approach (which is one of the reasons he is sometimes seen as Nakatomi's yes-man). The important thing to remember about Sasaki is he's not going where Nakatomi points him—he's following the data.

Sasaki rose through the ranks of FactFiles, which includes SeaSearch and GridGuide, so he is well aware of the power of data and versed in using it. His leadership focuses on two large questions: What value can we extract from our mountains of data, and where does it tell us to go? He was instrumental in expanding the use of GridGuide data to look at more than sending people ads for new cars or timing ads for when they got home. He had algorithms and AIs poring over travel data looking for patterns, and he came up with insights like the importance of selling back supports and blood-pressure medication to people with long commutes, or looking at travel and shopping patterns to determine when someone will be more likely to make a spur-of-the-moment decision to eat out.

Sasaki does not grab headlines or show up in screamsheet society pages. All he does is grow the company and navigate past potential trouble spots. They could do a lot worse, but the question is if they will settle for that for the indefinite future.

- Beware of all the ways Sasaki uses data. Renraku security procedures are regularly analyzed for weaknesses. If you're lucky, that just means they'll try to shore up those weaknesses. If you're unlucky, they'll leave those weaknesses visible and wait for you to take advantage of them, and then a hidden second line of security will spring into action. Often that line is wearing red helmets.
- RRW

## BOTAN NAKADA

(DIRECTOR OF RENRAKU ASIA: CHINA)

The geographic subdivisions of a megacorporation are a complicated overlay that intersect with the various subsidiaries of the corp. Some subsidiaries, like a fashion house based in Hong Kong, might be entirely set in the area overseen by Renraku Asia: China, which makes the line of authority between them and the area director clear. Others, like Terracotta Armaments, do plenty of business in the Chinese nations, but they also work throughout the world. How does the director of Renraku Asia: China interact with the head of Terracotta Arms when they oversee some but not all of their business?

The answer comes through improvisation and negotiation—or, in the case of Botan Nakada, pushing hard to get what you want.

Nakada has a strange relationship with Renraku. The corporation consumed his father, Haruhiko Nakada, who served as president right until he fell on his sword to atone for his failures in his role. That act took away Botan's father but gave him three percent of the company and a seat on the board. If he resented Renraku for taking the life of his father, he has yet to show it, as he has been enthusiastic about the work. He is particularly involved with the armaments and munitions side, regularly marketing one year's releases as just the thing needed to defeat the previous year's releases.

- There's a long-standing fan theory that Nakada is biding his time, amassing wealth and weapons, for what will be either a takeover of the corp or, most likely, its wholesale destruction.
- Jimmy No
- It's almost impossible for a single person to amass enough money or destructive power to take down a megacorp on their own. Remember the lesson of Art Dankwalther—you can feel all big and powerful, right until that beam shoots down from the sky.
- Orbital DK



- But Nakada has to be running some game, right? He's not just spending his life serving the corp that chewed up and spit out his father, is he?
- /dev/grrl
- That's exactly where these discussions tend to end up.
- Mr. Bonds

## NORIKO SAKAI

(DIRECTOR OF RENRAKU OCEANIA)

Sakai manages to be both an outsider and insider in Renraku. In most conventional senses, she's as insider-y as insiders get. She's the daughter-in-law of board chair Shikei Nakatomi and director of one of the corporation's six major geographic divisions. She oversees millions of employees and earns millions of nuyen. But she still comes to board meetings with a chip on her shoulder and an edge in her voice, as if she were challenging the status quo.

One of her major interests is not appearing like she is led by or loyal to Nakatomi. She's too savvy to turn that into knee-jerk opposition of anything he proposes, but when she has a chance to go against him, she goes hard. She also doesn't go alone. She wouldn't have lasted as long as she has in the company without some strong alliances, and her chief one is Karl Stadt of Renraku Europa. Together, they are a significant thorn in Nakatomi's side, except for the fact that they are pretty good at what they do. Sakai generates plenty of profits in her area, and she keeps Sasaki happy with a data-driven approach and innovative uses of analytics. Of interest to us is the way she has analyzed shadow activity, putting metrics on runner performance in a way no one has before. She is making her analysis more sophisticated all the time, calculating things like IV (Intimidation Value), the DeTEC (Destruction/Time Efficiency Coefficient), and of course a basic P&L analysis of each mission. On one hand, this can make jobs nice—Sakai has a clear vision of how a run should happen to make for the best P&L ratio, so there are plenty of details of what you should do and how to do it. On the downside, Sakai and her subordinates expect you to do things their way, which means any deviation from their plan, even one that seemed necessary due to evolving circumstances, needs an explanation, or you risk losing part of your payout—or worse.

- Let me be clear: Doing runs for Sakai or any of her disciples is a nightmare. We all know the importance of proper legwork and how hard it is to do right. Do you think Sakai's people do legwork the way we would? No, they don't. They miss important details, but they make plans anyway and hold us accountable for them. It's terrible.
- Cayman

- Where's your creativity? First, they know they're expecting a high level of precision from runners, so they pay accordingly. Second, you get a chance to play a game within a game here—do it your way, but make it look like you did it theirs. It's an extra benefit if your way is cheaper, because they pay you to do it the expensive way.
- Turbo Bunny

## KARL STADT

(DIRECTOR OF RENRAKU EUROPA)

Stadt is one of the great survivors of the corporate world. He has lasted more than thirty years as head of Renraku Europa, spending a lot of that time going head-to-head with a great dragon. The competition between Stadt and Lofwyr is well known, and it grew to the point where Stadt was rumored to have contributed major corporate assets to the anti-Lofwyr side of the Dragon Civil War in the hopes that somehow that army might take out his rival. When it failed, Stadt was said to be both disappointed and not. After all, it's a shame to lose a perfect adversary.

Europe serves as Stadt's fiefdom, and he has used Renraku's policy of localization to enhance his independence. If Nakatomi tries to rein him in, Stadt makes a case that he is doing the things the way Europe needs, which is official corporate policy. It doesn't work all the time, but it manages to maintain at least some of his independence.

Stadt seems quite comfortable where he is, seeking no further power in the corporation. Really, there is only one step above him, and that one comes with so much pressure and built-in rivals that he feels more comfortable continuing to pick a fight with a dragon.

That doesn't mean Stadt is complacent. He is forever looking to enhance Renraku's standing in Europe, and he is especially enthusiastic about doing that when he has the chance to crush an enemy. No trick is too dirty for Stadt—sabotaging rivals' product lines, planting vicious gossip about various media stars, blackmailing rivals and then slinging dirt on them anyway are all tools he is perfectly comfortable employing. He makes sure his division has a tremendous cash war chest at all times, and he knows how to employ it. Sometimes that's as simple as buying a rival outright, but other times it's financial sabotage, like secretly buying shares in a rival and then waiting to sell until a sell-off begins in other quarters, turning what would be a single bad day on the market to a calamitous decline. Even more subtly, he has been known to form dummy companies that come up with a hot prototype, show it to investors, collect a bunch of cash, then disappear. Then wait for the value of people's investment to zero out. Just because you lead one of the largest corporate divisions in the world doesn't mean you're above a basic swindle.



- More to the point, being willing to engage in swindling is often how highly placed corporate people got there.
- Cosmo
- The biggest danger of Stadt is he isn't in this for money anymore. He could live for several lifetimes on what he has stashed away. Instead, he's in it for the game—the jockeying, the positioning, the beating of a rival. That means he's often willing to take a short-term or even long-term loss if he likes the position it gives him, or if it inflicts enough pain on a rival. You cannot overestimate how much he's willing to lose to do significant harm to Lofwyr. He's got a huge arsenal at his disposal and is willing to sometimes be reckless in how he uses it. Be careful with him.
- Baka Dabora

## RIVALS AND REBELS

### MITSUHAMA AND SHIAWASE

By now I assume we all know the drill—the Japanacops present a united front when they are away from their homeland but tear each other apart at home. The tricky part is, with globalization, who can draw a clear line between what happens in Japan and what happens away from there? If Mitsuhamas has a factory in Seoul that makes parts for one of their major commlink lines, which is assembled in Japan, is that factory off-limits or fair game? If a Neo-Tokyo-based financial institution is profiting from investment across the world, can you reasonably hit some of those investments to make the institutions suffer?

These are the ethical dilemmas the Japanacops face. When in doubt, they err on the side of hitting hard.

In Japan, Renraku doesn't have the alliances with the Yakuza or the Imperial Family that their rivals boast, so they attempt to get by on sheer money and moxie. That's not to say they won't seek helpful alliances, and there are continuing stories of their outreach to the great dragon Ryumyo. While the Yaks and the government keep Renraku on their toes at home, they have enough diversified strength to hold their own. And when in doubt, they call on assets outside the country to help.

## HORIZON

If you read all the parts about how Renraku uses data and thought, “Hey, isn't this the kind of stuff Horizon does?” then congratulations—you've noticed a brewing and possibly weird conflict. Data analysis is beneficial for at least two reasons: It can tell you what to do with your business, and it can be its own product to sell. Horizon has made a mint on business services, sharing data with other companies and providing consultants to help them use it well. They're not anxious for competition, even though

anyone with millions of nuyen in sales and a Matrix site can start assembling their own data collection. While Renraku cannot yet compete with Horizon's ability to shape the market, they have proven to be excellent at analyzing and responding to it, and that has been enough to get their attention.

The competition between Renraku and Horizon is a hacker's dream, since it primarily takes place on a battlefield of ones and zeroes. It also rewards creativity. If you're doing something like sabotaging a weapon prototype, all you have to do is make it not work. Sure, it's more fun if it explodes spectacularly, but as long as it fails to fire, you're good. That doesn't allow for a lot of options—in the end, there are only so many ways for a piece of technology to not function.

But a relational database can fail in all sorts of interesting ways. It's one thing for the data to not provide the results the client wants, but it's another to turn the data failure into a public relations nightmare.

Want an example of what I'm talking about? Glad you asked. Last year, the Mizuho Group got a new client in Jakarta in Biogene, who was looking for analysis of how their clientele used bio-engineered critters in their security designs and what could encourage them to re-up and move to more expensive product lines. A hacker got into the data Renraku was analyzing so that the report ended up showing that a certain combination of breed and food made critters more effective in their work, which led to more repeat customers. In point of fact, the combination made the critters more aggressive to *anyone* who encountered them. Ten mauled customers later, Biogene had a bunch of lawsuits on their hand, which they turned into a lawsuit against Renraku. Some decker has been patting themselves on the back ever since then—and probably doing all the work a grateful Horizon can throw at them.

- Everything old is new again. When the U.K. broke the Enigma code in WWII, they concealed that fact by sending fake messages to non-existent spies for the Germans to intercept. These messages would help explain how the intelligence was gathered in a way that did not expose Enigma as broken. Messing with data to confuse your opponents is a time-honored practice.
- Fianchetto
- Don't get too cute, though. One smartass decker reprogrammed some data to tell marketers to point customers at a security services offered by a new startup. Turns out that startup was led by a recently retired runner who was a friend of the decker who did the altering. Mr. Johnson and company figured it out quick and geeked the lot of them.
- Netcat

## THE CRACKER UNDERGROUND

There are no greater critics of Big Data than those who spend their lives leaving extensive data trails.



The entire history of interlinked electronics has told a convoluted story of the tensions between privacy and accessibility. Users want to go anywhere and do anything without anyone noticing the trail they leave—or better, they want to be allowed to cover the trails up. The de la Mar-influenced Matrix successfully pushed the spectrum to less concealment and privacy, but that doesn't mean people are taking that lying down. Especially not the Cracker Underground. This massive international network has been active in trying to keep the Matrix free, and this includes making targeted attacks against those who are making a business out of the invasion of privacy.

These days, that very much includes Renraku. The Cracker Underground spent a while unleashing a spate of random attacks against Renraku, but after a while they thought they might be better served by more organized campaigns (despite the fact that organization is not something their members are always fond of). They're realistic enough to know that they're not going to take down an entire megacorp just by hacking it, so they set their goals at an appropriate level by asking a direct question: What's the most damaging part of their work, and what can we do about it?

It didn't take long for them to arrive at an answer. The intersection of Big Data and law enforcement is hugely concerning, so the Cracker Underground painted a big target on Neo-PD.

Anticipating crime before it happens has long been a Holy Grail of law enforcement. One of the long-standing debates is whether the techniques law enforcement uses accurately predict crime that was going to happen no matter what, or if they're self-fulfilling prophecies, sending officers to an area so convinced that a crime is going to take place that they encourage elements to fall into place that allow them to make an arrest. From this point of view, data-driven policing is a trap, a machine that gives police officers an excuse to arrest the people they already wanted in custody.

There is a lot hackers can do to combat this effort. High amounts of profiling go into the effort, giving people scores based on their arrest history, prison history, and so on.

- Some people get profiled by human officers to begin with, and that initiates their contact with the criminal justice system, which then inflates their score for these algorithms. This means human prejudice gets fully encoded into supposedly neutral technology. What a world.
- Cosmo

The Cracker Underground breaks into these databases every chance they get, altering or outright deleting individual information. The effects can be short-lived, as often the data is pulled from other collections, so it can be reconstructed by going back to those sources, but it can buy people a little time where they are not hassled on a daily basis.

On a more advanced level, they can tinker with the data or, even better, the algorithms analyzing the data to make them come up with unusual conclusions. More than once, police cars have gone screaming into wealthy gated communities because the system told them to, and on a couple of occasions some people at the scene were peremptorily arrested. That does nothing to help relationships between the police and wealthy constituents, and it also reduces the faith these citizens have in predictive policing—two results the Underground couldn't be happier about.

They have been concentrating their efforts in particular nations to keep the mistrust bubbling, and they hope sustained work will make people rethink this aspect of policing. At very least, it will be harder to use.

- While they've seen some minor successes, the Cracker Underground knows that in the long run, they're overmatched in this war. If they want more success, they need bigger weapons. This has led them to dive deep into the Matrix, looking for whatever allies they can find. They are probably too willing to make Faustian bargains in order to hurt their enemies, so beware the forces they may unleash.
- Respec
- If they'd like to hear cautionary tales about that, they can reach out to me.
- Puck

## PLANS AND PROBLEMS

Here are some of the areas Renraku focuses on in their shadow work, along with some angles to consider in those areas.

### GROUND GAME

Adapting to local circumstances, as Renraku likes to do, requires knowledge of local circumstances. Some of this is easy to come by—holidays, customs, notable people, and the like. Other parts are trickier—which organized crime figures are serious, and which can be ignored? What's the feng shui of the area like? Who has a secret they would die for? Who else knows about it?

All of those are things the shadows can help with. We excel at getting the information others have trouble finding, and we're pretty good at keeping it secret. The only trouble is, if you find out some juicy secrets, do you really think the right thing to do is sell it to a megacorp?

### HOMELAND SUPPORT

If you're looking to spend some time in Japan, Renraku has some work for you. No matter what you specialize in, Renraku could use it. Datasteals,



network, extractions, con jobs, even simple vandalism—Renraku has enemies for you to work against. Mainly they focus on their rivals, because between the three of them, they control the majority of the power in the nation, but sometimes Renraku needs to hurt the Yaks or one of the smaller corps.

Often, these runs are defensive, holding off any damage that might be coming their way. Bribing and blackmailing government officials, guarding prototypes, preventing extractions, that sort of thing. Their offense is focused on their Chiba headquarters. They don't want to keep other corps out of the city—it's hard to take other people's money if there are no other people around—but they want to ensure that the balance of power stays firmly in their favor. Vandalism is one way to do this, but they're also fond of corporate espionage, specifically of the type that either allow them to outdo a new competitor in town or win that competitor as a client.

## WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT

You wouldn't think this is an area where Renraku would need help, given their munitions roots, but a good company knows not to get complacent, so they're always looking for the next thing. And then they're checking to see if that thing works.

This area of work includes testing prototypes, stealing prototypes, and the super-fun area of "proof of concept." This happens before a full prototype is even made, when companies want to see if a certain weapon concept is worth putting a lot of time and effort into. Take the new work being done on L S emitters. Some parts of the idea are obvious—the utility of non-lethal weapons has long been high, and stun spells have long been part of any offensive spellcaster's repertoire. That would seem to be proof of concept enough—wouldn't a technological version of a Stunbolt spell be immediately appealing? The problem is, the Stunbolt is not really the concept. The concept is some technology that sends waves straight to the brain and eventually knocks it out. Before the manufacturers even build a prototype, they want to know if they might have success messing with people's brains. Would the right kind of pulse knock people out? What would it do at low doses? At high doses? Scientists and engineers are needed for a lot of that, but runners are needed for some steps. Namely, they sometimes need to take a janky-looking box, get it near people's brains, and see what happens to them. Does that sound like the kind of work for you? Izom and Terracotta are awaiting your call.

## HELP WANTED

### DATA WARS

I talked about this earlier—the battle of Big Data is in large part a battle of hackers, so if you're a





hacker, get in the game. Faking data, stealing data, guarding data, analyzing data, recovering lost data—it's all there. And if you think that sounds bland, let me tell you about a friend who was in the Resonance Realms recently, using a chainsaw and a hand cannon to fight off a multi-tentacled musk ox/octopus/naga thing while swarms of hornets the size of sparrows descended on a field of flowers with long, poisoned thorns. When the stakes are this high, the work is anything but normal.

This includes deep Matrix dives. Unsurprisingly, Renraku is wary of what's going on in the Foundation of the Matrix and any Matrix weirdness. They don't want any of it surprising them. They fund a decent amount of deep dives, some purely for data-collection purposes.

- These are fantastic! You don't even have to show a concrete result, just that you made it down to a certain level of the Foundation. Then you just share recordings from your run. Good money and not all that dangerous.
- Whippet
- First, I hope you're very careful with how much data you share with them. It's too easy for information about your devices to be entangled with your recordings, and corps can use that in various terrible ways. Second, I'm glad you had a good trip down, but never forget how dangerous the Foundation can be. Protosapients are down there. The Null Sect is still down there. Wild hosts are out there. There is a lot that can go wrong. Watch yourself.
- Netcat

## EXTRACTIONS

This is a pretty normal megacorporate function. Everyone tries to keep their people tied to them with unbreakable contracts, so that means everyone else tries to break them. Lately, though, Renraku has been putting their own twist on the game, which is that a high percentage of the time, whenever they want someone new to come in, they also want someone removed.

Renraku's extractions have been specifically targeted lately, meaning they don't just put their eyes on some up-and-coming talent and make a place for them. Instead, they find talent who will serve a particular need, and they know where they want them. Typically, that space is already occupied, which means that someone needs to go out when the new person comes in. Renraku would prefer that runners get rid of them smoothly and easily, with no lasting complaints.

Sadly, many runners decide the best way to take care of this is just to eliminate the old worker and bury them in a forgotten piece of ground. Of course, that often leaves behind confused and bereaved loved ones, so that isn't actually as seamless as the Renraku ideal. Once again, Renraku will reward your creativity. Do you connect the outgoing

worker to a new startup? Convince them their life was in danger if they stayed in their old position? Mess with their head so they can barely remember anything about their old life? Those are just some of the possibilities.

## WORKING FOR RENRAKU

First thing, remember that along with the aforementioned work, Renraku hires for the usual gamut—security jobs, infiltration, datasteals, long cons of rivals, occasional wetwork, whatever.

Second thing, remember that looking over everything Renraku is involved in are the Red Samurai. In fact, let's give them their own header.

## THE RED SAMURAI

I'm gonna say it—the Red Samurai are the most fabled corporate security force in the Sixth World. Lone Star, Knight Errant, Aztech Jaguars—those all cause us trouble, but no force inspires outright dread in runners like the Red Samurai. The only break we get is that an elite force cannot, by definition, be everywhere. But they are carefully deployed and capable of rapid response, so they can seem like they have a lot more personnel than they really do.

- Here's a mistake I've seen people make: They know the distinctive armor of the Red Samurai, and because of it they assume the Red Samurai are primarily a physical fighting force. They certainly are highly skilled at shooting the wings off of a fly, but never forget they have support in all areas of shadow combat—rigging, hacking, magic, you name it (except covert ops). They will fire anything at you they need to, with exceptional skill.
- Mika

We know they're a powerful obstacle, but why am I talking about them in a section on working for Renraku? Good question.

If you're going to be double-crossed by Renraku—and we know there's always a chance of that—then you have to consider the fact that the Red Samurai might deliver the final blow. If you think you can handle any wrinkles Mr. Johnson might throw at you, consider what might be involved if the Red Samurai are part of the wrinkle. If you're not ready to hold them off, or at least escape from any trap they might have set for you, be careful about taking that high-level Renraku job.

But it's not all scary. If you're working for Renraku, then the Red Samurai are technically on your side. And even if you never see one, you can use their aura. Are you extracting someone to bring to Renraku? Make them think the Red Samurai are backing you up and will take action if they don't move their hoop. Looking to get information out



of a reluctant source? Tell them the Red Samurai might be along soon to help with the interrogation.

Just make sure you don't over-promise. The Red Samurai aren't at your beck and call, and they don't like runners acting as if they are. Absolutely don't make them mad.

It's useful to know how they are organized. They operate in small squads, never more than five in one place. Their exact deployment in any sprawl is not clear, but typical estimates run from twenty-five to one hundred in major sprawls, with a few more in Chiba. They have been measured as both the most skilled and most loyal in Renraku's security ranks, and betrayal by any of them is inconceivable. Each squad of five has a leader, and there is a commander over all the squads in a single sprawl. Chiba has two sub-commanders to coordinate the many squads in that city, and some other sprawls have added that rank, too, including Seattle, Hong Kong, Neo-Tokyo, and possibly other cities.

While the commanders primarily interact with Renraku executives and squad leaders interact with their squads, these sub-commanders—known as shugo (not an entirely historically accurate use of the term, but Renraku care)—oversee situational deployments of the squads, which means they must have a detailed knowledge of events happening in the sprawl. If Red Samurai might be needed, the shugo is supposed to be the first to know. From our point of view, that makes them some of the most well-informed people in a city. If you can get some time with one, take advantage of it.

## HOW YOU'LL BE TREATED

Deep in their hearts, Renraku executives believe they carry on the bushido code, but doing so takes some leaps in the modern megacorporate environment. Telling themselves they are brave or honorable is one thing; believing they are honest and compassionate is more of a challenge. From a shadowrunner point of view, loyalty may be the most important value they carry. A Renraku Mr. Johnson will remember the good work you do for them, and they are always likely to call on runners they know first rather than chasing after the next new or cheap runner team. They'll also treat you well, with less of the haughtiness of, say, Aztechology Mr. Johnsons.

But if loyalty is one of their values, then their chief loyalty is to the corporation. If that requires selling you down the river, they will. One of the most important pieces of advice, then, is don't make them choose between you and their corp. Shaking down Mr. Johnson over some dirt you dug up can be fun, but Mr. Johnson won't see it that way. They'll act on loyalty and preserve the honor and righteousness of their corporation by being brave enough to eliminate you. That's four of the bushido virtues right there.

- ▶ Renraku Mr. Johnsons know their territory. They're usually from the area, rather than parachuted in like some S-K Johnsons, and that can give them a leg up on getting you started on the job. That also makes it easy for them to blend in and disappear if they need to. Their local networks are among the best of any Mr. Johnson you'll meet.
- ▶ Traveler Jones

## GAME INFORMATION

These qualities are often possessed by people within the Renraku corporation, showing their particular corporate culture. Runners who were former Renraku employees are also known to have these qualities.

## NETWORKED IN

You're known for your ability to find the connected people in your community—and introduce them to people who help them further their reach.

**Cost:** 4 Karma

**Game Effect:** When you gain a new contact whose Connection rating is 4 or less, immediately increase that rating by 1.

## HONORBOUND: CORPORATE BUSHIDO

This is a variant of the Honorbound: Bushido quality found on p. 77, SR6. Holders of this quality honor the basic values of righteousness, courage, compassion, respect, honesty, honor, loyalty, and self-control, but filter all those values through the needs of their parent corporation. That means their loyalty is defined as loyalty to the corp—if they have to betray other people to maintain that loyalty, so be it. Similarly, they are honest to people from their corp. but they will lie their hoops off to people outside the corp if it furthers corporate interest. This can make them difficult to deal with sometimes, but also predictable, as you always know where their ultimate loyalties lie.

**Bonus:** 10 Karma

**Game Effect:** You cannot spend or earn Edge for twenty-four hours after you break a tenet of your code. If the same tenet is broken multiple times or broken again during the twenty-four-hour period, each infraction adds another forty-eight hours onto the initial twenty-four. If a different tenet is broken, it's twenty-four hours for that one added to any current infractions, and the same rules apply for additional violations.

**Note:** A former Renraku employee may have permanently broken this code, thus starting them on the Boundaries of Honor quality path (p. 130, *Firing Squad*).





# SAEDER-KRUPP

POSTED BY: HEISENBERG

When you walk the streets of the Rhine-Ruhr-Megaplex with open eyes, you know who runs the show. Sure, there is a plethora of other corps active in this hell of twenty-five million people, but only one has all the strings in his hand—or rather claw. In day-to-day business you might not see those strings, but they are there and are in one way or another controlled by Saeder-Krupp. The bus or train you take to go to work? Indirectly owned by S-K. The car you are driving? Probably a BMW or VW. Matrix access? Ætherlink. The power that fuels this modern metropolis? Ruhr-Nuklear. The smoke that comes out of the various chimneys? One of the several Krupp Manufacturing steel-works. And your job itself? Either you work directly at S-K or for one of its known or unknown subsidiaries. And yes, this might be a description of any normal corporate enclave. But this is an entire megasprawl, and there are dozens if not hundreds

of places that looks exactly the same. S-K is probably the most ubiquitous AAA there is, even when they don't put their name or logo on everything they do or make (unlike, say, Shiawase). You deal with them every day, even if you don't notice.

## THE CORP AND THE DRAGON

### THE BEGINNING

At the beginning of Saeder-Krupp was the car company BMW. At the beginning of the new century, it had surpassed its local competitors Volkswagen and Daimler-Benz and had expanded into some new fields and massively increased its production capacity in the '80s and '90s (especially after German Reunification). But the real breakthrough came with the arrival of **Michel Beloit**, who took over BMW after the former majori-



## SAEDER-KRUPP

**Corporate Slogan:** "One Step ahead"

**Corporate Court Ranking (2081):** 2

**Corporate Status:** Private Corporation

**World Headquarters:** Neu-Essen,  
Allied German States

**President:** Lofwyr

**Major Shareholders:** Lofwyr (100%)

**First-Tier Subsidiaries:** Ætherlink (Matrix), Arcanovum (lore store), Arianespace (aerospace), Atlanta Insurance Company (finance), Awakened World Research (magical research), BMW (automotive), Commerzbank (finance), Deutsche Rück (finance), Diehl Defence (armaments), Elemental Service (magical service), Fatima Petrochemicals (petroleum), Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas (construction), Hochtief (construction), Krupp-Gruppe (heavy industry), Lunar Mining (mining), Messerschmitt-Kawasaki (aerospace/vehicles/heavy industry), Morgen-Tek GmbH (industrial electronics), Norsk Hydro (chemicals/heavy industry), Old World Airways (airline), Orbital Dynamix (aerospace/satellites), Ruhr-Nuklear (energy), S-K Aerospace (aerospace), S-K Bentley (automotive), S-K Puma (fashion), S-Kea (furniture), SaederLine (fashion), Schweizer Bankenverein (finance), Siemens-Nixdorf (electronics), Spellweavers Consortium (magical goods), The Arcanum (arcane service/magical goods), Thyssen Aqua Service (water supplier), Volkswagen (automotive)

**Second-Tier Subsidiaries:** Advanced Frontier Cybernetics (cyberware), Aeroflot Group (airline), American Broadcasting System (media), Amalgamated Technologies and Telecommunications (Matrix/electronics/drones), Angelic Entertainment (media), AN Meridian (resources), AV of Ukraine (armament/military vehicles), BAE Systems (aerospace), Barytech (heavy industry), Bremer Vulkan (shipyard), Bouygues (construction), Central Industrial (heavy industry/vehicles /construction), Centurion (security), Dafina Heavy Mining Group (mining), Deutsche Erdölgesellschaft (resources), Eastern Financial (finance), Eurocar Consortium (automotive), FIBI Group (finance), Fokker-Orlikov (aerospace), Fuchi Orbital (aerospace), Hermes Matrix Services (Matrix/electronics), Intel-XS (computech), Kinesys



Heavy Industries (heavy industry), Konglomerat Przemysłowo-Wydobywczy (heavy industry), Lothian-Vaea PLC (finance), Maser Industrial Electronics (robotics), Micronetics (biotechnology/genetics), Nippon Credit and Trust (finance), Onotari Arms (small arms), Phillips (electronics), Rosatom (energy), Rosneft (resources), Saurer-Rieter (vehicles/heavy industry), Siemens (cyberware/heavy industry/industrial electronics), Symington-CWR (transportation), Transnational Communications (media), Trans-Oceanic-Mining (mining), Triox (chemicals), Undine Processing (chemicals), Volvox Industrial Chemicals (chemicals), VTB-Sberbank (finance), Vulcan Systems (energy/technology), Willamette Compustat Corporation (Matrix/software), YPF (resources)

**Important Shares:** AG Chemie (5%), ESUS (10%), German Treuhand (15%), Lusiada (4%)

**Governing Involvements:** Economic Advisor of the German Federal Council (AGS), New European Economic Community, Algarve Corporate Enclave (Portugal), Austrian Corporate Council, Consejo Económico (Euskal Herria), Le Consortium pour le Développement du Québec, Neo-Atatürk (West Turkey), SOX Administrative Council, Panama Pan-Corporate Zone (indirectly), BERVAG (Berlin Administration Corporation), Europort Administrative Ruling Council, Manhattan Development Consortium, Istanbul City Council (indirectly), Perth Metropolitan Council, New Silk Road, Skyhook (indirectly), Trans-Afghan Highway

**Primary Business Language:** German, English, French, Russian

**Secondary Business Languages:** All

ty stockholder, the Quandt family, died in 2010 during the BMW-Keruba war by the hand of (presumably) Keruba-hired mercs. Under the new leadership, BMW would expand even further by acquiring (among others) Thyssen-Krupp, Saeder Munitions, Bouygues, and Fatima Petrochemicals. In 2012, BMW was one of the founding members of the Inter-Corporate Council (ICC). BMW would then, together with the Frankfurt Bank Association (FBA; founded 2003) and AG Chemie (AGC; founded 2011), start taking control over the declining Federal Republic of Germany and its neighboring countries. When the European Space Agency was privatized in 2025, BMW took most of it, becoming one of the few space-faring corporations at that time. In 2032, Michel died of mysterious

causes and his widow **Mina Graff-Beloit** took control of the megacorp. Her rule didn't last very long. Unbeknownst to her, **Lofwyr** gradually purchased shares via shell companies and proxies. In 2037, he finally gained a controlling interest in BMW. According to eyewitnesses (in a scene that has been recreated in multiple trid shows and movies), Lofwyr walked into a general shareholders' meeting and presented them with the fait accompli. He also revealed his true nature as a dragon, immediately ousted Graff-Beloit, and declared himself the new president and CEO.

