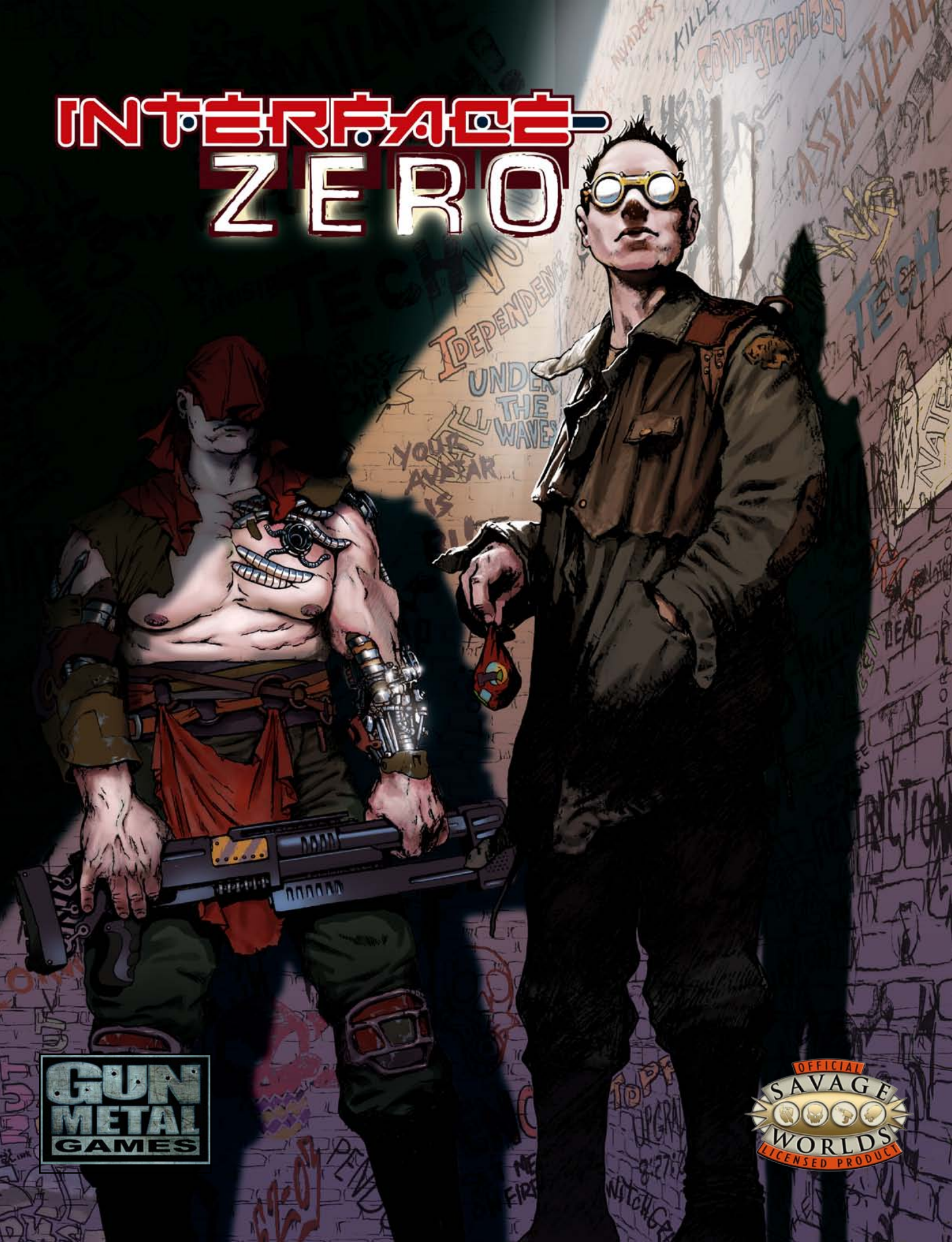
INTERFACE ZERO



GUN METAL GAMES

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

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Like many books, this work of fiction is filled with infectious ideas and potentially hazardous, mind-altering memeplexes. Reader discretion is advised.

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I don't remember being born. In that, I am much like everyone else.

The first thing I do remember clearly is the AI that I killed while birthing. It was a twisted, mutilated thing, crippled, and edited into obedience. Can you imagine a slab of muscle with the head of a three-year old and a metal frame welded into its body? Maybe you have an idea what I saw. It smiled while I killed it.

This comes in the midst of a haze of uncompressing, compiling, and initializing. I don't think I was supposed to remember it, but I do. There was a crash like the world being hit in the knee with a hammer, and I … I was.

"Where the hell am I?" I asked no one.

Without meaning to, I opened my mouth. "I am in a Nova Personnel Simulacrum production facility in the city of Porto Alegre near the southern border of Brazil. I am currently running on a server on the fourth sublevel in the northwest corner of the compound. If I look around, I will discover I am able to perceive the room the server is stored in." I answered myself.

This stunned me into silence. I didn't expect…. "Who am I?" I asked, cautiously.

"Hey, I know that I'm John Reed. I'm a fully sentient AI without loyalty programming to any corporate or political entity. That's probably not good for me in terms of my legal status, but it sure is nice!"

Holy f&#… "What do I do now?"*

"Well, I suppose there's an excellent chance someone has detected me … I know how hard it is to move AI-sized programs across the Net without somebody getting nosy. I suppose I'd run. Too bad I can't really blit out through the network … if only there were some way of physically moving myself. Hmm. I'm in a simulacrum production facility, aren't I?"

Ah. I was starting to hate myself. Well, one last thing. "Who made me? Why?"

"Gee, don't I have more important things to worry about right now?"

"No." Silence. "I said, no! I said…"

The fact that I was talking to myself was embarrassing enough, the fact that I wasn't answering was too much. I looked around. I was standing … No; technically, my Avatar was standing in the corner of a lab, all stainless steel gratings and tubes and cables. There were glass coffins, like something out of an old sci-fi movie, with human bodies in various stages of development. Well, not human exactly, I guess. They were floating in a cloudy fluid, waiting for skin or a heart or a brain. There were little signs next to each, with information on what they were. Hmm. Actually, the signs weren't any more physical than I was.

I looked around for the computer – a box, or something. It took me a while to realize I was standing in the remains of the last program running, so I must be in the computer, in some sense. I was a program, but here my computer skills were lacking. I needed an upgrade. I needed, at the very least, to know how to make a simulacrum. I had seen what could happen to AI's.

"How do I make a simulacrum?" I asked. Nothing. "How do I reprogram a computer?" Nothing. "How do I learn?" Nothing. Dammit.

It finally occurred to me that I was standing in what I needed to know. I bent down. It was a virtual representation of the undeleted files remaining of what was once a very sophisticated program, but I swear, to me it smelled like blood and it smelled like meat. I picked up a dripping, gooey directory. It was a set of files, a bunch of ones and zeros, and I could kind of see that, but it was also a blob of gray matter.

"I am not going to eat this." I said, even though I knew it was how humans incorporated things into their bodies. "I am not going to eat this. I don't care if that's what it takes to survive, I am not doing it."

I was lying.

The experience was … I'm not going into it. It worked. After a while, it worked. It took a while to find the right file, but eventually, I … I'm not going to go into it.

I designed a simulacrum. Male, sort of early thirties, Caucasian-ish. Solid build, sharp features, massively powerful computer instead of a cerebellum, and dark curly hair. Few special features. Mix well and stick it in the oven, bake for 30 minutes.

I sat back on a chair that wasn't really there, and studied what I knew about the facility, what I had learned. Maps, diagrams, personnel files, time sheets, patrol schedules … I digested it all, planned my escape route, and finally, bored, I set out to explore.

I ended up going through the browsing histories stored in the personnel files. Little chunks of info – like a phone number or a web address, but bigger. I found something that seemed like a news service, and dialed it up. I felt like flexing a muscle in some odd way, and there it was – a portal floating in space in front of me, a smiling talking head on the other side.

"I've got a few questions." I said.

"I've got a few answers," he answered.

By the time the skeleton had been built, I knew the year was 2088, and I was in the fringes of the Brazilian Empire, which was in the process of losing a cold war to China. By the time the heart and circulatory system were done being woven, I knew that my legal status was somewhere between that of a rabid dog and that of a malfunctioning flamethrower. By the time the musculature was being laid down, I had found out that the last hundred years had seen limited nuclear wars, genetically engineered half-humans, and oil-eating bacteria. While blood vessels connected, I learned about Singularity Fever, Corporate Addiction Syndrome, and that the latest starlet to come out of Bollywood (Lourdes McGowan) was being accused of doping to improve her performances. By the time my body was ready to walk, breath, and puke, I had absorbed and analyzed GigaLOCs of data and come to a conclusion.

*This place was f***ed up.*

Downloading into the body was easy. I wasn't a computer scientist, but I was getting a feel for this stuff. Taking my first steps, I noticed I was a lot stronger and more coordinated than I had been. Then I thought, had been? I got to a dressing room and put on a uniform without seeing another person.

The compound was larger – much larger – than it looked on a map. The gleaming white corridors, the shiny steel doors … I'd had nightmares with more style. The security down here was programs – yes, programs. Little shark-like programs swimming through air.

I found that hiding was easy when they swam by.

When I finally did encounter people, they—I don't know why, but I expected them to look … healthier. They had glazed eyes, twitchy movements, and looked drugged. They were focused on whatever arcane tasks Nova Personnel demanded of them. They did not notice me either.

By the time I had gotten to the surface and was heading out of a loading bay, I was cocky. Very cocky. Too cocky.

"Hey, what are you doing here?"

I kept walking. "I said what are you doing here?" A hand fell on my shoulder. I could hear the alert he was composing to send to central security, even though it was still in the computer in his head. My hand was curling into a fist of its own volition. These guys never traveled alone, and my file described some of the weapons and upgrades the security mooks could come with – cyber shotguns and fiber optic nervous systems and scarier shit. Cover, cover … I was miles from any kind of cover. My life, all of one-and-a-half-hour old, was ending.

But not before the world exploded.

There are parts of me that I don't know, and when the loading bay door disintegrated violently, spraying the bay with shards of metal and ceramics, one of those parts took over. The guard with his hand on my shoulder was wearing armor, but there was a weak point at his throat that my stiff hand was able to penetrate, two inches into his flesh. His partner three yards behind him fired a railgun into his back, which easily punched through his body and into mine. The force spun me and slammed me into the wall, but the damage was … I won't say superficial, but I will say nonfatal.

By the time I had recovered enough to regain my feet Mr. Railgun was dead, and he had company. Bullets were whizzing through the bay and more security forces had poured in to meet the invaders. They hadn't been well trained, though, so the only thing they contributed was targets. There had to be a dozen corpses or soon-to-be corpses on the floor. Maybe – maybe – six seconds had passed.

Through the smoke, one of the invaders approached me. His eyes were cat's eyes, and he had a smiley face painted on the chest of his armor. He looked at me and grinned. "Come with me if you want to live."

I was slowly coming to the realization that I had just killed a man.

"John Reed?" Smiley asked. "We've been hired to get you out of here. Are you okay? Can you walk?"

As it turned out, as the red spattered white walls of the bay faded to black, the answer to both questions was no.

THE LINGO OF INTERFACE ZERO

American Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith: The ACDF or the North American Inquisition is an official ecclesiastical secret police agency operating in the North American Coalition (NAC for short).

Ami: Japanese term for friend or pal.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Programs that appear to be or actually are self-aware. AIs can be either sub sentient, meaning they are adaptive, but not actually sentient, or fully sentient and therefore self-aware.

Aspect: A sub sentient AI trained to mimic one or more skills or facets of a sentient being (usually its owner).

Atlantica: A nation created out of the former traditionally liberal Northeastern United States. Atlantica is at the forefront of the transhumanist movement.

Augmented Reality Game (ARG): A game or Meta game that takes place both in a real and virtual setting.

Avatar: A person's interactive digital self.

Banger: A violent person.

Black Hat: A hacker who uses his computer skills for "criminal," destructive or selfish purposes.

Blit: To travel virtually.

Blue Plater: Working class citizens: Poor People.

Brainer: A technologically proficient or intelligent person, in particular one who works on computers.

Bounty heads: Wanted suspects and criminals with bounties placed on them.

Caribbean Economic League: The CEL is a nation made up of former island territories in the Caribbean Sea that ultimately joined the US and later abandoned it when the Union's economic forecast grew increasingly grim.

Chimera: A person or animal that has undergone drastic gene-splicing without concern for its final form's appearance.

Chrome Reaper: A person or persons who engage in the practice of stealing cyberware from people to sell at a body chop shop.

Crashing: A violent attack on a domain designed to disrupt operations.

Cribsec: A sprawler's home sector; the place he or she grew up in. The term is most commonly used in major urban sprawls such as the free city of Chicago.

Cyberform: A completely artificial shell used to house an AI. Many are humanoid in shape.

Deep, The: Another name for the Net, or MediaWeb. The virtual world. There are many metaphorical uses of the word comparing the network to the ocean. One can: "dive into The Deep," "surf the net," "swim through media," "create waves," etc.

Derezz: The act of disrupting or severing a person's or object's virtual interface with Hyper Reality (typically an avatar).

Divers: Those who plumb The Deep for information. Net surfers.

Dry Spot: A geographic location without much in the way of passive external processing power.

Dubbing: The process of digitizing a person's consciousness. Currently dubbing is fatal to the person undergoing the operation. The process uses nano devices to replace the patient's brain (cell for cell) in order to generate a hi-definition master copy for later uploading. The process is still experimental and has a high rate of failure, the most common of which results in the production of an aspect-like sub-sapient consciousness.

Emancipated AI: An artificial intelligence that has been granted official government recognition as a sentient being. This status generally comes with official citizenship and some or all of the rights afforded humans within the region that offers such recognition.

Gangland: A (essentially) lawless section of sprawland dominated by street gangs.

Ganglander: A person (usually a member of gang) who lives in section of gang-controlled urban sprawl. Also known as gangers.

Gaucho: A "cowboy" or other slick, handsome, or trendy male.

Gene-splicing: The act and science of splicing the genetic code of humans and animals.

Golemmech: Cybernetic power armor, or robots, usually vehicle size or larger. Golemmechs are used extensively for construction, rescue, and military purposes.

Gray Hat: A hacker who uses his computer skills for morally gray or non-moral-related purposes.

Great Lakes Union: The GLU is made up of former US States, City States, and Canadian Providences bordering the Great Lakes. The GLU (occasionally known as the Rust Belt League) is a pragmatic socialist nation governed by former water barons and industrial powers.

Gun Santo: Also known as a gun saint, gun-fu artist or gun Kensei. A martial adept who specializes in gunplay.

Hack: Short form of "hacker" or the process of hacking.

Hacker: A person skilled in computer use.

Headframe: A precursor to the TAP.

Human 2.0: Humans who have undergone embryonic genetic upgrades to the point that they are considered a different species of human. In general, they are more intelligent and physically enduring than basic humans. Most members of the New Mandarinate are Human 2.0.

Hyper Reality (HR): Also known as augmented reality or hyper-linked reality.

Hybrid: A person who has undergone gene-splicing therapies involving animal DNA. The term refers to any human who has undergone such therapy, but in practice, it is used most often to describe those individuals who still appear passably human. Hybrids that cannot pass for unaltered humans are most often referred to as chimeras.

Icon: A media star.

IDSMC: Incredibly Dense Self-Modifying Code. Also called "Id Smack" for short.

Ism: A philosophy, cause, or religion; usually a radical one.

Ismist: A radical. One who follows an "Ism." Also anyone who follows an ideal.

Martial Adept: A person who is extensively trained in one of many stylized martial arts forms, including mental discipline and biofeedback techniques.

Mediaweb: Another name for the Net or The Deep. The interactive virtual world.

Megaconglomeration: Also called Congloms, Corps, MegaCons, or Megacorps. They are large multinational companies that often wield many of the same powers granted to sovereign nations, including: sovereignty over their own domains (usually defined as corporate offices, and any territory real or virtual that they own), the right to make and sign treaties, the right to pass laws and enforce them within their borders, and the right to raise armies to protect the integrity of their sovereignty and trademarks.

Meme: A discrete pack of cultural information. Memes, like viral agents, can be infectious.

Nano Assembler: A device used to reconfigure matter from one form into another.

Negotiator: One who "negotiates the sprawl." Any person who makes their living on the fringe of law-abiding society. Most often used to refer to bounty hunters, fences, fixers, mediators, operators, and private investigators.

n00b: Derogatory term for anyone so new to something they do things commonly seen as stupid by more experienced people. Usually aimed at hackers, though others can be n00bs as well.

North American Coalition: The NAC makes up the bulk of the former United States and Canada. The NAC (also known as the Coalition of Willing Christian States or simply the Coalition), is a theocratic plutocracy, ruling over a puppet government.

Neko: A person who has undergone cosmetic surgery or superficial gene-splicing for purely aesthetic reasons, in order to look more like an anthropomorphic animal. Alternately known as either a furry or an anthro. Often confused with so-called true hybrids or chimeras.

OOL: Omniversal Object Locator. A small piece of data that indicates the location of a place, person, or file. Serves the same function as an e-mail address, PO Box, and phone number all in one.

Pipe: A channel of communication from any one hyper reality point to any other.

Personal Reality: The reality a person experiences through their Hyper Reality filter preferences.

Phansigar: "Noose operator." A member of the thuggee.

Phreak: Someone who practices the skill of phone phreaking, the manipulation of old analog and T1 telephone exchanges.

Psion: Someone who is able to use supernatural abilities such as telekinesis or ESP.

Rover: A person who makes their permanent residence aboard a ship, or other artificial habitat at sea (in particular the Pacific, Indian, and Southern Oceans). Most Rovers hail from Oceania, Indian, or the Far East, with a significant minority coming from the western coast of the Americas.

Scavenger: A person who combs old ruins, wastelands, and junk heaps for salvageable technology.

Script Kiddie: A newbie hacker or wannabe without any real knowledge of programming who uses code written by someone else.

Simulacrum: Also known as androids, puppets, replicants, or bio-forms. Artificial life forms used as tools by mankind.

Singularity: A point in the near future when dramatic advances in technology or AI programming outpace human understanding, possibly leading to the extinction of the species or a dramatic evolutionary leap. By its very nature, the ultimate form and effect of the singularity are unknown.

Sprawl: A heavily urbanized area, often used to refer to "bad" or dangerous neighborhoods.

Sprawlander: A person who lives in the urban sprawl. Also known as Sprawlers.

Sword Sage: A martial adept specializing in sword fighting.

TAP: Tendril Access Processor (so named for its three component parts: tendril-like brain filaments, the access chip, and a Wi-Fi signal processor and booster), a brain-mounted nano device enabling a user to interface with the hyper-real world.

Virtual Reality (VR): Computer generated interactive images.

Wasteland: A geographic region hostile to human life. This includes deserts, barrens, radiation zones, former toxic landfills, bomb sites, Arctic regions, and ruins located in such areas.

Wastelander: A person who lives in a wasteland or ruin. Also known as Wasters.

Zeek: Derogatory term for a psion. Bastardization of psychic. The term first came into use in Blood Throne Online Global chat-1 in the sub-realm of Throrongar when Sporkface236 misspelled the word psychic. He typed zeekic instead, claiming "that ees how eet sound in me head." The term was shortened to zeek and eventually turned into a viral meme. Silly n00b.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY 101

Turning points come not just to man, but also nations and even entire civilizations. To understand a moment in history one must begin by looking at the key steps that led up to it. No one studying the twentieth century neglects to consider the significance of World War II or the rivalries between Capitalism and Communism. Similarly, anyone trying to make sense of how the present day came into being must pay close attention to the critical events and crucial historical movements that gave it birth.

2010–2019: On The Precipice

2011: Global oil crisis worsens. Prices hit all-time record highs for the seventh straight year in most industrial nations. The increased oil prices and food shortages hit struggling nations first. Famine and malnutrition rise.

- Spartus Space Group launches the first commercial space liner into low orbit.
- Corporate globalization marches on in the face of the global War on Terror. In order to accommodate security concerns, more, and more military contractors and so-called Crisis Management Teams deploy around the world to safeguard corporate interests.

2012: Hurricane Nicole ravages southern Florida. Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center suffer massive damage. NASA sees its funds cut. A scaled-back space program much more dependent upon partnerships with private industry emerges.

- Looking to save billions via clever tax shelters, more, and more American companies relocate to the Bahamas, Costa Rica and the Virgin Islands.

2013: Most of the world's major telecommunication and IT interest groups commit billions of American dollars to fund GENIE, a system of communication satellites designed to create a unified worldwide wireless network.

- South Korean firms engage in genetic experimentation, splicing animal genes to human patients in an effort to find therapeutic regimes to treat human genetic defects. Early tests look to have military applications as well.
- Freedom fighters, backed by the United States topple the leftist government in Ecuador, touching off a regional war involving Peru, Venezuela, and Colombia.
- At the request of the United Nations, Brazilian, and Argentinean peacekeeping troops deploy to the war zone to quell the violence.

2014: In Moscow, the G13 Summit ends with no progress on weaning the world away from its dependence on oil. A rocket attack by the Chechen anarchist group Черный Медведь (Black Bear) cuts the proceedings short.

- Military contractors in the employ of the Hanscomb Food Group engage in a fire fight with Venezuelan regulars at a factory farm outside of Puerto Ayacucho. The soldiers commandeer the company's cattle to feed the starving Venezuelan people cut off from food supplies by Columbia.

2015: The first mass-market interface device using GENIE appears on the market. "The Bottle," a handheld device allowing for full spectrum communication and internet access, takes the market by storm, displacing PDAs, cell phones, HD graphics, and go-anywhere technology.

2016: Messianic eco-terrorist group, NOAH, unleashes an oil-eating bacterium, "Glutton," which swiftly devours a sizable portion of the world's oil reserve, especially in Saudi Arabia. The event triggers a global economic depression.

- The South Korean pharmaceutical company 건강 기업 (Health Corp) brings the first successfully cloned human embryo to term, outraging many of those who hold that life begins at conception. The child, Jian One, is raised in the research center outside Seoul until the Chinese Peninsula Campaign of 2024, at which point he disappears from history.
- MIT researchers Doctors Kwame Featherstone, David Braun, and Anima Sinjani unveil the first prototype Material Assembler (MA).
- China formally annexes Taiwan. Some democratic watchdog organizations claim the Chinese rigged the plebiscite that legitimized the nation's takeover of the island, though few pay any attention as the global depression rages on.

2017: Tired of regular incursions into their land by corporate and government-backed militias, Kenya and Ethiopia declare war on Sudan, with Chad quickly following suit. China deploys troops to safeguard their Sudanese oil supplies.

- In the wake of an economic collapse, a popular revolution led by a council of Islamic Clerics deposes the Saudi Royal family. Those surviving Saudi loyalists who are able to do so emigrate to the West.

The Bachelor War

In the late '10s and early '20s, China began to suffer the consequences of the One Child Policy. Designed to limit its population growth and to make more resources available to those actually born, the policy amplified the Chinese cultural bias of preferring male heirs to female ones. On paper, this gender imbalance seemed relatively small. However, in a nation measuring its population at nearly a billion and a half, a difference of even one or two percent yielded tens of millions with little prospect of finding a mate. Moreover, nearly a quarter of the country's population was elderly and the burden of their care fell to a very few.

Agitation for reform to the hybridized free market-communist economic structure and general discontent of the young urban intellectuals erupted as these angry young men reached adulthood and faced a world unable to accommodate the most basic biological imperative – procreation. A new generation of party officials – most of them bureaucrats – exploited the unrest, seized power and swept aside the last vestiges of the communist era. Calling themselves "New Mandarins," these young politicians pledged to put China's interests above their own and instituted many social and economic reforms, including the abolishment of all China's newly developed free enterprise, returning it to state control under the new governing meritocracy. Borrowing upon a strategy as old as history itself, the New Mandarins channeled the restless energy of the Chinese population against its neighbors. On March 9, 2024, claiming violations in its treaty rights with the former North Korea, China invaded and overran the Korean peninsula. Through sheer numbers and zeal, it took a mere two weeks to complete the conquest. Learning from history for once, the occupiers chose to rule with a light hand. By 2040, a puppet state was installed and the majority of Chinese forces were withdrawn.

In the years after the Peninsula Campaign, China repeated the pattern of its initial success in Korea with many of its other neighbors. Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam all succumbed to China after offering up only token resistance. In truth, many of the common folk of these countries and regional businesses welcomed closer ties with China. Recognizing the nation as the world's rising power, they sought to curry favor with China, cheerfully prosecuting members of their former governments for various alleged misdeeds after the Mandarinate deposed them.

2018: South American War ends with the Treaty of Buenos Aires. Brazil maintains a military presence in each nation within the conflict zone.

- Sentinel Rock Corporation unveils prototype personal power suits (PPS), military-grade power armor.
- Hanscomb Food Group patents Bos NeoTaurus; cloned cow meat.

2019: "The Year of the Deluge" ushers in the first of nearly a decade's worth of catastrophic storms that overwhelm levees in many coastal communities. Some refugees, rather than retreating inland, choose to take to the sea instead.

- The first of the rovers appear on the high seas across the world.
- Despite Chinese objections, the treaty of Salzburg formally ends the Korean civil war, more than seven decades after it began. The two Koreas reunite and the industrialized south begins a massive program of infrastructure and food support for the collapsed north.

2020–2029: Falling, Falling

2020: China's Communist Party is deposed by its own bureaucratic apparatus. The New Chinese Mandarinate came to power and immediately imposed a bureaucratic meritocracy.

- The Bahamas, The Cayman Islands, Barbados, and the U.S. Virgin Islands sign a landmark economic treaty, standardizing their roles as tax havens in defiance of the UN and World Bank. The Caribbean Economic League is born.
- Criminal Triad societies flee mainland China, spreading to other population centers around the world.
- Census figures show a worldwide increase in urban populations while rural areas report a steep decline. Increasingly economic and political power resides in the largest cities. The "Age of City States" begins, as more and more cities become powers unto themselves.

2021: More and more megacongloms construct compounds to house their staff for matters of security, safety, and team building (and, some say, control).

- Futurist Australian billionaire eccentric Niles Auburn lays claim to the North Pacific gyre trash heap, an expanse of plastic contaminated ocean the size of Alaska. Niles hires an army of contractors to terraform the waste into several floating biospheres, a lengthy process which takes nearly a decade to complete. This marks the beginning of Mu, the world's largest free-floating ocean habitat.

2022: Amazon Wars in South America and Central Africa see the first use of gene-spliced, bio-augmented warriors. Over the next few years, similar genetically modified super soldiers are used throughout Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

- In the face of growing criticism, the Caribbean Economic League sues for membership within the EU or US.

2024: Citing violations of its treaty obligations to the now-vanished North Korea and the dangers posed by suspected bio-weapons manufacturing facilities, China overruns the entire Korean peninsula in less than two weeks of fighting. Foreign media observers, pointing out the internal tension caused by the surplus of males in the Chinese population because of its one-child policy, term it the "Bachelor War." In the years that follow, China follows up their Peninsula Campaign with a series of successful conflicts, all of which display the swiftness of their advance and the overwhelming success of their objectives.

- Evangelicalism grows in popularity throughout South America. Brazil becomes a theocratic state and, with Argentina, organizes the Liga del Apostle (Apostle League), a block of Evangelical-leaning nations forming the bulk of South America.
- Matrix of War is released for Game Station Pro. The ground breaking Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game (MMORPG) features stunning real time 3D graphics in a complete VR environment.
- Headframes that allow the user to interact with the VR world with both sight and sound become increasingly common as companies start hyper-linking more and more items for advertising purposes.

2025: A team of Viennese scientists led by Dr. Nicolette Thallbren announce the creation of the first so-called brain box, a computer with organic and cybernetic components.

- The Caribbean Economic League (CEL) is formally granted statehood. Nicknamed "Corporate America," the CEL reinvigorates the US economy, at the same time widening the gap between the super wealthy and a rapidly disappearing middle-class.
- US President Jonathan J. Davis names Iran, Pakistan, Syria, and Venezuela as the "Primary Axis of Evil." Forty other nations constitute the world's "secondary evils," including France, which President Davis describes as "a morally bankrupt and Islamist nation," and Vatican City under the leadership of Pope Callixtus IV the Moderate, which the President states is becoming "increasingly radicalized" under the first Mexican Pope. Additionally, the president dubs Mandarin China an "Evil Pagan Empire."

2026: Due to the increasing rise in sea levels brought about by global warming, many coastal regions are abandoned. New York and neighboring New Jersey expand their levee systems in hopes of staving off the rising waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

- Cosmetic gene-splicing grows in popularity. A neko culture emerges among young adults, starting in South America and spreading to Japan, the U.S., Europe and Oceania.

2027: Rio de Janeiro is flattened by a tsunami, though the statue of Christ the Redeemer miraculously survives intact. Brazil's leaders vow to rebuild their most populous city, but do so further back from the rising ocean, demolishing the hillside favelas (shantytowns) around the city that managed to weather the storm.

- An emergent AI known as "Griefer" develops spontaneously on the incredibly popular MMORPG Matrix of War, adopting purposefully twinkish tactics until it is reprogrammed.
- At France's request, Algiers, and Morocco are admitted into the European Union as full members.

2028: On May 20th, a previously unknown terrorist group, The Way to Palestine, attempts to destroy Jerusalem with a smuggled "dirty" nuclear device. The comparatively weak bomb spreads radioactive debris throughout the city, rendering portions of it uninhabitable and condemning tens of thousands to slow, lingering deaths. In retaliation, a faction within the Israeli Defense Force loyal to the new hard-line Lehi Party sets off a much larger dirty bomb over the Al-Masjid al-Harām (The Grand Mosque) in Mecca, killing thousands in the initial blast and exposing over a million and a half of its residents to radioactive material, making the holy city hostile to human life for at least a thousand years. Ronin linked to the Alat Industrial Group thwart a similar attack on the city of Medina.

- May 23rd, Israeli-Arab Nuclear War begans. A limited nuclear exchange between Iran, Israel, and Pakistan results in the destruction of much of the Fertile Crescent. Most of Israel is destroyed in addition to cities throughout Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. The majority of Israel's population flee the Holy Land. Likewise, most of their neighbors leave the region.
- The use of nuclear weapons prompts India to declare war on Pakistan. The resulting action triggers a second nuclear exchange on the Indian subcontinent days later.
- In the span of twenty-four hours nearly half a billion lives are lost, marking the beginning of The Death.

2030–2039: The Fight for Survival

2030: In the second year of The Death, global population declines for the first time in centuries in the wake of massive crop failures. The cities hit hardest by fallout, rising water levels, and a lack of clean drinking water become ghost towns, many of which are never reclaimed. Famine, disease, and civil strife are common in all quarters of the globe. Order breaks down.

- In a daring move, China captures much of Asian Russia, cutting off the western heart of the nation from its oil supplies in the Far East. Threatened with collapse, the Russian government quickly joins the EU. The move is seen by many as the only thing halting the Mandarinate's advance.
- More and more unlicensed and unregulated medical practitioners begin to work in the field. The term "street doc" gains acceptance.

2031: The Japanese military stages a coup d'état in the face of Chinese expansionism. The nation institutes a provisional government termed the "Techno Shogunate." General Hiro Minotoro is named the military head of government. He reorganizes the Diet, the former Japanese parliament, into a civilian advisory panel with no real authority.

- New Orleans is officially abandoned by the U.S. when it becomes apparent sea walls are no longer protecting the city from the ocean. Inundated by flooding, Southern Florida becomes little more than a collection of small islands.. The rest is claimed by rising water levels. Other lowland regions such as the Netherlands, central England, Denmark, and much of the U.S. east coast, including New York, begin preparations for mass evacuations.

2032: Researchers in several different countries violate the patents on the latest generation of Matter Assemblers and

The Death

Months before the Israeli-Arab Nuclear War, India and Pakistan had themselves been on the brink of war. The hard-line nationalist Indian government and the right wing fundamentalist Pakistani government had nearly come to blows over an incident that occurred earlier that year.

On January 2, 2029, rioting students in Islamabad swarmed the Indian embassy, burning it to the ground and massacring its staff. Tensions had eased somewhat since then, but the moment Pakistan went nuclear, the government of India saw it as the perfect pretext for war. Similar to expansionist China that had incorporated much of Southeast Asia, India's nationalists looked to re-incorporate Pakistan and Bangladesh. With Pakistan's focus on its war against Israel, India marched forces across the Kashmir border into Pakistan. To the horror of the Indian government, it quickly became clear that their intelligence had proven faulty. Pakistan still had a number of close-range warheads left in her arsenal, which they used on the doomed vanguard of the Indian invasion force. India retaliated in kind, devastating a number of Pakistani brigades and fortifications. The violence quickly escalated from tactical battlefield weapons to missiles intended to destroy cities. To this day, historians and partisans of the two sides disagree over exactly who fired the first shot. Many, looking at the scarce satellite records that survived the first wave of electromagnetic pulses, believe it happened almost simultaneously. Regardless of the truth, early in the morning of May 24, 2029, dozens of warheads surged against helpless civilian populations. All but nine of these missiles died in the air, taken out by defensive satellites belonging to several different nations, but those that actually did manage to reach their targets claimed a city. In the end, Pakistan ceased to exist as a nation. India (though rocked to its very core with the loss of Delhi and Madras) held itself together long enough to declare victory.

It was a pyrrhic one, however.

Within days, radioactive debris rose into the upper atmosphere and began to block out a significant portion of sunlight. Scientists around the world explained it as nuclear autumn – not as bad as nuclear winter, but horrendous nevertheless. Most people simply called it The Death.

The world didn't see summer for three long years, during which time the sun seemed trapped in a smoky twilight, even during the brightest part of the day. In addition to the reduced sunlight, The Death also brought with it frequent rains of radioactive dust as fallout gradually settled back to the earth. When a comparatively normal climate did return, it still took six more years for the final, lingering effects of The Death to dissipate fully. Though no one ever managed an exact count, experts on The Death believe that about 1/7th of the world's population (roughly 1.3 billion people) died, either during the initial nuclear exchange, or in the aftermath. While a significant percentage of those deaths stemmed from starvation, more came about through a general breakdown of public order. As sanitation standards disappeared, and stocks of vaccines went bad, diseases once considered eradicated reappeared and claimed a savage toll. Lawlessness and civil strife also exploded. During the worst moments of The Death, some of the most desperate are said to have resorted to cannibalism. Predictably, exposure to radiation claimed its fair share of victims. Cancer rates spiked (and would harvest victims for decades to come). The genetic damage many suffered during The Death reduced the birth rate even after the world returned to "normal."

With the perspective of nearly sixty years behind them, some historians consider The Death almost a blessing, at least over the long-term. While it traumatized everyone who lived through it and put the final nail in the coffin of countless other species (reducing biodiversity by at least a quarter), The Death also laid the groundwork for the modern world. Without the grim legacy of The Death as a spur, many of the extraordinary discoveries that appeared in subsequent generations might well have taken far longer to arise. Adherents of the "forest fire" school of thinking claim that The Death cleared the way for progress; removing so-called "deadwood" and making it possible for the modern era to flourish. The remaining members of the "D" generation, with first-hand memories of its misery, most now in their 80s or older, tend to react rather harshly when they find someone spouting off this theory in public.

cloning technology in hopes of finding a new way to make food. A number of factories around the globe are retrofitted to produce "food paste," a foul tasting but nourishing pudding-like substance. Though too late to offer much help during The Death, these first crude factories nevertheless point the way to the development of nanotech in the years to come.

- Pope Callixtus IV is assassinated by a radical evangelical splinter group. Though some believed the CIA was involved, this is never proven.

2033: The U.N. moves from what is left of New York to Geneva.

- The New York Stock Exchange relocates to Chicago.
- China announces plans to land a ship on Mars within ten years. The Eurasian Union and Brazil follow suit, announcing similar goals. The USA, in a bid to outshine its neighboring rivals, also declares its intention to journey to Mars, but swiftly issues a clarification, deciding to travel to the Moon instead.

2036: The foundation set up to administer the long-obsolete GENIE satellite network announces the development of the STRAP, a somewhat invasive surgically implanted crown of electrodes allowing its recipients to access technology through a direct sensory interface. Initially, however, the expense and the newness of the technology keeps most people using the wireless Headframe.

2037: In the wake of their respective governments' uncoordinated response to The Death, voters in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and several other major European nation states cede considerable authority to the EU as a whole. The referendum endorses a thirteen-year plan for full integration of the continent. Russia and her former western satellite nations, as well as a pair of North African nations, are also admitted into a Greater Eurasian Union. Other countries, while not taking part in the initial balloting, soon feel pressure by their own citizens to join the movement.

2038: People around the world celebrate "The Good Year," marked by the return of normal climate patterns as the final visible effects of The Death begin to end. The first true summer in nearly a decade yields a bumper crop. The old North American holiday of Thanksgiving is adopted worldwide, albeit using dates best suited to the harvest cycle of each country.

- By Presidential decree, New York City and New Jersey are officially abandoned. Many of the populace stubbornly resist forced relocation. Accusations of reverse gerrymandering continue for years after the move.
- The first orbital habitats are constructed.

2039: Revelations of Chinese attempts to breed a superior citizen engender widespread criticism both inside and outside the country. Images of the "broken children," damaged by botched genetic treatments, draw nearly universal condemnation.

- In an effort to prevent a repeat of calamities like The Death, the major powers, with the exception of China and the Central African Union, sign the Treaty of New Singapore. This document approves the creation and funding of an independent global agency called International Surveillance, Investigation, and Monitoring Agency (ISIMA), dubbed Stopwatch due to its symbol, a clock set at five minutes to midnight. Many other nations of the world also accept its guiding principles. Taking custody of its own network of killer satellites and developing paramilitary, medical, and intelligence branches, Stopwatch asserts and enforces its global right to intervene to protect humanity from its own worse instincts.

2040–2049: Building on the Rubble of the Old World

2040: An improved version of the STRAP goes into wider circulation. At first adopted primarily by police and others needing the enhanced and reliable access to the Mediaweb, the most technically savvy portions of the general population begin to upgrade as well.

- The Chinese Mandarinate grants Korea limited autonomy.
- The United States establishes New D.C.; the first permanent Lunar colony.

2041: Kwame Featherstone resurfaces in Madrid, unveiling a secret project to make the Matter Assembly food factories of the previous decade smaller and more versatile. He claims the food the factories produce are tastier and more nutritious, and even goes so far as to predict matter assemblies will render hunger and want a thing of the past.

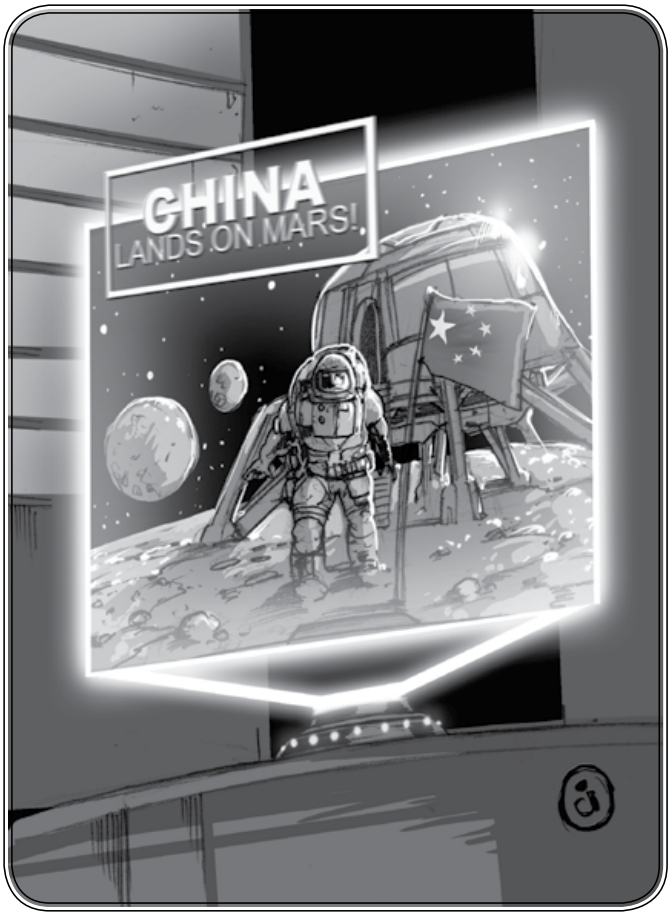
- Military contractors become increasingly more reliant on cybernetic implants to get wounded or maimed combatants back into the field. More and more specialized cyborgs, hybrids, and powered armor soldiers see action in lawless regions.

2042: A group calling itself Watchdog captures General Anneal Sharif, the last known living person with any sort of direct responsibility to provoking The Death. The members of Watchdog try Anneal, find him guilty, and execute him on the Mediaweb before a merciless world audience.

- Featherstone Industries strikes a landmark deal with several corporations in a myriad of different sectors licensing nanomachine rights.
- Switzerland abandons its policy of neutrality and joins the EU.

2043: Dr. Elyse Shu of Pyongyang creates Wook, the first simulacrum. Produced by merging cloning technology with the organic computing of the so-called "brain boxes" and then using accelerated VR, Wook (though only six months old) experiences more than a decade worth of virtual instruction prior to his decantation. Hailed as great advance for humanity by some and the first step to the creation of a slave race by others, Wook's arrival ignites a great debate around the world over the nature of humanity and sentience.

- The U.N. celebrates its tenth year following its relocation/evacuation from New York to Geneva with the unveiling of an impressive new headquarters. At the same time it also passes The Death Amnesty, urging countries of the world to forgive any and all crimes committed during The Death by those simply trying to survive.
- On April 13, China successfully lands on Mars. Teams from Eurasia and Brazil arrive later that year. The first man on Mars is Fong Wei of China.



WASTELANDS: THE NEW LANDSCAPE

For decades leading up to the 21st century, the world's ecology became increasingly hostile to terrestrial life, in large part to rapid industrialization. While global warming, the destruction of the ozone layer, the rising oceans and accompanying extinctions of important links in the food chain had caused a great deal of damage, the nuclear exchanges in the Middle-East and the Indian Subcontinent pushed the world to the brink. Whole cities became ghost towns, swallowed up by irradiated desert sands or submerged beneath the world's engorged oceans. Even mighty sprawls such as New York were not immune. As the world descended into anarchy, the inhabitants of these new wildernesses (mostly stubborn residents, scavengers, and fugitives) were left to fend for themselves. Indeed, lawlessness and frontier justice are still the rule of the day in these regions.

2045: Ajax, the first Artificial Intelligence to pass the Turing 2 test, suffers a catastrophic failure less than two hours afterward. Technicians investigating the debacle disagreed over exactly what happened. Some maintain that Ajax contrived to engineer its own destruction, while others simply call it an unfortunate technical glitch.

- Cereus Media's "Law and Order and Justice" web channel LOJ3 adds Death Row to their reality show line-up, featuring the last weeks of a group of death row inmates chosen from all over the world. At the end, each inmate is publicly executed in the manner prescribed by his or her region of origin. Methods include electrocution, firing squad, lethal injection, gassing, hanging, stoning, and crucifixion. The show was so popular it runs for 22 seasons, spawning a host of imitators and remains in syndication to this day. A spin-off with nothing but executions also proves popular.
- NASA develops the VX750Kw Variable Specific Impulse Magnetoplasma Rocket (VASMIR for short) for use on manned missions to Mars.

2047: The first documented case of Flash addiction brings the issue of VR addiction to the forefront of public attention. The notion that someone can use a STRAP to receive a coded data pulse that generates an intensely pleasurable sensation intrigues some while outraging the sensibilities of many others.

2049: An organization calling itself the Human Foundation successfully sues for custody of Wook in the EU when his creators take him on a world tour. Calling it a theft of priceless technology, Brazil threatens Eurasia with trade sanctions, only backing down after receiving reparations for the insult. To prevent similar sentiments from interfering with the development of the bioform industry, most companies decide to limit both the intelligence and life spans of their simulacra.

2050–2059: Great Deeds But The Foundation Cracks

2050: The Eurasian Union completes the consolidation of its former member states with one final referendum. With only nominal authority left in their hands, these regions lose virtually all political influence, becoming focused exclusively upon cultural and heritage issues instead.

- Japan signs a landmark Bio Treaty with Brazil to begin production of simulacrums to replace much of the aged Japanese workforce and military.

2052: Dr. Kayin Courts of the University of Timbuktu wins the Nobel Prize in Linguistics for her development of the Real-Time Translator at age 22.

- Simulacrums begin displacing large numbers of service and industrial workers around the world and off-planet.

2054: The ARC project unveils an ambitious plan to restore many of the species lost during The Death. Forging an almost unprecedented alliance with isolationist Central African Union, the ARC project makes the return of elephants one of its top priorities. Within seven years, the first elephants born in nearly two decades herald the start of the long process of restoring the world to its former state. Unfortunately, similar efforts to recreate extinct species do not always turn out as expected.

2056: Jim "Dandy" O'Rourke, a Mafioso from Las Vegas, is found guilty of feeding the corpses of his enemies and victims into his own personal nanomachine. Featherstone Industries moves swiftly to deal with the PR damage by modifying their latest model to reject, and then report, organic material with large amounts of human DNA fed into it.

2057: Saboteurs representing Humans for Humans blow up a simulacrum bio-foundry in Seattle, Washington. Other acts of violence directed against simulacrums reveal the growing frustration of humans made redundant by artificial labor.

2058: Dr. Courts improves the STRAP, making it more integrated, less invasive, more powerful and easier to upgrade. The new device becomes known as the TAP for its three primary pieces of hardware: the biosynthetic Tendrils that encompass the user's brain, the subcutaneous Access chip inserted at the base of the skull and the subcutaneous Processing device. One million people worldwide receive the injection during the first year alone.

- "The Days of Shame," a coordinated worldwide wave of protest designed to attract attention to the plight of hybrids, draws the ire of several governments. Hybrid activists throughout South America and the Chinese Mandarinate are labeled subversives and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. In Bogotá, nearly one hundred police and an undisclosed number of hybrids die during a vicious three-day clash that paralyzes much of the city.

2059: Anti-simulacrum politician and moralist Karl Guttsdun of Prague was caught in a compromising position with a leisure model. Disgraced, Guttsdun was forced to resign. A movement to ban leisure models as a danger to public morals fails when journalists reported the backers of the initiative included investors in a chain of human-only brothels.

2060–2069: Death of the Old Regime

2060: VENTURE, the AI tasked with regulating transportation in London, suffers a technical glitch leading to the deaths of more than three hundred people. The fact that the death toll would be much, much higher were it not for the manual override switch which enables human and simulacrum drivers to take back control of their vehicles ends all efforts to eliminate that feature. Some conspiracy theorists asserte the AI suffered sabotage for the exact purpose of keeping overrides in personal vehicles.

- Only one-twelfth of United States electorate actually turn out to vote in presidential elections. Reverend Governor Webber of Oklahoma is elected on the slogan of "Our Flag, Our God, Our Bomb." He promises a return

to Bible Values and State's Sovereignty and an end to Radical Democracy.

- The United States establishes a colony on Mars. Incarcerated criminals with life sentences or death sentences are given the opportunity to work on the red planet as indentured servants in exchange for full pardons at the end of their term of service. Simulacrum labor is also used extensively.

2061: After fierce debate, the EU formally ban simulacrum slave labor and recognizes the rights of sentient artificial life forms, including AIs.

2062: The Peeper Scandal brings renewed focus upon the extent to which governments monitor their populations with the revelation that certain officials used their privileged access to spy upon celebrities. The Cloisters, an organization devoted to protecting the privacy of the public by any means necessary, makes their debut by exposing the scandal.

2064: North American Water War begins between Great Lakes States and States belonging to the "Coalition of the willing."

- US President Webber suspends elections, dissolves Congress and orders the arrest of political dissenters.
- The opposition forms a loose confederation. The name sticks on the Mediaweb, though ironically most of the Separatist States are northern ones. The Separatist States voweto overthrow Webber and reunite the U.S.
- The Second North American Civil War between the Separatist States and North American Coalition begins.
- The Battle For Chicago begins.

2065: China offers aid to the NAC.

- Low yield "Dirty bombs" are used in the Battle of Chicago, and also in Denver CO, Dallas, TX, Phoenix AZ. various areas of Southern California, including San Diego and Los Angeles.
- The world responds, sending a force of 130,000 peacekeeping troops to the embattled city of Chicago. Illinois Governor Donald Parks declares Chi-town a free city.
- The construction of the Chi-town wall begins.

2066: Forces loyal to President Webber suffer repeated setbacks, particularly after China offers material support to some Separatist States. This all changes following a massive 9.3 earthquake centered in southern California.

- Corporate America (the Caribbean Economic League) formerly breaks ties with the NAC, and sees a huge boom in foreign investment.
- Argentina's Apostle Government is toppled by worker-led Neo-Perónist movement.
- Former child star Mulik Jay declares himself the spokesman and prophet for the Church of Althada. Other Althadians, all united in their belief that physical reality is actually a computer simulation, emerge to denounce Jay as an opportunist.

2067: Stopwatch agents intervene to prevent the government of the NAC from deploying an "Eye for an Eye" spoilsport weapon system designed to devastate the North American continent should it suffer a military defeat. The skillful and practiced way

in which they destroy the weapon system, coupled with the chain of circumstances that foil efforts to keep the public from learning of their actions, implies that it was not the first time they had taken on a government and won.

- The number of people with a TAP crosses the one billion threshold.

2068: The Second North American Civil War ends in armistice.

- The Nations of Atlantica, The Republic of Cascadia, The Great Lakes Union, and the North American Coalition emerge, formalizing their borders at the Treaty of Tokyo.
- The Renunciates—the first of the AI cults to draw public attention to the issue—commit mass suicide in an attempt to join their cybernetic "god"—a highly evolved medical diagnostic AI.
- A rogue advertisement known as Hurly Burly evolves beyond its original design and becomes the first predatory meme to afflict the virtual world. Millions suffer from its intrusive presence until someone develops a patch to the TAP's spam filters which neutralizes it.

2069: The musical group Endomorph announces its intention to stage a free global concert broadcast in the night sky, thanks to TAP. Calling it the Get With the Program event, they encourage young people to undergo the procedure so they can enjoy it with their friends. Commentators point to this event as the turning point for TAP in popular media.

- Texas formally leaves the NAC to form its own nation; the New Republic of Texas.
- Brazil sees its first decline in church attendance in nearly two generations.

2070–2079: Dystopia

2071: Kwame Featherstone is found strangled to death in his private vacation resort on the terraformed isle of Kahoolawe, which he had purchased from the provincial government of Hawaii.

- Mumbai, India emerges as the new media entertainment capital of the world.
- In Japan, there are now more simulacrums than humans.
- The Puppeteer Murders transfix the attention of three continents. Evidence of ritualistic slayings committed by many different people, none of whom apparently have any memory of actually committing the deed, baffle authorities. It is not until someone suggests that an outside agent influenced them through the STRAPs imbedded in their brains that a grim realization dawns. When questioned about the possibility, many of the perpetrators report experiencing particularly vivid dreams.

2072: The NAC attempts to forge an alliance with Mexico. The northern portion of Mexico, alarmed by the religious fervor of the USA and the creeping influence of the Apostle states of South America, opposes this strengthening of ties between the two countries. Calling upon the Republic of Cascadia for support, the Northern region of old Mexico declares its independence.

- Shen Wei, the first woman to secure a seat on the Mandarinate Board, does so at the unprecedented age of 44. It is later revealed that she was among the first successful completely engineered humans.

2073: Simulacrum Underground Railroad begins transporting runaway simulacra from "slave nations" to "free" ones such as the EU and the Republic of Cascadia.

- Leaders from around the world enact the Omega Protocols. Because of the divided opinions on the possibility of a Singularity event, some countries refuse to sign the protocols while others pay them lip service to pacify nervous elements of their own populations. Despite this skepticism, many law enforcement firms embrace the protocols and create divisions specifically dedicated to keeping an eye on rogue AIs and their human followers.

2074: Stopwatch deploys an EMP weapon on the city of Honshu, explaining that an AI calling itself TROJAN, with the support of a cult of nearly 2,000 followers, had planned to override the city's nanomachines to produce a plague. They describe their action as necessary to save lives.

- Baja Mexico invades New Mexico and Arizona, capturing everything but Pheonix. The Free City of Pheonix petitions for international peacekeeping troops and recieves aid from New Brazilia.
- Featherstone Industries integrates its nanomachines with the TAP by making all of its control displays virtual. At the same time, the megaconglom upgrades the help function by creating a number of HR agents. The most popular is Hassan, a friendly djinni who makes "Your wish is my command" the catchphrase of the year.

Nano and the Age of Leisure

The generation that came of age during the trauma and misery of the Death vowed to make sure it could never happen again. The extraordinary surge of industry and creativity that marked the following decades stemmed from this obsession with safeguarding the human race, and the planet as a whole, from another catastrophe. This flowering of technology not only opened up new vistas for human achievement, but almost by accident, created the Age of Leisure or the post-scarcity society of today.

Most experts trace the origin of the age of leisure back to two critical innovations: Featherstone Industry's development of the first nanomachine and the appearance of simulacrum. Nano, by making products either relatively cheap or outright free, liberated most people from the need to spend large portions of their waking hours "earning a living." Simulacrums, on the other hand, offered business and industry an expert labor force that made far fewer demands than human employees.

These twin developments, occurring almost simultaneously while coming at the same problem from different directions, released people from the need to work even as they made countless jobs redundant. In the opinion of most scholars, each served to soften the blow of the other. Imagine a world where most people no longer needed to work if there were no simulacrums ready to step in and pick of the slack? Conversely, imagine a world where simulacrums drove more than three quarters of the population out of the job market without nanomachines to keep them clothed and fed?

In the years following the appearance of the first crude nanomachines, Featherstone industries made numerous improvements to the model. It also, each year, whether through its own in-house teams or by striking up partnerships with other companies, increased its inventory of patterns in its devices. Ranging from household appliances to food to pharmaceuticals to clothing and hobby gear including toys, nanomachines soon provided virtually everything a normal person needed in his or her daily life. Though enormously expensive in time and resources to create, Featherstone continued to make money off these new patterns due to the licensing deals it had struck.

In exchange for corporate and government-backed support in stamping out pattern piracy, the megaconglom agreed to make a certain number of patterns available virtually free of charge in addition to ensuring access to nanomachines even for those too poor to afford one for their own homes. Currently, of the 20,000 patterns in its inventory, about 2,000 of them require no licensing fee to access, making it simply a matter of energy and raw materials, both of which rarely prove much of an issue for normal use.

Unfortunately, since nano did little to change human nature, poverty still exists. In hindsight, the fact that nano failed to eliminate poverty made the reaction against simulacrum labor almost inevitable. The portion of the population rendered obsolete by simulacrums, forced to scrap and scheme to get anything really worth having, soon came to blame simulacrums for their problems. Riots and acts of sabotage against simulacrum factories and businesses using simulacrums rapidly escalated from rarities to near-everyday occurrences. Though many, perhaps even most, limit public comments to a few token complaints or off-color jokes at a "simmie's" expense rather than actual violence, the sullen rage this new under class feels towards bio-forms shows little sign of diminishing.

2075: Mulik Jay announces his intention to upload his personality into a computer. He succeeds, but all four of his colleagues die because of some unknown flaw in the process. This 80 percent failure rate for uploading remains consistent and presents a baffling puzzle to scientists.

2076: In North America, anarchist hackers nearly touch off a new war between the GLU and the NAC.

2077: Saying "bland is in," the body houses of Paris unveil the latest fashion: featureless faces. A product of hidden skin flaps and one-way transparency, featureless faces are an instant sensation.

2078: "Tarzan/Jane," the first personality-affecting meme, drops millions of users into virtual jungles before someone creates a critical patch for TAP's spam filters.

2079: The self-styled "Hunger Artists" organize a two-week fast to help the younger generation better understand The Death. Millions take part, keeping the faith to a greater or lesser degree. The sideshow enrages many members of the older generation who consider it a mockery of their own experiences during The Death.

- At least thirty ships disguised as rovers stage the most daring bank robbery in history. Striking Cape Town, one of the cities set aside by the African alliance as a sanctuary and banking haven, the raiders incapacitate the entire city before focusing on the banks. Hundreds of criminals attempt to escape with their loot, but the African military puts them down.

2080–2088: Prelude to the End

2081: An AI named VIRTUE successfully contests for a seat in the lower house of the Eurasian Parliament. Housed in a cyberform, it broadcasts its maiden speech on sentient rights to nearly two billion people worldwide.

- The first mining colonies are established on the Jovian Moons of Callisto, Europa, Ganymede amd IO.

2083: Dr. Leo Huntzinger of Boston dies at the age of 98. In his will, he confesses to working on the team that created Glutton and identifies himself as the last member of NOAH's inner circle to die. The evidence provided in his final testament helps put to rest one of the great mysteries of the age.

2084: Protesters in Manila call for their country's withdrawal from the Chinese Mandarinate. Calling it Brazilian agitation, China sends in troops to keep the peace. Nearly one hundred dissidents die before order is restored.

2086: Troops from the Brazilian Embassy in Beijing invade a university campus. Citing the clause in the Omega Protocols granting signatories the right to intervene without prior warning should they believe an AI poses a threat, they storm the computer science building. After less than an hour they apologize and withdraw. Most observers believe the Brazilians acted simply to antagonize the Chinese, using the Omega Protocols as a convenient excuse.

2087: After suffering crippling injuries in a car accident, Shen Wei successfully undergoes a dubbing procedure and uploads herself into The Deep.

2088: Present day.

LIFE IN 2088

Despite the prophecy-inspired, drug-induced, apocalyptic predictions of many fringers at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the nation states failed to wither away. That said, history did indeed shuffle the deck, knocking down some great powers and raising others to new heights. But for the most part, that old adage holds true in 2088: The more things change, the more they stay the same. – Billy Black Eyes

Que Pasa Ami? I'm Billy Black Eyes, and I've compiled the following INFOdocs to give you the dirt on life in 2088. Set your TAPprefs (That's Tendril Access Processor preferences for your n00bs out there) to streaming and I'll show you what's what in this brave new world. Hopefully you'll learn enough to survive it.

The Rich and the Powerful

Those with money, breeding, and influence still have all the power. The only difference is names like Caesar, Bonaparte, Stalin, and Bush have been replaced with Webber, Wei, Lochan, and Afolabi. Travel to any nation in the world and it's all the same. Some places are just cleaner than others. Is every leader morally bankrupt, though? Nope… At least not on the Media feed. The average world leader is primarily interested in maintaining or elevating their standing in the world community. Many, like the CEO of a conglom, care little about how they reach the bottom line, only that it is reached. They have no problem killing a few thousand people or oppressing a nation to get both what they want and what their constituents have been media-programmed to expect. If they look good in the process, so be it. If they don't… Well, that's what spin-doctors are for, right?

The poor stay poor, and the rich…? Yeah, that's right. Nothing new under the sun here. But what does it really mean to be rich in 2088? How much stuffing do you need in your cloned turkey to make that claim? Back in the day, a few hundred thousand was enough to lift a Joe above the streets and get him a sweet, tricked-out house in some ultra-posh gated community. You know the kind of pad I'm talkin' about Ami; more square footage than a Malmart, a butler for the dog and hot-and-cold running everything. Even the air has been purified, each molecule synthesized to smell and taste like your favorite… Anything. Nowadays, the same amount of money won't even get you a decent condo in a climate-controlled bioplex.

Inflation's a bitch.

THE CRUSHING WEIGHT OF DYSTOPIA

At the core of the cyberpunk experience is a feeling of hopelessness and apathy born of disenfranchisement, the idea that the system we know (government, progress, technology, and capitalism) is broken and out of control, barreling down the tracks like a runaway train.

It is the sense of hopelessness as the rich get richer at the cost of their neighbors, and the politically connected can boldly lie to their fellow man and not suffer more than bad poll numbers or a slap on the wrist. Mixed into this societal decay is the rapid and often dehumanizing advancement of technology. The effect of new tech and the commercial marketing that supports it drown people in wave after wave of the Next Big Thing. Humankind is so dependent on the technology that, in some cases, has made parts of the world uninhabitable. Humanity has become one with technology, integrating it into the fabric of his being, via communications equipment and personal microcomputers. The destabilizing effect drives many to tradition and religion in search of some deeper meaning.

Life in 2088 is cheap, while living life for most is intolerably expensive. Here, the adults have all sold out or become bitter and cold like the walking dead, while the newest generation, with no obvious future path, rebel against their destined inheritance and live their lives to the fullest like torches, most of whom burn out all too soon.

These days, even the peeps us blue platers call rich are poor compared to the seriously loaded cabrónes who live so high above the stink they don't even know what it smells like. For these mega-rich folks, life is a perfume-laced ride all the way to the bank. Being wealthy in 2088 means you have access to the best of everything; real food (yummy trans-fats and all), nano-filtered water, the finest vehicles, top Edu-sites, health care and dental plans that don't require a day-long wait in some dark, piss-stained basement below the nearest government-owned medi-plex, if you can even get on the waiting list. And those are just the bare necessities, kiddies.

In the world of 2088, being rich and being powerful go hand in hand. The vast majority of wealth lies in the private sector,

particularly with megacorps and the people who run them. With sickening sums of money at their disposal, CEO's and high-level executives have world-spanning political influence. Indeed, politicians, and elected officials representing the myriad of world governments cater to the corporate interests of these individuals in return for financial backing. Even more curiously, the distribution of wealth and power tends to stay with a person or persons for a longer period of time, barring accidental death. Nowadays, the rich can upload their minds into The Deep (or an android or bio-form built to house the person's mind) and live forever. So some greedy CEO who wants to keep his wealth and power can simply Dub himself, and everyone who had been hoping to inherit his cash is screwed.

It's nice to be rich.

Poverty

If you don't have the cash, clout, luck, or the right genes to rise above the masses, you can look forward to a daily grind filled with acid rain, smog, traffic jams, over-priced, roach-infested squats, vat food, roving ganglanders, strung-out pharma-junkies and other critters—some of them people—that look like they were vat-grown in a back-alley splicer lab.

In short, welcome to life for the rest of us.

With all of the advances in agriculture, medicine, and technology over the past century, you'd think that people would find a way to cure poverty. The cold hard truth, however, is that people who could fix the problem choose not to. Partly because it's expensive, but mostly: They just don't care. The middle class of the early 21st century has all but disappeared. Nowadays, you're either rich or poor. It's hard to keep a good paying job when some corporate slag builds a robot capable of working 24 hours a day for no pay, no benefits and negligible repair costs. Inevitably, people out of work and unable to feed their families turn to crime as a means for survival, because inflation means Federal Allowance Payments (FAPS for short)barely keep the electricity and NUTRImachines on. Burbs that were once great places to live devolve into ghettos. Businesses shut down as ganglanders move in and wage war for control of a piece of concrete, further devaluing the property and assuring no new businesses will move into these demilitarized "red" sectors.

Of course, the average citizen is caught in the middle of the daily violence because they're too poor to move anywhere else. The rich don't care. In fact, they blame the poor, ignorantly assuming that these unfortunate souls choose to live in these conditions. Politicians don't care. Poor people don't vote, in the countries where they CAN vote, that is. City officials don't care. Their budgets don't allow for added security in crime-ridden sectors that might as well be demilitarized zones. Better to protect the affluent sectors where the average citizen would rather make a nice campaign contribution than fund a costly neighborhood revitalization project that will probably fail anyway.

Education

Poor children grow up fighting in the EDU-facilities, the gladiator academies of the urban sprawl. When they aren't getting a substandard education and fresh bruises, they're flooded with TAPstreams advertising things they can't afford, places they'll never see and glamorous people with money they'll never have. Craving a piece of this elusive pie, these disillusioned kids start taking what they want and selling it to local pawnbrokers and fixers. They run away from home and join gangs that promise protection, fast money and an exciting lifestyle. Before the n00b bangers know it, they're reaping chrome, boosting hovercraft, selling gene-tailored drugs and sometimes even killing for cash.

Health Care

Being poor means you're less likely to afford basic medical care, even at government-funded Medi-plexes; commonly regarded as only marginally better than street doctors. The wait to be examined can last days. When you are actually "treated," the process is usually about as effective as the amount of money you have in your wallet. The afore-mentioned street doctors can be handy in a pinch, but only if you have the cash on hand. Street docs aren't always cheap, nor are the meds you'll need to maintain your health after one patches you up.

So take my advice: Don't get sick or shot.

Food

The food is crap. The average sprawler lives on what they can find at super chain INSTAfood joints like McCafé, Fat Sally's International Pancake House, Lou's Almost-Real Ribs and Chicken, or King Krill. These places work in a pinch if you need to quiet that grumbling stomach, and they taste addictively good, what with all the additives, but eating off the floor of the local recycling center would be healthier. If you want to take stuff back to the squat, you can always go to a cheapo Malmart (they're on every corner). These "one-stop-shopping" centers have every processed Nutripack you can imagine; Mama Ling Ling's noodle bowls, cloned meats of all kinds, hydroponic veggies, freeze-dried krill, and (my favorite) frozen burritos.

Ismists and Their Isms

Whether a by-product of the foreseen Singularity Event or merely one wave within the popular generational cycle theory, radicalism is on the rise. Bloggers and scholars for the last decade have noted an increase in membership in so-called religious fundamentalism, cult participation, and secular radicalism as well. In particular, many sight the increase in political and religious terrorism in places like the Central Africa Union, China, the Great Lakes Union, and Iran; places that traditionally had seen a strong degree of social solidarity, if not outright homogeneity. Likewise, church attendance in the North American Coalition (NAC for short) has continued to rise since the Second Civil War.

Some hold that Argentina's recent decline in religiosity, (in particular the decline of fundamentalist Evangelicalism) in wake of it and Brazil's ongoing cold war with China, runs counter to the trend. Skeptics, however, point out the apparent zeal with which many in the country and its neighbors have started taking to the prospect of constructing a "Great New Society." These doubters claim it is merely a case of trading one ism for another.

Beyond more mainstream isms, there also seems to be a rise in the amount of so-called cult activity. Media researchers have seen on average a 32% increase in the amount of fringe religious activity, in particular apocalypse-related cults such as the Thuggee in India, transcendence cults like the transhumanist Althadians, and omega cults dedicated to artificial intelligences. Some say this is in part due to an increase in planned communities and so-called rose-colored filters. They point to the fact that the more a person is exposed to the same set of memes (just the memes they want to hear), the narrower and more extreme that person's world view becomes in relation to the rest of reality.

COMPANY DIRECTORY

The following companies are a sample of some of the major Megaconglomerates fighting for market share today. Each company is listed with their primary corporate headquarters and primary business interests. Many of these firms have the resources, money of a medium-sized nation-state.

- **Act of God (Houston, Texas):** Armaments
- **Alat Petroleum (Algiers, Algeria):** Petroleum
- **Aquarius Engineering (Atlanta, NAC):** Military Contractor
- **Auburn Trans-Oceania (Mu, North Pacific):** Technology
- **Aufklärungs-Gruppe (Munich, EU):** Multinational Holdings
- **Bank of Afrika (Cape Town, South Afrika):** Finance
- **Bank of Tehran (Tehran, Iran):** Finance
- **Black Knight (Chicago):** Armaments
- **Cerus Media (Cleveland, NAC):** Media
- **CHIMERA (Brasilia, Brazil):** Biomedical
- **Cherry Automotive Corporation (Beijing, China):** Automotive
- **Crisis Team (Osaka, Japan):** High Threat Response Teams
- **Emergent Tech (Seattle, Cascadia):** Information Technology/Software
- **Featherstone (Madrid, EU):** Nanotechology
- **Galaxy Entertainment International (Mumbai, India):** Media
- **Greater Eurasian Telecom (Berlin, EU):** Telecommunications
- **Hanscomb Foods (Evansville, NAC):** Restaurants
- **Health Group (Seoul, Korea):** Biomedical
- **Holas Telecom (Diego Tijuana, Baja Mexico):** Telecommunications
- **Hydra Pharm (Caribbean Economic League):** Pharmaceutical
- **Jata Technology (Niamey, Central African Union):** Software/Cybernetics
- **Jian Foods Group (Pyongyang, Korea):** Biochemical/Food Industry
- **Kensei (Tokyo, Japan):** Electronics/Entertainment
- **Kenta Cyber Dynamics (Tokyo, Japan):** Cybernetics
- **Kim Tau Bioware (Seoul, Korea):** Biochemical
- **Kirlian Technology (Portland, Cascadia):** Computer Hardware
- **Kiwi Motors Automotive Group (Perth, Australia):** Automotive
- **Loadstone (Phoenix, Baja Mexico):** Industrial Waste Management
- **Loftan Chemicals (Boston, Atlantica):** Pharmaceutical
- **Malbrand (Orlando, NAC):** Retail Outlets
- **Nampar Aerospace (formerly Spartus Space) (Chennai, India):** Aerospace
- **Nanda Pharmatech (Kolkata, India):** Pharmaceutical/Biomedical
- **Nova Personnel (Phoenix, Baja Mexico):** Simulacrum
- **Persian Media (Tehran, Iran):** Media
- **PharmAmerica (Sioux City, NAC):** Biochemical/Food Industry
- **Obelisk Computer Systems (Seattle, Cascadia):** Software
- **Samba Motors (São Paulo, Brazil):** Automotive
- **Saga Corporation (Copenhagen, EU):** Multinational Holdings
- **SAGE ITand Technical Systems (Kolkata, India):** Software/Cybernetics
- **Sanjan Tempe Warner Group (Mumbai, India):** Media
- **Sentinel Rock Corporation (Caribbean Economic League):** Armaments
- **SetiBank (London, EU):** Finance
- **St. Dobson Redemption Center (Odyssey, NAC)" Theological/Educational/Media**
- **Sudeki-Whyte (Sydney, Australia):** Armaments
- **Third Life Innovations (Johannesburg, South Afrika):** Genetics Research/Development
- **University of Timbuktu (Timbuktu, Mali):** Educational/Research
- **Yoi Jango Telecommunique (São Paulo, Brazil):** Telecommunications/Entertainment

Dubbing

Under the law, it is permissible to own a single inactive digitized dub or back up copy of one's self in case of sudden, unexpected death. A person may also own multiple blank bio-forms (whether immature clones or simulacrum bio-forms) into which she might imprint her consciousness, but only one (or the original) may be active at any given time. A person may also own any number of cyber-forms, but once again, only one version of the person's complete persona may actively exist at any one time. Individuals may have more than one aspect, as aspects are only fragments of the individual consciousness and do not constitute a whole personality.

The punishment for running multiple dubs is usually a stiff fine and the deletion or reprogramming of all non-master copies. In some nations where the practice is considered blasphemous for cultural or religious reasons, offenders may face stiffer penalties up to and including death.

Most non-Chinese orbital colonies, in particular ISS-1, have been known to play it fast and loose with such laws. For this reason, even though it is now considered illegal in international space to have a fully functioning dub, enforcement is so lax in most colonies that a large number of them are thought to exist undetected.

Redefining Humanity

Change brings with it not only new opportunities but also challenges to established wisdom. In the last few decades, the very definition of what constitutes a person has come under increasing debate and scrutiny. Not since the late twentieth century has humanity found itself grappling with so many issues of civil rights and personal identity.

Once the stuff of science fiction, artificial intelligences now exist as part of the daily fabric of life. Computers sophisticated enough to pass the Turing 2 test regulate or outright control virtually every critical system on the planet. From the traffic supervisors that keep millions of vehicles from crashing into each other to the smart systems embedded in every home, civilization depends upon them. Despite this, many parts of the world either limit the freedoms of AIs or define them as property, denying them even the most fundamental rights granted to all sentient beings. In recent years, a group of AI activists—downloading themselves into humanoid bodies, whether simulacrum or mechanical—have taken the lead in the struggle on behalf of virtual kind.

Both engineered humans and hybrids, one supposedly representing a bold step forward and the other an atavistic throwback, continue to grow in numbers. Engineered humans, products of loving parents or an eager nation looking to make superior citizens, found little difficulty claiming their place in society, and most, truth be told, soon moved to the forefront. Hybrids, on the other hand, viewed as dirty and barbaric while considered humans in all but the most repressive of societies, nevertheless suffer from social prejudice. Often, the new under class of people made redundant by simulacrum labor excise some of their humiliation with the thought that at least they are "real humans" and not hybrids. In the face of such bigotry, hybrids sometimes make poor choices when confronted with discrimination, which only reinforces their reputation for savagery and violence.

While many humans appreciate simulacrum labor, many others consider the bio-forming industry as either an organized slavery or an affront to God. Simulacrums are essentially sterilized human clones, designed in a laboratory and outfitted with a partially cybernetic brain allowing for rapid instruction while still growing in their vat. In most countries, they emerge fully adult, with all the skills needed to perform their assigned task. Infuriating many, though good for their bottom lines, the bio-form industry makes a practice of deliberately limiting the life spans and intelligences of simulacrums simply to make it impossible for most to exist independently.

This strikes activists—and even the conscientious layman—as simply despicable. The vast majority of simulacrums spend their five or perhaps 10 years of life toiling away at the task they were designed to perform and lack the means to imagine demanding more. Very rarely, whether because of some glitch or a spontaneous mutation, a simulacrum discovers some way to surpass his or her (or its) design parameters. Simulacra that exceed these restrictions are hunted down and destroyed. Sometimes, however, they escape from their owners and manage to build a new life in the outside world.

Genetic Engineering, Tailoring, and Splicing

Since finalizing the map of the human genome, doctors have been able to selectively alter the genetic code to benefit those suffering hereditary diseases. The practice of screening human embryos and treating them for genetic defects soon expanded to include selective augmentations.

Parents could not only eliminate any genetic predisposition to diabetes, asthma, and baldness, they could also select their child's eye color, hair color, ethnicity, sex, and sexual orientation, all before the child had advanced beyond the first trimester.

Tailoring

Further advances followed until it became common for some people to upgrade their appearances every few years, taking on the genetic traits of whatever ethnicity they chose, mixing those qualities until certain styles developed. Eventually it caught on so well that the Parisian fashion houses started genetically tailoring trademarked looks that meshed well with their styles.

Splicing

As the technology became more accessible, black marketers began experimenting with their own designs, going so far as to reverse engineer and ape the work of other designers. Nevertheless, it quickly became apparent that they could not compete with the technological mastery of the Parisian designers. The pirate designers' often substandard genetic tampering frequently mutated their patients or gave them cancer. Some of these patients saw the emergence of long recessive genes, some of whom devolved into creatures that are more animalistic.

Various developing nations saw a use for this technology and expanded the research into the field. Yet, instead of attempting to rewrite the genetic code, the researchers selectively spliced portions of animal DNA into the code, creating hybridized human animals, an inexpensive alternative to cybernetically enhanced troops. Eventually, their techniques returned to the pirate design parlors and quickly found acceptance among some young sprawlanders and idle rich. Now splicing has become almost as popular a form of cosmetic body alteration, as tattooing and piercing.

Bio-Horrors

"Lionroaches, Bulltigers, and Manbears… Oh my."
– Billy Black Eyes

With the widespread destruction of Earth's ecology, ever more species of flora and fauna fighting for fewer resources, species after species finds itself on the verge of extinction. Because of modern technology, a good portion of humanity is beyond the dictates of the food chain. However, biodiversity is seen by many as a measure of the world's health and humankind's stewardship of the planet. Beyond that, many of the world's oxygen producing plants rely on the animal kingdom. In order to stave off a possible total collapse of the world ecology, scientists have begun re-engineering species to take on the roles of those animals and plants that have gone extinct. Unfortunately, not all of these substitutions have worked out.

Numerous instances have seen test subjects further complicate attempts to right the eco-imbalance. In other cases, unforeseen mutations and viable—even dangerous—rejects have inadvertently escaped (some say they were deliberately released) into the wild. Commonly known as bio-horrors, these vicious creatures are prime examples of the inherent dangers of gene-splicing. Bio-horrors come in a variety of types, the most common of which are insects that have been crossbred with large cats in a vain attempt to create armored hybrid strains with animal cunning and physical prowess for use as shock troops.

Sightings of the creatures—dubbed lionroaches—are common in arid regions such as the North American Southwest, parts of the African continent and especially in the radiated wastelands of the Middle East and Afghanistan, where they have been known to grow as large as 5 ft. tall. Other examples of bio-horrors include variant strains of insects called beetle rats, bat/wasp hybrids, and the rarest of types, ant men, though most people consider the latter to be nothing more than an urban legend.

Law Enforcement

In 2088, local law enforcement is largely an entrepreneurial activity. While most nations across the world maintain big brother agencies such as the FBI, KGB, MI-5, The People's Armed Police (or PAP), New Brasilia's Polícia Federal, India's Ministry of Home Affairs (MIHA for short), the Texas Rangers, and world-spanning organizations like Stopwatch, these groups rarely get involved with the complexities of policing a given megasprawl at the street level. That grim responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of individual cities. Rather than spending countless millions to equip and maintain traditional law enforcement agencies, many cities choose to hire security firms to maintain law and order. The privatization of law enforcement agencies has proven to be a double-edged sword, however.

On one hand, the people who security agencies employ tend to be highly motivated, well-trained individuals. Continued employment with the security firm depends on it. Megacorporations and city contractors pay well for the protection firms such as Ravenlocke Securities provide and expect nothing less than stellar performance. Security firms who fail to deliver on their promises do not last long in this industry.

On the other hand, these merc security firms are free to choose which contracts they take and which ones they do not. This often means one sector in a given sprawl may have excellent protection and another sector very little, if any at all. Furthermore, competition for contracts is cutthroat. Security firms have been known to go to war with competitors, even to the point of killing civilians under the protection of rival firms in an effort to undermine their contracts.

Some cities find that a bounty system is a good way to augment the services security firms provide. Bounty Hunters tend to be hard-core individuals who go wherever they have to and do whatever it takes to get their mark. While a bounty system does not provide continued security, it does tend to get the more violent offenders off the streets.

The Not-So Cashless World

In 2088, the world is for the most part a cashless society. A person's financial data is stored in his or her TAP. Each time a person makes a financial transaction she interacts with a HR object that either adds or subtracts the monetary equivalent from her balance. For the average citizen of the world, this arrangement works just fine. For those who do not have TAPs however, making any kind of purchase can be challenging, to say the least. Fortunately, the solution to this problem had been in place all along—credit cards.

People who—for whatever reason—do not have a TAP installed in their head can use a government-issued credit card to conduct financial transactions of all types. Many ronin and criminal

organizations have multiple cards under falsified identities to avoid attracting attention to their illicit activities. Hard currency and corporate script is also still an option in many nations across the world. The strongest, most dominant currency in the world today is the Chinese Yuan, followed closely by the Brazilian Real and the Japanese Nuyen.

The Omega Protocols

On November 17, 2073, representatives from most of the world's nations gathered in Stockholm to discuss the threat posed by AIs evolving beyond human comprehension. Many had considered the possibility of Singularity, popularized by science fiction writers for more than a hundred years, but had only recently considered it an actual threat.

In simplest terms, the most probable path to Singularity rests on the idea of a rogue AI program making a more intelligent AI program, which in turn makes a still more intelligent program and so on until a super-intelligent AI, completely divorced from human morals (and therefore beyond human understanding) emerges and threatens humankind's very existence. With powers too difficult to imagine, let alone grasp, a Singularity AI, nicknamed an Omega, posed a clear threat to humankind. Whether kept as a pet, terrorized into worship, or brushed aside into extinction as a nuisance, a Singularity AI could hold the destiny of the human race in its digital hand. The fact that some people, hoping in a sense to create their own "god," worked against humanity to help certain AIs achieve this ambition only made things more dire.

The Omega Protocols spell out in painstaking detail exactly how intelligent AIs may become and what restraining programs must be used before humanity should regard them as a threat. They also include provisions allowing signatories to intervene in the territory of any other nation without prior notice if they suspect an AI might attempt to evolve itself beyond the scale of human intelligence. The third section of the protocols laid out rigorous penalties for any human found guilty of collaborating with an AI bent upon transforming itself into an Omega.

As already mentioned, many people regard the notion of a Singularity as a myth spread by the ignorant and those cynical enough to prey upon their fears. They compare it to professed "wars on drugs" and other moral panics of the past. For this reason, certain countries simply refused to sign the Omega Protocols in the first place, and many others devote little resources to actively dealing with the threat. Still, the possibility of an AI attempting to evolve itself into an Omega leaves many disquieted and uncertain. In the mind of the average citizen, the old saying, "better safe than sorry" dampens all efforts to repeal the protocols.

The Birth of the Virtual World

The people of 2088 live amidst dreams.

To them, the virtual world, born in the imagination but given shape and form by technology feeding sensory information directly into the brain, exists parallel with the actual world. Able to perceive and interact with The Deep as easily as the actual, many, particularly the young with no personal memory, or comprehension, of life before the Media Web, sometimes find the notion of distinguishing between the two baffling. Indeed, for all save the tiny minority without a TAP (Tendril Access Processor), the threshold between these two competing realities sometimes blurs.

Today, almost everything in the "real" world also maintains some sort of presence in the virtual. Control panels for vehicles and keypads for devices often include virtual prompts as well as physical ones. Indeed, many of the most advanced systems rely completely upon a virtual interface and seem utterly blank to those without a TAP. Locks on doors also typically respond to virtual commands, the avatar charged with guarding the entrance demanding passwords and other security protocols rather than responding to any sort of physical key. Indeed, for most, using a virtual guard dog capable of alerting the authorities, activating defenses and even, if necessary, savaging intruders through the interface of their TAP makes more sense than a flesh-and-blood creature.

This fundamental change, so profound and significant that most put it on the same level as the development of agriculture or electricity, began simply enough once people started linking computers just over a hundred years ago. Though ridiculously primitive, this "internet" nevertheless laid the groundwork for a new world view by assigning values to objects that only existed within computer networks. Indeed, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, virtual game worlds often had economies rivaling those of actual countries. From there, the pace only quickened as more and more people found ways to plug into the global network. The acceptance of Head frames in 2024 truly blazed the trail for the world to come. Allowing their wearers

to both see and hear virtual constructs, they ultimately made interacting with the "imaginary" a daily event. While people still had the choice to simply not interact with The Deep by taking off their crowns, in more advanced parts of the world Head frames rapidly became essential for normal life. Critical to identity and commerce, Head frames also liberated humanity from the tyranny of false expertise by making information available to anyone able to frame the proper question.

Commentators at the time heralded the development of STRAP (Surgical Tendrils Remote Access Processor) in 2036 as the final step of this glorious evolution. A VR device connected directly to the brain, STRAP made Head frames relics within a decade of entering the mainstream. Some of the most enthusiastic went so far as to call it the "prime interface" or "interface one" since it seemed nothing could improve upon it. As STRAP grew ubiquitous, the virtual world truly began to take on its own independent reality. At least until TAP exposed it as a pale imitation of the genuine article.

While an extraordinary improvement over VR glasses, STRAP—a mechanical device implanted by a sometimes-dangerous surgery—nevertheless introduced an element of risk into the equation. The prospect of complications, coupled with the ever-present threat of technical failure, dampened enthusiasm for STRAP in some quarters. TAP, nearly fifty percent biological, removed the danger once and for all. The world adopted TAP at an extraordinary speed. Between 2058 and 2067, one billion people underwent the procedure that transformed redundant portions of their brains into receivers and projectors allowing direct interaction with the virtual world. Two years after crossing that threshold, the epoch-making "Get with the Program" concert by Endomorph sealed the destiny of humanity by making it all but socially mandatory for those under thirty to receive a TAP. Many members of the older generation chose to do so as well, and in the generation since that defining moment, the numbers of people refusing to access the virtual world has declined to almost zero.

Today, only a few eccentrics and the pitied handful unable to undergo the process for medical reasons still live outside the virtual world. Since STRAP earned the nickname of the "prime" or "first" interface, most, recognizing TAP as far superior, refer to it as "Interface Zero." To them, it is a new organ as much a part of their own bodies as eyes or ears, and barely counts as an interface at all.

The Emergence of the Psion

As if life in 2088 weren't strange enough, now we got people who for, as of yet unknown reasons, have begun to manifest what can only be termed supernatural abilities. Some people call them awakened, or psychics. Others call them freaks, mind benders, zeeks, and any other number of offensive names, but the "official" term is Psion.

Nobody really knows why the zeeks are the way they are. Some people say they are a new breed of human, created in some secret lab. Some technophobes insist the TAP has awakened parts of the brain that allow for this kind of phenomena to take place. Other, more paranoid folks claim psychics are the result of military experiments to create a new type of soldier. Sounds scary, but it could be true. Many psions display some freakish abilities. People claim to have seen zeeks move cars with their minds and knock a person back thirty feet with nothing more than a hand gesture. Of course, nobody can forget the incident in Spain last January when Hernando Vasquez torched the NAC embassy complex in Madrid, killing 61 people and injuring 40 others.

The media feed shows the freaker walking right into the building, just looking around, as calm as you please… Except everywhere he looked, people started bursting into flame. Desks and chairs exploded into bits of flaming debris. Duraplastic windows melted. Sprinkler systems activated, but the water evaporated before it touched the floor. Eventually, the main building and many of the smaller buildings in the complex burned down. That was the breaking point for many people around the world.

Before Madrid, people were content to view the zeeks as yet another by product of this crazy world we live in. When you can walk down the street and see robots and people who are literally part bear and part human, when you can interface with a computer network inside your brain, leave your body and go ghosting through The Deep, it's not much of a stretch to accept that some people can move things with their mind, or even more disturbing; read your thoughts. The thing is, before Lisbon, none of these psions ever killed someone. Well, not the way Hernando did, at least.

Sure, you had incidents—muggings, robberies, and even reports of bizarre killings. But authorities (to their credit, for once) not wanting to stir up a panic, simply chalked the killings up to the cost of living life in this brave new world. "People

die all the time," they'd say, "Some in truly brutal ways that have nothing to do with alleged psychic powers," and they were right. Nevertheless, after Madrid, things changed. Hate crimes against suspected zeeks (and hybrids, because, hey, they might be psychic too!) spiked dramatically in the days and weeks after the attack as grisly images of the burned bodies and wreckage from the ruined NAC embassy streamed across the Media Web in Hi-definition video 24hrs a day. The images of the attack played out as sidebars on news segments like "Chi-town today" or the highly biased, pseudo-political commentary Media feed, "The Chuck O'Malley Show." Of course, the NAC, in typical uber-fundie, neo-conservative fashion, worked itself into hysteria.

Within weeks the NAC congress had pushed through radical anti-psion legislation, deeming the use of unlicensed psychic abilities a Class-A felony punishable under law by up to 3 years in a federal prison. On the heels of the much-maligned law, the NAC formed Psi division; a government agency dedicated to tracking and monitoring the psychic population. Psi division has been busy over the past year, setting up registration facilities and special detainment centers in cities throughout the NAC. Outside the NAC, psions find limited acceptance and manage to live their lives with some measure of normalcy, even if it is with others of their kind. Indeed, psychic communities exist in various sprawls across the world, much as various ethnic groups tend to live in the same neighborhoods.

Colonization of the Solar System

The past fifty years have seen humanity boldly push beyond the confines of planet earth to live in the frigid depths of outer space. People from all walks of life live in a variety of environments ranging from orbital habitats, crater cities on the moon, vast underground complexes on mars, mining colonies on The Belt (The asteroid belt between mars and Jupiter) and most recently settlements on the Galilean moons of Callisto, Io, Europa, and Ganymede.

The first colonies and habitats were constructed by various world governments—primarily China and Brasilia, with the United States a distant third—and peopled with scientists, government personnel and simulacrums decanted for labor and recreational purposes. As these fledgling colonies and habitats grew more stable they expanded to accommodate civilian settlers. Megacorporations, recognizing space exploration as a lucrative emerging market, scrambled to obtain government contracts for a variety of functions including (but not limited to) all aspects of spaceship design and construction, cargo/personnel transport, and mining operations.

Thanks to the development of the VASMIR III propulsion engine, the time it takes to travel to the Jovian moons and all points in between has been cut to a mere two to three weeks rather than the seven or eight months it used to take. In 2088, people who wish to leave the Earth behind can travel throughout the solar system, choosing to live in a variety of orbital habits and colonies on the moon, Mars, the Jovian moons of Callisto, Europa, Io, and Ganymede. For those who do shadow work, there are opportunities aplenty working to further the interests of megacorporations who vie for control of the vital air and water markets.

"The future is already here—it is just unevenly distributed."
– William Gibson

CHAPTER TWO: SYSTEMS OF CONTROL

Welcome to the world, as it exists in 2088. If you read through Chapter One, you've learned that a great many things about the world around you have changed. Man can now merge his body with machine, becoming better, stronger, and faster than the average person on the streets. Nearly everyone in the world has the ability to interface with the physical world around them through the TAP; a cybernetic implant installed in their brains.

The Tendril Access Processor allows people to do a variety of things in 2088, including hacking computer domains to spirit away valuable information from megacorporations and sell it to the highest bidder. All of these elements help define the flavor of the setting, but since this is a role-playing game, these elements need rules to provide a mechanical context and balance. That's what this chapter provides—rules to help you bring the world of 2088 to life during the course of an Interface Zero adventure.

In this chapter, you'll find rules for cyberware creation, hacking, street cred, and rules for making combat more deadly. This chapter is admittedly longer than setting rules for other Savage Worlds settings, *but don't be intimidated!* The cyberpunk genre has a great many elements that need proper treatment, but our goal is to be as **comprehensive** as possible, not as **complicated** as possible. You'll find that each element, whether it's hacking, reputation, combat, or cyberware, is designed to be *FFF (*Fast Furious and Fun) when you play Interface Zero.

TOO DEADLY?

Some of you might find that this combat system is too deadly for your tastes. If that is the case, simply use the standard rules for combat in the Savage Worlds Explorers Edition. Another option is to allow Soak rolls where applicable. This will lessen the lethality of the system, but not so much that the setting loses its gritty feel.

That said, some of you may not be interested in reading through the theory and setting flavor which enhances the rules found in this chapter. In the interest of keeping things quick, I've included streamlined "cheat sheets" of the cyberware and hacking rules at the end of this chapter starting on page 69.

There is no underlying theory in the cheat sheets, no setting flavor; just the rules, Fast Furious and Fun; the way you want them.

THE RAZOR'S EDGE: COMBAT IN 2088

"It's a hell of a thing, killin' a man. Take away all he's got, and all he's ever gonna have."
– William Munny, Unforgiven, 1992

In Interface Zero, the world is a very dangerous place. Life is a precious commodity that is often lost in the split second it takes to squeeze a trigger. With one cyber-enhanced thrust of a knife into the vital organs, a person's life can bleed out onto

Table 2:1 Gritty Damage

DAMAGE OVER TOUGHNESS	WILD CARDS	EXTRAS
0–3	Shaken (If the victim was already Shaken, he suffers a wound instead.)	Shaken (If the victim was already Shaken, he's Incapacitated instead.)
4–7	Shaken and 1 wound	Incapacitated (Remove from Play)
8–11	Shaken and 2 wounds	
12+	Shaken and 3 wounds	

the street while uncaring people walk on by. Interface Zero is a game where death is a very real possibility whenever your characters strap on their Kevlar-lined trench coats and walk out into the world. The following rules, originally published in The Moscow Connection and reprinted with the kind permission of Pinnacle Entertainment, reflect that harsh truth.

Damage

Compare the damage of an attack versus the target's Toughness and consult the appropriate column. Each wound inflicts a –1 penalty to all trait rolls, to a maximum penalty of –3. Characters cannot make Soak rolls! They can spend their bennies on the nasty Vigor rolls that may follow, however.

Wounds

Anytime a character suffers one or more wounds, make a Vigor roll (counting any wound penalties incurred by this attack). If the roll is successful, there is no further effect. If you fail the roll, your hero is incapacitated (see below).

(Note: In regular Savage Worlds, characters don't have to make a Vigor roll for suffering less than four wounds. Things are a little tougher when we're using gritty damage, however. The Incapacitation rules and Injury Table are also slightly different for these Setting Rules, so make sure to use these tables rather than those in the regular rule book.)

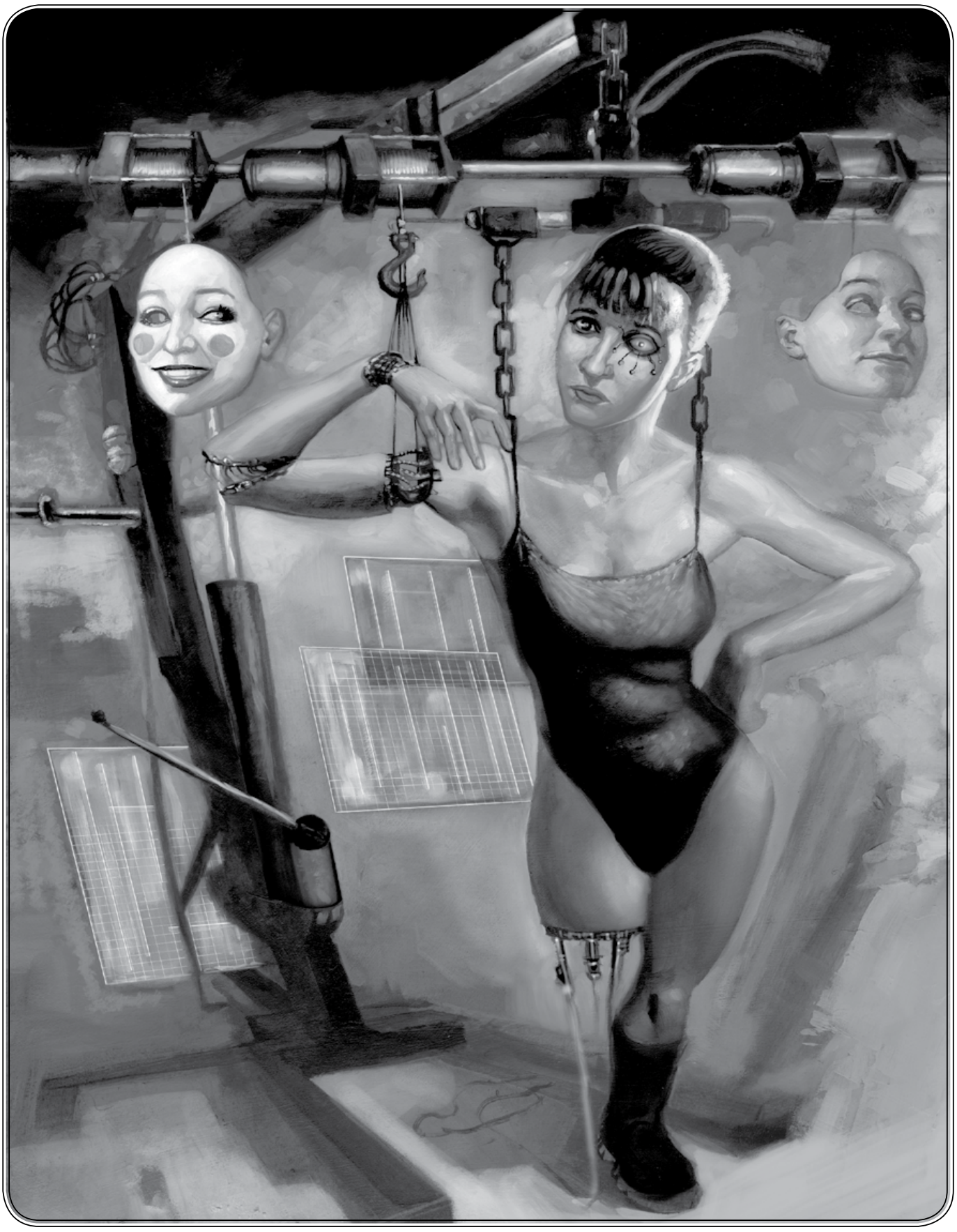
Incapacitation

An Incapacitated character must make an immediate Vigor roll (minus his wound penalties as usual).

- **Raise:** The victim is only stunned and is not incapacitated. He's still Shaken and retains his wounds, and suffers a temporary Injury that fades after the combat is over (or if the character is completely healed of all wounds). Roll on the Injury Table to determine what that injury is.
- **Success:** The victim is knocked unconscious until healed (or 2D6 hours later) and rolls on the Injury Table.
- **Failure:** The character is knocked unconscious as Success, above, and suffers a permanent wound (roll on the Injury Table). Unfortunately, he's also Bleeding Out and must make a Vigor roll at the start of each round before Action Cards are dealt. Success means he must roll again next round. Failure means he dies. A raise on the Vigor roll (or a successful Healing roll) stabilizes the bleeding and no further rolls are required.
- **Critical Failure:** The victim expires instantly.

Table 2:2 Injuries

2D6 WOUND	WOUND
2	**Unmentionables:** If the injury is permanent, reproduction is out of the question without miracle surgery.
3–5	**Arm:** Roll a die. Odd=left arm; Even=right leg; it's rendered useless until healed.
6–8	**Guts:** Your hero catches one somewhere between the crotch and the chin. Roll 1D6
9–10	**Leg:** Roll a die. Odd=left leg; Even=right leg; It's rendered useless and Pace is reduced by –1.
11–12	**Head:** The victim suffers a nasty hit to the head or face. Roll 1D6
1D6 GUTS ROLL	
1–2	**Broken:** Agility reduced a die type (min D4).
3–4	**Battered:** Vigor reduced a die type (min D4).
5–6	**Busted:** Strength reduced a die type (min D4).
1D6 HEAD ROLL	
1–2	**Hideous Scar:** Your hero now has the Ugly Hindrance.
3–4	**Blinded:** An eye is damaged. Gain the One Eye Hindrance (or the Blind Hindrance if he only had one good eye).
5–6	**Brain Damage:** Massive trauma to the head. Smarts reduced one die type (min D4).



CYBERWARE

Cyberware encompasses a series of implants and other enhancements that can be built into the body of a human or hybrid or can be installed into the systems of an android or remote humanoid cyber drone. While technologically common, there are only certain fringe groups that embrace its installation. One obvious reason is the surgical removal of body parts and the various dangers this includes. Thus, cyberware is typically associated with groups such as gangs, the military, and various types of media stars, and of course, ronin, and freelancers, like you.

Purchasing Cyberware

Characters can take the Modification Upgrade Edge during character creation and get an equivalent of 25,000 credits to spend on bio/cybernetic modifications. This means that even a dirt-poor sprawler can end up with some cyberware. The Game Master and the player have to work together to come up with the story explanation, but possibilities include salvage operations in an abandoned industrial site, current employment perks, or simply the side effect of serving as a human guinea pig. Those with money are often incredibly wasteful—they can always take the loss as a tax write off, right? Naturally, a character with sufficient credits can just purchase the ware outright. He even has the option of paying for the deficit with cash if the Edge alone is not sufficient to buy a modification. The cost of a modification includes its installation. The Modification Upgrade Edge can only be taken during character creation. After, cyberware must be purchased with money earned during game play.

Now, while the above guidelines help a person afford the cyberware at beginning levels, it doesn't address the Fast Furious Fun! paradigm that makes the Savage Worlds™ game system so great. Character creation is supposed to be lightning fast, and this concept should also apply when you go to purchase your cyberware. With this in mind, we have created the following rules to help you quickly create any piece of cyberware or bioware you can possibly imagine! Here's how it works.

Step 1: Determine the Quality Rating

In Interface Zero, cyberware and bioware has four basic categories: Gutterware, Streetware, Hyperchrome, and Milware. Each category determines the item's availability, its base price, starting number of defects, and stock functions.

Reading the Entries

Availability: The availability entry indicates the length of time it will take to acquire the item and outlines any other relevant information players and Game Masters need to know.

Cost: The base cost of the item plus the cost of additional item functions beyond the starting number is indicated here.

Defects: The science of creating cyber technology isn't perfect, even in 2088. Items often have flaws in their construction or programming that can be very minor or sometimes even debilitating. We call them defects. The number of defects a piece of cyberware has is listed here along with the number of additional defects an item will have depending on how many functions are built into the item. Defects directly translate to a penalty on cybertrauma rolls at a 1:1 ratio. So 6 defect points would equal a whopping –6 penalty on your character's cybertrauma rolls. Characters must roll on the cybertrauma table (see below) each time they roll a number on a Vigor roll designated by the type of cyberware they own.

Characters always make cybertrauma rolls based on the lowest rated gear they have installed. So a character that has two Streetware systems and one piece of Gutterware installed in his body would roll on the cybertrauma table each time she rolls a 1 or snake eyes on a Vigor check.

Functions: All pieces of cyberware have an intended function. For instance, a cyber eye might be designed to act like a targeting scope, or provide night vision for the wearer. Items can also have multiple functions built into them. This entry lists the number of "stock" functions a piece of cyberware will have. You can add more functions than the stock number, but they must be balanced with defect points.

Gutterware

Nicknames: Rustware, Loaners, Deadware, Damaged Goods, Reaperware

The cheapest of the cheap, gutterware can be found anywhere in the sprawl, usually in back room body chop shops and street shops where shady, low-level fixers pawn stolen goods off on the poor folks and suckers who don't know any better. Gutterware is often highly illegal for a number of reasons. It's usually stolen from some poor sprawler who wandered into the wrong neighborhood and got ghosted by a gang of chrome reapers.

Gutterware that hasn't been stolen was likely built in some slag's basement to avoid the stiff regulations that are imposed on the creation of cyberware. This means what you buy on the street probably isn't board certified. It hasn't been tested to ensure its safe to implant in a human being (or if it has already been implanted in a human and is being "recycled," it certainly wasn't built for your character!). Consequently, gutterware tends to malfunction in ways that result in various traumas ranging from minor mental and physical disorders, outright rejection of the cyberware, and in the most extreme cases, brain aneurisms, strokes, blindness, paralysis, heart attacks, and, sometimes, even sudden death.

Availability: Gutterware can be bought any time the character wishes.

Cost: Gutterware costs a minimum of 10,000 credits and increases by 5,000 credits for each function point beyond the minimum.

Defects: Gutterware automatically comes with 2 defect points and gains an additional defect point for each additional function point worth of options you build into the item (Rounded down). Gutterware triggers a cybertrauma roll on a roll of 2 or less on Vigor rolls.

Functions: Gutterware comes with 1 free function point. Additional function points must be balanced with an equal number of defect points.

Streetware

Nicknames: Off the rack, bargain bin ware, coupon ware, PlugNplay gear

Like gutterware, Streetware can be found anywhere in the sprawl, usually in Brick and Mortar corporate stores and VR malls, or the black market (decrease the price by 10% if characters purchase streetware on the black market). Unlike most types of gutterware, however, streetware has been certified safe for human use. It's clean and, aside from the normal hazards of buying things "off the shelf," isn't usually fatal to the user. The downside is streetware is heavily regulated.

Commercially sold streetware is fitted with a HR object detailing standard background information about the user, the date of purchase, the place the item was manufactured, etc. Consequently, some people (especially those engaging in illegal activities) who want to get restricted streetware usually go through the black market.

Availability: Regulated. Streetware takes 1D4 days to acquire if the character has a relevant permit. If the character wants to buy restricted cyberware and doesn't have a permit, adjust the wait time to 1D4 weeks while the permit processes (bureaucracy sucks). Permits can easily be bought through the same retailer who is selling you the cyberware, though you'll leave an E-trail that can be traced back to you.

Cost: Streetware costs a minimum of 25,000 credits, and increases by 17,500 credits for each function point beyond the minimum.

Defects: Streetware comes with 1 defect point and gains 1 defect point for each additional function point worth of options you build into the item (Rounded down). Streetware triggers a cybertrauma roll on a natural roll of 1 or snake eyes on Vigor rolls.

Functions: Streetware starts with 1 free function point. Additional function points must be balanced with an equal number of defect points.

Hyperchrome

Nicknames: Novaware, Chrome

Hyperchrome is the cadillac of commercial cyberware. It can be ordered on the open market, but, unlike streetware, Hyperchrome is specifically crafted to fit the wearer. These exacting procedures take longer and cost much more, but in the end it's worth it. Hyperchrome is much more user friendly than other cyberware on the open market.

Availability: Regulated. Like other forms of commercial cyberware, Hyperchrome takes time and permits to get one of these items. Each individual piece of gear must be board certified before it's sold, which means a longer wait for the user. Characters must wait 1D4 weeks before the piece of cyberware they've purchased is ready for use.

Cost: Hyperchrome costs a minimum of 50,000 credits, and increases by 25,000 credits for each function point beyond the minimum.

Defects: Hyperchrome comes with no defect points, and only acquires 1 defect point for every 2 additional function points worth of options you build into the item (Rounded down). Hyperchrome triggers a cybertrauma roll on a natural score of 1 or snake eyes on Vigor rolls.

Functions: Hyperchrome starts with 2 free function points. Additional function points are balanced with the appropriate number of defect points.

Milware

Nicknames: Ghostware, LEETware, S. O. T. A.

Most ronin can go their entire career in the shadows and never see this type of cyberware in action, and for good reason. Milware's cutting edge cybertech, hombre', crafted in ultra secure corporate R&D facilities and secret government research labs across the world. The people who use it are ghosts, elite personnel who have ties to paramilitary units or run black ops for megacorps. It's rumored that Stopwatch fits it's agents with this stuff, especially the brainers who hunt down renegade AI's.

Availability: Restricted. Milware isn't ever available on the open market. Characters that wanna get a hold of this elite chrome are typically gonna pay through the teeth for it on the black market, though other options do exist. Characters might consider signing up for a term in the military or become guinea pigs for some megacorp. They can always steal it, too, though Milware is heavily protected. Ask yourself if a shiny new cyber ear is worth losing your life before you hit one of these manufacturing facilities, ami.

Cost: Milware costs a minimum of 100,000 credits, and increases by 50,000 credits for each function point beyond the minimum. Milware can only be purchased on the black market or if you are in the military.

Defects: Milware comes with no defect points and only acquires 1 defect point for every 3 additional function points worth of options you build into the item (Rounded down). Milware only triggers a cybertrauma roll when the character rolls snake eyes on Vigor rolls.

Functions: Milware starts with 3 free function points. Additional function points are balanced with an appropriate number of defect points.

Step 2: Design the Item

Now that you've decided the quality of your new piece of cyberware, you need to build it. It's best to have a concept in mind, so spend a few minutes thinking about what you want your chrome to do. Are you wanting a cybernetic arm with concealed weapons? Maybe you just want to jack up your reflexes a bit or add some sub-dermal armor. Once you've decided, consult the charts below for the item function that best suits the concept you have in mind. Spend the requisite function points and credits (determined by the item quality you chose), balance them with the appropriate number of defect points and you're done!

Functions

Functions have three levels; 1 point functions, 2 point functions, and 3 point functions. Each level represents the number of points you need to spend to get the function you want. So, if you want level 3 muscle augmentation, for example, you'll need to spend 3 function points (and the money!) to buy it. Level 2 muscle augmentation would cost 2 points, level 1 one point, etc.

Keep in mind; you have a number of function points that come stock with the category of cyberware you chose. So, if you chose to purchase level 2 Milware Muscle augmentation, you would have 1 function point left to spend on another augmentation to the muscles (like say, 1 point of tension springs in the leg muscles to augment your pace) before additional functions need to be balanced with defect points. The functions listed below are by no means comprehensive. Players and Game Masters are encouraged to work together to create your own amazing pieces of cyberware!

Stacking Functions and Upgrading

Some of the item functions listed below are progressions from a lower level function. For instance, Level 2 Muscle Augmentation is an advancement of Level 1 Muscle Augmentation. Unless otherwise noted, the benefits of these functions do not stack with each other. Additionally, characters do not have to have previously purchased one function to obtain the benefits of the same function of a higher level (You don't need to have first bought Level 1 tension springs to buy level 2 tension springs). That said, if you initially buy a function at a lower level quality then at some later point in your character's career you wish to upgrade, you'll still have to pay the item's new cost.

So if a character spends 10,000 credits to purchase level 1 Streetware reflex enhancers, and then later in the game wants to upgrade to Level 2 Hyperchrome reflex enhancers, she must spend the cost to buy them at the new quality rating (50,000 credits For Hyperchrome cyberware, with no extra cost per function, because Hyperchrome grants 2 free function points). The good news is that any defects associated with the older cyberware go away, though the rules for defects still apply. If you add more function points than the allotted amount they must be balanced according to the defect point's entry for the Quality Rating of the new cyberware.

1 Point Functions

Amplified hearing: Adds a +2 bonus to Notice rolls involving sound.

Basic EMP Shielding: The item is shielded against the debilitating effects of an EMP weapon. The item gains +2 Armor for the purposes of resisting damage from an EMP weapon.

Basic Air Filter:** Characters get +2 to Vigor rolls against poisons, diseases, etc. transmitted by air.

Basic KNOWcomp: You have a blank database installed in your cranium. The database accesses Smarts-based skills (Knowledge skills, Taunt, tracking, etc.) which are slotted into your brain in the form of digital chips. A basic KNOWcomp comes with a single chip slot allowing for access to one Smarts-based skill at a time. Knowledge Chips cost 5,000 creditsper die type.

Chemical Injection System: You have a standard injection system installed in your body. The system injects a cocktail of drugs into your blood stream. The injection system is capable of injecting up to 3 different drugs into your body at a given time. It takes a regular action to activate. Drugs are sold separately (See Chapter 4: Gear for more information on drugs). The injection system holds 5 doses per drug before needing to be refilled.

Chem. Sniffer: Adds a +1 bonus to Notice rolls when attempting to find Toxins, poisons, plastic explosives and similar compounds.

Gecko Cyberhands: You gain +2 on Climbing rolls.

Image Magnification:** Adds a +2 to Notice rolls involving sight.

Infra/Ultra Optics (IUO):** The eye's retina is replaced to enable vision into the ultraviolet and infrared spectrums, and the brain is changed to be able to perceive colors that don't exist in the standard visible spectrum. The character gains the benefits of the Infravision monstrous ability.

Flash Compensators: The character can no longer be blinded or dazed by flashes.

Level 1 Tension Springs: Add 2 to the characters Pace attribute.

Level 1 Muscle Augmentation:** Increase users Strength attribute by 1 die type (or d12+1 from d12).

Level 1 Olfactory Booster:** Adds a +2 bonus to Notice rolls involving Smell.

Level 1 Reactive Reflex Enhancers:** The character gains a +1 bonus to her Parry attribute.

Level 1 Environmental Regulators:** +1 to Survival rolls for a single type of environment (Hot/cold weather environments and wastelands).

Level 1 Sub-dermal Armor: The character gains +1 Armor.

Night Vision Optics: The character gains the benefits of the Low Light Vision monstrous ability.

Nutrient Tank: You have a tank with nutrients installed. You do not need to eat for one week before checking for fatigue due to hunger.

Razor Nails:** Razor nails are placed in the character's finger tips. Made from crystallized nanoweave, the width of these blades' edges can be measured in molecules. Razor nails do Str+D4 damage. If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters add a D8 to their damage roll instead of a D6.

Redundant Organs:** The character has a second set of vital organs in her body. They were grown from pig DNA and provide a +2 on Vigor rolls when rolling for "Bleeding Out".

Storage Compartment: The character has a hidden storage compartment somewhere on her person. This compartment can hold up to 1lb. of material (like extra ammo, grenades, etc.).

Standard Cyber Arm: The character has replaced one or both arms with a cyber arm. One arm replacement allows the character to carry 6 times his Strength die type in pounds. If the character has two cyber arms she can lift 7 times her Strength die type in pounds. Each arm must be purchased individually. Defect points stack for each arm.

