

GURPS

CYBERPUNK ADVENTURES

Dark Scenarios for Roleplaying on the Edge



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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GURPS®

CYBERPUNK ADVENTURES

Dark Scenarios for Roleplaying on the Edge

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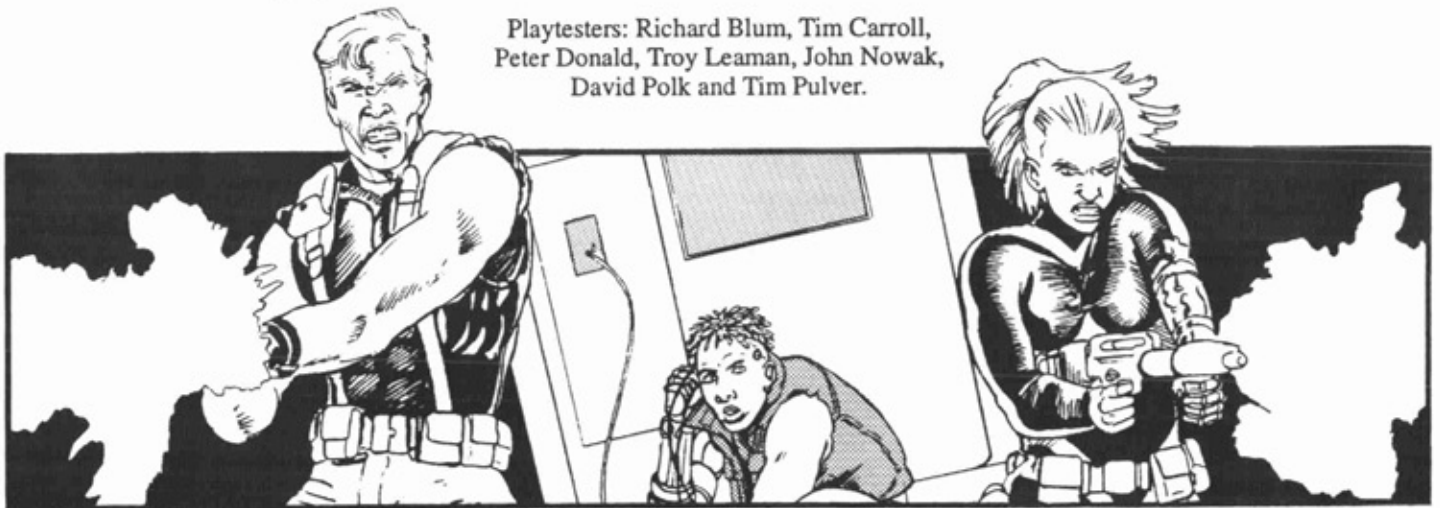
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3	JERICHO BLACKOUT	49	JIGSAW INCOMPLETE	88
Net Maps and Icons	3	Involving the Characters	50	Synopsis	89
About GURPS	3	An Offer They Can't Refuse	50	About the Author	89
THE MEDUSA SANCTION	4	About the Author	50	Coopting a Player Character	89
Charli	5	Chizmatron	50	Setup	90
About the Author	5	Shuttleport Detail	51	Ambush!	90
Charli Minelli	5	Transportation in Jericho City	51	Ninja Stats	90
Abraxas	6	Shuttle to Scrambletown	52	Vic Redmond	91
Michaelmass	7	Briefing	52	Imperial Stormtrooper Marksmanship	
Angels of Torment	8	Mandrakes	52	Academy	92
Sabbath	8	Scrambletown General Hospital	53	Map of Ambush Site	92
Typical Angel of Torment	9	Wolves in Sheep's Clothing	54	Tracing the License Plate	94
Jane Street Book Depository	9	The Big Picture: GM's Information	54	Polly Chromatique of the DMV	94
Chamosuits	10	Pop Mahoney	54	Cyber Jack's	95
Charli's Jacket	11	Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy		Tracing the Ninja	96
Chemical Warfare Gear	11	and Survival	55	No News is Good News?	96
The Korean Connection	11	Shuttleport	56	Abamadeus Appears	96
Mycroft Soft	12	C.H.A.I.N.	56	The Lone PC	96
Toshio (Kangetsu series)	13	Linkers	57	Jack	97
Mycroft Soft's Apartment	13	Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy		Gomijutsu Waste Removal, Inc.	99
Going Soft	14	and Survival	58	Abamadeus Kilifrey	99
Ann-Marie (Yasha series)	14	Jericho City	59	Gomijutsu Waste Removal	99
Androids	15	Linkers' Agenda	60	Headquarters	100
Data Precip - Saladin series		The Triple X	61	Audience With O-Mishu	
Combat Androids	16	On The Street	61	the Oyabun	102
Eumenides Police Androids	17	Meet the Doorman	61	Dealing With the Chip	102
Data Search: Joanna Ness	18	Linkers' Agenda	61	Lethal Chip	102
Geronimo Flak	19	Sven	62	Nina Jerrold's Message	104
The Android Liberation Front	20	Smoking, Hard, from		Nina's Place	104
The Moreau File	20	Floor to Ceiling	63	Memories Awaken	104
SkyTec	21	Spilling Blood on a Shifting Floor	63	O-Mishu the Oyabun	105
SkyTecNet	21	Blackie	64	Kozuo	106
Cassius (Mngwa I)	22	The Ruins	65	Finding Vic Redmond	107
Arafel (Britomart-100B)	23	Dumdum	65	The Address Book	107
Selected Sites Near SkyTecNet	24	Dog Boy Escort	67	Talltrees' Apartment	107
Neko/Catseye (Bast III)	25	Backbone	67	Zaphod's Body Shoppe	108
Catseye	26	Gangs	68	Under the Wire Orderlies	110
Kidnapping or Shadowing Neko	27	Frankie's Pad	69	Under the Wire	111
Typical Toadsticker	28	Sitting Pretty	69	Handling Netruns	111
Ivan Ruskov	29	Frankie's House	70	Running the Adventure for	
Cleo (Cassiopeia series)	31	Colmine	72	Tougher Crowds	112
Chi-7 "Cherry" (Chiroptera series)	32	Gang Mentality	72	Club Neurosis	113
Cherry's Story	33	Fashionably Late	73	Adapting to Other Genres	114
Ian O'Connell	33	Frankie	73	Wrapping it Up	115
Splashdown!	34	Better Late Than Never?	74	Deadly Kozuo	116
The Dornier Condor	34	Players' Map of the Sewer System	74	Data Safe Deposit Corporation	116
Zengi (Saladin M-2D)	35	The Sewers	75	Bargaining with Onishima	117
Fennis (alias Peter Wolf)	37	From Bad to Worse to Downright Dead	76	Negotiating with Cyberrad	118
The Chimera Hunt	38	Going Down	76	Fencing the Data	119
Chimera's Lair	38	Mule	76	Further Adventures	119
Alecto Eumenides (Jo Ness)	38	War Zone	77	The Chip Revisited	119
Cyberpets (Chimera's Lair)	39	Taking the High Road	77	Whatever Happened to	
Sarah Juliet	40	Autodefenses	77	Damian Blake?	119
Typical Redjack	41	Blackie's Betrayal	78	Character Points	119
The Medusa Plague	42	Frankie's Chip	78	Debugging	119
Skytower Mall	43	Showdown at the Power Station	79	Network Map	120
Shopping for Medusa	45	Overdrive: Linker Attack Force	79	Network	121
Houston Metrocop	45	Arriving Early	80	Standard Assumptions	121
Character Points	46	Lauren	80	APPENDIX	125
Resolutions	47	Scrambletown Power Plant	80	Mapping the Network	125
Adapting To Other Genres	47	Vasso	81	System Types	126
Further Adventures	47	Jerrold	82		
Android Advantages and Disadvantages	48	Arriving Late	84		
		'Chelle	84		

INTRODUCTION

The cyberpunk genre is overflowing with opportunities for adventure and intrigue. Shady megacorporations with their Yakuza patrons pull the strings of treacherous street ops. Vicious gangs prowl the back alleys, waiting for a careless step or a knock on the wrong door. Cocky console cowboys cruise the net, ripping off corps or shaving the ice off military systems for fun and prestige. From netrunner to razorgirl to samurai, anyone can find excitement and danger in this world.

GURPS Cyberpunk Adventures presents three detailed scenarios for roleplaying in the dystopian future. Each adventure includes maps, NPCs and suggestions for adapting the scenario to the GM's campaign.

In *The Medusa Sanction*, a canister containing a deadly nanomech virus has been stolen from a Yakuza courier. She calls in the PCs to help her get it back. What they don't know is that a deranged, rogue android has purchased the canister and plans to release the virus over Houston, Texas. Can they find her and stop her from carrying out her plan?

Jericho Blackout takes the agents to Jericho City, a crater town in the badlands of central Montana, where a class struggle has escalated to near-war. Using a team of bionically-linked mercenaries, the ConFed isolationists are trying to cause the middle-class Scrambletown to self-destruct. The PCs are called in to stop the mercs before they take out the power station, sending the city into total chaos.

Finally, *Jigsaw Incomplete* is a mind-bending scenario that keeps the party guessing until the very end. After a PCs loses his memory (and keeps having it jogged by rifle-wielding assassins), the party must stay one step ahead of unknown enemies until they can locate the clues to the missing memories . . . and use what they find to bargain for their lives.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Roleplayer. This bimonthly magazine includes new rules, variants, new races, beasts, information on upcoming releases, scenario ideas and more. Ask your game retailer, or write for subscription information.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

BBS. For those of you who have computers, SJ Games operates a BBS with discussion areas for several games, including *GURPS*. Much of the playtest feedback for new products comes from the BBS. It's up 24 hours a day at 512-447-4449, at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud. Give us a call!



Net Maps and Icons

All of the adventures in this book include network maps, with the location and statistics of systems described in the adventure. The nodes in these maps have been given high numbers to facilitate their insertion into existing networks. If the GM does not have a standard network in his campaign, the maps can be used as they are.

For the GM's convenience, we have included the descriptions of system types and network icons from pp. CY82-87 of *GURPS Cyberpunk*. This material can be found on pp. 125-128 of this book.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to a page in the *Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *Basic Set*, Third Edition. Page references beginning with CY refer to *GURPS Cyberpunk*.

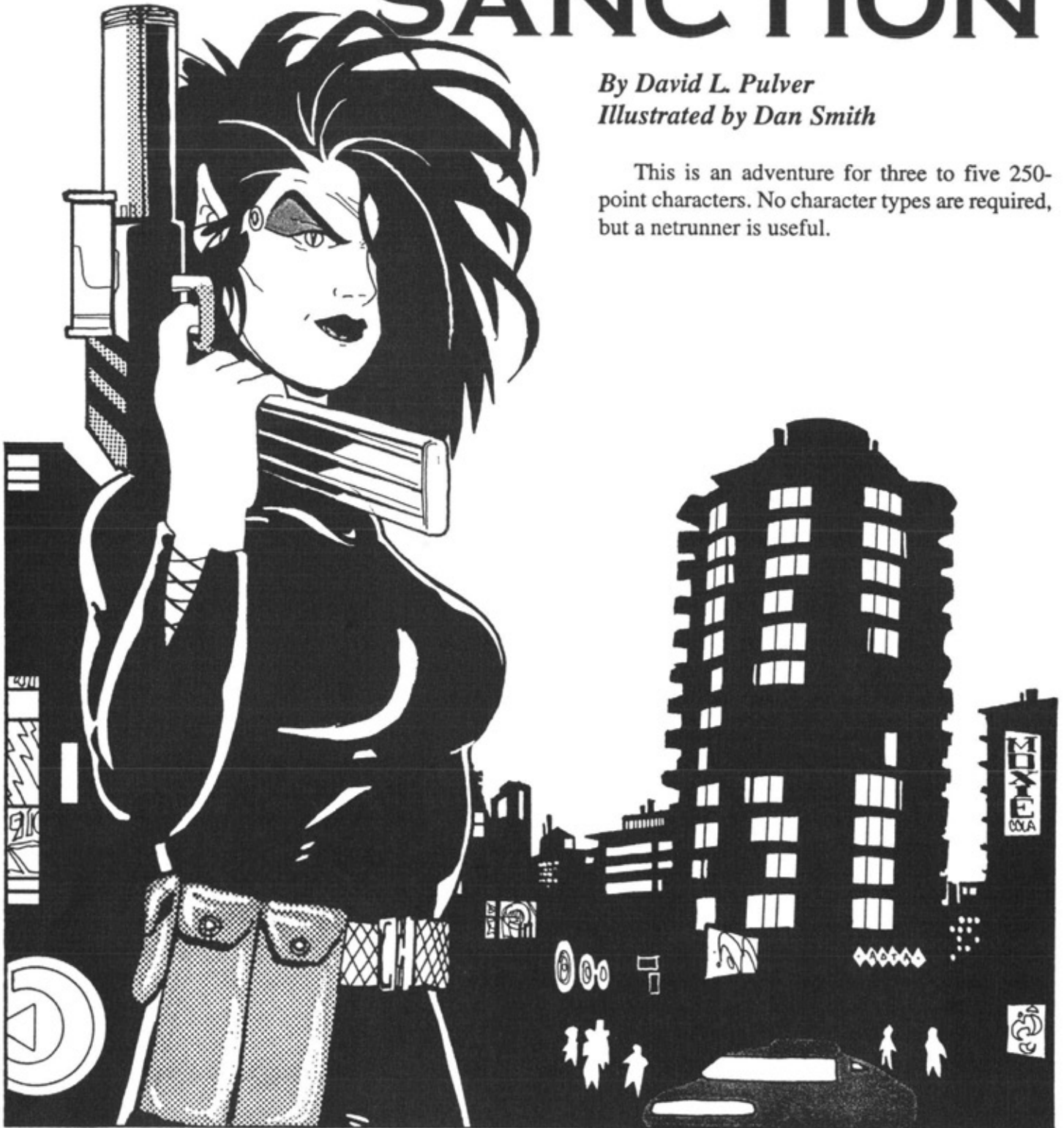
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THE MEDUSA SANCTION

By David L. Pulver

Illustrated by Dan Smith

This is an adventure for three to five 250-point characters. No character types are required, but a netrunner is useful.



Charli

One adventurer (preferably known as a freelance covert operative) returns home to find a message on his answering machine (even cellular phone implants have answering machines, unless the PC likes being awakened at midnight!). Read or paraphrase the following:

The machine said the call came from St. Catherine's Hospital, Toronto, Canada. The recorded voice was a young woman's, unsteady, with a trace of an Italian accent.

"It's Charli, Charli Minelli. I need your help."

You remember a decker's bar a few years back, a proud teenager with new Chulan eyes and a devil's grin who'd partied all night. She worked as a delivery girl for the local cowboys, and had just smuggled two Chinese military icebreakers out of Tsintow. Charli Minelli, celebrating her first big run. But now the laughing voice was dazed with pain and drugs, and the confidence was leaking like a sieve.

"It was a simple run, Berlin to Toronto, but it went sour. I lost the packet – not to mention both legs, my arm, and . . ."

Her voice breaks, then continues, stronger.

"Sorry. I'm a jigsaw, okay? The gang that cut me could have been paid to intercept me, or maybe it was bad luck. When I woke up in hospital, the package was gone. I want you to help me get it back: 50 grand, half my fee. Ten thousand in advance. Put together a team, split the cash."

A pause, and deep breathing.

"I'm going into surgery again. Time's important; if you can take the job, call my agent." – she relays the number – "He'll send plane tickets. I'll be out eight hours. I'd like to wake up and find you here. Ciao, baby."

The GM can adjust this message to fit the PCs' background. With cooperation from a player, the GM can fit Charli Minelli more tightly into his history. They may have just met once, but their brief encounter at a party could also have turned into a friendship or love affair before they separated.

Assuming they take Minelli's offer, the PCs can have round-trip tickets to Toronto International Airport, first class, delivered in an hour. If they are cautious they can call St. Catherine's Hospital, which confirms a Charlotte Minelli was admitted to Emergency yesterday, and is now in surgery.

Toronto

Toronto is a thriving Canadian metropolis, brain of the Toronto-Windsor Metropolitan Area, a dense urban sprawl stretching west along Lake Ontario until it mates with the seething civic cancer of Detroit. The PCs' arrival is greeted with



About the Author

David Pulver is the author of *GURPS Ultra Tech*, *GURPS Psionics* and *ICE's Aliens and Artifacts* sourcebook, and the co-author of *GURPS Space Atlas 4*. He has contributed to *GURPS Space Adventures*, *GURPS Fantasy Adventures*, *GURPS Supers Adventures* and TSR's *Marvel Universe '92 Update*. He has also written articles for *Challenge*, *White Wolf* and *Roleplayer* magazines. When not writing, he likes to read SF novels. He's been thinking of getting some mirrored contacts, but lacks the cash.

Charli Minelli

Age 20, 5' 6", 110 lbs., black hair and eyes.

ST 9, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 12.

Speed 5.25, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 8 (Karate).

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive); Charisma +3; Eidetic Memory (Level 1); Empathy; Language Talent +2; Flesh Pockets (2 oz. in head, 1 lb. in leg).

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Stays Bought); Overconfidence.

Quirks: Collects foreign postcards; Hates to stay in one place; Loves disguises.

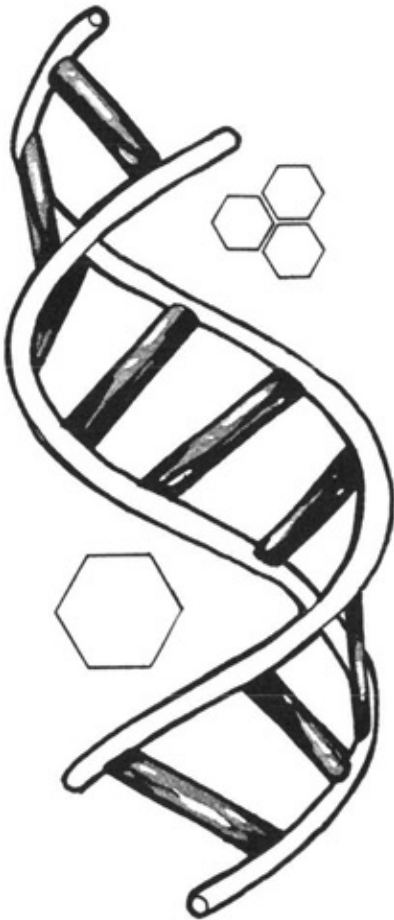
Skills: Acting-17; Area Knowledge (Major Ports and Airports)-20; Beam Weapons (Laser)-14; Detect Lies-11; Disguise-14; Diplomacy-13; Fast-Draw (Laser)-10; Fast-Talk-17; French-14; First Aid-13; Forgery-15; Holdout-18; Karate-12; Italian-10; Japanese-12; Judo-12; Mandarin-15; Merchant-13; Motorcycle-11; Powerboat-11; Shadowing-14; Spanish-14; Stealth-12; Streetwise-12; Survival (Urban)-13; Swimming-11.

Charlotte Minelli's parents hoped to send her to an exclusive drama school, but a recession cost them their jobs first. Her natural acting talent found another niche, and Charli became an undercover courier for small, valuable and usually illegal packages. She's practiced her trade since she was 12, smuggling everything from diamonds to icebreakers. She has a thousand ways to smuggle a parcel into or out of a country. Besides knowing every major sea and airport in the developed world, Charli has a talent for manipulating people. She senses the kind of person they'd like to deal with, then uses her acting skills to *become* that person. Charli would rather charm someone than fight; most of the time it works.

Charli's injuries give her the Blindness, One Arm and Legless disadvantages. She hates being trapped in hospital, and if she wasn't trying so hard to get the PCs to like her, she'd be shrieking in frustrated rage. If Charli survives long enough, her missing eyes and limbs will be replaced by bionics (with light amps in her eyes).

Abraxas

Charli mentioned the label on the canister. If the PCs look up "Abraxas" in a database, they'll find a multi-national corporation (main offices in Berlin) with a diverse range of interests including chemical engineering, plastics manufacture, cybernetics, mining, real estate, farming, and petroleum refining. But Abraxas is best known for its extensive investment in cutting-edge genetic engineering, notably android design and production. The president is Conrad Lang, the former head of its birthlab division. Since Lang took office, Abraxas has been increasingly involved in aggressive maneuvers to expand its international influence. The most recent example of this was the controversial KanoCorp incident in Nigeria (see sidebar, p. 18).



overcast skies and pouring rain. St. Catherine's Hospital is an hour from the main airport by taxi or monorail.

The hospital is on the lake shore, a park-shrouded pyramid of green polyglass. The adventurers encounter polite, well-armed guards who ask that weapons be checked at the door, and warm sun-lit corridors with the barest whiff of hospital smell – Minelli picked an expensive place to be sick in. The sister at the desk interfaces with her terminal, then directs the visitors to Surgery Prep. A pulsing blue line on the wall shows the way, past patients in expensive hoverchairs and hurrying green-clad medics.

Outside Minelli's door, they find a rent-a-cop in black monocrys and a faceless reflex visor. Fingering his stunwand, he pauses, then says Ms. Minelli is expecting them.

Charli Minelli

She lies in a hospital bed in the soft blue room, wearing a white hospital gown. An electronic bandage covers her eyes, and her right arm vanishes into a softly humming machine that was a rumor in Kyoto last spring. Her legs are bionic, the false skin not yet grown, nerves still knitting. A scar runs from a pale cheek to vanish under short black hair; a skull socket connects to a console beside the bed. The monitor above the bed shows her condition: broken ribs, two legs just replaced with metal, a compound-fractured arm, and empty sockets where her eyes should be. But the TV camera on the ceiling swings to watch the visitors enter. She isn't blind.

Even wired into a hospital bed, Charli is good at reading characters and a natural actress. Soft and vulnerable, warm and open, mysteriously conspiratorial, or cool and businesslike, she'll assume whatever persona would work best. For instance:

"Thanks for coming – I appreciate it, a lot. Don't worry about the rentacop: Andre's just to keep out the bill collectors. The Sister says I can only see you for an hour and then they'll be putting the eyes back in."

"You want details. I'd been hired to carry a parcel from Berlin to Toronto, avoiding customs checks. Europe was smooth, but I picked up some fleas here. I made the mistake of trying to lose them by evading through a bad part of North York – I'd some contacts in the stump gangs, thought I could rent cheap muscle. Bad mistake. I lost the pursuit, but the gangs had changed while I was gone, and I ran right into trouble."

"Trouble wore those new French chamosuits they're selling in Quebec and carried humming vibroblades. Holographic Maori tattoos like mating glow worms crawled across their cheeks. All the men in the gang had the same angelic face: curly black hair, compact nose, sensuous mouth, big brown eyes. Business must have been good to afford all that surgery."

"There were six of them, five identical-faced guys, one girl, ages 15 to 20, all white; they didn't say much and I didn't catch any names. They probably thought I was running drugs for a rival gang – I looked like sweet streetmeat, and they decided to get a taste. I burned two with my holdout laser, but that wasn't good enough."

"You don't want the gory details. Let's just say they took me apart."

"I'd told my implant to call an ambulance if my vital signs dropped, and hey, it worked. My credit was good, and I woke up in the Sisters' hospice to find them shoving my insides back where they belong. What's

missing is my backpack, my Rachel Steel real leather jacket, my gun – oh yes, and both my eyes. They had the Chulan trademark, you see – valuable. I can live without the gun, and the eyes weren't mine to begin with. But the stuff in my backpack – that's what my employer wants."

"The parcel's a small canister, two inches in diameter and eleven inches long, made of gray cerametal, stenciled Abraxas-2076-MED. The top had a computer lock I can't open. I'm not sure what's inside. I picked it up from a blind drop in a bus station locker in Berlin and carried it half way 'round the world. The party who wants it was to meet me here in TOWMA four days from now.



"Here's what I need: Go to the Stumps, get the canister from the kids who took it or whomever they sold it to – for all I know, they tossed it in a dumpster – and bring it back unopened. I don't know what's in it. If they opened it, bring back whatever was inside. One more thing: I'd like the Rachel Steel jacket back. Deal?"

If they accept, Charli tells them where to find the Stumps (a housing project in the run-down North York area of Toronto, about 3 hours drive from the hospital). She doesn't know the name of the gang that hit her. She's won't reveal details about her employer. If pressed, Charli says she was supposed to meet someone at the maglev station – an Oriental man named Iwahara Hisato. Privately she suspects Hisato is Yakuza, the Japanese mob, and believes that if she doesn't deliver the canister she's dead. She guesses the canister could contain anything from data files to drugs to DNA samples – she works "no questions asked."

Michaelmass

Age 18, 5' 10", 160 lbs., long black hair, blue eyes.

ST 11, DX 13, IQ 11, HT 12.

Speed 6.25, Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 9 (Knife).

Chamosuit (PD 2, DR 8), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive); Charisma +1; Combat Reflexes; Toughness; Reputation +2 (as gang leader).

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Intolerance (non-WASPs, rival gangs); Sense of Duty (Angels of Torment); Status (-1); Youth.

Quirks: Ambitious; Loves Andreas Brecht's music; Likes Sabbath; Maori light-tattoo on face; Considers himself a skilled military leader.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Stumps)-13; Brawling-14; Driving-11 (Auto); Guns (Pistol)-12; Knife-14; Leadership-12; Mechanic (Fuel Cell/Electric Motor)-10; Motorcycle-12; Occultism-9; Shadowing-12; Stealth-12; Streetwise-12; Survival (Urban)-12; Tactics-11; Strategy-9.

Equipment: Chamosuit; large knife (vibro, very fine); light-intensification contacts; machine pistol (2 magazines).

Michaelmass leads the Angels of Torment. Growing up in the slums of North York, he drifted into the gang for self-defense and found he enjoyed it. His parents tossed him out after his second arrest, but by then he was the gang's war-leader, making more dealing drugs in a month than his parents could in a year.

Michaelmass' main flaws are an amoral outlook and a tendency to suddenly explode into a blind rage if crossed – both useful traits for a gang leader. His ambition is to make corporate connections and turn the Angels of Torment into a real mercenary strike force. If the PCs treat Michaelmass with respect rather than shooting him, and they act like the chill, *dangerous* street samurai he wishes the Angels of Torment were, Michaelmass will happily sell his gang's services to them if they need a diversion or the like. He will charge \$500 per gang member involved.

Sabbath

Age 19, 5' 5", 120 lbs., female, large red eyes framed by straight black hair, and a slim boyish figure.

ST 9, DX 14, IQ 12, HT 12.

Speed 6.5, Move 6.

Dodge 6, Parry 7 (Knife), 10 (Karate).

Chamosuit and Rachel Steel jacket (PD 2, DR 18), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive); Charisma +2; Strong Will +2.

Disadvantages: Addiction (Slammer); Sadism; Youth.

Quirks: Paints fingernails and lips black; Collects occult paraphernalia; Both loves and hates Michaelmass; Likes guns; Wears tarnished silver nose and ear rings and spiked wrist bands.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Stumps)-12; Armoury-11; Beam Weapons (Laser)-16; Computer Operations-12; First Aid-12; French-9; Guns (Needler)-16; Guns (Pistol)-17; Karate-15; Knife-15; Interrogation-12; Leadership-10; Occultism-11; Shadowing-12; Stealth-14; Streetwise-12; Survival (Urban)-13; Tactics-10.

Equipment: Chamosuit under Charli's Rachel Steel jacket (sidebar, p. 11); large knife (very fine, vibro); Gauss needler (one magazine); machine pistol (2 magazines); 3 Slammer tablets; Charli's holdout laser (in boot).

Sabbath is one of the craziest members of the gang, always eager to inflict death and pain. She was born in a corporate arcology. Her parents altered her sex to male when she was five – they'd wanted a boy, but hadn't the money to change her when she was younger. Despite a good education, her childhood was confused and unhappy. When at 14 she learned about her parents' meddling, she cried for two days, then murdered them with a laser cutter. She stole their credit cards, and had herself changed back to female at a black clinic. She's been on the street ever since.

She is interested in the occult, and wants to experiment with human sacrifices, which her lover Michaelmass is too "professional" to endorse. If he dies and Sabbath survives, the gang will get nastier! Sabbath is usually high on Slammer: her IQ (and all IQ-based skills) drops by 2 but she gains Bloodlust, High Pain Threshold and Combat Reflexes (which boosts her Dodge and Parry by 1 each).

Angels of Torment

The Stumps is the nickname for a run-down neighborhood in Toronto's York industrial zone. By day, the streets are crammed with outdoor prawn vendors, t-shirt salesmen, diskware vendors and hotdog sellers. Behind them crouch crowded tenement buildings, covered with graffiti, laundry hanging from the windows. In the center of the neighborhood is MacDonald Park.

Fifteen years ago, MacDonald Park was built as a tree-lined place of natural beauty. But money was short, and after the last municipal cutbacks, the city decided to pave it over and turn it into a parking lot. They cut down all the trees before the budget dried up but never finished the job. Result: the Stumps, a two-block overgrown grassy zone, covered with tree stumps, surrounded on three sides by gray half-empty housing blocks.

Looking for Information

Clever PCs can work from Charli's description of the gang members' identical faces and assemble an accurate sketch based on it with a successful Artist skill roll. If they scan this into a database and ask for matches, out pops the name Andreas Brecht.

They can look the name up in a library data base; a PC who is into underground music may also have heard it (make an IQ roll). Here's what they can find out about Brecht:

Andreas Brecht was the millionaire "snuff-rock" king, infamous for music videos which combined angst rock sound and violent lyrics with orchestrated murder and torture. Snuff-rock is dead now; Brecht's private music station was blown off the airwaves two years ago, when Sword of Christ radicals shot down his broadcast satellite with a pirated A-SAT missile. Brecht perished a week later, murdered by one of his own band members, the feline Bast IIIT pleasure android Neko, now a fugitive from the law. Brecht's videos were banned in many nations, but pirate copies – especially of his first album, "Angels of Torment" – have now attained cult status.

(Although the details on Brecht's band may seem to the players to be a red herring, his killer Neko appears later in the adventure. Knowing a little background on Brecht may be useful in their dealings with this important NPC.)

News organizations and the metropolitan police have files on all known Toronto street gangs. If the characters have the information that their quarry is a group of Brecht-imitators, give them +3 to Research or Streetwise rolls when checking newsfiles or police records. A Good or better reaction and a plausible story (e.g., the PCs are reporters doing a story on TOWMA gangs) gives access to them. Roll vs. Research skill every hour. Success matches Charli's description with a gang called the Angels of Torment, a gang involved in drugs, weapons smuggling, and extortion, fighting other Toronto gangs (primarily the Streetwolves) for control of North York. They have 40 members.

Hitting the Streets

The PCs can also find the gang's name by asking people in the Stumps area, but the inhabitants are afraid to talk about the gang to strangers. Store

clerks have been victimized by the Angels of Torment, the rival gangs hate and fear them, local addicts buy drugs from them, and the beat cops treat them with the respect one gives to dangerous animals. A Streetwise roll is needed (at +3 if the PCs describe the gang as “a bunch of kids who look like Andreas Brecht”). Once the PCs know who they are looking for, the best way of finding the Angels of Torment is to inquire at local bars, the high school, corner stores or the like. Have them make more Streetwise rolls (or IQ-5 default) every 3 hours of daylight or once per night. The result determines how much information the PCs get:

Critical Success: “Looking for the Angels of Torment? You need Michaelmass. He’s the only one sane enough to listen to you. Try the Jane Street Book Depository after six p.m. – that’s where they hang out. If you see any roving at night, stay away from them. They’ll kill you.”

Success: “The Angels of Torment? You got a deathwish? Their headquarters is at the Jane Book Depository. Or just hang around the Stumps at night. It’s your life.”

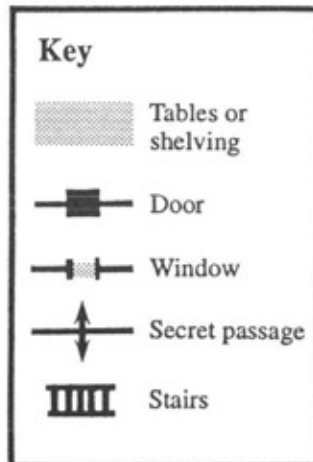
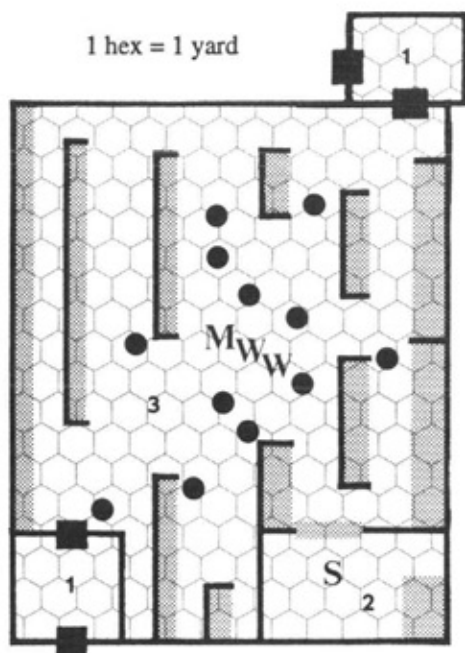
Failure: “I dunno. Messing with those kids is bad news. Take my advice: Stay away from them, or you’ll get cut.”

Critical Failure: The PCs miss the Angels, but encounter a drug-crazed psychopath, feral dogs or the like.

Jane Street Book Depository

This building is located in a particularly run-down part of the Stumps: broken windows, empty streets, garbage everywhere. Approaching PCs can hear the music a block away: The tortured angst of Andreas Brecht’s last snuff-rock single, *New Book of the Dead*, fills the air, the throbbing guitar of Brecht and the sinister, purring sensuality of his lead female vocalist (Neko) counterpointed by screams and sobs of tortured victims.

Jane Street Book Depository



- S = Sabbath
- = Angel of Torment
- M = Michaelmass
- W = Streetwolf



Typical Angel of Torment

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 11.

Speed 5.75, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 7 (Knife).

Chamosuit (PD 2, DR 8), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Appearance (Handsome); Patron (the Gang).

Disadvantages: Intolerance (Gays, Non-WASPs, Rival Gangs); Status -1; Sense of Duty (Gang); Struggling; Youth. Also roll 1d: 1-2 Bad Temper, 3-4 Bloodlust, 5-6 Sadism.

Quirks: Chants Brecht’s lyrics while hacking and slashing; Identical features; Light tattoo on face; Only listens to Andreas Brecht’s music.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Stumps)-12; Brawling-14; Guns-11; Knife-14; Leadership-10; Interrogation-10; Occultism-8; Shadowing-11; Stealth-12; Streetwise-11; Survival (Urban)-11.

Equipment: Chamosuit; large knife (very fine, vibro). Also roll 1d: 1-2 no other weapons, 3-4 stunwand, 5 power drill, 6 tangler. They use assault carbines, needlers or machine pistols for rumbles or drive-by shootings, but don’t carry them day-to-day.

There are 60 Angels of Torment in the Stumps, but they only come together for weekly meetings and major gang wars. Only seven are female. Typical streetnames include Barnabas, Dante, Jericho, Lucifer, Milton.

Chamosuits

Chamosuits are made of mimetic monocrystalline fibers designed to alter their coloration to blend in with surrounding terrain. They react more slowly than the TL10 chameleon suits and armor described in *Ultra-Tech*, and so give the wearer only a -1 to be hit or spotted if he is moving. However, if a wearer remains stationary for at least 2 seconds, the suit has time to fully blend into the background, for a -2 penalty after two seconds and a -3 after 3 or more seconds. A chamosuit covers the entire body except the head (a hood is attached), and has large side and back pockets. It provides PD 2, DR 8 protection, or PD 1, DR 1 vs. impaling attacks, but counts as non-rigid armor: any 6 rolled on damage from a crushing attack will do a minimum of 1 point damage even if the attack does not penetrate DR.

A chamosuit weighs 10 pounds, costs \$2,000 and works for 24 hours on three A cells. It is LC 4.



The building occupied by Brecht's modern disciples is a one-story brick and steel-frame building. A faded sign reads "Jane Street Municipal Book Depository." Graffiti sprayed on it includes "Angels of Torment Rule" and "Brecht Lived for Our Sins."

Fourteen Angels of Torment are in the building. They are making a lot of noise, so the PCs won't be able to listen in on them over the loud music. On the other hand, the gang won't hear the PCs breaking in . . . Refer to the map on p. 9.

1. *Front and Back Doors:* These have palmprint scanlocks installed by the gang. On the doors are posters of Brecht and his band: the handsome Brecht and four other men with cybernetic guitars, and a beautiful anthropomorphic cat-girl (a Bast IIIT android) with tiger-striped fur and long claws that drip blood. All wear silvery chamosuits and Maori tattoos. They stride over a field of mutilated corpses, behind them a burning city.

2. *Librarian's Office:* This is separated from the Stacks (below) by a low wall (shaded area on map). The room has two gel mattresses used by the gang and a litter of junk, beer cans, hypo needles, drained power cells and military MREs (meal, ready to eat). Sabbath (sidebar, p. 8) is rummaging around on the floor on her hands and knees, looking for her electrified stunwand; she wants to use it on the gang's prisoners (see below). She'll be out of sight when the intruders enter the Stacks; if they fight, she'll join in, using pop-up attacks from behind the low wall.

3. *The Stacks:* Industrial-strength speakers stacked on overturned shelves blare out Brecht's music. The library shelves and remaining books are usable as cover. The walls have graffiti and holographic concert posters of Andreas Brecht and his band. The room is lit by a heaped pile of burning library books. Squatting around the fire are 13 Angels of Torment (marked as Xs on the map – M is their leader, Michaelmass). All have Brecht's face and Maori war tattoos, while their bodies, sheathed in form-fitting chamosuits, blur and shift like quicksilver in the flickering firelight.

Manacled to a ceiling pipe just above the book fire are two young men in red leather jackets, their fluffy hair dyed in black and white (Ws on the map). These are members of the rival Streetwolf gang caught selling drugs



in the Angels' turf. One of the male Angels – Michaelmass (sidebar, p. 7) – is questioning the prisoners about Streetwolf defenses, and they are responding in low, hopeless tones, incomprehensible beneath the loud music. Several Angels of Torment have buzzing vibroblades out, and oozing cuts on the faces and bodies of the prisoners suggests they've seen use. See sidebar, p. 9 for the statistics of a typical Angel.

Meeting Michaelmass

This doesn't *have* to be a violent encounter – how the PCs get this information is up to them. The Angels of Torment are amoral street scum, but most of them aren't total psychotics, and they are relaxed in their home turf. If the intruders don't come in shooting, they'll find that the Angels' "fun" with the Streetwolves has put them in a good mood – relatively speaking.

The GM should use the reaction table (see p. B205) as a "potential combat situation" with a blanket -4: the gang is xenophobic, homophobic and in love with violence, but if the PCs are macho WASP neo-Nazis who like Brecht's music (or successfully act the part) they might get along – this will cancel the Angels' -4 reaction penalty. If the PCs come off cold and menacing, but act like they don't care what the gang did to Charli but want the canister she was carrying, Michaelmass will understand this is business, and conclude Charli probably worked for the PCs. Since this is the way he deals, give the PCs a +2 reaction bonus. On the other hand, if the adventurers act angry with the gang for their assault on Charli, give them a -2.

If the visitors get a Neutral or better reaction, the gang will be willing to talk. Here's what they know: It was Michaelmass, Sabbath and seven other Angels (including Bobby Joe) who rumbled Charli. They didn't like her accent; she looked rich, and any girl stupid enough to go alone through Angels' territory deserves what she gets, right? Michaelmass will recognize a description of Charli and remember "that white jailbait with the laser who we cut real good." After Charli passed out, Sabbath removed her cybereyes and kept her Rachel Steel jacket and holdout pistol. The backpack and canister was taken by an Angel who isn't here: Bobby Joe. They split Charli's cash, then Michaelmass and Sabbath took the two gang members she had shot to a clinic for treatment, while the rest, including Bobby Joe, went home.