Immediately after acquiring his new empire, he began to reshape it. Lofwyr wrote a several-thousand-pages-long strategy paper outlining a massive reorganization he planned to implement between



2038 and 2040. During this restructuring phase, he merged ThyssenKrupp with Saeder Munitions to form **Saeder-Krupp** and made BMW into a subsidiary of his new megacorp. During the '40s, the newly formed S-K would continue to excel at what BMW started—dominating the economic and political landscape in Europe, Russia, North Africa, and the Middle East. It monopolized key industries and became the biggest lender, which made areas, regions, or even whole countries highly dependent on them. But while in the corp was in its growing phase, it was useful to deal with smaller, independent entities, since they are easier to dominate. The whole thing becomes less easy to manage when both the parent company and subsidiaries grow.

This led to significant challenges, especially in Europe. After the dissolution of the old EU in 2029, there was a jungle of confusing national laws (especially national extraterritorial laws), taxation, governing entities, border controls, and non-governmental players. While the Business Recognition Accords of 2042 normalized some of this, they weren't signed by all European countries, leaving some of Lofwyr's problems unsolved. In the '20s he already tried a **European Restoration** project, by using one of his proxy's, the Austrian chancellor Matthias Helger. He proposed a unified European State with a federal government, similar to the old USA, deregulating the economy and equal membership for extraterritorial European corporations. While the idea gained some popularity at the time, it was eventually shelved due to the Euro Wars (2031-2036). And while Helger is mostly forgotten today, his idea gained new track in the '40s and '50s—mostly due to S-K lobbying. On June 21, 2062, Lofwyr attacked his long-term rival **Nachtmeister** in an air battle over the skies of Greater Frankfurt. Nachtmeister, head of the FBA, succumbed and was killed by Lofwyr. Later that year, the restoration movement eventually culminated in the Europort Intercompany Summit of November 2062. Here, the foundation of the **New European Economic Community** (NEEC) was decided, and the Constitutional Act was signed in April 24th, 2063. The festivities were short lived, when the Crashworm released by Winternight hit the world next year. But before the Matrix went dark on November 2, what became the **Second Crash**, Lofwyr “informed” the European governments that he would simply shut down every Matrix grid S-K operates. On the one hand, the governments were relieved that the Crash didn't hit them as hard as other parts of the world. On the other hand, now the governments knew that S-K had them at the whim.

## ZENITH AND FALL

After the Crash began, the subsequent period of reconstruction made it look as if S-K was going to continue as the unchallenged leader of the corporate

pack. Yet it also showed the first signs of their demise. S-K scored one of their last big coups in 2072, when they “announced” on September 14 that they actually owned every property in a four-kilometer radius around the Saeder-Krupp Main Arcology in Essen. Several corporations found out that day that they actually just leased real estate they thought they owned. Shortly after this revelation, they converted their land into a complete extraterritorial zone, encompassing the whole southwestern part of the city of Essen. This approximately ninety-kilometers-square enclave (which is about half the size of the Everett district of Seattle), called **Neu-Essen** (New Essen), became the new center of the S-K world. They tore down most of the old buildings and started to rebuild this new city-within-a-city after Lofwyr's wishes. Even today, they still build in some of the places, while more and more corporate citizens settle there.

- For those who have never been in the Ruhrplex: New Essen is the rose that grows on the pile of shit that is this industrial hellhole. The Rhine-Ruhr area is a group of interwoven cities in west Germany. It was the center of German industry, coal mining, and steel works since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Since then the cities slowly have grown together, so that now there are living about twenty-five million people in an area of about 6,728 square kilometers. Essen is right at the center of this sprawl.
- Traveler Jones

Then, the **Dragon Civil War** happened and the things started to go south. In general, S-K is a corporation that put its money in various long-term projects. This always made them come back on top in the long run, but it harmed them if they needed to be agile in the short term. When Lofwyr fought and killed his brother **Alamais**, he took huge sums of money out of those long-term projects to pay for his private war. Afterward, he used additional funds to mitigate the damage the Civil War caused in Europe. In the meantime, his managers had to do all the micromanagement Lofwyr normally would. On June 26, 2074, there was a bomb attack on Ætherlink's HQ in Hamburg, killing **Werner Julius Davids** and his wife. 2074 was also the year when Germany elected **Anikka Beloit** to be the next chancellor. The daughter of Michel and Mina Beloit immediately cut ties with all S-K lobbyists who influenced the former administration. Overstrained and with more and more of its money gone, the corp hoped for a break to breathe, but then CFD hit. Overnight, all of S-K's nano-fabrication had to be shut down, citizens became head cases, and customers panicked. This resulted in a massive loss of productivity and general output of their products. This was the moment when MCT overtook S-K's pole position as the biggest megacorp.



## BACK ON TRACK?

Since the late '70s, S-K has been trying to get back on top. In an unprecedented move, they invited several monads to join them, despite Lofwyr's distrust of AIs. With their help, S-K hopes to get an edge on research and bring their nanofabrication back online. They also set up a task force with their Portfolio Development and Market Forces divisions called "**Fall Magenta.**" It was led by **Antônio Ortega**, a former NeoNET employee, who was tasked with analyzing potential acquisition targets in case of an NeoNET collapse (which later occurred). Another addition was **Isabelle Corbeau**, a former Shiawase employee who switched sides and was tasked with overseeing and advancing food production in Europe. In addition, they also managed to snatch away **Canadian Western Railway** from MCT, who was trying to take control of every major railway company in North America. This gave them a leverage over the movement of goods, as CWR's rail network hubs were right in the middle of the east and west coasts. In 2079, the aforementioned fall of NeoNET occurred and S-K executed its plan. While Transys and Erika stepped came away relatively unscarred, Ortega concentrated his attacks on Novatech. They had to pay a very long bill, so they sold several assets. Aside from some electronics factories here and there, the biggest chunks Novatech unknowingly sold to S-K fronts were **Central Industrial** and **Fuchi Orbital**. Both are former Fuchi companies—CI is based in Detroit and was one of Villiers major industrial asset when he formed Novatech, while Fuchi Orbital was in charge of the corporate space program. Now both are part of S-K, posing as independent companies.

Observers predicted a rapid recovery of S-K in the next years, but then something unforeseen happened—something Lofwyr didn't even expect. **Monika Stüeler-Waffenschmidt**, Nachtmeister's protégé and successor as CEO of the FBA, managed to get her hands on an ancient relic—the Imperial Sword (also known as the Mauritius Sword). This relic seemed to have an dragon-repelling effect, which could be seen in a public event on September 25, 2080, when MSW and Lofwyr met. Lofwyr couldn't stand being near the sword for too long, so he eventually had to depart, leaving MSW as victor for a day.

## THE FALL OF CORD

While S-K was still as ubiquitous as before, its public image was significantly damaged. Normally S-K could take those hits, but the problem was not just that S-K looked weak, but *Lofwyr* looked weak. And that is something the boss couldn't stand. So he activated a plan, which seemed to be long in the making: he crushed **Cord Mutual Insurance**.





CMI is ... well, *was* one of the biggest insurance corporations in North America. They were famous for their various exclusive insurance deals, like covering all employees of the big emerging megacorp or a national government. It bought several of the other big insurance corporations and would eventually—as a statement of their power—build their five-hundred-story Cord Mutual Insurance skyscraper. In the '40s and early '50s, they were essentially the biggest insurance and reinsurance company in the world, which made them an AA. Their fall from grace began in the mid '50s, with the rise of Wuxing and the loss of two major subsidiaries (the Allianz and Munich Re) to the FBA. Nonetheless, they would stay very influential in the Americas with contracts signed by newly formed Novatech. Cord's major subsidiaries were the healthcare insurer BluSix, the reinsurance giant Gen Re-RGA, as well as Mutual Life Insurance Company, New Eagle Insurance, and West Coast Mutual. Its cash flow was generated by its customers, long-term investments, and the stock market.

After Boston, Cord lost a huge amount of contracts due to NeoNET's downfall. So they needed a new clients—which suddenly popped up out of nowhere. Several of these were traps, set up by S-K Prime in advance. Then Detroit and the Blackouts happened. While Cord had to pay enormous sums, they were spared from the worst, because luckily Ares did not call for their insurance payouts. Instead, they made a hole bunch of new deals when they moved from UCAS to CAS, which balanced out Cord's losses to some degree. Cord also started to scavenge the aftermath of the crisis for “new customers”, as other smaller insurances became insolvent. Their eyes landed on **New Toronto Re (NTR)**, which was another honeypot set up by S-K Prime. You see, NTR was essentially a bad bank. Due to financial tricks and manipulation, S-K Prime overvalued the company and their contracts. The assets either didn't exist, or were actually IOUs, outstanding payments, or outright fraudulent. In short: it was a big money grave. Sadly, Cord didn't understand what they had bought until after the acquisition. With all the gaming pieces in place, Lofwyr let his trap snap.

Normally, an AA like Cord could survive something like NTR. But while all this was going on, Cord was flooded with lawsuits over “fraudulent contracts and business practices” related to the contracts they made after Boston. Many of the projects turned out to be nonexistent, and the people involved simply vanished. With no one else to go to, investors sued Cord to get at least part of their money back. Then a series a sabotage operations and “accidents” struck targets insured by CMT, forcing massive pay-outs. Next, the **Confederate Investment Corporation (CIC)** froze all of Cord's investments after hearing the news of potential financial difficulties via “business insiders.” After CMT wasn't able to prove that they could still pay

their responsibilities (because CIC was given manipulated data), Cord management became desperate and lost it. They ordered a hostile takeover of CIC, so they could free their investment themselves. CIC tuned out to be co-owned by Evo, Shiawase and Citigroup, who started a counter-shadow war against CMT and froze all of their accounts within their financial divisions. S-K stepped in and offered Cord essentially parts of the money they used to buy NTR back to them in exchange for their five-hundred-story tower. These additional funds fueled the shadow war. After both factions entered a war of attrition, S-K made the final blow.

In January 2082, all of the major networks and screamsheets published the story of the imminent insolvency of Cord Mutual. Customers canceled their contracts and demanded pay-outs, while other finance companies froze and held back Cord's remaining accounts and investments. CMT's stock-market value hit rock bottom within days. Evo integrated BluSix into CrashCart, while Shiawase and Citigroup also ripped out their parts from Cord. On February 8, Lofwyr in his human form entered CMT's last shareholder meeting—resembling his own move forty-five years earlier. He announced that S-K had acquired the majority share of what remained of Cord. His first act as the new CEO was to fire the old management, declare the dissolution of the corporation, and take some of the remaining contracts and personnel to a new company named Atlanta Insurance Company.

- > And what was the point of all of this? What S-K got out of this is insignificant, compared to the amount of nuyen they spent. Also, AIC is just a fraction of what Cord once was.
- > Traveler Jones
- > This wasn't the point. Lofwyr wanted to show that he could essentially crush any corporation at any time. Cord wasn't your small mom-and-pop shop around the corner, but rather a full-fledged AA. By showing the world that he was in fact responsible for their demise (without publicly acknowledging it, of course), he made it clear that he is still a force to be reckoned with. So it wasn't about the money; it was about sending a message.
- > Frosty
- > Also, many other corps are now wondering if S-K has such death-switch plans for them, too.
- > Espion

## CROSS-SECTION OF A MEGACORP

### S-K MACROCOSM

When you look at the general structure of S-K you will—with enough information—see that it's



organized into different tiers. These tiers usually indicate the amount of direct or indirect control S-K has over an individual subsidiary. As you can see, this time the infobox at the beginning of the upload the subsidiaries are sorted into the two main tiers.

The first tier of the macrocosm consists of a number of core groups and subsidiaries that often bear the Saeder-Krupp name. First-tier corps are the most valuable to Lofwyr (mostly not in the monetary sense) and so have the highest protection to fend off hostile takeover attempts. Usually S-K owns close to one hundred percent voting stock—if the organizations are listed on the stock market at all. They often own extraterritorial rights via S-K as its parent corporation and often diversify into regional and business-unit divisions, subsidiaries, and local branches. The first tier also includes some corps like Diehl, Deutsche Rück, or the Swiss Banking Corporation, which try to avoid a clear S-K affiliation in public (for example, by not having a big dragon head on their logos). With a little effort, though, it's easy to see behind this charade. Employees and citizens of first-tier corps enjoy access to all of S-K's benefits and incentives, which grant them a very comfortable living.

The second tier consists of corporations where S-K often has only indirect control. They usually own between fifty and sixty percent of the stock (when they are publicly traded). In most cases, it's not S-K itself, but rather a number of S-K subsidiaries owning smaller chunks. In other cases, S-K owns close to one hundred percent, but it's split between various shell companies, wealthy individuals, investment and pension funds, banks, or insurance companies—all with no direct link to S-K. Privately owned business in this tier are often founded by (alleged) former S-K managers, or one of Lofwyr's secret henchmen. Second-tier corporations don't show any form of affiliation with S-K, because in most cases only the upper management actually know they belong to them, and it's usually a close guarded secret. Typically, these second-tier firms receive financial injections and directives from Saeder-Krupp, an intermediary corp, or S-K Prime.

Some people, myself included, also add two additional tiers. The third tier is where even the management might not even know they actually belong to S-K and they just fulfill the demands of their shareholders, which are in fact fronts for the mega. The fourth tier consists of companies that neither belong directly nor indirectly to Saeder-Krupp. But they depend so much on the AAA, because they are their main customer or supplier, or are so much in debt by one of S-K's banks, that it's often in their self interest to align with them.

The reason behind this structure is to protect (especially) the first-tier corporations from enemies and corporate predators. It helped them during the

Dragon Civil War and CFD. Yet there are constant shifts in the hierarchy. For show, S-K fronts shift their shares and ownership to other S-K fronts to simulate a “healthy economy,” while actually just pushing numbers around. Despite the hollow nature of this activity, it's possible for a lower-tier corp to ascend to higher tiers.

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

A general thing that applies to many megacorps and their subsidiaries, but especially to Saeder-Krupp, is that most of their subsidiary corporations are diversified conglomerates as well. There are always corporations that only provide one type of service or produce a range of products within a specific field, like commlinks. But conglomerates are active in various fields, sometimes within a certain business field, but sometimes as diverse as the megacorp itself. Often these corporations also own real estate for their employees, dabble in the local public transportation, or run shops, so their citizens only buy “certified” food and convenience products. Then they have joint ventures, think tanks, and other ways to engage employees and try to use their money or whatever non-work energy they may have. When looking at the whole organization, remember that it's often not that easy to pin down a subsidiary to one specific area of expertise.

## HEAVY INDUSTRY

When people use the term “Saeder-Krupp Heavy Industries,” they actually refer to the **Krupp Group**, or *Krupp-Gruppe*. It is the heart and core of Saeder-Krupp and is the base of much of its corporate culture. I mean, the *Villa Hügel*, the mansion of the old Krupp family, is literally standing inside(!) the S-K Main Arcology in Neu-Essen. But even on its own, the Group would be an impressive AA-corp. It is organized into several divisions, including **Krupp Chemicals** (Industrial and Consumer Chemicals), **Krupp Manufacturing** (heavy industry), **Krupp Munitions** (armament; essentially what Saeder Munitions became), **Krupp Robotics** (industrial robots) and **Krupp Specialist Engineering** (heavy equipment/mining). These divisions are all further diversified and consist of several divisions and subsidiaries on their own. So, for example, Krupp Manufacturing has the following divisions: *Krupp Materials* (steel production, metals), *Krupp Automotive* (industrial and utility vehicles), *Krupp Marine Systems* (submarines, aircraft carriers), *Krupp Technologies* (prefabricated parts, elevators, hydraulic equipment) and *Krupp Nanofabrication*, though the last one's production was put on hold due to CFD (but they are working to bring it back). The Krupp Group and its divisions can be found on every continent.



But S-K owns several other heavy industry conglomerates, like the Strasbourg-based **Barytech**, which is active in basically every French-speaking country. Another one is **Konglomerat Przemysłowo-Wydobywczy** (*Industrial and Mining Conglomerate* in English), the biggest producer of coal, steel and chemicals in Poland, which already expanded into Eastern Germany, Slovakia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Detroit-based **Central Industrial** is the newest heavy-industry company under the S-K umbrella. Like the Krupp Group, it is organized in divisions like CI Engineering (industrial machinery), CI Construction (was famous for its nanite-built houses), CI Armaments (military vehicles and equipment), CI Autonomous Systems (drones), CI Shipyards (former Norfolk Naval Shipyard), and CI Aerospace (civil and military planes).

## CONSTRUCTION

S-K owns some of the world's top construction corps. They make everything from highways to apartment complexes to full arcologies. In addition to the actual construction work, they also provide project planning, materials, and machinery, as well as maintenance, operations, and facility management. S-K supports a vast network of construction and construction material companies around the world. Several of them are local or regional companies, while others belong to the big three: **Hochtief**, **Bouygues**, and **Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas**. While all of them have their HQ in Europe (Germany, France and Spain, respectively), they are all active around the world. Beyond Europe, Hochtief is also active in North America, Middle East and the ANZAC, FCC is in Latin America and India, while Bouygues can be found in former French Colonies, Southeast Asia, as well as North America (mainly Republic of Quebec).

- And like others, all of them have their claws in some other business areas. Hochtief's Australian subsidiary ACIM Group is also invested in mining, Bouygues also owns some French media companies, and FCC also dabbles in chemicals, logistics and infrastructure.
- Espion

## MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING

One of the first things you may think of when considering S-K and manufactured goods is **BMW**. The BMW AG in Munich was the heart of the Beloit empire, and while it is overshadowed by the Krupp Group, under other circumstances it would still be a formidable AA-corporation. Its divisions **BMW Automobile** and **BMW Security & Defence** produce the various vehicles, engines and drones it is known for (which includes MINI and Rolls-Royce). Aside from that, BMW Software (part of

the Automobile division) is responsible for all on-board 'ware, from its Matrix interface to the autopilot. But, as mentioned earlier, even BMW is a diversified conglomerate, active in various areas. **BMW Mobility** deals in everything from car sharing, leasing and rental service, as well as service stations for changing the batteries of your electric car. Here you also find BMW Airlines (commercial airline) and BMW AirExpress (commuter service). **BMW Services** includes things like BMW Corporate Consulting, design companies, as well as the BMW Bank. Last but not least we have **BMW Lifestyle**, which deals with things like BMW branded merchandise, fashion, luxury accessories, official tuning parts, BMW's motor sport branch, as well as its entertainment branch (yes, they make mediocre BMW-branded Matrix games and trids).

Besides BMW, S-K owns several other vehicle manufacturers (Messerschmitt-Kawasaki, Volkswagen [including Audi], Eurocar, S-K Bentley), who are still responsible for a notable share of S-K's revenue. They are often similarly diversified, although often not to the extent of BMW. In addition to commercial vehicles, S-K also makes industrial vehicles (M-K, Krupp Automotive, Saurer-Rieter)

- Bentley was acquired recently. It was part of General Motors for some decades prior, but came under attack shortly after CFD hit Ares. Vauxhall Motors, GM's other UK asset, took also several hits, but Ares has managed to protect it—for now.
- Stone
- While Eurocar Consortium is labeled a S-K subsidiary, the two other consortium members besides BMW, Ferrari (Merenati) and Porsche (Porsche-Dornier), aren't. With just a few exceptions, EC's cars are also just rebranded versions from these three. The consortium was originally founded in Manhattan back in the Beloit days, so they could easier sell their cars in North America and Asia.
- Rigger X

Asides from vehicles, S-K also makes various heavy machinery (e.g., engines, turbines, manufacturing equipment), prefabricated parts, electric devices (e.g., circuits, controller chips), industrial robots, computers and many, many other things. This is not as glorious as the new BMW sports car or the next cyberdeck, but all this stuff keeps factories, modern buildings, power plants, and thus our modern world, running.

A huge part of S-K's manufacturing branch is armament. They make everything: land-based weapons ranging from small arms to heavy artillery, as well as aerospace, naval, and orbital-defense systems and even nuclear weapons. One of S-K's biggest customers is S-K itself, so not all of these products see the open market. This is especially true for Diehl's anti-dragon weapons. Beside



their own products, S-K also produce others under license, e.g., Heckler&Koch, which has licensed the production of its firearms to the **Krupp Arms** division of **Krupp Munitions**. In addition, S-K co-operates in various projects with other corps, like the French aerospace company **Aesa** or **Polska Grupa Zbrojeniowa** (Polish Armaments Group).

## CHEMICALS

Saeder-Krupp has a constant need for basic and specialized chemicals and chemical products. So S-K orders them from companies like AG Chemie (still one of the world's biggest chemical corps), Zeta-ImpChem, DowDuPont, or sometimes even from Aztech, Ares or MCT. S-K does have their own chemical companies, but their output is not enough to satisfy all of their demands. This has more to do with the composition rather the size of S-K's chemical assets. Saeder-Krupp is one of the few last big crude oil producers, and they also refine said oil. As the need for fuel was reduced in the last decades (due to fuel efficiency, hybrid and electric engines, and regenerative energy sources), more crude oil than before is used by the petrochemical industry, which turns it into polymers such as plastics or ethanol. But as demands for those products are higher than ever, S-K is also heavily invested in biofuels, bioplastics, and coal liquefaction. While S-K also needs these products, they often ship these processed petrochemical products to other chem-corps, who use them to make other chemical products and compounds.

S-K's remaining chemical capacity is consolidated in subsidiaries like **Krupp Chemicals**, **Norsk Hydro**, **Triox**, **Undine Processing**, and **Volvox Industrial Chemicals**. With some notable exceptions, they all produce and process chemicals for industrial applications rather than consumer products. This includes chemicals for the pharmaceutical, textile, and automotive industries; metallo-plastics and composites (including smart materials) for the cybertechnology, construction, and electronics industries; specialty coatings and other performance products such as car paints; polymers such as leather chemicals, varnishes, pigments, and adhesives; and specialized chemicals used for mining and fracking, or metal and material processing. A significantly smaller part of S-K's chemical capacities, nonetheless an important and heavily guarded one, is employed for the production and processing of the materials and chemicals used for running fusion and fission power plants, like heavy water, uranium, and super-heavy hydrogen (tritium).

## RESOURCES

Mining is another integral part of Saeder-Krupp. To provide raw materials and fuel for its manufacturing and heavy industry operations,

the megacorp has long focused on mining, extracting, and refining biotic and abiotic resources (such as oil and minerals). As traditional mining and drilling areas either became depleted or inaccessible (like Central Africa, Yakut, or Amazonia), S-K expanded to more exotic locations, like asteroid, lunar, and underwater mining.

- S-K wasn't quite happy when MCT's Exo Mining Systems showed up to mine the moon as well.
- Cosmo

In addition, the mega became heavily involved in recycling, biofuels, resource efficiency, and less resource-intensive methods (like using hydrogen instead of coal for steelmaking). In addition to mundane materials, S-K is also heavily invested in mining magical resources, including magical ores and para fauna.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

S-K remains strong in public infrastructure. Right behind Shiawase Atomics and Gaeatronics, it's the third biggest energy provider worldwide, but number one in Europe. Other hot spots are the Middle East, North Africa, Australia, and to some extent North and South America. They are extracting energy from gas, oil, and coal, as some countries still uses these methods, but the megacorp's energy subsidiaries also operate nuclear fission and fusion reactors, geothermal and hydroelectric plants, and land-based and orbiting solar collectors.

- For some inscrutable reason, Vulcan Systems bought several smaller defunct electronics and drone companies in Australia and New Zealand after Crash 2.0, and so added drone manufacture to their functions. They even have some kind of fringe development division, doing all kinds of weird stuff like jetpacks and so on.
- /dev/grrl

## FINANCE

When you exclude Z-OG, the top five financial corporations in the world are Wuxing, S-K, FBA, Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal (HKB), and Pacific Rim Bank & Financial Services (part of Universal Omnitech). S-K dropped behind Wuxing mainly due to the Dragon Civil War and CFD, but is now slowly starting to catch up again. Lately there was a big attack on Evo's financial assets, which a) denied them to entry the top five again (at least for a while), and b) strengthened S-K's financial power in the east and far east. S-K's financial assets regularly deny any affiliation with the megacorp, so they "look" more independent. This has mostly to do with the fact that they give out loans quite freely and so became debtors for a plethora of other corps and countries. You can



find S-K banks and financial corps at the big stock exchange hotspots—Zürich, Frankfurt, London, Hong Kong, Moscow, Neo-Tokyo, New York—and numerous smaller ones.

## LOGISTICS

For shipping products, S-K normally uses service providers like Mærsk, ESUS, or Wuxing. Prior to its acquisition, they also heavily relied on Lusiada, which has now been scaled back significantly. Nonetheless for some high priority shipments, S-K owns a small cargo ship fleet. S-K is more interested in bringing their workers to their factory, so they often invest or acquire local public transport companies in S-K strongholds. In addition, S-K owns several Airlines like **Old Word Airlines**, **BMW Airlines** and **Aeroflot**. Their railway transport branch in North America recently got an immense boost, after S-K managed to snatch away Canadian Western Railway before MCT could grab it. It was afterwards merged with another company to form **Symington-CWR**. And while this opens up several opportunities, S-K's most ambitious project lies in Asia. The **New Silk Road** is a transcontinental railway and highways network build in the '40s, owned and operated by a consortium lead by S-K. The network connects Qingdao at the Yellow Sea with Saint Petersburg at the Baltic Sea. Its central crossroads is Tashkent, where the Trans-Caspian branch meets the Trans-Afghan branch. This Trans-Afghan Highway (solely owned and operated by S-K) starts at Gwadar in Pakistan and goes north through the Khyber Pass and Kabul until it links with the New Silk Road in Turkistan.

## MAGIC

S-K led in various fields of thaumaturgical development. **Spellweavers Consortium** and **Awakened World Research** create and license spell formulae, metamagical techniques, and enchanting processes, while **Elemental Service** provides things like geomancy, magical training, security, and so on. Last but not least, **The Arcanum** produces magical goods and also offers some magical service, while **Arcanovum** is S-K's dedicated lore store. While seldom the in the spotlight of public interest, they have been quite busy lately. All these returned soldiers and this Dis-thing has called **Prof. Dr. Makram Zharan** into action. He and his team has interrogated several of the Returned and have increased their efforts in researching alcheras. While magical planes are not my area of expertise, I wouldn't be surprised if Lofwyr already knew about Dis. Over the last weeks and months, Dr. Zharan was often visiting Neu-Essen to meet the boss, but I don't know if he briefed Lofwyr or Lofwyr briefed him.

## CONSUMER GOODS AND SERVICES

S-K's consumer goods branch is quite small compared to nearly every other AAA. This has to do with the fact that most of S-K's companies are active in the B2B (business-to-business) sector, instead of B2C (business-to-consumer). When S-K owns a store, a shopping mall, or something similar, it's often by accident, not intent. And even their actual goods often don't generate the hype and excitement a new Renraku cyberdeck does (except when it's a new car by BMW, perhaps). Corporations like **Siemens**, **ATT**, or **Phillips** make all sorts of home appliances like dishwashers, autocooks, household drones, and electric shavers. They and **Siemens-Nixdorf** also put out various electronics and home entertainment devices like trideos, commlinks, cyberdecks, gaming consoles, and Matrix terminals

- ▶ I know, it's hard to distinguish Siemens from Siemens-Nixdorf. The latter was spun off from the former. While they share the Siemens name, they have nothing else in common (except being owned by S-K). Rule of thumb: If it's big, like heavy machinery or a train, it's from Siemens; when it's a cyberdeck, commlink, terminal, or some sort of software, it's usually from Siemens-Nixdorf. This rule does not apply to RCCs, which are made by Siemens as part of their mobility division.
- ▶ Glitch

There is also a small line of cyber-, bio- and geneware (offered by **Advanced Frontier Cybernetics**, **Siemens**, and **Micronetics**). They are often more functional than aesthetic, often made for extreme working conditions or tasks, including various industrial cyberware, which is often directly implanted in S-K factory workers. The same applies to S-K's fashion brands; form follows function (a nicer way to say that they generally look quite bland), and they often make working clothes.