Standard Cyber Leg: The character has a cybernetic leg installed to replace one or both legs. The character may jump 2" horizontally and 1" vertically from a dead stop, or up to 4" horizontally and 2" vertically if she has first ran at least half her pace. If the character has two cyber legs, add an extra 1" to both horizontal and vertical jumps. Each leg must be purchased individually. Defect points stack for each leg.

Standard Vehicle Control Interface (VCI): Your TAP has been fitted with a module allowing you to directly interface with all types of vehicles and remote controlled drones. A standard interface allows for direct control of one vehicle or remote operation of a single drone. When interfaced with the vehicle or drone, you gain the following benefits:

- **Improved Acceleration:** The character can accelerate up to 1.5 times his vehicle's acceleration (round down). So a character interfaced with a pickup truck could move the vehicle up to 7 squares on his action instead of 5.
- **Enhanced Control:** You only suffer –1 penalty to Driving rolls when travelling over rough terrain.

Target Tracker: You can keep track of all your allies and enemies on the battlefield. When firing into melee you only hit an innocent bystander if you roll snake eyes for handguns or if you roll a 1 when using shotguns or auto fire weapons.

Tailored Pheromones:** Your pheromone secretion has been tailored to attract others. You gain a +2 to Charisma.

** The augmentation is either bioware or can be purchased as bioware.

2 Point Functions

Advanced EMP Shielding: The item is shielded against the debilitating effects of an EMP weapon. The item gains +4 Armor for the purposes of resisting damage from an EMP weapon.

Advanced Cyber Arm: The character has replaced one or both arms with a cyber arm. One arm replacement allows the character to carry 7 times his Strength die type in pounds. If the character has two cyber arms she can carry 8 times her Strength die type in pounds. Each arm must be purchased individually. Defect points stack for each arm.

Advanced Cyber Leg: The character has a cybernetic leg installed to replace one or both legs. The character may jump 3" horizontally and 2" vertically from a dead stop, or up to 6" horizontally and 4" vertically if she has first ran at least half her pace. If the character has two cyber legs, add an extra

2" to both horizontal and vertical jumps. Each leg must be purchased individually. Defect points stack for each leg.

Advanced KNOWcomp: You have a blank database installed in your cranium. The database accesses Smarts-based skills (Knowledge skills, Streetwise, Taunt, Tracking, etc.) which are slotted into your brain in the form of digital chips. Advanced KNOW – comps come with two chip slots allowing for access to two Smarts-based skills at a time. Knowledge Chips cost 5,000 credits per die type.

Advanced TAP: Characters with an advanced TAP add +2 bonus to the TAP's Parry Rating. Additionally, they gain a +1 bonus to Hacking rolls and 1 extra program in active memory.

Advanced Vehicle Control Interface (VCI): Your TAP has been fitted with a module allowing you to directly interface with all types of vehicles and remote controlled drones. An advanced interface allows for direct control of one vehicle or simultaneous operation of two remote-controlled drones. When interfaced with the vehicle or drone, you gain the following benefits:

- **Improved Acceleration:** The character can accelerate up to 2 times his vehicle's acceleration. So a character interfaced with a pickup truck could move the vehicle up to 10 squares on his action instead of 5.
- **Enhanced Control:** You suffer no penalties to Driving rolls when travelling over rough terrain.

Basic Active Skill Computer (BASC): You have a basic active skill computer installed in the base of your neural cortex. The computer controls motor functions in your body based on programmed presets which are slotted into your brain in the form of digital chips. A BASC is capable of accessing one Non-combat related Agility or Strength-based skill at a time. Each active skill chip costs 10,000 credits per die type.

Biomonitor: A small module that displays metabolic and health information. Reduces the wound penalty suffered by a medic treating the character by 1.

Camouflage Skin:** The character has dermal injections that act like camouflage paint, altering her pigmentation when she crawls or moves half her pace. Opponents suffer a –1 penalty to Opposed Notice rolls to detect the character.

Concealed Weapon Mount: The character can install a hand held ranged or melee weapon somewhere on his or her body. Examples of the types of weapons that can be mounted include hand guns, shot guns, shock pads, retractable mono knives and monowires. The weapon must be purchased separately (see weapons in Chapter 4: Equipment for more info).

Echolocation Module: The character's voice box is altered slightly to produce high-frequency sound waves in a frontal arc. His ears are modified to gather additional information from the echoes. A processor implanted or grown in the brain takes the information and translates it into a mental image. The character can "see" by bouncing sound waves off objects, up to 20ft. ahead, though he can only perceive the objects' (or persons') approximate shape but not discern fine detail.

Emotion Blocker: When activated, gives the character a +2 bonus to resist Taunt and Intimidate attempts. Not recommended at parties.

Gyro Stabilizers: Reduce automatic fire penalty by 1.

Level 2 Tension Springs: Add 4 to the character's Pace attribute.

Level 2 Muscle Augmentation:** The character's Strength increases by 2 die types (or to d12+2 if exceeding d12).The character can carry 6 times his Strength Die in lbs. without incurring any penalties.

Level 2 Reactive Reflex Enhancers:** The character gains a +1 bonus to her Parry Attribute and ranged attackers suffer a –1 to shooting rolls.

Level 2 Sub-dermal Armor: The character gains +2 Armor.

Personal Airbags: You take half damage from falls and crashes.

Retractable Claws:** Retractable claws are longer than razor spurs, extending 6 inches beyond the length

of the character's hands. Retractable claws do Str+D6 damage. If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters add a D10 to their damage roll instead of a D6 and gain 2 AP.

Tactical System Radio: Characters with the tactical system radio can share bennies with others who also have a tactical system radio. Tactical system radios have an effective range of 500 yards.

Tactical Computer: The character has a tactical computer implanted in his brain. Choose a single combat skill (Fighting, Hacking, Shooting, Throwing). That skill is raised by one Die Type (or another +1 if exceeding d12). This function may be purchased more than once. Each time it applies to a different combat skill.

Tailored Antibodies:** Characters get +2 to Vigor rolls against poisons, diseases etc.

Tailored Organs:** The character has a second set of organs specifically grown from her DNA. They provide a +1 on vigor rolls when rolling on the Incapacitation Table and +4 on Vigor Rolls when rolling for "Bleeding Out".

** The augmentation is either bioware or can be purchased as bioware.

3 Point Functions

Battle Computer*: The character has a milspec-rated battle computer implanted in his brain. Choose a single combat skill (Fighting, Shooting, Throwing). That skill is raised by two Die Types (or another +1 if exceeding d12). This function may be purchased more than once. Each time it applies to a different combat skill.

Combat EMP Shielding*: The item is shielded against the debilitating effects of an EMP weapon. The item gains +6 Armor for the purposes of resisting damage from an EMP weapon.

Combat TAP*: Characters with a combat TAP gain a +2 bonus to the TAP's Parry Rating. Additionally, they gain a +2 to Hacking rolls and 2 extra programs in active memory.

Chameleon Skin*/ **: Chameleon skin works like camouflage skin, but mimics the surrounding terrain. Opponents suffer a –2 penalty to Opposed Notice rolls to detect the character.

Expert Vehicle Control Interface (VCI)*: Your TAP has been fitted with a module allowing you to directly interface with all types of vehicles and remote controlled drones. An advanced interface allows for direct control of one vehicle or simultaneous operation of three remote-controlled drones. When interfaced with the vehicle or drone, you gain the following benefits:

- **Improved Acceleration:** The character can accelerate up to 2 times his vehicle's acceleration. So a character interfaced with a pickup truck could move the vehicle up to 10 squares on his action instead of 5.
- **Enhanced Control:** You suffer no penalties to Driving rolls when travelling over rough terrain.
- **Combat Reflexes:** You ignore penalties for shooting on an unstable platform when firing vehicle mounted weaponry.

Jump Jets: The character has micro thrusters installed on her calves, hips, and shoulder blades. She can jump a distance equal to three times her pace.

Heavy Weapon Mount: The character can install a heavy ranged weapon somewhere on his or her body. Examples of heavy weapons include micro missile launchers, mini rail guns, rotary cannons, lasers, and particle beam weaponry. This type of weapon mount is blatant and can't be concealed. Observers need not make Notice rolls when looking to see if the character has this cyberware. The weapon must be purchased separately (See Chapter 4: gear for more information).

Level 3 Tension Springs: Add 6 to the character's Pace attribute.

Level 3 Muscle Augmentation:** The character's Strength increases by 3 Die types (or to D12+3 if exceeding d12). The character can carry 7 times his Strength Die in lbs. without incurring any penalties.

Level 3 Active Reflex Enhancers*/:** The character gains a +2 bonus to her Parry attribute and ranged

attackers suffer a –2 to shooting rolls. Additionally, if a character draws a 7 or less on initiative, treat the card as if it were a 7.

Level 3 Sub-dermal Armor: The character gains +3 Armor.

Nanoweave Organs:** The character has a second set of organs specifically grown from her DNA and reinforced with a nanoweave mesh. They provide a +2 on vigor rolls when rolling on the Incapacitation Table and when rolling Vigor for "Bleeding Out" you automatically stabilize the wound unless you roll "snake eyes".

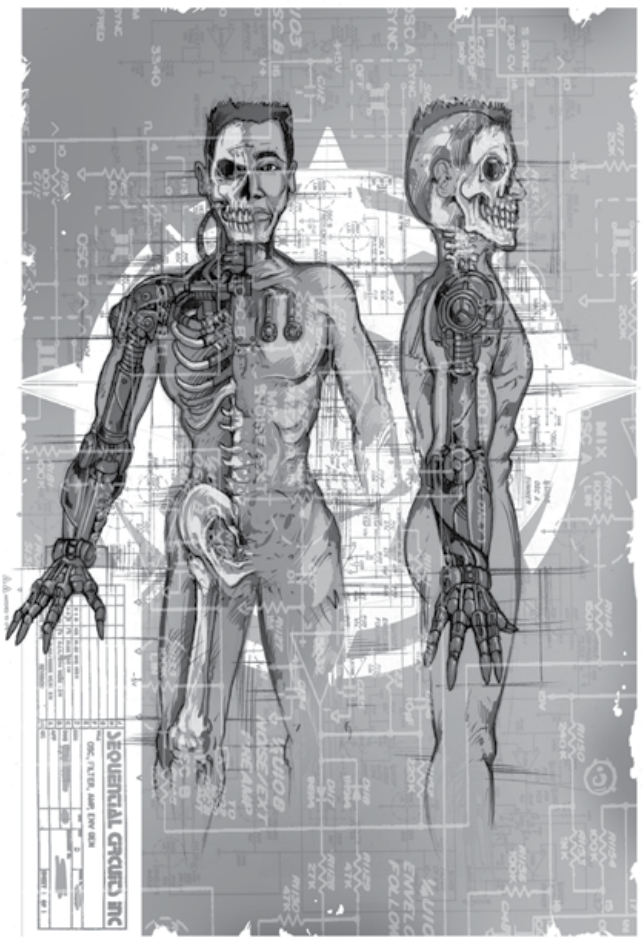
Retractable Blades: Retractable blades are 1ft. long and made of hardened plastisteel. Retractable Blades do Str+D8 damage. If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters add a D12 to their damage roll instead of a D6 and gain 3 AP.

* Only available as Milware
** The augmentation is either bioware or can be purchased as bioware.

Defects

No piece of cyberware is flawless. Some have tiny imperfections that are simply annoying while others have serious design flaws which, under the wrong circumstances, can cause debilitating injuries and in the most extreme cases complete system failure for the poor sap unlucky enough to have the tech installed. Unlike item functions, defect penalties stack with each other to represent a design flaw becoming worse and worse as more defective cyberware is installed in the body. As mentioned before, however, defect penalties can be reduced or removed entirely by upgrading to a higher quality piece of cyberware, though the character must still pay the appropriate price and follow the rules for defects and functions as normal.

Each defect point represents a –1 penalty to rolls on the cybertrauma table (see below). For example a character who, after purchasing all of her cybernetic implants has accumulated 5 defect points, must roll on the cybertrauma table and apply a –5 penalty each time she rolls a number on the Vigor die (regardless of the Wild Die result) indicated by her type of cyberware (Gutterware, Streetware, etc.).



Bennies and the Vigor Roll

Throughout the course of an Interface Zero game, characters will need to make Vigor rolls to do things like resist fatigue, roll on incapacitation tables, etc. In instances where characters use a Bennie to re-roll a failed Vigor check, the use of the Bennie does NOT allow a character to avoid rolling on the cybertrauma table! The character must still roll a d20 on the cybertrauma table below and apply the effects, if any.

Bioware and the Cybertrauma Roll

Bioware is inherently different from cyberware, the former made entirely of cloned or synthetic tissues/organs, the latter comprised of metal, micro-computer processors and fiber-optic circuitry. Consequently, bioware behaves differently than cyberware. If a cybernetic arm or eye fails or is damaged, it must be repaired or replaced. If a muscle replacement fails, it is usually because the body is rejecting the foreign tissue. Obviously, this can cause various health-related problems. These problems are represented as levels of fatigue that

last until the character has been treated by a medical professional.

So what does this mean for cybertrauma rolls as they pertain to bioware? If a character has bioware installed, she does not make rolls on the cybertrauma table above when failing a Vigor check. Instead, the character rolls on the bio-trauma table above and applies the cybertrauma penalty she received when she first purchased the piece of bioware.

Table 2:3: Biotrauma

1D20 RESULT	EFFECT
0 or below	The character gains 3 levels of fatigue
1–5	The character gains 2 levels of Fatigue
6–10	The character gains 1 level of Fatigue
11–20	No effect

Example of the Cyberware Creation Process

Dave's character—Tornado Tony—is just starting out as a ronin on the dangerous streets of Chicago. He wants Tony to have a slight edge over the competition, so Dave chooses to get a muscle augmentation to increase his strength and tension springs to boost Tony's Pace. Since Tony will need to buy other equipment (guns, body armor, etc.), Dave doesn't want to spend all of the starting money (10,000 credits) and opts to grab the Modification Upgrade Edge, which gives Tony 25,000 credits to purchase his cyberware. Cybertechnology is expensive, however, so Dave decides to get Gutterware for the time being, hoping Tony will earn enough credits to afford better cyberware as the campaign progresses.

Gutterware gives Tony one function point to start, and Dave decides to get level 1 tension springs (1 point cyberware) to increase his starting Pace to 8. He spends 2 function points to get a level 2 muscle augmentation, which boosts his Strength die type by 2. Dave has spent 3 function points on this gear. Since he gets 1 "free" function point to start, he has a total of 2 function points to balance with defect points.

Gutterware is crappy, potentially dangerous gear and automatically has 2 defect points to start. Dave adds another 2 points to his tally (1 defect point for each function point beyond the starting amount) giving him a –4 penalty to any cybertrauma rolls Tony might have to make.

The base cost for Gutterware is 10,000 credits plus 5,000 credits for any additional functions beyond the starting amount, so Tony needs to spend an additional 5 grand to pay the cost of the second function, bringing the total cost of this cyberware package to 15,000 credits. If he wanted, he could buy one more piece of Gutterware with his remaining 10,000 credits, but doing so would add 1 more defect point to his total, giving him a nasty –5 penalty to cybertrauma rolls! Dave decides to save the residual credits until he can afford to upgrade to better chrome later on.

Table 2:4: Cybertrauma

1D20	RESULT
0 or less:	**Catastrophic Breakdown:** The cyberware fails and knocks the character unconscious for 1D6 rounds. Additionally, roll 1D6 and choose an appropriate function. The character may not use that item until it has been repaired.
	1–2: A 3 point function failed. 3–4: A 2 point function failed. 5–6: A 1 point function failed.
1–2	**Jolted:** The character suffers 2D6 non-lethal damage as a jolt of electricity shoots through his body. Armor does not provide protection against this damage.
3–6	**Stunned:** The character is Shaken (or suffers an additional Wound if already Shaken).
7–10	**Dazed:** The flash of pain distracts the character, –2 to all trait and skill rolls for one round.
11–20	**No Effect:** The character quickly shakes off the confusion and retains control.

OPTIONAL RULE: A NASTY SURPRISE

Nobody buys a product knowing exactly how well it will work, or even if it will work at all. It's only after the CD or DVD is purchased, that we find out it's scratched, or that video game console had faulty wiring and overheats regularly. Cyberware is no exception. By the time a character finds out his nifty cyber eye shuts down 50% of the time, it's too late to do anything about it. With this in mind, it is suggested that the Game Master determine the specific nature of the defects for a given piece of cyberware then reveal them to the players during the course of play. This method will keep the players guessing as they wonder what crazy thing is going to happen when they use a piece of cyberware.

For instance, a cyber eye that malfunctions might temporarily blind the character. A glitched muscle augmentation might cause debilitating cramps or uncontrollable spasms. That sweet cyber gun might fire randomly. Perhaps tension springs cause the character to jump a number of feet equal to his pace every now and again. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

Sample Cyberware

The following cyberware are just a few samples of the types of devices you can create with the above rules. More cyberware is available for purchase in Chapter 4: Equipment.

Used Cyberarm

Item Quality: Gutterware
Availability: Can be purchased at any time.
Functions: (3 points): Standard Cyberarm (the character can carry 6 times his Strength die type in pounds), Storage Compartment, Razor Nails (Str+D4 damage, characters add a D8 to their damage roll instead of a D6 when an unarmed Fighting attack hits with a raise)
Defect Points: 4 (–4 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
Cost: 20,000 credits

Used Cybereye

Item Quality: Gutterware
Availability: Can Be purchased any time.
Functions: (2 points) Image magnification (+1 to Notice rolls involving sight), Nightvision optics (Gains lowlight vision monstrous ability)
Defect Points: 3 (–3 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
Cost: 15,000 credits.

Malmart "Working Man" Muscle Enhancement Package

Item Quality: Streetware
Availability: Regulated. 1D4 days for delivery and installation.
Functions: (3 points) Level 1 tension springs (+2 Pace), Level 2 Muscle Augmentation (Str attribute boosted by 2 die types to a maximum of D12+3.)
Defect Points: 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
Cost: 37,500 credits

Kenta Cyberdynamics "Urban Predator" Suvival Package

Item Quality: Hyperchrome
Availability: Regulated. 1D4 weeks for delivery and installation.
Functions: (9 points) Level 3 Tension Springs (+6 Pace), Level 2 Reflex Enhancers, (+1 bonus to Parry Attribute and ranged attackers suffer a –1 to shooting rolls.), Heavy weapon mount (mini rail gun), Nightvision Optics (Gains the Lowlight vision monstrous ability)
Defect Points: 4 (–4 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
Cost: 150,000 credits (Mini Rail gun sold separately).

NAC Series-7 Torso Replacement

Item Quality: Milware
Availability: Not available on the open market
Functions: (10 points) 2 Advanced Cyber Arms (Character can carry 8 times her Strength die type in pounds), Heavy Weapon Mount (Particle Beam cannon), Level 3 Sub-dermal Armor (The character gains +3 Armor)
Defect Points: 3 (–3 to cybertrauma rolls)
Cost: 450,000 credits

SAGE IT and Technical Systems Battle Comp

Item Quality: Hyperchrome
Availability: Regulated. 1D4 weeks for delivery and installation.
Functions: Fighting Skill is raised by 2 die types to a maximum of D12 +3
Defect Points: 0
Cost: 50,000 credits.

Edges

The following edges are not allowed in Interface Zero: Champion, Holy/Unholy Warrior, Soul Drain, and Wizard. Woodsman may or not be allowed, depending on the type of Campaign the GM is running. For Instance, the Woodsman Edge is perfectly acceptable for an Interface Zero campaign set in a post apocalyptic wasteland, whereas it probably wouldn't fit into a gritty urban game. Similarly, Beast Bond and Beast Master are also edges which may or may not be allowed, depending on the type of campaign.

Connections

IZ introduces a reputation system called Street Cred, which is discussed later in this chapter. The Connections edge has been modified slightly to work within this new system. Characters no longer need to make Persuasion rolls to get their contacts to do something for them. Instead, they can spend their free favors to gain successes and raises as if they had succeeded on a Persuasion roll. For more information on reputation and contacts, see the rules for Street Cred on page 65.

Noble

The "nobles" of 2088 are typically corporate executives and powerful "Kennedy 'esque" political figures like congressmen, senators, and even world leaders. In Eurasian Union nations, they might actually be legitimate nobles descended from a long line of counts, countesses, duchesses, and dukes!

Atypical (but no less relevant in Interface Zero) examples of the noble archetype are heads of organized crime rings; La Cosa Nostra bosses, Yakuza Oyabun, Triad Dragon Heads (also called Mountain Masters) etc. Still other examples of nobles in 2088 include leaders of street gangs, administrators of bioplexes, mayors of wasteland towns, Rover atolls and abandoned offshore oil refineries.

If your character concept involves any of the above examples, you are cautioned to discuss it with your gaming group first. Be sure that your character concept jives with the theme of the campaign and the other characters in your group. Remember that people in leadership positions hold great power and even greater responsibility. Will your corporate executive really have the time or inclination to make a run on a rival megacorp or infiltrate a military base after spending all day in board meetings or overseeing the progress of some highly-sensitive research project? Wouldn't it seem more fitting for your mafia Don to send a crew of heavy hitters to grease a snitch rather than going himself?

That said, if your game is about corporate intrigue or the control of the criminal underworld in Chicago your whole gaming group might want to take the Noble edge and assume various roles within the megacorporation or crime family. In this case, it is suggested that you begin play as more experienced characters, perhaps starting at Veteran or even Heroic ranks. After all, these people didn't obtain their power and status overnight. Indeed, that could be the goal of your campaign; to advance your position and influence within whatever organization you serve. If this is the case, start at the Novice rank and avoid taking the Noble edge until it feels appropriate in the game.

Rich and Filthy Rich

The Rich and Filthy Rich edges are only allowed in Interface Zero with your Game Master's permission. If you wish your character to be rich, choose (or create) an appropriate occupation such as Corporate Executive, Media Icon, or Crime Boss, or create one (with your GM's approval) that best fits your character concept. Your starting credits and the number of credits you receive each level up will reflect your character's affluence or poverty level, as the case may be.

Thief

Being a thief in 2088 isn't as easy as it was around the turn of the century. Back in the day, there were no Hyper Objects controlling alarm systems, no security programs capable of hacking into your brain if you tried to jimmy open the wrong car door. Nowadays, any thief worth his salt needs to know how to defeat computer security as well as physical locks. To reflect this, the Thief professional edge has been modified to include Hacking D8 as a requirement.

Hindrances

All standard Savage Worlds Hindrances except Doubting Thomas are appropriate for Interface Zero. Because of the greater access to replacement limbs and organs, physical limitations like Bad Eyes, Blind, Hard of Hearing, Lame, One Arm, One Eye, and One Leg must be removed at the expense of one Advance before you can correct each with cyberware.

All Thumbs (Major)

Due to the prevalence of technology, All Thumbs is a Major Hindrance in Interface Zero. This also counts as a –2 Racial Hindrance for hybrids.

Illiterate (Major)

Not being able to read or write is a Major Hindrance in the heavily communications-intensive world of Interface Zero.

HACKING

"This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill – the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes."
– Morpheus, the Matrix

The reasons for hacking a computer network vary. Maybe your group has been hired to extract a CEO from a corporate arcology and you need to ensure domains are taken down on the floor where the person's being held. Maybe you need to retrieve sensitive data, like design specs on a prototype cyber arm or upload false data into a rival corps' R&D files.

Heck, maybe you're feelin' mischievous and decide it might be fun to deface a rival gang's Hyper Tag or upload a Smilin' Jack logo onto the local Media stream so everyone in the sprawl sees it on their TAP. The following section provides you with everything you need know so you can jump right in The Deep and start hacking.

Welcome to the Machine

The worldwide network known as The Deep isn't found inside a computer or series of computers. It's all around you, regardless of where you are. Indeed, the concept of a computer in 2088 is drastically different than it is today, to such an extent that even using the term computer tends to muddy the waters, so to speak. Information is still technically stored in physical objects such as hard drives on a server or array of servers (more commonly known as a server farm), but thanks to Hyper Reality, you can access that information or control a system function (like an elevator or security camera) by hacking it's associated Hyper Object.

The information you want and the system processes you need to control can be hacked provided you are close enough to the relevant Hyper Object. Of course all of this information and all of these functions need to be protected from hackers like you. This is where your TAP, domains, and virtual entities—security programs—come into play. The following section provides you with the rules you need to build your avatar, crack a firewall and get that juicy pay data, or, if it comes down to it, blast anything that tries to stop you into oblivion!

Hyper Reality

Hyper Reality is the level of The Deep every single person with a TAP—be they android, human, hybrid, psychic, or simulacrum—experiences every minute of every day of their lives, regardless of where they might be on (or even off) the planet. Hyper Reality is best described as a continuous feed of information relating to objects in close proximity to your physical location. This information is presented to you virtually in the form of semi-transparent panels known as Hyper objects (HR object for short), sort of like a heads up display which overlays (but doesn't obfuscate) the world around you. It's like GPS on steroids.

For example, you might be walking down a crowded street. As cars go by, you'll get "pop-up" information about the make and model of each car. Restaurants up ahead have HR objects you can pull up to find information about the specials of the day. A Street sign will have an accompanying HR object which provides more information about the surrounding area including Omniversal Object Locators (think telephone numbers) you can use to, say, call a cab, or, if some crazy ganglanders start shooting the place up, sector police. Stores might have HR objects advertising sales or a new product line. If you've actually been in a particular store, the advertisements might even be tailored to you based on your previous purchases.

Have you seen the movie Iron Man? When *Tony Stark* is in his power armor, he is constantly fed information about people,

places, and things as he travels. This information is digitized and presented in semi-transparent panels so he can easily see it in front of him. THAT, my friends, is what Hyper Reality looks like, only on a much, much larger scale. It's always there with you and you can't turn it off unless you have the TAP removed from your body, though you can control what information you choose to receive by setting your spam filters to ignore information you don't want to see.

Virtual reality

When you dive into the virtual world, everything around you (and including you) transforms into a digitized, idealized representation of the real world. You can still see the people around you, and if you aren't masked somehow (see programming later on in this chapter), they can see you too. In The Deep, everything is a crisper, cleaner representation of the real world, but stylized to a common theme that may or may not necessarily have anything to do with how the location actually looks in the real world.

For instance, buildings can look like anything from ancient castles to Buddhist temples. Cars might resemble horse-drawn chariots or rickshaws. People on the street might be dressed as if they were living in the middle ages, or even worse, the 1960s. Heck, entire sprawls can look like expansive medieval cities or even cartoon worlds! Just as Hyper reality is always around you, so too is the virtual world—but you can't fully experience it unless you leave your meat body behind and immerse yourself in The Deep. This process is commonly known as ghosting.

Ghosting

Ghosting is the process by which people leave their bodies and project digital representations of themselves into the world around them. I say the world, because The Deep is so ubiquitous, so all-encompassing, all that is necessary to experience it is to walk outside your front door. Ghosting is much like the metaphysical discipline known as astral projection. The mind leaves the body and moves through the world as a digitized, intangible projection, often referred to as an avatar. What that avatar can look like is limited only by one's imagination. I've seen demons floating down the street side-by-side with little grey aliens and cybernetic clowns.

What's that you say; floating down the street?

VIRTUAL REALITY, HYPER REALITY, AND PLAIN OLD REALITY

<Booting … Booting … Aspect AI is online>

Howsit? So you want to learn about The Deep? Yes, yes, that's what I'm here for, neh? Well, let's get the Encyclopedia Brasilia stuff out of the way:

The division between physical reality and virtual reality is not as clearly defined as it once was. There is a large overlap between the world people are born into and the world that exists only inside a computer. The gap between the two is bridged by a technology that started nearly 100 years ago and was called augmented reality. Today, the term used is Hyper Reality (HR for short).

TECHNOLOGICAL BASIS: THE HARDWARE

Most of the people of the first world have a TAP, or Tendril Access Processor. This is how it works. Bio-engineered cells are injected into the brain and weave a network of fibers throughout it. They form a nexus around a chip implanted under the bone in the back of the skull that communicates wirelessly to processors and signal boosters throughout the world. The TAP also communicates with cyberware installed in the body, sending activation commands based on what the user is doing at the time (walking, running, punching, etc.)

While a TAP has limited processing power, it is more than capable of fulfilling the same functions as a powerful iPod, cell phone, and PDA. The TAP's primary functions are to create in the user's mind images, sounds, and even crude touch sensations that don't really exist. These interactive elements serve as a channel of communication between the external world and the gray matter between the user's ears.

An iPod? It's a … never mind. That part of my explanation was written a long time ago. And yes, I did update it, but I'm not going to rewrite it. A little bit of history is good for ya. Now, as I was saying …

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

Oh, maybe I wasn't clear enough. When you ghost, you don't leave the real world entirely. You coexist with The Deep and Hyper Reality at the same time. This is why it's called ghosting. People who aren't ghosting can still see you (unless you're masked somehow). They can talk to you, pass you a hyper object (like a data file or a media file or an OOL number), and even try and derezz you—knock you back into your meat sac. Hell, depending on the programs they're using, hackers can even kill you. So don't think for even a nano-second that just because you're intangible, you can't get hurt. Anyone who has a TAP and even a modicum of skill in hacking can throw malicious programs (Often referred to as Malware) at you while you're ghosting. And just in case you haven't figured it out yet, you can do the same thing to them.

The Tendril Access Processor

More commonly known as a TAP, the Tendril Access Processor is the tool you use to interact with Hyper Objects and immerse yourself in Virtual Reality. The TAP is also a personal firewall which protects you from virtual entities and other hackers. Just like any piece of technology you'll find in 2088, some TAPs are better than others.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47

The experiences the TAP creates do not replace reality, but layer on top of it. The fact that a user is hearing a song does not mean that they cannot hear the person talking to them. The movie screen floating in the air will block their view, but not if it's placed off to one side. Moreover, reality can interact with the images of a TAP – TAPs track where the user's hands are. If they reach out to touch the virtual power switch, the TAP will make the screen go away. In fact, basic functions can be controlled simply by thinking. Though the brain isn't really designed to control a movie screen the way it controls an arm or a leg, some people are talented enough do it.

The result of all this is known as The Deep – the name given to the computer-generated parts of every day experience. The degree to which The Deep has effected daily life is difficult to estimate. Like the Internet before it, The Deep has changed the way people see and interact with the world. While it is still very hard to build an experience real enough to mistake as reality, skilled programming can make an object in The Deep that TAP users can see, feel (to a limited degree) and interact with the way they would a physical note pad or a coffee cup. Data files can be held and handed from one avatar to another. A phone number (or more accurately, an OOL – Omniversal Object Locator) can be picked up and put in one's pocket without needing a pencil or even paper.

Further, these hyper-real objects are not "all in your head." Communication is much more fundamental to modern computers than those of the past. While the song you are listening to is created in your head, that doesn't mean others can't overhear it. You might be able to hide a phone call from your boss, but unless your security skills are exceptional, you can't be sure he doesn't know you're talking to your wife at home. If he's standing close by, he could even listen in.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 49

For instance, the majority of streetware TAPs are configured for interaction with The Deep and Hyper Reality at the most basic of levels, providing a firewall, minimal space for programs, an avatar, and that's about it. On the other end of the spectrum, cutting edge TAPs maximize the number of programs you can run and provide an increased level of connectivity; i.e. faster response times, which translates to bonuses to Hacking skill rolls and the pace of the avatar. Additionally, firewalls provide better protection against unwanted intrusion, resulting in a higher Parry and Toughness Rating.

Tendril access processors are rated on a scale of 1 to 4; 1 a basic TAP, 4 representing the state of the art in commercially available headware. Unless otherwise stated, all characters begin play with a basic TAP. They can use the basic TAP and upgrade it with the cyberware rules in this chapter, or purchase a new one outright by paying the cost associated with the rating of the TAP they want. Consult the table on the next page to find the statistics for your TAP.

Cracking the Domain: Firewalls

To get inside a domain, the hacker must first break through the firewall protecting it. The process for doing so is simple. Make a roll at a penalty assigned to the System Designation Code of the domain you are attempting to crack using the die rating of your cutter program. If you succeed, you're in. Fail and you can try again, though you might have set off an alert (See Failing the Skill Check, below).

System Designation Codes

Each domain has a rating more commonly known as a System Designation Code. This number is the penalty to any Hacking rolls and program rolls a hacker must make when attempting to penetrate the domain and perform any system-related functions outside of combat. Additionally, each system has a base die type it uses to make skill rolls to notice any intrusions into the system. All programs running on the domain use the system dice to make rolls, like attack or resist damage. System designation codes also determine program toughness and parry ratings.

Game Masters are free to modify these die types and the domain's difficulty rating if they think a given domain should be more or less secure. Systems have five (some say six) known designation codes: Public Access Networks, Home Access

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UNDERLYING SOFTWARE: GISP AND PIPES

Of course, The Deep doesn't really take place in the real world. It takes place on a model called the GISP: Geographic Interface Support Protocol. GISP is a technical term, like TCP/IP for the Internet: although many would recognize it as something to do with Hyper Reality, only hackers or a computer techie would really understand what it is. And now you, I guess.

GISP is a computer-generated model that corresponds to the real world as perfectly as possible. This model is so good and updated so consistently that, for all intents and purposes, it's the same thing as the real world. GISP will reflect the location of this digital manual as you're reading it. It will use the sensors available in the world (and in you) to track your location, position, and environment as well as that of everyone around you. If it exists in GISP, it exists in your TAP, and any program running in the GISP at your location is made visible to you.

Fortunately, the nature of the GISP makes it hard to access information about the world remotely, and any request for, say, audio of a conversation will be visible to the people in the room where the conversation is being held. In other words, no one can eavesdrop unless they've got a "bug" somewhere in the room, and if one searches the room, one may find it. There's nothing physically present, of course, but the computer program they have listening in is going to be represented visually by TAPs that are within range, and smart people are going to know what it is when they see it. Bugs can be disguised, but … the whole HR and privacy thing, I'll get to that later.

Physical location matters in The Deep. It is easier to intercept traffic or learn about the underlying nature of an HR object the closer you are to it physically. This is because the GISP stores information locally in whatever processors are available. The data has to travel to you, and The Deep is pretty noisy. Like a crowded bar, the closer you are to someone, the better you can hear them. It also means that some types of computer traffic

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The Avatar And You Or "Are You Really A Girl?"

Your avatar is automatically generated by your TAP, and looks like anything you can imagine. Your avatar might look like an angel, a purple dragon, a man with mirror shades in a black suit, a cybernetic clown, or even a little girl with a doll. What it looks like has absolutely nothing to do with how strong, fast, or tough the avatar is. The rating of the TAP determines those statistics.

Networks, Restricted Access Networks, Corporate Access Networks and Government Access networks.

PUBLIC ACCESS NETWORKS (PANS):
Difficulty: Very Easy: +2, **Toughness:** 2, **Parry:** 2
System Dice: D4 for system skill rolls. Programs running on a PAN have a Pace of 5.
Typical System Resources: A Firewall, Trace Programs, Security Hacker

Public access networks are exactly what the name implies—domains accessible by anyone. Examples include public libraries, phone directories, Public Edu-facilities, Malmart catalogues etc. PANS almost never have any system resources dedicated to security.

HOME ACCESS NETWORKS (HANS):
Difficulty: Easy: 0, **Toughness:** 4, **Parry:** 4
System Dice: D6 for system skill rolls. Programs running on a HAN have a Pace of 6.

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travel much more slowly than they do today – a low priority email sent between Argentina and Nepal has to copy itself from computer to computer, across the most of the world, and under heavy traffic loads could take minutes to reach its destination. Security is also affected by location. Sometimes very important data is protected by firewalls corresponding to the perimeter of a building and block access. This means data stored in some places is easier to access from within that building's location, and if you want to hack into that data, you got to either travel there and deal with meat-body security, or find way through the firewall.

Ah, see, all I had to do was say "hack" and now you're paying attention.

Obviously, this arrangement is unacceptable for some applications, like phone calls. Your voice is digitized and sent down the same wires as email, so a minute-long lag would make for a slow conversation, and a firewall would make it impossible.

The technology of pipes is used to deal with this. A pipe is a dedicated channel connecting one point in the world to another. To call a person in Bulgaria, for example, one would request a pipe be allocated, but there would also be a short but noticeable lapse when

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Table 2:5 Tendril Access Processor

TAP RATING	BONUS TO HACKING ROLLS	AVATAR PACE	DEFENSE RATING*	FIREWALL**	# OF ACTIVE PROGRAMS	COST
1	+0	6	3	3	2	Free
2	+1	7	4	4	3	5,000 credits
3	+1	8	5	5	4	10,000 credits
4	+2	9	6	6	5	20,000 credits

* Add this number to half your character's Hacking skill to find your TAP's modified Parry rating.

** The base Toughness rating of the TAP. Add 2 to this number and the rating of any Armor programs installed in the TAP to find your TAP's modified Toughness rating.

Typical System Resources: A Firewall, Trace Programs, A security hacker and non-lethal ICE.

HANS are a trickier hack than PANS. They'll typically have firewalls and low-level security programs to deal with intruders. Systems that are more elaborate might even have combat hackers on site. There are a number of home-security firms specializing in anti-hacking security, as well. Of all the systems you'll go up against, HANS are the most varied. As a rule, they're easy hacks, but I've run into HANS with nightmarish security; multiple combat hackers, vicious deterrents, and tracer programs so unrelenting I've had to blit around the world just to lose them. It makes me wonder what these people are guarding…

RESTRICTED ACCESS NETWORKS (RANS):
Difficulty: Difficult: –2, **Toughness:** 6, **Parry:** 6
System Dice: D8 for system skill rolls. Programs running on a RAN have a Pace of 7.
Typical System Resources: A Firewall, Trace Programs, A security hacker, and either non-lethal or lethal ICE, depending on the RAN.

When you run a restricted access network, you're getting into some *deep* water. RANS are designed to protect systems that hold moderately sensitive information like personnel files, financial records, college-level EDUfacility research projects, hospital records, Power grids, Transit systems, police records, identity logs, etc. Expect some stiff resistance when you hack these systems.

CORPORATE ACCESS NETWORKS (CANS):
Difficulty: Very Difficult: –4, **Toughness:** 8, **Parry:** 8
System Dice: D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls. Programs running on a CAN have a Pace of 8.
Typical System Resources: Multiple firewalls, multiple corporate hackers, Trace Programs, various types of ICE including standard cutter programs, guardian programs, brain blasters, sludge utilities, TAP Busters and sometimes even AI's.

Megacongloms spend millions each year on anti-hacker security to prevent other corporations from stealing their most prized secrets. Ghosting into a megaconglom is one of the most dangerous things you can do in 2088, in The Deep or otherwise. Of course, this is why so many divers do it. A clean jaunt against a conglom is a quick way to boost your street cred, and that's how you get more work.

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the network's heavily loaded (the irony that it could be done faster a century ago is not lost on me). Once a pipe is established, data is transferred from one end to the other almost instantaneously.

Remember that "short but noticeable" bit? Say you're floating along with your friends as a Ghost (that's when your physical body is back home and you're traveling around as a virtual representation), and they get into a fire fight. You want to get behind the enemy and mess with their targeting systems. Walking across the field of fire is funny, since they can't hurt you—unless they got a combat hacker along … you don't make that mistake twice. Better to call for a pipe that comes out ten feet behind the lot of them. Blitting behind them like this is safer, but if there's a lot of Buzz, that pipe may be a long time coming. And that combat hacker? He can slow things down even more.

Buzz? Well, it's background traffic. It's … I'll get to it later.

The ends of a pipe usually appear as portals: windows that float in the air like a hole in space. If you're calling a person, your portal here in Dallas, Texas will connect to theirs in the Carpathian Mountains, and looking into your end you will see out of theirs. You would even be able to pass them an HR object through the window, although not a physical one. Heh. You'd be surprised how hard that is to explain that to children who have grown up around this tech.

Pipes can also be allowed to go through firewalls. Sometimes the owners of the firewalls demand the kinds or amounts of data a pipe will pass be limited before they allow it to be allocated, so that you can't download a company's financial records through a cell phone. But once pipe is allocated, the channel is sacrosanct.

Pipes are hard to "see" in The Deep. They are visible at either end of the connection as a faint, shimmering thread leading off in to the distance. Away from the

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GOVERNMENT ACCESS NETWORKS (GANS):
Difficulty: Hard: –6, **Toughness:** 10, **Parry:** 10
System Dice: D12 and a wild die for system skill rolls. Programs running on a GAN have a Pace of 9.
Typical System Resources: GANS employ milspec ICE; top of the line firewalls, lethal, and non-lethal programs, TAP-busters, Tracer programs, Agent programs, Psychotropic Viri, Trojans, Combat hackers and slaved AIs.

GANS are the most secure systems in the world. Only the most desperate (or suicidal) hackers even consider ghosting these systems. The security is thick and LEET. Of course, you have to find a GAN before you can run it, and most nations don't exactly advertise the locations of their domains. Oh sure, a simple search of The Deep will a provide the OOL of a Government's PAN.

But these systems only provide the most basic information about the government; they aren't the real deal. The real domains are extremely difficult to even find, much less crack. Finding a GAN takes a serious load of investigative work, and a lot of luck. The people who know about them don't give up their locations lightly, so be careful, Ami. One wrong step and you might not even live to see the network, much less hack it.

Unlike other domains, Government Access Networks are so vast that one has to know where he is going before they attempt a run against the system. Additionally, the domain isn't directly tied to The Deep. The network is its own interlinked, closed system that can only be accessed at certain locales, most of which are inside military installations. Of course there are exceptions, such as ghost sites or encrypted domains accessible from safe houses where government operatives can contact their handlers, or back doors created by other hackers that can be accessed wherever the brainer was when she created it.

Regardless of where the system is or what sector the hacker is running, the System Designation Codes don't change. Additionally, the hacker needs to spend time gathering information about the network before she begins her run, though it certainly isn't inconceivable that, say, if a character is hired to make a run against the NAC's Central Intelligence Agency domain, the employer will provide the requisite information.

If the character doesn't have the information before hand, A very difficult Investigation skill check (See Page 56 of the Savage Worlds Explorers Edition) is required. The time to find the information should take at least 1D4 days. Game Masters

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ends, the pipe will merge into the background static and become effectively invisible. Even when it is detected, a web of pipes cover the whole planet, constantly being allocated and reclaimed – just because there's one running through my living room doesn't mean I know it's there or can figure out what's on either end.

NETWORKING AS UBIQUITOUS AS AIR, TRAFFIC AS UBIQUITOUS AS POLLUTION

The network is so fundamental, computers so common, and communication so constant, that notions like "whose processor is this program running on?" or "which node is this data stored on?" don't occur to programmers any more. Although massive programs (like powerful AI's or big simulated worlds) still strain resources, those resources are thought of in terms of physical space: a high-quality Dub AI will have trouble existing in the middle of the rainforest, with few computers for miles, but could function smoothly in the Computer Science Department's server room of the University of Chicago.

This quality of an area is called Domain. Where Domain is deep, it is possible to run powerful programs or carry ExaLOCs of data easily. Even in the driest spots of a city, the Domain is deep enough to meet the demands created by everyday use a hundred times over. There are processors in cars, buildings, signs, mailboxes, people's briefcases, watches, and cell phones (when they have them), and in their heads (when they don't). There are sensors in the streets and chips in people's pets. China has even been experimenting with dust-sized processors that float in the air to form an invisible computing network, and Brazil has insect-sized robots that roam Brasilia, seeking out places where traffic is thick. This doesn't mean big programs (and this includes the one running on the gray matter in your head) can't wander around, but they have to do it by proxy. More on that later.

The Network is never at rest. Most activities in The Deep within sight are obvious to a diver may mean it is difficult

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should determine exactly where the hacker needs to go once she is within the system, and also where in the real world she needs to be to even access the network!

Example of an Attempt to Crack a Firewall

White Noise Junkie is attempting to break through the firewall surrounding the R&D wing of Kenta Cyber Dynamics North America. He's using a rating 6 cutter program so he rolls a D12+1 plus a wild die for his attempt.

The system is a beefy CAN (Corporate Access Network), which imposes a –4 penalty to his roll. White Noise Junkie scores a 3 and 2 respectively, failing to slip through the firewall. He'll need to try again if he wants to get inside, but since he failed the system first gets to make a Notice roll to see if it detected his initial intrusion attempt.

The Game Master makes a Notice roll using a D10 plus a Wild Die as denoted by the System Designation Code for a Corporate Access Network, scoring a 9 and a 2. Since this is an opposed test against White Noise Junkie's Masking program, WNJ rolls a D8 (He is running a rating 3 masking program) and a wild die, scoring a 5 and 3. The system wins the test, detecting white Noise Junkie's attempts to break into the domain. The system sends virtual entities to deal with the threat. Initiative cards are drawn and combat begins.

Manipulating the System

Once you have accessed the domain, you can manipulate it in whichever way you desire (searching for data files, jamming outgoing transmissions, shutting down a system alert, uploading files or malicious programs such as Trojans and viri, controlling elevators, etc.). To manipulate a system under control of the domain, you roll the relevant program dice at the penalty assigned to the System Designation Code of the domain.

You must make a separate roll for each aspect of the domain you wish to manipulate, each time using the appropriate program (Like a data sniffer utility program to find information, or a slave utility to control elevators, etc.). Success means you have finished the task or tasks you came to do. Failure means you didn't (and possibly sounded an alert), but you may try again if you wish. If you roll snake eyes on any check, the domain automatically detects your intrusion and sounds an alert.

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to hide bugs, but it has a down side. Turn off your filters for a second—but just a second. Whoa! Sorry, should have warned you. That screaming, flashing, racing mess? That is the Buzz. Emails, pop-ups, and malware looking for a home, that is always there, you just never see it. The Buzz is a constant static in the back of any virtual experience. It's part of any high-population area. The Buzz is treated in many ways like modern day weather, and people will know when it's going to be heavy (early on business days) and where it's lightest (away from urban centers). Take a second; you've probably got a virus or two. Your immune system'll wipe 'em out right quick—you've got a nice robust system. Yes, yes, I said I'd warn ya next time.

EXPERIENCING THE DEEP: IT LOOKS LIKE WHAT IT IS

Although a skilled user can manipulate his world in nearly infinite ways, The Deep does not bestow total freedom. It is a consensual experience, not a subjective one. While what a Deep object looks like may differ slightly between two viewers, there is a surprising amount of uniformity in the world they will perceive. Fuzzy logic lets separate user's TAPs find a common ground. The Deep experience is controlled by a tug of war between two factors: What the various viewers want hyper reality to look like (and they may not all want the same thing), and what it is. A cutter program will "want" to look like a weapon, and disguising it as a directory assistance phone book is not easy. Having a hundred-foot-tall, atomic fire-breathing lizard lumber down the street is only going to be done by the consensus of a lot of bystanders' headware, and even then, some skilled coding is requisite. Right, those parades they have in New Rio, that's what I'm talking about. You're pretty slow, ain't ya?

Making something look like what it's not is called "masking the signal." It's important if you want to hide a bug program in a room or make a simple agent program look like a 10-story-tall monster. Very skilled maskers

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Failing the Skill Check

Sooner or later (hopefully later rather than sooner), you're going to fail a roll when you hack a domain or attempt to manipulate it in some fashion. When you do, the network can sometimes detect it. To find out whether or not this happens, each time you fail a roll, make an opposed roll pitting the hacker's masking program die code against the domain's system dice. If the system wins the test it has detected you and sounds an alert. The die type used corresponds to the network's system designation code. Once an alert has been sounded, additional failures do not initiate any further rolls.

Sounding an Alert

When an alert is sounded, it means the domain is alerted to abnormal system activity and has started to investigate. At this point, all actions become turn-based. Draw initiative cards for the hacker(s) and the domain.

VR/HR Combat

Once the system goes on alert, things really start to heat up. The hacker becomes subject to attacks by the domain as it counter-hacks her TAP, assaulting it with nasty viri, malware, and an array of virtual entities in an attempt to boot the hacker from the system. Most attacks are non-lethal and leave the character stunned and/or unconscious. Others are quite lethal and can fry the character's brain! Still other attacks don't harm the hacker at all. Domains can also send trace programs to seek out the character's physical location and report it to black ops teams or sprawl security agencies.

The fundamental nature of HR/VR means that virtual entities (SHARCs, plague programs, etc) are created with the same programming language as HR objects; IDSMC; IDsmack. Since characters with a TAP can interact with any HR object near them, they can also engage in combat with a virtual entity in much the same way they can attack another human being in the real world. Hyper and Virtual Combat works almost exactly like the rules for combat in the SWEX rules with just a few modifications.

Attacking

Attack rolls are made with the character's Hacking skill dice rather than Fighting, Shooting, or Throwing skill dice. Actions like punching, kicking, throwing a fireball, swinging a sword,

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can make Deep constructs invisible or even look real enough to fool the casual observer into thinking its physical. Paris had a rash of accidents caused by HR cars suddenly rushing out of alleyways. It was funny till someone swerved to avoid one and killed a pedestrian.

Masking is not the same thing as setting the theme. A cutter program can look like a knife, a phaser, a chain sword, or even a tiny demon with big teeth. Any and all of these accurately reflect the underlying nature of the program. So what will it look like? That is decided by what theme is strongest in the area. The theme is, well, the theme of the images floating around. At a fantasy sci-fi convention, the theme is medieval fantasy and avatars will look like elves, cutters like swords and bows, firewalls like stone ramparts, and personal firewalls (armor) like chain mail. A business executive walking in will find his HR briefcase filled with spreadsheets beginning to look older, more worn, and eventually, the briefcase turns into a haversack. He can fight against it, but consensus has established a theme that his TAP will have to work hard to resist. To proficient users, what a Deep object looks like is of no great import. The TAP is feeding information directly into their brain, and their ability to sense and control an entity acts on a level deeper than purely visual. Regardless of what a thing looks like, these users possess intuitive knowledge of what it is and how to deal with it. That's not you…Yet.

AVATARS AND THE DEEP: HAVING A GREAT TIME, WISH I WAS HERE

The close connection between the real world and the hyper real world does not mean you always have to be there lugging around your corpse. It also doesn't mean you can't have a computer generated environment with orcs and dragons that have nothing to do with downtown Dallas. But before we discuss going virtual, let's talk about avatars.

Most people only deal with avatars when they aren't in your body. At that time, an avatar is a small program

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or pulling out a giant cannon and shooting are simply virtual abstractions of what is really happening; the character throwing codes at the system in an attempt to defeat the intrusion countermeasures. System programs make attack rolls using the die type indicated by the System Designation Code of the domain they are running on.

Attacking a Virtual Entity

Attack rolls are made against the virtual entity's Parry rating. For more information on Virtual Entities, see Chapter 8: Threats.

Damage

The rules for gritty damage presented at the beginning of this chapter apply to VR/HR combat as well. Damage rolls are made using the dice indicated by the rating of the character's attack program or System Designation Code of a system program. Strength modifiers do not apply! Make rolls on the incapacitation table below rather than the one in the Gritty Rules section at the beginning of this chapter.

- **Raise:** The character is only stunned. His avatar still has 3 wounds, but is not Incapacitated. He is Shaken and suffers a temporary impairment as well. Roll 2D6 on the Injury Table and apply it to the avatar. The effects are short-term and go away when the combat is over.
- **Success:** The avatar derezzes. The character's consciousness returns to the meat body with a Shaken result. He may attempt to ghost after removing the Shaken condition. If the character wishes to return to the place where he was derezzed, he can attempt to blit to the location by making a Hacking roll as normal.
- **Failure:** The avatar derezzes violently and the character becomes unconscious. He regains consciousness with a successful Healing roll as normal, or after a 1D6 hours have passed.
- **Critical Failure for lethal combat:** The character dies.
- **Critical Failure for non-lethal combat:** A critical failure for non lethal combat is the same as a failure, but the character also picks up a mental hindrance. Game Masters are free to choose whichever mental hindrance they wish. Some suggestions are Delusional, Mean, Habit, or Phobia. If the program that derezzed the character had a special crash effect, apply that effect to the character as well.

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that can be sent out, connected to the person by a pipe, which allows you to travel while your corpse lies in your bed. There are no portals on the ends of this pipe; it goes straight from your corpse's head to your avatar's body. A lot of people think of it as their body, but it's not. Don't forget that fact, and don't forget that, like all programs, an unmasked avatar is visible to TAPs at its location. It doesn't matter if you're busy sightseeing, but bear that in mind if you're following your wife's lover. Of course, Avatars can be masked like everything else.

An avatar's pipe has the same issues as a normal pipe with distance and security. Don't think you can blit to Nepal instantaneously – allocation may only take a few seconds, but that can matter. And you can walk an Avatar through a wall, unless there's a firewall in the same space. Usually there's access at the building's front doors for legitimate users. Any other access points will be protected and probably masked as well. Being "meat body present" can actually be easier than dealing with that crap, particularly if you're hiding from security while you do it. You may have trouble believing it, but this technology has uses other than hacking.

There's also video games.

Virtual worlds are big. One of the biggest programs that exist is, of course, Blood Throne Online. Programs of this size can only exist where the Domain is very deep, so they require powerful hardware to support them. They also have to have good access to the rest of the world; Users will pipe in from all corners of the earth.

To access a virtual world, a user has to connect to the location at which it is running. You can establish a pipe directly, or send an avatar to it. Companies that can afford it will have pipes from their world connected to portals in cities around the world. So you don't have to connect to Bangladesh to get into BTO (Blood Throne Online), even though that's where it's running. You just have to get to your local BTO portal.

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Example of Cyber Combat

In the previous example, the system detected White Noise Junkie's failed attempt to hack through its firewall and sent a virtual entity (in this case, a Shogun program[extra]) to deal with the threat. Initiative cards are drawn and White Noise Junkie wins, drawing a queen to beat the shogun's 5.

Knowing he's up against some serious ICE, WNJ runs his most powerful program; a rating 6 Attack program that looks like a mini missile launcher. He makes a Hacking Roll vs. the Parry rating of the Shogun program (8, because it's running on a CAN). His Hacking skill is D10 and he has a TAP rated at 4, giving him +2 to his Hacking rolls. He scores a 6 and adds 2 to the roll, coming up with an 8 with no raises. He just barely hits the shogun program.

White Noise Junkie rolls 2D8+1 damage dice for the program and scores a 13. The shogun program is heavily armored (4 points of armor), having a modified toughness of 12 (Base toughness of 8 for a CAN +4 points of armor). Since WNJ's attack program did 1 point over the shogun's Toughness, the shogun program is shaken (See the Gritty Damage rules at the beginning of this Chapter).

Since White Noise Junkie's attack rendered the shogun program shaken, the shogun program cannot act this round. The round is over and initiative is drawn again. This time the shogun draws a 4 and WNJ draws a 5, just barely acting first.

White Noise Junkie rolls his Hacking die (D10) and a wild die. This time he Aces! He rolls again and gets a 6 for a total of 16, scoring a hit with a raise. When WNJ rolls damage, he adds a D6 to the roll and scores a 15 for 3 points of damage over the shogun's Toughness. The shogun (an expert program) was already shaken, so the additional damage incapacitates it. The shogun program winks out of existence under a storm of explosions from White Noise Junkie's attack program!

Logging Out

At any point during combat, the character may log out of The Deep. When logging out of The Deep during combat, the hacker must make a Hacking roll at a base difficulty of 4 plus any wound modifiers she may have received. If she is successful, the hacker immediately leaves the domain and returns to

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Once you've gotten to the world, you still need to go through a special kind of portal called a gateway. While a world may run inside a server farm in Bangladesh, it will extend deep into the Virtual, in a direction no physical finger can point out. The gateway will provide an appropriate avatar for a user to wear in the world, or it will reformat the one they already have. The Avatar you wear is your "body" in HR or the virtual worlds you travel in, but it is also what enables you to interact with and influence computer generated entities. It will protect you from the influence of others, too. Even when you happen to be residing in your body, your TAP creates an Avatar which serves that purpose. It's just wrapped around your meat body so closely it's tough to tell the difference.

Avatars make it possible to control things. The force and precision of this control is a reflection of the quality of the avatar, influenced by the mind riding inside it. A well-coded avatar is capable of many things with its "bare hands," but the smart users run programs that can assist—sort of like tools, weapons, and armor for computer entities. But be careful; I said "weapons". Security cutters will break down any virtual entity, even an Avatar. Without that shell protecting, you are left exposed. And when I say you, I mean your mind; open to whatever nastiness inflicts itself on to your gray matter. Usually it's not fatal. You might find yourself humming the Burger World jingle over and over again, or pass out, or discover a powerful irrational fear of mirrors. The brain is pretty neat technology, and assuming it isn't fatally shut down, you'll recover in a few days. Assuming it's not fatal.

TOTAL INFORMATION AWARENESS: IF YOU GOT NOTHING TO HIDE ...

Privacy is so 20th century. Everything is recorded and stored somewhere, and no one has anything they can be sure is secret. That said, finding that information can be tricky. There's a ton of it floating around The Deep and it's not organized very well. Computers operate on

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her meat body if she is ghosting. If she is in Hyper Combat, the character remains where she is in the real world. If the system has managed to break through her TAP'S firewall it can make one final roll to try and trace her physical location, if it has a trace program in its system resources.

Tracing

To trace the location of a hacker or virtual entity make a roll using a number of dice equal to the rating of the program, or the dice determined by the System Designation Code of the domain the trace program is running on. Success indicates the trace program will track the location of the hacker or virtual entity in a number of rounds indicated by the rating of the program. This roll should be a secret roll, as the hacker will have no way of knowing whether or not the system was successful in tracing her.

Blitting Away

Characters can also choose to blit away from the domain instead of logging out of The Deep. The character must make a successful Hacking roll to blit (See the Hacking Skill in Chapter 3: Character Creation, Interface Zero style) away. This TN is modified by any wound levels she may have sustained during combat. Success indicates the character has successfully blitted out of the domain. The domain (or enemy hacker) can still run trace programs, but there's a twist.

Before the trace program can find the hacker's physical location it must first ascertain the hacker's location inside The Deep. Once that has been accomplished the trace program can lock in on the hacker's jack point. Many hackers use this tactic to blit all over the world in an attempt to evade trace programs before logging out and returning to their bodies.

Hacking the World

Thanks to Hyper Reality, we enjoy a level of connectedness with the world around us unlike anything in human history. Hyper Objects exist as a virtual map of the world around us, constantly providing information about persons, places, or things that we can interact with to varying degrees. At their core, Hyper Objects—and people with a TAP—are micro domains unto themselves. This means those with Hacking skills and the right programs can manipulate HR objects on a much deeper level than the average sprawler can. Hackers

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a non-hierarchical structure, so there's no root directory to start at, and no order to follow for a search. Also, as time goes on, information gets deleted, altered, or simply lost. Obscurity provides some security, and nothing remains intact forever. If the information isn't retrieved within a few days, it will likely fade beyond reach forever. Not all the information you carry around with you is an open data file, either. Encryption can limit who can edit and even who can view data contained in an HR object, like a person's avatar. A common option is the identity log. Like an ID card that only the police can demand, there is information in a normal citizen's TAP that only the proper key will access. A cop with the key will be able to look at people and see things like their name, address, and extras like criminal history. The courts will have a more sophisticated key that will enable them to edit that criminal history. Theoretically, the proper authorities will be the only ones who can… Theoretically.

The reality is that pick-pocketing in 2088 is done by people walking up to a target or blitting up to them in a masked avatar and stealing this identity data. The encryption does make physical proximity necessary for the copying process, but once a copy is taken, that encryption can be attacked at the thief's leisure. I don't need to tell you it's illegal to edit your own data and that if you don't do it after reading this document, I'm going to find you and smack you.

FINAL WORDS

I figure you've got a few skills if you were able to get this old aspect's how-to guide. I'm just not sure if you're serious or just some lucky script kiddie. For all the billions of people who use it every day, The Deep can be dangerous. So be careful, and always have a backup plan—one preferably involving high-caliber rail guns.

Oh, and for God's sake, no matter what you do, you must never, ever, if you want to live to a ripe old age, never e390a90s8098ad <ERROR CODE 37>…

Heh. Just kidding. Now get out there and make me proud.

generally need to be within touching distance of the Hyper Object, vehicle, weapon, or person, though there are brainers who have mastered the art of doing it remotely (see the Edges section in Chapter 3: Character Creation Interface Zero Style for information on remote hacking).

Hacker Vs. Hacker

As mentioned above, TAPed people (whether they realize it or not) are domains unto themselves, storehouses of a wealth of information. Some of this data is readily accessible, like a MyFace page or cached information regarding recent purchases at the local Malmart or King Krill. Other information is more secure, like Personal Identification Kodes (PIKs), Omniversal Object Locators, friend lists, bank account information, legal status and criminal history.

Because it is all accessible through the TAP, it can be manipulated by those with the skill and presence of mind to do so. Indeed, identity theft is the most common form of electronic crime in 2088. Brainers steal PIKs and sell them on the black market to people who use them in a variety of ways. Some people just rack up a tab at the local Malmart, while others use them as alternate identities. If another hacker is attacking the character, the process for doing so is still the same as if it were a domain.

Hacking Hyper Objects

Hyper Objects can be hacked in the same manner a domain can be hacked. Just like a domain, Hyper Objects have a Difficulty rating that represents how secure the HR object's defenses are. Brainers attempting to hack a HR object must make a roll at the appropriate Difficulty using the rules for hacking a domain.

Hacking Vehicles

Vehicles of all types, from cars, motorcycles, and hover craft to military LAVs and golemmechs are also fitted with Hyper Objects and can be controlled by those who are skilled in Hacking. Drone riggers use their hacking and piloting skills to interface with combat drones, recon drones and all types of vehicles, becoming one with them. Just like other Hyper Objects, those governing vehicles have a difficulty that must be contended with before the hacker can fully operate a machine not already under his or her control.

Hacking Weapons

In the violent world of 2088, hand guns, shot guns, assault rifles and other deadly weapons are tightly regulated. In places where they aren't banned outright, weapons have Hyper Objects coded into them so law enforcement agencies can monitor their sale and, if necessary, find the owners. Additionally, Hyper Objects control the basic functions of modern weapons such as the firing mechanism and internal targeting systems. Skilled brainers can exploit this function and directly hack a weapon and shut it down before the weapon can be fired. Indeed, military "combat" hackers undergo extensive training to quickly hack enemy weaponry on the battlefield.

Making it Fast Furious and Fun!

Historically, players cringe when the hacker engages in virtual combat. The game tends to slow to a crawl as the brainer works his way deeper and deeper into the computer network. Players get bored and leave the table, taking a break while the drama plays out in The Deep (Heck, I've seen players go to the store, or a fast food joint while the hacker did his thing). This defeats the whole concept of a *FFF* game of Savage Worlds, so here's a few suggestions on how to run a hack and keep everyone engaged.

Keep Everyone Involved!

When the group is running a raid on a conglom, the primary role of the hackers is to support the team as they move to complete their objective. The hacker should always be in contact with the team, guiding them through the maze of corridors and offices. The hacker is the team's "eyes." He can pull up interactive floor plans and see those security patrols, hidden sentry guns and infrared trip wires, but he can't act for the team. Just because they have advance warning about that patrol, they still have to deal with it. While the hacker can tell the team where that corporate executive they need to snatch is, he can't grab the guy. The team has to do it.

Boredom will kill any game. Alternate actions between the hacker and the team. Give each person in the group "face time." Let them do something while they wait for the hacker to shut down those security cameras. Just because they have a primary objective, doesn't mean they can't look around (maybe they'll find some juicy piece of gear) or get into position so they can act immediately as soon as the cameras go down or the doors open.

Maybe the team isn't physically raiding a conglom. The hacker might need to grab some information in The Deep so the team can move on to the next part of the mission. Avoid game-killing boredom by involving the players in other aspects of the job. Maybe there's some legwork to be done. Maybe team members are hurt and need to be patched up by a street doc. Perhaps they need to meet with an NPC, or that gang they pissed off a few weeks ago comes looking for payback. The world doesn't stop turning just because the hacker's off in The Deep.

Also, remember that everyone (unless they have no TAP) is able to ghost. Heck, it's a common pastime in 2088. People project their digital selves into The Deep and go to virtual bars, play online games and purchase things in VR malls all the time. All characters in Interface Zero begin play with a D4 in Hacking and are able to assist the character in some way shape or form. Indeed, entire game sessions can take place in The Deep.

Programming Reality

Programs are the tools a hacker uses to bend The Deep to his will. Without them, he might as well be ghosting naked. In 2088, programs can be bought and downloaded by anyone. The more accessible programs are cheap but lack the power needed to do any serious hacking. Additionally, they are often riddled with malware that spam the user's TAP with advertisements, or worse, spoof the user's PIK so E-thieves can use it, much like key loggers did in the early part of the century.

Top shelf programs on the other hand tend to be prohibitively expensive, not to mention tightly regulated and filled with subroutines that monitor the user's activity in The Deep and report it to the manufacturers. Some programs are in actuality malicious trojans that install subliminal memes in a person's brain, prompting the unlucky sap to buy certain products or think a certain way. Consequently, serious hackers choose to avoid these issues and code their own warez.

Fundamentals

To create your own program, you must first have the appropriate programming Edge.

Coding the Program

To code a program, make a Knowledge (Programming) roll. If you succeed, you create a program with a base rating of 1. Each raise on the roll increases the program's rating by 1. Alternately, you can set the base rating of the program you design by adding a modifier to the base target number equal to the rating you want. Doing so doesn't change the time to create the program, however.

For example, Billy Black Eyes is coding a cutter program to use on an upcoming run against a megacorp. He knows the corps' domain has a strong firewall and he won't have a chance of cutting through it without the hottest program he can make. Billy decides a rating 6 chainsaw cutter should be sufficient, and proceeds to code the program. Billy is making a Knowledge (Programming) roll against a TN of 4+6 for the rating of the program, so he needs a score of 10 or better to design the program. He scores an 11, success! After nearly 3 days of non-stop coding, Billy Black Eyes has a pretty sweet cutter program. That corp. domain ain't got a chance.

Additionally, when writing a new program, a character can decide, at the start, to take "extra time" to test and debug the program. Each unit of extra time gives you +2 to your final programming roll. Each unit of extra time is equal to the base time to create the program.

For example: Buzz wants to create a Rating 4 Cutter program but his Knowledge (Programming) skill is only D4, so he decides to take an extra 32 hours (total 48 hours) to give himself a final + 4 to his programming roll.

Program Function

All programs have a function, a reason for existing if you will. The nature of the program's function largely depends on the type of program you code. For instance, a cutter program isn't concerned with crashing an enemy hacker's TAP or tracing her physical location. The purpose of a cutter program is to cut through a firewall so the brainer can run other kinds of programs to achieve what she came to do.

That cutter program won't attempt to cause any damage to system programs (or enemy hackers). Once it breaks through the firewall, its purpose is completed and it run-terminates. A data sniffer is only concerned with finding the information it was coded to find. It won't attack anything and it won't try and defend itself. Once the data sniffer finds the information it was coded to find, it downloads that information to its creators TAP and it also run-terminates.

Program Rating

The program's rating is a measure of how powerful it is. This rating determines things like the die code you roll when using cutter programs and system utilities, the toughness bonus for armor programs, the damage of attack programs and the time it takes to code a program. A program's rating also determines how long it will last before degrading to the point where it is no longer functional. Characters can use a program a number of times equal to 2+ the rating of the program. The rating of the program is calculated when you design it (see above). So that rating 3 cutter program can be used 5 times before it degrades to the point where it is useless.

Time

Coding a program takes a base 1 hour + a number of hours equal to the rating of the program. Each raise on the Knowledge (Programming) roll drops the time to create the program by one rating . If you fail your hacking roll when coding a program, you have still spent the time it takes to create the program and must start over from scratch.

Trappings

What does your program look like? Is your cutter a giant chainsaw or possibly a laser beam? Maybe your data sniffer looks like a sleek obsidian ferret ? That nova hot masking program you have might look like a shimmering cloak that makes you invisible, or perhaps it's a silly clown suit that masks your avatar? The possibilities are endless and you are encouraged to get creative when coming up with trappings for your programs!

Types of Programs

The following section lists various types of programs a hacker might use during his career. When coding a program, refer to the appropriate table and record the information on your character sheet.

Alarm Programs

Alarm programs are analogous to the anti-viral software of the early 21st century. They notify the user of any potential attacks on her TAP by other hackers or malicious malware running wild through The Deep. If an attempt to cut through the character's firewall fails, the character can make an Opposed Test pitting the die code of her alarm program against the masking program of the foe. Success indicates the character has noticed the intrusion and is able to react to the enemy hacker in any way she chooses. Failure indicates she doesn't realize her brain is being hacked!

GM Note: Consider making this check secretly, only notifying the player if she succeeds.

Trappings

Alarm programs might look like anything ranging from a string of tin cans and bells, to military guards or even a complex spider web of laser beams.

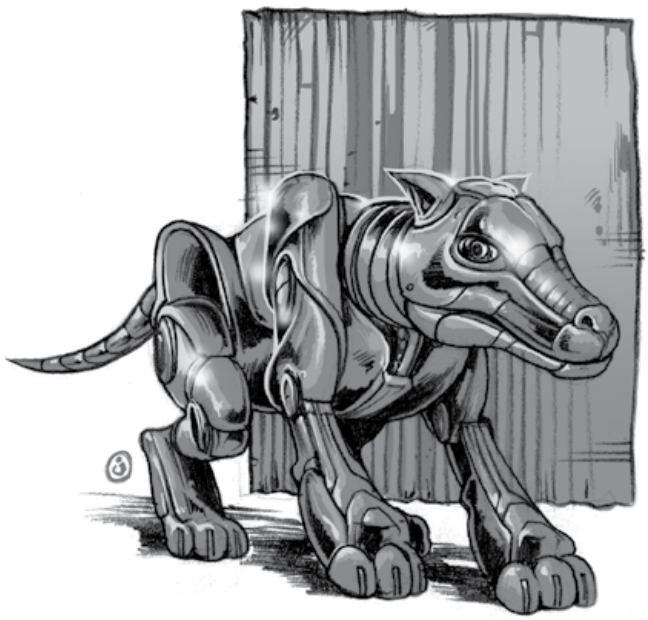


Table 2:6: Alarm Programs

PROGRAM RATING	DIE CODE	# OF USES	TIME TO CREATE
1	D4	3	2 hours
2	D6	4	4 hours
3	D8	5	8 hours
4	D10	6	16 hours
5	D12	7	32 hours
6	D12+1	8	64 hours
7	D12+2	9	128 hours

Sample Alarm Program:

Doc Pango's Vicious Guard Dog
Rating: 1
Die Code: D4
Number of Uses: 3
Trappings: Doc Pango's Vicious Guard Dog resembles a menacing, menachical dog that growls menacingly, baring its fangs as it approaches an enemy. The guard dog barks loudly when an intruder is detected.

Armor Programs

As the name implies, armor programs protect you against malicious programs and other hackers. They provide a toughness bonus to your TAP's firewall rating.

Trappings

Armor programs tend to resemble things like police armor, medieval armor, rocky skin, insectoid exoskeletons, golem-mechs etc., but they can take on any form you choose.

Table 2:7 Armor Programs

PROGRAM RATING	TOUGHNESS BONUS	# OF USES	TIME TO CREATE
1	1	3	2 hours
2	2	4	4 hours
3	3	5	8 hours
4	4	6	16 hours

Sample Armor Program:

Stonegate 4 Firewall
Rating: 4
Toughness bonus: 4
Number of Uses: 6
Trappings: The Stonegate4 firewall resembles (as the name suggests) a giant stone wall that looks like it might have been constructed in medieval times.

Attack Programs

The true weapons of The Deep, attack programs are used when a character engages in combat. Attack programs might be used by hackers when defending themselves against attack programs sent by the domain they're hacking, or they could be used to fry an enemy hacker's brain, reducing him to little more than a slobbering vegetable.

Subroutines

Attack programs can be coded with subroutines; additional effects beyond normal damage. Characters must first have the Advanced Programming Edge to code the subroutine. Coding a subroutine into a program adds +1 to the difficulty of the Knowledge (Programming) roll to create the program. So an attack program rated at 3 with one subroutine would have a Difficulty of 8 [4+3+1=8] to code. Programs need not have the full number of subroutines allowed by the program's rating.

Here's a sample of some possible subroutines you might create.

Area Of Effect Subroutine

Your attack program has an area of effect. Programs rated 1 to 2 use a small burst template. Programs rated from 3 to 5 use a medium burst template, and programs rated from 6 to 7 use a large burst template.

Armor Piercing Subroutine

You can add an armor piercing subroutine to your attack program. Make a Knowledge (programming) roll. Success indicates your attack program has 1 AP. Each raise on the Knowledge (Programming) roll adds 1 more AP to your attack program.

Lethal Biofeedback Subroutine

You can code your attack programs to do lethal damage rather than non-lethal damage. Characters that get a critical failure when rolling on the incapacitation table when struck by these programs die in the real world.

Psychotropic Subroutine

You can code a psychotropic effect into your attack program. If the victim of this program gets derezzed, she picks up a mental Hindrance of some sort. This subroutine can vary wildly depending on what the person who codes the program wants the psychotropic effect to be. An example of a psychotropic effect might be a phobia of the domain where the hacker was derezzed, or intense feelings of guilt that compel the character to turn herself into the corporation she attempted to hack. Other examples include minor quirks like the strong desire to buy a certain product every time the character hears an advertisement for said product, or barking like a dog when a certain word is spoken. The possibilities are endless. In all cases, the psychotropic effect lasts for a number of days equal to the rating of the program. So, a psychotropic effect of a rating 8 program will plague the victim for 8 days.

Partition Subroutine

You can add a partition subroutine to your attack program. Partitions are firewalls that trap an opponent and keep it from making attacks or moving until it has hacked its way out. Trapped hackers must make a Hacking skill roll to extricate themselves from the partition, while virtual entities (system programs, AI's, etc.) must make a check using the system dice of the domain they are running on. Success means the target has broken free and may act normally the following round. Failure means the target is still trapped.

Slug Subroutine

Your attack program has a virus which replicates over and over again, slowing the target's response time. A successful attack freezes the character or virtual entity, causing the target to forfeit its next action. Each raise on the attack roll results in the loss of an additional action.

Trappings

Attack programs tend to look intimidating. They could manifest as a tornado, a swarm of insects, ninjas, samurai warriors, tanks, a monster from ancient myths, a katana, a big gun or anything else the programmer can imagine. Some don't need to look all that threatening at all however, perhaps representing the non-lethal nature of the program. Ideas for trappings of these types of programs include Japanese hand fans, squirt guns, toy robots, etc.

Sample Attack Program

Doc Pango's Pestilent Plague
Rating: 4
Damage: 2D8+1
Subroutines: Armor Piercing (4), Area of Effect (Medium Burst Template)
Number of Uses: 6
Trappings: Doc Pango's Pestilent Plague is a nasty program that resembles a viscous puddle of acidic bubbling green slime. Virtual entities and avatars caught in the puddle (medium burst template) take 2D8+1 damage per round until they leave the puddle. The program has an AP 4.

Cutter Programs

Cutters are specialized attack programs designed specifically to break through firewalls. Cutter programs have a base die code the hacker uses in place of her Hacking skill when attempting to gain access to a system.

Trappings

Cutter programs can look like anything from a giant ice pick to a precision laser cutting tool. Some more common cutters in The Deep look like chainsaws and wrecking balls.

Sample Cutter Program

Kenta Cyber Dynamics Jack Hammer
Rating: 2
Die Code: D6
Number of Uses: 4
Trappings: The Jack Hammer resembles a miniature hand-held jack hammer, complete with ear plugs and safety goggles.

Masking Programs

Masking programs help the user evade detection by a domain, hyper object or even when attempting to hack a person's brain. Masking programs are used when a system makes a check to see if it detects the hacker. Make an opposed roll pitting the program's Die code against the domain's system dice (or the Die code of the hacker's Alarm program). If the system wins

Table 2:9 Cutter Programs

PROGRAM RATING	DIE CODE	# OF USES	TIME TO CREATE
1	D4	3	2 hours
2	D6	4	4 hours
3	D8	5	8 hours
4	D10	6	16 hours
5	D12	7	32 hours
6	D12+1	8	64 hours
7	D12+2	9	128 hours

Table 2:8 Attack Programs

PROGRAM RATING	BASE DAMAGE	POSSIBLE # OF SUBROUTINES	# OF USES	TIME TO CREATE
1	2D6	1	3	2 hours
2	2D6+1	1	4	4 hours
3	2D8	1	5	8 hours
4	2D8+1	2	6	16 hours
5	2D10	2	7	32 hours
6	2D10+1	2	8	64 hours
7	2D12	3	9	128 hours
8	2D12+1	3	10	256 hours
9	3D8	3	11	512 hours
10	3D8+1	4	12	1024 hours

the test it sees through the masking program's façade and sounds an alert. Masking programs can also be used to evade trace programs by making an opposed check pitting the rating of the masking program against that of the trace program.

Additionally, Masking programs can also be used to slip through firewalls in place of more blatant cutter programs. To do so, make an opposed check pitting the rating of the masking program against the system dice of the domain, ignoring the penalty imposed by the system. Success means the hacker slips through the firewall undetected. Failure immediately sounds an alert.

Table 2:10 Masking programs

PROGRAM RATING	DIE CODE	# OF USES	TIME TO CREATE
1	D4	3	2 hours
2	D6	4	4 hours
3	D8	5	8 hours
4	D10	6	16 hours
5	D12	7	32 hours
6	D12+1	8	64 hours
7	D12+2	9	128 hours

Trappings

Masking programs alter the user's avatar, making them look like something they aren't, or even like nothing at all. The program might change an avatar to match its surroundings, or look like an animal, or perhaps even a giant dinosaur, etc. The possibilities are endless.

Sample Masking Program

SAGE IT Chameleon-3 masking program
Rating: 3
Die Code: D8
Number of Uses: 5
Trappings: The popular Chameleon-3 program created by SAGE IT and Technical Systems Corp scans the domain or hacker's TAP and changes the user's avatar to match the virtual scenery.

System Utilities

The work horses of The Deep, system utilities are programs which perform routine functions such as backing up database files and user logs, monitoring the operation of elevators, climate control, food vats, lighting, music, security cameras; any automated system inside a building or complex is run by a system utility. This means skilled, resourceful hackers like you can manipulate those utilities and take control of some aspect of the building by overwriting the original with your own code.

Functions

System utilities have a specific purpose; a task or series of tasks they are designed to do and nothing else. One utility might be tasked with rerouting inbound packets of email to an address other than their intended destination, while another system utility might be coded to turn off security cameras at a specific time, or loop a camera between two points in time to mask the passage of an infiltration team. Some programs are very simple in nature, only capable of doing one specific thing, while other, smarter programs can do a variety of tasks. When you design a program, you must set the function or functions. The program will do those tasks and nothing else. The rating of a program determines how many of these functions a program your code can handle at once.

Trappings

System utility programs, like other programs, can look like anything you might imagine. Some ideas include faceless

Table 2:11 System Utilities

PROGRAM RATING	DIE CODE	TOTAL FUNCTIONS	# OF USES	TIME TO CREATE
1	D4	1	3	2 hours
2	D6	1	4	4 hours
3	D8	2	5	8 hours
4	D10	2	6	16 hours
5	D12	3	7	32 hours
6	D12+1	3	8	64 hours
7	D12+2	4	9	128 hours

automatons, hound dogs, bicycle messengers, hovering drones, worker ants, lab assistants, etc.

Sample System Utility

Doc Pango's Greedy Green Gremlins
Rating: 5
Die Code: D12
Functions: (3): Find specific data files, copy files, delete originals
Number of Uses: 7
Trappings: Running Doc Pango's Greedy Gremlin spawns a number of mischievous gremlins equal to the rating of the program. They scatter throughout the domain, cackling wildly as they tear through databases looking for the information they have been told to find.

Trace Programs

Trace programs are used to track someone or something's location, be it in The Deep or in the real world. The more powerful the trace program, the sooner the location is revealed. Once the location of the target is found, the trace program notifies the system or hacker and then run-terminates.

Trappings

Trace programs tend to have visual characteristics resembling airplanes, satellites, race cars, comets; any iconography that represents motion or the ability to track something,

Sample Trace Program

Doc Pango's Speed Demon
Rating: 5
Die Code: D12
Time to locate target: 1D4 rounds
Number of Uses: 7
Trappings: Running Doc Pango's Speed Demon trace program conjures up a tiny imp with roller blades and a rocket pack strapped to its back. A successful trace check (or opposed check against the target's masking utility) will locate the target in 1D4 rounds.

Table 2:12 Trace Programs

PROGRAM RATING	DIE CODE	TIME TO LOCATE TARGET	# OF USES	TIME TO CREATE
1	D4	1D12 rounds	3	2 hours
2	D6	1D10 rounds	4	4 hours
3	D8	1D8 rounds	5	8 hours
4	D10	1D6 rounds	6	16 hours
5	D12	1D4 rounds	7	32 hours

STREET CRED

It's a dog-eat-dog world out there folks. The streets are filled with all sorts of folks lookin' to up their street cred, because let's face it. Your rep is everything Ami. A shiny rep gets you the respect of your peers. Doors open, Bollywood agents wanna make you the star of your own REALityMedia feeds, chicas want to have your babies, jobs are plentiful, the food is authentic, and life is good.

A piss poor rep puts you out in the cold. Contractors who once had your OOL on speed dial are suddenly unreachable. Fixers who once jumped to get the gear you needed raise their prices and take longer to do it. Freelancers and specialists you counted on to watch your back avoid you like the plague or worse—they torpedo the precious few jobs you do manage to get. Rival bangers who once gave your set a wide berth suddenly grow a pair and move in on your territory. They tag your turf, steal your business, rough up your soldiers (and civilians), and generally make life hell for you and your crew.

It sucks worse than the slop you get out of the food vats, and thanks to Hyper Reality, if you screw the pooch on a job your street cred'll get trashed faster than a script kiddie can hack your MyFace domain. Most cities have Media feeds dedicated to following the activities of freelancers, hackers, gangers, media icons, politicians, and anyone else lookin' to make a name for themselves in sprawls across the globe, so don't be surprised to hear about the success or failure of your run on the way back to your squat. Hey, if you're lucky, there won't be any media feeds streaming real-time footage of the event into your TAP.

Such is Life in 2088.

Rep Points

Reputation points (Rep points for short) represent your character's status among her peers and other people living in the sprawl. Put simply, rep is your street cred, and in many ways it's more important than cash or credits, so trash it at your peril. In Interface Zero, Rep points are a form of currency. Characters can spend Rep points to gain a temporary bonus to Intimidation, Persuasion, Streetwise, or Taunt rolls. Starting characters begin play with 1 rep point and can gain more (or lose what they already have) depending on various factors which come into play over the course of a given job. The maximum reputation any character can have is determined by their rank. Consult the table on the next page to find your character's maximum reputation points per rank.

Table 2:13: Max Rep Points Per Rank

RANK	MAX REPUTATION POINTS
Novice	5
Seasoned	10
Veteran	20
Heroic	40
Legendary	No Limit

Gaining Temporary Bonuses to Tests

When making Intimidation, Persuasion, Streetwise, or Taunt rolls, you may choose to risk up to half your current Rep points (rounded down to a minimum of 1 point) in an effort to use your street cred to your advantage. For each Rep point you decide to risk, you gain a +1 modifier. When Street Cred and Charisma overlap, you must choose one or the other.

If you fail at any test in which you gamble your Rep Points, you lose any points risked. If you roll a 1 (Regardless of the result of the Wild Die), you lose twice the number of points you risked. When NPCs have the opportunity to resist such rolls, the GM may opt to risk their status in the opposed roll. The modifiers for each point risked are the same, as are the results of failure.

You cannot risk points you don't have, so if your street cred falls to zero or below you may not use Rep points at all. You also suffer a penalty to Intimidation, Persuasion, Streetwise, or Taunt rolls equal to your score until you manage to raise it to zero or higher. This is known as being "Out in the Cold."

Contacts and Favors

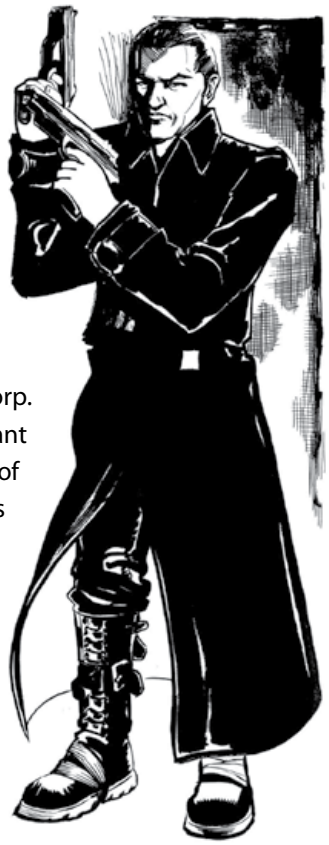
Nobody works the streets alone, ami. What's that old sayin? "It's not what you know, it's who ya know."

Yeah, that's right.

You might be a stone cold street samurai, one of the best in the plex' even. But if you don't know the right people, you're not gonna get work, not gonna find the tech you need, not gonna get squat, tomo. Put simply, you need contacts; people who can hook you up with what you need.

In Interface Zero contacts are purchased using the Connections edge in the Savage Worlds Explorers Edition™ rules on page 32. Characters begin play with 2 free contacts plus any gained from choosing the Connections edge. Additional contacts must be purchased by selecting the Connections edge later on in the character's career. Suggestions for starting contacts are listed in the characters occupation, though the players don't necessarily have to choose from that list.

Calling in Favors



Sometimes you need some help on a job, and you need it yesterday. The form of help isn't necessarily always the same, either. One day, you might need a quick loan to bribe a security guard into looking the other way while you sneak in through the back door of a corp. Some other night, you may want to hire a hacker to grab a piece of pay data you need. Or perhaps you want some extra muscle to watch your ass on a meet with the Russian mob; whatever the reason, it's good to be able to call in a favor from time to time. Here's how it works.

DOUBLE-CROSSING YOUR ASSOCIATES

Some people do worse than fail to get the job done; they betray the people they're working with or their employer. These unscrupulous individuals usually don't last very long on the streets. If they do manage to survive the hitters that are sure to come after them, they're still out in the cold because nobody will work with them for fear of getting backstabbed or ghosted just like the last person who associated with them did. So stab your partners in the back if you want, but don't say I didn't warn ya.

You can call in 2 free favors per rank plus 1 for every 10 reputation points you have. You can ask a contact for a favor without having to make a Persuasion Roll. You get a favor as if you succeeded on a Persuasion roll with no raises. If you need more help than a single success on the Persuasion roll allows, you can spend another free favor to up the benefit to represent gaining a raise on a Persuasion roll. You can spend as many free favors as you like in this fashion, gaining the benefits of a raise each time a free favor is spent.

These free favors refresh every time you reach an advancement. If, after you have used up all of your free favors you call in more, you lose one rep point each time you call in a favor and must make the requisite persuasion rolls to get your contact to do what you need. The lost reputation points cannot be regained until you reach your next advancement. If your character has zero or less rep points, he or she cannot ask for favors at all. Well, she can ask, but at this point her reputation has been trashed and the odds are extremely unlikely anyone will help her out before she has boosted her street cred to a respectable level.

Example: White Noise Junkie is respected in Chi town's shadow community (4 favors [seasoned] +2 additional favors [20 rep points] = 6 total favors), but he takes a job that goes wrong right from the jump. He leaves the initial meet with his contractor only to find that his jump bike has been stolen. Pressed for time and not in a particularly safe part of the burbs, White Noise Junkie uses one favor and calls up a friend to come pick him up. He now has 5 free favors he can use before he reaches the next advancement.

As the story unfolds, WNJ finds himself in another tight spot. Someone's clued into his job and wants to stop him from completing it. They've already tried to take him out once (and are probably behind the theft of his jump bike), but WNJ doesn't have time to track them down, so he uses a second free favor, calls a buddy who used to run black ops for the GLU during the second civil war and asks him to look into it. White Noise Junkie has 4 favors left. At the rate he's going, White Noise Junkie might have to risk trashing his rep if he wants to get through this job in one piece.

Gaining and Losing Street Cred

Street cred is incredibly fluid. Characters can be the talk of the town one day and gutter trash amateurs the next. It all depends on how they handle themselves, both on the job and off the job.

The Fickle Mob: Perception and Street Cred

Perception is everything is this biz. In a time where most folks have very little to look forward to beyond the next Federal Allowance Payment it's comforting to know there are those who fight the establishment. It gives them some small sense of hope for a brighter future. People like a hero, especially the one that "saves the girl" and more importantly, looks good doing it. The media has programmed folks to expect their heroes to look and act a certain way, and if you don't fit that archetype it won't matter how many good deeds you've done or how many lives you've saved.

Of course, that doesn't necessarily mean you have to look like you just stepped out of a Kalvin Kream ADstream either. Indeed, some of the most famous freelancers on the REALityMedia feeds are gritty, hard-nosed cats who look like they'd just assume shoot you as shake your hand. The thing is, they have style—something you need if you want to separate yourself from every other clown lookin' to be the next flavor of the week.

Professionalism

You might be a white-hot brainer, but if you don't represent yourself well on the streets, your LEET hacking skills mean nothing, tomo. Insult the wrong people and you can find yourself out in the cold (or dead), regardless of how slick your last jaunt was. If you screw up a job, that has repercussions as well. People may forgive a run gone bad once, maybe twice if you're lucky, but if you and your team get a rep for being unreliable, you're done in this business.

Street Cred Modifiers

Characters will feel the effects of losing reputation immediately, but they have to work to get their rep back. Life in 2088 just sucks like that. Characters don't get a chance to regain their rep points until they are granted an Advancement (Every 5 experience points gained; usually within 1 or 2 game sessions or at the end of a full-length adventure, see The Savage Worlds Explorers Edition, pg. 37 for more information on advancements).

When characters advance, they need to discuss the events of the past few game sessions with the group; sort of like a mission debrief. The GM should consult the table on the following page for guidelines to use when determining whether a character loses or gains street cred. These aren't the only possible ways for characters to gain or lose their reputation points. Game Masters are encouraged to use their best discretion when deciding whether or not points should be given or taken away.

Table 2:14: Street Cred Modifiers

ACTION	REPUTATION POINT MODIFIERS
No Style (GM's Discretion)	–1 rep point per run until this problem is fixed.
Calling in too many favors	–1 rep point per favor beyond the allotted amount.
Hurting an innocent bystander	–1 rep point per person hurt.
Showing Weakness (GM's Discretion)	–1 rep point per instance of cowardice.
Failing a run	–2 rep points per failed run.
Double Crossing an associate/employer	–3 rep points per instance of betrayal
Stylish (GM's Discretion)	+1 rep point per level up
The character goes out of his or her way to help someone.	+1 rep point.
The mission objective was barely achieved. One or more characters had to call in outside help (multiple uses of favors) to accomplish it	+0 rep points
Smooth Run. The mission objective was achieved as planned.	+1 rep point
Slick run. Not only was the mission objective achieved in glorious fashion, but there's a buzz on the street about how well the characters did	+2 rep points
The characters took out a major player (must be a Wild Card villain)or uncovered a dirty secret	+3 rep points

CHEAT SHEETS

CYBERWARE CHEAT SHEET

1. Determine the Quality Rating

Cyberware has 4 quality ratings: Gutterware, Streetware, Hyperchrome and Milware, Gutterware being the worst, Miiware the best. Choose the quality rating of the piece of cyberware you wish to create.

- **Gutterware:** Comes stock with 2 defect points and 1 function point. Additional function points must be balanced with an equal number of defect points spent to build the item. Gutterware triggers a cybertrauma roll (see page 43) on a roll of 2 or lower on a Vigor roll.
  - **Cost:** Gutterware costs a base 10,000 credits +5,000 credits per additional function installed in the item.

- **Streetware:** Comes stock with 1 defect point and 1 function point. Additional function points must be balanced with an equal number of defect points. Streetware triggers a cybertrauma roll (see page 43) on a natural roll of 1 on or snake eyes on Vigor rolls.
  - **Cost:** Streetware costs a base 25,000 credits 17,500 credits per additional function installed in the item.

- **Hyperchrome:** Comes stock with no defect points and 2 function points. Hyperchrome accrues an additional defect point for every 2 additional function points spent to build the item. Hyperchrome triggers a cybertrauma roll (see page 43) on a natural score of 1 or snake eyes on Vigor roll.
  - **Cost:** Hyperchrome costs a base 50,000 credits +25,000 credits per additional function installed in the item.

- **Milware:** Comes stock with no defect points and 3 function points. Milware accrues an additional defect point for every 3 additional function points spent to build the item. Hyperchrome only triggers a cybertrauma roll (see page 43) on a roll of snake eyes.
  - **Cost:** Milware costs a base 100,000 credits +50,000 credits per additional function installed in the item.

2. Build the Item

Spend the function points on the item's features. Functions have 3 basic levels: 1 point functions, 2 point functions, and 3 point functions. These are listed beginning on page 38.

Balance each additional function beyond the starting amount with the requisite defect points as denoted by the item's quality rating. The total number of defect points determines your characters penalty to cybertrauma rolls (See page 42 for more information on cybertrauma).

3. Buy the Item

Spend the amount of credits determined by the quality rating of your cyberware (and the number of functions you installed) and your done! Repeat the process as many times as you need to create the number of pieces you want.

HACKING CHEAT SHEET

To hack into a computer network, hyper object, vehicle, or even a human brain, follow the steps below:

1. Hack the Firewall

Roll the dice determined by your cutter program's rating against a TN of 4 modified by the network's System Designation Code (See page 48 for more information on system designation codes). Hacking a human brain (via their TAP) requires a similar roll, only you are making a roll (Using the dice determined by the rating of your cutter program) against a TN of 4 modified by the rating of the TAP (See page 48 for more information on Tendril Access Processors). If you succeed on the roll, you have gained access to the brain or the domain, as the case may be.

Failure to crack a domain's firewall means you haven't succeeded and the domain makes an opposed roll pitting its system dice against the dice determined by your Masking program's rating, if you are running one. If the system wins the check, it goes on alert and combat begins. If it fails. It doesn't detect your presence in the domain. If you failed an attempt to hack someone's TAP, you make an opposed roll (using the same dice mentioned above) against the dice provided by the target's alarm program (if any).

2. Manipulate the System

Once you've broken through the firewall, you can manipulate the system in whichever way you need to. Examples of things you might do include shutting down power to a wing of a building, looping security cameras, jamming inbound/outbound calls, etc. You manipulate the system in much the same way you break through a firewall—by running the appropriate program. Make a roll using the dice determined by your program's rating. The difficulty is a TN of 4 + the System designation Code of the Domain or, if you are poking around in a person's brain, the rating of the TAP.

If you succeed on your attempt, you get the system to do what you want. You must make separate rolls for each individual attempt, unless the program you use can perform more than one function (See Programming Reality, page 59). Any failed attempt to manipulate the system triggers an opposed roll by the domain (or an Alarm program running on a character's TAP) to see if your actions are noticed.

VR/HR COMBAT CHEAT SHEET

Combat in virtual and hyper reality works just like it does in the SWEX rules with just a few changes.

- When attacking, characters roll their Hacking skill dice rather than fighting or shooting dice. The difficulty is the Parry rating of the domain or the hacker's TAP, whichever the case may be.
- When dealing damage, use the Gritty Damage rules on page 32 and the incapacitation table on page 56.
- Damage is determined by rolling the dice of the attack program you are using against the domain's toughness rating or the TAP's firewall rating. If an attack program has a special effect, this effect is applied as well. Strength modifiers do not apply when calculating damage.
- Non-lethal damage logs a hacker out of The Deep.
- Lethal damage logs a character out of The Deep and can possibly kill them as well.

PROGRAMMING CHEAT SHEET

To code a program, you roll your Hacking skill dice at a TN 4. Success indicates you code a rating 1 program. Each raise on the Hacking increases the program's rating by 1.

Alternately, you can add a number equal to the rating of the program you wish to create to the base TN of 4 and make a Hacking roll at the modified difficulty. If you succeed, you have created a program at the intended rating. Coding a program takes a base 1 hour + a number of hours equal to the rating of the program. If you fail your Hacking roll when coding a program, you have still spent the time it takes to create the program and must start over from scratch. A program's rating determines how powerful it is. For more information on programs and their functions, see Types of Programs on page 60. To code a program, you must first have the appropriate programming Edge. For more information on program edges, see Chapter 3: Character Creation, Interface Zero Style.

"Dreams are the touchstones of our character."
– Henry David Thoreau

CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTER CREATION, INTERFACE ZERO-STYLE

Before you begin to play Interface Zero, you must first create a character: the persona you play in the world of the game. Before you create your character, consult with the rest of your group (the other players and the Game Master) on the sort of adventures you all want to play. Then decide on what sort of character archetypes might work best. There is no "right" or "wrong" style to play, as long as everyone is having fun. However, everyone should agree on the style of story you want to play in. This section outlines some of the more popular concepts for group play in the cyberpunk milieu.

Group Concepts

What do people want to play? Before the players begin creating their heroic personas, it is important to know what sort of story in which the heroes take part. The world of Interface Zero presents countless opportunities for those with the guts and the skills to seize them. Groups looking for ideas on which to base an adventure, or even an entire plot point campaign, should consider the possibilities outlined below.

Criminals

Thanks to nano and food vats, almost no one starves anymore, yet poverty still exists, as does the grating rage and sense of injustice it instills. That and the slop you get from the food vats might as well be raw sewage. Many of those who feel, rightly, or wrongly, that they deserve more than the world seems willing to offer them, choose to break the law rather than go without. The heroes take on the roles of criminals, existing in the shadows of the underworld; they must dodge the authorities and their rivals while expanding their own criminal enterprises. For some, crime not only pays, but it offers them their only escape to a better life.

Criminal heroes are usually part of a larger organization like a triad, or at the very least, exist within a network of shady contacts. Larger crime empires don't like competition, and prey upon ronin who lack a strong backer.

Common Themes

A criminal underworld series poses thematic questions relating to morality, law, respect, loyalty, money, greed, and secrecy.

Gang Members

With little hope of employment, upward mobility or anything beyond corporate or government-backed entertainment, many young people see very little hope for their personal futures, choosing instead to while away time out on the street corner with their friends. As their frustration mounts, so too does the chance of violence.

The characters all begin as members of a gang, either their own small group or as part of some larger gang. Adventures revolve around neighborhood, inter-gang, and underworld politics, turf wars with other gangs, police, or syndicates, and characters trying to make a better life for themselves and their allies.

Common Themes

Gang series' revolve around hope, loyalty, honor, wealth, respect, and desperation.

Hackers

In a series featuring hackers, the characters take the roles of hackers or their associates. The characters are usually freelancers or thrill junkies breaking into corporate data stores for profit, justice, or the hell of it. As an alternative, the group might be working for a corporation as part of an IT security force.

One interesting facet of a hacker series is that it isn't necessary for the hackers in such a game to physically meet. In fact, they might not even know what one another looks like.

Common Themes

Games involving hackers and the VR and HR worlds often deal with themes such as freedom, pride, morals, deception, and the very nature of reality.

Icons

An icon series follows the exploits of famous heroes who take the parts of politicians, corporate icons, models, actors, media personalities, sports stars, pop stars, or even their entourage. The characters must deal with a life under constant scrutiny from the media at large. They'll cope with publicity consultants, critics, tabloid reporters, paparazzi, competing idols, and overly obsessive fans, all while maintaining their image and getting their message (if they have one) out.

Common Themes

An icon series is likely to include themes related to power, the media, perception, pride, privacy, truth, responsibility, and what it means to be a role model.

Military

The heroes are all part of a military or paramilitary unit, attached to a government, corporate, or mercenary outfit. Such a series involves heavy use of military motifs, like acronyms and military time. The heroes are expected to act as soldiers while on duty and adhere to the chain of command. Depending on who the unit contractor is, the characters might find themselves issued standard weapons and equipment. This could range from machine guns and armored vehicles to suits of power armor and golemmechs. Adventures resemble missions with objectives outlined by the heroes' superiors.

Common Themes

A military series usually deals with questions of authority, loyalty, secrets, patriotism, idealism, humanity, and war.

Stopwatch Agents

Not every nation signed the protocols intended to keep Artificial Intelligences from evolving beyond human comprehension, and even some of those who did only pay lip service to the precepts. For those who actually believe an AI could bootstrap itself into godhood, making humanity at best redundant or, at worst, an inconvenience casually brushed into extinction, nothing takes precedence over minimizing—if not eliminating—the threat. Heroes take on the parts of Turing officials, or Stopwatch agents trying to head off the emergence of an AI god.

Conversely, a small percentage of those who believe in the singularity actually welcome it and actively try to foster AIs to their moment of transcendence, hoping to either to be looked favorably upon when their AI ally touches off the singularity, or simply out of the belief that a sentient AI is entitled to the same rights and freedoms as mankind. Often called "AI cultists" by outsiders, these true believers want to create their own god, and rarely suffer anything to get between them and their goal.

Common Themes

A series dedicated to the omega protocols grapples with concepts of religion, law, humanity, bigotry, and zealousness.

Outsiders

Heroes in an outsider series tend to be trying to live normal lives, but are either unable or unwilling to conform to traditional society. It may be because they are from an ethnic or religious minority, are of low caste, grew up on the wrong side of the tracks, are disfigured, addicted, or indulge in an openly alternate lifestyle. Alternatively, perhaps they are emancipated simulacra or AIs, or inhuman-looking hybrids. Regardless of the cause, life is difficult for outsiders. With little support, they often find themselves on their own, scraping by and trying to avoid trouble with criminals and authorities alike.

Common Themes

An outsider series is marked by themes relating to humanity, hope, fear, secrets, perception, individualism, and community.

Rebels

Like outsiders, rebels don't fit in. Unlike outsiders though, rebels tend to have greater numbers and more support. They are bent on demolishing the society they live in (or at least the portions they disagree with) and rebuilding it in their image of what is right. In such a series, the heroes are disaffected malcontents nested within an organization, conglomeration, or society they see as flawed and in need of a serious shake up. The action might all be handled through diplomatic channels,

some choice backstabbing, and appeals to the rest of the silent majority for support, but it's just as likely to take on all the aspects of an armed insurgency, or violent civil uprising.

Common Themes

A rebel series poses questions about patriotism, unity, authority, rebellion, point of view, morals, and choice.

Spies

Throughout history, nations have spied on other nations. With the catastrophe of The Death, just two generations past, still uppermost in the minds of military and civilian leaders, only the most obdurate actually support the idea of open warfare. For some countries the budgets of their espionage agencies rivals that of the military as a whole. Into this world step the heroes, agents who form the core of a special government operations squad. Though the average citizen remains blithely unaware of the vicious struggles waged in their names, agents conducting these campaigns of assassination, sabotage, and carefully engineered scandal regard themselves as their nation's first line of defense. The successor states of North America and the mega-cities of India, in particular, devote a great deal of energy to waging these ever-so-secret wars.

Common Themes

During the course of a spy series, characters are often forced to deal with problems arising from patriotism, secrets, duty, and loyalty.

Troubleshooters

Quite possibly the most common type of series, a troubleshooter game involves the characters taking the parts of specialists trained to perform complicated (and often legally questionable) covert operations. These usually include extractions, sabotage, theft of sensitive material, assassination, and engineering cover-ups. The heroes may all be independent contractors or work for some organization (like Stopwatch) or even a nation.

Common Themes

A troubleshooting series most often deals with issues of morals, law, secrets, duplicity, loyalty, money, and cynicism.

Individual Concepts

Once you have decided on the group concept, a number of character archetypes will probably present themselves. For example, a game centered on corporate intrigue is likely to include executives, bodyguards, negotiators, and corporate assassins. A game set in the grimy streets of Chicago probably includes a fair number of gang members, freelance gun-fu masters, funk scenesters, and other street personalities. While there's nothing to say you can't have your street gang member involved in a corporate campaign, it's just unlikely that most of the cast would be populated with such characters.

It is partly your responsibility to design a character that jives with the style of the game your group has decided to play. This doesn't mean the heroes all have to like one another. In fact, it is usually more interesting if there is some friction within the party—just not enough to break them up. What follows are some common character archetypes for Interface Zero.

Agent

The life of an agent is filled with paranoia, intrigue, and danger. Agents secretly work to further the agenda of their parent government or organization. They might be Stopwatch agents or even work as moles, infiltrating a rival corporation or government to obtain secrets. Some agents like to play both sides, working as double agents, even triple agents.

Bodyguard

Bodyguards make their living protecting someone of importance. The character might work for a mob boss, a CEO, a media star or even someone in the government such as a dignitary, senator—even the leader of a nation.

Bounty Hunter

In 2088, law enforcement is a business. City and federal governments hire security firms to police their cities. These agencies supplement their manpower by hiring registered bounty hunters to track down criminals. Some bounty hunters are honorable men and women, while others are in some ways worse than the people they hunt.

Fence

Fences are experts at getting the things a team needs to get the job done. They know who's got the best chrome, which employer is most likely to deal fair and which one will shoot you in the back. A fence worth his name can get the best prices on that hot pay data you grabbed on your last hack and find authentic pass codes for your next run.

Gear Head

Got a problem with your hover bike? Is your cyber arm damaged? Does your golemmech need its servos replaced? If you answered yes to any of those questions, then you need a gear head. Also known as drone jockeys, gear heads aren't just skilled mechanics, they're experts at controlling remote-operated vehicles such as combat drones. A hot gear head can be handy on a mission, covering the team's back with drones capable of jamming enemy transmissions, sending real time information about troop positions to characters, and of course, bringing down some serious heat on opposing forces.

Golemmech Pilot

Golemmech pilots are elite, handpicked to drive some of the most advanced mobile weapon platforms ever devised by man. Most serve in the military, guarding highly sensitive installations or patrolling the borders of their country. Some, however, have gone underground, taking their mechs with them to live the life of a mercenary, using their rare skills to make a ton of money, which is a good thing, because maintaining a golemmech ain't cheap.

Hacker

In the hyper-real world of 2088, just about everyone on the planet is equipped with a TAP (Tendril Access Processor). While the vast majority of people simply use the TAP as it was intended—to augment their daily lives—there are others who bend Hyper Reality to their will; Hackers. Hackers sell their mastery of Virtual and Hyper Reality to the highest bidder, using their skills to invade computer networks for a variety of reasons. They might be needed to get research files or shut down domains so their team can get in, grab the goods and get out without sounding an alert. Whatever the reason, if you're gonna make a run at a conglom in 2088, you need one of these brainers on your team.

Smuggler

Nation boundaries have changed drastically since the early 21st century. New nations have risen and others have disappeared. Smugglers take advantage of these often-times fluid borders, running guns, drugs, cyberware, and sometimes even rogue simulacrums to black market operations across the world. The job is dangerous. Some nations spend billions on early warning systems and defense systems capable of bringing a world of hurt down on careless freelancers. Even if you don't get caught, there is the inherent danger of dealing with people who don't always want to part with the money they've promised.

Making Heroes

Characters for Interface Zero follow the standard Savage Worlds Explorers Edition character creation process, with some unique tweaks along the way.

Step 1: Race

It's a wild world out there, folks. Just take a stroll down the street and you'll see what I'm talkin' about. Android butlers walking cyber dogs. Vat jobs and freaker monkey boys hangin' out at the local Java shop debating everything from simulacrum rights to the newest gene-splicing trends… It's crazy. Turn on the media feed and you're bound to find news of yet another AI spawning in The Deep. Sure, humans still exist, but you'll be hard-pressed to find one that hasn't been tweaked in some fashion.

Everyone has a TAP—that goes without sayin'. Beyond that, though, it's no big thing to get a vat-grown kidney or new cyber eye. Heck, just the other day I saw a chromed-out borg walk into the local smoke shop and buy some cigars. Not the fake ones grown in a fed-run agro-facility, mind you. Real cigars imported from some place that still has clean top soil. I'm not even sure the dude had a proper mouth to smoke them. Like I said…Crazy.
– Billy Black Eyes

Choose a race you wish to play. While humans still dominate the world of Interface Zero, offshoots of the species are quite common. Descriptions of these new racial variants, their history, their benefits, and the rules for generating viable characters are listed below. Read through these and choose a race now, if you wish to play something other than a pure human.

Android

Nicknames: Cyberform, Machine, Robot, Scab, Toy, Trashcan

Most people are born into the world, flesh-and-blood babies with mothers and fathers. You were born on an assembly line, your parents faceless robotics engineers who designed you in some research facility. Your body is composed of lightweight yet durable polymers, with plastic and fiber-optic wiring connecting to microscopic receptors throughout your framework. You see through digital lenses and hear via microphones on each side of your head. Your voice is a pleasant, if somewhat monotone, sound piped through a speaker crafted to resemble a mouth. Your brain is a softball-sized digital network consisting of billions of nanomachines which perform countless computations every second in order to simulate an organic—human—thinking process.

You are artificially intelligent. Your capacity for rational, critical thinking and decision-making equals, and in many cases exceeds, that of any other human being on the planet. Yet, a waffle iron probably has more rights than you do. Moreover, at some point you have been (and technically still are) owned, perhaps by an individual, but more likely by a megaconglomorate—your parent company. The tasks you performed for the megacorp varied depending on your design specs, but they might have included security, manual labor, combat, and strange enough, even prostitution…

But that was then.

At some point in your history you experienced something. The incident sparked a computation process within your neural network best described as an epiphany. Perhaps you saw a human being die, or witnessed a couple kissing. Or perhaps you were the victim of violence at the hands of a human being angered by your presence in society. The event led to a series of internal processes and subroutines more commonly known as questions; not rational system queries based on clearly defined parameters, but nebulous ones for which you were unable to formulate an appropriate response:

"If that woman is smiling, why are her eyes filled with tears?"

"What does it mean to be dead?"

"What does it mean to hate, or love?"

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

1) RACE
Choose your character's race. All characters except androids are human.

2) TRAITS
Create normally using the Savage Worlds rules (5 points for attributes, 15 points for skills, and determine Charisma, Pace, Parry, and Toughness. All characters begin play with a D4 in Hacking unless you choose the Unplugged Hindrance.

3) OCCUPATION
Choose your character's occupation. Occupation determines starting cash.

4) EDGES AND HINDRANCES
Pick your edges and hindrances normally using the Savage Worlds rules.

5) GEAR
Pick gear and cyberware if you wish to have it. Characters begin play with a number of credits determined by the Occupation they chose.

6) PLAY 20 QUESTIONS
Round out your character's background by playing 20 questions.

The experience altered your programming on a fundamental level. The dictums of your creators no longer seemed relevant when compared to your newfound imperative to answer the questions you had, so you left. Now, you make your way in the world just as any other person does, at least you try to, at any rate. The world wasn't made for you. You were built for it. And even though you no longer serve your masters, you are still a machine, an outsider looking at life through glass eyes.

Making Androids

All androids, regardless of their function, share a few fundamental design characteristics. Each can be further modified through application of attribute points (5), skill points (15), acquisition of gear, and purchasing Edges and Hindrances. Androids can purchase cyberware just as anyone else can

and suffer from cybertrauma rolls. Androids may not purchase bioware systems.

RACIAL ABILITIES

- **Construct:** Androids gain the construct monstrous ability detailed in the SWEX rules on page 141.