If the PCs want to know where to find Bobby Joe, have them make a second Reaction roll – use the "commercial transactions" rather than "requests for information" modifiers since the Angels will happily sell information if it won't hurt them. For \$200, Michaelmass will call Sabbath out, and have her guide the agents to Bobby Joe's apartment (see below). Michaelmass hasn't seen Bobby Joe (or the canister) in the last 24 hours. He figures Bobby is crashing at his girlfriend Ash's place. Michaelmass will ask them to pay Bobby a decent price for the canister – say \$500. Sabbath will want to keep Charli's jacket and holdout laser as trophies.

If the PCs got a Poor or worse reaction, the Angels of Torment will resent the PCs bothering them, and attack. The only way the intruders can get the information described above is to interrogate survivors; Michaelmass and Sabbath will be glad to trade their lives for it!

Charli's Jacket

Charli's Rachel Steel jacket (now worn by Sabbath) is an expensive (\$1,000) designer leather jacket, lined with light monocryls. Charli will bug the PCs about it if they don't bring it back to her. She'll quit asking about the jacket when she gets really scared, but will bring it up again when the Yakuza gets off her back. Getting the jacket back means dealing with Sabbath. Sabbath considers it a prize of war, and won't want part with it for less than \$10,000. The PCs may suspect there's something hidden in the jacket. There isn't. It's a red herring in the adventure – Charli bought it after her first big job, and it has sentimental value to her.

Chemical Warfare Gear

An *NBC Suit* can be worn over regular clothing or armor to protect vs. nuclear fallout, biological weapons or chemical agents. It includes a clear hood (-1 to vision and hearing) and filter (see below). If penetrated, it no longer protects against chemicals, disease, etc. 30 seconds to put on, 15 to remove. PD 0, DR 1; 10 pounds; \$600.

A *CBR Filter* is installed in most combat helmets, weighs one pound, and costs \$200. It must be used with a sealed suit (e.g., Combat Infantry Dress) and replaced every 48 hours in a contaminated environment.

Decontamination Aerosols removes traces of most radiation, persistent chemical and biological agents. A tank and spraygun (cleans ten people or a room) costs \$300, weighs 12 pounds. Spare tanks cost \$200 each.

The Korean Connection

Soft isn't sure how the ninja found him. Here's what happened: Charli gave Abraxas security the slip when she dodged into the bad part of town, and they have no idea what happened to the canister or the courier. But AbSec guessed that whoever found it would try to sell it. So they politely passed the word to the local black clinics: cross us on this and you are very dead – help us and we owe you one. The Korean medic who Soft bribed received the warning, and decided her life wasn't worth the \$20,000 Soft had given her if word leaked back to Abraxas. She called the number AbSec had left, and told them all she knew. 20 minutes later, two ninjas arrived at the Soft Sell. But by then, they were too late, the PCs were about to intervene, and Jo Ness was six hours gone.

If the PCs decide to visit the black clinic, they'll be able to confirm that Soft called them. As for any other information, no one knows anything, except that the specialist they are looking for just left for her vacation – in Korea.



Mycroft Soft

Age 42, 5' 9", 160 lbs., black skin, black hair, gray eyes.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 11.

Speed 5.5, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 6 (Karate).

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Amp Chip; Chip Slots (2); Reputation (+2 as arms dealer); Skip (Merchant [6]); Wealth (Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Enemies (Abraxas, 9 or less); Greed; Overconfidence.

Quirks: Admires French culture; Collects Danish antiques; Ironic sense of humor; Passion for obsolete military gadgets.

Skills: Area Knowledge (TOWMA)-14; Armoury-10; Boating-11; Breath Control-10; Calligraphy-10; Computer Operation-12; Cooking-10; Diplomacy-14; Driving-10 (Auto); Electronics Operation (Communications)-12; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-13; Fast-Talk-15; Forgery-14; Freight Handling-11; Guns (Pistol)-12; Holdout-11; Karate-10; Merchant (Weapons)-14 [17]; Piloting (Small Helicopter)-11; Savoir-Faire-12; Seamanship-10; Streetwise-13.

Languages: English-13; French-13; German-12; Japanese-9.

A former merchant seaman turned smuggler, Soft's base is the TOWMA sprawl but his business takes him across Europe and North America. Lately, most of his biz has been shipping U.S. and European-made guns into Quebec, but Soft considers himself an up-and-coming businessman, and is always looking for deals that could net him a little extra lucre. Unfortunately, the present one went sour.

Soft will be happy to work with the PCs – if they save his neck – but he's mostly concerned with his own safety. He'll hire security for himself. If he thinks the agents are smart and dangerous, he'll stay honest with them and might prove a valuable contact in the arms trade after the adventure is over. If he considers them incompetent, he'll try to sell them to Abraxas, figuring the information that there is a third party involved should be worth something.

Bobby and Ash

Ashley Wang lives in a rundown tenement a few blocks from the Book Depository, which she shares with her mother Kara, who normally spends the weekends plugged into the vidcom watching interactive soap operas. Ash does what she likes, which includes inviting punks like Bobby Joe to stay nights. Since Ash has a job (at a local video outlet) and Bobby doesn't, she's his meal ticket. At the moment, she's also his nurse: Bobby Joe is very, very sick.

Ash answers the door if the PCs knock. They'll see an anorexic 16-year-old, a skinny Oriental girl with short dark hair and eyes red from crying. She's wearing an oversized Andreas Brecht concert t-shirt, torn Korean jeans, pink plastic sandals and an expression of barely contained panic. If the PCs are at all friendly, Ash will break down and cry on their shoulders: "My boyfriend is dying, my mother's a zombie, I don't know what to do." If the PCs have Sabbath with them as a guide, she'll be disgusted at Ash ("whimpering loser.") But Ash has reason to be upset . . .

In the bathroom is Bobby Joe. A slim white teenager, he's locked into a fetal position in a bathtub full of ice water, whimpering in mindless agony, Brecht's face stretched into a rictus of pain. Despite the ice water, he's running a fever.

Ash says it started with Bobby complaining of joint pains a few hours



ago, and got worse: soon he was nauseous and feverish. Two hours ago the pain got so bad he couldn't move, just scream until his throat was so sore he could only moan. Ash can't afford a med-team, and knows Bobby has no insurance. She's scared he's going to die.

Where's the Canister?

Searching Ash's apartment won't turn up the canister. If they question Ash, she'll tell them Bobby said he found it in the dump and thought it might be valuable. He had been trying to pry open its seals, and was annoyed he hadn't succeeded. When Bobby came down with his fever she figured her mother's medicine chest wouldn't help. So since Bobby thought it might be worth money, Ash took the canister to the local ware-

man and traded it for \$500 and a packet of black market antibiotics. But those didn't help either, and Bobby just keeps getting sicker . . .

The 'wareman's name? Mycroft Soft, who will buy and sell anything if the price is right.

Panic – Biohazard!

If any PC has the Biochemistry or Diagnosis skill and diagnostic equipment (or they take Bobby to a clinic) they can find out what's wrong with him. A successful roll reveals something like an accelerated bone cancer is inexplicably spreading very rapidly through his body. It has affected his spinal column, and at this stage, the only thing that can save him is an immediate brain transplant or braintape. If the PCs bother to check Ash or Kara for signs of infection or contagion, they won't find any. On a Critical Success, the diagnosis reveals the "disease" is really caused by molecule-sized nanobots: microscopic nanotech machines that are imitating disease cells.

Smart PCs will suspect Bobby's tampering with Charli's canister is responsible. They'll probably call Charli and demand explanations (or more money). Charli is just about to go into surgery; they are putting her eyes back in. She asks for the PCs' number, then says she'll try to reach her employer. As for money, she'll see what she can do.

An hour later, she calls back. She's calm (if the PCs can win a Detect Lies contest vs. her Acting skill, they realize she's faking it). They don't have to worry – much. According to her information, the canister contained custom-engineered and very valuable nanobots designed to dispose of nuclear waste. Bobby Joe's problem? If the seal was damaged when he took his laser cutter to it, it might have a very slow toxic leak, and some of it could be eating Bobby Joe by mistake. This is dangerous only if the seal itself is touched, and should be easy to avoid: wear surgical gloves, and avoid attempts to open the canister when they find it.

Toshio (Kangetsu series)

Android, age 7, looks 23, 5' 3", 140 lbs., oriental male, black hair and eyes.

ST 11, DX 15, IQ 13, HT 11.

Speed 6.5, Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 11 (Karate), 8 (Shortsword).

Light Monocrys and Toughness (PD 2, DR 10), no encumbrance.

Advantages: 2 Bionic Eyes (Infrared); Biomonitor; Chip Slots (2); Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Radio Reception; Skip: Electronics Operation (Security Systems) [4], Forensics [4]; Toughness 2.

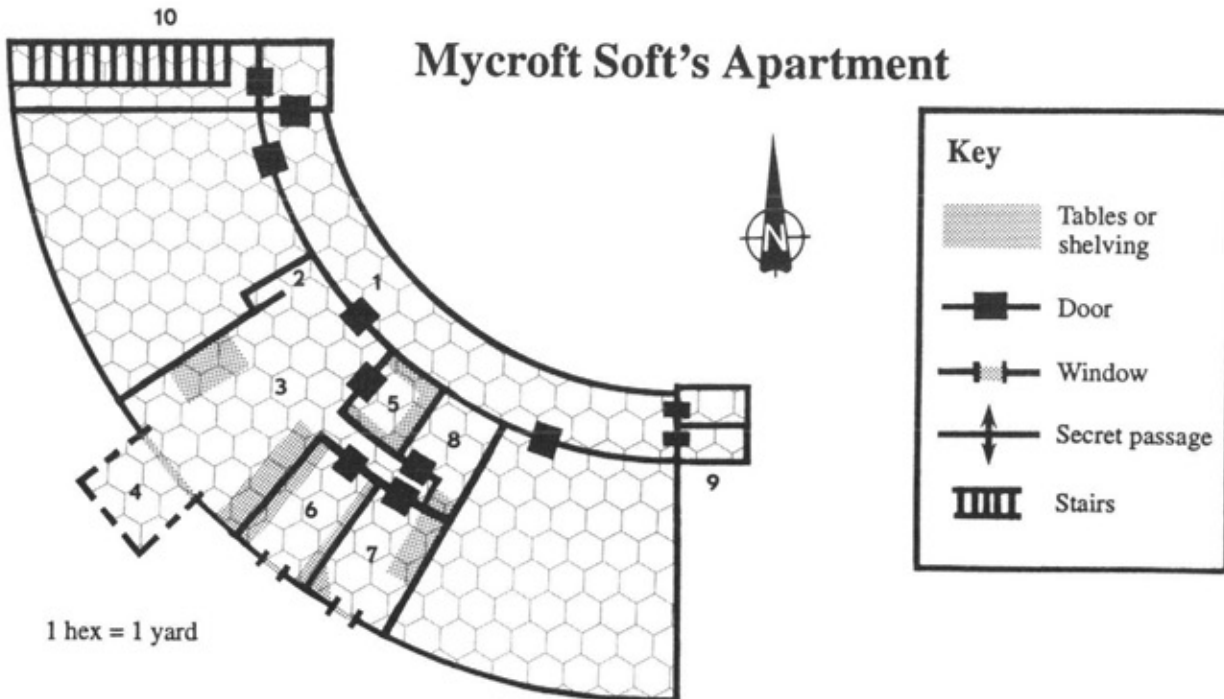
Disadvantages: Cortex Bomb; No Sense of Humor; Sense of Duty (Abraxas); Short Lifespan*; Sterile*.

Quirks: Calm and emotionless; Faint Japanese accent.

Skills: Acrobatics-14; Climbing-15; Disguise-14; Electronics Operation (Security)-15 [17]; Guns (Pistol)-15; Holdout-15; Interrogation-15; Karate-15; Lockpicking-15; Shadowing-15; Shortsword-14; Stealth-16; Throwing-15.

Equipment: Criminology kit, electronic lockpick and bugstomper in attache case; business suit (light monocrys); needler (one magazine sleep poison); pneumohypo with Crediline, Hypercoagulin and Retro; Recorder; throwing knife (superfine).

*Android disadvantages; see p. 48.



Ann-Marie (Yasha series)

Android, age 5, looks 20, 5', 120 lbs., black hair (in ponytail), brown eyes. ST 11, DX 14, IQ 12, HT 12. Speed 6.5/7.5, Move 6/7. Dodge 7/9, Parry 10/11 (Karate). Chamosuit (PD 2, DR 8), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive); Audio Dampening (2 levels, +4 to Stealth skill); Biomonitor; Broadcast; Combat Reflexes; Flesh Holster (2 pounds in stomach); High Pain Threshold; Hyper-Reflexes*; Radio Reception.

Disadvantages: Cortex Bomb; Fanatical (Serve Abraxas); No Sense of Humor; Short Lifespan*; Sterile*.

Quirks: Grins wildly in combat; Rarely speaks.

Skills: Acrobatics-14; Climbing-15; Disguise-13; Electronics Operation (Security)-14; Guns (Needler)-17; Holdout-15; Jumping-17; Interrogation-11; Karate-14; Lockpicking-13; Shadowing-15; Shortsword-16; Stealth-16 (20 with audio dampening); Throwing-15

Equipment: Autograpnel; chamosuit; needler w/laser sight; shortsword (superfine, vibro); gas mask; 1 smoke and flare grenade; multiview goggles; electronic lockpick; electronic thumb.

Toshio and Ann-Marie report directly to Conrad Lang. Both are android "vat-ninja" but look like normal humans. Their orders were to recover the stolen Medusa canister and eliminate anyone who found out about it. Their biomonitors are slaved together through the com implants so if one is drugged, injured or killed, the other will instantly know about it. Their cortex bombs are designed to be triggered at will (to avoid capture), or upon their death. This will scramble the brain, preventing anyone using braintape machines to revive and interrogate them.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.



Charli believes what she's saying – she's nervous for other reasons! She now *knows* her employers are Yakuza (though she won't admit it unless pressed) and is sure they'll kill her if the PCs don't retrieve the canister in the next few days. She'll tell the PCs her employer is getting anxious, and wants the canister as soon as possible. If the PCs need reassuring, she'll up the fee to \$100,000 since the job seems more dangerous than she thought. If the PCs are really worried, she'll suggest they score some CBW (chemical-biological warfare) protective equipment. Roll vs. Streetwise or Scrounging every hour. Success means the PCs acquire some military-surplus equipment that still works. The protection for sale is described in the sidebar on p. 11.

Going Soft

The adventurers may want to try calling first. Soft isn't in the book, but Ash has his number. If they call, all they get are busy signals. But with Ash's help, finding Mycroft Soft's place is easy; it's Apartment 4 on the seventh floor of Brinkley Building, a low-rent condo eight blocks away. But the PCs aren't the only people looking for the canister. It was originally stolen from Abraxas Corporation's Berlin labs by freelance thieves. Charli was to deliver it to a Yakuza operative when she picked up an Abraxas tail. She lost the tail in the Stumps, and Abraxas Security still haven't found Charli, but they *have* traced the canister to Mycroft Soft by other means (see *The Korean Connection*, sidebar, p. 11, for how they did it). When the PCs visit Soft's apartment, they'll find they aren't alone; AbSec's corporate ninja arrived about an hour earlier.

Mycroft Soft's Apartment

The Brinkley Building is a 12-story middle-income apartment block facing a busy street. All apartments also have balconies with French windows. PCs can enter the Brinkley Building through the front lobby or a back door fire escape, or go to the parking lot, climb the walls and enter through a window.

The Brinkley's lobby is a small foyer floored with colorful polymer tiles. The lobby once had a closed-circuit security system, but vandals stole it, leaving security to the residents. The inner doors are unlocked, and lead into a short corridor ending in a bank of elevators. The back-door fire escape is a featureless spiral stairway, also lacking in defenses. The building is quiet; most residents keep to themselves.

The seventh floor is a curving windowless corridor, with numbered doors every few yards. At one end is the elevator bank, at the other, a fire escape. Apartment 4 is the second door nearest the fire escape – see the map above. Its balcony faces the back of the building, so if the PCs decide to scale the walls, they should be able to do it at night without being seen.

Soft's Apartment

PCs can gain access through the front door (1). If they climbed the wall they can reach the balcony (4) and enter the living room through the French windows. The work room (6) and bedroom (7) also have windows, but they don't open.

1. *Soft's Door:* This has a thin wood veneer over thick armorplas (DR

10, HT 50). There's a retina scanlock keyed to Soft. The door is locked and impregnated with fiber optic filaments which will sound an alarm if they are cut through or the door (or lock) is broken. PCs can detect and neutralize this with electronics tools and a successful Traps or Electronics Operation (Security Systems) roll.

2. *Hall Closet*: Contains clothing; Soft's taste is garish French street fashions.

3. *Living Room*: A decor consists of a moss-green carpet and ivy-patterned wallpaper, a wood table, an antique lava lamp, and a plush couch. The light is on, shedding a ruddy glow. A minicomputer (Accounting and Datalink programs) is on the table hooked up to a Smarthome system (see p. CY103) which will beep loudly if the front door's security is breached. Next to the computer is a vidcom and disk reader; the bottom shelf is full of French entertainment vids.

An AbSec ninja (Ann-Marie; see sidebar, p. 14) is riffling through the disks. She's in a good position to notice intruders from the front door or balcony. Even if they don't set off the front door alarm, make a Quick Contest of their Stealth vs. her Vision or Hearing roll as appropriate. If she's alerted before the PCs notice her, she'll signal Toshio, then duck under the table, using her Stealth skills and chamosuit (which will blend her into the rug) to become invisible, ready to ambush them. In a fight she uses flare grenades (and her own multi-vision goggles) to blind opponents, then attacks with her gun or vibroblade.

4. *Balcony*: This overlooks a the car park, with a 60-foot drop. It has a low railing. French windows (the curtains are drawn) made of plexiglass (DR 8, HT 1) lead into the living room. They are fitted with an electronic lock and infrared beam sensors, neither of which are working. If the PCs check for alarms and make an Electronics Operation (Security Systems) roll they'll realize the defenses were expertly neutralized: There are small marks where lockpicks and "black boxes" were used to disable them.

5. *Kitchen*: This is decorated in green and white tile. It contains a Danish pinewood table, chairs and the usual automated appliances. The fridge and cupboards show Soft's taste runs to imported European snack food, French wines and German beer.

6. *Work Room*: The windows are DR 8, HT 1 plexiglass; the curtains are not drawn, so anyone climbing the wall and peering in can see the room is empty of life, though overflowing with junk. Soft's hobby is restoring antique military electronics. The shelves are stacked with them: military light-intensifiers, electronic viewers, radios and infrared goggles, even a laser target designator, all from the 1995-2010 period. Half of them work (roll 1-3 on 1d), but all weigh twice as much as a modern (TL8) system, and use obsolete lithium batteries (half duration). Besides antiques, the shelves also hold an electronics tool kit; a combat infantry helmet; two magazines of Gauss needler ammo; a mile of pink fiber optic cable; a CBW aerosol can (see sidebar, p. 11); a Steyr AUG 5.56mm assault rifle (p. B209) with two magazines, and twelve chips. Four are cheap Trips (Swedish and French travel erotica); two are zapped [1-point] Skips, three are zapped [1-point] Flips; two are safe [1-point] Skips, one is a safe [2-point] Flip. Roll on the table on B85 to see what skill the Skips or Flips provide.

7. *Soft's Bedroom*: The plexiglass (DR 8, HT 1) window has the cur-

Androids

An android is a synthetic humanoid created from biological materials – don't confuse them with robots! Androids are also called gene-splices, vat-humans, replicants and artificial people. Some resemble humans; others are more exotic, often with animal features due to the splicing of animal and human DNA. Androids cost from about \$200,000 to \$1,000,000 each, more for custom-designed prototypes. Because of the expense involved in android creation, most are either ordered by very wealthy individuals to satisfy private whimsy or by major corporations to fulfill a need for specialized personnel. It's not yet cost-effective to replace regular human workers with androids.

Androids are produced by tinkering with human DNA to produce the desired results, then using in-vitro fertilization techniques and artificial wombs to produce a child. After the first prototypes are produced, mass production begins, using clone-tank force-growth techniques to grow the embryo to adulthood in a few months. As it floats in the clone tank its brain is hooked up to a mainframe computer running sophisticated dream simulation programs. The android develops in virtual reality and experiences simulated childhood, education and job training. Six months to a year after entering the tank, the android's socialization and education is complete, and it is released, a thinking being.

The legal status of androids remains hazy. In some areas they are citizens with full human rights, but many of the companies who produce them for sale maintain they are not human (most androids use a sizable quotient of artificial or animal DNA, if only for this reason) and laws governing Artificial Intelligences instead apply to them: they can be owned and trademarked. International conventions adhered to in Europe, North America and Japan agree that androids are artificial lifeforms in the same category as AIs: they may have limited citizenship, but belong to the creator corporation (or whoever purchased them). They must contain a certain amount of nonhuman DNA, must be sterile, and may only be contracted to corporations (not individuals). Of course, there is a thriving trade in black market androids sold to individuals.

The android characters described in this adventure make use of new "racial" advantages and disadvantages (many of them from *GURPS Aliens* and *GURPS Uplift*). These are marked with an asterisk and described on p. 48.

Because androids are produced using fast-growth clone tanks, their actual ages differ from their biological ages – they'll usually be about 15-17 years younger than they look. Furthermore, some androids are designed to age more rapidly than humans. Normal skill limits for age do not apply to androids, since many of their skills are "programmed" into them through dream-game simulations.



Data Precis – Saladin series Combat Androids

This information is available in the latest edition of *Jane's Fighting Androids* (copies available in most libraries):

One of the most stable and reliable combat androids yet produced, the Saladin has been widely exported and is certainly a commercial success for SkyTec. In the seven years since the first prototype was de-canted, 6,970 M-2Ds have been produced, primarily for Middle Eastern, North African and Eurasian armies and the French Foreign Legion. Estimated price of an M-2D is \$250,000-\$300,000, depending on exact education and training.

SkyTec's M-2D "Saladin" is the successor to the Mk. I "Spartan" infantry combat android, specialized for high-intensity desert warfare. The M-2D are of standard human male morphology, but have extensive subdermal modifications: they were the first combat android to feature both pain-killing endorphin glands and the speed and strength-enhancing adrenaline boosters in a single package. Other modifications include toughened skin, enhanced endocrine production to stimulate muscle growth and doubled heart via induced polyploidy. Immunity to most chemical weapons is ensured through self-regenerating lung-filters and anti-toxin glands.

tains drawn. Furnishings consist of a matching Danish bed and desk set. Handcuffed to the desk's chair is a black man in his mid-forties wearing an expensive French bathrobe: Mycroft Soft (see sidebar, p. 12). Standing over him is a nondescript Oriental man in a business suit (the Abraxas ninja Toshio; see sidebar, p. 13). If the PCs are fighting Ann-Marie, he'll leave Soft tied to the chair and aid her in dealing with them. If the PCs manage to sneak up without Toshio or Ann-Marie noticing, he'll be holding a recorder and speaking to Soft, who is answering in a slurred voice. If the PCs eavesdrop, they'll hear the following exchange:

Toshio, speaking with a Japanese accent says: "Soft-san, please tell me again the name of the woman who bought the Medusa canister?"

Soft's answer is slurred: "Told you already man, she was an artificial girl name of Jo Ness. Think she was with the A-L-F."

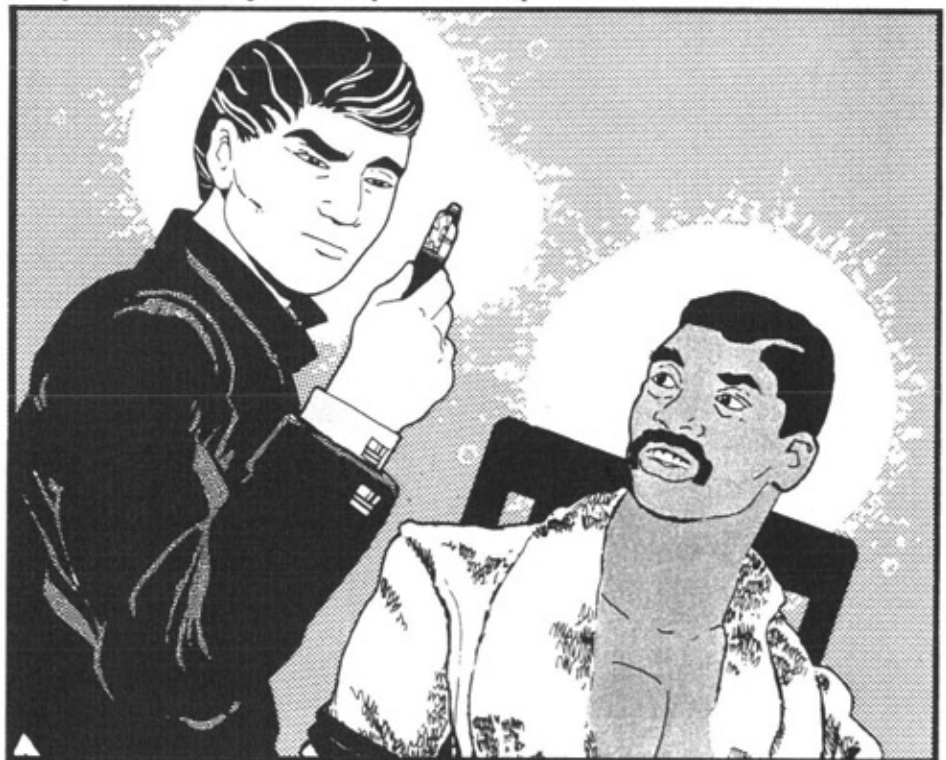
Toshio: "The Android Liberation Front, you said. Yes."

Soft: "Right, man. Just so."

At this point – if the PCs haven't taken action yet – Toshio will decide he has the truth, and reach into his pocket for a pneumohypo.

Toshio "Thank you for your cooperation, Soft-san. You will sleep now – and forever."

If the PCs don't interfere, he will inject Soft with a Hypercoagulin overdose, remove the cuffs, arrange the dying Soft artistically in bed, and pull out his criminology kit to check for any evidence he has left. The two ninja will use Soft's vidcom to relay a coded report to Abraxas, then head for Bobby Joe's apartment to interrogate (and then silence) Ashley Wang. If they don't stop him, they'll read about how Wang murdered her mother, then took a drug overdose, in the next morning's papers. No mention of Bobby Joe – the ninjas destroyed the body.



If the PCs get to Soft after he is injected with Hypercoagulin, they've got one minute to save him before he dies. If they act before then, they can keep him alive through CPR (requiring a successful First Aid or Physician

roll every 2 minutes). If they can keep him alive long enough to get him to a hospital like Charli's, a full blood transfusion will save his life. A successful Diagnosis roll will identify the drug used, and the need for a blood transfusion.

8. *Bathroom*: A needle shower, sink, and antique 1970s French toilet. The tank has a loaded machine pistol and 2 doses of +2 DX Adder taped inside it. If freed, Soft will want the gun.

9. *Elevator Bank*.

10. *Fire Escape*.

What if the Ninja Win?

If the PCs lose to two ninja, they probably deserved it. Survivors could be drafted by Abraxas, interrogated to find Charli, and then (along with Charli) injected with killer viruses that will activate in a week if the PCs don't find the canister and return it to the corporation.

Soft's Story

If the PCs are able to take out the ninja before they kill Mycroft Soft (or if they revive Soft) they can hear his story. If Soft is dead, someone who searches Toshio will be able to find a small audio recorder which contains the same story (told to Toshio).

"Okay, you want me to tell you how I got the canister. Fine. It starts when the little girl visits my shop with the sad story about her sick squeeze Bobby Joe. Since she is with the Angels of Torment, who sometimes do real biz, I am of course willing to see this metal can she is trying to sell me."

"Unlike some people who should know better, I recognized the label on this salvage as belonging to Abraxas Corporation. Since Abraxas does not put computerized seals on cans of waste sewage, I realize it might be worth buying, so I do this thing. Then, being careful not to touch it, I call a black clinic to send someone down to check it out."

"The Korean medic performs her scan, and she is very surprised, yes. It seems we have a tiger on our hands, a nanotech biochemical agent that is to bubonic plague as the neutron bomb was to a hand grenade, and then some. The Korean, she notes that someone has tampered with the seals, but before I turn white, she tells me not to worry, it is perfectly safe with all reasonable precautions. There is no danger unless you happen to be an idiot like Ashley Wang's little freak Bobby Joe and go touching the seals, in which case your bones will start leaking out your ears in about six hours. But should these seals break, the Korean tells me I can kiss it goodbye, because there's enough in that can to kill all human beings in a 10-mile radius."

"Did I flinch? No – we look destruction in the eye, and recognize ourselves, or at least a lot of money. I didn't make the stuff, but why shouldn't I profit by what my tax dollars probably funded, right? I realized this was the big time. I paid the Korean twenty grand to forget she'd seen the stuff, and then sealed the prize up in a biohazard bag, sprayed the bag with clear plastic decontamination foam, and went looking for a buyer. The word goes out on the net with the proper codes that Soft has something worth spending money on. And a few hours later, up comes a white woman with a soft voice and a German accent who says her name is Jo Ness."

Eumenides Police Androids

When the PCs learn they are chasing a *Eumenides*, they may decide to see what is available. Information is surprisingly sparse; the *Eumenides* aren't in most standard catalogs because they were a canceled experimental model. However, there was some speculation on them in the defense press a year and half ago. From last year's edition of *Jane's Fighting Androids*:

"Abraxas Corporation's Eumenides series is one of the first combat androids expressly designed for high-intensity police and counter-terrorist operations. Of human female morphology, the Eumenides' (named "kindly ones" after the Greek Furies) genetic modifications are believed to include Gen IV nerve sheathing to reduce the electrical resistance in neural pathways, increasing reaction speed by some 80% above human norm. Reslin muscles and Abraxas-K hyper-adrenaline glands similar to those used in SkyTec's Saladin provide further short-term reflex boosting. Anti-toxin glands and an altered liver combined with lung and skin-pore filters defeat most known poisons. Feline eyes and ears provide sensor enhancement.

"More controversial are reports that both left-brain (for eidetic memory) and right-brain (for intuitive ability) enhancements were made; since this combination has been linked to instability or mild paranoia in earlier models their use on the Eumenides-series may indicate either breakthroughs by Abraxas in brain chemistry engineering or an intention to correct any problems that appear in the prototypes during actual production.

"However, that production may not take place. A source within Abraxas has indicated the two most likely purchasers – Germany's Bundesgrenzschutzgruppe-9 and France's Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale – have each canceled their orders, claiming that cost overruns within Abraxas drove the unit price substantially above expectations. So far Abraxas has been unable to find a new purchaser, and it seems likely that the first two prototypes (Alecto and Megaera) will be the only Eumenides produced. Information on the disposition of EUM-1 Alecto and EUM-2 Megaera is not available at time of press."

Data Search: Joanna Ness

A successful Research roll combined with a news search for the keyword *Jo Ness*, *Abraxas* or *KanoCorp* may turn up the following news story, eight months old:

"Good News for KanoCorp" – Nigeria, AP: For several years, this African mining company was a rising star on the international stock exchanges. But nine months ago, a coup in Nigeria toppled the government. During the brief but bloody period of unrest, KanoCorp's Nigerian offices were destroyed. Under the command of Captain Joanna Ness, KanoCorp's outnumbered security unit fought to the last android, bravely covering the withdrawal of corporate executives to the branch office in Madrid. Then (in a true example of the "New Bushido" ethic now practiced by many corporate mercenaries) the survivors chose suicide over surrender, detonating a .01-kiloton tactical nuclear device which killed many of the rebels (including Captain Ness) and utterly destroyed the KanoCorp facility.

Despite the senior management's survival, KanoCorp's future initially appeared bleak, as its remaining Nigerian assets were seized by the new government, and its stock prices plummeted to rock-bottom levels. But now KanoCorp has received a shot in the arm! After buying a controlling interest in KanoCorp stock, executives of Abraxas Corporation just announced they have completed delicate negotiations with the new Nigerian government to return KanoCorp's nationalized assets. Soon KanoCorp will be back in business.

Speculation that executives of Abraxas Corporation met with Nigerian opposition leaders before the coup – and had in fact encouraged it – were dismissed by both the new Nigerian government and Abraxas Corporation as "ridiculous fantasy." No former KanoCorp senior executives have been found who were willing to comment on the subject.



"Now I had heard that name before while talking to one of my regular contacts, who had mentioned it in connection with the Android Liberation Front. That was a year back, and since then I'd heard the ALFs had been put out of business after some New England fiasco. But maybe not, 'cause she sure fit the part."

"She was tall, five-nine, 150 pounds, maybe, with long legs and a good figure hidden by a hooded coat. The hood kept me from getting a good look at her face or hair, but I saw her eyes, and they weren't human: slit pupils, yellow, like a cat's. I fumbled the canister when I passed it to her, but she caught it so fast her hand blurred, man."

"So this obviously artificial girl takes a look at what I am selling, and she says "Lang" like it's her lover's name. Now I'd like to ask some questions since she obviously knows something I don't, but Jo Ness isn't one for talk, she just shakes her head. Now she looks at the Korean's report and makes the usual threats about what nastiness will go down if I double on her but I can tell that this is just a formality; she's in love with the stuff and is going to buy. Out pops her briefcase and there is three hundred grand. Naturally, I sell, the canister vanishes, and the artificial girl is out the door and off into the wind and the rain."

"Six hours later, I've just deposited the cash in my account, and I'm sitting here deciding whether I should get out of the city in case she uses the stuff here, when I feel a prick in the back of my neck, and what do we know, it is a little Japanese man who has just bypassed \$50,000 worth of security like it wasn't there to ask me some questions I wish I didn't have the answers to."

If the PCs got the information off the ninja's audio recorder, then that's all they'll have. If he's still alive, here are some details Soft could give the characters if they ask the right questions:

Ness bought other items from Soft's bargain basement besides Medusa: a Defense Globe (missing its laser), a surveillance camera, 50 yards of optic cable, a newscam, six pounds of Plastex explosive, a gyroscope from an obsolete inertial navigation system, a modern beam sensor with lethal beam option and eight magazines of armor-piercing sabotted pistol ammo.

All Soft knows about the ALF is that they are a radical android-right's group, dedicated to punishing those individuals or corporations whom they believe mistreat androids. They've blown up or burned down some birthlabs, but nothing Soft would call spectacular. Recently, he remembers seeing a news bulletin which said that the ALF bungled a burglary in an Abraxas plant, and two members were killed by security guards while trying to escape. Jo Ness wasn't among them. Alert PCs might catch Soft's mention that he heard Jo Ness' name in connection with the ALF *before* she showed up on his doorstep. (If the PCs threaten to do something nasty to Soft, he may also mention this to give him something to trade for his life!)

This was five months ago in Marseilles, France, where Soft was trying to purchase a consignment of rifles for a customer in Quebec. A Saladin-class combat android named Zengi (who had recently retired from the Foreign Legion) had helped him close the deal. As they were loading the guns on the hovercraft, Zengi had asked Soft if he knew anything about the Android Liberation Front. All Soft had heard were the usual news reports, but he inquired after Zengi's interest. Zengi said that last month a female

android mercenary named Joanna Ness had tried to recruit him into the ALF, but he wasn't sure – he didn't know enough about the group, and had heard Ness had lost her former outfit in some African bloodbath, and Zengi didn't like to join up with an unlucky commander. That is all Zengi said, and Soft didn't ask him for any more details about Ness or the ALF, so there is nothing else to tell. But Soft remembered and made the connection when "Jo Ness" turned up. As for Mr. Zengi, Soft never saw the mercenary again, although rumor had him dead in a vertol crash in Zaire.

Jo Ness' Story (GM's Information)

The PCs won't know it for some time, but Jo Ness is actually Alecto Eumenides, the first prototype of the Eumenides series of police counter-terrorist androids (see *Eumenides Police Android*, sidebar, p. 17, and *Alecto Eumenides*, sidebar, p. 38). After the police contract was canceled due to massive cost overruns, the two existing prototypes, Alecto and her clone-sister Megaera, were left without a clear job. Alecto was assigned as a bodyguard for Conrad Lang, the vice president in charge of the genetic engineering division that had created her.

After two months on the job, an assassin tried to kill Lang. Alecto slew the assassin, then found herself assigned to eliminate three Abraxas executives who Lang accused of plotting to kill him – and another two – and then three more. As the circle of death widened, Alecto suspected she was being ordered against rivals rather than plotters. Trained as a police officer rather than an assassin, she decided it was her duty to report her suspicions to Abraxas' Board of Directors. But Lang learned of her intentions, and Alecto found herself accused of treachery and murder, and forced to run.

Pursued by Lang's hitmen, Alecto traveled abroad. She found work as a security specialist in Cairo, but prejudice against androids kept her from finding a secure position. After killing two Abraxas assassins, she headed for Nigeria. She learned that Lang was now Abraxas' president, and she became involved in a corporate war between Nigeria-based KanoCorp and Abraxas. Jo signed on with KanoCorp and led its SkyTec-manufactured combat androids in counter-insurgency sweeps against Abraxas-sponsored rebels. Despite her efforts, KanoCorp's puppet Nigerian government toppled. As Alecto's androids defended the KanoCorp compound to cover the withdrawal of the corporation's executives, the rebels smuggled in an Abraxas-provided nuke. Of the 200 androids caught in the blast zone, Alecto was the sole survivor.

While she was recovering from radiation burns in an Algiers hospital, an Abraxas assassin tracked Alecto down. It was her own clone sister, Megaera, brainwashed by Lang to kill her. But Alecto was more experienced, and it was Megaera who died. As her sister died in her arms, she learned that Lang had ordered Tisiphone, their last clone sister, terminated in embryo. She was the only Eumenides left. Alecto had been a cool, private person, not much given to emotion. Now she felt a tidal wave of loss – and something else. Hatred. Lang – and Abraxas – would pay.

In New Delhi, she helped Pakistani extremists blow up an Abraxas-owned plastics refinery. In Poland she aided eco-terrorists raiding an Abraxas-built nuclear plant, but they failed to capture the fissionable materials she sought. Watching the news in Marseilles, she heard that KanoCorp



Geronimo Flak

Age 32, 5' 7", 160 lbs., brown hair, green eyes.

ST 9, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 10.

Speed 5.5, Move 5.

Dodge 5.

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Amp Chip; Chip Slot; Environmental Interface; Interface Jack; Reputation (+3 among netrunners, all the time).

Disadvantages: Addiction (Face); Dyslexia; Enemy (Mafia, 6 or less); Epilepsy; Overconfident; Stuttering.

Quirks: Australian accent; Constantly munches potato chips; Designs own programs; Lives out of a minibus; Wears cowboy hat.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-14; Computer Hacking-17; Computer Operation-13; Computer Programming-20; Cyberdeck Operation-16; Swimming-12.

Equipment: Minivan (his deck was confiscated by the police).

An Australian immigrant, Flak is a former security expert turned hacker. When the PCs meet him he's in bad shape: twitching all over, stuttering, shivering, and unable to read. Flak's drug charges weren't *quite* a frame: he's not a dealer, but has been taking industrial-strength levels of the drug Face (see p. CY58) to boost netrunning ability, and is suffering from withdrawal symptoms. He became addicted, and needed more cash to buy Face, so he raided some Mob-owned money laundries. But he got careless and a trace discovered his identity. The Mob arranged to have a dealer sell Flak some Face spiked with a new Abraxas neural toxin which fried half his brain cells. Then they tipped off the police, who swooped down and arrested him for drug possession.