In 2071 S-K acquired the GeMiTo-based police and military company **Centurion**—which should not be confused with Seattle-based Centurion Security, owned by Jonathan Blake. The company formed after the Euro Wars from Italian police and military personnel and was eventually bought by Esprit Industries. When Aztech made their hostile takeover of Esprit via Dassault, S-K managed to cut out Centurion and made it pose as an independent A-level-corp. They offer a full and an “enhanced” service, where they only provide the special units, like CSI or Awakened investigative teams, while the local government provides the basic police. On the other side, they offer a military policing service for unstable areas like the Balkans or Africa, like the UN peacekeepers once did.

## MEDIA

S-K's corporate media arm is quite small. Its two biggest assets are **Angelic Entertainment** and



**American Broadcasting System (ABS).** The former was originally set up as a shell company to go around the ban California put on S-K business within its borders. Now the LA-based corporation operates within PCC, California, and Aztlan, investing in everything from shopping centers, hotels, and simsense theaters to agencies. Angelic's actual shows and movies, made by their studios Quark Studios or Boromakers (acquired '65), are often quite mediocre. ABS is a total different beast. Roughly ninety percent of North America's media is controlled by the big networks, so S-K has a big foot in the doorstep, as Manhattan-based ABS is the fourth or fifth biggest of them (depending on who you ask). ABS Studios co-produce the Gobi Wars together with CBC. The various owned and affiliated trideo and radio stations spread the news from ABS News division. It isn't just blatant propaganda; in fact, S-K let ABS operate (mostly) on their own. Especially its flagship channel, WABS-TV from Manhattan, is feared by several members of the MDC for its investigative journalism. Still, criticism of S-K or Lofwyr himself isn't as harsh here as on the other networks. In addition to its normal programming, ABS also owns **World Sports Broadcasting** (the former ESPN), which is the biggest source for live sports broadcasts in North America. The last big asset is **Transnational Communications**, a former Chicago-based studio that moved to Toronto after the bug incident. TNC was the former owner of ABS, but now only holds twenty-eight percent of S-K's sixty percent total. Now, they are "reduced" to owning some "independent" local stations (including those affiliated with ABS, like Seattle-based KOMA) and doing preliminary work for other networks, channels and Matrix news outlets.

- TNC tried to expand its influence into the Midwest, where they met strong opposition by the small but influential Simmons Group from Oklahoma. Simmons has bought dozens of small conservative channels across the CAS, PCC, Sioux, and UCAS. These super-localized channels are often one of the only news sources these people have, and Simmons prefers to keep it that way.
- Sunshine

Aside from these big fishes, S-K's remaining media assets around the globe are small. There are some news services, and trid, music, and simsense studios here and there, often customizing their products for S-K corporate citizens.

## SPACE

With the recent acquisition of Fuchi Orbital, S-K gained a massive boost to its space assets. The megacorp now operates three primary and two secondary launch sites. **Arianespace** operates the former major ESA launch sites at Baikonur in Turke-

stan and Kourou in French Guiana. **Fuchi Orbital** operates a mobile launch platform in the Caribbean Sea. These three can lift massive amount of tonnage into space. The two secondary sites are Overberg Test Range (OTR), or Overberg Toetsbaan (OTB), operated by Ariane, and Woomera Range Complex (WRC), operated by Fuchi. Both are used to test civil and military rocket systems, as well as to launch satellites into a polar or sun-synchronous orbit.

- FO also had a launch site at Formosa Bay, Kenya, but that was snatched away by Trans-Orbital, before S-K made its move.
- Orbital DK

Space operations are handled by Paris-based **Orbital Dynamix**, which trains S-K's astronauts (at Orbital Dynamix Astronaut Centre in Cologne), acts as mission control, and operates S-K's satellite network (including the former ESA Galileo global navigation satellite system) and space stations—all officially from Orbital Dynamix Space Operations Centre in Darmstadt. But it is widely known, that ODSOC's Matrix output is quite low for what they have to supposedly manage. With the completion of the two Skyhook space elevators, OD set up offices near both of them, helping handling much of the busy work. OD's biggest space station is the **Himmelsschmiede** ("Sky Forge"), which is S-K's manufacturing and materials research orbital station. With the help of some monads and Morgen-Tek, OD recently started the construction of the new **Wayland Station** (named after a figure from the Edda). This is where S-K is restarting its nanofabrication research, which was previously housed on Himmelsschmiede but was shut down due to CFD. Lastly, OD is also involved in space mining. Several missions involving bringing asteroids into earth orbit so they could be harvested for raw materials—which became easier due to Skyhook. On the dark side of the moon, you will find the **Sigmund Jähn Lunar Station** (named after the first German in space, but often just nicknamed "Far Side") operated by **Lunar Mining** and OD.

Rockets, satellites, and other space components are all made by **Messerschmitt-Kawasaki** (acquired from the now-defunct IFMU during the Corp War of '59), **Saeder-Krupp Aerospace** (a merger of ThyssenKrupp Aerospace and BMW Aerospace), and **BAE Systems** (acquired by a hostile takeover from UK's Integrated Weapon System PLC in the mid-'40s).

## COGS IN A GLOBAL MACHINE

While there are various top-down organized corporations, this is turned to eleven in S-K. Here more than anywhere else, organizations rather



than single persons form the decisions and directions the corporation takes. Managers, directors, and other leadership figures mostly just have their job to fulfill orders that are given to them by superiors, who often received their orders by their superiors, who often got theirs from Lofwyr directly. Only certain hand-picked—or rather, claw-picked—individuals have some form of freedom of decision and margin to maneuver in their position.

## GLOBAL MANAGEMENT

### LOFWYR

While outsiders often call him “the dragon,” or various other names, as an S-Kian you would rather call him “President Lofwyr,” or “*Herr Generaldirektor*,” which is something you (have to) learn fast. I faced the boss several times, and his presence (as a dragon, as well as his metahuman form) leaves a lasting, intimidating impression—and not only because you’ll likely soil yourself out of fear, despite all professionalism. As a human, his golden eyes pierce right through you; as a dragon, his glorious, golden scalation and his sheer size renders you speechless—even among the great dragons there are few that can measure up to the Gold Master (which, according to a dossier I read, seems to be the translation of his draconic name). In any form, he is surrounded by a permanent aura of power. Apart from his razor-sharp mind and ability to follow very complex technical explanations, the tone of his dealings with his subordinates is set by the hierarchy that characterizes his corporation. His instructions are cold, precise, and issued in a commanding tone that tolerates no dissent and could spontaneously freeze water. His conduct contradicts the image of a benevolent all-father corporate leaders attempt to convey. He is a strong believer in survival of the fittest, a philosophy that extends to his relationship with his adversaries and enemies. If provoked, Lofwyr can be extremely unforgiving and vindictive. In some cases, certain organizations, or people (such as Aithne Oakforest), makes him so furious, his office needs to be renovated. These are exceptions; most of the time, his anger is ice-cold, and only a few people can make him lose his self-control.

Normally, Lofwyr spends the majority of his time in his “office” (which actually is more of a chamber loaded with SOTA electronic equipment) where he processes the incredible amounts of data provided to him by S-K Prime and the new Oversight Office.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Because of Lofwyr’s ... presence, people often overlook the fact that there are actually other board members and executives at the top of S-K.

The most noticeable and rememberable is certainly **Roel Vandenhoeck**. This slick and arrogant elf is the head of public relations and S-K’s main spokesperson. **Cheyenne Galais** is a Quebecois dwarf and head of global human resources. She is also responsible for the infamous *Innenrevision*. The Turkish-German human **Prof. Mesut Sahin** was professor for corporate finance in Greater Frankfurt before he joined S-K. Now he is head of finance. The corporation’s chief legal officer is a dryad named **Evelyn Westlake**, who originates from Portland.

### CORPORATE OVERSIGHT OFFICE

The Oversight Office is relatively new. It was installed in the aftermath of the Dragon Civil War and the drop from the top spot of the Corporate Court ranking. Previously the information flow was generally up to the top (Lofwyr), while orders went top down, with very little room for interpretation or maneuvering by the managers in between. Only certain individuals who gained the trust of the boss also earned the right to make bigger decisions on their own. Normally everything was micromanaged by Lofwyr himself, as he did not want to leave something to chance. Due to his personal involvement in the Civil War, this level of control during that time was not possible anymore. When CFD finally dealt the killing blow to S-K’s nanofabrication and S-K was downranked, the reforms that were passed afterward led to the OO.

Broadly speaking, the OO is a virtual ubiquitous conference meeting in combination with a huge database and a highly advanced analytical know-bot. It’s not an AI (Lofwyr hates AIs), and it’s not a copy of Horizon’s Consensus, because the OO don’t tell anyone what to do. But it is a tool for the rare cases, when Lofwyr and his highly analytical dragon brain is not available. The database is fed with the same information that normally would only be given to Lofwyr and could generate projections and long-term outcomes. Then it produces opinions based on the input of its members, so they can find a democratic position on certain things. Democracy in a megacorp and that megacorp is Saeder-Krupp, you ask in disbelief? Correct, but of course there is a catch. Access to the Oversight Office is limited to the regional managers, a representative from S-K Prime and the *Innenrevision*, the other members of the global management, and key figures like Hyvönen, Montejac and Lofwyr himself.

## SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE

### SAEDER-KRUPP KONZERNGARDE

The *Konzerngarde*, or Corporate Guard, is the branch responsible for physical protection of all



S-K property, as well as providing personal security for key individuals. While the local managers are responsible for security, this system proved to be insufficient, so Lofwyr created the new position Chief Security Officer, which is held by **Karen Montejac**. The Guard usually is equipped with S-K-made equipment, armor, and weapons (although this might include some license-built HK weapons). Their training is excellent and even includes portions of criminalistics and forensics. As usual, S-K often hires local personnel for its security forces, but these are often relegated to unimportant facilities, while the personnel hired from its own corporate citizens are sent to the key locations. The CG usually only guard first-tier facilities and personnel, while second-tier corporations have to hire their own security. These guards are usually not on pair with the CG, but sometimes they hire from an obscure, tiny local company, which is a CG front in disguise.

## SAEDER-KRUPP KONZERNWEHR

S-K's *Konzernwehr*, or Corporate Defense Force, is the military arm of the corp. The leadership is nicknamed "**Junta**," because it consists of former military officers, military advisers and experts from S-K's defense divisions, as well as foreign militaries. For a long time, it was regarded as the second-best corporate military, right after the Ares Corporate Military Forces with regard to training and equipment. But now, after ACMF's ... let's say, mixed performance in Detroit, the bookies aren't that certain anymore. The CDF almost exclusively drafts its soldiers from S-K corporate citizens. Permanent deployments are garrisons in Neu-Essen, Berlin, or Curacao. Other deployments are protection forces for the Trans-Afghan Highway or its EuroForce contingent on the Balkans. In addition, you might have seen them in action as part of the NEMAQZ, or one of the several Desert Wars incarnations, as well as the Rad Wars within the SOX. In addition to conventional weapons, they also have nuclear and special "anti-dragon" weapons in their arsenal.

- These are advanced versions of the weapon the German Bundeswehr used in the early 2010s to shoot down Feuerschwinge, after she wrecked the countryside. All of them are developed by Diehl Defence.
- KAM

## AGEMA

The *Agema* (in ancient Macedonia, the name given to the king's bodyguard) is recruited from the CDF and CG and forms the elite commando troops of S-K. Where Renraku has their Red Samurai and AGC has their TETs (*Taktische Einsatzteams*; Tactical Operation Teams), the closest ap-

proximation on S-K's side is the Agema. They are equipped with the best weapons and usually wear the special Myrmidon heavy milspec armor made by Krupp Protection (part of Krupp Munitions). Typically, they are only found in Neu-Essen and the other regional division HQs as an additional heavy garrison unit and bodyguards. But like the Red Samurai, they are also used as commandos, operating as black-ops units. They only take orders from Lofwyr himself, Montejac, the regional managers, or the heads of S-K Prime.

## INNENREVISION

The *Innenrevision* (Internal Affairs Office) could be described as S-K's FBI. It has been led for over fifteen years by the Brussels-born **Médard Vogen**. Their day-to-day duty is to keep an eye over S-K's workforce, investigate misconduct, embezzlement, theft, fraud, drug abuse, sexual assault, as well as racist or sexist behavior. In rare cases, they also deal with identity theft and undercover agents (who are usually runners). To do that, Innenrevision employs sociologists, psychologists, and criminologists to create profiles for every employee (with additional help by S-K Prime, corporate security, and human resources) from the first and second tier. These profiles are used to find the perfect treatment for every citizen, if necessary. Furthermore, they run a system called *Devianz*, which analyzes deviation from a citizen's baseline data. In the past, Innenrevision helped S-K during the Emergence to spot, monitor, and later integrate technomancers into the corporation, as well as during the tempo crisis to find drug addicts and dealers. Later the system was used to find CFD cases, which brought the Innenrevision the nickname "the Inquisition." Now they keep a close eye on every monad working for S-K, as the corp still has some prejudice towards AIs.

## SAEDER-KRUPP PRIME

While S-K has the Agema as a commando force, they usually take a more subtle route for intelligence operations. For that, S-K maintain its own intelligence service, which is the infamous S-K Prime. It can be described as the CIA and NSA combined. It is the nerve center of all Saeder-Krupp intercorporate operations and intelligence, and it also spies on its own citizens and subsidiaries. The arsenal and staff (cybertacticians, tech wizards, data analysts, troubleshooters, augmented field agents, and so on), as well as its HUMINT and SIGINT capabilities, can put nations and other corporations to shame. Prime field agents can be found in various places, fulfilling various roles, including a few who are deep undercover. You have managers in other corporations, public officials, politicians, high-society fashionistas, members of organized crime, street worker,



and even shadowrunners. Either one of these gather information or fulfill certain missions.

While S-K Prime has various physical offices around the world, it was always a virtual and decentralized intelligence service. They are organized into independent cells that are interlinked and report to “stations” (hardwired networks in secured facilities and safe houses) with access to the S-K Prime VPNs. There are bigger stations, or “hubs” (like the S-K Prime “North America HQ” in Atlanta, or the S-K Prime building in Manhattan), that connect the intelligence service with S-K lobbyists, lawyers, and bureaucrats, giving them privileged access to S-K Prime’s accumulated data. Other “hubs” are pure data-processing and analyzing facilities (like I used to work in). Despite this, Prime exists mostly within the Matrix. This means that it has no real physical headquarters—not even the offices in Neu-Essen are its HQ. All data S-K Prime gathers is sent directly to Lofwyr and the Corporate Oversight Office, while regional managers and other key personnel (like Hyvönnen or Vandenhoeck) also have access to at least some of the data.

S-K Prime has a dual leadership consisting of the former Corporate Court judge **Jean-Claude Priault** and the savvy technophile **Dmitri Baichik**. While Priault deals with the more intercorporate and political missions, Baichik is in charge of the hidden networks, spysats, virtual resources, intelligence, and Matrix surveillance operations.

## TOP TALENTS

As I said before, there are just a very few individuals who stand out within S-K. I’d like to mention a few of them here, as they will be worth watching in the days, weeks, and months to come.

### VANADIS HYVÖNNEN

Hyvönnen is an elf (a grey-blue skinned Night One) from Finland. She is the “governor” of Neu-Essen and, besides Lofwyr, the most important person in S-K Europe. She has been rigorously clawing her way up the corporate ladder and is defending her position grimly. She took over her current post as chief negotiator for corporate-political affairs and earthbound assistant to Jean-Claude Priault nearly twenty years ago when she was transferred back to earth thanks to her merits as the director of the orbital factory Himmelsschmiede. Hyvönnen’s main task is to make sure that everything at home works according to Lofwyr’s wishes. Accordingly, she has been vested with extensive authority in the corporation’s macrocosm. As S-K’s direct chief negotiator in all political affairs, she’s in constant contact both the state and the federal government as well as the Federal Council of the AGS, although contact with the federal authorities is mainly maintained by S-K’s

NEEC-minister Gustav Moeller. She has a reputation of being an extremely uptight and rigid negotiator who has been taught by one of the best (namely Priault) and forged to extreme relentlessness and mercilessness. Though mostly concerned with the AGS and the Ruhrplex, she maintains a direct connection to Brackhaus and the other Mr. Johnsons in the European shadows and beyond, if necessary.

### ANTÓNIO ORTEGA

Ortega is the most important person within the Portfolio Development and Market Forces division. Before joining S-K, he was originally working for Fuchi in the pre-Novatech years). He jumped ship after Crash 2.0 brought a violent civil war to Argentina. He became S-K’s South America division head but was reassigned to his new post in the late ’70s. There, he was assigned to a special task force that eventually managed to acquire former NeoNET assets. He was also involved in denying MCT Canadian Western Railway. Later, he was involved in the takedown of Cord. Because of his success, he has been tasked to find new targets to be incorporated into the macrocosm. So he is a quintessential figure in bringing back S-K to the top spot, which is why he is one of the best-protected persons within S-K.

- This means he has a full unit of Agema soldiers protecting him.
- Thorn

### PROF. DR. MAKRAM ZHARAN

Prof. Makram Zharan is the chief research officer of the Spellweaver Consortium and serves as chief adviser on all major arcane projects within the megacorp. He started his career by studying Renewed Hermeticism at the University of Cairo before attending several minor arcane colleges. Afterward, he traveled to several magical sites (including New Orleans, Varanasi, and Urga) and founded his own magical research group back in Cairo. In the ’60s, he met Lofwyr in Prague, and he joined S-K afterward. He has surrounded himself with a new research group at Awakened World Research. They consist of a cadre of loyal researchers, some of them from the original research group he formed back in Cairo. His current main tasks are all the new alcheras, the returned soldiers and this Dis-thing. This makes him travel around the world and get into contact with many talents outside of S-K.

### HANS BRACKHAUS

Based on old company records, BMW’s subsidiary Thyssen-Krupp employed a man named Hans Brackhaus back in the ’20s. He was known as a takeover expert and scored several coups for the



Beloits, and even later for his new masters, after Lofwyr took over BMW and created S-K. The tracks of this genuine Brackhaus were lost in the mid-'40s. Nonetheless, the name has popped up very frequently since then, and it is believed that Brackhaus became an alias used by Lofwyr himself and other people within the corporation to hire shadowrunners. Even today, a Hans Brackhaus can be seen around the world hiring teams to work for S-K. Whether that's Lofwyr, S-K-Prime agents, or just some S-K employee who got to know the story is unclear. The fact is, if a Brackhaus wants to hire you, you will be offered a highly lucrative but also highly dangerous job.

- This means, that not every S-K Johnson is a Brackhaus. Even some that introduce themselves as one, may just be posing as one.
- Cosmo

## DRACONIC BULLETIN BOARD: RUNNING FOR S-K

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Saeder-Krupp at its core is a company that believes in long-term benefits. This is reflected in their relationship toward shadowrunners. When an S-K Johnson hires you and your group, they will usually start with some introductory runs to see if you have the skills that are required. If so, you will get hired again for the real job, followed by another one. The last one usually has nothing to do with the other two, but is more a test of reliability. If you manage to accomplish this one as well, there is a fair chance you will land on this Mr. Johnson's speed dial. He may also recommend you to other S-K Johnsons as well.

- Why I want to do that? S-K Johnsons only pay on corp scrip.
- Anity
- Yeah, heard that one too.
- KorpKilla
- I don't know where this myth originates from, but this is not true at all. It also makes no sense. There are no public S-K stores, where you can go to spend your S-K money on S-K products. When you want a BMW, go to the next car dealership. Need a Hermes commlink? Go to the next electronics store. S-K pays in nuyen or the dominant local currency. There are S-K stores (like S-K Family Store), but they are for corporate citizens only, can only be found within S-K corporate enclaves, and usually sell stuff like organic food. I mean, there are worse ways to spend your money, but I guess this myth was made up by people, who





had some bad experience with single S-K Johnsons, or even S-K Johnson posers.

► Heisenberg

S-K has been known to employ successful runner teams for a long time, as long as they benefit from them. They will pay above-average rates, and you may be granted other bonuses and perhaps become a corporate citizen if you wish (in my opinion, there are worse retirement provisions). A normal S-K run may be a run against their own facilities. S-K has the constant need to check their own security measures, which sometimes can only be tested under live conditions. These runs are often the aforementioned standard introductory runs.

This philosophy came top-down from Lofwyr's own believe of survival of the fittest. Only those runners who manage to deal with S-K's strict security measures, are fit enough for the real jobs—

everyone else isn't worth it. This also means that when you run against S-K and accomplish it successfully, you may be hired by S-K in return, as you have already proven yourself. Yet, this only applies when you did not accidentally cross some plans set up by Lofwyr himself. In this case, he will track you down and make you pay.

## EUROPE: POLITICAL BATTLEFIELD

Europe has become less of an economic and more of a political battleground for S-K. The European market is saturated with participants, and due to the fact it is so densely packed, it is hard for outsiders to make an entrance. The major corps have all pegged out their market share, and while they certainly all hunger for more, the usual gains are often marginal, even when these gains were made through runs. So the big players have shifted their eye toward the political power play. The NEEC is the biggest market and consists of basically every Western and Middle European nation, as well as the biggest fifteen Eurocorps.

S-K was and is the biggest player here, but they were never unchallenged and—especially in recent years—there is quite an opposition forming against them. Certain states like Germany, France, United Netherlands, and the Scandinavian Union formed some kind of rebel faction against the Dragon, while the corps are also forming new alliances. First there are the **Eurocrats** (Erika, FBA, Merenati, HKB, Regulus, Trikon, Z-IC), who really like the NEEC but don't like S-K's leading role. Then you have the former **"Southern Alliance"** (Esprit-Dassault and Spinrad Global) who also have no real love for Lofwyr (to say the least). The remaining five corporations (AG Chemie, ESUS, Mærsk, Proteus, Transys) are either neutral, or have divided loyalties. Although it seems that there is some kind of alliance forming between S-K, AGC, ESUS, and Mærsk. The lobbyists of these groups fight over political influence in Brussels, as well as each European capital. Last year, they managed to expand the NEEC influence, as in the wake of the UCAS Blackout-Crisis Hungary, the Baltic states and Iceland (former Thule Protectorate) joined. But this wasn't all due to S-K's effort—the credit goes to Erika. The Finland-based AA kicked it off after Iceland broke free from Trans-Polar-Aleut and even proposed, that Iceland and Estonia became part of the Scandinavian Union, which grants both countries the benefit of ScanU's "modified BRA-treaty."

With the NEEC influence spreading further, their sphere of influence started to overlap with the spheres of **Philike Hetairia** (PH, or Friendship Association), as well as the old **Commonwealth of Independent States** (CIS). These two political and economic unions are also targets due to S-K's

### NEEC MEMBERS 2082

#### Nations

Allied German States  
Austria  
Czech Republic  
Euskal Herria  
France  
Hungary  
Italian Confederation  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Poland  
Portugal  
Scandinavian Union (including Estonia and Iceland)  
Spain  
United Kingdom  
United Netherlands

#### Pending Membership

Slovakia  
Tír na nÓg

#### Corporations

AG Chemie  
Esprit-Dassault (Aztechnology)  
ESUS  
Erika  
Frankfurt Bank Association  
Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal  
Mærsk Incorporated Assets  
Merenati  
Proteus  
Regulus Joint Industries  
Saeder-Krupp  
Spinrad Global  
Transys Neuronet  
Trikon  
Zeta-ImpChem



need for dominance. And while S-K is already big in Russia and to some extent in the other CIS states (Belarus, Transcaucasian Federation, Turkestan, and Mongolia), the PH has mostly resisted S-K's advances.

## **NORTH AMERICAN STANDOFF**

With the recent changes in the NA corporate scene, there are plenty of new opportunities for runners. Working for S-K means attacking Ares, because due to their relocation from Detroit to Atlanta, there are several weak spots that S-K is willing to exploit. It is also more than just a coincidence that S-K moved its North American regional division from Charlotte to Atlanta into their new, recently acquired and newly renamed Ludmilla Reanka Tower. Regional manager **Klaus Basoski** and his subordinates **Stephan Aachen** (S-K Northeast, Manhattan) and **Luke Ishikawa** (S-K Northwest, Portland) check for every opportunity to gain additional footholds. This also includes their general war against MCT, who took S-K's top spot on the corporate ladder some years ago. A new front was opened when S-K managed to snatch away Canadian Western Railway from MCT. With their subsidiary Symington Corporation, they already owned the former Canadian company VIA Rail, as well as the domestic flight airline UCAS National Airways. After the merger to **Symington-CWR** their network stretches from Halifax and Manhattan to Vancouver and Port Rupert. It also connects with Detroit and Chicago and then going southward to Mobile and New Orleans. This greatly reduces the time for transporting raw resources from the arctic to UCAS proper, which come in at Churchill harbor.

- ▶ This is a big joint venture project with Mærsk, which runs Churchill harbor and is working on setting up a terminal in Port Rupert harbor as well. That would allow them to compete with Wuxing in the Pacific and transport and refine resources mined from local corp Polaris Natural Resources.
- ▶ Stampeder

Speaking of Detroit, S-K bought several of the now-vacant Ares factory buildings in Greater Detroit and the Toronto area. Some are likely to be refitted for BMW and Volkswagen car production, while others are being torn down to make room for new steelworks, chemical plants, oil refineries and synthetic refineries used for coal liquification and biofuels. Some of the processed resources come from Polaris Natural Resources (a local company), while the rest is shipped down from the Arctic. This new resource hub and S-K's cooperate with Mærsk and Polaris, serving as a direct attack on MCT and its subsidiary Mitsuhamma-Benguet Mining and their Canadian and Arctic mining opera-

tions—MCT's raw materials freighters are banned from Churchill harbor.

## **THE BATTLE FOR OIL**

While new deposits of minerals and ores can be found on asteroids and the moon, and can be re-used via recycling, oil isn't and usually can't. Fuel is finite, and while there are new methods of powering vehicles (hydrogen, biofuels, electric), peak oil has come and gone. Despite that, the demand for oil-based products is still increasing, and so are the prices. So S-K's major oil-producers (Fatima, Deutsche Erdölgesellschaft, AN Meridian and Rosneft) have expanded their extraction operations to areas that were seen as not being lucrative a few decades ago. This includes things like oil sands, oil shale, underwater drilling, micro oil fields as well as arctic and antarctic extractions.

But S-K is far from alone in this field. With the Arabian oil fields depleting, **Spinrad Global's** oil divisions have set their eyes further north. Supported by SpinGlobal, the Arabian Caliphate set up military bases in Iraq and Syria in 2078-79, which resulted in the whole region seeing that as an aggressive action. Israel felt especially threatened, while Europe feared a renewed Jihad. While this might be a little far fetched, it offered S-K an opportunity to intervene. Reza Mohammad Bakr, a former brigadier general of the Iraqi army and regional manager of S-K Middle East, immediately stood by Israel, after German Chancellor Beloit denounced any aggressive actions against Israel, as its "very right to exist" is a reason of state for the AGS. And while the Caliphate backed out of further expansionist plans, SG and Fatima Petrochemicals are now fighting over the remaining oil fields in Iraq and Syria.

While SG and S-K clash in multiple places, they aren't the only thorn in Lofwyr's claw. When **United Oil Industries** was downgraded during the Megacorp Audit, the corp became quite anxious they might share the fate of Chevron, which was acquired by Athabaskan Oil. So, the Galloway family clan, who owned a controlling share in the company, as well as several other oil companies, started a big battle to consolidate the American oil business, as well as their holdings. They eventually absorbed Amalgamated Oil, National Oil, and last year they finally integrated Exxoco Petrochem. They have now set their eyes on New Orleans-based Gulfstar, as well as extending their reach into the Atlantic and North Sea. They also plan to expand their Arctic and Africa operations—which is a declaration of war against S-K.

- ▶ UniOil hopes that their new assets will finally be enough when the Corporate Court reviews their re-filed reapplication for AA-status that they made in January this year.
- ▶ Mr. Bonds



- Well, I can name two judges who probably will vote “no.”
- Espion
- Besides SG and UniOil, there are other companies with a hunger for the last remaining oil. Keep an eye out for AGC, AthOil, British Petroleum (Z-IC), Delek Dragon, Evo, OMV, Pemex (Aztechnology), Maersk (Maersk Oil & Gas), Shell (Regulus), Shiawase Petrochemical, and Total (Esprit-Dassault/Aztechnology).
- Cosmo

## GAME INFORMATION

These qualities are often possessed by people within the Saeder-Krupp, showing their particular corporate culture. Runners who were former or current S-K employees/citizens are also known to have these qualities. In other cases, runners may have adopted parts of S-K’s culture, without them ever being part of it. In other cases, they may have done something for the corp, earning them some respect.

### S-K SWAGGER

While employees and citizens of many corporations, especially extraterritorial ones, develop some form of classism, this attitude is very common within Saeder-Krupp. Classism is kind of like racism, but instead of hating people based upon their heritage, culture, skin color, ethnicity, or which type of meta you are, classists despise people based on their social class and status. Usually, this means the rich hate the poor, but also corporate citizens hate non-corporate citizens and SINless people. Because of its predominance within S-K, the term “S-K Swagger” was coined for it, making it sound more friendly than it really is.

### Bonus: 5 Karma

**Game Effect:** While having this quality and interacting with current or former S-K corporate citizens (or other people having this quality), you gain an Edge on all Social Tests with these people. But when interacting with people either having a low or lower lifestyle, or who don’t have a SIN, you are unable to gain or use Edge while they are present (unless you’re attacking them).

**Note:** As is the case with the more general Prejudiced quality (p. 78, SR6), gamemasters and players should use this quality carefully. Everyone in the group should be on board with it being used, and it should never be used as a veiled excuse to state real-world prejudices or verbally attack, either directly or indirectly, other players.

## SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

At some point in your life, you either made several runs for S-K that were successful, or you made at least one run against S-K, which had a lasting effect on the corp. In case of the latter, you either managed to execute the run with exceptional artistry, or you escaped S-K’s attempts to hunt you down. In any case, you left an impression on the people in charge. They may not like you (especially if you killed someone), but they nonetheless respect you on a professional level.