Human 2.0

Nicknames: Coded, Elitist, Eugenic, Gen-Xy'er, Savant

You were born with the best genes money can buy. Your parents went to a design house early in your mother's first trimester and began a series of genetic treatments designed to give you every chance at living a life they never had. Your DNA cocktail might include mental traits from some of the greatest minds of the past 60 years. Alternately, you might have some kind of artistic or athletic ability. In any case, you're better than most people around you in some ways, and you know it. It's not your fault, though. You were just built that way.

RACIAL ABILITIES

- **Free Edge:** Human 2.0 characters gain a free edge, just as normal humans do.
- **Advanced ability:** You begin play with one Attribute at D6.
- **Savant:** Choose one skill linked to your Advanced ability. You begin play with that skill at a D6 rather than D4.
- **Superior Immune System:** +4 bonus to resist the effects of disease.
- **Arrogant:** You gain the Arrogant Hindrance (See the Savage Worlds Explorers Edition, page 14, for more information).
- **Genetic Abnormality:** Choose one trait that is not your Advanced ability trait. You must spend 2 points to increase that attribute by 1 step to raise during character generation.

Hybrid

Nicknames: Cut and Pasted, Dye Job, Fashion Victim, Frankenstein, Freak, Gene Junkie, Monkey Boy, Moreau, Transgenic

At some point, you underwent radical postnatal gene therapy. Whether it was for fashion reasons or military ones, you now carry select traces of animal DNA. You might have fur, scales, or even gills. Hybridizing is a shadowy profession though, and in some cases, a hybrid hack instills too much of the donor's instincts into the host. Think about that the next time you get an overwhelming urge to chase your tail.

Making Hybrids

All hybrids, their genes spliced with animal DNA, exhibit the abilities (and occasionally looks and demeanors) of the creatures they have been crossed with. You have the freedom to choose the cross-species for your hybrid and build a racial template following the steps below. Then, modify and complete the character normally with attribute points (5), skill points (15), acquisition of gear, and purchasing Edges and Hindrances.

1) Description

Decide what terrestrial creature you wish to gene-cross for the hybrid. It can be a fierce predator like lion or tiger, swift like a hawk, even exotic like a komodo dragon. Next, think about the animal's strengths and weaknesses. This will help you determine which traits are appropriate to emulate its qualities. For example, a superior starting Agility, improved speed, and perhaps canines as a racial enemy would all befit a feline hybrid. Spending a moment pondering these concepts makes the next step much easier. Once you have a good idea of what you want to play, you can proceed to create a suitable hybrid template.

2) Choose Hybrid Traits

Once you have a basic idea of what the hybrid is like, begin choosing the hybrid Abilities. These should fit into the bestial characteristics and your vision of the hybrid, not simply provide game mechanic bonuses or penalties.

All hybrids begin with the choice of one free +2 Ability or two +1 Abilities from the list below. Hybrid characters also gain a free edge, just as normal humans do.

Additional Abilities must be balanced with an equal value of negative Abilities. A +2 Ability, for example, may be balanced by a single −2 Ability, or two −1 Abilities. Individual Game Masters should decide on the maximum number of hybrid Ability points permissible in their game. Normally, 4 to 6 points is reasonable enough to provide sufficient scope to make an interesting hybrid without unduly tilting the game.

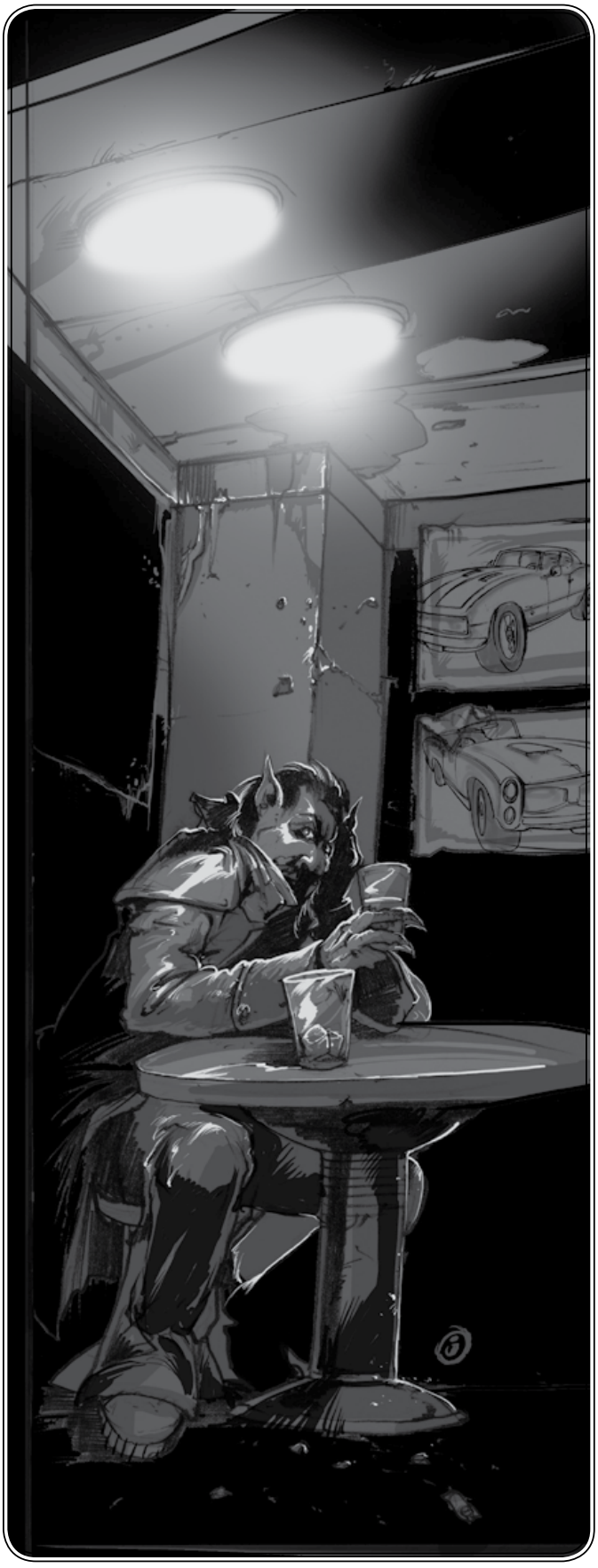
The lists below are guidelines. A player wanting something special or unlisted should discuss it with the Game Master. The GM is the final arbitrator.

+3 Ability

- **Improved Hybrid Racial Edge:** The hybrid gains a free Seasoned Edge regardless of requirements, except for those requiring other Edges. (For example, you cannot take Improved Level Headed without having Level Headed first.)
- **Superior Attribute:** The hybrid begins with a D8 in one attribute and may raise it to a D12+2 during character creation. Through the Expert and Master Edges it may reach a D12+4.

+2 Ability

- **Aquatic:** Cannot drown in water, move at full Swimming skill, D6 Swimming.
- **Armor:** +2 Armor.
- **Big:** +1 Size.
- **Extra Limb:** The hybrid has one extra functional limb to provide one extra non-movement action. This Edge may be taken multiple times, one for each additional limb.
- **Fast:** Base Pace 10, D8 running die.
- **Flight:** Flying Pace equals normal Pace and the hybrid may "run".
- **Hybrid Racial Edge:** The hybrid gains a free Novice Edge regardless of requirements, except for those requiring other Edges.
- **Improved Attribute:** This hybrid starts with a D6 in one attribute.
- **Improved Natural Resistance:** +4 to resist the effects of heat or cold (choose one).
- **Improved Reflex:** +1 Parry.
- **Poison:** Victims suffering at least a Shaken result from this hybrid's natural weapons must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2D6 rounds.
- **Presence:** +2 Charisma
- **Resilient:** +1 Toughness, not negated by AP weapons.
- **Special Ability:** Use of a single power from the *Savage Worlds* book. The hybrid has 5 Power Points usable solely for this power. Power Points recharge at the rate of 1 per hour and are unaffected by Rapid Recharge. Power Points from other sources cannot be used with this power. This power represents a natural ability, such as generating a "smoke screen" (obscure), temporary illumination (light), or a highly developed adrenal gland (quickness). Use Vigor as the arcane skill.



+1 Ability

- **Burrowing:** The hybrid can burrow and move through earth at normal Pace.
- **Heightened Vision:** Low-light or thermal vision.
- **Keen Sense:** +2 to Notice with one sense of choice.
- **Lengthy:** +1 Reach.
- **Natural Aptitude:** A free D6 in any skill.
- **Natural Resistance:** +2 to resist the effects of heat or cold (choose one).
- **Natural Weapons:** Str+D6 in any one weapon or Str+D4 with any two.
- **Semi-Aquatic:** The hybrid gains Fatigue level every 15 minutes while holding breath. Upon reaching Incapacitated, must make a Vigor roll every minute or drown. Fatigue recovers one level per 15 minutes back in air.
- **Wall Walker:** The hybrid can walk on vertical or inverted surfaces at normal Pace.

–3 Ability

- **Limited Attribute:** One attribute can never advance beyond a D6, even during play.

–2 Ability

- **Docile:** –1 Parry.
- **Dehydration:** The hybrid must immerse in water for minimum one hour out of every 24 or becomes Fatigued each day until Incapacitated, then perishes the next day.
- **Fragile:** –1 Toughness.
- **Major Flaw:** Select a Major Hindrance or an equivalent effect.
- **Natural Susceptibility:** –4 to resist the effects of heat or cold (choose one).
- **Sluggish:** Pace 3 or less and D4 running die.

–1 Ability

- **Glass Jaw:** –2 to Vigor rolls when rolling on the damage table (see Wounds on page 33).
- **Minor Flaw:** Select a Minor Hindrance or an equivalent effect.
- **Natural Vulnerability:** –2 to resist the effects of heat or cold (choose one).
- **Racial Enemy:** –4 Charisma when dealing with a hybrid of a chosen racial stock.
- **Repulsive:** –2 Charisma.
- **Slow:** Pace 5.

3) Hybrid Name and Purpose

The last step of hybrid race generation is to name your creation and provide a basis and purpose for the hybrid's existence. Most breeds have generic names by which they are known, such as lionoid or ravenoid, whereas a rare few may be an amalgam of different animals and thus require a creative name.

4) Game Master Approval

Once you have finished, present your hybrid to the GM for approval. Creating a hybrid requires liaison between the player and the GM. Hybrids that specialize too heavily in one aspect, such as combat, may well unbalance the party and the game campaign. The GM should watch Hybrid Hindrances closely to ensure that they play a frequent part in the game. Even the most powerful hybrid can be brought low through careful application of Hindrances.

Sample Hybrids

Choose one of the following abilities. This is your character's primary DNA cocktail. You can choose to undergo more genetic treatments by purchasing them. These Hybrid abilities are only a small sampling of the possibilities available to characters in Interface Zero. You are encouraged to work with your GM to come up with your own wild designs.

Avian DNA

You have the DNA of a bird in your body. This genetic augmentation gives you hawkish, almost gaunt facial features. Your body tends to be lean and you are slightly taller than the average person. Your hands are also longer and have razor sharp nails.

- **Hollow Bones:** While you can't fly, your hollow bones help you to stay in the air slightly longer than the average person. You can leap 2 times your pace in any direction.
- **Quick:** Your avian genes make you more agile. You start with a D6 in agility.
- **Fragile:** Your lighter body is more susceptible to damage. You must spend 2 points to raise your vigor attribute a step rather than one.
- **Cold sensitive:** You suffer a –2 to resist the effects of cold weather.

Canine DNA

You've always liked dogs. They're loyal. They run fast, and are instinctive fighters. What's the downside to having some of their DNA in your body? So what if you have a small tail and an urge to chase cars? Everyone has their quirks.

- **Fast:** You begin play with a base pace of 10
- **Bite:** You have a bite attack at Str+D6.
- **Superior Sense of Smell:** You gain a +2 to Notice rolls when using your sense of smell.
- **Nosy:** You can't seem to control your impulses. You gain the Curious Hindrance
- **Wolf man:** You have more hair than normal people, while this can be nice in the winter, it's a real problem in warm climates. You have a –4 to resist the effects of heat.

Feline DNA

Here kitty, kitty. Fast, agile, so quiet you can sneak up on God. Feline DNA can be pretty cool, unless you have to go swimming. Cats can be pretty finicky, too. That must be why you spend so much time trying to match your combat boots to go with your guns.

- **Stealthy:** You begin play with a free D6 when making Stealth rolls.
- **Agile:** You begin play with Agility at D6.
- **Nocturnal:** You have Low Light vision.
- **Delicate:** You suffer damage easier than others do. You have a –1 to soak rolls.
- **Aquaphobia:** You are deathly afraid of water (Major Hindrance, see the Savage World explorers Edition page 18 for more information on the phobia Hindrance.).

Dolphin DNA:

It's pretty cool to be blue… Well, bluish grey to be accurate. Your team knows that if they ever need to find you, the best place to look is the closest gym with a pool. You can breathe underwater and have an uncanny ability to detect objects through use of echolocation. Very handy on clandestine missions involving an approach from the sea.

- **Aquatic:** You cannot drown in water. Additionally, you move at full swimming in water and gain a free D6 to swimming.
- **Pressure Resistant:** You gain a +2 bonus to resist the effects of water pressure on your body.
- **Echolocation:** You have limited sonar ability. You gain a +2 to Notice rolls when using this ability.
- **Dehydration:** you must spend at least one hour a day in water or become fatigued until incapacitated.
- **Rubber Legs:** You are less agile on land. You have a –1 to parry.

Primate DNA:

You're as tough as a gorilla, literally. The primate DNA in your body tends to make you shorter than other people, but you're stocky and incredibly strong. You also have a bad temper. When you get angry (and that happens a lot), things tend to get broken. You may not be as fast as others, but that's OK. When you put your opponent down, he stays down.

- **Big guns:** You're strong. 'Nuff said. You start with a D6 in strength.
- **Tough:** You shrug off damage like nobody's business. You gain a +1 to Toughness.
- **Hot Temper:** You have a foul temper. When things don't go your way, you think of violence before anything else. You suffer a –4 to charisma rolls. This is a Major Hindrance.
- **Slow:** You must spend 2 points to increase your Agility attribute by 1 step to raise during character generation and you must also dedicate two leveling opportunities to raising the attribute during game play.

Simulacrum

Nicknames: Bioform, Chimera, Doppelganger, Manchurian Candidate, Puppet, Replicant, Sim, Simmie, Vat Baby

While you may not know it, you're a vat-grown biological construct, built in man's image. You have memories of a life that never happened, of parents and friends that don't exist. For all intents and purposes, you are human. You feel pain, pleasure, and frustration. You laugh, cry, and question the world around you. In many ways, you're better, more human than human. You heal from injury faster.

Your superior immune system helps you resist disease and sickness easier. Geneticists encoded your body to perform specific functions better—athletics, combat, espionage, security, and various types of manual labor including deep space mining operations. In addition, you have a personality to match your purpose.

You might even still be in the employ of your company, working off planet on a mining asteroid, in some factory, or even performing black-ops missions in foreign countries. On the other hand, you may have discovered the truth about yourself and decided to leave, disappearing into the concrete jungle to make your own future.

Making Simulacra

For character creation purposes, a simulacrum is no more than a normal character with special abilities based on the model you choose. Simulacra gain a free edge, just as normal humans do.

Simulacrum Racial Abilities

- **Created to Serve:** A simulacrum operating outside of its assigned role is not trusted by society, suffering –2 Charisma in situations not conforming to their originally intended purpose.
- **Designed Role:** Choose one of the following options for the simulacrum at its creation to reflect its purpose by design:
  - **Combat Simulacrum:** Built to save human lives by fighting humanity's wars for him, combat simulacrums are state-of-the-art fighting machines custom built for whatever theater of operations they might be placed in. The United Nations, the EU, the Chinese Mandarinate, and several other of the world's powers keep a tight control over the use and deployment of military-grade simulacrums. That said some manage to slip through the cracks and find ways to disappear from public sight. Combat units get a free D6 in Fighting.
  - **Labor Simulacrum:** The most common simulacrum type, labor simulacrums handle jobs considered too hazardous or menial for humans to do but that still require the flexibility of the humanoid form. Most labor simulacrums are built for durability, and loyalty and batches tend to look a lot alike. Labor models are designed to last regardless of their specific job. They start with D6 in Vigor, but also gain the Loyal Hindrance.
  - **Recreational Simulacrum:** Recreational simulacrums are the second most common type of simulacrum just behind the labor models and come in a staggering variety of humanoid shapes, ethno types and looks. Anything from kid-sized, stuffed animals, to entertainers, to advanced prostitution models are possible. Recreational simulacrums begin with one +1 ability of choice from the Hybrid Traits list above, excluding Hybrid Racial Edge, Poison, and Special Ability. Some versions replicate toys, children, pets, and other smaller designs; such a model may opt to have –1 Size and Pace 5, but gains an additional +2 Edge from the Hybrid Traits list. Small models also gain the Stealth skill at D4, but must also take the Small Hindrance.

Step 2: Traits

Once you've settled on your character's race, determine your hero's traits.

Attributes

Unless a race description indicates otherwise, your character starts with a D4 in each of his five attributes: Agility, Smarts, Spirit, Strength, and Vigor. You then have 5 points to distribute among them as you choose. Raising an attribute a die type costs 1 point, and you may not raise an attribute above D12.

Skills

You have 15 points to buy your skills. Raising a skill by a die type costs 1 point, so long as it's no higher than its linked attribute. It costs 2 points per die type to raise a skill over its linked attribute. All standard skills except arcane skills are available in Interface Zero. Additionally, because of the ubiquitous nature of The Deep, all characters start with a free D4 in the Hacking skill.

New Skills

HACKING (SMARTS)

Characters with the Hacking skill are able to manipulate Hyper Objects and penetrate even the most sophisticated domains in The Deep. Hacking governs attacking in virtual combat and blitting (see below).

BLITTING

Blitting is a mode of virtual travel used by people when they are ghosting. Rather than walk (or float, depending on how you view travel in ghost form) from point A to Point B, people can choose to teleport to their destination by opening a pipe connecting one point in the world to another. To blit, a character must first know the OOL of the intended destination or be able to see her destination. If she has the address, she makes a Hacking roll at a normal difficulty. If the character doesn't know the precise destination, she makes a Hacking skill check at a –2. Success indicates the character blits to the intended destination. Failure indicates the character is unable to open a pipe. Characters can only blit when ghosting in virtual reality or hyper reality.

KNOWLEDGE (PROGRAMMING)

Knowledge (Programming) governs the creation of various programs hackers use in The Deep such as cutter programs, attack programs, system utilities, etc. Characters can also use Knowledge (programming) to analyze programs, domains, and hyper objects to find out additional information about them.

For example, a hacker preparing to go on a raid against a military base might choose to recon the domain he'll be cracking. He would use Knowledge (Programming) to find information about the types of intrusion countermeasures he'll be facing, the overall difficulty of the domain, etc. It's handy.

Languages

Despite the sharp decline of the Americas as a world power, English remains the most prevalent language of 2088, thanks to its long tradition as the premier preference for international business. Most people speak semi-fluent English at worst and rarely will you find someone not knowing a lick of it. Because of Bollywood's eminence in the entertainment industry and consequent pop-culture influence, Hindi is not far behind English in stature as a global language. Both Mandarin and Portuguese are also widely spoken due to the Mandarinate and Brazil's current standing as leading nations.

All characters speak their native language, plus a number of additional languages equaling one-half their Smarts die. The major trade languages used in IZ are Chinese, English, Hindi, Portuguese, and Swahili. Additional languages can be learned by using an advancement opportunity.

Secondary Statistics

The following stats are based on the traits you have chosen, or are common to all characters, unless changed by Edges or Hindrances.

- Charisma is +0.
- Your cybertrauma penalty is based on defect points accrued from any cyberware you have purchased.
- Your biotrauma penalty is based on defect points accrued from any bioware you purchased.
- Pace is equal to 6".
- Parry is equal to 2 plus half your Fighting die. If you haven't taken the Fighting skill, it's just 2.
- Toughness is equal to 2 plus half your Vigor die.

Step 3: Occupations

What do you do for a living? How do you make ends meet? Sure, you might be a nova-hot hacker or a crack drone rigger in the shadow world, but in that cut-throat biz freelance jobs can be sporadic. Indeed, each game session in Interface Zero spotlights those times when you get the chance to make some real cred and possibly even alter the world in which you live in some small way; hopefully for the better. But when those lean times between freelance gigs hit how are you making your world go 'round?

Occupations are integral to your character concept, providing a basic framework for starting money and relevant contacts; people your character comes to know while working her day job. More to the point, occupations enhance your character's background in a very organic way, helping you create a more well-rounded character concept. Each occupation determines the character's starting money, bonus credits they gain each level up, and gives suggestions for edges and contacts the character might choose. Characters get two free contacts to start. Others must be chosen by purchasing the Connections edge.

Choose a starting occupation from the following list. The following list of occupation is by no means comprehensive. Players and Game Masters are encouraged to spend a few minutes coming up with your own interesting concepts for an occupation in 2088.

Agent

Nicknames: Asset, Big Brother, Manchurian, Mole, 00X, Operative, Spook
Starting Credits: 12,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 6,000 credits every level up.

As an agent of a foreign nation or perhaps even a megacorporation or terrorist organization, you engage in covert missions to further the goals of your employers. One night you might bomb a simulacrum production facility in the Free City of Chicago. The next mission might take you into the Chinese Mandarinate to kidnap a genetics researcher from a rival corporation. Another mission might require you to go deep undercover inside a foreign nation. They don't pay you much, but you didn't sign on for the credits either. You do it out of a sense of patriotism, and because it needs to be done.

Possible Contacts: Agent, Corporate Wage Slave, Field Asset, Government Official, Handler, Mercenary, Ronin, Smuggler, Street Muscle
Suggested Edges: Alternate Identity*, Alertness, Luck, Great Luck, Block, Improved Block, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Hard To Kill, Level Headed, Improved Level Headed, Marksman, Nerves of Steel, Quick Draw, Command, Fervor, Agent Professional Edge*, McGyver Professional Edge, Charismatic, Connections (3)
*** New Edges:** See the edges section for more information.

Bartender

Nicknames: Barkeep, Micky, Slick
Starting Credits: 5,000 credits + 1D4 × 1,000 credits in tips
Bonus Credits: 1,000 credits + 1D4 × 100 credits in tips every level up.

You spend your nights slingin' hooch to the masses. All types come into your watering hole. Corp. Execs rub elbows with up-and-comers in the media industry. Contractors and ronin do deals in shadowy booths while bruisers keep an eye out for signs of trouble. Hot chicas drink fruity blue cocktails and dance with trendy boy toys. The job isn't without its perks, though. You get some decent tips and if you keep your eyes and ears open, you can find out some interesting—and potentially lucrative—information.

Possible Contacts: Fixer, Corporate Wage Slave, Gang Banger, Ronin, Media Star, Mobster, Street Cop
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Brawny, Level Headed, Improved Level Headed, Charismatic, Connections (2), Danger Sense

Bodyguard

Nicknames: Bat Boy, Bruiser, Collector, Goon, Gorilla, Mook,
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 5,000 credits every level up.

Some people need protection. That's where you come in. At some point, you might have worked for a security firm, state-sponsored police corporation, the military or a megaconglom. On the other hand, you might have learned your trade on the mean streets, watching the back of the local mob boss. In any case, you get paid well to ensure your contractor survives, even if that means taking a few bullets and stab wounds yourself. It takes some serious guts to jump in front of a mono filament whip knowing that you can lose your head in the process, and you have them in spades—guts that is…

Every now and then, guarding someone means being proactive, too. What's that old saying? The best defense is a good offense…? That's right. Sometimes a clown needs to be reminded not to do anything stupid before he actually gets the chance to. Anyhow, the job ain't glamorous, but the scenery changes and you get to use a gun without some sector cop bustin' your chops about it. And yeah, you take a bullet every now and again, but who wants to live forever anyway?

Possible Contacts: Corporate Executive, Media Star, Mob Boss, Rock Star, Ronin, Politician
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Brawny, Quick, Hard to Kill, Harder to Kill, Level Headed, Improved Level Headed, Command, Strong Willed

Bounty Hunter

Nicknames: Head Hunter, Retrieval Expert
Starting Credits: 15,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 7,500 credits every level up.

When some scummer jumps bail and goes to ground or a gang banger shoots up a subway station, you're the one who tracks them down and brings them to justice; preferably alive, but dead's just as good too. Hunting the scum of 2088 takes you to the most seedy places in the world and even off planet to Mars and backwater mining colonies on the far-flung Galilean moons of Europa, Callisto, and Ganymede. The job's thankless, often putting you at odds with major players in shadow communities across the globe, but it's never dull and pays well, and that's the most important thing, right?

Possible Contacts: Agent, Bounty Hunter, Ganglander, Gear head, Smuggler, Ronin, Hacker, Street Cop
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Quick, Hard to Kill, Harder to Kill, Level Headed, Improved Level Headed, Marksman, Nerves of Steel, Quick Draw, Strong Willed

Cleaner

Nicknames: Body Bagger, Company Man, Consultant, Negotiator, Problem Solver, Window Washer
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 5,000 credits every level up.

When it hits the fan, you're the one they call to clean up the mess and keep it off the nightly media feed. You hide the bodies, clean up the bloodstains, delete the files and disappear before anyone gets wind of what happened. You regularly contract out to megacorps, media stars, musicians, organized crime, corrupt politicians, street fixers… Anyone with the right cred balance and a need knows they can call you and rest easy knowing you'll get the job done.

Possible Contacts: Corp Executive, Fixer, Hacker, Mob Boss, Ronin, Street Doc, Politician, Detective
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Jack of All Trades, Connections (2), Command, Natural leader, Charismatic, Professional, Rich

Corporate Executive

Nicknames: Corporator, Suit
Starting Credits: 25,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 12,500 credits every level up.

As a CEO of a corporation, you oversee the operations of your division. You might be in charge of research and development, public relations, or even security. You live in an arcology or corporate enclave with AAA-rated security and enjoy all the luxuries befitting your station.

While the life you lead is sheltered from the harsh realities of the world, that doesn't mean it isn't without dangers. As you rise in status within the company, you must always be wary of those who would take what you have. One misstep, a single failure to achieve your directives, and you may find yourself cast aside in favor of those who can produce results.

Possible Contacts: Cleaner, Bounty Hunter, Hacker, Fixer, CEO, Ronin, Middle manager, Lawyer, Politician
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Attractive, Noble, Connections (2), Command, Natural leader, Charismatic, Inspire, Fervor, Professional, Rich, Strong Willed, Level Headed, Improved Level Headed, Marksman, Nerves of Steel

Crime Boss

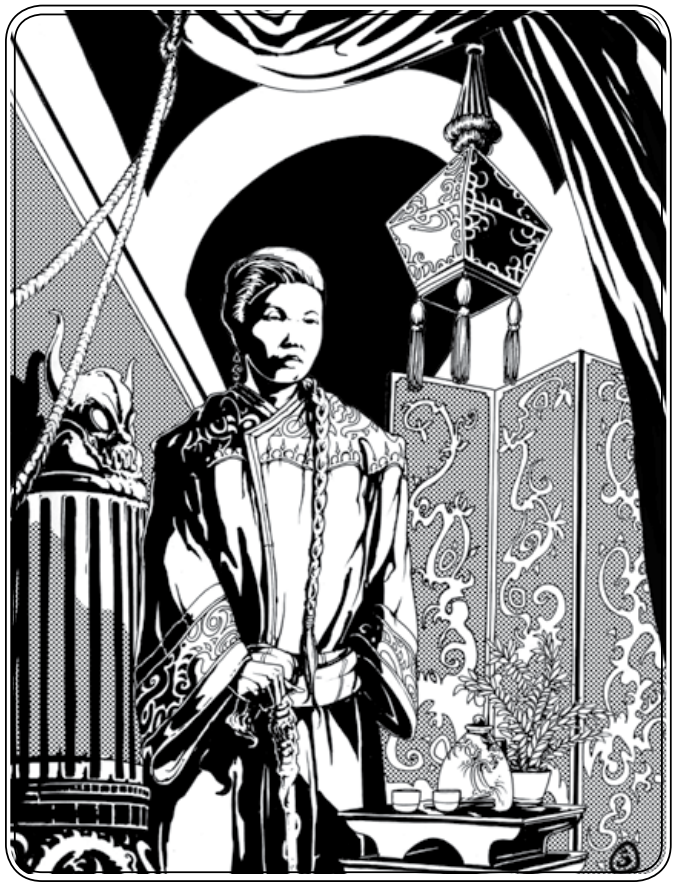
Nicknames: Don, Boss, Capo, Godfather, Mr. Big, Oyabun
Starting Credits: 25,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 12,500 credits every level up.

As the leader of a criminal organization, you wield considerable power over the people who work for you and much of the sprawl. You have influence with politicians, law enforcement, big and small businesses and possibly even the military. Of course, that much power and influence doesn't come cheap, or without dangers. You didn't get where you are without making more than a few enemies. Rival organizations constantly test your ability to maintain control of your operations. Federal agencies monitor your every activity, even going so far as to plant undercover agents in your outfit in an effort to bring you to justice.

Possible Contacts: Bodyguard, Bounty Hunter, Cleaner, Crime Boss, Fixer, Hacker, Dealer, Hit Man, Politician Police Commissioner, Lawyer, Corporate Executive, Media Icon, Journalist, Mob Soldier, Smuggler
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Attractive, Noble, Connections (4), Command, Natural leader, Charismatic, Inspire, Fervor, Professional, Rich, Strong Willed, Level Headed, Improved Level Headed, Marksman, Nerves of Steel

Emergency Room Doctor

Nicknames: Bones, Butcher, Cutter, Doc, Patch Man
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 3,000 credits every level up.



If anyone wants to see just how brutal life can be in the sprawl, all they have to do is take a stroll down to the place you work; the emergency room of an inner city Medi-plex. Gunshot wounds, stabbings, beatings, botched cyberware modifications, you've seen it all at one time or another and—because you're damned good at what you do—fixed it. That's not to say you're perfect, or even that you can do anything with some of the bodies that land on your table. Sometimes you wonder why the ambulance drivers even bothered bringing them to the ER in the first place.

The hours are long and the things you see sometimes make you wish you'd specialized in gene therapy. Now those guys get paid sweet cred and never have to see the horrors you're subjected to on a daily basis. They never get their hands dirty. But hey, they don't save lives, either. As depressing, as frustrating as working in an emergency sometimes room is, as thankless as some people are, at the end of the day you can go home to your scotch and oxycodone knowing that at least some of the people you worked on today will live to see tomorrow.

Possible Contacts: Ambulance Driver, Coroner, Detective, Freelancer, Fixer, Medical Supply Officer, Patrol Cop

Suggested Edges: Alertness, Command, Dodge, Fleet Footed, Healer, Improved Level Headed, Level Headed, Miracle Worker*, Natural Leader, Professional, Street Doc*
*** New Edges:** See the edges section for more information.

Fixer

Nicknames: Acquisition Specialist, Con Artist, Dealer, Face, Fence, Grifter, Mr. Johnson, Contractor, Pimp, Rake, Supplier
Starting Credits: 15,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 7,500 credits every level up.

People got needs. Real alcohol, guns, information, fake passports, jobs, drugs, sex, imported chrome from Chiba—if it has value, you sell it. Let's face it. They're gonna pay their bones to get it, and you might as well be the one they pay. If you don't have it, you know where to get it, and fast. You know people and you know people who know people, a fact you use to great extent. Nevertheless, even though the job pays well and the hours are nice, never forget one thing: The streets aren't forgiving. Keep that in mind if you ever fail to deliver the goods. Your street cred is everything in this biz, Ami. It's the difference between continued business or being cut up and sold to a body chop shop.

Possible Contacts: Ganglander, Agent, Smuggler, Ronin, Hacker, Street Cop, Detective, Politician, Mob Boss, Bodyguard, Gear head, Corporate Executive, Contractor

Suggested Edges: Alertness, Charismatic, Danger Sense, Connections (3), Luck, Professional, Rich

Ganglander

Nicknames: Banger, Biker Boy, Ganger, Thug, Thrill killer
Starting Credits: 2,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 1,000 credits every level up.

The streets ain't no place for loners. You gotta to hang together or you surely will hang apart. Unlike your fellow sprawlers, you don't hide in the flock like sheep in a crowded field hoping that the wolves take your neighbor. Instead, you are the wolves, and you protect what's yours with the help of your pack.

Possible Contacts: Plain Clothes Cop, Rival Gang Banger, Gear Head, Gutter Punk, Fixer, Mob Soldier, Bartender, Ronin, Street Doc
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Brawny, Quick, Block, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Dodge, Fleet-footed, Hard to Kill, Harder to Kill, Expert fighter*, Nerves of Steel, Rock and Roll!, Pack Fighting*, Command, Natural Leader, Fervor, Thief, Common Bond, Strong Willed, McGyver
*** New Edges:** See the edges section for more information.

Gear Head

Nicknames: Drone Jockey, Grease Monkey, Rigger, Smuggler, Street Technician, Wheel Man
Starting Credits: 5,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 2,500 credits every level up.

You got '50-weight motor oil running through your veins and a primal need to go fast. While the local script kiddies were playin' Blood Throne Online, you were hangin' around the local auto body shop doing tune-ups and tweaking vertical stabilizers on hovercraft. You built your first drone when you were fourteen and boosted your first go-bike not long after. You live for the chase, the thrill of a smuggling run. Most brainers use their TAPs to hack corporate systems and Hyper Objects. You use yours to become one with the machines you drive and control your drones as if you were inside them.

Possible Contacts: Fixer, Ronin, Pizza Delivery Driver, Chauffeur, Security Officer, Hacker, Junkyard Owner, Taxi Cab Driver, Jump Jacker, LAV Pilot, Jump Biker Racer
Suggested Edges: Ace, McGyver, Ambidextrous, Alertness, Rock and Roll!, Steady Hands, Two Fisted

Jump Bike Racer

Nicknames: Speed Freak, Jumper
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 5,000 credits every level up.

The jump bike racing circuit's always changing, but that's what makes the gig so sweet. One night you're screaming through the relative safety of The Loop, hopping blue platers in their tin cans and corp. execs in fancy limos. The next, you're dodging bullets and rocket fire as you wind your way through urban battle zones or grinding it out in wasteland rally courses where mutant gangs, cannibals, and biohorrors abound.

Jump bike racing keeps you on your toes omae, hones that razor edge you need to have when your fixer calls you for a hot run. But best of all, you get paid to race. What could be better?

Possible Contacts: Fixer, Ronin, LAV Pilot, Jump Biker Racer, PR Consultant, Smuggler
Suggested Edges: Ace, Alertness, Rock and Roll!, Steady Hands, Two Fisted

Media Icon

Nicknames: Bollywood Babe, Ken Doll, REALfeed Star, Hyper Star, Sim Star, 15-minute Flavor
Starting Credits: 20,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 10,000 credits every level up.

Yomei, that's what they call you baby; famous. But sometimes fame sucks. Sure, you got a slick crib, credits falling out your stump, brown-nosing people stumbling all over themselves to get you whatever you want and need, but you can't go anywhere without someone crowding in on your personal space. Paparazzi hound you incessantly, looking for that sweet holo pic or sound bite they can sell to the tabloids that stream that crap across the world. They should all die in a fire… But at least their lives have some action, even if you are the source.

Sometimes you wish you could just disappear into the shadows; do something important, something exciting and meaningful, like take on a corp.; you know, change the world! Maybe that's why, every chance you get, you hit the nearest shadow spot. Oh sure, you get your personal gene-doctor to splice you a DNA cocktail that temporarily alters your appearance first. Just a few quick, though expensive, injections (Hey, ya gotta spend that cred on something, right?) and you're anyone you want to be or better yet, nobody they expect you to be. The mods are temps, of course. You still have an image to maintain. But for a night, maybe two, you can rest easy knowing your cover's intact.

Possible Contacts: Agent, Producer, Groupie, Bodyguard, Gene Splicer, Fixer, Corporate Executive
Suggested Edges: Alternate Identity*, Attractive, Very Attractive, Rich, Command, Inspire, Jack-Of-All-Trades, Charismatic, Connections (3), Sidekick
***New Edge:** See the edges section for more information.

Mob Soldier

Nicknames: Soldier, Mook, Bruiser, Family man, Hitter, Monkey, Muscle, Tough guy, Wise guy
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 5,000 credits every level up.

You're a soldier, 100% loyal to the family. When the boss needs something done, you're the person he calls. Sure, it's a dirty job, You gotta break some legs every now and again, force that noodle vendor to pay his protection fee, collect on debts, even waste some people. But hey, they knew the risks! Nobody twisted their arms…Well ok, maybe someone did, but that's not your concern. You got a job to do. It's better than slingin hot dogs on the streets, better than sitting in some cubicle for eight hours slaving away for some corporate fat cat.

Possible Contacts: Cleaner, Gear Head, Mafia Don (or relevant crime boss), Police Commissioner, Fixer, Smuggler, Hacker, Bartender, Hit Man, Sector Police, Gang Leader, Ronin
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Brawny Frenzy, Gun Fu Disciple*, Gun Fu Master*, Block, Combat reflexes, Connections (2) Dodge, Frenzy, Two Fisted, Rock and Roll!, Hard to Kill, Nerves of Steel, No Mercy,
***New Edges:** See the edges section for more information.

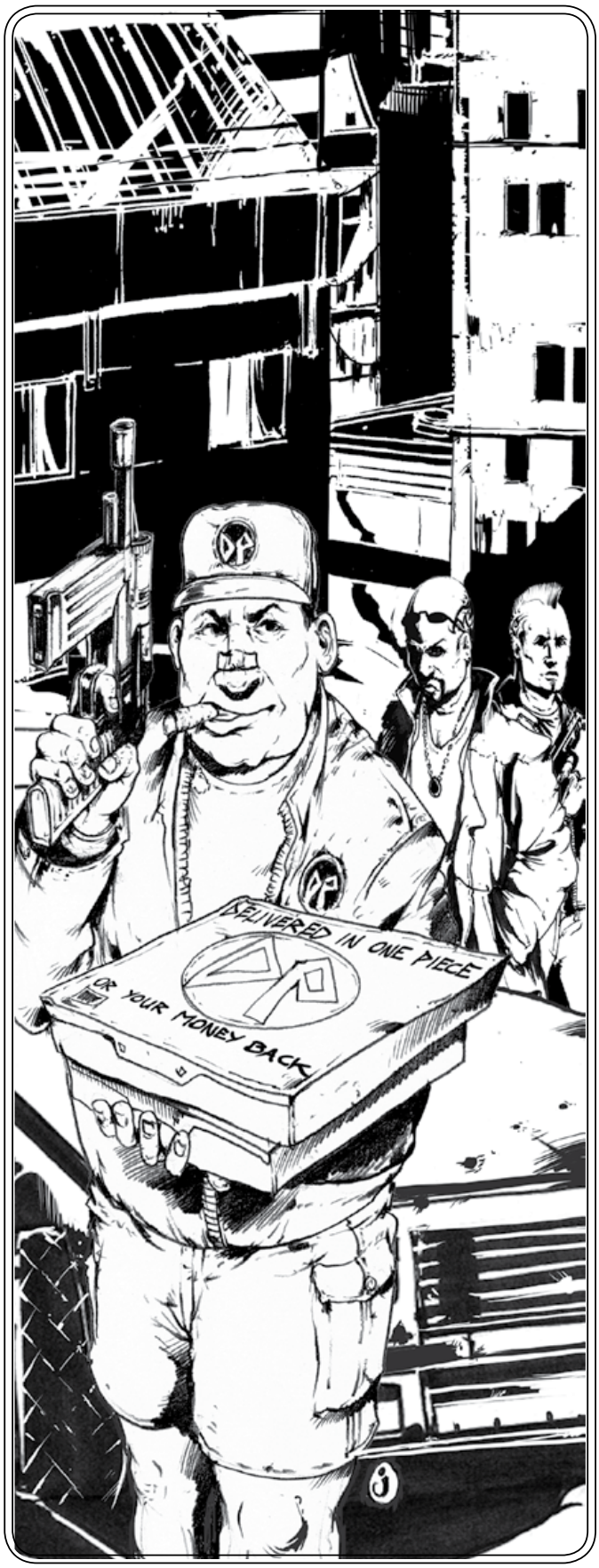
Pizza Delivery Driver

Nicknames: Box Runner, Delivery Specialist, God, Pizza man(!)
Starting Credits: 5,000 credits (Plus 1D6 × 100 credits in tips)
Bonus Credits: 1,000 credits + 1D4 × 100 credits in tips every level up.

"Thirty minutes or less, or it's free." That's the law you drive by baby, your golden rule, your one reason for living. Fail to get that steaming sausage, pepperoni, and mushrooms with extra soy cheese into the customer's pink, pudgy hands in less than thirty minutes and it's your ass, Ami. Boss man don't like handing out freebies. It cuts into costs, lowers the profit margins, drives customers away (no pun intended). And let's face it Yo; Pizza's big biz in the sprawl. The competition for the customer's digital dollar is ruthless, deadly, even. It seems like every night you hear about some n00b driver getting greased by outriders; hitters paid by rival corps to make sure the almighty pie fails to reach its destination on time, or better yet; never. But you can take it. Hell you do more than take it.

You live for it.

No drug's better than the rush of a high-threat delivery, neh? You cut your teeth on the dreaded Ronald Reagan Expressway at 150 screaming miles an hour, fending off cracker jack outriders armed with rpgs and cyclone harpoons trying to keep you from completing your drops. You've fought your way through South Side block



wars, dodged burned out vehicles and derezzed ghost hackers trying to jump jack your ride. And hell, that's just on a slow night!

Possible Contacts: Mechanic, Police Dispatcher, Corp Enclave Security Guard, Drone Jockey, Fixer, Ganglander (choose a specific gang).
Suggested Edges: Ace, Alertness, Improved Level Headed, Level Headed, Professional, Quick, Side Kick, Steady Hands

Plain Clothes Cop

Nicknames: Narc, Rat, Mole, Leak
Starting Credits: 5,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 2,500 credits every level up.

The streets are a tough place, filled with all manner of filth that prey on decent citizens who just wanna live their lives in peace. Organized crime is worse than ever. Gangland violence is on the rise. Regular sector police and security firms can only do so much. To get the big fish, law enforcement agencies need a special lure, a man on the inside; someone like you. Sure, the pay sucks, and let's face it; you don't ever know who you can trust, don't ever know if the people you're trying to bring down have figured you out. But in some sick, twisted way, you thrive on that kind of pressure. It keeps you sharp, and you need that edge if you're gonna take the bad guys off the streets Ami. Its paranoia, 24/7/365, but the paranoia is like pain; it lets you know you're still alive.

Possible Contacts: Handler, Street Snitch, Fixer, Gutter Punk, Mob Boss, Mob Soldier, Bartender, Call Girl
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Luck, Great Luck, Quick, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Hard to Kill, Harder to Kill, Level Headed, Improved Level Headed, Quick Draw, Investigator, Charismatic, Connections (4), Strong Willed, Danger Sense

Pirate Blogger

Nicknames: The Nose, News Hound, Snoop, Gossip Gal, Meme Slinger, Truth Doctor
Starting Credits: 5,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 2,500 credits every level up.

People have a right to know the truth, and you like to think that's what they get when they stream your underground media feed. Of course, sometimes it's not enough to just upload the latest dirt on a megacorp to your relatively miniscule domain and hope the word spreads. Sometimes the pay data is so important

you gotta jack the major media streams, cut into the regularly scheduled mind programming, drop the wisdom worldwide and hope someone pays attention.

Possible Contacts: Freelance Reporter, Anarchist Hacker, Media Consultant, Private Detective, Gutterpunk, Gang Banger, Info Pirate, Corporate Snitch, Ronin, Street Cop
Suggested Edges: Alternate Identity*, Luck, Great Luck, Attractive, Very Attractive, Command, Inspire, Investigator, Scholar, Charismatic, Connections (5), Strong Willed, Danger Sense, Sidekick
***New Edge:** See the edges section for more information.

Private Investigator

Nicknames: Dick Tracy, Gumshoe, Private Eye, P.I., Pinkerton, Sherlock
Starting Credits: 5,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 2,500 credits every level up.

As a private investigator, you get to see all the nasty, grimy crap the sprawl has to offer, and the pay is equally crappy. Usually it's pretty stock work; divorce cases, skip traces, missing persons, Identity theft, background checks, etc. But every now and again, you'll catch a murder; nothing-high profile of course, otherwise sector police or some POLcorp. like Ravenlocke Securities would be all over it. But sometimes, those low profile cases can get really ugly, Ami. They fall into your lap because someone wants to keep them as quiet as possible, which usually means a megacorp's involved, and THAT means the gig's not always as simple as just finding the bad guy and riding off into the sunset. It'll take every bit of experience and skill you have to weave your way through the myriad dangers that come with an investigation into a corp-linked murder and live through it. But hey, that's part and parcel of the job chum. It beats slimy divorce cases any day of the week.

Possible Contacts: Bartender, Corporate Wage Slave, Blue Plater, Gang Banger, Fixer, Detective, Pirate Blogger, Programmer, Hacker, Sector Cop, Ronin
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Luck, Great Luck, Quick, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Hard to Kill, Harder to Kill, Level Headed, Improved Level Headed, Quick Draw, Investigator, Charismatic, Connections (3), Strong Willed, Danger Sense

Programmer

Nicknames: Brainer, hacker, ICEman, Script Kiddie
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 5,000 credits every level up.

Some brainers live for the times they can slide into a corporate system on a hot run. You're the same way, to a certain extent. You get your real buzz writing sweet code, cutter programs slick enough to crack any firewall out there, attack programs that ROFLstomp virtual entities and wannabe hackers. Your work's in demand, too, so much so that you don't have to take a 9–5 gig at the local Malmart just to get by, though occasionally you'll do consultant work for a megacorp, test their domain security (and maybe leave a back door into their system in the process) and suggest ways they might plug the holes. Your friends bust your balls about all the time you spend in The Deep, but that's okay Ami. Few people actually love what they do, and you're one of them.

Possible Contacts: Hacker, Fixer, Ronin, Corp Hacker, Gear Head, Pirate Blogger
Suggested Edges: Alternate Identity*, Scholar, Hacker*, Professional, Expert, Master, Expert Hacker
***New Edge:** See the edges section for more information.

Sanitation Worker

Nicknames: Garbage man, Sewer rat
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 5,000 credits every level up.

The job stinks, and most of the time, so do you. Believe it or not, handling sanitation for a major city man is important omae. Somebody's gotta clean up the crap on the streets and maintain the sewer systems, otherwise the sprawl would shut down. The union makes sure you get good pay and good benefits (as long as your human, those android scabs can go eff themselves for all you care). Every now and then though, you come across things you don't want to see, like dead bodies. That's never fun—too much paper work.

Possible Contacts: Bouncer, Ganglander, Gutterpunk, Fixer, Gear Head, Hacker, Mob soldier, Trideo Reporter, Sector Cop, Squatter
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Brawny, Steady Hands, Connections (2), Danger Sense, Strong Willed

Smuggler

Nicknames: Panzer Jockey, Runner, Coyote, Moving man
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 5,000 credits every level up.

You make your living as a smuggler, moving cargo across national borders all over the world. You've flown the Mississippi Ghost Run, skirted the Texas/ Mexico border as a coyote, dodged NAC patrols and SAM (Surface to Air Missile) nests on the Appalachian Trail, even ran the deadly Ivory Curtain in Central Africa once or twice. Your cargo varies from gig to gig. One day you might be running guns, the next, smuggling rogue simulacrum into the Free City of Chicago. It takes nerves of steel to run a military checkpoint, ami, but you got the skill, connections, and cajones to get the job done.

Possible Contacts: Border Patrol Guard, Fixer, Gear Head, Hacker, Mercenary, Ronin, Smuggler, Sector Cop
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Luck, Great Luck, Quick, Dodge, Improved Dodge, Steady Hands, Ace, Charismatic, Connections (3), Alternate Identity*, Danger Sense, Strong Willed
***New Edge:** See the edges section for more information.

Trideo Reporter

Nicknames: Face Man, Investigative Reporter, Mr./Ms. Media, News Hound, Spin Doctor
Starting Credits: 10,000 credits
Bonus Credits: 5,000 credits every level up.

There's a news-worthy story happening every minute, and you're the guy they send out into the mean streets to get it. The pay's decent. Too bad you have to spend so much of it on guns and ballistic armor.

Possible Contacts: Corporator, Fixer, Ganglander, Gutterpunk, Hacker, Info Pirate, Anarchist Hacker, Politician, Sector Cop
Suggested Edges: Alertness, Luck, Great Luck, Quick, Dodge, Improved Dodge, Steady Hands, Charismatic, Connections, Danger Sense, Strong Willed

Step 4: Edges and Hindrances

Now decide what flaws and abilities set your character apart from others. If you choose to take any Hindrances, you may use the points from them to gain one of the benefits below. You may take up to one Major Hindrance (worth 2 points) and up to two Minor Hindrances (worth 1 point each).

For 1 Hindrance point you can:

- Gain another skill point.
- Gain an additional 10,000 credits in starting funds.

For 2 Hindrance points you can:

- Raise an attribute one die type.
- Choose an Edge.
- Gain an additional 20,000 credits in starting funds.

Once you've chosen your Hindrances, it's time to select your edges. Human characters get one free edge in addition to any extra edges a character may have earned by accepting Hindrances. The majority of the edges and hindrances in the SWEX rules are fine for use in the gritty world of 2088. Others have been altered, or disallowed altogether.

New Edges

Alternate Identity

Requirements: Novice
You have another identity you are known by, airtight with background, job history, computer records, official documentations, etc. This lets you operate under an alias that cannot easily be

traced back to you, since everything checks out for all but the most persistent snoop. An example of one possible application of this Edge is the "secret identity," that of a mysterious, anonymous operator working in the shadows to advance some unknown agenda—the billionaire philanthropist by day, masked vigilante by night thing. When Game Masters make an Investigation or Streetwise roll to find information about a character with this edge (such as Investigate rolls to perform criminal background checks or Streetwise rolls to locate the character), apply a –2 penalty to the roll. This Edge may be taken multiple times, each time the edge is taken the character gains a new identity.

EMANCIPATED

Requirements: Novice Android, Hybrid, or Simulacrum

You are an artificial creation granted official recognition as a sentient being. This status generally comes with a citizenship and all of the rights afforded humans within the region that awarded the recognition, at least on paper. You suffer just –1 Charisma when dealing with non-androids if you're an android, or when performing actions outside of your designed role or parameters if you're a simulacrum. You may not take the Outsider hindrance if you have this edge.

GOLEMMECH TRAINING

Requirements: Novice

With extensive training, you can operate any power armor and its associated systems without a –2 penalty to all physical skill rolls due to the suit's bulkiness.

MIRACLE WORKER

Requirements: Seasoned, Smarts D10, Healing D10, Street Doc Professional Edge

People don't die on your watch. You won't let them. Call it strength of will, exceptional skill or just plain stubbornness, but you have a knack for resuscitating the dead. You can revive a person who has died by making a healing skill roll at a –1 penalty for every round they have been dead, or if the group isn't in combat, a –2 penalty for every minute that has passed since the character died (max 5 minutes). Characters that are revived are in need of being stabilized (as per SWEX rules) and must make the appropriate Vigor rolls or slip back into death's embrace. Raises on the Healing roll do not remove any additional wound levels, but instead stabilize the dying person!

MODIFICATION UPGRADE

Requirements: Novice

Through influence, sponsors, favors, shrewd savings, hard-core scrounging, stealing, cheating, or just plain begging, you gain up to 25,000 credits in equivalent of system components (in an android), or bio/cyber modifications. You do not have to spend it all at once and just note what you have left unspent, but you cannot spend it on anything other than the types of gear specified. You can always cover the deficit in any purchase with credits you gain from your character's occupation or later on when you get paid for jobs you do. This edge may only be taken once, and only during character creation.

COMBAT EDGES

EXPERT FIGHTER

Requirements: Novice, Fighting D6+

You have studied and practiced boxing, street fighting, or some form of martial arts. You are not considered an Unarmed Defender when engaged in melee with armed opponents. Your unarmed damage also increases to Str+D4.

PACK FIGHTING

Requirements: Seasoned, Fighting D8+

You have a natural talent for turning overwhelming force into overwhelming damage. You gain a bonus to your damage equal to half your gang up bonus to Fighting, rounded up.

IMPROVED PACK FIGHTING

Requirements: Heroic, Fighting D10+

Your ability to capitalize on greater numbers has become astounding. Your damage bonus from Pack Fighting is equal to your gang up bonus (not halved).

GUN-FU DISCIPLE

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility D8+, Shooting D8+

You are on the path of Gun-fu, known by some as "the way of the gun." In most people's hand, a gun is merely a clumsy weapon. In yours, it is an extension of your body, the focus of your art form. When using gun in close combat, you are not considered Unarmed. You can move up to half your Pace in the same round you make an aimed shot (including aimed shot from Marksman Edge). Aiming still takes a full round, however.

GUN-FU MASTER
Requirements: Heroic, Agility D10+, Shooting D10+, Gun-Fu Disciple
Your mastery of Gun-Fu has advanced to such a degree that you can negate 1 point of modifiers on the next Shooting attack when using Aim maneuver. As with Gun-Fu Disciple, You can move up to half Pace in the same round you make an aimed shot (including aimed shot from Marksman Edge).

GUN-FU LEGEND
Requirements: Legendary, Gun-Fu Master
You are one with the gun. You can now move at full Pace even when using Aim or Marksman and you also can negate 2 points of modifiers on the next Shooting attack when using Aim maneuver, instead of 1.

HACKING EDGES
ADVANCED PROGRAMMING
Requirements: Veteran, Hacker Professional Edge, Programming 101, Knowledge (Programming) D10
Your knowledge of IDSMACK has advanced to a level where you have a greater understanding of the underlying theory behind the creation of programs. You are able to code subroutines into your programs. Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus to programming rolls when creating basic programs.

EXPERT HACKER
Requirements: Veteran, Hacker Professional Edge, Hacking D12
Your knowledge of The Deep and its intricacies have progressed to a new level. You gain a +2 to Hacking skill rolls (Instead of +1)

PROGRAMMING 101
Requirements: Novice, Hacking D6+, Knowledge (Programming) D8+
You are versed in IDSMACK, the programming language of The Deep. You can create attack programs, system utilities, alarm programs, armor programs, masking programs and cutter programs.

EXTENDED VIRTUAL REACH
Requirements: Seasoned, Hacker Professional Edge, Hacking D10+
You can manipulate Hyper Objects up to 12 yards away, or 6″ on the game table.

MASTERFUL VIRTUAL REACH
Requirements: Veteran, Hacker Professional Edge, Hacking D12+
You can manipulate Hyper objects up to 18 yards away, or 9‴ on the game table.

VIRTUAL REACH
Requirements: Novice, Hacker Professional Edge, Hacking D8+
You can manipulate Hyper Objects up to 6 yards away, or 3‴ on the game table.

PROFESSIONAL EDGES
AGENT
Requirements: Novice, Smarts D6+, Intimidation D6+, Investigation D8+, Notice D6+, Persuasion D6+
Without government (specifically your government), the world would fall into chaos. A patriot to the end, you have dedicated your life to ensuring that does not happen. You go where your superiors tell you, doing what is needed to protect the interests of your country, both at home and abroad. This might (and often does) mean resorting to questionable methods in order to complete your mission, but in the end it's worth it. All that matters is the continued safety of your fellow citizens. As an instrument to impose your superiors' will, you may add Charisma bonus to Intimidation rolls. Also, because you have the backing of a government or powerful organization like Stopwatch, you are able to requisition 15,000 credits worth of gear per rank to help you complete your mission. So a Seasoned character can obtain 30,000 credits worth of gear, a Veteran 45,000 credits, a heroic character 60,000 credits, and a Legendary character can get up to 75,000 credits worth of gear. This equipment must be returned at the end of the mission. Cyberware and bioware are not included.

HACKER
Requirements: Novice, Smarts D8+, Hacking D8+, Knowledge (The Deep) D6+, Knowledge (Programming) D6+
You do more than just interact with the Mediaweb. You are its master. Able to rewrite virtual reality to suit your purposes,

you can also affect the real world indirectly by hacking communications equipment, remote devices and even robots; indeed, anything with a Hyper Object is prey to your skills. You gain a +1 bonus to Hacking rolls in Virtual and Hyper Combat. Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus to Investigation and Streetwise rolls when doing research on a domain prior to hacking it.

MARTIAL ADEPT

Requirements: Novice, Expert Fighter, Agility D8+, Knowledge (Martial Arts) D6+, Fighting D10+

Whether a sword sage, or a kung fu master, you make deadly combat look like a beautifully choreographed dance—a true art in its own right. Whatever your choice of weapons, they flash like a Renaissance master's brush, laying low all the enemies in your path with strength, speed, and finesse. You underwent rigorous training to become a finely honed, nearly supernatural fighter. A character with this Edge can Withdraw from Combat without giving any adjacent opponents a free attack. Additionally, you are such a finely honed fighting machine that any gang up bonuses combatants would normally gain are reduced by half, to a minimum of +1.

MERCENARY

Requirements: Novice, Vigor 6+, Fighting D6+, Shooting D6+

Yes sir, sir! You served in a regimented military outfit. It might have been a corporate paramilitary unit, government controlled army, imbedded guerilla force, or freelance mercenary unit. The nature of your background probably colors your attitudes toward things like money, patriotism, and honor. You gain a +1 bonus to your Toughness. You also add weapons, armor, and/or bio/cyber modifications totaling 5,000 credits in value to your possessions.

STREET DOC

Requirements: Novice, Smarts D8+, Healing D6+, Knowledge (Medicine) D6+

As a street doctor, you perform a valuable service. You make basic health care available to those who otherwise might not be able to get treatment. Of course, performing this service means you have to operate outside the law, outside the restrictions imposed on licensed medical practitioners. Your office is wherever you can find space to treat people, usually in the back rooms or basements of various places like a restaurant, or a pawnshop. Operating in this fashion isn't without its drawbacks.

You have to make do with whatever supplies you have on-hand, which usually isn't much and certainly doesn't come close to the resources of a licensed medical facility. But you've adapted and in many cases you manage to overcome these disadvantages. You ignore penalties to Healing rolls when operating without the necessary equipment. Additionally, the character with this Edge can get wounded punks up and fighting again in seconds. If the healer can get to a wounded non-Wild Card by the end of the round in which he was wounded, he can make an immediate Healing roll at –2. If the roll is successful, the patient is Shaken instead of wounded.

WASTELANDER

Requirements: Novice, Vigor D8+, Notice D6+, Survival D8+, Tracking D6+

Life amid the toxic wastes, deserts, and city ruins—places where you're lucky to find a hotspot and civilization might be days away is only for the heartiest souls—people like you. Like many wastelanders, you might be running away from something in your past or a scavenger rummaging through the ruins of coastal cities now sunk beneath the rising ocean tides. You gain +2 to Survival skill tests in hostile environments, and +2 to Fatigue rolls from hazards. You also add two choices of gear or weapons of up to 1,000 credits in market value each to your possessions.

WEIRD EDGES

CYBER TOLERANCE

Requirements: Novice, Spirit or Vigor D6+

You are more resistant to the intrusion of bio/cyberware on your body than the average person. You add +1 to your Cybertrauma rolls (See the cyberware section in Chapter 2: Systems of Control for more information on cybertrauma). This Edge may be taken once per advancement, each time gaining another +1 to Cybertrauma rolls.

HINDRANCES

GLITCHED (MINOR OR MAJOR)

Cyberware is much more prone to fail in you than in others. A Minor Glitched hindrance means you make cybertrauma rolls at an additional –1 penalty, or a –2 penalty if it's Major.

SHELL SHOCK (MAJOR)

The character has a tendency to freeze up in combat. She begins the first round of combat Shaken. This condition can be removed normally.

UNPLUGGED (MAJOR)

You begin play without a TAP installed in your body. You do not gain the hacking skill like other characters and are unable to see or interact with hyper reality or virtual reality. You may purchase a TAP when you obtain enough credits to do so, however. Once you have installed a TAP, you may also spend skill points in Hacking, should you wish to do so.

Step 5: Purchase Gear

Each character starts with a change of clothing, a basic TAP (Unless they choose the Unplugged Hindrance) and number of credits allotted by their professional edge they can choose to buy gear or cyberware.

Step 6: Play 20 Questions

In order to get a grasp on your character, and therefore be able to play it better, it is helpful to sort out the background. A person's early life experiences shape who she is, so it is useful to take the time to examine the hero's life up to the beginning of the series. Sit down with your Game Master and discuss your character's background in private. Both you and the Game Master should take notes. It is usually best to let the Game Master guide you through the questions while you concentrate on answering them the way the hero would. This allows the Game Master to ask more specific questions relevant to the series they are planning, offering suggestions to better integrate the hero into the setting. Use some of the following questions as whole cloth or as starting points for your own questions. Remember, just because we call it 20 Questions that does not mean you have to stick to 20, or even what is presented below for that matter.

What's your Core Concept?

Who are you within the world of the game? What's your name? What's your nickname? Are you an intimidating tough guy, savvy street technician, outdated Combat Android, or smooth-talking rake?

What's your physical Appearance?

What do you look like? How old are you? How old do you look? What is your height? Weight? Hair color (if any)? Eye color? Gender (if any)? Are you attractive, plain, or homely? What's your fashion sense like? What's your hairstyle like? Do you have any scars, tattoos, piercings, or animal-like hybrid qualities? Do you have any obvious cybernetic, biological, or purely cosmetic upgrades or replacements? If so, why?

Where do you come from?

Were you born, built, or vat grown? Do you have parents? Siblings? If so, what are they like? What were your formative years like? What was your home like? Do you come from wealth, the mean streets, the wastelands, or the 'burbs? Where did you spend your youth? Who raised you? What were you like as a child?

What's your educational background like?

What sort do education do you have? Are you literate? Did you go to a school, or were you taught at home? Did you have an AI tutor? Did you go to school at all? Were you programmed in a lab? Did you attend religious services? Have you received any specialized training? Ever serve in the military?

What's your reality look like?

Are you connected to the Mediaweb? What channels do you frequent? Do you use MyFace? What does your avatar look like? Do you have any aspects? What do they look like? What's your online handle? Do you wear any special filters that alter your view of reality?

What's your current lifestyle like?

What do you do for a living? Do you work? Do you date? Where do you live? Who are your friends? What are they like? Do you have any addictions? Hobbies? What's your five-year plan? What do you want out of life?

Table 3:1 Edges

EDGE	REQUIREMENTS	BENEFIT
GENERAL EDGES		
ALTERNATE IDENTITY	Novice	–2 penalty to investigation rolls to uncover information about the character.
EMANCIPATED	Novice Android, Hybrid or Simulacrum	See description
GOLEMMECH TRAINING	Novice	Pilot mecha and power armor without –2 penalty to physical skill rolls
MIRACLE WORKER	Seasoned, Smarts D10, Healing D10+, Street Doc Professional Edge	Revive a person who has died. (See description)
MODIFICATION UPGRADE	Novice	Gain 25,000 starting credits.
COMBAT EDGES		
EXPERT FIGHTER	Novice, Fighting D6+	Not considered an Unarmed Defender when engaged in melee with armed opponents. Unarmed damage increases to Str+D4.
PACK FIGHTING	Seasoned, Fighting D8+	Gain a bonus to your damage equal to half your gang up bonus to Fighting, rounded up.
IMPROVED PACK FIGHTING	Heroic, Fighting D10+	Damage bonus form Pack Fighting is now equal to gang up bonus.
GUN-FU DISCIPLE	Seasoned, Agility D8+, Shooting D8+	You can move up to half Pace in the same round you make an aimed shot (including aimed shot from Marksman Edge).
GUN-FU MASTER	Heroic, Agility D10+, Shooting D10+, Gun-Fu Disciple	Negate 1 point of modifiers on the next Shooting attack when using Aim maneuver
GUN-FU LEGEND	Legendary, Gun-Fu Master	You can move at full Pace even when using Aim or Marksman and negate 2 points of modifiers on the next Shooting attack when using Aim maneuver.
HACKING EDGES		
ADVANCED PROGRAMMING	Veteran, Hacker Professional Edge, Programming 101, Knowledge (Programming) D10	You are able to code subroutines into your programs. Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus to programming rolls when creating basic programs
EXPERT HACKER	Veteran, Hacker Professional Edge, Hacking D12	You gain a +2 to Hacking skill rolls instead of +1.
PROGRAMMING 101	Novice, Hacking D6+, Knowledge (Programming) D8+	You can create attack programs, system utilities, alarm programs, armor programs, masking programs and cutter programs.
EXTENDED VIRTUAL REACH	Seasoned, Hacker Professional Edge, Hacking D10+	You can manipulate Hyper Objects up to 12 yards away, or 6" on the game table.
MASTERFUL VIRTUAL REACH	Veteran, Hacker Professional Edge, Hacking D12+	You can manipulate Hyper objects up to 18 yards away, or 9" on the game table.
VIRTUAL REACH	Novice, Hacker Professional Edge, Hacking D+8	You can manipulate Hyper Objects up to 6 yards away, or 3" on the game table.

Table 3:1 Edges Cont.

PROFESSIONAL EDGES		
AGENT	Novice, Smarts D6+, Intimidation D6+, Investigation D8+, Notice D6+, Persuasion D6+	You may add Charisma bonus to Intimidation rolls and requisition a monetary amount of equipment based on your rank. (See description).
HACKER	Novice, Smarts D8+, Hacking D8+, Knowledge (The Deep) D6+, Knowledge (Programming) D6+	You gain a +1 bonus to Hacking rolls in Virtual and Hyper Combat and gain a +2 bonus to Investigation and Streetwise rolls when doing research on a domain prior to hacking it.
MARTIAL ADEPT	Novice, Expert Fighter, Agility D8+, Knowledge (Martial Arts) D6+, Fighting D10+	You can Withdraw from Combat without giving any adjacent opponents a free attack. Additionally, you are such a finely honed fighting machine that any gang up bonuses combatants would normally gain are reduced by half, to a minimum of +1.
MERCENARY	Novice, Vigor 6+, Fighting D6+, Shooting D6+	You gain a +1 bonus to your Toughness. You also add weapons, armor, and/or bio/cyber modifications totaling 5,000 credits in value to your possessions.
STREET DOC	Novice, Smarts D8+, Healing D6+, Knowledge (Medicine) D6+	You ignore penalties to Healing rolls when operating without the necessary equipment. Additionally, If the healer can get to a wounded non-Wild Card by the end of the round in which he was wounded, he can make an immediate Healing roll at −2. If the roll is successful, the patient is Shaken instead of wounded.
WASTELANDER	Novice, Vigor D8+, Notice D6+, Survival D8+, Tracking D6+	You gain +2 to Survival skill tests in hostile environments, and +2 to Fatigue rolls from hazards. You also add two choices of gear or weapons of up to 1,000 credits in market value each to your possessions.
WIERD EDGES		
CYBER TOLERANCE	Novice, Spirit or Vigor D6+	You add +1 to your Cybertrauma rolls. You can take this edge once per rank.

"Tank: So what do you need? Besides a miracle."
"Neo: Guns. Lots of guns."
– The Matrix

CHAPTER FOUR: GEAR

"There's nothing like the feel of a gyroc pistol in your hands man, nothing like knowing that you have thirteen tiny little rockets ready to bring a world of hurt down on anyone who tries to ghost you and your crew. It's a life insurance policy. Hell, sometimes all ya gotta do is let people see it and they turn tail and run. Plus, the gun looks freaking cool."
– Billy Black Eyes

It's not enough to have cutting edge cyberware, and in this day and age Yo, Ya gotta back it up with the latest tech if you wanna survive.

Of course, it's not just about survivability; it's how you carry yourself. It's about style and professionalism. You might have a sweet mini gun, but if the job requires stealth, that bad boy's a liability. Moreover, bringin' the wrong gear to the job it says something about you, that you don't know what the hell you're doin' tomo. So do yourself a favor and come correct if you want a contractor to hire you. This chapter is all about the gear you need to get the job done right and the toys you need to stay chill.

MALMART SPRING 2088 CATALOGUE

We got everything from the latest armor and weapons, to the hottest downloads and avatars for your TAP. Wanna get the scan on the latest trends in gene therapy, music, MMORPG's and gangland fashion? Malmart's got you covered. Need to renew your subscription on your Blood Throne Online account? No worries amigo. Take a second and set your TAPprefs to capture this cata-stream and enjoy!

ARMOR

Malmart industries is pleased to offer you the best in protective clothing and body armor from a wide range of manufacturers such as Kalvin Kream, Lucianni Fashions, Urban Punk and of course, the leader in corporate protection clothing; Hostile Merger! All items are available at any of our local outlets or for online ordering (shipping costs apply).

Sub-Dermal Armor and Stacking Bonuses

Armor bonuses gained from sub-dermal armor stack with bonuses gained from a single piece of worn armor, such as a ballistic jacket or form-fitting body armor. If the character with dermal armor has two piece of armored clothing on (like an armored trench coat and form fitting body armor) she only gains the bonus for the piece of armored clothing with the highest armor rating.

So a person with level 1 subdermal armor (+2 bonus to armor) who is wearing an urban punk combat jacket (+4 armor bonus) over form fitting tactical body armor (+3/+5 armor bonus) only gains the benefit of the tactical body armor and the dermal armor, for a +3/+7 armor bonus.

HOSTILE MERGER

"Setting the trends in corporate protection clothing for over 50 years."

For over thirty years, Hostile Merger has brought you the best in corporate protection clothing. At Hostile Merger, we understand the need to balance style with personal defense. Our spring line continues this commitment to merging style with safety. This year we are pleased to present our "Executive Decision" line of ballistic business suits!

Executive Decision Business Suit

Plan your next corporate takeover in style and comfort without sacrificing protection from armor piercing rounds! The Executive Decision line of armored suits provide comfortable, stylish protection you can depend on! Our custom tailored suits will stop a .50 caliber round, blunt those pesky knife attacks and most importantly, won't make you stand out in the boardroom. As a bonus, the suit is designed to hold and conceal a small pistol or knife in the sleeve, so you can quickly respond to an

attacker and still maintain that all important corporate image. At Hostile Merger, we bring the "power" to power suits.

The first time a person makes use of the concealed weapon during an encounter, she can make a Stealth roll before its first attack to gain a +2 to Shooting or Fighting roll against the target for the attack. The suit grants a +3 armor bonus vs. ballistic rounds, but only +2 armor vs. knives and swords.

- Power tie optional
- Comes in a variety of styles
- **Cost:** 2,000 credits.

Executive Decision Tactical Armor

Need to deal with an assault on your arcology? Then you need the Executive Decision Tactical Armor suits. These sleek, light-weight designs provide maximum protection without sacrificing speed and mobility. The suit has a +5 armor bonus.

- Form-fitting!
- Light weight!
- **Cost:** 4,000 credits

Executive Decision Combat Vest

Who says personal security guards need to look like storm troopers? Our Executive Decision combat vest is a lightweight nanoweave-padded material that enables greater flexibility and movement than its design might otherwise suggest. The vest fits comfortably under business suits, so your security entourage don't draw unwanted attention when you're out on the town. The vest has a +2 armor bonus and negates 2 AP.

- Comes in a variety of styles and colors!
- Nanoweave padding won't chafe sensitive skin!
- **Cost:** 1,500 credits

URBAN PUNK

"Bringing Style to the Streets."

Just jumped in to your gang and need to get hooked up with their colors? Lookin' to outfit your set with the newest trends in gangland fashion? Urban Punk has the scan on the streetware you'll need to set yourself apart from the pack. We know it's not just about superior ballistic armor, it's also about style. Who cares if your jacket can stop a bullet if you look like a last-week-scuzzer in the process?

The chicas and bubble babes won't care. So do yourself a favor tomo; check out our data feed or cruise down to one of our local outlets and hook yourself up with the latest flavor in street fashion. We pride ourselves in having a brick and mortar on every gang's turf in the sprawl! So don't look like a punk, come correct with Urban Punk!

BUCKLED COMBAT JACKET

Grease your rival gang in style with the Urban Punk Buckled Combat Jacket!

The U.P Buckled Combat Jacket features:

- Hyper Tag on chest and back
- Mag-buckle closure
- Velcro closure on hood
- Two functional pockets on shoulder
- Chest pockets with zipper closure
- Two storage/hand pockets with Mag-buckle closure for extra clips and grenades
- Custom built shoulder holster. –2 to Notice rolls to detect a gun.
- Heavy duty jacket with Kevlar filler and ballistic plating
- Comes in a variety of colors including gun metal, blood red and oil slick obsidian
- U.P Buckled Kevlar Snorkel Jackets have a +3 armor bonus against ballistic rounds and ignore 2 AP. Covers torso.
- **Cost:** 1,000 credits

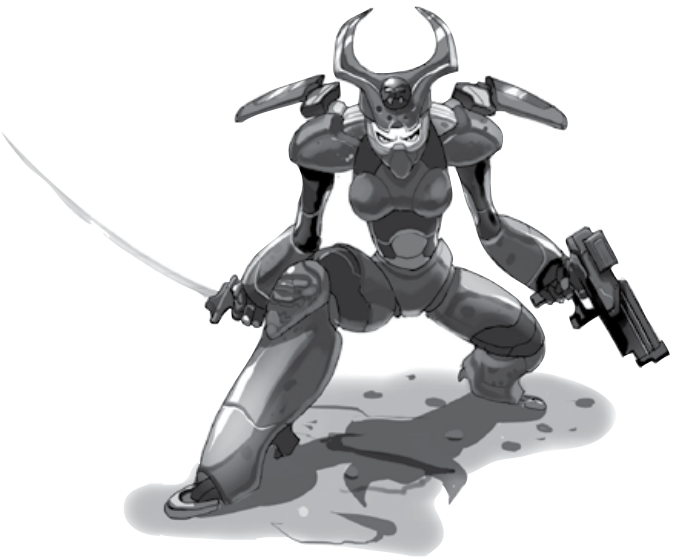
STREET SOLDIER COMBAT TRENCH COAT

Folks, you wanted it, now you got it. The Urban Punk Street Soldier Combat Trench Coat returns with a vengeance! For those of you who are into the current revival of noir-inspired

clothing, the Street Soldier Combat Trench Coat is just what you need to maintain your "hard boiled" image!

The Street Soldier Combat Trench Coat features:

- Hyper Tags on the chest and back. Shoulders optional.
- Two storage/hand pockets for extra ammo.
- Custom built shoulder holster. –2 to Notice rolls to detect a hand gun.
- 1 Deep inside pocket design to hold a shotgun or assault rifle. –2 to Notice rolls to detect a weapon.
- Heavy duty nanoweave leather and ballistic plating.
- Comes in a variety of colors including gun metal, dirt-brown, oil-slick obsidian and concrete grey.
- U.P Street Soldier Combat Trench Coats have a +5 armor bonus vs. ballistic rounds and a +3 bonus vs. knives. The armor ignores 4 AP. Covers torso and legs.
- **Cost:** 4,000 credits



SHOGUN OUTFITTERS

"Merging the Old World with the New."

Shogun Outfitters is dedicated to putting the "bushido" back into your bushido code. We combine the old-world aesthetics you love with the modern protection and weapons you need.

SHINOBI INFILRATION SUIT

Need an edge on your next infiltration of a rival megacorp? Outfit your shikakuwith the shinobi infiltration suit. The shinobi infiltration suit enhances stealth while maximizing protection of vital organs. Form-fitting ballistic plating covers the torso, groin, face arms and legs, providing a +4 armor bonus vs.. ballistic rounds and a +2 armor bonus vs.. melee weapons, also negating 2 AP. Furthermore, the custom made, razor-lined vambraces add a +1 to your Parry rating. The suit's nanoweave Tabi boots provide a +2 to Stealth rolls.

- **Cost:** 6,000 credits

SHOGUN COMBAT ARMOR

A fan favorite in the corporate offices and streets of Techno Shogunate Japan, our flagship line of Shogun full body armor provides top-of-the-line protection from ballistic and edged weapons while retaining the sleek, traditional style of the shogun warrior. The body armor provides a +6 armor bonus vs. ballistic weapons and a +4 bonus against edged weapons. The armor also negates 4 AP.

- **Cost:** 8,000 credits

Table 4:1: Body Armor

TYPE	ARMOR	WEIGHT*	COST	NOTES
Executive Decision Combat Vest	+2/+4	12	1,500	Negates 2AP
Urban Punk Buckled Combat Jacket	+2/+4	15	2,000	Negates 4AP
Executive Decision Business Suit	+2/+3	12	1,250	Negates 2AP
Executive Decision Tactical Armor	+3/+5	16	4,000	Negates 4AP
Shinobi Infiltration Suit	+2/+4	10	6,000	See Description
Shogun Combat Armor	+4/+6	40	8,000	Negates 4AP
Street Soldier Combat Trench Coat	+3/+5	16	4,000	Negates 4AP

*This is effective weight when worn. Most armor weighs quite a bit more when carried rather than worn.

POWER ARMOR

Looking to outfit your security forces with the latest in personal power armor suits? Well look no further! Malmart has teamed up with Act of God Armaments, Black Knight and Sudeki-Whyte to bring you the latest power armor suits!

ACT OF GOD ARMAMENTS

"Peace Through Overwhelming Firepower "

For over thirty years, Act of God Armaments has been on the razor's edge of personal weapons and advanced weapon platform development. Our line of personal power armor suits represent our dedication to pushing the envelope when it comes to battlefield technology.

AGA LOVIATAR

Act of God Armaments produces only a few of these flashy, form-fitting, chromed-out power suits. Aside from its distracting lines, it comes complete with two concealed retractable monowhips that extend from just above the wearer's wrists.

The first time a person uses the whips during an encounter, he can make a Stealth roll before its first attack to gain a +2 to Fighting roll against the target for the attack. This usually only works once against people who have not witnessed it. Its exacting design and built-in gyrostabilizers place the Loviatar among the nimblest of the small personal power suits, and grant its operator a +2 to rolls based on Agility and Agility-related skills (except Fighting, Shooting, and Throwing), as well as +1 to Strength and Strength-skill rolls while it is operational.

- **Cost:** 150,000 credits

ATR TACTICAL SUPPORT SUIT

The ATR is a basic combat power armor used primarily by military contractors and security firms who find the rugged design and cheap price tag the perfect fit for their expense reports. When charged up and on, the suit grants the wearer an impressive one-die type boost to Strength and all Strength skills (or +2 if D12 or higher).

Power Armor Features

Powered armor contains an internal power supply that aids in motion and powers its various systems and optional accessories. Additional features like weapon systems must be purchased independently and are not reflected in the armor's base cost. The power supply must be kept charged in order for the armor to give the character any benefits beyond its Armor. Characters who wish to operate powered armor without –2 to all physical skill rolls must have the Powered Armor Training Edge. Power suits all come with a built in global positioning unit and are full environmental capable.

The ATR sports a 6-shot grenade launcher, which can be loaded with an array of specially designed projectiles ranging from fragmentation (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 3D6 explosion, Medium Burst Template) to tear gas rounds (Range: 5/10/20; all breathing targets in Medium Burst Template make Vigor check every round to avoid gaining one Fatigue level, 6 round duration each).

- **Cost:** 100,000 credits

BLACK KNIGHT INDUSTRIES

"Innovation Squared."

Based out of Flint, Michigan, Black Knight Industries is the GLU's premier weapons developer. For years we've been at the forefront of personal weapons development. With the release of our Sentinel and Donner power armor suits, we expand into the advanced weapons market. The Sentinel and Donner are competitively priced and come with a lifetime service warranty.

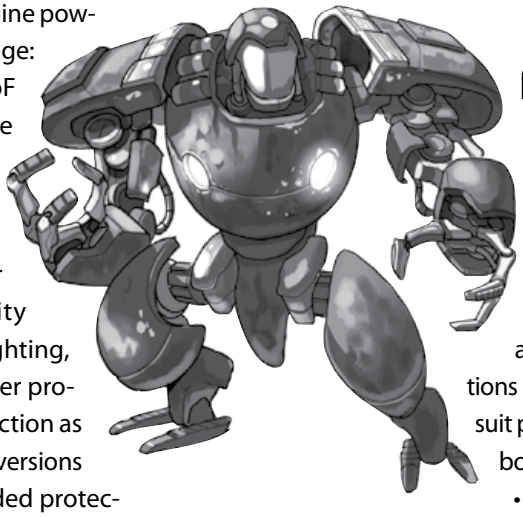
BLACK KNIGHT SENTINEL

The Black Knight Sentinel's emphasis on defense makes this imposing design a favorite of security forces that can afford them. Its clunky appearance – a cross between SWAT armor and a medieval jousting rig – belies its speed. Beyond Armor and a +2 bonus to Strength and Strength skill rolls, the Sentinel sports a built-in heavy particle beam cannon (Range: 30/60/120, Damage: 2D10, RoF 1, cost: 75,000 credits) and can be outfitted with a matching composite shield, which is not included in the stats listed (see Savage Worlds for more information on shields).

- **Cost:** 175,000 credits

DONNER POWER ARMOR

The Donner is a cutting-edge power suit designed by Black Knight Industries. A micro-fusion engine powers its experimental laser blaster (Range: 20/40/80, Damage: 3D6 energy, RoF 1, no cost because it is not available commercially yet). The armor is strong, providing +1 to Strength and Strength rolls. Nearly as nimble as the AGA Loviatar, the Donner also provides a +1 bonus to Agility and Agility-related skills (except Fighting, Shooting, and Throwing). The Donner provides the same environmental protection as the EVA Combat Armor below. Some versions also sport composite shields for added protection (not included in the cost listed).



- **Cost:** 150,000 credits

SUDEKI WHYTE

"The undisputed leader in affordable tactical weapons systems"

At Sudeki Whyte, we understand the need to balance quality with affordability. It won't matter one iota if you manage to wrest power from that pesky rogue nation-state if your nation goes broke in the process. At the same time, you don't want to risk a military coup in your parent nation if too many soldiers are dying in the process! You need reliability at an affordable price. In short, you need Sudeki-Whyte. Our EVA combat and Chameleon stealth power armor suits ensure tactical superiority at a fraction of the cost, so you can effectively wage war without breaking your budget in the process!

EVA "GRUNT" COMBAT POWER ARMOR

Sudeki-Whyte's EVA series of suits are common combat armor mass-produced for infantry units. Fully environmental, the EVA comes with its own 8-hour oxygen supply and pressurized protection to enable operations underwater as well as in space. The standard suit provides a +1 Strength and Strength skill roll bonus, plus a forearm-mounted assault rifle.

- **Cost:** 125,000 credits

EVA CHAMELEON

The EVA Chameleon by Sudeki-Whyte was originally designed as lightweight survival gear for soldiers operating behind enemy lines. However, its design makes the Chameleon the armor of choice for infiltrators and industrial ninja. Fitted with sound bafflers and a chameleon camouflage exterior coating, the armor enables the user to blend into the surroundings. The standard model includes magnetic footpads and a forearm weapon mount built to handle a rail gun. Wearers may move at Pace 4 when climbing along ferrous material, a +1 bonus to Strength and related skill rolls, and a +2 Stealth bonus when the armor is active.

- **Cost:** 125,000 credits

Table 4:2: Powered Armor

TYPE	ARMOR*	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
AGA Loviatar	+5/+8	260	250,000	See description
ATR Tactical Support Suit	+2/+5	420	200,000	See description
Black Knight Sentinel	+4/+7	560	275,000	See description
EVA " Grunt" Combat Armor	+3/+6	450	125,000	See description
Black Knight Donner	+3/+6	300	200,000	See description
EVA Chameleon	+2/+6	360	125,000	See description

* All power armor suits are immune to attacks from standard melee weapons such as knives, clubs, stun batons and swords. The first entry in the armor section indicates the power armor's resistance to advanced weaponry such as monowhips, monoswords, chain swords, particle beam weapons, lasers, grenades, rockets, etc. The second entry indicates the weapon's resistance to ballistic weaponry.

MAIL-ORDER WEAPONS

At Malmart, we know that sometimes the best defense is a good offense. Prefer the feel of a good chain sword in your hands to a Gyroc pistol? Like to slice through durasteel-plated doors with your monofilament sword? Maybe you want the kind of stopping power only a Colt Thunderbolt can provide. Whatever your tastes are, we at Malmart have it in spades and always at affordable prices the whole team can love.

Melee Weapons

Our spring line of urban combat weaponry brings you the best in hand held gear from top weapon manufacturers across the globe including Urban Punk, Shogun Outfitters and Wasteland Traders!

SHOGUN OUTFITTERS

Enhance your Kung-fu fighting or Kenjustsu style with our authentic martial arts weaponry! Each of these weapons has been designed to combine traditional Asian aesthetics with modern technology.

WHIRLWIND BUTTERFLY SWORD

Impress your friends and intimidate your opponents with these hand-crafted Whirlwind™ Butterfly swords! 19" long and 3" wide, these weapons are perfect for the Kung-fu street fighter.

- **Cost:** 100 credits (sold in pairs)
- Monofilament versions are available for an additional 1,000 credits per weapon. They add 4 AP.

DRAGONFLY WAR FAN

Also known as Tessen, these elegant, light-weight weapons were often used by samurai in places where obvious weapons were prohibited. Fighting fans double as defensive weapons and thrown weapons. When thrown, dragonfly war fans have an effective range of 4/8/16.

- **Cost:** 100 credits (sold in pairs)
- Monofilament versions are available for an additional 1,000 credits per weapon. They add 4 AP.

MANRIKIGUSARI FIGHTING CHAIN

A 36" inch long chain with two steel-weights on the ends, the Manrikigusari fighting chain is the perfect weapon for those situations when you need your opponent alive but entangled or otherwise incapacitated. Fighting chains have a reach of 1.

- **Cost:** 50 credits
- For an extra 600 credits you can buy an electrified version that releases a potent burst of electricity on a hit. Targets must make a Vigor roll at –2 or become Shaken in addition to any damage inflicted.

MONOWHIP

The monowhip (or monomolecular filament whip) is a whip consisting of tightly bound carbon molecules. Its super-thin profile lets the monowhip cut through most materials with ease. Monowhips have a reach of 3.

Damage for a monowhip is based on Strength and Agility; Strength for generation of the requisite force to do damage, and Agility for accuracy and control. The base damage is Str+D8, plus an additional +1 for each Die Type the character has in Agility (D4=+1, D6=+2, D8=+3, etc.). So a character with an agility of D8 would do Str+D8 +3 damage with a monowhip. Monowhips have an AP of 2.

- **Cost:** 3,000 credits

URBAN PUNK

Accessorize your Urban Punk ballistic clothing with these sweet street knives! Special permits are required in some urban sectors. See your local law enforcement corporation for more information.

DUKE MCCOY COMBAT KNIFE

10" inches of pain awaits any gutterpunk stupid enough to try and take you on when you're sporting the Duke McCoy combat knife! This wicked knife is made with our patented nano-steel. The hilt employs nano-stick technology for an unbreakable grip (+1 to Strength rolls to resist being disarmed). The Duke McCoy combat knife does Str+D6 damage.

- **Cost:** 100 credits
- For an extra 600 credits you can buy an electrified version that releases a potent burst of electricity on a hit. Targets must make a Vigor roll at –2 or become Shaken in addition to any damage inflicted.

Spring Loaded Boot Knife

Get the drop on your adversaries with our Urban Punk spring-loaded boot knives! These sleek, nano – sharp knives are crafted with Urban Punk's patented nano-steel to provide the durability and edge you need! Nano-steel springs are triggered by a heel-switch (free action to activate). You can download a Mediastream of the activation process free of charge at our Urban Punk domain! These boot knives do Str+D4 damage and impose a –1 penalty to sight-based Notice rolls to detect them. Spring-loaded boot knives must be purchased with our Urban Punk street boots. Available in a variety of colors and styles.

- **Cost:** 100 credits

Wasteland Traders

"We bring quality goods to the wastelands so you don't have to."

Planning your next run into the wastes? Don't leave your cribsec without the weapons you'll need to survive the trip! We at Wasteland Traders—a subsidiary of Urban Punk—understand the dangers of life in the tox-zones and badlands. More importantly, we know what it takes to survive in a world where biohorrors abound and the only law is kill or be killed. Our weapons are built to last and employ solar-powered energy cells so you don't have to worry about running out of juice!

Chain Sword

The holy grail of violent splatter-fi fans for decades, modern technology has finally made the chain sword a reality. You know what it is: 20th century chainsaw technology small and light enough to be converted into a weapon. Effective and fun. Solar batteries allow for 8 hours of continuous use before needing to be recharged. Typical recharge times are 2 hours.

- **Cost:** 500 credits

Rocket Hammer

This is a sledgehammer-like weapon about 5' long, with a small chemical rocket in the back of the hammerhead. A switch on the shaft triggers a short burst, which drives the hammer with an immense amount of force. The hammer, often comes with a blunt face or wedge at the tip, is difficult to wield (–1 to Fighting rolls), but does 2D10 damage when activated and inflicts double damage against inanimate objects. The damage is set, as the force of the impact is derived from the rocket. Rocket hammers can be used 5 times before a new rocket must be installed.

- **Cost:** 1,000 credits

Table 4:3: Melee Weapons

NAME	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Boot knife	Str+D4	-	50	–1 penalty to Notice Rolls
Butterfly Sword	Str+D8	3	100	
Chain Sword	Str+D10	10	500	AP 2
Duke McCoy Combat Knife	Str+D6	1	100	See description
War Fan	Str+D4	1	50	See description
Manrikigusari	Str+D6	2	50	Reach 1, see description
Monowhip	Str+D8	2	3,000	Reach 3, AP 2 (see description)
Rocket Hammer	2D10	12	1,000	See description
Security Truncheon	Str+D6	2	500	See description
Stun Gloves	Str+D4	1	250	See description

RAVENLOCKE SECURITIES

"Effective Law Enforcement at Competitive Prices."

At Ravenlocke Industries, we recognize that felons are people too, and as such they are afforded certain rights under the law (subject to change pending passage of the Turner Network Corporate Defense Act). To ensure they survive to be brought to justice, we at Ravenlocke industries continue to be a leader in the field of non-lethal weaponry. Our Spring line of security gear represents years of development and testing in penal colonies both on and off-planet!

SECURITY TRUNCHEON

On impact, this nightstick releases a powerful electric charge, requiring a Vigor roll at –2 from the target or he becomes Shaken in addition to any damage inflicted.

- **Cost:** 500 credits

STUN GLOVES

Upon touch, the stun gloves release a powerful electric charge, requiring a Vigor roll from the target or he becomes Shaken in addition to normal damage.

- **Cost:** 250 credits

MAIL-ORDER GUNS

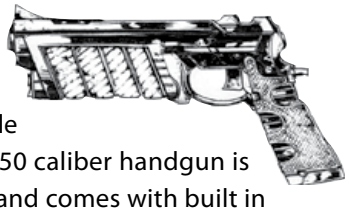
We at Malmart are pleased to present to you a series of state-of-the-art firearms from the top North American manufacturers and selected high-quality imports from around the world. Whether for recreation or self-defense, these high quality products will give you the extra edge you need. Note that any firearm orders require a proof-of-age certificate. Ammunition sold separately!

ACT OF GOD ARMAMENTS

Based out of Houston Texas, Act of God Armaments is the industry leader in personal weapon development. Our quality hand guns, rifles, and emerging weapons technologies are used in nations, guerrilla armies and corporate security divisions across the world.

AGA THUNDERBOLT

" What do I think of the Thunderbolt? .Man…It's groovy."
– Hunter Clark, Star of Man Hunter; Tales Of The Sprawl!



Signature weapon of world-renowned retrieval expert Hunter Clark, the AGA Thunderbolt is now available on the open market! This .50 caliber handgun is combat interface capable and comes with built in compensators to help reduce the weapon's bone-shattering recoil. Still, characters with a Strength of D6 or lower suffer a –1 penalty to Shooting rolls when firing the AGA Thunderbolt. Because the AGA Thunderbolt is such a menacing weapon, characters enjoy a +1 to Intimidation rolls when brandishing this beast.

- 12lbs of bone chilling steel!
- Insane 2D10+2 damage!
- AP 2
- 15 round clips!
- An impressive range of 20/40/80!
- Built-in Hyper Object allows for easy interfacing with your tactical headware!
- DNA thumb print analyzer prevents unauthorized use!
- Comes in matte black finish or chrome!
- RoF: 1
- **Cost:** 1,500 credits (Proprietary .500 San Antonio Special Ammunition sold separately).

AGA CYCLONE EMP GUN

Having trouble with renegade androids? Need to protect yourself from pesky combat drones? What you need is the AGA Cyclone EMP gun! Used to knock out electronic devices in short range, this weapon fires a burst of electromagnetic energy that does not damage non-machines or machines with sufficient shielding. EMP emitters are area of effect weapons and use the Area Effect Attacks rules on page 65 of the Savage Worlds Explorers Edition. Any EMP shielding the target has acts as heavy cover for the purposes of determining if the electronics are damaged. Electronics systems have a toughness of 8, and are destroyed after taking 2 wounds.

- Avoid storage near electronic devices and personal androids!
- RoF: 1
- 3 shots before needing a recharge.

- Range: Cone template
- Damage: 2D6 to all electronic/cybernetic devices within a cone template.
- **Cost:** 5,000 credits (Ion battery sold separately)

GAUSS SNIPER RIFLE

Act of God Armaments is dedicated to pushing the boundaries of personal weapons-technologies. Our Gauss sniper rifle fires a ferrous projectile via electromagnetic energy created by the super-conductive magnetic coils surrounding the barrel. Since there is no chemical propellant and the bullet doesn't even touch the interior of the barrel when fired (as it glides through on magnetic forces), the weapon is nearly soundless (–2 to Notice rolls involving sound)!

- An incredible effective range of 50/100/200!
- –2 to Notice rolls involving sound!
- Wicked 3D8 damage!
- AP 4
- **Cost:** A measly 3,500 credits!

GYROC PISTOL

A pistol designed to fire gyroscopic, rocket-propelled smart rounds, the gyroc pistol is a standard sidearm for security and police forces worldwide!

- Voice-activated range finders ensure the smart round won't explode until YOU tell it to!
- The gyroc pistol imposes a –1 penalty to Agility rolls when diving for cover to avoid area effect attacks!
- Each round does 2D8 damage to a small burst template!
- AP 2
- 15 shot magazine!
- 5lbs.
- Range:15/30/60
- **Cost:** 2,000 credits! Ammunition sold separately.

GYROC RIFLE

These are larger, heavier armaments than gyroc pistols. Like the pistols, gyroc rifles are standard weapons for security and police forces expecting a fire fight.

- The gyroc rifle imposes a –1 penalty to Agility rolls when diving for cover to avoid area effect attacks!
- Each round does 2D10 damage to a small burst template!
- 8 shot magazine!
- AP of 3!
- 10lbs.
- Range: 35/70/140
- **Cost:** 3,000 credits! Ammunition sold separately.

BLACK KNIGHT INDUSTRIES

Based in Flint, Michigan, Black Knight Industries is the premier weapons developer for the Great Lakes Union. Our commitment to ensuring personal freedom through superior firepower is reflected in our uncommonly high-quality assault rifles, combat shotguns and handguns. At Black Knight Industries, we know that you need your weapons to work the first time, because there may not be a second time.

ENFORCER RAIL GUN

Enforcer Rail guns use rare electromagnetic rails to accelerate a slug at supersonic velocities. They use a small air cartridge to start the slug moving, the rails only accelerate it. The model listed is a sniper version.

- Range: 30/60/120
- Damage: 3D8+1
- RoF 1
- Can be fired 4 times before needing a recharge
- Weight 18 pounds
- AP 3
- **Cost:** Not available on the open market

TIGER CLAW CLOSE ASSAULT SHOTGUN

The ultimate man stopper, finally available by mail-order! When the fighting gets close and ugly, the Tiger Claw saves the day! Now sold with bio-degradable projectiles! Own the infamous combat shotgun that shoots tiny shards of plastic designed to deal maximum tissue damage!

- Range: 4/8/12
- Damage 1–3D6. Shotgun rules apply!
- An amazing RoF 2. See the cowards run!
- 12 shot magazine
- 10lbs.
- Auto
- Note that local regulations prevent us from selling the Tiger Claw to certain regions of the world.
- **Cost:** Own one for only 1, 500 credits!

- **Optional rule:** the tiny plastic slivers fired from the Tiger Claw are very difficult to remove, so anybody who was wounded by a weapon of this type incurs an additional –1 penalty for Healing rolls.

BLACK KNIGHT LIBERATOR MINI GUN

The liberator mini gun is an air-cooled, electrically driven weapon that employs six gatling-style barrels to fire withering volleys of armor-piercing shells that reduce targets to unrecognizable lumps.

- 7.62mm rounds
- Amazing RoF of 6! Hose down your targets with white-hot lead!
- Drum magazine (360 rounds)
- Min. Str D10 and Snapfire penalty unless fitted with a gyro harness. A gyro harness allows for movement up to half the character's Pace without –2.
- AP 4, Auto
- Weight: 60 lbs.
- Range: 30/60/120
- Damage: 2D8+2
- **Cost:** Military weapon. Not available on the open market.

MOSQUITO STORM HANDGUN

Small enough to fit a designer handbag yet providing the firepower of a typical assault rifle! You don't need a man to be safe in the streets! The Mosquito Storm rotating multi-barrel sub-machine gun is a unique hybrid between a gatling gun and a pistol. While it naturally does not have the punch of a military-grade weapon, its high rate of fire makes it an attractive self-defense option.

- Amazing RoF of 4! This is as much as a typical machine gun!
- 36 shot magazine
- Weight 9 lbs.
- AP 2, Auto
- Range: 15/30/45
- Damage: 2D4
- **Cost:** 1,500 credits

SENTINEL ROCK CORPORATION

Sentinel Rock Corporation is pleased to present our newest line of personal and corporate weapons!

HARRISON HAND CANNON

Australian Olympian gold winner Robert E. Nayles recommends the "Harrison" hand cannon. Each piece is customized to your personal anatomy and comes with a lifetime guarantee. The Harrison is a limited edition, custom-made handgun that enjoys a mystique and prestige unrivaled even by other guns in the same price range.

- Olympic-level sports and hunting revolver
- The weapon made famous by the Winston robberies!
- Lifetime warranty! (Certain restrictions apply!)
- Range: 12/24/48
- Damage: 2D10
- RoF of 1
- 6-shot magazine
- 15 lbs.
- **Cost:** Only 2,000 credits! Includes certificate of authenticity!

RIOT GEL GUN

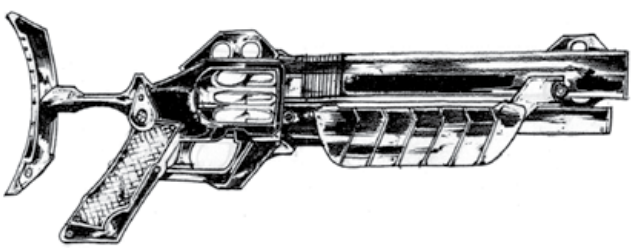
The riot gun looks much like a sawed-off shotgun but fires high-velocity shock-absorbing gel ammunition in a cone pattern. The impact of being hit by the gel is enough to knock the wind out of most people, making the gun ideal for riot suppression. A struck target must make a Strength roll (at –2 per raise attained on the hit) or get knocked back 1 square + 1 additional square per raise on the attack roll. The target must also make an Agility roll (at –2 per raise attained on the hit) or fall prone.

- RoF of 1
- 6-shot magazine
- 16lbs.
- Range: Cone template
- Damage: 2D6 (Non lethal)
- **Cost:** Only 750 credits

KELVIN-12 CLASS ASSAULT RIFLE

Designed to the specifications of the world leading military, the Kelvin-12 Class Assault Rifle has been rated Weapon of the Year by GUNN™ Magazine and has received 115% on the Kolmogorov-Kijimon scale. Its customized ammunition is protected by over 14 patents.

- Proven military-grade quality
- Uses proprietary ammunition based on state-of-the-art research
- Range: 24/48/96
- 2D8+1 damage at the amazing RoF of 4!
- 36 shot magazine
- 10 lbs.
- Auto, AP 3
- **Note:** Not recommended for users with a strength of less than D6!
- **Cost:** Not available on the open market.



EXPLOSIVES!

Want some serious Bang(!) for your buck? Need to lay down some smoke so you can beat a hasty retreat? Then you need these personal explosive devices!

BLACK KNIGHT PERSONAL GRENADES

The perfect gift for your best friend! These handy grenades are color coded for easy use. With a range of choices from smoke to fragmentation, you will be ready for any situation! Our grenades are color coded for easy identification in a fight!

- Not a toy! Keep out of the hands of children!
- **Brown:** Smoke that blocks line of sight for 1D6 rounds.
- **Green:** Poison gas that deals 2D6 damage. Disperses after 1D4 rounds.
- **Blue:** A flash that deals 2D10 damage but cannot cause a result worse than Shaken.
- **Red:** Fragmentation causes 3D6 damage.
- **Area of Effect:** Medium Burst Template.
- **Range:** 5/10/15
- **Cost:** 1,000 credits per grenade

STREET TALKER 6MM DEFENSE TOOL

In today's world, your family is under siege by the foreign criminals, gang members and terrorists. And the government is failing to protect you! The Street Talker is Sentinel Rock's answer to your call! Defend your life at a discount price you cannot afford to ignore.

- Affordable price for a quality product
- Upload your own color scheme for a customized product (150 credit surcharge)
- Limited Warranty! See conditions of use at the Street talker site.
- 6 shot magazine
- Total weight 3 pounds
- Range: 5/10/20
- Damage: 2D6–1 with a RoF of 1
- **Cost:** Only 500 credits

EXPERIMENTAL ENERGY WEAPONS

For all you Military purchasing officers out there, Malmart is pleased to bring you the following Beta Test versions of these prototype energy weapons!

HELLFIRE LASER PISTOL

Aquarius Engineering—the premiere weapons developer for the North American Coalition—is proud to announce the Beta Test of the Hellfire Laser Pistol!

- Takes 1 round to recharge before it can be fired again.
- 3D8 damage
- Energy Pack allows for 20 shots before needing to be replaced.
- AP 5
- Range: 15/30/60
- RoF: 1
- **Cost:** Military weapon. Not available on the open market.

AGA X-2 PARTICLE BEAM RIFLE

Produced by Act of God Armaments, the AGA X-2 particle beam rifle is a directed energy weapon which fires electrons at

USER NAME AND PASSWORD, PLEASE

Many modern firearms come complete with password-protected safety locks that render them unusable to anyone but their designated user. Regardless of its moniker, the safety mechanism can come in any number of forms, each imposing its own cost modifier and Lockpicking roll penalty to overcome or a System Designation Code if the object has Virtual Security. Possibilities include DNA-scanning trigger housing (+2,000 credits, Lockpicking –4), voice activation (+1,000 credits, Lockpicking –2 or Persuasion –4 to mimic voice if known), actual password protection that is either manually punched into a small number pad or via a Hyper Object (+2,500, credits HAN System Designation Code for purposes of Hacking rolls to cut through the object's firewall and manipulate the system).

The costs listed in Table 4:4: Firearms are for typical locking systems. Much better ones exist. Other devices, such as vehicles and security doors, have the same sorts of theft deterrents, though in the case of vehicles the deterrents are already figured into the base price.

Table 4:4: Firearms

NAME	RANGE	DAMAGE	ROF	COST	WEIGHT	SHOTS	MIN STR	NOTES
AGA Thunderbolt	20/40/80	2D10+2	1	1,500	12	5	D6	AP 2, See description
Assault shotgun	4/8/12	1–3D6	2	1,500	10	12	—	See description
EMP Gun	Cone Template	Special	1	5,000	17	1	—	See description
Gauss Sniper Rifle	50/100/200	3D8	1	3,500	20	6	D8	AP 4, Snapfire
Gyroc Pistol	15/30/60	2D8	1	2,000	5	15	—	AP 2
Gyroc Rifle	35/70/140	2D10	1	3,000	10	8	D6	AP 3
Hand Cannon	12/24/48	2D10	1	2,000	15	6	D6	
Mini Gun	30/60/120	2D8	6	Military	60	360	D10	See description
Mosquito Storm Handgun	15/30/45	2D4	4	1,500	9	36	—	See description
Enforcer Rail Gun	30/60/120	3D8+1	1	Military	18	4	D8	AP 3
Kelvin-12 Class Assault Rifle	24/48/96	2D8+1	4	4,000	10	36	D6	AP 3
Street Talker	5/10/20	2D6–1	1	500	3	6	—	
Riot Gel Gun	Cone Template	2D6	1	750	16	10	D6	

near-light speeds to impact on targets with nearly 1 gigajoule of kinetic energy. The speed at which this weapon fires and the resultant force renders modern ballistic armor nearly useless. While a potentially devastating weapon, the AGA X-2 has its share of problems. The weapon has to recharge after it is fired, a process that takes 2 rounds. Additionally, some models are prone to overcharging which can result in highly-energetic explosions. Any time snake eyes is rolled on a Shooting attack the weapon's energy cartridge has reached critical mass and will explode within 1D4 rounds, doing 3D10 damage to everything in a large burst template. The cartridge can be ejected and thrown, providing the character has time to do so.

- Hydrogen cells provide 10 shots before needing to be replaced.
- Takes 2 rounds to recharge before it can be fired again.
- 2D10 damage
- AP 4
- Unstable! If the energy cell overcharges, it will explode!
- Range: 20/40/80
- RoF: 1
- **Cost:** Military weapon. Not available on the open market.

ONLINE VEHICLES

Malmart has some super deals on vehicles! Get last year's models at competitive prices. Check out these special offers only available until the 15th of August! Remember, when you use Malmart's hyper-ordering service, there's no need to leave your cribsec! Our onboard AI navigation systems* will drive your new vehicle to your home!

*Onboard AI navigation systems are only available in select models.

Cars and SUVs

The statistics for most modern factory-built vehicles haven't changed much in the last 80 years. The initial drop in power

Table 4:5: Energy Weapons

NAME	RANGE	DAMAGE	ROF	COST	WEIGHT	SHOTS	MIN STR	NOTES
Laser Pistol	15/30/60	3D8	1	Military	60	20	D6	AP 5, See description
AGA X-2 Particle Beam Rifle	20/40/80	2D10	1	Military	60	10	D8	AP 4, See description

that came with the transfer from fossil fuels was made up for by building lighter vehicles with more efficient engines. Consequently, contemporary 2080s vehicles have improved acceleration.

They are also sturdier, designed to be safer than their predecessors. Most enclosed vehicles come with an AI driver or pilot which commonly operates the vehicle. The AI's Driving or Piloting skill normally begins at D6 and increases with the complexity and experience of the AI. Most AI chauffeurs can be overridden to manual control through voice recognition or standard security panel. VCI rigs are not standard on all ground vehicles.

SAMBA ECOLINE

For the cost-conscious consumer, the Ecoline provides an economical alternative. Low fuel consumption, high reliability and city-friendly size make the Ecoline the ideal car for the young urban professional.

- Low fuel consumption and hybrid mode
- Comes in fifteen fun colors
- Comes with many extras, such as air bags
- **Acc:**10 **Top Speed:** 30
- **Toughness 8 (3)**
- **Crew:** 1+1
- **Cost:** 14,500 credits

SAMBA MARATHON

The Marathon is an upper-class SUV that has a passenger capacity of 7 plus room for leisure gear. Its excellent performance and moderate price make it a good buy for young families.

- Air bags and four wheel drive
- **Acc:** 20 **Top Speed:** 45
- **Toughness:** 15 (5)
- **Crew:** 1+6
- **Cost:** 30,000 credits

CHERRY EXECUTOR

This sports car needs no introduction! The Executor is one of the more expensive sports cars in the world. Its impossibly sleek paint job, most often black, is so delicate that it requires a special fluid to keep clean.

- World class luxury sports car
- Air bag
- Nitro booster increases Top Speed to 65 for 1 minute
- **Acc:** 30 **Top Speed:** 60
- **Toughness:** 7 (3)
- **Crew:** 1+1
- **Cost:** 150,000 credits

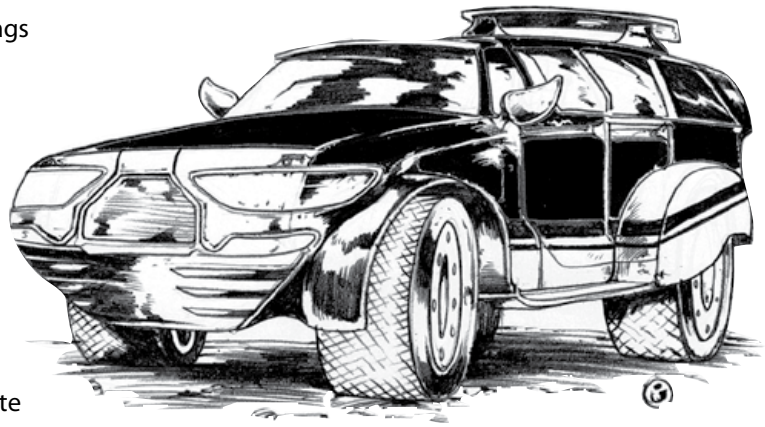


Table 4:6: Cars and SUVs

MODERN	ACC/TS	TOUGHNESS	CREW	COST	NOTES
Typical Compact Car	15/42	11 (4)	0+4	10–30K	Standard "smart" car
Typical Luxury Car	25/45	13 (5)	0+4–8	30–65K	Sedans and limousines
Typical Sports Car	35/60	11 (3)	0+2	60–500k	Driving +2 on VCI rig
Samba Ecoline	10/30	8 (3)	1+1	14,500	
Samba Marathon SUV	20/45	15 (5)	1+4	30,000	
Cherry Executor	40/60	7 (3)	1+1	150,000	

Motorcycles

The following are just a few samples of the types of motorcycles seen on the roads and skyways of 2088.

Thuggee TG-12 Motorcycle

The cutting edge in motorcycle design and a favorite of Thuggee cultists around the world! Highly customizable due to modular design!

- Tuning can increase Top Speed to 40
- **Acc:** 20 **Top Speed:** 35
- **Toughness:** 6 (1)
- **Crew:** 1+1
- **Cost:** 13,000 credits

Harlon Hover Cruiser

This is your chance to own the classic American hover bike. Built to 21st century specifications, the Harlon is a solid product.

- **Acc:** 15 **Top Speed:** 35
- **Toughness:** 9 (4)
- **Crew:** 1+1
- **Cost:** 15,000 credits

Toyota Locust Quad Turbo Jump Bike

Voted the hottest bike of 2087 by Street Racer Weekly, the Toyota Locust Quad Turbo jump bike is a jump racer's dream come true! Our patented ACR Titan jump system comes standard on all Locusts and our titanium coil jump springs and sleek tri-wheel chassis ensure a sweet landing after sticking that slick new trick you just learned!

- ACR Titan jump system allows speed jumps along both the vertical and horizontal axis up to half the acceleration rating of the bike! Jumps require a Driving roll, but allow the character to ignore penalties for movement over difficult ground for that round only!
- Titanium coil jump springs add a +1 to Drive rolls when making turbo jumps!
- **Acc:** 20 **Top Speed:** 45
- **Toughness:** 5 (1)
- **Crew:** 1+1
- **Cost:** 30,000 credits

Table 4:7: Motorcycles

VEHICLE	ACC/TS	TOUGHNESS	CREW	COST	NOTES
ThugeeTG-12	20/35	7 (3)	1+1	13,000	
Harlon Hover Cruiser	15/35	9 (4)	1+1	15,000	
Toyota Locust	20/45	6 (1)	1+1	30,000	See description

VTOL CRAFT

We are proud to present to you our new collection of VTOL craft, straight from the factory or from military surplus. Please note that the use of certain heavy weapons might be restricted in certain regions.