Flak will give the PCs his "back door" if they offer him lots of money, which he will use to try and fix his nervous system. He'll start at \$25,000, but he's desperate: they can easily bargain him down to \$5,000 and a percentage off any salable data they find in SkyTecNet. Or if they're cheap, the PCs can just offer him some Face and watch him squirm: addicts will do anything for a hit.

The Moreau File

The file contains the information in the ALF data precis on p. 20. In addition, it adds the following:

Known members of the ALF include:

Cassiopia, Cleo: Android female, Cassiopia-series genetic upgrade. Believed to have worked for the Yakuza as a tax lawyer. Enhancements: Hyper-developed left brain lobe and vasopressin glands provide improved mathematical aptitude, high intelligence and eidetic memory.

Catseye: Android female, runaway Bast III pleasure model, serial number unknown, background unknown. Enhancements: feline DNA, pheromone control.

Ness, Joanna: Android female, type unknown. Former KanoCorp mercenary captain; may be a renegade Abraxas-designed Eumenides-series police android. Believed responsible for a variety of terrorist incidents aimed at Abraxas corporation prior to joining ALF. Enhancements: unknown.

Rostoy, Ivan: Known anarchist, android rights advocate, seditious song writer and samizdata activist; uses alias Bakunin 5 on the net. Believed to be a runaway Ken-series fashion android, and the ALF leader. Enhancements: cosmetic.

Wolf, Peter: Android male, custom-designed exotic created for "Brothers Grimm" theme park in Georgia by Biotech Chulan. Serial number EX-102-L. Runaway, prefers alias "Fenris." Enhancements: lupine DNA.

Zengi: Android male, Saladin-series combat model, serial number SAL-202-820. Deserter from French Foreign Legion. Enhancements: endorphin glands, toughened skin.

In exchange for SkyTec's adherence to certain "ethical" guidelines, the ALF have agreed to confine its activities to Abraxas Corporation, BioTech Chulan, and independent black market android birthlabs. Horizon Group estimates reveal the dollar cost of adherence to ALF standards for android sales is on the order of 21.3 million per year. ALF raids inflicted some 227 million dollars in damage to our competitors in last year alone. At that rate of return, the ALF remain a favorable investment indeed.

Continued on next page . . .

had been bought by Abraxas, and that Abraxas was feeding stories to the media that the bomb that killed her soldiers was set off by her! The next news item was the Android Liberation Front's raid on an Abraxas birthlab in Atlanta – and it gave Alecto an idea.

Her next stop was the United States, where she joined the ALF. She fought with the ALF for six months and made some allies, but the marriage was an unhappy one; Alecto's skills were welcome but the ALF leaders would not let her turn their group into a personal instrument of vengeance. A few weeks ago she left the ALF and formed her own splinter faction, the better to pursue her private war. Just a few days ago, Alecto discovered that Mycroft Soft was selling a misplaced Abraxas biochemical weapon. She was delighted; Abraxas' own creation would be the instrument of her vengeance . . .

The Android Liberation Front

Joanna Ness is long-gone and her backtrail is cold, but the PCs have Mycroft Soft's observation that Ness was connected with the Android Liberation Front. The easiest way to find information on the ALF is to access a public library data base and ask the computer to assemble a data precis on the ALF from unclassified sources. A link to a public library (\$15 user fee) takes a few minutes, and yields the following:

Data Precis – the Android Liberation Front

The Android Liberation Front, or ALF, is a radical terrorist group who oppose the "exploitation" of androids. They came to public attention two years ago when they released a statement taking credit for the destruction of the Kitchener, Ontario headquarters of EduSoft Corporation (a subsidiary of Biotech Chulan), designers of dreamgame software for android conditioning and education. No one was killed in the attack; masked ALF terrorists evacuated the six late-working EduSoft employees at gun point before blowing up the building. The ALF's press statement accused EduSoft of producing programs that turned Bast and Ken-series androids into little more than sex toys.

The Android Liberation Front have since claimed responsibility for 27 acts of arson or sabotage and 12 successful kidnapping of androids from corporate birthlabs, inflicting an estimated 227 million dollars in damage. 23 people have been injured in ALF attacks, but prior to the Boston Incident only three people, all corporate security troops, were killed – as in the EduSoft incident, the ALF appear to take steps to minimize loss of life.

The ALF's reign of terror is focused on individuals or companies alleged to abuse android workers. The lion's share of attacks have been aimed at two leading android manufacturers: Abraxas Corporation and Biotech Chulan. SkyTec, the world's third largest producer of androids for the North American market, has been the target of only a handful of ALF raids, none in the last eighteen months. This has led to allegations that the ALF are a covert SkyTec "strike force" used against SkyTec's rivals. SkyTec, which has called the ALF "misguided and confused," denies any connection. Asked to speculate on their apparent immunity from the ALF, SkyTec spokesperson Maria Esteban pointed to the company's scandal-free

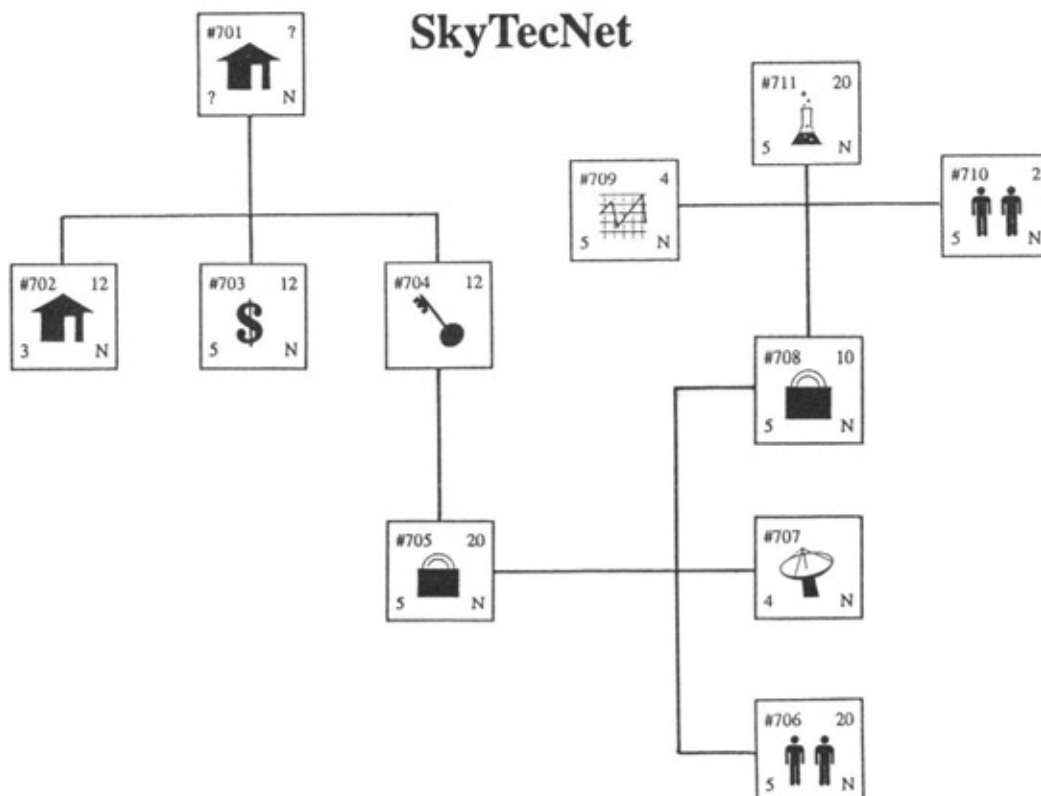
record and new internal ethics guidelines on "artificial persons" which include 20% real-time nurturing and strict background checks on all purchasers to prevent android abuse. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a SkyTec executive stated that "if our distinguished competition treated androids more like people instead of animals, maybe they wouldn't have to spend so much on security."

The ALF's most recent attack was three weeks ago against Abraxas Corporation's Boston birthlab, when two ALF members were killed by security forces while attempting to burglarize the facility. Five Abraxas lab technicians were reported slain by the terrorists, making the Boston incident the first time the ALF has reportedly killed anyone not firing back at them. But an anonymous source within Abraxas claimed the deaths resulted from Abraxas Security's reckless use of nerve gas against the ALF. Asked to comment to the media on these charges, Abraxas/Boston's security chief Ian O'Connell said he could not discuss Abraxas internal security procedures but "reasonable minimum force" had been used. The terrorists' bodies were identified as the SkyTec-designed Saladin-class combat android M-2HD-406 "Spartacus," a deserter from the French Foreign Legion, and the renegade Abraxas-designed Hermes-724 medical android known as "Doc Cobra."

Since the Boston incident, no terrorist attacks have taken place that can be definitely linked to the ALF.

SkyTec

After reading this, the information on the ALF's restrained use of violence may make PCs wonder why they need a weapon of mass destruction. Revenge? The data also suggests a connection with SkyTec. If the PCs raid SkyTec's databases, they'll find the clues they need.



The Moreau File (Continued)

Despite this relationship, attempts to directly recruit the ALF as a corporate strike force have so far proven unsuccessful; the ALF maintains strict "ethical" standards, and will not work for pay, perform assassinations, or use weapons of mass destruction. However, to enhance the ALF's effectiveness, Horizon Group have passed information regarding our competitors' birthlab operations and security to the group.

Recent information for ALF: Horizon Group has learned Abraxas/Boston's deputy security director Ian O'Connell, the man responsible for death of ALF operatives Spartacus and Doc Cobra, has been transferred to Abraxas' Brazilian laboratories. Horizon Group considers this a promotion, and an indication that Abraxas/Brazil is engaged in high-security research. Note: This information is not deemed important enough to contact the ALF at present, but should be included with the next information drop if Horizon Group learns anything more about Abraxas/Brazil.

The current ALF contact is Catseye, who can be reached at the Helix nightclub in Aquarius. The present authentication code is Gilgamesh; the reply is Noah's Ark

Cassius (Mngwa I)

Android, age 5, looks 35, 7' 2", 220 lbs., male, yellow cat-eyes, no hair, spotted pelt. ST 15, DX 14, IQ 11, HT 13. Speed 6.75, Move 6. Dodge 7.

Fur and Medium Monocrys (PD 2, DR 17), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Alertness +2; Claws (40 point)*; Combat Reflexes; Fur*; High Pain Threshold; Night Vision; Sharp Teeth*.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Color Blind; Intolerance (Humans); Gigantism; Self Destruct*; Short Lifespan (2 levels)*; Social Stigma (Valuable Property); Sterile*.

Quirks: Collects guns; Thinks Catseye's cute; Wears black scarf.

Skills: Armory (Rifles and handguns)-12; Beam Weapons (Laser)-15; Brawling-18; Fast-draw (Power holster)-13; First Aid-10; Guns-15 (Gyroc); Guns-15 (Needler); Sex Appeal-13; Stealth-14; Survival (Urban)-10; Tracking-11.

Equipment: Launch pistol (2 magazines Stinger, 1 SLAP) in powerholster; Gauss needler (w/laser sight); medium monocrys (full suit); 1 Gauss magazine; heavy laser pistol.

A hybrid of human and leopard DNA, Cassius is a Mngwa-class combat android grown by Biotech Chulan for the private security market. He doesn't like humans at all. His toothy grin is a challenge, and he'll be the first to make humans feel unwelcome when they enter the Helix. He's not a member of the ALF or Chimera. He works as a private street-op, enjoying getting paid for breaking human heads. He'll bother anyone who tries to bother Catseye. She thinks he's a pain.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.

According to public information, SkyTec is an Australian-based multinational. Its money is in pharmaceuticals, but it has sizable interests in farming, cloning, braintaping and android manufacture. Its chemical factories are in orbit (hence its name) but its android birthlabs are scattered among two dozen ground sites in the Pacific and North America.

SkyTec's headquarters is in the Australian desert: the Needle, a mile-high tower of gleaming alloy, ringed by miles of warehouses and shuttle landing fields. Security is excessive; the surrounding desert is swept by sensors and patrolled by a dozen helicopter gunships, and the Needle is guarded by over 400 human and android security troops.

Fortunately, the PCs don't need to *physically* break into SkyTec – the simplest way to discover what SkyTec knows about the ALF is to hack into their databases, and the only thing they have to worry about is the long-distance charge to connect with Australia.

SkyTec's files are kept in its own mini-network, SkyTecNet. A cyberspace map showing SkyTecNet and environs is given on p. 21.

JayBoard

Only a fool hacks into a strange network without checking it out first. Anyone who makes an Area Knowledge (Cyberspace) roll will know the best place to find information on SkyTecNet is the hacker chat system closest to SkyTecNet in cyberspace: JayBoard (node #701 on the cyberspace diagram), a BBS used by Australian console cowboys.

The PCs can log onto JayBoard through the net. If they convince the sysop they aren't corporate heat (this may require one of the group to have a Reputation as a netrunner, criminal or the like, or make a good Reaction Roll) they can ask about SkyTecNet. Bad news – SkyTec is nearly as paranoid about net security as it is about the Needle. Everyone on JayBoard agrees SkyTecNet is absolutely frozen in black ice – only three months ago, veteran Canberra cowboy Calico Jack flatlined trying to raid their R&D files.



But their may be an easier way in then brute force: a Sydney-based hacker called Splicehawk tells them a friend (actually, her ex-lover) Eric "Geronimo" Flak, is the one they need to talk to. Flak emigrated to the United States, where he works as a freelance console cowboy. But Splicehawk knows that under a different identity – one SkyTec believes is dead – Flak was part of the team that designed their security systems. Knowing Flak, Splicehawk thinks it's likely he left a back door.

But there is one problem: Geronimo Flak is rotting in a police holding cell in Tampa, Florida. (He called her yesterday to borrow bail money, but she didn't have any electronic cash on hand.) He was arrested on drug charges which Splicehawk's sure are trumped up – he's a hacker, not a junkie, and the Tampa heat couldn't bust him one way, so they got him another. If the PCs want him, they'll have to get him out of the slammer. He'll probably be favorably disposed if they do get him out . . .

Taking Flak

That's all Splicehawk knows; she's not sure what police station he's in. The PCs can try calling all Tampa precincts until they find an Eric Flak. He's in the Precinct 7 station house, under arrest for narcotics possession, and is awaiting trial. Flak is locked up in the station holding tank because the city jail is overcrowded, being held on \$20,000 bail. The trial is in four weeks.

The best way to get him out is to post bond for him – if they don't have the cash, Charli will wire it down if they convince her they're on to something. But before they put up bail, they may want to see the merchandise. The only people the cops let in to talk to Flak are his family and lawyer. Flak doesn't have a family the PCs can find ("Eric Flak" is a false identity). He's got a public defender, but not a real lawyer. A successful Law and Acting or Fast-Talk roll can convince the desk officer that the visitor is Flak's legal counsel and should be allowed to meet him, although security will be tight. See the sidebar on p. 19 for Flak's statistics, why he's in jail and what kind of deal he'll want to make with the agents.

If the PCs don't want to post bail and are gung-ho enough to think they can bust *into* an ultra-tech Florida police station, the GM should let them try. The station house is a one-story concrete and durasteel building housing 40 police officers, half of them in armor (use the Houston Metrocop statistics in the sidebar on p. 45).

If the PCs get Flak out and make a deal, Flak can describe the basic architecture of SkyTecNet but not the details of programs – they change too often. Security consists of an outer Padlock protecting personnel, Satellite downlink and inventory systems. To reach the secure nodes, they'll have to breach a *second* inner Padlock, one defended by Black Ice systems. This leads to three more systems: Finances and Accounting, R&D, and the Horizon Group (security and espionage). Each of *these* nodes has a final layer of defense: more ICE, and a manual cutoff if their defenses are breached. This gives only two to three seconds to penetrate the system and find the data before the node is shut down.

But Flak does indeed have a back door: he'll provide the PCs with three priority passcodes he thinks may still be valid. Each will give a +6 bonus on the *first* attempt to get past a specific Password program on SkyTecNet.



Arafel (Britomart-100B)

Android, age 5, looks 25, 5'2", 120 lbs., female, short blonde hair, blue eyes.

ST 11, DX 14, IQ 12, HT 14.

Speed 7/8, Move 7/8.

Dodge 8/10, Parry 9/10 (Karate).

Light monocrys (PD 2, DR 8), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Absolute Direction; 2 Chip Slots; Combat Reflexes; G-Tolerance*; Flip: Gunner (air-to-air weapons) [4]; Hyper-Reflexes*; Interface Jack; Perfect Balance*; Skip: Japanese [2].

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Compulsion: Flying; On the Edge; Overconfidence; Phobia (Rupophobia); Social Stigma: Valuable Property; Self-Destruct*; Short Lifespan*; Sterile*.

Quirks: Hates learning foreign languages; Only drinks vodka; Prefers surprise attacks; "Sex is for humans"; Will only work as pilot.

Skills: Carousing-12; Driving (Hovercraft)-14; Electronics Operations (Sensor)-15; Gunner-16 (Gauss Railguns); Gunner-16 (Missiles); Guns (Needler)-15; Karate-13; Motorcycle-13; Parachute-12; Piloting (Military Jets)-18; Piloting (Small Helicopter)-15; Swimming-13; Survival (Plains)-10.

Languages: English-12; Japanese-12 (from Skip).

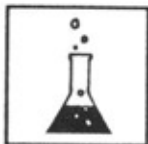
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Arafel (Continued)

Equipment: Light monocrys (Chinese flight jacket, fur-lined) Kazakstan military fatigues; crash helmet (PD 4, DR 15); machine pistol (one magazine APS); \$40 cash.

The Britomarts are designed as aerospace pilots, battlesuit troopers and hovercraft jocks. Arafel's hard-luck story is typical of combat androids in the Helix: she is a Brit-100B, first owned by SkyTec's orbital security division. After five years as a scramjet pilot, the Brit-100C entered the market and she and her sisters were obsolete. Arafel was sold to a Eurasian air force that needed pilots for a border war with its neighbor. They lost; Arafel was shot down in the Kazak uplands and injured. While hiding from enemy soldiers her untreated wounds became infected and she nearly died. (Ever since, she's been obsessive about her personal hygiene, and always smells faintly of disinfectant soap.) Now she's a mercenary flier, too proud to take street op work. Business has been poor, her money's running out and she'll settle for hovercraft or 'copters. Unlike most Helix clientele, Arafel is friendly to any strangers who enter, hoping someone will want to hire her.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.



If the first attempt fails, *that* passcode is invalid for that Password, and won't give the bonus on subsequent attempts against it. They can still try either of the others, of course.

Selected Sites Near SkyTecNet

This is a portion of cyberspace near SkyTec's Australian headquarters. See the map on p. 21.

Home Node

#701. This is the long-distance connection to Australia.

JayBoard

#702. Discussed above, this node is a Complexity 3 system running Password-14 and Camouflage-13 with a phase length boosted to 1,000 milliseconds, but that's just to discourage the mundanes. Anyone who can crack in is welcome, for this is a meeting place and chat system for local hackers, with a busy BBS and 12 lines for realtime conferences. The sysop is a retired cowboy called Felon who runs it as a hobby; it's a good place to pick up net gossip and get an idea how strong SkyTecNet is.

New Zurich Laundry

#703. This is an illegal money laundry and tax haven. It's a secure nest full of tax-dodgers and criminal accountants, hip-deep in poisonous black ice. Operations run on a Complexity 5 mainframe accelerated to 200 milliseconds with 10 slots: Alarm-17, Black Ice-15, Camouflage-15, Disinformation-16, Password-17, Regenerate-16, Safety Net-15, Snare-16, Trace-18 and Watchdog-16.

Each account will usually have 6d-6x\$10,000 in cash and will be protected by a Datalock-15. If the Watchdog notices two failed login attempts from the same connection, it triggers the Alarm. The Alarm triggers Snare and Black Ice (standard flatline version) until the opposition are dead or log off. The bankers don't mess around. If the Black Ice fails, they'll send a Trace. The Alarm is also triggered if the Regenerate notices Watchdog is corrupted or if a user tries to promote himself. If they Trace an intruder, they'll hire an assassin to deal with whoever messed with their laundry.

SkyTecNet

#704. This is the network gateway to the SkyTec corporate system, and can support up to 12 users at once. It is running Password-16.

#705. This padlock node is SkyTec's outer security system. It runs on a complexity 5 mainframe modified to 10 slots. It has a phase length decreased to 500 milliseconds. Its slotted programs are Alarm-16, Bail Out-14, Password-18, Regenerate-15 (2 copies), Safety Net-14, Sever-17, Snare-16, Trace-17 and Watchdog-15. The Password activates when the connection is made. If the Watchdog notes three failed login attempts or the Regenerate detects program degradation it will sound the Alarm and use Snare and then attempt a Trace. If the netrunner escapes the Snare it will try Sever.

#706. This computer manages SkyTec's resources, keeping track of employee records, hours worked, inventory of raw materials and finished products, etc. It doesn't pay the bills directly. To write checks, you need a

superuser account here and must login to #709. Everything runs on a complexity 5 mainframe with a phase length of 1,000 milliseconds. The system has Alarm-15, Codewall-15, Password-16 and Sever-15. All data is protected by disk-based Datalock-14 programs. If three login attempts or an attempt to promote to superuser status fails, an alarm is triggered, the Codewall goes up, and the Sever is activated. If the Sever fails three times to defeat its target, a ready human operator will react, and 2 seconds later, turn the system off.

#707. This node is SkyTec's satellite uplink. It gives SkyTec quick access to other company systems around the world. Security is light – a Password-13 and a Watchdog-12 to log calls.

#708. This padlock node is SkyTec's main line of defense, designed to protect its financial assets and R&D files. It is a complexity 5 mainframe with a phase length slashed to a mere 100 milliseconds. The system is running Black Ice-17, Bloodhound-16, Mask-17 (-6 to Recon), Password-19, Regenerate-15 (two of them), Safety Net-15, Snare-17, Trace-18 and Watchdog-15.

The Regenerates watch the programs and each other, one in normal alphabetical order, the other in reverse. The Watchdog observes all logins; on two failed attempts to get past the Password or 5 seconds connection without a login, it triggers a Snare. If it succeeds, it follows up with a Trace. If the target escapes or evades the Snare, Black Ice is launched.

#709. This node handles SkyTec's financial affairs, including paychecks, accounting, and other asset management. It runs on a complexity 5 mainframe with a phase length of 1,000 milliseconds. The system has Alarm-16, Bloodhound-14, Codewall-15, Password-18 and Trace-15. All data is protected by disk-based Datalock-15 programs. Each connection is automatically traced, and if it doesn't originate from a superuser account in #706 or two login attempts fail, an alarm is triggered, the Codewall goes up, and 5 seconds later, the human operator will react and turn off the system. All data is checked against backup files, and the system put back on line half an hour later; checks can be canceled, making any commodities theft short-lived unless the PCs are *really* fast about laundering the money . . .

#710. This is the Horizon Group's computer. According to the personnel files in #706, the Horizon Group is in charge of long-range market planning for SkyTec. They are actually the company's security and intelligence division, and have the data the netranners need regarding the Android Liberation Front. A search of the files under the keywords "Android" or "ALF" will find the Moreau File (pp. 20-21), protected by one of the datalocks.

The computer is a Complexity 5 microframe with a phase length decreased to 500 milliseconds and 8 slots. The system runs Alarm-16, Black Ice-15, Codewall-17, Password-18, Sever-16. All information is protected by disk-based Datalock-15 programs. If two login attempts fail or anyone loiters for more than 5 seconds without a login, the Codewall goes up, followed by Sever. If a Sever attempt fails twice, Black Ice will be launched. If three Black Ice attacks fail, 2 seconds later a human operator will turn off the system manually. As in #709, data will be compared to backup files and the system will go back on line in 30 minutes.

Neko/Catseye (Bast III)

Android, age 5, looks 25, 5' 7", 125 lbs., female feline, black and silver fur, white hair, green eyes.

ST 9, DX 15, IQ 12, HT 13.

Speed 7, Move 7.

Dodge 8, Parry 10 (Karate).

Fur and Medium Monocrys (PD 2, DR 17), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Alertness +3; Appearance (Beautiful); Claws (15 point)*; 3 Chip Slots: Combat Reflexes (chipped); Flesh Holster (3 lbs. in leg); Fur*; Night Vision; Perfect Balance*; Pheromone Control*; Reflex Chips: Guns (Needler) [2], Shortsword [8]; Reputation (+2 as underground rockstar); Voice.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Carousing; Enemy (Police, 6 or less, for Brecht's murder); Impulsive; Sense of Duty (other androids); Short Lifespan (1 level)*; Secret (ex-snuff-rock star); Self-Destruct*; Social Stigma (Valuable Property); Sterile*.

Quirks: Amused tolerance of humans; Licks her fur; Purring voice; Loves singing; Won't do "wet work."

Skills: Acrobatics-14; Acting-15; Area Knowledge: Aquarius-12; Carousing-14; Climbing-14; Computer Operations-12; Dance-15; Detect Lies-12; Escape-13; Fastdraw (Sword)-14; First Aid-11; Guns (Needler)-18 [19]; Holdout-14; Karate-15; Performance-15; Sex Appeal-17; Singing-18; Shortsword-17 [18]; Stealth-15; Streetwise-12; Survival (Urban)-11; Throwing-14.

Languages: English-12; Japanese-13.

Equipment: Gauss needler; shortsword (superfine, vibro) in flesh holster; medium monocrys (full body); 2 Gauss magazines.

Neko is a Biotech Chulan-designed Bast III pleasure android: her face is feline, with slit-pupil green eyes and large furry ears. Her athletic body is covered by a tiger-striped black and silver pelt of soft fur. She's flamboyant, outgoing, sexy and passionate, just as she was built to be. But underneath the sex-kitten chassis, she's a custom-built killer.

She didn't start out that way. She was created for Music Box, an Osaka rock superstation that wanted a unique DJ. Neko's charm and interviewing skills (male rock stars turned to jelly in her presence) were popular with viewers, but she was the only thing on Music Box worth watching. When the station went out of business Neko was sold to "snuff-rock" star Andreas Brecht.

Continued on next page . . .

#711. This is the research and development mainframe. It is a Complexity 5 mainframe with a 500 millisecond processing speed. Security is otherwise identical to #710, above. If the PCs want to steal data, the GM can create some exotic biotech projects.

Catseye

Aquarius is an artificial island located in the Gulf of Mexico. First built to serve oil rig workers, Aquarius has grown into a city-sized entertainment complex floating on ten square miles of plastic rafts. It is owned by Aquarius Corporation, a consortium of corporate and private investor. Every year its luxurious hotels, night clubs and casinos attract thousands of tourists and convention visitors, while its location in international waters makes it a popular tax shelter and a rendezvous for smugglers, fugitives and mercenaries.

Aquarius doesn't have an international airport, but nearby islands and coastal cities such as Tampa run regular helicopter shuttles to the Aquarius heliport, costing about \$200 for a one-way ticket. Customs restrictions are lax. Aquarius is Control Rating 3 with respect to weapons, Control Rating 2 otherwise.

Aquarius is built of high-impact plastic, but rather than try to disguise this, it revels in it. Buildings are cubes and spheres of black, red, and purple, stacked up to five stories high, many joined by transparent tubes, giving the city its nickname: "The Plastic Playground." Its narrow streets are packed with an international melange of tourists and business travelers, spiced with entertainers and smugglers, gamblers and geishas. A constellation of flickering holograms advertise hotels, restaurants, clubs, tax-free



Neko/Catseye (Continued)

Neko worked for Brecht for two years, which she describes as "psychedelic hell." Brecht was a Sin addict, and given to fits of sadistic paranoia; he wanted a unique bodyguard-mistress to show off at parties, so Neko was given a head full of implants, some designed to augment her skills, others to keep her enslaved. Usually Neko was the instrument of Brecht's rage – he liked what her claws and fangs did to people, and even used her in his videos: she danced, sang backup vocals, and killed. But even as Brecht's favorite pet, Neko could not always escape him. The night that Brecht's broadcast satellite was shot down, he flew into a rage and his vicious beating fractured her skull.

Brecht didn't want to lose his expensive toy, so he called a doctor. The surgery jarred her control implant loose: Neko was her own woman again. When she recovered, Brecht tried to resume his games. Neko killed him and ran. Hiding from police, Neko met android rights activist Ivan Ruskov, who helped her build a new life. As "Catseye" she sings at small underground clubs like the Twisted Helix. As Neko, she's the ALF's most effective commando.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.



shops, bordellos (human and android), casinos and dream-game arcades; the back alleys hold street vendors and warehouses.

Androids are a common sight in some parts of Aquarius. Many android mercenaries visit the floating city looking for work, while others add exotic flavor to wealthier establishments, such as the lupine staff of Wolfhead's Bar and Grill or the inhumanly beautiful (and beautifully inhuman) android geishas who work the floors of the Zodiac Casino. A favorite android hangout is the Twisted Helix.

The Twisted Helix isn't in the tourist guidebooks, and finding it may take some footwork. Most androids who work at Aquarius know where it is, but are shy about giving out the location (Good or better Reaction Roll needed). The GM can give the PCs a Streetwise roll every half hour to find it, with a Critical Failure indicating an encounter with a pickpocket, mugger or the like. Success nets the following directions:

"The Helix? You some kind of fur-kisser? Okay, sorry. . . Look for the big neon sign that says Zodiac Hotel. Go to the alley behind it and follow it north one block until you get to the back of Sturm's Secure Warehouse – you can't miss it. It's a rectangular two-story building the color of an old bruise. Take the back door under the graffiti, climb the stairs to the second floor, and there you are. If you're human – and you look it – you better watch your step and keep your weapons way out of sight. It's an 'artificial' bar, and they're a little touchy."

The Twisted Helix

The directions are accurate. The bar is in the top floor of a purple plastibrick warehouse. The graffiti on the wall includes "ALF," "Bakunin 5," "Catseye Live!" "Stick the Toadstickers," "Furnage!" and "Skin the Humans." Rickety metal stairs lead up to an open door.

The doorman is a tall, muscular man with dark hair, an olive tan, and Arabic features – Richard, a Saladin class combat android. (If it's important, use Zengi's statistics – see sidebar, p. 35, except Richard wears an Ablat jacket and carries a laser pistol in a shoulder holster.) Richard has a cool, laid-back attitude; he'll ask humans trying to enter the club "are you sure you've got the right club, green-genes? Maybe you'd better stick to your own species." If they insist on entering, he'll tell them "Your funeral. Keep your guns in your holsters and your hands off the fur, and maybe I'll see you on the way out," and ask each visitor for the \$10 cover charge.

Inside, the club fills the entire second floor of the warehouse. The walls are flickering television screens tuned to a dead channel, floors slick black plas covered with graffiti, the ceiling bare structural girders. The furniture consists of slabs of transparent armorplas with metal legs bolted to the floor, and the self-serve drink machines behind the bar are German automatics at least 15 years old. Half the club is a dance floor and stage; along one side is the gray steel bar and a half-dozen tables.

There are about 30 people inside, and besides the decor, the first thing the PCs will notice upon entering the Helix is that most of the clientele are androids – rugged Saladin or Britomart-series combat models rub shoulders with slinky Ken and Bast-series fantasy androids, while more exotic types lurk in the shadows. Humans aren't very welcome; about half the club's patrons are fugitives from justice.



Kidnapping or Shadowing Neko

If the PCs attempt to snatch Neko in the Helix, the result will be a free-for-all – the clientele won't be happy to have their favorite singer kidnapped! Nabbing her as she leaves the door isn't very sneaky since Richard the doorman is always on duty. The best option is to follow her and then catch her.

After performing, Neko will change into her street clothes and hang around the club for 30 minutes, then leave for the waterfront. Within a block, the GM should have the Toadstickers (see p. 28) attack Neko and any PCs shadowing her. If Neko safely reaches the waterfront (see *Pier 69* on p. 31) she intends to take her hoverplane to join the other ALF members at sea.

The GM should determine the success of attempts to shadow or ambush Neko, taking into account her Alertness and skills (see p. B67 for procedures). She'll fight if attacked, but faced with automatic weapons or overwhelming numbers, she'll surrender. If the PCs meet her on friendly terms (e.g., after rescuing her from the Toadstickers) see *Meeting Catseye* on p. 29 for what she knows. If they kidnap and question her, the GM should judge how much of this data they get of her, based on the success of their Interrogation rolls, use of drugs, etc. What they won't get is her assistance. If Neko guesses what her captors want, she'll try to explain that the ALF wouldn't be involved – except maybe Jo Ness. Then she'll try to reveal information about Ness without compromising the other ALF members. If she can, Neko will attempt to escape and warn Ivan Ruskov. She'll use Escape skill (and if it hasn't been spotted yet, the blade in her leg). If she's desperate, she'll try seduction to save her life – her pheromones can be a powerful distraction to any male captor (see *Pheromone Control*, p. 48).



Typical Toadsticker

Male or female, age 17-21, average height and build, shaven heads.

ST 12, DX 11, IQ 10, HT 10.

Speed 5.5, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 6 (Club).

Trenchcoats and Toughness (PD 0, DR 2); no encumbrance.

Advantages: Toughness (level 1).

Disadvantages: Bully; Jealous; Illiteracy; Intolerance (Androids); On the Edge; Status-1; Wealth: Struggling.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Aquarius)-10; Axe-10; Brawling-12, Broadsword (for club)-12; Guns-11; Knife-10; Streetwise-12.

Equipment: All have trenchcoats (DR 1) and light clubs in the hands or stuck in their belts. Also, one has an axe, one has a laser torch (see p. CY53), one has a stun wand, three have 9mm auto pistols (Glock 17, p. B208), and the last two carry Tauri M-12 bullpup-format shotguns (4d crushing, SS 11, Acc 6, ½D 25, Max 150, Wt 6, RoF 3, Shots 10, ST 11, Rcl -3, \$300, TL8).

They'll beat senseless and rob anyone who doesn't resist and shoot anyone who does, mouthing inarticulate profanities against the "fakes" and "furs" who pollute the city and take jobs from real people and the "fur kissers" who hang out with them.

They'll flee when half their number are down or dead.

The usual reaction to an uninvited human walking into the club is "get the (expletive) out of the Helix, green-genes." A likely challenger is the anthropomorphic leopard Cassius (sidebar, p. 22). But not all androids will be automatically hostile to strangers. The Helix is also a favorite recruiting center for criminals seeking high-powered street muscle. PCs who can give the impression that they are looking for hired help may be able to talk their way out of trouble. Nobody wants to lose a chance at a well-paying job by killing their employer. There are always several combat androids looking for work, such as Arafel (sidebar, p. 23). The GM should feel free to create more androids with those in this adventure as a model, using advantages and disadvantages on page 48.

If the PCs have the misfortune to be involved in a fight with an android such as Cassius, the challenge will probably be one-on-one and hand-to-hand. If more than one PC jumps into a fight or the PCs draw guns, other patrons may even the odds – Cassius and Arafel's weapons and statistics are typical of the 3 to 18 combat androids in the club.

Catseye Live!

Catseye is a singer; when the PCs get to the club, they'll arrive about five minutes before her band's performance. This gives them time to get into trouble with the patrons, ask a few questions, and so on. The club is tense with expectation – Catseye is already a few minutes late, and this is her last performance at the Helix. If the PCs ask anyone (e.g., Richard the doorman) if they can see her privately, they'll be told she'll be on stage any moment now. Just then, a DJ (an inhumanly handsome male – a Ken-series android) steps up to the mike on stage. His voice booms out: "Ladies and gentlemen, live at the Helix, I give you – *Catseye!*"

Laser spotlights flare, a slow, hypnotic beat starts, and she springs on stage, grasping the mike in one clawed hand. The spotlight defines an attractive feline face, pointed ears and whiskers, green eyes gleaming with reflected light. It picks out a lean, athletic body covered in a pelt of soft black and silver fur, clad in a brief halter top and a leather miniskirt (with a hole for her bushy tail). A mane of silver and black hair swirls about her. She's barefoot, dancing on the slippery plastic stage with more-than-human grace.

Catseye's voice turns angst rock into romantic ballads, a throaty purr that sings of pain and death, loss and love. The band runs through six different songs, a steady beat and heavy synthesized sound counterpointing lyrics mixing dark passion and anti-corporate sedition. After the third song, Catseye introduces her band: Gotzbadeh, a Saladin-series combat android, on backup vocals and guitar; Lady Ferret, a furred exotic like herself, on the drums; and two humans, Timbernach Klass, on the synthesizer, and Solon Mastika, on guitar. Two songs later, there is a burst of applause and "Catseye" and her band vanish off stage while the DJ switches to a tape of dance music.

If the PCs caught any of Andreas Brecht's "snuff rock" music in the Angels of Torment's lair, they may recognize Catseye's voice as Brecht's backup vocalist and murderer Neko. The GM may require an IQ or Singing roll to do so since her style is more passionate and less violent. If they saw the poster of Brecht's band, they'll notice that her pelt is different. It's been

chemically altered from orange and black tiger stripes to black and silver (altering her apparent model from a Bast IIIT to a Bast IIIS). But Catseye is Neko, and she's also an ALF member. She's described in the sidebar on p. 25.

There are two ways the PCs can get the information they want from her. The first is to talk to her, perhaps posing as SkyTec agents, and come up with a plausible excuse for asking about Jo Ness or Medusa. The second is to attempt to kidnap and interrogate her – see the *Kidnapping Neko* sidebar on p. 27. But, since they have the ALF contact codes, meeting her socially will be more rewarding, especially since the PCs can masquerade as Sky-Tec operatives.



Meeting Catseye

If the characters want to talk with Neko, they can push through the crowd and catch her after the concert. Since the Twisted Helix is an informal, underground establishment, the band members mix freely with the clientele after playing. After her set, Neko will have changed back into her street clothes backstage and be preparing to have a few drinks at the bar. If the visitors use the Gilgamesh password, she will give the countersign, then suggest the PCs go to a side table to talk – her band aren't ALF members. Neko won't leave the club with anyone she doesn't know. Once she is seated, she'll order a brandy Alexander, lap up the cream, then politely inquire as to "what Horizon Group has for Alpha this time?"

Unless they do something to convince her otherwise, Neko will assume the PCs are SkyTec agents, since they have the correct passwords and information, and she'll expect them to offer her juicy information about Biotech Chulan or Abraxas while trying to persuade her to do their dirty work for them. If they act like SkyTec agents, she'll cooperate with them if they tell her something useful (e.g., the information on Ian O'Connell in

Ivan Ruskov

Android, age 9, looks 24, 5'9", 170 lbs., black hair, blue eyes.

ST 12, DX 11, IQ 14, HT 12.

Speed 6, Move 6.

Dodge 6, Parry 7 (Knife).

Medium Monocrys (PD 2, DR 16), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Appearance (Very Handsome); Charisma +2; Chip Socket; Interface Jack (breakdown prone); Musical Aptitude +1; Reputation +3 (among Androids).

Disadvantages: Pirate's Code of Honor; Secret (Android terrorist); Self Destruct*; Sense of Duty ("the people").

Quirks: Anarchist; Deep mournful voice; Gives anti-establishment speeches at drop of a hat; Intense; Russian accent.

Skills: Acting-15; Area Knowledge (Aquarius)-13; Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-13; Bard-17; Brawling-12; Chemistry-15; Computer Operations-14; Demolitions-15; Fast-Draw (Needler)-12; Guns (Needler)-13; Guitar-12; Knife-14; Politics-14; Sex Appeal-13; Singing-12; Stealth-10; Streetwise-12; Writing-15.

Equipment: Beret; large knife (superfine); medium monocrys (full suit); assault carbine; 1 plastic and 2 APS magazines.

Ivan Ruskov is a Ken-series fashion android. He was bought by a Broadway playhouse doing a Checkov revival – they had fired all their human actors after a contract dispute. Ivan was kidnapped by Actor's Guild radicals, fell in love with one of them, and took up a new identity as a student at the University of Michigan where he studied chemistry and politics. He became a song writer and (after his lover died in a protest march against Biotech Chulan's Ann Arbor birthlabs) urban revolutionary.