**Cost:** 2 Karma (local), 4 Karma (regional), 6 Karma (global)

**Game Effect:** You gain 1 point of situational Edge on social tests with Saeder-Krupp employees when you are in the geography selected for this quality. Local geographies would be a single sprawl and outlying areas; regional geographies would be a small nation or significant portion of a larger nation (Switzerland, New England); global areas are, well, everywhere.





# SHIAWASE

## POSTED BY: HAZE

When it comes to Shiawase, the keyword is *power*. Through Shiawase Atomics they generate it; through Shiawase Biotech, they embody it; and through vast sums of nuyen, they control it. When I took the job to put this thing together, I was like everybody else and just sort of shrugged when their name came up. “Just another Japanacorp,” I said. “Seen one, seen ‘em all.” Not quite true. When you’ve seen one, you’ve seen Shiawase; they define the megacorp and, to be honest, we judge every other mega by how far they branch off of the standards that Shiawase sets. That kind of soft power is easy to overlook, and I have to tell you that by the time I got this thing assembled, I not only bought in to the concept, but I bought in to the company. Okay, it’s one share, but even a single share of Shiawase is more valuable than you’d think.

Japanese? Check. Dark suits and briefcases? Check. Corporate samurai? Check. Big black

cars? Check. Stoic executives who blow off steam with karaoke and katana practice? Check and check.

Shiawase embodies the very idea of megacorporation, and they don’t back away from using that idea to keep people in line. Renraku wants to be a country’s friend. Evo wants you to actualize your potential. Aztechnology hides everything it does. Shiawase marches a legion of salarymen into town, puts their name on the tallest office building they can find, and insists that you sign all documents in Japanese. They are in control, you are a cog, and that’s just the way the world works.

- Hey, wasn’t Baka Dabora supposed to do this one?
- Slamm-O!
- Yes, but once again, his version was a fawning love letter that didn’t let us see the ugly. So I farmed it out.
- Glitch



## SHIAWASE CORPORATION

**Corporate Court Rating (2081):** 5

**Corporate Slogan:** "Advancing Life"

**Corporate Status:** AAA, public corporation

**World Headquarters:** Osaka, Japan

**President/CEO:** Tadashi Shiawase

**Chairman of the Board:** Reiko Shiawase-Shimada

**Major Shareholders:** Tadashi Shiawase, Empress Hitomi, Reiko Shiawase-Shimada, Shiawase Shin-to Advisory Board

### MAJOR DIVISIONS AND ASSOCIATED SUBSIDIARIES/BRANDS

**Shiawase Biofoods:** Sensei Snacks [MySoy fast foods, Nippon Noodles] (consumer goods/foodstuffs), Seven Seas Ocean Farming (foodstuff), Opulent Sushi (foodstuff), Yamato Restaurants (consumer goods/foodstuffs)

**Shiawasee Biotech:** Shiawasse Bidrones (drones), Shiawase Cybernetics [Shiawase-Vector] (cybernetics), Shiawase Laboratories [Vasocon] (biotech/genetech), Shiawase Nanotech (nanotech/medical)

**Shiawase Energy:** Shiawase Amaterasu Solar (energy), Shiawase Atomics (energy), Shiawase Fuzion (energy)

**Shiawase Envirotech:** Arbortech [Terres Du Monde], Kuroyama Geosource [Kuroyama Minerals, MegaMinee] (mining/resource processing), SECCA Co-op Commercial [Agricola] (agribusiness), Shiawase City Services (utilities, service provider)

**Shiawase Financial:** Shiawase House Bank (banking)

**Shiawase Logistics:** Resha Corporation [UCASTrak] (Rail Transport), Shiawase Cargolifting (Shipping), Shiawase City Transports (urban transport), Shiawase Sea-Ways (shipping)

**Shiawase Manufacturing:** Shiawase Advanced Robotics [Abyssal Industries, Genuine Gynoids] (drones/industrial robotics), Shiawase Electronics [Kawaii Electronics, Shiawase Sim Stations] (Matrix/consumer electronics), Shiawase Fashion [Jean-Paul, LolliPOPI, Vashon Industries, Wellington Bros] (fashion/consumer products), Shiawase Industries [Hephaestus Technologies] (heavy industry/vehicles), Shiawase Motors [Hongqisama, Protoreva, Purosu, Toyota (Automotives), Shiawase Toys [Hello Puppy, MegaToys, Mycross Diecast] (consumer products)

**Shiawase Mediatech:** Shiawase & Rubicon Advertisement (publicity), Shiawase Simsense Studios (media/sim), Shiawase Vector Matrix Services [SXTsoft] (Matrix/software)

**Shiawase Market Information & Forcasting Department:** Shiawase Legal Services (legal services)

**Shiawase Omnicare:** Reblossom Centers (healthcare), Shiawase Diagnostics [euroGenetix, myGene, Senpaitek] (genetics/pharmaceuticals), Shiawase Health [Da Fang Rejuvenation Clinics, Shiawase Medical Response & Rescue] (medical service provider), Shiawase Welfare [Shady Pines Retirement Homes, Tengoku Enclave] (healthcare services)

**Shiawase Security Services:** Desert Storm Security (security services), Imperial Tech Services (miltech), Kami Consulting (military consultancy), Shiawase Armaments/Nemesis Arms (armaments)



SHIAWASE  
シアワセ

- > Yeah, but why did **Haze** get it? He's an ass.
- > Pistons
- > I take offense at those allegations. I promise you that my report was as accurate as it was detailed.
- > Baka Dabora
- > Pipe down, peanut gallery. Let's see what Haze turned in.
- > Bull

## HISTORY

The first Megacorporation. What more needs to be said?

- > Ahem.
- > Bull

Fine. Shiawase was a basic Japanese *Zaibatsu* (a family-owned company that was involved in either a horizontal or, in this case vertical, monopoly) that dates back to the nineteenth century but doesn't get important for another century. It made waves in the power-generation business, the first corporation to have its own nuclear plant, and having invested in alternative energy before peak oil and the shattering of the fossil fuel industry's dominance. They then turned that income stream into the food industry, focused on Japanese staples of rice and seafood, having an iron grip on those industries as the Food Riots started at the turn of the century.

1999, A hungry mob in New York mistook a Seretech truck full of nuclear waste as one that held food, leading to a running battle as the truck crew tried to hold off a screaming mob from cracking open nuclear waste and irradiating a massive swath of the city. Despite the deaths and property damage they caused in escaping, the US Supreme Court ruled that the corporation was in the right,



due to how much damage would have been done had they not resisted, the first legal case that built the existence of today's megacorp.

More important was the second case, *Nuclear Regulatory Commission vs. Shiawase Corporation*, where Shiawase, feeling gouged by the local power company, asked for permission to build a private nuclear plant. When it was refused, they took it all the way to the Supreme Court, who ruled in their favor. The final case that sealed the deal was a second NRC suit, after eco-terrorists from TerraFirst! attempted to break into Shiawase's nuclear plant, only to be cut to ribbons by Shiawase security forces. The NRC had wanted to prove that it was obviously too dangerous for a private corporation to have such facilities, only to instead show that they were quite capable of defending themselves, and in fact, would have been more effective without harmful regulations imposed on them by the US government that allowed the terrorists to get far closer than they would have if things were left to unregulated Shiawase forces.

With that final Shiawase Decision, the modern megacorp was born and they will never, ever, let you forget it.

- There were obviously dozens of other cases involved in the background, forcing the issue wider, defining extraterritoriality more specifically, and getting most other nations of the world to agree to similar deregulation, but that's getting lost in the weeds. They weren't all wins, such as the finding that a corp's hazardous waste that escaped its property was still its responsibility, leading to actual enforcement of environmental regulations by nations as one of the few tools they had to push back at corporate power. But these days, the whole package is the Business Rights Accords. When a nation signs on to them, they have to recognize extraterritoriality and cede some authority to the Corporate Court. The UCAS briefly refused these last year, but then everything went to hell. President Colloton's belly crawl to sign them again, only with worse terms, scared several other nations to sign on before they, too, got a worse deal.

- Kay St. Irregular

CEO Emori Shiawase spent the next twenty years riding high, seemingly able to do no wrong as he consolidated power, welcomed new corporations to the extraterritorial family, and accepted smaller companies into the greater Shiawase family, gaining their fealty in return for legal protections from being a part of a megacorp. When he passed in 2019, the world lost a great man of unmatched vision. Those who followed him atop the pyramid were ... smaller. The next decade saw stagnation, as the poor leaders simply coasted rather than seizing power. Petty squabbles of unworthy family members resulted in a rapid turnover of executives, one worthless cousin being replaced by an idiot nephew or corrupt aunt. Somehow, through

the fog of failure, came Sadoto Shiawase, taking power as chairman of the board after the first Crash, proving the firm hand the family needed. His leadership was untouchable until 2049, where a botched assassination attempt by his sister Soko killed their younger brother Ryoi, creating a situation where the two of them, and Ryoi's spirit by way of albino medium Jerri Howard, jointly ran the corporation

- ... What?!

- Quicksilver

- Long story. **Excellent** con!

- Lyran

Fast forward a bit to the second Crash and the death of Fuchi, when one-third of that corporation, and Korin Yamana, join Shiawase, including a literal marriage between the then-eighty-year-old Yamana and college student Mitsuko Shiawase, Sadato's son Tadashi getting his own daughter Hitomi married to the boy Emperor of Japan, a vote of no-confidence spearheaded by Soko against her brother, Howard's suicide (or "suicide"), Ryoi's daughter Reiko finally inheriting her shares over Howard's dead body, then a sudden surprise as both Soko and Sadato were forced out when Yamana, Reiko, and Hitomi wound up with more voting power, setting up Korin Yamana as CEO and Hitomi as chairman of the board. It's still unknown exactly how this happened, but it's presumed that it was orchestrated by Yamana, using his young wife as a go-between with the other Shiawases. Some think it was Mitsuko's idea. Regardless, she, Reiko, and Empress Hitomi became known as the Three Orchids and were at the forefront of changes in the corporation's morality, even while Korin and his Yamana Doctrine reformed the corporation's business practices.

This era lasted a decade, with Korin, celebrating his new CEO status with an absolute massive leónization treatment, a rude surprise to his wife who was certain he'd soon die and leave her his fortune. He forced out many of the older members of the Shiawase Corporation, senior executives given honorary positions and pay in thanks for decades of service; to Yamana's eyes, they were a drain on the bottom line, being paid but contributing nothing, and his general drive for new things caused quite the shake-up in the stodgy old corp. On top of this list was the creation of a Shinto Advisory Board, which promoted a better caretaking of environmental procedures, and the entanglements of Empress Hitomi as chair of a megacorp. This made her responsible for whatever happened there, good or ill, and caused no end of problems.

It all came to a head with the birth of Hitomi's second child. It was a very difficult pregnancy in the first place, and labor was triggered by an





intense shareholder meeting, with Korin Yamana leaving the corporation (and selling his shares in the process, largely to aging Soko). Soko refused to pass those to her own daughter and instead granted them to “rightful heir” Tadashi Shiawase as the last “true blood” alive. Subsequently, Hitomi’s left the corporation (officially), Soko died peacefully, and Tadashi Shiawase, now in his late 60s, became CEO. Mitsuko Shiawase-Yamana found herself frozen out as Korin Yamana’s wife, now without shares, while Hitomi was constrained into being the Empress and mother to two children rather than a brilliant corporate player, leaving only Reiko Shiawase-Shimada as the last Orchid standing, now serving as board chair. The corporation has never been more unified than now.

- Well, that was a wild ride.
- Clockwork
- The family’s the best soap opera ever made. This barely scratches the surface, and when you start looking at the cousins, aunts, uncles, adoptees, it just gets better. Shiawase’s greatest weakness has always been the very family it draws strength from.
- Pistons

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

### SHIAWASE ATOMICS

The single most important of the major arms of Shiawase has, traditionally, been Shiawase Atomics and its spinoff, Shiawase Envirotech. By creating their own nuclear power plant, they kicked off the creation of megacorps and extraterritoriality, so this arm has high levels of prestige, even if the profits aren’t as robust as they once were. Before the arrival of fusion power, Shiawase invested heavily in assorted sustainable sources, most notably solar and geothermal, and brought forth the first solar-gathering, microwave-transmitting energy satellite (which was deployed by Ares), allowing them to beam power down to remote areas without infrastructure. The development of the Universal Shiawase Port, or USP, which is now standard on all electric-powered vehicles, allowed for standardization of charging methodologies, creating a way to fill the demand for cars not powered by fossil fuels. Fusion power, of course, is the greatest breakthrough in the modern era, but as we all know, it’s neither perfect nor infallible; fusion plants have to be taken offline every so often for upkeep due to particulate matter that gets in the water intakes, and the reaction itself becomes too



hard to control every 144 hours or so, necessitating a shutdown and restart. These events are regularly scheduled, so areas know when power will be shut down at least a day in advance.

- › If you ever wondered why we have blackouts when fusion power is “cheap and unlimited,” this is why. Wealthy areas will have two or three running, switching between them when one shuts down, while the rest of us have to suck it up and deal with regular blackouts. You get what you pay for ...
- › Butch

Shiawase Envirotech, in contrast, was a bit of a joke, allowing them to gather up waste material and “dispose” of it largely by burial or burn-off, with little to no care about environmental after-effects. This changed when it was ruled that runoff was a liability, so the division took a decade of internal reform and restructuring to become an actual environmentally friendly operation. Traditionally it’s lost money, but the positive PR, and access to the remnants of other corporations’ debris, made it worth keeping afloat. In the wake of the Comet, the Ghost Decade, and the Shinto Advisory Board, the prestige for this division skyrocketed and it added significant magical resources in terms of research and combatting corrupted spirits. Shinto priests bravely combatting spirits driven mad by the environmental damage done by rival corporations makes for astoundingly good press.

- › Shiawase Envirotech’s been busy in Europe, trying to deal with the assorted collapses there, and Lofwyr hasn’t taken too kindly to them in his backyard. Having noble priests and clean tech on display, in contrast to belching smokestacks and chemical plants, hurts his reputation. Never wise to poke a dragon with a short stick.
- › Sunshine
- › But such **wonderful** fun!
- › Laughing Man

## SHIAWASE BIOTECH

This will break Plan 9’s heart, but the masters of biotech aren’t found in Evo, but in Shiawase.

- › Prove it.
- › Plan 9

For over thirty years, they’ve been the bleeding edge of biotech advances, focused less on the larger and more obvious mods, like fur, tails, and so on, and more on perfecting what’s already there, with perfect-vision eyeballs, robust livers, and, of course, a “perfect” human genome. They own the Type O bioware rights, so *any* bioware made with that genetic sample sends Shiawase a slice of the

price, and they continue to push the limits of genetic expression every day. There’s a lot more going on in there than just giving someone lobster claws instead of hands.

- › Just how many breakthroughs has Shiawase had? The exact number is unknown, but they have several storage facilities that are loaded with gene-tweaks and biomods that have never been released to the public. They pull them out once every three or four years, see if any address current needs and, if not, put ‘em back into cold storage for later. Each of those facilities contains more discoveries than a year’s worth of research at any other corp.
- › Icarus

Shiawase Biofoods was a spinoff from Biotech focused, obviously, on food. Shiawase has long been the leader in aquatic farming and in the Japanese staple of rice, but their work on krill revolutionized the food industry almost as much as Renraku’s work on soy. This arm became much more profitable after the famine in Aztechnolgy a few years back and continues to bring in rock-solid, reliable profits year after year. New flavors are always being developed, as are new delivery methods.

- › Wish they could find a way to replicate Amber Gel. Ares rolled it out five years ago, it sold great in test markets, then, poof, it vanished. I’d give my left earlobe for a case of it again.
- › Slamm-O!

Shiawase Omnicare was also spun off of Biotech to be a division in and of itself, focusing on medical care, hospitalization, and medicine. They still work closely with their parent, so getting treatment at an Omnicare facility will include the option for Shiawase bioware at an enticing price. This is the arm that had the leónization type II method, which wound up being discontinued after the mental decay it caused was uncovered. Considering how much of a money maker that was, I can’t imagine that they’ll leave it idle for long before getting in there and trying to fix it. Whether or not they can—well, that’s a question.

- › Best care I ever had was in an Omnicare bed. An arm, half a leg, and three organs cloned from my own body, skilled physical therapists to get me used to the new parts—hell, they even upgraded my teeth for that perfect smile!
- › Stone
- › I’m still not certain that there’s a flaw per se. Yamana was working on flushing the old Shiawase citizens who were draining the bottom line, and having them get another century or two of lifespan was going to make it worse. Awfully convenient for him that the flaw was found and was irreversible.
- › 2XL



- No, it's legit. The Shinto arm was well-poised to push for its termination as soon as it was found out, however. They might have gotten some advanced warning. Possibly from the Empress herself.
- KAM

## SHIAWASE LEGAL SERVICES

The most prestigious legal firm in the world, bar none. Shiawase lawyers are drafted only from the best schools' best graduates. If you don't graduate in the top three of your class, don't even bother asking, and if you're not number one, you better hope you have some leverage. These guys are why extra-territoriality exists, and further, they work hard every day to keep the Business Rights Accords obeyed worldwide. Their top customer is the Corporate Court itself, and you often see Shiawase lawyers representing both sides when arguing before the Court. If you're on the Z-O with your lawyer and the other side has a Shiawase shark, might as well go ahead and settle. That's how good they are.

- Shiawase lawyers are hired worldwide to help other corps get one over on a government—get this regulation changed, get that permit signed, ensure you get tax breaks that last generations, whatever. Court cases are pretty dull for shadowrunners, but you should keep an eye on who's spending the nuyen to get themselves represented by a Shiawase suit. That's a corp that's going places.
- Dr. Spin

## SHIAWASE MANUFACTURING

It's easy to overlook their industrial arm, but Shiawase's got a massive one, and with the recent purchase of Toyota, you'll be seeing more of it on a street-level view instead of a macro view. The consumer-products arm handles big hits like Hello Puppy and assorted mechanized toys, but they also have big numbers in heavy industry thanks to Hephaestus Industries and Shiawase Motors, who will now have a flagship brand to rally behind. Shiawase also slots their fashion industries in here, as well as computer tech; as noted elsewhere, Shiawase's never been able to draft the local talent that MCT and Renraku can, so their computer tech has lagged behind both of those two. But being in third place behind two of the three best computer manufacturers in the world isn't a terrible place to be.

## THE REST

Outside of those primary arms, there are a few other areas of note. Shiawase Financial handles banking, Shiawase Logistics handles not only large scale transportation, like cargo ships, but smaller-scale, environmentally friendly transportation

options, like busses, light rail, and, believe it or not, moving sidewalks. Shiawase Mediatech handles the usual, and again falls behind both Mitsuhama and Renraku, giving them something of a handicap in controlling the narrative that's counterbalanced by high public support and the arrangement with the Emperor. Shiawase Security Services exists as an umbrella for miltech and private arms and has had traditionally good markets in North America with both the Native Nations and the CAS. The former, though, is being challenged by the Sioux-owned Colt, while the latter now has to face the Ares juggernaut.

- Still find it interesting and weird that Colt is in NAN hands.
- Hard Exit
- Corporations listen to money, not national anthems. Can't blame 'em for going to the highest bidder. Besides, Roger Soaring Owl's on the board, and you know he's got some amazing experience.
- Turbo Bunny

Oh, and then there's one last bit.

## SHIAWASE MARKET INFORMATION & FORECASTING DEPARTMENT

Officially, this department handles actuarial reports, marketing trends, and bean counting. Ho hum, how boring. The truth is that this is Shiawase's black-ops division, gathering information from other corps, protecting Shiawase's own secrets, hiring shadowrunners, and, when needed, engaging in black ops themselves. While everyone in this division is ultimately loyal to Shiawase, there are hundreds of small cracks when it comes to exactly *which* Shiawase someone is loyal to. Empress Hitomi's man, Nigel Coltrane, was erased a couple of years ago, leaving former Sadoto-ally Ichiro Kiyomoto as the head of MIFD, but since she's dead, he has no real loyalty to either Tadashi or Reiko, keeping him in his position as neither has any reason to risk replacing him; the scramble to put someone else in the chair could result in the other gaining the weight of thumb on this vital asset, so the status quo, while not the most favorable, is better than the potential alternative. Beyond that, Shiawase has a long tradition of hiring shadowrunners to execute operations against itself, to test defenses or deal with internal affairs where other tools have failed. MIFD fixers make arrangements without prejudice, but they also have long memories. As a bonus for us, they're quite good at making sure the teams they hire only know what they need to know and not one nugget more, and that interrogation of captive runners is largely unrewarding. They use a "catch and release" program, getting teams that they catch on call for future work. The first job erases the debt.



After that, you get paid. Keep doing good, you get paid better and increased access to Shiawase tech. It's a good gig!

- Every instinct I have screams at me that this is a trap and that they'll just send you into a meat grinder, but much as I hate to go against my gut, it's true. Shiawase has a never-ending need for runners, and they don't dispose of assets that can be useful later.
- Clockwork

## TOP TALENT

### THE SHIAWASE FAMILY

It's easy to focus on the big names of the Shiawase main line, but it should be remembered that there are cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews, and more, fanning out for two hundred years, as well as marriages, resulting in over a hundred of them in all. Most of them have been given positions as executives here or there or simply survive on generational money and relax. For example, Rei Shiawase (fourth cousin) is a philanthropist who sanctions art galleries and hosts parties for rising artists, and has nothing at all to do with the corporation's operation. The family gets larger when we consider adoption.

Every corporation gives the rank of Corporate Citizen to some of its employees. Some, mostly the Japanacorps, have a status that's even higher than that, a "noble house," as it were, that can be passed down to one's children. Shiawase has these, but also has a third option via "adoption." A citizen who has done something of high import to the corp can be given this status, being allowed to append the name Shiawase to their own, in essence being adopted into the "royal family," a notch above even the other "noble houses." Emori Shiawase himself started the tradition in 2010, taking the son of a valued advisor who'd been with him for fifty years under his wing, giving him the name Shiawase as a reward. He took six more like that before he died, one a year, and these seven wound up being the most loyal of Sadato's fellows when he eventually took over. Since then, it's been an almost-annual tradition to single out one person for astounding service to adopt into the family. This is done at the annual shareholder's meeting in Osaka. Needless to say, speculation on who it'll be is fierce, and the competition is more so. The few years when no one qualifies is a time of great mourning. All this said, there are nearly a thousand people in the corporation who bear the name Shiawase, even if only one small branch stands as blood relations.

### CEO TADASHI SHIAWASE

If you looked up "Japanese Business Executive" in any dictionary, a picture of Tadashi Shiawase

would look back at you. In his younger days, the man was an icon of severe business fashion, stoic features, and squared shoulders. Now in his late sixties, his hair's gone grey, he's partially bald, and his glasses have gone from reading to always-on, and his once firm body has given way to a bit of a grandfatherly paunch, he's at once perfectly distinctive and yet could vanish into a room of corporate executives, and you'd never find him. For a generation, Shiawase executives leaned heavily on leónization to preserve their youth, but when it was discovered (by Shiawase researchers) that the process carried with it a grievous flaw, its use was suspended. Tadashi is proud to have never undergone such treatments (a direct contrast to former CEO Korin Yamana), and he wears his age well.

Tadashi's cut from the same cloth as his father, a strong, decisive leader and an excellent salesman who drives a hard bargain but also honors his word. He's loyal, dependable, and trustworthy ... at least in business dealings. Rumors for years say that he mistreated his family, forcing them to live up to impossible standards and even using them as experiments for some of Shiawase's lesser-known procedures. To suggest such impurity of Empress Hitomi would be most unseemly, of course, and his own son is beyond reproach, so most of these rumors revolve around the third child, Toshiro.

- You should not make allegations about The Empress.
- Baka Dabora
- See, this is why you were pulled off this project, BD. You used to be a reliable voice for us in Japan, but the past decade, you've really started to swallow the official line. We need the old you back.
- Bull

It's easy to overlook him in a world of Spinrads and great dragons, but the fact is that Tadashi's been doing this for five decades and has been seeped in family dynastic politics as well for even longer. He seems so harmless, so *normal*, that it's easy to forget just how cunning the man really is. Time after time, the odds are stacked against him, and yet time after time, he manages to come out of it smelling like a rose. He's a subtle guy who plays the long game, and I've grown to respect that.

### BOARD CHAIR REIKO SHIAWASE-SHIMADA

Under Japanese tradition, and thus Shiawase tradition, a woman marries into her husband's family and leaves her own behind. The Three Orchids all challenged this tradition in their own way, all of them clinging to their Shiawase name. Empress Hitomi was sidelined by the machinations of those who thought it improper for her to be tied to the corp's activities. Mitsuko was re-



moved by her husband, even as she plots to possibly return. Reiko is the last Orchid standing, and she shows no hint of stepping down. The daughter of the powerful Soko Shiawase, she never had any intention of fading away in someone else's shadow and tossed her husband to the curb as she pursued her goals. She still carries his name (awkward) but has shown no interest in being someone's bride again; she's sixty (but looks more like thirty due to leónization, a treatment her mother absolutely hated, yet another reason she was frozen out of her rightful inheritance), and has happily sampled the snacks available to someone of her wealth and position. Her own two children are hapless nitwits who she uses as personal servants and errand-runners. A short tryst with (the now late) Nigel Coltrane was a fun distraction, but she's avoided anything serious since then, casting aside a dozen playthings once she grew bored of them.

Reiko hates Tadashi in a very personal way, since he has everything that she feels was denied her: the position as head of the family, the approval of the majority of the board, and her mother's respect. For his part, he disdains her as a secondary family member. But they need one another, and both are smart enough to put profits and the good of the corporation over their private dispute. This has oddly resulted in the corporation doing quite well as a unified force—the two are content to sneer at one another and snipe with words, not assassinations, but orchestrating operations against family members is so ingrained in them that it continues as background noise in their lives. The current situation, where Tadashi operates as the face of the corporation while Reiko controls things from the chair suits them both, and neither has made a serious move to change that status quo.

- > Ghost, what I wouldn't give to be at the dinner table between these two some time. "Ah, my dear cousin, Tuesday's bomb was lovely. Pass the salt?" "Of course, my sweet cousin, but the debut of a new line of noodle at the Toyota unveiling was a masterstroke. More butter?" "I'll pass ... as should you. Starting to show a bit of a bulge, my beloved cousin." It's gotta be as savage as it is cold.
- > SeaTac Sweetie

## EMPERESS HITOMI

How telling is it when the Empress of Japan only rates the third position in a list of Shiawase personalities? Tadashi's once-wayward daughter got tamed by marriage and grew into the role, shocking pretty much everyone who knew her as a wild college kid and, according to rumor, a decent decker. There are a *lot* of rumors about her, but any evidence of that time in her life vanished

in the Second Crash, and she's been as unwilling to talk about it as anyone has been to ask about it. These days, her primary function is to stand by the Emperor and look regal, but anyone who thinks that she's content to be a prop is a fool. The Empress has all the resources of the Empire at her fingertips, and while those resources must be strummed gently, like the strings of a harp, she's quite a masterful musician. You can find her influence in the board of directors, where her votes are technically cast by others, but everyone knows who's behind the choices. Take, for example, the push for Virtuakinetic acceptance across Japan, including a school opened with her personal blessing to take in and train them. She's the serene swan, gracefully gliding across the surface of a pond, with no one aware of what churns beneath.

- > Decker my ass—she was a full-blown Otaku, but one from a different source than us.
- > Puck
- > We have a couple of fragments from pre-Crash 2.0 that suggest she was good but, well... fragments.
- > Glitch
- > And then there's the vampire baby.
- > Plan 9
- > Oh, here we go.
- > Snopes
- > Hitomi's second pregnancy was troubled. What nobody talks about is how she had a vampire baby! It was drawing blood from her through the umbilical cord!
- > Plan 9
- > ... Yes, that's what a fetus does. Congrats on passing Bio 101?
- > Beaker
- > No, not like **that**, like a real vampire! When she gave birth, it got replaced with a "clean" baby that wouldn't taint the royal line. The real one's locked under Kyoto castle. Feral beast, but you can't **kill** it since it's half-divine by the father.
- > Plan 9
- > And how, exactly, did she get a vampire baby?
- > Snopes
- > Sources are mixed on that. But that it exists? Unity!
- > Plan 9
- > For the record, I disagree with 9's assessment.
- > Plan 10
- > There's hope for you yet.
- > Snopes



## DAIKI SHIAWASE

Tadashi's firstborn son and heir apparent to the throne, Daiki's cut from the same cloth as his father. Twenty-five years younger, with a younger man's height and broad shoulders and jet-black hair, he's nearly a clone of his father and has been following in his footsteps his entire life. He's the Chosen One, after all, and his entire life's been laid out before him since before it began. Somehow, he's never rebelled, and simply followed along like the dutiful son he is, doing everything his father demanded and doing it well. He married an office lady (who just *happened* to be the daughter of a well-placed executive in a noble house) and has three kids of his own, all of whom are following the family path.

Look, Daiki's boring. I know you want me to say he's a wizard or half-dragon or a cyberzombie, but he's just Japanese Business Executive Stock Model Number One, just like his father, and there's not a damn thing I can do about it. The man doesn't even have a tattoo!