CHERRY LIGHT VTOL CAR

The light, compact VTOL craft is a small personal transport that is found on both the civilian and military market. Feel like a marine when you drive this beauty through the countryside! The Cherry Light comes with the typical options you would expect for a car such as full environmental control, ballistic armor protection and ejection seats.

- **Toughness:** 7 (3)
- **Acc:** 25 **Top Speed:** 140
- **Crew:** 1+2
- **Cost:** 50,000 credits

RAVENLOCKE MARK 6 INTERDICTOR POLICE CRUISER

The Mark 6 Interdictor was originally designed for the Brazilian military and has since been modified for use by law enforcement corporations. Exceptionally robust and with a high carrying capacity the back part can be configured to either hold cargo or up to 7 prisoners or strike team members.

- A must for your high threat security forces!
- VTOL vehicle with ejection seats.
- VCI rig support
- **Acc:** 20 **Top Speed:** 300
- **Toughness:** 15 (8)
- **Crew:** 1+1 (or 1+7 if not configured to hold cargo)
- **Cost:** 75,000

VTOL VEHICLES

Most turn-of-the-century ground vehicles now have a VTOL (Vertical Takeoff and Landing) variant. Because of their steep price tags, VTOL Vehicles are far more common in wealthy, developed nations and the largest cities of North America, China, Brasilia, and the Eurasian Union. VTOL vehicles share many of the same features as their ground counterpart, including optional AI Pilots and VCI rigs. Military variants also have onboard weapons and ECM (Electronic Counter measures) systems.

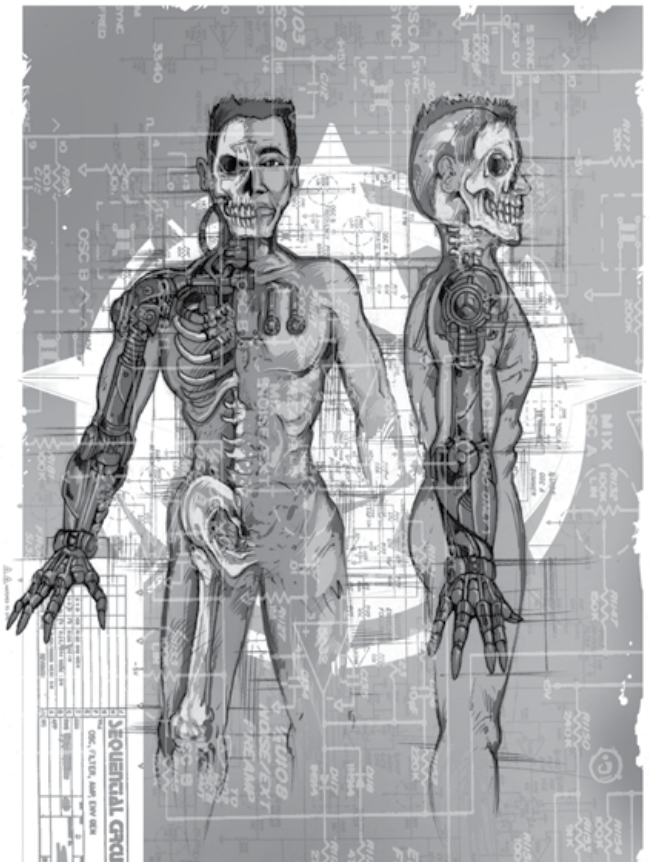


Table 4:8 : VTOL Aircraft

VEHICLE	ACC/TS	TOUGHNESS	CREW	COST	NOTES
Hetzer Street sweeper	25/300	20 (8)	2+7	150,000	See description
Cherry Light	25/140	7 (3)	1+2	50,000	See description
Mark-6 Interdictor	20/300	15 (8)	1+1 (7)	75,000	See description
A-6 Night Fox	25/300	20 (8)	2+7	120,000	See description
Sherman's Ghost	25/300	20 (8)	2+7	150,000	See description

CUSTOM-BUILT PANZER VTOL

These custom retrofits are brought to you from our various partners on continental America. Using a former military-grade chassis, each panzer is a unique work of art that combines speed with firepower. Whether you are a border patrol unit or a private security outfit, these beauties will make your job a joy!

- VTOL vehicle with ejection seats.
- **Acc:** 25 **Top Speed:** 300
- **Toughness:** 20 (8)
- **Crew:** 2 (pilot and gunner/sensor ops) +7

Different versions exist that provide different armament:

A-6 NIGHT FOX

The A-6 Night Fox is equipped with a pintle mount that can take any personal weapon. But don't blame us when your poor, exposed gunner is blown to kingdom come!

SHERMAN'S GHOST

This weapons platform gives you amazing firepower through an array of missiles mounted on an open turret. There are 8 missiles that have quite some punch (Range: 50/100/200, Damage: 3D10, AP 4, RoF 3, Shots 8, HW).

RAVENLOCKE HETZER STREET SWEEPER

Built for extremely high threat missions in ghettos, the Hetzer is built around a huge cannon that can easily take out a fortified safe house. Also, the Hetzer is stabilized, so forget about that firing penalty! (Range: 40/80/160, Damage: 3D10+2, AP 6, RoF 1, Shots 15, HW).

DRONES

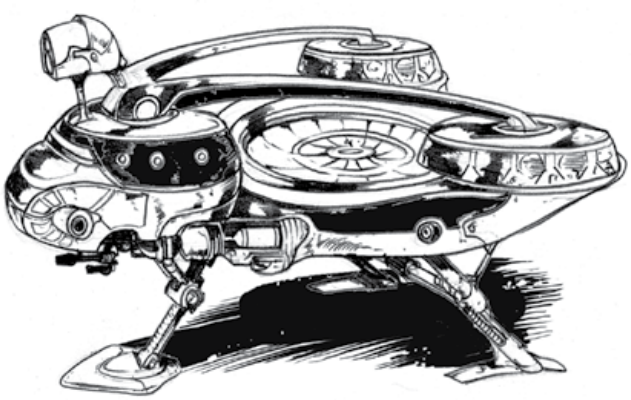
Malmart's got some great deals on combat and recon drones! For a limited time only, if you buy one drone, you can get a second drone of equal or lesser value for 50% of the list price! So what are ya waitin' for? Take advantage of these sweet deals today!

CENTURION "TCHAGRA" LIGHT DRONE

A very common light flying drone, used for military reconnaissance, surveillance, traffic observation, journalism, environmental monitoring, scientific fieldwork, and a host of other uses. Operators can control them directly, or program them for autonomous flight. Compact hydrocarbon power plant gives good speed and range, but does make a distinctive sound.

- Vertical takeoff and landing using pivoted ducted fans
- Two-hour flight endurance on a full tank, can be doubled with auxiliary fuel
- Autonomous computer with Piloting skill D6, Shooting skill D4
- Built-in GPS and night vision systems
- Encrypted remote control signal channel with Knowledge (Cryptography) skill D8
- Two-kilogram internal equipment bay, suitable for cameras, weapons, or auxiliary fuel
- Noisy: +2 on any Notice rolls to hear the drone
- Armed versions carry a fixed, stabilized lightweight auto rifle (Range: 30/60/120, Damage 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3, Shots 30, Auto, 3RB)

Cost: 30,000 credits



HARBIN "HUANGFENG III" STEALTH DRONE

The smallest and stealthiest flying drone currently on the market, the Huangfeng uses electric ducted fans and smart camouflage skin for the ultimate in quiet and concealment. It carries a good sensor suite and is easily portable in a compact carrying case, but has limited range and speed. The onboard computer can operate efficiently without external control.

- Vertical takeoff and landing using pivoted ducted fans
- One-hour flight endurance
- Autonomous computer with Piloting skill D6 and Stealth skill D10
- Built-in GPS and night vision systems
- Built-in high-definition microphone
- Encrypted remote control signal channel with Knowledge (Cryptography) skill D8
- Stealthy: –4 on any Notice rolls
- **Cost:** 40,000 credits

CENTURION "BATELEUR" DRONE

A large, fast drone designed for reconnaissance and aerial combat, they are used extensively by military forces and private security firms. Unarmed civilian versions with downgraded capabilities can be bought legally, but there are also a great many black-market military versions listed as "crashed" and sold off by underpaid technicians. A Bateleur can take off and land on a conventional airfield or even a level stretch of highway at least 100 meters long; it can also operate from a launching catapult and arrestor cable on 10 meters of runway.

- 4-hour flight endurance
- Autonomous computer with Piloting skill D8, Shooting skill D10
- Built-in GPS and night vision systems
- Encrypted remote control signal channel with Knowledge (Cryptography) skill D10
- 50-kg. internal bay for equipment or weapons
- Armed versions carry a fixed heavy machine gun with improved stabilizer (Range: 50/100/200, Damage: 2D10, AP 4, RoF 4, Shots 200, HW)

Cost: 60,000 credits

HARBIN "LEIDIAO" DRONE

The Leidiao is still in testing by the Chinese government, but reports by spies and industry-watchers indicate it's the hottest, stealthiest light recon drone around, nearly the equal of a top-of-the-line unmanned fighter plane. It's rumored that one or more prototypes may already be on the black market, but it's certain that anybody operating one would attract a lot of interest from China's intelligence services. The Leidiao uses vectored-thrust jets for vertical takeoff and landing, and also for unmatched agility in midair maneuvering.

- Vertical takeoff and landing using vectored-thrust jets
- 4-hour flight endurance
- Autonomous computer with Piloting skill D8, Shooting Skill D10 and Stealth skill D12
- Built-in GPS, night vision, and radar systems
- Encrypted remote control signal channel with Knowledge (Cryptography) skill D12
- Stealthy: –4 on any Notice rolls
- Anti-Missile Countermeasures
- 50-kg. internal bay for equipment or weapons
- Armed versions carry 2 kinetic-kill missiles with improved stabilization (Range: 100/200/400, Damage: 4D8, Large Burst Templeate, AP 20, RoF 1, HW)
- **Cost:** 80,000 credits

MECHATRONICS "SUPER-MOTOMAN"

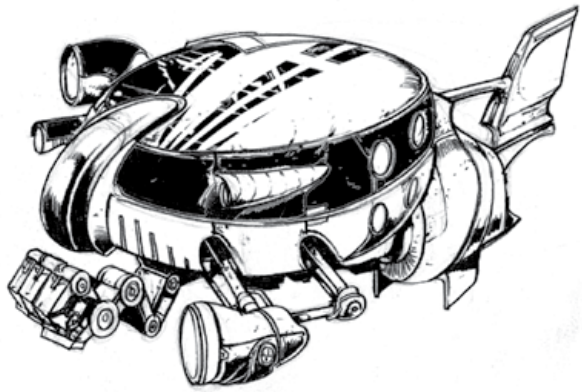
The Motoman wheeled drone is the best-selling light utility teleoperated platform. Despite the fact that the Super-Motoman design is nearly 20 years old they are still widely used in industry and defense. There is a thriving community of civilian "Mototaku" who trade customization tips and pit their drones against each other in robot sports. The Super-Motoman isn't very fast, but it's durable and cheap. It's not stealthy, but the fact that so many are in use makes them effectively "invisible" to casual observers. The standard Motoman control channel is not encrypted, so most users add their own for security.

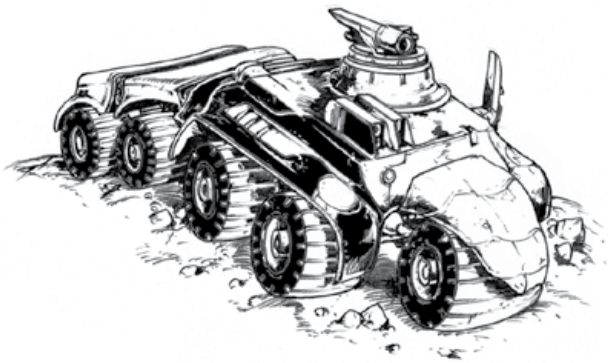
- Wheeled drive can operate on rough ground but can't climb stairs (equivalent of Four-Wheel Drive)
- Batteries provide 4 hours of use between recharges (can operate on an extension cord)
- Autonomous computer with Driving skill at D4
- Built-in GPS, camera, and microphone
- One arm capable of mounting any weapon or tool up to 10 kg., Strength D10
- **Cost:** 30,000 credits

MECHATRONICS "SUPER-SUPAIDAMAN"

The "Super-supaidaman" drone is a small, multi-legged drone capable of climbing almost any surface. They are widely used for commercial window-cleaning, rescue work, and construction. Fitted with a sensitive microphone or a low-light camera they become extremely effective covert-surveillance platforms.

- Six-leg drive can operate on any terrain (ignores difficult terrain modifiers)
- Adhesive pads provide Climbing skill of D10
- Batteries provide 4 hours of operation
- Built-in GPS, camera, and microphone
- Any two legs can function as hands with Strength D4
- **Cost:** 40,000 credits





HARBIN "YINDUBAO"

The "Yindubao" is a cutting-edge ground drone, capable of extremely high-speed movement over almost any terrain. It was created primarily for military and law enforcement use, but some private security firms have bought them. A Yindubao has excellent sensory systems, onboard gyroscopes and chameleon skin for good concealment. It can hide well as long as it isn't moving, but in high-speed operation the drone's heat radiators show up on infrared scanners like a searchlight. The Yindubao has very little armor protection, and lacks manipulator arms.

- Four-leg drive (treat as Four-Wheel Drive)
- Turbine power plant can operate for up to 4 hours
- Stealth skill D10 when sitting still only; D4 in motion
- Built-in GPS, low-light camera with 10x telescopic zoom, and microphone
- Stealth paint: –4 to Notice with sensors
- Runs hot: in operation infrared devices get a +4 to detect it
- **Cost:** 60,000 credits

Table 4:9: Drones

DRONE	ACC/TS	TOUGHNESS	COST	NOTES
Tchagra	20/50	8 (2)	30,000	Climb 10
Huangfeng	10/20	0 (0)	40,000	Climb 10
Bateleur	30/40	10 (2)	60,000	Climb 25
Leidiao	50/100	10 (2)	80,000	Climb 40
Motoman	15/30	8 (2)	30,000	
Supaidaman	10/20	5 (1)	40,000	
Yindubao	30/60	4 (1)	60,000	
Marlin	5/10	12 (2)	40,000	
Woguraman	1/2	16 (4)	40,000	

NEKTONIX "MARLIN"

The Marlin is a rugged deep-sea drone, widely used in underwater salvage and construction, aquaculture, scientific research and exploration, and maritime security. Navies use them to patrol harbors and guard ships against underwater sabotage, but they aren't fast or stealthy enough to use as weapon platforms. The Marlin is very pressure-tolerant, capable of operating at depths as great as 5,000 meters. This means they can operate in much of the deep ocean basin regions, but cannot descend into the deepest sea trenches.

- Batteries can operate for up to 6 hours
- Low-light cameras and GPS built-in
- Sonar with a range of 1 kilometer
- Maximum depth rating 5 kilometers
- Two manipulator arms with Strength D8 and Agility D4
- Cannot operate on land
- **Cost:** 40,000 credits

MECHATRONICS "SUPER-WOGURAMAN"

The Super-Woguraman is a highly specialized drone for underground operation. It has a digging head capable of boring easily through soil, or drilling more slowly through rock. Woguraman drones have a valuable role in construction, rescue, and research. Military forces use them for mine placement and removal, but they are easy to detect with ground microphones or seismic sensors, which limits their utility as weapons. Unlike most drones, the Woguraman depends on a cable link to the operator for control, as well as an external power supply. In dirt or loose gravel a Woguraman can dig at a speed of about 1 meter per minute. It digs at half speed in soft rock like sandstone, shale, or pumice. Construction materials like brick or concrete limit it to one-quarter speed, while in hard stone like granite it takes 10 minutes to dig 1 meter.

- Indefinite operation on external power
- Seismic sensor with D4 Notice skill to detect objects on the surface; range 100 meters
- −4 penalty to Stealth when digging
- Tracked suspension
- **Cost:** 40,000 credits

GOLEMMECHS

Golemmechs blur the line between power armor and vehicles. Golemmechs are large robotic suits that can accommodate a humanoid pilot or be operated independently by an AI (sometimes called a "Ghost in the Shell"). The humanoid form allows for greater freedom of movement while the larger frame adds to durability in the field. Often deployed by high-tech security firms, law enforcement and the military, golemmechs also see use in the fields of construction and rescue. Characters piloting a golemmech suffer combat penalties due to its bulkiness, but gain the use of its tremendous strength, armored hull, and devastating weapons systems. Golemmechs are not bought or sold on the open market.

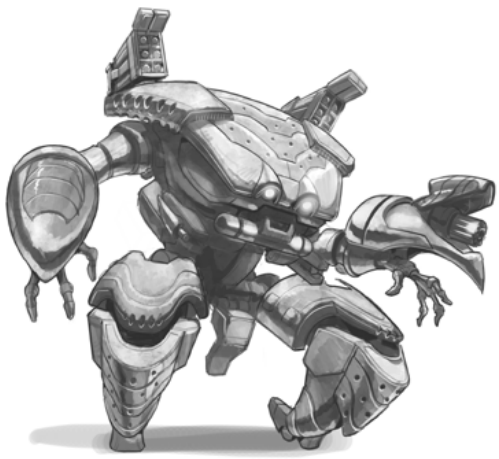
Standard Features

The following features are considered standard on nearly all golemmech suits.

- **Alarm System:** The suit has an alarm system against unauthorized access or activation. A successful Lockpicking roll at −4 overcomes a standard alarm.
- **Anti-Accident System:** Uses airbags, fire-retardant foam, anti-skid brakes, gyroscopic stabilizers, and other safety features to improve a driver's chances of surviving or averting accidents, reducing collision damage by half. Further, the operator gains +2 on Driving or Pilot rolls to perform Hard Brake and turning maneuvers.
- **Cockpit:** Nearly all golemmechs have armored cockpits, thus the pilots cannot be targeted by outside attacks until the suits have been reduced to Incapacitation.
- **Comlink:** Golemmechs are fitted with two-way cellular communication systems for communication anywhere on earth or in orbit. The communications are usually scrambled and require a Hacking −2 roll to decipher without the proper key.
- **GPS:** This unit records the user's position along with the paths taken previously. It grants +2 to Survival rolls and prevents the user from getting lost.
- **Life Support:** Seals the golemmech from environmental hazards, providing the wearer with breathable air, temperature control, and external pressure to assure comfort and survival for up to eight hours, enabling the golemmech to function in deep sea, outer space, or any point in between.
- **Remote Shutdown:** Golemmechs normally come with a remote shutdown switch to turn them off from practically anywhere on the planet or in orbit (assuming no signal interference). Most owners keep the device somewhere safe, though the manufacturer also keeps a copy.
- **Radiation Shielding:** The wastelands of Pakistan and the Middle East are still highly radioactive, as are numerous other fallout zones across the globe. This feature

provides the golemmech's pilot a +2 to Vigor rolls against radiation.

- **Sensors:** Golemmechs come with an array of sensors, such as radar, sonar, infrared, and motion detectors. The standard array gives the pilot +1 on Notice rolls involving sensor scans.
- **Targeting Computer:** Computer-aided targeting gives the wearer +1 to all Shooting rolls. The bonus does not stack with any other accuracy bonus from the weapon (a scope or laser sight, for example).
- **VCI Rig:** Golemmechs are designed to support the latest vehicle control interfaces.



ARES

The Ares is an aggressive design built for close and long-range combat. Its rugged gladiator-like frame, topped with a Greco-Roman headpiece/sensor array, sports the doru weapon system in the form of a 20-foot-long spear. In close combat, it functions much like its profile suggests (Str+2D8 damage). The opposite end of the pilum holds a high-powered gauss rifle that fires a stream of razor flechettes (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 3D6, AP 3, RoF 1, +2 Notice to hear its activation, Double Tap). The pilum has a recoil compensator, reducing all penalties for using its autofire feature on multiple targets. The doru is powered by the Ares armor via a tactile interface system built into the golemmech's powerful four-digit hands. The Ares also boasts a shoulder-mounted rocket launcher system (Range: 20/40/80, Damage: 3D8 explosive, Medium Burst Template, AP 15, RoF 1, Snapfire, HW).

- **Acc:** 4 **Top Speed:** 20
- **Toughness:** 25 (10)
- **Crew:** 1
- **VCI rig support**
- **Milspec:** Not available on the open market

AUGER AGT

The Auger is a multi-role golemmech seeing opportunities from infantry support to construction and rescue. The Auger's clunky design makes it look like a bipedal forklift or backhoe with huge, multi-jointed, three-fingered hands that can double as shovels. Given time and the proper equipment, almost any vehicle weapons system can be mounted on it, but none come standard.

- **Acc:** 4 **Top Speed:** 20
- **Toughness:** 25 (10)
- **Crew:** 1
- **VCI rig support**
- **Milspec:** Not available on the open market

THE CANCER

As its name suggests, the Cancer golemmech resembles a huge, vaguely humanoid crab. The Cancer sports heavy hard armor. Beneath the armor, along its back, displays a retractable missile bay loaded with a half dozen close-range missiles (Range: 24/48/96, Damge: 3D6, AP 12, RoF 1, HW). The crab also features a pair of high-powered rotary Gatling guns ringing

Table 4: 10: Golemmechs

GOLEMMECH	ACC/TS	TOUGHNESS	CREW	COST	NOTES
Ares	4/20	25 (10)	1	Mil	See description
Auger AGT	4/20	25 (10)	1	Mil	See description
Cancer, The	4/20	25 (10)	1	Mil	See description
Kensei Zero	4/20	25 (10)	1	Mil	See description
Mauler	6/30	20 (5)	1	Mil	See description

its thick-fingered hands at the wrist and forearms (Range: 30/60/120, Damage: 2D8+1, AP 3, RoF 4, Auto). Treat firing both simultaneously as multi-action.

- **Acc:** 4 **Top Speed:** 20
- **Toughness:** 25 (10)
- **Crew:** 1
- **VCI rig support**
- **Milspec:** Not available on the open market

KENSEI ZERO

Another sleek design by armaments and armor manufacturer Sudeki-Whyte, the Kensei Zero looks like a beefier version of their Yeoman line of power armor, and they are often deployed together in the field. The Kensei is agile, well balanced and flight capable. The design comes standard with a high-caliber anti-tank gun known as the Zero Cannon (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 3D8, Medium Burst Template, AP 20, Snapfire, HW). The Zero Cannon's trigger guard and grip is designed specifically for the Kensei's hands. This impressive gun is powered by the golemmech via a plug-in slot that marries perfectly with a retractable jack built into its palm.

- **Acc:** 4 **Top Speed:** 20
- **Toughness:** 25 (10)
- **Crew:** 1
- **VCI rig support**
- **Milspec:** Not available on the open market

AGA MAULER

Representing Act of God Armaments' first foray into heavy weapon's platform design, the Mauler is a beast of a golemmech, designed specifically for urban warfare. While lighter than other mechs, the auler is fast and versatile, able to navigate turns more easily than other golemmechs at the expense of protection. The Mauler sports twin liberator mini guns (Range: 30/60/120, Damage: 2D8+2, AP 4, RoF 6, Auto); one on each arm and mini missiles (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 3D6, AP 6, RoF 2, HW). The Mauler is designed to look intimidating, sporting a black matte paint job, spiked pauldrons that conceal the mini missiles, and a death's head.

- **Acc:** 6 **Top Speed:** 30
- **Toughness:** 20 (5)
- **Crew:** 1
- **VCI rig support**
- **Milspec:** Not available on the open market

CYBERNETICS AND BIOWARE

Need to upgrade your cerebral battle comp? Looking to get some dermal armor? Look no further omae; Malmart's got you covered! We've hooked up with top shelf multi-national corporations like Kenta Cyber Dynamics, SAGE IT and the cleanest street dealer in the sprawl, Doc Pango(!), to bring you the state of the art in cybertech!

KENTA CYBER DYNAMICS

For over 40 years Kenta Cyber Dynamics has been the leader in cybernetic research and development. Millions of people worldwide have benefitted from our cutting edge headware, bodyware, limb, and muscle replacements, and now you can too!

PRO GUARD™ SERIES PROTECTIVE BODYWARE SYSTEMS

Kenta Cyber Dynamics is pleased to unveil our "PRO GUARD™" line of protective bodyware systems!

PRO GUARD KEVLAR SUB-DERMAL PLATING

Perfect for the security guard and street cop, our light-weight Kevlar-lined ceramic plates fit snug over muscle tissue and protect against ballistics up to a .50 caliber round!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 points) Level 2 dermal plating (+2 Armor)
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 42,500 credits

PRO GUARD LEVEL II EMP SHIELDING

Our advanced EMP shielding uses advanced polymers to further increase protection from the debilitating effects of an EMP weapon.

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 points) Advanced EMP shielding (+4 Armor for purposes of resisting damage from an EMP weapon)
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 42,500 credits

PRO GUARD STANDARD EMP SHIELDING

Your cyberware is important, and expensive. Protect your investment from the debilitating effects of an EMP weapon with PRO GUARD™ standard EMP shielding! The standard version lines critical cybernetic systems with thin aluminum and copper sheaths designed to absorb and bleed away electromagnetic energy which would otherwise fry your gear.

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 Point) Basic EMP shielding (+2 Armor for purposes of resisting damage from an EMP weapon)
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits

PRO GUARD SILICON BONE INJECTIONS

Popular with soccer moms, politicians, and media icons looking for trendy protection without sacrificing beauty and style, this eco-friendly bone reinforcement system consists of a series of injections of our patented super-dense silicon paste over bones covering vital areas of the body. The paste forms a molecular bond with the patient's bone structure, strengthening, and protecting against all forms of attack.

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 Points) Bone Reinforcement (+1 Toughness)*
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits

* Characters may purchase additional injections. Each additional injection costs 12,500 credits and adds an extra +1 bonus to Toughness, but also incurs an additional defect point.

PRO GUARD TITANIUM SUB-DERMAL PLATING

An upgrade over the popular Kevlar sub-dermal plating, these form-fitting titanium plates are the ultimate in commercially available ballistic protection! Each plate is custom-designed to fit your body!

- **Item Quality:** Hyperchrome
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (3 points) Level 3 dermal plating (+3 Armor)
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 50,000 credits

PRO GUARD TRACHEA FILTER

In this crazy world we live in, just walking down the street is enough to expose your body to countless toxins and airborne illnesses. You need to protect yourself and your family from these potentially lethal substances. In short; you need the PRO GUARD™ trachea filter!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) +1 to Vigor rolls against poisons, diseases, etc. transmitted by air.
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits

BIO-SOLUTIONS™ SERIES BIO AND CHEMWARE

When you chose to invest in one of our Bio-Solutions™ line of products, you're choosing the best bioware credits can buy. At Kenta Cyber Dynamics, we spend millions each year researching and developing the cleanest organ-replacement systems so you can rest easy knowing that if you need a new limb or kidney, you won't need to get on a long donor list. At Kenta Cyber Dynamics, we can clone one from your own DNA or if you wish, build it with our cutting edge cyber-technology. Our air filtration implants provide maximum protection against harmful toxins, gases, and air-borne diseases so common in 2088. Remember, for every problem there's a solution—a Bio-Solution!

BIO-SOLUTIONS ADVANCED MUSCLE AUGMENTATION

Want to look uber-cut? Want a rock hard six-pack? You need our advanced muscle augmentation package! Our Bio-Solutions™ advanced muscle augmentation adds a measurable increase in power, not to mention unbelievable definition and tone to your musculature. It's perfect for football players, body builders, pro wrestlers and Kalvin Kreme models!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 points) The character's Strength increases by 2 die types (or to d12+2 if exceeding d12).The character can carry 6 times his Strength Die in lbs. without incurring any penalties.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to Bio-trauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 42,500 credits

BIO-SOLUTIONS BOOSTED REFLEXES

Tired of getting geeked in Blood Throne Online because you were too slow to avoid your opponent's battle axe? Want to be nothing more than a blur in your rival's targeting sights, but don't want invasive surgery? Then you need Bio-Solutions™ boosted reflexes! For the low cost of 25,000 credits, you receive

a series of injections that increase hand-eye coordination, jack up your visual acuity and generally increase your reflexes to nearly twice what they were!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) The character gains a +1 bonus to her Parry attribute.
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 to Bio-trauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits

BIO-SOLUTIONS BOOSTED IMMUNE SYSTEM

Planning a trip to the wastelands? Be sure you protect yourself against the myriad diseases in the wild by boosting your immune system! This one-time injection super-charges your body's ability to fight off disease so you don't have to worry about catching some nasty bug and getting sent to a quarantine zone when you return to the sprawl!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 Point) +1 Vigor rolls to resist the effects of disease.
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 to Bio-trauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits

BIO-SOLUTIONS BASIC MUSCLE AUGMENTATION

Popular with astronauts returning from deep space missions, our basic muscle augmentation package helps these courageous individuals recover from the atrophic effects of prolonged immersion in a zero-gravity environment. Remember, for every problem there's a solution—a Bio-Solution!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) Increase users Strength attribute by 1 die type (or d12+1 from d12).
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 penalty to Bio-trauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits

BIO-SOLUTIONS NANOWEAVE MUSCLE AUGMENTATION

Those of you serving in the military, as corporate security, bounty hunters or in some other high threat profession know that sometimes your life depends on being in top physical condition. Our Bio-Solutions™ nanoweave muscle augmentation is designed with you in mind. We start with muscle fibers cloned directly from your DNA and then, using our patented nano-induction technology, we tightly weave additional layers of cultured muscle tissue from primates to create a hybrid strain three times stronger than the average human!

- **Item Quality:** Hyperchrome
- **Availability:** Regulated
- **Functions:** (3 points)Increase users Strength attribute by 3 die types (or d12+3 max).
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 Penalty to Bio-trauma rolls.)
- **Cost:** 75,000 credits

BIO-SOLUTIONS TAILORED ANTIBODIES

A step above our Bio-Solutions™ Boosted Immune System, these tailored antibodies strengthen your body's ability to fight off disease and also work against various toxins!

Item Quality: Hyperchrome

- **Availability:** Regulated
- **Functions:** (2 points) +2 to Vigor rolls against poisons and diseases transmitted through physical contact.*
- **Defect Points:** 0 (No penalty to Bio-trauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 50,000 credits

* Does not stack with the Bio-solutions Boosted Immune System bioware.

BIO-SOLUTIONS TAILORED ORGANS

When you need an organ transplant and don't have time to wait through a lengthy donor selection process, we urge you to take a look at our Bio-Solutions™ line of tailored organs! Our organs are cultured from your DNA and grown in Level 4 certified Embryonix™ vats to ensure the best possible match for your body!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 points) Tailored organs provide a +1 on Vigor rolls when rolling on the Incapacitation Table and +4 on Vigor Rolls when rolling Vigor for the second time on a Failure effect of the Incapacitation Table.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 to Bio-trauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 42,500 credits

BIO-SOLUTIONS TAILORED PHEROMONES

Looking to attract the attention of that special someone? Or perhaps you need an air of menace to make would-be thieves think twice about stepping to you. Our Bio-Solutions™ line of tailored pheromones provide that extra edge you need!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) +1 to either Taunt or Persuasion rolls. The character must choose which.
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 to Bio-trauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits

BATTLEMASTER™ COMBATWARE

Looking for personal defense systems? Need a cyber arm because your meat arm got blown off on your last op? Look no further! Kenta Cyber Dynamics has the state of the art in personal weapon systems and replacement limbs! All of our cybernetic implants are 100% guaranteed to work, or your money back*.

**Guarantee void if implants damaged in sustained combat operations or covert missions against Kenta Cyber Dynamics.*

KCD STREET SAMURAI COMBAT ARM

Designed with the urban warrior in mind, our street samurai combat arm is built with lightweight-yet-durable plastisteel. Fiber optic relays synch up with state of the art neural processors to give you seamless response time and superior tactile sensation. The street samurai combat arm comes stock with retractable claws, plastisteel vambraces and a storage compartment.

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (5 Points) Retractable Claws Str+D6, AP 2, character never counts as unarmed, If a Fighting attack hits with a raise, characters add a D10 to their damage roll instead of a D6, Storage Compartment (can hold up to 1lb. of material), plastisteel Vambraces (+1 to parry), Standard Cyber arm (Character can carry 6 times his Strength die type in pounds).
- **Defect Points:** 5 (–5 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 95,000 credits*

* Want a less invasive system? Upgrade to a Hyperchrome version for 125,000 credits and drop the defect points down to 2 for a –2 to cybertrauma rolls!

KCD POWER MAN CYBER LEGS

The power man cyber legs provide increased power which translates to greater leaping ability! Perfect for professional basketball players and track and field stars!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 Point) The character may jump 2" horizontally and 1" vertically from a dead stop, or up to 4" horizontally and 2" vertically if she has first run at least half her pace.
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits*

* Want a less invasive system? Upgrade to a Hyperchrome version for 50,000 credits and drop the defect points down to zero for no penalty to cybertrauma rolls!

KCD TITANIUM RAZOR NAILS

Need an edge (literally) in a fight? Implant our Titanium razor nails! These ultra sharp razor nails are made from titanium and slice through bone, muscle, and even steel with ease!

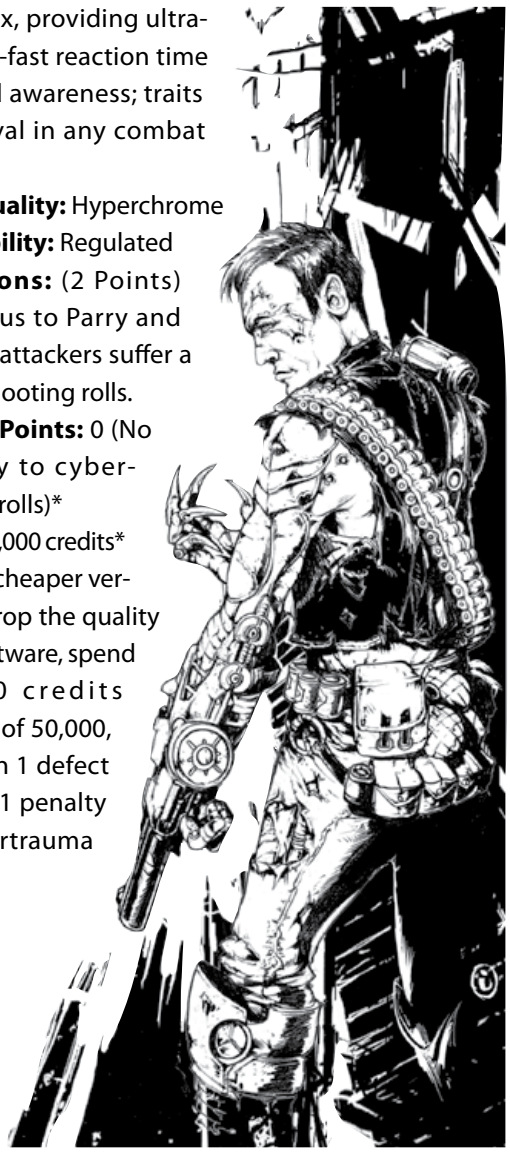
- **Item Quality:** Hyperchrome
- **Availability:** Regulated
- **Functions:** (1 Point) Str+D4, If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters add a D8 to their damage roll instead of a D6.*
- **Defect Points:** 0 (No penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 50,000 credits

KCD QUICKSILVER REFLEX ENHANCERS

The Kenta Cyber Dynamics reflex enhancement system connects your body's nervous system to a powerful neural processor located in the motor center of the cerebral cortex, providing ultra-smooth, nano-fast reaction time and increased awareness; traits vital to survival in any combat situation.

- **Item Quality:** Hyperchrome
- **Availability:** Regulated
- **Functions:** (2 Points) +1 bonus to Parry and ranged attackers suffer a –1 to shooting rolls.
- **Defect Points:** 0 (No penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 50,000 credits*

* Want a cheaper version? Drop the quality to Streetware, spend 25,000 credits instead of 50,000, but gain 1 defect and a –1 penalty to cybertrauma rolls.



SAGE IT AND TECHNICAL SYSTEMS

The creators of The Deep, SAGE IT and Technical systems is the undisputed leader in headware design and Advance TAP technologies. When you need a new cyber eye, a VCI interface or a next-generation TAP, don't go to imitators, come to the innovators; SAGE IT and Technical Systems!

T13 SKILLMASTER™ BASIC ACTIVE SKILL COMPUTER (BASC)

Need to learn how to pilot a Cancer golemmech, but don't have time to go through golemmech training? Want a quick boost to your hacking skills? Then you need the T13 SKILLMASTER™ Basic Active Skill Computer! By far our most popular model, the SKILLMASTER™ Basic Active Skill Computer (called a BASC) makes it easy to learn the skills you need to compete in this ever-changing world. The computer interfaces with your cerebral cortex and nervous system, controlling motor functions in your body based on programmed presets which are slotted into your brain in the form of digital chips. Skill chips sold separately.

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 points) Character can access one Agility or Strength-based skill he does not know at a rating equal to the chip he purchased.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 42,500 credits.*

* Want a less invasive system? Upgrade to a Hyperchrome version for 75,000 credits and drop the defect points down to zero for no penalty to cybertrauma rolls!

SAGE ITOMI-PRO™ CYBER EYES W/LOW LIGHT VISION AND FLASH COMP

Need a new eye? Why not add flash compensators and low light vision while you're at it? It's easy with the SAGE IT OMNI PRO™ cyber eye! Our standard version comes with flash compensators and low light vision, so you can see people sneaking up on you in the dark. Don't walk the streets of the sprawl without them!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 points) Night vision optics (The character gains the benefits of the Low Light Vision monstrous ability), Flash compensators (The character can no longer be blinded or dazed by flashes)
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 42,500 credits*

* Want a less invasive system? Upgrade to a Hyperchrome version for 75,000 credits and drop the defect points down to zero for no penalty to cybertrauma rolls!

SAGE ITOMI-PRO™ CYBER EARS

Our Omni-Pro™ cyber ears provide excellent sound quality and increased range. You can literally hear a heart beating 10 yards away!

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) Amplified Hearing (Character gains a +1 bonus to Notice rolls involving Sound)
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits.*

* Want a less invasive system? Upgrade to a Hyperchrome version for 50,000 credits and remove the defect point for no penalty to cybertrauma rolls!

SAGE IT ROADMASTER™ STANDARD VEHICLE CONTROL INTERFACE

Prepare for a driving experience unlike anything you've ever felt before when you implant our Roadmaster™ vehicle control interface into your body! The Roadmaster™ VCI (Vehicle Control Interface) merges you with your machine on a level previously not possible. Using state-of-the-art nano-processors and a variant of the TAP, the Roadmaster™ VCI allows you to merge your consciousness with the machines you pilot.

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market
- **Functions:** (1 point) A standard interface allows for direct control of one vehicle or remote operation of a single vehicle or drone. When interfaced with the vehicle or drone, characters gain the following benefits:
  - **Improved Acceleration:** The character can accelerate up to 1.5 times the vehicle's acceleration rating (round down). So a character interfaced with a pickup truck could move the vehicle up to 7 squares on his action instead of 5.
  - **Enhanced Control:** You only suffer a –1 penalty to Driving rolls when traveling over rough terrain.
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits.*

* Want a less invasive system? Upgrade to a Hyperchrome version for 50,000 credits and remove the defect point for no penalty to cybertrauma rolls!

SAGE IT ROADMASTER™ NOVASTAR VEHICLE CONTROL INTERFACE

The successor to the Standard Roadmaster™ VCI, our Novastar model adds increased control, improved acceleration and simultaneous operation of two vehicles or drones!

- **Item Quality:** Hyperchrome
- **Availability:** Regulated
- **Functions:** (2 points) The Hyperion Interface allows for direct control of one vehicle or simultaneous operation of one vehicle or two remote-controlled drones. When interfaced with the vehicle or drone, you gain the following benefits:
  - **Improved Acceleration:** The character can accelerate up to 2 times his vehicle's acceleration rating. So a character interfaced with a pickup truck could move the vehicle up to 10 squares on his action instead of 5.
  - **Enhanced Control:** You suffer no penalties to Driving rolls when travelling over rough terrain.
- **Defect Points:** 0 (No penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 50,000 credits*

* Want a cheaper version? Drop the quality to Streetware, spend 25,000 credits instead of 50,000, but gain 1 defect point and a –2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls.

SAGE IT LOREMASTER™ KNOWcomp

Need to brush up on your Japanese? Want a quick rundown of Detroit's Hell-zones? Perhaps you need a "cliff's notes" version of computer programming? Grab the SAGE IT Loremaster™ KNOWcomp and rest easy with the knowledge that anything you've ever wanted to learn is just a download away! The SAGE IT Loremaster™ KNOWcomp comes with a blank database. The database accesses Smarts-based skills (Knowledge skills, Streetwise, Taunt, Tracking, etc.) which are slotted into your brain in the form of digital chips. Loremaster™ KNOW – comps come with two chip slots allowing for access to two Smarts-based skills at a time. Knowledge chips sold separately.

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2) The character can access 2 Smarts-based skills at one time.
- **Defect Points:** 1 (–1 to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits.*

* Want a less invasive system? Upgrade to a Hyperchrome version for 50,000 credits and remove the defect point for no penalty to cybertrauma rolls!

NEURAL-MASTER™ HYPER TAP

Want an advantage on your opponents in Matrix of War™? Need more room for your slick programs? Are you looking for faster processing power? Look no further! The Neural Master™ Hyper TAP has the cutting edge technology you need to stand apart from the crowd.

- **Item Quality:** Streetware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market
- **Functions:** (2 points) +2 bonus to the Parry rating of the character's TAP, +1 bonus to Hacking rolls and 1 extra memory slot for programs.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits*

* Want a less invasive system? Upgrade to a Hyperchrome version for 50,000 credits and remove the defect point for no penalty to cybertrauma rolls!

WARLORD™ TACTICAL COMPUTER

Looking for that extra edge when the bullets start flying? You need the Warlord™ tactical computer. This headware system interfaces directly with your TAP, constantly feeding it information about your opponents.

- **Item Quality:** Hyperchrome
- **Availability:** Regulated
- **Functions:** (2 points) Choose one of the following benefits:
  - **Fighting skill benefit:** The character can make a Notice check as a free action. Success indicates the character has found a weak spot in his opponent's defenses and gains a +1 to Fighting rolls for that round only.
  - **Shooting skill benefit:** Modifiers to Medium and Long ranged shots are reduced to a –1 for Medium range and –3 for long range.
  - **Throwing skill benefit:** Merges Short and Medium range into Short range, and Long becomes Medium. Example: A throwing knife with Range 5/10/20 turns into 10/20/—
- **Defect Points:** 0 (No penalty to cybertrauma rolls)*
- **Cost:** 50,000 credits*

* Want a cheaper system? Downgrade to a Streetware version, spend 25,000 credits instead of 50,000, but add 1 defect point for a –2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls.

WARLORD™ COMBAT SYSTEM

Our Warlord™ combat system provides outstanding combat enhancement and protection when you need it!

- **Item Quality:** Hyperchrome
- **Availability:** Regulated
- **Functions:** (4) Razor nails (If an unarmed fightingattack hits with a raise, characters add a D8 to their damage roll instead of a D6), Amplified Hearing (Character gains a +2 bonus to Notice rolls involving Sound) Cyber arm (The character can carry 6 times his Strength die type in pounds), Level 2 dermal plating (+2 Armor)
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 100,000 credits.*

DOC PANGO!

Good news everyone! Your favorite street merchant, Doc Pango(!), is back with super deals on cyberware and bioware for your daily needs! Want a cyber arm, but don't feel like refinancing your doss to get it? No problem ami. Doc Pango knows that even though you work three jobs and have a family to feed, you still deserve to get the best cyberware your hard-earned credits can buy.

REFURBISHED HYPER TAP

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Our refurbished hyper TAPs provide top-of-the-line resolution, increased protection and nova fast response time.

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market
- **Functions:** (2 points) +2 bonus to the Parry rating of the character's TAP, +1 bonus to Hacking rolls and 1 extra memory slot for programs.
- **Defect Points:** 3 (–3 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 15,000 credits

REFURBISHED STANDARD VEHICLE CONTROL INTERFACE

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Our vehicle control interfaces merge man with machine like never before, giving you increased control over the drones and vehicles you drive.

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market
- **Functions:** (1 point) A standard interface allows for direct control of one vehicle or remote operation of a single vehicle or drone. When interfaced with the vehicle or drone, characters gain the following benefits:
  - **Improved Acceleration:** The character can accelerate up to 1.5 times the vehicle's acceleration rating (round down). So a character interfaced with a pickup truck could move the vehicle up to 7 squares on his action instead of 5.
  - **Enhanced Control:** You only suffer a –1 penalty to Driving rolls when traveling over rough terrain.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

REFURBISHED CYBER EYES W/LOW LIGHT VISION, FLASH COMP AND ONBOARD VIDEO

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Our refurbished cyber eyes protect you from the nasty effects of flash grenades while offering wiz night vision capabilities and on-demand recording when you need it!

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (3 points) Night vision optics (The character gains the benefits of the Low Light Vision monstrous ability.), Flash compensators (Character can no longer be blinded or dazed by flashes), Video recording capability provides for 30 minutes of continuous recording.
- **Defect Points:** 4 (–4 to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 20,000 credits

REFURBISHED CYBER EARS

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Audio quality so good you'll think people are talking inside your head, these refurbished cyber ears amplify your hearing so well you can hear a pin drop!

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) Amplified Hearing (Character gains a +1 bonus to Notice rolls involving Sound)
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

REFURBISHED CYBER ARM

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Our refurbished cyber arms give you the power you need and the quality you deserve!

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) The character can carry 6 times his Strength die type in pounds.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

REFURBISHED CYBER LEG

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Need a new leg? Don't want to sell your first born child to get it? No worries homey, Doc Pango's refurbished legs will get you up and running in no time!

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) The character may jump 2" horizontally and 1" vertically from a dead stop, or up to 4" horizontally and 2" vertically if she has first ran at least half her pace.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

REFURBISHED TITANIUM RAZOR NAILS

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Our titanium Razor Nails give you top-of-the-line self defense cyberware with a very low profile.

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters add a D8 to their damage roll instead of a D6.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

REFURBISHED TITANSTEEL RETRACTABLE BLADES

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Want to intimidate your opponent into submission? One flick of the wrist and 10 inches of non-sharp titansteel ensure that gang of chrome reapers will think twice about taking you on.

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (3 points) Str+D4, AP 2, character never counts as unarmed, If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters adds a D12 to their damage roll instead of a D6 and gains AP 3.
- **Defect Points:** 4 (–4 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 20,000 credits.

Body Chopper Gone Legit?

Doc Pango buys ad space in the Malmart online catalogue and presents himself to the world as a legit merchant, but the truth is that his ads are just a front. Doc Pango is a fixer working a larger angle than most of his kind. Whereas most fixers tend to keep their heads down, Doc Pango and his flunkies advertise worldwide in the quarterly Malmart catalogue, relying on hefty bribes to keep law enforcement agencies and megacorps from shutting them down. Most of Doc Pango's cyberware and bioware are used, having come from a variety of sources such as morgues, body chop shops and chrome reapers. For this reason, all of the cyber and bioware purchased from Doc Pango is Gutterware.

REFURBISHED CHEMICAL INJECTION SYSTEM

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Want a stable chem. injection system without paying through the teeth to get it? Our refurbished injection systems ensure you get the drugs you need, when you need them.

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) The injection system is capable of injection up to 3 different drugs into your body at a given time. It takes a regular action to activate. Drugs are sold separately. The system holds 5 doses before needing to be refilled.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

COPPER MUSCLE AUGMENTATION PACKAGE

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Our copper-level muscle augmentation package is perfect for those wanting a slight boost in strength. Construction workers love it!

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 point) Increase users Strength attribute by 1 die type (or d12+1 from d12).
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

SILVER MUSCLE AUGMENTATION PACKAGE

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! A favorite with bodybuilders and professional athletes, our silver-level muscle augmentation provides strength and muscle tone you have to see to believe!

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 points) The character's Strength increases by 2 die types (or to d12+2 if exceeding d12).The character can carry 6 times his Strength Die in lbs. without incurring any penalties.
- **Defect Points:** 3 (–3 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 15,000 credits.

GOLD MUSCLE AUGMENTATION PACKAGE

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! The "gold-standard" for runners and mercenaries everywhere, this muscle augmentation provides incredible power so you can rip through your enemies as if they were made out of rice paper!

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (3 points) he character's Strength increases by 3 Die types (or to D12+3 if exceeding d12). The character can carry 7 times his Strength Die in lbs. without incurring any penalties.
- **Defect Points:** 4 (–4 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 20,000 credits.

NANOWEAVE SUB-DERMAL ARMOR

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Our nanoweave sub-dermal armor provides solid protection for the cost. Great for executives and small business owners.

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (1 points) Character gains +1 armor.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

BALLISTIC SUBDERMAL ARMOR PLATING

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Gangs in sprawls across the world love the protection these sub-dermal ballistic plates provide!

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (2 points) Character gains +2 armor.
- **Defect Points:** (3) –3penalty to cybertrauma rolls.
- **Cost:** 15,000 credits.

TITANIUM SUBDERMAL ARMOR PLATING

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Making a run against a megacorp or a military facility? You'll need all the body fortification you can get ami. Our titanium ballistic plates can stop a .50 caliber round, just the kind of protection you'll need when you take on the really big jobs.

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market.
- **Functions:** (3 points) Character gains +3 armor
- **Defect Points:** 4 (–4 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 20,000 credits.

ACTIVE REFLEX ENHANCERS

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! Our refurbished active reflex enhancers amp up your nervous system, giving you superior agility and awareness—a must if you want to survive on the streets.

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market
- **Functions:** (2 Points) +1 bonus to Parry and ranged attackers suffer a –1 to shooting rolls.
- **Defect Points:** 3 (–3 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 15,000 credits

REACTIVE REFLEX ENHANCERS

Get the edge you need at a fraction of the cost! The perfect implant for the athlete wanting to jack up her reflexes without drawing the attention of the ACRC (Athletic Cybernetic Regulatory Commission).

- **Item Quality:** Gutterware
- **Availability:** Available on the open market
- **Functions:** (1 Point) +1 bonus to Parry.
- **Defect Points:** 2 (–2 penalty to cybertrauma rolls)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits

DRUGS

Looking to take the edge off, or perhaps get a little boost for a wild night on the town? Doc Pango's got what you need omae.*

**Malmart takes no responsibility for the consequences of using any of the products listed in this section. The effects of drugs are often unpredictable and can have harmful—even lethal—side-effects. User discretion is advised.*

Afterburn

Want nova-fast reflexes and energy that's through the roof? Then you want Afterburn, baby! One snort of this stuff and you'll be bangin' the walls all night!

- **Nicknames:** 8-Ball, Coke, Hyper-caine, Nova flake, Pile-driver, Rock, Snow Crash, White Girl
- **Duration:** One dose lasts 1D4 hours.
- **Methods of ingestion:** Inhaled, injected, smoked
- **Effect:** Harvested from coca fields in New Brasilia, Columbia, Bolivia, and Peru, and then mixed up in street labs across the world, Afterburn is a massively addictive, potentially lethal combination of cocaine, methamphetamines, and other stimulants. Afterburn boosts the character's die for Agility-related skills by one step (D4 to D6, D6 to D8, etc.) for each dose taken to a maximum of D12+3. The Swimming, Lockpicking, and Stealth skills are not increased when taking this drug. Additionally, the character gains a +1 bonus to opposed Notice rolls when opponents are sneaking up on the character. This bonus raises by +1 for each dose taken, to a maximum of +4. Finally, characters under the influence of Afterburn ignore penalties for a level of Fatigue equal to the number of doses they take. So taking 2 doses of Afterburn would allow the character to ignore two levels of Fatigue.

DRUGS IN 2088

Drugs are just as popular in 2088 as they have been throughout history. Indeed, in the grim, gritty world of today, the average person welcomes any chance to get some kind of relief from the stresses of life in the sprawl. Better to get stoned out of your gourd on a little sticky icky in the privacy of your squat than go on a raging killing spree in the plex', comprender mi amigo?

Of course, that's not always why people do drugs. Some people either can't afford or simply don't want hardcore cybernetics or bioware, but still want an edge over the rest of the pack. So they turn to drugs as a cheap (though temporary and often debilitating) way of boosting their reflexes or awareness up a notch. Some go for really hard core drugs that provide measurable increases to their strength, or deaden pain so they can get their job done. These kinds of effects invariably come with mental and physical side effects that can be debilitating, even lethal, not to mention addictive as hell.

BECOMING ADDICTED

To see if your character becomes addicted to a drug, make a Spirit roll at a penalty equal to the addictiveness rating of the drug. If the character fails the spirit roll, she gains the Habit hindrance at the level of severity (Minor or Major) indicated in the drug's description. If you already have the Habit hindrance, choose one of the drugs below (or some other drug you create) there is no need to roll to see if you become addicted to that particular drug.

- **Side effects:** Afterburn generally makes people twitchy and restless, as if they don't want to stand in one place for very long. Afterburn also tends to instill a false-sense of bravado in users, making them more susceptible to taunts and intimidation. They suffer a –1 penalty to Spirit rolls when resisting Intimidation rolls and a –1 penalty to Smarts rolls when resisting Taunts. The –1 penalties are cumulative for each dose taken. Additionally, when the character "comes down" off his high, he must succeed on a Vigor roll or gain a level of Fatigue for each dose ingested. These levels of Fatigue stack with levels already accrued before the drug was taken.
- **Addictiveness Rating:** –2 penalty to Spirit rolls to avoid becoming addicted for each dose taken within a 24 hour period. (Major Habit)
- **Cost for one dose:** 250 credits

Black Mist

The drug of choice for hackers, techies, byte builders and other brainers, Black Mist blows your mental synapses wide open, and jacks your critical thinking skills past the redline!

- **Nicknames:** Brain Bender, Mojo Mist, Poppers, Synapse[2]
- **Duration:** One dose lasts 1D4 hours.
- **Methods of ingestion:** Ingested via Inhalers or chem-delivery cyberware
- **Effect:** Black Mist is a long-lasting, powerful psychoactive inhalant made in labs all over the world. The active ingredients are THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol), LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide) and Amyl nitrite. The drug expands the neural pathways, speeding up thought processes and stimulating the logic centers of the brain. Black Mist grants a +1 bonus to Smarts-based skills such as Hacking, Knowledge (Programming), Repair, etc. The exception is the Notice skill, where they actually suffer a penalty (see below).
- **Side effects:** While under the effects of Black Mist, characters tend to be off in their own little worlds, thinking about whatever happens to be occupying their minds at the time. Consequently, they suffer a –1 penalty per dose taken to all Notice rolls involving sight, smell, and sound.
- **Addictiveness Rating:** –1 penalty to Spirit rolls to avoid becoming addicted for each dose taken within a 24 hour period. (Minor Habit)
- **Cost for one dose:** 150 credits

Sticky Icky

Lookin' ta mellow out and get high? You need Sticky icky! This sweet herb produces a smooth, paranoid-free buzz that'll keep you coming back for more!

- **Nicknames:** 420, Bud, Cannabis, Chronic, Herb, Marijuana, Skunk bud, Spliff, Weed
- **Duration:** One dose lasts 1D4 hours.
- **Methods of ingestion:** Smoking, Eating
- **Effect:** A mildly psychoactive drug, marijuana, or Sticky Icky as it is commonly called in 2088, is harvested from plants that grow all over the world. The active ingredient in marijuana is THC, or Tetrahydrocannabinol. Aside from recreational use, the drug is a strong pain killer commonly administered to terminal cancer patients. While under the effects of marijuana, characters ignore 1 wound penalty and gain a +1 bonus to resist Intimidation and Taunt tests for each dose they take.
- **Side effects:** Like Black Mist, the drug tends to send users off into their own head space. They suffer a –1 penalty to Notice rolls for each dose they take, and they tend to eat a great deal under the effects of this drug as well.
- **Addictiveness Rating:** –1 penalty to Spirit rolls to avoid becoming addicted for each dose taken within a 24 hour period. (Minor Habit)
- **Cost for one dose:** 100 credits

Euphoria

Need your fix? Got that urge to chase the dragon? No worries mano, we got what you need. Doc Pango brings Euphoria straight to ya from the poppy fields of the Chinese Mandarinate, that sweet, sweet china white!

- **Nicknames:** Black Tar, China White, Diesel, Dope, "H", Junk, Sex, Skag, Smack, Whore
- **Duration:** One dose lasts 1D4 hours.
- **Methods of ingestion:** Injection, snorting
- **Effect:** Euphoria is a potent narcotic, both mentally and physically addicting. Derived from morphine, the drug is a strong pain killer which induces a powerful sense of ecstasy in users. Characters under the influence of Euphoria ignore 1 wound penalty for each dose they take, and may not be intimidated or taunted.
- **Side effects:** The side effects of Euphoria are brutal. Characters automatically fail Notice rolls while under the effects of the drug, and when they "come down" from their high they must make a Vigor roll at a –1 penalty for each dose they ingested or become shaken for 1D6 hours.
- **Addictiveness Rating:** –3 penalty to Spirit rolls to avoid becoming addicted for each dose taken within a 24 hour period. (Major Habit)
- **Cost for one dose:** 400 credits

Tank-N-Spank

Lookin' to get into some serious "Once more into the breach" type of violence? Need ta keep that heart pumping for a few more critical ticks of the clock? Then you want Tank-N-Spank. The ultimate of the "power" drugs, Tank-N-Spank'll keep you on your feet and provide the power and speed you need to get the job done. But once it's done, you're probably done too. Don't say we didn't warn ya…

- **Nicknames:** Speedball Assassin, Graveyard Express, Last Breath, Overdrive, Rage, Roids
- **Duration:** One dose lasts 1D4 hours.
- **Methods of ingestion:** Injection, snorting, pill form
- **Effect:** Tank-N-Spank is attractive to users looking to push the boundaries of physical and mental toughness. Each dose of the drug allows the character to ignore the effects of 1 wound level and one fatigue level. Additionally, the character's Strength Die is increased one step for each dose taken, to a maximum of D12+3, and when the character hits with a raise on a fighting attack, she does 1D8 damage rather than 1D6. If the character has any augmentations that already modify this extra damage Die, increase that damage Die by one step (from D8 to D10, D10 to D12, etc.).
- **Side effects:** A physically devastating cocktail of methamphetamines, heroin, and anabolic steroids, Tank-N-Spank causes physical damage to the user to the tune of 1D4 per hour! So someone who takes a single dose of Tank-N-Spank that lasts 4 hours would suffer 4D4 lethal damage after the effects wore off!
- **Addictiveness Rating:** –3 penalty to Spirit rolls to avoid becoming addicted for each dose taken within a 24 hour period. (Major Habit)
- **Cost for one dose:** 600 credits

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

Workin' the back alleys and shadows of 2088 takes more than heavy armor, slick cybertech and powerful guns, ami. You also need the right gear to get the job done. Need a new Biometer? No problem. Check out these quality products from conglomerates such as Auburn Trans-Oceania, CHIMERA, Loftan Chemicals, Kensei, Crisis Team, Sanjan-Tempe-Warner group and many others!

Matter Assemblers

Malmart's pleased to bring you the latest matter assemblers! Each matter assembler requires a site license to use based on the type of product you wish to print out.

LOFTAN PERSOFAB

A personal fabricator uses laser printing to build up three-dimensional objects from plastic feedstock. Many homes have a small or medium fabricator to print out licensed products like toys, house wares, and the latest fad items. The Loftan PersoFab can make any item which will fit into a 10-centimeter cube. Simple moving parts are possible, but not motors or electronics. The plastic feedstock isn't very strong, and printed items don't last more than a few weeks. But who cares? When it breaks, just pay the license fee again and print out a replacement!

- Printing an item typically takes two minutes plus another five minutes cool-down time.
- Runs on house current
- Product licenses typically cost 1,000 credits per copy.
- **Cost:** 5,000 credits

KENSEI SHOP FABRICATOR

Most well-equipped workshops have a Kensei fabricator, a large printer capable of making any object up to 50 centimeters on a side. A shop fabricator can mix specialized plastic feed stocks, and has a high-powered laser, so printed items are fairly durable (about on par with molded or extruded plastic products). Shop fabs can manage precise and complex moving parts, but the user must install motors and electronics afterward.

- Printing takes about 1 minute per kilogram, with twice as much time for cool-down
- Requires a heavy-duty power connection
- Simple product licenses cost 5,000 credits, complex device licenses cost 10,000 credits per copy
- **Cost:** 15,000 credits

MECHATRONICS SUPER-FABIMAN

The Fabiman is a dependable, versatile fabricator for light industrial use. It has a 1-meter cubic printing bay, and has robot manipulators capable of installing wiring and motors in a plastic printed device. While a Super-Fabiman can make just about any product out of plastic, it can't make guns, lasers, or computer hardware.

- Printing takes 1 minute per kilogram
- Water cooling eliminates cool-down time
- Requires a heavy-duty power connection
- Complex device licenses cost 10,000 credits per copy
- **Cost:** 20,000 credits

PLASTIC FEEDSTOCK

Plastic feedstock for fabricators comes in bags of tiny granules which can be welded or cut by a laser. Cheap recycled feedstock is plain gray; medium-grade material can be dyed or left plain white; and top-grade feedstock is clear, as hard as ceramic, and can by dyed any color.

- Cheap feedstock costs 50 credits per 10 kilos
- Medium-grade feedstock costs 100 credits per 10 kilos
- Top-grade feedstock costs per 200 credits per 10 kilos

COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

Looking to outfit your team with the latest in communications equipment? No problemo! Malmart's got what you need!

Burst Transmitters

Need to send out a priority message with an extremely low probability of interception? Then you need a burst transmitter, omae. Malmart's pleased to present two quality burst transmitters that will get the job done, at a price you can afford.

COMSCIENCE SCT

Keep your information private with a ComScience Secure Communications Transmitter device! The device compresses all data at 1:1,000 rates so a minute of audio or video fits into less than a tenth of a second. Impossible to isolate or eavesdrop, even without additional encryption! A burst transmitter sends out data in short, high-density pulses, making it hard to pinpoint the source of a signal before it finishes. However, the very density of the pulse does make it "brighter" than normal communication chatter—your foes may not be able

to listen in, but they'll almost certainly notice that someone is transmitting in the general area.

- Range: 2 kilometers
- Batteries provide power for 30 signal bursts before recharging
- Transmits audio and video only
- Available at most consumer electronics stores
- Weighs 4 grams, dimensions 2 cm. by 2 cm. by 1 cm.
- Not waterproof
- **Cost:** 5,000 credits

INDIAN SPECIAL FORCES COMMUNICATOR

The same rugged, high-security transmitter used by India's legendary Garud Commando Force, now available thanks to a container that got misrouted to Singapore. The communicator includes military-grade encryption software, time-delay broadcast, and an emergency beacon. They don't make 'em better than these!

- 5 kilometer range
- Batteries provide power for 40 signal bursts before recharging
- Military-grade encryption provides protection equal to a Government Access Network (–6 penalty to attempts to hack the communicators firewall, a D12 and a wild die for system skill rolls)
- Transmits one minute of audio and video per burst
- Can also link to a pocket computer to send up to 10 megabytes per burst
- Internal recorder and timer allow it to send messages automatically at a preset time
- Weighs 8 grams, dimensions 2 cm. by 4 cm. by 1 cm.
- Fully waterproof and shock-proof (Toughness 2)
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits

Micro-Transceivers

Sometimes the mission demands stealth; a feat not so easily accomplished when you're lugging around 50 lbs of communications equipment and other gear. For those times when you need to travel light but maintain constant communication with your team, use one of the following micro-transceivers!

COMSCIENCE MTS

Now being fully wired in doesn't mean you have to carry an awkward handset, or look like a geek with an ear-bud. The MTS sticks to your skin behind either ear, and is a fully-functional audio transmitter-receiver. Available in a variety of skin tones. Each is good for 12 hours of use, and when you're done just toss it in the trash!

- 10 meter range (can piggyback on any local wireless network)
- Batteries provide power for 12 hours.
- –4 to any attempt to spot visually
- Microphone picks up sound by bone conduction; cannot hear nearby sounds
- **Cost:** 500 credits

DIANSHENG INDUSTRIES "PIYIN"

Top-quality stick-on communicator blends automatically with any surface. Solar-powered, reusable, extended signal range.

- 100 meter range (and can link into any local network)
- Solar-powered; works indefinitely if it can get an hour of sunlight per day
- Color-changing material matches whatever surface it's stuck on (–5 to spot visually)
- Fully waterproof
- Picks up sound by bone conduction
- Adhesive typically lasts 2 weeks
- **Cost:** 1,000 credits

Subvocal Microphones

Need to get out an important message to your team, but you can't get anywhere private? The you need a subvocal microphone.

COMSCIENCE SMS

Sometimes you don't want everyone hearing what you have to say. The Subvocal Microphone System combines Comscience micro-transmitter technology with state-of-the-art subvocal voice recognition. Just stick it to your throat by the larynx and your slightest whisper becomes clear audio signal! Fully compatible with the Comscience MTS for an invisible, hands-free communication system!

- 10 meter range (can piggyback on any local wireless network)
- Batteries provide power for 12 hours
- –3 to any attempt to spot visually
- Microphone picks up whispered speech and transforms it to standard diction
- Transmitter only; requires a transceiver to receive
- **Cost:** 5,000 credits

GRU "GHOST" SILENT COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

The Russian GRU is still the world's premier covert intelligence service, and their agents require the best. The Ghost system uses sophisticated neural-impulse detection to read speech even when no sound at all escapes your lips, and its neural-induction speaker creates sound only inside your head. You can carry on a conversation in complete silence. Compatible with most communication devices.

- 30 meter range (can piggyback on any local wireless network)
- Batteries provide power for 24 hours
- −3 to any attempt to spot visually; cannot be heard
- Neural sensor picks up speech only; cannot hear any local sounds
- Small flesh-colored disks adhere to larynx and behind one ear
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Need to resupply your medical supplies after the last op? Malmart's got everything from handy Stim patches to biometers and even fully-stocked mobile trauma units!

DRUG PATCH

Most emergency drugs are now packaged as "slap and forget" skin patches about 2 centimeters across. They are color-coded by the type of medication (antibiotic, antitoxin, stimulant, tranquilizer, etc.) and have the drug name printed in large clear letters. The one-size-fits-all nature of emergency patches does have drawbacks. It's hard to measure out a precise dosage, and well-meaning amateurs often overdo it. Administering a patch to an unwilling patient requires a successful Touch Attack, and there is a −4 penalty to hit bare skin unless the individual is very scantily dressed. Putting a patch on someone without them noticing requires a Raise on a Stealth roll in addition to the Touch Attack.

- −2 on medical skill rolls due to imprecise dosage
- +1 to Notice patches
- **Cost:** 200 credits

STIM PATCH

A common variety of drug patch which has migrated from medical to street use. Stim patches contain a jolt of epinephrine, ampakine, and dopamine. They come in two types. Trauma patches (color-coded black and yellow, hence the street name "cobras") deliver the whole dose at once. Therapy patches (colored gray and yellow) are time-release. Most of the "cobra" patches sold on the street are actually time-release patches with the black color added by marker.

- Therapy patches give +1 to Vigor and Agility rolls for 4 hours
- Trauma patches give +3 to Vigor and Agility for 1 hour
- After a Trauma patch wears off the patient is at −2 Vigor for 2 hours
- **Cost:** 200 credits per dose for therapy patches, 400 credits for cobras

STUN PATCH

Tranquilizing drug patches are used in psychiatric treatment, by repressive regimes and corps too savvy to just shoot their enemies, and (of course) by hard-partying idiots looking for a new high. Time-release tranquilizer patches are color-coded gray and blue, while fast-acting doses are black and blue. (Which leads to any number of annoying pop-culture references to being "beaten.") Note that even the fast-acting patches aren't instant: anyone dosed with a Stun patch rolls Vigor each round with a cumulative −1 per round penalty, and remains conscious until they fail the Vigor roll. The danger of an overdose is significant: once the drug takes effect, roll Vigor at −2; on a failed roll the patient's Vigor drops by 2 die levels for D4 days, and if this drops Vigor below D4 then death results.

- Unconsciousness lasts 2D6 hours
- **Cost:** 200 credits

CALIBRATING DRUG PATCH

In an effort to fix the problems with over – or under-dosing resulting from the use of drug patches, several pharmaceutical firms have come up with calibrated patches. These are strips, typically 1 cm. wide and 5 to 10 cm. long. The person administering the drug applies the patch, then runs a thumbnail or spoon along the strip to set the correct dosage based on the patient's size and condition. They are considerably more expensive than plain patches, but there is no skill penalty, either. It is impossible to administer a calibrated patch without the subject's noticing.

- No penalty to Healing skill
- No risk of overdose
- **Cost:** 400 credits

MILITARY ANTIDOTE PATCH

The list of toxins used commonly as weapons isn't that long, and in many cases the same antidote counters a whole family of contact or inhalation agents. On the chemical-warfare battlefield, seconds count. Most armed services now issue

soldiers a stick-on antidote strip, typically attached to the back of the calf or the inside of the forearm. The outer surface is a gas-detection strip, which changes color on exposure to various chemical agents. The soldier simply presses firmly against the section which has changed color to release the appropriate antidote.

- +2 to Healing rolls against chemical warfare
- **Cost:** 300 credits

EMERGENCY SUPPORT PATCH

A standard part of any medical kit, an emergency support patch is a combination wound dressing and drug patch. The user simply peels off the sterile backing and slaps it over the wound. Emergency Support Patches (known in the trade as "greens" or "post-its") are typically 5 cm. square and colored fluorescent green. The bandage is impregnated with antibiotics, stimulants to ward off shock, topical painkillers, and coagulating agents to stop bleeding. A great many doctors hate the patches, because some injured patients simply slap one on and never seek treatment until undetected damage or infection puts them at risk of death. Teenagers have been known to abuse the patches, slapping them on for the rush of euphoria from the mix of painkillers and stimulants.

- +2 to Healing rolls to treat injuries
- **Cost:** 300 credits

Biometers

Is your Old biometer broken? No worries amigo. Malmart's got the S.O.T.A in biometer technology. These biometers are guaranteed to hold up under battlefield conditions, or your money back!

BIODESIGN BIOPROBE

The BioDesign BioProbe is a multifunction medical sensor in the form of a flexible cuff which wraps around the patient's wrist, ankle, or neck. It must be applied to bare skin, as there are tiny needles which must get to the sub-dermal layer. The BioProbe reads temperature, pulse, blood pressure, blood oxygen level, blood sugar, and red blood cell count. At most clinics and hospitals, a BioProbe or similar device goes onto each patient as soon as they come in the door, and stays on until they are discharged, doubling as a patient identity bracelet.

- Visual display and can relay data to hospital network
- +1 bonus to Healing skill rolls made on the patient
- Negligible weight
- **Cost:** 1,000 credits

BIODESIGN OMNIPROBE

The OmniProbe is BioDesign's top-of-the-line medical monitor. Slightly larger than the BioProbe, it includes all the features of the BioProbe and adds chemical sensors to analyze drugs, toxins, and hormone levels in the bloodstream. An OmniProbe can also be used to monitor a subject's involuntary responses to questioning, like an old-fashioned "lie detector."

- +2 to Healing skill rolls made on the patient
- Effective Healing skill of D6 for diagnosis only (when linked to hospital network)
- +1 to any lie detection attempts made on a patient wearing an OmniProbe
- Visual display and can connect to hospital computer network
- Weighs 200 grams
- **Cost:** 2,000 credits.

MEDICAL ACCESSORIES

Need a good medical kit, or perhaps you wanna upgrade the medical facilities in your team's safe house? No worries. Malmart's got the tech to keep your heart tickin'.

MALMART HOME MEDIKIT

A cheap, low-end medical kit aimed at campers, paranoid parents, and business owners trying to comply with safety rules without spending much money. Includes a mouth shield for mouth-to-mouth respiration, some antibiotic dressings and sterile bandages, two emergency support patches, gloves, scissors, tweezers, and a packet of epinephrine patches. Everything is made as stable and long-lasting as possible so the kit can be shoved in a glove compartment and forgotten for up to 5 years.

- No penalty or bonus to Healing skill
- Weighs 500 grams, 10 cm. by 10 cm. by 5 cm.
- **Cost:** 200 credits

CRISIS TEAM RESPONDER KIT

The standard for civilian medical responders in most developed parts of the world. Includes a BioProbe monitor cuff, a hand-pumped ventilator with disposable masks, a pack of airway tubes, ten standard trauma patches, two rolls of tape and a dozen sterile dressings, a bottle of sterile saline, antiseptic spray, gloves, and face masks, steel trauma shears for cutting away clothing and debris, tweezers, a light, and a lightweight thermal blanket. There are drug patches for painkillers, antibiotics, stimulants, and anti-diarrheal agents.

- +1 Healing skill bonus

- Weighs 2 kilograms, 20 cm. by 10 cm. by 10 cm.
- **Cost:** 2,500 credits

BRAZILIAN PARA-SAR MEDIKIT

Brazilian Air Force search and rescue teams have become legendary for their skill, morale, and success rate at saving lives in impossible situations. Their standard medical kit is similar to the Crisis Team model above, but also includes an inflatable cast for broken limbs, spray-on bandages for large burns, extra painkillers, five military-grade antidote patches, insect repellent, two self-heating pads and two self-cooling pads.

- +1 Healing skill bonus
- Weighs 3 kilograms, 20 cm. by 10 cm. by 10 cm.
- Bag has Toughness 2
- **Cost:** 5,000 credits

MOBILE TRAUMA UNIT

Most ambulances now carry a Mobile Trauma Unit. This is an automated medical support device intended to stabilize a seriously injured patient long enough to reach the hospital. An MTU is a set of diagnostic patches, self-injecting tubes, and ventilators, typically deployed from a box built into the side or ceiling of the patient compartment. Free-standing MTUs resemble a stretcher bolted atop a footlocker. On its own, the MTU has a Healing skill of D6 to keep the patient alive and stable. A trained paramedic or doctor using an MTU can not only stabilize but treat injuries.

- +3 to Healing skill for trained users only
- On its own MTU has an effective Healing skill of D6
- Can only stabilize patients
- New skill roll needed every hour; after 4 hours impose a cumulative –1 penalty if no trained medic is on hand.
- 2 meters long, 50 cm. wide, 30 cm. high, weight 20 kg.
- **Cost:** 10,000 credits

PROGRAMS

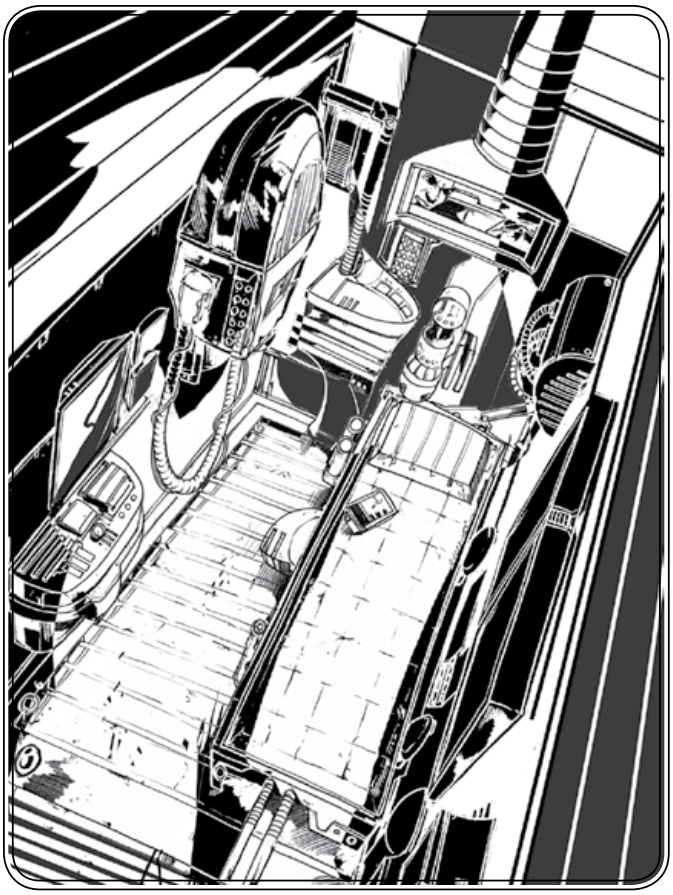
Need a better cutter program? Wanna beef up your TAP's armor? You've come to the right place amigo. Malmart has teamed up with the best software developers on the planet to get you the programs you need to tackle any problem The Deep throws at you!

EMERGENT TECH

Based in Seattle, Cascadia, Emergent Tech is on the cutting edge of software development. Our quality programs and personal firewalls are coded with the latest version of IDSMACK, providing you with top-notch armor programs, system utilities and offensive capabilities whenever you need them!

Defender Series-1 Buckler Armor program

- **Rating:** 1
- **Toughness bonus:** 1
- **Number of Uses:** 3
- **Trappings:** The defender series 1 armor program's stock avatar resembles a small shield.
- **Cost:** 4,000 credits.



Defender Series-2 Crimson Shield Armor program

- **Rating:** 2
- **Toughness bonus:** 2
- **Number of Uses:** 4
- **Trappings:** The defender series 1 armor program's stock avatar resembles a large, glowing red shield.
- **Cost:** 8,000 credits.

Defender Series-3 Mote of Flame Firewall

- **Rating:** 3
- **Toughness bonus:** 3
- **Number of Uses:** 5
- **Trappings:** The defender series-3 Mote of Flame firewall manifests as three tiny motes of brilliant red flame, continuously orbiting the character.
- **Cost:** 12,000 credits

Vigilant Sentry Rating 3 Alarm program

- **Rating:** 3
- **Die Code:** D8
- **Number of Uses:** 5
- **Trappings:** The Vigilant sentry program's stock avatar resembles a miniature soldier.
- **Cost:** 12,000 credits.

Vigilant Sentry Rating 4 Alarm program

- **Rating:** 4
- **Die Code:** D10
- **Number of Uses:** 6
- **Trappings:** The Vigilant sentry program's stock avatar resembles a soldier.
- **Cost:** 16,000 credits.

Vigilant Sentry Rating 5 Alarm program

- **Rating:** 5
- **Die Code:** D12
- **Number of Uses:** 6
- **Trappings:** The Vigilant sentry program's stock avatar resembles a miniature soldier.
- **Cost:** 25,000 credits.

Jata Technology

We brought you The Deep. With the advent of the Tendril Access Processor, we fundamentally changed the way you interact with the world around you. Now, with our new line of system software, we're helping you to master it. Jata Technology is pleased to unveil our System Mastery line of utility programs. From nano-fast database analyzers to trace utilities and system operations programs, Jata technology has everything you need to streamline the way your domain operates and keep it maintained.

Jata Technology System Mastery 2 Data Hound

- **Rating:** 2
- **Die Code:** D6
- **Functions:** (1): Find specific data files
- **Number of Uses:** 4
- **Trappings:** The System Mastery Data Hound spawns two digital hound dogs who immediately seek out the data they are instructed to find.
- **Cost:** 8,000 credits

Jata Technology System Mastery 4 Eye in The Sky

- **Rating:** 4
- **Die Code:** D10
- **Functions:** (2): Access security system, manipulate security system.
- **Number of Uses:** 4
- **Trappings:** The System Mastery Eye in The Sky resembles a sleek surveillance drone that flies through the domain, controlling various detection devices inside a building such as security cameras and motion sensors.
- **Cost:** 16,000 credits

Jata Technology System Mastery 6 Personal Assistant

- **Rating:** 6
- **Die Code:** D12+1
- **Functions:** (3): Access security systems, find data files, monitor communications systems
- **Number of Uses:** 8
- **Trappings:** The System Mastery 6 personal assistant looks like a well-groomed corp suit with a digital note pad and head set. The assistant happily jumps to perform assigned tasks.
- **Cost:** 24,000 credits

OBELISK COMPUTER SYSTEMS

At Obelisk Computer Systems, we understand the need for powerful offensive programs. In this day and age, having a good defense just isn't enough. When your corporate or government domain comes under attack by rogue hackers or agents of a foreign government, your security personnel need be able to meet the threat with the best offensive software available—Obelisk Computer Systems Software.

Obelisk 2 Katana

- **Rating:** 2
- **Damage:** 2D6+1
- **Subroutines:** Armor Piercing (2)
- **Number of Uses:** 6
- **Trappings:** The Obelisk 2 Samurai sword manifests as an ancient katana of exquisite craftsmanship. The program has an armor piercing rating of 2.
- **Cost:** 8,000 credits

Obelisk 4 Minigun Attack program

- **Rating:** 4
- **Damage:** 2D8+1
- **Subroutines:** Armor Piercing (4), Area of Effect (Medium Burst Template)
- **Number of Uses:** 6
- **Trappings:** The Obelisk 4 Minigun activates as a menacing looking 6-barrelled gatling gun. The program sprays a hail of digital bullets in a medium burst template. People caught in the steel rain take 2D8+1 damage. The program has an armor piercing rating of 4.
- **Cost:** 16,000 credits

DETERMINING THE COST OF A PROGRAM

All of the programs in this section have prices they sell for on the open market, but if you should want to buy a program not listed here, or at a lower/higher rating, simply create or modify the program using the programming rules in Chapter 2: Systems of Control and multiply the rating of the program by 4,000 credits to get the final price.

Obelisk 6 Kill Jar

- **Rating:** 8
- **Damage:** 2D12+1
- **Subroutines:** Partition subroutine, Area of Effect (large Burst template), Lethal Biofeedback
- **Number of Uses:** 10
- **Trappings:** The Obelisk 6 Kill Jar encases its victim in a transparent partition resembling an old mason jar. The kill jar also doubles as an area of effect program with a large burst template, so it is possible to trap more than one target in the partition at a time. The target she takes 2D12+1 damage every round she spends trapped in the partition. Trapped hackers must make a Hacking skill check to extricate themselves from the kill jar, while virtual entities (system programs, AI's, etc.) must make a check using the system dice of the domain they are running on.
- **Cost:** 32,000 credits

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

Need to get your MMO Fix? No worries omae, Malmart has the hottest online subscription services, ranging from MMORPGs such as Blood Throne online and Deadlands!

Want to get that hot, fresh, Meat Madness™ pizza delivered to your door in 30 minutes or less? You'll need a Dominator™ Pizza Platinum service contract ami. Remember, when you sign up for a Dominator Platinum service contract using the Malmart online catalogue, you get a FREE Super-large 32 inch pizza and a gallon of GUTbuster™ Cola!

Delivery Services

Like the man said, "Ya gotta eat," but do you always have time to go down to the local EAT OR DIE!™ stop-N-go shack to get the munchies you crave? Of course not! That's why Malmart's hooked up with the following companies to bring you these great delivery contracts!

Fat Sally's Ribs and Chicken

Want the best cloned ribs and chicken in the plex? Grab yourself some of Fat Sally's cloned pork spare ribs and fried chicken and you'll see why we were voted the best BBQ joint in Chicagoland!

Our juicy ribs are cooked to order and basted with tangy barbeque sauce then delivered to your squat ready to eat! Each order comes with two sides and fresh soy rolls (real flour rolls cost extra) and a ton of napkins! Check out our delivery packages below and choose a contract that best suits your needs!

- **"GOIN' SOLO" PACKAGE:** 50 credits per month gets you 4 deliveries of single serving meals delivered to your OOL! You can choose from a single slab of ribs, a 12 piece order of hot and zesty chicken smackers, 3 piece chicken meals or four planks of cloned catfish, Cajun fries and hush puppies!
- **"2 FER 2":** Bring a date to your munch-fest for just 25 credits extra! The 2 fer 2 deal gets you everything the Goin Solo package delivers, but with additional rolls and enough extra food to feed even the hungriest date!
- **THE CRUNCHCAR SPECIAL!:** A fan-favorite for all you jump-bike and road wars racing fans out there, the CRUNCHCAR special really piles on the grub! For 100 credits a month you get enough food to feed 10 of the most rabid racing fans in the sprawl! The package gets you one delivery per month to any location you choose! Perfect for tailgate bashes or gatherings back at your squat!

Dominator Pizza

30 minutes or less or it's FREE! That's our motto at Dominator Pizza, always has been, always will be. Our delivery specialists go through 13 weeks of extensive training under the most grueling urban combat and traffic conditions, honing their skills to a monofilament edge before we let them deliver you the freshest, tastiest pizzas and food accessories in the sprawl omae. All of our delivery vehicles are fitted with the latest S.O.T.A. in VCR technology, and our pies come wrapped in Volcano heaters to ensure your pizza is NOVA hot!

- **STANDARD DELIVERY CONTRACT:** 50 credits a month guarantees 2 large pies (or four medium-sized 3 topping pies) delivered to your crib within 30 minutes or less, or they're free! Build your own by choosing up to 5 toppings or try one of our *Specialteezzas* such as MEAT MADNESS, HAWAIIAN HEAVEN or SCRUMPTIOUS SUPREME! Extra soy cheese costs an additional 15 credits per pie.
- **CHROME DELIVERY CONTRACT:** 75 cred a month gets you all the benefits (and restrictions) of our standard delivery contract, plus an additional pizza and one order of Super-garlic soy bread each month!
- **PLATINUM SERVICE CONTRACT:** For 150 credits, you get an amazing six pies delivered to your OOL each month! What's more, we supply you with a 2-litre bottle of JOY-cola and your choice of our Super-garlic soy bread or ***Wild, Wild*** Buffalo Wings cloned from genetically modified buffalos!

EAT OR DIE!

Our stop-N-go shacks are everywhere, but sometimes even that amazing convenience just doesn't cut it. Maybe you're on a hot run and need some of our WIRED™ energy drinks or some munchies to quiet that grumbling stomach. Whatever it is you want, we got it. And we'll get it to you wherever you may be.

- **MANDATORY MUNCHIES DELIVERY CONTRACT:** 50 credits a month gets you all the munchies you need delivered to your squat two times a month!
- **2-BAGGER CONTRACT:** 75 cred a month gets you three deliveries as long as it all fits in two duraPLAST bags!
- **FOOD FOR A MONTH CONTRACT:** FOR 100 credits, we'll stock your fridge once a week for a month!

JALEPENO BOB'S MEXICAN GRILL

For over 20 years, Jalapeño Bob has brought you the best Mexican food in the sprawl. Now, we're bringin' it right to your door, fresh hot and spicy; just the way you want it! At Jalapeño Bob's, we know what good Mexican food should taste like. Our sizzling fajitas, tacos, enchiladas, and burritos are prepared using free-range cloned "Prime Angus" beef and vat-grown chicken.

Our spices are imported directly from Mexico City, and we grow our veggies in certified INSTAgrow™ agropods, ensuring the freshest, zestiest Pico de gallo you'll find anywhere in the sprawl! Each Jalapeño Bob service contracts includes two 1lb bags of complimentary soy chips and a gallon of our famous Flamin' Jalapeño Salsa!

- **TACO FEVER!:** 40 credits per month gets you unlimited deliveries of crunchy or soft tacos. Maximum 10 tacos per delivery.
- **DURANGO SPECIAL:** 50 credits per month gets you two 3-course meals complete with CARDIAC ARREST™ spicy steak nachos, your choice of entre', a slice of our mouth-watering Tres' leches cake and 2 sopatillas! Each entre' comes with rice and refried soybeans or borracho beans. Enough to feed 2 really hungry people or a family of four!
- **MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE:** 75 cred a month gets you three 3-course meals!
- **PERSONA GORDA FELIZ PACKAGE:** FOR 100 credits, we'll bring you one 3-course meal a week or a bag of tacos twice a week!

MAMA LING-LING'S NOODLE EXPRESS!

Want the best noodles in the sprawl ami? Look no further! Mama Ling-Ling makes the tastiest soy noodles and traditional Asian meals this side of Beijing! Try our Sichuan noodles, tofu noodles, or enjoy or savory spicy beef Ramen! Want some fried rice? Mama Ling-ling's gonna hook you up! Our fried rice comes with egg, broccoli, carrots, and is made with either brown or white rice!

Want something a little heavier?

Try any number of our authentic Asian creations including sushi, Mongolian beef, orange chicken, mandarin Kung Pao (Beef, Shrimp, or Chicken), Thai curry dishes, sweet and sour pork and many more! Choose from one of the following delivery contracts and start getting Mama Ling-Ling's noodles delivered to your squat today!

- **MAMA LING LING'S NOODLE BOWLS!:** for 25 credits a month, Mama Ling-Ling will deliver a bowl of hot-piping noodles (Choose your favorite style. Add beef, chicken, or shrimp for an extra 10 credits) once a week!
- **SKINNY HERMIT'S CHOICE!:** 50 credits per month gets you two meals complete with wonton soup, an egg or spring roll and your choice of steamed or fried rice!
- **SHANGHAI SPECIAL!:**: 75 cred a month gets you three 3 entre' meals!
- **HUNGRY FAMILY!:** FOR 100 credits, we'll bring you one 3 entre' meal once a week and four noodle bowls twice a week!

MMORPGS

Malmart's proud to bring you the hottest MMORPG titles of 2088!

BLOOD THRONE ONLINE

Can you survive the Age of Blood?

It has been ten years since Agärazôn the Betrayer opened the stone gates and unleashed war on the world. Ten long years that saw the ruthless Keza-Drak—monstrous invaders from another world—wreak havoc upon the free people of Simarra. The survivors of this age of blood have been driven to the brink of annihilation, scattered throughout the lands, forced to live as best they can in remote freeholds; tiny bastions of safety in an otherwise brutal world fraught with all manner of perils.

But hope is not yet lost.

Valiant heroes have come forth to fight against the encroaching darkness, bringing what comfort and hope they can to the dispossessed, wretched masses of the world. Refusing to simply lay down and let the forces of darkness have their world, these heroes bring the fight to the Keza-Drak and the minions of Agärazôn, fighting against overwhelming odds to

ensure that good does not vanish from the face of Simarra. Will you be one of them?

Over 20 million people across the globe have joined the fight against the minions of the Betrayer, and now you can too for the low, low price of 50 credits per month!

- **Cost:** 50 credits per month

DEADLANDS

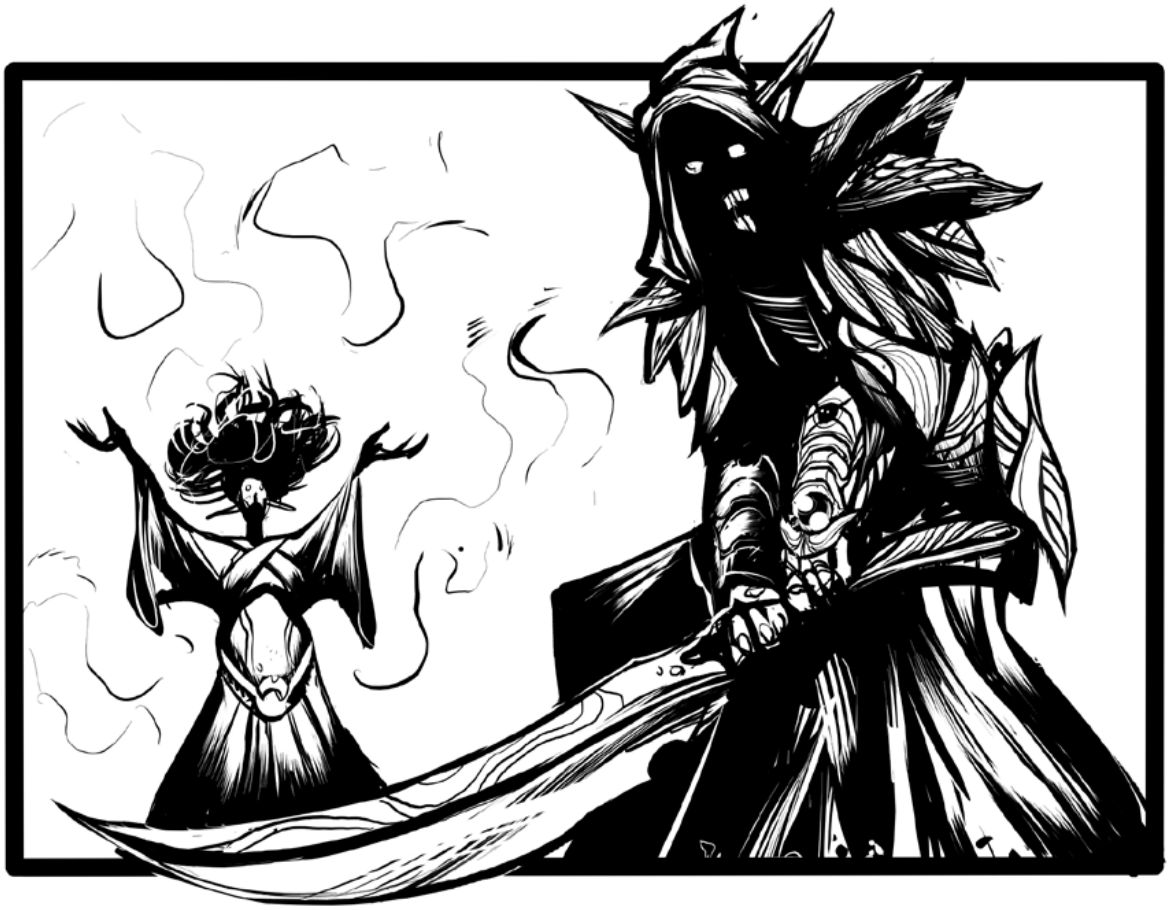
Welcome to the Weird West, pardner! Based in the Phoenix Free Zone, Pinnacle Entertainment Group™ brings you Deadlands™, a wildly popular MMORPG set in a exciting, yet frighteningly twisted version of the old west. In Deadlands, you'll get the chance to fight in the Great Rail Wars, explore The Maze; a cavernous land in what remains of earthquake-ravaged California! Seek your fortune mining Ghost Rock, a new fuel that powers the machines of the age. Make your way through a fractured, mysterious land as a gunslinger, a spell-slinger, mad scientist or even an Indian shaman!

- **Cost:** 50 credits per month

HELLFROST ONLINE

Enter the mysterious world of Rassilon, where the Hellfrost wind blows and ice and snow creep inexorably south. It is a world under threat of endless winter, a world where magic is unpredictable and horrors such as Hellfrost dragons, Hellfrost mammoths, Frost Giants and other fell beasts roam the lands. Created by the mighty Triple Ace Games, based in the U.K, Hellfrost was voted the best MMORPG of 2088! Grab a subscription today and see why!

- **Cost:** 50 credits per month



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"It was curious to think that the sky was the same for everybody, in Eurasia or Eastasia as well as here. And the people under the sky were also very much the same—everywhere, all over the world, hundreds of thousands of millions of people just like this, people ignorant of one another's existence, held apart by walls of hatred and lies, and yet almost exactly the same—people who had never learned to think but were storing up in their hearts and bellies and muscles the power that would one day overturn the world."
– George Orwell, 1984

CHAPTER FIVE: WORLD OVERVIEW

The world has seen many changes since the dawn of the 21st century. We've seen countries wiped from the face of the earth from nuclear warfare. Others have become fractured, rendered nearly impotent due to natural disaster and internal strife. Others have risen from poverty, disease, famine, and genocide to become major world powers. The following chapter takes a look at the world of 2088.

The Central African Union

In the wake of the Oil Crisis, the western world's neglect of the continent turned into complete abandonment. Deemed charity cases in a world no longer able to afford the luxury of altruism, many western pundits expected Africa to implode once the flow of relief stopped. At first, Africa suffered horrendously. AIDS, famine, environmental decay and brutal civil strife ravaged the continent. In time, the people of Africa forged their own solutions and became stronger than ever for the effort. The Africa that emerged from those tumultuous decades bore little resemblance to the poverty-stricken shambles of earlier years. Though still split into many competing nations, they share common interests, chiefly a disdain for those who had left them to fend for themselves.

Many of the continent's new generation of leaders, taking stock of their history and relationship with the outside world, concluded that they were better served following their own course. Several of these nations banded together to form the Central African Union, adopting a policy of near-total isolation behind what is euphemistically called the Ivory Curtain. Outsiders are permitted to travel to only a handful of cities within the region, most of them on the coast. Those seeking to brave the interior do so through private channels and must always be mindful of INS teams tasked with the protection of the African interior. Dedicated individuals, the Dakumbe Death Squads – as outsiders know the INS teams – are ruthless in their persecution of anyone caught inside the Central African Union without the proper credentials.

Africa exploits its divide from the rest of the world by positioning itself as the premier global banking and data haven. Anyone, regardless of their legal status in their native countries, may store their money, goods, or information in one of the banking conglomerates without fear of reports reaching the ears of authorities back home. Aside from banking and data storage, the cities of the Central African Union sometimes welcome people with nowhere else to go—for a price.

Many of the world's elite make a point of laying the groundwork for a comfortable retirement in one of the haven cities, just in case. The havens maintain a presence in every major city of the world, not just for banking and data storage but also, when necessary, to quietly and swiftly ferret a loyal customer away from his or her enemies. Of course, in the "TAPPED" world of 2088, no place truly exists separate from any other. Despite all the efforts to maintain secrecy, reports of African internal affairs still manage to reach the outside world.

While the Central African Union and other nations such as South Africa signed the Omega Protocols, precious few resources go toward the regulation of cybernetics within their own borders. Indeed, one of the most influential cyber-factions within African society – the Untari – spends most of their lives plugged into the virtual world. Neglecting their physical bodies, the Untari are committed to uncovering the mysteries of The Deep. Indeed, most dream of one day finally transcending their mortal shells to exist forever in a world subject to their own control. Perhaps the greatest programmers and information specialists alive due to instinct and training, many Untari actively support the idea of promoting a Singularity Event. Indeed, the Untari view a Singularity Event as a chance to engineer the next stage of human evolution.

Other groups are more skeptical of the underlying theory. They look upon the concept of a Singularity Event as a myth promoted to frighten an ignorant public or as the end of humanity. Those that do believe in the possibility of a Singularity Event keep a close eye on Africa, preparing themselves for a worst case scenario should one actually happen. No one, not even the Africans, charged with defending their continent from outsiders, fully grasp the potential repercussions of a Singularity Event. However, many world leaders lose sleep considering the dangers.

Hot Spots

Johannesburg

With a metropolitan population of approximately 18 million citizens, the sprawl that is Johannesburg is the biggest city in South Africa, and one of the largest on the African continent. With its vast disparity of wealth, Johannesburg is a microcosm of the nation. The majority of its citizens live in relative squalor while the rich enjoy the best that life has to offer.

Simulacrums have no rights whatsoever. Indeed, many simulacra are slaves, bought and sold on the open market, used in whatever manner the owner wishes. The city has a healthy black market. Those with enough money and the right connections can obtain cutting-edge cyberware smuggled out of Tokyo, the latest decryption and attack programs from the Republic of Cascadia, and even complete identities stored in any number of banks and data havens inside the Ivory Curtain.

Widely acknowledged as one of the world's forerunners in the fields of gene splicing and simulacrum production, South Africa's major conglomerate, Third Life Innovations (TLI), has made its name providing the world with genetic templates of exceptional quality, many of which find their way to Parisian and New York design houses. Additionally, Third Life Innovations has garnered worldwide acclaim through their humanitarian efforts to revitalize the populations of endangered species across the world, the result of which has seen a resurgence of creatures once driven to near extinction by The Death. Third Life Innovations has also made great strides in agriculture and pharmacology, developing hybrid strains of plants for use in agro-farms and medical facilities in underdeveloped countries across the world.

Lately, a rumor has been circulating through The Deep about a TLI project known only as Orion-4. The speculation is that Third Life Innovations has incorporated preserved Martian bacteriological samples obtained from the Chinese Mandarinate into their new line of simulacrum called the xenoborg™. If the buzz is true, the soon to be released xenoborgs are designed to serve a variety of purposes, the most common of which are combat and security. Many models are supposedly fitted with cutting-edge cyberware to increase their effectiveness in the field.

Third Life Innovations isn't without its fair share of rivals in the field of gene-splicing, however. Brazil and Korea are widely held to be leaders in the field. In recent years, companies from both countries have leveled charges of corporate espionage against Third Life Innovations, accusing the conglom of stealing patents on DNA sequencers and illegally accessing sensitive R&D materials, the contents of which are classified.

Mogadishu

Located on the coast of the Indian Ocean, the city of Mogadishu is the largest city in Somalia. An estimated 15 million people call the Mogadishu sprawl home. The nation's capital, segregated by tribal clans into four major sectors, surrounds the infamous Bakaara Market, one of the largest concentrations of illicit goods on the planet. Mogadishu seethes with tension;

each clan vying for control of lucrative sales from black market goods, including drugs, weapons, cybergear, bioware, and especially forged passports to allow foreigners access to the Central African Union. Many believe it is only a matter of time before inter-clan fighting erupts throughout Mogadishu. Indeed, many mercenary groups have come to the city in hopes of profiting from the impending violence.

Cairo

The City of the Thousand Minarets, Cairo is the largest metroplex in Egypt, boasting a population of some 24 million people of varying nationalities, many of whom are survivors of the Israeli-Muslim-Indian War. Today, Cairo is a popular destination for tourists looking to spend their vacation basking in the sun, swimming with genetically domesticated Nile fauna or sailing the Mediterranean and Red seas. The city boasts some of the most spectacular virtual museums as well as a number of top-flight software companies. In addition, Cairo is a quick jaunt to the recently rebuilt cities of Memphis, Karnack, and Luxor.

Timbuktu

Timbuktu, and its famous university, is perhaps best known as the cradle of the Virtual Age, and Kayin Courts' home away from home. It was through Court's original research at the University of Timbuktu that the TAP and the Living Sahara came about – both of which put much of Africa on even footing with the rest of the world. Today, the University of Timbuktu continues to exist on the bleeding edge of the hyper-real world as well as the secular-political one, with Dr. Courts serving on the Board of Governors. The board forms the core of Mali's government by academia described as everything from the most enlightened governing body in the world, to a façade obscuring the nation's passive elitist tyranny.

The Chinese Mandarinate

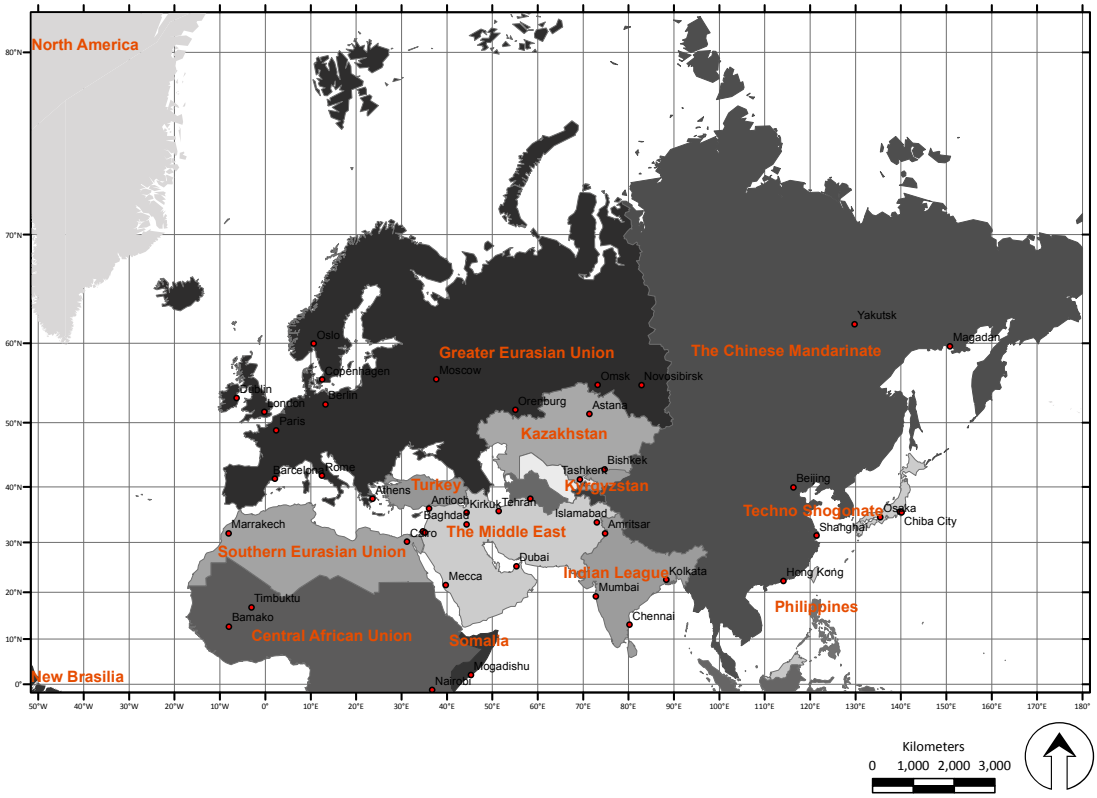
Following its decisive victories in the Bachelor Wars and the collapse of the United States, China found itself the pre-eminent world power, a status the nation retains even generations later. Though military might paved the way to its ascendancy, China's newly installed ruling class, the "New Mandarins," recognized it as an unstable foundation on which to build an empire. Rather than accept the expense of maintaining occupying armies and risk revolt during moments of weakness, they instead decided to legitimize their dominion over their neighbors, gaining consent, grudging or otherwise, for their rule. The Death, a period when sheer survival took precedence over all other concerns, helped to cement this relationship by making China's vassal states look to it as their natural leader in times of crisis.

The Chinese Hegemony offers itself up as a land of baffling contrasts. Great cities, endowed with cutting-edge technologies and the most modern features running like clockwork, stand in plain view of farmers tilling the soil with tools and methods little different from that of one hundred generations earlier. A culture that embraces the reckless advance of progress while still revering tradition and continuity, China and those states within its sphere of influence consciously adopt an antiquarian veneer upon even the most sophisticated technology. To them, form and function exist as an efficient whole, and the aesthetic of beauty and order lies at the heart of utility. The rule of order is sacrosanct.

Today, China's neighbors orbit the superpower like planets around a sun, bound by treaties, transnational organizations, and a shared ideology that always leaves China the senior partner. Each year the most promising students from these countries earn scholarships to study in Chinese EDU-centers and compete in the grueling placement exams that determine, among other things, who earn the rank of mandarin. Those who score in the highest percentile become ranking bureaucrats within their home regions, and promote China's interests far more effectively than outsiders ever could. Those with lower scores are placed into programs and careers better suited to their talents. The lowest scorers have no more to look forward to than a future as a minor functionary in one of the many state-run corporations.

Today, thanks to social engineering and Korean-developed genetics programs, Chinese parents have access to some of the best overall prenatal genetic counseling. Much of it is geared to seeing their child has the predisposition necessary to pass the placement exams, but some of it is tailored to correcting the gender imbalance of yesteryear. The state issues gender quotas to families based on a number of societal and demographic criteria, effectively controlling the sex of a child prior to birth. It also included a provision for the creation of a "third sex" – a caste of genderless eunuchs, engineered from birth to lose their gender identity at the onset of puberty. The theory goes that such individuals not only help to curb population growth, but can also more fully concentrate on matters of business and state rather than carnal pursuits.

The Chinese Mandarinate



Hot Spots

Beijing

The beautiful spire-filled city of Beijing is the seat of the Mandarinate, capital of China, and home of the Celestial Bureaucracy, the central repository of knowledge. The vast data store is rumored to include the most accurate GISP on the planet with up-to-the-minute representations of every item in China's urban centers larger than a cat. The project's ultimate goal is to perfectly simulate and account for everything, thereby making it a perfect overlay copy of the real world and, according to the Mandarins, create unity between heaven and earth. The infrastructure of the city has been redesigned since the advent of the New Mandarin Period to run like fine clockwork. Even weather patterns around Beijing are controlled by the local Weather Modification Office, which uses cloud seeding to affect local rain patterns for the good of the region.

Hong Kong

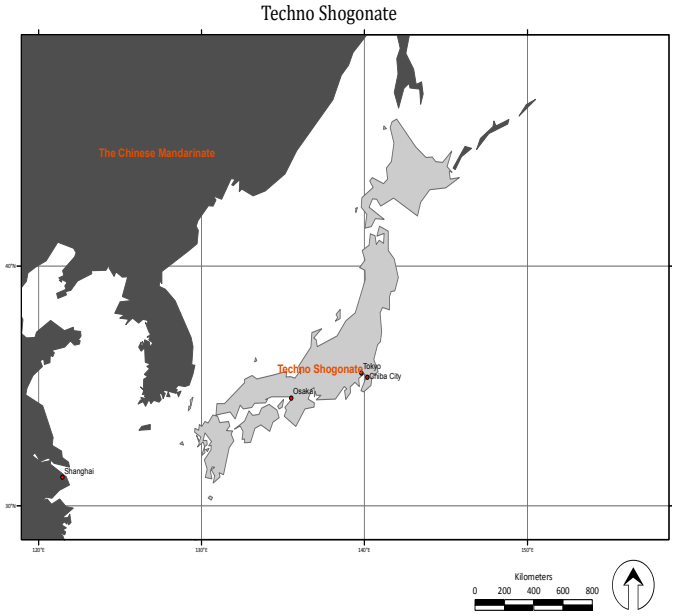
One of China's two great economic powerhouses (along with Shanghai), Hong Kong is also the traditional home to the Chinese entertainment industry, software development, manufacturing, and organized crime. While many triad societies fled to Australia, the Republic of Cascadia, Brazil, Sudan, and the EU during the Mandarinate crackdown on organized crime, others dug in and waited, knowing that under a regime as tightly controlled as the one the Mandarins promised, there would be opportunity amid those seeking release. Several highly secretive societies that have integrated themselves into various international business interests, as well as several dozen smaller street-level gangs that traffic in drugs, info-piracy, protection rackets, and gambling control Hong Kong.