Ruskov plays guitar, writes most of Catseye's songs, and enjoys brewing beer and homemade explosives. A committed enemy of the establishment, he is involved in the political side of the android rights movement, circulating samizdata speeches in the Net against the "legalized brainwashing and slavery" of the corporate birthlabs. He also runs a shelter for fugitive androids, some of whom (like Neko) he enlists in the ALF.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.

the Moreau File). If they don't act in this fashion, she'll be suspicious – but also very intrigued. She knows how good SkyTec security is, and she'll want to know what their game is, so she'll play along with them as long as they answer questions as well as ask them.

Neko has never heard of the Medusa canister and knows nothing about it – and she's telling the truth. If the PCs explain what Medusa is, Neko will be disgusted. That's not something *her* ALF would have anything to do with! But SkyTec's information is outdated – Neko will tell the PCs that last month the ALF spawned a radical splinter group, Chimera. The leader is Jo Ness, a name Neko says she wishes she'd never heard . . .

From her physical reactions (low hiss, flattened ears and bared fangs) it's apparent she either dislikes Ness intensely or is a good actress. If Neko can be convinced of the danger of Medusa (or the PCs capture and interrogate her – see below) or assured the PCs want Jo Ness rather than the ALF, she'll be willing to tell the PCs a lot more about Jo Ness. Here's what she knows:

Neko says Jo's real name is Alecto. She joined the ALF six months ago. She was a combat android with an impressive record, and they welcomed her fighting and sabotage skills. Even before she joined the ALF, Alecto had been waging a one-woman guerrilla war against the biotech corporation Abraxas. While Neko agrees that Abraxas is the scum of the Earth, she thinks Alecto was obsessed with them. She constantly tried to redirect the ALF against Abraxas, even if other targets were more vulnerable. She was impatient with the ALF policy of rescuing androids, claiming it was too risky and didn't hurt the enemy enough – better to blow the expensive labs up along with everyone in them!

While the ALF hit many Abraxas targets, they weren't doing enough to suit Alecto's private feud. Alecto became frustrated when her plans for decapitation strikes against the Abraxas leadership were vetoed as violating the ALF's rule against assassination. The final break with the ALF came after the deaths of Spartacus and Doc Cobra. Alecto claimed that the tactics followed by the ALF were a recipe for disaster, and used her arguments to convince two ALF members, Fenris and Zengi, to leave with her. This left the original Android Liberation Front with only three of the members listed in the SkyTec files: Neko herself, Cleo Cassiopia and Ivan Ruskov.

Why was Alecto so upset with Abraxas? Neko isn't sure, but does know that Alecto is a Eumenides-series android, an experimental model designed by Abraxas and then canceled before mass production, who once worked for the corporation she is trying to destroy. Alecto claimed Abraxas' president Conrad Lang is a traitor who betrayed and tried to murder her, and who killed her clone-sisters Megaera and Tisiphone. But Neko says she once heard Alecto talking in her sleep, murmuring that she had killed her clones herself and asking them to forgive her. Then she started muttering about nuclear bombs, KanoCorp and betrayal. Neko thinks Alecto is obsessed, guilty and paranoid. If the agents have told Neko what Medusa is, she'll let them know she thinks that Alecto is crazy enough to use it.

Since Alecto left for her private war, Chimera and the ALF haven't seen each other. But Neko believes the ALF's leader, Ivan Ruskov, has kept track of Chimera's movements. If the PCs want to find Alecto, Ruskov



would be the one to talk to. How to get in touch with Ruskov? That's the tricky bit. The PCs arrived in the middle of an ALF project: Operation Cherry. Ruskov and ALF member Cleo Cassiopia are in a yacht off the Yucatan coast in the Gulf of Mexico. Right after her performance, Neko was to take the ALF's other boat to rendezvous with them, delivering a box of skill chips she had scrounged. Each contains Scuba [4]. Besides this, she isn't sure of the operation's details. It's some kind of extraction, but Ruskov operates on a need-to-know basis, and is maintaining strict radio silence. The only way to contact them is to meet them in person.

If she's been convinced that the visitors are trustworthy – or has had Medusa described to her in enough detail to scare her – Neko will suggest they do just that. If the PCs trust her, she'll take them to her boat. If they don't trust her, she'll want to go there anyway; she's got to deliver the Scuba skips.

The Toadstickers

As the PCs leave the Helix, the Toadstickers show up. The Toadstickers are a gang who hate androids; although they aren't brave enough to go into the Helix, they'll hang around nearby to "skin some furs and fakes." Furs are androids who look artificial (e.g., Catseye or Cassius). Fakes are even worse in their minds: those who can pass for human, like Arafel or Ivan Ruskov. When the PCs accompany (or follow) Neko out of the Twisted Helix, they'll be accosted by eight head-shaved youths in black trenchcoats and heavy boots. One of them carries an axe, the rest are armed with shotguns and auto-pistols. All carry clubs.

The Toadstickers assume *anyone* coming out of the Helix is an android and will want to stomp them – Catseye and the PCs both! The PCs looking human is no excuse: they're probably fakes, right? Or worse, fur-kissers. Break their heads! Even if the PCs were planning on kidnapping Catseye, they could end up as allies when the Toadstickers attack both her and them!

The Toadstickers are described in the sidebar on p. 28.

Pier 69

Neko's own boat is moored on the Aquarius waterfront, on pier 69. It's a Messerschmidt AF-2000 *Swordfish* hoverplane, a skirtless ram-effect hovercraft that uses twin turbfans and a wide, forward-swept delta wing to generate a surface-effect air cushion, enabling it to skim the waves at 150 mph for less power and fuel consumption than a conventional hovercraft or airplane. About the size of a large speedboat, the *Swordfish* has an enclosed bubble canopy, and can carry six people. The *Swordfish* mounts no weapons, but its aramid-polycarbon hull provides PD 3, DR 15, and it can take 150 hits before being disabled. Its controls incorporate an interface jack, and Neko has fitted it with a tight-beam maser communication system, vidcom, and long range radio, plus a toolkit and emergency medkit on board. Its canopy is secured by a voiceprint scanlock keyed to Neko. Neko will use it to reach Ivan Ruskov's ship, the *Kropotkin*, waiting off the Yucatan coast.

The Kropotkin

Neko's hoverplane can reach the *Kropotkin* in three hours. Ivan's ship

Cleo (Cassiopia series)

Android, age 4, looks 19, 5'6", 120 lbs., female, black hair, brown eyes.

ST 9, DX 10, IQ 15, HT 11.

Speed 5.25, Move 5.

Dodge 5.

Light Monocrys (PD 2, DR 8), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive); Cellular Link; Chip Slots (5); Eidetic Memory II; Flips: Beam Weapons [2], Gunner (Grenade Launcher) [2], Scuba [4]; Swimming [4]; Lightning Calculator; Mathematical Aptitude.

Disadvantages: Attitude Chip (Quirk: Love of Ruskov); Attitude Chip: (Sense of Duty: Comrades); Gullibility; No Sense of Humor; Self Destruct*; Shyness (Mild).

Quirks: Experiments with attitude chips; Likes fashionable clothes; Normally unemotional; Tries to fit in with her group.

Skills: Accounting-19; Computer Operations-16; Economics-17; Forgery-15; Intelligence Analysis-15; Law (Tax)-16; Research-15.

Equipment: Electromag grenade launcher (with concussion grenades); Swiss designer jumpsuit with light monocrys; heavy laser pistol; light-intensifier mirrorshades.

Cleo is a Cassiopia-model mathematical android. Unlike most Cassiopias, she wasn't born in a Chulan birthlab: she's an illegal knockoff clone made by a black clinic, sold to a Yakuza-run tax shelter. When the police raided her employers, Cleo went to jail. She hated it: she disliked having her chips taken away, and was upset no one wanted her to do their taxes. The ALF broke her out, and she's been with them ever since, laundering their funds and helping Ivan plot ALF strategy.

Cleo has trouble with emotions, and is normally cold and distant. Her main desire is to belong to a group that cares for her and will let her do the work she enjoys: meddling with figures. She spends her money on custom chipware to enable her to "be human." She's running an Attitude chip with the Quirk "Loves Ruskov" and is always hanging on his arm, to Catseye's annoyance. If Ruskov is hurt, Cleo will be very upset – and then she'll remove the chip, and lose all interest in him.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.

Chi-7 "Cherry" (Chiroptera series)

Android, age 3, looks 18, 5' 8", 100 lbs., female, batlike face, tall and thin, black skin.

ST 8, DX 12, IQ 13, HT 13.

Speed 6.25, Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Toughness (PD 0, DR 1), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +5; Acute Hearing +2; Appearance (Attractive); Bioelectricity; Chip Slot; Claws (short)*; Drug Factory* (Hypercoagulin, Neurovine, Superstim); Eidetic Chip (10 hour); Immunity to Disease; Immunity to Poison*; Interface Jack; Sonar Vision*; Toughness 1; Racial +4 bonus to Biochemistry, Diagnosis, First Aid and Physician skills; Rapid Healing; Sharp Teeth*; Ultrasonic Hearing*.

Disadvantages: Enemy (Abraxas, 9 or less); Skinny; Social Stigma (Valuable Property).

Quirks: Cynical; Dislikes violence; Morbid sense of humor

Skills: Biochemistry-16; Chemistry-14; Cooking-12; Computer Operation-13; Diagnosis-17; Electronics Operation (Medical)-14; Fast-Talk-10; First Aid-16; Hypnosis-14; Knife-11; Naturalist-13; Poisons-12; Psychology-10; Physician-16; Sex Appeal-11; Scrounging-10; Survival-16 (Radioactive); Survival-13 (Jungle); Survival-14 (Woodland); Surgery-12; Swimming-9; Veterinary-10.

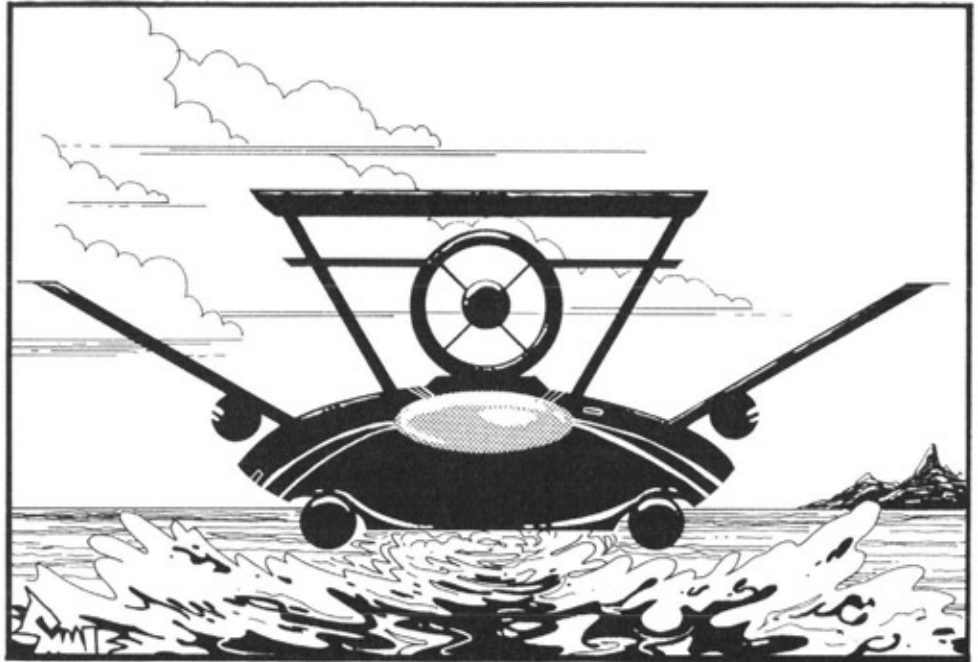
Equipment: None (nude in cryonic canister).

The Chiropteras made extensive use of bat DNA – as well as that of vipers and electric eels. Cherry's bat voicebox-derived sonar lets her make diagnostic scans of the inside of a living body; her tongue can analyze chemicals in a patient's blood, and her body can manufacture natural analogues of stimulants, tranquilizers, or hypercoagulants which she can inject through her fangs. Her bioelectricity is designed to provide emergency cardiac stimulation. These abilities combine to provide the bonus the android receives to medical skills. The Chi-series were also designed to be tough, with an enhanced immune system and rapid bone, blood and cell regeneration. Unlike many other androids, the Chiroptera series is not short-lived or sterile: they come in both male and female versions, and are designed to breed true. But then, they are not intended for commercial sale.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.

is an old 60-foot luxury yacht with an oversized radar and communications mast.

The ALF have a simple but effective security precaution. When she gets within 3 miles (line of sight) Neko is supposed to call the vessel with her tight beam masercom. Ruskov will expect to see Neko (it's a video link) and chat with her; if the characters approach Ruskov in a different vessel, or Neko isn't with the PCs (or isn't cooperating) Ruskov will assume the craft is hostile. He and Cleo will take cover behind the boat's windows (assume his boat's hull is a kevlar/fiberglass composite with DR 15) and ready their weapons. When their craft gets within 1,000 yards, Cleo Cassiopia will lean out (from a position of cover in the boat's hatch) and fire with her grenade launcher while Ruskov covers her from the boathouse with his rifle. They'll fight fiercely and while they'll take captives, neither is in a mood to surrender. If the PCs capture Ruskov, he'll be very hostile, referring to the PCs as "Stalinist butchers," "pawns of the system," "capitalist running dogs" and so on, especially if he thinks they killed Neko or if they hurt Cleo. If the shoe is on the other foot and it's the invaders who get shot down or lose a firefight, Ruskov will fish out any survivors. He'll handcuff and drug (using Crediline) any survivors, then interrogate them. He'll kill them if they harmed Neko, but if she's still healthy, he'll listen to what they have to say and might make a deal.



But if the PCs have a friendly Neko aboard, they can sidestep trouble: she will signal the *Kropotkin* when they get in line of sight. Ruskov's handsome, bearded face will appear on the video screen. Speaking in a thick Russian accent, he'll tell Neko she's late, and (when Neko mentions her guests) angrily demand to know what possessed Neko to break cover and bring strangers here in the middle of a mission. Neko will explain she had good reason and mention that it's about Chimera. Ruskov will be suspicious but mollified, and tell them to come alongside but leave their weapons in their boat.

Ruskov is described in the sidebar on p. 29. The picture of the chic revolutionary, he's a tall, handsome young man wearing a beret, a silver

scarf, a jacket and jeans, and carrying a ready assault rifle. Although obviously wary, he looks willing to listen to their story. Once Ruskov learns the details, he'll forgive Neko, but he'll be *very* cold to the PCs if they treated her roughly. On the other hand, if they rescued Neko from the Toadstickers, he'll be much more favorably disposed.

The *Kropotkin* is an old but seaworthy vessel, with antique wood paneling interiors, a modern communications and radar room, and a quiet if inefficient gas-turbine engine. Inside the vessel is ALF member Cleo Cassiopia, slim and elegant in chic Swiss overalls. If he's feeling hospitable, Ruskov will provide the visitors with steaming cups of hot tea or chocolate, and then discuss Ness with them. He'll tell them that he feared that Ness might have been planning something violent after she left, but that he had hoped her targets would be confined to Abraxas.

But at the moment, Ruskov is more concerned with Operation Cherry than he is with Chimera. An experimental new-generation biomedical android codenamed Chiroptera 7 has contacted the ALF and asked for help defecting from her corporate owners. In one hour an Abraxas Corporation's Dornier *Condor* jet will be passing overhead, en route between Abraxas' Brazilian genetics laboratory and a nuclear test site in Nevada. On board is Chi-7 (in a cryogenic coffin), accompanied by two security personnel, a pilot and a medtech. The Chi-7 has arranged for the aircraft to suffer a malfunction which should cause it to ditch in the ocean at a point just off the Yucatan coast. The ALF will be waiting to pounce.

Ruskov expects the aircraft to ditch in the water and possibly sink. He has wetsuits and diving gear and laser cutting torches aboard the *Kropotkin*; his plan was for Cleo and himself to use the Scuba chips to make a quick dive, cut through the aircraft's doors, and salvage the cryogenic pod before any Coast Guard or Abraxas people can respond to the aircraft's SOS. Neko was supposed to watch for aircraft and be ready to back them up in the event of trouble.

Ruskov says he never liked that plan; it had originally been devised when Alecto, Zengi and Fenris were with the ALF. Although he kept the rendezvous secret from them, he still has three extra sets of diving gear. If any of the PCs has chip slots to run Neko's skips or Scuba skill, he'd appreciate their assistance. In return, he'll tell the PCs what he knows about Chimera – primarily the locations of ALF safe-houses he believes Alecto may be using. Deal?

Ruskov will sweeten the pot by pointing out that Chi-7 is a biomedical specialist and might be useful for dealing with whatever frightfulness is contained within Medusa. And if he gets killed underwater, the PCs will be out of luck. But if the PCs prove trustworthy comrades on the dive, any surviving ALF members would be willing to join up with the PCs to track down Ness: "she was one of us – she's our responsibility too."

If the PCs don't have chip slots to accept Neko's Scuba skips, lack Scuba skill or cyberware capable of operating underwater, don't trust their Scuba default (IQ or Swimming-5) or just plain don't want to help the ALF, Ruskov will tell them he doesn't trust them around when he and Cleo are diving. They can take Neko's boat and return to Aquarius and wait. Ruskov will discuss Ness later – *if* he gets back. While they dive, Neko will stay

Cherry's Story

Abraxas executives intended the Chiroptera series to operate in a post-holocaust environment (see *The Rapture Project* on p. 37), and required exhaustive testing of the first ten Chiroptera prototypes. It was realistic and dangerous: within a year, three were dead. After two years, only four remained. Chiroptera 7 was one of the survivors. She believed that if she listened to her instructors and made no mistakes, she would live through the rigorous program. But while putting in an extra late-night practice session, her augmented ears overheard two instructors discussing the testing procedures. What did "test to their limits" mean? She listened more carefully – and was shocked to discover that *none* of them were supposed to survive the five-year program! The testing was programmed to increase in difficulty until the last subject failed – and died.

Over the next two months, Cherry bent all her skills to finding a way out. She hung around humans more, practicing the psychology and hypnosis skills she had been trained with. Her solution – the drug and hypnosis-assisted seduction of an Abraxas sysop – was inelegant but effective. With access to the Net, Cherry contacted the ALF, sabotaged the Dornier's computerized maintenance programs, and arranged for her escape. She also downloaded information on the Rapture Project into her Eidetic chip, and was appalled at what she was part of. Her "lover" died in her arms, the victim of a massive drug overdose, and she was on the way to freedom.

Ian O'Connell

Age 33, 6' 5", 220 lbs., no hair, red crystal eyes (one sensor in back of head), dark green metal and plastic body.

ST 14, DX 13, IQ 12, HT 15/20.

Speed 7, Move 10.

Dodge 10.

Light Monocrys and Full Metal Jacket (PD 6, DR 23), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Biomonitor; 2 Bionic Arms (ST 15, ST 23 with full cyborg body); 2 Bionic Eyes with Infrared and Polarization; Broadcast; Combat Reflexes (chipped); Cortex Bomb; 2 Bionic Legs; Eidetic Chip (2 hours); Full Cyborg Body; Chip Slots (2); Combat Reflexes; Extra Hit Points (5); Full Metal Jacket (PD 4, DR 15); Patron (Conrad Lang); Radio Reception; Status 1; 360-Degree Vision; Wealth (Comfortable); Weapon Mount (heavy laser pistol in right arm). All bionics appear artificial.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Sense of Duty (Abraxas); Stubborn.

Quirks: Devout Protestant; "I love my job;" Irish accent.

Continued on next page . . .



Ian O'Connell (Continued)

Skills: Beam Weapons (Laser)-15; Brawling-16; Camouflage-12; Driving (Automobile)-10; Economics-12; Electronics (Security)-13; First Aid-11; Gunner (Grenade Launcher)-15; Guns (Gyro)-15; Interrogation-13; Leadership-12; Pilot (Helicopter)-14; Savoir-Faire-12; Stealth-11; Shadowing-13; Tactics-14

Languages: English-13; Gaelic-10; German-12; Spanish-11.

Equipment: Launch pistol w/laser sight; 3 magazines (SLAP, HEX, nerve gas); light monocrys (full suit); 4 grenades (2 flare, 2 sleep gas).

Six feet of sharply angled armor, swiveling eye stalks and bulky cybernetic exoskeleton, Ian O'Connell is an elite AbSec security officer. He was security chief at Abraxas' Boston birthlab, but has been transferred to the Rapture Project as a reward for his ruthlessness in thwarting attempted ALF sabotage (he trapped and killed Doc Cobra and Spartacus), and was on his way to oversee security at the Nevada test site. His braintape is on file at Abraxas headquarters, so he doesn't fear death: he knows they'll just download a tape into an identical body.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.

topside to act as lookout, with orders to use Cleo's grenade launcher and blow the PCs out of the water if they show up again.

If the PCs leave the ALFs to their rescue mission, assume they pick up Chi-7 but Cleo is badly wounded and Ruskov lightly injured. The ALF will make the meeting, but neither they nor Chi-7 will directly assist the PCs against Ness, although they'll provide information. Refer to *The Chimera Hunt* on p. 38 for what Ruskov tells them.

Splashdown!

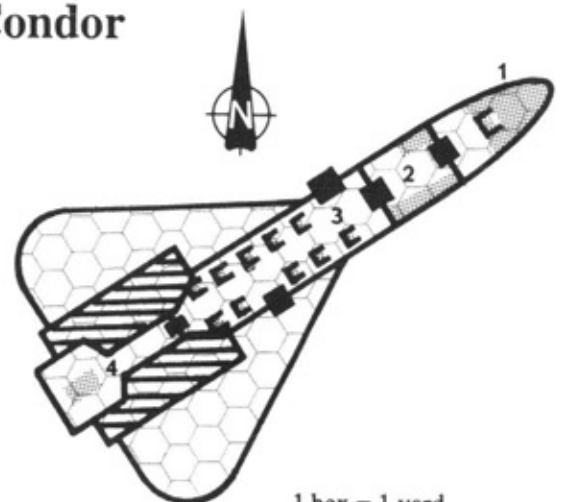
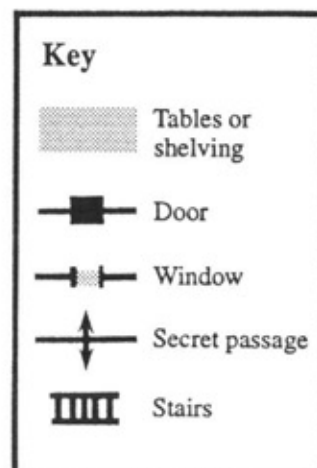
Assuming the PCs decide to take Ruskov's offer, he'll show them the military wetsuits and tanks he has available, three spares originally intended for the other ALF members. Each wetsuit covers the whole body and includes fins (+1 to Swimming Move) and light armor (PD 2, DR 8, half that vs. impaling). The face masks are also armored (PD 4, DR 10 to location 5) and include HUD and multi-view goggles. The air tanks have an oxy-helium mix good for 2 hours (divided by the water pressure). The suits weigh 10.5 pounds with goggles; tanks weigh ten pounds). Neko's Skips provide Scuba [4]; unlike Flips, they'll kick in right away, though Ruskov will suggest a little practice first.

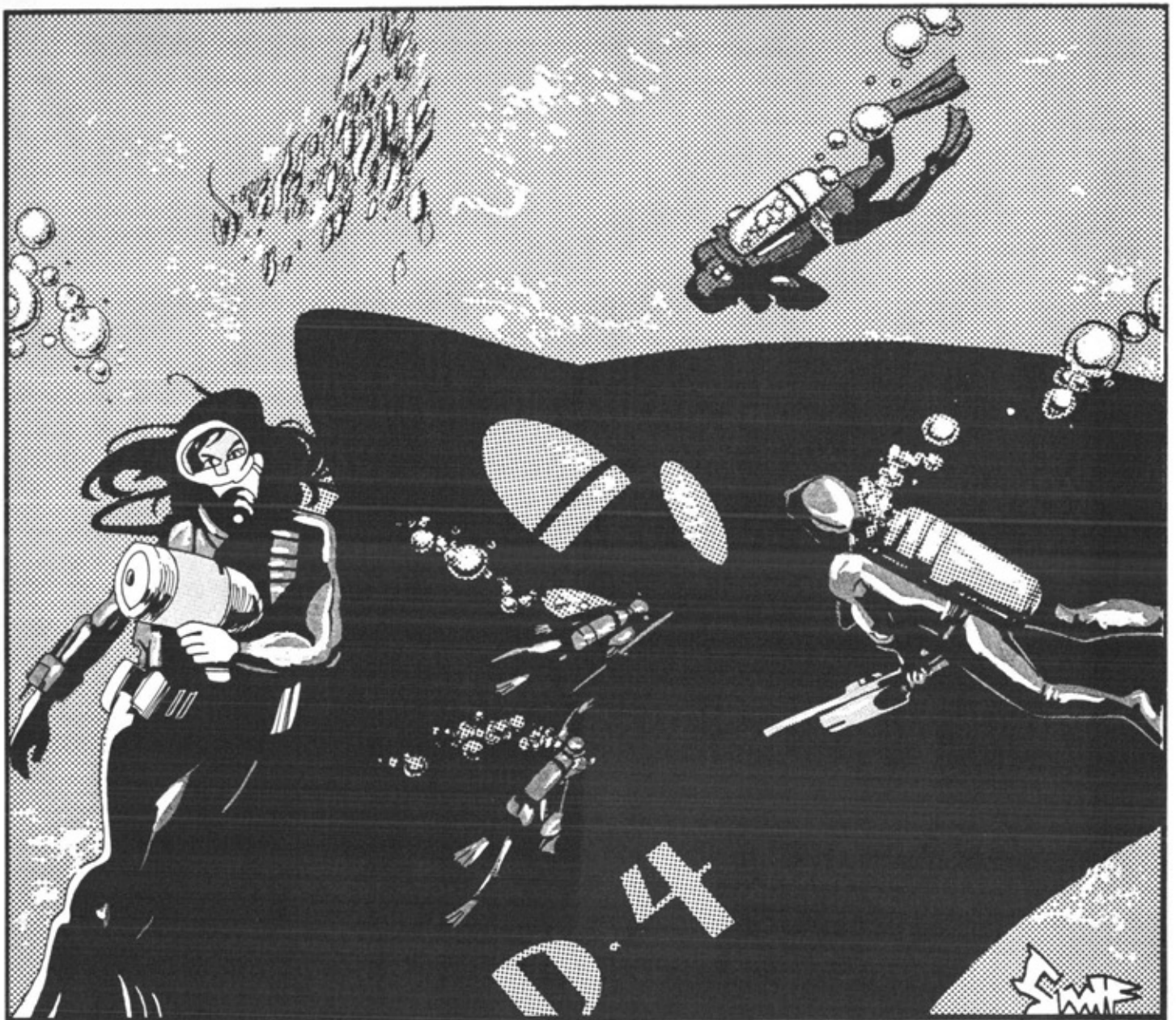
The aircraft is expected to arrive in 90 minutes. It's early. 80 minutes after the PCs arrive, their radios pick up a distress signal, a female voice, calm but with overtones of nervousness: "Mayday, Mayday, this is Brazil flight Abraxas 212 inbound for Houston, we have a flight computer emergency, total system failure, we are going down, latitude . . ."

A minute later, they can *see* the aircraft: a black delta shape that passes within a mile of the coast and hits the water hard. As the PCs close in, it majestically slides beneath the waves.

The Dornier's SOS didn't go unnoticed. The GM should roll 1d×5 and add that to 30 minutes. After the time is up, a Mexican naval helicopter will appear to investigate the crash and guide in rescue vehicles. The helicopter has a 200 mph speed, PD 3, DR 10 and 150 hit points. It is equipped with a rescue winch and mounts a chin turret with full-auto EMGL loaded with flare and concussion grenades. The helicopter is manned by a pilot, gunner, and five men. Use the Houston Metrocop statistics (sidebar, p. 45) with addition of Pilot-13 (for the pilot) and Spanish-11 and Swimming-12 for the crew. If the PCs are still on site with the ALF and have both androids

The Dornier Condor





and obvious weapons on hand, one or both groups may be suspected of being drug or android smugglers.

Beneath the Waves

The aircraft crashed about a half mile off shore. The characters will have observed the general location of the crash, so knowing where to dive isn't a problem. The coastal waters are only 90 feet deep, well within the capabilities of the helium-oxygen mix the ALF scuba tanks are filled with; water pressure at that depth is some 4 atmospheres, so the divers can safely stay down for 25 minutes without worrying about decompression. The air won't last more than 30 minutes at this depth anyway.

The *Kropotkin* doesn't have a decompression chamber, so if the PCs remain underwater for more than 25 minutes, every 5 extra minutes will cause the loss of 1d-3 HT and Fatigue from the bends. Repeated dives will count toward the total time spent underwater, but every 10 minutes out of water will reduce the accumulated time by 1 minute. Besides pressure, using scuba gear is tricky (see p. B48 for rules) and finding anything

Zengi (Saladin M-2D)

Android, age 9, 6', 170 lbs., looks 24, black hair and eyes, Arabic features.

ST 14/21, DX 13, IQ 11, HT 13.

Speed 6.25, Move 6.

Dodge 6, Parry 11 (Karate).

Medium Monocrys and Toughness (PD 2, DR 18), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Hyper-Strength*; Immunity to Poison*; Toughness 2.

Disadvantages: Intolerance (humans); Pirate's Code of Honor; Overconfidence; Self-Destruct*.

Quirks: Enjoys pulling limbs off cyborgs; Likes to cook.

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Zengi (Continued)

Skills: Armory (Guns)-12; Carousing-11; Cooking-12; Demolitions-12; Driving-14 (Hovercraft); First Aid-11; Gunner (Grenade Launcher)-16; Guns (Pistol)-16; Guns (Rifle)-17; Karate-15; Stealth-14; Survival (Desert)-13; Tactics-12; Throwing-13.

Equipment: Machine pistol w/laser sight; 1 magazine APS; medium monocrys (full suit); multi-view goggles; short-range communicator (wrist-mounted, scrambled); 1 concussion grenade.

Zengi is a M-2D Saladin-class android (see sidebar, p. 16). He is a deserter from the French Foreign Legion, turned gun-runner and street samurai. After running too many employers who favored human cyborgs over androids, Zengi took Jo Ness's suggestion and joined the ALF. He found satisfaction in blowing up biotech labs but chafed under Ruskov's rules. When Jo Ness broke with the ALF he went with her. He'll fight fiercely for her, but will surrender if it's hopeless. He knows where and how Medusa was placed, and is willing to trade that for his life.

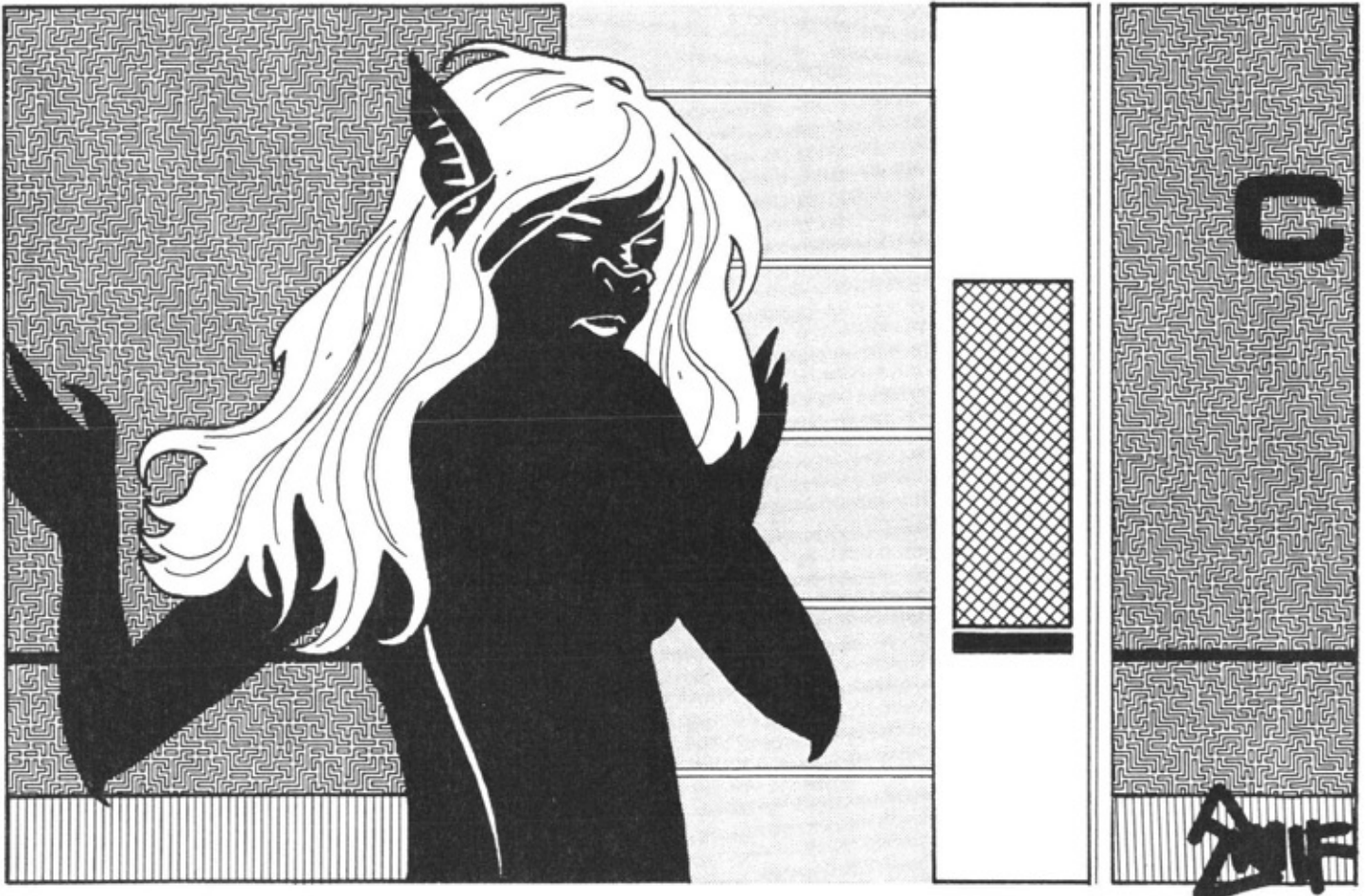
*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.

underwater can be difficult. GMs who feel particularly vicious may wish to add sharks (roll 2d every five minutes; on an 11-12, 1d-3 sharks show up). If the divers get into any underwater combat, see p. B91. All TL8 ranged weapons except chemical slugthrowers work underwater, but divide $\frac{1}{2}D$ and Max ranges by 5. For underwater explosions, concussion damage is *halved* rather than *quartered* every 2 yards.

The bottom is covered with soft sand, which was disturbed by the Dornier's crash. It swirls around obscuring vision. It will take about a minute for divers to reach the general site of the crash, and a further Vision-4 roll every five minutes to locate the aircraft itself. Through the murk, divers will be able to see a needle-nosed, delta-winged shape – the Abraxas aircraft.

The Dornier Condor

The aircraft is 60 feet long, painted black with red trim and the Abraxas logo (a human DNA spiral). Two doors lead into the flight cabin. They are locked, but the aircraft has leaked, equalizing pressure, so the PCs should be able to open it once they cut or pick the lock. There is a row of windows on each side of the fuselage and at the cockpit, enabling the PCs to see into the cabin and cockpit areas if they move up to them and peer through; other sections have no windows. The cockpit windows are big enough to crawl through (they are DR 5, HT 2), although this will take 2 turns and require a Swimming roll; failure means the character is stuck, critical failure severs an air line or the like. The fuselage is DR 10, HT 40. A door is DR 8, HT 30.



1. *Cockpit*: In this watery tomb, a young Oriental woman lies slumped over the controls, a fiber-optic cable plugged into the console. She was the pilot. Although the aircraft's crash-web saved her from the impact, she was knocked unconscious and drowned.

2. *Communications Suite*: Contains sophisticated secure satellite communications equipment, most of it now damaged by water leakage. There are no windows. Ian O'Connell (sidebar, p. 33) is here; as a total cyborg, he can breathe underwater. He's checking the damage, but if he hears someone trying to break in, he'll investigate, hoping it's a Abraxas rescue team, ready to act if it isn't.

3. *Cabin*: Only two chairs are occupied, both by bodies – a medtech (with a red cross on his sleeve and a medical kit next to his chair) and a bodyguard. Both are wearing red and black Abraxas jumpsuits and were killed by whiplash from impact. The dead bodyguard was heavily cyborged, with bionic eyes (infrared), two bionic legs, and a built-in machine pistol in his right arm.

4. *Cargo bay*: The Dornier *Condor* isn't a cargo aircraft, but it does have a small cargo hold. Filling the hold is a silvery-gray metal container, the size and shape of a large coffin. On the outside, lettering reads: "Cryonic Storage Unit CHI-07-C." The coffin was knocked loose from its packing cradle, but appears to be intact. It weighs 250 pounds. Inside it is Chiroptera 7, described in the sidebar on p. 32.

The Rapture Project

The Chiroptera series was designed as part of the Rapture Project, a super-secret government-funded program designed to ensure survival of civilization after a nuclear-biological war. Conrad Lang, the head of Abraxas, is obsessed with the idea of a coming apocalyptic struggle between megacorps and the remaining governments. With funding from factions within the American government, he's been attempting to make sure that Abraxas Corporation survives. In addition to designing androids such as Chi-7 (who goes by the nickname "Cherry") and stocking fallout shelters and the like, he's been stockpiling exotic biological and chemical weapons.

Cherry's Eidetic chip contains ten hours of information on the Rapture Project from files she copied. Besides details on the development and training of the Chiroptera series of android bush-doctors, the files include lists of stockpiled Abraxas biological and chemical weapons, inoculation and evacuation plans, and the locations of hidden Abraxas shelters. Most frightening of all are specific plans for chemical and biological strikes against other major corporations – supposedly retaliatory strikes, but if these plans were released, Abraxas would be in a great deal of trouble as its rivals would (understandably) be worried that Abraxas intended a first strike of its own. The files are worth about \$250,000 to a rival mega-corporation; Abraxas would pay the same or more to get them back, but would probably try to kill everyone involved afterwards.

Along with stockpiles of improved nerve gas, mutant AIDS viruses and super-lethal strains of Pneumonic Plague (a more virulent Bubonic Plague), the Rapture files hold data on Abraxas 2076-MED. The Rapture files indicate that Medusa is the biochemical version of a neutron bomb,



Fenris (alias Peter Wolf)

Android, Age 5, looks 25, 5' 8", 160 lbs., male lupine, red and brown fur, dark eyes, wolflike features.

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12.

Move 6, Speed 6.

Dodge 6.

Light Monocrys (PD 2, DR 15), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell+3; Claws (small)*; Chip Slot; Charisma +1; Flip (Guns (Beam Weapons) [2]); Fur*; Implant Communicator; Sharp Teeth*.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Gluttony; Intolerance (Humans); Short Lifespan; Social Stigma (Valuable Property)

Quirks: Only eats meat; Charming grin; Upper-class British accent.

Skills: Acting-14; Brawling-14; Electronics-11; Mechanic (Aircraft)-12; Savoir-Faire-12; Singing-10; Tracking-13; Swimming-11; Survival (Urban)-10.

Languages: English-14; Spanish-11.

Equipment: Light monocrys (full suit); heavy laser pistol (built-in laser sight); concussion grenade; short-range communicator (wrist mounted, scrambled).

Designed for a Brothers Grimm theme park, Fenris learned to hate being a toy, and eventually escaped. He is bitter toward humans, and found the ALF and later Chimera an outlet for his anger. Fenris is usually in the kitchen by night or the living room by day.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.