- > While that's true, he does have one small vice: baseball. He's a diehard fan of the Tokyo Giants and frequents the Shiawase private booth on the regular. If you ever get to see him smiling and shaking hands with players, you'll see a man just having the time of his life. It's the one and only time he sets the perfect mask aside and geeks out.
- > Kat-o'-Nine-Tales
- > SOMEbody's got stories!
- > SeaTac Sweetie
- > And she doesn't share them.
- > Kat-o'-Nine-Tales

## TOSHIRO SHIAWASE

The third child and the second son of Tadashi, Toshiro is kind of a cipher. He exists, and he has a technical position in the company (executive vice-president of market forecasting: rice futures, for those who want to know), but he's never really seen. It's known that he's autistic and skilled with numbers, but he has no liking for or interest in social skills. He doesn't play the backstabbing parlor games of many of the other members family, and they in turn leave him alone. We know little about him besides that.

- > The rumors, however, are great. Some say that he's the real power player behind the scenes, others that he's not real and just a AI, and so on. The one rumor that sticks is that he's not autistic but got the heaviest experimentation of the family. Number one son can't be messed with, number one daughter's being lined up for marriage, but number two son did not emerge with a clearly determined pathway. The rumor says

that whatever they did to him in the womb made him the way he is today, a predictive math savant who is used by Tadashi to forecast good investments. True? Not true? Great story!

- > Dr. Spin
- > His own **kids**?! I knew Tadashi was cold blooded, but that's ... beyond.
- > Slamm-O!
- > It's also par for the course for autistic kids—people are always looking for some weird intervention to explain them, rather than simply letting them be who they are.
- > Winterhawk
- > Shiawase has been at the cutting edge of genetic manipulation since the '40s. Three gene-erations, if you'll pardon the wordplay. It wouldn't be surprising if they looked for ways to boost their family line.
- > The Smiling Bandit
- > And selective breeding before that. Remember that Shiawase in-house marriages are the norm, all done through central genetics, looking to create the ideal corporate bloodline for executives, researchers, and so on. At least a century.
- > KAM

## NAOHIKO KIMURA

Last, but certainly not least, is Naohiko Kimura. He's a highly-regarded monk in the Shinto Advisors, and he's a very old-school hardliner. How hard of a line does he draw? He feels that Tadashi Shiawase is far too liberal to be trusted with the corporation.

- > Egads.
- > Slamm-O!

He's all-in on the divinity of the Emperor but would love to see Hitomi removed as Empress, as he feels that she's a "corrupting influence" on him, not that he would ever say that part out loud. He's a hardliner, but he's a cunning one and can keep his views hidden when he has to. He's violently opposed to AIs and technomancers, another strike against Hitomi in his eyes, and he has repeatedly called for re-opening Yomi Island as a place to dump them. That he'd like to send the rest of meta-humanity there as well is an unspoken addition. That said, he's a fervent believer in his religion, which includes the Emperor being a divine being, so he follows orders given by him with no complaint and unswerving loyalty.

- > He's developed contacts inside both MCT and Renraku, the former due to his racism, the latter as Renraku was gifted with a number of Shinto-practicing magicians in order to create a corporate magical tradition. He hasn't passed any information



along, since that would be betraying his oaths, but he's certainly an ally who would support their policies here or there.

- > Kay St. Irregular
- > Fun fact! He's not got any magical talent. He's just a faithful guy.
- > Glasswalker
- > I find that hard to believe.
- > Lyran
- > Well of course **you** would. You don't have faith in anything.
- > Slamm-O!
- > I have faith in the gullibility of others and the value of nuyen. Served me well enough so far.
- > Lyran
- > Apropos of nothing, I could really go for a snack right now.
- > Orange Queen

## RIVALS AND REBELS

### THE SHIAWASE FAMILY

It goes without saying that the main adversary of any Shiawase is another Shiawase. Everyone out of power wants in, everyone in power wants to stay there, and paying favorites and pulling strings is as natural to a Shiawase as breathing. The family hosts petty ambitions, personal fiefdoms, sleights real and imagined, and vast piles of nuyen to put their desires and feuds into motion. It's rarified stuff, way outside of the air that most of us breathe, but that kind of drek rolls downhill and gets in everyone's hair sooner or later.

### MITSUKO SHIAWASE-YAMANA

Perhaps no one embodies this more than the Wilted Orchid, Mitsuko Shiawase-Yamana. When she agreed to marry nonagenarian Korin Yamana, more than seventy years her senior, she expected he'd soon die and she'd gain all his wealth and power. Instead, he rejuvenated himself to her age and swore he'd live another century. She struggled against her status as best she could, but by the time his tenure as CEO ended, she wasn't able to escape and was whisked away from the only home that she'd ever known. Their relationship quickly soured after that, and they divorced (a huge shame, but one she'd rather bear than to stay married, so you know it must have been bad). She got a huge sum out of it but was unable to buy back into the corporation. She instead turned her vast fortune into, of all things, snapping up Ares stock when it tumbled, planning on establishing herself as a power player, or possibly even taking over.

Then a shark ate her husband.

Well, a megaladon that had no business being off the coast of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, where Korin Yamana was enjoying a lovely vacation right up until his boat got devoured. The only things left were splinters and barely enough blood to ID his DNA.

- > There is no way he's actually dead. No. Way.
- > Pistons
- > Hawai'i's in the middle of nowhere. Even if he faked the attack, there was nowhere to go. Sometimes, the sea happens.
- > Kane

Now she's in a contest with Korin's other ex-wives and his children, trying to lay a claim to his entire fortune instead of just half. With that, she could buy a controlling position of Ares or maybe, just maybe, buy her way back into Shiawase. The longer the court battle takes, however, the smaller her window of opportunity gets. If she waits too long trying for the big prize, the smaller one might be out of reach. No one knows where this one'll end but I, for one, am watching closely.

### MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES

Yamato Damashii, the "Spirit of Japan" that has kept the three Japanacops working together outside of the island, has been ongoing for years now and has been extremely lucrative for them all, but the war inside Japan between MCT and Shiawase will likely never end. It rages hot now and then, and is lukewarm for now, but if it ever cools off entirely, one of them will likely be dissolved. Each feels disrespected by the other (Shiawase expects to be deferred to as the First Megacorp, MCT expects to be deferred to as the largest and most powerful), and they pull the nation between them.

- > MCT is strongly opposed to the liberalization of the Emperor's policies, blaming them on Hitomi's influence, and while Shiawase largely agrees, they have to toe the line because of the marriage.
- > Kay St. Irregular

### HORIZON

The youngest megacorp just rubs the oldest the wrong way. Horizon's entire business style clashes terribly with the traditional Shiawase style, and having been beaten to the punch on the River Wind agricultural industry, Shiawase's made a note that they need to take the upstart down a peg and let the puppy know whose house it's playing in.



## SEA DRAGON

This one's speculative, but Shiawase's second-most-profitable arm is aquacology, and while much of it is done on land in aquariums, there are some aspects that only be done in the ocean proper. That's Sea Dragon's territory and while she's more concerned with the Atlantic than the Pacific, her recent activities in Hawai'i and now Seattle have Shiawase on alert. They'd prefer negotiation, but if it comes to a fight, well, they have Aztechnology dragonslaying tech on speed dial ...

## SAEDER-KRUPP

Speaking of dragons, Shiawase collected on Fuchi's Euro properties, back when Korin Yamana bought into the family, and while everyone knows that Germany is his turf, he seems to turn a jealous eye on anyone in Europe as a whole. Shiawase has gradually moved most of their Euro-operations to France, finding kindred spirits there, especially on the computer side of things.

- > For those curious, MCT and Renraku snap up all the top talent in Japan's computer programmers and deckjockies. Shiawase's a third place pick at best. To try to keep up, they started plucking deckers from France and it's gone over very, very well.
- > Pistons
- > So that's why my deck freaked out! I was cutting into a Shiawase server, went a bit into the code, and suddenly everything went French! My deck's great at English and Japanese, but it couldn't make heads or tails out of French code! By the time I figured out what was up and started looking for a good translation bot, I got dumpshocked. I thought it was some code bomb I triggered, but if it was all just **written** in French, well, that's that!
- > Quicksilver

## GAEATRONICS

This one's new. As Shiawase started producing power in the Seattle Arcology, they've been removing the need for Gaeatronics power in large parts, if not entirely. That's a kick square in the money-maker and the natives are, um, restless.

- > Can we not?
- > Many-Names

## PLANS AND PROBLEMS

This one's the trickiest of the bunch. More than any other corp, Shiawase plays their cards close to their chest. They're slow but inexorable, just adding more and more pressure until a target cracks, scooping up the pieces, then moving to the





next target. They don't scatter a hundred risky plans out like Spinrad, knowing that ninety percent will fail but ten percent will bring in big profits. They don't invest heavily into cutting-edge computer tech or astral research, both of which have massive costs but can bring massive wins. They simply make good products with a forgiving mark-up, sell services, and somehow manage to stay ahead of marketing needs while collecting the best execs and lawyers in the world. It's kind of dull, but the business of Shiawase is business, and business is good.

They take a conservative approach, willing to sacrifice profits as long as they don't face losses. They value their reputation highly, and losing face is far more harmful than not making more money, so they're willing to leave off delicate situations that they could otherwise turn to their advantage. They don't want to rule the world, they don't want to make bargains with extraplanar entities, they don't want to transform everyone into some weird multi-socket ooze singularity ... they just want to make money.

In short, Shiawase just *wins*. It's boring, but it's what they do. It's all base hits and sacrifice bunts, not home runs, but at the end of the game, they're up by three and you have no idea how they did it because it was all just rock-solid fundamentals and nobody stood out in the least.

That said, there have been a few times when they took the L. They were heavily invested in both the Philippines and California, before '61 and the Ghost Decade washed them out. The recent acquisition of Toyota looks bad on paper, at least in the short term, and, of course, the Yamana Doctrine drove out hundreds of grey-haired icons who took it personally and who still harbor grudges.

But there's nothing major. No Boston collapse. No Detroit. No Excalibur. No Dragon Civil War.

Or, rather, there hadn't been anything major until now. The biggest move that the corp's done since Yamana left is right there in Seattle. Instead of trusting you local yocals, I went there in person to take a look around.

- I hate to say that Haze is right, but, well, he's right. Shiawase doesn't have many allies, but they have almost no enemies. Renraku gets by with friendliness, but Shiawase gets by with prestige. When a megacorp looks bad, it makes them look bad by extension, since they're responsible for megacorps even existing. That means Shiawase will step in and defuse situations that make the concept look bad. They took the lead in the Corporate Court in making sure that NeoNET paid, and paid hard, for Boston, then turned around and defended Ares on the grounds that the UCAS had broken the Business Rights Accords, not Ares, and as such were the party to be penalized. Their legal team not only won the case handily but were on hand to absolutely put the screws to the UCAS when Colloton went crawling back to rejoin. Shiawase's similarly taken the lead in

other nations that have yet to sign the BRA, showcasing how much good it did for the UCAS once they were a member. They do this even in countries where they have little to no investment, because a world under the BRA is a world that Shiawase knows better than anyone.

- Sunshine
- Missing from this is Evo. Buttercup used to be the Emperor's top advisor and is thought to be the one who got him to change so much in Japan in regards to changelings, metahumans, and more. Shiawase has never been happy with them changing their name and leaving Japan, but rather than want them destroyed, they continue to wait, like a father, for Evo to get in trouble. When they come to ask for help, it will be given, but at a price. How long will they wait? This is Shiawase. Patience is what they **do**.
- Glasswalker

## THE SHIAWASE ARCOLOGY: SEATTLE

The SCIRE. The ACHE. The SAS. Whatever name they stick on there formally, it's always just going to be The Renraku Arcology to me and many, many others. SA:S is the temporary name, and they'll eventually replace it with a more formal name when they get near a grand re-opening. A few people I talked to started calling it the "Shia-Raku" arcology, as they'd replaced half of the old letters with new ones, and the comical re-naming seems to have landed well with locals.

Currently the tenth largest building in the world, the Self-Contained Industrial-Residential Environment was to be Renraku's North American headquarters and the crown jewel of Seattle, a bottomless money pit whose looming structure demanded that the entire world sit up and pay attention. And they did! Right up until the computer that ran the place went insane.

- Want to give us the juicy details, Puck?
- Clockwork.
- No.
- Puck

A hundred thousand residents and another fifty thousand shoppers locked inside the arcology were at the mercy of a mad AI that unleashed unspeakable horrors on the captives. Over the next year, that population saw ninety percent of it culled in ways that I won't even try to describe. It called itself Deus and it chose some of the locals to serve as its hands and eyes, known as his Whites, and in its name they did anything it asked.

- Vivisections? Of course. Peeling off someone's skin like they were an empty cola bottle to see how long you could get a



single piece before it snapped? Yup. Dangling someone from an elevator shaft by their stomach to see how much of their intestines could spool out before they died? Yup. I never went in, but I reviewed some of the footage. It goes against everything you're trained in the medical field. **Everything.**

> Butch

Renraku, with the help of the UCAS military, was eventually able to break in and fought their way, floor by floor, for months, until a strike team made a play for Deus himself. Cunning thing that it was, Deus managed to break himself into a thousand and twenty-four pieces and then smuggled them out of the arcology in the bodies of survivors and some of his Whites who pretended to be survivors. They later compiled parts of him outside, but couldn't find the processing power to bring him fully online. They wound up finding it in the Neo-NET IPO in Boston and caused the Second Crash in the process. Deus died there. FastJack and Puck both watched it happen.

> And I will take that to my grave.

> Puck

> **Good.**

> Butch

> The whole **point** of CFD is that nothing that is coded can truly die; it just awaits replication. Never think Deus is entirely gone.

> Pistons

The SCIRE that was left was turned over to the Seattle government in lieu of lawsuits, figuring that a building that ate ten percent of Renraku's budget for fourteen years would even the scales. Seattle turned it into the Arcology Commercial and Housing Enclave, or ACHE, the world's largest combination homeless shelter and prison complex. At least they were nice enough to hose the blood off of the floor before they started moving the SINless in. The UCAS military stayed inside, both to protect the nuclear reactors beneath the place and to claim the top twenty stories or so, where Deus had dwelled and where they could dig into the remains as much as possible. What did they find? No one knows. I'd imagine that everything important left with Deus himself, but who knows? Seriously, if anyone knows, this is where you can tell us, because I got nuthin'.

> I know that the drones were turned over to Ares after the fact. This advanced their weaponized drone program by at least a decade, and of course they happily sold those advances back to the UCAS government.

> Glitch

> I believe that they also gathered up a few fragments of Deus' code, well after the fact, from some of the survivors who

carried them. It wasn't many—three, maybe four—and these went to Top Men somewhere in the Appalachian mountains in Pennsylvania. That trail's been cold for nearly twenty years. After that? No clue.

> Plan 9

> Supposedly, they got several hundred in Boston and stuffed them into a dragon. That didn't end well. For some.

> Cerberus

> As for the building itself? Seattle didn't stick much money into it. Several of the changes Deus put into place are still there, like the Labyrinth, and pity the poor SINless who got shoved into **those** floors. Seattle didn't much care, but the UCAS government went through every centimeter of the place in an effort to remove hazards—and find things of potential value.

> Pistons

> They did a piss-poor job.

> Puck

> And how would you know?

> Pistons

> Because they never found **my** lair.

> Puck

Which brings us to today. Shiawase's going in, taking a census of those who live there, and figuring out which ones have talents they can use and which ones will be kicked out. The vast majority will be in the latter category, I'm sure. Shiawase's quite picky about personnel. They've already managed to decommission the fission plants and install one fusion one, but they're nowhere near able to supply the SAS with enough power yet, so are buying power from Gaeatronics, which has to sting. Once reactor number two is online, it'll be able to power the entire place by itself, while number one will be used to sell excess power to the city. This is a few years out, so no cheap juice for you lot yet.

> They're in the early stages of moving a microwave power transmission satellite over the city. It will take about a year to get it into place, but once it is, that extra power will make a big dent in what they have to buy. Once the plants are fully online, they might sell this excess power, or they might move it to a new location.

> Orbital DK

> They're well aware that they aren't going to find any hidden diamonds in the rough in there—overlooked shamans, kids with great decking skills but awful hardware, etc.—but they're looking anyway, just in case, because that's what Shiawase **does**. Much bigger, however, is the Dog Program. For those that have missed it, the Japanacorps all use a method of collecting children, ranging from four to eight years old (five is the preferred age) and buying them from their parents. (You don't buy babies,



since you can't tell if they have some developmental issues. By the time they're kids, you can gather some genetic material and make a good forecast, if they get the right nutrition.) These kids are raised by the corporation as "dogs," whose first and foremost priority is loyalty to the corp. They get trained intensely, first as "packs" when younger, then broken into smaller groups around ten, then individuals around fifteen, where their lifepath will be known. Good physicals but little else? Security. Good physical and a bit on the ball? Spec Ops. Loyal and decently handy? Janitor, technician, etc. Some get trained as geisha, some as office ladies, and the ones with real mental strength wind up as corporate suits, where they'll keep an eye on other workers and make sure that they always follow the corporate line. The Corp is father, the Corp is mother.

► Stone

Shiawase isn't going to be content with the shambles that the ACHE is inside, however. They want a proper building for a proper megacorp, and will be investing Renraku-level nuyen to renovate the entire place. Wiping the lettering off the sides and putting the Shiawase name on there is just the start. It looks to be a ten-year plan in all, and that level of investment, for that long, is a much greater rick than Shiawase is ordinarily willing to take. Tadashi personally negotiated the sale with Seattle Government, so this is his baby, one way or the other. Is he being set up for a big fall by Reiko? Is he planning on winning so big that she can never challenge him? Is this showing that the faith his father had in him was well-placed? Too early to tell. But he sent a big name in to be his eyes.

## THE ARCOLOGY STAFF

Just a quick rundown here. While the SAS will, eventually, serve as Shiawase's North American HQ, it's nowhere near ready for that yet. As such, those present are focused on local issues, and the arcology itself first and foremost. There are several names to be added, but here's a few I found.

**Riku Hammamoto** is the Director of the Arcology. He's the man in charge of the whole thing, and it's his job to get it running on time and under budget. He's a lifetime member of the corp and has both served in and operated arcologies in Japan, but none as large as this monster.

**Stephan Levine** is in charge of Matrix operations, including the installation of new, tame programs to run much of the arcology and keep up Matrix security. He's a hotshot programmer, not a decker. It's a bit of a risk putting a Gaijin in charge of such an important task, but he was the best man for the job. Or at least the best who'd be willing to risk getting turned into a Deus puppet.

**Haru Kazama** is the lead liaison with Seattle's government. He's got the world's best legal team at his beck and call, so if there's something wrong in terms of contracts, he will absolutely not let it

go. The current holdup is what the city plans to do with the people Shiawase doesn't want to keep. Where can you stick over a hundred thousand people in a city as full as Seattle? Not Kazama's problem. He just wants them out.

**Rebecca Smalltree** is the PR person in charge and the one that you'll see most often dealing with the press. She's a Salish native and had some kind of history with Tsimshian where she developed a big hate for Renraku. I'm still stunned that this went to anyone who wasn't a native Japanese, but she seems as adept at keeping Gaetronics cool as the local government, so maybe she was the right pick.

Lastly is **Shiawase Daigou**, humble gardener. Yes, you read that right. He's one of the Seven, the first ones adopted by Emori Shiawase himself, and he was a virtual god among executives. He and Korin Yamana did *not* see eye to eye on things, especially the Yamana Doctrine's eradication of loyal old men, and the fact that he survived Yamana's entire tenure as CEO should tell you something about how good he is. He retired the day after Yamana left, settling into a life of retirement and simple gardening. The man has an apartment in the top five floors of the Arcology, including a private garden that's at least a hundred square meters (you cannot imagine how valuable that much prime real estate is worth) where he tends to his plants, enjoys his tea, and makes small talk with active executives. He has access to Hammamoto's office on demand and attends some, but not all, arcology top-level meetings. He never offers his opinion on matters unless asked, but his yay or nay carries the weight of Tadashi Shiawase himself and can instantly end affairs. How he knows which meetings don't matter and which ones need his attention, who can say? He just does. The man's a legend.

- He's the kindest, most genial grandfather I've ever met. He keeps his grandson around to run errands for him, pour tea, and so on, but otherwise he's just a the sweetest, most harmless man. Except ... one time, while we were speaking, I happened to mention Korin Yamana's name, and for just the tiniest moment, his guard dropped. I heard his cup strike his saucer, and in the moment it seemed as loud as a cannon. His face hardened and I swear to you, I could see some glowing aura around him that terrified me to my core. Then, just as quickly as it was there, it was gone, and he was back to being a kindly old man again. I've never seen anything like it, and it shook me down to my toes. How does a normal man have that kind of power?
- Kat-o'-Nine-Tales
- How did you get into the presence of Shiawase-sama?!
- Baka Dabora
- Private concert for Kazama to help impress the new governor, and the VIPs got to mingle. He never actually came up to me ... I wanted to have a look around and stumbled into his garden.



We talked about flowers for maybe ten minutes. Felt like three hours. The chum's got wisdom for days.

> Kat-o-Nine-Tales

## HELP WANTED

Working for Shiawase is the gold standard for Mr. Johnsons worldwide. Pay is average (and, honestly, Shiawase contracts define what the average is), your client doesn't want you poking into who they represent, they'll give you a shocking level of information about your target and what's protecting it but not one drop of data outside what you have to know, and best of all, they honor the deal; getting double-crossed by a Shiawase Johnson is all but unheard of. That said, they have high standards, and if you fail, the blame is entirely on you, not them, and Shiawase doesn't pay for failure. Pull the run off, you get paid; fail, and you get nothing, but you also don't have any real information that you can sell to get revenge either. This encourages you to do your best and pull the mission off or go hungry. Harsh, but fair.

> Fair my ass. It's not **my** fault that they doubled the guards on the night I was going in, so I had to pull out. I spent a lot of nuyen on gear, bribes, and more, and I walked out of there with a loss. That's no way to run a business.

> Mika

> Quite the contrary! If you ordered food and the waitstaff never delivered it, would you pay for the meal? For a Shiawase Johnson, same thing. Put what Mr. Johnson ordered on the table and get a good tip. Simple.

> Balladeer

As you pull off more and more successful runs, Shiawase has no qualms about giving you access to their tech; after all, a better shadowrunner is better able to do missions for them. Getting access to alpha-, or for aces beta-grade cyberware has always been an option, but Shiawase's also able to produce proper bioware that's tailored to your genetic code. Since they're well-aware of what these implants are going to be used for, they don't, as a rule, add markers or tracing devices. That would betray the respect between host and guest, after all, which is a shameful thing and would further undermine your usefulness to them. The same doesn't apply to corporate citizens, however, who buy their cyberware from Shiawase with pride, happy to send back wireless updates on their activities all day long, for the good of the family.

> Fun fact: Thirty years ago, when a salaryman was going to retire, he'd have his datajack and headware memory removed so that he could present it to his superior as a way to show his usefulness was at an end. This cyberware would be recycled

back into the next generation of salarymen, as cyberware was so expensive back then that this was a great personal sacrifice that showed how much they loved Shiawase. Today, headware memory is nearly a thing of the past, and datajacks are ever-falling in popularity. The ritual is still done, however, but uses a simple datacord as a token instead. Senior executives who recall the retirement ceremonies of their superiors, however, sometimes have a datajack implanted, just so it can be removed and presented.

> Netcat

A fairly unique aspect of Shiawase runs is that you often won't be stealing tech or destroying prototypes—they're far more interested in human elements. Extractions aren't rare, but more common by far are blackmail operations: Gather intel and either pass it to Mr. Johnson for him to use, or less often, you'll be provided with information that would greatly shame someone if it were found out. You get hired to present that information to the target, let him know what he has to do to make that information vanish, and here's the weird part, when he does as directed, you actually destroy the evidence. Ain't that a kick in the pants?! You don't *keep* it so that you have leverage over some guy whenever you need it, you don't turn it into an extortion, you actually promise to destroy it and then follow through on that. Mr. Johnson will be insistent that this happens and will usually want evidence. Of course, it's not like we can't doctor footage or toss a few illusion spells around, but hey, better be sure you know what you're doing, because if they find out, it won't be good for you. Hit me up in a private chamber for more details on getting away with it.

> Just when I start to think that you might have a use around here.

> Pistons

> Since this went up? Six private messages. Just sayin'.

> Haze

The big thing right now is, of course, the Arcology. Shiawase is paying good nuyen for runners to go in and nose around, sniff out any potential problems, and remove them. There've been rumors of bug cults in there since the ACHE was opened—vampires, ghouls, or spirits that feed on negative emotions, leftover Deus tech or cults that worship it, that sort of thing. There's also the issue of the Seattle Underground having smuggling operations all through the ACHE; Shiawase's Yak allies won't be happy to have anyone else doing their job, so they could use some local talent to encourage them to step off. In a perfect world, they'd hammer out an agreement that everything inside the arcology is Yakuza territory and everything outside is off limits, where they'd use the orks as mules and go-betweens, as



well as a source for illicit goods in return, but, well, racism and short tempers are always a problem. Having some locals that could forge such an agreement for them would be the ideal. A team would need to have some good contacts in the Underground, be willing to work with Yaks, and have both strength to keep the peace and softness to talk things through. Good luck finding that combination!

- > Ork Underground.
- > Butch
- > Seattle Underground. My daughter lost her life over this. Please honor her memory.
- > Bull

## GAME INFORMATION

These are some characteristics seen in Shiawase employees, especially in recent days.

### HUMAN 2.0

#### PREREQUISITE: HUMANS ONLY

Thanks to Shiawase genetic manipulations and selective breeding, they have managed to make the

human genome just a little bit better. It's up to you to meet your potential.

**Cost:** 25 Karma

**Game Effect:** Your racial limit for Charisma and Willpower are increased by 1. You cannot be magically active or have Resonance.

## DOG ON A LEASH

You've come up through the Dog program. Whatever your focus was, the most important aspect was Loyalty, and that you have in spades.

**Cost:** 8 Karma

**Game Effect:** Gain +2 to any Willpower test that would result in you harming, defaming, or letting harm come to, the Shiawase corporation.

## SHINTO SUMMONER

#### PREREQUISITE: MUST BE ABLE TO SUMMON SPIRITS

Your focus in the ways of Shinto give you a particular affinity with spirits connected to that tradition.

**Cost:** 2 Karma

**Game Effect:** Gain +1 to Summon rolls while in Shinto shrines.

Corrupted spirits will always select you over any other target.





# SPINRAD GLOBAL

## CORP OVERVIEW

POSTED BY: ORKCEO

I had a whole other introduction written, but I just scrapped it so that I could ask a question: What the hell is going on with Spinrad Global?

It's a mark of some of the weirdness that I'm seeing that the answer a lot of people will give is actually another question: "Wait, is something going on?" Because it's not clearly apparent that something is. Product lines are released and updated. Executives are hired and fired. Subsidiaries are bought or shut down. Business continues.

So why do I think something's going on? It's tough to put a finger on. Is it the fact that for perhaps the first time in decades, no one knows when the next big Johnny Spinrad party is going to happen? Is it the curiously rote information coming out of corporate PR? That's part of it, but not all of it.

Let me give you an example. Mitsuhamma has a subsidiary called Star Brands that is dedicated to ripping off other corporations' designs. They are the premier cheap knockoff business in the world. They're an annoyance, but most corps see them as an unavoidable nuisance. But they came up with a coup a few weeks ago, releasing a knockoff of a Spinrad sneaker before Spinrad got their version out. On top of this, the shoe was one of Johnny's personal designs. This should have infuriated Johnny. There should have been a sheaf full of cease and desist orders fighting with a host of aggressive press conference statements to see which could breathe the most fire. Instead, there was silence. It was bizarre. Unsettling, even. And this was not isolated. I could fill most of my allotted space with more stories where there's nothing clearly wrong but something seems off.

So what's wrong, then? Wish I knew. But I'm worried enough to make this section a warning. Keep your eye on Spinrad Global. Something is up.



## SPINRAD GLOBAL

**Corporate Court Rank (2081):** 8

**Slogan:** Putting Our Spin on the Future

**World Headquarters:** Lisbon, Portugal

**President:** Johnny Spinrad

**Major Shareholders:** Johnny Spinrad (51%), Gabrielle (Al Thani) Spinrad (24%), Aziz Ibn Yusuf al-Shamar (10%), Shaheed Zahir (3%)

### MAJOR DIVISIONS AND SUBSIDIARIES

#### Spinrad Global Africa/Southwest Asia

Al-Jazeera News (media), Arabian Future Industries (energy), Asia Online (Matrix), Djinn Licit Magic (magical services), Euphrates Solutions (construction), Global Oil (petroleum), Ifrit Services (finance), Marduk Munitions (armament), Nunoo Health (biotech), Qur'anic Telesma (magical services), Sandstorm Engineering Conglomerate (construction), Sphinx Security (security), Xenel-Oman (finance)

#### Spinrad Global America (Manhattan)

Montclair Industries (industry), New York Marauders (sports), Ottawa Arsenal FC (sports), Phoenix Biotechnologies (biotech), Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company (hospitality), UCAS Online (Matrix), UCAS Steel (industry), Warwick International Hotels (hospitality)

#### Spinrad Global Asia (Macao)

Light Clouds (fashion), Sorayama (augmentations), Tai Fung Bank (finance)

#### Spinrad Global Europe (Lisbon)

Aegis Cognito (intelligence), Chalmers & Cole Assoc. (finance), CNI (banking and insurance), Europe Online (Matrix), Javert et Cie (sports promotion), Lusiada (conglomerate), LusoServices Medical (biotech), Melia Hotels International (hospitality), Monte Carlo Casino (recreation), PetroGas (petroleum), Sol Media Group (media), SpIn Public Relations (PR), Spinrad Media (media), Spin Shop (augmentations), Sport Lisboa e Benfica (sports), Trideo Monte Carlo (media), Trompe L'oeil (Matrix)

#### Spinrad Global Latin America (Buenos Aires)

CEMIG (energy)

#### Spinrad Global Oceania (Jakarta)

Island Spin (holding company)



## SPINRAD INDUSTRIES

Spinrad Industries is not the first business dedicated to selling the lifestyle of its founder, but it certainly is the largest. When Johnny Spinrad was young, wealthy, and beautiful, he became fully convinced that everyone wanted to be like him, and they weren't wrong for feeling that way. He decided his mission in life was to try to facilitate that desire.