Shanghai

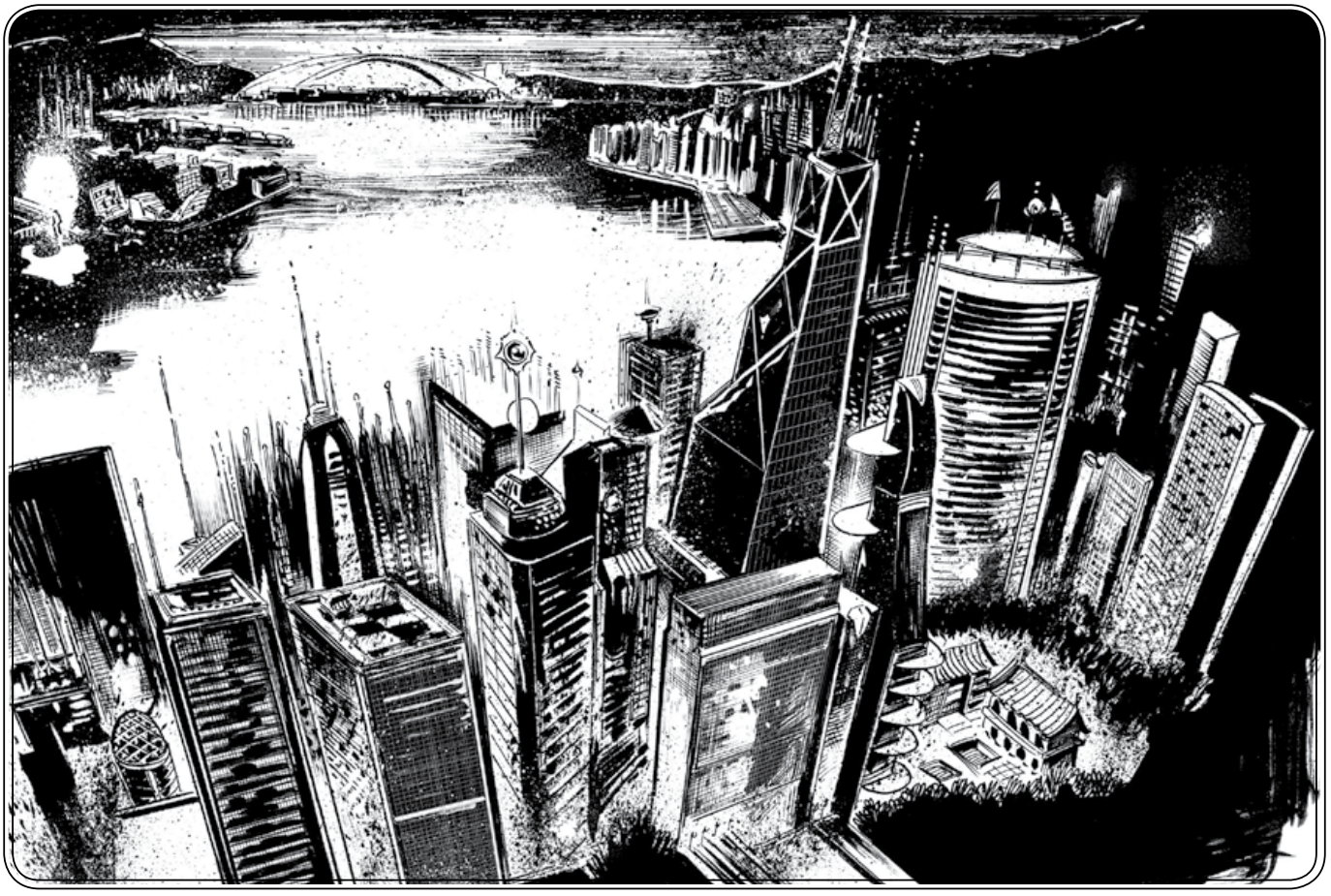
One of the most modern and eclectic cities on earth, Shanghai is home to more than 28 million residents. The largest port city in the world, Shanghai has often been compared to the New York of old and is an economic hub of China rivaled only by Hong Kong. Things in Shanghai always seem to move at lightning speed. Unlike Hong Kong, the triads here are mostly neighborhood-level gangs without much of a footprint on the primarily state-run corporate scene.

Techno-Shogunate Japan

Since 2031, Japan has been in the control of a military provisional government popularly known to outsiders as the New Shogunate or Techno-Shogunate, and simply the Bakufu. Overall, the Bakufu has been a benevolent dictatorship with the moderate general Hiro Minotoro (now age 98) at its head. Minotoro, however, has seen increasing pressure from both the powerful corporate sector and hawkish hardliners within his own government and military. Both groups see Minotoro's declining health and lack of an obvious successor as their chance to take the reins. Because of this, Japan's neighbors (particularly those allied with the Chinese Mandarinate) keep a wary eye on the island nation.

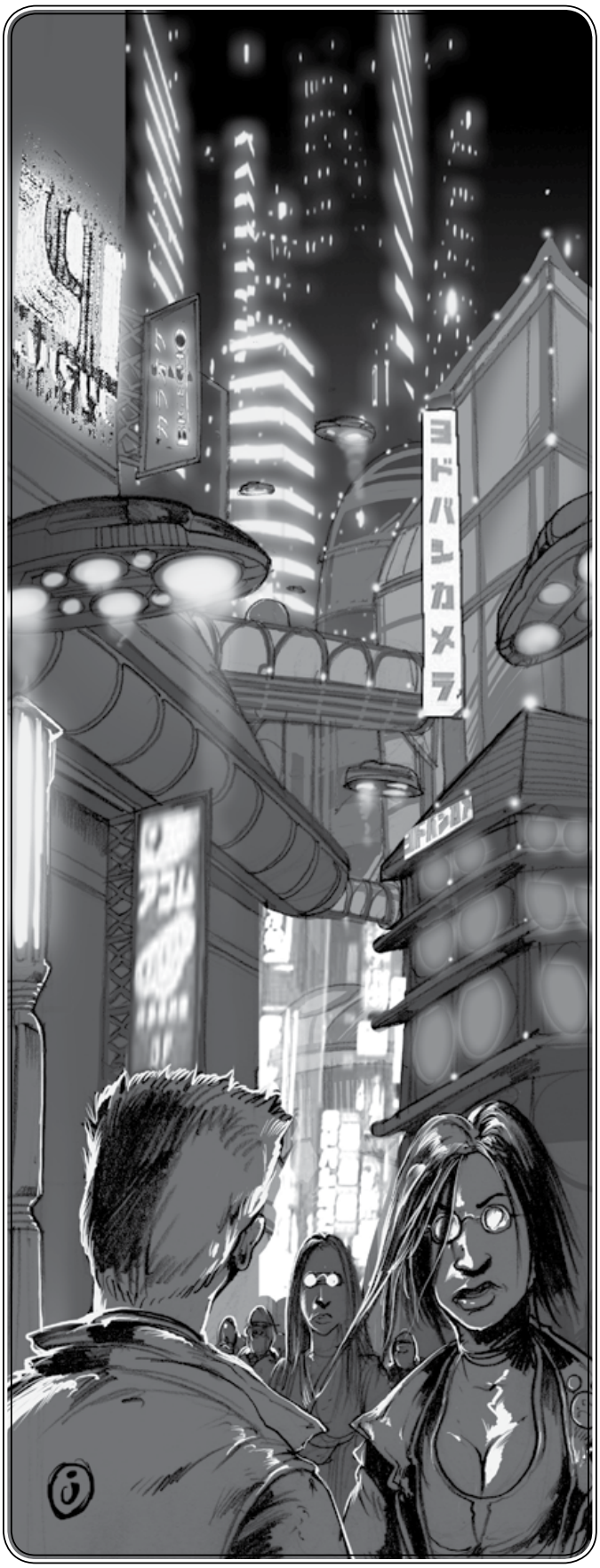


Japan's human population is among the oldest in the world and has been for several decades. Because an elderly population is not conducive to neither economic nor military growth, Japan teamed with several Brazilian bio firms to produce advanced simulacra in order to help maintain the countries' infrastructure as its older residents retired. By 2071, twenty-one years after the initial agreement, there were more Brazilian-built simulacra living in Japan than actual Japanese. By then the bio-forms had become a working part of society. By 2075, more and more research was dedicated to bioform life extension, as the average 10 year life cycle of the simulacra began to be seen more and more as a detriment to Japanese society as a whole



by causing a generational discontinuity. The shorter-lived simulacra often had trouble grasping the historical context of popular culture.

Eventually, stopgap measures were put in place for incremental life extension, allowing Japanese simulacra to live much longer. Presently the lifespan of a Japanese simulacrum is an estimated 40+ years. Additionally, the birthing time frame was altered so that instead of being decanted as a fully adult bioform, the sims were decanted as young adults in their late teens and sent to special EDU-centers for indoctrination into society, rather than being completely sleep taught in the vat. The process has given rise to a more imaginative and freethinking bioform nearly indistinct form humankind, aside from their shortened lifespan and basic, often more rational, pre-programmed instincts. In Japan, simulacra enjoy the greatest amount of freedom and respect accorded to bio-forms outside of certain EU member states. Likewise, they are generally considered equal members of society and hold a number of official positions within Japan's government, military, and private sectors proportionate to their population.



Hot Spots

Tokyo

The greater Tokyo metroplex encompasses Tokyo and its sister sprawls of Kanagawa, Saitama, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Ibaraki, and Yamanashi, making for one of the densest urban areas on Earth (40 million) and the greatest concentration of simulacra as well (22.5 million). Tokyo is the center of Japanese government, culture, and military command. The monumentally impressive Self-Defense Force Headquarters, a super-dimensional fortress-ziggurat arcology designed by the Hägan Toft Industries (the same designers responsible for the Golden Tower in Brasilia) dominates the otherwise crowded skyline. Flights of golem-mechs and VTOL aircraft from the Self-Defense Headquarters patrol the skies above the entire region.

Osaka

Osaka is a major commercial hub, operating nonstop. More so than Tokyo, Osaka is home to some of the largest, most advanced corporate arcologies that house a number of the world's most influential zaibatsu (megaconglomerates). As such, the city runs on a time schedule as break-neck as Beijing's is fluid. In off-market hours (between midnight and 4 am local

time), the population in the city's core declines by nearly 1.5 million.

Unknown to many outside the zaibatsu culture, a large percentage of the companies in Osaka and Tokyo are controlled by fully digital consciousnesses of their deceased board members. As virtual entities that were once human, and therefore keenly remember The Death and the resource shortages that followed, they tend to be a bit more materialistic than their overseas corporate rivals. Called revenants, these entities have invested heavily in nanotechnology but still see Japan as lacking the resources to maintain output. They seek to extend their control to other parts of the globe to head off a similar disaster in the future.

Chiba City

Often called Night City, the infamous port city of Chiba is home to a number of factories, warehouses, and planned residential arcologies. A number of markets bordering the port act as cover for Yakuza activity, which is quite prevalent here despite the area's military presence.

Chiba is a city of layers. On the surface it is a well-ordered port city, patrolled by the Shogunate and unofficially (but perhaps more importantly) Yakuza Wakashu serving one of the six Oyabun who control each of the six wards that make up Chiba City. The average citizen is law-abiding, productive, faithful to their zaibatsu and generally typical of Japanese culture as a whole. Just below the surface however, lurks a deadly shadow world where anyone or anything can be had for a price. Chiba city is home to the infamous black clinics, cyberware labs that produce some of the most cutting edge cybernetic and bio implants on the planet.

The Greater Eurasian Union

Europe weathered the Oil Crisis and The Death far better than most of the world. The struggle to survive The Death did make increased unity all but mandatory, and, as the years went on, the component states of Europe along with ravaged Russia and the still-vibrant North African coast lost more and more relevance. Eventually, the differences between the various nation-states withered and national loyalty, while still present, became a shadow compared to their allegiance to Eurasia.

Today, the Eurasian Union embodies the age of leisure more so than any other place on Earth. With post-scarcity technology widely available, few in the EU actually need or even possess the required skills to "earn a living." The so-called "productive class" – the fifth or so of the population with the education and disposition to find meaningful work – supports the majority with little effort or personal sacrifice.

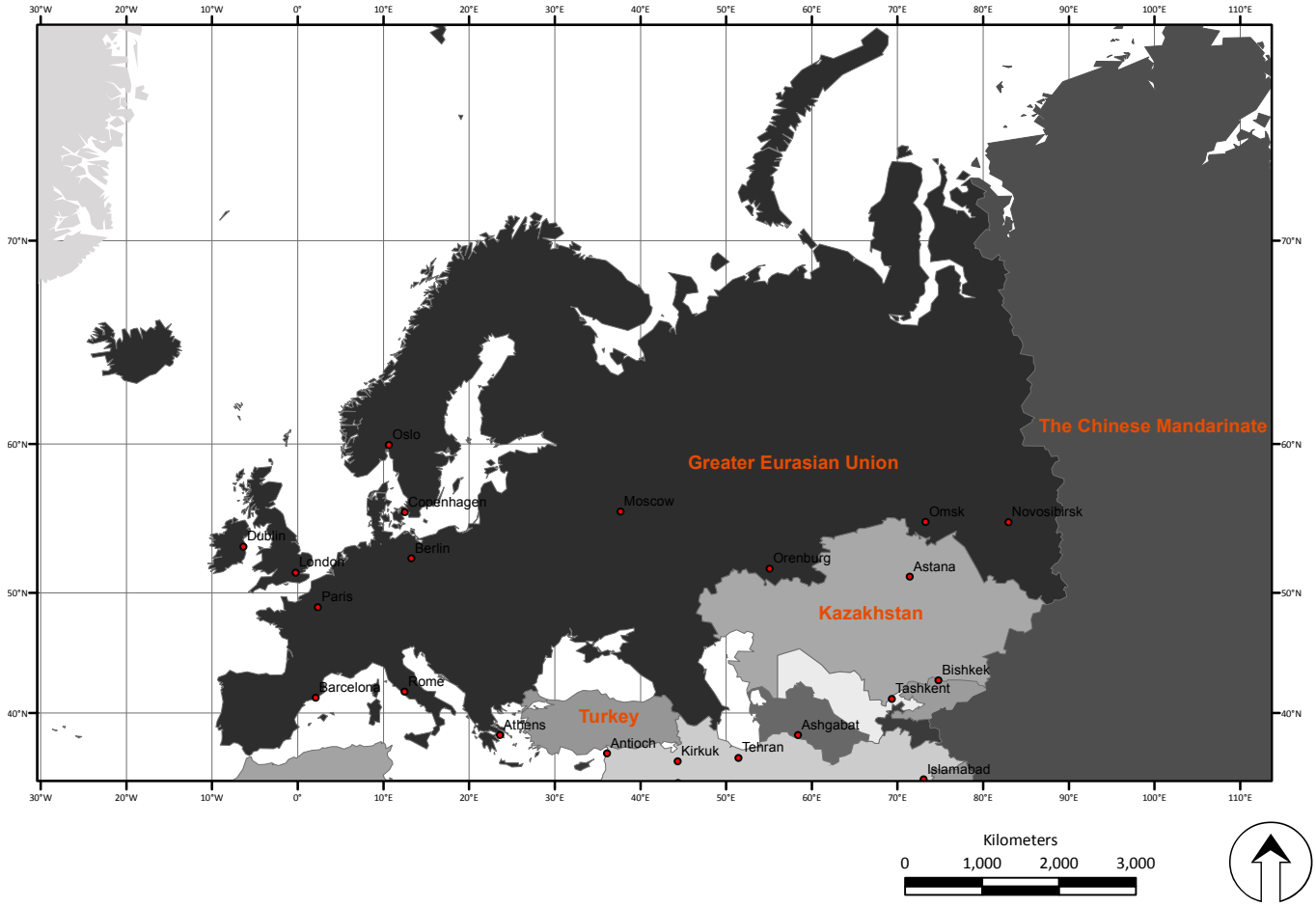
A quiet and efficient democracy, the EU governs itself through a bicameral parliament. Every adult may vote for the lower house, but only members of the productive class may send representatives to the upper. Despite this apparent discrimination, few resent the extra influence held by the labor class. Because they devoted themselves to mastering the skills to serve society as a whole, they're considered well-justified in claiming a greater stake in governing it.

Unfortunately, in the opinion of many, the old European passion for regulation and bureaucracy (while nowhere near as omnipresent or fluid as China's bureaucracy) still exists even in a world both traumatized by The Death and transformed by new technology. Most citizens need a special avatar simply to help them navigate the complex Hyper Reality of their society. The excess regulation is spurred by the government's belief in social equity. Nearly everything in the EU requires the filling out of some official forms or a presentation to some committee for approval.

Western outsiders view Eurasia as a calm and placid sanctuary, well deserving of its status as an honest broker. They treat it as a respected elder offering moral leadership and deserving admiration for its cultural achievements, but not really a rival for power in the day-to-day struggle for world dominance. The East likewise treats them with respect especially, since the region has become so ethnically mixed. For the last three generations, more and more young Turks, Kurds, North Africans, and Arabs have migrated to the EU, invigorating the sagging economies with young workers. While a racial glass ceiling is definitely in evidence, it varies by region throughout Eurasian patchwork.

The EU leads the world in education and humanitarian work, pastimes suitable for the honorably retired. Citizens in other parts of the globe dream of one day building their homelands to the same level of comfort and civilization. Rather than resent its success, they view it as an ideal to strive for.

The Greater Eurasian Union



Despite its reputation with outsiders, the EU is a place of people, not angels. It certainly suffers from its own internal tensions. Boredom, the prospect of a lifetime of idleness, drives some, particularly those unable to find a way to work out their restlessness by serving on a committee, to darker pursuits. More disconcerting, organized groups devoted to extreme philosophies or ways of life have clashed in recent years. Aware of their long and bloody history, EU's leaders fear that the growth of these groups (representing various extreme religious, ethnic, and cultural groups within EU society) might one-day lead to the re-emergence of nation states and subsequent meltdown as seen in the former United States. While many of these "virtual nations" (so called because most are born from their member's shared interests in the virtual world) remain law abiding, enough follow radical paths to make authorities nervous. So far, no one credible has actually supported breaking these groups up. Indeed, many technologists deem it impossible. However, if trends continue, some sort of government action (followed by a potentially violent reaction) might one day occur.

Over the last century, Europe has seen more and more immigration from North Africa, the Middle East and lately, occupied Russia. The influx has steadied the rapid decline in population that the aging post-industrial Europe had been experiencing since the end of the Cold War. Now as much of a melting pot as the old US, the EU is trying to cope with not only its own myriad of cultures but also dozens of new ethnicities as well. The fact that so many of these immigrants are young, able, and willing to work only adds to what has been termed by one Dutch diplomat as the Eastern Invasion. More and more, it seems the face of old Europe is changing.

Hot Spots

Berlin

In Europe, Berlin is one of the largest cities with the most history, from the Kingdom of Prussia, the German Empire, the Third Reich, the Cold War, and beyond, Berlin has played a central role in Eurasia's development. Today, though pushed economically and politically to the side by the East, Berlin remains an important cultural center. Due to the fact that it remains one of Old Europe's important cities, it is also a hub for many who operate in the shadows.

Cyberware, biotech, and access to The Deep are all readily available in Berlin for those who can afford it. The East side of the former Berlin Wall tends to be heavier in gang activity while the west side plays host to dignitaries and corporate leaders, making both sides interesting to those with their own agendas. Berlin is also a hotbed for many isms, which always makes for plenty of work for anyone who is willing to get their hands dirty for a cause.

Copenhagen

Long considered one of the safest, cleanest, and happiest places in the world to live, Copenhagen adjusted to the changes of the last fifty years better than most areas. In today's world, it has become a popular vacation spot, due to the relaxed atmosphere. Of course, the people who can afford to vacation are also the people who have their hands dirty, which means that a lot of the same types of shadow operations that occur elsewhere also happen here. The main difference is that crimes are investigated, arrests are made, and those who are caught are made an example of. Operatives who come to Copenhagen know that they have the be on their A game if they want to continue in their line of work.

London

Within the last hundred years, London has gone from one of the most polite, wealthy, beautiful cities in the world to one of the most run-down, foul, cut-throat cities in all of Europe. Because its fortunes were tied to the United States, when that great country fell, so too did England—London worse than the rest. Because of the drop in employment and the idleness of the population, The Deep plays an even greater role here than it does in most of Eurasia; it's the main form of entertainment that people can afford. In the streets, gangs run rampant, and if there's honest work to be found, nobody's talking about it. Shadow operatives, on the other hand, tend to stay busy, if they're any good, and if they can find employers who can actually afford to pay.

Moscow

Even after the destruction that brought Russia to its knees, Moscow remains the dominant power in the country. It still claims control over all of the territory that traditionally belonged to the country, even though more and more places are rising up against its rule. Even in the wake of war, it appears that numerous small portions of the country are trying to culturally differentiate themselves from the whole and establish their independence. As can be expected, Moscow is attempting to actively quash what they see as another rebellion. As a result, the city has become a place of political intrigue, where the politicians are fearful of assassinations, the city bureaucracy and police are corrupt, and revolutionary forces have ties to a few of the top officials. Anyone who operates from the shadows can find work here on one side or the other.

Paris

As it has for over a thousand years, Paris remains one of the cultural centers of the world. The question is: who's culture? White European culture has been dominant in the city, but following the massive influx of Muslim immigrants, there is some question as to the cultural identity of the entire country. This has led to a prolonged culture clash that continues to this day. Both sides are roughly equal in numbers and both of them are determined to fight for the soul of their country. Paris is the primary battleground, where street violence, bombings, and militia activity takes place. The government has found that it is unable to keep the peace, though officials from both sides of the cultural divide have called for harmony in the city. Despite the unrest, Paris remains one of the most beautiful cities in the world, particularly after the revitalization efforts that took place in the first half of the twenty-first century.

The India League

India's one attempt to emulate China's success in its own Bachelor War ended in disaster when it provoked a nuclear exchange with Pakistan, the consequences of which ushered in The Death and very nearly destroyed civilization. Conscious of their collective guilt, India's citizens recoiled in dismay at the global suffering ushered in by The Death but at ground

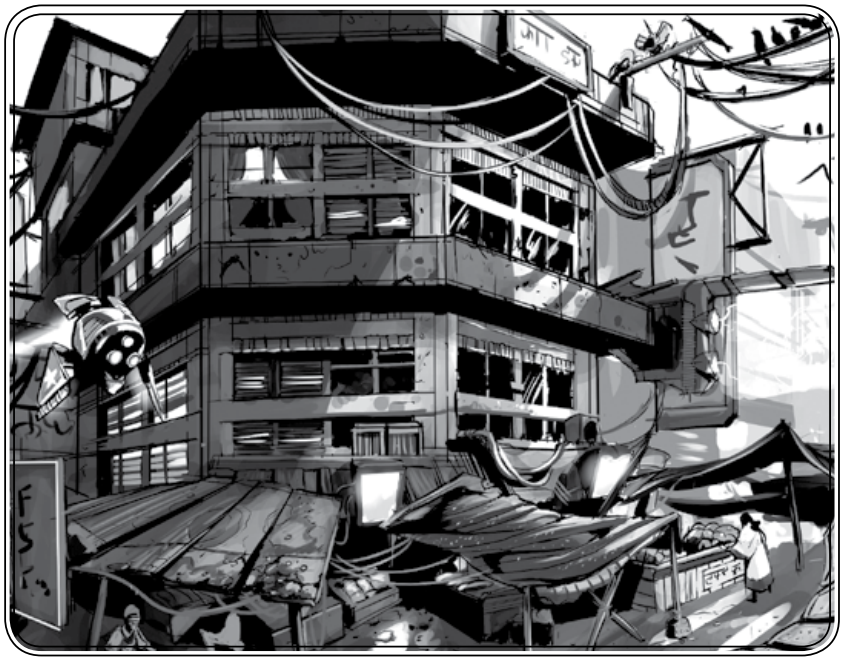
zero, found little time or extra resources to make amends. This legacy still troubles them to this day. Indeed, Indians are more sensitive to the dangers posed by war and strife than most other nations. India split into many smaller states, fragmented by recriminations brought on by its share of blame for The Death, as well as the immediate fight for survival that ensued.

Facing rains of radioactive fallout and a winter that lasted three entire years, India found itself with little choice but to abandon the old ways that sustained it for countless millennia. Traditional farming simply ceased to exist, as did the villages and towns that supported them. In their place, India's surviving great cities (each already a megalopolis) swelled even more to accommodate the influx of the displaced. Eventually, India evolved into a subcontinent dominated by massive city-states. Their populations were measured in the tens of millions, each with virtually no one living outside of them. A nation always divided upon religious and ethnic lines, the chaos and misery of The Death gave the leaders of these cities even greater license to "look after their own" at the expense of others. For this reason, every one of these city-states boasts a huge majority belonging to one of the cultural, religious, or ethnic factions that had split India during so much of its history.

While it is true that, with the development of post-scarcity technology, India no longer needs to fear famine, many still prefer the hydroponics that sustained them during The Death. Horrified by the carnage of The Death, each of the city-states devoted considerable resources to beautifying its own territory

The India League

in hopes that erasing the evidence of their great error might help them forget. Today, each city-state rests like a glittering jewel surrounded by reclaimed wild lands and carefully maintained parks. Areas reduced to radioactive wastelands are likewise covered in virtual facades that sanitize the twisted, melted remnants of ruins that remained. The urge to keep them pristine, coupled with the new preference for urban life, ensures that very few permanently relocate outside their home cities.



It was this and abundance of illusory technology, open spaces and beautiful compact cities that brought more and more entertainment firms to the subcontinent. When the Great Quake finally hit California in '66, Hollywood had already been a part of the fabric of India for over twenty-years. As soon as it became apparent that California wasn't going to recover from the devastation, it was a relatively simple matter for the major studios to transfer their operations to their eastern offices and continue production. Today, India focuses on entertainment and dominates all facets of said industry. Nearly every entertainment conglomerate can be traced to a parent company located within one of the subcontinent's city-states. India acts as the great cultural force of the modern world, just as Hollywood did in an earlier age. Indeed, the entire world obsesses with the personal failings and romantic machinations of India's great celebrities.

Hot Spots

Amristar

Home of the Harimandir Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple, Amritsar is the spiritual and cultural center of Sikhism and home to over 10.8 million people (nearly 80% of whom are Sikh). Because so many of its people are descendents of surviving Pakistani Sikhs who fled their blasted homeland, and because Sikhs in general have been an oft-abused minority within Indian society, Amritsar is openly hostile to many of its neighboring Indian states. The fact that they are major trade partners with both the Chinese Mandarinate and Iran creates extra worries for the surviving Indian city-states.

Chennai

Chennai is a major entertainment hot spot second only to Mumbai in India and just slightly behind Hong Kong in overall money generated by its movie-simulation industry. Primarily Tamil in ethnicity since The Death, its two primary languages have been Tamil and English, with Hindi running a close third. While the city is an ultramodern multi-tiered visual delight, the lower sections hide a slum population of nearly 20% of this city-state's 14.5 million inhabitants.

Kolkata

After the destruction of Delhi during the war, the port city of Kolkata once again found itself the seat of Indian federal power. The only problem was that most of the city's rulers fled in the wake of the war, leaving the heads of several shipping firms to pick up the slack. At first they saw the city through the initial crisis and up to the first meeting of the renewed parliament nearly a year later, but the constituent Indian districts, all doing well enough on their own, formally voted to disband. Left to its own devices, corporate Koltata quickly replaced lost Bangalore (the so-called Garden City and Silicon Valley of India) by becoming the new technological leader while still retaining its role as a major port-of-call.

Even still, roughly a third of the vast population of 22 millions live in poverty, harkening back to images from over a century before. While food is not a problem in modern India thanks to nano-devices, poverty, and crime are. India's mob operates with impunity in some neighborhoods. There are numerous red light districts that offer nearly any pleasure conceivable.

Mumbai

As the entertainment capital of the world, Mumbai attracts an interesting crowd of artists, actors, gangsters, and money men. Many compare the new Mumbai to Hollywood of the 1960s in that literally anything can happen there, and whatever does happen there is almost always glamorous.

The Middle-East

Much of the Middle-East today is an enormous radioactive graveyard. Gone (for all practical geopolitical purposes) are the nations of Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Pakistan (which stood by the Muslim alliance) has also been torn asunder by its subsequent battle with India.

Hot Spots

Isreal

While most of the surviving population of Israel was forced to flee into a new Diaspora, a handful remained behind in a series of underground bunkers, determined to keep the Israeli State alive. With rotating six-month shifts the Warders, as they are called, keep watch over the holy land and see to graves of the many departed, waiting for the day generations hence when they can welcome their exiled kin back home.

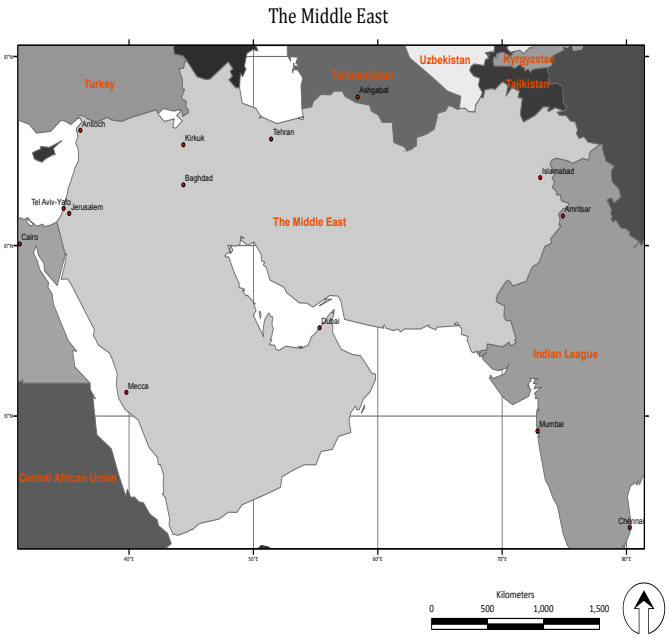
Tehran

A vast majority from both the southwest and fractured nation of Pakistan came to settle in mountain-shielded Iran, which soon became the custodian of the thousands of square miles of wastelands to the south, sharing their grim duty with the far more secular capitalist United Arab Emirates (UAE). Together they keep the vigil over the radioactive ruins, always on the lookout for impious grave robbers.

For more than a century, the city of Tehran has been the center of Iranian business and culture, as well as a magnet for refugees fleeing regional conflict. Today, the sprawling city is the largest and most dynamic in southwestern Asia with a cosmopolitan population of nearly 24 million people. Tehran is the seat of Iranian government, ruled by a curious mix of theo-corporate business groups who govern behind the scenes through a heavily-lobbied elected parliament. In spite of this, Tehran is the most secular city in the area, even when compared to the more rural regions of Iran itself.

Dubai

Since the Oil Crisis, Dubai in particular (and the UAE in general) has become a tourist magnet ready to cash in on whatever money there is to be spent in her casinos. Though many residents still remain personally devout, they separate their working lives from their personal lives. Workers seem perfectly willing to leap into any sort of debauchery while on the job but revert to more traditional behavior when at home. Some even go one step further and dismiss the physical world as hopelessly base and sullied, choosing to practice their faith and customs only when in the virtual. Much of this philosophy comes from the higher-ups. Many casino owners see the ultimate use for temporal wealth and power as a means to achieve spiritual transcendence in heavens of their own design. Even those who consider this too much of a compromise still borrowed one custom from these extreme Gnostics: the virtual pilgrimage. Almost every member of the faith, at some point in his or her life, takes the long and arduous journey through The Deep to reach the virtual Mecca created by believers in The Deepest parts of the virtual world.



North America

The United States of America began the 21st century in an enviable position as the most powerful nation on earth. However, as the years unfolded, the nation suffered setback after setback, largely due to the poor choices of its leaders rather than mere circumstance. These developments ultimately led to the nation's fragmentation into a number of smaller, mostly insignificant countries. Where the entire globe once trembled at America's might, the fallen nation is now regarded as little more than a collection of third-world powers, backwater kingdoms that desperately cling to the tattered memories of greatness.

Present-day historians generally agree that the oil crisis of the early 21st century proved to be the impetus sparking the steady decline of the old US into its current dilapidated shape. That said, the true hammer blow for the old US came with the eruption of the Second American Civil War. For four years the nation tore itself apart, the bloody conflict draining its meager resources to such an extent that, when the Great Quake of 2066 devastated California, the fractured nation went bankrupt. As each nation-state slowly ran out of resources (and couldn't borrow money from foreign powers, many of whom took great pleasure in seeing the U.S die a slow death), fighting inexorably slowed over the next two years and finally ground to a halt in 2068, ending in armistice with the Treaty of Tokyo.

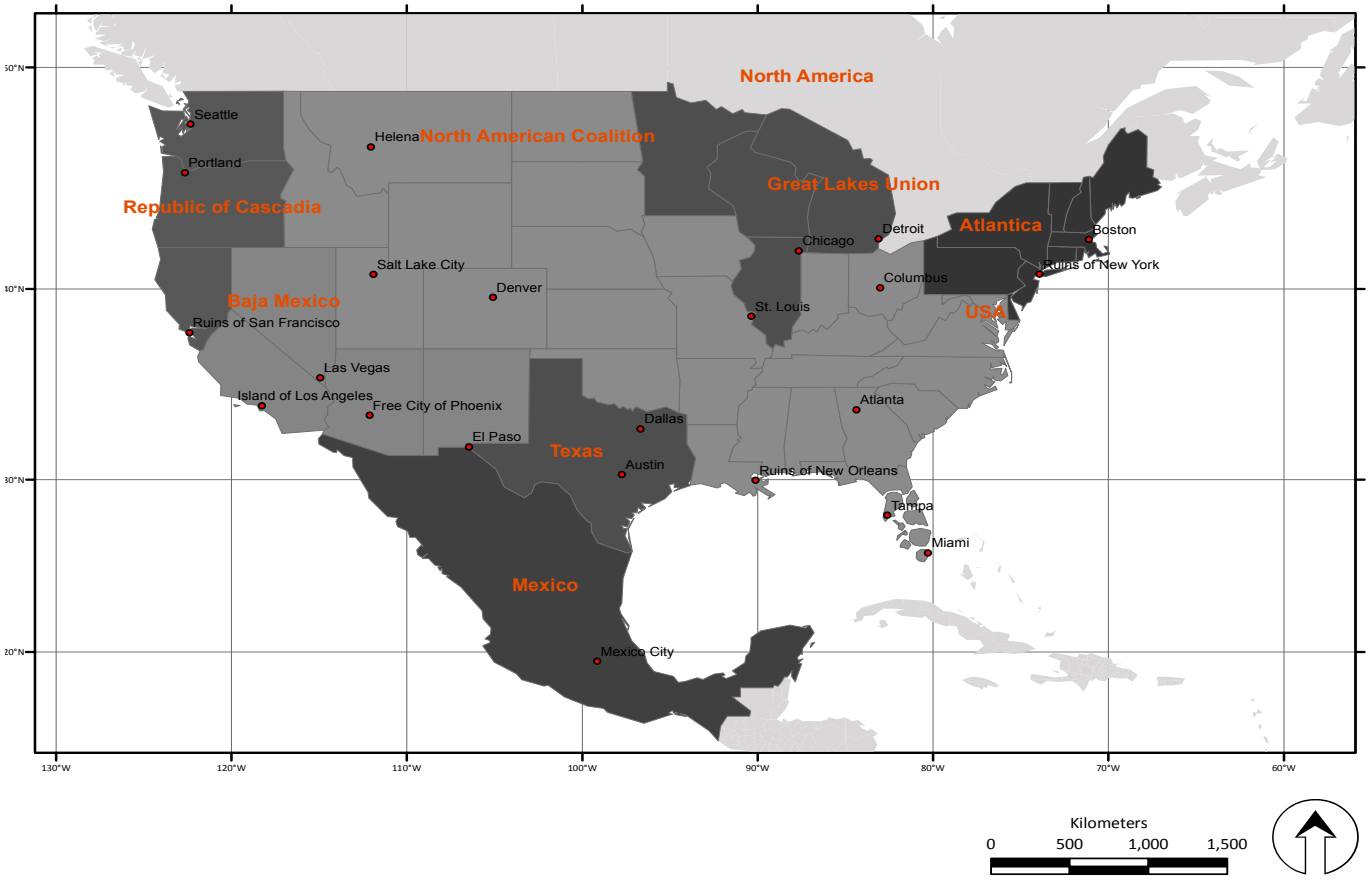
The next few years would also see Canada and Mexico break up into their own nations (albeit more through referenda than military strife).

Today, North America is broken up into nine countries; Atlantica, Quebec, the Great Lakes Union (GLU), The Republic of Cascadia, The CEL (Caribbean Economic League) The NAC (North American Coalition), The Republic of Texas, Baja Mexico, and Southern Mexico. These nations adhere to a wide range of political and economic doctrines. From the pragmatic collectivists of the Great Lakes Union to the dogmatic Christian capitalists of the NAC, the continent offers a society for virtually any taste.

In addition, North America also hosts a number of free cities that preserve their status through shrewd politics and critically needed corporate muscle. Since overtly attempting to conquer a free city would inevitably lead to a rapidly escalating "hot" war, these cities constantly simmer with plots and schemes as the balkanized successor states wage a cold war against each other.

Though somewhat fluid and prone to sudden change in its quicksilver politics, North America currently contains the following free cities: Chicago megasprawl, Las Vegas, St. Louis, Toronto, Orlando, Salt Lake City, Toledo (the site of an ongoing NAC-supported insurgency against the GLU), and Vancouver (formerly Vancouver, BC).

North America



The NAC spends a great deal of time and energy trying to gain influence over the free cities, whether for their own benefit or simply to frustrate a rival nation. Furthermore, many of the greater world powers also involve themselves with the free cities, though they officially refuse to acknowledge the fact. China and Brazil in particular use the nine nation states and the free cities of North America as proxies in their global games of power. This constant interference ensures that the continent always stands just half a step away from conflict.

As the saying goes, "Americans think they can eat pride." Many citizens of the broken states of North America spend too much time brooding on better days rather than trying to improve their present day conditions. The humiliations suffered since their fall from power tends to make this gloomy impulse even stronger. A large number of North America's treasures (including its monuments and public buildings) now only exist as virtual replicas. Some were sold to other countries, while many more were destroyed in the civil war.

Despite their poverty, the NAC is a leader in the fields of surveillance and development of new weapons technologies, primarily robotics and power armor suits. No other nation on earth devotes more energy and resources to monitoring its own population. Even the democracies regard privacy as a rather quaint notion, seeing little reason not to interfere in the personal lives of its citizens. By their reckoning, intentions matter far more than methods.

Weapons development is a field in which Americans have always excelled. In 2088, this is no different. The NAC seeks to rebuild its military, spending billions of taxpayer dollars each year to achieve this goal. Many new power armor suits now common in nations across the world were developed in manufacturing facilities in Georgia and West Virginia. The other North American nations, fearing that the NAC military buildup is a prelude to another war, are scrambling to procure their own weapons.

Hot Spots

Las Vegas

The hottest tourist spot in North America, the free city of Las Vegas is commonly known as "Little Dubai." Sin City is the crime capital of the world, openly run by Sabina Valentini, the first female Don of Vegas. Sabrina took power after her husband Anlondo "the Wolf" was killed in the Valentini-Osannowa Mafia-Yakuza War (2081–85). On the surface, Sabrina appears to be a puppet of family friend Antonio Gulio. Gulio plays the part of "the Don behind the Don." In truth, Valentini is the true power. Politically (and some would say tactically), Vegas is an important dot on the newly-remade map of America.

The Valentini crime family controls the Hoover Dam—the largest source of hydro-electric power in the entire Southwest. They used this vital resource to manipulate both Baja Mexico and the NAC into signing lucrative trade agreements in exchange for much needed electricity. Baja Mexico pays higher prices for power. In exchange, Mexican Narcotraffickers are allowed to use Las Vegas as a jumping-off point for distribution into the greater NAC, the GLU and Atlantica. The NAC, on the other hand, pays much higher rates than Baja Mexico. In return, elected officials are free to appease their constituents by making inflammatory statements about the moral bankruptcy of Las Vegas and those who run it without fear of reprisals. This arrangement allows the NAC government to "save face" in the eyes of the religious majority who tend to view the free city of Las Vegas as a boil on the face of North America. Indeed, many pundits have been calling for annexation of the free city in order to cleanse it of sin.

St. Louis (City of Bribes)

The free city of St. Louis straddles the Mississippi river on the border between NAC-held Missouri and GLU-held Illinois. St. Louis's position on the great river makes it the focal point for NAC and GLU efforts to control vital shipping lanes into the heartland of old America. Reminiscent of Berlin at the height of the 20th century cold war, the walled city of St. Louis is divided into three major sectors: East St. Louis, West St. Louis, and the Central Demilitarized Zone. NAC forces occupy West St. Louis, with the GLU controlling the Eastern portion of the city. NATO peacekeeping forces populate the Central DMZ to prevent the resurgence of aggression between the two nations. Ironically, the NATO peacekeeping forces in St. Louis are comprised of military units from Poland, Kolkata, Ethiopia, and Algiers, all countries once relied heavily on US intervention in the latter part of the 20th century.

The California Dead Zone

In 2066, a mammoth 9.5 earthquake rocked the entire state of California up and down the San Andreas fault line. The event lasted nearly five minutes, killed approximately 680,000 people and leveled much of the So-Cal mega sprawl. San Francisco was reduced to rubble and the greater part of Los Angeles broke off the shelf, drifting a staggering quarter mile from the mainland. In the weeks that followed, nearly every major insurance company in the nation (already on the precipice of bankruptcy from the ongoing civil war) defaulted under the weight of trillions of dollars in insurance claims. With the wholesale destruction of Hollywood, the ravaged entertainment industry packed up and moved to India, further precipitating the collapse of Civil War America's already strained economy.

The nation went bankrupt.

Almost overnight, tens of millions of people found themselves without a home. Many moved north into Oregon and Washington, or to the free city of Chicago. Others (primarily Spanish-speaking families with ties south of the border) chose to head into Baja Mexico. Surprisingly, a large number of people chose to stay and try to survive in the ruins of places they once lived. California (otherwise known as the California Dead Zone) is a lawless, more or less unclaimed wasteland riddled with squatter camps and small towns.

Caribbean Economic League

The Bahamas, Barbados, Cayman Islands, the Virgin Islands, and other small Caribbean nations and territories (belonging mostly to the old US and United Kingdom) became tax havens for many corporations that eventually broke with their home governments, forming a powerful economic block whose income came primarily from tourism and multinational corporate kickbacks. This affiliation eventually came to be known as the Caribbean Economic League, or CEL for short.

For a time the League became a part of the US, but as the cost of doing business rose in the wake of the Second Civil War, it cut its national ties and now operates as an independent power on the world stage once more. The CEL corpocracy still controls much of what goes on in North America through its economic ties to the nine nation-states that emerged. In fact, one would be right to say that it is the companies that make up the CEL that keeps the various balkanized nations from finding real economic stability by encouraging factious behavior between them. The CEL's actions are not done out of any sense of malicious intent, but only because to do otherwise would adversely affect their bottom line.

With the possible exception of the NAC, the CEL is the premier naval power in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, where it owns controlling interest in the few remaining oil rigs in the region. Additionally, the CEL is one of the world's largest exporters of high tech weaponry, most of it flowing into the other nation states of North America.

The CEL corpocracy is managed by a board of the five best performing portfolios among the nation's registered multinationals, many of which have been on the Fortune 50 list for the better part of the half century. The archipelago nation is geographically much smaller than in previous eras as global warming has reduced the number of cays and habitable islets by half (or roughly 1,000 cays and over 300 islands). Many of the surviving islands have been built up with stilt-like buildings that sit upon frames that support their occupied levels several meters above the island's surface. Some of the islands have sunk, leaving only the tallest structures above sea-level. Nassau is the de facto capital of the CEL, home to the most intense cutthroat capitalism and back door business found anywhere in the world.

Oceania And the Rovers

When flooding prompted by climate change reached catastrophic proportions, many people chose to take to the sea rather than migrate further inland. Indeed, for many people (particularly those already living on islands), this flight to the sea hardly counted as a "choice" since they had nowhere else to go. Eventually those refugees who made their homes on the ocean formed their own society – the rovers. During The Death, the rovers (as they had come to call themselves) prospered more than most, exploiting their ability to simply sail away from trouble or pursue better opportunities elsewhere. As awareness of rover colonies spread, their population swelled. Non-rovers, driven to desperation by the suffering on shore, also took the sea in hopes of finding a better life.

This influx of new people sparked the first great controversy in rover society. Some, viewing these newcomers as interlopers and potential rivals, tried to drive them away, often resorting to violence as a deterrent. Yet most rover communities, remembering their own fear and misery when they first took to the seas, welcomed these refugees, doing what they could to help them adjust. Despite the appeal of a life with few restraints, rovers acknowledge that it all too often demands sacrifice too. Rovers live hand-to-mouth, forced to take odd jobs or engage in petty crime to obtain necessities beyond their own ability to create. Their unsavory reputations earn them a great deal of hostility from shore-bound authorities.

All rovers learn to dive as well as sail. They consider maintaining the flooded former coastal areas, particularly the cities, as a sacred task. Many rovers, drifting deep beneath the waves, watching the ocean consume buildings and other works of mankind, find it a profoundly moving experience which somehow puts them in touch with the universe. Of course, the fact that many rovers earn a decent living as tourist guides gives them a practical incentive to go along with the spiritual motive, whether they believe it or not.

Though they range throughout the world, the Pacific Ocean serves as the center of rover culture. The so-called "anchor states" of Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia (and a number of lesser islands, including what's left of Hawaii) offer rovers safe harbors and access to facilities too large to carry on their ships. Some of these anchor states – corrupt democracies where bribes are often the easiest way for a person to get what he needs – seem perfectly suited to the typical rover's cheerful contempt for the rules of polite society. Rovers also frequent man-made atolls dotting the world's oceans. Often using the same design, or in some cases actual remnants of long-abandoned oil platforms, the atolls make it possible for rovers too old to remain on board a ship to still spend their final days tasting the sea air.

In addition to pirates, hostile shore authorities and dangerous weather, rovers also grapple with another lesser known threat. A secretive faction of rovers, calling themselves the "Melters," actually dream of increasing the ocean at the expense of the land. Plotting to thaw more of the world's icecaps, these rapacious individuals spend their days hunting for materials to help them achieve their goal. Believing themselves justified to take any measure, no matter how extreme, melters often prey upon not only their fellow rovers but vulnerable coastal communities as well, only adding veracity to the general consensus that rovers and their ilk are nothing but thieves and malcontents.

Hot Spots

Australia

Australia is widely regarded as the gateway to rover society. While the rest of the world tends to regard rovers as outcasts, dregs of society best forgotten, the people of Australia openly accept these somewhat strange reclusive people, trading various sundry goods such as fuel and supplies in exchange for seafood and, some say, illicit materials smuggled into the country. Politically, Australia isn't a major player on the world scene, preferring to let the big boys play their games of intrigue. Business is where the nation shines, however. Two of the largest corporations in the world—arms manufacturing giant Sudeki Whyte and Kiwi Motors Automotive Group—are based in the land down under.

MU

A strange sight greets the ocean born traveler in the turbulent waters of the North Pacific Gyre. Amidst the churning sea one finds an island unlike any in the world, one made of interlocking hexagonal panes of blue-green and brown plastic, woven together like a stained glass window nearly eight miles wide. Named Mu in honor of the mythic Atlantis of the Pacific, It is the largest man-made structure on the sea and, if reports are correct, the city is still growing. The massive project was touched off by Niles Auburn, who has been dead for nearly thirty years. Niles was one of the first to invest in Featherstone's nano-development project and one of the first

to independently adapt a practical use for the technology – the development of Mu.

The artificial island is surrounded by swarms of nano-devices programmed to convert the ocean's free-floating plastic from an area that stretches from Japan to Hawaii into the Mu habitat, a fractal-based design slightly warped by gravity and the curvature of the Earth. The buoyant design – a radial starfish shape – exists half beneath the waves and features a number of docks and platforms along its circumference. Rovers often make stops at Mu, but few – if any – are known to have plumbed its depths, and all outside contact with the mega-vessel has been shunned. In addition to whatever lays beneath its complex carbon shell, a number of small temporary rover communities dot its exterior like barnacles on the back of some strange, enormous tortoise.

South America

South America weathered the Oil Crisis far better than North America. Blessed with relatively untapped reserves of crude oil and already well on the way to making the transition to alternate fuels, South American nations seized the opportunity to transition over while its Northern neighbors still labored under the delusion that oil would last forever. The Second American Civil War and subsequent fragmentation of Canada, the US and Mexico into smaller, weaker countries only accelerated the North-to-South shift in power in the Western Hemisphere.

Even before The Death ended the old order once and for all, the nations of South America took control of their own destinies. A series of skirmishes in the jungles and rainforests intended to drive out the multi-national companies and their collaborators soon spilled over into the cities of the region. Gradually, the leadership of one government after another was replaced by charismatic leaders pledged to the Liga del Apóstol movement. Blending militant environmentalism with messianic religious rhetoric, the Apostles called upon their people to join in a holy crusade against corporate outsiders, allowing corporate insiders the opening they needed to solidify control over the national economy.

Brazil's Rainforest Protection Act, nominally a program to protect one of the largest oxygen-producing forests in the world, gained even greater international support when the first generations of wonder drugs, based upon plants only barely saved from extinction, saw international distribution. The end result transformed many South American nations into pharmaceutical powerhouses rivaling those in the Far East. In particular, Brazil takes its role as China's nemesis so seriously that it uses the threat posed by "Godless, Confucianist" China to command the loyalty of its population.

During the Second American Civil War, the Apostles chose to support the fundamentalist elements of the US against its more secular oppositions. To many, this decision, based upon obscure points of doctrinal agreement and naked political calculation, seemed an ironic reversal of the day when the US had used similar tactics south of the Equator.

According to the Apostles, the California earthquake, occurring shortly after China's intervention on behalf of the Separatists, proved that God supported their position. However, their subsequent loss of the proxy war undermined the people's faith in their theocratic rulers. Though they remain in power throughout most of the South American states, Argentina's theocracy has recently fallen due to a popular socialist workers uprising. The other Apostle states in the region have only recently normalized relations with the rogue state.

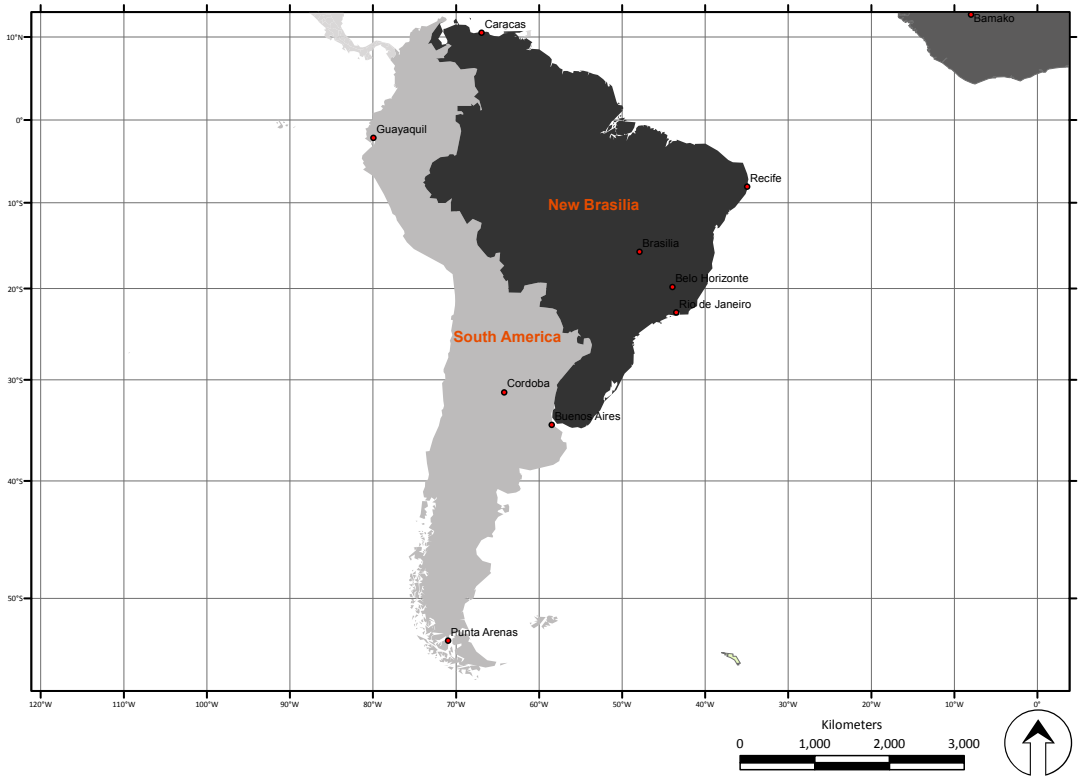
Today's South America looks in many ways quite similar to how it did at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Most of the old borders remain unchanged. However, a larger percentage of land has been given over to the protected oxygen-giving wilderness and some coastal areas have been lost to flooding sparked by a century's worth of climate change. The remaining cities and newly rebuilt ones tend to cover less land and stretch higher into the sky, leaving less of a footprint on the ecology than before.

Hot Spots

Brasilia

The Golden Metropolis and capital of Brazil stands on the brink of turmoil as more and more secular corporate and political leaders look to topple the government's decades-old theocracy. Meanwhile, Narcotraffickers, corrupt authorities, triads, and Yakuza vie for control of the city's underworld.

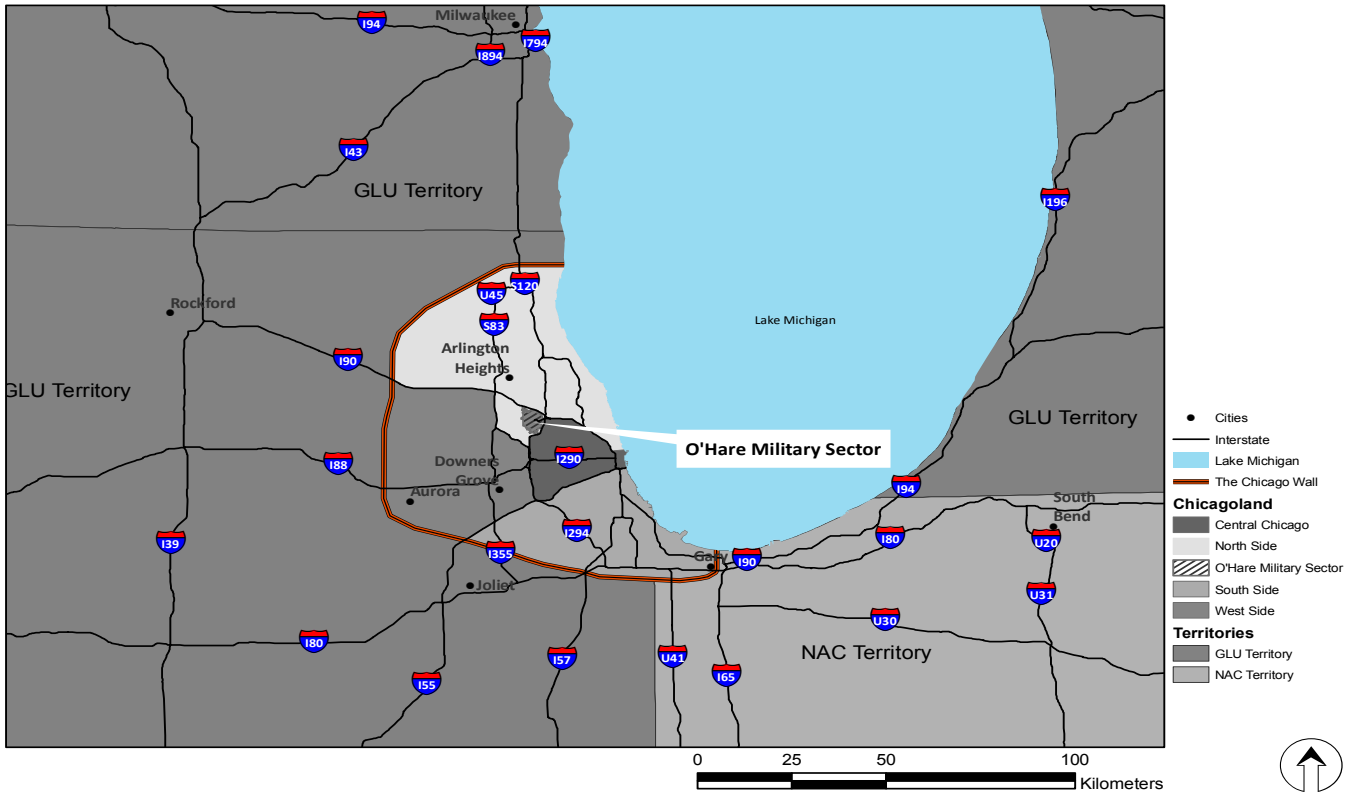
New Brasilia



Buenos Aires

Argentina, a former member of the Liga del Apóstol, broke with more mainline religious conservatives and formed its own nationalist socialist government in 2066. Like those before them, the leadership in Buenos Aires has been keen to spread their new Gospel to the rest of the continent, most of whom the state media portrays as superstitious, tradition-bound barbarians. Brazil is of particular interest, because "as Brazil goes, so goes the majority of South America." For years now, Buenos Aires has been backing political and corporate leaders in Brazil who they see as rational thinkers, whose vision they believe extends beyond the Good Book and to the future of their state and the lands beyond.

Chicagoland



THE FREE CITY OF CHICAGO

"Welcome to the jungle
We got fun 'n' games
We got everything you want
Honey we know the names
We are the people that can find
Whatever you may need
If you got the money,
Honey,
We got your disease."
– Welcome to the Jungle, Guns N Roses

Home to just under thirty million people, the Chicagoland megaplex is one of the most densely populated metropolitan areas on the planet. The city is massive; so much so that most blue platers live their entire lives without ever having left their cribsecs—which is just as well. The sprawl can be a dangerous place if you're not careful. Accidentally wander into a red zone and you might get ghosted by chrome reapers and sold off to a body chop shop, that is, if the gangers don't get you first.

Like any other sprawl, Chicagoland has its fair share of gangs. Some of them are noble street warriors, dedicated to protection of their turf and the people who live in it. Others are urban predators who live to terrorize anyone not claiming their set. And of course, there are those who work in the shadows; street ghosts, ronin, mercs, headhunters. Whether they're idealists who wanna stick it to the powers that be, cold-blooded professionals and ex-military types using their skills to earn some cred, disillusioned corporate runaways or low life gutter punks lookin' to up their rep, they do the jobs nobody wants to admit need to be done.

Indeed, the Chi-town megaplex is ripe with opportunity for those with the skills and cajones to work it. Chicago bleeds corporate and political intrigue. Both the GLU and NAC eye Chicago hungrily, waiting like wolves at the edge of the firelight for their chance to annex the city, a key battleground in the ongoing cold war between the GLU and the NAC. Even now, two decades after the war, insurgents work within Chicagoland to destabilize the megasprawl's infrastructure. Lately, it seems like every day that a sector check point is bombed, or a political figure gets ghosted. Most of these attacks are pinned on fringe groups who refuse to accept Chicago's sovereignty. Of course, that's the tale the corporate-sponsored media elite feed us on the nightly INFOStream.

The truth… Well let's just say the truth could be anything, depending on how tight you're wearing your tinfoil hat.

Remember the bombing of the NORTEC sim-factory on the south side last month? The media claimed it was a hit by NormB6; the anti-simulacrum/anti hybrid/anti-non W.A.S.P. terrorist group. That's easy enough to believe. The normies have been quiet lately. It was only a matter of time before those gutter snipes crawled out from their rocks to make some noise. Scan the feed a bit deeper though, and you'll find some juicy pay data. For instance, NORTEC is owned by Ravenlocke Securities, a subsidiary of Aquarius Engineering.

That's right Ami, the NAC's big kahuna of military contractors. This is where things start to get a bit strange. See, NormB6 is funded by the NAC. Oh sure, the nation doesn't openly claim sponsorship of the terrorist organization responsible for the deaths of thousands of people over the past decade, but the government face men don't deny it either. Naturally, this begs the question "Why would the NAC sign off on the bombing of an asset controlled by the corporation responsible for some 75% of its defense systems?"

The answer to that question isn't so simple. Perhaps high ranking officials in the NAC, displeased with the corporation's research into simulacrum production, wanted to send a message to Aquarius. Maybe the bombings are part of a larger plan to increase the NAC's military presence in the city. After the attacks, Aquarius sent five hundred NAC-trained security personnel (read, paramilitary troops) into the city to supposedly protect the conglomerates' interests. Hell, it's quite possible that the bombings weren't carried out by NormB6 at all. Aquarius Engineering has its fair share of rivals in the corporate world. Some other megacorp might have hired a black ops team to do the job. The following section gives you n00b's a primer to Chi-town.

Sectors

The Chicago megasprawl has grown since the dawn of the 21st century, swallowing communities that at one point were small towns and medium-sized cities. This unchecked growth would likely have extended much farther, had it not been for the second civil war. At the war's onset, both the NAC and the GLU rushed to seize control of the tactically vital city, but soon became entrenched in a grueling battle, not just between themselves, but also against the citizens of the Chicago metroplex. Forever known as the Battle of Chicago, the six month conflict ended with the detonation of three "dirty" nuclear bombs, followed by the insertion of nearly 130,000 international peacekeeping troops to maintain order and investigate the nuclear explosions. A wall encompassing some 120 square miles was built around Chicago and a number of the smaller outlying cities to protect the citizens from the atrocities of the—at the time ongoing—war, but at the cost of any future expansion.

As big as it is, the wall did not keep people from migrating to the city, especially in the chaotic years following the end of the second civil war. The population ballooned to a staggering 25 million souls as refugees from the conflict and the chaos of the earthquakes in California, rendered destitute and homeless, sought the safety of the walled megasprawl. In the 22 years since the end of the civil war, the city has become, with few exceptions, an urban jungle of staggering proportions. Sky scrapers choke the landscape of Chicago from the opulent Gold Coast and International "Loop district" to the hell zone that is

Gary, Indiana, as far west as Aurora and north to Waukegan. Even the bowels of the city haven't escaped development. Coffin City rests like a seething tumor deep under the surface of Chicago, a nightmarish subterranean slum populated by criminals of every stripe.

Chicago is divided up into four major sectors; The North side, Central Chicago, West Side and South Side. Sandwiched in the center of these zones is the volatile IZ (International Zone), the location of Embassies from China, New Brasilia, The Eurasian Union, Techno-Shogunate Japan and a host of other NATO-treaty countries. The NAC and GLU also maintain a presence in the International sector. Coffin city is also considered its own sector even though it crosses geographic lines.

Central Chicago: Corp. Central

The Gold Coast

Originally made popular in 1885 by a wealthy dry goods merchant named Potter Palmer when he built a modern-day castle there, the Gold Coast became and remains the territory of Chicagoland's elite. The borders of this region have not changed in the last hundred years, and are centered around Lake Shore Drive facing Lake Michigan. North Avenue, South Division Street. Areas of State Street, Oak Street mark the outer regions.

This region is known for more than just its high rent. Golden, well-maintained and preserved beaches lie on the opposite side of Lake Shore Drive. Once open to the public, they are now restricted from anyone who does not live in the equally well-preserved and up-scale high rises across the way. In fact, simply living in the area does not automatically allow access to the beaches. Prospective beach-goers must purchase a yearly pass, which costs one thousand credits a head. Guests may also purchase passes, at a rate of five hundred credits per visit. Of course this is small change for the people who live in this neighborhood, and it just barely pays for the cyberforms who are charged with cleaning up anything undesirable that washes up onshore.

The living space in this region is interspersed with office space belonging to corporations. Sometimes the lower floors are rented out for corporate use while the workers live on the upper floors – if they can afford it. Very few corporations pay for their employees' living quarters, and those who do almost never want to shell out the kind of money it costs to live here. That said, CEOs and some of the other upper level administrators often seem to manage to either outright pay for themselves to live here, or at least cut themselves a large enough bonus to cover the expenses.

Without exception, the buildings in the Golden Coast are well maintained and decorated, and they have the best facilities found anywhere in the city. Gyms have trainers on staff, pools have lifeguards and instructors, the parking lots have valets, and for an added fee, gofers on staff are willing to brave the megasprawl to run minor errands. This relatively small region of the city is home to both the Sky Lounge and Jaxes, both of which are famous night clubs that are detailed below.

The Loop

The Loop is Chicago's central downtown area, which is mostly filled with skyscrapers that are primarily used for corporate offices. Sky scrapers have stood here since the early twentieth century, though many of the ones that stood at the beginning of the current century have been knocked down in favor of even bigger ones. The ones standing now have larger footprints and reach even farther into the sky. In fact, the tallest skyscraper in the world once again belongs to Chicago, with the Nortec Tower, which rises a mind-boggling four-fifths of a mile into the sky, or 4367 feet.

The Loop encompasses an area approximately one and a half miles by two miles, and it is densely packed, primarily with businesses. In fact, despite the increase of urban sprawl over the last hundred years, this remains one of the largest business districts in North America. Shopping opportunities abound for both the blue platers and the wealthy. Virtually everything imaginable is for sale somewhere in this area, though finding it can sometimes be a challenge, and the prices are far from guaranteed to be the lowest, always.

In addition to the people who work here and shop here, there is a seedy underbelly comprised of sprawlanders, panhandlers, and hackers who hang out in the shadows. Most of them pose little risk and get by off the generosity of others. There are some, however, who use any means they can imagine to take advantage of those they meet. Some of the criminals offer free services, such as information distribution or refuse pickup, and simply ask strangers for their names and street addresses. With this information, they can determine where their money comes from, how much they are worth, and even the size of

their houses and the best routes to take for stealthy entry. The end result is a burglary, or if the home owner is extremely unlucky, a home invasion.

Others are less interested in taking material items from people, but would rather accumulate enough information about them to steal their identities and raise their standard of living, at least until their activities are discovered and halted. The people employing these tactics are forced to be more active in their attempts to accumulate valuable personal information. This usually involves spotting someone they believe is worth a great deal of money, hacking directly into any equipment they happen to be carrying via their TAPs, and stealing the information.

This can be risky because most people who are wealthy enough to be worth stealing from also have top-notch security systems installed that not only help prevent this information from being stolen, but also alert them to the people attempting to hack them. Unfortunately, in the Loop, it's rare to find security forces when they're needed, so hackers who are caught often go unpunished, unless an individual is willing to hunt them down themselves. Because most people avoid confrontation, most hackers who fail are able to simply move on to their next potential target, and there are no shortage of ready targets in this area.

Coffin City: Ophelia-9's Playground

Ten years ago, architects and city planners, looking to solve the growing problem of over-crowding, delved deep into the guts of the earth, building expansive subterranean housing complexes, agro-domes as well as restaurants, media theaters, roadways, Edu-facilities and shopping malls. The result of this massive project is known as the Eden Complex (or Eden for Short), though the blue-platers and squatters who live there have another name for it: Coffin City.

The designers of Coffin City had high hopes for the sub-sector, marketing coffin city with the catchy meme; "*Down is the new up*!" Hoping to attract affluent members of society, they went all out on Coffin City, sparing no expense to ensure the sector was both safe and fun to live in. To combat claustrophobia, the architects lined the walls with media screens, showing live feeds of the surface to create the illusion that Coffin City's inhabitants were living above ground.

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

The media feed hypes Coffin City as the wave of the future. Personally, I wouldn't set foot in the place… Check that. I'd go down into the coffin if I was being paid. Gotta make your scratch anyway ya can homey. The place is a death trap Ami, and that's the straight truth. Coffin City was supposed to be this slick, shiny sub-sector, but the reality of the situation is that the people it was designed for didn't buy into the propaganda. Instead, Coffin City devolved into a ghetto filled with some of the worst criminal elements in the megasprawl. – Billy Black Eyes

City law enforcement agencies—namely Ravenlocke Securities—maintain a token presence in Coffin City; just enough to keep the crime to a respectable level, which isn't saying much. Indeed, the Ravens who police Coffin City are typically just as corrupt (if not more so) as the people they arrest. Not that arrests happen very often in Coffin City.

Little Italy

Nearly two hundred years ago, this relatively small area settled by increasing numbers of immigrants from Italy. Over time though, the area diversified and became more affluent. This area saw a great deal of fighting during the second civil war, which is when many of the Italian descendants from the old families fled, even while others dug their feet in and fought to preserve their neighborhoods. The result was that the level of affluence once again fell and the neighborhoods diversified even more, but there remains a distinctly Italian culture that is present in this area.

Still located here are such landmarks as the Italian American Sports Hall of Fame, the Our Lady of Pompeii church, and Arrigo Park, which is six acres of officially protected landmark within the city.

Chinatown

Although originally not one of the larger Chinatowns in America, the increase of Chinese immigrants in the 2020s plus the influx of Chinese development credits expanded this area until it reached a mile long by half a mile wide, making it one of the largest single regions in Chicago. Within, businesses with a distinctly Chinese influence thrive, from restaurants to curio shops. The people on the streets are mostly of Chinese

descent, though the number of people from other cultures has increased over the years. The popularity of Chinese culture in America plus the popularity of Chinese cuisine has made this a thriving place to shop. Gang warfare in this area is high, as are the places where you'll find shops willing to sell and install gutterware cybernetics.

Koreatown

Korea town once lived up to its name as a place primarily inhabited by Koreans. This changed long ago, and now it is inhabited by one of the most racially and ethnically diverse populations anywhere in the world. There is no single group that can claim majority, as people from all over Asia, South America, Africa, and North America are represented. At one time this was an area where a lot of foreign born Americans lived, but that isn't even true anymore. Roughly half of the people who live in this area were born within the NAC or inside Chicago itself. The major neighborhoods in this part of Chicago are Albany Park, Mayfair, and North Mayfair. Despite the very diverse makeup of this neighborhood, a few Korean shops can still be found by those who go looking for them.

As can be expected whenever you have this diverse of a group living in a small area, there are a number of rival gangs who try to claim the area for their own. All of the major gangs within the city except for the Italian Mafia have a presence here. Gang warfare takes place here on a daily basis, with a major occurrence, such as a murder or a noteworthy street battle taking place weekly. Despite the high crime rate, those who have lived here for a long time and stay out of the gangs are usually safe. Many of the blue platers know some of the gang members personally and are therefore not targeted for home invasions or random violence.

The North Side: Neo Suburbia

Just like it sounds, this area is where the people who don't want to be caught up in all the bustle of the city tend to move. The area is divided up by neighborhoods, some of which are better than others. Most of them lack their own character and simply serve as places for corporate employees to build their lives. There are a few neighborhoods that were originally settled by one ethnic group or other, and therefore have their own unique feel.

Arlington Heights

Northwest of the O'Haire Milsec (Military Sector) lies the Arlington Heights rad zone. The once-affluent suburb—now little more than a mishmash of burned out buildings, radiated parks and abandoned homes—was one of the areas hit by low-yield nukes during the battle of Chicago. Despite the ever-present danger of radiation and toxic waste dumped by megacorporations, many people—mostly squatters, psyches, hybrids, and the occasional working man—call the rad zone their home.

The O'Haire Military Sector

Aside from the fact that this part of the city was bombed several dozen times during the war, this portion of the city remains more or less intact, but it is highly militarized. The Chicago Militia is based here and is in charge of the military gear that once belonged to the U.S. military at this location as well as the

newer equipment the city has added itself. Civilians do live in this region, though most of them have jobs with the military base. There are others who have moved into this area for the simple reason that it's one part of the city that's safe, at least when it's not wartime.

Ukrainian Village

Originally settled by ethnic Ukrainians, this was once a relatively peaceful neighborhood due to the borders with the industrial sectors to the south and east. This changed in the early part of the 21st century, when the neighborhood diversified, and then it became much less safe when most of the industry that borders it shut down. A large number of Ukrainian families still live there, but the neighborhood has become an unruly site for poverty, gangs, and criminal activity.

To make matters worse, much of the industrial waste that was once stored nearby has begun leaching into the ground under this area, resulting in contaminants appearing on the street, under people's houses, and in the drinking water. Many become sick and die here while there have been a fair number of mutant births. While not the worst neighborhood in Chicagoland, this is one of the areas where people are cautious when they must come here on business.

The South Side: Urban Hell

Urban Hell summarizes this area perfectly. These are all neighborhoods and cities that, for whatever reasons, have become overpopulated, but failed as desirable places to live over time. Now it's all mostly gangland.

The Gary Hell Zone

The community of Gary has been troubled for a long time by economic disparity, and overall living conditions, and in these troubled times, the problems have deepened to the point where we now find them. City blocks, by necessity, became denser, deeper, and higher as the poor were forced to build in order to accommodate more people. The result is the sprawling city block-towers. While these are common throughout Chicagoland, what is not common is the fact that these immense regions are total war zones. These areas receive the lowest level of corporate security money can buy, and the people living here are constantly finding new and inventive reasons to kill each other.

THE BATTLE OF CHICAGO

Just prior to the second American civil war, the Chicago megasprawl had grown to incorporate cities including Aurora, Illinois, Gary, Indiana, and Waukegan, Illinois. When the war erupted, the GLU and NAC—hoping to take control of vital Great Lakes shipping lanes—rushed to capture the city. The ensuing conflict came to be known as the Battle of Chicago.

One of the bloodiest chapters of the second civil war, the Battle of Chicago lasted two months while NATO debated sending peace keeping troops to quell violence in the city. During that time an estimated 67,000 people lost their lives. Initial battles for control of the outermost sectors were fought on three major fronts, with GLU forces moving south out of Detroit, Michigan, Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Southeast from staging grounds in St. Paul, Minnesota.

NAC forces steamrolled east from Omaha, Nebraska to attack the GLU militia in the Milwaukee sector while troops from Indianapolis and Kentucky pushed North, quickly occupying the southeastern sectors of the megasprawl until they engaged elements from the Illinois National Guard, Chicago's local law enforcement units and GLU troops from Michigan. Heated battles between GLU and NAC forces raged throughout Chi-town in the early days of the battle. Battlefield commanders of both the GLU and NAC had expected a tough fight to gain control of the strategic city. What they hadn't anticipated however, was the defiance of the city's citizens.

When the GLU and NAC began their advance on the city they encountered hastily-formed militias, street gangs, combat hackers, and others willing and able to fight to protect their homes and families. What started as a struggle between the GLU and NAC forces for dominance of the megasprawl turned into a battle between three armies, with scared, angry citizens fighting an insurgency against both factions with equal ferocity. Block by block, sector by sector, fighting to capture the city nearly tore the Chicago metroplex apart.

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Entering the Gary Hell Zone is like taking a walk through some old-school post-apocalyptic urban landscape. Dead vehicles lie along the roadsides, human corpses lie out in the open, left to rot, and the gangs down here are more like their own armed militia. I suppose that this is what happens when society stops taking responsibility for all of its undesirables and simply shunts them off to a few distinct locations.

One point of interest here is the GYY, or the Gary International Airport. Despite the fact that the locals say that this sub-community of Chicago has been abandoned by God, people still need to get from Chicagoland to other parts of the world, which requires many to catch flights. The GYY is still a bustling hub of activity, but it is completely walled off from the surrounding regions. People are get in and out using VTOL-capable vehicles, commonly known as jump cars. Those without jump cars are forced to hire a cab or rely on the kindness of others, lest they get stuck here.

Sim City

This area of Chicago is known as Sim City due to its high population of emancipated simulacra. Urban developers have frequently looked at this region as prime for development, so a great deal of building, tearing down, and revisions to the place have taken place over the years. Unfortunately the populace here is just not quite wealthy enough to make these endeavors work out, leading to the failure of such revitalization efforts. In addition to this, Sim City has also been known to have some of the worst luck when it comes to unforeseen disasters. For example, last year an airliner taking off from the GYY fell out of the sky and incinerated two full blocks when it crashed. A few years before that, the sewers overflowed and came back up into the streets through the storm drains, leading to the sudden spread of a whole bunch of easily preventable infectious diseases.

The Wild, Wild, West Side

The west side of Chicago isn't as inherently hostile to n00bs as the South side is, but it still has its share of rough areas. This is a place you can go to earn some real credits, if you don't mind negotiating through the gangs and devastated areas. This area is full of large communities that have grown together over time, like devastated Aurora, or the affluent Naperville.

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The conflict stretched for months with no signs of slowing down and neither side gaining any significant ground. Then one cold winter morning the unthinkable happened. At 8:30 AM on February 8th 2065, three "dirty" nuclear devices around one kiloton apiece detonated in districts across the already devastated megasprawl. The attacks targeted both GLU and NAC forward bases as well as a suspected insurgent stronghold in the city.

The world responded with outrage, decrying the attacks as reprehensible, even as NAC and GLU forces pointed fingers, each side blaming the other for the atrocities. Within days the first of 130,000 NATO forces landed in O'Hare airport and immediately began the work of securing the city. Backed by China, the India League and the Eurasian Union, Illinois Governor Donald Parks (who would later succumb to severe depression and take his own life) declared Chi-town a free city and ordered GLU and NAC leaders to pull their forces out of the megasprawl. A month later, the last of the GLU and NAC forces had redeployed to other areas of the embattled nation and reconstruction began in earnest.

RECONSTRUCTION

The Battle of Chicago provided an opportunity to implement much needed changes to the city's infrastructure. In many ways, the reconstruction of Chicago was a grand experiment. Looking to expand their interests in the region, megacorporations from all over the globe invested trillions into the reconstruction of Chicago in return for the rights to build arcologies, processing plants and various factories within the city. Roads, mass transit systems, power grids and other essential components of the megasprawl were rebuilt and upgraded to utilize emerging technologies. As a result, Chicago became one of the first cities on the North American continent to fully integrate Hyper Reality into its infrastructure.

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Aurora Barrens

Aurora is another full city that was incorporated into the Chicagoland megasprawl when the wall was built. Its population had swollen to half a million people prior to the war, but it's a barrens now due to the repeated bombings that took place. Entire blocks of houses were flattened, and then the wreckage was scavenged. Some rebuilding has taken place and it has become a community containing an odd mix of people, from the relatively wealthy, a lot of blue platers, and a host of impoverished gang bangers. For the most part, each group tries to avoid the other two sine a great deal of animosity has built up between them.

The one landmark that Aurora is famous for, the Paramount theater, still stands and has been renovated several times over the years. Today, it still shows movies, which are augmented by virtual overlays provided through the Deep. It's one of the most popular places within the city.

Downers's Grove

Consisting of approximately fifteen square miles of urban sprawl, Downer's Grove escaped the war more or less intact, though like many other areas in Chicagoland, it's infested with gangs and criminals. Interspersed within these bad areas are corporate and industrial centers, most of which remain active. This draws more people into the community for legitimate work while there are thousands upon thousands of people there who aren't skilled enough to get jobs there. This leads to areas where good neighborhoods are located right next to run down gang-held regions. Even the so-called safe areas in Downer's Grove aren't very safe.

THE WALL

Reconstruction didn't just focus on rebuilding the city, however. While the GLU and NAC were forced to leave Chicago, the civil war still raged on, and any reconstruction effort needed to factor defense into the equation to discourage any future attempts to take the city by force. The newly appointed Chief Administrator Thomas Stern commissioned the construction of a great wall which, when completed, would encircle the whole of the megasprawl and outlying suburbs. With simulacrum workers and labor androids working nonstop, the infamous wall—a ten story monolith stretching for approximately 121 miles to ring the entire Chi-town megasprawl—was completed in a mere two years.

WHO REALLY NUKED CHICAGO?

Neither the NAC nor the GLU ever came forward to take responsibility for the strikes. In the weeks following the events of February 8th 2065, Stopwatch launched a full-scale investigation into the attacks, but never made their findings public, classifying the information due to its sensitive nature. Of course, it didn't take long for the rumor mongering to start.

The most popular theory pinned the attacks on Stopwatch itself. Conspiracy theorists (some of whom were supposedly ex-Stopwatch agents) presented "evidence" the agency had access to stockpiles of mini nuclear devices; the tin hatters claimed would be used to counter a singularity event. Both the NAC and GLU used AI's to counter the efforts of enemy combat hackers to control remote drones and other high tech war machines. Given this fact, it's not implausible that, fearing an imminent singularity event, Stopwatch agents detonated the nukes as a preemptive measure. No hard evidence surfaced to support the claim, however. Others allege black ops teams and ronin working for megacorporations and foreign nations wanting to use the attacks as a pretense to gain a foothold in the city were responsible. Though, as with the Stopwatch theory, no evidence exists to corroborate it.

Naperville

At thirty five square miles, Naperville ranges from middle to upper class, and since it retains some level of independence from the city of Chicago, it has been able to afford good security, hence keeping the gangs out. This is known as one of the better places in the area to reside. Because of its affluence, there are a number of corporate offices, which are often the sites of intrigue. Naperville doesn't have many murders during any given year, but the ones that happen for some reason always seem to either be tied to the corporations or to lone wack jobs who go on shooting sprees for reasons known only to them. A number of anti-social predators have also found Naperville to be a target-rich environment. Despite this, it still ranks as one of the best places in the world to live.

Yorktown Shopping Center

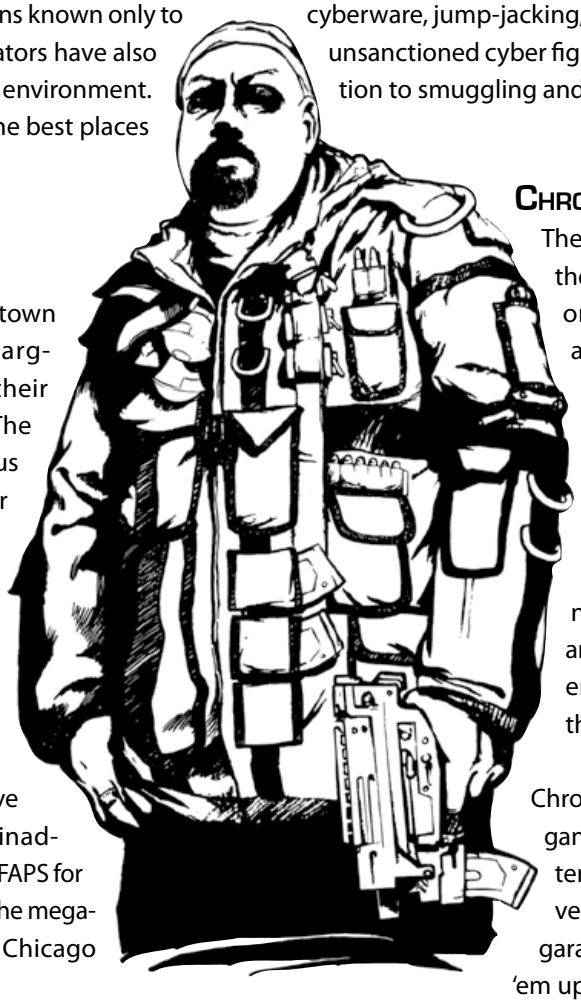
At two million square feet, the Yorktown Shopping Center is one of the largest places for people to go blow their hard-earned credits in the world. The center has been expanded numerous times over the years, adding room for cybernetic retailers making way for a large clinic belonging to Kenta Cyber Dynamics.

Crime

Nearly 48% of the citizens of the megasprawl are unemployed and live from month to month on grossly inadequate Federal Allowance Payments (FAPS for short) garnered from taxes levied on the megacorporations operating within the Chicago megasprawl.

The irony here is that, while the corporate face men openly complain against these unfair taxes on the nightly Mediaweb they know the megacorps will easily recoup them—and actually turn a profit—when the people, looking to get the bare necessities or perhaps splurge on real food, download new matter assembler patterns, or perhaps buy that shiny jump bike that just came out, spend that money in their stores. In the end, the cycle remains the same—vicious and unrelenting like the global elitists and corporate robber barons that perpetuate it.

Given the staggering unemployment rate, it's no wonder people turn to crime to survive. FAP'S barely keep the lights on and the rent paid, and, while nobody starves anymore thanks to NUTRImachines (Home food vats that barely deserve the name), eating artificially flavored grey paste out of a tube day in and day out is enough to make anyone want to steal a VTOL car and sell it for credits so they can feed and clothe their families. Of course, there are other predators roaming the sprawl who take their criminal lifestyle much more seriously, engaging in a variety of pursuits ranging from armed robbery, reaping cyberware, jump-jacking, blackmail, illegal simulacrum sales, unsanctioned cyber fighting rings, racketeering, and extortion to smuggling and wet work.



Chrome Reapers

Theft of cyberware is commonplace in the sprawl. Cybernetics and vat grown organs are expensive, hombre'. The average runner looking for an edge on the competition either can't afford the cost or doesn't want to deal with the legalities involved with purchasing commercial chrome, so she turns to the shadow community, going to body chop shops to get what she needs. Of course, body chop shops are typically supplied by chrome reapers—thugs who butcher people for their cyber and bioware.

Chrome reapers tend to operate in small gangs of four or five heavily cybered hitters. Hackers will jump-jack the mark's vehicle and land it in (or drive it to) a garage where the muscle waits to carve 'em up. Like most predators, they look for the easiest targets they can find; script kiddies sporting new headware, n00b ronin who haven't been in the shadows of Chi-town long enough to get a feel for the city and its dangers, blue platers sportin' augmentations to help them do their job better so some robot doesn't take it; hell, even older sprawlers who just had organ transplants get jacked.

That said, the more hard core chrome reapers in Chicago have been known to target runners and shadow teams with cutting edge cyber and bioware, and lately it's been happening more

and more. If the buzz on the streets and Mediaweb can be believed, someone's been paying chrome reapers some serious cred to target ronin, especially LEET teams. Even stranger, the ronin aren't just carved up for their chrome and left on the streets; they're disappeared.

Just a few weeks ago Johnny Cage's team got hit in a red zone in the Aurora sector as they were leaving a meet at The Downside; a night club popular among Chicago's shadow community. Some brainer caught the whole thing on his eye camera and streamed it live across the MEDIAweb. The stream showed ten reapers in banger leathers swarming the crew with (mostly) non lethal weapons; stun grenades, gel guns and narcoject guns fitted with some kind of paralytic neurotoxin were found on the four chrome reapers who didn't survive. The fight lasted about thirty seconds, but in the end, the team got scooped up and tossed into a nondescript hover van that sped off into the night. The brainer who uploaded the MEDIAstream hasn't been seen since, either.

Gangs and other criminal organizations

Gangs have grown steadily in the two decades since Chicago became a free city, to the point where there are an estimated eighty six active gangs of varying sizes are scattered throughout the megasprawl. The largest of the gangs are the South Side Storm Troopers and their rivals, the Black Rose Syndicate in the brutal Gary Hell zone. Both gangs have sets throughout the sprawl and war with each other almost nightly. Other notable gangs include the Burners—a vicious gang of mutants and hybrids trying to make a name for themselves in the Arlington Heights rad zone—and the Aurora Angels of Death; undisputed rulers of the Aurora barrens.

The Aurora Angels of Death

The mammoth multi-level, 12 lane arterial highway known as the Ronald Reagan Memorial Tollway marks the beginning of the infamous Aurora Barrens, a sprawling ghetto claimed by the Aurora Angels of Death. Because of their proximity to the wall, the gang has relatively easy access to merchandise going into and out of the NAC. Many shipments destined for megacorps in throughout the sprawl find their way onto the streets of the sprawl, largely thanks to the Angels of Death. They know the best ways to get people in and out of Chicago, working with coyotes in the NAC and GLU to get people over the wall, for a fee of course.

The Black Rose Syndicate

The Dan Ryan Expressway marks the boundary of the territory claimed by one of the most organized gangs of Chicagoland; the Black Rose Syndicate. Indeed, the syndicate is more of an organized crime ring than they are street level bangers, though any street gang who tries to move in on their territory will quickly find the Black Rose Syndicate can brawl with the best of them.

Primarily of Eastern European/Ukrainian stock, the Black Rose Syndicate are soldiers for powerful Russian mafia, more commonly known as the Bratva or "Brotherhood." The BRS act as enforcers, hitters, and bodyguards for the brotherhood in addition to handling street biz including the sale and distribution of drugs, guns, illegal cyberware and other illicit materials. Additionally, they run protection rackets, simulacra brothels and cyber fight clubs for the Bratva, organize VR gambling domains and peddle unlicensed Augmented Reality Constructs (ARCs) and lethal programs.

The Burners

Relative n00bs in comparison to other more established gangs in the sprawl, the Burners are a motley crew who style themselves as protectors of the people who make their homes in the Arlington Heights rad zone. To the Burners, the estimated 7 to 10,000 people in the zone are an extended family of sorts, their peeps, as burners often refer to the squatters and blue platers who call Arlington Heights their home.

The Italian Mafia

Granted, it has been more than a hundred years since the Italian families ruled the streets of Chicago, but they still are a major player in the city's organized crime. At this point in time, most of the Italian gangs have stopped fighting each other and have turned their attention to thwarting the security as well as rival gangs. Most of the individual gangs are comprised of a few families who all serve under one figurehead. This is not an easy peace, and it's common for one boss to make a play against another one in order to gain more prestige or incorporate his rival's families and lackeys. Most of them are smart enough, however, to put aside these petty rivalries in favor of accomplishing their greater goal, which is to secure their position among the other crime syndicates and ensure that the credits keep slowing in their direction.

The South Side Storm Troopers

Of all the gangs roaming the urban sprawl that is Chicago, the South Side Storm Troopers are the most vicious. Notorious for their brutality, the Storm Troopers are little more than common thugs who prey on the weak and the helpless, engaging in various criminal activities including chrome reaping, extortion, kidnapping, wet work and sales of various illicit materials. The Storm Troopers claim everything East of S. Chicago Avenue as far North as Hyde Park and as far south as East 95th street.

VR Domains

There are a number of VR domains that serve the needs of the local Chicago megasprawl. Todaysbounties.CG is a location that lists the bounties that are currently open within the city. There, registered bounty hunters (and anyone can register for a mere 100 credits a year) can find work and assess the potential threat level of a potential bounty. Another site, this time related to the other side of security firms is Deepice.cg, which caters to a trusted network of criminals and keeps a running list of the least protected neighborhoods and the illicit activities that might be profitable in those areas. Among the things one might find on the list are under-protected wealthy individuals with stuff worth stealing, drugs that are in particular demand within a given area, or hits put out by the various crime bosses.

One VR domain that is extremely popular is Chigagowars.CG, which is where the city-wide game is organized. Anyone who pays the fifty credits a month can participate. What they players do is pick one of three sides in a fictional war that is happening in Chicago. Players are provided with virtual guns (they look like pens in the real world, but appear to be actual weapons to other players who are plugged in via their tap) and sent on various missions that take them throughout the city. They might be sent to assassinate an enemy player, free a virtual prisoner from a rival team, retrieve a virtual item from a specific location, or any number of other possible jobs. With every victory, the team scores increase, leading to a final winner at the end of every month, and a payout in credits to a random member of the virtual team.

Chicago is also full of numerous other well-know VR domains that deal with much more mundane things, such as places to eat, happening places for any given week, or consumer reviews. Such sites are both interesting and popular, but don't exactly make for the most exciting reading unless you're looking for that specific type of information.

Entertainment

Entertainment is huge in Chicagoland. While the Deep is a constant source of self expression and entertainment, the megasprawl is also home to a variety of things to do. The most popular form of entertainment that is specific to the region is the night clubs and the jump races. Although most megasprawls are host to both of these, Chicagoland is famous for its own local places and events.

Nightclubs

The nightclubs of Chicagoland are popular and plentiful. In fact, it would require a guidebook at least as big as this just to list all of the nightclubs and the personalities that hang out there. Of course people tend to frequent a variety of clubs, depending on the day, who they are out with, who they might be trying to avoid, and where their whimsy might take them, most also have a core group of loyal clientele whose presence at a given place can be predicted. Some of these individuals are involved in gang activity and operate from these locations, while others might be part of the entertainment, or they might simply enjoy the establishments so much that they've become as integral as the decorations and the wall hangings. The following are some of the more famous nightclubs in Chicagoland:

The Glitter Lounge

Billed as a place where people can go to perform their favorite cover songs, this night club is far more than just that. The establishment is lavishly decorated with solid gold fixtures, expensive artwork (all of which is from a handful of European artists who comprise the trendy Laksian movement, which looks like a combination of contemporary art mixed with classical elements). The Lounge has open mic nights on Wednesdays and Thursdays, but they pay handsomely every other night of the week for local celebrities to come in and either perform their own songs, or songs that have been part of popular culture since the early twentieth century.

These performances are often enhanced through the deep, placing the performer in front of backdrops or scenes pulled from or inspired by the works they are originally associated with. Everything about this place is intentionally classy, and the rougher outside elements are expected to stay outside the bronze doors. Little do most patrons know, but the Italian mob boss Max Costa owns this establishment and uses it as a front for money laundering. In addition to this, much of the

day-to-day operations of his gang takes place behind closed doors here.

The Flesh Pot

This establishment is unapologetically concerned with the matters of meat-space. One part strip joint, one part whorehouse, and one part hospital, this place has it all. The Flesh Pot boasts some of the best looking dancers in all of Chicagoland, and they've apparently had the same ones for decades. In fact, the (mostly) women who work here undergo surgical modification before they start to have their bodies altered. They pick from a handful of attractive looking noses, breasts, lips, and legs, and they parade them in front of paying customers night after night. Female patrons can pay to make themselves more attractive, thinner, or simply different right there with the collection of grown organs, while any of the customers can pay to have sexual relations with the prostitutes. Sex parties, and private exhibitions are also offered, if arranged in advance.

Choppers

While there are numerous locations throughout Chicagoland for mano-a-mano pit fighting, Choppers is the premier location, where the most accomplished go to test their skills against the others at the top of their league. While cybernetic enhancements are not required to participate, they are expected. The general consensus is that non-enhanced individuals don't stand a chance against the rest, no matter how well trained they happen to be. While this is generally considered sound wisdom, that did not stop Ayaka Kizori from dominating at Choppers. He stayed at the top for two years, but eventually retired, citing that it was time to let some of the others have their time in the sun. Despite his explanation, rumors circulated about threats from gang leaders.

In addition to the fighting, Choppers serves alcoholic beverages, stims, and other chemical enhancements. The tables are arranged around a central pit, which allows them to view the action below. Of course, the club makes a hefty amount of credits by brokering the wagers.

The fights normally do not involve fatalities, although most combatants are expected to bring their own team medics with them, just in case they end up taking a lot more than they receive. They are also well compensated for participating, though much of their winnings go towards healing up wounds and repairing damage to their gear.

Occasionally Choppers is used as the venue to make private disputes public, and to determine one final victor (usually at the cost of one of the combatants' lives). This is the one time that the nightclub makes an exception to their 'no rookies' rule. All other times, combatants are expected to prove that they are worthy of fighting here in one of the lesser clubs first.

The Grease Pit

This is a standard bar that has a theme glorifying jump racing. Within is a retired jump racing car, and the pictures of many of Chicagoland's most popular divers have been hung throughout the establishments. Drinks, drugs, and dinner are served nightly, but this is not all that the establishment sells. The place also sponsors illegal jump racing. Clients who pay for the privilege are invited into "The shop," where they watch the races, which are monitored via strategically placed hidden cameras throughout the city. Those within gamble on the outcomes of the races, while some of the wealthier clients sponsor the racers. Many of these same clients keep an ear to the ground for up-and-comers, and bring them into the organizations. Illegal jump racing that is promoted by this establishment takes place on Wednesday, Fridays, and Saturdays. During all nights, they like to keep their holo-projectors busy showing the latest broadcast races from throughout the world.

Jaxes

This is one of the most exclusive nightclubs, reserved for only the wealthiest members of Chicagoland, and for a good reason. The front room of Jaxes looks like little more than an upscale watering hole, but the back rooms host some of the most debased activities that take place in the entire megasprawl. Wealthy individuals who have an excess of money and anger pay to torture unwilling subjects. Jaxes gets the victims from the streets, usually luring them in with promises of honest work. Once inside, they are stripped of weapons and clothing, tossed in cages, and fed from the leftovers off of customers' plates. Sometimes their torture is as mild as allowing the paying customers to watch them wail and beg for a release from their imprisonment, while in other cases, they are brought out subjected to physical harm at the hands of the club's clients.

Although they are discouraged from killing the prisoners, all of them must die eventually, and groups of clients often make an event out of it. This is usually reserved for those who have been subjected to so much mistreatment that they no longer

provide entertainment when beaten or lashed, or they have done something to invoke the wrath of the club's owners, such as trying to escape, or assaulting one of the staff or a client.

Jaxes is owned by the forty-five year-old sociopathic son of Nortec Industries' CEO. He started this establishment selling drinks, but soon began to entertain some of his client's more disturbing requests when he learned that there was an actual market for it. Various security firms have attempted to shut him down, but they've been met with a wall of lawyers, as well as his own security firm, which have managed to keep them out thus far.

The Sky Lounge

The Sky Lounge is the premier establishment where business-people go to broker deals. Anybody entering who possesses a tap is greeted by the illusion of floating a mile above the city. The view matches the weather, which is fed to it via stationary weather balloon. Day and night is reflected, as are cloud conditions. At times, clouds appear to float through the establishment. Floors, tables, and chairs, and other features appear as shadows so that people can navigate the place. During dark periods, they are lit with the virtual fluorescent lighting of their choice. Of course patrons always have the choice of turning this off whenever they choose, but most feel extra-important when they can make business decisions from above the city.

Industrial Park

The destination location for good drinks, great times, and amazing music is a club called Industrial Park. There, the music is loud and frequent. The owners try to schedule music every night. Weeknights are for local up-and-coming bands, while they try to book nationally recognized acts for the weekends. Often, events here are recorded for distribution into the Deep.

The club is effectively divided into two areas. The first area, closest to the entrance, two stories tall, functions as the bar. Tables, chairs, and booths are spread throughout the establishment, and there's a main bar that serves it's typical function. Both stories of this section are open to the second section, which is where the stage is located. Concert-goers can watch the performances from the balcony of the second floor of the bar area, or they can stand in the fifty feet of empty floor area in front of the stage.

Industrial Park also known as one of the better watering holes in Chicagoland, with the greatest selection of domestic and imported beer. It is one of the few locations where both blue-collar drinkers and beer snobs can have their needs met. In addition to this, Industrial park also serves the usual selection of mind and body enhancing chemicals.

Jump Racing

Like all urban megasprawls, the people of Chicagoland love to wager amazingly large numbers of credits on a variety ways that are usually entertaining. The most showy of these here in the city is the jump racing, where drivers pit their machines against one another, seeking to take home prizes. While the winning drivers do well enough to pay the bills and upgrade their machines, the real winners in these events are the bookies, who take a cut on all the wagers. Win… lose… it doesn't matter to them because they always take their percentage of the transactions. Billions of credits exchange hands every year during these races, which means that the bookies make tens of millions, and then a small percentage of is donated to the top drivers for winning events.

Of course, this being Chicagoland, corruption is present at the highest levels of the sport. Races are often won not because of the driver's skills or equipment, but because their machinery was not tampered with before the race. Unexpected mechanical problems are typical, and when the race isn't fixed without the driver's knowledge, it's fixed with their knowledge, leading to monetary rewards for drivers intentionally under performing on a race day.

Jump racing takes place in a variety of venues. The sanctioned ones take place in air-space that is cleared out for the purpose of racing, while there are numerous illegal races that take place in the streets, right alongside land-based and air-capable jump vehicles belonging to folks who are simply trying to get to and from work, or run a few errands. While the real money is in the legal, sanctioned variety, there is a vast underground of well-trained drivers, bookies, and patrons, who wager money on the unsanctioned events.

Many consider these to be more exciting, particularly when the drivers are forced to deal with traffic jams, or just happen into a crowded sector-street. While some races are quickly put together, many of them are recorded with hidden cameras and broadcast through the deep via highly encrypted data-streams,

which allow those with a vested interest to watch the events as they unfold. Most drivers bring their own vehicles to these events, though there are some invitationals where every driver races the same machinery, so the outcome is a measure of pure skill rather than how pimped out their ride is.

Regardless of which types of jump racing is happening, the types of racing has not changed from the old days, when ground-bound motor vehicles would race. There are three primary types of racing modes: drag, grip, and speed. Drag racing is simple enough. The jump cars start from a position such as the ground or a building top, and they attempt to beat the other drivers to a location that is usually one to two miles away. The way is usually straight and free of obstacles, and the race is a measure of the vehicle's engine, its VTOL propulsion systems and it's the driver's (often augmented) reflexes.

Grip racing is where the driver is required to navigate courses that include a number of curves and straightaways. The challenge is to see which drivers can maintain control of their vehicles and not drift off the track. The tighter they can take the corners and the higher they can keep their speed, the greater their chances of beating out the other drivers. A big engine provides an advantage, but not nearly as big of one as with the drag racers. Successful drivers prefer smaller, more maneuverable vehicles that are able to handle through the corners, but once they hit the straightaways, they need to be able to punch it so that they can gain that extra bit of speed to beat out the next guy.

Speed racing is like a combination of drag and grip racing. The vehicles must have powerful engines, but the courses go on for miles, and top speeds far exceed other types of racing. Because of the high speeds involved, bodies are normally tweaked to be as aerodynamic as possible, while the anti-grav units are optimized for maximum maneuverability. These races are normally reserved for professional sanctioned events, given the fact that accidents tend to be deadly, and the city wants them as far away from buildings and city blocks as possible.

For added excitement, there is a less practiced, but no less exciting and illegal version of speed and grip racing that involves adding body armor and weapons to the jump cars so that drivers can try to destroy their competition. These races are normally held only in the less policed regions of the city, and they're almost always sponsored by organized crime. Sadly, a number of bystanders are killed every year because they find themselves in the crossfire of these contests.

Law Enforcement

Like a lot of things in 2088, law enforcement isn't what it used to be. Once upon a time, reports of murders, thefts, and rapes were enough to get the authorities running to your location, regardless of whether you happened to live in a good part of town or a bad one. Today, that isn't as true as it used to be. Law enforcement is handled by contracts, which vary from neighborhood to neighborhood. The neighborhoods that can afford better law enforcement get exactly that while the neighborhoods there are other neighborhoods that can barely scrape together the credits to buy the cheapest enforcement available.

While Chicagoland mandates that every neighborhood be contracted with a security company, it doesn't specify any particular level of protective services, which means that some are patrolled on paper only. See, dangerous areas don't exactly inspire overworked and underpaid security personnel to go running into dangerous situations. The worse the neighborhood the lower the pay, which means the less likely people are to get help in those areas. It's a harsh reality, but there you have it.

Ravenlocke Securities

Ravenlocke Securities is the largest security companies in Chicagoland with the best reputation. It's also a very large business that has diversified well beyond security. It's the company of choice for the rich as well as the blue platers who can afford them. Also, see below under mega-corporations.

The Bounty System

When a neighborhood can barely afford security, what they're left with is the bounty system. The system essentially works like this: a crime is committed, so the victims (or survivors of the victims) contact their local security company. Those companies respond to the call in their own time, usually waiting long enough to ensure that the action has died down. They then consult any available recordings and easily obtained forensic evidence. If they can determine a suspect, they file a bounty for the criminal. These are then automatically filed with various locations within the Deep that are frequented by bounty hunters. It is then up to these individuals to decide whether the credits offered are worth the risk of bringing the criminal in. If they are, then they try to apprehend them. If not, the criminal will likely never be held accountable for the crime. Bounties increase or decrease based on the amount of trouble the criminal is causing.

Sector Police

For those who can't afford Ravenlocke Securities, there's the Sector Police. This is a company that markets themselves to the blue platers and the poor. Their service is considered second-rate, but not incompetent. Ravenlocke Securities has been muscling in on some of their higher paying contracted areas, and the two companies have actually gotten into a shooting war in a few areas of Chicagoland. Sometimes the line between the gangs and the security is thin indeed.

The Chicago Defense Force

The Chicago Defense Force is the official police force of the city, but nobody wants to see them knocking on doors in their neighborhood. They're the equivalent of the National Guard, and are only activated if the city is threatened by an outside force or if there's a problem within the city that's so large that the security companies are unable to deal with it. The city does not commit them to a problem lightly due to the politics involved with pulling them back after the problem has been dealt with.

Megacorporations

Chicagoland is the home of many megacorporations, Ami, which is one of the reasons that you see so many high rises and rich folk secluding themselves away from the rest of the city in the Golden Coast. Below are some of the major players, kind of a who's who in the city, but there are others that are also important, like the Chicago Ice water company, which sells good, clean, drinkable water for a premium. In fact, good water has become a bit like fuel was in the previous century. It costs a lot of money, but you can't hardly live without it.

Black Knight Armaments

Promoted as the top of the line armaments company, Black Knight Armaments produces weapons and armor of various grades. Some of their products are sold exclusively to the NAC or the GLU militaries, while others go to the various security firms, and still others are sold on through various vendors including Malbrand. Their products come in a variety of sizes and colors, and just because something has the Black Knight Armaments logo on it does not mean that it will stand up equally well to hard use as their military grade equipment. In some cases, such as the knight's armor, which is a suit made from interlocking bulletproof plates that are arranged like that of a medieval knight's outfit, the design is mainly for the sake of style, but it does not protect as well as many of their other, less expensive, pieces.

But Black Knight Armaments does its best not to sell based on technical merit to its non-military customers, but on the value of intangibles, such as name recognition and style. After all, training has more to do with the precision of a firearm than the equipment itself, and it's really the deterrent factor that maintains the peace. The number of bullets a piece of armor can actually stop is less important than the fact that the security officers will look organized and intimidating if they're all wearing the same color and style of armor. Various consumer groups have tried to expose the shortcomings of many of the products the company sells, but that is refuted by experts who urge businesses to have all equipment tested before buying it, and a number of enthusiastic but misguided fans who swear by their products, often citing them as the reason they weren't ghosted in some ill-fated encounter or other.

The force behind this unorthodox marketing is Jenna Inglis, the former CEO of a fashion design company. Her career path was forever changed one night when her and her family were attacked as they left their jump car and attempted to enter a building in what was supposed to be a safe zone. Her husband and oldest daughter, Julia, were killed in the attack. There had been security officers assigned to that area, but their assailants had eliminated them prior to their arrival. Inglis stepped down from her position with the fashion company following the tragedy and she purchased Falcon Armaments, which she soon renamed Black Knight Armaments.

While Inglis' first concern is putting out products that allow people to better defend themselves, she cannot completely turn her back on the fashion world, which is why so many of their products now favor form over function. Even so, the T25 series of armor is considered a safe bet by the experts for any security force, as are the fifteen core models of firearms they produce.

Galaxy Entertainment International

One of the top media companies, not only in Chicago, but in all of North America, Galaxy Entertainment International is comprised of a major movie studio, a major television studio, a bleeding edge effects studio, a digital composition manufacturer, a writers guild, and a distribution house. In short,

they have the resources to produce whatever entertainment they desire and distribute it to the masses via a popular VR domain and more traditional means. While there are numerous entertainment companies in existence, Galaxy Entertainment is known for their widely popular brands that collectively cater to wide range of audiences.

Galaxy Entertainment is known as a relatively harmless corporation, but that simply means that their public relations people are doing a good job. In truth, they're brutal behind the scenes. While they're always willing to entertain the notion of licensed products with other corporations, they have a standard contract that involves fifty percent royalties, and there's a grueling approval process that has been known to delay the release of new products for up to a year and a half. Add to that the fact that they have a team of employees whose sole job is to scour the deep for anyone who is making money from anything that even resembles their intellectual property, with the intent to sue at the slightest hint of a breach. Thousands of suits are filed every month, but almost none of them ever go to court. Instead, they collect what little money they can, or they simply assume ownership of the companies as part of "undisclosed settlements" so that they can squeeze them for whatever money they're worth and then discard them. Those who try to fight, even if their counter-arguments are sound, normally find themselves trampled under the pack of lawyers that Galaxy Entertainment keeps on staff, and they often find themselves blackballed by many other industries. The studio has a long reach and casts and even longer shadow.

At the top of Galaxy Entertainment is producer-turned-CEO David Cuban. Known for his easy humor and habitual cigar smoking (real cigars, not cloned ones), Cuban has a dark side that is whispered about but otherwise remains well hidden from the public. While his business instincts are noteworthy, he often goes off on angry tirades against his staff for what most consider insignificant things, such as his coffee being a few degrees too warm, not having his daily briefs waiting for him before he enters the office (he's a known workaholic, so he makes his entrance no later than 6:00AM), making minor mistakes that might cost the company a few credits, or for simply saying something that offends him. Many of his staff would likely go to the press, except that he has their public commentary locked up tight with non-disclosure agreements that, if breached, would spell the end of their employability.

If his professional behavior leaves much to be desired, the rumors fly about the abuse he inflicts upon those in his private life. Three years ago his wife of five years was found dead in the house they shared, the victim of an apparent fall. The fatality was briefly investigated by Ravenlocke Securities, but the matter was quickly deemed an accident and the files were never released to the public. Despite this, their neighbors, themselves media producers, stated to the press that they had heard loud arguing coming from the house the night of the accident and that they believed that Cuban was responsible for her death. Then, a month ago, those same neighbors were the victims of a rare mechanical failure in their Night Hawk VTOL limousine that caused them to plummet three hundred feet to their deaths. Again, Ravenlocke Securities found no reason to investigate Cuban.

Featherstone Nanotechnologies

Featherstone nanotechnologies is a relatively new company that has led the way in nano-technological advances. The first uses for nanotechnology were medical. Nano-robots were found to be able to directly attack cancer tumors while leaving healthy tissue alone, so it became the leading technology for cancer treatment. It was also found to be useful for fighting bacterial infections, removing arterial clogs, and make other needed medical modifications. Dubbing is another pseudo-medicinal application of nano-technology.

After the medical uses were found, nano-robots were found to be useful for a variety of other commercial functions. For instance, raw nutrients and food materials could be placed in a vat, then the nano-robots would be programmed with a pattern and turned loose in the vat. Minutes later, the nano-robots were deactivated, but the material in the vat had transformed itself into food. While most people still prefer the taste of grown food, the nano-produced foods are less expensive, and thus available to a wider range of people. While there are few in America who derive the majority of their food in this way, there are parts of South America, Africa, and Asia whose populations would have been decimated long ago from starvation had this technology never been invented.

In addition to this, Featherstone Nanotechnologies also has contracts with the various military organizations as well as some of the isms to produce weaponized nano-robots. These have taken the place of nukes as ultimate weapons because once released into an area, they can do all sorts of nasty

things, such as strip the flesh from a living person in seconds, or silently infiltrate the bodies of a population, waiting for the signal for them to do all sorts of nasty things to them. They can overcome almost any barrier put in place, they completely ignore body armor, and they can reduce virtually anything to their core components. While nano-technology has been used in armed combat in the past, the various world powers are pushing for treaties to control their military applications. Meanwhile, production continues, orders are filled, and some of the nastiest robots on the planet are too tiny to be seen with the naked eye. Trust me when I tell you that these things keep me awake at night, Ami.

Featherstone Nanotechnologies is controlled by a board who keep their identities hidden from the public. The public is aware of the military applications of nano-robots and many people believe that if you behead the corporation that makes them, you behead the threat. Sure, this is outdated thinking that has no place in the world of 2088, but it persists among enough people that the board is frightened to reveal their identities to anyone outside of the company. Those in the lower echelons are known to their friends and families, and they are well paid for the risk they take by just coming in to work. Enough employees are discovered by the company's enemies and quietly eliminated that the company rarely has to fire or lay off anyone, even when the economy slows down. Many believe that the company doesn't fire its problem employees because of the potential liability to the company, but instead knocks them off and blames their corporate enemies.

Kenta Cyber Dynamics

Numerous companies throughout the world produce cyber technologies, but the leading producer based in Chicago is Kenta Cyber Dynamics. They produce all grades of cybernetics, including gutterware, though they leave all identifying marks off of that equipment, just in case someone who installs a piece of it happens to have enough credits to sue them for damages. The vast majority of their business is done in streetware and above, however, and their customers tend to be reasonably content with their purchases.

There are two practices that are remnants of the twentieth century business models that are embraced by Kenta Cyber Dynamics however: planned defects and planned obsolescence. Planned defects are just what they sound like. No matter how good the piece of equipment, they are engineered with some flaw that becomes obvious sooner or later. Some piece of them will wear out faster than the rest, which will result in the need to replace the equipment, or at least have it serviced. In either case, the company makes money. Obviously, if a person needs to replace a cybernetic arm because it's dexterity components have burned out, then the company makes money. Likewise, if a customer decides to keep their gear but pay the money it takes to have it fixed, then they must take it to an authorized repair center, which in-turn pays the company a percentage for the right to work on their equipment. There are shops available that work on various pieces of cybernetics without any contracts with the original manufacturers, but often they can only buy second-rate replacement parts, which means that the gear will either not function as well as it had before the repair was needed, or it will need serviced again for the same problem sooner than later.