Alecto Eumenides (Jo Ness)

Android, age 5, looks 20; 5' 9", 145 lbs., female, cat-like yellow eyes, windblown dark hair, pale, elfin features with pointed ears, lean, athletic body.

ST 12/18, DX 18, IQ 13, HT 14.

Speed 8/9, Move 8/9.

Dodge 9/11, Parry 13/14 (Karate).

Medium Monocrys and Toughness (PD 2, DR 19), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +4; Amp Chip; Appearance (Attractive); 3 Chip Slots; Clock Chip; Charisma +2; Combat Reflexes; Eidetic Memory; Hyper-Reflexes*; Hyper-Strength*; Immunity to Poison*; Interface Jack; Intuition; Night Vision; Skip (Video Production [1]); Toughness 1.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Enemy (Conrad Lang, 9 or less); Fanaticism (hates Abraxas and Lang).

Quirks: Faint German accent; Ironic sense of humor; Likes to read Goethe; Mildly paranoid; Talks to self.

Skills: Acrobatics-15; Acting-12; Administration-12; Beam Weapons (laser)-19; Camouflage-13; Climbing-16; Computer Operations-13; Criminology-16; Demolitions-12; Detect Lies-11; Driving (Auto)-17; Electronics Operation (Security)-17; Fast-Draw (Pistol)-17; First Aid-13; Guns (Pistol)-21; Guns (Rifle)-18; Holdout-12; Intelligence Analysis-14; Karate-18; Law (Police)-12; Leadership-14; Lip Reading-12; Literature (German)-11; Parachuting-17; Photography-12; Psychology-12; Russian-12; Research-12; Savoir-Faire-13; Shadowing-15; Speedload (Power Cell)-17; Stealth-16; Strategy-13; Streetwise-13; Survival (Plains)-12; Survival (Urban)-12; Swimming-17; Tactics-15; Traps-15; Throwing-16.

Languages: English-12; French-12; German-15.

Equipment: Anti-glare sunglasses; hold-out laser; machine pistol (w/laser sight); 2 magazines APS; medkit (5 Crediline, 5 Neurovine); medium monocrys (form-fitting bodysuit); newscam; short-range communicator (wrist-mounted, scrambled); nerve gas grenade.

Continued on next page . . .

limited in its destruction and as a result, all the more likely to be used. It kills humans and nothing else (not androids or animals) and is incapable of spreading uncontrollably or mutating. It isn't even a real disease: it's a lethal swarm of self-replicating microbots designed to *simulate* a plague, and programmed to burn itself out 48 hours after release. With a multi-million dollar lab and an AI to help, Cherry thinks she could use the information in the files to make a counter-agent – but it would take at least two weeks . . .

The Chimera Hunt

Ivan Ruskov can tell the PCs where he thinks Alecto is; if the PCs have told him about Medusa and he has Cherry's information on it, he will be eager to help.

The ALF has several safe houses, secure havens scattered about North America. One of these safehouses was in Baytown, Texas: a pet store owned by Rudolph Ruge, an ALF sympathizer. Rudolph met Alecto once (just after she joined the ALF) and they got along well together – both were Germans and would often natter away about German romantic literature. If Ness had a friend, it was Rudolph Ruge.

Ruskov knows Ruge and his wife died in an auto accident earlier this year; the shop was inherited by their daughter Sarah, a college-educated veterinarian. Sarah wasn't an ALF supporter and had never met any of the group, so Ruskov had written the shop off as an active safehouse. But Ruskov thinks Ness might not know of Rudolph's death – he only heard of the accident a few weeks ago himself. Ness may have tried to visit Ruge and left a trail that can be followed from there. Ruskov has the address. It's 221 Park Street. He's also got a com number for Rudolph Ruge. (A call reveals that it's been disconnected. If the PCs try directory assistance for Sarah Ruge, they won't find any listing.)

If the PCs want to check out other ALF safehouses, the GM should make up three other locations. If visited, none will have seen sign of Chimera.

Chimera's Lair

Baytown is a small coastal city on the outskirts of Houston. The Rudolph's pet store was called *Best Friends*. It's not in the com listings, but if the PCs try the street address, they'll find a pet shop there: *Cyberpets*.

Park Street is a middle class neighborhood and *Cyberpets* is a typical storefront, next to a *Face Nouveau* bodysculpt boutique and just across the road from a *Doctor Donut* concession (whose wide polyglass windows make a good surveillance point).

If the PCs ask about *Cyberpets* at neighboring shops and succeed with a Savoir-Faire roll, they'll learn that the woman who works there is Sarah Juliet, who inherited the shop a few years ago after the death of her parents, the Ruges (Sarah is married). No neighbors have noticed anything unusual at the store. Sarah works 9 to 5, customers are going in and out, etc. If they ask at the *Doctor Donut*, waitress Marjorie Fields can tell the investigators that Sarah hasn't been coming in for her usual coffee break – maybe she's

working too hard, to pay for her new Mercedes. She just got the car last week.

The *Cyberpets* storefront is plaster over plastibrick; above it is a second story apartment house, with two curtained windows blindly overlooking the street. Around the sides and back are more curtained windows and a parked Mercedes smartcar. The roof is flat, but offers no way of entering the building. The sticker on the front door says the store is open seven days a week, 9 AM to 5 PM, and warns that it is protected by Castle Security Systems. Instead of store front windows, holograms display items for sale – a cage of electronic mice, Obedience, Trick and Speech cyberware for your dogs or cats, and fanged robotic “Asper Bears” – named for General Asper of the Panama War, these offer cuteness and home defense in one cuddly package.

Tactics and Security Procedures

Chimera (Alecto, Fenris and Zengi) are indeed in the building. They have captured Sarah Juliet, and Alecto and Zengi have used the material bought from Mycroft Soft to turn the building into a fortress. Alecto and either Fenris (by night) or Zengi (by day) are always awake upstairs; Sarah mans the store, but is under constant surveillance. Alecto never sleeps: she uses her Amp chip to stay awake. During store hours, she observes Sarah through the defense globe. In the evening, she will be in Sarah’s living room with her, talking and watching vid. At night, she sits beside Sarah’s bed, watching the news and cleaning her gun, talking to herself about Megaera and Lang.

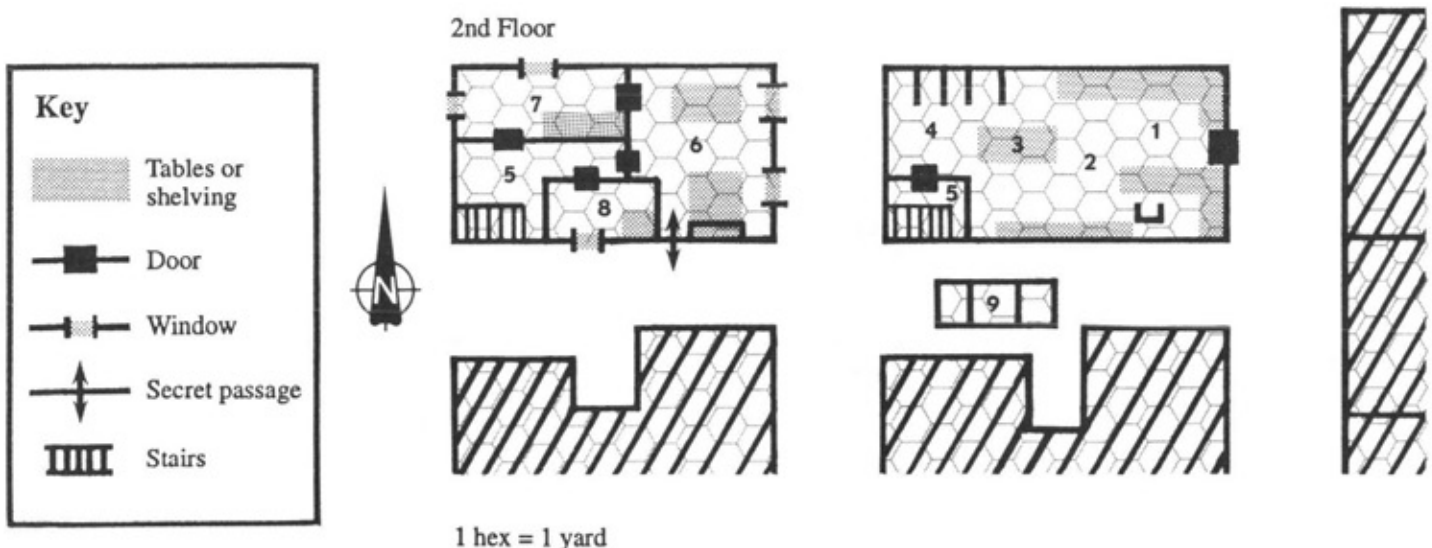
If Alecto sees an attack is coming and has time to organize her people, they will take the following positions:

Alecto Eumenides (Continued)

Alecto is Jo Ness, the leader of Chimera, last of the *Eumenides* androids created by Abraxas. See *Jo Ness’ Story* (p. 19) for her background. She is a lonely, private person who rarely displays any emotion. She has never had a close friend, much less a lover, and feels betrayed by everyone she knew: by her creator Conrad Lang, by her dead clone sister Megaera, by the ALF, and by Rudolph Ruge, who died when she needed him. She hates Lang passionately, but her need for revenge is coupled to a keen sense of self-preservation: she does not want to die like her sisters did. How she intends to fulfill her mission of vengeance – and how the PCs could dissuade her from doing so – is described under *Ultimatum*, p. 42.

*Android advantages and disadvantages; see p. 48.

Cyberpets (Chimera’s Lair)



Sarah Juliet

Age 27, 5' 7", 120 lbs., black skin, black hair and eyes.

ST 9, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 10.

Speed 5.75, Move 5.

Dodge 5.

Advantages: Chip Slot (1); Eidetic Memory I; Reputation +2 (as cybervet); Skip (Veterinary [4]); Wealth (Comfortable).

Disadvantages: Pacifism (Cannot Kill); Sense of Duty (Customers).

Quirks: Dislikes cute animals; Tips of hair sparkle.

Skills: Area Knowledge-12; Brawling-12; Computer Operation-13; Computer Programming-15; Electronics (Cybernetics)-15; Electronic Operations (Medical)-16; First Aid-13; Mechanic (Cybernetics)-15; Veterinary-15 [17].

The daughter of Rudolph Ruge, Sarah is a university graduate turned pet splicer. When her parents died, she turned their *Best Friend* petshop into *Cyberpets*, and now she makes a good living as one the best freelance cybervets in the country. She is married (to Andrew Juliet, a doctor), but her husband is working in an orbital colony: they see each other once a month.

Alecto arrived looking for Rudolph Ruge. When Sarah told her she was dead, Alecto decided to stay anyway, since Baytown was close to a good target. Since then, Sarah's been a prisoner. By day she works at the front desk or on customer's projects, knowing that Alecto will have her killed if she gives anything away; after the store closes, she eats mechanically, then watches TV with Alecto until she falls asleep, half-listening as Alecto talks about her hopes and fears. If Sarah survives, she could give PCs some insight into *Jo Ness' Story* (see p. 19).

Zengi will go to the living room (6, below), directly between the two windows facing the front of *Cyberpets*, ready to fire to right or left, or down the corridor. Fenris will go into the bathroom (8), leave the door open to give him a view of the corridor between (5) and (6), and kneel in the bathtub in (8), covering both the bathroom window and the corridor. Alecto will remain in the living room, kneeling behind the bed by her secret passage, pistol ready to shoot anyone entering via the corridor or the living room windows. If she is badly hurt or clearly outnumbered, she'll flee out the panel to her smartcar. She'll take Zengi or Fenris if they are nearby, but won't wait for them.

Windows: All windows are DR 5, HT 2 polyglass. They are locked from the inside, curtained, and possess invisible lethal laser beam sensors (see p. CY54) run by house power. Each sensor is programmed to fire at anyone moving through it, and radio Alecto in the event of a security breach. All lasers can be turned off by anyone using a code from Alecto's wrist communicator. If Alecto wants to exit through a window, she can do so safely.

Front Door: This is DR 10, HT 20, and has an electronic lock; Alecto and Saladin have laser keys for it. Alecto has added a lethal laser beam sensor at waist level, but it is deactivated from 9 AM to 5 PM when the store is open.

Defense Globe: This is the globe Alecto bought from Mycroft Soft (see 2. below). It was missing its laser, but Alecto built in a machine pistol and a magazine of APS ammunition, and added a television camera with voice pickup. Alecto controls the globe from a hidden fiber optic cable running through the ceiling to the living room upstairs, where it's plugged into the wall vidcom; she controls it manually using her own Pistol skill and a neural interface. She uses the camera to watch and eavesdrop on Sarah when she's in the store. If anyone pretends to be a customer and looks and acts the part (ALF androids will have to be disguised), she won't be suspicious. If the "customers" are heavily armed or mention things they



shouldn't (e.g., the ALF, Alecto, Medusa or Chimera), she'll react, alerting the other Chimera members with her scrambled communicator. But she'll hold her fire until the intruders try to snatch or interrogate Sarah or they begin to search the building.

Booby Trap: There's a mine under the interior stairs (see 5, below).

Key to Cyberpets

1. The Shop Floor: The door will be open between 9 AM and 5 PM. Sarah Juliet will be working behind the counter, using her computer and a virtual reality glove to control the microsurgery in 4. If they go inside during business hours, they'll be greeted (without much enthusiasm) by Sarah, an attractive black woman in her mid-twenties, with dark, bloodshot eyes, long hair and glittering crystal earrings. She's dressed in a sleeveless reflex top, black tights, and low boots, and seems to be unarmed. Sarah is described in the sidebar on p. 40.

Sarah will be coldly polite – she's busy, she doesn't have much time for new jobs, and so on. If the PCs make an Empathy or Detect Lies roll, they can sense she's frightened but is trying to act normally. If they act like customers, she'll show them around and give them a sales spiel, but she'll try every excuse the GM can think of to keep them away from the second floor! Sarah knows about the defense globe: Alecto has threatened to kill her if she reveals Chimera's presence.

If the globe (or the PCs) starts shooting, Sarah will duck for cover behind the counter (if down stairs). If the PCs disable the Defense Globe or rescue her, Sarah will tell the PCs what she knows: "Android terrorists! It's Alecto, she's got two other androids, and she's planted a plague bomb in a shopping mall in Houston and there's a bomb under the stairs and laser traps on the windows and she's out to get Abraxas Corporation and totally crazy!" If the PCs invade *Cyberpets* while Sarah is upstairs, she'll dive for the nearest cover and stay down until the shooting's over, then surrender ("I'm not a terrorist, don't shoot!").

2. Defense Globe: This is disguised as a cheap light fixture on the ceiling, and can cover any part of the first floor except the stairwell (although PCs could duck under the operating table in 3.) The PCs won't notice it unless they say they are checking the ceiling for traps and make a Vision-4 or Traps roll.

3. Microsurgery and Electronics Workshop: Sarah's shop doesn't sell live animals. What it does have are robot toys and a fully-equipped veterinary cybernetics workshop. Sarah will put implants, usually chip slots, into animals for 20% more than the cost to do a human. She has special chipware for animal training (cost is \$100×the number of days it would have taken to train the animal to that IQ level using normal methods – see p. B144). Want your dog to talk? Fit him with a \$10,000 voicebox and a \$5,000 English skip, and he'll soon have a 20-word vocabulary. For \$100,000 she'll use cyber implants, cell grafts and brain-boosting drugs to increase a pet's IQ by 1, though she won't guarantee its sanity afterwards. Sarah's current project is a 15-foot python (see B143) asleep on the operating table. Sarah's just finished using waldo micromanipulators to fit it with a chip slots for IQ 3 level training and Watchdog O-Rom, and muscle grafts to boost ST to 20.



Typical Redjack

Age 15-19, 5' 10", 150 lbs., male.

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 11.

Speed 5.75, Move 5

Dodge 6, Parry 7 (Karate).

Advantages: Cellular Link; Claws (Long); Chip Slot (1); Combat Reflexes (only on Slammer); Flip: Karate [2]; High Pain Threshold (only on Slammer); Pockets.

Disadvantages: Appearance (Hideous); Bloodlust (only on Slammer); Enemy (Police, Rivals: 9 or less); Intolerance (Non-cybered people); Sense of Duty (Gang Members); Status (-1).

Quirks: Demonic features; Lusts after cybernetics.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Houston)-10; Guns-12 (Pistol); Karate-11 [12]; Merchant-10; Streetwise-11; Survival (Urban)-10.

Equipment: Light monocrys (vest); machine pistol; Slammer.

If not on Slammer, IQ and IQ-based skills are increased by 2.

The Redjacks are a Houston gang who trade in illegal cyberware and black market drugs and hormones. Rites of passage include facial alterations to give members hideous, demonic features, and the implantation of razored claws: most gang members steal the money, then get a cheap job (often with the Rejected modification) at the local black clinic. The gang members use what they deal, and are usually high on combat drugs.



The Medusa Plague

The Medusa plague is caused by self-replicating inorganic nanomachines that feed on the human body. The effects it produces are similar to both bone cancer and arthritis, but incredibly accelerated. Use the *Disease* and *Contagion* rules on B133; the difference is that Medusa is harder, faster-replicating, and more lethal. Medusa's is first airborne, spreading like blowing pollen. Bobby Joe wasn't contagious because Medusa is programmed not to spread unless the canister seals are unlocked (something Alecto has done) which releases a chemical trigger permitting contagion. Once this happens, contamination is possible from touching a contaminated object, or contact with tainted blood, sweat, saliva or breath. If released from a high, windy place such as the Skytower dome, Medusa will spread over a 100-square mile area. If released at ground level or inside a non-sealed building, the area will be only 10 square miles, but contamination will be severe (-2 to HT rolls).

Contagion: Anyone within 50 yards of Medusa when the canister ruptures is contaminated on a failed HT-7 roll. As Medusa spreads and disperses, use the *Contagion* rules and modifiers on p. B133 for anyone entering the contaminated zone, but check each *hour* rather than each *day*, and at an extra -4 to HT! Animals and androids are immune; Medusa only affects humans.

Continued on next page . . .

4. *Animal Cages:* Two dogs (a Labrador Retriever and a German Shepherd) and small gray house cat are kept here, awaiting surgery. The dogs have gotten used to Chimera (Fenris has intimidated them) but will bark at intruders, alerting anyone upstairs unless quieted down (Animal Handling roll).

5. *Wooden stairs with "Employees Only" sign:* A pressure-activated boobytrap is fitted under a loose board on the fourth step (Vision-8 or Traps-4 to notice it. For each person using the stairs, roll 1d: 1-3 they step on it and it goes off, 4-6 they miss that step and it doesn't. The charge is a flattened half-pound of Plastex; besides the damage, it will bring down the stairs. Chimera and Sarah both know where the trap is.

6. *Living Room:* This is a combination living room and bedroom. There's a large double bed, a couch, and a low stool facing a wall-sized vidcom/television and disk reader. A closet holds Sarah's clothes; there is also a breakaway panel that Alecto and Zengi cut in the wall. It looks like solid plastibrick but is paper-thin and can be kicked out in one turn, leaving a 15' drop to the smartcar outside.

Fenris sleeps here by day, Zengi at night. Alecto is always here: she has the wallscreen on split-screen mode, watching the defense globe monitor and the news. After the store closes, Sarah will be here, the android watching vid while Sarah does the same or tries to sleep. See *Ultimatum* below (p. 42) for what might be on the vidcom wall screen when the PCs drop by for a visit . . .

7. *Kitchen:* The kitchen reeks of basil and other spices: Zengi has odd ideas about cooking. It has a table and three chairs of smooth black plastic, a coffee pot, washer/dryer, microwave oven, and a stocked fridge containing some microwave dinners, pork chops, and several beers and fruit drinks. A cupboard contains an emergency medkit. During the morning, noon and evening, Zengi will be cooking here; other times he'll be here or in the living room with Alecto (50-50 chance). At night, Fenris hangs out here, eating to satisfy his rapid metabolism.

On the kitchen table is a map printout of Houston, Texas, with a circle around the downtown Skytower office block.

8. *Bathroom:* A normal bathroom with the usual amenities, plus a cellular phone hookup. Alecto and Sarah use the shower from about 7-7:30 a.m., Alecto watching her prisoner closely; Saladin showers between 6:30-7 p.m. Fenris just licks himself clean. Anyone showering will leave their equipment in the bathroom.

9. *Smart Car:* Alecto's smartcar (a Mercedes) is parked on the south side of the building, powered and ready for a quick getaway. The car door has an electronic lock, and Alecto has trapped the air conditioning system with a nerve gas grenade (-5 to Traps to notice if searching the car) which detonates if someone turns on the ignition without a code word ("Tisiphone," the name of Alecto's dead sister) being spoken into the car's computer. Alecto will never use her car without a quick check (-3 to skill) for boobytraps.

Ultimatum

The Medusa canister isn't in *Cyberpets*. If the PCs interrogate any prisoners or talk to Sarah, they'll learn what Alecto has done. While the

PCs were at Aquarius, Alecto and Zengi got back from a short trip to downtown Houston. They placed Medusa in the Skytower shopping mall, with a timer set to go off in 24 hours. Before leaving, Alecto made a video of their demands. On the way back, they modemed it (at a public booth in Houston) to 23 different news stations across North America, and 3 international networks.

The newsvid may appear during or after the PCs' first (or only) visit to *Cyberpets* – for dramatic effect, it could be on the vidcom as they burst into Sarah's living room. It shows Alecto standing against a highway (no signs or landmarks in sight). She's dressed in a form-fitting bodysuit, but her face is bare and her inhuman features are fully exposed. She's holding the Medusa canister.

"My name is Alecto Eumenides. I was born in an artificial womb in Abraxas Corporation's laboratory in Bonn, Germany. I represent Chimera. We speak for oppressed androids around the world.

"For too long, unaltered humanity has exploited its artificial children. We are treated as less than human. We are sold and traded as slaves. We are genetically programmed to self-destruct before reaching old age. Most of these crimes are committed by the corporations that create us. These must cease. Or there will be punishment.

"I am holding a canister containing Abraxas-2076-MED, codenamed Medusa, produced by the Abraxas corporation laboratory in Berlin, Germany, under the direction of Conrad Lang."

(The screen shows a graphic of a very complex multi-colored molecular model.)

"As you can see, it's a beautiful creation. Like myself, it is an artificial lifeform, but of a very different order. Medusa is an inorganic nanomachine whose structure is analogous to a disease organism. It feeds on and replicates within the human body. Although it is a unique entity, its effects might be compared to a contagious, airborne bone cancer. Exposure is normally lethal in under 12 hours. It is a painful death."

(The shot cuts to time-lapse video footage of a young man in a cage. He is being eaten alive by Medusa. Characters who have seen Bobby Joe will recognize the symptoms as authentic, although this is actually a computer simulation Alecto put together with her Video Production skill.)

"The presidents of Abraxas Corporation, SkyTec and BioTech Chulan are to issue a joint public statement to be shown on world-wide network television. It must condemn the enslavement and exploitation of androids and

The Medusa Plague (Continued)

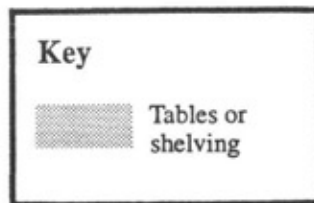
Symptoms: Four hours after Medusa is caught, a sufferer experiences severe pain, fever and joint aches. He must start making HT rolls (see below).

Sickness and Recovery: Make an hourly roll vs. HT-4. Critical Failure means *permanent* loss of one point of HT and DX. A failed roll means the loss of one point of DX and HT which can recover when the disease vanishes. A success means no HT or DX was lost *or regained*. Three consecutive successes or a Critical Success means the disease has been suppressed by the victim's immune system, but lost HT (and DX) must recover as per normal daily healing. HT or DX lost due to a Critical Failure is permanent damage that cannot be healed without extensive bionic reconstruction – this will cost \$25,000 and require one week in hospital per point of HT or DX lost.

Treatment: Normal drugs will not affect Medusa, but care by a competent physician will give +1 to HT rolls.

Burnout: Each Medusa nanoid has an internal clock, and this clock is *updated* and copied rather than merely copied when Medusa replicates: thus, each generation of "disease organisms" has a progressively shorter lifespan. The result is that if a person is infected 15 hours after Medusa was released, he'll have the disease for only 33 hours. Medusa cannot spread uncontrollably: exactly 48 hours after release, *all* Medusa microorganisms drop dead. Anyone left alive can begin recovery, though permanent damage won't heal.

Skytower Mall



must pledge to eliminate the production of androids with artificially reduced lifespans or self-destruct codes in one year's time. It must announce their acceptance of the rights of any android to freedom and self-determination. Finally, it must condemn the wanton murder by Abraxas security forces of Android Liberation Force members Cobra and Spartacus, killed while attempting to assist other androids find their freedom.

"If these modest demands are not met within 12 hours, Medusa will be released in the city of Houston, Texas."

Alecto's Plan

Both Zengi and Alecto know exactly where the bomb is located (see *Shopping for Medusa* on p. 45) and how it was trapped. Fenris and Sarah just know it's in the Skytower in downtown Houston, hidden somewhere in the mall, with a booby trap on it to prevent tampering.

Sarah, Fenris and Zengi think that Alecto's objectives are those given in the statement, and that Alecto will phone the police with the location of the bomb if her demands are met. Actually, they are wrong, but the only way the investigators can find out this information is to actually interrogate Alecto.

Alecto does not believe that Abraxas or Chulan would ever agree to her demands. Even SkyTec, covertly in bed with the ALF, can't be seen to publicly give in to terrorism. This doesn't bother her; Alecto intends to release Medusa regardless of whether they agree or not.

Alecto's real target is Abraxas president Conrad Lang. By announcing she is an Abraxas-designed android using an Abraxas-designed terror weapon, Alecto made sure Medusa will be associated with Abraxas, and she included enough verifiable information that Abraxas' denials would mean little. If Medusa kills thousands and contaminates downtown Houston, the public outcry should lead to government hearings on why Abraxas ordered this weapon built and how they allowed it to escape. Alecto thinks this will emasculate Abraxas for months. She doubts Lang will survive – the wolves on the Abraxas board of directors will need to sacrifice someone, and for a scandal of this magnitude, only the man at the top will be enough. If they don't kill him, he'll be demoted, disgraced and weakened.

Alecto thinks Medusa is simply another of the bioagents that Abraxas sells to governments around the world. However, the public circulation of Cherry's Rapture Project files could do the same damage to Conrad Lang as Medusa's release, and without causing megadeaths.

If the agents incapacitate Alecto but don't kill her, she'll accept medical treatment and talk about the background and motivation behind her plot – in the hopes of convincing her captors that she is right. Alecto won't be threatened into telling them how to locate or stop Medusa – but if the PCs tell her about the Rapture File, she'll realize she doesn't need Medusa. She will tell them how to find and disarm the canister if they agree to the file's release.

Bugging Out

After this ultimatum, the adventurers may decide to forget Charli's commission, pass prisoners or information to the authorities, and let them retrieve Medusa. This could save lives (if the PCs are taken seriously and



the authorities don't foul up – GM's option), but it has unfortunate consequences: the Yakuza will have Charli kidnapped and tortured for failing to deliver Medusa. They'll put out a \$200,000 hit contract on the PCs as well, since Charli will reveal their names under interrogation and the Yakuza want to eliminate any loose ends that connect them with this debacle.

If the PCs contact Charli to ask advice, she will be frantic after seeing Medusa on television. She'll admit she was working for the Yakuza, tell them she's afraid, and point out she's still recovering from surgery and unable to hide herself. If they think they can get the canister, *do it!* If not, can they fly down and *get her out of there?* If the PCs have moral qualms, see *Resolutions* for Charli's argument.

Shopping for Medusa

Chimera's ultimatum was released on the net and sent out to 23 different television stations. Although several refused to air the story, the news was impossible to contain.

Houston is gripped in chaos as people try to flee the city. The highways leading out are choked with vehicles attempting to escape. Police microcopters fly spiral patterns overhead, ordering citizens to stay in their homes. Riot police and National Guardsmen in fully-sealed Combat Infantry Dress make house-to-house searches, and attempt to keep order and direct traffic. Smoke from wrecked and burning autos fills the air.

Commercial flights are canceled, the airports are closed, and trains and busses are not running or jammed to overflow. A car will require 1d+2 hours to navigate the choked roads from Baytown to Houston. Once in the city, the GM may require Driving rolls to avoid collisions, get through traffic, etc., with failed rolls indicating an accident or a permanent traffic jam, forcing them to proceed on foot. Whatever the means of transport, hazards such as refugees trying to hitch a ride at gunpoint, police wanting to commandeer the PCs' vehicles, religious fanatics prophesying doom, and random snipers can all add spice to the trip.

The Skytower is a office block towering above the center of downtown Houston, 200 stories of smoked polyglass and gleaming black durasteel. There are three police cars parked in the No Parking zone outside. PCs can enter through the lobby since the glass doors have been smashed. Inside they will find a bank of elevators and directions. The first 199 levels are offices for various businesses and companies; the last level is an exclusive mini-mall.

The Skytower has been evacuated – even the security guards have left. Now a gang, the Redjacks (sidebar, p. 41), is looting the mall. The mall's security robots were shot by the looters, but they called the police. A few Houston Metrocops (see sidebar, p. 45) have responded, and now a battle rages on the top floor mall level.

Skytower Mall

The mall is a typical shopping mall with some 50 businesses. All the stores are closed, with armored shutters (DR 5, HT 50) pulled down and electronically locked over their store fronts. Points of interest are described below:

1. *Elevators:* These lead down to the other levels of the mall. As the



Houston Metrocop

Age 21-40, 5' 10", 155 lbs.
ST 11, DX 11, IQ 11, HT 11.
Speed 5.25, Move 3
Dodge 4, Parry 6 (Stunwand).

Combat Infantry Dress (PD 4, DR 40 on torso, PD 2, DR 12 elsewhere), medium encumbrance.

Advantages: Chip Slots (2); Combat Reflexes (chipped); Legal Enforcement Powers; Patron (Department); Skip: Criminology [2].

Disadvantages: Duty to Police Department; Sense of Duty (other police). Roll 1d: 1 Bully, 2 Greed, 3 Honesty, 4 Laziness, 5 Overweight, 6 Overconfident.

Skills: Area Knowledge (City)-12; Brawling-12; Driving-11; Electronics (Communications)-10; Electronics (Security)-10; Fast Talk-12; Gun (Gyroc)-13; Gun (Rifle)-12; Interrogation-10; Law-9; Shortsword-12; Streetwise-12.

Equipment: Sealed Combat Infantry Dress with helmet; helmet video; 3 electronic handcuffs; emergency medkit; launch pistol (Stingray, SLAP, sleepgas loads) w/laser sight; stunwand.

Houston police are in full riot gear wearing sealed combat armor. They'll give suspects one warning to surrender, then act. They use lethal force against armed and dangerous opponents, otherwise use stingers, stunwands or gas. Anyone who surrenders (or is incapacitated) will be cuffed until he or she can be taken to a station holding cell.

Character Points

Award one point if the PCs prevented Medusa from being released (either personally or by discovering its location and getting the police to disarm it). Award an extra point for exceptional roleplaying. In addition, accomplishing any of the following may be worth one character point:

Dealing peacefully with the ALF (as opposed to Chimera).

Assisting in the rescue of Chiroptera 7.

Saving Sarah Juliet's life.

Keeping Charli safe from the Yakuza (either by returning the canister to her, or hiding her).

Reforming Alecto (she's not evil, just very misguided . . .)

PCs exit, they'll hear automatic weapons fire in the north-east corner of the mall and see two bodies (Redjacks, unconscious from Stinger rounds) on the floor in front of them.

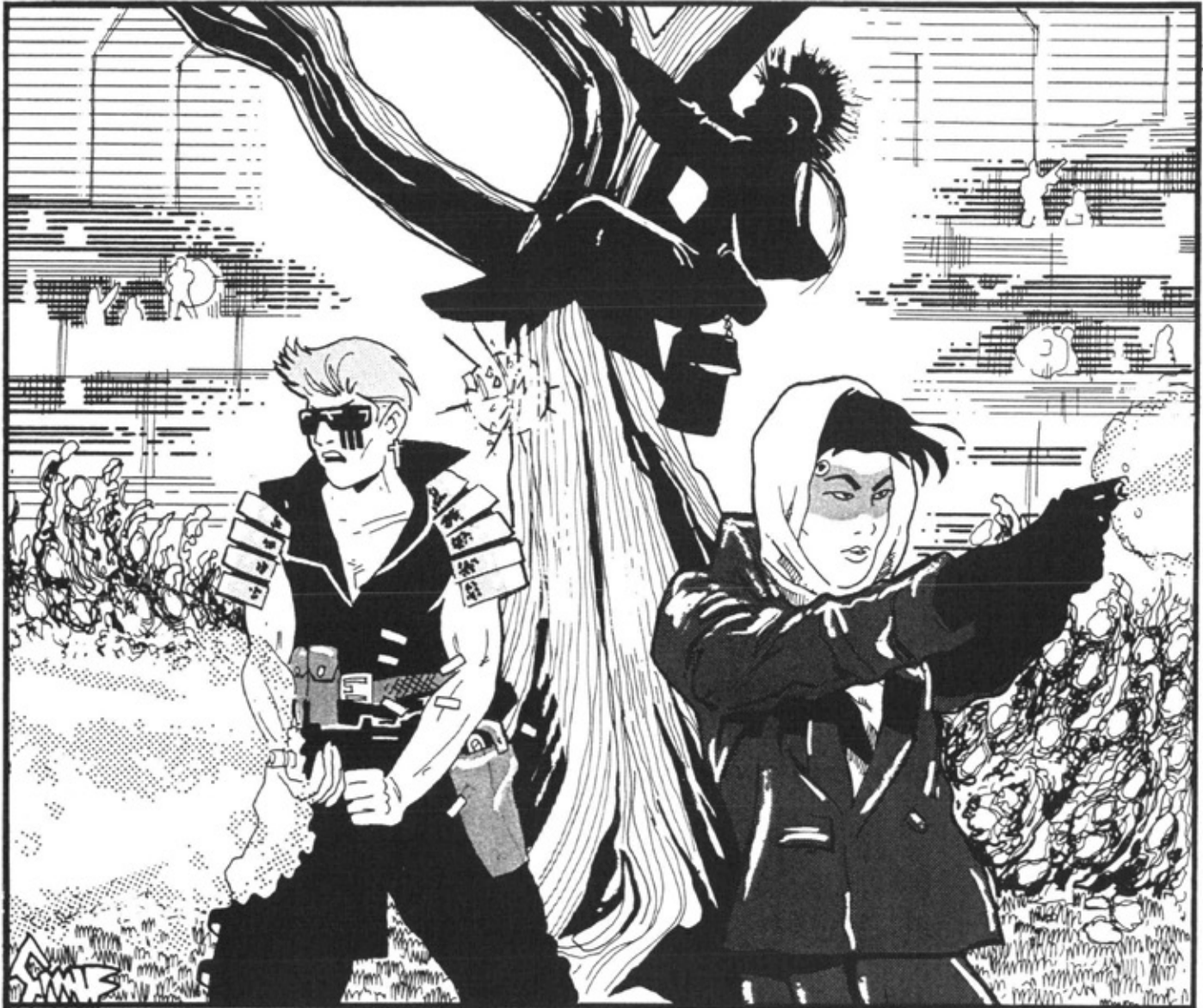
2. *Gulfstar Hoversport Display*: Three Metrocops (sidebar, p. 45) are taking cover behind this (DR 10, HT 150) hovercraft sportscar, pinned down by fire from the gang members. One is wounded (HT 2). The Hoversport doesn't have any fuel aboard, and is full of bullet holes.

3. *Soyburgers*: This is an open restaurant in the middle of the concourse. A group of five Redjacks are taking cover behind plastic bucket seats and tables, firing at the police across the mall in 2.

4. *Dreamer Arcade*: Eight Redjacks are removing the arcade dreamgame machines (loading them into a pair of shopping carts) while another keeps watch.

5. *Outdoorsman*: This sporting goods store contains climbing gear the PCs may find useful if they want to climb the apple tree (6). There are no guns, but the PCs can find some crossbows if they are desperate.

6. *Abraxas Garden*: This is a patch of greenery directly beneath a transparent plexiglass dome. Flowerbeds form the Abraxas corporate logo,



a DNA spiral. The centerpiece is a mature apple tree, its branches brushing the top of the dome. A plaque next to the flowers says the park was paid for by Abraxas, and that the tree was grown to its full height using Abraxas cloning techniques in only three weeks, then transplanted to the park. (No one should say Alecto lacks a sense of humor!) A chamocloth-wrapped bundle (-3 to spot) is attached by superglue to the topmost branch of the tree, 20 yards off the ground and just below the dome.

The bundle contains the Medusa canister and a 5-pound charge of plastex explosive. When the timer goes off – 8 hours after the deadline – it will rupture Medusa’s casing and blast a hole in the plexiglass dome in order, scattering the canister’s contents to the four winds.

To prevent tampering, Ness has added a black box to the package: a gyroscopic trigger. Anyone moving the bundle (or shooting it, or knocking the tree down) will trigger the explosion. The only way to disarm it safely is to climb the tree (becoming a great target for everyone in the mall), carefully cut the chamocloth away, and remove the black box. This requires a Traps/TL8 roll at a -4 penalty. A failed roll means it is jarred and nearly – but doesn’t quite – go off, since the PC steadied it in time. A failure by 5 or more or a Critical Failure will detonate the explosive. Once the boobytrap has been removed, the explosives can be safely removed from the canister (though a Demolitions critical failure would detonate it). If the device explodes, 5 pounds of plastex will go off (see p. CY53) and Medusa will be released.

If the PCs can’t find Medusa’s location, the GM can have a Redjack notice it and be taking pot shots at it with his pistol.

7. *Dead Robot*: A three-legged security robot the size of a dog is lying on its side, riddled with bullets.

Resolutions

If the adventurers get their hands on Medusa, disarm the bomb, and get out of the mall alive, they face a moral question – what to do with it? Do they turn it over to Charli Minelli (and thus, to the Yakuza) or try to sell it back to Abraxas corporation or a third party? Do they keep it? Throw it out? Use it with the Rapture File for blackmail? As long as they have it, Abraxas and the Yakuza will be hunting . . .

If they ask Charli, she’ll want to fulfill her contract. If they mention moral qualms to her, she’ll say she doubts the Yakuza want it for terrorism anyway – that’s not their style. Instead, she guesses, they’d want to sell it to another corporation, or to study it for their own labs, maybe to tame it as a more controlled assassination weapon. Nothing to worry about, really.

If Medusa was released and the PCs survived, they should probably try to keep a low profile in case Abraxas or the FBI trace the act back to them, although they may be in a position to sell information or blackmail some of the parties involved. Conrad Lang will also (as Alecto hoped) be out of favor, and (if Alecto isn’t around to assassinate him) be scheming to get back his position of power. Perhaps his plans could involve the agents.

Finally, some or all of the groups and NPCs in this adventure may survive to become continuing friends or enemies of the PCs, depending, of course, on how they were treated by them.

Adapting To Other Genres

GURPS Space

Just upgrade the background technology. Multinationals become multistellars. Set the adventure on a single TL9+ planet, or change the locations to different planets and use spacecraft instead of hoverplanes and passengers jets.

GURPS Supers

Reduce the overall tech level, but leave the gadgets and androids the same: powerful megacorps with ultra-technology are a staple of the superhero genre. Assume androids are produced and sold *secretly* by some advanced corporations for use by the rich and decadent, or for sale to supervillains. The ALF and Chimera are seeking to publicize this exploitation.

GURPS Fantasy

Tricky but possible. Change the megacorps to feuding guilds of powerful alchemists and the androids to vat-born homunculi they sell as slaves. Medusa becomes a flask holding flesh-eating demons who kill humans but leave artificial life alone.