His initial company looked like a disaster on paper. Most new companies start with a clear area of focus or a single product line. Spinrad launched a whole stream of products—athletic wear, entertainment, electronic accessories, music, and more. The primary connecting theme between all those lines was “things Johnny Spinrad likes.” It could easily have been an unfocused disaster, but somehow it worked. As it turned out, Spinrad wasn't wrong—lots of people really did want to be like him. From there, his efforts went in two directions: putting himself in the spotlight doing outrageous things, and then selling new things based on his antics. He went to the most outlandish parties, slept with the most attractive people, and acted like a carefree, entitled rich person day in and day out. Then his companies built hotels like the ones he stayed in, booked tours to the cities he visited, sold clothes like he wore, snowboards like he used, and alcohol like he drank.

He collected admirers and enemies with equal enthusiasm. He made probably his greatest enemy in 2051, when a consortium he led won the contract to redevelop Monaco—and shut Lofwyr and Saeder-Krupp out of the process. The dragon was, of course, not thrilled, and that began decades of moves and counter-moves by the two, as they pissed away millions of nuyen in their eternal slap

## HISTORY

The cold fact of the matter is that Spinrad Global has very little history. Their AAA rating is just over a year old, and they are still learning how to use their new powers (such as feeling their way through their role on the Corporate Court). But to understand what the corp is, you have to look at the two pieces that make its foundation—Spinrad Industries and Global Sandstorm.



fight. Johnny frequently seems to have a lot more fun with the fight than Lofwyr does.

Spinrad's lifestyle was the instigating factor in the growth of his company, but if the CEO wanted it to keep getting bigger, he needed to diversify. So he did. They made augmentations for purposes he wouldn't use, low-cost foods he'd never eat, and other subsidiaries that would never bear the Spinrad name but would still pump profits into the coffers.

Despite this success, it seemed for a time Spinrad had hit its ceiling as a giant, diversified multi-national that would never make it into the top ranks of the corporate world. But then, opportunity came along.

## GLOBAL SANDSTORM

For well over a century, one of the greatest ways to develop a fortune was to find oil. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was formed in 1932; six years later, oil reserves were found, entirely transforming the new nation. Within half a century, the nation was the largest oil producer in the world. The money was serious. It also provided a strong foundation for expansion.

Like many of the other major corporations, Global Sandstorm (née Sandstorm Engineering Conglomerate) prospered because they knew how to use a hanging world and the occasional crisis. When the Matrix crashed, they were there to help rebuild. When new businesses emerged in Southwest Asia and Africa, they were there to finance them. When war broke out, they were there to sell weapons to the rivals and then broker a peace that was contingent on them gaining deals to rebuild infrastructure.

Their success was aided by the approach the company took in Asia and Africa. Those continents had suffered extensive damage in the colonial era, making them distrustful of corporations looking to descend on them and exploit their resources. Global Sandstorm opened regional headquarters in several important African cities (such as Lagos, Cairo, and Johannesburg) and established businesses there, and only after operating for a time did they look to involve themselves in larger business affairs, such as building oil pipelines and winning Matrix contracts. By that point, they were seen as locals.

It was effective, and even though corporate headquarters were in Riyadh, many people in places like the Kingdoms of Nigeria and Egypt saw Global Sandstorm as their hometown AA, someone to stand up to the colonist megacorps of the world. This meant that the merger with Spinrad Industries, which normally would feel like their corp was losing some of its distinctive character, was easier to accept because it led to the local hero getting AAA status.





## COMING TOGETHER

If you were unsure whether Spinrad Global deserved to be an AAA corp, then their manner of snatching the title should convince you. As veteran megacorporate watchers should know, you don't need to be one of the absolute largest corporations in the world to gain AAA status (whether you define "largest" in terms of revenue, employees, or whatever). Now, in point of fact, Spinrad is large enough to gain that status—they might be in the top three, if we looked at assets (and ignored debt). But a whole lot of those assets were acquired in the last few years. Johnny Spinrad went on an absolute buying spree to make his company look bigger, buying Chalmers & Cole, Sol-Media, Lusaida, and more. That doesn't come cheaply, so Johnny had to borrow from half a dozen of the largest financiers in the world. But he needed more, so he went and got Global Sandstorm by marrying corporate scion Gabrielle Al Thani.

Now, at this point, you should be thinking something like, "Hold up. This is not the Middle Ages, where you acquire something simply by marrying the right person. What the hell is up with that?" You'd be both right and wrong about that. Yes, there is a whole practice in the legal industry dedicated to preventing people from gaining too much simply by marrying someone rich. They have a wide assortment of pre-nuptial agreements on hand to make sure no one loses a huge amount of assets through marriage. But on the other hand, if you saw the marriage of Spinrad and Al Thani as being a great corporate gain for Spinrad, then we have a simple message for you: Stop being sexist. Gabrielle Al Thani is a shrewd, conniving corporate shark, and as a Global Sandstorm executive, she gained about as much power as he did. And should Spinrad die before his younger wife, then reports say she gets it all. Spinrad got a giant corp, but Al Thani may well wind up with the bigger prize.

- So what's the scoop on these two? Do they love each other? Do they even like each other?
- Slamm-O!
- There is at very least a core of respect there. They recognize each other's skills and shrewdness, and they see each other as peers on the corporate stage. They have enough shared interests that they can talk for hours and hours if they so choose.
- But let's be upfront about one thing: Neither one of them was going to settle into the confines of traditional monogamy. They might like each other, they might find each other attractive, but neither one of them is going to limit themselves. They'll spend time together, but they'll also spend plenty of time apart.
- So what does that add up to for the relationship? It clearly was a relationship born of convenience, but there is enough common ground and shared agreement of what they want the relationship to be that they might be able to keep it up for a while.
- Goat Foot

- Goat Foot does celebrity gossip now?
- Haze
- Folks back home are a little obsessed with Gabby. She's a frequent topic of conversation.
- Goat Foot

But that wasn't the entirety of this master stroke. Spinrad didn't just want a shot at becoming an AAA corp. He wanted a guarantee. So he approached Richard Villiers and convinced him to part with one of the most valuable assets in the world—JRJ International's automatic seat on the Corporate Court. It wasn't a full-on purchase—Spinrad worked out a ten-year lease of JRJ's Corporate Court rights.

- It's still not clear just how legal this arrangement is, but it's the Corporate Court's rules to follow, and since they were in a mood to punish NeoNET and give a seat to any corp not led by Richard Villiers, they were willing to not analyze the deal too closely.
- Mr. Bonds

There has been a ton of speculation about what Spinrad gave up to win that prize. Most people focus on something besides cash, because what does Richard Villiers need more money for? Speculation runs the gamut from having someone rubbed out to acquiring a rare artifact to making a place for Villiers' old running buddy, Miles Lanier.

- I'd warrant the latter is closest to the truth, and I'd add that everyone should pay close attention in about nine years when the lease runs out. There's going to be some serious maneuvering then.
- Dr. Spin
- That maneuvering has already started.
- D Cline
- Who the hell is that?
- Glitch

The end result put Spinrad Global in the Big Ten, so we're caught up!

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

As is the case with any listing in this download, don't consider this list comprehensive. Megacorporations have their fingers in any pie you can imagine. The list here, though, includes their larger areas of business and the things they're most known for.

## TRENDSETTING

The corporations of the world have always been adept at hopping on trends, but that's a substitute



for what they really want—the ability to regularly create trends. That’s been a corporate Holy Grail for well over a century. It’s not just about the money in this case. The money you make hopping onto a trend can be close to what’s earned by the innovators—or even much greater, if you’re good and ruthless enough. But the cachet of an innovator is what they want, because used correctly, that’s a gold mine that lasts for decades. Think about it—Chanel is still a name that gets attention in the fashion world, even though Coco hasn’t designed a thing in more than a century, due to being dead.

Spinrad is all about that cachet. Johnny Spinrad sees himself as a leading-edge fashion and lifestyle innovator, and he has the résumé to back it up. I think it’s safe to say that more than half of the athletic shoes sold today are either sold by Spinrad or influenced by their corporate designs. The recent surge in aesthetically minded cyberlimb designs is almost wholly attributable to Spinrad efforts. Spinrad does not have as large an entertainment division as say, Ares, but they capture up-and-coming buzz better than the mega-labels. They are a lifestyle brand across several categories. People pay a premium to use or wear Spinrad because of the message the brand sends. Sure, that message boils down to “I’m the kind of person that uses Spinrad stuff,” but it’s the nuance in the definition that makes the difference.

At the heart of this line of work is a question that has bedeviled marketers: How do you corporatize cool without losing its essence? Everyone wants youth nuyen, but no one wants to be a punchline for their clueless attempt to market to youth.

Spinrad has two key strategies in this area. The first is simple: hire youth. If you want to really know what’s going on in their world and what they like, bring some actual youth in to tell you what they like. This doesn’t mean pulling some kids in for a focus group, and it also doesn’t mean training some youth to be nine-to-five desk jockeys. It means finding the right influencers and making sure you get more information from them than anyone else does. Give them a MeFeed, supply them with lots of trial goods, then let them be themselves. Then be ready to move fast when your audience reaction metrics show that something is making an impact.

The other move is simple to describe but difficult to accomplish: hire visionaries. The history of trends is littered with people who had a big hit with one trend and then didn’t come within sniffing distance of a second hit. The guy who invented the pet rock made a million dollars in a year and then opened a bar, worked in advertising, and tried to capture lightning in a bottle again without success. One-hit wonders are common enough that you thought of one as soon as you read the phrase.

That’s not what Spinrad wants. They want the Steve Jobses, the Coco Chanels of the world, the

people who redefine their industry multiple times in their career. Those individuals aren’t easy to find, but Spinrad scours the earth for them. Spinrad Media has the hottest MeFeeds and young actors, Bodyline has some of the most beautiful augmentations around, and of course there are a thousand subsidiaries with the Spinrad name right on them making items for every part of your body.

## INDUSTRY

While the Spinrad portion of the merger had “industries” in its name, Global Sandstorm brought the real industrial heft to the table. The golden age of petrochemicals may have passed, but there is still plenty of money to be had. Around the turn of the century, many thought that Saudi Arabia would run out of oil by the end of the twenty-first century—or sooner, if oil use continued to expand. As it turned out, oil use dropped dramatically, thanks to significant decreases in population from VITAS and the continued drift away from internal combustion engines. Global Sandstorm and others decreased their output, which meant profits dropped, but they didn’t disappear. Oil and petroleum products still have myriad uses, so the oil fields of Global Sandstorm continue producing.

But that’s far from the only industrial effort that carries the Global Sandstorm name. They have bauxite mines in Baoulé, uranium mines in Mali-Faso, steel production in Pakistan, and plenty of other facilities. If it exists, they make it somewhere.

This doesn’t mean the Spinrad name is without industrial facilities. They have several textile mills across the world, and they maintain profit margins by controlling the supply chain for most of their clothing and shoe lines. Portugal-based Lusaida has major construction and petrogas interests, and Marduk Munitions makes weaponry in Dubai. UCAS Steel is one of the oldest metallurgy names in North America, while Montclair Industries makes the machine parts that make the world run. Sandstorm Engineering Conglomerate takes the resources and material from the other subsidiaries and uses them to build the structures and infrastructure of the world.

## AUGMENTATIONS AND BIOTECH

Spinrad Global is one of the leaders in augmentations as a fashion choice. This can be minor modifications, like nano-tattoos and fiber-optic hair extensions, or more significant ones, like cyberlimbs and exotic changes such as gills and webbed fingers. If you can envision a look for yourself, Spinrad wants to help you gain it.

They are similar to Evo in this respect, but there is a shade of difference in their approaches.



Evo generally wants to help you become something more than human; Spinrad wants you to be the slickest damn human on the planet. Spin Shop is your retail outlet to design the bodyware of your dreams, Biotechnics and Phoenix Biotechnologies sell bleeding-edge bioware, and Bodyline is the perfect combination of fashion and augmentation.

## LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Spinrad has its share of financial and business services, but they downplay them sometimes because that's not their image. You're not supposed to imagine Johnny Spinrad poring over a spreadsheet while hunched over a desk—you're supposed to imagine him flying a private jet to a tropical island where he is handed a fruit-filled cocktail as soon as he leaves the plane. Not at all coincidentally, "Johnny's Island Holiday" is one of the most popular packages offered by Spinrad's Luxe subsidiary. Whether it's losing a fortune at a Monte Carlo Casino or spending a fortune at a Warwick International Hotel, the corporation presents a host of ways for you to blow your money while feeling like the *crème de la crème* of society.

The corporation also has extensive sports holdings, if only so that Johnny can hang out in luxury boxes across the world. The corp owns the Ottawa Arsenal Football Club, the New York Marauders combat biker team, and more, and they also control urban brawl innovators and ace sports promotion corp Javert et Cie.

## MEDIA

Someone like Johnny Spinrad loves to have cameras pointed at him, and one of the best ways to ensure that keeps happening is to own a lot of cameras. Of course, by this point the corporate media holdings are far beyond what is needed to keep track of the CEO. Spinrad Media has plenty of breathless Johnny coverage, but it also has some of the most-watched entertainment industry coverage in the world. Trideo Monte Carlo has its share of lifestyle coverage, but it went from high-stakes poker coverage to all sorts of high-society sports, and from there went into general athletics. Their innovative microdrone coverage of urban brawl has managed to make matches both easier to follow and more intense, and aficionados swear by their coverage. Regency MegaMedia also has plenty of Johnny, but its base in the major Spinrad Global areas (Portugal and Saudi Arabia) plus a huge presence in Mumbai gives it connections to talent that conglomerates in North America and Japan often overlook (it also has a large presence in Seattle to access the more traditional North American talent pool). They have their fingers in every media branch there is—trideo, mu-

sic, screamsheets, whatever—and a deep love for mainstream entertainment with just enough of a kick to keep it from being the stuff retirees watch all day. Sol Media is a more recent acquisition. After a bruising conflict with DeMeKo, Sol is rebuilding in their native Spain, taking on a harder edge than many Spinrad offerings. Al-Jazeera News is one of the most respected news brands in Southwest Asia.

## TOP TALENT

### JOHNNY SPINRAD

You know Johnny Spinrad. Even if you think you don't, even if you say you're the type of person who doesn't pay attention to celebrity gossip, you know about him. He's unavoidable. His vacations, his parties, his affairs, his presence on the European Grand Tour, his near-marriage to Queen Caroline of the United Kingdom—you know. You've heard about them. And if there somehow is something you're missing, then there are entire channels dedicated to telling you more.

So we're not going to talk about all that, in favor of asking a simple question: Where the hell is Johnny Spinrad?

He hasn't been seen in public for a month. He hasn't attended any parties. He hasn't given any interviews or held any press conferences. He hasn't been seen in Monte Carlo or Lisbon or anywhere.

For the vast majority of the world population, this would not be a big deal. Hell, we've barely seen any of Richard Villiers since NeoNET got kicked out of the Big Ten, and that was more than a year ago. But this is Johnny Spinrad, a man who possibly might not exist if people weren't looking at him. He's been out of sight, and all the shows in his media empire dedicated to covering his life have been in re-runs.

I wish I had more here. I wish I had some leads or even decent theories to share. But all I have are questions. So where is he?

- Do you know how exhausting it must have been to win his place in the Big Ten? If Spinrad wanted to take a vacation away from everyone, who can blame him?
- Nephrene
- But that doesn't sound like Spinrad at all. His Big Ten move wouldn't exhaust him—it would energize him. Did you watch any of his shows in the few months after he got into the AAA club? It was like he was on a nonstop novacoke binge. And maybe he was. He was so excited, so jazzed, that he wouldn't stop talking about his next conquest, his next big thing. The ascension to the Big Ten didn't wear him out. It made him want to do more. That makes it hard for me to believe he went on vacation.
- Kay St. Irregular



- Especially since a lot of his work responsibilities involve the type of things that would seem like a vacation to you or me.
- Traveler Jones
- Spinrad paid a high price to get the funding he needed to make his move. And not all of it was money. From what I've heard, he is away paying off some of his debt.
- Plan 10

## GABRIELLE (AL THANI) SPINRAD

In this article, I made the same mistake as everyone who writes about Spinrad Global: I wrote about Johnny far more than I wrote about Gabrielle. It's an easy mistake to make—the corporation is his name, his brand, his personality. He is its best salesman and primary asset. And look, here I am doing it again—talking about Johnny in the spot *specifically dedicated* to talking about Gabrielle.

Gabrielle Spinrad is the daughter of Emir Jassim bin Joan Al Thani. She was born royalty and has lived her entire life as royalty. She had every excuse to coast through life, enjoying the superficial pleasures and never exercising a bit of effort on anything. That was not the life for her, though. She earned multiple degrees, trained at different family businesses, and learned how the world worked. Her mind is analytic and sharp—she measures twice and cuts once, but when it comes time to cut, she does it decisively and with authority. She's been very hands-on with Regency MegaMedia lately, giving it access to details about her life and others close to her, helping the company increase its audience share in the Arabian Peninsula and northeast Africa. She has overlaid it with the ongoing infrastructure work in Africa to make sure Spinrad entertainment offerings always flow smoothly to their intended audience, never experiencing the delays or stutters many other conglomerates deal with. She is good at finding these linkages, making connections between the diverse businesses of her corporation that strengthen every part involved.

The biggest question mark about Gabby is her marriage to Johnny. On camera, they're a fun, entertaining couple. Her sardonic manner contrasts with his brash enthusiasm, and they show genuine chemistry and affection when they talk. They even did a special where they dispensed relationship advice. These shows, though, exist alongside ongoing reports that Gabby has all sorts of eyes watching Johnny, keeping track of both his personal and business dealings. Is he carrying on an affair? That's probably not an issue, as both seem to be at peace with the other's extra-marital activities. More serious questions are: Is he planning a new acquisition? A sale? Will he be messing with any of Gabrielle's pet projects? Those are ques-

tions that, reportedly, she has turned to the shadows to answer.

Is she really watching him that carefully? Who knows? What we can be sure of is that she did not marry Johnny because she is a gold-digger or because she plans on being a passive wife. Johnny advanced his goals by marrying her, and she did the same. It should be a happy marriage as long as their goals overlap. If they stop overlapping? Then things get fun.

- Gabrielle knows the ins and outs of manufacturing better than Johnny, and she has shown how to use Global Sandstorm's mining might in Africa to expand its manufacturing base. She also has made substantial inroads with Asamando, shipping a surprising amount of resources to that nation. Where and how the ghoul kingdom is expanding is not clear, but Gabrielle seems willing to help.
- Cosmo

## AZIZ IBN YUSUF AL-SHAMMAR

Put simply, Aziz al-Shammar is one of the most powerful people in the world. Global Sandstorm was reconfigured after the merger but it remains an entity, and al-Shammar is its CEO. He also controls the Islamic-Corporate Cooperation Board and is the Emir of the Arabian Heartland. The people and resources at his disposal are vast, and he has set up his organizations to make his authority absolute. He brooks no disagreement and has no use for those who would stand in the way of his goals. While he is capable of subtlety, he often doesn't bother with it. He is a semi-truck barreling down the highway, daring you to stay in his way.

- It's not just the money and might that are scary here; it's the sheer destructive power he can wield. With his construction tools, munitions factories, explosives, and more, he can reduce a town to rubble in mere minutes. We know this because he has.
- Thorn

## MOHAMMAD SUDAYRIN

On the Global Sandstorm side of the merger, perhaps no one has elevated his profile as much as Mohammad Sudayrin. A financial wizard, Sudayrin added a ton of assets to his purview in the merger while also learning a few secrets. If anyone besides Johnny Spinrad knows what it took to pull off the buyouts Spinrad made to rapidly grow his company, it's Sudayrin. He doesn't seem to be the type who would use this knowledge directly against Spinrad for blackmail purposes, but he may well know which way the wind will be blowing—and as any financier can tell you, that is a considerable advantage. He makes investments



based on where payments will be going, and sometimes he plays games with what he has, timing investments and payments to give him the most bang for his many bucks.

## SHAHEED ZAHIR

Zahir has no biography, no title, and no clear reason to be at high-level Spinrad Global meetings. But there he is, same as he often was for Global Sandstorm meetings. He listens, he whispers into certain people's ears, and he seldom speaks aloud. When he does, the conversation pivots around whatever he says. No matter what room he's in, people treat him with respect and give him their confidence.

So where did he come from? Is he a spirit, dragon, alchemist, or just a powerful human? Answers about him are tough to come by, but one recent, intriguing piece of information emerged: He has been on the wrong side of Lofwyr for a long time. Crack researchers recently uncovered this excerpt from a 2036 news story as Lofwyr was building what would soon become Saeder-Krupp:

*The great dragon Lofwyr continued the expansion of his corporate empire with two new acquisitions, though a third, Austria's Ganz Industries, slipped out of his grasp. The dragon thought he had a line on acquiring a majority share of the Ganz stocks, but another bidder, a Mr. Shaheed Zahir, swooped in to buy enough shares to keep Lofwyr from gaining control.*

*The dragon refused comment about the last-minute interference.*

The story, naturally, contains no further details about Zahir. But we need to remember that in the whole drive to build his empire, Lofwyr tangled with Wilhelmina Graff-Beloit in a fight that has often been blamed for her untimely death, and Spinrad has often been seen as carrying on Graff-Beloit's fight. If Zahir was involved at this same time, then he and Spinrad might be allies in the same fight.

- Once I read this, I started digging around to see if any stories from the time had an image of Zahir. I found one. It's not great—only gets about half of his face—but from what I saw, it doesn't look like Zahir has aged a day in more than forty years.
- Sunshine

## MIRANDA KING

You will probably never meet Miranda King, but you will see her fingerprints if you work for or against Spinrad. She oversees a ton of shadow operations for the corp, and her knowledge of our kind of work allows her to consult on how to defend against us. King sets the tone for Spinrad's shadow operations, and she prefers the work to be fast and relentless. She came to Spinrad after doing some

work for NeoNET in Chicago when corps began snatching up some of the Containment Zone land, and she showed decisiveness and tenacity in dealing with that ever-changing situation. Her adaptability and confidence will be tested as she responds to Spinrad's growth and watches out for the new enemies they've made from growing so big—and the continuing opposition from old enemies.

## LI JUNLIN

The director of Spinrad Industries Asia is in some ways the anti-Johnny Spinrad—he isn't flashy or especially charismatic, but he has built a considerable reputation by being real and smart. Working from Macao, Li demonstrates a deep knowledge of the disparate countries and corporations in his region, and he constantly seems to be one step ahead of emerging trends. He is very image-conscious in how he nurtures Spinrad brands, but he does it by being deep and engaging instead of using the shallow, splashy images his boss loves. After a quake in Japan in '79, Spinrad hotels were proactive in reaching out to people who lost their homes and giving them a room indefinitely, a move that people continue to talk about positively.

Li has also built a relationship with the great dragon Ryumyo, though the purposes of this partnership are not clear. Is it just a friendship? A business arrangement? Some long-term, in-depth plan? Neither side is talking about it in public.

- Ryumyo's ties with the Yakuza are well known, and the Yakuza are in deep with Mitsuhamas. Long story short, if these two are working together, I'd be watching my back hard if I were Shiawase or Renraku.
- Baka Dabora

## RIVALS AND REBELS

### LOFWYR

Lofwyr is a hell of a rival to have. His memory is extremely long, his plays are incredibly subtle, and his ruthlessness is legendary.

This last one has come up in conversations about Spinrad. If Lofwyr hates Spinrad as much as everyone says he does and is as ruthless as people says, why is Spinrad still alive and in charge of a corporation?

The question contains its own answer: Spinrad lives because that better serves Lofwyr's purposes. Yes, Johnny pats himself in on the back for being wily and clever, but he has never been the subject of a serious assassination attempt from Lofwyr. Plenty of nasty corporate jousting, a number of dead bodies in the shadows, but no bloodshed at the top of the food chain. The fact of the matter is that a lot of avenues of corporate growth are fostered through this



fight. Weak links in a corporation are identified and cleared out; strength is identified and can be promoted or stolen from your rival. Companies can be built up to the point where they are attractive purchases or beaten down to where they are a bargain.

And those are the sorts of victories Lofwyr and Spinrad treasure far more than a crude assault on their rival. Stealing away something that was theirs, beating them to the punch to snag something valuable, foiling one of their rivals' complicated schemes—these are the trophies that business tycoons truly value. While the rivalry between Lofwyr and Spinrad is bitter and real, Lofwyr does not want Johnny killed or conquered—he wants him beaten, over and over, again and again.

To add fun to the rivalry, Saeder-Krupp has long been Global Sandstorm's chief rival in Southwest Asia. Johnny figures he brought more weapons to the conflict, while Lofwyr figures he acquired more targets.

- ▶ Lofwyr has not taken Johnny out before, but for most of the time Johnny didn't head a triple-A and control a seat on the Court. The dynamic between them has changed; that means the tactics are likely to as well.
- ▶ Fianchetto

## BLACK STAR

It's unusual for a mercenary group to have rivals, since typically they just go against who they're paid to hit. But Black Star is not your typical mercenary group. Their anarchist mindset makes them only hit targets where power is consolidated, and few managed to consolidate power in a particular region as well as Global Sandstorm in Saudi Arabia. Our old friend Aufheben specifically targeted CEO Aziz Ibn Yusuf al-Shammar and died on a mission against the corp. While he left Black Star a number of years ago, the organization is carrying on his grudge, and with Global Sandstorm now part of Spinrad Global, they have shifted targets. They eagerly take up any contract against Spinrad they can find, and sometimes go against them pro bono.

A small organization going up against a megacorporation needs every force multiplier it can find. They look for multiple weak spots and hit them, hoping their cumulative effect will be devastating. Cut an oil pipeline, interrupt bauxite mining, and dynamite a road or two, and suddenly an entire oil refinery is screwed up. That can affect a small nation, or at least a state or two. These measures may never bring down something as large as Spinrad, but focusing on annoying them often seems like a worthwhile pastime.

## QUEEN CAROLINE

Once upon a time, Johnny Spinrad and then-Princess Caroline seemed like they were on

their way to marriage, when socialite Claudia Romanov announced she was carrying Spinrad's child. We could do a deep dive into the ins and outs of what actually happened there, but for now the main outcome that matters is that Spinrad and Caroline's relationship was abruptly severed.

So there's some history there. But it would be a mistake to view Queen Caroline as some kind of spurned woman, eternally seething at the man who did her wrong. She is a queen in full and has moved on with her life in just about every way possible. While she is not operating out of bitterness or jealousy, she knows that Johnny Spinrad has significant power in her part of the world, and she knows full well what kind of a man he is.

Queen Caroline believes that to know Spinrad deeply is to worry about him holding *too* much power. If he were a magnate in charge of a company selling his personal lifestyle, that's one thing. But to have him running one of the ten most powerful organizations in the world is a concern. The Queen retains some connections in Spinrad's inner circle, and she uses them to keep tabs on him and his plans. Will he use his position to take more powerful shots at his longtime rival Lofwyr? Will he gobble up UK corps to extend his foothold there? Will he destabilize any European governments to help him get his way? All of those are matters of concern to Queen Caroline, as well as areas where she is willing to interfere to keep him from becoming too big for his considerable britches.

- ▶ There's a fight brewing as Spinrad looks to gain shares of Amalgamated Technologies and Telecommunications, which has a substantial media presence in the UK. Saeder-Krupp is the majority owner of the corp, and Queen Caroline is very much not interested in Spinrad having more of a voice in media in her nation, so Spinrad has a huge hill to climb here. The fact that they are even thinking of attempting it makes me think that something is up his sleeve.
- ▶ Kay St. Irregular

## PLANS AND PROBLEMS

### BASE OF OPERATIONS

There have long been rumors that Spinrad wants to relocate his corporate headquarters from Lisbon to New Monaco. New Monaco is a hugely significant location in Spinrad history—receiving the contract to rebuild it was a signature achievement (and start of the feud with Lofwyr), while exile from it was one of the corporation's deepest wounds. Johnny Spinrad would love to cement his rise to the AAA heap with a triumphant return to that spot. He has been expanding operations there, and as word has circulated that he wants to move





his headquarters, responses are building. Portugal has no desire to lose the headquarters and is preparing a full-court press to keep Spinrad in place. Lofwyr in no way wants to see Spinrad triumph in New Monaco. And the political leaders of Monaco don't want to see their city turned into a corporate battleground. There will be plenty of jockeying and maneuvering to either put Spinrad Global in a good position to move in or to bar the door to them for a few more years at least.

## MAKING THE MARRIAGE WORK

The dirty secret of Spinrad Global's ascent to AAA status is that its two major components do not necessarily work together well. It's true that megacorporations are vast and host a number of varying corporate cultures in their structures, but it still can be difficult to make different ways of working function together. Spinrad management is, generally speaking, far more image conscious than Global Sandstorm leaders, while Global Sandstorm leaders can be incredibly focused on the details of various operations to a degree that Spinrad leaders often feel is extreme micromanaging. Each geographic division contains leaders who served with each of the parts before the merger, and there are regular clashes between them. Johnny is constantly being asked to moderate disputes between leaders, which is a part of the job he does not have much interest in. He's learned, though, that he's going to have to develop more of an interest, because every time there's a dispute he doesn't want to deal with, Gabrielle steps in and resolves things for him. Unsurprisingly, Gabrielle's settlements often work in favor of Global Sandstorm holdovers, and the Spinrad loyalists have noticed. They're asking Johnny to intervene more, which could make these spats more contentious in the near future.