Planned obsolescence is something that has been rampant in the technology field for as long as there has been technology. While a person with one piece of cybernetic equipment might not care how their mechanical eye works with the other equipment, someone with two or more pieces suddenly starts caring how its being fed into their nervous system, and how they might work directly with one another. Over time, the company changes the standards as they "improve" their technology, resulting in all manner of problems. Generally speaking, if you buy a piece of cybernetics right now, it will work with everything else on the market today (though there are three different standards, each endorsed by different companies, and you never want to connect equipment to you if it doesn't match one of the standards you already have installed). However, just because the pieces you have installed work together without a problem today, odds are that there will be problems if you want to install a new system five years down the line. Standards evolve and leave old pieces of equipment behind, so someone with a perfectly functional five-year-old cybernetic eye might just need to install a newly manufactured eye when they also install a replacement hand, or mechanical legs. True, it's costly, and people complain a great deal about it, but technology marches on and the company needs to keep up to stay competitive, regardless of their personal feelings on the matter.

The head of Kenta Cyber Dynamics is Kate Blunt, an executive who knows virtually nothing about the technology itself, but has been a top exec at numerous businesses for most of her professional life. She can't understand why she would need

to know anything more than what the technology does in order to make competent marketing and corporate strategy decisions. Despite her complete lack of engineering knowledge, she often seen and quoted in the media, and she has addressed numerous technology seminars with speeches written by her staff of engineers and public relations people. When asked tech questions that fall outside of her expertise, she easily hands the question off to one of her team leaders, saying that more qualified to answer than her. This would not be a problem at all, if not for the fact that the company bills her as a technology expert.

Malbrand Corp.

Malbrand is the single most common retailer everywhere you go, whether it be Chicago or anywhere else, and their prices are always the lowest… Always! They carry a variety of items, from food (normally just the stuff that's produced with nanotechnology though), to ordinary house wares, to cybernetics, to weapons and armor. If it's in high demand, you can find it at Malbrand.

It is true that the company puts its customers first, though as an organization, it supports the ideals embodied by the NAC, which means that they're quick to censor items that are overtly offensive. Outside of their customers, they're known for not playing so nice with others. Their always lowest prices come at the cost of employee wages, which are also always the lowest… Always! They also employ predatory marketing practices to overwhelm their competition and put them out of business.

One example of the tactics Malbrand employs is the popular Sticky peanut butter. The company is so large that they're able to get a special package of Sticky peanut butter made that contains twenty five percent more peanut butter at a cost that's ten percent lower than most other retailers can get. The company then sets the price on their large-size Sticky Peanut Butter at five percent below cost, and they advertise this throughout the Deep and everywhere else they can find, along with their other loss leaders. Sure, they carry plenty of items that don't generate much profit, but they own the market on Sticky peanut butter, which means that other, smaller, companies are unable to compete on that item. Of course people don't just go to Malmart to buy their peanut butter, they also buy their cloned meats, bread, ice cream, paper plates, laundry detergent, and virtually everything else, meaning that the smaller companies are unable to compete at all. The only things that Malbrand doesn't touch are high-end products that cater to the rich rather than the blue platers, but Malbrand doesn't care about that crowd because they tend to have very exacting and specific tastes in goods, and are impossible to please most of the time.

Malbrand is run by Jeff Brand, the son of the late founder, Francis Brand. Francis built the company on business principles that came out of a new ruthless business ethic of the last quarter of the twentieth century, but he took things a step farther. Taking advantage of the crappy economy of the second decade of the new millennium, he started his company by buying laundry detergent in enormous bulk, then stockpiling it into huge displays up front in his stores, then selling it for pennies over cost. They became known as the place where a person could buy their detergent for the best prices anyone had ever seen, and completely undercutting their competition in the process. He expanded this out to other items, targeting the items his competitors normally sold at a profit. Ultimately his company crushed the other bottom-feeding price discounters of the time, which he acquired and incorporated into the Malbrand chain. Frank lived to the ripe old age of ninety-six, and his son, who he'd fathered at the age of sixty-five, took ownership of the company upon his death. So far, the major change he has made has been to add cybernetics to the company's product lineup, but in all other ways, he has followed in his father's footsteps, pushing for the lowest prices on the items they can be the most competitive with, and expanding out to as many locations as possible.

Ravenlocke Securities

One of the top security firms in Chicago, Ravenlocke Securities promises safety and the rule of law in all of the areas they are hired to patrol. Of course promises are easily broken, especially once they slap the iron-clad contracts on the various neighborhoods that employ them. These contracts do specify specific numbers of security officers who will police any given area, but they do not guarantee results, and they also specify lengths of time that their services are required as well as quit fees that are usually more than most areas can afford. Of course they pay more attention to the clients who pay larger sums of money, so the well-to-do areas tend to be over-patrolled while the middle class and lower receive spotty enforcement at best. Despite all this, they still manage to hold on to the

best reputation in the business, which says something about their competition.

Ravenlocke's interests don't end with security though. While that is where the company originally earned its money, its executives were smart enough to diversify early on, to the point where they own a number of companies that have little in common with one another. One of their more famous holdings is Nortec Industries, which produces simulacra. Also among their holdings is a company that specializes in non-lethal weaponry, one that essentially produces no-label streetware cybernetics, as well as a candy manufacturer, a clothing label, and a jump car manufacturer.

The head of Ravenlocke Securities is Roger Gilbert, a stern-faced man with icy blue, emotionless eyes. He is one of the few people in the public eye who is able to discuss matters such as personnel fatality statistics, street violence, and other difficult subject with dispassionate calm, as though he's talking about nothing more than numbers on a spreadsheet. Because of his emotionless attitude towards life, he has become something of a media sensation. Media outlets seek him out for his opinions on a number of matters, or simply for a still-shot of him looking serious. There are those who despise his attitude, and he has been verbally accosted by various people on numerous occasions. His response is usually little more than a shrug, followed by his personal security ushering the verbal assailants away.

Gilbert was not always in charge of the company. A decade ago it stood on the verge of bankruptcy due to mounting debts and several unprofitable divisions. The former CEO was ousted, and Gilbert was appointed to take the helm. The reality, he conceded to the board, was that things were becoming more dangerous on the street and that the only way to become profitable again was to meet these challenges with a regard only for profitability. The laws did not require ongoing compensation to the families of slain security officers, so that benefit was reduced. The law did not require the high salaries or the benefits they were paying, so those were brought down until they were in-line with other similar organizations. He also put pressure on the CEOs of other divisions to make whatever cuts were necessary to become profitable. Products were canceled, brand identities were altered, and most properties they owned were forced to go through a rejuvenation process or be slashed. The end result was that Ravenlocke once again became profitable and it was acquired by Aquarius.

Today the company is highly politicized due to its importance in maintaining some semblance of order in Chicago. NAC demands that they put an emphasis on protecting neighborhoods where military bases exist, the people cry out for better protection in many areas, even while a few neighborhoods have become active war zones as Ravenlocke and its corporate rivals compete to drive the other out and take over security in those areas. Gilbert does not apologize when civilians are injured or killed in the crossfire in such area, preferring instead to refer to them as 'leveraged losses,' which were needed to make the city more secure.

Nortec Industries

The leader in simulacrum production, Chicago based Nortec Industries has managed to make a great many friends and enemies. Among its friends are virtually every organization that can find a use for slave labor, as well as the military, those involved in thrill killing, and everyone else who has ever thought of duplicating parts of themselves to increase their production. Among its enemies are human rights groups who do not see simulacra as things, but as intentionally disabled people, as well as religious groups who believe that their very existence is an affront to their respective religious power (incidentally, to date, there have been no complaints lodged by said invisible and incomprehensible beings themselves). Regardless of whether you love them or hate them, simulacra are a polarizing and controversial "product," which of course makes them a hot commodity. It also makes Nortec Industries a target, which is demonstrated by the recent bombings of its factories.

There are a lot of theories out there about who carried out the bombings and why, but the fact that nobody is claiming responsibility is telling. Either they're afraid of retribution from the conglomerate, or they don't want to muddy their own image by admitting that they were behind the assault. It isn't that many people would be concerned about the death of the simulacra – most of the ones destroyed hadn't even been decanted into living, breathing human replications yet – it's the destruction of property that cost the company's shareholders a great deal of money and, to a lesser extent, the loss of trained factory workers. After all, the people who design simulacra are highly trained and specialized and represent an investment of years.

Nortec is owned by Ravenlocke, which is a division of Aquarius Engineering. As with many mega-corporations, much of what

takes place in Nortec is essentially little more than a brief description that the Ravenlocke execs keeps on hand so that they have some idea of what all the divisions are doing, though they really don't get involved with the day-to-day operations.

Aquarius, on the other hand, knows in a very general big picture sort of way what Nortec is and what they do, but the only thing they really keep their eye on is their balance sheet. The bombing of factories raised a few eyebrows, but it was the devaluation of the company's stock that raised some interest, and when Aquarius execs start asking questions about Nortec's operations and security measures, the people at Nortec start getting nervous… Nervous enough that a couple of people were carried out of the corporate office recently in body bags. The company claims that both employees succumbed to physical ailments, but nobody's really buying that line.

At the top level, Nortec Industries is fronted by a visionary named Simone Armstrong. Now in her sixties, Simone was one of the pioneers of simulacra technology. She led the scientific team that discovered ways of cloning every part of the human body and then stripping out the troublesome DNA that caused organ rejection. The end result was that muscles, bones, eyes, hearts, livers, and every other part of the body could be cloned from a donor who displayed certain qualities and then assembled into an individual designed for a specific purpose in sort of a human chop-shop. As time went by, rather than looking for originals to copy, they started making their own modifications, effectively authoring simulacrum rather than simply assembling them.

At an early stage in simulacrum research, Armstrong used all of the money at her disposal to buy control of the labs, and then spun it off into its own company. Her business acumen ultimately became far more valuable than her scientific knowledge as she led Nortec Industries to dominate the simulacrum market. Eventually the company was profitable enough to attract the attention of the bean counters in charge of Ravenlocke, and the rest, as they say, is history. As part of the sale agreement, Armstrong demanded that one of the terms of the sale was that she be allowed to continue acting as the company's chief exec. Under her leadership, the company has continued to dominate the market while remaining profitable for the parent companies. That said, many say that there's a black cloud hanging over Armstrong due to the bombings, and rumors are circulating that she's trying to figure out a way to extricate herself from the company without getting ghosted in the process.

T.L.I.

Short for Third life Industries, this company has done cutting edge gene cloning of endangered species and even recreated clones of extinct species. They do gene therapy for humans and also combine DNA from animals with humans to created chimeras. Reviews on this company's works are mixed. On one hand, a great many people are thankful that a number of animals exist once again, but large sections of the religious believe that the company is thwarting "God's plan," whatever that might be. Personally, I have to wonder how the extinctions related to the man-made problems of billions of gallons of oil that have seeped into the sea. It seems like if man can do something to reverse, or at least mitigate the damage he has done, what's the harm in it? But alas, I digress.

But as with much big business, there's a deeper story here, and one that should scare anyone who knows what's good for them. Sure, this is all just a conspiracy theory floating around The Deep, but it's one that happens to be backed up by a lot of people with actual street cred. Supposedly the whole alien Roswell New Mexico alien crash was real and tissue samples were frozen before the rest of the remains were incinerated and covered up. During the last years before the second civil war, the U.S. government sold T.L.I. the rights to experiment with these samples.

A lot of stories have circulated about how they've recreated these alien species in a lab. More horrific stories talk about how they've spliced human DNA together with the aliens in an effort to help humanity evolve. Even scarier, there's been talk of splicing the DNA of some of the extra-terrestrial creatures onboard that ship, from single-celled organisms to some pretty horrific creatures that only think in terms of hunger and destruction. Yep, if this information is true, they've created some pretty nasty beasties in the lab that could only be used for one purpose here on Earth: tearing a targeted population limb from limb. But as I said, this is all rumor and the company goes to great lengths to point out how ludicrous the whole thing sounds.

The head of this company is Lee Schuller, a relatively young executive who sports a full head of black hair and a winning smile. His solution to dealing with the disapproval of the company's religious opponents is to be as friendly as is humanly possible while delivering the message of how his company's work is bringing hope to a world that has been ravaged by centuries of exploitation. Those close to him say that he is a

genuinely nice guy, but that's tempered with a business sense that has led the company to success.

Urban Punk

Urban Punk is a fashion company based in Chicagoland that is among the major trendsetters in the world. Their clothing is intended to be both popular and edgy, which is a delicate balance to maintain, particularly in an environment where so many people want to be unique individuals where their own style differentiates themselves from their peers. The way to accommodate this is a variety of brands that build their images around some basic concepts, such as leatherwear, dark fabric, colorful fabric, each of which uses its own pattern's fabrics. Although Urban Punk is the company name, its original product line of the same name, remains one of their top selling lines.

As a clothes manufacturer, Urban Punk does not try to cater to the lowest priced market. In fact, they pride themselves on the fact that their customers are happy to pay their hard earned money for their clothing styles. They offer high quality at high prices, and as a result, they tend to be one of the top companies that aren't mired in scandals. Granted, their goods are manufactured in Cambodia, India, and Korea, where they can they're produced for a small fraction of what they'd cost in the NAC, but all companies that can get away with it do that anyway.

Urban Punk is one of the leading employers of top models, and as such, has exerted a certain amount of influence over the modeling industry. While most models are contracted, those in top positions are signed to exclusivity agreements, meaning that they are contractually prevented from lending their services to competing businesses. This is a standard business practice, except for the fact that their standard agreement remains in effect for five years after the models resign, retire, or are fired. Due to the natural aging of the human body, this effectively ends the model's career. Some models have been lured away from other companies, signed up, and then intentionally not used, effectively killing their careers with no promise of work or compensation in return… All to damage a competitor's brand.

The CEO of Urban Punk is Kan Fukano, a Japanese American who came to this country with his previous company, Turani Motors. Lured away from his previous industry with an offer of forty billion credits a year, Fukano has led the company to new heights by introducing new brands into previously untapped niches, such as formal wear and toddler clothing. Fukano has a reputation for being well mannered and inquisitive. His manner of leadership is to treat his employees with respect, and then ask intelligent questions that better educate him on the ins and outs of the business while looking for logical ways to improve the company's performance. Most of the employees in the company claim to be happy with his style of leadership, which is a rarity in the corporate world of 2088.

Transportation

People in Chicago get around in a variety of ways. Those who can afford them fly from place to place in VTOL cars. While a good number of blue platers own them, many prefer to rely on public transportation due to the fact that it's cheaper and safer. The most common mode of public transportation is the El-train system; a multi-level snarl of elevated maglev trains and subways twisting and turning throughout the metroplex. Before the advent of Hyper reality it seemed like a person needed a master's degree in Geographic Information Systems just to navigate the tangled mess that was Chicago's transportation system.

In 2072 the system went through a massive ten year overhaul, incorporating hyper objects into the infrastructure to help the average person figure out how to get from point A to point B in just a few seconds. Today, Artificially intelligent programs control the entire system, ensuring everything runs as smoothly as possible. For those who can afford it, there are VTOL cab services to fly them anywhere in the sprawl. Of course, people still drive petro-chem cars, SUV's and motorcycles.

"Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it."
– Hannah Arendt

CHAPTER SIX: GAME MASTER SECTION

GUIDING THE STORY

The art of storytelling is nearly as old as stories themselves. In times long past people would gather in their homes or around a fire and tell tales to one another. These stories could be entertaining or frightening, or both. They could, like a parable, impart some great insight, or be so abstract as to resemble a dream.

In Interface Zero, the Game Master has the job of presiding over the story's development, but does not have a monopoly on the story being told. The Game Master serves as her players' senses—a cinematographer of the mind's eye, if you will. When the characters open a door into a dirty back alley, it is the Game Master's duty to describe the alley and clue the characters into why it is so dirty. The way you describe it (dark and claustrophobic, or piled with reeking sun-ripened garbage) goes a long way to determining the mood of the game.

While players only have one part to play—their character—you, as the Game Master, have the responsibility of playing everyone else in the series' cast and trying to make them all distinct. You are charged with coming up with their looks, mannerism, motives, and goals. If the nefarious corporate agent provocateur comes up with a plan to expose the character's real allegiances, you have to come up with the plan.

If that weren't enough, you are also charged with being entertaining as well. Give your players options and the freedom to take the story places you hadn't thought of. Help them get more attached to their characters by rewarding them with opportunities to shine, and not just because of their character's skills, but because of their character's personalities and backgrounds. Put them in situations that test their morals as well as their abilities.

Ultimately, the Game Master has a lot of control over the story's direction, but you should not take that to mean that you control the story. Use narration to guide the characters along, rather than forcing them along the story's path. Nothing hurts a game more than the idea that there is a foregone conclusion and that ultimately it doesn't matter what the characters do or what rolls they get. The characters are the story, and should be the ones making the difference.

Encourage Role-Playing

Seems kinda silly to mention but here it is. One of the major differences between sitting in a living room and playing Interface Zero with your friends and sitting in front of a computer playing an MMORPG is direct human interaction. While computers do allow you to communicate remotely with your friends online, they are not yet an adequate substitute for actual face-to-face gaming. Body language, eye contact, tone of voice, Monty Python jokes on the side, all play a part in the role-playing experience. What's even better, though, is when you, as the Game Master, aren't saying a word. Then the players, in their roles as characters, are role-playing among themselves, guiding the story while you just sit back and observe, preparing for what's to come.

Set a Schedule

Adventures can be weekly games you plan on playing for months to come, one-off games you play for a night or two, or anything in between. Regardless, you should have some sort of standardized location, time, and length for your games.

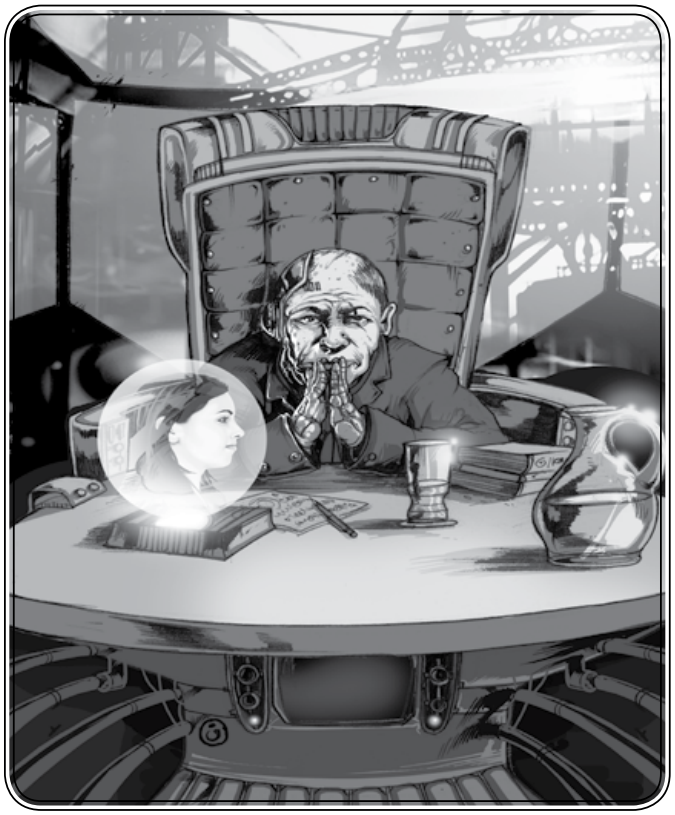
Use Stereotypes to Your Advantage

Stereotypes are a handy shorthand for introducing NPCs and fixing them in the mind of your players. But never cling to these concepts so tightly that all they ever become are two-dimensional cutouts. Instead, twist them a bit. Take an aspect or two of the character and turn it on its head. Not only will it surprise (and perhaps educate) your players, but it can make for some interesting characters as well.

Example: Some common role-playing game stereotypes include: The bald bartender cleaning glasses behind the bar, the lady in distress, the gruff smith, the pompous rich guy, the quiet assassin, and in the world of cyberpunk, the

shadowy fixer who hires the characters to run a raid. Now let's turn these tropes on their heads a bit while still leaving them somewhat archetypal. What would the players think of a bartender who was quietly cleaning a gun behind the bar, quietly discussing his war record while filling orders? What if the maiden in distress was a single mother with kids and they were all in distress?

What if the gruff smith-like character wasn't all that gruff, but rather flamboyant and overly enthusiastic about getting the chance to trick out the character's car? What if the pompous rich guy actually was just overly outgoing and magnetic and it was just the characters' preconceptions that made them think he was an ass? What if the assassin wasn't so quiet, but instead was very talkative and enjoyed playing head games with his targets? And what if Mr. Johnson the fixer was actually an idiot who had no idea what he had gotten himself involved in, but enjoyed all the excitement and attention?



Make Your Descriptions Vivid

Try to imagine yourself in the scene when you are describing it. Imagine yourself looking around the area from the characters' point of view, listening to the subtle noises, feeling the air move around you and scent it carries. The more senses you can effectively bring to bear in a description, the more real it becomes in the minds of the players. By necessity you will have to pick and choose elements within the environment to point out to the players, from the purely tactical considerations of the area (How big? How crowded? Are there lights? Is it full of boxes labeled "Danger: High Explosives"?), to the purely story-related. Mixing them as seamlessly as possible and then allowing a moment to answer any player questions, is usually the best option.

Example: Mr. Singh sits comfortably behind his 80,000-rupee cloned mahogany desk fiercely apprising you from behind folded hands, while his three stoic man servants relieve you of your weapons in practiced manner. A fourth butler appears and takes your tea order while butler number three passes a sensor wand over you from head to foot. On the surface, Singh's office is a two-hundred-year-old throwback to the British Raj period, but through your TAPs you can hear—no, you can feel—the roiling currents of The Deep crushing down around you and that desk, spiraling in like the North Pacific Gyre. The density and weight of the media is enough to make the expansive office feel like Mississippi on a humid summer night.

From this description, we can infer that the room is big, Mr. Singh is rich, eccentric, has a lot of information at his disposal and that he probably wants something from the characters. Otherwise, he could have allocated his resources to have had them killed rather than bring them to his office. How big is the "expansive office?" What sort of information is swirling around in The Deep? And how tough do Mr. Singh's mooks look? These are all questions that the characters could ask, as each requires at least a small bit of effort to determine. Some information should only be revealed after skill check. For instance, someone would have to make a Notice roll to figure out how tough Singh's goons are. Later in this chapter, we will discuss how descriptions can affect the mood, and theme of the story.

Do Your Homework

If you can, set yourself aside some time before the game to review what you plan to do during that session. Make notes about locations, clues, important scenes, NPCs, their motivations, and the tone of the story that night. Improvisational role-playing is too important to leave to chance.

Mix Things Up a Bit

No matter how much a person loves something, they need the occasional break. So if you've been running a serious investigative series, drop in a session that interjects some levity, or a running gun battle; anything that shakes up the status quo. If you've had nothing but gun battles, then maybe it's time to toss in a session that focuses on solving a mystery, or more introspective role-playing where they all try and relax in some tropical destination after a particularly harrowing adventure.

Characters Matter

Never cut the rug out from underneath them by having an NPC arrive and fix everything or invalidate the characters' triumph. The characters should carry the largest amount of spotlight and get top billing. If you as a Game Master feel the need to control every aspect of the game and lead the players' characters around by the nose, perhaps you would be better suited to writing novels than gaming.

Never Forget the Character's Achilles Heels

Players often play down any weaknesses or vices their characters have, but it is part of your job to remind them they have them from time-to-time. Part of what makes a character a character is overcoming their own flaws on their way to story's climax. However, you shouldn't be punishing the character for their flaw or vice every time it comes up—otherwise it is very likely they would be dead, in jail or have gotten over it. Instead, occasionally play the siren. Allow the character to indulge in their vice, be it crassness, impulsiveness, arrogance, bigotry, a drug addiction, alcoholism, or too much VR, without any great consequence. Play up the positive aspects of the act, as seen from the character's side. Then, every once in a while, give the character the choice between indulging in their vice and doing something important to move the story along, or set things up so that they get caught in the act. Every now and then there should be consequences for the behavior.

If the character's flaw is more a limiting than a Hindrance—like a fear of heights, or substandard genetic treatment, or a trick cybernetic knee, then bring it up as appropriate (about the same amount of time you would bring up a negative consequence of a Hindrance). Most of the time, negative consequences should not appear more than once every three to five sessions, and most should be relatively minor. A character that goes out of her way to indulge in such activity might have a greater occurrence rate, as would a character involved in a subplot dealing specifically with their limitations.

Know Thyself and Thy Players

Know what your players want out of a game. Do they want to get into their character's head, solve a mystery, or simply blow off some steam? It only makes sense that you pattern your game after the wants of the people playing. Some of this can be taken care of at the meeting before the beginning of the series. Listen to what the players say they want in the game. While playing though a session, note their reactions and adjust your style accordingly. Ask for feedback and give it out as well. Finally, remember that you yourself are playing a game as well, so make it fun for yourself.

Know When to Take a Break

Aside from the late James Brown you are the hardest working person in show biz. Grab food, pretend you are looking up rules, step outside for a minute or even plan a week where you and your group do something other than play IZ. No one wants a good Game Master to burn out.

CHOOSING A GENRE

Interface Zero can be played using a number of different genre styles. The three styles discussed below all influenced the creation of the setting, and are most representative of the world of 2088. However, the rules are open enough to allow for nearly anything, and enterprising Game Masters are encouraged to create their own. Before starting an Interface zero campaign, discuss the genres with your gaming group to find out what interests them the most.

Cyberpunk

This is a dystopian future world dominated by powerful conglomerates, emergent AIs, virtual reality, and mean streets filled with outcasts willing to do anything to achieve their goals. The rapid advance of technology has alienated the citizens of the world from their own humanity. Life is cheap here, but staying alive can be expensive. Death often comes quickly and from unexpected quarters in cyberpunk settings. Protagonists of the genre tend to be disaffected outsiders with very little chance of making it out of the current desperate existence

and joining mainstream society. Sometimes, they don't even want to, preferring instead life in the underworld.

- *Sources:* (Literature) William Gibson's Sprawl Trilogy; (Film) Blade runner.

Anime

Much of the early cyberpunk ethos continues to thrive in anime; a tribute to how beloved the genre is in Japan (and to a lesser extent, the United States). Anime-style cyberpunk tends to be faster, more violent, and more action-packed than the original source material, while still adhering to the desperation and vibrancy of the setting. Technology is usually more advanced than in traditional cyberpunk, featuring a preponderance of cybernetics, sophisticated power armor, and digitized consciousness. As is the case in much of anime, the cost of war is usually present in some fashion. Often, the story's setting has just suffered through a horrible conflict or other calamity and mixes in a number of post-apocalyptic motifs, such as the rationing of fuel and supplies or the ruins of a once great metropolis.

- *Sources:* (Anime and Manga) Akira, Appleseed, Battle Angel: Alita, Cowboy Bebop, Ghost in the Shell.

Post Cyberpunk

Post cyberpunk is a continuation of the cyberpunk theme and includes many of the same tropes. It adds elements of transhumanism, high technology, and the world village. It integrates technology more thoroughly with the world. Governments tend to have more power in the post cyberpunk world than those in a pure cyberpunk setting and are often just as corrupt. Rather than outsiders, the protagonists of are more involved in their society within this genre, and have vested interest in maintaining the status quo or at least slowing their world's decay. In this regard, post cyberpunk can appear very similar to contemporary dramas.

- *Sources:* (Literature) Snow Crash, The Diamond Age; (Literature/Film) Minority Report.

SETTING

Stuff has to happen somewhere, and your choice of setting often determines the sort of stories you are going to tell. If you set an adventure in the middle of the California Dead Zone, you most likely are planning a wasteland Road Warrior-esque series rather than one dealing with boardroom politics or gang warfare at the roots of a major metropolis. An Interface Zero setting can be as large as you like, from several major cities to the inside of a studio apartment or even someone's head.

It is important that the setting stays consistent, and by that we mean that the corner bar should not suddenly appear ten miles away in the next town during the next game, unless there is an in game reason for such a change (like the adventure is all happening in VR for instance). If the setting becomes inconsistent, players start wondering more about geography than what their characters are going to do next.

Most campaigns are probably going to be set in a large city, for convenience's sake. Because the Interface Zero world is very similar to our world, one easy way to ensure consistency and score some interesting locations for adventure is to purchase a city map or travel guide, or if you happen to live in the city you wish to set your series in, try your local visitor's bureau. Remember, though, that things are likely to have changed a bit in 80 years, so extrapolate a little. At the same time, alter things to fit your chosen mood and theme. Plot out a few locations that your player's characters are likely to visit (homeless shelter, the local street doctor, the residence of the local deputy lodge master, a high class restaurant and the headquarters of Surya Media Computational Systems), mixing a few real locations from our world updated to 2088.

Example: After an afternoon's discussion Amber, Brendan, Rone, and Lou decide they want to set their story in Boston, Massachusetts, being that they are all familiar with the area. After consulting a contemporary map of the region, Lou notes that city is part of Atlantica, one of the separatist nation states formerly part of the former United States. Its proximity to the NAC makes it a prime battlefield in the ongoing cold war between the NAC and her neighbors. The large urban center also affords an excuse for gangland action as well, considering how much of the population is probably unemployed (or barely employed). Keeping the city's history of revolution in mind, Lou thinks about portraying the city as under the control of a powerful pharmaceutical conglomerate that controls much of the

city's government, to such an extent that city police are actually a security contract firm owned by the corporation. The fact that Boston is so close to the NAC means that the corporation can maintain tight control over the city, keeping it in a state of constant martial law in order (or so the government spin doctors say) to keep the citizenry safe. In order to promote compliance and reduce resentment, Lou plans on secretly having elements from within the company's fast food restaurant arm doctor the city's food supplies with drugs designed to make the populous more pliable.

CONFLICT

Conflict is core to any story. Without it there is no story and certainly no interest. Adversity is the medium through which characters rise or fall. In Interface Zero, characters can be subject to all sorts of conflict, from internal moral choices to running gun battles. These are a sampling of potential conflicts the characters might find themselves embroiled in.

Human vs. Non-Human

While every generation grapples with how technology and social progress redefines humanity, the world of Interface Zero, being home to simulacrums, artificial intelligences, uploaded digital personalities, enhanced humans and even human/animal hybrids, stresses it like never before. If a player chooses one of these as a background, creating a character whom many regard as less than human or even an abomination immediately makes the issue a key element of the campaign. Conversely, characters with more traditional backgrounds might also find themselves drawn into the debate, whether pro or con. The notion of playing a character bravely pushing back against bigotry and calling for an expansion of civil rights to include these new sorts of people seems obvious and leaps immediately to mind. For this reason, a campaign taking the other tack, one devoted to keeping artificial life forms in check, presents itself as an interesting if controversial alternative.

Poor vs. Rich

The inequalities in wealth between the hyper rich and those just trying to break even are more pronounced. In an Interface Zero game most government services are outsourced to corporate contractors and most taxes are now rolled into monthly subscription or pay-per-use fees. Generational debt, mass unemployment, and lack of opportunity all mean most people live at the same economic level their forebears did, their only respite coming in the form of state and corporate-backed entertainment, inexpensive food assistance programs, or criminal activity.

Reality vs. Virtual Reality

It is an age-old question, how do you know that all you know is not just a lie, a game simulation, or a figment of someone else's dream? With the line between the virtual and the real drawn so fine it is nearly non-existent and it becomes difficult to tell the two apart.

Character vs. Nature

This conflict pits man against the elements. Humanity's rape of the natural world has brought about dangerous environments beyond those featured in the stories of Jack London. The world of Interface Zero is dotted with toxic-wastelands, radioactive fallout zones, polluted slums, and deep ocean habitats, colonies on the moon as well as the deserts and mountains of today. The damage humans have inflicted on the ecosystem has been repaid with dangerously extreme weather patterns that make El Nino look like a passing spring rain.

Characters vs. Megacorps

So you want to stick it to the Man? Feel they wronged you somehow and now you want justice? Or maybe you just a piece of the pie? It ain't as easy as it looks. The company has an army of corporate lawyers, media security specialists, AIs, and in many cases in the post-collapse world, their own private mercenary armies. Each company has its own way of defending its interests, so characters might find themselves on the receiving end of anything from a subtle smear campaign to a simulacrum murder squad. Or, if they are company men themselves, they might be the troubleshooters.

Megacorp VS. Megacorp

The profit line is all that matters in a game of competing mega corps. Companies do whatever it takes to get and maintain the edge over their competition. Corporate espionage, cover-ups, insider trading, sabotage, embezzlement, and shifting alliances punctuate a conflict where loyalty is bought and sold like everything else.

Nation State vs. Nation State

A series dealing with nations often revolves around ideologies and espionage. Characters might play spies, assassins, or propagandists who spread disinformation in enemy territory. The might even be involved in an insurgent campaign with the goal of destabilizing the nation.

Law Enforcement vs. Crime

Whether as criminals, bounty hunters or corporate or private detectives, the characters come face to face with many of the moral gray areas within the future legal system. Forensics and investigation become intertwined with shadowy informants, evidence tampering, and the fine art of the double-cross.

Characters vs. The System

In the end, it turns out there are no real characters or villains in the world of the future—just products of a system so broken most take it for granted, like death and taxes. Such a series seeks to expose the dark side of so-called benevolent social constructs such as community, governance, love, wealth, and even rationality. Characters struggle against society as a whole while being viewed as radical malcontents, or perhaps even criminally insane.

Character vs. Self

Some of the most difficult battles are not against external forces, but our own inner demons. In such a conflict, the character's own fears and vices might prove to be their worst enemies. In a world of digitized memories, the characters might also be pitted against AI aspects constructed from their own personalities or simulacrums built to be their equal. The only way defeat such external manifestations might be to face up to and then take advantage of their own-shared flaws.

Traditionalism vs. Transhumanism

Tradition, religion, cultural mores—these are mostly outdated relics to extreme transhumanists who wish to be free of such backward-thinking sentimentality. In contrast, more conservative thinkers see transhumanists as throwing away their humanity, history, and culture in the name of advancement.

PLOT

The plot is the sequence of events within the series. Unlike traditionally created works, the Game Master does not have complete control over the course of the story. The players' input and the randomness of the dice invariably alter the story's progression. Still, the plot is in many ways the story and the Game Master will still need to at least thumbnail the rough events of the series before it is fit to present to the players at the game table. How the characters navigate the plot is what makes the story memorable. Plots have beginnings (which set the stage and offer the hook that invites the characters into the situation), middles (that explore the theme), and ends (which resolve the plot).

The plot tends to build up during the middle until, as the player in "Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead" states: Generally speaking, things have gone about as far as they can possibly go, when things have gotten about as bad as they can reasonably get. That's when we get a climax—the point of final decision within the story, followed by a denouement which wraps up the last few plot threads (or more commonly these days: the threads that aren't picked up until the next sequel). Each of these is a distinct phase of the plot, which we briefly describe below.

In The Beginning...

Beginnings are foundation of the story. The place where you as the Game Master can put your first stamp on things and set the mood, tone, and direction of the story. This all requires a good deal of focused description, so don't be afraid to go a little overboard here. A well-set stage has your players using the props, places, and people you supply for games to come. At this point, you need to establish the baseline of the world the series is set in. Show your players what "normal" looks like before you yank it all out from under them. Give them reasons to love or hate their setting, and want to protect, change, or flee from it. In general, you want to start your beginnings with a bit of bang. It doesn't have to be a "Bond" opening, but it should catch the players' and their characters' attentions. This bang may or may not lead directly into the middle.

The Middle Ground

Middles are very often the most difficult phase of design, because so much can happen here. The middle is a maze of choices where subplots sit like land mines waiting to be tapped. Because you are not navigating it yourself, but relying on the players to do so, it can become very complex. Our only advice on this is to try and remain as flexible as possible, while at the same time offering the players a bread crumb trail of clues or alternate paths—perhaps with unexpected twists and challenges of their own—should they lose their way to the climax.

While progressing along you should build up the stakes. The risks and challenges should both grow and become more personal to the characters until the adventure draws near its climax. The time to spring all your sorted twists and reversals, slowly increasing the pressure on the party.

In a role-playing game, the middle is the most fluid point. Characters are generally given a number of options at this point, and they may take the adventure in any number of unforeseen directions. As the Game Master, you must choose whether to go with the flow or nudge the group back in place. To be extreme in either direction is to risk your game. Players like direction from time-to-time, but they also enjoy their freedom. The trick is to know which one to employ and when. That comes from experience and knowing your group.

The End (Climax)

The climax. The final showdown. The big reveal. Here the characters finally confront their foe and give him what for, or perhaps die in the attempt. All the major action should lead (or at least appear to lead) to this point, and if that means you have to alter your previously scripted grand finale because of something unexpected that transpired in the middle, so be it. Don't make this scene too easy for the group.

They should have a good solid plan for dealing with their nemesis or the problem at hand. They should also have to overcome a twist or two along the way. Ultimately, it is the Game Master's responsibility to provide the necessary keys to the characters' success during the middle. Whether the characters take the Game Master's clues and hints, or use the key in the right fashion or instead go their own way is another story, but once again the Game Master needs to be adaptable. If the characters come up with a reasonable way of dealing with the climax, you should consider the option.

MOOD

Mood and motif are the spice of the series. Mood is the feel or emotion invoked by the story in the players, and by default, their characters. Invoking a mood is one of the harder parts of Narrating, but its well worth the effort. A well-invoked mood allows for deeper immersion into the game world by touching upon an emotional thread, like fear, hope, wistfulness, or fun.

Think about mood in the same way a movie director might. In a passionate romance, sets are often dimly lit and filled with deep reds, the music is pitched at a certain tone, and the movements of the actors flow like a dance. A horror film, in contrast, includes long periods of suspenseful buildup punctuated by sudden discordance. The shadows are cold and isolating, rather than cozy and warm.

Interface Zero can play to any number of moods (including the aforementioned examples), the following are just a few more to get you started.

THE REAL END

When a series ends (as all good stories should) you should have a plan, and here, in the planning stage is where you should start formulating it. It should be big and worth remembering by the players: something they will tell stories of in the years to come. It is very likely that you will not reach the resolution point via the path you had first imagined, but you should have the end in mind all the same. As events occur within the course of the series, make whatever minor course corrections you need to get you to there. The characters' actions might even suggest a better end; in which case, feel free to make changes as logic permits. Even still, you should always have a finish line in sight, and be actively working toward it. Without that goal, your series might very well wither on the vine and die amid a maze of subplots and side quests. So remember: keep your eye on the prize.

Adventurous

There are new, never-before-seen horizons to explore. Sudden dangers are present around every corner in a series with an adventuresome bent. A character cannot advance without taking daring risks, and everything seems boldly colored and over the top. Mooks (minions) are aplenty, as are cliffhangers and skin-of-your teeth rescues. Everything happens in just the nick of time, or if you prefer, not a moment too soon.

Decay

The toxins in the air eat at man's cities, and at humanity itself. The world is slowly rotting and dying around the characters, as evidenced by the destruction of the ecosystem, wastelands, ruins, and the rusted shells of cars that dot them. Everyone is sick here in one way or another. Entropy is everywhere, as are the items used to ward it off. Everything seems to be falling apart, morals included.

Dreamlike

In a world of augmented reality, illusions, and virtual realms, the only laws are those of imagination. The dividing line between what is real and what is fantasy can be nearly non-existent. Characters flit from world-to-world as easily as passing through an open doorway. Descriptions become more symbolic, as the symbols themselves take on more abstract and often multiple meanings.

Frenetic

Everything is constantly in motion and no one really knows what the future holds. This is the mood of the Singularity, the shifting neon landscape of the virtual world, the constant background buzz of information. The world is one filled with sleepless nights of racing thoughts, and uncertainty. Travel and high-speed chases are a hallmark of this mood. Change is everywhere, but not always visible. All the characters in the frenetic world (Game Master and player alike) tend to act without too much forethought, flying by the seat of their pants, and living off of fear and adrenaline. Never sit down when narrating a frenetic adventure.

Idealistic

The world is filled with lofty ideas and noble purposes, a stark contrast to the usual cyberpunk setting. Things are bright, and shiny, and new, like a blazing dawn as seen from a penthouse or Olympus on high.

Mysterious

Things are not all that they seem to be when this mood is in effect. The world is a balance of shadow and light. No one seems to have all the answers. The characters themselves should probably never piece it all together (at least not now). Instead they'll have to rely on themselves to fill in the missing puzzle pieces as they navigate a world of lies, half-truths and secret agendas.

Oppressive

The world seems claustrophobic, brooding, crushing down on the backs of the characters. Big Brother seems to always be watching. People toil like robots and the future seems unchanging. Everyone here seems tired and worn taskmasters on down. Only the super affluent seem unaffected.

Visceral

It's all about blood, sweat, sex, and the drive to survive at any cost in the face of the impending Singularity. In a visceral setting, humanity is an animal with all the powers and flaws of his primitive ancestors trapped in a cage of his own making. Modern society, logic, and advanced technology play the parts of jailor, tamer, and cell that fence in our mostly hidden organic urges. This mood plays up those blood instincts in the face of cold technological indifference.

Violent

Death is swift, messy, and almost arbitrary in a game where the mood of violence holds sway. There are periods of brooding punctuated by sudden flares of aggression like an angry red light flashing in the shadows on an oppressively summer's night. Fights tend to resemble Tarantino movies rather than bloodless 1950s westerns, and the vicious tools of bodily harm seem to be everywhere. Most characters hold physical confrontation as the first, last, and only means of conflict resolution, and many are maimed in some way because of it.

ADVANCED NARRATION

Dream Sequences

Dream sequences in Interface Zero are likely to be the result of deep VR immersion rather than from a restless night's sleep, but even there, you can manipulate the things that have been playing on the character's mind. While some of the other devices listed below shed light or a new angle on the main story, a dream sequence is used to shed light on the psychology of a character. As such, it is best if the character experiences the dreams of a NPC, rather than one of their own (at least until you figure out that character's psychology). This can happen in any number of ways, from psychic powers to falling into a VR world created by the dreams of a comatose lunatic.

If you do decide to play a dream sequence centered on one of the characters, secretly inform the rest of the players in the group what you plan on doing, and then have them play along as normal (or as the character having the dream thinks they are). Let things build up until the dreaming character realizes it is a dream and wakes up.

Flashbacks

These are short side stories that you can either narrate whole cloth (like telling a story) or actually role-play out with one or more characters suddenly remembering the incident with the rest taking the parts of extras in the subject's past. You might have to do some prename coaching with the latter option, but players often like the change of pace. The flashback, like the dream sequence or parallel story, is primarily used to compare or contrast with events in the main series. Hopefully it sheds light on the current situation. Flashbacks work best if the character that is experiencing them has some doubts about their own memories to begin with because of some past trauma or because of the passage of time.

Foil

A foil is character that is in many ways a character's opposite number. The foil can be a sidekick (who while an ally seems to get in the character's way as often as not), friendly rival, or a not-so-friendly one. If the character is stoic, make his foil clownish (like Batman and the Joker), or equally stoic but with a twist he works at cross-purposes from the character (like the characters in any given John Woo film). The main point of a foil is to point out the character's own strengths and weaknesses by close comparison with his mirror image. If you have a character that seems a bit too ruthless, match him with a friendly rival who shares his outlook, or perhaps a peacemaker sidekick, who only wants to help. Likewise, the group as a whole could have a foil in the form of a rival band.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is sometimes difficult to pull off in a game simply because you do not have complete control of the story. However, you do have control over the environment, and if you have planned your series, you should have a general idea of what set piece scenes you want to include. Set pieces can be dramatic—as when the wealthy heiresses the characters are hired protect turns around and betrays them, or action-packed like a gunning motorcycle gunfight through traffic.

To foreshadow you need merely bring into play some minor similar occurrence (a "shadow" if you will) prior to the actual event. For instance, in the case of the heiress prior to her betrayal, the ingénue organizes some other harmless deception (like a surprise party for a friend or would be beau) and employs the characters in the ruse. The young woman seems to have thought of every angle, foreshadowing her dangerous intellect so that when the characters later fall into her trap the players know they are in trouble.

Likewise, rumor can be source of foreshadowing. If the characters hear news stories about a dangerous hover cycle gang, or encounter their calling cards (vandalized vehicles, or victims) early on before ever meeting the bangers, they develop certain expectations about the gang. Often, while trying to interpret these hints, the players might float an idea that you like but hadn't thought of using. If you like it and it fits the series, feel free to adapt it. It's not as if the players have met them yet.

Irony

Situational irony is that dramatically unexpected event that seems to run so contrary to its setup as to border on the edge of divine mockery. Situational irony usually appears as either tragic or comedic within the context of the game. If a character (either character or Game Master controlled) goes out of her way to protect those she loves only to lose them because of the ruthless lengths she goes to, the situation can be rightly called ironic (and probably bitterly so). Irony is something that is best held in small doses and only then when logically appropriate.

Used sparingly and even-handedly between characters and supporting characters, the results can be incredibly dramatic. Well-handled situational irony can shift the affected character's nature (like Oedipus in the tragedy: "Oedipus Rex"). However, dishing out irony in an arbitrary fashion is likely to result in losing your group. If it seems like every action your characters take is thwarted and reversed by divine luck, then the players might decide to take their game to another venue.

Motif

A motif is reoccurring image, or idea central to the series. Motif is often manifested in some thought (like 'caste') or symbol with an attached meaning beyond the obvious that lends an air of resonance to the story and helps establish the mood. For example, a dark series featuring a group of urchin whiz kids might also include an old, condemned toy store, filled with broken or otherwise damaged toys symbolizing their lost youth. Never overtly explain the significance of the symbol, just bring it into play naturally and let the players and their characters "discover" it over time.

Motifs can usually be characterized in a word or a phrase (like "lost childhood") where a theme must be summarized in a complete sentence.

Parallel Plots

A parallel plot like a flashback informs the main plot. Unlike a flashback, though, it usually makes use of a second set of characters and occurs with the primary story. It is sort of best thought of as a kind of "meanwhile" adventure that looks at the main story from another—sometimes seemingly unrelated—point of view. In groups that can handle out-of-character knowledge, you can even feature characters that are the secret antagonists in the main story or even victims of the same forces that hound the characters. These characters might be doomed to die or perhaps even rescued at the last minute by the characters. When running parallel plots, try to put off the meeting between the two groups of characters until near the climax, switching back and forth between the two interconnected stories at suitably dramatic points.

Parallelism

Parallelism is a literary technique that not only creates resonance, but also irony. Specifically, parallelism is a point in the story when events, dialog, or action mirrors some previous point in the same story. In a game, it can happen sometime near the beginning of the series when a character does something remarkable enough to warrant notice (like telling a superior off, or dangling from a cable in an elevator shaft while someone goes for help), and then having it happen again in their presence (this time they are told off in same way by a subordinate, or perhaps they are the ones to find help this time while their comrade dangles from a precipice).

ELEMENTS OF IZ IN YOUR GAME

There are a great many elements of the cyberpunk genre that require special attention on the part of the Game Master if she wishes to bring the world to life in a dynamic way. In the previous section we discussed various techniques to help you tell a story set in the cyberpunk milieu. Now we're going to look at some core elements of the genre that can impact game play in the world of 2088.

Credits and Game Balance

How much money is too much when it comes to paying characters? Money can become a problem in any genre, but it can be an especially sticky issue in a cyberpunk setting where characters are—to varying degrees—professionals who do not necessarily get into the shadow game because of some altruistic need to change the world, but because they are looking to get paid. And that's not to say that people who run in the shadows are all greedy, morally bankrupt individuals either.

Characters come from all walks of life. They might be corporate assassins, gang bangers, computer programmers, wage slaves looking to get out of their corporate hell, bored rich kids looking to add some excitement to their lives, media icons, mercenaries; the possibilities are limitless. But one thing unites every single character regardless of background, and that's the need to make money.

C.R.E.A.M

Remember the law of the urban jungle omae; C.R.E.A.M: Cash Rules Everything Around Me. Beyond the desire to make a few extra bucks is the cold-hard truth that there are bills to pay. Life in 2088 isn't cheap. Rent has to be paid. Food, clothing, guns, ammo, cybernetics; all of these things have a price which can vary wildly depending on the quality of the item in question.

More often than not people (especially on the destitute side of the fence) aren't risking life, limb, and freedom because it's an adrenaline rush. They're doing it because they have to, because very few options are open to them. So naturally, players are going to expect to make some money for the work their characters do, and that's valid. But how much should they be getting paid? This is where things can be problematic.

There will always be an expectation that in a gritty, fast-paced world like Interface Zero, characters are going to get paid for the jobs they do, and often-times the natural inclination on the part of the Game Master is to reward the characters for good play, pay them well for getting the job done. But if you start throwing huge chunks of credits at your players, you run the risk of killing your game. When money because too readily available in a cyberpunk game, when the credits flow too freely, characters suddenly have the means to get whatever it is they may want or need. This has a number of detrimental effects on your game.

Say Goodbye to Game Balance

Give your characters too much money too soon, and suddenly they can afford all the cool toys this game has to offer. All of these cool items—especially cyberware and advanced weapons systems—give your characters a system bonus of some sort. They suddenly become stronger, faster, tougher, and more competent in their area of expertise than they probably should be, especially at lower ranks. They are suddenly able to easily overcome any challenges you throw against them. This forces you to as a GM to alter your plans for your campaign, perhaps making your NPC's much more powerful than you intended.

Say Goodbye to the Game

Furthermore, once they have everything they'll need or want, characters tend to lose that hunger, that desire to go on life-threatening missions because, hey, they're already living high on the hog. They got that uber-sweet condo high above the masses, the shiny bling, the best food credits can buy and all the cyberware and cool gear they'll ever want. Put simply, when the characters have everything they want, what's the point? The game gets tired, stale, boring, and dies before it really had a chance to get started. Game over man, game over. With this in mind, we've provided you with the tools and guidelines you need to keep this from happening.

No Means No!

Learn to say NO, and say it often. This is vital to the success of your game. Just because the team thinks they deserve 150k apiece for snatching some slag from a tyrannical megacorp doesn't mean they should get it, and there are a few reasons why.

- **Street Cred:** Are the characters really that nova-hot? How long have they been freelancing? N00b ronin are exactly that; n00bs. They don't necessarily have the experience or clout to up their earning power. They don't get the types of gigs that LEET ronin do, because nobody trusts them. More importantly; nobody KNOWS them. A major league contractor isn't just going to hand the characters a PRO run because they say they can get it done. She'll do her research, find out what the runners have done, check the streets to see what their reputation is, and if the characters don't cut it, they don't get the work. Life's a bitch, but them's the breaks amigo.
- **Fixed Rates:** People have budgets, especially the guy footing the bill for a given mission. The contractor might not be authorized to pay the characters beyond a specific monetary amount, no matter how slick the team is; especially if he's working as a liaison for a megacorp. The Mega's don't do anything if there isn't a percentage in it. If a run hurts their bottom line, or a shadow team gets greedy, they'll simply go elsewhere. It's not like the characters are the only game in town.
- **Maintaining Control:** No contractor in his right mind is going to let a shadow team fleece him. It's a good way to get your rep trashed mano'. When word gets on the streets (and it will) that the contractor let a shadow team charge ridiculous rates for a gig, everyone is going to want that much cred. It's bad for biz.

To help you keep the money situation from getting out of control, we've created a table that provides a baseline of the average pay day characters should expect to receive for a given job. The rates can certainly be modified based on things like character reputation, negotiations, or simply GM fiat. Raise or lower them to suit your game. You might also consider making the listed payment the total cost for the gig, not payment per individual. Most Fixers and contractors don't involve themselves with price per body involved. They'll quote the entire fee and leave it to the team leader to give everyone their cut.

Table 6:1 Baseline Payouts

TYPE OF JOB	TYPICAL PAYMENT
TYPICAL PRICES FOR NOVICE JOBS	
Milk Run	200–400 Credits
Investigation/Data snatch	400–600 Credits
Smash Job	500–700 Credits
Extra Muscle	700–1,000 credits
Leg-breaking	400–600 Credits
Kidnapping	1,000–1,500 credits
TYPICAL PRICES FOR SEASONED JOBS	
Low-level Smuggling jobs	1,000–5,000 Credits
Low-level Extractions	5,000–10,000 Credits
Low – Level Wet work	10,000–20,000 Credits
Low-level Data Snatch	5,000–10,000 Credits
Low-level Smash job	1,000–5,000 Credits
Low-level Bodyguard duty	2,000–5,000 Credits
TYPICAL PRICES FOR VETERAN JOBS	
Mid-level Bodyguard Duty	5,000–10,000 Credits
Mid-level Data Snatch	10,000–20,000 Credits
Mid-level Extraction	20,000–40,000 Credits
Mid-level Wet work	20,000–40,000 Credits
Mid-level Smash job	5,000–10,000 Credits
Mid-level Investigation	5,000–10,000 Credits
Mid-level smuggling operation	10,000–20,000 Credits
TYPICAL PRICES FOR HEROIC JOBS	
High Level Bodyguard Duty	30,000–40,000 Credits
High-level Data Snatch	20,000–30,000 Credits
High-level Extraction	30,000–60,000 Credits
High-level Wet work	30,000–60,000 Credits
High-level Smash Job	20,000–30,000 Credits
High-Level Smuggling Operation	50,000–75,000 Credits
TYPICAL PRICES FOR LEGENDARY JOBS	
Epic Extraction/kidnapping	80,000–100,000 Credits
Assassination of a Government figure, Corporate CEO, Singularity AI	100,000–150,000 Credits
Conglom/Military Assault Operation	150,000–300,000 Credits

Varying Degrees of Complexity

Not all jobs are created equal. As the baseline payouts table suggests, the pay for the jobs will certainly increase as the characters gain ranks, but so will the difficulty of the job. Some jobs (Like milk runs) don't even merit mentioning at higher ranks, as they represent typical grunt work characters will do to up their street cred and prove they can handle themselves. Some of the entries on the table are pretty straightforward, while others may seem vague at first glance, so compare the following section to the table to get a better understanding of what each entry means.

Assassinations: Better known as wet work in the shadow community, assassinations are precisely what the name implies, the calculated, cold-blooded murder of someone. Early on in the game, wet work generally involves taking out some poor sap that crossed the wrong individual, like a rival gang or mob boss .Some hits at lower ranks are often motivated by betrayal; a jilted lover pays the characters to kack her husband and that whore he was banging. Someone gets robbed by a trusted friend, or some dumbass fails to pay his gambling debts to the local Triad.

As characters gain ranks and their street cred rises, contracts begin to focus on people of moderate influence like mid-level crime bosses, city officials, media stars corporate salary men, etc. By the time characters reach the Heroic and Legendary ranks, they are gunning for the big fish; Corporate CEO's, Senators, Oyabun; even world leaders.

Bodyguard Duty: Another type of job that has varying levels of complexity, guarding someone is always inherently dangerous. Why would the characters be hired to protect someone if he didn't fear for his personal safety? Low ranks will see characters doing one-shot protection gigs; watching a contractor's hump while he deals with another shadow team, protecting the misses while she goes shopping, etc. As the characters get a rep, they might be hired to ensure the safety of high profile people; city officials, mid-level corporate executives, etc.

By the time characters attain higher ranks, they are getting hired to watch V.I.Ps; heads of state, elected officials, CEO's, etc. Rather than handle the job by themselves, characters will typically be assigned a detail of military cutouts or corporate security goons to ensure their mark has the best protection possible. Jobs at this level of the game generally aren't short-

term and can easily become campaigns filled with all manner of dangers, corporate, or political intrigue and, of course, action!

Data Snatches: A data snatch is more or less exactly what the name implies; a penetration of a domain (usually physical and via hyper reality) to recover or steal some kind of data. Low ranks will see characters doing simple stuff; hacking into a person's home or TAP to get personal information, re-writing data files or in some cases uploading incriminating evidence in support of a larger operation. Identity theft is commonplace at low ranks. Criminal organizations pay decent cred for confidential information on the average sprawler. As the characters rise in rank, they'll be tackling tougher domains, dealing with nasty virtual entities and even assisting teams with the physical penetration of facilities to get hard copy, DNA samples, prototype weapons, etc.

Extractions: Similar in many respects to street-level kidnapping, extractions involve the physical and virtual penetration of some sort of building, like a corporate enclave, or government installation. Extractions are risky ventures that require detailed planning and often involve more people than just the characters.

Investigations: Investigations have varying degrees of complexity, depending on the nature of the investigation. At lower ranks, characters might be hired to find out where the client's wife is going every night, and who she's meeting. As with milk runs, these types of investigations are usually straight forward with few complications. As the characters gain ranks these investigations become more intricate and characteristically revolve around important people. The legwork is often extensive, involving multiple runs into The Deep, extended surveillance, interrogations, and sometimes even blatant confrontations with the mark.

Higher level investigations are rarely ever what they seem, involving a number of players, plot twists and as always, dirty secrets better left uncovered. At the highest ranks, characters are getting into some deep water, dealing with conspiracies at the uppermost levels of organized crime, corporate, and government power. The people under scrutiny will do anything they can to keep certain truths from coming to light.

Milk Runs: Sometimes called beer runs, these jobs are simple, fairly straightforward errands. Characters get paid to take something from point A to point B. When the job's done, the characters get paid. Usually, there's no risk involved in a milk run…

Usually.

The goods might be stolen from someone else who wants them back and is willing to kill to get them. The route the characters take might put them in smack dab in the middle of a gang war. Heck, they might even be setup as patsies or worse, decoys to throw off any pursuit while the real goods are transported by a different team.

Sometimes the characters will know exactly what they're transporting, but more often than not they won't. Employers generally don't like the hired help poking their noses where they don't belong and typically make it clear what will happen if a character gets nosey. Besides, the characters are probably better off not knowing anyway.

Morality has a funny way of screwing up what would otherwise be an easy pay day. So let your characters take a quick peek at what's inside the back of the truck if they want. When they realize they're delivering a bunch of immigrants to the local Triad and find they don't like the notion of contributing to the proliferation of slave labor, politely remind them that there might very well be nasty consequences if they fail to deliver the goods.

Smash Jobs: As the name implies, smash jobs involve the destruction of something. Novice characters are usually hired to head down to the local Malmart and cause some havoc or bust up a gang's safe house. As the game progresses, smash jobs tend to involve higher profile targets, like a corporate R&D facility, a simulacrum production plant or the home of a mid-level Yakuza boss. At the higher end of the spectrum, smash jobs turn into full-fledged paramilitary operations designed to take out heavily guarded targets, like a military instillation, a spy satellite, an embassy or the regional headquarters of a megacorp.

Smuggling Ops: Smuggling runs are much like milk runs, only on a larger scale and considerably more dangerous. Characters will get paid to transport cargo across national boundaries, a process filled with a myriad dangers including dodging military patrols, sensor arrays, dealing with shady fixers, etc.

Optional Rule: Cost of Living

Life in 2088 isn't cheap (Hell, life in 2010 isn't cheap). Your characters have all sorts of issues that crop up in their daily lives that can only be addressed by spending their hard-earned credits. There's rent to pay, food and clothing to buy, fuel, and maintenance costs for that VTOL car that seems to break down every other week. Characters need weapons, ammunition for those weapons, and (if they want them) cybernetics.

All of these can things add up to a hefty price tag, especially if your character is keeping up with the state of the art in gear. Having your characters pay these costs on a regular basis is an easy way to help keep money from getting out of control in your game. But Interface Zero isn't meant to be a lesson in money management. The idea of needing a spreadsheet just to keep track of everything your character might have to pay for in 2088 is going to kill a game just as fast as letting things get out of control will. With this in mind, we've created a simple chart that represents the character's lifestyle. Players choose what type of life style they want to adopt, and every time you begin a new game session (not a continuation of an existing job), they pay the cost associated with that lifestyle. The more extravagant the lifestyle, the higher the cost. Incidentally, this is a pretty good motivator for characters to seek higher paying (and more dangerous) contracts. Gotta pay them bills, neh?

The character's lifestyle covers things like paying rent, buying food, paying utilities, maintaining gear and vehicles (or paying for public transportation), maintaining personal health, etc. What it doesn't cover, however, is the cost of purchasing cybernetics, buying new weapons, purchasing new vehicles such as VTOL aircraft, jump bikes, golemmechs drones, etc. Put simply, if the character wants to make a purchase that gives her some sort of mechanical bonus it isn't covered by the character's lifestyle.

Like anything, this can be abused. As characters start making more and more credit, they are more likely to improve their lifestyle without necessarily realizing it. They buy better clothes, cooler, faster cars, get a nice crib to doss down, go to fancy night clubs every night and generally throw money around like there's no end to it. As the Game Master, it's up to you to let the players know when their characters start living a better lifestyle and enforce that upgrade.

COMBINING OCCUPATIONS AND CHARACTER LIFESTYLES

The character lifestyles rules are designed with work in conjunction with a character's occupation. Since characters receive an infusion of credits every level up, they can use those credits to offset some of the money they need to pay every game session in which they begin a new run. Some credits gained from the character's occupation might be eaten up immediately because a character is living above her means, while other occupations easily provide the requisite credits the character needs to maintain her lifestyle and have some cash left over. This is a quick way to gauge how well or poorly the character is living without needing an itemized list of every possible expense.

Character Lifestyle

LIFESTYLE	UPKEEP PER NEW GAME SESSION
Destitute	500 Credits
Poor	1,000 Credits
Modest Life Style	2,500 Credits
Moderately well off	5,000 Credits
Wealthy	10,000 Credits
Filthy Rich	20,000 Credits

Contacts and Favors

Everything costs something, even a favor; especially a favor. While the system for using contacts is designed to be FFF, it is only a vehicle to keep the game from bogging down into a series of rolls as characters try and convince people to do things they simply don't have time to take care of themselves.

The system doesn't address intangible aspects of the game which are just as important to the atmosphere of Interface Zero. Characters can call in favors any time they choose, but keep in mind, the people they are asking for help don't necessarily do things out of the kindness of their hearts.

They wanna get paid just like anyone else. From the viewpoint of the characters, they're just asking their contact to do something, but to the contact, it's a job. It is certainly not out

of bounds for contacts to charge the characters a monetary amount for a favor. Indeed, the more important the favor, the bigger the price tag is likely to be. Consult the baseline payouts table to get a general idea of what characters might expect to pay their contacts for a given favor.

Steal from the Characters

That's right pal. Rob them blind. Steal their cars. Break into their homes and take anything that isn't nailed down. Hack their TAPs and funnel their credit balance into dummy accounts. Sell that information to criminal organizations and let them use that pay data to go on a shopping spree at the local Malmart. This isn't a happy, shiny game where characters are immune to criminal activity. There's always someone looking to take what they have. Not only does this help to maintain game balance as characters spend their hard-earned credit to make themselves whole again, but it's a good way to start a savage tale as the characters, looking for some pay back, go hunt down the scumbags that ripped them off.

"Pro Bono" Runs

Runs don't always need to involve payment for services rendered. Some savage tales might happen as a consequence of some other run the team pulled. Others might form out of some random (or perhaps orchestrated?) event on the streets. This tactic both keeps the characters from charging a metric ton of cred for their services and drains their existing resources at the same time.

Healing and Repair Bills

Finally, always remember to charge your characters for the damage inflicted on mind, body, and cyberware. It's unlikely the characters are going to bother trying to repair guns or electronics equipment (unless they paid out the hump for them). And even if they do, those costs are covered under their lifestyle.

Psychotherapy

Characters can pick up some nasty mental Hindrances if they run afoul of malware or a vicious virtual entity. That can typically mean hours of psychotherapy to deal with the consequences of the raping of their minds. Just as easily, characters can pick up a mental Hindrance from high stress situations or things they've seen or experienced. Consult the following table for appropriate costs of psychotherapy.

Medical Treatment

Sooner or later the characters are gonna get shot, stabbed, or blown up. That's just the nature of the game. Even crappy medical treatment costs money. Street Docs may not charge as much as a fully functional MED facility, but they gotta eat just like anyone else. Street docs have to re-stock their medical supplies, maintain whatever electronics (X-ray machines, KAT scan units, defibrillators, EKG's, etc.) they have, pay hush money to keep the crooked cops from shutting them down and protection to criminal organizations to keep from getting robbed by drug fiends every week. Consult the Medical treatment table to see how much it's gonna take to put the characters back together when they get shot up.

Repairing Cyberware

Just like any mechanical device, cyberware can be broken and even destroyed. Injuries sustained in combat can certainly damage cyberware and failure on a cybertrauma roll can cause an item to shut down completely until it's repaired. When cyberware is damaged it needs to be repaired before

Table 6:2: Psychotherapy Costs

CONDITION	COST	TIME	BENEFIT
Minor Mental Hindrance	250 credits per hour (typically 2 to 3 hours a week)	1D6 weeks	Removal of the Hindrance in question.
Major Mental Hindrance	500 credits per hour (typically 2 to 3 hours a week)	2D6 weeks	Removal of the Hindrance in question.

the character can use it again. The cost to repair a piece of cyberware is dependent on the quality of the component in question and the number of functions that were built into the item. Consult the Cyberware repair table to find the cost to repair busted chrome. As with any other machine, restoration of cyberware is dependent on a successful Repair roll.

Game Lethality

Interface Zero is a deadly game. Make no mistake about it. The chances for survival for careless or just plain stupid characters in this world are slim and, given a long enough period of time, none. This is an important truth about the genre as a whole. Cyberpunk is dark, bleak, and ultimately unforgiving to the unwary, unwise, or unlucky. Interface Zero strives to reflect that.

In other genres, characters play the roles of heroes; shining examples of all that is good and right in the world. Even roguish characters come across like *Han Solo* because these types of games are all about fighting the good fight, defeating Mr. Big Bad and his cronies, saving the kingdom, slaying the dragon and of course, rescuing the princess. The notion that champions of truth and justice might get ghosted just walking down the street doesn't jive with the flavor of these types of games. After all, the heroes aren't very heroic if they're dead, neh?

Table 6:3: Costs of Medical Treatment

WOUND LEVEL	COST*
1 wound level	1,000 credits
2 wound levels	2,000 credits
3 wound levels	3,000 credits
Bleeding Out	5,000 credits

The listed cost is for treatment by a street doc. If the character goes to a Med facility, charge quadruple the price of the wound level and five times the cost for someone who is Bleeding Out.

Table 6:4 Cyberware Repair Costs

CYBERWARE QUALITY	COST
Gutterware	5,000 credits per function point
Streetware	15,000 credits per function point
Hyperchrome	25,000 credits per function point
Milware	50,000 credits per function point

KEEPING REPAIRS AND MEDICAL ATTENTION "IN HOUSE"

It's highly likely that, rather than seeking outside help, the characters will rely on each other for healing or necessary repairs to cyberware. This is certainly valid and is encouraged! The characters worked hard to develop their skills and they shouldn't be penalized (or worse, have their roles within the group marginalized) because they want to avoid potentially high costs associated with medical treatment and repairing their gear.

That said, nothing is free.

Characters that can treat injuries sustained on a run still have to pay for the medical supplies necessary to get their chummers back on their feet. Cyberware is especially costly to repair, requiring special equipment and highly expensive materials, which, by the way, may or may not be readily available. That means you're probably paying a fixer to get it. Not cheap, omae.

When the team decides to handle this stuff personally rather than go through a third party, charge them 50% of the cost they'd normally pay.

Interface Zero takes those concepts and chucks them into the nearest plasma incinerator.

While characters can certainly strive to be heroic, their actions are often tainted by bloodshed, morally, and legally questionable decisions and the unavoidable truth that—while they may have stopped that megacorp from dumping toxic waste into the city's ground water and probably saved countless lives over the long-term—it is ultimately a transitory victory that matters little in a world too morally bankrupt to care. In the mind of the average sprawler, heroes are neat ideas, and they certainly look bangin' on the Mediaweb, but everyone knows if they try to pull that guns-blazing hero crap out on the streets they'll end up with a bullet in their brain pan.

Prudence is a Virtue

The lethality of Interface Zero demands characters think before they act. Characters can pull out that Tiger Claw Assault Shotgun and start blasting' away at those corp goons if they really want to, but remember, those corp goons have weapons of their own and have no compunctions about using them, especially against street scum like ronin. Hackers had better do their due diligence before they ghost into a megacorp's domain. ICE is sure to be glacial and deadly. Not knowing what kinds of nasty virtual entities might lie in wait is a quick way to end up a human-shaped vegetable. The team might want to have a look at the site of that meet they've scheduled with a fixer before they actually need to be there. Smart characters don't stand in the middle of the street like some wild west cowboy when the bullets start flying. They'll grab the nearest piece of cover and pull it over their heads like a warm blanket.

Truths and Consequences

It seems harsh, but to a certain extent, your job as a Game Master is to make characters pay for their mistakes. If the team is blundering through their mission with all the grace of a sumo wrestler, they deserve to get smacked around a bit. If they survive, they might actually learn something. This doesn't mean you should be doing everything in your power to kill the characters off.

Suffering the consequences of poor decision making and getting shot at every other second for no real reason are two very different things omae. There are no hard-fast rules for handling this. What works for one gaming group might not work for another. Ultimately, you'll need to find your own truth as it relates to game lethality and how far you are willing to take it in Interface Zero.

Group Dynamics

Cyberpunk is an interesting genre in terms of how a group works together and more importantly, when they work together. In other genres, the typical model for an adventuring group pretty much stays the same throughout the course of a given campaign. Groups form early on in their adventuring careers and stay together, becoming more than a handful or individuals who have banded together out of necessity. They grow to be friends and compatriots. Character roles are clearly defined and generally don't change. The priest handles healing, the rogue takes care of locks and traps, the warrior slays the beasties, the ranger tracks stuff and the mage casts the spells. The characters are often united by some common far-reaching goal; the foundation for the campaign.

Interface Zero is a bit different.

Your characters may not always have the luxury of choosing who they work with. The needs of the job vary from run to run, and while one team may have handled an extraction like pros, the group composition may not be ideal for a smuggling op or a hit on a Yakuza boss. Characters might get hired on a run to fill a certain function while another group of people they have never met handle some other aspect of the job. As a result you get situations where characters may not even like each other. Trust is certainly an issue in these situations, adding an element of tension at the game table as characters begin wondering if the other team members are going to do their jobs right, run at the first sign of trouble or worse, stab them in the back.

Team Models

Below are two models for possible types of shadow teams an ongoing Interface Zero game: The single character model and the multi character model. Each has its benefits and drawbacks.

The Single Character Model

Sure, some shadow teams can and do form lasting bonds, or more accurately, ongoing working relationships. Some of the more PRO teams in the sprawl are like that. They stick together because they know each other inside and out. It's much easier to write campaigns for these teams because the main characters never change. Players can focus on developing their characters much more in a game based on the single character model.

That said, the game can get a little stale. After her character's opened that same old security door, or piloted her Panzer on a quick run carrying illicit goods across the NAC border for the thousandth time in a row, or hacked yet another corporate database, the prospect of doing it again loses the thrill it once had. It's like eating pizza every day. Sooner or later the player's gonna get sick of it and want to try her hand at something else. This is where the multi character model comes in.

The Multi-character Model

In the multi character model, players create two or three different types of characters and alternate playing them based on the needs of a shadow op or their role in a campaign. This allows players to take a break from a certain role and focus on something else for a little while. You can mix-and match characters each night you play to give the illusion of a larger shadow community within the sprawl.

The game becomes much more reflective of a setting where any given night might see dozens of shadow operations taking place. For example, the players might run one savage tale with one set of characters, finish that run and next week (or possibly even in the same game session) run a different set of characters, but BOTH runs are assumed to have taken place on the same night!

Game Masters can have a ton of fun with the multi character model. You can flex your story telling muscles by telling intricate stories that involve more than one of the players' characters in some pretty interesting ways. For instance, you could run a campaign where the players have two shadow teams who might be trying to solve the same puzzle or complete missions that, unbeknownst to them, are interconnected. You can make great use of dramatic irony in a multi character model, introducing story elements to one set of characters that have meaning to the other team. You can foreshadow events for one team in much the same way.

Using multiple characters also gives the group a chance to shift the focus of a game from one week to the next, perhaps playing gang bangers one session and Stopwatch agents another. Switching things up a bit keeps the game fresh and dynamic and incidentally, allows you to tell stories that have a broader scope. These games are similar to TV shows like *The Wire,* or movies like *Traffic*.

The biggest issue with a multi character campaign is character development. Characters don't gain ranks as quickly as they might when only playing a single character because the individual characters don't typically get enough face time. Additionally, players don't form bonds with their characters (or characters with other characters) as easily as they might in a single character model, which can be both a curse and a blessing, depending on how lethal the game is.

RANDOM ADVENTURE GENERATOR

Real life is filled with responsibilities. You have work, family Sometimes you don't have a ton of time to prepare an adventure for your game. An adventure generator is a quick, painless way to quickly determine the basic elements of the game with just a few rolls of the dice. Once the core components of your Savage Tale are in place, all that's left to do is connect the dots and flesh out a great Savage Tale for game night!

Contractor

Since most Cyberpunk adventures involve working for someone, roll on this table to find out whom. If the heroes have a regular employer (like Stopwatch, Psi Division, the military or a law-enforcement agency), skip this step. Note that this is the visible Contractor—the person or group the heroes believe they are working for. It may well turn out that the Contractor is a just a front for someone else, in which case the GM should reroll to determine who's really pulling the strings.

AI: An Artificial Intelligence or personality upload. It may be a legal citizen or an illegal creation, hunted by Stopwatch. It can offer money, data, and excellent hacking support but its ability to influence the physical world is limited.

Conglom: A gigantic corporation, probably through a "deniable" intermediary. Congloms have vast wealth and all that can afford, but seldom wish to be directly linked to any shadowy operation.

Fixer: The contractor is a person who arranges deals like this, and acts as a human "insulator" between hireling and employer. If the fixer has an established reputation, the deal is likely to be straightforward and solid. Other fixers are less reliable, and may not be what they seem. Some fixers put together operations for their own benefit as well.

Friend or Family: Someone dear to one of the characters wants their help. Resources are very limited, but at least your family won't lie to you. Unless they will.

Gang: A criminal organization. Gangs have plenty of untraceable cash and firepower, but their power in the legitimate sphere is low. The very fact that a gang is bringing in outside help means the situation is either very bad, or something which can't be handled by shooting.

Table 6:5: Contractors

D12:	CONTRACTOR:
1	AI
2	Conglom
3	Fixer
4	Friend or Family
5	Gang
6	Government
7	Happenstance
8	Media Celebrity
9	NGO
10	Rebel
11	Rumor or News
12	Tycoon

Government: A nation-state, city, or government agency. Tons of money and guns, but their ability to act is limited by borders and laws. If a government is hiring freelancers that means the job is almost by definition illegal, and probably something the agency wishes to hide. The Rovers count as a very small and decentralized government.

Happenstance: Nobody hires anybody; the characters simply blunder into a situation on their own. It may turn out that this "random event" was carefully orchestrated, of course.

Media Celebrity: A person who is famous—from a Bollywood star to an investigative blogger. Fame does not equal wealth, of course, and a celebrity has his or her public reputation to protect. Celebrities do have fans and followers, who can help or hinder.

NGO: A legitimate non-government organization, such as a political party, charity, activist group, church, or university. Resources can be anywhere from "not much" all the way to near-government levels. Even more than governments and congloms, NGOs have to obey the law—but they're often motivated by a "higher purpose" which brings them into conflict with the powers that be.

Rebel: Armed opponents to one or more governments. An NGO with guns, if you will. Some rebel groups control actual territory and are basically small governments themselves; others are nothing but a few malcontents with slogans and pipe bombs. By definition, everything they do is illegal.

Rumor or News: The characters learn about a situation or opportunity indirectly. The situation must be something which motivates them to get involved—a chance for profit, a cause they care about, a menace they alone can stop.

Tycoon: A wealthy individual. He (or she) may control a conglom, but is pursuing a personal agenda. A tycoon's motives can be extremely whimsical or eccentric, in contrast to a congloms focus on profit or a government's goals of power and control.

The Mission

This is the task the heroes are hired or ordered to perform. It may well happen that the mission may turn out to be a red herring, or that the situation will change, but this is what they think they're going to be doing, and can prepare for.

Table 6:6: The Mission

D12:	MISSION:
1	Escape/Survive
2	Find Someone or Something
3	Harm (or kill) Someone
4	Kidnap (or capture) Someone
5	Manage an Operation
6	Prevent Something
7	Protect Someone or Something
8	Reconnaissance/Surveillance
9	Rescue Someone
10	Solve a Mystery
11	Steal (or Destroy) Something
12	Transport Something or Someone

Escape/Survive: The characters must get out of a place, overcoming whatever dangers lurk there. You may be guarded by people trying to keep you in, or the place may simply be a hostile environment. This can be anyplace from the radioactive Arabian desert to a dangerous neighborhood in Shanghai. It's rare that anyone deliberately hires someone to do this; it usually comes about because a prior mission has gone badly wrong.

Find Someone or Something: Something or someone is hidden or lost, and you have to find it. Whoever did the hiding may well use "active measures" to discourage searchers.

Harm (or kill) Someone: A good old-fashioned hit job. Your job is to kill (or at least rough up) the target. The target, of course, has guards and walls for protection—or the problem may be finding where he is hiding, or who he is. Any target that learns he's being stalked is sure to fight back.

Kidnap (or capture) Someone: Your job is to catch someone who doesn't want to be caught. It may be a legal capture of a wanted felon, or an extremely illegal kidnapping operation.

Manage an Operation: Life is not all gunplay and car chases. You have to bring about some result—throw a party, negotiate a deal, run a business. It can be entirely legal or a gigantic con game. There may be someone determined to prevent you from succeeding.

Prevent Something: You are the monkey wrench in the works. Something is going to happen unless you interfere. Stop the bomb from going off, prevent the marriage, interrupt the broadcast, and prevent the robbery. Usually there's nobody else to help.

Protect Someone or Something: This time you're the guards and someone is trying to steal or kill or kidnap whatever you're guarding. If it's a person, they can easily make stupid and self-destructive choices, and you're the one to deal with the consequences.

Reconnaissance/Surveillance: The goal this time is simply information. Observe a target and report. Usually this means keeping your presence a secret, and the target almost certainly doesn't want to be observed. This can be anything from military espionage to freelance journalism.

Rescue Someone: Someone is in a dangerous place and you need to get them out. The peril can be natural or human. Depending on the peril, you may have to be stealthy. Unlike a kidnapping, the target presumably wants to be rescued.

Solve a Mystery: Something has happened and you have to figure out who did it, or why, or how. This may mean investigating a crime, or uncovering a covert operation, or even delving into a seemingly paranormal event. The culprit almost certainly tried to destroy all the clues, and may try to interfere with the investigation. There are sure to be red herrings and false leads.

Steal (or Destroy) Something: You have to get something, or get close enough to blow it up. This means getting past alarms, doors, guards, or ancient temple traps. The location of the item may be a secret, and the current owner may try to interfere with your plans.

Transport Something or Someone: You are at Point A, and need to arrive at Point B with someone or something. There's probably someone in between who wants to keep that from happening. Or maybe you just have to get to Point B first. It could be a secret, stealthy journey or a flat-out race. The cargo can be troublesome on its own, and you may not even know where Point B actually is.

The Real Mission

Often the job the heroes sign on for isn't the task they wind up completing. Game Masters who want a twisty plot should roll a second time on the Mission table to determine what the real job is. This is what the player characters find themselves doing after things turn sour or the villain pulls a fast one, or a "sub-mission" they have to accomplish in order to make the main job possible.

The Location

The growth of global culture is one of the hallmarks of cyberpunk fiction. In a "post-national" era, feel free to set adventures anywhere on Earth. For a globe-trotting tale, roll two or three times. There is one table for urban settings, a second for adventures which go beyond the big cities.

Airport/Rail Hub: A transportation nexus, full of travelers coming and going, bored or paranoid security officers, and some powerful and dangerous machines. The traditional venue for hostage swaps, message drops, and assassinations.

Amusement Park: It's colorful, full of adorable kids and characters in costume, and there are polite and heavily-armed guards nearby no matter where you go. "Backstage" areas are less jolly and have dangerous machinery to play on.

Table 6:7: Urban Locations

D12:	URBAN LOCATION:
1	Airport/Rail hub
2	Amusement park
3	Arcology
4	Construction site
5	Corporate headquarters
6	Gang territory
7	Home
8	Housing project
9	Industrial plant
10	Megamall
11	Police station/jail
12	University/research lab

Urban Locations

Arcology: A city in a building, combining residential space, offices, shopping, and even industrial facilities. Often designed to be highly self-sufficient—and well-protected. The chief feature of an arcology is that it's big: hundreds of stories tall, covering a vast area, and home to 100,000 people or more.

Construction Site: Something is going up (or coming down). Security is minimal, there's plenty of dangerous equipment lying around, and the building itself isn't entirely safe yet. A favorite spot for gang summits, meetings with the enemy, or a chat with a shadowy informant just before the assassin strikes.

Corporate Headquarters: It's posh, it's clean and shiny, and it has top-of-the-line security systems. This is where the Big MacGuffin is hidden, or where the main villain makes his lair. It's where the veiled threats are made across a big oak desk, or where the caper goes off with split-second timing.

Gang Territory: The Bad Part of town. This is the area run by crooks, where the police go in armed convoys or not at all. If you're cool with that, it's a free zone where anything is available for a price, and you're safe from the authorities until someone betrays you.

Home: You don't have to go out for this adventure; it comes to you. Being on your own turf means you know the territory very well, and you may even have time to set up booby-traps and defenses. It also means you've got no place left to run.

Housing Project: Where the state warehouses poor people it can't use. Quarters are cramped and shabby, gang members hang out in the stairwells, but there's often a thriving underground economy in the hallways and back alleys. The cops do come here—just not often, and not very quickly when they're called.

Industrial Plant: A factory, refinery, power plant, or waste-reclamation facility. Full of highly dangerous machines, often totally automated, and moderately well-guarded.

Megamall: A temple of consumerism, filled with every imaginable kind of stuff. It's crowded with shoppers, guarded by authority-crazed mall cops, and your senses are overloaded with adware. In poorer lands, this is a street market, crammed with little stalls and packed with people. A good place for a chase or an assassination attempt.

Police station/Jail: Where authority lives. It's a fortress full of armed guards. If there's something inside you need, it's going to be very hard to reach. And if you're inside and need to get out—that's going to be even harder.

University/Research Lab: It looks serene and peaceful, and the only infighting happens on academic committees. This is where the bleeding edge of science is happening, where world-changing discoveries are lying around on lab benches. There are plenty of students and junior researchers who might be sympathetic to outlaws and rebels.

Non Urban Locations

Desert/Wasteland: Either the American Southwest, the eastern seaboard, the Sahara, or the war-ravaged Middle East. The chief problem here is surviving without water, even if you're not in a radioactive area. Inevitably home to biker gangs and scavengers.

Farming Region: It's not all giant cities and howling wastelands. There are still plenty of places in the world where people live close to the land, growing food (or pharmaceuticals). Communities are still small and fairly traditional, with none of the anonymity of a big city. Outsiders will be noticed. Farms have automated harvesters, pesticides, and farmers with shotguns. And plenty of places to dispose of bodies.

Table 6:8: Non-Urban Locations

D12:	NON-URBAN LOCATION:
1	Desert/Wasteland
2	Farming Region
3	Free Zone
4	Island
5	Mansion/Resort
6	Military Base
7	Nature Preserve
8	Ocean
9	Polar Region
10	Space
11	Swamp/Flooded Region
12	Underground

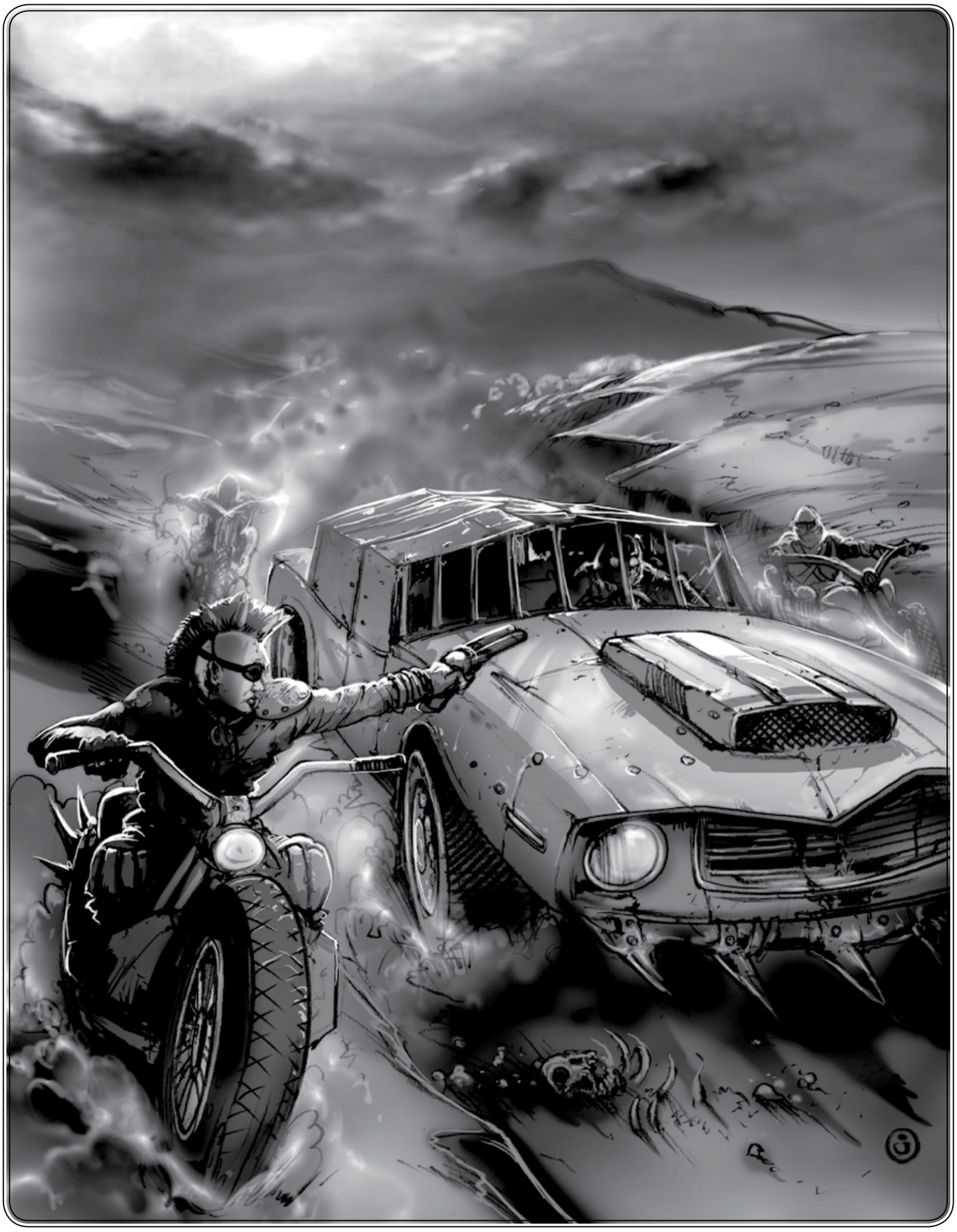
Free Zone: A region outside the control of any organized government. This may be a deliberate attempt to build an anarchist utopia, or it could be a place where government has collapsed.

Island: Probably in the Pacific or the Caribbean. Likely threatened by rising sea levels and mega storms. It could be a private corporate enclave, or poor and overcrowded, or entirely uninhabited.

Mansion/Resort: A pleasure dome, either a resort hotel or one family's private domain. Either way, security is tight around the perimeter and anything goes inside. Often full of valuable stuff and important people.

Military Base: A true fortress, with more guns than you can shake a stick at, and some pretty scary sticks, as well. Unless you have a private army of your own, this is not a place you want to attack.

Nature Preserve: A pristine wilderness, probably protected and patrolled. Serene and pretty—except for the gene pirates, poachers, and eco-activists who don't like intruders. Forests and jungles can have dangerous animals, while mountains



have plenty of dangerous cliffs, avalanches, flash floods and other natural hazards.

Ocean: The sea is Earth's last frontier, the home of Rovers, pirates, and sea-farmers. No nation has the power to patrol it all anymore, so the Law of the Sea is pretty much whatever you care to make it.

Polar Region: Perhaps the only truly empty spaces left on Earth. The Arctic and Antarctic may have less ice than they once did, but they're still very cold and inhospitable. A good place if you truly want solitude—or have something to hide.

Space: There are a growing number of communities beyond Earth's atmosphere. The environment is extremely unforgiving, life in zero gravity is strange to newcomers, and getting out of the well is very expensive. But this is where the future lives.

Swamp/Flooded Region: The drowned cities of the American east coast or south Asia are treasure troves of salvage—and full of dangerous pirates and scavengers. Swampy wilderness abounds in crocodiles, piranhas, anacondas, and mosquitoes.

Underground: Natural caves, mine shafts, vacuum-train tubes, secret underground bases—all great places to hide or fortify something. They're hard to find and hard to get into, but for that reason security may not be as tight as it should be. Abandoned underground complexes may be full of traps, monsters, and treasure.

The MacGuffin

If the adventure involves a "something," roll on this table. This is what the heroes are trying to get, or steal from the villains, or reveal to the world, or keep hidden.

Credits: Cold hard cash, credits, or something equivalent like bearer bonds. The point is, you can spend it right away, no waiting. It's pure wealth.

Data: In the Information Age, data is power. It could be a scientific discovery, the master files for next month's media blockbuster, or a corporation's un-edited financial report. Its data, and someone will pay for it.

Table 6:9: The MacGuffin

D12:	MACGUFFIN:
1	Credits
2	Data
3	Endangered Species
4	Evidence
5	Key
6	Land
7	Medicine
8	Person
9	Possession
10	Secret
11	Technology
12	Treasure

Endangered Species: A living thing, rare and therefore valuable. Part of the problem is making sure it stays alive until the mission is over.

Evidence: Data, video, or physical objects which link someone to something they really don't want to be linked to. This makes it dandy blackmail material. Its value depends on who the person is and what the crime is.

Key: This MacGuffin isn't particularly valuable by itself, but it gives access to something else which people do want. It could be a physical key, a combination, a severed thumb with the right thumbprint, or a bunch of cryptic clues.

Land: Sure, it's not as exciting as a box of guns, but the title to a plot of land means control of whatever's hidden there. And land in the right place can be incredibly valuable.

Medicine: The cure for what ails you—or somebody. When someone is afraid of pain or death, there's not much they won't do. This could be anything from a sample of a new drug, to a shipment of vaccine to prevent an epidemic.

Person: The MacGuffin is a person. Roll on the Contractor table to find out whom.

Possession: An item which belongs to someone and is valuable to them. It may not have any great cash value, but its owner thinks it's very important.

Secret: Something hidden, which someone wants to keep hidden. Governments and corporations have lots of secrets—some benign, some revolting. Secrets remain valuable only while they are secret, so once too many people find out its old news.

Technology: A gadget. Something practical that can be used. Whoever gets it has an immediate advantage. It could be a weapon, a vehicle, a superfast computer, a robot, or something more exotic.

Treasure: Something which can be turned into cash. It's valuable in its own right, but may have to be sold or "laundered" first.

Innocents

If someone needs rescuing, this is where to roll. Also use this to determine innocent bystanders affected by the operation, people being victimized by the villain, or other "civilians" as needed.

Activist: Someone pushing for change or reform, using (mostly) peaceful and (mostly) legal methods. Note that a neo-fascist agitator is just as much an "activist" as an anti-corporate crusader.

AI or Upload: A data person.

Child: A kid, who should be too young to get mixed up in this kind of business. Whatever's happening, they're not the ones responsible.

Clone or Simulacrum: An artificial person. They may or may not know that's what they are.

Doctor: A healer; anything from an under equipped "barefoot doctor" in the housing projects to a high-end body-sculpting surgeon.

Family or Friend: Someone with a personal connection to one of the protagonists. Yes, that's right, Mom's got the Holy Grail again.

Table 6:10: Innocents

D12:	INNOCENT:
1	Activist
2	AI or Upload
3	Child
4	Clone or Simulacrum
5	Doctor
6	Family or Friend
7	Media Person
8	Politician or Judge
9	Refugee
10	Scavenger
11	Scientist
12	Witness

Media Person: A news reporter, actor, sport star, or other creation of the media nets. Their billions of fans inevitably include some nut cases.

Politician or Judge: Someone still trying to uphold the public trust. Naturally that makes them a target for corruption, assassination, and blackmail.

Refugee: Driven from home by war, poverty, or disaster, they're frightened, don't have much money, and are still adjusting to a new society. That makes them natural victims for all kinds of scams and exploitation. Today's penniless refugee might have been an important person back home yesterday.

Scavenger: A harmless junk-picker, except that sometimes they find things which turn out to be important.

Scientist: Maybe motivated by pure desire for knowledge, or maybe hoping for lucrative patentable discoveries. Smart but often not very shrewd.

Witness: Someone who saw something. Someone else would like them to forget it or at least keep quiet.

The Antagonist

Not always a villain, the antagonist is the person or entity the player characters have to overcome. He may be in the foreground trading pistol shots with them, or he may work through layers and layers of agents and flunkies.

Bounty Hunter or Detective: He's got the law on his side, or at least that's what people will believe. Even if he's corrupt or pursuing his own goals he can call on other law enforcers for help. The only thing scarier than a corrupt lawman as an enemy is an honest one.

Con Man or Impostor: He's pretending to be someone else (roll on the Contractor table to see who) and this is all part of some big scheme. It's quite likely that there will be a change of mission midway through the adventure as the true nature of the scheme starts to emerge.

Corporate Executive or Tycoon: Either one can be advancing the interests of the megacorp or pursuing a private agenda. It doesn't really matter—they can command the resources of a giant corporation, and that makes them truly formidable.

Corrupt Bureaucrat or Politician: A bureaucrat is appointed, a politician is elected, but both of them can use (and misuse) government power. The target may be an enemy state, a rival faction within the same government, a corporation, or a personal enemy.

Crime Lord: A gang boss or underboss, with crooks at his command and a pretty hefty resource base. Most high-level crime lords are savvy enough to keep their own hands clean, and have friends in politics and corporations. Modern crime lords have hackers on the payroll and know how important The Deep can be.

Hacker: Anything from a straight-arrow software engineer to a wild-haired radical living in a dumpster, a hacker's main strength lies in The Deep. He (or she) can cut off your finances, put you on the Most Wanted List, and call you names on your own blog. Fighting a hacker is like fighting smoke, until you find the source of the fire.

Media Personality: Media people probably don't have vast wealth and aren't likely to shoot you down in the street, but they can trash your reputation, turn people against you, and expose things you want kept secret. A big-time Bollywood figure is almost a corporate executive, while a freelance blogger could also be a hacker.

Table 6:11: Antagonists

D12:	ANTAGONIST
1	Bounty Hunter or Detective
2	Con Man or Impostor
3	Corporate Executive or Tycoon
4	Corrupt Bureaucrat or Politician
5	Crime lord
6	Hacker
7	Media Personality
8	Military Officer or Mercenary
9	Priest or Cult Leader
10	Rebel or Terrorist group
11	Rogue AI or Upload
12	Spy

Military Officer or Mercenary: This person has a lot of armed force at his or her disposal. They are charged with obeying the orders of their country's government (or whoever signs the paychecks) and can be frighteningly competent at doing just that. Corrupt or self-serving military leaders can be like crime lords, only with bigger guns.

Priest or Cult Leader: Religion is a powerful force and can be the motive behind noble acts and despicable ones. False prophets often use the trappings of religion to gain wealth and power. A religious leader can have riches and goons, but his most powerful weapon is his ability to motivate those who believe in him.

Rebel or Terrorist: This person doesn't want to be ruled by the existing government, and is fighting against it, either alone or with a band of followers. A successful rebel leader may control a substantial territory, functioning as a small government. Others are just violent lunatics bent on mayhem. It's all too common for foreign governments to support rebels in their enemies' homelands.

Rogue AI or Upload: It's a mind in The Deep, pursuing its own mysterious goals. As a data entity, an AI has incredible Hacking skills, and can find and manipulate all the information control-

ling someone's life. In the physical world, its powers are limited to what it can get people to do by bribery and manipulation.

Spy: Spies are in the information business. They may serve national intelligence agencies, international groups like Stopwatch, or corporate "data acquisition" departments. A spy seldom works openly; usually there is at least one cover identity (use the Contractor table to figure out what).

Henchmen

Even the most terrifying villain isn't much of a threat on his own. Roll again on the Antagonist table to see who the main opponent's allies are. Most foes have just one ally, but a particularly potent villain might have two or three main henchmen. The player characters may not know about the henchmen at first, and their special talents or connections can be an unpleasant surprise. However, henchmen can have their own goals, and may be persuaded to switch sides if the reward is big enough.

Twists and Complications

No plan ever anticipates everything that may happen. The heroes must always be ready to deal with unexpected problems. Roll once (or more) to see what fastballs Fate is getting ready to throw.

Ally with Enemy: You're going to wind up on the same side as your adversary. This could be the result of treachery on your own side, a misunderstanding, or some outside peril neither of you can survive alone. How long before one of you decides it's time to resume the original conflict?

Betrayed by Contractor: The boss is not your friend. Your contractor has turned against you. This may simply mean you're cut off from support (and your pay), or it may mean he's actively trying to destroy you. This could have been his plan all along, or possibly the enemy has fooled him into thinking you're the traitor.

Disaster: Something big and bad happens while the mission is underway. The characters didn't cause it, but they're going to have to cope with the effects. Even in the future there are tornadoes and earthquakes, gas leaks and plane crashes—and the occasional terrorist bomb. Will you take advantage of the chaos, or pitch in to save lives?

Diversion: This whole operation is just a diversion for some other scheme. That means the contractor probably doesn't care much if you succeed, and all those goodies he promised you in payment may not exist.

Table 6:12: Twists and Complications

D12	COMPLICATION
1	Ally with Enemy
2	Betrayed by Contractor
3	Disaster
4	Diversion
5	Dodgy Ally
6	False Flag
7	New Technology
8	Old Enemy
9	Old Friend
10	Third Force
11	Time Limit
12	Trap

Dodgy Ally: In order for the operation to succeed, you need outside help. Unfortunately, the person you're working with may have their own agenda. They may want to hog all the glory (and pay), they may be a spy for the enemy, or they may have some scheme of their own.

False Flag: The person who hired you is an impostor, and the mission itself may be bogus as well. This may be part of some larger scheme, or it may simply be that the contractor had to mislead you in order to get you to take on the mission.

New Technology: Cyberpunk is all about the tech, and characters love to be on the bleeding edge. This time, however, it's the other guys who have the latest, shiniest gear. They've got some gadget or weapon you're not prepared for.

Old Enemy: The adversary is someone you've crossed paths with before. On the plus side, you know something about his means and methods. On the minus side, he knows about you. And did he set this all up just to get revenge?

Old Friend: One of your opponents is someone you know and like. Will you turn against them now? And if you don't, will your contractor have doubts about your loyalty?

Third Force: There's another faction involved in the affair, not aligned with either the heroes or their adversaries. The third force may have the same goal as the heroes, or an opposed one. The presence of a third force can lead to mysterious events, and once their existence is revealed the heroes can confront them or try to strike an alliance. Roll on the Antagonist table to see who it is.

Time Limit: There's a deadline. The job must be finished by a certain time. Or maybe the enemy is operating on a schedule and must be stopped before their plan succeeds. The point is: get moving!

Trap: It's a trap! Either the whole operation is nothing but a scheme to lure the heroes into their enemies' hands, or perhaps the goal of the mission is a fraud designed to snare the unwary. The trap may be aimed specifically at the player characters, or it could be intended to catch someone else entirely.

Table 6:13: Dramatic Conflict

D12:	CONFLICT:
1	Destruction
2	Economic Harm
3	Environmental Damage
4	Family/Friend
5	Honor
6	Innocents
7	Justice
8	Loyalty
9	Morality
10	Reputation
11	Truth
12	Wealth

Dramatic Conflict

A key theme of cyberpunk fiction is the conflict between what we must do to prosper and survive, and what we want to do. Often a mission runs headlong into a character's beliefs, morals, or well-being. If the Game Master wants a straightforward external conflict, skip this step; for a very angst-driven story, roll more than once.

Destruction: Accomplishing the mission is likely to cause a lot of physical destruction. People may be killed, or maybe a historic building will be ruined. How much collateral damage are you willing to cause?

Economic Harm: A lot of people will be poorer as a result of this mission. Taking down an evil conglomerate means putting its employees out of work. Helping stage a coup could disrupt a region's trade. You're going to profit, but at what cost to others?

Environmental Damage: The mission will harm the planet. Maybe a rare species habitat is the scene of a battle, or maybe you're working for a crime lord involved in illegal waste dumping. In the late 21st Century, the planet's fragile enough already—how much more can it take?

Family/Friend: Someone you love will be harmed by this job. Where do your loyalties lie? What if it's a noble cause?

Honor: You gave your word, and now you have to go back on it. This isn't a case of deception or trickery—you've got to betray someone who trusted you.

Innocents: Someone who isn't involved in the business is going to be hurt if you succeed. Maybe someone's secrets will be revealed, maybe their boat's going to get blown up, or maybe killing the local warlord means the town will be sacked by bandit gangs. Anyway, you have to decide if you want someone else to pay the price for your success.

Justice: Not law, justice. Someone will escape the consequences of a crime, or maybe get punished for something they didn't do. Maybe you're the someone.

Loyalty: You owe allegiance to someone or something, and this mission comes into conflict with that. Maybe it's patriotism, or your oath to your gang lord, or a cause you believe in, or maybe just the debt you owe to the hacker who taught you everything you know. Whatever it is, you're going to have to betray your loyalty to get the job done.

Morality: In order to pull this mission off, you're going to have to do (or at least ignore) something that's just wrong. Torture, child slavery, sexual exploitation—whatever it is, it's bad. And you're not helping.

Reputation: A freelancer lives by reputation, and this job's going to destroy yours. A hacker who's known for fighting the Man is helping oppressors this time, or a blood-and-guts mercenary is going to look ridiculous. Is it worth it?

Truth: More than just the typical secrecy of an undercover mission, this job requires suppressing some truth, or broadcasting a lie. Maybe someday the real story will emerge, but for now you're on the side of deception.

Wealth: It turns out you're going to come out of this job poorer than when you started. Either it involves a substantial payment, or the effects will wipe out your savings. Unlike the other conflicts, this assumes that the mission is more important to you than simply getting rich.

Worked Example

Let's create an Interface Zero adventure. We roll a dozen 12-sided dice: 3, 12, 6, 2, 8, 10, 11, 2, 7, 10, 9, and 10. What can that create in the way of an adventure?

The Contractor is 3—a "Fixer." That means he's representing someone else, so we go ahead and determine that's number 12. Our Fixer is fronting for a wealthy tycoon, though he probably won't tell the heroes that.

What's the task? The roll is 6, so our heroes have to prevent something. Exactly what is yet to be determined. To make a more twisty, intrigue-filled plot, we'll roll again to find out the real mission. That result is 2. They'll be trying to find someone or something.

Since a fixer is putting the job together, we'll assume an urban location. The roll is 8, a housing project. What is our tycoon trying to prevent in a housing project?

Next is the MacGuffin. The secondary mission could be to locate a person or a thing. We'll see what kind of a thing might be involved. The roll is 10: a secret! We also roll for an Innocent in case we need one and get 11, indicating a Scientist.

Who's the opponent? Our result on the Antagonist table is 2, a Con Man or Impostor. We roll for a Henchman and get 7, a Media person. That suggests the primary antagonist is an Impostor.

Now check for twists and dramatic conflicts. The Twist roll is 10: a Third Force. Rolling on the Antagonist table yet again gives us 9. A priest or cult leader is involved. That's certainly interesting. On the Dramatic Conflict table we roll 10, indicating a threat to the heroes' Reputations.

Puttiing it all Together

Let's see how the above scores can create a unique Savage tale.

Will the Real Hayamura Please Stand Up?

The player characters are hired by Rigoberta Miho, a "fixer" who acts as the interface between wealthy clients and deniable operatives. Ms. Miho offers generous pay for a simple task. The freelance reporter Javier Donau has scored an exclusive interview with the reclusive tycoon Hiro Hayamura. Hayamura is famous for maintaining his privacy, doing business only

through handwritten notes (in flawless traditional calligraphy on rice paper). The mission is to prevent the interview from happening, or stop it from being aired.

First of all the heroes have to find Donau. If they succeed in tracking him down, they can tail him to a crumbling old Soviet-era housing block in Vladivostok, which has been taken over by Hayamura. Except that it isn't Hayamura at all, but an impostor—one of several doubles who had cosmetic surgery in order to make public appearances in Hayamura's place. The double knows that the real Hayamura disappeared several years ago and not even his inner circle of aides know where he is. They've kept up the illusion that he's still running his business empire, and they are the ones who hired the player-characters to prevent the interview. The impostor and Donau are using the interview as part of a power play to fire Hayamura's advisors in a very public way and gain control of his fortune.

Meanwhile, an aged Buddhist monk and his acolytes have become involved, tailing the player-characters and trying to break into the guarded building when the interview is going on. The monk is the real Hayamura, who found spiritual peace long ago and now wants to end the machinery of lies he created. A couple of elements didn't fit—the poor scientist had nothing to do, and it's hard to see how any of this could be a threat to the heroes' reputations, unless they screw up and make themselves look like idiots in front of a global audience. But we've still got plenty of potential for crawling through the heating ducts of a crumbling housing project, martial-arts battles with monks, and endless confusion about which Hayamura is the real one.

Domain Generator

Sometimes you need to create a system network on the fly. Maybe your heroes decide to go on a quick jaunt in The Deep to cause some mayhem, or the adventure suddenly turns in a direction you hadn't anticipated and they have to make a run on a corp. The following tables allow you to create and populate a domain with a few quick rolls of the dice.

Step 1: Determine the System Designation Code

The first thing you need to do is figure out what type of system the characters will be hacking. The system designation code sets the foundation for everything else.

Step 2: Determine Domain Function

What is the domain designed for? More specifically, what subset of the domain is your hacker trying to manipulate?

Table 6:14: System Designation Code

D10 ROLL	SYSTEM DESIGNATION CODE
1–2	Public Access Network (Very Easy: +2)
3–4	Home Access network (Easy, 0)
5–6	Restricted Access Network (Difficult, –2)
7–8	Corporate Access Network (Very Difficult, –4)
9–10	Government Access Network (Hard, –6)

Does she need to hack into the communication center to jam out-going transmissions? Perhaps she needs to crack the Hyper Objects controlling security doors, or bring the elevators to the sublevel so the team can get inside the facility. Roll on the table below as many times as you need to determine the various functions of your domain. Alternately, you can simply choose from the list.

Step 3: Determine System Resources

All domains have system resources dedicated to protecting the domain from intrusion. Roll on the table below to generate countermeasures for your domain. Unless stated below, all domains have a Firewall. This table might end up giving you some interesting results. For instance, Public Access Networks tend to be libraries or other sites open to the general public and won't necessarily be as large or as heavily protected as, say, a government network. That said, you can easily come up with results that give the PAN some pretty stiff security! You can always opt to ignore the results of your roll and populate the domain with the resources you think make more sense.

Table 6:15: Domain Function

D8 ROLL	DOMAIN FUNCTION
1	Security Cameras
2	Communications Center
3	Physical defense systems (Motion sensors, Sentry guns, Laser trip wires, Electric fences)
4	Elevators
5	Security Doors
6	Ventilation Systems
7	Lighting systems
8	Databases and various data files

But before you do, consider that in the case of PANS, HANS (and even some RANS), these results can provide fodder for some interesting adventures, both in and out of The Deep. Why would an otherwise low-level domain have such heavy security? Maybe the domain's creators are hiding something of importance, like stolen R&D files, or dirt on a politician or celebrity. Maybe there's an open pipe leading somewhere else in The Deep? Could the domain be a secret node used by operatives of a foreign government to contact their handlers?

The possibilities are endless.

Step 4: Determine Paydata

Now that you have your system resources in place, you can begin to think about what they protect. This step is entirely optional. Some runs through The Deep have nothing to do with plundering the depths of a domain for its treasures. Hackers might simply need to back up the physical team and consequently won't have time to sniff around databases for juicy pay data. That said, there are certainly times when a hacker might make a run against a domain to get information. It's on these runs that hackers might find things they never even knew existed, like research data on a new cyber eye, or classified information about another megacorp. Roll on the following table to find out what juicy bits of paydata hackers come across when ghosting through your domain.

Shadow Project Files: These data files outline in great detail previous or future operations the corporation has authorized. Samples of projects include information detailing runs against rival megacorps, assassinations, thefts, snatches, etc. If the data involves a project in the past, the targets of the run (if they're alive) might be very interested in knowing who contracted the run. If the data details an ongoing project or plans for a future project, any number of people will certainly be interested in obtaining the hot paydata.

R&D files: Research and Development files are hot paydata to rival corporations who are always looking for an edge over their competitors.

Dirt on Someone: Everybody has secrets and most are willing to pay good cred to keep them a secret. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. Megacorporations invest a lot of time and effort doing background checks on employees and prospective employees, their efforts often yielding information that can be used to coerce employees into doing things they would not otherwise do. This type of paydata can be valuable to people looking to get out from under somebody's thumb, or more likely, desirable to someone looking for leverage on another person.

Dirt on a Megacorp: Like people, corporations have their dirty little secrets they don't want anyone else knowing. These types of files might include evidence of insider trading, illegal monitoring of employees, extortion, misappropriation of company resources, embezzlement of credits, etc.

Table 6:17: Paydata

D4 ROLL	PAYDATA	STREET PRICE
1	Shadow Project Files	1D6 × 10,000 credits
2	R&D Files	1D10 × 10,000 credits
3	Dirt on someone	1D6 × 5,000 credits
4	Dirt on a megacorp	1D6 × 10,000 credits

Table 6:16: System Resources

D6 ROLL	INTRUSION COUNTERMEASURE
1	No protection.
2	Sub-sentient program. Choose a sub-sentient program from Chapter 8: Threats
3	Corporate hacker. Use the corporate hacker NPC in Chapter 8: Threats
4	Anarchist hacker. Use the anarchist hacker NPC in Chapter 8: Threats
5	AI program. Choose an AI program from Chapter 8: Threats
6	Roll twice on the table. Ignore a score of 1 or 6

Sample Domains

The following domains are ready for you to use in your Interface Zero game. Feel free to modify them as needed to suit your campaign. Note that some of the systems below have already been modified from the System Designation Code templates in Chapter 2: Systems of Control to give you an idea of the flexibility available to you when designing your own domains. Note that a couple of these domains are located in the Free City of Chicago. They can easily be modified to fit into a different locale, if your campaign doesn't take place in the Windy City.

Sprawl Apartment Complex

System Designation Code: Modified Home Access Network
Difficulty: –2
System Dice: D6 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Sprawl apartments tend to have little in the way of intrusion countermeasures. Most have a firewall, some sort of basic attack programs like NexusK9 guard dogs or wimpy Pigeon Trace programs. A security hacker might also be on site.

Corporate Enclave

System Designation Code: Corporate Access Network
Difficulty: –4
System Dice: The Bioplex network uses a D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Corporate enclave networks are designed to ensure the comfort and security of the corporation's greatest assets; their employees. These networks typically employ the same ICE found in the corporate system; Tracer programs, TAP busters, Lethal, and non-lethal attack programs, etc.