Further Adventures

Lang’s Return

Provided Conrad Lang wasn’t killed outright for his work on the Rapture Project, he will eventually want to return and wreak revenge on those who brought about his disgrace. If Alecto’s still alive, he’ll go after her first, but the agents who gave the Rapture information to Alecto will be next on his list. With a hidden stockpile of deadly combat androids, Lang could prove to be a serious adversary.

Yakuza and Medusa

If the PCs return the canister to the Yakuza that hired Charlie, they will take it to a secret lab to carefully analyze the nanomechs. Within a year, they will have developed a new weapon – it’s non-contagious, but it works much faster than Medusa. One spray will kill a person within 2 minutes.

Abraxas wants the new formula and hires the PCs, who have worked with Medusa before. The Yakuza wants anyone who’s ever heard of Medusa eliminated, putting the PCs in the middle of a power struggle that’s bigger than all of them.

Android Advantages and Disadvantages

Several "racial" advantages were used to create the androids described in this adventure. Some of the advantages are biological variants of cyberware: *Claws* are natural equivalents of short

or long claws (p. CY32). *Perfect Balance* is the equivalent of Gyrobalance (p. CY35). *Ultrasonic Hearing* is the same as the cyberware implant on p. CY37. Others are described below.

New Advantages

Bioelectric Shock 10 points

You can generate an electric current in your body, much like an electric eel or ray. This inflicts 1d electrical damage if you touch a person who is not grounded. It costs 2 Fatigue. You can also use the ability to *save* lives – add +3 to First Aid skill when making CPR rolls!

Drug Factory varies

Your glands produce natural analogues of one or more of the following drugs: Crediline, Hypercoagulin, Morphazine, Neurovine, Nerve Poison or Rage (see pp. CY57-59). You can administer these drugs to others (but not yourself) via a bite or claws as if they were hypo-injected. Your metabolism is limited to producing HT/2 doses; doses are restored at one per four hours. This is similar to a Poison Reservoir cyberware, but self-regenerating. This advantage costs 20 points for one drug on the list and 10 points per extra drug. Any drugs you can make won't affect you!

Fur 4 points

You have a coat of fur, providing DR 1 and protection from the elements equivalent to light clothing.

Hyper-Reflexes 15 points

You can voluntarily initiate and control abnormal levels of adrenaline production, increasing your speed and reflexes. At the start of any turn, you can activate your hyper-reflexes. This costs 1 Fatigue *per turn* but gives you the Combat Reflexes advantage and +1 to Basic Speed. (If you *normally* have Combat Reflexes, you gain double the usual benefits.) Since Combat Reflexes increases all active defenses by 1 and Speed increases Dodge, Androids with this advantage have two values for each active defense: one when hyper-reflexes is activated, one for when it is not.

Hyper-Strength 30 points

You can voluntarily duplicate the feats of hysterical strength that normal people sometimes perform. You may increase ST (but not Fatigue) by 50% at a cost of 1 Fatigue *per turn*. Androids with this ability have a "split ST" listed.

Immunity to Poison 25 points

You are genetically engineered, or different enough biologically, to be immune to most poisons (including sleep and nerve gas) and non-medical drugs. You are still vulnerable to acid and many diseases.

New Disadvantages

Self-Destruct -20 points

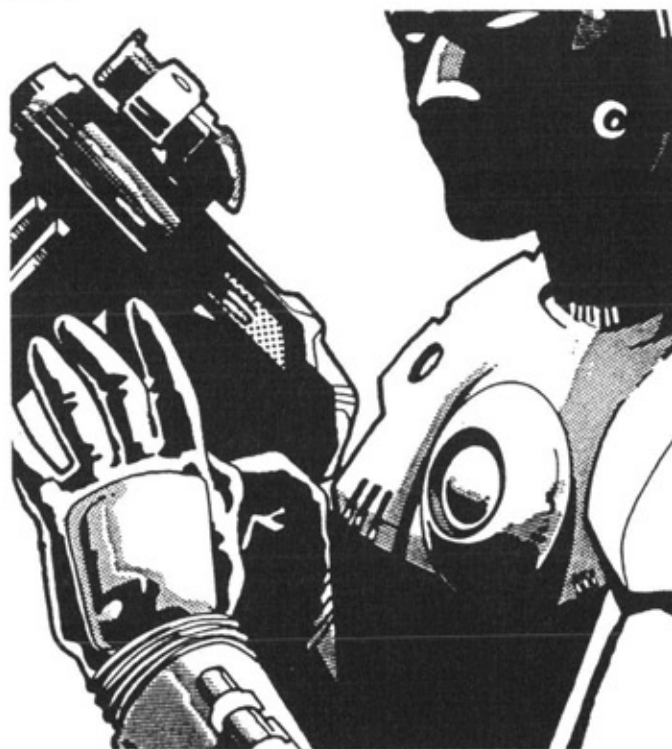
As soon as you reach your aging threshold (50 for a normal human) your organs and immune system begin to fail. You start to age rapidly, making aging rolls every *day* at a -3 to HT. Terminally ill characters may not take this! This disadvantage ensures a steady demand for new androids . . .

Pheromone Control 25 points

You can release powerful sex pheromones. Any human (or android) of the opposite sex within 4 yards may breathe them in (unless wearing a sealed suit, etc.). Anyone breathing your pheromones will find you one level more Attractive (+2 on Reaction if already Very Beautiful) and will break into a sweat and become aroused: roll IQ-3 or suffer from Lecherousness for the next ten minutes.

Sonar Vision 25 points

You can "see" by emitting sound waves like a bat or dolphin with a range of 100 yards. No light is required. Sonar can be jammed by loud noises and is color blind, but (within a range of 1 yard) you can actually "see" inside living things or other objects of similar density. GMs may give a +2 bonus to skills such as Diagnosis, or for attempts to detect concealed weapons (using Holdout).



Sharp Teeth 5 points

You can do cutting damage in close combat, using the table on p. B140.

Short Lifespan -25/level

Each level halves the age at which you are mature *and* at which you begin to suffer aging effects. This disadvantage makes production of androids quicker, and ensures a steady demand for new models. It is often found in conjunction with Self-Destruct.

JERICO BLACKOUT

2

By Jak Koke

Illustrated by Darrell Midgette

Jericho Blackout is a fast-paced, action-oriented adventure with an emphasis more upon street-level violence than netrunning. It is a high-powered adventure, designed for two to six 200- to 250-point characters. Lower point levels are acceptable, but the adventurers' opponents should be toned down to compensate.



About the Author

Jak Koke is a freelance writer who lives and works with his wife, Seana, in Springfield, Oregon. After receiving his Bachelor's degree in both English and Biology from the University of Oregon, Jak went to work part-time in a genetics lab.

When not at work, Jak writes short stories and novels, mostly in the cyberpunk vein. He has sold several stories to science-fiction magazines: "Deadwise" will appear in the August, 1992, issue of *Amazing Stories*, and "Lead-Lined Christmas," written in collaboration with Jonathan Bond, will be printed in the December issue of *Science Fiction Revue*. At least five other stories have been scheduled to appear in periodicals, including *Pulphouse* and *The Review*.

Chizmatron

Chizmatron works as a "middle-man" company. When a corporation or organization has personnel needs for a delicate operation, legal or not, they contact Chizmatron. If something needs doing, Chizmatron can get in touch with someone who can do it.

Chizmatron uses a double blind system. Working through the net, Chizmatron contacts a field operative, giving him or her the personnel requirements and whatever specifics are required, and only that information. The operative finds candidates (often without their knowledge) who fit those needs – five times as many as are needed for the job – and sends a list back to Chizmatron. The company then runs extensive background and experience checks on the prospects. The operative is given a list of those agents who are acceptable, still many more than are needed. The operative does not tell Chizmatron who is finally hired; he makes that decision himself. If someone were to hack into Chizmatron's *very secure* system, all he could find is a long list of possible candidates. If someone interrogates the operative, he could only follow the trail back to Chizmatron, not the client.

Once they accept the job, the recruits get a decryption code from the operative, and receive their specific orders later – either through e-mail from an anonymous account on a public net, or delivered via courier in the form of a scrambled electronic briefing (the courier is also hired anonymously). Any other untraceable method of delivering the briefing will work, but Chizmatron must maintain plausible deniability. Once the briefing has been unscrambled and read, a self-contained virus destroys the coded message.

Chizmatron accepts no responsibility for damages; no refunds will be issued if the recruits fail to complete their contract. If legal action is pursued against Chizmatron, they will deny everything, usually letting their operative take the fall, rather than allowing the company to be brought down.

The PCs should have a wide variety of skills including Streetwise, Fast-Talk, and Diplomacy. Cyberdeck Operation and Computer Hacking will come in handy, especially late in the adventure, and thief and spy skills will be very useful. Demolition, Tactics and Strategy are good selections, as are any combat and weapon skills.

Involving the Characters

There are several ways to involve the PCs in the scenario. Only one has been detailed here, but any number of options will work. The basic plot requires that the adventurers be shuttled to Jericho City – an isolated community in the badlands of central Montana where economic disparity between the classes has resulted in outbreaks of violence, bordering on war. The upper-class faction – the ConFed – has hired a group of expert mercenaries to locate and destroy certain key sites in the Scrambletown district, hoping to damage the middle-class and poor districts enough to make them fall into ruin. The PCs are hired by a leader of the Scrambletown resistance, "Pop" Mahoney, who has uncovered this plan.

The most obvious method to get the PCs involved is for Pop to contact them directly. However, Mahoney knows he is being watched carefully by the ConFed; anyone he contacted for help would be targeted immediately. Instead, Pop would work through an intermediary, like Chizmatron (see sidebar). While the ConFed would know that Mahoney hired *someone* through Chizmatron, they have no way of finding out who.

Alternately, the agents could know or be related to someone in Scrambletown – a sibling or parent – who contacts them in the hopes of recruiting some help. Finally, the PCs could just get caught up in the situation. Perhaps Jericho City was just a shuttle stop on the way to somewhere else. When the shuttleport starts to explode (see p. 57), the PCs are stuck in the middle of things; the adventurers just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

An Offer They Can't Refuse

This is detail for the first method of involving the characters. If this is not the introduction the GM prefers, skip to *Shuttle to Scrambletown*. Note that certain passages in the adventure assume the Chizmatron connection; the GM will have to alter some things if this is not the case.

The party is contacted by the secretive go-between organization, Chizmatron (see sidebar). The original contact can be anything from a back-alley meeting to a mysterious vid-call (a human shape in the shadows with an electronically-disguised voice). Anything that will whet the appetites of curious PCs will work.

Once contacted, the recruits are instructed to meet with a Chizmatron representative for briefing and to complete the contracts. The meeting's location is up to the GM. However, Chizmatron will insist on an isolated place, without crowds.

The Chizmatron contingent consists of five people – four of them heavily-armed bodyguards wearing mirrored contacts and medium monocrys. They carry Gauss needlers or laser rifles (skill 15). The fifth member of the group is a rail-thin blonde of about 30.

The woman introduces herself as Krix and asks the recruits to listen carefully. She removes a portable vidscreen from her attaché case (see p. CY53) and occasionally reads from it as she speaks to the party.

"The deal comes down to this: Chizmatron is willing, on behalf of a deposit paid by the actual employers, to pay you a ridiculous amount for a simple job.

"They'd like," she goes on, "to give you clone insurance and five years of personality downloads." (If the GM doesn't like the idea of clone insurance, offer something of equivalent value.) "In addition, you will be awarded \$50,000 each upon fulfilling the contract.

"And all you have to do is travel to Jericho City, Montana, via public shuttle, which will be provided. Once there, you will be responsible for aiding in the defense of the Scrambletown district against a small mercenary force which is threatening the social structure of the city."

If the PCs ask her for more information, Krix responds by telling them that the client in Scrambletown sent all the specifics in the form of a coded electronic briefing for each party member. However, due to security measures, the briefing is only to be accessed once the agents have accepted the assignment and boarded the shuttle.

Krix doesn't know anything else. Information from Chizmatron is on a need-to-know basis only. Outside of her orders, she could care less what's going on.

If the characters press her, Krix spells it out in different terms: "What have you got to lose? If you don't like the specs when they fill you in, you can bail out and hop the next shuttle out of Scrambletown. You don't get any of the loot, but it won't cost you anything more than the cost of a shuttle ride out of Scrambletown." She pauses with a brief smile. "It's got to be worth that much to find out what's going down."

Once the recruits accept, Krix will produce a small combination retinal and genetic scanner (see pp. CY53-54). She will hand the device to the agents and ask them, one by one, to validate the contract with a retinal ID and a geneprint. The prints will be verified at the completion of the mission to insure that proper payment is made. This is standard procedure, and Krix will be upfront with the characters about this, but only if they ask her about it.

Krix also provides an electronic descrambler for each recruit, to be used to decrypt the briefing when they receive it.

The PCs may decide to look over the contract in detail. If so, they will discover that it looks like a fairly above-board agreement.

Once the retinal scans and genecodes have been taken, Krix wishes the agents luck and hands out the shuttle tickets. They will be given their information packets when they board the shuttle.

In the unlikely event that the PCs decline or things get ugly, Krix will

Shuttleport Detail

The Scrambletown shuttleport is very busy. The air traffic here seems to be about twice what the four pads should be able to accommodate. One of the pads has been modified into a repair dock where most of a shuttle lies gutted.

The jump-jet shuttles are sleek rocket planes, capable of taking off straight up, though once in flight they use their wings to stay aloft like traditional jets. Jump-jets have the ability to reach orbiting stations as well as points around the world.

When landing, shuttles disengage luggage/cargo capsules and shuttleport technicians attach new ones. At a stop like Jericho City the engines never power down. Once passengers have exited, the shuttle departs.

Security and pedestrian control is at a minimum here . . . there is none. People on the deck are at their own risk. Warning signals (bad landings, fuel leaks, etc.) are given about one in six landings, during which time people scurry everywhere. It is easy to get lost in the shuffling maelstrom.

There is also a shuttleport on the ConFed side of Jericho City. It is smaller than the Scrambletown port, with only one pad, but much more organized and very clean.

Transportation in Jericho City

In the Ruins, almost everybody walks. A few of the bigger gang leaders have cars, and sometimes they actually drive them when they can steal some gas in Scrambletown. In Scrambletown there are some electric cars and a few gas-powered vehicles, mostly heavy machinery. The ConFed has all sorts of vehicles, but most people get around in little electric golf carts.

The PCs will probably walk from place to place unless they feel they need to rent or steal a car. Electric taxis are available, but the price is high (\$25/mile per person). The characters won't be able to get anything that runs on gasoline unless they spend 1d hours searching and buy it from the owner (or steal it). An old gas hog would run about \$5,000, and gasoline about \$50 a gallon.





Mandrakes

The night in Scrambletown is ruled by a very large gang of cannibals called the Mandrakes. Locals know this and stay inside. The cover price goes up to \$10 per person at the Triple X at dusk because people would rather pay more than risk traveling the streets after dark.

The Mandrakes emerge from the sewer system just after dark to scavenge Scrambletown for food. Their favorite food is people, and they will attempt to kill anyone who is dumb enough to be wandering about after the sun goes down. They will attack vehicles up to the size of large cars; Mandrakes don't lack numbers and death means very little to them. Mandrakes sometimes have to settle for stray animals, but they prefer human flesh and will eat their own dead rather than leave it out in the street. Mandrakes don't enter the Ruins above ground, day or night, because the Dog Boys kill them.

The common Mandrake wears almost nothing but sharp-studded boots and cloth shorts. They are skinny, malnourished people with milky skin and long hair and fingernails, which are usually filed sharp. They do not bathe and many file their teeth to points as well, to make it easier to eat.

There are over 100 Mandrakes total, though they don't travel in groups of more than 10 or 15. Their hunger is such that they are just as likely to feed on a fallen Mandrake as on other humans. That is to say, they are allied and should be treated as such, but if one falls, the body will be dragged off immediately by two others and may provide a momentary distraction. They all know the sewer system perfectly; it is their home.

Mandrakes are extremely cunning and will work together to herd intruders to their lair (located beneath the Scrambletown Hospital). Once there, they will attack as a group, though never more than 20 are in one place at one time.

retreat immediately, leaving the four heavies to cover her. If captured, the bodyguards know nothing – they were hired anonymously through the net. They only met Krix an hour ago. Krix doesn't know anything more about the mission, not even who contacted her employers.

Shuttle to Scrambletown

The party will be boarding a PGT&T (Pan Global Travel and Transport) jump-jet shuttle – flight 7648, with stops in Jericho City, Denver, and New York (if the travelers miss their stop, at least they know where they'll end up). The trip is without incident, taking a little over an hour and a half. It's a comfortable, smooth ride.

The shuttle has 24 seats, 17 of which are occupied. It is filled with an assortment of corporate execs, a family of six returning from a vacation, two couples and random others.

Briefing

After the agents settle into the shuttle's plush seats and the flight takes off, they can open the documents that were waiting for them when they boarded.

If the characters are equipped with slots, there are chips for them to use. If not, there are hand-held units with ear- and eye-phones.

When they jack in, or activate the phones, they see a grizzled man of about 40, with a deep scar down the left side of his face. He introduces himself as Pop Mahoney, owner of Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy and Survival and head of Scrambletown's city council. Using holomaps, the older man sketches out the conflict between Scrambletown and the ConFed.

Pop's Story

"The ConFed," Pop tells them, "makes up just less than a third of Jericho City. It is inhabited by the Isolationists – a cult of the supremely wealthy who spend all their time jacked into the net. The Isols have shut themselves inside an impenetrable fortress so that they don't have to worry about the outside world.



"At one time, this was an equitable, even profitable relationship, but not anymore. The ConFed is afraid that we're going to expand into its space. Jericho City derives its name from the high, crater walls that surround it. There is no room for expansion, at least not without considerable expense.

"Scrambletown's population has grown rapidly in recent years; the ConFed is taking measures to ruin the social structure of the city, causing the populace to either leave or die. Since the ConFed does not have the man-



power to do this themselves, it is planning to make Scrambletown destroy itself.

“Specifically, the ConFed has offered a bid to certain covert mercenary organizations. According to my sources, one of the groups has accepted the job, but unfortunately, the contact was killed before he could discover which group.

“This group of insurgence experts could arrive at any minute, and with Jericho City’s social structure as delicate as it is, two days would be enough to wreak havoc.

“As if that weren’t bad enough, on the other side of Scrambletown lies the Ruins – the poorest section of Jericho City. There has been general unrest in the Ruins over the last few months, due to a shift of gang power. Word has spread through the Ruins that the ConFed is getting ready to make a move on Scrambletown, and because of this, gang tension has become explosive. And even though I have a tap into the situation, and am doing all I can to defray the tension, all it would take is a spark, and the entire city would go up like a half-pound of plastex.

“So what you’ve been hired to do is simple. All you have to do is come in, find out what mercenary group has been hired, and stop whatever it is they’re doing. Simple, no?”

As a postscript to the message, Pop tells them that they are to proceed straight from the shuttleport to his store, Pop Mahoney’s Pharmacy and Survival. He gives them directions and shows them the shop’s location on the map (see p. 59). Upon arrival, they will be briefed on what has happened since the time this message was recorded.

He fades to black.

Scrambletown General Hospital

The PCs may venture into Scrambletown’s medical facility, either to be healed for injuries or for some other reason. The layout is simple.

The Emergency Room is on the first floor along with the central lobby and some outpatient facilities. The above floors hold such basics as pediatrics, maternity, intensive care, etc.

The PCs will have to show credit or insurance papers up front if they want to be helped. Without payment or assurance of it, they will be refused service. Once the form of payment has been determined, the patients will be treated quite well.

The hospital is the third item on the Linker’s agenda, however, so if the PCs try to get treatment late in the adventure they may find a pile of smoking rubble where the hospital was.

Note: The GM may spice things up by having the Linkers blow up the hospital while the characters are getting patched up.

Pop Mahoney

Age 34, 6'1", 265 lbs., blue eyes, salt-and-pepper hair (balding), scar along jawbone.

ST 12, DX 15, IQ 13, HT 14.

Speed 7.25, Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 11 (Karate).

Heavy monocrys (PD 2, DR 24), light encumbrance.

Advantages: Ally (Frankie), Combat Reflexes, Contacts, Legal Enforcement Powers, Military Rank (6), Status 5 (City Councilman).

Disadvantages: Overweight, Cyber Rejection, Sense of Duty (to Scrambletown).

Quirk: Loves Frankie.

Skills: Administration-12, Diplomacy-12, Biochemistry-14, Chemistry 14, Physiology-14, Physician-15, Electronics (bionic)-132, Mechanics (bionic)-13, First Aid-12, Surgery-15, Judo-15, Karate-15, Brawling-13, Tactics-14, Strategy-13.

Equipment: Heavy monocrys, ablative foam. Carries a military laser carbine in combat.

Pop is the father figure to many people in Scrambletown. He's got the moderate paunch of someone who sits around and drinks beer a lot, but even so, he moves with considerable grace and agility.

Despite his appearance, Pop is trained in several martial arts, and is competent in the use of a wide variety of weapons. He also is certified to install cybernetic devices of all sorts, knowing just enough neurobiology and medicine to be an efficient field medic.

Despite his business of dealing technology, Pop has a secret mistrust of computers and is a cyber-virgin through and through. Pop keeps his antipathy toward cybernetics to himself since part of his business is to promote the use of computer-aided enhancements as well as weaponry and drugs.

Pop is the leader of Scrambletown's council and takes his role very seriously. It was he, along with some netrunning help, who discovered the ConFed's plan to hire mercenaries. Pop is also well-known outside Scrambletown.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

The mercenaries in question belong to the covert organization called the Linkers (see sidebar, p. 57). There should be as many Linkers involved as PCs. Four specific Linkers are provided (see *Overdrive*, p. 79). Using these as templates, additional Linkers can be created to balance against party strength.

What the agents don't realize is that the Linkers are on board the very same shuttle. Two of them are disguised as a young couple on vacation, possibly their honeymoon. These two laugh a lot and seem wholly harmless. The other two look like harried executive types – a man and a woman – business partners perhaps, who barely made the flight because their last board meeting ran too long. They sit across the aisle from the young couple.

The GM should not draw attention to them, and they will not do anything that would seem overly suspicious.

The Big Picture: GM's Information

Pop told the PCs the truth. The ConFed is a private city for wealthy isolationists – many of whom are very old, kept alive only by advanced technology. It started about ten years before the adventure as an immortality cult. An enterprising old man by the name of Garth Trimble created a business which sold what he called extra-life. Trimble's idea was that money could buy immortality, and he sold that idea to a large number of the extremely wealthy. To achieve this immortality, paying customers are placed on life-support and jacked into a dreamscape of their choosing.

The ConFed takes care of the aging body's physical needs while the computers create a pleasurable virtual reality. As the bodies decay, artificial organs replace their organic counterparts. People don't even have to be taken out of the simulation for surgery.

The ConFed became very popular. It became a fad even among certain younger crowds who had the funds to waste on perpetual interfacing – an amusement park for the mind. Soon, Trimble found himself with far more clients than he had originally anticipated. He bought more and more property in Jericho City and converted buildings to fulfill the demand until the ConFed occupied more than a fourth of the crater.

During this time, the inhabitants of Jericho City profited from the ConFed's success; the city needed maintenance, parts and security, and the ConFed paid well. Money trickled down to everyone. That is, until Trimble became afraid that Scrambletown's middle class would get too wealthy and make a move on his business property. Wanting to protect his investments, Trimble walled off the ConFed from the rest of the city and placed a huge arsenal of autodefenses on the wall. He started hiring his security and maintenance employees from out of town.

After the walls went up, Scrambletown's populace got a little anxious about what was happening inside the ConFed. With the population growing and no place for expansion, tensions rose against Trimble and his business. The overall standard of living in Scrambletown plummeted because most of the upper class moved away from Jericho City or bought

their way across the wall. Since the citizens could do nothing to legally evict the ConFed from the crater, civil unrest ensued.

Renegade netridders tried to crack their way into the corporation's internal system, hoping to introduce viruses and crash the simulation generators. After a few deckers flatlined, it became widely known that Black Ice surrounded the ConFed's area of the net. In an attempt to prevent further trouble, Trimble leaked the information that the simulation generators were on an isolated network with no inbound lines. Only the basic data processing – personnel, financing, etc. – was setup for external access. Trimble apologized for the “unfortunate deaths of certain misfit youths,” but stressed that the ConFed's security would not be compromised.

Trimble then began forcing people to sell their property. For the most part, he succeeded until Pop Mahoney (then simply Conrad Mahoney) became head of the City Council. Pop rallied the middle class against the ConFed and found a buried statute which set a ceiling on the total amount of Jericho City property which could be owned by any individual or corporation. Trimble and the ConFed were already way over the limit.

Pop threatened legal action if the ConFed didn't stop its expansion. Scrambletown's funds were by no means exhausted, and ConFed didn't want to enter an expensive, drawn-out legal battle. It ostensibly agreed, while Trimble set about looking for other means of expansion.

Then Pop recruited the help of Frankie (see sidebar, p. 73), a businesswoman and ex-Linker who was popular with the city's underground and poor, to try to organize the Ruins. If Scrambletown wasn't going to be able to expand in the direction of the ConFed, they had to have some place else to go. Frankie was respected in the Ruins and had been used by some of the gangs to moderate disputes. Like most gangs, the homeboys in the Ruins fight first, talk policy later. When two evenly matched gangs had a dispute, and neither side could win without significant loss of life (and therefore power), Frankie would be called in. She had a knack for straight talk and fairness, and the gangs usually accepted her judgment.

So with Frankie's help, Pop tried to get the gangs to accept some sort of unified rule. It was during this time that Pop came into contact with Blackie and the Boyz – Dumdum and Backbone (see sidebars, pp. 65-68). Blackie was the first gang leader to realize the potential that such an arrangement offered.

However, the other gang leaders didn't see it the same way, and even though both Frankie and Blackie pleaded the case, the gangs just assumed that the inhabitants of Scrambletown were trying to move in on their territory. The gangs created their own wall out of demolished buildings, burned-out cars, scrap metal and industrial trash (see map, p. 59). The Barricade became a nearly impassable barrier, with each gang responsible for looking after a length of it. Behind the Barricade, the Ruins became anarchy.

Now Pop and the rest of Scrambletown are squeezed between the wealthy schemers and the paranoid street gangs.

The ConFed's executive board had no desire to wage an actual war. Still, there was a way that the inhabitants of Scrambletown could be scared into leaving the crater.

To accomplish this, the ConFed contacted the mercenary organization,



Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy and Survival

The sign above the shatterproof glass doors is simple, black lettering painted on a white background, though if you look closely you can see the small black shape of a micro-video camera. Scanners will detect anyone entering with a weapon. The guard just inside will confiscate the weapon unless the customer is bringing it in for repairs or service. In that case, the guard will conduct a body search for ammunition. Once all weapons or ammunition have been set aside, customers are allowed to enter. Of course, certain regulars like Blackie and Frankie can come and go as they please, regardless of weaponry.

The PCs are also a special case. Chizmatron has forwarded an electronic copy of the contracts to Pop with retinal ID and photos. Pop has instructed the guard to give the PCs directions to find Pop at the switchboard.

Inside Pop Mahoney's store are rows and rows of steel shelves. Pop stocks both drugs and survival equipment, from grenade launchers to cyberdecks to the latest in IQ enhancers. The GM can include any and every black market or legal cyberpunk-related product that exists. Much of it will be beyond the PCs' price range, of course.

Pop's has an operating room in the basement for surgical implants. Pop does the surgery himself. Of course there isn't enough time just now for any hardware implanting.

The switchboard is set in a large area near the back wall. The three net-interfaces sitting next to a flat wall screen all look like they were just installed. The shelves and cases have been pushed to the side in order to get this information exchange center set up.

Two young women are jacked into the net-decks along with a kid who looks no more than 13. Pop stands behind them, wearing generic gray monocrys and a headset. He is alternately speaking into the mike, then to a runner. His fingers are flying across the big screen; he's coordinating the fire fighting and trying to track the perpetrators. The PCs catch fragments of the five or six vidphone conversations he's having at the same time. He's coordinating the defenses of Scrambletown.

When the PCs arrive, Pop stops whatever he's doing and gives them his full attention.

C.H.A.I.N.

The acronym stands for Central Hyrokurchek Artificial Intelligence Network. Ten years ago, Dr. Lee Hyrokurchek reached a major breakthrough in communications. Dr. Hyrokurchek found some investors and created his own electronics company

The company, Hyrokurchek International Group (HIG), is now a primary contributor to the cybernetic industry. It is rumored that HIG is progressing in leaps and bounds in the area of virtual reality.

The communication breakthrough made by Dr. Hyrokurchek is being applied to a device called the Link. The process has taken the miniaturization of electronics across another threshold on the way to the sub-atomic. The Link performs as a cyberdeck, microcomputer and a long- and short-range communicator implanted into a human as part of a set-up that includes bionic eyes and ears. The short-range Link allows a person to locate and communicate subvocally with other Link-fitted individuals within a 10-mile radius. The long-range Link (where the advance really came) gives a person direct satellite access from anywhere on the Earth's surface or in orbit, allowing the user to access the global net at will, without the use of extra hardware or even a phone line. This advance has made possible a new breed of human, the Linker (see *Linkers*, p. 57).

Every Linker is in constant contact with all other Linkers in his immediate area. Each of them also has the capability to download up to five skills from the central computer. HIG maintains a small standing army, of sorts, composed of these Linkers, which they hire out as expensive, but successful, mercenaries. They are highly-trained military personnel who are able to access and download virtually any information available through CHAIN.

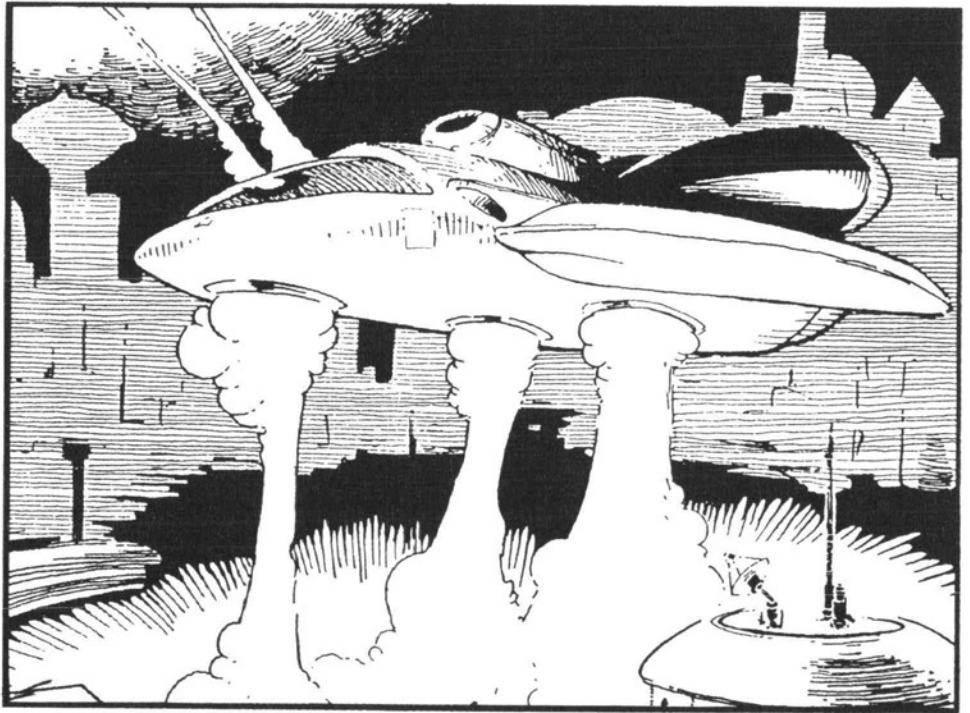
CHAIN is supported by four satellites owned and operated by HIG. The degree of accessibility and the speed at which all systems are functioning is astounding. It should be treated as an advanced (TL8, Complexity 8), restricted net with access to all public nets, and many restricted ones. However, its datalinks are well-disguised, buried under subcorporations and false fronts (see *Netrunning vs. CHAIN*, p. 87).

CHAIN (see sidebar), and hired the services of two to six Linkers (depending on the size of the party). These Linkers have one objective – cripple Scrambletown by destroying its ability to sustain its population. The Con-Fed will just sit back and watch as the gangs and the citizens fight each other for survival.

The Linkers will first try to destroy the Scrambletown shuttleport (see *Shuttleport*, below). Their other objectives will be to contaminate the various food processing facilities (see map, p. 59), destroy the hospital, and incite gang violence in the Ruins (see *Linkers' Agenda* sidebar, p. 60). Their final goal is to cut Scrambletown's power by shutting down the fusion reactor.

Trimble's experts predict that if the Linkers are successful in causing a blackout, the aftermath fighting in Scrambletown would last about a week. By then, most of the city's population would either be dead or have fled the city.

The Linkers' agenda is somewhat flexible, but the GM should avoid lengthening it significantly for the players' sake. It is better to keep the pace fast and attempt to motivate the PCs in other ways. Combat (or the threat of it) is always an easy way to get the party moving, and there are plenty of opportunities in Jericho City for motivational encounters.



Shuttleport

Approaching Scrambletown from the sky, the PCs see desert and desolation for miles around. No roads. No civilization. Nothing. The bleak gray landscape gives way to an oasis of trees and buildings, set deep within a meteor crater up ahead. The crater is roughly circular and very deep, with jagged-cliffs all around. The meteor strike that formed the crater occurred about 30 years ago and wiped out most of the city of Hardin, Montana. The resulting crater developed a microclimate that was wetter and warmer than the surrounding countryside. The few hundred surviving Hardinites peti-

tioned the government for emergency aid, and the feds funneled enough money in to allow them to build a smaller town *inside* the crater. After 10 years the city had grown to fill the 15-mile-wide crater, and now it nearly matches its former population.

From above, Jericho City's economic stratification is evident. The ConFed is a tightly-walled area to the south, filled with shiny, plastiglass sky-rises. The Ruins are a huge, blackened-and-burned mess of old brick structures to the north. Scrambletown is the comparatively narrow strip sandwiched between them. That narrow strip has a shuttleport, to which the party is headed. There is another, smaller, shuttleport in the ConFed (see map, p. 59).

The recruits' shuttle lands on one of the port's four pads. Upon disembarking, the operatives will be handed their luggage (if any). They should exit through the main doors, and find Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy and Survival.

However, the agents may want to look for other information before leaving the shuttleport. In this case, the adventure might get off to a bad start, because immediately upon landing, the Linkers begin planting explosives to blow the shuttleport off the map. Within five minutes, the 13 bombs start going off. Within ten minutes, the shuttleport is a smoking ruin, and the Linkers are approaching their next target – the food processor.

If the visitors tarry at the shuttleport, they will feel a massive explosion as the control tower blows. For the next two minutes, a different portion of the facility explodes every 30 seconds (the rest rooms, the restaurant, the repair hanger, etc.).

Roll 3d every time a bomb goes off (after the control tower) while the PCs remain in the shuttleport. Subtract 1 from each successive roll (for example, the second roll for an explosion is 3d-1, the third is 3d-2, etc.). A 5 or less means all party members take 3d crushing damage from an explosion. No active defenses are allowed, but a successful Acrobatics roll will reduce the possible damage by 1d.

Hopefully, however, the recruits are well on their way to Pop



Linkers

The Linkers are the definitive mercenaries. There are no better to be had, but they are very expensive. The reputation of CHAIN calls for efficiency and dependability. Jobs are carried out as quickly and quietly as possible. Outside of top government officials, criminal kingpins, and political leaders, the existence of Linkers is not common knowledge.

The basic Linker cyberware set-up includes bionic ears and eyes, a microprocessor with enough RAM to hold the contents of 5 [1-point] skips, a Complexity 3 cyberdeck, with its Speed Index raised to 4 (bringing its Phase Length down to 1,000 milliseconds), and finally, the Hyrokurchek device which allows both short-range subvocal communication and signal transmission within 10 miles and long-range satellite hookup to the central computer (for downloading and information gathering).

The Linkers use the Link for several purposes. First, they download whatever skills from CHAIN they feel are needed in the near future. All skills for TL8 are available. It takes one uninterrupted minute per skill to download; skills remain in RAM until overwritten or power is cut.

Second, they use the short-range communicator to transmit location signals to each other; this is involuntary. The effect of this is that all Linkers within 10 miles know the distance and direction of every other Linker in the same area. They also use the short-range communicator to give subvocal commands and information to each other as needed. Linkers rarely speak.

Third, they can – at will – switch to another local Linker's ears and eyes, receiving the signals in addition to their own senses. The visual input is set up as a "split screen" display, with the Linker's own display on the right, and the visual data he's monitoring on the left. The aural input can either be heard on top of the local sounds, or the local sounds can be tuned out, at the Linker's discretion. Switching to another Linker's sensory data takes one second of concentration and the connection is maintained until broken by the receiver.

Finally, Linkers use the long-range communicator to access the global net, hacking into any computer system that has incoming lines. All Linkers are skilled cyberdeck operators and computer hackers.

Although linkers develop an uncanny ability to sense and predict their team member's actions, they *cannot* read minds. The Link's advantages are very specific; there is no access to another Linker's thoughts.

Continued on next page . . .

Linkers (Continued)

As a safety precaution, HIG installed a cortex bomb in every Linker. Any attempt to remove or adjust the hardware causes the bomb to go off, killing the Linker instantly. HIG's unofficial motto is "Once linked, linked for life." Linkers who try to leave HIG, like Frankie, are disconnected from the satellite link and marked for termination. Frankie was lucky; she went into hiding and proved too much trouble for HIG to spend a lot of money searching for.

Depending on the job, variable numbers of Linkers may be assigned. Should additional Linkers need to be created due to the number of PCs involved in the scenario, the following guide is provided to give a minimum listing of "basic" Linker characteristics.

Generic Linker

Male or female, ages 17-30, 5' 6"-6' 3", 130-210 lbs.

ST 12+, DX 13+, IQ 13+, HT 14+

Standard armor is combat infantry dress (PD 4, DR 40).

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Ambidexterity and Patron (HIG). Add any two of the following: Absolute Direction, Absolute Timing, Alertness, Danger Sense, Eidetic Memory, High Pain Threshold, Lightning Calculator, Mathematical Ability.

Disadvantages: Duty (HIG). Add any of the following: No Sense of Humor, Overconfidence, Sense of Duty (HIG), Code of Honor (Mercenary's).

Skills: Acting-IQ, Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-IQ+1, Computer Operation/TL8-IQ, Computer Hacking-IQ-1, Cyberdeck Operation-IQ, Guns (Pistol)-DX, Guns (Rifle)-DX, Stealth-DX, Shadowing-IQ. Add at least 10 other natural skills and 5 additional skills in RAM. Treat as [1-point] Skips or Flips (see p. CY40). Download time is 1 minute per skill.

Cyberwear: Basic Link setup: bionic eyes, bionic ears, Hyrokurhek device, cortex bomb. Individual Linkers may enhance their bionics with Acute Vision or Hearing, Infravision, etc.

Equipment: Combat Infantry Dress, weapons by individual choice. May be limited by mission parameters.

Only people who meet HIG's high physical and mental standards are considered for training as Linkers. The process is strenuous and many fall by the wayside before attaining Linker status. Other than the computer and communication hardware implanted in each individual Linker, cybernetics are discouraged. Few Linkers will have bionic limbs.

Mahoney's Pharmacy and Survival by the time the first bomb goes off. They will feel the explosions, hear distant shouts and sirens and Pop will let them know what happened, unless somebody on the street tells them first. The Linkers did their job well; the Shuttleport is a total loss.



Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy and Survival

The route to Pop Mahoney's takes the group directly down Beggar's Street, where they will get their first glimpse of the no-man's-land separating Scrambletown from the ConFed.