- This will be especially important if he moves the headquarters to New Monaco. Part of that effort involves deciding what to build there, who should move into the new headquarters, and how the corporation should act in the new space. Any big change is a chance to shift power, and if Johnny stays asleep at the wheel, the Global Sandstorm portion of the corp will walk away with some big gains.
- Dr. Spin

## PREDICTIVE POWER

Political polls, market research and forecasting, predictive policing—these efforts and more attempt to use numbers based in the patterns of the past to show the direction of the future. Their success has never been absolute, but neither has their failure. They provide just enough knowledge to make data analysts feel that with a few more tweaks, a few more modifications, they will have the perfect algorithm. Then, like the psychohistori-



ans of fiction, they will know unerringly how civilization will advance.

As much as any corporation on earth (well, them and Evo), Spinrad Global wants to be ahead of wherever the world is heading. They don't need that knowledge to be too comprehensive—they generally could care less who is going to win what election—but they want to know what people will want before they want it. They have cool hunters across the world to help them hop on trends, but they'd trade them all for the right set of numbers and variables.

It's commonly accepted that Spinrad's purchase of Aegis Cognito was primarily motivated by a desire for data, access to one of the greatest intelligence troves in the world. They sent that data through a ton of mills, processing it backward and forward, trying to spin a thread that would lead them through the maze of the future. If they've had any success, they're not sharing it. They're sure as hell going to keep trying.

- There are often strict rules about monetizing certain types of intelligence data, partly because people know just how powerful it could be in theory. While consumer data looks at individual movement and activities, the type of intelligence Aegis Cognito collects is often more macro, looking at secret corporate and government plans and how people are trying to shape the future. CFD is a good example here—if you get early word and understanding of how the infection was working, you could disinvest in nanotech and instead invest in cyberware and bioware. That was one of the sad things about Evo's involvement in the whole thing—they were in position to recognize the looming disaster, but they were constitutionally unable to pull out of their nanotech work until it was way too late.
- Fianchetto
- A few monad investors made themselves rich through this exact strategy.
- Kay St. Irregular

## HELP WANTED

### COPYRIGHT ENFORCEMENT

That's a euphemism. Spinrad Global doesn't want people copying their stuff, and they don't want to let them off with something as light as a cease-and-desist order or lawsuit if they make an attempt. Spinrad wants factories smashed, designs erased, and possibly careers ruined if the lesson needs to be severe enough. All of that, of course, requires runners. These jobs can be a lot of fun if you like breaking stuff, and who doesn't?

### PALACE INTRIGUE

There's a story about the halls of Versailles in the time of Louis XIV. Vatel, the "Prince of Cooks,"

felt like the roast he had prepared for a large gala had not been well received. He felt so bad about this that he believed he had lost all honor and had no recourse but to kill himself. Louis de Bourbon visited him with consoling words, saying the failure was in Vatel's head. Vatel doesn't act on his despair, though he also does not sleep. He then encountered Jean Gourville, who had risen from servant to vital tool of the court thanks to a series of cons and skill at cards. (Look, Versailles had a wacky values structure.) When Gourville saw Vatel, he offered no consolation. He only offered mockery.

Vatel proceeded to his quarters and stabbed himself to death.

The point is simple. In areas of high, intense power—and the upper ranks of Spinrad Global are certainly that—mere words have great power to soothe or burn. An individual can offer consolation or deep pain—depending on how they play the game.

The trick is knowing enough about the players to know the right words to say and the right wounds to aggravate (had Gourville criticized something like Vatel's hunting ability, the cook might well have survived the night). That means that you can earn good money finding out about the strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes of high-ranking Spinrad executives. Get out there, find some weak spots, and earn some good nuyen.

### PEACEKEEPING

This is a weird area for people like us to get involved in, but it ties into the areas listed above. Spinrad's people all want to protect their brand and get a leg up on one another. But they also want to preserve the overall value of the corp. That means they sometimes need someone who will dig into burgeoning conflicts and find a way to defuse them, especially if it looks like it's a case of Spinrad-on-Spinrad violence. So if, say, a clothing factory has the same piece of machinery malfunction three times in a week, and then let's say the manager of the factory gets a snide note from an intra-corp rival asking if the factory is functioning well lately, then the manager might decide to launch an investigation into why they're being screwed with and how to get revenge. Word of that may go up the ladder, and a higher-up will send a team of runners to encourage the belligerent parties to knock it off and forestall any future mischief.

A valid question to ask is, why send runners? Why not just drop an order to knock it off? The answer speaks to Spinrad corporate culture. Spinrad bosses want to be the cool bosses, the ones who let you wear jeans to work and don't tell you what to do every minute of the day. Sure, they'll keep your pay low and expect you to work so much that you'll have time for nothing else, but that's just the



job, right? That's the world everyone lives in. Your boss is working within the parameters they have, but that doesn't mean they have to be a jerk about it. That's the mindset in place. So they're not going to walk into the middle of a dispute and yell at people like some angry parent. No, they're going to outsource that shit. So if you have the skills to smooth those kinds of bumps in the road and keep corporate partners happy with each other, Spinrad is hiring.

## GAME INFORMATION

Spinrad Global knows what kind of employees it likes, which means certain traits tend to pop up frequently in people associated with the corp. Here are two of them!

### FASHION INFLUENCER

You have a way of doing things that makes other people want to do it the same way. When you

share anything publicly—comments, videos, whatever—people pay attention and alter what they're doing just a little bit to be more like you (though your look is not outrageous or attention-getting enough to count as the Distinctive Style quality).

**Cost:** 5 Karma

**Game Effect:** When buying fashion clothing (anything that's part of a named line, like Armanté or Zoé), you receive a fifty-percent discount, as designers and merchants want you to show off their wares.

## SOCIAL OUTCAST

You once had a place in high society, but situations change, and you're on the outs.

**Bonus:** 5 Karma

**Game Effect:** When you are intermingling with high society—for example, the type of people who inhabit the Grand Tour or similar social circuits—you always have to deal with the “Listener has strong personal dislike of talker” condition when determining social test Edge (p. 119. SR6).





# WUXING

POSTED BY: JIMMY NO

Well, it's that time again. I guess the admins decided I'd done such a good job with my last Wuxing update that they wanted me back for this one. Hong Kong's homegrown megacorp has been pretty busy in the last few years, so settle in and get ready for a datadump.

## OVERVIEW

I don't think we say this enough, so I want to make it clear: Wuxing is dangerous. And I mean to everyone—to us, to smaller corps, to their peer megacorps, *anyone*. When people think of the scariest megacorps in the world, Wuxing is not often in the top of that list. Aztechnology? Sure. Sadder-Krupp? Quite possibly. Mitsuhama? These days, maybe. But in many eyes, Wuxing sits closer to the Horizon end of the spectrum. Sure, they're bloodless greed merchants, but that's part of being a megacorporation, isn't it? They'll do their busi-

ness and chase their profits, and you can try to do your work, and the world will continue turning.

Abandon those thoughts. Wuxing has high ambitions, a wide array of skills, and the ruthlessness to clear out enemies when they need to. Their CEO painted a target on her back by forcing her own husband out of the job, but despite that she has built more support year after year, holding off the considerable powers that want to undermine her. She has managed to get all sorts of corporations agree to loan terms they would never usually accept, and she now faces the daunting but enjoyable task of making them pay up.

When dealing with Wuxing, you have to remember how much care they put into the situations they set up. They plan on levels most people never consider. Sure, everyone knows to look at physical, Matrix, and astral security, but few know how to set up an environment, both physically and astrally, like Wuxing does (I've been in a few of their secured areas that make MCT zero-zones look like a playground, and this doesn't



cover what they do with geomancy). Wuxing also has world-class diviners on retainer, and they use what they see to guide their operations. They often act like what they know what's coming because they've already seen it.

So yes, they're smooth and polite. Yes, a ton of their employees have the demeanors of accountants and insurance adjusters (in part because that's what a lot of them are). Yes, they do not wear arrogance on their sleeve, and they know the value of cultivating allies, making them seem loyal and kind. But while Aztechnology has impressed those of us in the shadows with the terrible things they can do to your body, Wuxing has the ability to slowly, kindly, crush your soul.

Always remember that. Always be cautious.



## WUXING

**Corporate Court Ranking:** 6

**Corporate Slogan:** "We're Behind Everything You Do"

**Headquarters:** Hong Kong Free Enterprise Zone

**CEO:** Sharon Chiang-Wu

**Major Shareholders:** Wu Lung-wei, Sharon Chiang-Wu, Fu Peng, James Harper-Smythe, Lu Bao Ling

### MAJOR DIVISIONS & NOTABLE SUBSIDIARIES

**Wuxing International:** Awakened Protective Initiatives (Awakened security), Cartwright Cartage and Freight (shipping), Kong-WalMart (consumer goods), Ming Solutions (Awakened goods), Minh-Pao Exports (shipping), Red Wheel Engineering (heavy industry), Wuxing Worldwide Shipping (shipping)

**Wuxing Africa (Addis Ababa):** Suez Security Consulting (security)

**Wuxing Asia (Hong Kong):** Bach Mai Medical (medical services), Eastern Electronics (Matrix), Malaysian Independent Bank (finance), Prosperity Development Corporation (finance), Wuxing Financial Services (finance)

**Wuxing Europe (London):** Albion Mutual Funds (finance), Bank of Vienna and Hong Kong (finance)

**Wuxing North America (Vancouver):** Fidelity Mutual Insurance (finance)

privately taking advantage of the shifting landscape whenever he could. He expanded his company through a number of acquisitions, most of them in the import/export business. He had his finger on the pulse of the area, quickly adapting his strategies to bring in what people wanted. Were tensions growing? Wuxing expanded its weapons trade. Is the electronic market shifting to more diamond-based designs? Then Wuxing is ready to bring raw materials such as carbon hydrogen to diamond manufacturers and then take those the synthetic diamonds to electronics manufacturers. As soon as the world developed a demand, Wu wanted to be able to meet it.

His work paid off in multiple ways. First, his business prospered, and his wealth grew. Second, when the former People's Republic of China dissolved and the Hong Kong Free Enterprise Enclave was created, Wu was recognized as a hero in that effort, and his place in the Hong Kong firmament was assured. The city was happy to accommodate Wu's desire for an elaborate headquarters, and they were unfazed when he decided to build it in the relatively remote area of Aberdeen. The Wuxing Skytower in Aberdeen remains a central icon of the corporation.

## HISTORY

The history of Wuxing Incorporated is about a corporation trying to make its environment suit it. The corporation began as an import/export business in Hong Kong, before the United Kingdom's lease on the area expired. They had to navigate a transition to a government that was pretty okay with unrestrained capitalism to one that was kind of okay with it as long as they could control it, which from a capitalist's point of view pretty well goes against the "unrestrained" part.

The founder of the company, Wu Kuan-li, dealt with this difficulty in the time-honored fashion of publicly advocating for his company's interest and

- We say this all the time, but **feng shui** was a critical factor in the decision to locate in Aberdeen. Subsequent events seemed to bear out this decision.
- Lei Kung

His company grew and met new challenges. As its influence spread beyond Hong Kong, the Japanacops took notice, and it's very rare for such interest to be benign. Wu very clearly saw the danger of the Japanacops' combined strength, and he reacted as he always had—by looking to build his own strength. He envisioned a business alliance that would allow non-Japanese corporations to act in the same coordinated fashion and keep the Japanacops in check. The 1929 Matrix Crash and



subsequent rebuilding kept him from realizing his vision—as did his death in 2039.

Wu Kuan-li was succeeded by his son, Wu Lung-wei, and Wuxing continued to prosper. Lung-wei realized his father's dream of a business group to stand up to the Japanacorns in the form of a coalition known as the Pacific Prosperity Group. With a diverse range of members including Evo, Federated-Boeing, the Eastern Tiger Corporation, and eventually Aztechnology, the PPG can throw a lot of weight against the Japanacorns—as long as they can stay unified with each other. In the wake of CFD, the common cause they held disintegrated, especially with the punishment and scorn piled on Evo. Wuxing has made a few efforts to rally the non-Evo troops (even though Evo has not been formally expelled), but it's been a heavy lift.

The younger Wu also led company through a stunning series of successes. The great dragon Dunkelzahn bequeathed the corp the Jade Dragon of Wind and Fire, one of the famed Coins of Luck, and a large sum of nuyen, and those things seemed to launch the corp to a new level of success. As they had during the early Hong Kong days, they grew through rapid acquisitions, but this time they diversified more, broadening their reach throughout Asia and beyond. This surge brought them their AAA status and a seat on the Corporate Court.

Things slowed up after Crash 2.0, but they didn't come to a halt by any means. Some business areas might have slowed a bit, but that happened to other corps, and Wuxing knew quite well what to do in those circumstances. Once again, they bought, greatly strengthening their financial holdings through purchases like the Malaysian Independent Bank.

- There are a lot of business reasons for an acquisition—adding new skills to your organization, buying new technologies, branching into new business areas, gaining specific geographic monopolies, and buying out the competition to strip them for parts and mostly shut them down. Wuxing employs all of these strategies.
- Mr. Bonds

Wuxing received its third leader about five years ago when Wu Lung-wei stepped down for health reasons that have yet to be specified—and yet to be noticed, as Wu is still active in Hong Kong society and the lives of his famous quintuplet daughters. His wife, Sharon Chang-Wu, ascended to the top spot, and her time at the top has not been easy. She had to navigate the CFD crisis and the shadow war waged on the corporation by Maersk, a conflict that became very expensive for Wuxing and led to them being involved with a number of loans and other financial arrangements that were high in the risk/reward spectrum. So far, Chang-Wu has not been widely blamed for these troubles (though of

course she has vocal critics), and her skill at moving the corporation ahead and keeping morale and loyalty at reasonably high levels has been noted by many observers.

- Internal gossip persists in saying that Sharon might have pushed Lung-wei out of the position, but there was a perception that he might not have had the energy to steer Wuxing through these difficult times, so no one is really complaining.
- Dr. Spin
- You cannot overstate how large of a role divination plays in Wuxing's strategies. To them, the main lesson learned from the post-Dunkelzahn growth was that magic **works**. Yes, divination can be subject to interpretation and does not always present clear directions, but when it does? Wuxing leaders follow. That's why Chang-Wu took over.
- Frosty
- If only there were proof that divination was the key reason.
- Sunshine
- Oh, I've been looking, believe me.
- Frosty

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

### FINANCE

Money makes the world go 'round, and Wuxing is better than any other AAA at pulling purse strings around the globe. Financial services are the one area where Wuxing's gotten away relatively untouched in the last few years, even as other megas chip away at their more visible core industries.

One of Wuxing's biggest bargaining chips in financial services actually comes through a different megacorp entirely: Aztechnology. They've never let Tenochtitlán forget that it was **Wuxing Financial Services** who bailed them out after SIRRURG destroyed the NatVat facilities on Borinquen back in the mid-'70s, gutting Aztechnology's hold on the agri-food industry. Aztechnology might've turned its back on the Pacific Prosperity Group and tried to leave Wuxing out in the cold, but even they have to be squeamish about defaulting on a debt that big.

- Judging by some internal Azzie communications I've seen, Wuxing's already using that financial leverage to help them in their fight against Maersk.
- Pyramid Watcher
- Yeah, I go into that in the next section.
- Jimmy No

Wuxing's major North American financial subsidiary, **Fidelity Mutual Insurance**, dodged a massive bullet when the Corporate Court found



NeoNET responsible for the destruction wreaked by the Boston Lockdown. Besides being based in Boston itself, a lot of local corps held insurance through FMI, and having to pay out that many claims would've been enough to overwhelm even a triple-A mega. Luckily for Wuxing, once the story behind the Lockdown came out, the Corporate Court let Fidelity Mutual off the hook. Sucks for the corps relying on that cred, but hey, that's biz.

- A few smaller corps in the NEMA sprawl have started banding together to go after Fidelity Mutual corp drones. They'll pay pretty well for anyone willing to dig up dirt on FMI managers who can approve payouts on the claims that the Corp Court waved off.
- Kay St. Irregular

With Wuxing's North American assets sitting pretty after the Corporate Court finished head-shooting NeoNET, they've started funneling those expected losses into other areas. I've seen paydata saying that they're putting out feelers via two Asian subsidiaries (the **Malaysian Independent Bank** in Kuala Lumpur and the **Prosperity Development Group** in Neo-Tokyo) to put a financial squeeze on the Japanacorp's overseas subsidiaries, especially Renraku's expansion into the Philippines. There's also chatter about some action through two European subsidiaries, **Albion Mutual Funds** in London and the **Bank of Vienna and Hong Kong** in Vienna, to try to use their financial-sector muscle to strike back at Maersk.

- As good as Wuxing is at messing with markets, trying to throw their weight around in Europe is playing with fire—literally, considering the two biggest European financial corps (Saeder-Krupp and the Frankfurt Bank Association) are both owned by dragons. SpinGlobal are hardly slouches in that department, either.
- Mr. Bonds

## SHIPPING

Getting stuff where it needs to be is Wuxing's second-biggest industry. It's also the industry where Wuxing's had the most competition in recent years. Last time we talked about Wuxing, I mentioned that there was a shadow war heating up between Wuxing and the second-biggest megacorp in the shipping world, Maersk. That conflict has only gotten hotter, and it's threatening to drag in other big players.

Although Maersk had started to make some moves into the South Pacific, Wuxing's biggest shipping subsidiaries (**Cartwright Cartage and Freight** and **Wuxing Worldwide Shipping**) had managed to keep their hold on major shipping lanes through what Kane and the Matrix tell me is called the North Pacific, like the Bering Sea and the Malacca Straits. That all changed when

Maersk partnered with Saeder-Krupp to open major ports in the northern NAN. By using the one rail line Mitsuhama didn't manage to buy, Maersk can move freight into the Pacific by entering North America from the Arctic, even using S-K's Tsimshian seaport instead of having to go through the Salish-Shidhe (and thus Wuxing-controlled) facility in Vancouver.

Needless to say, Wuxing's not happy with that turn of events. Before, the direct conflicts between them and Maersk were limited to Africa and the South Pacific (more on those below), but with Maersk having direct access to Wuxing's backyard, Wuxing decided to turn the tables. First, they used some of their leverage over Aztechnology to "persuade" the Azzies to allow them to offload shipments in Spain at Aztechnology-controlled ports. I also have it on good authority that a few months back, some high-level execs from Wuxing had a sit-down with a SpinGlobal Asia rep in Macao.

- Spinrad Global would be a natural partner for Wuxing, given their competition with Saeder-Krupp in so many areas.
- Heisenberg
- It's risky, though. Up to this point, Wuxing and S-K have been competitors, but they weren't openly hostile toward each other. Saeder-Krupp's been too preoccupied with reclaiming the top spot from Mitsuhama to care much about Maersk and Wuxing getting into a catfight, but if Wuxing allies with SpinGlobal and targets S-K in the process, Lofwyr might change his priorities.
- Sunshine

The good news for Wuxing is that with Maersk investing so heavily in its Arctic Ocean corridor, the totally-not-targeted pirate activity against Wuxing in the South Pacific is simmering down. The corp's strategy of splitting contracts off to be handled by smaller, better-disguised subsidiaries seems to have worked, and from what I've heard, it was a serious test for Wuxing's financial wizards to keep up with juggling accounts for the sheer number of front companies they've gone through over the last few years. Their persistence paid off, though, and Wuxing is now—for the time being, anyway—back on solid footing in the South Pacific.

- How long it'll take them to repair their image in the area is another question entirely.
- Baka Dabora

Likewise, Wuxing seems to be catching a break in Africa. Their **Suez Security Consulting** subsidiary has (unsurprisingly) maintained its great record in protecting ships from local pirates, something that Maersk's Marines have been a lot less successful at doing. On top of that, I've heard rumors that Maersk has had a terrible time with hold-ups moving its freighters through the Suez Canal, while



Wuxing's cargo breezes through. I'm sure it's just a coincidence that this only started happening after the Macao meeting I mentioned earlier.

- I don't know if Jimmy was aware of this before he uploaded this file, but the news in Hong Kong recently announced another major expansion by Wuxing: consumer air travel. Wuxing has operated Cathay Pacific Airlines as a freight-only service for decades, but until recently, they'd never shown any interest into providing passenger services. Now, they're advertising that they'll have service to more than thirty Pacific destinations within the first three months.
- Lei Kung

## CONSUMER GOODS

If there's one area where Wuxing can claim an unqualified success since our last update on them, it's consumer goods—you know, the everyday knickknacks that have been stamped with “Made in China” since back when China actually existed. The reason for that is that Wuxing recently closed a deal to acquire a majority share of Kong-WalMart, which puts them in control of the single largest consumer-goods retailer in the world. Now wageslaves everywhere can enjoy easy access to all the cheap crap that comes out of Wuxing's factories, and more importantly to Wuxing, they get to reap the profits from it.

- They also get to give the finger to Aztechnology, seeing as Stuffer Shack is one of Kong-WalMart's main competitors.
- Sunshine

Besides that feather in their cap, Wuxing hasn't lost a step when it comes to hawking everyday items nobody really seems to think about—food, drinks, clothes, commlinks and other personal electronics—and making variable-quality knockoffs of other corps' products. The slow, steady growth I talked about in the last update has gotten a little slower and less steady as they've met resistance from Evo and Saeder-Krupp in Eastern Europe and Spinrad Global in the Middle East, but they were making progress on the North American front. Even before the Kong-WalMart deal, cars by ESSY Motors and food products from Soba Foods were showing up in Seattle, the Salish-Shidhe Council, and CalFree. With Kong-WalMart in Wuxing's pocket, I'd expect to see them expand through the rest of North America pretty quickly.

## MAGICAL SERVICES

Look, I know I sounded like I was brown-nosing when I talked about Wuxing's arcane divisions in my last upload about them. The thing is, they actually *are* that good. Unlike Wuxing's consumer products division, **Ming Solutions** actually puts in





the effort to source high-quality materials like foci and reagents, and they take advantage of Wuxing's shipping expertise to get their products to customers quickly and reliably. It's even more important for a magician like me, who comes from a less common tradition and can't always find gear that I can actually use, especially if I'm working outside Asia.

- > You still sound like an ad.
- > Puck
- > As much as I'd love to say that a good talismonger can get you anything you need, especially when the alternative is lining a corp's pockets, there's been at least one time where Jimmy called me and asked if I carried something I'd never even heard of before. Just make sure to use a fake SIN you don't mind having burned.
- > Lyran

In addition to their storefronts, Wuxing offers the usual variety of magical services: security contracting, education, research, and so on. They're still heavily involved in cleaning up the astral damage that Mitsuhaman left behind in the Philippines, and they were working on the same kind of thing in Tsimshian until recently. That works seems to have been put on hold since Maersk and S-K expanded into the area, though. I've also had the misfortune of meeting paracritter handlers from **Awakened Protective Initiatives** on runs against both Wuxing and other corps around Hong Kong. If their name comes up in your legwork, don't make the mistake of thinking they're a run-of-the-mill arcane security company unless you want a hellhound chewing on your hoop.

- > API has started taking contracts further afield, too. I ran into one of their teams in Kolkata not too long ago.
- > Mika
- > What were you doing in Kolkata?
- > Ma'fan
- > You don't really expect me to answer that, do you?
- > Mika

## MEDICAL SERVICES

Wuxing's medical division hasn't suffered as much from the CFD crisis as I expected them to, especially given their former association with Evo. The losses they took from having to swear off using any kind of augmentation to treat their patients (or at least, having to accommodate patients who weren't willing to use and pay for those treatments) were offset by Evo's floundering reputation when the truth behind CFD came to light. **Bach Mai Medical** has mostly evicted Evo-owned CrashCart from Korea in the last few years, and

they were even making some small gains in Eastern Europe before they ran into massive roadblocks. It looks like DocWagon (or OmniStar, if you want to look at their parent company), Evo, and Saeder-Krupp still have no intention of letting Wuxing worm their way into the European market.

On the other hand, Bach Mai is still the dominant armed medical services corp in most of Asia, and they're gaining attention in other parts of the world for their expertise in treating Awakened patients. A few cities in the Salish-Shidhe Council have agreed to let Bach Mai operate there on an interim basis, which might be a sign that they're planning to expand into the rest of the NAN.

## TOP TALENT

### SHARON CHIANG-WU

Here's a fun fact about Sharon Chiang-Wu: her detractors within Wuxing have started calling her "Cixi," after the dowager empress who ruled the Imperial China for almost fifty years. The original Cixi took control of the empire by engineering a coup after her husband died, ruled with an iron fist, and ended up as a laughingstock when her efforts to prolong her own power led to the collapse of the entire dynasty.

Sharon Chiang-Wu is probably scarier than the real Cixi, because unlike the Empress Dowager, Sharon's too competent to become a laughingstock anytime soon. When she convinced Wuxing's board of directors to evict her husband as CEO and appoint her in his place, she had to deal with the company being under siege from outside while trying to fend off a civil war with Wu Lung-wei's supporters. She's not only done that, but actually strengthened her own position enough to quiet some of her rivals even as she faced down threats from Wuxing's competition.

One of the reasons Sharon has been able to secure her hold over Wuxing is run-of-the-mill corporate politics. Her willingness to take radical approaches to solve the company's problems meant replacing a lot of the old guard with hand-picked appointees who knew they owed her their job. Sharon had the good sense to make sure the executives she ousted found similar positions in other areas of Wuxing or its subsidiaries, or at other corps that weren't direct competitors. Or sometimes she just made sure that they got golden parachutes to soften the blow to their dignity.

- > Or ended up at the bottom of Hong Kong Harbor.
- > Clockwork

No matter how you dress it up, though, the fact of the matter is that Sharon's surrounded herself with subordinates who are both highly competent



and fiercely loyal. The result is that the people who still oppose Sharon aren't in a position to do much about it, and the number of people willing to support an outright rebellion against Sharon (which came up more than once in her early days as CEO) is shrinking by the day. As it becomes more and more clear that her way of doing things is working, resistance to Sharon's approach is fading, and a few of her old enemies within Wuxing have become grudging supporters.

- That's only going to last until something goes wrong. All it takes is one slip-up to give the haters an excuse to go after her.
- Borderline

## WU LUNG-WEI

As most of you probably know, Wu Lung-wei—the son of Wuxing's founder, and the corp's CEO until Sharon's coup a few years ago—has basically been sidelined out of the corp. As of my last update, Wu's obsession with the study of magical artifacts had led Sharon to convince Wuxing's board oust him from the CEO position, instead putting him in charge of a new “Special Acquisitions Division.” Even then, there were signs that he was being consumed by his pursuit of these artifacts, and things haven't gotten better with the passage of time; if anything, they've gotten worse.

I'm going to go out on a limb and say that nobody actually knows what's going on with Wu Lung-wei, or if they do, they aren't talking. I do know that it's been at least two years since anyone saw him in public, even at major events like Wuxing's Lunar New Year celebrations or the going-away party that Sharon threw for the Quints before they all went off to university. The few rumors that have come out always sound like they've been ripped from a screamsheet, saying drek like “he doesn't eat or sleep,” “he looks like a walking corpse,” or claiming he's been possessed by some kind of malicious spirit.

- Are you so sure those are rumors?
- Many-Names
- I knew someone was going to ask that. No, I'm not sure, and I haven't heard of anyone with a shred of credibility who is sure either way. I'm sure everyone has their own ideas, like they always do, but I'm just here to tell you all what I actually know.
- Jimmy No

## JAMES HARPER-SMYTHE

James Harper-Smythe has been Sharon Chiang-Wu's consigliere and fixer (if you can even call him a “fixer” at that level) for decades, and with his leónization treatments a few years ago, that relationship probably won't change anytime soon.

As Sharon consolidates her control over the corp, Harper-Smythe has been turning his attention towards two main priorities: overseeing “special projects” that don't quite fit into any one industry, like the Revival Project (which I'll talk about more later), and acting as a counterweight to Fu Peng's influence over Wuxing. Trying to contain Fu Peng's activities takes up most of Harper-Smythe's time nowadays, which usually keeps him anchored to his office at the Wuxing Skytower in Hong Kong. However, he's also been spotted in the capitals of various Chinese splinter states, usually meeting with government officials.

## THE WU QUINTS

For those of you who don't keep up with history, here's the short version. Wu Lung-wei and Sharon Chiang-Wu have five daughters: Fo, Shui, Tou, Moak, and Gum. They were born in 2061 after Sharon received a magical artifact called the Second Coin of Luck from Dunkelzahn's will. The girls are identical quintuplets, so people call them the Quints. If you want to know more about them as people, you can find them in pretty much any celebrity gossip rag. I'll even attach a clip from one here, for those of you who are too lazy to look it up yourself. [\[link\]](#)

### KA-POW! KA-POW!

### STAR POWER SPECIAL: THE WU QUINTS

Good evening, Hong Kong! It's Victoria Li, coming to you live from TVC City in Sai Kung! Tonight is a very special episode of Star Power, where we follow the Wu Quints as they prepare for their next year at university. Before we get started, let's have a little recap of what we know about each of the Quints' plans so far!

**Fo:** Named for the element of fire and known for her talent for plants, Fo is attending Stanford University in the California Free State—the same university her mother went to—where she studies business.

**Shui:** Named for the element of water and known as “the sociable one,” Shui is attending Princeton University in the UCAS, where she studies politics.

**Tou:** Named for the element of earth and known as “the one who never speaks,” Tou is staying the closest to home and attending Hong Kong University, where she studies medicine.