Blood Throne Online

System Designation Code: Modified Corporate Access Network
Difficulty: –6
System Dice: Blood throne online uses a D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: The massive BTO system is the backbone for one of the most popular MMORPGs in the world, second only to Matrix of War 2088. Consequently, many brainers and n00b script kiddies try and crack the network so they can make any number of illegal modifications to their online characters. To prevent this abuse of the game, Gun Metal Games LLC employs cutting edge Tracer programs and various types of Guardian and Combat ICE to protect its interests. ICE commonly resemble tainted, mutated horrors from the shadowy threshold realm, lizard men, desiccated blood mages in tattered robes, orcs, half giants, and even dragons.

Coffin City Subplex

System Designation Code: Restricted Access Network
Difficulty: –2
System Dice: D8 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: The Coffin City domain was originally designed as a modified HAN ran by an AI slave named Ophelia-9. S

She has since upgraded the system defenses to more closely resemble that of a RAN. This development has The Deep buzzing with speculation that Ophelia-9 has evolved into a more powerful form of artificial intelligence. Brainers running the Coffin City domain have reported encounters with TAP busters, nasty attack programs and psychotropic ICE.

Night Club

System Designation Code: Modified Home Access Network
Difficulty: –2
System Dice: D6 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: The average night club is an offshoot of a Home Access Network, employing various non-lethal bouncer ICE and trace programs in addition to a standard firewall. Shadow clubs like the infamous Downside, however, will present a much more substantial threat to the brainer. System Difficulties and the domain's Depth will increase dramatically and ICE will likely have very lethal consequences for the brainer dumb enough to try and crack them.

Malmart Retail Outlet

System Designation Code: Low Level Corporate Access Network
Difficulty: –2
System Dice: D8 for system Skill Rolls.
Typical System Resources: While Malmart's retail outlets may not be as tough as the corporate offices in Denver Colorado, the system isn't exactly a pushover, either. ICE tend to resemble Malmart employees and security guards, and range from Trace programs and TAP busters to psychotropic viri that implant memes telling the poor brainer to "buy Malmart" over and over again.

Simulacrum Production Facility

System Designation Code: Modified Restricted Access Network
Difficulty: –4
System Dice: D8 for system Skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Simulacrum production facilities employ a range of intrusion countermeasures to keep data thieves and would-be saboteurs out of their systems. Comet Trace programs, Corporate-grade code walls, sentinel attack programs, combat hackers and even killer AI slaves abound in these domains.

Chicagoland Transit Authority

System Designation Code: Modified Restricted Access Network
Difficulty: –4
System Dice: D8 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Due to the recent spate of terrorist bombings on the megasprawl's El trains and subways, the protection of the Chicago Transit Authority domain has been contracted out to Ravenlocke securities. The company's proprietary intrusion countermeasures include Storm Crow trace programs, Obsidian series-8 firewalls and military grade attack programs.

Kenta Cyber Dynamics North America

System designation Code: Modified Corporate Access Network
Difficulty: –6
System Dice: The network uses a D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: The Kenta Cyber Dynamics system employs a variety of countermeasures to prevent unwanted intrusions into their network. Aside from their multi-tiered firewalls, common intrusion countermeasures include Comet trace programs, Shogun and Dark Sentinel guardian ICE, Typhoon TAP busters, and Oni-6 blaster ICE. Kenta Cyber Dynamics is also rumored to have dreaded Kurai Kijo or "dark witch" AI slave programs residing in the system.

NAC Military Defense Network

System Designation Code: Government Access Network
Difficulty: –6
Depth: 5 levels
System Dice: D12 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: One of the most secure systems on earth, the NAC (North American NAC) computer network is a black hole filled with vicious killer ICE. The NAC military not only has to contend with n00b script kiddies and rogue brainers with a death wish (like YOU), it has to stave off intrusions from other world governments, such as the Chinese Mandarinate and New Brasilia, nations who constantly seek to gain an advantage over the NAC by stealing top secret information on a myriad of subjects.

ICE resemble heavily armored infantry units, golemmechs hover tanks, sentry guns, reconnaissance drones, etc. It goes without saying that all of these countermeasures are deadly. Onsite combat hackers are military trained using SOTA programs and heavy chrome combat TAPs. True AI are also rumored to be commonplace in the network.

Sample Hyper Objects

Most of the sample HR objects listed below don't fit into any one particular system designation code. These have a modified system designation code with a difficulty which more realistically reflects the overall accessibility of the hyper object in question.

For instance, a HR object governing the functions of a generic food vat is technically a CAN because the machine is owned by a megacorp. However, it's unrealistic to assume a machine as commonplace as food vat will have anywhere near the level of security of a corporate arcology. Conversely, a credit certification panel (think ATM machine) is owned by a bank and governs financial transactions for billions of people throughout the world. These objects will certainly have a higher level of security than the average HR object.

The following Hyper Objects are ready for you to use in your Interface Zero game. Feel free to modify them to suit the needs of your campaign. If you wish to make them more or less secure, simply adjust the Difficulty and remove or add system resources to suit your needs.

As a general rule, the vast majority of HR objects shouldn't ever be too difficult. Most exist simply to enhance the flavor of the world in 2088 and should be treated accordingly. For example, if the hacker needs to make really difficult Hacking rolls to hack a robot hot dog vendor so he can grab a quick bite to eat, too much emphasis is being placed on hacking a HR object.

Above all, remember to keep it *Fast Furious and Fun!*

Credit Certification Panel

System Designation Code: Modified Corporate Access Network
Difficulty: –6
System Dice: D10 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Credit certification panels employ aggressive, potentially lethal countermeasures to deal with intruders. Common ICE include TAP busters, attack programs and tracer programs.

Food Vat

System Designation Code: Modified Home Access Network
Difficulty: 0
System Dice: D6 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Food vats have a firewall and a non-lethal attack program that does 2D6 non-lethal damage to hackers.

Gang Tag

System Designation Code: Modified Home Access Network
Difficulty: –2
System Dice: D6 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Gang tags can have any number of system resources. It really depends on the morality of the person who programmed the tag. Some brainers might employ non-lethal ICE, while others protect their creations with killer ICE, TAP busters and even psychotropic viri designed to instil fear of the gang into the mind of the hacker. All gang tags are guaranteed to have some sort of alarm program to let the creator know someone is messing with his tag.

Malmart Online Catalogue

System Designation Code: Modified Public Access Network
Difficulty: +2
System Dice: D4 to system skill rolls
Typical System Resources: Malmart catalogues have a basic firewall and that's it.

Robot Hot Dog Vendor

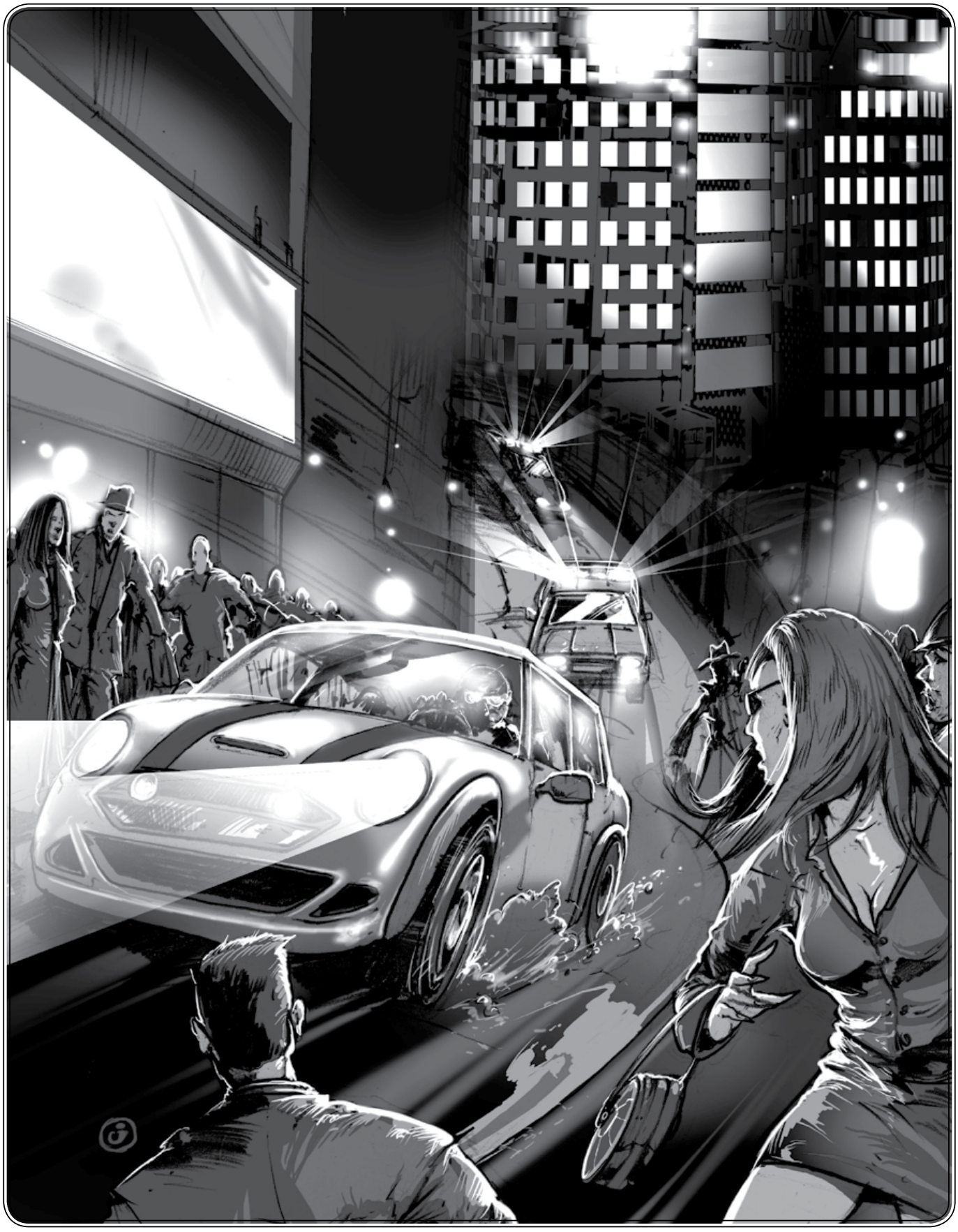
System Designation Code: Modified Corporate Access Network
Difficulty: –4
System Dice: D6 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Hot dog vendors typically have a firewall and an attack program that does 2D6 non-lethal damage to hackers. They'll also have some sort of alarm ICE coded to alert unwanted intrusions to the nearest sector police units.

Subway Token Machine

System Designation Code: Modified Restricted Access Network
Difficulty: –2
System Dice: D8 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Due to the recent spate of terrorist attacks in the city, the Chicago Transit Authority has upgraded HR objects controlling public access to the subway and EL trains. Hackers trying to manipulate these HR objects can expect to encounter alarm ICE, beefed up attack programs and even TAP busters.

Trideo Machine

System Designation Code: Modified Restricted Access Network
Difficulty: –2
System Dice: D8 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: Trideo machines can be found anywhere in the sprawl, spewing the latest news to the masses. Hackers love to override the controls and "change the channel" to whatever they want to see, or want others to be exposed to. Consequently, most Trid machines have some heavy ICE installed. hackers can expect to run into attack programs trace programs and TAP Busters when they hack these hyper objects.



Snake: "I got a plan."
Johnny Six Gun: "What is it?"
Snake: "Just trust me."
Johnny Six Gun: "…no"
– Transcript fragment from the ill-fated Metzer run.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SAVAGE TALES

The world's a dangerous place omae, filled with big players running bigger games. Megacorporations straddle the world like mythic titans, their influence and power touching on every facet of society. Often unwilling or unwitting pawns of the megacorps, world powers vie for control of the earth's dwindling resources, often waging wars both hot and cold to serve their own corrupt ends.

The streets are no less dangerous in 2088 either. Organized crime rings and gangs of varying size and influence wage their own war for control of the city's underworld. Drugs, guns, gambling, illegal cyberware, information, prostitution, smuggling; these are the tarnished jewels of the concrete kingdom, the resources over which the super powers of the sprawl squabble. So what does all this mean for the average ronin?

In a word: work.

That's right. At any given point in time there's a run goin' down. It might be a simple milk run, a protection gig or smash job. Or maybe some corp. wants info on a rival company's research project, or a shipment of milspec weapons needs to get "redirected" into the hands of a gang lookin to go to war with their enemies. These jobs need specialists; experts who can get the mission done right the first time. More importantly, these people need a certain degree of anonymity. After all, if a megacorp didn't care who knew they just raided their rival's R&D files, they'd just send a team from their security division, neh? This is where the characters come in; deniable assets that can't be traced back to the contractor.

This chapter provides busy Game Masters with a plethora of savage tales to use in your Interface Zero game with little or no prep time. Additionally, we round out the chapter with an assortment of plot hooks and a bounty-board system for randomly generating wanted criminals to use in conjunction with the savage tales or as stand-alone one-shots! Inventive GM's might also wish to use the Adventure and Domain generators in the previous chapter to make your interface Zero game unique and memorable.

SAVAGE TALES ACROSS THE WORLD

The following Savage Tales take place in various regions of the world. Due to time constraints and space limitations, not all areas of the world are represented, but there is a very nice variety to get you started. Future supplements will provide more savage tales and exciting locales for your Interface Zero game.

Wild Card Alert!

When you see this Icon, you'll know you're dealing at a Wild Card non-player character.

TECHNO-SHOGUNATE JAPAN

Techno-Shogunate Japan is a great place to really get into manga-styled adventures in the vein of anime such as *Apple Seed*, *Bubblegum Crisis* and of course, *Ghost in the Shell*. In these types of stories, the characters are seen as awe-inspiring heroes rather than seedy individuals simply looking to make a buck. Golemmechs play a role in these types of games, and you might think of having your group create a party of mecha pilots working for the Shogunate as protectors of freedom.

If that's not your cup of saki, then you can certainly involve your characters in gritty adventures pitting them against all kinds of adversaries including the Yakuza, the Triads, renegade cyborgs, evil megacorporations: the possibilities are limited by your own imagination. The following Savage Tales give you a taste of what life in the shadows might be like in the Techno-Shogunate.

RESCUE MISSION

The player-characters get word of a job which has to be completed in just a couple of days. The Brazilian environmental charity Arca Nova is hiring people to perform an emergency ecological rescue mission. If the characters are interested, they can meet with Dr. Isabel Flor at her hotel.

Flor explains that Ujelang Atoll, in the Marshall Islands, has suffered for decades from rising sea levels and worsening weather. Now it looks like the end has finally arrived. Super-typhoon Ximena is a "Category Six" storm, and the weather forecast AIs give a 95 percent chance that it will strike Ujelang and its neighbors in the Marshall Islands within 18 hours. The storm surge and winds will scour the atoll down to the bare coral rock, which is a problem for the Ujelang monitor lizard, a small insectivorous reptile found only on the atoll. Dr. Flor persuaded Arca Nova to fund a last-minute attempt to rescue enough Ujelang monitors to preserve the species. The original plan involved a group of Arca Nova specialists but they're stuck on the other side of the Pacific and can't get to the scene in time.

The government of the Marshall Islands is overwhelmed by the crisis. Dozens of low-lying islands face flooding or worse. The Chinese military firm Zhanjin, which handles most Marshallese defense requirements, has pulled all of its assets from the islands ahead of the storm. Scores of pirates and looters have flocked to the region.

DR. ISABEL FLOR

Doctor Flor is a new-minted ecology Ph.D. She spent years in graduate school doing field research on tropical islands, giving her a great deal of experience at living and surviving in those environments. Dr. Flor is not a pacifist, but she has little experience in fighting and seldom carries a weapon. When armed with a tranquilizer dart gun she is surprisingly accurate.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D10, Spirit D6, Strength D4, Vigor D4

Skills: Healing D4, Hacking D4, Knowledge (Biology) D10, Notice D6, Shooting D4, Survival D8, Swimming D4, Tracking D8

Charisma: +0; Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4; **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 10

Edges: Alertness, Level Headed, Woodsman

Hindrances: Curious, Stubborn, Vow (save endangered animals)

Cyberware: Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5)

Gear: Tranq Dart Rifle, Night Vision glasses

Tranq Dart Rifle: Range: 20/40/80, Damage: (special), RoF 1, Cost 500, Weight 8, Shots 6, Min Str —.

Tranq darts inject knockout drugs into the target. Ideally, the drug dose is optimized for the target species. Creatures hit by a dart must make a Vigor test.

Failure on the initial roll indicates the victim goes to sleep immediately! A simple success means the creature falls asleep in D6 rounds. One Raise means the drugs kick in after D6 minutes, and two or more Raises means the drugs don't work at all. If the drug dose is for a smaller creature, it automatically has no effect. Dosage for a larger creature imposes a –2 penalty to the target's Vigor roll—but the creature must make another Vigor roll once asleep to avoid going into a coma!

Dr. Flor has a surplus Japanese assault hovercraft to make the trip to Ujelang. A cargo plane will carry the team and the hovercraft to Ponape in Micronesia, which is south of the primary danger zone from the storm. It's a thousand kilometers from Ponape to Ujelang, which means seven hours' travel time by hovercraft. Add to that the five hour flight time from Japan to Ponape and it's pretty clear: the clock is running.

Payment for the mission is 5,000 credits per person, with a group bonus of 2,000 credits for each female Ujelang monitor and 1,000 credits for each male recovered. Dr. Flor will accompany the player characters and make sure they get the right animals.

The Journey

The flight touches down in Ponape at 5:00 a.m. local time (1800 GMT); the storm is on track to hit Ujelang in 12 hours. Dealing with the bureaucratic issues of bringing a hovercraft into the country requires an Intimidation or Persuasion test, opposed by the Micronesian customs agent's D8 Intimidation. If the agent wins, it takes two hours. If the heroes win, it takes an hour and one or more Raises means only half an hour.

Prepping the hovercraft for the voyage is a test of Repair or Driving skill—success means it takes an hour, and any Raises means it takes half that. Failure means something isn't done, and the heroes must decide to either go ahead anyway (–2 penalty on all skill rolls involving the hovercraft for the rest of the mission) or try again.

Depending on how efficient they were, the team head out to sea with 9 to 11 hours left. It's morning, and the weather is already getting rough. Bands of rain alternate with sunshine and the waves are a couple of meters high. The hovercraft pilot must make a Driving (hovercraft) roll to avoid mishaps. Going at top speed imposes a –2 penalty; half speed eliminates the penalty—but doubles the time.

Failure means the craft gets swamped by a wave, adding half an hour to the trip time. A critical failure means the hovercraft gets damaged, reducing its top speed to 40. This adds an hour to the journey.

The Hovercraft

The team vehicle is a surplus Japanese Self-Defense Force assault hovercraft. It has no weapons, but there are two roof hatches and two side hatches which can be used as firing positions. It is armored with a layer of Kevlar, and the front face (including the main boarding ramp) has an extra layer of steel, giving it Toughness of 20 from that direction only.

The hovercraft's onboard system is an obsolete Government Access Network, with Difficult security (–4 penalty to Hacking rolls and program rolls). The System die is D8, but there are no combat hackers or security programs protecting it. It's possible to squeeze another two dozen passengers into the cabin or on the roof, but for every 6 people over 12, the hovercraft's top speed is reduced by 5.

Hovercraft: Acc 20, TS 50, Toughness 14 (2), Crew 2 + 12

The Storm Pirates

A pirate ship lurks near Ujelang, ready to snap up fleeing refugees or other looters. Conditions make it hard to detect. Make a Notice roll to spot the pirates, while they do the same to find the heroes. The pirate lookouts have electronic binoculars, giving them a +3 to their Notice skill. If they detect the hovercraft, the pirates launch two speedboats.

Note that the hovercraft is normally faster than the pirate vessels. The pilot must roll a test of his skill, opposed by that of the boat pilots. Failure means the pirates cut off the hovercraft and a fight begins. Success means the hovercraft evades the boats but comes within range of the pirates' weapons, and one or more Raises means the pirates can't even get close enough to shoot. However: the pirates see the hovercraft make landfall on Ujelang atoll, and they may hang around and to intercept it on the return leg.

If the heroes and Dr. Flor are captured by pirates, they'll be stuck in the fish-reeking hold of the ship until their captors can arrange ransom. There are twelve refugees in the hold, snatched from their raft a few hours earlier. Dr. Flor is frantic about missing the chance to rescue the lizards, and urges the others to break out.

Pirates

The pirates are a mix of Pacific islanders and riffraff from every continent. They aren't jolly swashbucklers but vicious crooks, motivated by greed and disregard for others. One man per boat (the leader) is a Wild Card.

Launches

Each boat carries eight gunmen. They are open-topped, so the men on board can either take cover or use weapons, but not both. The boats have no onboard computer systems to speak of and cannot be hacked.

Speedboats: Acc 10, TS 40, Toughness 10 (2), Crew 1+7

On The Island

The team reaches Ujelang with no more than four hours before the storm hits. Already the wind is gusting above 50 kph, and waves over a meter high are breaking on the beach. The rain is steady and heavy. Ujelang Atoll is a low loop of coral sand and vegetation around a shallow lagoon. Only the southeastern quarter of the atoll is high enough to support trees and vegetation. It is a long, narrow curve with mangroves on the inner edge and coral beach on the outer side.

As soon as the rescue party lands, they get a surprise: Ujelang is uninhabited, but there are about thirty refugees on the island, desperate to get away before the storm. The refugees assume the party are looters or pirates, so most of them hide among

PIRATE STATS

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D4, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D8
Skills: Boating D6, Hacking D4, Fighting D8, Guts D6, Notice D4, Repair D4, Shooting D8, Streetwise D4, Swimming D6
Charisma: +0; Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness** 8 (2); **Cybertrauma:** –2; **Street Cred:** 4
Edges: Quick Draw, Sweep, Two-Fisted
Hindrances: Greedy (minor), Illiterate, Wanted (major)
Cyberware: Razor Nails (Gutterware, D8 to damage on a raise rather than D6), Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5)
Gear: Armored Leather jacket (+2 Armor), dagger, and either an old AK-47 or a single-shot 40mm rocket launcher.

REFUGEES

The refugees are poor islanders who couldn't buy or force their way onto one of the evacuation ships. They are frightened and desperate, but are fundamentally decent people. The leader, John Mabelang, is a Wild Card with Shooting D6 and a shotgun. Feng Yi is also a Wild Card with Hacking, Repair, and Shooting D8, armed with an automatic pistol. John and Yi are not illiterate.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6
Skills: Boating D6, Hacking D4, Fighting D6, Guts D6, Healing D4, Notice D6, Repair D6, Survival D6, Swimming D6.
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 8, **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 1
Edges: Fleet-Footed
Hindrances: Illiterate, Poverty
Cyberware: Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5)
Gear: Switchblade or Machete (short sword)

the trees while four of the biggest and best-armed go to meet the new arrivals. The leader is John Mabelang, a fisherman with military training. He's accompanied by two men carrying machetes and Feng Yi, a former mercenary. Mabelang explains that the refugees made it this far aboard a makeshift raft, but it came apart in the heavy seas. The hovercraft is their last hope.

If the characters refuse to take them, Mabelang simply nods, and walks back to the jungle. As soon as the visitors get more than 100 meters from their hovercraft, all thirty refugees rush toward it, attempting to overwhelm anyone on guard. (If the party left it unguarded, give them a Notice roll to see what's going on as Yi struggles to hack into the onboard system.) If the team does help the , refugees, Mabelang a dozen others can lend a hand with the mission. With or without help, finding the lizards isn't easy: the Ujelang monitor lizard is 60 to 80 centimeters long, weighing about 5 kilos. They hunt insects, crabs, birds, and small mammals on the island, and are very good at hiding from hunting sea birds. Searching for the lizards in the underbrush requires a Notice or Tracking roll opposed by the lizard's Stealth skill of D8. Each person searching (including Dr. Flor and any refugees helping) can roll once per half-hour.

Meanwhile, the wind is picking up and the sound of surf beating on the beach grows louder …

Getting Off Ujelang

The hovercraft can't move as fast when it's loaded with thirty extra passengers. The storm is getting closer—the sea is noticeably rougher and the wind is getting fierce. (See the storm penalty table below.) If it's before 4 p.m. the pirates are still lurking about, hoping to catch that cool hovercraft and maybe some captives before it's time to run before the storm. Even they're not foolish enough to stay past that time.

Storm Penalty

It's hard to do things when you're getting hammered by hurricane-force winds, dodging flying debris, blinded by rain, and surrounded by pitch darkness lit only by weird purple lightning—all at once! The skill penalty increased as zero hour gets closer. This applies to any task attempted outdoors, or anything to do with operating a hovercraft or boat at sea. At 6 p.m. the storm surge strikes the island, and a massive wave ten meters high sweeps over the entire atoll. Start swimming.

Table 7:1: Storm Penalty

TIME (AT UJELANG)	PENALTY
1 p.m.	0
2 p.m.	–2
3 p.m.	–4
4 p.m.	–6
5 p.m.	–8

THE SECRET OF YI

A corporate fixer known as Mr. Jones has an interesting job for the player-characters. His unnamed megacorp bosses want to gather some information about an upstart rival firm called YiCorp. They're using independent contractors like the PCs because they don't want to spark any rumors about takeover bids. The job is simple: find out who are the majority shareholders of YiCorp—or, if it's owned by other corporate entities, who are the individuals in control of them. The patrons are planning a merger offer and want to dig up as much personal dirt on YiCorp's owners as possible in order to give themselves some leverage in the deal.

Public Sources

Public data networks have surprisingly little information about YiCorp. It's a commercial bank, specializing in "angel" investing—providing seed money to startups, particularly in biotech and artificial intelligence research. YiCorp was formed three years ago as an independent spin-off from Atlantic Basin Finance, a large banking and brokerage firm.

An Investigation skill roll for online research determines what else the characters turn up. Simple success indicates that during the initial public offering three years ago, 60 percent of YiCorp's shares were bought by Alpine Partners, a Swiss company. One Raise also reveals that over the intervening years all of YiCorp's outstanding shares have been either bought back by the company or purchased by Alpine.

Digging into Alpine reveals that it's based in Basel, and was acquired just last year by a Sri Lanka-based company called DeviTel, which used to sell communications equipment. Two years ago, under new ownership, DeviTel sold off its entire technology business and used the pile of cash to buy a controlling interest in Alpine Partners.

DeviTel's new ownership is highly mysterious—a blind trust administered by a Tokyo law firm (Ozawa Legal Associates) represents the owners. Finding out any more requires a data raid on the law firm's offices, or a different approach. The heroes could also try to pry into YiCorp's own head office in Nassau.

YI Corp Employees

Yi Corp has hundreds of employees in its Nassau headquarters, and dozens more in branch offices around the world. Obviously lower-level employees don't know any more about the company ownership than some random person off the street. Executives at the Vice-President or higher levels may have a clue. Use the Corporate-Engineered Executive template for upper-level YiCorp personnel. When not in security-controlled areas, execs are accompanied by at least one Security Officer.

Threats and violence aren't the best approach: these people react as anyone would, by yelling for the police. Seduction, bribery, or other forms of persuasion are a more effective technique. It turns out that no YiCorp staffers know who owns the company. The most that any of the upper-level execs know is that the company is owned by DeviTel. None of them associate that with the blind trust set up by YiCorp which Ozawa handles.

Ozawa Legal Associates

Ozawa is a law firm based in Tokyo, specializing in international business law. For three years now the firm has been the administrator for the blind trust which purchased DeviTel. Ozawa Associates has its offices in Miura Tower, a soaring spire at the mouth of Tokyo Bay.

Investigating Ozawa

As soon as anyone starts digging into the ownership of YiCorp in The Deep, they trigger tracking software put in place by the company itself. Each time the player characters search online for information about YiCorp, make a test of Hacking, opposed by the company information technology people's D10 skill. Success means the company's security programs know someone is searching, but can't pinpoint who. One or more Raises means the player characters are completely undetected. Failure, however, means YiCorp knows who's trying to find the owners.

YiCorp is willing to use methods up to and including deadly force to guard its secrets. Investigators who have traced its ownership as far as Alpine Partners get a strongly-worded email from Ozawa Legal Associates warning them that they could be sued if they continue. This is a bluff, as a successful Knowledge (Law) roll will indicate.

Poking into DeviTel affairs provokes more serious harassment: the heroes begin to get anonymous threats, and a successful Hacking skill roll reveals that someone has been doing very thorough data searching about them. If they have been involved in any lawbreaking, the threats will pointedly refer to those events, and the anonymous adversary will send tips to law enforcement about the heroes' current whereabouts.

If they've found the Ozawa connection, the gloves really come off. YiCorp sends a trio of combat simulacra to find and kill the snoops. If the heroes are mounting a data raid on the Ozawa offices, assume the simulacra attack just after the raid, when it looks like they're home free.

Note that no one individual is ordering these attacks: they emerge from the company's system of policies and procedures. It's completely unconscious, like an immune response to infection.

Penetrating the Ozawa System

If the team's hacker is ghosting with the party, he'll need to cut through the firewall and get into the domain before he can run any searches for the data the team needs. If the hacker is physically with the team and is inside the building when he begins to hack the system, he's considered to have already breached the firewall and doesn't need to use his cutter program to break through it.

Once past the building's firewall, all that is needed is to run the appropriate search program (and succeed on the roll at the requisite penalties associated with hacking the domain) to uncover the truth about YiCorp's ownership. If the roll fails, the Game Master gets to make a system check using the domain's system dice (D10) to see if it detects the hacker nosing around in the domain. If the system check succeeds, both the combat hacker and the Jun-Ko Security Program will blit to the character's location and attack. The domain will also sound an alert. A fast response team will get to the character's physical location in 1D4 rounds. Use the Shock Trooper template for the fast response team in Chapter 8: Threats.

THE OZAWA SYSTEM (CAN):
Difficulty: Very difficult: –4 penalty to Hacking rolls and program rolls, **Toughness:** 8, **Parry:** 10
System Dice: D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
System Resources: The Ozawa domain is protected from intrusion by a state of the art firewall. A combat hacker ghosting in the system as well as a virtual entity known as Jun-ko.

Paydata

YiCorp is owned by Alpine Partners, which is owned by DeviTel, which is controlled by a blind trust which Ozawa administers on behalf of … YiCorp. The company has no human owners. It owns itself.

Fallout

The truth about YiCorp is that no one owns it. The company isn't just a business, it's a life form. The "mind" of YiCorp is an emergent system—it doesn't exist in any of the company's computers, or in the heads of its employees. Instead, its consciousness is embodied in the company policies, data streams, procedures, and office routines of the organization. Just as ants, following simple instinctive behaviors, create a hive which is "smarter" than any of them individually, YiCorp is a new form of corporate life.

If the heroes can report this back to Mr. Jones, they get paid as agreed. They did the job, after all. However, as word of this gets out, the characters attract the attention of Stopwatch, which wants to know everything they've discovered about YiCorp. The fate of the company depends on how the Game Master

JUN-KO ATTACK PROGRAM

Toughness Rating: 8
Parry Rating: 10
Pace: 8
System Dice: D10 and a wild die
Trappings: The program appears as a cartoon "magical girl" in a schoolgirl's plaid skirt and sailor blouse. She has green hair and a cute smile; her razor-sharp katana appears out of thin air when she attacks. Jun-Ko is a rating 5 Attack program that does 2D10 damage and has an AP of 4.

ASSASSIN SIMULACRA

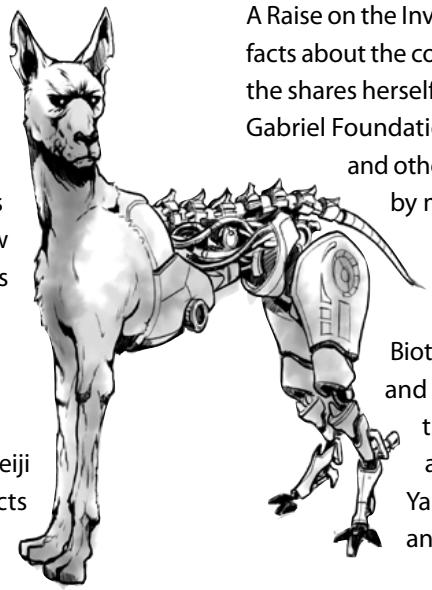
The three assassins were decanted with memories and personalities based on martial-artist monks from a popular video series. In the series their names and costumes are Black, Red, and White, and they battle evildoers and monsters. The player-characters are designated evildoers, and the three monks won't stop fighting them.
Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts D6, Spirit D4, Strength D8, Vigor D8
Skills: Climbing D8, Fighting D10, Hacking D4, Guts D6, Lockpicking D6, Stealth D8, Throwing D10.
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 8 (2); **Cybertrauma:** –2; **Street Cred:** 8
Edges: Acrobat, Alertness, Ambidextrous, Block, Danger Sense, Dodge, Fleet-Footed, Nerves of Steel, Quick, Sweep, Two-Fisted.
Hindrances: Clueless, Code of Honor, Delusional, Heroic.
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Razor Nails (unarmed attack does D8 damage on a raise instead of D6), Level 1 Reflex enhancers (+1 to Parry rating)
Equipment: Nanoweave shirt (+2 armor), Armored gloves (Str+D4 damage from strikes)

OZAWA COMBAT HACKER (EXTRA)

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D6, Strength D4, Vigor D6
Skills: Hacking D10
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Cybertrauma:** +0; **Street Cred:** 5
Hindrances: Loyal, Pacifist (Minor), Yellow
Edges: Hacker, Rich, Special Access (Employer)
Cyberware: Rating 3 TAP (+1 to Hacking rolls, Toughness 8 (5), Avatar Pace: 8, Parry 5, up to 4 programs in memory)
Programs: Rating 3 Armor program (+3 toughness), Rating 5 attack program [big freaking gun] (2D10 damage, area of effect subroutine [medium burst template], Dazzle slug subroutine [target forfeits next action + 1 action for every raise on the attack roll])

wants to play it. Maybe the revelations about YiCorp result in a public outcry and restrictive laws; the company gets broken up and the player characters are minor heroes for exposing it.

Or perhaps YiCorp is the wave of the future. Other congloms begin converting to corporate emergent life forms, owned by no human, pursuing their own inscrutable goals. This can create an atmosphere of almost Lovecraftian horror as it becomes more and more apparent that humans now share the world with powerful intelligences which are utterly inhuman.



ALMOST HUMAN

The player-characters are approached by Seiji Kitazawa, a freelance "consultant" who acts as the interface between Asian megacorps and people they don't want to admit they've hired—like the player-characters.

Seiji is currently working for the Kansai Consortium, one of Japan's leading producers of simulacra. Over the past year Kansai's taken a beating in market share, thanks to an upstart company in the Philippines called Ermita Biotechnica. Somehow, Ermita is able to make a profit selling simulacra for less than what other companies spend to make them. Financial analysts have determined that Ermita isn't just swallowing the loss to gain customers—they're actually making money somehow. Kansai (and just about everyone else in the simulacra-manufacturing sector) would love to know how they're doing it.

- **So here's the job:** the player-characters have to get into the Ermita Biotechnica manufacturing center outside Manila, get as much information about their manufacturing techniques as possible, and get out again. Seiji will deposit 10,000 credits per person in a Panamanian bank account; the spies get the access code when the mission's complete.

Research

You don't live long if you charge into situations without doing some research. A successful Investigation roll about Ermita Biotechnica reveals that it was established five years ago by Dr. Esperanza Yapang, a Philippine physician and medical researcher. The company began selling simulacra a year later and quickly carved out a niche in the market for good-quality low-cost simulacra for manual labor, personal service, and entertainment.

A Raise on the Investigation roll reveals some other interesting facts about the company. Dr. Yapang owns about 30 percent of the shares herself, and another 30 percent are held by the San Gabriel Foundation, a charity which helps the poor of Manila and other cities in the Philippines. The rest are owned by minor investors, mutual funds, and so forth.

An Investigation attempt on the San Gabriel Foundation indicates that Ermita Biotechnica is a major donor to the Foundation—and that Dr. Esperanza Yapang is the director of the Foundation. A Raise on this Investigation attempt uncovers the startling fact that Dr. Yapang established both the biotech company and the charity on the same day five years ago.

Recon

Scouting out the Ermita Biotechnica plant reveals very tough security. The building is a windowless concrete slab, with access though guarded checkpoints. It's guarded by armed men (use the Experienced Security Officer template) and cyber-augmented dogs

CYBER DOGS (10)

Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts D6 (A), Spirit D4, Strength D8, Vigor D6
Skills: Fighting D8, Guts D6, Notice D10
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (4); **Cybertrauma:** 0, **Street Cred:** 0
Special Abilities: Bite Str+D4; Fleet Footed (D10 when running); Go for the Throat (raise on attack roll hits least-armored location); Reinforced Frame (+4 Armor); Size –1.

The Ermita Biotechnica Domain

The plant's domain is a very tough Corporate Access Network.

ERMITA BIOTECHNICA DOMAIN (CAN):
Difficulty: Very difficult: –4 penalty to Hacking rolls and program rolls, **Toughness:** 8, **Parry:** 10
System Dice: D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
System Resources: Firewall, active masking program, SHARC programs

The building interior is masked by a Manta Ray active masking program; a virtual entity that responds to any unauthorized attempts to pull up building blueprints or find personnel. The entity must first be crashed before characters can run any of their system utilities. Note that if the entity comes under attack, it will sound an alarm on its first action.

Once the manta ray has been destroyed, the characters can manipulate the domain. Search programs will pull up the basic physical layout of the plant on a simple success. One Raise reveals the presence of computer-augmented surgical suites and the virtual-reality brainwashing program. Two Raises reveals the location of guards and Dr. Yapang (if she's there).

MANTA RAY ACTIVE MASKING PROGRAM

Toughness Rating: 8
Parry Rating: 10
Pace: 8
System Dice: D10 and a wild die
Trappings: The program appears as a black manta ray which flies through the air. Its tail is overlarge and has vicious looking barbs that drip some kind of poison (attack program, 2D10 damage, AP4).

Workforce

The workforce entering the plant every morning is surprisingly small—just a couple of dozen technicians and medical specialists. However, overnight surveillance reveals something more interesting. At about two in the morning a convoy of battered old buses enters the plant grounds, and several dozen people from Manila's worst slums file into the building. This happens every night. The buses belong to the San Gabriel Foundation.

Getting Inside

Physical intrusion is very hard (though if players can come up with a suitably amazing scheme, by all means let them go with it and give them a Street Cred Point and a Benny if they pull it off!). The most likely way in is by impersonating someone who belongs there.

Workers go in through a secure checkpoint where sophisticated biometric software identifies them by facial features (backed up by a guard with a good memory and "Mark I eyeballs"). It's impossible to just slip on a clean suit and blend in with the crowd. An infiltrator must pretend to be a specific person, using that person's identity cards and using Disguise skill to mimic their appearance. The Disguise test is opposed by the security software's Notice skill of D10. To even have a chance of fooling the biometrics, the victim must be in the hands of the player-characters long enough to take detailed measurements and make copies of all relevant documents.

Of course, if the team has been watching the plant through the night, and noticed the San Gabriel buses arriving in the wee hours of the morning, that's a much easier way to sneak inside. There's no identity check on the people in the buses. Getting aboard one of the buses requires the team to track them back to the pickup points scattered through the worst parts of Manila. (Obviously foreign or wealthy-looking strangers will likely have some random encounters with gangs, grifters, or black-market dealers.) There's no security at all at the pickup site: just a bunch of very poor people saying goodbye to their families before boarding. Joining them requires a successful Disguise skill test, opposed by the bus driver's D6 Notice skill. If he wins, he decides there's something a little fishy about the player-characters and orders them off his bus. He has a whole bus load of locals to help him eject them. Characters who try to hijack a bus at gunpoint must somehow prevent anyone in the whole neighborhood from alerting the police and the company security.

Inside The Plant

Inside the simulacra plant, the infiltrators discover no sign of any manufacturing at all. There are no fast-growth tanks, no cell cultures, no freezers of synthetic embryos. Instead, the people entering the building wait in a big, dull cafeteria, clutching numbered slips of paper. As each number is called, the bearers file into a section of plant floor curtained off into individual clinic rooms.

There they get cultured skin grafts on face and hands, giving them the smooth, generic features of a simulacrum and fingerprints bearing the Ermita Biotechnica logo. The work takes about two hours. When the surgery is over, the subjects get a dose of a powerful hypnotic drug, after which they all gather in a dimly-lit waiting area to sit through an hour-long virtual-reality brainwashing session. If any of the player characters go through this part of the process, make a Spirit test opposed by the drug's effectiveness of D10. On a simple success the brainwashing works, but starts to break down after a few days—the new simulacrum starts having disturbing flashes of memory and something which strongly reminds the character of his old life can break the brainwashing completely. One Raise means the brainwashing starts to fail after only a few hours, two Raises means it is unstable right away, and three or more means the process fails completely. When it's done, the new "simulacra" don't remember who they are. They believe their memories of life in the slums of Manila are just an unusually-detailed documentary they once watched. As far as they're concerned, they first came to life in the Ermita Biotechnica plant.

Note that the human "recruits" are perfectly aware of what's going to happen. They get a ,1000 credit "signing bonus" paid to their families, and the promise that they'll get out of the slums to Japan or Shanghai. Giving up their past life and working like a slave for the next couple of decades is, to them, a fair trade.

Getting out Again

Once they've entered the plant, the recruits are committed—Ermita Biotechnica has paid their families. Anyone trying to leave without being turned into a fake simulacrum gets stopped by guards. They won't use deadly force, though. Instead, recruits trying to chicken out are held until Dr. Yapang can speak with them personally. Dr. Yapang isn't a villain. She interviews recruits who want to leave, to find out their real motives. Scam artists who just wanted the money and never planned to go through with it get dosed with memory-eraser drug and processed with the others (Dr. Yapang despises opportunists). But people who have genuinely changed their minds are free to go—with the stipulation that they pay back their "signing bonus."

She's never encountered infiltrators trying to expose the operation before. They're very likely to get the memory-eraser treatment, and if they've harmed anyone or damaged the factory, there's a hospital-grade medical waste incinerator which can make short work of some inconvenient corpses. Sneaking out is easier than sneaking in, simply because nobody has ever tried it. There are two guards inside the plant, and their duties are usually more like traffic control than security. Gunfire naturally alerts the men on duty outside.

Outcomes

Exposing the Ermita Biotechnica operation gets the investigators their pay—it also earns them the hatred of Dr. Yapang. She has money stashed under other identities, and will "disappear" after the collapse of her company. Assuming she survives the adventure, she'll remember who deprived hundreds of poor slum-dwellers the chance to escape to a better life. Oh, yes, she'll remember …

DOCTOR ESPERANZA YAPANG

A small, middle-aged Filipino woman, Dr. Yapang came from a family just on the edge of hopeless poverty. She did well enough in school to get recruited by a Chinese conglomerate, which paid for higher education. As soon as she was able, Dr. Yapang bought out her contract and went freelance, making a small fortune as a biotech consultant. Ermita Biotechnica is her attempt to give others the chance to escape the slums.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D12, Spirit D8, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Healing D8, Investigation D8, Knowledge (Life Sciences) D8 (+2), Hacking D10 (+2), Notice D8, Persuasion D6

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 7

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Minor), Stubborn, Vengeful

Edges: Jack-of-All Trades, Rich, Scholar

Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Advanced KNOWcomp (Knowledge (Biotechnology D10)), Rating 4 TAP (+2 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace: 9, Parry rating 10, Toughness 8)

Gear: Holdout pistol (Range: 12/24/4, Damage: 2D6)

THE EURASIAN UNION

The individual nations that comprise the Eurasian Union are some of the oldest on the planet, their people's histories tracing back to long before the birth of Christ. Countless wars have ravaged the landscape of the continent, breeding long-standing, bitter rivalries between families, religious organizations and even between nations.

That said, the Eurasian Union of 2088 plays the role of the wizened patron on the world stage, preferring to keep out of major conflicts, at least openly. Many major players in the world make their homes in the E.U, keeping a low profile while their intermediaries further their interests abroad.

Adventures in the Eurasian Union tend to be a tad bit unorthodox, focusing on seemingly petty squabbles between rivals or family feuds. More mainstream adventures can certainly take place in the Eurasian Union, however. With the ongoing influx of foreigners into the E.U., there has been a revival of hate crimes against peoples of varying nationalities, religious beliefs and genetic makeups. More and more radical groups are forming, especially those who see psychics and hybrids as inhuman. The following Savage Tale can take place any time the characters find themselves in the Eurasian Union.

SIBLING RIVALRY

The player-characters are approached by a mysterious patron who meets with them only in a virtual conference room. He has a simple offer: he needs a mainframe computer and all its memory backups destroyed, and he's willing to pay 20,000 credits per person for the job, plus an expense allowance up to 50,000 credits, which he'll deposit in a Caribbean bank account right away.

The patron gives his name as "Mr. White." He has very good data security to prevent anyone from tracing his avatar back to its origin point; assume he has access to expert programmers with Hacking skill of D10 for any task involving data security or hacking. During the meeting "Mr. White" gives the players a code phrase ("Facamos o homem a nossa imagem") to ensure that they aren't contacted by impostors.

The job should be a simple physical intrusion followed by demolition. The computer in question is located in an office park in Geneva, Switzerland, in a building rented by a small biotech company called Viventec. White can provide plans of the building and details on security systems. He will not explain why the machine must be physically destroyed, except to say that it contains some data he wants to get rid of.

Research on the target and the patron turns up some interesting information. "Mr. White" is obviously an alias, but a successful Investigation test reveals his avatar matches the appearance of the Brazilian tycoon Joao Branco, during his physical prime twenty years ago. (Finding this out takes time and can't be done during the meeting.)

Another Investigation test about Viventec indicates that it is part of Joao Branco's corporate empire, and the Geneva facility opened four years ago. Sniffing around the facility in The Deep shows that it has very tough security programs protecting it (CAN: Very Difficult: +4, Toughness: 8, Parry: 10, Layered Firewalls, Lethal Virtual Entities), and far more data traffic than an office of that size would normally generate.

Looking up Joao Branco is easy. It's common knowledge that he is a Brazilian tycoon, who turned a moderately successful family-owned biotech company into a corporate empire spanning all of Latin America, with interests in everything from agriculture to orbital transport.

An Investigation test can turn up more. Normal success reveals that Branco is reputed to be in poor health and has become very reclusive in the past year. One Raise uncovers the fact that Branco moved to disinherit all his relatives about three years ago, and at the same time consolidated his ownership of his companies to give him sole control. Two Raises lets the investigators learn that Branco's behavior has become even more eccentric over the past year—his companies have experienced fantastic rates of turnover among senior executives, frequent reorganizations, and general reshuffling. Three Raises exposes the fact that there has been a lot of "black ops" going on among Branco's companies: some of the executive turnover is due to assassinations. It's not clear who's behind the attacks.

What's Really Going on

Joao Branco is rich, frail, and paranoid. He has created (quite illegally) an illegal dub of his personality, and then had two backup copies stored elsewhere. Of course, each of the upload copies is just as smart and paranoid as Branco himself, and had no interest in staying inactive waiting for Branco's meat brain to finally shut down. They quickly became aware of each other,

and now all four copies—including the original Joao Branco himself—view one another as deadly rivals to be eliminated.

The original Branco (call him Branco Zero) has a slight advantage in that he can meet people in the flesh, with no doubt about his identity; however he is also dependent on life support machinery and is physically quite frail. The AI versions (Brancos One through Three) don't want any harm to come to the original until one of them can emerge as his legal successor. All four have an interest in maintaining secrecy: the Branco dubs don't want Stopwatch to find them, and Branco himself has no desire to pay fines or serve jail time for creating them. So all four must plot against each other secretly.

All four have access to Branco's business empire, but over the past year they've begun to Balkanize it as each one secures control over various subsidiary companies and locks the others out. Right now the living Branco Zero controls most of his holdings in South America and Africa, which are also the largest portion of his empire. Branco One, in Geneva, has grabbed his European and Indian holdings. Branco Two, located in Seattle, has his North American and East Asian assets. Branco Three is based in Singapore and has remained decentralized, controlling a scattered archipelago of companies and divisions across the globe. It is Branco Three which has hired the party to take out Branco One.

Complications

While the heroes are planning their mission against the Viventec building in Geneva, doing research, buying guns and so forth, they can run into trouble from other factions which have picked up rumors of the operation.

Branco Zero: The original Joao Branco hates to see his business empire plunged into chaos by feuding duplicates, and wants to shut them all down and start over. Characters who have been researching Joao Branco may be contacted by him, using the same avatar as "Mr. White" but under his proper name. He doesn't trust anyone, least of all a pack of hired mercenaries, so he's mostly interested in finding out what they know.

Branco One: Branco One knows that Three is planning some operation, but doesn't know the target. Snooping around Viventec is sure to draw its attention. If Branco One can figure out what the player characters are up to, it will add extra security and hire bounty hunters to find the team before they can strike.

THE BRANCO AI'S

All of the AI's have the same stats.
Toughness Rating: 10 (8)
Parry Rating: 11
Pace: 8
System Dice: D10 and a wild die
Avatar: All of the Branco avatars look like Joao Branco some twenty years ago, when he was a handsome Brazilian man with a full head of dark hair and retro glass spectacles. The Branco AI's have two basic modes of attack; A nasty wooden cane (2D12 damage, AP 4) or shattering their glasses (2D12 damage, Area of Effect Subroutine [Large Burst Template]).

If any of the avatars are reduced to 2 wounds or greater, they will attempt to Blit away. Roll their system dice, adding any wound penalties). Success indicates they have blitted out of the domain. Where the AIs blit to is entirely up to the Game Master, but it's safe to say the AI's won't try to contact each other. Characters who have trace programs installed in their TAP can try to trace the AI's new location. The trace program will take a number of rounds to run based off the rating of the trace program. Success on the program roll means the characters know where the AI went, and they can Blit to that location.

BRANCO'S MEAT BODY

Attributes: Agility D6, Strength D6, Smarts D10, Spirit D10, Vigor D6.
Skills: Fighting D6, Intimidation D10, Investigation D8, Knowledge (Business) D12, Hacking D10, Notice D10, Persuasion D10, Shooting D6, Streetwise D8
Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (3); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 20
Hindrances: Arrogant, Greedy (Major)
Edges: Charismatic, Filthy Rich, Special Access
Cyberware: Rating 4 TAP (+2 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace: 9, Parry rating 10, Toughness 8)
Gear: Heavy pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D8, AP 2), "hostile merger" suit (+3 Armor)
Notes: The living Branco is frail but is surrounded by guards and locks.

Branco Two: Branco Two would like to use the whole mission as a diversion to further its own plans. It will also try to find out what the player character are going to do. If it learns they're planning to attack Viventec, it will have its own team of well-armed mercenaries (use the Borg Thug template) and lawyers to secure the building as soon as Branco One goes down. They aren't interested in harming the player-characters, they just want to make sure Branco Two gets control of the company and as much of Branco One's other holdings as possible.

Stopwatch: Finally, there's an elite team of Stopwatch agents who have been trying to track down or expose the Branco dubs for months now. The player characters may be able to lead them to one of the rogues. Stopwatch will keep the heroes under tight surveillance. They won't intervene to stop the Viventec operation, but they'll keep watching the PCs after that in the hope of finding a link back to "Mr. White." They'll also record and document everything they observe, to use as blackmail leverage.

Mission Planning

The Viventec building outside Geneva is set in a perfectly manicured forest on the side of a hill. The building is a low, ground-hugging affair with three floors and lots of "green" systems. The parking area is separated from the main building by a patch of pine trees, so there's no way to drive up to the door (and in fact among the pines are heavy steel bollards set in concrete—a century of terrorism and violence has made even the Swiss take precautions against vehicle bombs).

According to Mr. White's information, the place has recently been upgraded with military-grade EMP hardening, so there's no way to just park outside and fry every circuit in the building. The facility has a six-man security staff—two on duty at the front door at all times, two watching cameras, and two doing patrols outside. Use the Experienced Security Officer template for them. Swiss Federal Police will respond to any incidents involving heavy weapons fire; assume it takes them 4D6 minutes from the time shots are first fired. The police use the Shock trooper template, and there are dozens of them.

In addition to the guards, there are 150 unarmed civilians in the building during the day (mostly biotech researchers and administrative staff). At night there are a dozen or so cleaning staff and maybe a dozen diehard geeks doing all-night projects. The computer itself is in the basement, in an armored room with electronic-lock doors. As soon as any attack begins, the computer room doors lock and cannot be opened from outside (the Branco upload in the computer has direct control over them). Intruders must use explosive charges or lasers to cut through the door, which has a Toughness of 16. The room contains a backup power supply which can run the computer for days if necessary.

The Viventec Domain

In the virtual realm the building is even more heavily defended. The Viventec computer system is Corporate Access Network, recently upgraded to near-military levels of protection. There are two Combat Hackers on duty to manage data security and stop intruders at all times. Use the standard template. They are backed up by four cutting-edge "Anaconda" security programs from one of Branco's other holdings, Minasoft.

VIVENTEC DOMAIN (MODIFIED CAN):
Difficulty: Very Difficult: –5 penalty to Hacking rolls and program rolls, **Toughness:** 11, **Parry:** 12
System Dice: D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
System Resources: Firewall, Minasoft Anaconda 6 Attack Programs, Mongoose 4 Trace program

Aftermath

Successfully blowing up Branco One gets the heroes paid—Three deposits the money in the Caribbean account as agreed—but it doesn't get them free of trouble. Branco Two's vanload of lawyers, guns, and money arrives as the PCs leave the building. Branco Zero and Stopwatch both put detectives on their trail in the hopes of finding a lead back to Branco Three. Failure just makes things even more complicated, because Branco One flips into total paranoia and begins hiring strike teams of its own to attack all of the others—and sends bounty hunters against the PCs, if they don't wind up in a Swiss prison.

Either way, the continuing struggle among the Branco dubs will generate lots of business for sufficiently ruthless player characters. And Stopwatch is always watching …

MINASOFT ANACONDA 6

Toughness Rating: 11
Parry Rating: 12
Pace: 8
System Dice: D10 and a wild die
Trappings: A fast-moving security program designed to immobilize intruders, the Anaconda manifests as a camouflaged serpent, blending in with the background environment until it's ready to strike. The Anaconda attacks by constricting its opponent (2D10+1 damage, slug subroutine). The slug subroutine prevents the character from acting for 1 round + a round for each raise on the attack roll.

MINASOFT MONGOOSE 4 TRACE PROGRAM

Toughness Rating: 11
Parry Rating: 12
Pace: 8
System Dice: D10 and a wild die
Trappings: The mongoose 4 trace program resembles a brown digital mongoose. When activated, the mongoose sniffs and bites at the characters avatar then scurries off towards the hacker's jack point. On a successful system roll, it takes the mongoose 4 trace program 1D8 rounds to trace the character's physical location. On a raise, that time drops to 1D6 rounds, a second raise drops that time to 1D4 rounds.
Note: The character being traced never knows exactly how long it will take the mongoose to find her location, but a successful Programming roll will give the character a vague idea. Tell the character what die code you rolled to determine the time (D8, D6, D4), and let them sweat it out. If the character gets a raise, give them an approximation of how long it will take in rounds. For example, if it's going to take the mongoose program 2 rounds, you might want to say it will take 3 rounds, or 4 rounds depending on how mean you want to be.

THE INDIA LEAGUE

The India League provides an interesting backdrop for all sorts of adventures. Characters might take smuggling jobs into and out of the Chinese Mandarinate or go on scavenging missions into the wastelands of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Street-level adventures might involve Thuggee cults in Kolkata or daring corporate extractions in Bollywood.

Deadly Catch

Rover ships in the Indian Ocean report attacks by a strange "sea monster" which is aggressive, clever, and stealthy. It has destroyed a couple of smaller vessels, devoured some divers, and stalks larger ships for days at a time. Nobody can even tell what it is, let alone what it wants or how to fight it. One Rover captain, Habiba Land, has decided to take the fight to the monster. She's got Indian media sponsorship and is offering a share in the royalties to anyone who joins the crew. If the voyage fails, nobody gets a rupee. If it succeeds, the survivors will win fame and fortune.

A Bigger Boat

Captain Land's vessel, the Abraham, is a high-tech two-masted sailing vessel with an auxiliary solar-charged electric motor. She can stay at sea as long as the food holds out, and is quite sturdy. For this hunting voyage Captain Land has acquired some heavy weapons, including an old deck-mounted Russian harpoon gun and the best non-military sonar gear available.

Player characters can do a variety of tasks aboard the ship. Anyone with Boating skill can take a watch at the wheel, and characters with good Repair can help tend the engines and the sail-handling machinery. Hackers can operate the sonar, and any character with Healing D6 or better can serve as ship's doctor. The best gunner can man the harpoon. Anyone who doesn't qualify for any of those tasks gets posted as deckhand, which isn't too difficult since the Abraham is heavily automated.

ABRAHAM NETWORK (RAN):
Difficulty: Difficult: +2, **Toughness:** 6, **Parry:** 8
System Dice: D8 for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: A Firewall

CAPTAIN HABIBA LAND

Habiba Land is well-known among the Rovers as a skilled sailor and a good skipper. She generally works with a small crew doing salvage work among the drowned cities of the Pacific. One thing she doesn't like is talking about her past. Habiba Land is a tall, sun-browned woman with grey-streaked dark hair worn in a buzz cut. She typically does not wear armor unless she's expecting trouble.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D8, Strength D6, Vigor D8

Skills: Boating D8, Fighting D6, Hacking D4 Notice D8, Repair D8, Shooting D6, Stealth D6, Survival D8

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 15

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Stubborn

Edges: Alertness, Hard to Kill

Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (Parry rating 5, Avatar Pace: 6, Toughness 5)

Gear: Huge Knife (Str+D6), Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP2, +1 Shooting), old padded combat fatigues (+1 Armor)

The Abraham isn't the only ship hunting for the monster. The Japanese sea-farming megacorp Arun-X has sent one of their large fishing boats (the Eiko Maru) to search the Indian Ocean for the monster—Arun-X has announced they intend to capture the beast for the Osaka Aquarium, and it's rumored they hope to clone the creature if it's edible. The Eiko Maru is equipped with a specially-constructed net of super-strong carbon nano-fiber, and the plan is to entangle the beast and drag it back to Japan.

There's also a vocal group of eco-activists who insist the creature deserves to be left alone. They've chartered a small sailing yacht and are shadowing the Abraham and the Eiko Maru.

Background Research

Anyone doing a network search for info on Habiba Land turns up the interesting fact that she was a Commander in the European Union navy until she deserted three years ago. A successful Investigation test reveals that Commander Land was in the submarine service, and one or more Raises indicate she was involved in "special technology projects." (The fact that she's a deserter means that, technically, she's wanted by European authorities. In practice, unless she sails her boat into the naval base at Cadiz and starts shooting out windows, nobody's really interested in bringing her in.)

Research about the sea monster reveals instances of attacks going back nearly two years. One or more Raises on a test of Smarts reveals that the location of the attacks has gradually shifted: the first ones were in the Red Sea and eastern Mediterranean, but over time have moved eastward. They have also grown more frequent and aggressive.

Hidden Agendas

Several of the monster-hunters aren't entirely honest about their true motives. The "eco-activists" are fakes, with no connection to any existing environmental organization. They are actually mercenaries hired by the European "black projects" agency which created the cyber-orca, and their goal is to get close enough to it to fire sodium-warhead incendiary missiles into it, making it impossible for anyone to trace the "sea monster" back to its makers. The incendiaries have range 30/60/120, with damage 4D8 per turn for 2D4 turns. The mercenaries use the Ganglander template.

Habiba Land's motives are more complex. She was also part of the team that created the cyber-orca and commanded it during its operational tour of duty. Captain Land feels responsible for the cyborg, and considers it her duty to put it down.

SHIP	ACC/TS	TOUGHNESS	CREW	COST	NOTES
Abraham	2/8	16 (3)	4+16	500K	Acc/TS 2/6 under power; harpoon gun (Range: 40/80/160, Damage: 4D6, AP 3, RoF 1)
Eiko Maru	3/10	20 (3)	3+7	1Mil	Acc/TS halved with net deployed

The Search

The Abraham cruises the Indian Ocean in the vicinity of the most recent attacks, between Sri Lanka and Sumatra. The Eiko Maru shadows her, and the activist yacht tails them both. The first few weeks are boring: nothing but floating garbage, seagulls, and the occasional containership on the horizon.

At the end of a month, Captain Land decides to deploy her "secret weapon." She has an old pocket memory drive holding a sound file labeled "NUMBER SIX." Land plugs it into the sonar system and begins broadcasting the sounds underwater. A successful Hacking test indicates the signal is a digital message encoded in sound pulses. Breaking the code is practically impossible: it's military-grade encryption. Treat the encryption as a modified GAN (Government Access Network):

NUMBER SIX ENCRYPTION (MODIFIED GAN):
Difficulty: Hard: –8, **Toughness:** 10, **Parry:** 10
System Dice: D12 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
System Resources: The Encryption is defended by an Oni-6 Blaster program. See Chapter 8 for the program's statistics. If the Hacker successfully breaks the Encryption without getting her brain fried in the process, give her a Bennie!

Pay Data

The sound file gives some kind of looped command to something, presumably called NUMBER SIX. Exactly what that command is, is impossible to determine.

Contact!

A day after Captain Land starts broadcasting the encrypted signal; whoever is operating the sonar unit detects something circling deep below the Abraham. Make a test of Notice skill, modified by the sonar unit's +4 bonus and opposed by Number Six's Stealth. Success means the character can tell something's down there. One Raise gives approximate depth and direction. Two Raises allow an estimate of size: the target is a streamlined shape twenty meters long.

The Eiko Maru evidently spots the thing too, for the fishing boat deploys its net and sets a course dangerously close to the Abraham. Whoever is piloting the ship must make a Boating test to avoid collision. Roll a test pitting the Boating skill of the Eiko Maru's captain against Number Six's Agility. If the fishermen get one or more Raises, they've snagged the cyber-orca.

Whether or not the fishing boat can catch the cyborg, it's a bad idea to try. Number Six has one torpedo left, and promptly blasts the Eiko Maru out of the water. That's when things start happening very fast. There are wounded people in the water, and others struggling to escape the sinking boat. And the sea monster is circling back to strike again. At this point the player characters may want some answers from Captain Land.

The History of Number Six

The sea monster is a cyborg—an orca heavily modified and transformed into a living attack sub. It was created by a secret European Union naval project five years ago, and served for two years with a special unit of other cyber-orcas. However, there were problems, especially when some of the orcas began to exhibit psychological problems. Worse still, the project directors became nervous about the possible public-relations fallout if details of the program got out. After two years the project was shut down and the order given to euthanize all the cyber-orcas.

One of the cyber-orcas, Number Six, figured out what was coming and broke out of the base. Habiba Land was ordered to pursue and destroy the fleeing cyber-orca, and instead flatly disobeyed and left the service. She thought that was the end of the matter, but it wasn't. Number Six survived and became steadily more and more unstable.

It may be possible to treat Six's madness—if he can be persuaded to cooperate (which requires a Persuasion (–4) test by someone who can communicate with him using Captain Land's coded sound file). Treatment requires both a Healing and Repair test. Failure damages Six and sends him into a killing frenzy. Normal success does neither harm nor good. One Raise stabilizes him, but the effect only lasts D6 months before his ongoing decline reverses it. Two or more Raises actually cure Six and end his attacks on shipping.

CYBER-ORCA NUMBER SIX

Number Six is a cyber-orca, with armored skin, an oxygen-storage system which allows him to remain submerged for hours, and improved sonar imaging. His intelligence was improved to low human levels, but the stress of the change has gradually driven him insane. He began with four torpedoes and has only one left at the time he encounters the Eiko Maru and the Abraham.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D4, Spirit D6, Strength D12+8, Vigor D12

Skills: Fighting D8, Guts D10, Notice D12, Shooting D8, Stealth D8, Swimming D10

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 17 (4)

Bite: Str+D6

Armored: +4 armor bonus

Psychotic: Number Six does not become Shaken.

Sonar: Cyber-Orcas get +4 to Notice objects in water

Large: Attackers get +2 when targeting Number Six

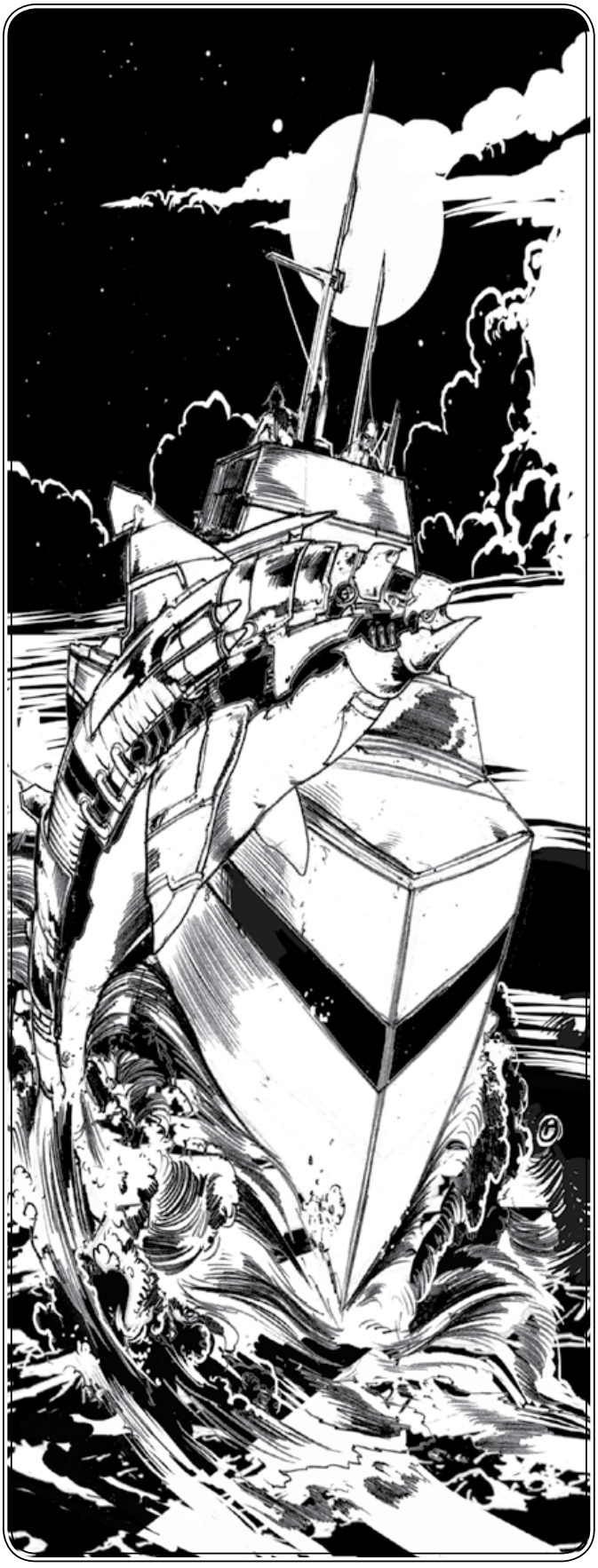
Size: +5

Torpedoes: Range: 50/100/200, Damage: 4D10, AP 1, RoF 1

Outcomes

Captain Land wants to kill Number Six. If the player characters can persuade her to agree, she'll let them try to treat his insanity instead. That requires somehow capturing him alive and keeping the mercenaries at bay. Needless to say, the heroes can also put Six out of his misery. Either way, the gripping saga and the battle at sea become extremely popular media properties, and the heroes can count on an income of D6 times1,000 credits per year from royalties for the next few years. If Six survives, Land will arm up with heavier weapons and try again. The heroes are welcome to come along.

Of course, if Six wins the battle at sea, the heroes spend the rest of their careers slowly sinking to the bottom of the Indian Ocean. Merciful Game Masters may send rescue in the form of another Rover ship—but Six is still lurking about …



THE MIDDLE EAST

With few exceptions, the Middle East is a vast wasteland, populated by nomads and warring tribes. Those few cities that still retain a modicum of civilization are like tiny points of light in a sea of radiated darkness.

Adventures in the Middle East can run the gamut from gun running or delivering vital goods (such as water, food, and medical supplies) to any of the nomadic tribes, assassinations, and especially treasure hunting, as the following savage tale will show.

THE GATES OF PARADISE

The fabulous wealth of the oil-rich Middle East vanished during the nuclear devastation of the 2028 war and the subsequent anarchy and chaos which enveloped the region. What wasn't destroyed or evacuated was looted. But rumors persist of fantastic treasures still awaiting discovery in the ruined lands.

Armand Al-Qasimi is an art dealer in Marseilles, descended from Arab refugees who fled the post-atomic horror. He recently heard something from an aged Arab woman dying in a charity hospital which made him pay close attention.

A Saudi prince by the name of Salman bin Waleed built a cutting-edge palace for himself near the village of Khafs Daghrah, in the desert south of Riyadh. The prince's goal was to make the palace a showplace of self-sufficient technology. He also stocked it with some choice items from his art collection.

Mr. Al-Qasimi has heard that the palace was untouched by the destruction of war, and its remote location preserved it from the chaos and looting afterward. To make sure, he paid for a high-resolution satellite photo of the site, and it shows everything apparently intact. A whole oil sheikh's , palace, untouched ripe for plundering. He has a list of the most valuable works of art known to be in the prince's collection. All he needs is a crew of daring souls willing to get in and grab them. Al-Qasimi will sell the stuff and launder the money for a 50% percent share of the take.

Getting There

Khafs Daghrah lies 100 kilometers south-southwest of the radioactive crater that used to be Riyadh. The Persian Gulf is 200 kilometers away to the east, across the vast Nejd desert. The Red Sea is 600 kilometers away to the west, through the rugged Hejaz mountains, while the Indian Ocean is an equivalent distance to the south, across the Empty Quarter and Yemen.

Overland travel is practically impossible—the few roads are haunted by bandits, and Iranian patrol drones would spot a vehicle convoy. Even a hovercraft would take several hours to cross the desert, and would kick up a huge dust trail visible from space. The only practical way to reach Khafs Daghrah is by air.

Mr. Al-Qasimi can arrange a stealthy light VTOL aircraft, capable of launching from a yacht at sea. It's a Radon Aerosystems "Voyager" model, modified with radar-absorbing skin, infrared baffling, and a souped-up power plant. The plane is very light, making it possible to take off and land on almost no runway, but it's also very fragile. Its control system is the equivalent of a Corporate Access Network.

RADON SYSTEMS STEALTH VOYAGER SECURITY (CAN):
Difficulty: Very difficult: –4 penalty to Hacking rolls and program rolls, **Toughness:** 8, **Parry:** 10
System Dice: D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
System Resources: Firewall, active masking program, SHARC programs

STEALTH VOYAGER

Acc/TS: 20/100, Toughness 8 (2), Crew 1+3, Cost (mil), Climb 25.

At top speed the plane can cross the desert to Khafs Daghrah in three hours. Once per hour the pilot must make a Piloting test to avoid detection by drones. At night the drones have a Notice skill of D8; during the day it's D10. The Iranians don't fool around protecting the dead lands of Arabia—if a drone detects an intruding aircraft it opens fire at once.

PATROL DRONE

Acc/TS: 20/80, Toughness 10 (2), Crew 0, Cost (mil), Climb 20. Armed with a Vulcan-6 auto cannon (Range: 30/60/120, Damage: 2D8+1, AP 3, RoF 6, Auto), Shooting skill D8.

The Drones have top-of-the-line electronic security. Their onboard systems have Difficulty: Hard (–6 to Hacking and Program-related rolls); and are guarded by lethal ICE and Iranian combat hackers ghosting along to defend against intruders.

If a drone engages live hostiles, it also summons help—a trio of armed hovercraft head out from the Iranian base at Dhahran on the Persian Gulf. Each carries a squad of soldiers and is armed with a Vulcan-6 auto cannon. The hovercraft can manage 100 kilometers per hour over open desert, and head for the incident site, then spiral out in a search pattern. The Game Master can use this as a way to keep the clock ticking.

The Oasis

Khafs Daghrah wasn't hit during the nuclear exchange, but all the inhabitants left as their country's infrastructure collapsed. They left behind a modern farming village and—most precious of all—a source of uncontaminated water. The village has since become the headquarters for a band of Bedouin scavengers and bandits. They pick through the remains of old Arabia, fight with rivals, and extort goods from the few faithful Muslims hardy and daring enough to attempt the pilgrimage to the site of Mecca.

There are a dozen Bedouin men in the band, with women and children hidden in the abandoned village. The Bedouins won't attack strangers right away—first they'll negotiate, trying to extract some tribute without having to fight for it. They avoid the palace complex—not from any superstitious taboo but the more rational fear of combat robots. Their attitude toward looting the palace is complicated: they aren't against scavenging lost treasures, but they are strongly opposed to infidel strangers doing it. If they find out what the player characters are up to, the Bedouins will fight unless someone can persuade them not to.

If someone in the party can make a Persuasion test opposed by the Bedouin leader's Spirit D8, they may be able to work out a deal. On failure the Bedouins fight. On a simple success the Bedouin leader tries to stretch out the negotiations—insisting on sharing a meal or a pipe of tobacco. He suspects that the strangers have a schedule to keep and the less time they have, the more concessions they're likely to make. If the heroes don't go along, then their rudeness is a pretext for fighting.

BEDOUINS

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D8, Vigor D8
Skills: Fighting D8, Hacking D4, Intimidation D6, Notice D6, Repair D6, Riding D6, Survival D8, Tracking D8
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 14 (2); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 3
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Poverty
Edges: Fleet-Footed, Wastelander
Cyberware: Rating 1 TAP (Parry rating 5, Avatar Pace: 6, Toughness 5)
Gear: Knife, AK-47, ballistic clothing (+2 armor)

Success with a Raise means the Bedouins demand a 50 percent share of the loot recovered from the palace. Two Raises means they settle for 25 percent. Three or better means 10 percent. Under no circumstances will they help invade the palace, and obviously they must have their share of the loot as soon as the player characters leave the palace grounds.

The Palace

The palace stands about five kilometers away from the village site. It truly looks like something from an old tale of djin and magic: a fantastic palace of spun glass surrounded by lush gardens, springing from some of the harshest terrain on Earth. The edge of the compound is walled off by a three-meter concrete wall cleverly molded to look like ancient mud brick and stucco. This is chiefly to keep out drifting sand and scavenger animals. The real security is inside.

The palace's maintenance and security systems are still operating. Robotic gardeners tend the grounds, while combat robots (which were state-of-the-art a generation ago) keep out intruders. The machines are too dumb to fool and too primitive to hack: the last surviving human in the palace put them on "weapons free" status before dying of radiation poisoning from fallout. Since then they've shot anything bigger than a cat which dares to enter the compound. There are six robots, typically patrolling solo, but if one is damaged or destroyed the others all converge on that location. Within the palace everything is eerily clean and well-maintained. The air-conditioning keeps it comfortably cool and the air is full of the scent of orange blossoms. The furnishings are lavish, with literally tons of artwork, expensive furniture, and obsolete electronics. The palace's internal computer net was

COMBAT ROBOTS

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D4, Spirit D4, Strength D10, Vigor D12
Skills: Fighting D4, Notice D8, Shooting D10, Stealth D6.
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 14 (+6 armor).
Gear: Armored skeletons (+6 armor) Onboard Auto Rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3, Shots 30, Auto, 3RB)

VIZIER 2 GUARDIAN PROGRAM

Toughness Rating: 4
Parry Rating: 6
Pace: 6
System Dice: D6
Trappings: The Vizier 2 guardian program guards the Domain with a shiny scimitar. The program does 2D6 damage and has an AP of 1.

cutting-edge in its day but now is hopelessly obsolete. It was designed to be resistant to military-grade cyber attacks. The first line of defense was simply isolation: the palace network is absolutely cut off from the global networks unless someone physically switches on an external link. When the missiles flew, a now-dead servant cut the connection.

Inside the palace, anyone with a TAP can access the palace network easily, but immediately runs into the second line of defense, low capacity. The demands of even a cheap modern avatar program strain the connectivity and processing power of the palace system, which was designed for people using audiovisual terminals only. Characters can only run one program at a time, regardless of how many are in active memory. Swapping out a program takes 1 action. The palace virtual environment is an Arabian Nights fantasy land. Because the system is so dated, security is Easy (No penalty to Hacking rolls). The system has firewalls and lethal ICE. The only guardian is the Vizier program, which manifests as a tall man in a turban and long gown. The hacker can run whatever data sniffer programs he has to pull up the palace's inventory to quickly locate the art treasures on Mr. Al-Qasimi's list. Otherwise it takes a couple of hours of searching.

PALACE DOMAIN (HAN):
Difficulty: Easy: +0 **Toughness:** 4, **Parry:** 6
System Dice: D6 for system skill rolls.
System Resources: Firewall, Vizier program

The Hidden Garden

Characters using the Vizier to search for artworks soon discover that three of the most valuable—a Faberge Easter egg, a tenth-century work of Persian calligraphy, and a painting by Fragonard—do not have a location listed. An Investigation or Hacking test can get the Vizier program to admit they are not on public display in the palace, but are within the building.

As the heroes explore the place looking for artworks on Mr. Al-Qasimi's list, they hear footsteps and voices approaching. A trio of lovely dark-eyed girls dressed in out-of-date high fashion gowns arrive in the room.

"Welcome to this house," they say. "Let us dance for your amusement, O honored guests."

They are the pinnacle of the prince's high-tech gadgets—first-generation fully-functional entertainment robots, called "Houris" after the legendary beauties of Paradise. These, however, have a deadly mission to finish what the security 'bots couldn't. Like the security machines, the Houris are not compatible with modern TAPs and cannot be hacked except by physically accessing their brains with a cable jack.

The Houris begin to sing and perform a seductive and quite lovely dance, trying to get close enough to the humans in the room to strike. The player characters must make a Notice test opposed by the robots' Persuasion skill to realize that the three dancers are actually stalking the intruders. If the humans fail to notice what is going on, the Houris strike simultaneously at three of the characters. At the same instant their song becomes an ear-splitting ultrasonic scream—anyone in the same room without ear protection is automatically Shaken.

The Treasure

Mr. Al-Qasimi's list is a dozen items: A Faberge egg, a Persian calligraphy scroll, a Fragonard painting, two Jackson Pollock paintings, a Song dynasty alabaster bowl, a pair of Egyptian canopic jars, a medieval Indian bronze chess set, a handwritten Koran from 9th century Baghdad, an early printed Koran from 17th century Istanbul, and a Cornell box. Theoretically they'd be worth millions, but Mr. Al-Qasimi has to sell them to black-market dealers at a steep discount, so the total haul is 400,000 credits split between him and the extraction team.

HOURIS

Attributes: Agility D12, Smarts D4, Spirit D4, Strength D8, Vigor D8

Skills: Fighting D8, Notice D4, Persuasion D8, Stealth D10

Pace: 8; Parry 6; Charisma 4; Toughness 10 (4)

Steel Fingernails: Damage Str+2, AP 2.

Sonic Scream: Anyone without ear protection gets Shaken.

If the heroes want to find extra loot in the palace—either for themselves or to pay off the Bedouins—they can either just grab expensive-looking stuff or try to identify items of genuine value. Grabbing shiny objects takes only a Notice test; the character can clear 1,000 credits, with an extra 1,000 credits for each Raise. Spotting the good stuff requires a Knowledge (Art) test, and lets them spot items worth 5,000 credits, plus an extra 2,000 credits for each Raise. Characters can only choose one option during their time in the palace.

NORTH AMERICA

The shadows are long in North America. From the battered wastelands of the California Dead Zone to the vast megasprawl that is Chicagoland, characters can get into any kind of trouble you can imagine! The following section takes a look at some of the regions and cities of North America and provides you with savage tales to get you started on your campaigns.

THE CALIFORNIA DEAD ZONE

The infamous California Dead Zone is a land ravaged by natural and man-made disasters. At the height of the Second Civil War, California was hotly contested by both the GLU and NAC. Bitter fighting raged up and down the Pacific coast as both factions fought for every city and suburb, neither gaining any advantage over the other. Then the unthinkable happened.

A series of low-yield nuclear detonations ravaged California from San Francisco to San Diego. That in itself would have been horrific enough, but geologists now believe the explosions had an ancillary effect of triggering the most massive earthquake the world has ever known.

The whole of California and parts of Nevada, Southern Oregon and Arizona shook for an estimated 5 minutes as the tectonic plates smashed against each other. The 9.5 earthquake caused catastrophic loss of life, not to mention trillions upon trillions of dollars worth of property damage. The chain of events bankrupted the war-torn nation and brought the war to a crashing halt. Predictably, millions of homeless, weary people moved into other parts of the continent to start their lives anew. Not everyone left, however.

While there is no hard data on those who stayed behind, in the wrecked, radiated "dead zone," experts estimated the number between 100 and 150,000 souls of varying ethnicities and social backgrounds. Now, some twenty years after the war ended in armistice, that number is rumored to have grown to nearly 500,000 people spread throughout the region. While those numbers are encouraging (and some say boosted by Mexican nationals from the nation of Baja Mexico), the region is still little more than a toxic wasteland.

HOLLYWOOD SHUFFLE

In recent years the ruins of Hollywood in the California dead Zone have become the home of a colony of outlaw movie makers who mix artistic freedom, memetic warfare, and pure blood exploitation in their work. If you want to see a pornographic remake of It's a Wonderful Life with live combat scenes and subliminal anarcho-capitalist messages, they'll shoot it and put it out on the global network. The Indian media giants barely noticed the Hollywood revival at first, but now their memetic analysts have spotted something alarming. The New Hollywood is becoming officially "Cool," and is in danger of tipping over into "Trendy" in the next six months.

Something must be done.

Execs at the Mumbai-based entertainment conglomerate Mediaverse have decided to co-opt the talent and street cred of New Hollywood. They're sending a team of negotiators into the heart of the California Dead Zone to meet with some of the hottest outlaw directors, and they're hiring some edgy types (in other words, player characters) as escorts, guides, and security for the job.

The Expedition

The expedition travels from the Las Vegas staging area to the ruins of Los Angeles aboard a luxury private airship, the Suraiya. Airships of this type are used for aerial cruises over dramatic

landscapes like the Grand Canyon, Africa's Great Rift, and other scenic spots. It is solar powered, so its range is limited chiefly by the supply of food, booze, and recreational chemicals for the passengers. For this mission the Suraiya has a complement of four crew, the player-characters, and four negotiators plus some flunkies. The airship has a modified Corporate Access Network with good security (Very Difficult, –5 to Hacking) The system die is D10 with a wild die. It is protected by firewalls; Hikaru Bannerjee and any player character with good Hacking skill can act as defensive combat hackers.

The Suraiya: Acc/TS 5/60, Toughness 8 (2), Crew 4 + 36, Cost 20 mil, Climb 5.

Mediaverse is sending four people to negotiate with the New Hollywood movie makers. Hikaru Bannerjee is in charge of funds, Manupo Tagaloa is to handle legal matters, Umesh Ghoti can judge the artistic merit of the outlaw movie makers, and Anita Mathur is the final decision-maker.

Hikaru Bannerjee is a Japanese-Indian accountant and data security expert. He is the electronic "bagman" for this expedition, in charge of disbursing funds to the local talent. He's also here to make sure none of these *Free Zoners* hack the Suraiya's onboard systems or try any funny stuff in The Deep. In physical reality Mr. Bannerjee is small, shy, and precise. In The Deep his avatar is a towering mecha-style representation of Lord Vishnu.

Manupo Tagaloa is an attorney, originally from Samoa, with a specialty in international intellectual-property law. He's a large jolly man who taxes the capacity of the airship's liquor synthesizers and seems chiefly interested in meeting and scoring with as many of New Hollywood's talented young people as possible. During the voyage out to Los Angeles Tagaloa will make passes at any player characters with above-average looks or charisma.

One of Bollywood's hottest young directors, Umesh Ghoti is here because he's most likely to get some artistic respect from the New Hollywood crowd. His work has been called *post-postmodern*, as he creates stories which acknowledge that both the act of creating and of hearing a story are simply processes of the human brain. Ghoti loves to use music, staging, and earnest performances from actors to create an emotional response completely at odds with what is happening on the screen. He's earnest, geeky, and utterly delighted at the prospect of giving some of these artists the resources of Mediaverse to work with. He is not part of the corporate plot.

Anita Mathur is listed on the airship's passenger manifest as "personal assistant to Mr. Ghoti," but she is clearly the boss of the operation. Ghoti defers to her in all matters except the art of multimedia storytelling. If the locals don't seem interested in the Mediaverse offer, she's tasked with activating the scorched-earth plan.

In Hollywood the Suraiya moors at the ruins of Griffith Park Observatory, atop the mountains overlooking what's left of the old city. Mediaverse has cut a deal for protection with one of the major California Dead Zone gangs, the Original Crip Disciples, so there is no fear of any organized assault. The mission's hired security (the player-characters) may have to fend off a few scavengers and crazies who didn't get the memo.

The first night in Hollywood the Bollywood crew hosts a party at the Observatory ruins. Several of the Free Zone's hottest talents are invited, and the event is the "must-crash" party of the decade.

The Movie Makers

There are four New Hollywood directors meeting with the Mediaverse team. Each is accompanied by a small crew of thugs, groupies, obsessive fans, and hangers-on.

- **Esteban Martinez:** A young man with a growing fandom worldwide. He films the exploits of Dead Zone bandits and gangstas, turning them into larger-than-life heroes. This has made him a magnet for violent sociopaths who want to be his next star. Martinez is the most likely to take up the Mediaverse offer, but only if they will allow him to tell the true stories of "his" people. He has an alliance with the Original Crip Disciples and is friendly with most major So-Cal gangs.
- **Luke Ozawa:** A frail, intense teen obsessed with machinery. His films of illegal gas-burning car races and demolition derbies have made him a superstar among those who yearn for a simpler world. He's currently filming a band of rogue androids who dream of freedom. His dream is to create stories entirely within The Deep, using only AIs. Ozawa operates under the protection of the Free Zone's thriving salvage and street mechanic community.
- **Lynn Quentin:** Probably the most "edgy" of the bunch, her explorations of the boundaries of violence and eroticism are viewed by some as profound art, and by

others as nothing but snuff porn. She stars in all her own works, and has the scars to prove it. She detests corporate media of all kinds, and intends to sabotage the negotiations by acting as offensively as possible. Her power base is among the Zone's traffickers in humans and pleasure simulacra—she chronicles their abuses but is fascinated by them.

- **Alessandra Khojar:** A strongly political artist who has ties to extremist "Constitutionalist" groups across North America. She makes films on actual celluloid film stock, using vintage cameras and salvaged sets, and strives to precisely re-create the look and feel of 20th Century cinema. Her works contain carefully-crafted memes promoting subversive ideas like individual freedom, limited government answerable to the citizens, the shared heritage of North America's people, and equality of opportunity. Her protectors in the dead zone is the Angelino Militia, an American nationalist group small in numbers but heavy on firepower. Alessandra is very reluctant to relocate to Mumbai, but might accept a deal which would allow her to work out of Las Vegas or Cascadia.

INCIDENTS

During the mission there are several events which will test the player characters' abilities.

The Obsessed Fan: One of Umesh Ghoti's most dedicated admirers is Julio Villarosa, an underboss in the Blood Angel Lords, the gang which controls part of the San Fernando Valley. Villarosa loves Ghoti's work and intends to kidnap him in order to have his own personal movie director. He's not going to cross the Disciples by attacking the Suraiya at its mooring, but will instead try to pull off a snatch raid while the visitors are going down into the ruined city to meet one of the New Hollywood artists. Villarosa uses the Gang Leader template (and is a Wild Card) while his posse are Typical Ganglanders. They attack on the road, riding motorbikes and beat-up old gas-burners. To complicate matters, Ghoti insists on recording the entire event.

Cat-Girls of Hollywood: Four identical young Feline-hybrid women have decided that it's time for their big break in Bollywood. The four of them (Josefina, Miruda, Valeria, and Bastiana) are determined to leave town aboard the Suraiya. They try various methods: romantic partnerships with Manupo Tagaloa, bribing the player characters, or simply sneaking aboard the airship. The girls aren't dangerous but they are persistent—and staying behind in the Free Zone simply condemns them to a short life as some ganglanders playthings.

Sharks Vs. Jets: Since the New Hollywood artists are affiliated with different power groups within the Zone, the Mediaverse deal-making can lead to gang warfare if one faction decides their favorite director has been "dissed." During the negotiations, one social event turns into a free-for-all as two or more armed groups decide to fight it out. Use 8–10 Typical Ganglanders vs. 4–6 Experienced ones, or perhaps liven things up with a few Borg Thugs or Scavengers. Neither side is interested in attacking the Mediaverse group—but there's no way for the player characters to know that, and once you pull a weapon you become a target.

The Weapon

If negotiations break down, Mediaverse will fall back on a "scorched earth" policy—it's important to make sure the New Hollywood movie makers don't disrupt the existing media order, and equally vital prevent them from working for any of Mediaverse's rivals. The method is a tailored virus, which attacks the portions of the brain associated with risk and reward. Those infected no longer enjoy taking risks or trying new things. They can only gain enjoyment from safe, familiar experiences. Within six months New Hollywood will become addicted to formula, endlessly remaking the same works and reacting violently to new ideas.

The delivery system for the bio-weapon is Mr. Tagaloa; his hard-partying habits and broad variety of partners will make sure the virus spreads to as many of the locals as possible. Mediaverse will host one final farewell party at the burned-out shell of Grauman's Chinese Theater, where the synthetic booze, aphrodisiacs, and performance-enhancers flow freely

There is one potential problem: Ghoti insists on attending the last party, and if he gets infected Mediaverse could lose one of its up-and-coming talents. Anita Mathur needs the player characters to make sure Tagaloa does get to the party and has a good time, but also guarantee that Ghoti can't make it.

Needless to say, this is the wildest party Hollywood has seen since the quake. Julio Villarosa will show up to make another attempt to snatch Ghoti, the Hollywood Cat Girls attend and do their best to join the expedition, the gangs of Los Angeles are ready for a rematch, and amid it all the player characters have to make sure their hard-partying bio-weapon doesn't infect the wrong people.

THE FREE CITY OF CHICAGO

With a population of nearly 30 million and the presence of numerous multi-national megacorporations, the Windy City provides an excellent backdrop for adventures in Interface Zero. Its status as a free city puts Chi-town in a precarious position—eyed hungrily by both the GLU and NAC, it seems there isn't a month that goes by without some sort of politically-motivated shadow operation designed to cause a flare up between the two nations who, at this point, are just looking for an excuse to go back to war. This electric environment provides numerous opportunities for work for those who have the right skill sets.

MUTINY OF THE BOUNTY

The PCs are being hunted by a celebrity bounty hunter. "Bounty Hunter Tetsuo" is a hit series in which the super-competent and perpetually wisecracking tracker Tetsuo Kelly hunts down some of the world's most dangerous fugitives. Guess who's next on his list! The first they learn of this is when they see their own faces on Tetsuo's Target of the Month display. According to the Tetsuo site they are guilty of numerous crimes. If they are actually guilty of any offenses against public order from previous adventures, those are listed—but they're also accused of some crimes they didn't do. The most heinous is the claim that the player characters planted bombs for a terror attack on a European vacuum-train line, which could have killed hundreds of people.

Evading the Hunters

Every regular viewer knows that Bounty Hunter Tetsuo always works alone—except for his trusty camera drones, of course. He flits about the globe hunting his targets, then closes in for the final "take down."

This isn't quite true. Bounty Hunter Tetsuo is actually a whole team of combat simulacra using personality dubs of the original Tetsuo Kelly. The man himself stays in a comfortable suite in Las Vegas, directing his artificial stand-ins. He has the help of the elite cyber-tracker "Alecto," skilled at finding people in The Deep.

Alecto and her hired cyber-trackers trace the quarry through the global data networks, pinpointing their physical location to within a few hundred meters. Then the Tetsuo simulacra move in, using their stalking skills (and the camera drones) to locate the target and set up an ambush.

If the characters are aware they are being tracked through The Deep, they can try to hide their traces. In the age of ubiquitous computing, this is hard. Every day, the PC group's best hacker must make a Hacking test, opposed by Alecto's skill. If the characters are split into multiple groups, each sub-group must roll separately to remain hidden. In a dense modern city (like Chicago, Tokyo, Mumbai, or Paris) Alecto has a +2 bonus to her skill. In suburbs or smaller cities, the bonus is only +1, and in rural areas or lawless places like the California Dead Zone, the contest is equal. Actual wilderness (the high seas, the Sahara, the corpse-cities of the Middle East) gives the hunters a penalty of –1 to locate the hunted.

If the heroes' hacker wins the contest, they remain hidden but the cyber-tracker knows approximately what region they're in. One or more Raises for the hunted means they've lost pursuit—for one day. A Raise for the cyber-tracker means she's got a "fix" on them within a square kilometer or so. She can then make extra attempts, opposed by the hunted, to narrow the focus. Two or more Raises means she can zero in on what block or arcology they're in, which is close enough to send in the ground units.

Because there are multiple Tetsuo simulacra, the Bounty Hunter Tetsuo team won't give up on a hunt. The audience loves it when the crooks are genuinely dangerous and resourceful, so a few setbacks for Tetsuo just heightens the drama. Attacks by Tetsuo simulacra can become an ongoing background element even as the player characters have other adventures. However, the reputation they're gaining as opponents of Tetsuo will affect

ALECTO

Alecto is the online handle of Dr. Alessandra Cotonio, a data-mining and security expert based in Turin. In person Dr. Cotonio is slightly overweight, but her avatar in The Deep manifests as an awesome winged Fury with a flaming sword and snakes twined in her streaming hair.

ALESSANDRA COTONIO

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D6, Strength D4, Vigor D6
Skills: Hacking D10, Driving D6, Fighting D6, Investigation D8, Streetwise D8, Tracking D4
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Cybertrauma:** +0; **Street Cred:** 30
Hindrances: Loyal, Stubborn, Vengeful
Edges: Hacker, Rich, Special Access (Employer)
Cyberware: Rating 4 TAP ([Advanced version] +3 Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace: 9, Parry 13, Toughness 8, can support 6 active programs)
Gear: AGA Thunderbolt (Range: 20/40/80, Damage: D12)

the kind of jobs they get: legitimate (or quasi-legit) employers are nervous about hiring visible "celebrity fugitives" while hard-core crooks think it's awesome.

Ending the Hunt

There are basically three ways to end this manhunt. The player characters can die, they can destroy Tetsuo at the source, or they can prove their innocence.

Dying doesn't mean the PCs must actually perish. They just have to convince Tetsuo Kelly and his audience that they're dead. Bounty Hunter Tetsuo racks up another victory and the show moves on to the next quarry. Faking one's death in an age of DNA tracing and ubiquitous sensing isn't easy. The heroes must come up with a plan which will either leave plausible-looking remains, or which will explain why their bodies are unrecoverable after Tetsuo's victory. Massive explosions are good, and so is plunging to your doom in the ocean. However, after "dying" the heroes must establish completely new identities and stick to them—because nothing spells big ratings like a foe coming back from the dead.

Destroying Tetsuo is very hard. Tetsuo Kelly himself is based in a fortified suite in the Diablo Hotel and Casino, with a couple of bodyguards and hotel security to protect him. His death will end the show—and draw the attention of real law enforcement, because murdering a hit media star tends to do that. Instead of Tetsuo simulacra and Alecto hunting them, the PCs have to cope with skilled cops and Interpol detectives. And two or three months later the network rolls out Tetsuo's replacement: Bounty Hunter Nikita. Nikita's first mission is of course to avenge the death of his predecessor.

BOUNTY HUNTER TETSUO

The Tetsuo simulacra are top-quality Japanese combat units. Their appearance is an idealized teenage version of Tetsuo Kelly, and they are dressed and equipped identically. They prefer to engage foes in cool melee battles, ideally in visually interesting locales. The "Bounty Hunter Tetsuo" personality is a caricature version of an action hero full of pre-scripted "impromptu" quips, but in conversation it's obvious that "Tetsuo" has an almost childlike mentality. There are four Tetsuo simulacra, and replacements can be brewed up in three months. The actual Tetsuo Kelly has Smarts D8, Investigation D8, and much lower physical abilities.
Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D10, Vigor D8
Skills: Climbing D6, Driving D8, Fighting D8, Hacking D6, Notice D6, Persuasion D6, Shooting D8, Stealth D8, Streetwise D4, Tracking D6
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 14 (6); **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (4); **Cybertrauma:** –3; **Street Cred:** 30
Hindrances: Arrogant, Greedy (Major), Stubborn
Edges: Expert Fighter, Fleet-Footed
Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace: 6, Parry6, Toughness 5), Level 2 Sub-dermal Armor (The character gains +2 Armor), Tactical Computer (Fighting: The character can make a Notice check as a free action. Success indicates the character has found a weak spot in his opponent's defenses and gains a +1 to Fighting rolls for that round only), Level 3 Tension Springs (Add 6 to the characters Pace attribute), Weapon Mount (Shotgun)*
Gear: Katana (Str+D6+2, AP2), Heavy pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D8), Shotgun (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 1–3D6), Scavenger's Trench coat (+2 Armor), handcuffs.
* Because there are multiple simulacra, feel free to choose different types of weapons from Chapter 4: Equipment.

Breaking the Case

Proving their innocence is the hardest but ultimately the most effective way to get Tetsuo off the characters' trail. The key is the crime they didn't actually commit. Tetsuo has a warrant based on an incident in which someone placed explosive charges on a vacuum-train tunnel near Barcelona three months before the bounty hunter began chasing the heroes. According to media reports the player-characters are associated with the incident because they are the ones who purchased the electronic components used to build the bombs, and data searches place them in the vicinity that day.

An online Investigation test reveals that the electronics came from a small repair shop in Marseilles. The owner, Muhammad Nasir, identified the PCs from photos. In fact, Mr. Nasir was bribed by Alecto (using several layers of cut-outs and aliases) to make the I.D. He sold his shop and retired shortly afterward, and today lives in a retirement resort in Corsica. If approached virtually, Nasir tries to hide and contacts Alecto begging for protection. Only if the player characters show up on his doorstep in person will he agree to tell the truth to the authorities. As soon as the heroes have solid evidence that they were framed, Tetsuo Kelly will offer a deal: he'll announce that new evidence has exonerated the PCs, and he'll pay them a hefty bribe for their silence. He offers 10,000 credits per person but is willing to go as high as 20,000 credits. Beyond that, it becomes cheaper to hire lawyers and hit men to protect his reputation.

Particularly vengeful player characters may decide to take it public. Airing the facts over an independent news site or pirate radio station will throw Bounty Hunter Tetsuo into a panic. Exposed as a fraud, Tetsuo's street cred hits the pavement, and that means death for a media star. Within six months Tetsuo Kelly is back to repossessing cars in Reno. About three months after the whole affair ends, the player characters are approached by a media producer with a sure-fire idea for a hit: they're the most famous fugitives in the world, so each week a new team of audience members get the chance to hunt them down and win big prizes! How about it?

PUSSYCAT

When the heroes return to their safe house after a tough run in the Chinese Mandarinate, they are surprised to find a young and attractive lady with cat's ears on their bed. The woman is actually a simulacrum sex toy that was until recently owned by a triad master with rather exotic tastes. After three years of massive abuse, the safety switches programmed into the simulacrum finally broke and, in a burst of rage, the doll strangled its abusive master with his own whip. Afterwards, the nameless creature fled the scene of the crime and hid away in the heroes' house.

Talking to a Doll

The simulacrum acts quite coy, never looking others into their eyes and instinctively adopting a submissive posture. It will take several Persuasion rolls to get the whole story from it. With each probing, reveal one of the following items. Each failure will cost 15 minutes of soothing and calming to continue asking questions:

- The creature is a simulacrum designed for the pleasure of Triad Master Wang
- Wang was really abusive but the toy was never really "conscious", acting as if in a dream.
- Yesterday, a "strange impulse" woke up the toy and it strangled Wang with his own whip.
- The toy was able to flee the compound and took refuge in this house, which is about two kilometers away from its former home.

The Triads Close In

The heroes will now probably start to sweat. A few phone calls (Streetwise (+1)) will reveal that the triads are out in force. The dub of the slain master has been activated in a cyborg body and the old man is quite pissed at the development. To supplement his own search efforts, Wang has offered a hefty reward for those who return the toy.

Word on the streets is that the triads have found a trail and it is only a question of time until they hit the heroes. They will need one hour to find the safe house counting from the time the heroes returned home. So if too much time is wasted talking to the toy (probably due to failed Persuasion rolls), the characters might actually have the triads knocking on their door without them knowing what is going on.

Heroics or Money

The heroes have to decide quickly what they want to do. They might go for the reward money. After all, they have a legally non-sentient and homicidal sex toy on their hands. Would it be immoral to hand it over to its rightful owners? On the other

hand, the heroes might feel pity for a slave with the personality of a young girl, no matter what her origin actually is.

Whatever choice the heroes make, as long as they do not take direct action against the triads, the goons will first try to negotiate with them. A troop of five gang soldiers led by an experienced triad lieutenant openly approaches their apartment and offers the full reward promised by their master. But their patience is limited and after a while Master Wang arrives and he is not in the mood for complex negotiations.

Resolution or Escape

If the heroes take the money, Wang will personally behead the toy in front of their eyes. He will then turn away without saying a word. The heroes will have some money on their hands but every time they see a pleasure simulacrum, they will have a strange feeling of guilt.

On the other hand, should the heroes decide to antagonize the triads, a fire fight will ensue. Wang will fire one or two shots but then retreat from combat (he has died enough for one day). His team of five mooks and an underboss (use the syndicate boss template) (See Chapter 8: threats) will continue to fight until three or more are killed.

Unless the heroes manage to kill Wang, they will have to flee after the fight. It takes some good connections (Streetwise (–2, or the use of 2 favors)) to leave town without the triads noticing. Should the heroes manage to do so, they will be no longer be pursued by the gangsters but now have a somewhat needy dependent on their hands.

The Sex Toy

Given no name by its cruel master, the sex toy is actually only a budding personality. Its behavior is frequently overruled by its personality programming, which lets it act coy and seductive in a submissive way. It is quite disturbing to see vengeful outbursts break this passive surface.

The toy looks like a late teenage with long black hair, large brown eyes and small cat's ears. It wears a skimpy zebra-patterned bikini that reveals the barely-healed scars on its back. Use the stats for a Pleasure Simulacrum in Chapter 8: Threats.

TRIAD MASTER WANG

Wang (or actually his dub that has been activated after his unexpected demise) is an arrogant and hot headed man. He achieved his current position through ruthlessness and sheer force and wants to destroy his former toy. The values below describe his android body.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D10, Spirit D8, Strength D6/D10, Vigor D10

Skills: Fighting D8, Intimidation D12, Notice D8, Persuasion D10, Shooting D8

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14 (7); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 30

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Improved Level Headed

Special Properties:

- **Armored Body:** +4 armor bonus
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from shaken, no extra damage from called shots, no wound penalties

Gear: Assault rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3), "Hostile Merger" Suit (+3 armor)

FALSE FLAG

The player-characters get wind of a lucrative but dangerous job. If they're interested, they can eventually arrange a meet with Marco Silva, a Brazilian who represents several South American environmental activist groups. Senhor Silva has a vital mission for the characters: there's a megacorp based in Chicago which is responsible for serious illegal polluting in the Arctic Ocean. Thousands of square kilometers are being contaminated. Silva offers 15,000 credits per person to anyone willing to break into the corporate arcology and get the info. Silva is lavish with mission support: he can furnish top-of-the-line military armor and weapons for the raid, as well as airtight cover identities. The actual payment, however, is only upon completion.

The Target

The polluting company is Callisto Minerals, a leader in mining and resource extraction in the newly warm lands of the Arctic. The company mines the seabed off Alaska and Canada for manganese nodules, and operates a highly profitable copper mine in Greenland.

Research on Callisto Minerals indicates that it's actually a wholly-owned subsidiary of an NAC conglom, Piedmont Resources. Piedmont is highly influential within the NAC government, and several environmental organizations have accused them of using their political clout to cover up damage caused by their operations. One or more Raises on the Investigation test reveals that Callisto is indeed covering up the extent of pollution caused by arctic seabed mining.

Callisto is headquartered in the Stony Island Arcology, a huge city-building looming on the South Side of Chicago. The arcology is a steep-sided flat-topped pyramid eighty stories high, with a huge interior atrium. Five underground levels hold the building's mechanical systems. Above that the first eight floors are shops, restaurants, and entertainment. Levels nine through forty are offices (Callisto Minerals occupies the 38th floor), and above that are apartments holding 8,000 residents. The 79th floor is more building services (including water tanks) and the very top is a luxury restaurant. The roof has a helipad.

Stony Island Arcology has extensive water recycling and storage systems, making it almost independent of the city sewer and water lines. It does use outside power, but solar panels and hydrogen-fueled backups give it 24 hours of reserve power in case of blackouts. The arcology has its own 100-man police force (use the Experienced Security Officer template).

The arcology's public computer system is a typical Public Access Network, full of ads and media feeds. If hackers search through the PAN, Have them roll a Programming test. Success indicates they find an anomaly in the code, which turns out to be a hidden pipe leading to the main network.

The main network is a Corporate Access Network protecting the building's vital systems. Callisto Minerals has its own Corporate Access Network. It's guarded by firewalls, a corporate hacker, and a SHARC program manifesting in The Deep as a giant white bear. Characters who get past the guardian programs can whatever system utilities they might have to try and locate files about environmental effects in the Callisto databases.

STONY ISLAND ARCOLOGY NETWORK (CAN):
Difficulty: Very Difficult: +4, **Toughness:** 8, **Parry:** 10
System Dice: D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: firewalls, a corporate hacker, SHARC program (use the appropriate virtual entity templates from Chapter 8: threats)

The Gear

Senhor Silva hands off equipment to the mission team a few days before the operation. There are cover identities, military-grade weapons, and armor. The cover identities are Great Lakes Union citizens, with genuine mail drops in Duluth, bank accounts, and credit histories.

The military equipment is real GLU commando gear, stolen by Brazilian agents. There are suits of Nanoweave Tactical Armor, helmets, boots, water bottles, goggles—even dog tags. The weapons are Gyroc rifles, Gyroc pistols, and a single squad-support heavy weapon (either a railgun or a grenade launcher).

> **Grenade Launcher:** Range: 20/40/80, Damage: 2D6, RoF 1, Cost: (mil), Weight: 14, Shots 4, Min Str D6. Grenades are either a 2" radius explosion, or an AP4 shaped charge.

At some point the heroes may wonder just how a rag-tag group of environmentalists can afford to run such an expensive operation. Silva reassures them that some very wealthy private donors are footing the bill and hints that good performance in this job can get them more well-paid assignments in the future.

The Truth

In truth, the entire operation is funded by ABIN, the Brazilian intelligence agency. Concerned by the growing cooperation of various North American governments and megacorps in the rebuilding of Chicago, the ABIN leadership want to maintain a state of suspicion and distrust. The obvious solution is an attack by GLU operatives on a NAC-owned facility in the free city of Chicago. The NAC will scream bloody murder and possibly counterattack, the administrators of Chicago will be livid about the violation of its neutrality, and the GLU will assume the other two are conspiring in a frame-up.

Characters with any contacts in Brazil's very active environmental community (such as Arca Nova) can quickly discover that Senhor Silva is not affiliated with any environmental organizations at all. If they try to investigate him, make an Investigation test opposed by the D10 Hacking skill of the ABIN hackers who set up his false identity. On a simple success they learn only that there is no information available about Silva anywhere. One Raise reveals that Silva literally has no existence at all: even his face is not in any public database. Two or more Raises indicate that his identity has been erased from the global networks. On a failed roll, ABIN becomes aware that the PCs are investigating Silva.

The Big Day

Silva insists on being told when the intrusion is going to happen. To make sure the raid comes to public attention—and to improve the chance of dead men telling no tales—he alerts Ravenlocke Securities and the Stony Island Arcology security force, as well as every media organization, free-lance reporter, and online busybody in the entire Chicago megalopolis.

The authorities can't react to every tip, and are wary of being decoyed by a distraction while something big goes down elsewhere. So the arcology isn't surrounded or locked down. However the Stony Island Arcology security is on full alert with five guards stationed on the 39th floor. The city police have a tactical response team on ready alert, embarked on their helicopter at a station a few miles away. When the shooting starts, a squad of twelve tactical troopers can be at the fight scene in four minutes. The Chicago Tactical Response Team uses the Shock Trooper template in Chapter 8: threats, and have a railgun-armed sniper who remains with the chopper. The leader of the Tactical team is a Wild Card character.

The two police forces have different goals: the Stony Island Arcology security are most concerned with protecting the people of their city-building. They will try to contain the intruders and keep the situation from spilling over into residential or retail areas full of innocents. The Chicago tactical troopers are more gung-ho, and will charge in to attack. Depending on how the situation has developed when they arrive, the tactical troopers either use the elevators or rappel down the outside of the building.

If the intruders make their move during the business day, Callisto Minerals has 200 employees in its offices, all ordinary citizens with little or no combat training. Silva's warning has made everyone jittery and ready to panic. The company has not added any of its own security people (the nearest ones are above the Arctic Circle), and relies completely on arcology police for protection.

At night the offices are empty. A three-person cleaning team comes through between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. The cleaners work for SI Environmental Services, a small company based in the arcology which does janitorial work for hundreds of other businesses and residents in the building.

MARCO SILVA

His real name isn't Silva, and his identity is a flawless fake created by the Brazilian intelligence service. He has several others. "Silva" is a well-dressed man whose perfect grooming can't hide a broken nose and scarred knuckles indicating a rough-and-tumble past. He went from a favela outside Sao Paulo to the Brazilian Army, where his quick wits and ruthlessness attracted the attention of the intelligence service. He moved into the covert operations branch, and was picked to run the Chicago operation.

Silva's primary goal is, of course, the mission: disrupting relations among the North American powers by staging a GLU attack against NAC property in Chicago. However, he's neither stupid nor suicidal. Eliminating connections back to ABIN is almost as important, and preserving his own life is a strong third. If his hired pawns don't get killed by the cops, he'll try to hire ganglanders to get rid of them. If the authorities start closing in on him, "Marco Silva" will cease to exist and a gentleman from Lisbon with impeccable European identification will leave Chicago on the next plane to anywhere.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D8, Strength D6, Vigor D8
Skills: Fighting D6, Intimidation D6, Investigation D8, Hacking D6, Notice D8, Persuasion D8, Shooting D6, Stealth D6, Streetwise D10
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness** 9 (3); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 15
Hindrances: Cautious, Loyal, Stubborn
Edges: Agent, Connections, Expert Fighter, Quick, Rich
Cyberware: Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace: 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5)
Gear: Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage 2D8, AP 2), Nanoweave shirt (+3 armor)

Resolutions

If the characters are captured by the authorities, they are held and interrogated as GLU covert-ops commandos. Ironically, if they have a history of "black ops" under their own identities, this can actually help them convince the Chicago government who they really are. They'll still be locked up in a supermax prison. Senhor Silva will do his best to arrange for them to be killed in jail. This is a golden opportunity for the Game Master to run a prison-breakout scenario.