No-man's-land is a blasted waste, extending approximately 100 yards from the stone wall on the Scrambletown side, and ending at the 15-foot, steel wall on the ConFed side. A Vision roll at +2 shows anyone the automated weaponry on top of the ConFed's walls, constantly scanning the stretch of dead ground. Further examination shows the remains of a few human bodies out in the zone . . . mute testimony that people don't venture into the no-man's-land, even to retrieve their dead.

Continuing, the PCs turn off Beggar's Street, taking Farm's Road, and walk two blocks. Here they will find Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy and Survival on the corner (see sidebar, p. 55).

The guard, recognizing the operatives from the description given by Chizmatron, lets them pass. They enter a scene of confusion. People are manning video switchboards and barking orders. Replies come over the comm-lines in loud, excited voices. (This is obviously a command center of sorts, and fairly efficiently run.) The switchboard operators are relaying their messages to an older man who the characters recognize from their briefings as Pop Mahoney (see sidebar, p. 54).

Pop is busy taking in information and giving orders, but as soon as he sees the PCs, he tells a young black man, Blackie (see sidebar, p. 64), to take over for him, and motions the recruits into a back office.

When they get into the back office, Pop sits down behind a large desk littered with papers, seeming out of place in the high-tech surroundings. Without preamble, Pop starts in, telling the party that things have already started. The mercenary group has obviously arrived and attacked the shuttleport. While he is talking, he is buzzed on the vidphone, the only sophisticated piece of hardware in the entire office.

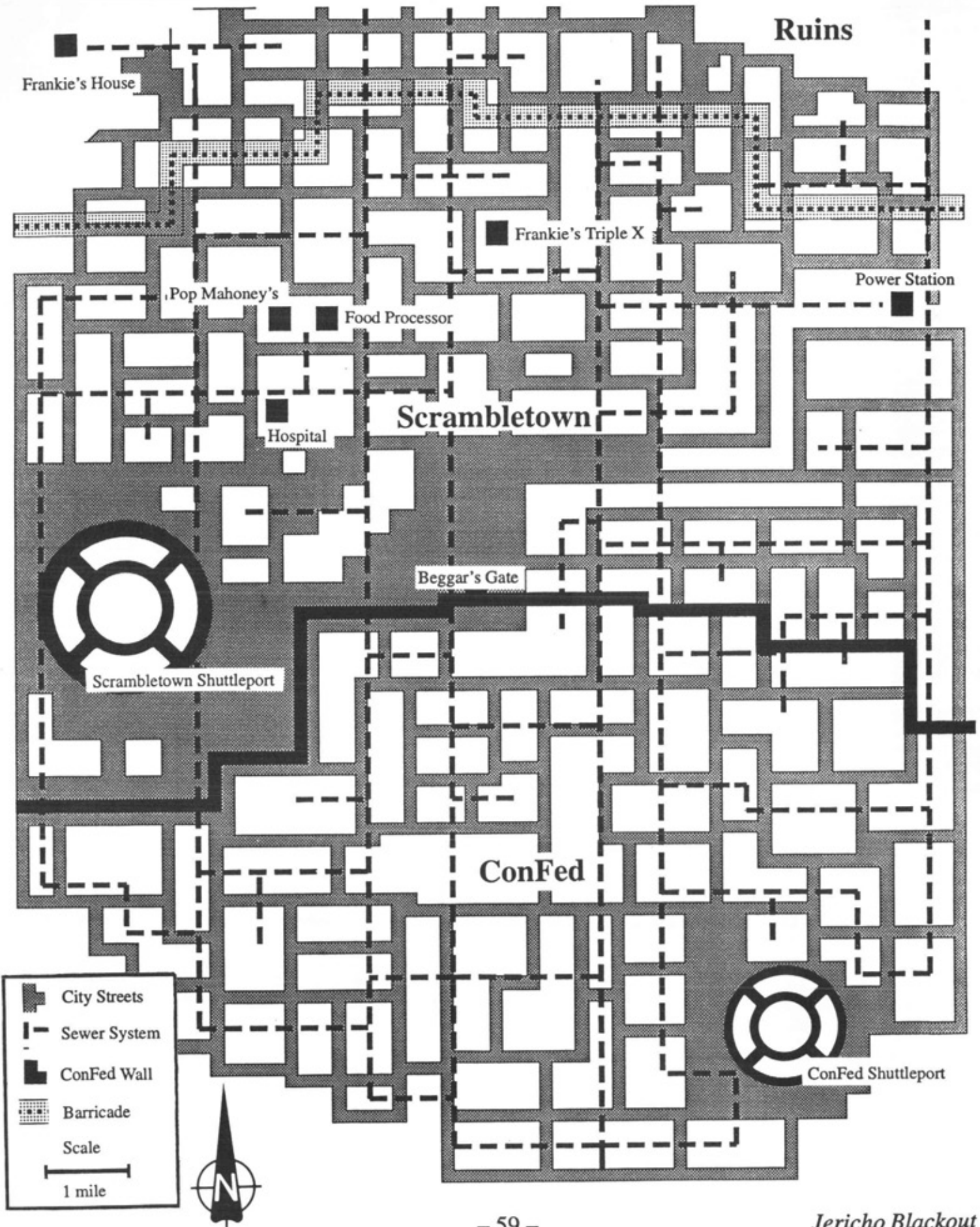
Pop takes the call in front of the PCs, and he kicks in the noise dampers, making it difficult to hear the conversation. They can still see who he's talking with, though.

The caller is a thin woman, with short-cropped, red hair, pale skin, and deep, chromed eyes, noticeably bionic. Though emaciated, she remains beautiful. Pop begins to look sick as he hears what the woman is saying.

If the characters have some way to get around the sound dampers (a Hearing roll at -4 or Lip Reading would do the trick), they can pick up the message; the conversation goes something like this:

Pop: Frankie, what is it?

Jericho City



Ruins

Frankie's House

Frankie's Triple X

Pop Mahoney's

Food Processor

Power Station

Hospital

Scrambletown

Beggar's Gate

Scrambletown Shuttleport

ConFed

ConFed Shuttleport

- City Streets
- Sewer System
- ConFed Wall
- Barricade

Scale
1 mile





Linkers' Agenda

The Linkers' objectives are to destroy the shuttleport, the food processor, the hospital and the power station. Their agenda is only loosely determined when they begin; they mold it as they proceed. However, the GM should know the order in which the Linkers will take out their targets and what new targets are acquired. Unless the PCs interfere, the Linkers will follow the timeline below:

1:00 pm	Arrive at Scrambletown shuttleport.
1:10	Destroy shuttleport.
3:00	Contaminate food processor.
4:00	Destroy hospital.
5:30	Destroy Pop Mahoney's.
6:00	Kill Wyntar Kim, leader of China Snow.
7:00	Kill Frankie.
8:30	Shut down power station.
10:00	Leave Jericho City via ConFed shuttleport.

After Pop Mahoney's is destroyed, the Linkers will do all their traveling through the sewers. They will make a deal with Mule, the Mandrake leader, trading a pack of Dog Boys' bodies for free passage.

Continued on next page . . .

Frankie: (looking tense) Pop, they're here.

Pop: I know, I know. They already took out the –

Frankie: (breaking in) You're not listening! I said they're here. It's worse than we could have imagined. There's four of them.

Pop: (looking ill) Linkers?

Frankie: Yeah. I saw them blow the shuttleport, and if I can see them, then they can find me. I've got to get out of here. If they catch me, they'll kill me. Can you spare Blackie and the Boyz to back up my exit?

Pop: They're on the way. (Glancing up at the PCs) Listen, the cavalry has just arrived –

Frankie: (interrupting again) The mercs? Tell them to pack it up. They'll be worthless.

Pop: They're the only chance we've got. Listen, tell Blackie where you're going. As soon as I've finished with the briefing here, I'll send the new arrivals out to you for a full briefing.

Frankie hesitates for a moment, then nods. (Screen goes black).

Pop disconnects and punches the intercom for the outer office. When Blackie answers, Pop tells him, "Get your boys and hightail it to the Triple X." They are to cover Frankie's retreat.

Then Pop turns to the characters, and it is obvious that he is very shaken. He tells them he now knows that the mercenary organization which took the ConFed's offer is a group known as the Linkers. Little is known about this organization, except that they are very expensive and

have a very high success rate. However, Pop tells them, an information source is available, if they can get to it soon enough . . . an ex-Linker!

He tells them what he knows about Frankie (see sidebar, p. 73), the proprietor of Frankie's Triple X – a local establishment where any pleasure can be had, for a price. He basically gives them a brief bio and explains her role as a gang mediator (see *The Big Picture*, p. 54).

Pop instructs the mercs to outfit themselves as they see fit, showing them what his store has to offer (everything listed on pp. CY43-59, except for vehicles and exoskeletons). He tells them that everything is discounted 25% for cash purchases, or they can take credit against the fee which they are to be paid if they succeed, but these purchases are at list price.

Cyberware is not available (except plug-ins). The basement is outfitted for surgeries of even the most delicate nature, but there is no time for the PCs to go under the knife.

Pop makes them extremely aware of how tight the schedule is. Obviously, the Linkers aren't wasting any time, and the party should be in a similar hurry. He suggests heading first for the Triple X. There they can make contact with Blackie, who should be able to take them to wherever Frankie has gone into hiding.

The Triple X

Pop gives the PCs directions to Frankie's Triple X (see map, p. 59). Most people in Scrambletown walk from place to place (see *Transportation in Jericho City* sidebar, p. 51), but if they wish, the operatives can hire a "taxi" (nothing more than an electric golf cart painted yellow). The Triple X is six blocks away.

On The Street

As they approach the Triple X, the agents see a lot of people in the street: punks, street scum, prostitutes of every description. Normally there are cops on the scene, not to arrest anyone, just to keep the potential violence down to a minimum. Today, however, the visitors don't see any; they've all been called to defend the city's utilities – the power station, the food plants, etc.

Provided the PCs avoid the many advances from the local prostitutes, and they follow Pop's directions correctly, they will eventually come to a two-story concrete structure that takes up most of a square block. There are metal fire stairs on both sides, with various exits leading to those stairs. The major distinction between the Triple X and other buildings in this section (other than its size) is the decoration. The entire surface is painted with vivid murals depicting various lewd fantasies. Blue and red neon lighting are stretched around the top of the building, and there is a huge marquee over the double doors that reads "Frankie's XXX" in strobing white lights.

Meet the Doorman

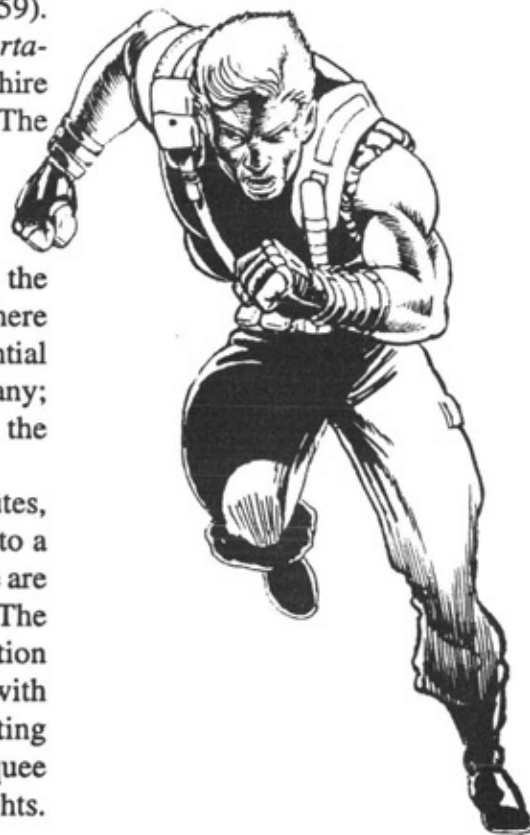
Upon entering, the PCs are met by a tall man with chiseled features, blond hair and piercing blue eyes. He wears an "XXX" t-shirt and a name badge which reads "Sven" (see sidebar, p. 62). Sven greets them and asks them to pay the \$5 cover charge and requests that they check all weaponry.

Linkers' Agenda (Continued)

Agenda Modifications

If the PCs are running far behind and have hit unforeseen snags in the adventure, the GM can modify their agenda. Adding an additional food processor or water treatment plant that must be destroyed will eat up some more of the Linkers' time, allowing the PCs to get to Frankie's or the power station on time.

Or if the GM decides that the PCs need more time to roleplay, or to explore the various parts of Jericho City, the timeline can easily be doubled or even tripled. Simply assume that the Linkers run into more trouble than they expected from rebellious citizens or gangs.





Sven

Age 29, 6' 6", 235 lbs., pale complexion, blond hair, light blue eyes.
ST 16, DX 10, IQ 13, HT 14.
Speed 6, Move 6.
Dodge 6.
No armor, no encumbrance.

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The agents will have to give over their armament if they want to enter. Sven scans them with an X-ray scanner (see p. CY54). Then he catalogs and tags their weapons with an adhesive barcode and gives the owners a voucher chip. Anyone holding non-removable cyber-weaponry has to pay an additional insurance deposit of \$100, returnable upon exit (provided no damage was caused). Sven will explain that these rules are for their own safety during their stay.

The only non-removable cybernetic weapons Sven will not allow inside are suicide weapons or post-mortem weapons – for example, an inter-

nal thermite charge triggered by failing respiration or heartbeat. Anyone carrying this type of hardware will be refused entrance.

If the PCs ask Sven about Blackie, he looks at them oddly, maybe suspiciously, and says that the gang leader came in with his boys a little while ago. He suspects he's downstairs at the Pit. Then Sven will go back to watching the front doors.

Smoking, Hard, from Floor to Ceiling

The visitors step into a room that is hard to gauge. The floor is covered with smoke which changes color from the lasers under the plastiglass flooring. A huge, central lighting display bombards the senses, making the actual dimensions of the room hard to figure. Just from the amount of people milling about (150+), it's obvious the place is cavernous.

Through the wall of light and smoke and sound (DisTech, a cross between disco and speed metal), the PCs can see a massive circular bar in the center. Mirrors line the walls, and the ceiling is packed with holographic projectors, and flat wall screens display dreamvision – a special effects montage of nudity and ultra-violence.

The bar serves almost anything. If it exists, the Triple X probably has it (see pp. CY57-59 for descriptions of drugs). A custom aerosol version of the drug Sin is constantly pumped into the air (see p. CY59). The difference is that the dangerous side-effects are absent, but it produces a slight hangover. For every half-hour spent in the club, the visitor will have a bad headache and be at -1 to DX and IQ, starting four hours after he leaves, up to a maximum -4 penalty. For this reason, the GM should keep careful track of how long the adventurers stay in the Triple X. Because of the drug, the agents will be constantly harassed by carousing clubgoers wanting to dance, drink, get high, etc.

Entertainment at the Triple X is extensive. To one side of the bar is a stripping stage. In the corner opposite the stage is a more traditional dance floor which at any given time will be packed with locals in various stages of dancing frenzy. In another corner, are a number of cybergames designed to test one's netrunning skills as well as more-traditional vid games with virtual reality interfaces.

Spilling Blood on a Shifting Floor

Downstairs is The Pit. The lighting is low; the air is heavy and wet, like walking into a sauna. Lots of hot, sweaty bodies are crammed around a narrow, bright hole in the floor, leaning against the ropes to get a glimpse of what's going on below.

A Vision-2 roll allows the visitors to notice Blackie in the crowd. Otherwise, they won't see him until he introduces himself at the end of the current match. If the PCs see Blackie and approach him during the fight, he motions for them to wait, making room for them to watch.

The Pit is a circular room about 15 yards in diameter. The floor is covered with fog that is shifting in odd directions. The fog thins in certain places, and the watchers can see conveyor belts and spinning sections of floor underneath.

Within the Pit, two fighters are circling each other, both stripped to the waist, trying to keep their balance on the moving floor. One of them is a

Sven (Continued)

Advantages: Toughness (DR 1), Common Sense, Intuition, Peripheral Vision.

Disadvantages: Greed, Eunuch, Sense of Duty (to Frankie), Duty (Triple X).

Quirk: Mistrusts cyborgs.

Skills: Accounting-12, Brawling-15, Carousing-14, Chemistry-14, Electronics-12, First Aid-13, Guns (Pistol)-12, Judo-12, Streetwise-13.

Equipment: Tangler; Laser pistol.

Sven is Frankie's right hand man and the night manager at the Triple X. Sven is fiercely loyal to Frankie and the business. If business is good, money is good. Sven does not tolerate customers who get out of hand and distrusts cyberware.

Sven has always had a bad feeling about Blackie, but has never gained enough evidence to bring it up to Pop or Frankie. He knows that they trust Blackie implicitly, but Sven has always thought there was something "wrong" about the young ramrod.



Blackie

Age 19, 5' 11", 175 lbs., Black skin, black hair, brown eyes.

ST 13, DX 15, IQ 12, HT 11.

Speed 6.5, Move 6.

Dodge 6, Parry 8 (Knife).

Medium monocrys (PD 2, DR 16), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Ally (Dumdum), Ally (Backbone), Charisma +2, Intuition, Luck, Patron (Pop Mahoney).

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Pirate's), Sense of Duty (to his boys).

Skills: Acting-14, Area Knowledge (Scrambletown)-12, Area Knowledge (Ruins)-14, Brawling-15, Detect Lies-15, Fast Talk-15, Guns (Pistol)-16, Guns (Rifle)-16, Holdout-15, Knife-17, Leadership-14, Politics-14, Stealth-16, Streetwise-18, Survival (Urban)-13.

Equipment: Cloth jacket lined with medium monocrys; Gauss needler.

Blackie is the leader of Blackie's Boyz, a small but influential gang in the Ruins. They rely upon him completely for leadership and survival. He puts the welfare of the gang before that of anything else. Blackie carefully arranges everything that they are involved in. Blackie does everything he can to keep his small group alive. The power structure in the Ruins is delicate and subject to change. Blackie keeps careful tabs on everything that happens there as well as in Scrambletown.

Blackie puts on a front of bristling animosity and quick temper, but this is usually a ruse to intimidate his adversaries. Through careful staging, Blackie makes his Boyz seem more powerful and influential than they really are. Conflict is always prearranged and meticulously planned by Blackie to give the Boyz the upper hand.

Blackie's gang is small – only two people – but very loyal. Dumdum and Backbone are young, but with Blackie, they make an exceptional trio that anyone would find quite a match, both in wit and in combat.



Herculean monster – tall and well-muscled, with pale skin and bleached white hair which flows down past his shoulders. He wields a heavy chain with a spiked ball on the end (about the size of a large shot-put). Muscles ripple as the ball swings around his head in a blurred arc. He would be more impressive if he weren't giggling the whole time.

His opponent is a Mandrake (see sidebar p. 52) – a dirty, thin, pale-skinned boy of about 16, with bunched, wiry muscles. He is wearing nothing but cloth shorts and dark spiked boots. The boy has long, stringy hair and long fingernails that a Vision roll will reveal to be sharpened. His teeth are sharpened to points as well. He is making sniffing, grunting noises.

The fight goes back and forth for a while. Blows are traded, and blood spills, and the albino giant never stops laughing. Finally the Mandrake gets fed up and leaps at the hulk, looking to sink his teeth into the big man's throat.

The giant dodges to the right, putting himself on a conveyor belt going backward. He backpedals, swinging his flail. The spiked ball spins around him once, dips down and lands hard against the Mandrake's skull. The emaciated body falls into the fog.

A couple of bouncers pull the body from the moving floor and take it away. Others tend the wounds of the giant, who is now quietly chuckling to himself. Murmurs of disapproval and screams of victory come from the crowd. Money is exchanged as the bets are paid; a considerable amount is passed to Blackie.

Blackie

After the fight, Blackie approaches the operatives. If they have already found him, he turns to them to talk business. Blackie is a stocky young ramrod (gang slang for leader) who takes lip from no one, except maybe Pop. He lives by his own code. Essentially, he and his boys come first.

He fills the PCs in on what has gone down since he left Pop's. Frankie was waiting when he showed up at the Triple X. She looked scared – not like her at all. He and the boys covered her retreat; the sun wasn't down yet



so she went through the sewers to her house in the Ruins. As far as Blackie can tell, no one saw her leave. After that, he came down to place a few bets on Backbone, the laughing boy from the Pit. Blackie introduces Backbone to the PCs, along with Dumdum, his other sidekick (see *Blackie's Boyz* sidebar, p. 68).

Blackie says they've got to hurry up and get to Frankie's house. He'll lead them into the Ruins. If the PCs ask Blackie why he doesn't take them through the sewers, he tells them that he doesn't know the way.

Note to GM: If the party has wasted too-much time in the Triple X (more than three hours), Pop Mahoney's will blow while they are still there (see *Linkers' Agenda* sidebar, p. 60). If that happens, Blackie will leave to go to Pop's, taking Backbone with him. He will instruct Dumdum to lead the mercenaries to the Barricade, get them through, and give them directions to Frankie's house (as well as pass the note to Colmine; see p. 68). Then Dumdum will hightail it back to Pop's. Otherwise, Blackie will lead the PCs to the Ruins.

The Ruins

Blackie and the Boyz lead the PCs to the Ruins. They pass through Scrambletown's short industrial sector, and then a narrow residential

Dumdum

Age 18, 5' 9" 145 lbs., Fair complexion, crew-cut brown hair, green eyes.

ST 8, DX 13, IQ 16, HT 11.

Speed 6, Move 6

Dodge 6.

Light monocrys (PD 2, DR 8), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Alertness, Ally (Blackie), Ally (Backbone), Mathematical Aptitude.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior, Cowardice, Sense of Duty (Blackie's Boyz).

Skills: Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-19, Area Knowledge (Scrambletown)-16, Area Knowledge (Ruins)-16, Beam Weapons-15, Computer Hacking-18, Computer Operation-14, Computer Programming-14, Cyberdeck Operation-18, Electronics Operation-15, Guns (Pistol)-15, Guns (Rifle)-15, Intelligence Analysis-15, Knife-15, Survival (Urban)-14, Traps-16.

Continued on next page . . .



Dumdum (Continued)

Cyberware: Interface Jack.

Equipment: Complexity 5 Cyberdeck, SI 2; laser pistol; scalpel.

Tall and thin, with military-cut brown hair, Dumdum is the genius of the group. He knows computers, hacking, weaponry, and has the general ability to figure out how things work.

Dumdum has been hardwired by Pop for straight plug to the small cyberdeck (complexity 5) which he carries in his backpack most of the time. With it, he manages the finances of the group, and dabbles in investments like stocks and bonds. He's managed to keep a constant flow of credit coming their way, approximately \$3,000 interest per month.

Dumdum fights with a laser pistol at long range, scalpel in close quarters. He was abused as a child by his stepfather and killed the man two years ago with the same scalpel he uses now.

district. Soon they are traveling up a long, cramped street – Dead End Alley – filled with abandoned cars and overflowing trash dumpsters.

The buildings look less and less well-kept as the group approaches the Ruins. At the end of the long street, they can see the Barricade. On Dead End Alley, the Barricade is a 20-foot-high pile of concrete rubble. Re-bar juts from the chunks of old building like rusted snakes. Broken glass and fragments of barbed wire litter the street in front of the wall. In the center of the road, an 8-foot sewer pipe opens up into the Barricade.

As the party comes to within 100 yards of the Barricade, they are met with a hail of gunfire that chews up the ground 20 yards in front of them. Blackie doesn't seem the least bit disturbed by this. He simply stops and waits, signaling for the visitors to do likewise.

If the PCs return fire, Blackie will try to stop it. First he will yell for the shooter to cease fire, and if that fails, he'll attempt to disarm him. If combat continues, Blackie will take cover with Dumdum and Backbone on his heels. He'll shout to the party that combat is the hardest way to make it into the Ruins.

Provided the party remains calm and stops at Blackie's signal, he steps in front and calls for Colmine (see sidebar. p. 72). From inside the stretch of sewer pipe comes a dirty, bedraggled character who the PCs will be able to smell from 20 feet away. He reeks of stale beer and old urine. Colmine carries an Uzi which he aims in the general direction of the party.

Blackie and Colmine speak for a minute. PCs with Acute Hearing or Lip Reading can roll to follow the conversation. The Hearing roll is at no modifiers.



Blackie: I need passage to Frankie's for these cranks.

Colmine: (slurring horrendously) What do they want?

Blackie: (wincing from the smell) Just let them through and we'll make it worth your work.

Colmine: I dunno, Blackie. Things've been real bad lately. Bad rumors comin' down the line. The Snows're gettin' edgy up topside.

Blackie: (pulling a stash of cash out of his pocket) Cut it, Colmine! How much?

Colmine: (looking longingly at the wad of bills) A hundred a head. Two hundred for Dog Boy escort.

Blackie flips through his stash and hands some of it to Colmine. Then he motions for the party and his boys to follow. He and Colmine lead the way into the length of pipe that serves as a gate through the Barricade. The pipe stinks of Colmine and his gang – the Beefeaters. The tube extends for just over 50 feet. It is very dark, illuminated only by the outside light coming in from either end.

When everyone is safely through, the party is surrounded by Colmine's gang – 15 street thugs, all drunk and foul-smelling. They crack stupid jokes constantly and will no doubt direct a few the party's way, just for fun.

Blackie addresses the mercenaries, bidding them farewell – he has to go back and help Pop Mahoney. He then gives them the directions to Frankie's house (refer to the map on p. 59).

"Straight ahead three blocks," he says, pointing west toward the rising edge of the crater. "Then right for two blocks, jag to the right and keep going 'til you can't go no further. Then turn left and start climbing up toward the rim. The house is 'bout halfway up on a rock shelf. Watch out, she'll have the security system up an' cookin'."

Colmine interrupts him, proclaiming that he will radio ahead. As long as the group sticks to the described route, they will have no interference from any of the gangs that make up the Ruins' population.

At this point, unless it has already occurred, the group will hear an explosion and see smoke rising from the direction of Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy and Survival. Blackie and his Boyz will immediately turn and run back through the Barricade, without a further word to the PCs.

If the characters decide to follow, they will find Pop Mahoney's Pharmacy and Survival a smoking ruin. (If the players decide to turn from their course here, they will lose the largest time advantage they have against the Linkers. Pop Mahoney is alive, but badly wounded, and he will try to make the PCs understand just how important it is that they continue on, no matter what happens.)

Dog Boy Escort

The Dog Boys belong to a street gang that uses packs of dogs to do their fighting for them (see *Dog Boys* sidebar, p. 70). As the operatives make their way through the Ruins, they are flanked by Dog Boys. The Dog Boys and their hounds remain 10 feet or more on either side of the party. The dogs are huge and black, weighing between 200 and 300 pounds. They are very strong and agile (ST 12, DX 12, Move 10, 1d-1 biting damage). If one of the characters tries to talk to the Dog Boys, only a high reaction roll (16+) will get any response. For the most part they are quiet and solitary.



Backbone

Age 22, 6' 4", 260 lbs., albino, white hair, red-rimmed blue eyes.

ST 17, DX 15, IQ 7, HT 14

Speed 7.25, Move 7

Dodge 8.

Toughness (PD 0, DR 2), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Ally (Blackie), Ally (Dumdum), Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Immunity to Disease, Toughness (DR 2).

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Pirate's), Illiterate, Odious Personal Habit (laughs constantly), Sense of Duty (Blackie's Boyz), Truthfulness.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Ruins)-10, Area Knowledge (Scrambletown)-8, Brawling-18, Driving (Cars)-15, Piloting (Shuttle)-10, Flail-16, Lockpicking-10, Mechanic (Auto)-11, Scrounging-15, Survival (Urban)-12.

Equipment: Spiked ball on a chain.

Continued on next page...

Backbone (Continued)

The PCs first meet the big, blond giant in the Pit at the Triple X. Backbone took a hit of an experimental drug (called Carnival) four years ago. Something went wrong and the effects never wore off. Because of this he's always in a good mood and he laughs nearly all the time. Even when he's sleeping, he can be heard to chuckle softly.

Backbone is not smart, but he knows rules and follows them to the letter. Honor and loyalty are his strongest character traits. He's amazingly strong and nearly unbeatable in hand-to-hand combat. He doesn't like to use sophisticated weaponry and will pick up an old-style shotgun if he must use a weapon (his default skill is 11). He prefers combat up close, using his ball and chain.

Backbone is a master scrounger and has the uncanny ability to uncover any and everything. Cars are his specialty, and this ability has saved Blackie and company from losing their lives on more than one occasion.

Gangs

There are more than 20 different gangs in the Ruins. Only four are detailed below, but the GM is encouraged to develop others if it becomes necessary for the PCs to stay in the ruins very long.

Blackie's Boyz

Though considered a gang, Blackie's Boyz have no turf. A special arrangement with Pop Mahoney gives them free movement in and out of Scrambletown. They are not allowed on the rooftops, however. Blackie's gang is respected in the Ruins mostly because Blackie is a straight talker and doesn't try to infringe on anyone else's territory. Also, Blackie's connection to Frankie gives him a certain respect in the Ruins. Stats and descriptions of Blackie's Boyz can be found in the sidebars on pp. 64-68.

China Snow

The gang that "owns" the rooftops of the Ruins, China Snow is mostly Asian, precisely coordinated and as highly-trained and tech-heavy as the Ruins' gangs get. They have access to old-style anti-aircraft weaponry as well as gyrocs and needlers. China Snow is responsible for controlling the skies above the Ruins, preventing any sort of reconnaissance aircraft from flying over. Any aircraft that gets within range has a good chance of going down with the auto-targeting missile-fire the gang has under its control. Shuttles coming into Scrambletown have been avoiding Ruins' airspace for years.

Continued on next page . . .

As they travel, the party's movements are being tracked by binoculars and vision goggles from the windows of the high-rises to each side of them. Roll Vision-2 to notice. If the travelers are extra observant (Vision-4), they will recognize that on top of most of the buildings, the gangs have stationed anti-aircraft lasers and heat-seeking missiles. However, some of this weaponry seems to track the PCs as they move along.

Double-Cross

Most of the trip through the Ruins is uneventful, but as the party makes the last turn (to the west), and see the road start a long switchback up the side of the crater wall, they are ambushed by Colmine and the Beefeaters. Blackie had slipped a note into the cash he gave Colmine. The note read "Frag these chumps once they get near Frankie's."

It turns out that after the shuttleport went up, Blackie got scared. With Dum Dum's help, he made contact with the ConFed right after he covered Frankie's exit from the Triple X. They cut a deal. Blackie knew that if the ConFed could afford to hire Linkers, they weren't going to stop until Scrambletown and the Ruins were decimated. He told them he'd wipe out the hired help if the ConFed would protect him while the inevitable gang wars swept across Scrambletown. Then he'd help them root out the stray homeboys if they promised to give him \$100,000 and a shuttle ticket to the Bahamas.



Blackie figured the Ruins was the best place to stop the mercenaries. Colmine was the easiest ramrod to contact, and the most reliable for this kind of mission; Colmine loved the double-cross.

The ambush is set as follows: as the characters round the corner, 15 gang members open fire, aiming to kill this time. The Beefeaters will be hiding behind vacated cars and burnt out dumpsters; they will attack with everything they've got – Uzis, shotguns and molotov cocktails (see *Beefeaters* sidebar, p. 71).

This is supposed to be a surprise attack. Nevertheless, the Beefeaters are not the most stealthy of warriors and they are mostly drunk (-2 to DX and IQ). Therefore, the characters will probably not be surprised. With a straight Vision roll, they will notice the gang with their weapons drawn just before they start firing. The GM should give the adventurers one second to dive for cover before the shooting starts.

The PCs have several options. They can fight it out, then continue on to Frankie's House (minus Dog Boy escort – they scatter when the first shots are fired). Alternatively, the agents can retreat, trying to skirt the ambush and proceed to Frankie's. If they do this, the Beefeaters will regroup and attack one more time before the party makes it to Frankie's.

he will tell the group is that Blackie gave them a note telling them to attack. They did so for the fun of it and because they got hard cash for it. They won't elaborate because they don't know any more.

Also, if the Beefeaters start losing gang members wholesale, the remaining members will need to make Will rolls at -1 per two members killed to remain (add the -2 penalty for being drunk as well). They've already been paid for this job, and for them it's all a big party. If too many of their friends get killed, they'll cease combat and back off.

If the party makes it another 100 yards up the hill, any remaining Beefeaters will call it quits. After about ¼ mile of switchbacks, the adventurers come to Frankie's house (see *Frankie's Pad*, below).

Tick-Tock, Tick-Tock, Tick-Tock . . .

If the PCs have wasted a lot of time getting to the Ruins – maybe Pop's has already gone up in smoke and Dumdum is guiding the party to the Ruins – they will make it through the Barricade as described above, but the Dog Boy escort will be absent.

Tension in the Ruins is high because the Linkers have been making key assassinations (see *Linkers' Agenda* sidebar, p. 60), and blaming rival gangs. Fighting has broken out in several sections of the Ruins. Distant gunfire can be easily heard.

Because of the general nervousness, there is a higher chance that the party will be attacked by China Snow or the Dog Boys before they get to their shootout with Colmine and company. (Roll 3 dice. On a 3 or 4, China Snow attacks – see sidebar, p. 68. On a 5 or 6 Dog Boys are on the prowl.)

When combat occurs, either with Colmine or before, the destruction will travel like a wave – a ripple of violence spreading from each spark. If China Snow gets into the action, massive devastation will ensue as the anti-aircraft weaponry is used against structures belonging to rival gangs. Bodies litter the streets, and smoke fills the air.

Frankie's Pad

If the PCs have done things by the numbers, haven't wasted time, and have generally kept their noses clean, they will be well in time to receive the crucial information about the Linkers from Frankie.

However, it is seldom that a group of PCs sticks to the schedule. Glance at the *Linkers' Agenda* and make a decision as to whether the party will reach Frankie's house ahead, behind or at the same time as the Linkers. It may be crucial to the outcome.

Sitting Pretty

If the PCs are on time, they arrive at Frankie's house well before the Linkers. The structure is slightly hidden by rock outcroppings that jut from the crater wall. This makes it hard to see from below, in the Ruins; however, it is easy to find from the road.

There is a short path, leading from the road to the house. It passes through a beautiful garden, with sculpted bonsai trees in the front, and fresh grass. If the operatives are observant (Vision-2), they will see automated defenses among the greenery – the best that money can buy.

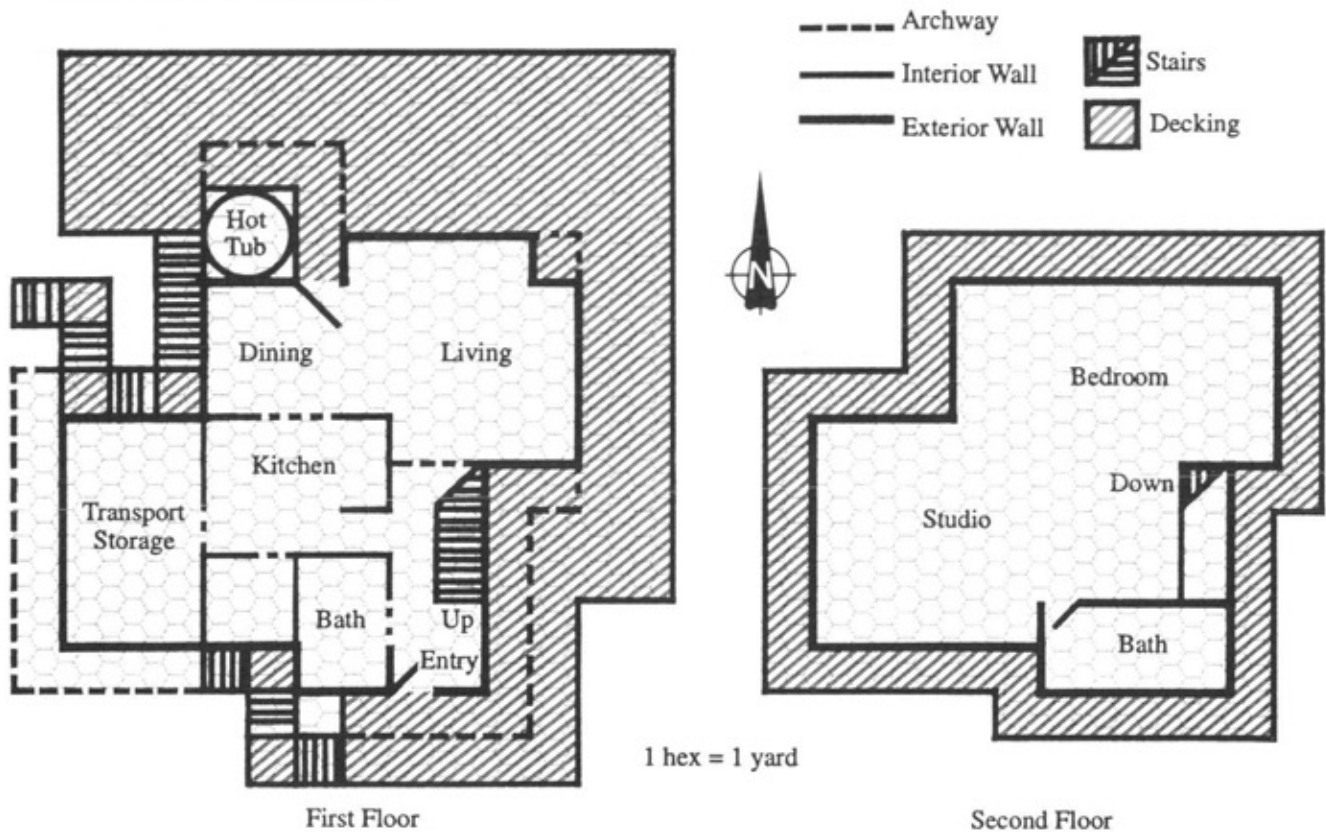


Gangs (Continued)

China Snow is made up of about 45 street fighters who train constantly. Their leader is a woman named Wyntar Kim, and the members of China Snow follow her fanatically. They have an attack-first mentality when it comes to combat, and have managed to maintain control of the prestigious rooftop sector for more than ten years. In fact it is unusual for any member of the Snow to travel groundside. Wyntar has set up an arrangement with the Dog Boys to bring food and supplies up to the rooftops in exchange for free movement rights. Wyntar reveres Frankie and is in part responsible for Frankie's powerful respect among the Ruins' gangs.

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Frankie's House



Gangs (Continued)

Dog Boys

The Dog Boys monitor all the happenings groundside. They have no particular territory and have worked deals with the other gangs to give them the freedom to come and go as they please. Dog Boys are normal humans who use dogs to fight for them.

The dogs are vicious fighters (ST 12, DX 12, Move 10, 1d-1 biting damage). They are completely loyal to their masters. The dogs attack opponents in packs, biting and dragging people down before tearing their flesh to ribbons with their teeth.

No one knows the actual number of Dog Boys, but a good estimate is 70. Dog Boys live in the streets and travel in packs of 15 or 20. Each Dog Boy will have one or two dogs under his control. The gang uses its power to make sure gangs stay on their own turf, and that outsiders don't break any of the various gangs' unspoken rules. A Dog Boy escort is taken as a sign that someone important is in the ruins; the visitors will usually be left alone. Few gangs have the manpower to take on a Dog Boy squad. The PCs will see Dog Boys everywhere they go in the Ruins.

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Still, it might occur to them that despite the state-of-the-art defenses, the inhabitants of the Ruins would never allow this much wealth to be shown openly. However, gangs and ramrods view Frankie as a battle Guru of sorts (see *The Big Picture*, p. 54). It is Frankie who is responsible for the military social structure and firepower in the Ruins below her house. All the gunnery placements were her idea, back when she thought she could unify the gangs. And even now that the dream is gone, she has too many connections. It would be suicide for a ramrod to cross Frankie.