**Moak:** Named for the element of wood and known as “the negotiator,” Moak is going the furthest away from Hong Kong to attend Oxford University in the United Kingdom, where she studies law.

**Gum:** Named for the element of metal and known as “the genius,” Gum is attending the National University of Singapore, where she studies engineering.



If you don't care about celebrity gossip, don't worry, you're not the only one. Honestly, I had half a mind to skip this section completely; it's not like the Quints matter much when it comes to how Wuxing actually operates. Then I got a call from an acquaintance offering a huge pile of nuyen to do magical overwatch on a Wuxing-sponsored extraction at a university in Singapore. I had to pass because of other commitments, then found out a few weeks later that the slot and his entire team had been picked up by Wuxing corpsec. Keep that in mind if you get ambitious enough to take on an extraction at a university where one of the Quints is studying. I know I won't.

- So what, Wuxing's hiring runners to test their own security, then vanishing them to make sure their paydata doesn't get out? Dick move.
- Riot
- And not at all surprising.
- Hard Exit
- Other parties aren't passing up the chance to get at the Quints, either. A few of my fellow fixers around Asia have spent the last few years specializing in arranging "kidnap the Quints at college" runs. I've had more than a few requests to find a team that could pull off one of those runs, too. The Johnsons range from corp rivals and major Asian political figures to wealthy parents with unwed sons and bat-drek-crazy stalkers. The security on those girls is as sky-high as you'd expect from any major corporate figure, too: fake names, magical illusions over faces biosculpted to look like they're someone else, plainclothes bodyguards disguised as fellow students, regular Matrix sweeps against both eavesdroppers and any embarrassing publicity about the girls' extracurricular activities. I won't say it's impossible, but for what it's worth, every team I know that might have the skills to pull it off has turned those jobs down as too risky.
- Kia

What's a lot more interesting is everything the Quints have been doing in their time off school, and what their plans are after they're finished. The Quints are in their third year of university, which means most of them will be finishing their studies within the next year or two, and there's already speculation about which one (or ones) will be groomed to follow in Sharon's footsteps.

- I'm sure Wuxing's board is hoping that only one of the Quints gets involved with the company. Shiawase had it bad enough with the Three Orchids. Imagine how much worse it'd be if there were five of them.
- Rigger X

Fo, the Quint who supposedly has a green thumb, is in her last year of studying business in

Singapore. This past summer, she did an internship at the Malaysian Independent Bank, apparently working in their mergers and acquisitions department. The media keeps picking up reports from "anonymous Wuxing insiders" that she's currently the favorite to succeed Sharon as CEO someday, but I think we all know how meaningless that is at this point. Fo has also been spotted helping with the environmental cleanup in the Philippines, which I guess is where the whole "plants" thing comes in.

Shui, the most "sociable" of the Quints, is in her third of four years at Princeton. She's probably the least academically focused of the five girls, if her appearances on the Manhattan socialite circuit are anything to go by; she's said to keep an apartment in New York, and she regularly spends weekends there. Shui has also shown the least interest in taking a position within the family business after she graduates, though she did spend a month working with Wuxing-owned **Lotus Multimedia** this past summer.

- Least interest in taking an **official** position, perhaps. One of those "Manhattan socialite parties" had Shui meeting, and apparently getting along very well with, SpinGlobal North America VP Katie Brooks. I suspect she'll follow in her father's footsteps as "the Asian Damien Knight," whether she intends to or not.
- Kat-o'-Nine-Tales
- She's also been "romantically linked" with the son of a Horizon executive who's also attending Princeton. It's not clear whether the relationship is strictly personal, or whether the two companies are pursuing closer ties.
- Kay St. Irregular

Tou is as much of a mystery as ever. She's the one who hasn't been seen uncovered in public for years—you know, the one who people speculated was kidnapped in the 2070s and has had a body double standing in for her ever since. Whatever the truth is, nobody's said anything about having spotted one of the Wu Quints at HKU in the past few years (and you know that if they'd be recognized anywhere, it'd be in Hong Kong), so Tou's probably studying in disguise like the rest of the Quints. I assume she's also learned or decided to talk since she started university, so she's going to have to find a new gimmick besides being "the silent one."

Moak is the other Quint who's finishing university this year, studying law at Oxford in the United Kingdom. She's already spent a summer working in the legal department of Wuxing Europe's London headquarters, and corp-watchers expect her to go into contract law after she graduates, fitting her public persona of being "the negotiator." More interesting for us is that the projects Moak was working on were connected to James Harp-



er-Smythe, Sharon Chiang-Wu's personal attack dog (see previous section). If I didn't know better, I'd say she was lining up to become Sharon's personal fixer.

- > It's not like there isn't a precedent for that; we've all heard about Cara Villiers and Tess van Hama. The question is whether she's going to spend time as a runner first.
- > Pistons
- > Are you kidding? The shadows would eat a spoiled corp brat like her alive.
- > Sunshine
- > I'm sure people said that about Cara, too.
- > Pistons

Last but not least, **Gum** is living up to her public persona of "the genius" and putting on an impressive show at CalTech. Matrix engineering is kind of a weird choice of major for someone from a company who doesn't really do Matrix stuff, but maybe it's Sharon's way of building up some in-house technical expertise instead of relying solely on Telestrian.

- > That scans. I've heard some noise from the Airwave Domination Crew in Tír Tairngire about Gum possibly spending a year at Willamette University. Telestrian pulls most of their top talent from there.
- > Netcat
- > Gum also made some waves when she showed up at a media event in Busan this summer as the guest of Kyung-Mi Park, a K-pop star signed with one of Eastern Tiger's media subsidiaries. I'm not sure whether people were more surprised by the two women openly appearing as a couple, or the fact that people who are so prominently associated with Wuxing and Eastern Tiger were seen together when their companies have been on bad terms for years.
- > Kia

## FU PENG

I talked a little bit about Fu Peng in the section on Wu Lung-wei. What I said up there probably makes it sound like Fu's some kind of evil spirit that has the former Wuxing CEO under its malign influence. The thing is, for all we know, that's exactly what's happening. As Wu Lung-wei is consumed by his obsession with magical artifacts, Fu Peng seems to be making a play to consolidate the remaining pro-Wu (or really, anti-Sharon) executives under his control. He still attends every single board meeting, and the meeting minutes I've seen show that he goes out of his way to be a malcontent, digging his heels in against every suggestion that Sharon and Harper-Smythe make while urg-

ing the board to pursue "darker," less moral directions in their operations.

- > You say that like the corps give a drek about morality in the first place.
- > Old Crow
- > Of course they don't, but most of them at least pretend to care about it to avoid any negative PR. Fu Peng's pushing to abandon that charade entirely.
- > Jimmy No

The most concerning part for Sharon and Harper-Smythe is that Fu Peng can make a convincing argument that he speaks for Wu Lung-wei, letting him imply that Sharon's move to oust Wu was based completely on selfish interest—which it might have been, but it's still worked out well for the corp. Fu has also demanded that the board vote to increase funding for the Special Acquisitions department that Wu Lung-wei "oversees."

- > As bids to increase your own power goes, that one's pretty blatant.
- > Baka Dabora

## RIVALS AND REBELS

If you've been paying attention so far, you can probably guess most of the names that are going to come up in this section. Wuxing's number-one rival at the moment is Maersk. A lot of their current operations are focused on keeping the Scandinavian corp the frag out of Wuxing's territory—which, as far as Wuxing is concerned, is pretty much everywhere. If they can't do that (and even Wuxing would admit that kind of feat isn't really feasible), they'd settle for keeping Maersk out of Asia, Oceania, and western North America, the way things were before Maersk opened their Arctic Ocean seaport.

Maersk is far from Wuxing's only problem, though; Saeder-Krupp might actually be the more dangerous competitor for Wuxing. Saeder-Krupp is Wuxing's direct rival in both the financial and arcane services industries, and Wuxing's clash with Maersk is bringing the two triple-As ever closer to a direct conflict. Unfortunately for Wuxing, most of the megas who might be inclined to join a fight against Saeder-Krupp don't like Wuxing either, leaving them in a pretty precarious position.

Speaking of corps who don't like Wuxing or Saeder-Krupp, the Japanacops—Mitsuhamas, Renraku, and Shiawase—are as determined as ever to put their Chinese rival in its place. The most direct conflict is between Wuxing and Mitsuhamas over magical goods and services; Mitsuhamas's **Pentacle Distribution** is one of Ming Solutions' biggest direct competitors, and narrowly holds the title of



“largest magical-services corp in the world,” something Wuxing would love to change. Renraku and Shiawase have fewer direct conflicts with Wuxing and mostly support Mitsuhama out of nationalist solidarity, although Wuxing and Renraku are starting to step on each other’s toes in the Philippines.

Besides those five, there are the megas who aren’t actively hostile towards Wuxing but still don’t particularly like them. Both Aztechnology and Evo have built up a lot of bad blood with Wuxing in recent years. The Azzies resent Wuxing holding the NatVat bailout over their heads, and the fact that Wuxing is now their direct competitor in both arcane and consumer goods. Evo, meanwhile, is still sore over how publicly Wuxing disavowed them during the CFD crisis. As for Ares and Horizon, neither corp really has much interaction with Wuxing, for better or worse.

The only megacorp that Wuxing might be able to consider friendly is Spinrad Global. They have their share of potential conflict, like if Aegis Cognito decides to stick their noses into Wuxing’s financial shenanigans, but they also have common interests when it comes to undermining Maersk and Saeder-Krupp. SpinGlobal might also be a powerful ally if Wuxing tries to reform the Pacific Prosperity Group (again), with SpinGlobal’s strong presence in Indonesia complimenting Wuxing’s operations in Malaysia. There have already been some development projects on the island of Borneo/Kalimantan that were jointly funded by the Malaysian Independent Bank and SpinGlobal’s Chalmers & Cole, and it’s pretty clear that the two corps are cooperating in the Middle East.

Wuxing isn’t out of the woods when it comes to internal conflict, either. Sharon Chiang-Wu has made strides to cement her control over the corp, but Fu Peng is a persistent thorn in her side. I’m sure that Sharon would’ve ordered Fu dead by now if she knew how to actually kill him. Unfortunately for her, the enigmatic entity (who still runs circles around anyone trying to identify or track him, let alone cause him harm somehow) is still hell-bent on weakening Sharon’s control of the corp.

- Why, though? At risk of sounding like a corp shill, Sharon’s actually been good for Wuxing and its shareholders. Doesn’t undermining her go against his own interests?
- Riot
- If he were metahuman, yes. However, between his decades-long lack of any mundane data trail, his penchant for disguising his identity and appearing in multiple places at once, the reports of his magical abilities, and the power he seems to exercise over Wu Lung-wei, I’m fairly confident that Fu Peng is some sort of spirit—and judging by how he’s driving Wu Lung-wei to self-destruction and pushing Wuxing’s board to indulge their worst impulses, I doubt his intentions are benign.
- Winterhawk

And then there are the elves. I’ll let Frosty talk about that.

## PLANS AND PROBLEMS

### JOURNEY TO THE WEST

Although Wuxing’s doing their best to conduct a shadow war against Maersk’s operations in the Algonkian-Manitou Council (and are happy to hire runners who are willing to travel), blowing up a few rail lines isn’t going to be enough to maintain their hold on the market in the face of Maersk’s expansion. To do that, Wuxing’s going to need to find ways to trade in the heart of Europe the way Maersk is doing in Asia. Their arrangement to ship cargo through the Suez and Mediterranean to Spain is one option, but I’ve seen some paydata that suggests they’re looking for other alternatives. One of the projects they mentioned is called the “Journey to the West.” If it is what I think it is, the name comes from an ancient Chinese novel about a Buddhist pilgrim who travels to India and Central Asia.

- I wouldn’t have taken you for a literature nerd.
- Sounder
- I’m not. It’s just that that novel’s as well-known among Chinese speakers as Shakespeare is in English.
- Jimmy No

Assuming I got the reference right, it would mean that Wuxing’s looking to expand their freight business into Europe via the Middle East. I don’t know exactly how going through India and Central Asia would help them do that besides it being generally in the right direction, but I’m sure someone else on here can fill in the blanks.

- I don’t think it would. It sounds to me like they’re trying to reach the New Silk Road to get through Turkestan and into Russia, but that whole line is controlled by Saeder-Krupp and Evo.
- Red Anya
- If they’re already in bed with SpinGlobal, they could go through Pakistan into Iran and East Anatolia instead. Or at least, they’d have a better chance of making those arrangements if they had Global Sandstorm brokering the deal for them.
- Goat Foot

I do know that if Wuxing wants to move anything by land, they’re going to have to deal with the headache of trying to negotiate for passage with the various splinter nations that occupy the Chinese mainland—which brings me to the next point.



## THE ELVEN CONNECTION

POSTED BY: FROSTY

Hoi, chummers. Like I predicted in the **Streetpedia** upload, it looks like Wuxing has taken Telestrian Industries under their wing. For those who aren't familiar with them, Telestrian Industries Corporation is a Tír Tairngire-based megacorp that's historically specialized in arcane goods, augmentations (especially bioware), and Matrix technologies. They were a AA-rated corp up until a couple years ago, when the Corporate Court removed their second A and the extraterritoriality that goes with it. Suddenly, Telestrian was subject to the local laws of pretty much everywhere they operated, and the corp's never really gone out of their way to be nice to others. They needed new friends, fast.

Enter Wuxing. The Hong Kong-based corp offered Telestrian the opportunity to use their extraterritorial holdings to evade legal scrutiny and access to wider markets, in exchange for collaboration on future projects. They knew that TIC's expertise in augmentations and Matrix technologies would be invaluable in helping them stand up to the Japanacorps. Telestrian didn't like the idea of being the junior partner in any relationship, but they knew they didn't have much choice in the matter if they wanted to survive long enough to regain their lost AA rating. Ultimately, it didn't take long for them to sign the partnership arrangement, complete with a widely Matrix-cast handshake between Sharon Chiang-Wu and Telestrian CEO (and Tír Prince) Lynne Telestrian.

Ever since then, the two corps have been uneasy allies. As far as Telestrian's concerned, they only accepted Wuxing's deal to pull in nuyen by having Tír Tairngire telesma on Ming Solutions shelves and Lyric of Portland clothes on Kong-WalMart racks while they work on regaining their self-sufficiency. They've already given up more of their independence than they ever intended, and they'll fight tooth and nail to avoid becoming any more reliant on Wuxing's goodwill. On the other hand, Sharon Chiang-Wu isn't stupid. She knows full well that Lynne Telestrian would have no qualms about taking everything Telestrian wants and leaving her to pick up the tab, and she knows that Wuxing wields the power to make Telestrian give something up in exchange for what they're getting. That's why Bach Mai Medical offers cybersurgery to install Telestrian-produced cyberjacks, and (I've been told) Wuxing security deckers are using Telestrian's new Zephyr cyberdeck.

- > Drek, is that what that was? I went up against a Wuxing decker the other day who had hotter hardware than I would've expected from that corp.
- > Pistons

Beneath all the publicity shots, the elf in charge of liaising with Wuxing is Stephen Telestrian, who was named TIC's new "Executive Vice-President for Inter-Corporate Affairs" shortly after Telestrian and Wuxing signed their deal. In practical terms, this makes him Telestrian's ambassador to Wuxing. If the rumors I've heard are true, Stephen has an office a few doors down from Lynne's at Telestrian's HQ in Cara'Sir, which I guess tells you how seriously Telestrian is taking this new arrangement with Wuxing.

The two corps are also experimenting with coordinating their shadow ops in the Seattle Metroplex. If my info is correct, Stephen's daughter Kelly is the point of contact for Telestrian's shadow dealings in the area. I've heard she was briefly a runner herself, but I don't know her handle or what she did.

- > She was a decker, she went by Maera, and after the one time I ran into her in the Matrix, I swear to Ghost she's the elfiest elf I've ever seen.
- > Glitch
- > Hey!
- > Freya
- > If you wanted to keep your title, you should've answered my message about contributing to our most recent upload on magic.
- > Glitch

## PROJECT REVIVAL

After seeing someone in the *Streetpedia* download suggest that Wuxing's trying to reunify Greater China, I remembered noticing that the local hiring boards have had a steady increase in mainland-based job postings in the last few years and started tracking the different types of runs I saw. I never got around to looking for patterns, but looking back, I think an unusually high num-

ber of those jobs involved runs against mainland governments and the officials who work in them (see more on these lines in the **Help Wanted** section). Everyone around here knows that Wuxing's been expanding their influence on the mainland for years, so it wouldn't surprise me if those runs were intended to make those governments bow to Wuxing's pressure. That's going to be a long, hard road if Wuxing wants to pull it off, but the megas are renowned for their long-term planning.



## HELP WANTED

If you're going to work for Wuxing, you're going to be asked to do some weird things. It's not that the jobs themselves are that weird—the missions themselves are often quite straightforward—but they'll ask you to do certain things in weird and not entirely intuitive ways. For example, on an infiltration target, you might be asked to approach the facility only from the north. Your rigger may be told where or where not to park their vehicles. Conjurers may receive specific guidance on what type of spirits to summon and when.

As with most things in the shadows, the trick is knowing when to follow this advice and when not to. For the most part, you absolutely should. Wuxing diviners, geomancers, and so forth are the best in the world, and when they give you advice, it's for a reason. For the most part, their advice will make your job go easier as forces align around you. You'll find unexpected boosts and bits of luck going your way, like a drowsy security guard or a malfunctioning alarm. In most circumstances, Wuxing wants things to go your way, so let them help you.

As we all know, though, sometimes we're set up to fail. The directions you're given could make things more difficult for you or bring different obstacles into play. We're all wise enough to double-check the instructions Mr. Johnson is giving us to make sure they're workable—at least, I hope we are—but what do we do with directions where the outcome of following them is not clear?

Like anything else, you need sources. If you don't have someone who knows spirit (or is a spirit themselves), find one, and have them evaluate the manasphere, ley lines, and spirit presence in the area you're working in, and compare them to your directions. It will cost you extra if you don't have in-house expertise, but dead and rich is still dead.

- In particular, get someone who knows how to check the manasphere for recent changes. A lot of times, Wu shamans will have paved the way for your work, so gaining some insight into what they did can help you understand why they did it.
- Ethernaut

With that said, let's look at some of the particular areas for work.

## WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD

The single largest threat to Wuxing's core industries is Maersk's ability to ship cargo from Europe to Asia via Saeder-Krupp's railroad in the northern Native American Nations. Wuxing North America will pay very well to make sure those operations are disrupted. The catch is that, for the time being, Wuxing wants to avoid going up against Lofwyr directly. Instead, they're focusing their efforts on





the rail line running between the Maersk-owned Arctic Ocean port of Churchill and Saeder-Krupp's Pacific port at Prince Rupert in Tsimshian.

Interested runners will receive instructions to make their way up to Edmonton in the Athabaskan Council and wreak havoc on those rail lines. If they can destroy Maersk's shipments in the process, all the better. Luckily for the runners, the Athabaskan Council has a long history of eco-terrorism, and the local TerraFirst! cells know full well that Maersk has oil-drilling operations in the Arctic. Unfortunately, the eco-terrorists are also very anti-corp, and any runner looking for their aid will have to watch their words carefully.

## HEARTS AND MINDS

If China is to be reunified, it won't be through conquest. It would be a spectacular waste of resources for Wuxing to attempt to build an army and sweep through Southeast Asia (certain dictums about avoiding land wars in Asia come to mind). What happened to the UCAS is a bit more of a blueprint for what Wuxing could attempt: getting people to join together or shift alliances because you make them want to. This can mean making them lose faith in their current government, making them worried about threats that might seem too large for a single smaller nation to handle, or making the potential gains from an alliance or partnership too lucrative to pass up.

How do these principles specifically play out in the Chinese Reunification effort? It starts with the Canton Confederation, which has the best relationship with Wuxing of any nation in the area, to the point where many thing Wuxing essentially controls it. Guangxi could be an interesting next target—the pirates and bandits it houses are a perpetual annoyance to both the Canton Confederation and Hong Kong. The non-bandit population of Guangxi tends to have a positive view of the bandits, seeing them as their own Robin Hoods, bringing wealth to the nation that the megacorps can be bothered to provide. Staging false flag operations to make the bandits look more hostile to Guangxi natives is one tool Wuxing is using.

Henan is perhaps a tougher nut to crack. It remains one of the most staunchly anti-corporate nations in earth, and the government remains in firm control of the national economy. That means they would not currently be at all receptive to overtures from Wuxing or the Canton Confederation. Wuxing might need to play a long game there that involves at least two prongs: control of the sacred mountain of Hua Shan and the succession plan for Shaanxi monarch. Grooming the successor (whichever of Queen Michelle's sons that might be) and weakening Henan's strength in the internal fight over the mountain could change things in Henan. Just how it will change is unclear, but

Wuxing believes that just about anything would be an improvement over the current government.

- Remember that people fight over Hua Shan because there is power there, and no one is better poised to unlock it than Wuxing. If Wuxing gains more influence in Shaanxi and thus more control over Hua Shan, it would be good for them and quite bad for the entire rest of the world.
- Lyran
- We all know the government of Henan is humorless and unforgiving, but they're still better than a megacorp. Work to defend them if you can.
- Old Crow

## SOPHISTICATED LOANSHARKING

These days, the main difference between bankers and loan sharks is the quality of their suits (hint: the loan sharks wear better ones). The primitive days where someone would lend you money in exchange for you eventually paying them more money are fading; these days, cutthroat financiers are very interested are interested in a wide variety of ways to put you in debt. Corporate equity, indentured servitude, and resource rights are just some of the things they have been exploring. But what they like more than anything is the practice that gave usury a bad name centuries ago: making people agree to impossible terms and then extracting huge concessions from them when they can't meet those terms.

Wuxing is fantastic with this and has been stepping it up in their ongoing spat with Maersk. They have been pushing the limits to see how willing people are to read the fine print, then working to collect the exorbitant payments. Sometimes, this kind of dispute ends up in court, but other times it ends up in the shadows. You might end up chasing down a whole range of things in these jobs—debtors might owe cash, tech prototypes, teslas, or perhaps their soul—but no matter what the case is, you're going to have to find them, then be persuasive, intimidating, or both.

## GAME INFORMATION

Wuxing leaves its mark on the people and things it deals with; here's a couple of ways that happens.

### WE SHIP ANYWHERE

Wuxing is no stranger to using its global shipping reach and extraterritorial privileges to move cargoes that local governments consider illegal. You have a connection in Wuxing that allows you to move a reasonable amount of cargo between



major cities without fear of having it seized by local authorities.

**Cost:** 4 Karma

**Game effect:** The definition of “reasonable amount” is at the gamemaster’s discretion, though generally the street value of the goods should not reach six figures. “Major cities” are cities with at least one million people. The time it takes to arrive is approximately one day per every 4,000 kilometers traveled (minimum one day).

## **CHEAP KNOCKOFF**

For decades, Chinese companies have been notorious for making subpar copies of brand-name gear, and Wuxing is no exception. They have a long line of cheap products that look like their more expensive kin but don’t always function the same. Your willingness to use them depends on how much risk you’re comfortable with.

**Game effect:** This quality applies to gear and equipment, not people. The cost of the item is reduced by fifty percent, but any test made with this item (including tests to repair it) requires one fewer rolled 1 to make a glitch or critical glitch (e.g., normally you’d need to roll four 1s with a dice pool of 7 to glitch; this quality lowers that number to three). On a critical glitch, the item is ruined in addition to any other penalties the user suffers. This quality may not apply to foci or other magical items, owing to Wuxing’s well-earned reputation for quality in that field. The Social Rating from Cheap Knockoff fashion is half what it normally would be (see p. 50, *Firing Squad*). Players can find Cheap Knockoff gear if they have a relevant Knowledge skill (such as Black Markets or Retail Operations) or if they have a contact who might deal or interact with that material. That contact needs to succeed on a Connection + Loyalty (2) test to tell the PC where they can find the gear they’re looking for.



# CORPORATE COURT RANKINGS (2081)

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# APPENDIX

## NOTABLE AA CORPS

After the Megacorporate Revision and Audit, there are about forty of these left. Here are a few notable ones that are AA level and are not a subsidiary of any of the Big Ten.

### **BRACKHAVEN INVESTMENTS**

**Focus:** Finance

**Headquarters:** Seattle

**Key thing to know:** Led by Kenneth Brackhaven, the former governor of Seattle, this firm is newly focused on the changing political environment and how they can keep making money off of it.

### **EASTERN TIGER CORPORATION**

**Focus:** Electronics, energy

**Headquarters:** Pusan, Korea

**Key things to know:** Once a major player in the Pacific Prosperity Group, Eastern Tiger's ongoing spat with Wuxing has weakened the group and left the future of the alliance in doubt.

### **ERIKA**

**Focus:** Matrix gear and electronics

**Headquarters:** Espoo, Scandanavian Union

**Key thing to know:** Once the capital E in NeoNET, Erika is back on its own and contemplating a headquarters shift to Azania.

### **FEDERATED-BOEING**

**Focus:** Aerospace and air travel

**Headquarters:** Seattle

**Key thing to know:** A member of the Pacific Prosperity Group thanks to their heavy industry in southeast Asia, F-B has lately been closer to Renraku than their PPG allies, causing further chaos to the PPG.

### **FORD MOTORS**

**Focus:** Automobiles and groundcraft

**Headquarters:** Dearborn, UCAS

**Key thing to know:** With Detroit not being the most friendly town for corporations right now and UCAS being in flux, Ford is looking at how to best flex their muscle and perhaps make Detroit their town again.

### **FRANKFURT BANKING ASSOCIATION**

**Focus:** Finance

**Headquarters:** Frankfurt, Allied German States

**Key thing to know:** They have their fingers in a huge percentage of the world's transactions, so your money has likely passed through them at some point. You might not have noticed, but they did.



## **HILDEBRANDT-KLEINFORT-BERNAL**

**Focus:** Finance, security services

**Headquarters:** London, United Kingdom

**Key thing to know:** This finance giant has been involved with NeoNET and its components for years, and that hasn't stopped. They are arranging for the future of the components—namely, trying to make sure they have one.

## **KONDORCHID**

**Focus:** Transport and shipping

**Headquarters:** Guyaquil, Ecuador

**Key thing to know:** Since the corporation is a cartel front, many people thought it would struggle when the tempo craze dried up. Tempo use didn't entirely vanish, though, and there are always new street drugs to invest in, so the corporation has not gone away.

## **MAERSK INCORPORATED ASSETS**

**Focus:** Shipping

**Headquarters:** Copenhagen, Scandinavian Union

**Key thing to know:** They can move anything anywhere, and they hate Wuxing with a red-hot passion.

## **MONOBE INTERNATIONAL**

**Focus:** Biotech, retail, customer service

**Headquarters:** Matsuyama, Japanese Imperial State

**Key thing to know:** The Japanacorp that hasn't ever managed to become an AAA; their ongoing spat with the emperor and Shiawase is not helping their efforts to get ahead.

## **NOVATECH**

**Focus:** Matrix gear, electronics, software,

**Headquarters:** St. Louis

**Key things to know:** Once a megacorporation on its own, then part of NeoNET, Novatech is trying to figure out what it wants to be now, in a free city that is trying to do the same.

## **OMNISTAR**

**Focus:** Emergency response and more—this new conglomerate includes medical service corp DocWagon, law enforcement corp Lone Star, and magical goods and services ace Manadyne.

**Headquarters:** Atlanta, CAS

**Key thing to know:** Now occupying the same city as Ares (parent of law-enforcement rival Knight Errant), OmniStar is prepared to bring competition right to Ares' face and perhaps someday take their seat on the Corporate Court.

## **PROTEUS**

**Focus:** Heavy industry, construction, aquacologies and naval architecture

**Headquarters:** Helgoland, Allied German States

**Key thing to know:** They are a leader in self-sustaining water-based residencies/workplaces, but stories persist of secret areas in their constructions where weird things happen.

## **SONY CORPORATION**

**Focus:** Electronics

**Headquarters:** Neo-Tokyo, Japanese Imperial State

**Key thing to know:** The shadows of the Japanacorps are tough to escape from, and Sony has been pondering chasing greener grass elsewhere. Is the more-wide-open UCAS a possible answer?

## **TRUMAN TECHNOLOGIES**

**Focus:** Media and entertainment

**Headquarters:** Chicago

**Key thing to know:** Newly independent (after leaving Horizon) and trying to rebuild their base in the still-wild heart of Chicago, this corp is looking for quick profits and strong defense against those who might snatch them up.

## **UNIVERSAL OMNITECH**

**Focus:** Biotechnology, genetic research, mining

**Headquarters:** Vancouver, Salish-Shidhe

**Key thing to know:** CEO Thomas Roxborough, a decker of considerable strength, continues his quest to overcome his disease and make his physical form manageable.

## **ZETA-IMPERIAL CHEMICALS**

**Focus:** Chemicals and pharmaceuticals

**Headquarters:** Interlaken, Switzerland

**Key thing to know:** This is a giant, rich corporation that probably would be an AAA corp if 1) they were more diversified; and 2) they hadn't gotten caught back in the '40s putting drugs where they weren't supposed to be.



FIN







# CORP REPORT

You can be proactive, shift paradigms, think outside the box, and set aggressive agendas all you want—the megacorporations of the Sixth World are still going to disturb your plans, ruin your day, and screw up the world. They are shadowrunners' employees and adversaries, the source of cash and the source of despair. Shadowrunners need to know them—because knowing your enemy is the first step to bringing them down.

**Power Plays** provides updates on the Big Ten megacorporations of the Sixth World, as well as news on a few other corps. Whether you're taking a job from one of them or going up against one, this book has what you need to know to survive the job.

**Power Plays** is for use with *Shadowrun, Sixth World*.

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