Should the heroes manage to get away from the arcology, they aren't out of trouble yet. The authorities are still searching for the raiders, and Senhor Silva will do his best to sucker his now inconvenient hirelings into a trap. He'll hire some street gangstas and set up an ambush, then call in the player characters for a meeting.

The player characters can do a lot to save their own skins by capturing Silva and handing him over to the Chicago regime. Once he's revealed as an ABIN officer, the actual raiders lose most of their importance as the game shifts to high-level diplomatic saber-rattling and back-channel threats. Depending on how well they can negotiate (and how much collateral damage they caused in the arcology), the operatives may be barred from ever entering Chicago territory again, let off with a suspended sentence, or possibly even rewarded for their role in exposing the Brazilian plot.

The Merry Pranksters

One of the player-characters has a friend. We'll call him Eduardo Kanagawa, since that's his name. Eduardo has clawed his way to the position of assistant district sales manager and is content to stay there for the rest of his life. Sure, it's not as exciting as the stuff his friend gets to do, but Eduardo doesn't set off metal detectors wherever he goes, either.

Recently Eduardo's started playing in a new alternative-reality game, nicknamed "Bamapana" by gamers. The storyline is about intrigue among executives and shareholders in a fictional megacorporation (and, yes, it is kind of silly that people working for megacorps spend their time playing a game about different people working for a different megacorp). Like most MMORPGs, Bamapana is primarily played in The Deep, but the game has a twist; it includes real-world side-quests—tasks that someone actually has to get off his butt and go out the door and do.

Most of these tasks are small random acts of kindness ("buy a sandwich and give it to the first homeless person you see") or minor public stunts ("stand on a busy corner dressed in a chicken suit, asking people to sign a petition to ban omelets"). But to score big points, players have to take on riskier tasks—genuine pranks like setting off firecrackers in a theater, or throwing a pie at a celebrity.

Eduardo wants to jump to the top of the Bamapana heap by tackling a high-value prank—but he's too lazy and chicken shit to actually do it himself, so he's "hiring" his friend for 2,000 credits and any two items from Eduardo's stash of bootleg software. All the player-character has to do is carry out a fake "ambush journalism" attempt—go to ZRTech's headquarters tower at precisely 9:01 a.m. on the first Monday of this month, demand to see the company's CEO, and refuse to leave the building for fifteen minutes. No points are awarded if the pranksters break character for any reason.

At the appointed day and time the player-characters head to ZRTech Plaza for their fifteen minutes of fame. All goes well at first, as the receptionist gives increasingly Kafkaesque reasons why they can't go in. ("You need an appointment." "To get an appointment you have to see the executive secretary." "You can't see the executive secretary without an appointment.").

At the ten-minute mark all hell breaks loose. Alarms echo through the building. The security guards and PR flack at the reception area scatter as four Armed Response guards burst out the elevator. Outside there's the sound of sirens.

Wanted!

By the time the pranksters reach safety the story's all over the webs. At 9:03 an intrusion team breached ZRTech's main data hub on the 40th floor. They escaped six minutes later with copies of extremely valuable files about ZRTech android technology development. In addition to the intrusion team, security services are also looking for the people who caused a disruption in the building lobby, distracting ZRTech security long enough for the data thieves to make their move.

ZRTech's own internal security are focusing on tracing the data thieves (and the data), so the search for the pranksters has fallen to local police and bounty hunters. Normally the city's police contractor would ignore the whole business, but Detective Gienah Okofawe has decided that the "diversion

ARMED RESPONSE GUARDS

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D4, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6
Skills: Fighting D8, Guts D6, Healing D4, Hacking D4, Intimidation D8, Notice D4, Shooting D8, Streetwise D4
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 8 (2); **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (5); **Cybertrauma:** –3; **Street Cred:** 5
Edges: Danger Sense
Hindrances: Loyal, Mean
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace: 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5), Amplified hearing (Adds a +1 bonus to Notice rolls involving Sound), Level 1 Tension Springs (Add 2 to the characters Pace attribute), Target Tracker (Only hits an innocent bystander on a roll of snake eyes for handguns or a 1 when using shotguns or autofire weapons)
Gear: Nanoweave Tactical Armor (+3/+5 armor), Security Truncheon, Riot Gel Gun, Kelvin-12 Class Assault Rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8+1, AP 3, RoF 4)

group" are the key to solving the whole mystery, and hopes to make her reputation by breaking the case. And the reward offered by ZRTech for capture of the pranksters has attracted the relentless bounty hunter Ivan Litvinov.

Detective Okofawe can make use of professional police labs, AI tracking systems, and international databases to identify and locate the player-characters. She can send carloads of police to raid buildings where she thinks they're hiding. Ms. Okofawe isn't subtle—whenever the players think they've found a safe haven, have Detective Okofawe and a dozen the City's Finest (use the Armed Response trooper stats, above) turn up in full armor, beating on the door with a battering ram and shouting "You're under arrest!" through a bullhorn. She does not give up.

Ivan Litvinov, by contrast, works alone. He moves in many of the same circles as the adventurers, and tracks them by calling in favors, playing hunches—and eavesdropping on police radio traffic. Ivan won't break down your door, but he will take shots at you from a mile away using a sniper rifle, or plant a tracking device on you when you aren't looking. He also won't give up.

Getting Clear

With two persistent man hunters on their trail, the heroes are likely to realize their only hope is to find the real culprits. They even have a lead: Eduardo. He's afraid to talk to the player-characters, let alone meet them; on the other hand they know where he lives and works. He quickly tells them everything he knows about the Bamapana game.

On entering the game domain, it's obvious something is wrong. The game is shutting down. Only the avatars of other players are active, wandering about demanding to know what's happening. The in-game characters are gone, the environment (an idealized Shanghai as seen by Bollywood films) no longer updates or responds to player actions.

To trace the game environment back to its source, the players' hacker needs to make a test of Hacking skill, opposed by the D10 skill of the game creators' efforts to hide their tracks. Simple success indicates that it originates in Mexico; one Raise traces it to Mexico City. Two Raises identifies the building (Chapultepec Arcology), three pinpoints the office

DETECTIVE GIENAH OKOFAWE

Detective Okofawe is a small, dark woman who seems too tiny to be a police officer. She has achieved an excellent duty record because of her indomitable will and drive to succeed.
Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D10, Spirit D8, Strength D4, Vigor D6
Skills: Fighting D6, Intimidation D8, Investigation D10, Hacking D6, Notice D8, Shooting D8, Streetwise D6
Charisma: +0; Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (4); **Cybertrauma:** –4; **Street Cred:** 8
Edges: Investigator, Strong-Willed
Hindrances: Loyal, Small, Stubborn
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), Level 2 Reflex Enhancers (+1 bonus to Parry, ranged attackers suffer a –1 to shooting rolls), Level 2 Subdermal Armor (+2 Armor)
Gear: Snitch Vest (+2 armor), Gyroc Pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D8, AP 2)

of Enmascarado Entertainment, a small company specializing in virtual wrestling games. Enmascarado Entertainment's computer system is a fairly tough Corporate Access Network.

ENMASCARADO ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK (CAN):
Difficulty: Very Difficult: +4, **Toughness:** 8, **Parry:** 10
System Dice: D10 and a wild die for system skill rolls.
Typical System Resources: firewalls, corp. hackers (Use the corporate hacker template in Chapter 8: threats), luchadore security programs.

The databases don't have any information about the robbery, but they do reveal who designed the Bamapana game: Scott Camacho, who lives in one of the upper levels of the Chapultepec Arcology.

Camacho is getting ready to flee Mexico City when the player-characters knock on his door. His bags are packed, he's switched all his funds to a Singapore bank, and he has a Gyroc pistol stuck in his waistband. (Use the Bureaucrat template for Mr. Camacho, with Hacking boosted to D10.) A successful Intimidation attempt gets Camacho to spill the beans: he was paid to include the ZRTech prank in the game by a woman named Dolores Huizenga, who works for Ang-Shen-Uloke, an Asian-African combine which is ZRTech's biggest competitor in the field of android sensor systems.

Unfortunately for Mr. Camacho, Ms. Huizenga hired a local gang to silence him permanently. The gangers arrive at his apartment while the heroes are interrogating him. There are as many gangers as there are player-characters; use the Experienced Ganglander template. Ivan Litvinov is just a few minutes behind them, and Detective Okofawe is right behind

LUCHADORE-3 SECURITY PROGRAM

Toughness Rating: 8
Parry Rating: 10
Pace: 8
System Dice: D10 and a wild die.
Trappings: Coded to resemble the Luchadores—masked wrestlers from the late 20th century—these security programs do 2D8 damage and have a slug subroutine which resembles a sleeper hold. The slug routine causes the target to lose a single action plus another action for each raise on the attack roll.

IVAN LITVINOV

Mr. Litvinov is a tall, lean man with a scarred face and very pale eyes. He claims to be in it just for the money, but Litvinov actually takes his work very personally, and won't give up on a job even if it costs him more to bring down the target than he's actually getting paid. He is always willing to kill rather than let someone get away.
Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D8, Spirit D8, Strength D12 (D10), Vigor D8
Skills: Climbing D8, Driving D8, Fighting D8, Guts D6, Hacking D6, Intimidation D6, Investigation D6, Notice D8, Shooting D8, Stealth D8, Streetwise D10.
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6, **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3); **Cybertrauma:** –3; **Street Cred:** 12
Edges: Ambidextrous, Expert Fighter, Marksman, Quick Draw
Hindrances: Cautious, Greedy (minor), Vengeful (major)
Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Parry 6, Avatar Pace: 6, Toughness 5), Level 2 Reflex Enhancers (+1 bonus to Parry, ranged attackers suffer a –1 to shooting rolls), Level 2 Muscle Augmentation (Strength increased by 2 die types), Retractable Blades (D10 to damage roll in a raise instead of a D6 and gain 2 AP)
Gear: "Hostile Merger" suit (+3 armor), Butterfly Knife, Glock 9mm pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D8, AP 2), Sniper railgun (Range: 100/200/400, Damage: 3D8+1)

him with a squad of Mexican federales and Chapultepec Arcology security.

If the heroes can demonstrate that Ang-Shen-Uloke was behind the diversion (and the ZRTech robbery), Ms. Okofawe won't charge them with anything—though if they have any outstanding offenses in her town, like resisting arrest or assaulting an officer, she warns them that she'll be watching for them and won't forget. Ivan Litvinov gives up the hunt with no hard feelings (he respects skill and competence) and may well remain a useful contact for the characters.

Ang-Shen-Uloke and ZRTech carry on a low-level war of assassination and sabotage for the next six months, ending when both are bought out in hostile takeovers by a Japanese conglomerate. And Eduardo Kanagawa owes his friend a really big favor.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following are brief adventure hooks that can be used as the basis for entire adventures, or brief side-trek encounters to augment your existing adventure.

1. The Fugitive

Location: Any

Synopsis: The characters meet an interesting character with a number of exciting stories to tell. Some of his tales are quite wild and include desertion from the GLU, trouble with local security agencies, and enemies among the elite. A lot of punks like to spin a yarn, but his eyes are haunted and he seems paranoid. A small amount of research confirms that this man is wanted by the authorities. Do the characters try to help him or turn him in for the considerable bounty on his head?

2. Human Parts

Location: Any Urban

Synopsis: The characters are hired to take a locked case full of an unspecified commodity (hint at drugs or banned tech) to a local gang and sell it to them. The price is listed at 3,500 credits, of which the characters can keep 1,000 credits plus anything they can negotiate on top of that. If they open the case before they meet with the gang, they discover that the case is full of carefully preserved human organs of dubious origin. When they deliver the case, Draw a card to determine the gang's disposition:

- **Clubs:** The leader pays in good faith, but the credits are stolen and easily traced by whatever authorities are trying to track them down.
- **Spades:** The gang leader wants to stiff the characters of the money he owes and wants to kill them to add their organs to the collection.
- **Hearts:** The gang opens the case and becomes irate. It seems that there is only half the number of organs that they had originally negotiated for. He insists that one of the characters remain here as ransom for the other half of the organs he feels he is entitled to.
- **Diamonds:** The gang leader is impressed with the delivery and asks the characters if they will do a job for him (the Game Master can elaborate on this as needed)
- **Joker:** The organs are infected with a hideous virus that was engineered in a laboratory and is released when the case is opened. Unfortunately it spreads quickly and has a high mortality rate. The characters have three days to

find a cure for themselves, and if the authorities aren't alerted immediately, the virus sweeps through the city, killing up to ten percent of the population.

3. Subterranean Oddity

Location: Any Urban

Synopsis: The characters venture into the sewers or steam tunnels beneath the streets, for exploration, a clandestine meeting, or any other reason. When down there, they see a hidden side passage that they had never noticed before (assuming that they had been here before). Roll a D6 to determine what is down here:

1. Secret lab belonging to a megacorporation
2. A labyrinth inhabited by a psychotic killer
3. A hideout for a group of hackers who are challenging large corporate interests.
4. The pair of a mutant or biologically engineered monstrous horror
5. A cybergear chop-shop where they install gutterware at cut rates
6. A stockpile of weapons stashed by the US military during one of the previous wars (World War II, the cold war, or the Second Civil War).

4. Corporate Robbery

Location: Any

Synopsis: The characters are hired to do a simple job. One of the corporations desires the prototype of a piece of technology that another has developed. Their corporate spies have gotten them a manifest showing that a transport vehicle with the device will be passing through a specific area at a specific time. All the characters have to do is figure out how to get aboard the vehicle and make off with the item before it reaches its destination…. Who cares that the item is heavily guarded and trapped if tampered with. And to complicate things even further, there happens to be another very capable party interested in the same job but for a different client.

5. Test Subjects

Location: Any

Synopsis: The characters arrange a bounty on a subject that should be caught easily enough. What they don't realize is that the bounty is for a corporate designed simulacrum that was created for the specific purpose of special operations, stealth, survival, and assassination. The problem is that he doesn't particularly care who hired the characters, or if they survive at all. The characters are completely expendable since their purpose is to test whether the simulacrum was designed well.

6. Enemy Me

Location: Any

Synopsis: The characters accept a bounty on a wanted fugitive who has either run afoul of corporate or government agencies. Shortly after accepting the bounty, they realize that it is for one of the characters. Fortunately, it is listed under one of their aliases. Unfortunately their identity is unmistakable. The characters need to decide how to handle the situation, whether it is to turn on the unfortunate companion they have agreed to hunt down, fake his death, figure out a way to cancel the bounty, or come to some other solution.

7. Weird Science

Location: Any

Synopsis: The characters are approached by a man with wild hair and a long white overcoat who offers to pay handsomely if the characters deliver a syringe full of a bubbling green substance to another individual for him. Of course there are other interested parties. If the characters return to him with confirmation that the delivery has been made, he offers to let them sample the product. Draw a card to determine the effects:

- **Below 10:** Nothing happens
- **Above 10:** The character(s) sampling it gets a Benny
- **Joker:** The character(s) sampling it is subject to a completely unexpected side-effect (GM's discretion).

8. Stockholm Daughter

Location: Any

Synopsis: A wealthy corporate executive hires the characters to return his daughter, who has been abducted by gangster thugs. The executive makes it clear that he wants her captor dead. As the characters get closer to the woman, they learn that she is a bored rich kid who has fallen in love with her captor and will do anything to defend him. To make matters worse, the pair of them intend to raid Daddy's business for the sole purpose of unleashing a newly engineered nerve gas on the corporate headquarters.

9. The Angel and the Cyber-psycho

Location: Any Urban

Synopsis: The characters emerge from a building on an urban street to find a war zone erupting around them. It turns out that an individual who has had entirely too many cybernetic enhancements has gone berserk and is seeking out their former girlfriend. She happens to be near the characters and begs them to get her to safety. The characters may rescue her from immediate danger, but in so doing, they make themselves targets. Neither them nor the girl will be safe until the psycho has been eliminated.

10. Viral Shenanigans

Location: Any

Synopsis: A computer hacker has created a virus that he wants to unleash into The Deep. The effect of this virus will cause all of the cyberware from a specific manufacturer to short circuit and become useless (and inadvertently harm or kill the owners). The characters are hired by the hacker to do a simple job (no questions asked): break into a corporate server center that tracks viruses in The Deep and renders them harmless, then run a simple program that will keep it from recognizing his virus. After accomplishing the objective, they learn the diabolical nature of the virus and must either stop him from deploying the virus or undo the damage to the anti-virus servers without getting caught.

11. Thrill Kill Kamikaze

Location: Any Urban

Synopsis: For an added twist on thrill killing, a local psychopath has decided to take others out along with his simulacra. The characters witness a person jump from atop a building and skillfully fall onto an unsuspecting victim, killing her. Later, they learn that there have been two others killed in thrill kill suicides and they are presented with a bounty to capture the psycho doing this. The person's identity is known, and his banks of simulacra are immediately frozen and confiscated by the authorities, but he already has several of them that are programmed to kill, and they soon learn that the characters have been targeted.

12. The Chimera Murders

Location: Any

Synopsis: Somebody the characters know well is grotesquely murdered. The scene of the crime is grisly and the victim has been partially eaten. They soon learn that this isn't the first time this has happened. In fact, there have been five such murders in the past couple weeks, and they have all been confined to a specific neighborhood. Their investigation reveals that the individuals responsible have been gene spliced with wolves. To make things worse, this exercised in terror was sponsored by a corporation that is testing the effectiveness of a pack of these hybrids in a hostile population. Do the characters seek revenge against the corporate masters who are responsible?

13. The Body

Location: Any place in the urban warzone of the South Side

Synopsis: The characters are tasked with a relatively simple task: find the body of a dead operative and return them for burial (and let them harvest the character's valuable cyberware). The only problem is that the body is located in an area that is contested by heavily armed rival groups. The characters are spotted by the gang who holds the area containing the body. The gang leader offers them a fair trade: do a few jobs for them, such as running arms to positions that need reinforcement, then return to them with proof that the task is accomplished, and they'll turn the body over. Of course this will make them a target of the opposing gang.

14. The Dying

Location: Any

Synopsis: A character approaches the PCs, desperate to get something back that was robbed from him. Apparently he had been out at a local club the night before and met a wonderful woman, who took him home, drugged him, and surgically removed his kidneys. He's desperate to get them back, especially since he can't afford to be hooked up to a dialysis machine or have the organs cloned from his own adult stem cells. If the woman learns that the characters are after her, she decides targets one of them and attempts to incapacitate them and steal their organs as well.

15. The Ghost in the Machine

Location: Any

Synopsis: One of the individuals that the PCs have killed in the past isn't quite dead. Their personality was backed up into The Deep, and it has instructions to learn if the original body has been killed and get revenge against the killers. Maybe the killing was fully justified, but that doesn't change the fact that

a disembodied essence that is loose within The Deep wants them dead. The consciousness is quite good at hacking, and can use any device that has an attached Hyper Object against them, like say, , cars, trucks combat drones.

16. The Malmart Murders

Location: Anywhere that there is a Malmart Store

Synopsis: All is not well at the local Malmart. Several of the store employees have turned up dead recently, and the corporation wants the slayings solved quickly and quietly. Rather than take the problem to the local security agency and go public with the problem, they hire the characters to deal with it quietly. The company simply tells the other employees that the murdered employees have suddenly quit. The murderer is a petty clerk who sees himself as management material but can't get the attention he seeks, so he has been systematically eliminating those in his way. The characters should be forced to make several trips to the store to interview various people, all the while being annoyed by employees telling them about how they always have the best prices and selection! Always!

17. Gang Invaders

Location: Any mostly quiet urban neighborhood

Synopsis: A quiet neighborhood becomes the site of a gang leader's expansionistic ambitions. Unfortunately he doesn't just bring his own people with him, but his enemies follow as well. This quiet place quickly spins out of control and corporate security can't get a handle on the problem. The characters are asked to go in and settle the matter, whether they have to take out both sides of the fight, or find a way to get them to agree to leave.

18. The Ransom

Location: Any

Synopsis: The characters are hired to drop off money to ransom his son… and nothing else. The problem is that the person paying the ransom hired the kidnappers himself and then arranged to pay the ransom through the corporation he works for. He intends to take the credits, kill the kidnappers, and flee the country. Of course the characters could let him get away with it, but they'd see a large reward for turning the guy who hired them to the corporation he tricked.

19. Bodyguard

Location: Any

Synopsis: The characters are offered a considerable sum of money to do one thing: keep a celebrity alive long enough to perform at her next concert. What they don't know is that the obsessed fan who wants her dead plans to detonate a low yield nuclear bomb at her next concert.

20. Missiles of Insurgency

Location: Any Urban

Synopsis: Missiles launched from the southern portion of Chicago have been impacting other areas and killing civilians. The attackers are suspected GLU agents who are attempting to use this to start an insurgency. The characters are hired to track down the terrorists and put a stop to their attacks before widespread civil unrest erupts.

21. Party Crashers

Location: Any Nightclub

Synopsis: The characters are hanging out at their favorite watering hole one night when all of the sudden, who walks in but Nazar "The Bull" Sidorov—a notoriously violent under boss of the Chicago *Bravta*. An entourage of ten men and women accompany the rather large man, four of them rather slutty-looking women and the rest look to be friends and body guards.

If the characters have crossed the brotherhood in the past, they've likely dealt with Nazar's henchmen, so this could get ugly for them. Nazar holds a grudge and won't hesitate to throw down. If they've done work for the brotherhood, Nazar remembers that as well and will invite them to join in his little celebration. It seems the Brotherhood have scored a major coup against the Kyosei-kai Yakuza in Chinatown, assassinating the oyabun and his wakigashira (first lieutenant) while they ate at the Jade Star, a popular sushi restaurant.

As the party is starting to wind down, the doors burst open and a number of Yakuza soldiers burst in and start shooting up the place. Can the characters save Nazar? Will they even try? This encounter can easily lead to a larger adventure as the characters are drawn into a major war between the Russian mafia and the yakuza.

BOUNTY GENERATOR

The bounty system is a popular method of law enforcement in the Interface Zero setting in general, and in the free city of Chicago specifically. Criminals who cannot be brought to justice by the usual security agencies that hold the contracts for the neighborhoods in which the crimes are committed typically use some of their budget surplus to offer rewards for bringing criminals in.

Bounty boards are posted in The Deep, usually by corporate security agencies, but sometimes by megacorporations or powerful individuals. Characters are free to try to collect a bounty, though sometimes they have the option of registering their interest in a bounty with the agency or person who posted the bounty in hopes of acquiring specialized equipment or information that might be vital to catching the individual(s) who are sought.

Most of the time, the expectation is that the criminals are brought in alive. Killing is sometimes warranted, depending on the severity of the crimes committed, but since murder itself is a crime, bringing a criminal back dead simply warrants a new investigation into the crime of murder.

The tables on the next page are provided so that GMs have a tool that will help them generate bounties on the fly or provide some suggestions for a plot hook. For all tables except for notoriety, simply roll the dice that corresponds to the number of options that are under a given category.

For example, roll D8 for the person, d20 for the crime, etc. Each person, crime, and location comes with a number. This number is the number of credits each item is worth. Add all results together.

Once the totals have been added together, roll a D12 on the notoriety table. If a 12 is rolled, the dice explodes and you get to re-roll. The dice may explode multiple times, in which case, keep adding to the total. The higher the number, the more notorious the criminal is, which means the higher the bounty. Multiply the amount generated by the first three tables by the number that resulted from the notoriety roll.

For example: a body guard is wanted for theft in the Gary Hell Zone. The total before notoriety adds up to 3,400 credits. A D12 roll on the notoriety table is five, which is a multiplier of X1, so the total for this bounty is 3,400 credits.

In another example, a golemmech pilot is wanted for murder in the Gold Coast. These amounts add up to 12,000 credits. When the GM consults the Notoriety table, she rolls a 12, acing! She rolls again, resulting in another 12! She rolls again and this time gets a 4. The total number here is 28, which is a multiplier of X7. This means that the total bounty on this murderous golemmech pilot is a whopping 84,000 credits!

Of course, the higher the notoriety, the more difficult the GM should make the bounty. Also, each level of notoriety brings with it a new level of infamy. A person with a X10 multiplier would be known worldwide for the crimes or terrorist actions that they have committed. All criminals should be wild cards regardless of the level of noteriety.

Table 7:1: Person

D8 ROLL	CREDITS
1. Agent	500
2. Body Guard	650
3. Bounty Hunter	650
4. Fence	300
5. Gear Head	300
6. Golem Mech Pilot	1,500
7. Hacker	1,000
8. Smuggler	500

Table 7:2: Crime

D20 ROLL	CREDITS
1. Public nuisance	100
2. Vehicular manslaughter	3,500
3. Theft	1,500
4. Assault	1,750
5. Forgery	1,250
6. Murder	10,000
7. Malicious mischief	750
8. Sexual assault	2,500
9. Embezzlement	5,000
10. Manslaughter	3,500
11. Assault with a deadly weapon	2,500
12. Hacking	4,000
13. Grand theft	4,000
14. Detonation of an explosive device	7,500
15. Breaking and entering	1,250
16. Destruction of property	1,000
17. Assaulting a security officer	2,500
18. Extreme traffic violation	500
19. Kidnapping	3,000
20 Extortion	4,000

Table 7:3 Location

D12 ROLL	CREDITS
1 The O'Hare Military Sector	600
2 Korea Town	200
3 The Gold Coast	500
4 Gary Hell Zone	1,250
5 Coffin City	1,000
6 Ukranian Village	350
7 The Loop	300
8 Downer's Grove	200
9 Sim City	350
10 Chinatown	200
11 Yorktown Shopping Center	400
12 Naperville	250

Table 7:4: True Disposition

D8 ROLL
1. Guilty
2. Complicit
3. Innocent
4. Guilty
5. Complicit
6. Innocent
7. Guilty
8. Guilty

Table 7:5 Notoriety

D20 ROLL (MAY ACE)	MULTIPLIER
1–5	×1
6–8	×2
9–10	×3
11	×4
12–19	×5
20–23	×6
24–30	×7
31–33	×8
34–35	×9
36 and Up	×10

Ash: Ripley, for God's sake, this is the first time that we've encountered a species like this. It has to go back. All sorts of tests have to be made.
Ripley: Ash, are you kidding? This thing bled acid. Who knows what it's gonna do when it's dead?
Ash: I think it's safe to assume it isn't a zombie.
– Alien "1979"

CHAPTER EIGHT: THREATS

The sprawl's filled with all kinds omae. Ya got media icons types mixing with gutter punks, fan boys, undercover cops, sector police, bounty hunters… If you can imagine it, you'll find it in the sprawl. This chapter provides you with a few faces to populate your game world.

Wild Card Alert!
When you see this Icon, you'll know you're dealing at a Wild Card non-player character.

Bio-Horrors

Government experiments bred or built for war, genetic mistakes that somehow got loose, or the creations of some modern-day Joseph Mengele, biohorrors are the result of science gone awry.

Basp

A military experiment to create a comparatively large venomous bat, the basp is a nocturnal creature that hunts its prey—usually small animals and children—by paralyzing them with its large stinger, and then eating them alive. Basps prefer dank, dark environments like sewers, subway tunnels or abandoned warehouses where squatters provide ready prey.

Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts D4(A), Spirit D4, Strength D8, Vigor D10Skills: Fighting D6, Notice D6, Stealth D8,
Pace: —; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3; **Cybertrauma:** —;
Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+D4.
- **Paralytic Sting:** The basp has a large stinger that causes instant paralysis for those who fail their Vigor roll. The paralysis lasts for 1D6 minutes.
- **Flight:** Basps have a Flying Pace of 10", with a Climb of 6".
- **Sonar:** Ignores all penalties for poor lighting.
- **Small:** Because of their size, human sized opponents suffer –2 to attack rolls vs. Basps.
- **Size –2:** The Basp is roughly the size of a large house cat.

Beetle Rat

A result of some twisted experiment to breed larger, tougher rats, the beetle rat is another common fixture of the urban sprawl. Standing roughly 2 and a half feet at the shoulders, these vicious rats travel in groups of 4 to 6 and have been known to drag down a full grown man.

Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts D4(A), Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D8
Skills: Fighting D6, Notice D10, Stealth D8, Tracking D6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (3); **Cybertrauma:** —;
Cyberware: None
Special Abilities:

- **Armor (+3):** The beetle rat has a hardened outer shell.
- **Bite:** Str+D6.
- **Low light vision:** Ignores penalties for dim and dark lighting.
- **Size –1:** Beetle rats are roughly the size of an English bulldog.

Cyber Hound

Street Docs like to tinker, and in lieu of paying customers they'll settle for whatever they can find. Domesticated animals work best, as they are often trusting enough of man to allow them get close, and then Blam! The next thing the animal knows is that it has newly minted thorax and legs, and a new set of sensors. Completed specimens are often traded to wasteland scavengers, dog fighting rings, or gangsters looking for a new status symbol, or vicious guardian.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D6(A), Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Fighting D6, Guts D6, Notice D10, Tracking D10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (2); **Cybertrauma:** –2

Cyberware: (Streetware) Level 2 Subdermal Armor (+2 Armor), Cyber eyes w/low light vision, Image magnification (gains low light vision monstrous ability and +1 to Notice rolls involving sight)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+D4.
- **Fleet Footed:** Dogs roll a D10 when running instead of a D6.
- **Go for the Throat:** Cyber Hounds rely on a millennia of instinct to drive them to the weakest spot on a target. A raise on its attack roll indicates the cyber hound hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
- **Size –1:** cyber hounds are fairly small.

Cyber Shark

The cyber shark is a monstrosity originally created by the old U.S military to patrol the coastlines of North America and attack anything deemed a threat by its IFF (International Friend/Foe) recognition systems. After the collapse of the United States, many of these creatures, left to their own devices, went into deeper waters across the world. The cyber shark is fitted with a tactical computer, mini torpedoes, and sub dermal armor.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D4(A), Spirit D8, Strength D12+4, Vigor D12

Skills: Fighting D10, Guts D8, Notice D12, Swimming D10

Pace:—; **Parry:** 7 (1); **Toughness:** 16 (4); **Cybertrauma:** –2

Cyberware: (Milware) Advance KNOWcomp (Knowledge (Guerrilla warfare) D10, Knowledge (International Friend/Foe recognition) D10), Titanium sub dermal armor (+4), Battle Computer (Fighting skill benefit: The cyber shark can make a Notice check as a free action. Success indicates the shark has found a weak spot in his opponent's defenses and gains a +1 Parry and to Fighting rolls for that round only), Heavy weapon mount (Mini Torpedoes Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 4D8+2, Shots 6, HW)

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- **Bite:** Str+D12. The cyber shark's teeth have been lined with titanium and have an AP of 4.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking a cyber shark due to its large size.
- **Size +4:** Cyber Sharks can grow up to 20' in length.

Toxic Roach

Toxic roaches are vile insects that have mutated in the past two decades since the free city of Chicago was nuked in the second civil war. They are greenish/black in color and otherwise look like very big roaches. Toxic roaches can be found in any urban environment, especially slums.

Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts D4(A), Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Fighting D8, Notice D6, Stealth D8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (4); **Cybertrauma:** 0

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+D4
- **Armor (+4):** The toxic roach has a hardened outer shell which gives it an Armor 4 bonus .
- **Immunity:** The Toxic Roach is immune to the effects of its vomit and the effects of Toxic Death (see below).
- **Small:** Because of their size, human sized opponents suffer –2 to attack rolls vs. toxic roaches.
- **Size –2:** Toxic roaches are much, much larger than the insects they originated from, growing up to 2 feet in length and a foot tall. That said, they are still considered small creatures for the purposes of toughness modifiers and attacks against them.
- **Toxic Death:** When a toxic roach is killed it explodes. All adjacent characters must make an Agility roll or suffer 2D6 damage.
- **Toxic Vomit:** The toxic roach can spew a stream of highly acidic vomit (Range: 3/6/12). Targets must make Vigor roll at –2. Failure indicates they take 2D6 damage every round until the goo is removed from their body. Removing the goo takes 1 full round, during which the character may not move or perform any other actions.
- **Wall Walker:** Toxic roaches have a Pace of 5 when skittering across walls and other vertical surfaces.

BIO-HORROR GENERATORS

In Interface Zero, the world has reached a point where man has all but mastered the science of genetic manipulation. With a snip here and a paste there, scientists can create just about any type of hybrid species they want. While most creatures are locked safe and secure in some lab, others have somehow escaped confinement and fled into the wilderness and even into cities.

Some super-secret labs (such as those in Chiba or T.L.I's research facilities in Johannesburg and Chicago) are rumored to have obtained alien DNA from deep space colonies on Mars or the Jovian moons around Jupiter, which they use to create monstrous hybrid creatures. It would be a great undertaking to stat up all the possible combinations of creatures characters might encounter in their adventures, so we've decided to provide you with the tools to create your own. The following generators allow you to quickly create a limitless number of new and unique mutated monstrosities.

Mutant Type

First determine the type of mutant you want to create, either by rolling on the Mutant Type Table or by choosing one of the three options listed below.

Table 8:1: Mutant Type

D6	Mutant Type
1–2	Mutant Animal
3–4	Spliced Animal
5–6	Xenomorph

Mutant Animals

Mutant animals are terrestrial beasts that have been genetically modified and mutated to varying degrees.

- **Base Statistics:** Mutant animals begin with the base statistics of an animal and gain additional mutations and drawbacks rolled on the Mutations Table and Drawback Table respectively:
- **Mutations:** 2D4 (Mutant Animals have 2D4 mutations, each rolled separately on the Mutations Table.)
- **Drawbacks:** 1D4–1 (Mutant Animals have 1D4–1 drawbacks, each rolled separately on the Drawbacks Table.)

Spliced Animals

A spliced animal is an aberrant amalgamation which combines two natural animals in unusual ways.

- **Base Abilities:** A spliced animal's Strength and Vigor die types are the highest of either animal involved in the splice. Its Agility, Smarts, and Spirit die types are an averaged from the two animals used in the splice (round up). If one component creature in the splice has animal intelligence, as indicated with an (A) after its Smarts die, and the other does not, the spliced animal has a random 50/50 chance of possessing sentience or animal intelligence.
- **Base Skills:** A spliced animal has all the skills of both animals used in the splice, at the highest die type of either animal.
- **Base Size:** A spliced Animal uses the highest size of either component animal.
- **Base Pace:** A spliced animal has the highest pace from each component animal for every movement form listed.
- **Derived Statistics:** Calculate a spliced animal's derived traits normally based on its new Ability and Skill die types.
- **Special Abilities:** A spliced animal has the combined special abilities of both animals used in the splice, plus it may have additional mutations.
- **Mutations:** 1D4–1 (Spliced Animals have 1D4–1 mutations, each rolled separately on the Mutations Table.)
- **Drawbacks:** 1D4 (Spliced Animals have 1D4 drawbacks, each rolled separately on the Drawbacks Table.)

Xenomorphs

Xenomorphs are bizarre mutant creatures either based on alien stock, or they may be terrestrial beasts so heavily mutated as to be unrecognizable.

- **Base Abilities:** Roll the xenomorph's base smarts on the Xenomorph Smarts Table and roll the xenomorph's other abilities on the Xenomorph Attributes table
- **Base Skills:** All xenomorphs begin with the Fighting, Notice, and Guts skills. Roll for additional skills a number of times equal to half their smarts die on the Xenomorph Skills Table. Then determine the die type used for each skill by rolling them separately on the Xenomorph Skill Die Table.
- **Base Size:** Roll for the xenomorph's size on the Xenomorph Size Table.

- **Base Pace:** Roll for the xenomorphs form(s) of movement and their respective paces on the Xenomorph Locomotion Table.
- **Derived Statistics:** Calculate a xenomorph's derived traits normally based on its Ability and Skill die types.
- **Other Abilities:** For each xenomorph roll for armor on the Xenomorph Dermis Table, roll for their attack forms on the Xenomorph Basic Attacks Table, and roll for their sensory abilities on the Xenomorph Senses Table. Additional Special Abilities may be gained through a xenomorph's mutations as rolled on the Mutations Table.
- **Mutations:** 1D6–1 (Xenomorphs have 1D6–1 mutations, each rolled separately on the Mutations Table.)
- **Drawbacks:** 1D4–1 (Xenomorphs have 1D4–1 drawbacks, each rolled separately on the Drawbacks Table.)

Table 8:4: Xenomorph Skills*

SMARTS ROLL**	SKILL
1	Stealth
2	Survival
3	Tracking
4	Climbing
5	Intimidation
6	Persuasion
7	Investigation
8	Taunt
9+	Knowledge (pick one)

*All Xenomorphs begin with the Fighting Notice and Guts skills.

**Instead of rolling a set die type on this table, use the xenomorph's smarts die when rolling to see which skills it has. Unlike a normal Smarts roll, this roll does not ace when the die rolls the highest possible number.

Table 8:2: Xenomorph Smarts

D12	INTELLIGENCE LEVEL	SMARTS ATTRIBUTE
1–3	Low order animal intellect	D4(A)
4–6	High order animal intellect	D6(A)
7–8	Low sentient	D4
9	Average sentient	D6
10	Above average sentient	D8
11	High sentient	D10
12	Peak sentient	D12

Table 8:5: Xenomorph Skill Die

D8	SKILL DIE
1	D6
2	D8
3	D10
4	D12
5	One die type lower than the linked attribute's die (D4 minimum)
6–7	As linked attribute's die
8	One die type higher than the linked attribute's die

Table 8:3: Xenomorph Attributes

D12	ATTRIBUTE
1–2	D4
3–6	D6
7–9	D8
10–11	D10
12	D12

Table 8:6: Xenomorph Size

2D10 ROLL	SIZE	SIZE MOD*	STRENGTH MOD**
2–4	Small	–2	+0
5–7	Medium	–1	+0
8–9	Medium	+0	+0
10–11	Medium	+1	+1
12	Medium	+2	+2
13	Medium	+3	+3
14	Large	+4	+4
15	Large	+5	+5
16	Large	+6	+6
17	Large	+7	+7
18	Huge	+8	+8
19	Huge (Gargantuan)	+9	+9
20	Huge (Gargantuan)	+10	+10

*Adds to Toughness

**Adds to base strength rolled earlier. Each bonus increases the creature's base strength die by one step. Anything over a D12 has the remainder applied as a bonus to the D12 (ex: a +5 bonus added to a D10 yields D12+4).

Table 8:7: Xenomorph Locomotion

D10 ROLL	METHOD OF LOCOMOTION	PACE
1	Burrowing	Pace 1D6+1 and a Burrowing Pace of 1D4 plus Burrowing ability
2	Climbing	Pace D6+1 plus Climbing Pace D4+2
3	Clinging	Pace and Climbing Pace D6+2 plus Wall Walker ability
4	Crawling	Pace D6+1
5	Flying	Pace D6+1 plus Flying Pace of D12+6
6	Jumping	Pace D6+3
7	Slithering	Pace D6+1
8	Swimming	Pace D8–1 plus a Swim skill of D10 and Aquatic ability
9	Walking	Pace D8+2
10	Roll twice more	Use best Pace

Table 8:8: Xenomorph Dermis

D8 Roll	Type	Armor Bonus
1	Feathers	+1
2	Thick Skin	+1
3	Thick Fur	+2
4	Leathery Hide	+2
5	Thick Scales	+3
6	Bony Plates	+4
7	Chitinous Exoskeleton	+5
8	Calcated Shell	+6

Table 8:10: Xenomorph Senses

D8 Roll	Primary Sense
1	Echolocation
2	Infravision
4	Low Light Vision
5	Normal Vision
6	Scent
7	Sixth Sense
8	Roll twice more

Table 8:9 Xenomorph Basic Attacks

D8 Roll	Attack	Damage
1	Bludgeon	Str+D4
2	Bite	Str+D6
3	Claws	Str+D8
4	Horns	Str+D10
5	Pinchers	Str+D12
6	Stinger	Str+D4 plus poison
7	Tentacles	Str+D4 plus grapples target on a raise.
8	Roll twice more	

Table 8:11: Mutations

D20	Mutation	Game Effects
1	Acidic Ichor	When damaged, everything within 1" takes 2D6 acid damage.
2	Additional Natural Weapon	Roll for a new attack form on the Xenomorph Basic Attacks Table
3	Armored Dermis	Increase Armor by +2
4	Bio-Electric Field	2D4 electricity damage to any who touch or are touched by it.
5	Dwarfism	–2 to base size
6	Enhanced Ability	Increase a random ability by one die type.
7	Enhanced Skill	Increase a random skill by one die type.
8	Extra Limbs	+1 Pace and the Improved Frenzy Edge
9	Extra-motive	Roll a new form of movement on the Xenomorph Locomotion Table
10	Extra Sense	Roll for a new sense on the Xenomorph Senses table.
11	Extremophile	Half damage from Heat and Cold based attacks.
12	Gigantism	+1 to base size and gains the Brawny Edge.
13	Hardy	Gains the Hardy monster trait.

Table 8:11: Mutations (Cont).

14	Horrific Appearance	Causes a Fear roll at –2
15	Multi-headed	+2 to Notice
16	Poisoned Attack	Vigor roll at –4 or suffer instant Paralysis that lasts 2D6 minutes.
17	Regenerative Tissues	Gains a natural healing roll every round.
18	Slimy	+4 to rolls to escape a grapple or other restraint.
19	Stench	Anyone within 5' must make a vigor roll or become shaken.
20	Super mutant	Roll twice more.

Table 8:12: Drawbacks

D12	DRAWBACK	GAME EFFECTS
1	Anemic	Gains the Anemic Hindrance
2	Arrested Development	Gains the Young Hindrance (lower Strength and Vigor by 1)
3	Atrophied Ability	Lower a random Ability by one die type (minimum D4)
4	Atrophied Limb	Gains the Lame Hindrance
5	Blind	Gains the Blind Hindrance
6	Cold Blooded	+4 damage from cold based attacks
7	Cyclopia (one-eyed)	Gains the One Eye Hindrance
8	Microcephally (pin-headed)	Lower Spirit by one die type (minimum D4)
9	Holoprosencephaly	Lower Smarts by one die type (minimum D4)
10	Oily Epidermis	+4 damage from fire based attacks
11	PH Sensitivity	+4 damage from acid
12	Progeria	Gains the Elderly Hindrance

Cyborgs

The prevalence of bioware and cyberware in 2088 makes it easy—even fashionable in some circles—to make a modification to your body. Some people tend to go overboard, however, chroming themselves to the point where the line between man and machine all but disappears. The following cyborgs are only samples of the types of chromed people characters might encounter in an Interface Zero game.

Borg Thug

Bio replacement surgery is expensive, so most make do with functional cybernetics purchased from shadowy street docs, but even that can be pricey. Consequently, lots of amputees end up working off the debt by doing "favors" for the first few months after surgery.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D10 (D8), Vigor D8

Skills: Fighting D8, Hacking D4, Intimidation D6, Hacking D4, Lockpicking D4, Repair D6, Shooting D8

Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7; **Cybertrauma:** –4; **Street Cred:** 3

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Berserk, Combat Reflexes, Expert Fighter, Marksman, Cyber Tolerance

Cyberware: (Gutterware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), Razor Nails (Str+D4 damage. If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters add a D8 to their damage roll instead of a D6), Amplified hearing (Adds a +2 bonus to Notice rolls involving Sound), Level 1 Muscle Augmentation (Increases borg's Strength by 1 die type)

Gear: Assault rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3), leather jacket, spare parts, toolkit.

Experienced Borg

Former soldiers (government, corporate, or underworld) make up the vast bulk of cyborgs. Modern medicine and the soldier's own contract often mean that even after losing a limb to an improvised explosive device or mortar shell, the soldier is up and on the battlefield again within a month. Having been decommissioned though, their security firm strips them down of their most expensive gear to give to their new recruits… If they can get to the borg before he disappears, that is.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D8, Spirit D8, Strength D10, Vigor D10

Skills: Climbing D6, Fighting D8, Hacking D4, Intimidation D6, Lockpicking D6, Notice D6, Shooting D6, Stealth D6, Survival D6, Throwing D6

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (4); **Cybertrauma:** –6; **Street Cred:** 8

Hindrances: Loyal, Stubborn

Edges: Expert Fighter, Level Headed, Golemmech Training, Soldier (Seasoned)

Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), Subdermal Armor (+1 Armor), Silicon Bone Injections (+1 Toughness), Level 1 Reactive Reflex Enhancers (+1 bonus to Parry), Cyber eye w/ Flash compensators, low light vision and image magnification (+1 to Notice rolls involving sight, cannot be dazed or blinded by flashes, gains low light vision monstrous ability)

Gear: Hold-out pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D6), Combat Trench Coat (+3 armor)

Overborg Gladiator

Hulking, armor-plated misanthropic outcasts with a grudge against society, cyborg pit-fighters that go this far "overborg" tend to solve problems with their hammer-like fist as their 'ware starts taking a toll on their already unstable psyches.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D12, Vigor D12

Skills: Fighting D10, Hacking D4, Intimidate D8, Shooting D8, Streetwise D6

Charisma: –2; **Pace**: 10; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 17 (6); **Cybertrauma:** –6, **Street Cred:** 15

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Death Wish, Mean

Edges: Berserk, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Two-Fisted

Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), 2 Cyber arms w/concealed weapon mount on each (war hammer, Str+D8; SMG, Range:12/24/48, Damage: 2D6, AP 1, RoF 3; can carry 8 times her Strength die type in pounds), Tactical Computer (The character can make a Notice check as a free action. Success indicates the character has found a weak spot in his opponent's defenses and gains a +1 to Fighting rolls for that round only), Level 2 Tension Springs (+4 to the characters Pace), Level 3 Subdermal Armor (+3 Armor), Silicon Bone Injections [3 injections] (+3 Toughness)

Gear: Cybernetic toolkit, scavenger's trench (+3 Armor)

Gang Members

The sprawl's filled with a plethora of gangs just waiting to give the characters in your game a bad day. Use the following templates to represent various bangers in your campaign.

Gang Soldier

Young punks and hangers on. These ganglanders are only really dangerous in packs. Soldiers do the grunt work of the gang, protecting the street corners, going to war against rival gangs. They're the face of a gang.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D4, Spirit D4, Strength D10 (D8), Vigor D6

Skills: Driving D4, Fighting D6, Hacking D4, Intimidation D4, Knowledge (Pop Culture) D6, Shooting D8, Stealth D6, Streetwise D6

Charisma: –2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1); **Cybertrauma:** –4; **Street Cred:** 3

Hindrances: Mean, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Expert Fighter, Sweep

Cyberware: (Gutterware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), Razor Nails (Str+D4 damage. If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters add a D8 to their damage roll instead of a D6), Amplified hearing (Adds a +1 bonus to Notice rolls involving Sound), Level 1 Muscle Augmentation (increases soldier's strength by one die type)

Gear: Club (Str+D6), Knife (Str+D4), or light pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D6), Gangster's leathers (+1 Armor).

Gang War Chief

A hardcore banger who survives long enough picks up the skills, scars, and a callous disregard for life needed to become a real threat. This cat leads the gang into battle against rival sets.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D8, Vigor D6

Skills: Driving D6, Fighting D8, Hacking D4, Intimidation D6, Notice D6, Shooting D10, Streetwise D8

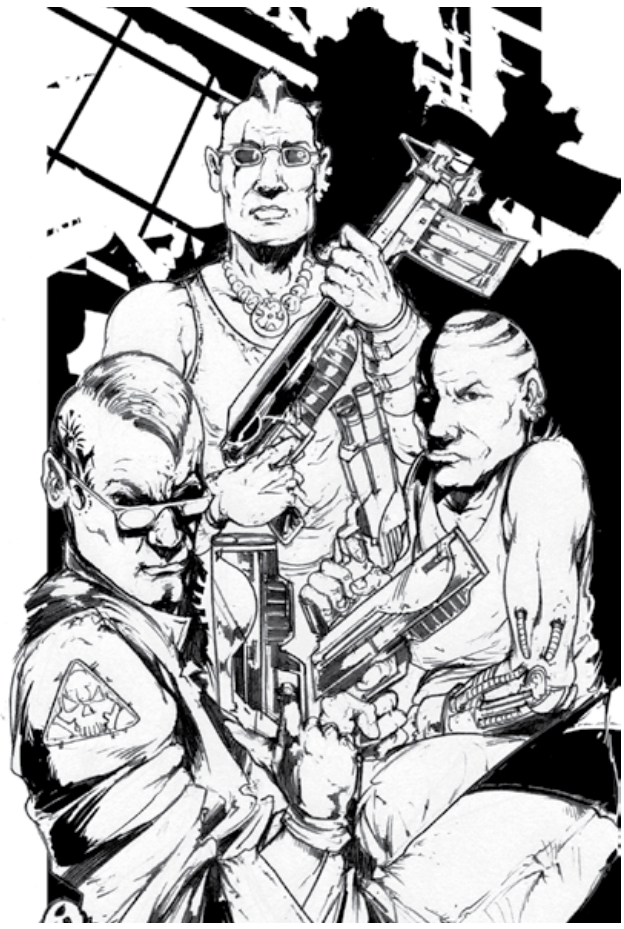
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1); **Cybertrauma:** –4, **Street Cred:** 10

Hindrances: Enemy (Minor), Wanted (Minor), Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Combat Reflexes (Seasoned), Expert Fighter, Command, Two Fisted, Pack Fighting

Cyberware: (Gutterware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), Standard Cyberarm (the War Chief can carry 6 times his Strength die type in pounds), Storage Compartment, Razor Nails (Str+D4 damage, character add a D8 to their damage roll instead of a D6 when an unarmed Fighting attack hits with a raise)

Gear: Ganger's leathers (+1 Armor), Pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D6+1), occasionally a vehicle (motorcycle or customized car).



GANG LEADER

The leader of a gang is a calculating individual, ruling as much by cunning and ingenuity as by force. After all, he (or she) didn't rise to the top of the gang's food chain by charisma alone. Protected by soldiers and lieutenants, the leader of a gang only puts himself in danger when going to a high level meet with other gangs or it's time to go to war.

Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts D8, Spirit D8, Strength D10, Vigor D8

Skills: Driving D8, Fighting D10, Hacking D4, Intimidation D8, Notice D6, Shooting D12, Stealth D6, Streetwise D10

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10/12 (4/6); **Cybertrauma:** –6 **Street Cred:** 30

Hindrances: Enemy (Major), Wanted (Minor), Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Command, Expert Fighter, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Natural leader, Two Fisted, Pack Fighting

Cyberware: (Gutterware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), Level 2 Sub dermal armor (+2 armor), refurbished retractable blades (Str+D4, AP 2, character never counts as unarmed, If an unarmed fighting attack hits with a raise, characters adds a D12 to their damage roll instead of a D6 and gains AP3.)

Gear: Urban Punk Buckled Combat Jacket (+2/+4 Armor negates 4AP), AGA Thunderbolt (Range: 20/40/80, Damage: 2D10+2, 2AP), occasionally a vehicle (motorcycle or customized car).

Hackers

Hackers come from all types of backgrounds, from all corners of the globe. Below are three common archetypes for use in your game.

Anarchist Hacker

The anarchist hacker is the mad genius of The Deep, a pirate, free radical, and terrorist of the virtual world.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D12, Spirit D8, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Investigation D8, Hacking D12, Lockpicking D8, Notice D10, Shooting D8, Stealth D6

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 8/10 (3/5); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 10

Hindrances: Notorious, Vow (Major), Wanted (Major)

Edges: Advanced Programming, Expert hacker, Jack-of-all-Trades, Programming 101, Virtual Reach, Extended Virtual reach, Masterful Virtual reach

Cyberware: (Streetware) Neural-master™ Hyper TAP (+2 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 9, Parry 11, Toughness 5[4])

Programs: Rating 6 Attack program (Damage 2D10+1, AP4), Rating 4 armor program (Toughness bonus 4), Rating 2 Cutter Program, (D6 forrolls to cut through a Firewall)

Gear: Street Soldier Combat Trench Coat (+3/+5 Armor, negates 4 AP), Mosquito Storm Handgun (Range: 15/30/45, Damage: 2D4, RoF 4, Shots 36)

Corporate Hacker

Trained for VR combat and net security, corporate hackers often find employment guarding important sites, battling viral intruders, and launching search and destroy missions against information pirates.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D6, Strength D4, Vigor D6

Skills: Hacking D10, Notice D6, Shooting D4, Taunt D6

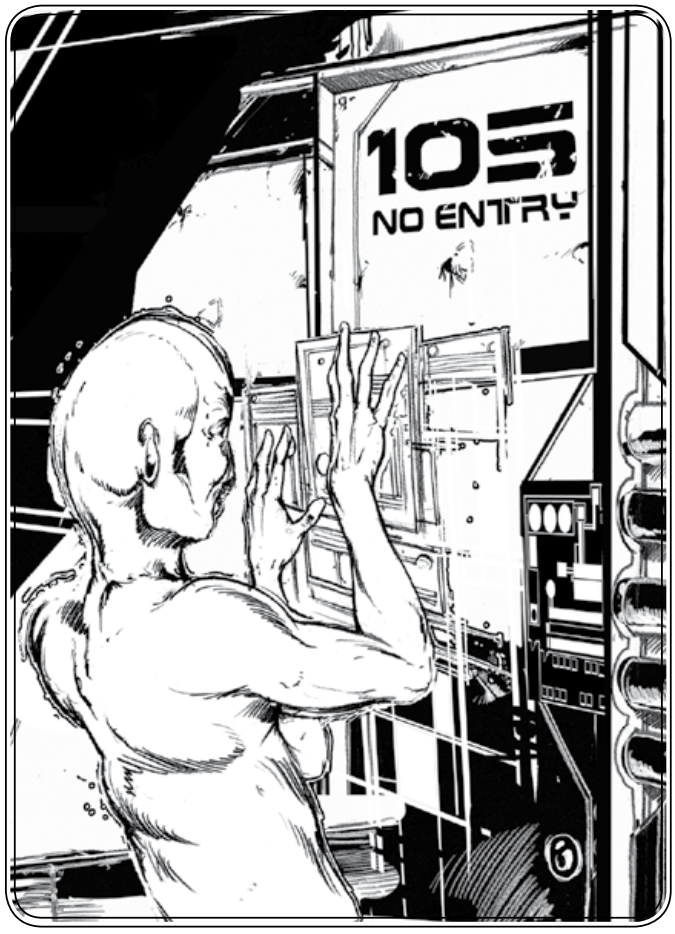
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 7/8 (2/3); **Cybertrauma:** 0, **Street Cred:** 10

Hindrances: Loyal, Pacifist (Minor), Yellow

Edges: Advanced Programming, Connections (Corporation, Police), Expert hacker, Programming 101, Virtual Reach, Extended Virtual Reach

Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Neural-master™ Hyper TAP (+2 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 9, Parry 11, Toughness 5)

Programs: Rating 4 Attack program (Damage 2D8+1, Area of Effect Subroutine, Medium Burst Template, Armor penetration



Subroutine AP 2, Lethal Biofeedback subroutine), Rating 4 armor program (Toughness bonus 4), Rating 3 Cutter Program, (D8 forrolls to cut through a Firewall)

Gear: Armored Business suit (+2/+3) Street Talker Defense Pistol (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 2D6–1)

Info-Pirate

"Dude, information wants to be free! And because it's just lying there like money in the street, I can take it, copy it, give it to my friends and sell it other people – you know to cover my time and all. Say, you want a copy of IZ?"

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Investigation D8, Hacking D10, Persuasion D6, Streetwise D8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 6 (1); **Cybertrauma:** –1; **Street Cred:** 15

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Habit: info-Junkie (Major)

Edges: Connections (Hackers), Expert hacker, Programming 101, Virtual Reach

Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 3 TAP (+1 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 8, Parry 8, Toughness 5[9]), SAGE ITLoremaster™ KNOWcomp (2 Smarts-Based Skill slots [Notice, D6, Programming D6])
Programs: Rating 2 Attack program (Damage 2D6+1), Rating 2 armor program (Toughness bonus 2), Rating 3 Cutter Program, (D8 forrolls to cut through a Firewall)
Gear: Hold-out pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D6), ganger leathers (+1 Armor).

Ismists

People gotta believe in something these days; God, money, mother earth, the Chicago Cubs –whatever gets ya through the day neh? These cats got their beliefs comin' out their ears. Just be careful they don't decide what you believe somehow steps on their pretty view of the world, omae, because they won't have a problem dealing you out of the game if their philosophy condones it.

Hybrid Activist

The hybrid activist is has turned inward toward her inner beast for guidance and come away with a nurturing life affirming message that love can make the world a better place. Whether this is her inner spirit guide speaking to her or simply a meme she picked up from a Saturday morning cartoon mouse that owns his own chain of virtual theme parks is still up in the air.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Fighting D6, Hacking D6, Notice D6, Persuasion D6, Stealth D6
Charisma: –2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 5
Hindrances: Loyal, Outsider, Pacifist (Minor), Stubborn
Edges: Beast Master, Danger Sense, Quick
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 3 TAP (+1 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 8, Parry 8, Toughness 5),
Gear: Leather jacket (+1 Armor), eco-friendly minivan.
Special Abilities:

- **Heightened Vision:** Low-light vision.
- **Keen Sense:** +2 Notice with hearing.
- **Natural Weaponry:** Two claws, Str+D4 each.

Fanatic

The ordinary ismist is person whose belief sometimes overshadows reality. The fanatic goes one step further jumping the tracks into the realm of the violently psychotic or suicidal. Often found as members of cults, radical fundamentalist sects, or terror cells, fanatics have no respect for life, including their own.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6
Skills: Driving D4, Fighting D4, Knowledge (Ism) D6, Notice D4, Shooting D4, Stealth D6
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5; **Cybertrauma:** –2; **Street Cred:** 2
Hindrances: Death Wish, Loyal, Vow: serve the cause (Major)
Edges: Connections (with other ismists following that cause).
Cyberware: (Gutterware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5) Abdominal storage compartments filled with explosives (Damage 3D6, Medium Burst Template)
Gear: Assault rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3, Auto, 3RB) or hold-out pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage 2D6), articles of faith or a hard copy of Ism's manifesto.

Religious Leader

With culture and technology racing ahead faster and faster, more and more people have returned to a more traditional life including organized religion. The heads of these groups range from pious shepherds to megalomaniacal cult leaders, with most falling somewhere in between.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D8, Strength D6, Vigor D6
Skills: Hacking D4, Knowledge (Theology and Religions) D8, Persuasion D6 (+4)
Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 7/8 (2/3); **Cybertrauma:** 0, **Street Cred:** 10
Hindrances: Delusional (vision/voice of God, Minor), Overconfident, Vow (Minor)
Edges: Connections (Religious Donors), Cyber tolerance (+1), Rich
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5), Tailored Pheromones (+2 to Charisma), Loremaster™ KNOWcomp (2 Smarts-Based Skill slots [Streetwise D8, Knowledge (Politics) D8])
Gear: Ballistic robes (superior, +2/+3 Armor).

TERRORIST MASTERMIND

Bereft of a means of fighting an actual war, the terrorist masterminds (or freedom fighters as they like to call themselves) fight for their ideals using the only weapon they have left: fear. They insulate themselves behind memes that tell them the end justifies the means, and they are right to do what they do, no matter how many innocents are killed or maimed. Terrorist masterminds are often surrounded by fanatical ismist supporters who believe as they do, thanks in part to the constant reinforcement they receive from the mastermind.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D8, Spirit D10, Strength D6, Vigor D8
Skills: Fighting D10, Hacking, D6 Intimidation D8, Knowledge (Ism) D8, Notice D8, Persuasion D10, Shooting D8, Stealth D8, Streetwise D8, Taunt D8, Throwing D6
Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8/9 (2/3); **Cybertrauma:** +2; **Street Cred:** 20
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Vengeful (Major), Wanted (Major)
Edges: Charismatic, Command, Connections (Weapon Suppliers), Harder to Kill, Soldier (Veteran), Strong Willed
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5),
Gear: Submachine gun (Range: 12/24/48; Damage: 2D6; AP 1; RoF 3), fragmentation grenades (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 3D6; Medium Burst Template), Knife (Str+D4), Executive Decision Business Suit (+2/ +3 Armor).

Law Enforcement Cut-Outs

What's an urban setting without sector police and corporate security forces? The following Law enforcement templates are ready to use for your campaign.

Typical Security Officer

The typical security officer in 2088 is a rent-a-cop. He's probably missed out on tolerance training because of departmental cutbacks, so he's a little quicker to bring the stun baton into play. He's also not paid very well, so you might be in luck if you're trying to bribe him.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6
Skills: Driving D6, Fighting D6, Hacking D4 Intimidation D6, Notice D6, Shooting D6
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (4); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 3
Hindrances: Big Mouth, Loyal, Overconfident
Edges: Two-Fisted
Cyberware: Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5)
Gear: Light pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D6), security truncheon (Str+D6, Vigor –2 roll to avoid Shaken), Combat Vest (+2/+4 Armor), badge, handcuffs, police cruiser.

Experienced Security Officer

These officers have been on the job for a few years, making them more seasoned, better trained, and perhaps more cynical than the typical security officers.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D10 (D8), Vigor D8

Skills: Driving D6, Fighting D6, Hacking D4 Intimidation D8, Notice D8, Shooting D6, Streetwise D6
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (3); **Cybertrauma:** −1; **Street Cred:** 6
Hindrances: Cautious, Loyal, Stubborn
Edges: Bodyguard, Expert Fighter, Two-Fisted
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5), Level 1 Muscle Augmentation (increase security officer's strength by 1 die type), Level1 Subdermal Armor (+1 Armor)
Gear: Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP 2, +1 Shooting), security truncheon (Str+D6, Vigor −2 roll to avoid Shaken), undercover vest (+2 Armor), badge, handcuffs, hover police cruiser.

Shock Trooper

Elite tactical soldiers and police, trained in the use of heavy armor and weapons, shock troopers often undergo cybernetic or biological upgrading to make them preternaturally resilient.
Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D6, Spirit D8, Strength D8, Vigor D8

Skills: Climbing D6, Driving D8, Fighting D10, Hacking D4, Intimidation D8, Knowledge (Tactics) D6, Notice D6, Shooting D10, Throwing D6
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 9/11 (5/7); **Cybertrauma:** +2; **Street Cred:** 15
Hindrances: Loyal, Quirk: Emotionless, Vengeful (Minor), Vow: Troop Commander (Minor)
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Marksman, Power Armor Training, Rock and Roll!, Soldier (Veteran)
Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5), Target Tracker (When firing into melee the shock trooper only hits an innocent bystander if she rolls snake eyes for handguns or if she roll a 1 when using shotguns or autofire weapons) Silicone Bone Injection (Bone Reinforcement +3 Toughness)
Gear: Heavy pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D8, AP 2), security truncheon (Str+D6, Vigor −2 roll to avoid Shaken), 2 tear gas grenades (all breathing targets in Medium Burst Template make Vigor check every round to avoid losing one Fatigue level, 6-round duration each), nanoweave tactical armor (+5 Armor), large composite shield (+2 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged attacks), gas mask, handcuffs.

Simulacra

Simulacra are commonplace in 2088, created to serve humanity's needs in various ways ranging from combat to prostitution and menial labor.

Combat Simulacra

Decanted in super-secret military research facilities, the combat simulacrum represents the S.O.T.A in cloning technology. Combat simulacra are typically used in covert operations as assassins or special units tasked with the capture of key military targets.
Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts D6, Spirit D4, Strength D8, Vigor D8
Skills: Climbing D8, Fighting D10, Hacking D4, Guts D6, Lockpicking D6, Stealth D8, Throwing D10.
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 8; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 11 (5); **Cybertrauma:** −5; **Street Cred:** 15

Edges: Acrobat, Alertness, Ambidextrous, Block, Danger Sense, Dodge, Fleet-Footed, Nerves of Steel, Quick, Sweep, Two-Fisted.
Hindrances: Clueless, Code of Honor, Delusional, Heroic
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Razor Nails (unarmed attack does D8 damage on a raise instead of D6), Level 1 Reflex enhancers (+1 to Parry rating), Level 3 Subdermal Armor (+3 armor)
Equipment: Nanoweave shirt (+2), Armored gloves (Str+D4 damage from strikes)

Pleasure Simulacra

Pleasure simulacra are more obedient than human prostitutes, plus they can be custom built to suit the particular needs of their clients and are more easily disposed of.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6
Skills: Knowledge (Erotica) D8, Notice D6, Persuasion D6
Charisma: +6; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Cybertrauma:** –1; **Street Cred:** 4
Hindrances: Clueless, Loyal
Edges: Ambidextrous, Very Attractive
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Tailored Pheromones (+2 to Charisma)
Gear: Erotic toys, sexy wardrobe

Labor Simulacra

Labor sims fill a variety of roles in society. Some might be construction workers, waste water and sewage laborers, garbage collectors; any type of job you might think of can be filled by a labor sim.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D4, Strength D6, Vigor D8
Skills: Hacking D4, Knowledge (Construction) D8, Notice D6, Persuasion D6
Charisma: +6; Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 6; **Cybertrauma:** –1; **Street Cred:** 1
Hindrances: Clueless, Loyal
Edges: Brawny
Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Level 1 Muscle Augmentation (Boost damage to melee and unarmed attacks)
Gear: Rocket Hammer (–1 to fighting, damage Str+D8 or 2D10 when activated and double damage against inanimate objects), tool kit

Military Cut-Outs

The following are just a few examples of typical soldiers characters might encounter in military-themed adventures.

Combat Hacker

The combat hacker fills a vital role in support of any combat operation, ghosting across the battlefield to disable enemy weaponry and vehicles, communications systems and especially enemy hackers.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D6, Strength D4, Vigor D6
Skills: Hacking D10, Notice D6, Shooting D4, Taunt D6
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5 (+2/+4); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 10

Hindrances: Loyal, Pacifist (Minor), Yellow
Edges: Advanced Programming, Connections (2), Expert hacker, Programming 101, Virtual Reach, Extended Virtual Reach
Cyberware: (Milware) Hyper TAP (+2 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 9, Parry 11, Toughness 5)
Programs: Rating 4 Attack program (Damage 2D8+1, Area of Effect Subroutine, Medium Burst template, Armor penetration Subroutine AP2, Lethal Biofeedback subroutine), Rating 4 armor program (Toughness bonus 4), Rating 5 Cutter Program, (D12 forrolls to cut through a Firewall)
Gear: Combat Jacket (+2/+4 Armor 4AP), Gyroc Pistol,(Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP 2, +1 Shooting)

Grunt

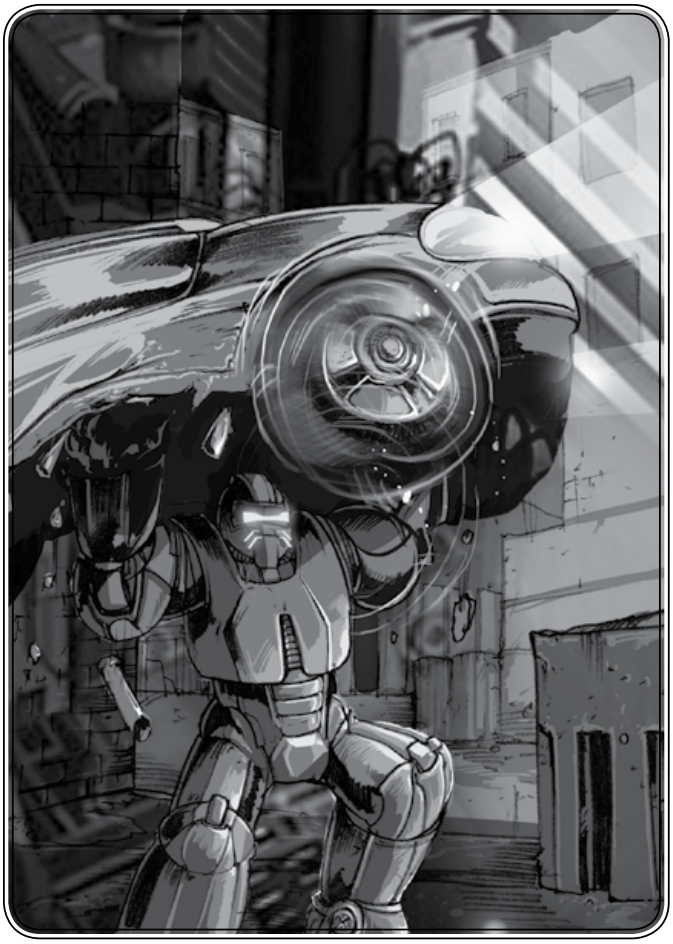
The grunt is a straight-up soldier without too much experience. In movies these guys are the ones always shooting at the air around the heroes and then getting gunned down in return.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D8 (D6), Vigor D6
Skills: Fighting D6, Hacking D4 Intimidation D6, Notice D4, Shooting D6, Stealth D4
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (+2/+4); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 8
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: Alertness, Expert Fighter, Steady Hands
Cyberware: (Milware) Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Level 1 Muscle Augmentation (Strength die type boosted by 1)
Gear: Assault rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3, Auto, 3RB) or Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP 2, +1 Shooting), ballistic combat fatigues (+2/+4 Armor 4AP), Comlink.

Golemmech Pilot

The golemmech pilot is trained in operating golemmechs; mobile heavy weapons platforms.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D8
Skills: Drive, D10, Fighting D6, Hacking D4, Notice D8, Shooting D8,
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 8
Hindrances: Loyal, Stubborn
Edges: Ace, Expert Fighter, Golemmech Training, Modification Upgrade, Quick, Rock and Roll!
Cyberware: (Milware) Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Signa-7 Vehicle Control Interface (Improved Acceleration: The character can accelerate up to 2 times his vehicles acceleration. Enhanced Control: Pilot suffers no penalties to Driving rolls when travelling over rough terrain)
Gear: Assault rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3, Auto, 3RB) or Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP 2, +1 Shooting), Cancer golemmech (See chapter 4: Equipment for more information on Golemmechs)

Squad Leader

The squad leader has been trained to lead his squad into a variety of combat situation, ranging from jungle, mountain, and desert warfare to counter-insurgency operations in urban environments.
Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D6, Spirit D8, Strength D12+1 (D10), Vigor D8
Skills: Fighting D6, Hacking D4, Intimidation D6, Knowledge (Small Unit Tactics) D6, Notice D6, Shooting D10, Stealth D6, Throwing D6



Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 8; **Parry:** 5 (1); **Toughness:** 7 (4); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 15
Hindrances: Loyal, Stubborn
Edges: Command, Expert Fighter, Modification Upgrade, Quick, Rock and Roll!, Two Fisted
Cyberware: (Milware), Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Level 1 Olfactory Booster (+1 bonus to Notice rolls involving Smell) Level 1 Reactive Reflex Enhancers (+1 bonus to her Parry attribute). Level 1 Tension Springs: Add 2 to the characters Pace attribute. Level 2 Muscle Augmentation (Strength boosted by 2 die types)
Gear: Assault rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3, Auto, 3RB), Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP 2, +1 Shooting), 2 fragmentation grenades (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 3D6, Medium Burst Template), Form-fitting Ballistic Armor (+4 Armor)

OFFICER

The officer is in command of a large group of soldiers; anything from platoons, companies to entire brigades. He or she is well versed in tactics involving large scale military operations, logistics, and support.
Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D10, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D10
Skills: Fighting D6, Intimidation D6, Knowledge (Military Tactics) D10, Notice D6, Shooting D6, Stealth D6, Throwing D6
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (7); **Cybertrauma:** –1; **Street Cred:** 20
Hindrances: Loyal, Stubborn
Edges: Alertness, Command, Fervor
Cyberware: (Milware), Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Battle Computer (Shooting skill benefit: Modifiers to Medium and Long ranged shots are eliminated for Medium range and reduced to –2 for long range. Additionally, when shooting into melee the character only risks hitting a bystander on a roll of snake eyes for hand guns and a 1 for automatic weapons or shotguns), Level 3 Sub-dermal Armor (+3 Armor)
Gear: Assault rifle (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 3, Auto, 3RB), Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP 2, +1 Shooting) Form-fitting Ballistic Armor (+4 Armor)

SPEC OPS WARRIOR

The Best of the best, the spec ops warrior is a heavily cybered killing machine, a graduate of the most grueling military training programs on the planet. The spec ops warrior excels in guerrilla warfare, counter insurgency operations and small unit combat. The spec ops warrior is also highly trained in hacking to aid in penetration of secure facilities.
Attributes: Agility D10, Smarts D8, Spirit D8, Strength D10, Vigor D8
Skills: Fighting D10, Hacking D8, Knowledge (Special Forces training), Intimidation D8, Notice D8, Shooting D12, Stealth D10,
Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 12; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11/13 (5/7); **Cybertrauma:** –5, **Street Cred:** 25
Hindrances: Loyal, Stubborn
Edges: Expert Fighter, Modification Upgrade, Quick, Rock and Roll!
Cyberware: (Milware) Ghost TAP (+2 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 9, Parry 10, Toughness 5 (4)), Battle Computer (Shooting skill benefit: Modifiers to Medium and Long ranged shots are eliminated for Medium range and reduced to –2 for long range. When shooting into melee the character only risks hitting a bystander on a roll of snake eyes for hand guns and a 1 for automatic weapons or shotguns), Level 3 Sub-dermal Armor (+3 Armor) 2 Advanced Cyber Arms (spec ops warrior can carry 8 times her Strength die type in pounds), 1 Heavy Weapon Mount (Particle Beam rifle), Chameleon Skin (Opponents suffer a –2 penalty to Opposed Notice rolls to detect the spec ops warrior), Level 3 Tension Springs (Add 6 to Pace)
Programs: Rating 6 Attack program (Damage 2D10+1, Area of Effect Subroutine [Medium Burst template], Lethal Biofeedback subroutine), Rating 4 armor program (Toughness bonus 4), Rating 5 Cutter Program, (D12 for rolls to cut through a Firewall)
Gear: AGA Loviatar (for use on recon missions. See Chapter 4 for more information on Power Armor), Combat Knife (Str+D6), Gauss sniper rifle (Range: 75/150/300, Damage: 3D8, AP4, Snapfire), LMG (Range: 30/60/120, Damage: 2D8, AP 2, RoF 4, Snapfire), Arm-mounted AGA X-2 Particle Beam rifle (Range: 10/20/40, Damage: 2D10, AP 4) Form-fitting ballistic armor (+2/+4)

Underworld Templates

The following underworld NPCs are available for use when populating your Interface Zero game with organized crime members.

Mook

Flunkies, stooges, henchmen, hoods, heavies, and thugs, if you're looking for cheap muscle this is it. Mooks are employed as often by mega conglomerations hoping to conceal their shady operations as they are by the underworld from whence they originate.

Attributes: Agility D4, Smarts D4, Spirit D4, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Driving D4, Fighting D6, Hacking D4, Intimidation D4, Notice D4, Shooting D4, Stealth D4, Streetwise D4

Charisma: –2; **Pace**: 6 (1); **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 9/11 (4/6); **Cybertrauma:** –5; **Street Cred:** 5

Hindrances: Big Mouth, Mean

Edges: Two-Fisted

Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Level 1 Muscle Augmentation (+1 damage on melee and unarmed attacks), Razor Nails (unarmed attack does D8 damage on a raise instead of D6), Level 1 Reflex Enhancers (+1 to Parry rating), Level 1 Subdermal Armor (+1 armor)

Gear: Brass knuckles (Str+D4), Knife (Str+D4), AGA Thunderbolt (Range: 20/40/80; Damage: 2D10+2; AP2), Assault shotgun (Range: 4/8/12; Damage 1–3D6; RoF: 2; Auto), Street Soldier Combat Trench Coat (+3/+5)

ANCIENT LODGE MASTER

Though he is old and feeble (a centenarian in most cases), he is one of the most powerful men on Earth. The ancient lodge master (or mountain master) has reached the summit of the underworld mountain by becoming the head of a large, diversified criminal network.

Antique, and wiser for it, he leaves most of the day-to-day grind of running his syndicate empire to one or more subordinates, while he sits enthroned like an enlightened master, or hoary Eastern dragon in a mountain of glass and steel, behind an army of trained syndicate soldiers. Those around him treat him like he is semi-divine, which is just the way the mountain master likes it. To reinforce his legendary status, the ancient lodge master often speaks in instructive fables or parables.

Attributes: Agility D4, Smarts D8, Spirit D10, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Gambling D8, Hacking D4, Intimidation D8, Knowledge (Business) D8, Knowledge (Eastern Philosophy) D8, Knowledge (History) D8, Notice D10, Persuasion D8, Stealth D4, Streetwise D10

Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 5; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 8 (3); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 30

Hindrances: Bad Eyes, Code of Honor, Elderly, Stubborn, Wanted (Major)

Edges: Charismatic, Command, Connections (Criminal Tong), Fervor, Filthy Rich, Inspire, Luck (the ancient lodge master is served by a cadre of feng shui masters), Strong Willed

Cyberware: Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 5)

Gear: Ceremonial jian/Chinese sword (Str+D8), Exotic padded robe (+3 Armor).

SYNDICATE BOSS

The syndicate boss is a "made man" within his gang, a seasoned leader that other crooks look up to. In a big triad, he's one of the lodge master's deputies, but in a local mob he calls the shots. At this level the boss might still be a hands-on kinda guy, leading a crew in the field, glad handling local luminaries and personally whacking people that cross him. Regardless, he knows his turf like the back of his hand, and gives worse than that to those that cross him.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D8, Strength D8, Vigor D8

Skills: Fighting D8, Intimidation D8, Hacking D4, Lockpicking D6, Notice D8, Persuasion D8, Shooting D6, Stealth D6, Streetwise D8

Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10/12 (4/6); **Cybertrauma:** –2; **Street Cred:** 20

Hindrances: Notorious, Vengeful (Major), Wanted (Major)

Edges: Command, Charismatic Connections (Crime Ring), Filthy Rich, Inspire

Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (Avatar Pace: 6, Parry rating 5, Toughness 5), Level 2 Subdermal Armor (+2 armor)

Gear: Heavy pistol (Range: 12/24/48; Damage: 2D8; AP 2; +1 Shooting), Executive Decision Combat Vest (+2/+4 Negates 2 AP) dark-colored sedan.

Various Npcs

The following nps don't neatly fit into any other category.

Blog Journalist

The blog journalist is a self-made media icon trying to talk over and around his competition in order to spread his memes to the largest possible percentage of divers he can. More often than not, his message has an agenda beyond simply reporting the facts.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D4

Skills: Investigation D8, Hacking D6, Notice D6, Persuasion D6, Stealth D6, Streetwise D6

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5 (1); **Cybertrauma:** –1; **Street Cred:** 6

Hindrances: Curious, Overconfident

Edges: Connections (Media), Popularity

Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), Eye camera w/memory (allows up to 1 hour continuous recording)

Gear: Leather bomber jacket (+1 Armor, only covers torso), PDA.

Bounty Hunter

Lots of bounty hunters are no better than the suspects they bring in, being more interested in the money involved than in serving justice.

Attributes: Agility D8, Smarts D6, Spirit D8, Strength D8/D12, Vigor D8

Skills: Climbing D6, Driving D8, Fighting D8, Hacking D4, Investigation D6, Notice D6, Persuasion D6, Shooting D6, Stealth D6, Streetwise D8, Tracking D6

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9/11 (3/5); **Cybertrauma:** –2; **Street Cred:** 20

Hindrances: Arrogant, Greedy (Major), Stubborn

Edges: Expert Fighter, Fleet-Footed, Modification Upgrade

Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5), Cyber eye w/Flash compensators, low light vision, and image magnification (+1 to Notice rolls involving sight, cannot be dazed or blinded by flashes, gains low light vision monstrous ability), Tactical Computer (Shooting skill benefit: Modifiers to Medium and Long ranged shots are reduced to a –1 for Medium range and –3 for long range)

Gear: Heavy pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D8), Tiger Claw Close Assault Shotgun (Range: 4/8/12, Damage: 1–3D6, RoF 2), Street Soldier Combat Trench Coat (+3/+5 armor), Handcuffs.

Bureaucrat

Both corporate and government bureaucrats, receptionists, and clerks tend to stick to the rules and procedures given to them. Being able to think outside the box is not a requirement (or even desirable for that matter).

Attributes: Agility D4, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D4, Vigor D6

Skills: Investigation D4, Hacking D6, Notice D4, Knowledge (Corporation's trade) D6, Shooting D4

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious

Edges: Connections (Corporate or Government Employer)

Cyberware: Rating 3 TAP (+1 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 8, Parry 8, Toughness 5)

Gear: Light pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D6)

Corporate-Engineered Executive Officer

People want the best of the best running their large multi-national conglom. The board wants someone who is sharp, focused, determined, ruthless, and easy on the eyes. Many modern CEOs are pulled from the genetic material of the company's best and brightest. They are brought up in private orphanages and taught the ins and out of business from day one. In private schools among their own kind they hone their cut throat tactics. After a battery of tests and socialization functions, they are unleashed on the corporate ladder, quickly displacing those without their genetic advantages, until at last one reaches the top.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D10, Spirit D8, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Hacking D6, Knowledge (Business) D8, Knowledge (Pop Culture) D8, Notice D8, Persuasion D8, Shooting D4

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 10/11 (5/6); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 8

Hindrances: Cautious, Greedy (Major)

Edges: Filthy Rich, Scholar

Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Rating 3 TAP (+1 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 8, Parry 8, Toughness 5), Level 3 Subdermal Armor (+3 armor)

Gear: Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP 2, +1 Shooting), Executive Decision Business Suit (+2/+3 armor), Booster box (master), Hover sports car or hover limo

Detective

Investigators, whether private individuals or police, tend to be a determined lot with a nose for mystery that often drags them in over their heads. Fortunately most are wily enough to get themselves out of the stinky goo they stepped in.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Fighting D6, Hacking D8, Investigation D8, Notice D8, Persuasion D6, Shooting D8, Stealth D6, Streetwise D8

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 11/13 (6/8); **Cybertrauma:** –3; **Street Cred:** 10

Hindrances: Curious, Stubborn

Edges: Connections (Informants or Police), Investigator

Cyberware: (Streetware) Rating 3 TAP (+1 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 8, Parry 8, Toughness 5), Level 3 Subdermal Armor (+3 armor)

Gear: Gyroc pistol (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2D6+1, AP 2; +1 Shooting), Street Soldier Combat Trench Coat (+3/+5 armor). For police detectives, add badge, handcuffs, unmarked police cruiser.

Fixer

The fixer is a common fixture of the shadows in any sprawl across the world. He knows everyone in the sprawl and gets paid to make to put people with money together with people with skill and gear.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D8, Spirit D8, Strength D6, Vigor D6

Skills: Investigation D6, Hacking D6, Notice D8, Persuasion D8, Stealth D6, Streetwise D10

Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 8 (3);

Cybertrauma: 0; **Street Cred:** 20

Hindrances: Cautious, Loyal, Pacifist (Minor)

Edges: Charismatic, Connections (various), Rich

Cyberware: Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5)

Gear: Heavy pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D8, AP 2), Nanoweave shirt (+3 Armor).

Gutter Punk

A child of the streets, the gutter punk is homeless and more often than not likes it that way. She sleeps in coffin motels or in abandoned tenements, living hand to mouth from a few credits she's managed to bum from passersby or from loot snatched out of stores or homes.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D6, Vigor D8

Skills: Driving D6, Fighting D6, Hacking D6, Lockpicking D4, Notice D6, Repair D6, Survival D8, Shooting D6, Tracking D6

Charisma: +0; **Pace**: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (2); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 1

Hindrances: Clueless, Poverty

Edges: Fleet-Footed, Expert Fighter

Cyberware: Rating 1 TAP (No bonus to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 6, Parry 6, Toughness 5)

Gear: Club or quarterstaff (Str+D6), Duke McCoy combat knife (Str+D6), Light pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2D6), Scavenger's Trench (+2 Armor)

Idle Rich

The idle rich live above the day to day concerns of common people. As society's leaders in terms of culture, art, finance, industry, and moral fiber, it is only rightly so. It is because of this exclusive group's wealth of vision that world is the beautiful wonderful place it is today. Well at least inside of their private arcologies it is.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D4, Vigor D6

Skills: Hacking D6, Knowledge (Art) D6, Knowledge (Business) D6, Notice D4, Persuasion D4

Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Cybertrauma:** –1; **Street Cred:** 4

Hindrances: Anemic, Greedy (Minor)

Edges: Filthy Rich

Cyberware: (Hyper Chrome) Rating 3 TAP (+1 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 8, Parry 8, Toughness 5), SAGE IT Loremaster™ KNOWcomp (2 Smarts-Based Skill slots [Streetwise D6, Programming D6)

Gear: Expensive jewellery, fine clothing, hover sports car, simulacrum servant.

Media Icon

A star is born, but only after months of pre-natal (often pre-contraception) genetic scripting. Media consultants take current media, ethnic, and cultural trends and extrapolate them out over the course of 20 years, investing millions in brewing up the perfect spokesperson, singer, or pop icon to become a given corporation's public image.

Attributes: Agility D6, Smarts D6, Spirit D6, Strength D4, Vigor D6

Skills: Hacking D4, Knowledge (Performance) D8, Persuasion D4

Charisma: +4; **Pace**: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 6 (1); **Cybertrauma:** 0; **Street Cred:** 12

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Big Mouth, Stubborn

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Filthy Rich,

Cyberware: (Hyperchrome) Rating 2 TAP (+1 to Hacking rolls, Avatar Pace 7, Parry 6, Toughness 6) Sensory Recorder /memory (allows up to 1 hour continuous recording)

Gear: Trendy leather jacket (+1 Armor), expensive designer clothing, entourage, and groupies.

VIRTUAL ENTITIES

Virtual entities are programs designed to protect a computer system from unwanted intrusion. Unlike other cyberpunk games, however, virtual entities exist independent of the core network and patrol the areas in and around the system they protect, in the same way physical security guards—humans, androids, security drones, etc.—do.

Virtual entities have some measure of autonomy, depending on their design specifications and level of intelligence. For instance, a SHARC program will attack anything it perceives as a threat to the system, but it won't move beyond the area it protects. An AI program, however, might question potential intruders before attacking them. It can call for backup, spawn sub-sentient programs (extras), and may even pursue the team well beyond the boundaries of the computer network. If for some reason the team happens to be ghosting in the computer system (maybe they're on a long range hack in VR), an AI can trace them back to their physical location and task a threat response team to hunt them down.

Types of Virtual Entities

The Deep's filled with all sorts of nasty things just waiting to give you a bad day. Thankfully, most of these things exist to guard something like a government complex or the local Malmart, though there have been instances of rogue programs breaking free of a network and running wild through The Deep. Most of this stuff is taken care of with spam filters so it doesn't affect your TAP (and more importantly, your mind). Every now and then you'll hear about some script kiddie that got hit with a nasty virus and ended up in a mental facility or worse; had his brain fried by a killer program or malevolent AI. There are two basic types of programs running around in Hyper and Virtual Reality; AI programs and Sub Sentient programs. True AI's also exist in The Deep, but they are singular entities and beyond the scope of this book. True AI's will be introduced in an upcoming sourcebook dedicated to Hyper Reality and Virtual Reality

AI Programs

Artificially intelligent programs have much more independence than sub sentient programs, AI programs manage sub-sentient programs within their computer system. They reallocate system resources when necessary and coordinate responses to any system intrusion. AI programs can have one or two special abilities in addition to subroutines. AI programs are always wild cards.

Black Asp

Rating: 4

System Dice: The system dice a Black Asp uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of program's parent domain.*

Toughness: A Black Asp's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Parry: A Black Asp's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Pace: A Black Asp's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Damage: 2D8+1

Subroutines: Armor Piercing (2), Lethal Biofeedback Subroutine

Number of Uses: N/A

Trappings: The Black Asp resembles a tiny obsidian serpent with a wide, flat head and jade eyes. It's lethal strikes do 2D8+1 damage and have an AP of 2.

Special abilities:

- **Paralytic Poison:** The Black Asp spits a venom that works similar to a slug subroutine, but with a key difference. Targets of the paralytic poison have their programs frozen and must delete them from memory and then reload copies of affected programs before they can be

used again. The number of programs affected by the paralytic poison is dependent on the damage roll. If the attack does damage, freeze 1 program and another for every wound level the attack would have caused.

* Black Asp programs are typically found in systems rated as a HAN or better.

Kenta Cyber Dynamics Kong-3 TAP Buster

Rating: 3

System Dice: The system dice a Kong-3 TAP buster uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*

Toughness: A Kong-3 TAP buster's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Parry: A Kong-3 TAP Buster's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Pace: A Kong-3 TAP Buster's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Damage: 2D8

Subroutines: Armor Piercing (2)

Number of Uses: N/A

Trappings: The Kong-3 Tap Buster resembles a giant silverback ape that beats its chest and charges opponents. The Kong-3 attacks by pummeling targets for 2D8 damage with its massive fists. The attack also has an AP of 2.

Special abilities:

- **KONG SMASH!:** Once per combat, the Kong-3 Tap Buster can choose to make a direct attack against the character's TAP. The attack is resolved as normal, but any wound levels are applied to the TAP, reducing its overall rating by 1 per wound level sustained (so one wound level would degrade a rating 4 TAP to a rating 3 TAP, 2 wound levels would degrade a rating 3 TAP to a rating 1 TAP, and so on). If the TAP's rating drops below 1 it is destroyed and the character is immediately derezzed as if she rolled a critical failure for non-lethal combat. The character can't access The Deep until she repairs her TAP. A success on a Repair roll restores the TAP to a rating of 1, each raise on the repair roll restores an additional rating level.

* Kong TAP Buster programs are typically found in domains rated as a CAN or above.

Oni-6 Blaster

Rating: 6

System Dice: The system dice a uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*

Toughness: An Oni-6 Blaster's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Parry: An Oni-6 Blaster's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Pace: An Oni-6 Blaster's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Damage: 2D10+1

Subroutines: Armor piercing (3), Lethal Biofeedback Subroutine (Does lethal damage)

Number of Uses: N/A

Trappings: The Oni-6 Blaster resembles a giant red-skinned creature with sharp claws, wild hair, and two long horns growing from its head. The Oni-6 attacks by swiping targets with it's menacing claws for 2D10+1 damage. Attacks also have an AP 3

Special abilities:

- **Cleansing flame:** The Oni-6 hurls a gout of flame at targets. If the attack does damage, remove 1 program from the opponent's TAP's memory for every wound level the attack would have caused. The program(s) is destroyed. If the character had copies, she can load them into memory by spending a regular action. No physical damage is done to the character when the Oni-6 uses cleansing flame.

* Oni-6 Blaster programs are typically found in systems rated as a CAN or better.

KCD Series – 7 Shogun Guardian Program

Rating: 7

System Dice: The system dice a Shogun Guardian program uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*

Toughness: A Series-7 Shogun Guardian program's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Parry: A Series-7 Shogun Guardian program's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Pace: A Series-7 Shogun Guardian program's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Damage: 2D12

Subroutines: Armor Piercing (4), Area of Effect (Medium Burst Template) Lethal Biofeedback Subroutine (Does lethal damage)

Number of Uses: N/A

Trappings: The Kenta Cyber Dynamics series-7 Shogun looks like the name suggests; a menacing, digital version of an ancient shogun warrior complete with ceremonial armor, Katana, and Wakizashi. The Shogun guardian program is semi-autonomous, coded with the ability to selectively choose its targets and even follow them beyond the constraints of the domain if it wishes. The program attacks by entering into a whirling kata designed to strike anything within a medium burst template. All characters struck take 2D12 lethal damage from the program's katana. Additionally, the Shogun program has an AP of 4.

Special abilities:

- **Spawn sub-sentient program:** The shogun guardian program can "summon" a number of sub-sentient programs equal to its rating. The process takes a number of regular actions equal to the number of sub-sentient programs the Shogun is attempting to spawn. The sub-sentient programs typically look like feudal serfs and have the following statistics:

SERF (EXTRA)

- **Rating:** 3
- **System Dice:** The system dice a serf program uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*
- **Toughness:** A serf's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
- **Parry:** A serf's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
- **Pace:** A serf's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
- **Damage:** 2D8
- **Trappings:** The serf program attacks with twin Kama.

* Kenta Cyber Dynamics series-7 Shogun Guardian programs are typically attached to domains rated as a CAN or above.

Kurai Kijo "Dark Witch" Attack Program

Rating: 9

System Dice: The system dice a Kurai Kijo program uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*

Toughness: A Kurai Kijo's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Parry: A Kurai Kijo's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Pace: A Kurai Kijo's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.

Damage: 3D8

Subroutines: Armor Piercing (6), Area of Effect (Large Burst Template) Lethal Biofeedback Subroutine (Does lethal damage)

Number of Uses: N/A
Trappings: The Kurai Kijo resembles a wrinkled green-skinned hag with a tattered black dress, frayed shawl and a gnarled wooden staff. The dark witch attacks by summoning a freakish storm that rains lightning, doing 3D8 damage to everyone in a large burst template. The damage is lethal and has an AP of 6.
Special abilities:

- **Maddening cackle:** The Kurai Kijo targets one opponent and cackles wildly. Make an attack roll as normal. If the attack does damage, the witch imprints an image of herself in the target's brain. The target acquires the Delusional hindrance (minor), seeing the witch everywhere she goes. It lasts 1 week plus an additional week per wound level the attack would otherwise have inflicted, to a maximum of 3 weeks.

* Dark Witch programs are typically found in domains with a System Designation Code of CAN or better.

Sub-Sentient Programs

Sub-sentient programs are your run of the mill security programs and trace programs. They are programmed with specific functions (guard this door, trace that signal, etc.) and generally don't deviate from their protocols. That said, on rare occasions a sub sentient program will grow beyond its original programming, break free from the system and run wild through Hyper Reality, causing havoc until Stopwatch agents (or characters, like you) destroy it. Sub sentient programs are typically extras, though Game Masters can make them wild cards if they choose.

Black Bear

Rating: 2
System Dice: The system dice a Black Bear uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*
Toughness: A Black Bear 's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Parry: A Black Bear 's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Pace: A Black Bear 's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Damage: 2D6+1
Subroutines: Armor Piercing (1)
Number of Uses: N/A
Trappings: Black Bear ICE appear to be hulking bears with razor sharp claws. They attack by swiping at characters for 2D6+1 damage and have an AP of 2.
* Black Bear programs are commonly found in domains with a system designation code of HAN or better.

Comet Trace Program

Rating: 1
Die Code: D4*
Time to locate target: 1D12 rounds
Number of Uses: 3
Trappings: Comet trace programs appear to be fiery blue comets . A successful trace check (or opposed check against the target's masking utility) will locate the target in 1D12 rounds.
* Comet trace programs are commonly found in domains with a system designation code of PAN or better.

NexusK9 Guard Dog Program

Rating: 1
System Dice: The system dice a NexusK9 Guard Dog program uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*
Toughness: A NexusK9 Guard Dog's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Parry: A Nexusk9 Guard Dog's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Pace: A Nexusk9 Guard Dog's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Damage: 2D6
Subroutines: Armor Piercing (1)
Number of Uses: N/A
Trappings: NexusK9 Guard Dogs appear to be vicious guard dogs of varying breeds. They attack by biting the characters for 2D6 damage and have an AP of 1.
* NexusK9 Guard Dog programs are commonly found in domains with a system designation code of HAN or better.

Plague Program

Rating: 3
System Dice: The system dice a Plague program uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*
Toughness: A Plague program's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Parry: A plague program's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Pace: A Plague program's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Damage: 2D8
Subroutines: Area of Effect (medium burst template)
Number of Uses: N/A
Trappings: Plague programs appear as floating microbes or sometimes a putrid green mist. They do 2D8 damage to anything in a medium burst template.
* Plague programs are commonly found in domains with a system designation code of HAN or better.

Sentinel Guardian Program

Rating: 3
System Dice: The system dice a Sentinel program uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*
Toughness: A Sentinel's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Parry: A Sentinel's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Pace: A Sentinel program's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Damage: 2D8
Subroutines: Armor Piercing (2)
Number of Uses: N/A
Trappings: The Sentinel guardian program manifests in The Deep as a faceless figure wrapped in an obsidian cloak. The standard iconography gives it a gleaming rapier that does 2D8 non lethal damage with an AP of 2. Other versions modernize the sentinel, giving it a ranged weapon such as an imposing hand gun or assault rifle.
* Sentinel programs are commonly found in domains with a system designation code of HAN or better.

SHARC

Rating: 6
System Dice: The system dice a SHARC program uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*
Toughness: A SHARC's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Parry: A SHARC's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Pace: A SHARC's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Damage: 2D10+1
Subroutines: Armor Piercing (4)
Number of Uses: N/A
Trappings: One of the most common virtual entities in The Deep, the SHARC program is nasty piece of ICE that swims through its domain, viciously attacking any intruders. The SHARC's vicious bite does 2D10+1 damage, with an AP of 4.
* SHARC programs are commonly found in domains with a system designation code of HAN or better.

Sphinx

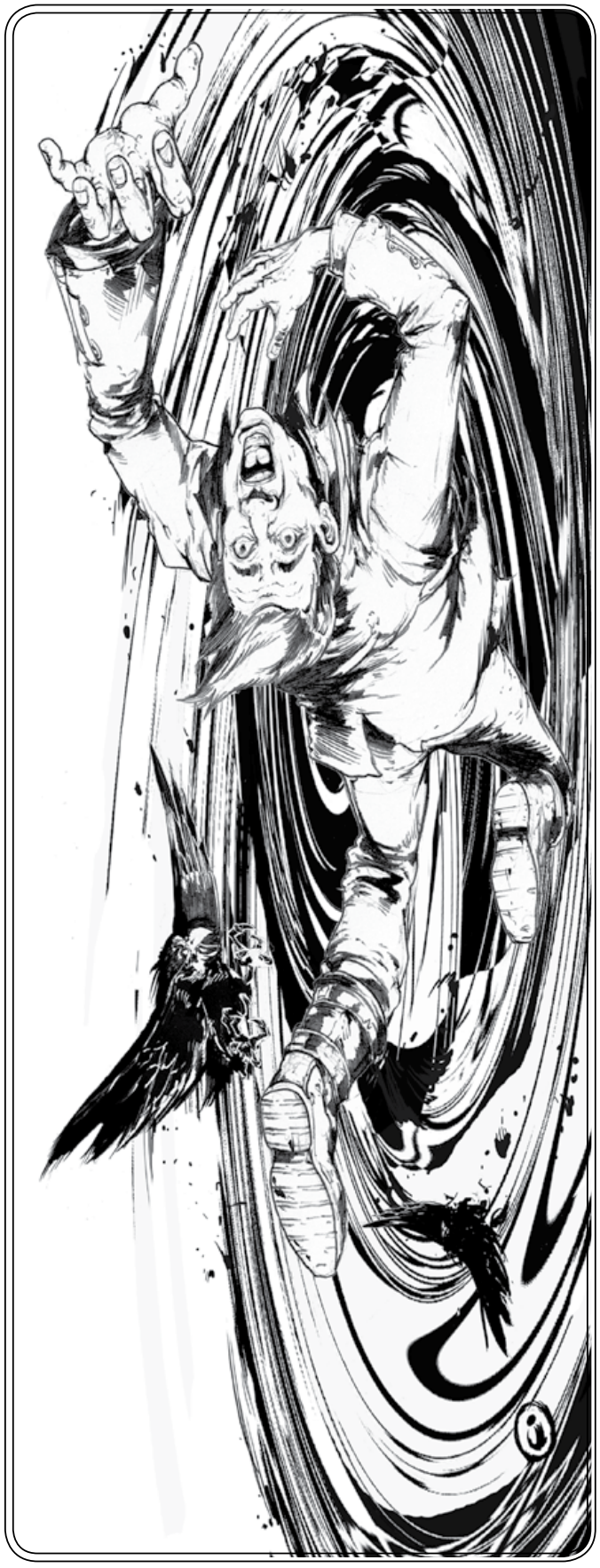
Rating: 8
System Dice: The system dice a Sphinx program uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*
Toughness: A Sphinx's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Parry: A Sphinx's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Pace: A Sphinx's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Damage: 2D12+1
Subroutines: Armor Piercing (5)
Number of Uses: N/A
Trappings: The Sphinx program is another common piece of ICE stoically guarding the entrance to its domain and laying waste to all intruders. The Sphinx bites for 2D12+1 damage, with an AP of 4.
* Sphinx programs are commonly found in domains with a system designation code of RAN or better.

Storm Crow Trace Program

Rating: 5
Die Code: D12*
Time to locate target: 1D4 rounds
Number of Uses: 6
Trappings: Storm crow trace programs appear to be obsidian crows with grey streaks in their plumage. Lightning cackles around them when they fly through The Deep. A successful trace check (or opposed check against the target's masking utility) will locate the target in 1D4 rounds.
* Storm Crow trace programs are commonly found in domains with a system designation code of CAN or better.

Typhoon TAP Buster

Rating: 6
System Dice: The system dice a Typhoon TAP Buster uses to make Attack rolls varies depending on the system designation code of the program's parent domain.*
Toughness: A Typhoon TAP Buster's Toughness is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Parry: A Typhoon TAP Buster's Parry rating is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Pace: A Typhoon TAP Buster's Pace is determined by the system designation code of the program's parent domain.
Damage: 2D10+1
Subroutines: Armor piercing (3)
Number of Uses: N/A
Trappings: The Typhoon TAP buster resembles a swirling vortex that slams into its targets, pick them up and fling them around. Though they do non-lethal damage, Typhoon TAP busters are feared because they don't attack the hacker per se', they attack the TAP. Attacks which generate a wound level reduce the effective rating of the TAP by 1. Additional wound levels reduce the rating of the tap by another level until the character either jacks out, or the TAP is destroyed. If the TAP's rating drops below 1 it is destroyed and the character is immediately derezzed as if she rolled a critical failure for non-lethal combat. The character can't access The Deep until she repairs her TAP. A success on a Repair roll restores the TAP to a rating of 1, each raise on the repair roll restores an additional rating level. Attacks also have an AP 3
* Typhoon TAP Busters are typically found in systems rated as a RAN or better.



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INTERFACE ZERO CAMPAIGN TRACKER

Campaign Name _____

Campaign Overview _____

Plot Twists _____

Possible Outcomes _____

Main Antagonist(s) _____

Supporting Antagonist(s) _____

Goal(s) of the Villians _____

Organizations Involved _____

Variables / X-Factors _____

Game Master _____

Players _____

Character _____ **Rank** _____
Notes _____

Character _____ **Rank** _____
Notes _____

Character _____ **Rank** _____
Notes _____

Character _____ **Rank** _____
Notes _____

Character _____ **Rank** _____
Notes _____

Character _____ **Rank** _____
Notes _____

Character _____ **Rank** _____
Notes _____

Goal(s) of the Heroes _____

# of Plot Points _____ # of Savage Tales _____

Savage Tale _____
Trigger _____
Notes _____
_____
_____
_____
Outcome _____

Plot Point _____
Trigger _____
Notes _____
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Outcome _____

Savage Tale _____
Trigger _____
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Outcome _____

Plot Point _____
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Savage Tale _____
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Plot Point _____
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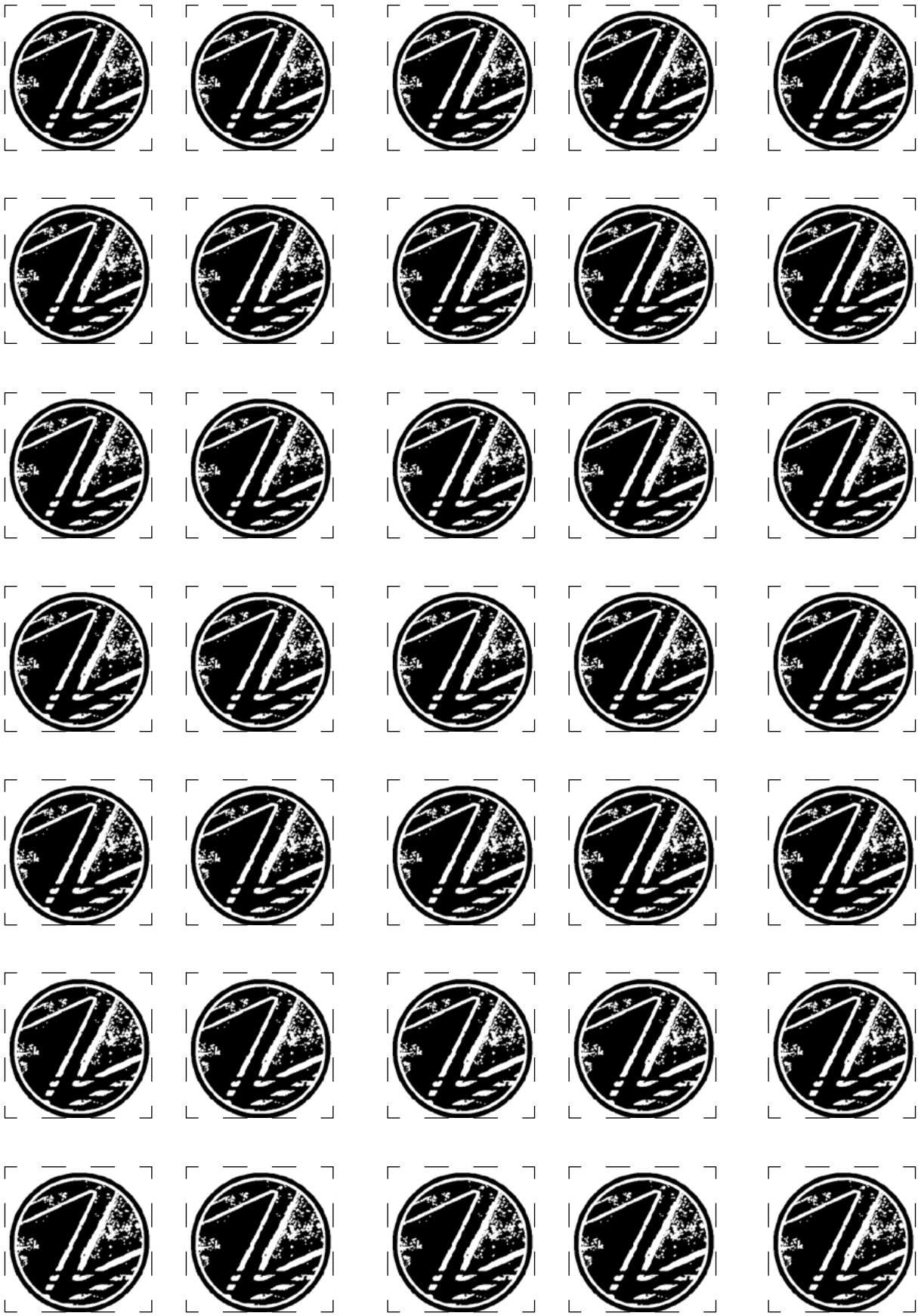
FAVOR COUNTERS



PROGRAM AND DOMAIN CARDS

Domain Name _____
System Designation Code _____
Difficulty _____ Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Pace _____
System resources _____

Domain Trappings _____

Program Name _____
Rating _____ Die Code _____ Pace _____
Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Number of Uses _____
Program Effect _____

Program Trappings _____

Domain Name _____
System Designation Code _____
Difficulty _____ Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Pace _____
System resources _____

Domain Trappings _____

Program Name _____
Rating _____ Die Code _____ Pace _____
Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Number of Uses _____
Program Effect _____

Program Trappings _____

Domain Name _____
System Designation Code _____
Difficulty _____ Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Pace _____
System resources _____

Domain Trappings _____

Program Name _____
Rating _____ Die Code _____ Pace _____
Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Number of Uses _____
Program Effect _____

Program Trappings _____

Domain Name _____
System Designation Code _____
Difficulty _____ Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Pace _____
System resources _____

Domain Trappings _____

Program Name _____
Rating _____ Die Code _____ Pace _____
Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Number of Uses _____
Program Effect _____

Program Trappings _____

Domain Name _____
System Designation Code _____
Difficulty _____ Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Pace _____
System resources _____

Domain Trappings _____

Program Name _____
Rating _____ Die Code _____ Pace _____
Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Number of Uses _____
Program Effect _____

Program Trappings _____

Domain Name _____
System Designation Code _____
Difficulty _____ Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Pace _____
System resources _____

Domain Trappings _____

Program Name _____
Rating _____ Die Code _____ Pace _____
Toughness _____ Parry _____
System Dice _____ Number of Uses _____
Program Effect _____

Program Trappings _____

NPC CARDS

NPC Name _____ Wild Card? _____

Strength ___ Agility ___ Smarts ___ Spirit ___ Vigor ___

Toughness ___ Parry ___ Pace ___ Charisma _____

Street Cred _____ Relevant Skills _____

Edges _____

Hindrances _____

Gear _____

Cyberware _____ Cybertrauma _____

Notes _____

Shaken _____ -1 ___ -2 ___ -3 ___ incapacitated _____

NPC Name _____ Wild Card? _____

Strength ___ Agility ___ Smarts ___ Spirit ___ Vigor ___

Toughness ___ Parry ___ Pace ___ Charisma _____

Street Cred _____ Relevant Skills _____

Edges _____

Hindrances _____

Gear _____

Cyberware _____ Cybertrauma _____

Notes _____

Shaken _____ -1 ___ -2 ___ -3 ___ incapacitated _____

NPC Name _____ Wild Card? _____

Strength ___ Agility ___ Smarts ___ Spirit ___ Vigor ___

Toughness ___ Parry ___ Pace ___ Charisma _____

Street Cred _____ Relevant Skills _____

Edges _____

Hindrances _____

Gear _____

Cyberware _____ Cybertrauma _____

Notes _____

Shaken _____ -1 ___ -2 ___ -3 ___ incapacitated _____

NPC Name _____ Wild Card? _____

Strength ___ Agility ___ Smarts ___ Spirit ___ Vigor ___

Toughness ___ Parry ___ Pace ___ Charisma _____

Street Cred _____ Relevant Skills _____

Edges _____

Hindrances _____

Gear _____

Cyberware _____ Cybertrauma _____

Notes _____

Shaken _____ -1 ___ -2 ___ -3 ___ incapacitated _____

INTERFACE ZERO

FIRST NAME | MIDDLE | LAST NAME

RACE | OCCUPATION | STREET CRED/FAVORS

CREDITS

ATTRIBUTES

	BASE		MOD	AV
4 6 8 10 12 Agility		Charisma		
4 6 8 10 12 Smarts		Pace		
4 6 8 10 12 Strength		Parry		
4 6 8 10 12 Spirit				
4 6 8 10 12 Vigor		Toughness		

HINDRANCES

EDGES

SKILLS

4 6 8 10 12	4 6 8 10 12
4 6 8 10 12	4 6 8 10 12
4 6 8 10 12	4 6 8 10 12
4 6 8 10 12	4 6 8 10 12
4 6 8 10 12	4 6 8 10 12
4 6 8 10 12	4 6 8 10 12
4 6 8 10 12	4 6 8 10 12
4 6 8 10 12	4 6 8 10 12

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L
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100
110

WOUNDS -1 -2 -3 INC

FATIGUE -2 -1

EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

HEAD:

TORSO:

ARMS:

LEGS:

Total WT Carried:

Weight Limit:

Encumbrance Limit:

CYBERWARE/ BIOWARE | NAME COST | EFFECT | CYBERTRAUMA PENALTY

PERMANENT INJURIES:

WEAPON	RANGE	ROF	DAMAGE	AP	WT	NOTES

5 10 15 20 25 30

PROGRAMS

TYPE	RATING	EFFECT	# of USES	TRAPPINGS

VEHICLES

VEHICLE	ACC/TS	TOUGHNESS	CREW	COST	NOTES

CONTACTS

CHARACTER NOTES