As they proceed up the walk, a voice comes from a hidden speaker and asks them to state their business. If they answer truthfully, they will be told to walk up the gravel path to the front door of the house, where they will be met by Frankie herself (see sidebar, p. 73).

Frankie is the woman the PCs saw talking to Pop Mahoney at the outset of the adventure. If anything, she looks more tired and nervous than she did then. She is obviously distraught, keeping control by sheer force of will.

Frankie leads them into her house (refer to the map above). The first thing she tells them is that by coming to see her, they have signed their own death warrants. Frankie is frantic; she has a lot to say and the less she knows about the mercenaries, the less she can give away. She won't look directly at them or offer them a place to sit down, and she won't be cordial. She will cut them off and blatantly ignore any questions until she has said all she has to say.

Frankie knows that the Linker team is monitoring everything she sees and hears, so she is going to play down the threat that the agents represent. Before the PCs arrived, she went to her computer and, with her eyes closed,

touch-typed the information that she wants them to have. When the recruits get there, she will close her eyes and point to the printout of her story, which is sitting on a small table and covered with a manilla folder. An IQ or Gesture+2 roll will allow someone to deduce her intent.

What Frankie Says

Frankie keeps her eyes closed while she speaks and signals for the PCs not to say anything and to read the printout.

"Listen," she says. "You folks might as well pack up and go home. I can't tell you anything useful about the Linkers, and even if I did, they'd know everything I said. I destroyed every bit of evidence I had that tied me to that ghastly organization. I wanted to cut all my ties.

"Well, it looks like they found me anyway. They are almost here and if you don't leave, they will kill you along with me. Get out while you can. Take the road back into the ruins and disappear. Whatever you do, don't confront the Linkers. You can't beat them."

Frankie waits while the PCs read the printout. She fills the time by talking about how vicious and unbeatable the Linkers are, and how the recruits would be better off driving through the ruins naked in a brand-new Cadillac.

When the agents indicate that they have finished reading the printout, Frankie walks blind along the walls and motions for the PCs to follow. She leads them to the back of her house where there is a manhole cover. She signals for the PCs to enter the sewers and leave.

What Frankie Wrote

As you read this, don't pay any attention to what I'm saying, and please don't say anything or make any noise at all. The mercenary team that is on

Gangs (Continued)

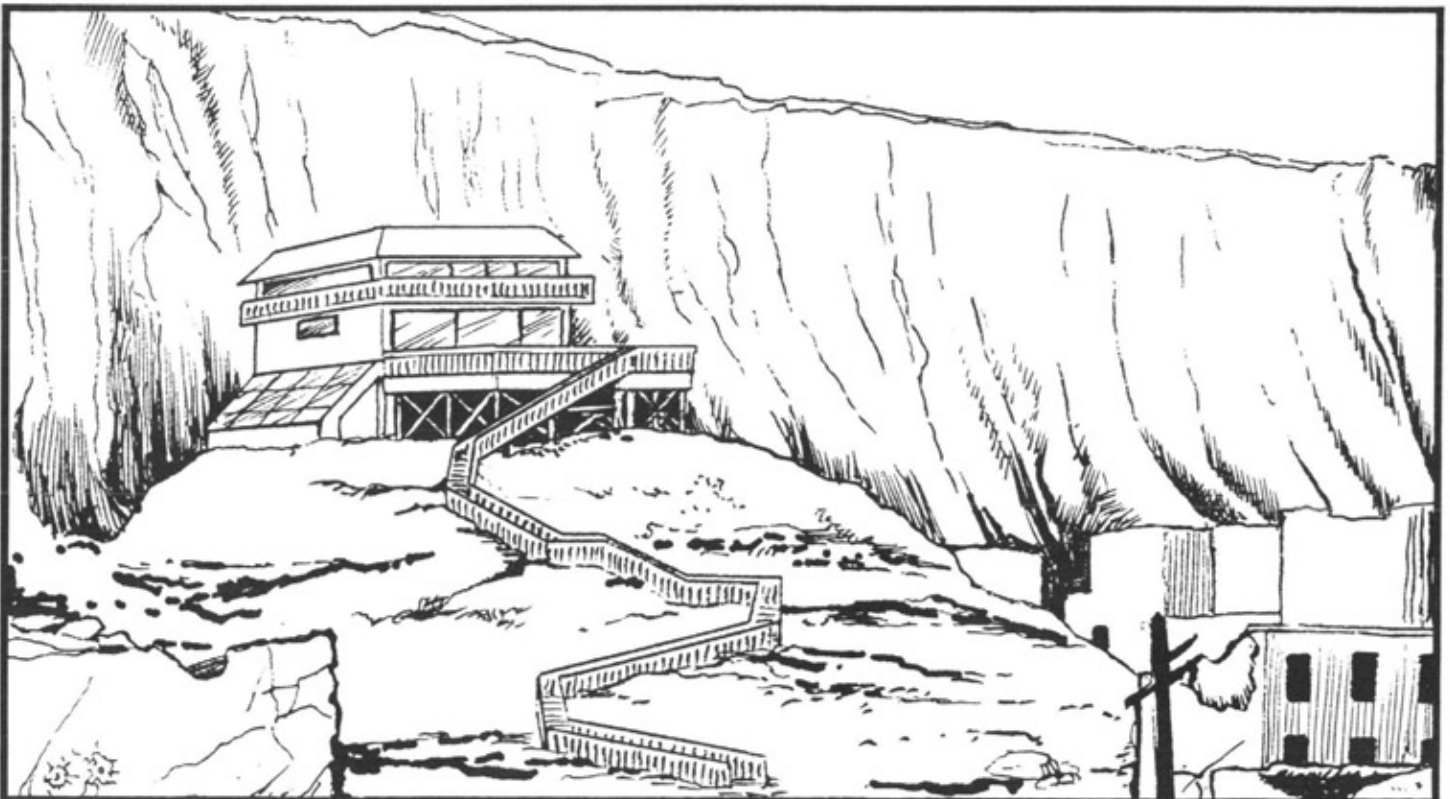
The Beefeaters

Colmine's group consists of about 16 of the ugliest, smelliest, most vile human wannabees ever seen (or smelled). They all have a -2 on reaction rolls, due to appearance and smell. The Beefeaters are not, in general, the most intelligent of groups. Their most distinctive feature is that they are drunk all the time. They constantly search out parties and pay little heed to their own health. Somehow, however, they remain competent enough to avoid being snuffed out by a more-powerful gang.

The Beefeaters' turf is a 3-mile-long strip, running about a mile wide along the Barricade. They control one of the ten entrances to the Ruins, a tall sewer pipe at the end of Dead End Alley.

There are two basic classes of Beefeater; the lower is called scum. Above scum is scum leader, and above both is Colmine. There are three scum leaders, and five scum to a leader. Common weapons for the Beefeaters are molotov cocktails, Uzi 9mms, and concussion grenades when they can steal them. They have tattoos all over and are pierced with ugly, industrial jewelry in the strangest places.

During combat the Beefeaters huddle back to back and lay suppressive machine-gun fire around them in a circle. They're usually too drunk to hit much, but they will keep firing until everything around them is dead. They think very much in two dimensions.



Colmine

Age 17, 5'6", 98 lbs., greasy black hair, black eyes.

ST 10, DX 14, IQ 12, HT 14.

Speed 7. Move 7.

Dodge 7, Parry 7 (Knife).

Leather jacket (PD 2, DR 2), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Charisma +2, Danger Sense.

Disadvantages: Alcoholism, Bully, Cowardice, Skinny.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Ruins)-14, Carousing-14, Escape-12, Fast-Talk-11, Gambling-13, Guns (Machine Gun)-15, Knife-16, Leadership-10, Running-16, Singing-12, Sleight of Hand-12, Survival (urban)-14.

Equipment: Stiletto; Uzi 9mm.

Leader of the Beefeaters, Colmine is a craven coward. He leads the Beefeaters because they are collectively weak. His instinct for self-preservation, if they are not too drunk to take his cue, keeps them alive. Colmine, when outgunned, will make friends any way he can. He'll give his opponents whatever they want, get close, and then give them something sharp between the ribs.

Gang Mentality

Street punks band together for survival in a system that has been around for years. Kill or be killed, that's the mind set; don't trust anybody. Gang is stronger than family. If led by someone competent, they function with purpose and can be very dangerous.

Their primary motivators are revenge and boredom. The rewards are few, and feuds common, but when there is nothing to do, they walk around until they find someone or something to mess with. They take anything that isn't nailed down. If they can pry it up, it wasn't nailed down. If they can't pry it up, they ruin it.

Despite this, there is some honor among these ruffians. They call it "face." Face is gained by doing things that haven't been done, bettering peers. Face is lost by making mistakes.

its way, the Linkers, can see and hear everything that I can – including what I'm saying. They can't read my mind, though. When you finish reading, say, "I guess you're right, Frankie," so I'll know that you're done.

I used to be a Linker. I'm going to tell you as much as I can about CHAIN – the Linker organization. But I must warn you, all of my knowledge is at least five years out of date.

First of all, the Link is a cybernetic device and data pathway that connects all Linkers with each other and with CHAIN – a huge computer and data exchange. Linkers have two advantages over you. One, they can cruise the net without a deck, download knowledge from CHAIN, hack into any online system, etc. And two, they are in constant communication with each other. Their local link gives them the ability to see through each other's eyes, hear with each other's ears and locate each other instantly.

That's how I'm plugged into them. CHAIN cut my satellite uplink, but my local still works. When the netheads landed, I knew right away. They intend to kill me – ex-Linkers aren't supposed to exist.

I'll go down fighting, that's for sure, but I can't stand up to a group that size. (The note tells the PCs how many there are.)

As far as their plans go, they've taken out Pop's store, though they don't know if Pop is dead or alive. They have hit the food plants and the hospital; they plan to hit the power station after they come here.

Without power, the social structure of the entire city will crumble. They've already caused turmoil in the Ruins by killing Wyntar Kim – China Snow's ramrod. And now that it's started, it will escalate until all the gangs are involved, at all levels. Scrambletown may be lost.

Saving the power station is the only way to stop them. If you can keep power to Scrambletown, people might not panic. The gangs will take care of themselves.

The power station is a better place to face the Linkers. It has autodefenses far superior to mine; you can control them from the computer terminals inside.

There is a computer chip in the top drawer of my desk behind me. When you are done, get it and take it with you. The Linkers don't have many weaknesses, but they aren't invincible. They are highly reliant upon the Link; if that can be severed, they will be easier to stop. This chip contains everything I could pull together to help battle these Linkers on the net.

Cutting their connection to CHAIN will require greater hacking skills than I have, or I would have done it by now. There is a computer access in the power station offices, which should even be able to aid in the hacking job. Otherwise, you'll have to make do with your own.

Here's how to get in, break the CHAIN, and get out:

Use the information on the chip to get to HighLine, Inc. My NUI (Network User Identification; see p. CY68) is engraved on the side.

Keep cool, and look around; there's a hidden node, but if you look close, you'll find it.

Watch yourself at the gateway to CHAIN, it'll be busy, but don't get in the way. Get close enough to use the password, but don't stand around or you'll get noticed. One of the codes on the chip should get you inside.

Once in the Communications Hub, crash it. There's a very good Crash program on the chip.

They will be back online with CHAIN inside 15 minutes, and you're not going to get another chance at it. They'll be watching out for you after that, and I don't know for sure whether this stuff will work the first time, much less a second.

Once you've severed their access, get out as fast as possible. After you finish reading this, I'll lead you to a manhole behind the house. There's a map of the sewers here (see the player's map on p. 74). Take the most direct route to the power station, and watch out for Mandrakes.

When the PCs give Frankie the signal that they have finished by saying, "I guess you're right, Frankie," she will turn and walk along the walls to the back exit. Behind the house, the agents can enter the manhole. Frankie will not speak and will go back into the house, so she can't hear them lift the cover.

If the PCs decide to stay and fight, Frankie will protest. If she can't get them to leave, or if they decide to return after going partway into the sewers, play the battle out as presented in *Fashionably Late* below.

Fashionably Late

If the mercs are running slightly late, they will hear the sounds of combat as they approach Frankie's house. This consists mostly of laser fire and APEX rounds (see p. CY44). When the PCs get within 100 yards or so, they can smell smoke. The Linkers have already arrived.

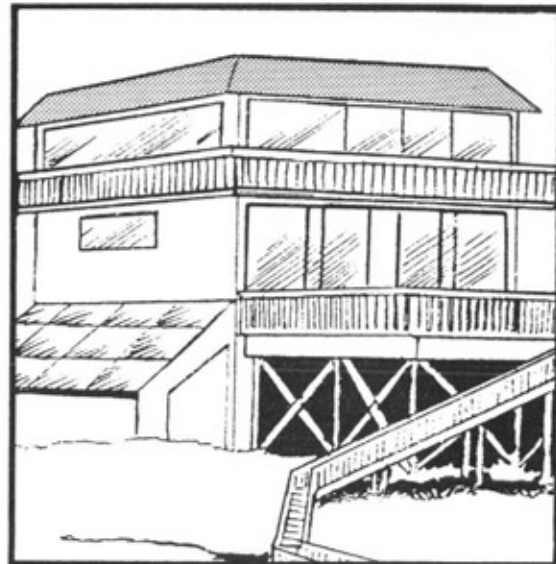
It will take the Linkers only a few minutes to cut through Frankie's defense systems, and only slightly longer to eliminate Frankie herself. So the PCs, provided they decide to get involved, must do so in a hurry.

By the time they round the corner, the Linkers should have just broken through the defenses and will begin engaging Frankie directly. Frankie is no pushover, and she is aided by the fact that she can sense exactly where her opponents are and where they are aiming.

However the same is true for the Linkers with regard to Frankie, and so eventually the sheer weight of numbers will bring her down. But probably not before she has grievously wounded at least one of the attacking party. Roll 1 die. On a 1 or 2, she kills a Linker; a 3 or 4 means she deals a serious wound (2d+2 damage gets past all armor; this may or may not kill one of them), and a 5-6 indicates a slight wound – 1d damage past armor.

If the PCs move quickly, they may be able to turn the tide of the battle. If they manage to bring a lot of firepower to bear, and the Linkers feel the battle turning against them, they will cover one of their number (Jerrod) while he sets 1d+3 explosive charges, and retreat into the Ruins. They will use their Stealth skills to avoid pursuit, fading into the dark alleys of the Ruins. Killing Frankie is important to the Linkers, but not important enough to risk jeopardizing their mission. There will always be time for her later, now that they know she is still alive.

The explosives are set to go off 30 seconds after they are set. If the PCs try to defuse them, they will discover that the fuses have atomic-decay timers, and are very difficult to defuse (Demolition-5). Frankie also knows this, and if she isn't dead, she'll grab the printout and hustle the recruits outside while the place blows.



Frankie

Age 36, 5' 11", 135 lbs., female, short-cropped red hair, chromed, bionic eyes.

ST 14, DX 16, IQ 14, HT 13.

Speed 7.25; Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 12 (Karate).

Heavy monocrys (PD 2, DR 24), light encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Vision +3, Ally (Pop Mahoney), Appearance (Beautiful), Charisma +3, Combat Reflexes, Infravision.

Disadvantages: Cortex Bomb, On the Edge, Secret (ex-Linker).

Quirks: Loves Pop Mahoney; Secretly dreams of being a Linker again.

Skills: Acting-14, Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-15, Area Knowledge (Scrambletown)-15, Area Knowledge (Ruins)-16, Area Knowledge (Sewers)-12, Artist-15, Beam Weapons-17, Computer Hacking-15, Computer Operation/TL8-14, Computer Programming-16, Cyberdeck Operation-16, Demolition-19., Driving (Car)-14, Guns (Pistol)-17, Guns (Rifle)-17, Karate-18, Piloting (Shuttle)-15, Sex Appeal-18, Shadowing-14, Stealth-16, Strategy-18, Streetwise-17, Tactics-16.

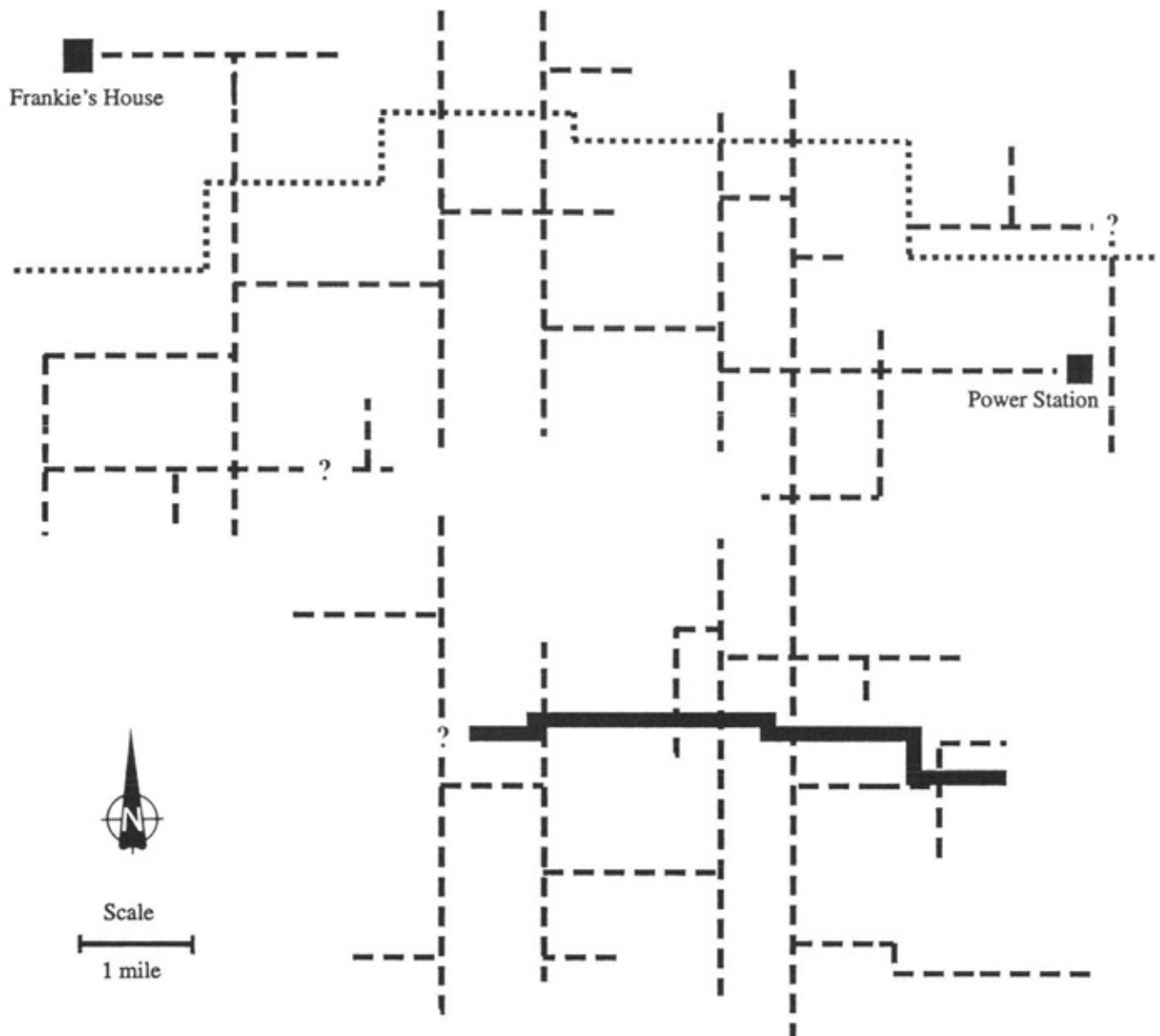
Cyberware: Basic Link setup: bionic eyes, bionic ears, Hyrokurchek device (with long-range Link deactivated), and cortex bomb. Eyes have Acute Vision +3 and Infravision.

Equipment: Military laser rifle; Gyroc rifle.

Frankie is a fallen angel, who has managed to pick up the pieces of her life. When she was a Linker under a different name, she was sent on many missions, and even led a few. Most of them were ethical, even heroic, jobs, and the sense of power the Link gave her was addictive.

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Players' Map of the Sewer System



Frankie (Continued)

One mission, however, was the assassination of the heir to a successful perfume megacorporation. The inheritor was only eight years old. She did the job, but later decided that she couldn't live with the guilt . . . so she went public with the story of the Linkers.

Unfortunately, she had little proof other than her own implants, and she refused to allow them to be examined because of the cortex bomb. HIG disconnected her long-range Link and bought off the media, writing the whole thing off as the deranged rantings of a former employee. A secret army of cybernetic mercenaries, indeed!

Continued on next page . . .

At this point, things happen as stated in the previous section (see *Sitting Pretty*, p. 69), chip included, and the PCs get the knowledge they need to fight the Linkers. After Frankie gives them what they need to know, she will show the party to the manhole cover.

Frankie wishes the PCs luck and thanks them for saving her life, at least for a little while. She tells them that as much as she would like to go with them, she can't. She would be a dead giveaway everywhere they went, because the Linkers always know where she is and what she is doing.

If a PC thinks to give Frankie a two-way radio, she will gladly relate what the Linkers are doing and where they are, as far as she can tell. If this is the case, the GM will have to improvise the location and actions of the Linkers and whether the party beats them to the power station.

Better Late Than Never?

If the adventurers show up *really* late, the house is a smoking ruin. The

once-immaculate lawn is burnt and gouged from laser fire, and the house looks like someone took a rocket launcher to it.

Searching the house, the agents find Frankie's body in the studio upstairs. She is quite dead; the whole upper part of her head is gone. The Linkers physically removed her link, and the cortex bomb did the rest of the damage.

Obviously, the PCs won't get any information from Frankie, but they can search the premises. Frankie has a lot of information on Linkers and CHAIN which she stored on chips *before* the Linkers arrived in Jericho City. If the party conducts a thorough search – taking 30 minutes or more – anyone making a Holdout roll will discover a datachip, up to seven of them (each PC can try as many times as he wants; each successive attempt takes another 30 minutes and is at a cumulative -2).

If the party finds all the chips, it can then piece together the same information that Frankie gave them above, *including* her NUI and the access information for getting into CHAIN. This will take time, however (1d × 10 minutes per chip), and without all the datachips, the information will be incomplete.

Their search of the entire premises (and a successful IQ roll) will also reveal the manhole cover behind the house and the fact that it seems to have been recently opened. If one of the Linkers was wounded, blood traces will be noticeable.

When they've pieced together all the information they can, the PCs will want to head back to Scrambletown. Getting through the Ruins won't be easy, however. Warfare has started in earnest. Rockets are going off; the view from Frankie's deck is quite pretty. Sights and sounds of death, destruction, and bloody mayhem rise to meet the party as they look out across the Ruins.

The trip through the sewers will actually be less difficult at this stage (provided the party avoids the Mandrake lair), because the Mandrake cannibals will have plenty of fresh food due to all the violence. The group will not, however, have any directions or map for the sewers.



Frankie (Continued)

After surviving an attempt on her life; she retreated to Jericho City. She made sure that no Linkers were in the area and escaped.

After arriving in Jericho City, she used money she had set aside from her jobs to buy the Triple X. She was welcomed to Scrambletown by Pop Mahoney, and they became fast friends; she took up his dream of uniting the Ruins and Scrambletown.

Her short-range Link is still intact, which is why she knows of the Linkers' presence when they land. That is also how they know about her.

She will be able to provide the PCs with quite a bit of useful knowledge regarding Linkers, their likely procedures, weaknesses, and strengths.



The Sewers

The sewers of Jericho City are classic. Wet, but warm, heated with overflow steam from the Power Station, the underground tunnels are ankle to neck deep with water, and the curved ceilings gleam with condensed water droplets. Travel via the sewers is not recommended without taking certain precautions and outfitting properly.

Many of the tunnels which pass under the wall have been blocked off intentionally by the ConFed. Chance has blocked many others, more nearer the Ruins than the ConFed.

The primary concerns when traveling in the sewers are: 1) getting lost; maps are recommended, but hard to come by, and 2) the Mandrakes (see sidebar, p 52).

The sewers are all one standard size (6 feet in diameter) except for intersections. At intersections they widen out into collection and cross flow areas 10 yards square. Access to the sewers can be achieved through manholes in the streets every 50 yards and storm drains around the ends of long streets.



Mule

Male Mandrake, age 27, 6' 10", 335 lbs., pale, dirty skin, long, black hair, green eyes.

ST 18, DX 12, IQ 15, HT 13.

Speed 6.25, Move 6.

Dodge 7.

Toughness (PD 0, DR 2), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Ally Group (Mandrakes), Combat Reflexes, Toughness (DR 2), Night Vision.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust, Gigantism, Odious Personal Habit (Cannibalism), Sadism.

Quirks: Constantly hungry; Likes to act the sycophant.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Scramble-town)-15, Area Knowledge (Sewers)-16, Brawling-15, Climbing-13, Cooking-15, Jumping-12, Leadership-14, Scrounging-14, Shadowing-17, Stealth-17, Survival (Urban)-17, Tracking-13.

Mule has been known to rip open doors and peel open cars like fruit. He is the most feared individual in Jericho City not only because he is a cannibal leading a tribe of man-eaters through the streets at night, but because those who have come face to face with him (and lived to talk about) it tell of piercing intelligence seen in his eyes.

Mule is perpetually hungry and will attack any obviously inferior opponent for dinner on the spot. His teeth are lengthened implants, and he sharpens them regularly. Mule wears spiked boots and cloth shorts like the rest of the Mandrakes.

When encountering formidable opponents underground, Mule will organize the Mandrakes to surround them, cutting off any retreat. He will then try to force the intruders to travel toward the Mandrake lair. Mule is perfectly willing to bargain, though often he will pretend deference to lure his victims into complacency; then he will attack.

From Bad to Worse to Downright Dead

This section describes the possible routes to the power station, which should be the next place the adventurers go. The routes available are bleak at best.

Going Down

The first and most likely option for travel to the power station is through the sewers. If the PCs are timely getting to Frankie's house and have an accurate map of the sewers, underground will be the easiest route.

Frankie had her own deal for safe passage through the sewers, and it certainly does not extend to the adventurers. Aside from knowing the shortest route, they are on their own. Frankie knew this, but still felt it was a safer, not to mention quicker, route for the PCs rather than going back through the Ruins. On the face of it, the sewers look to be the more peaceful of the two routes, but the sewers are home to the Mandrakes, a renegade gang of cannibals (see sidebar, p. 52).

Once the PCs have descended into the darkness, they will find themselves in ankle-deep sludge. The sewers are a maze of round tunnels about 6 feet in diameter. The only light comes faintly through the holes of the rare manhole covers.

As soon as the characters pass beneath the Barricade (see map, p. 59), they will be vulnerable to Mandrake attack.

The GM should roll 1 die every five minutes of game time. On a 1 or a 2, the party is detected, either by their use of a light source, or by smell. This does not mean the PCs will be attacked at that time. Quite the contrary, once the party is detected, the Mandrakes will immediately begin trying to manipulate the intruders into altering direction, closer to their lair (in the sewers under the hospital).



The Mandrakes will use whatever means necessary, including blocking off certain sections of tunnel and opening water stops – confronting the party with a wall of liquid sewage – to make them change direction.

When the intruders have been maneuvered into a 10-yard-square sewer junction, the Mandrakes will attack *en masse*. There will be three times as many Mandrakes as PCs. The Mandrakes are semi-suicidal, and won't stop the attack even if half their comrades are down. That just means there will be more meat to go around once the intruders are dead.

However, the PCs may become aware that they are being herded. A successful Tactics or Strategy roll will reveal that the blockages are not coincidental. If the adventurers decide to attempt contact with the Mandrakes – calling out or signaling the cannibals in some way – the passage way will be immediately illuminated by a weak light, and the PCs will find themselves facing a group of the filthy cannibals.

They will be approached by the leader, Mule (see sidebar), who will negotiate. What Mule wants, in exchange for safe passage, is meat,

whether that of the party, or from anywhere else. So if the PCs are willing to go topside, either in the Ruins or Scrambletown, and bring back five or six freshly dead (at least one body per character), they will be allowed safe passage.

The Mandrakes are a gang with little honor. There is a 50% chance that they will renege on the deal and try to lead the agents to their lair. If the PCs have a map, this will be obvious. Mule will explain that he knows a shortcut to the power station. If his bluff is called, he and his group will slink off into the shadows, not to return.

If he manages to lead the party to his lair, the group will be attacked as described above.

War Zone

Another possible route through the Ruins is above ground, through a veritable Fourth-of-July fireworks display. The rival gangs in the Ruins have finally made good their threat to use their anti-aircraft weaponry on each other; it's an all-out bloodbath. Fires rage, and even from this distance, the PCs can hear the explosions, and smell the sulfurous stench of burning.

Should the adventurers decide to attempt this route, they will be in constant danger of being attacked from the rooftops by automatic gunfire as well as anti-aircraft missiles. If they keep to the shadows, and don't do anything overt, the party can make a group Stealth roll at +5 (roll vs. the average of all Stealth skill levels in the party; Stealth defaults to DX-5 or IQ-5), but due to the amount of activity, they must re-roll every two minutes. Failure means that someone sees or hears the party.

If the PCs are cocky enough to just strut on in, without taking any precautions, they will be perceived immediately. For each time the intruders are noticed, roll 1 die. On a 1 or 2, the gang decides to attack them. Use the stats for Colmine (see p. 72), adding Guns (Rifle)-14. The gang will fire with rifles equipped with Gyroc HEX rounds, Gauss needlers and laser rifles. On a 3 or 4, they don't attack outright, but take 1d pot shots at the group with Gyroc HEX rounds (on a 9 or less on 3d a stray shot hits a PC for 4d crushing damage). Allow the target an opportunity for a Dodge. On a 5 or 6, the gang shouts threats and insults, but takes no offensive action.

Taking the High Road

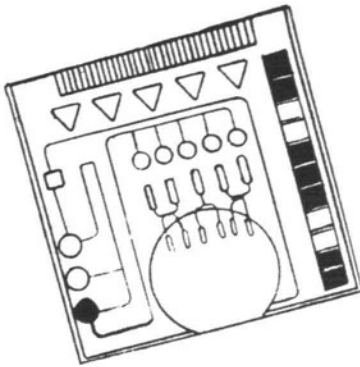
A third possible route out of the Ruins is for the PCs to use the rooftops. This is tricky. There is a 4 in 6 chance of meeting China Snow members if they enter a building and use the stairs (see *China Snow* sidebar, p. 68). If they attempt to get to the roof by scaling the outside wall (or the firestairs), then they must do so quickly, and make a successful Stealth roll

Autodefenses

The power station has sophisticated automatic defenses to protect the grounds from damage by Mandrakes or the Ruins' gangs. The system is sophisticated in design, but simple in principle.

Military laser rifles and Gauss needlers are hooked to surveillance cameras, which in turn are hooked to the station's Complexity 6 computer, which has an Optical Recognition program (see p. CY54). The program can distinguish between animals and humans, and will fire upon any humans who enter without authorization from the security booth (either human authorization or security card verification). The autodefenses only cover the area outside of the offices; there are no automated defenses inside the building.





Frankie's Chip

Engraved on the chip that Frankie gives the agents is an NUI (113032ZEKE).

Once the chip is slotted, the following information becomes available:

- 1) Linkers (see sidebar, p. 57).
- 2) CHAIN (see sidebar, p. 56), including identification of HighLine, Inc. as a false front, what to expect at guest-level access, instructions on using Frankie's NUI to get through the passage to CHAIN (see p. 87).

- 4) Linker User #'s for...
 Vasso 5783164, BOOG
 Lauren 9714484, PUDY
 Jerrod 0625543, KAJ
 'Chelle 9372447, SCHMER

5) Old Passwords. The ones in italics are the only ones which still work. Those in boldface italic will set off alarms. All others are useless, but the PCs won't know that and will probably try them all.

212W11O10RD7B6Y5S4T3O2R1M0
 FRAZIER11223
 418XZ5551212
 12PALMETTO456
 112L3L4U5M6I7N8A9T10I
 GERTA HALFET 14Z
 2222FFEJEKOK454
 9SURRENDER9DOROTHY,9OZ9
 !DOGRAED!
 14LAUNDRY754
 14QWERTY!33

6) A very good Crash program (skill 18) to use on the CHAIN hub node.



or draw attention to themselves. If they fail the roll, they will be noticed, as above.

However, if the party manages to attain the rooftops without being noticed, it will have a good chance of making it, because all the sky-watch gangs are moving downward to rumble closer to street level.

Once on the roofs, the PCs will find travel difficult, but relatively safe. The group only need make Stealth rolls every ten minutes. They will notice that suspension bridges used to extend from rooftop to rooftop. However, at the outset of the hostilities, 50% of these were cut (roll randomly each time the party wants to move from building to building). Still, the characters may be able to jump with a successful Jumping roll (see p. B88). Buildings are 2d yards apart.

However, any gang members who notice the party will immediately come to the conclusion that it is an invasion force crossing the rooftops. The gang will automatically attack.

If the PCs take either of the above ground routes, they will have to pass the Barricade to get back into Scrambletown. They can attempt to climb the rubble in a desolated section or they can try and get through at one of the "gates." Either way, they are more likely to be noticed at the Barricade. Roll vs. Stealth for each character at -2.

Once inside Scrambletown, the group can proceed to the power station without incident.

Blackie's Betrayal

After the PCs have escaped the Ruins, whether above ground or below, they will meet Sven in front of the power station.

The power station looks like nothing more than a big office building and a huge cooling tower that billows steam from its maw. There are no power lines visible, nor are there any pipes. A small parking lot sits just inside the main gate, next to the building, and the rest of the grounds are covered by green grass and shrubs. The main gate is not manned, but there is a remote security booth adjacent to the entrance.

If the PCs are traveling through the sewers, the nearest manhole access out of the sewers is about a half-block from the power station. The tunnel continues on under the actual station as shown on the map, but it is blocked off by a cement wall.

Sven is waiting for them at the main gate. He runs up to the PCs as they near the gate, yelling. He holds something shiny in his right hand, and carries a laser pistol in the other.

If the PCs let Sven approach he will hand them the shiny object – Pop's security passcard with the power station emblem on it. He will tell them that Blackie sold out to the ConFed. Also, Pop died shortly after the explosion at the Pharmacy and Survival. Before he died, Pop handed Sven this card to give to the mercenaries. There is a message on it.

At this time, a smashed-up old car comes careening down the road. A successful Vision-2 roll shows two people in the car. One of them is laughing hysterically. It is Backbone and Dum dum, driving directly at the party.

A gunshot goes off, and Sven is knocked over from the force of the blow, perhaps into the hands of one of the characters. Blood spouts from a

wound in his chest. Successful IQ rolls indicate that the gun was not fired from the car, but – maybe – from a building to the west.

Using a H&K PSG1, high-powered rifle, Blackie is sighting the party from a nearby rooftop (he can be seen with a simple Vision roll). He will continue firing until all the characters are down. If they find cover, he will move to a better vantage. The security booth next to the power station's main gate provides good cover (-5 or more to hit). Blackie has 20 rounds for his rifle.

Backbone and Dumdum were meant as a distraction only. They intend to simply drive past, unless one of the PCs is an easy target in the middle of the road. Blackie will wait out the party from the rooftop. He knows they have to travel the distance from the gate to the power station's offices. Then he'll try to take them out one by one.

If the PCs engage Blackie directly before entering the power station grounds or Blackie runs out of ammunition, the young ramrod will regroup with his two sidekicks at the entrance to the building he was on.

If it looks like he's going to lose, however (or as soon as the power to Scrambletown is cut), Blackie and his troops will attempt to get in the old car and speed away. If Blackie is captured, he'll try to talk his way out of the situation. He will tell the mercenaries that he contacted the ConFed and cut a deal. He's willing to cut the PCs in for \$20,000, plus he can get weapons and bionics. Lots of Pop's stuff is salvageable. Blackie is good at cutting deals and is very resourceful in a crunch. He will try to be very convincing. Remember that his motivations lie solely in the survival of his gang, and he'll do whatever it takes to keep them alive.

Showdown at the Power Station

To simplify things, the GM should assume that the agents arrive at the station either 10 minutes before the Linkers or 10 minutes after, depending on when they arrived at Frankie's and how fast they traveled to the power station. If they arrive early, they will have time to get to the control room,

Overdrive: Linker Attack Force

It may be best to enlist the aid of an assistant to help keep the Linkers on their agenda and efficiently bring their skills to bear against the party during a battle. It will be more interesting to have the PCs and the Linkers individually motivated, allowing the GM to moderate and control other factors.

Overdrive is made up of four Linkers (unless the GM has modified that number) who have worked extensively with each other. Vasso is Command; Lauren functions as Point; Jerrod as SAW; and 'Chelle takes the Gunner #1 (see *Combat Tactics* below). *Overdrive* has been working as a unit for just over six years and has one of the highest efficiency profiles of any Linker force.

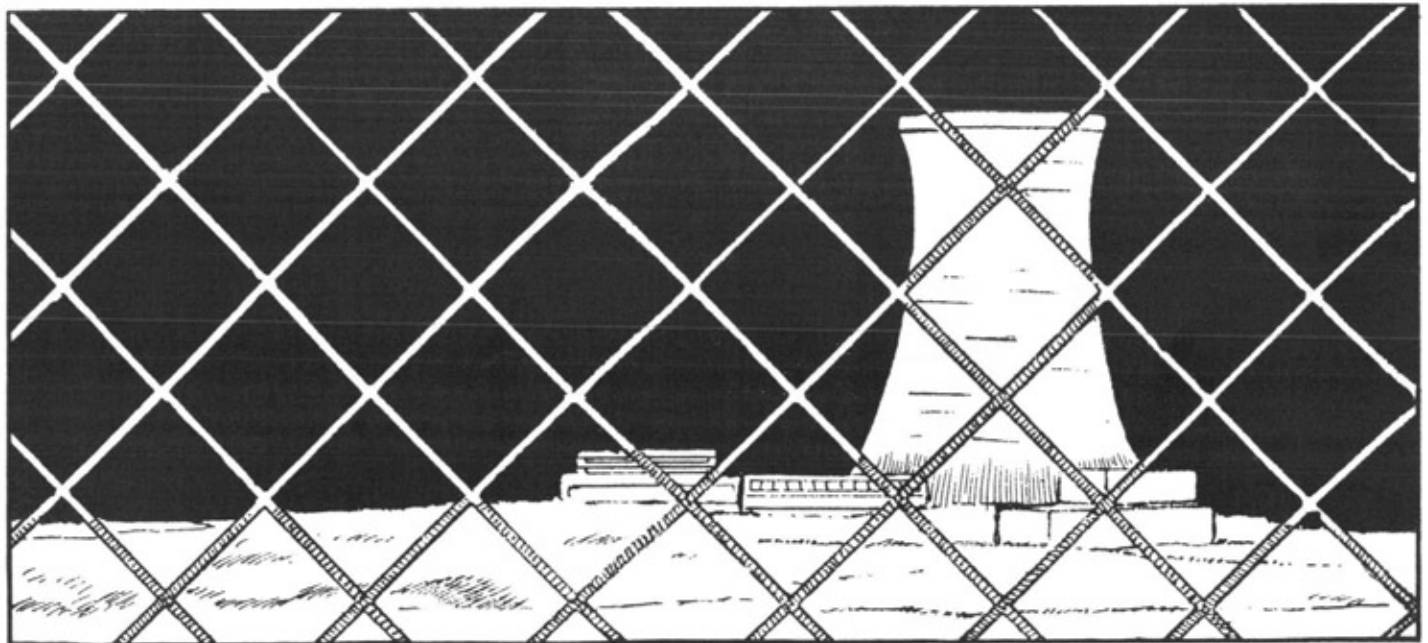
It is important to realize that the Linkers are *real* people, not just killing machines. They have personalities and private motivations. See the individual descriptions of the Linkers on pp. 80-84 for more information.

Combat Tactics

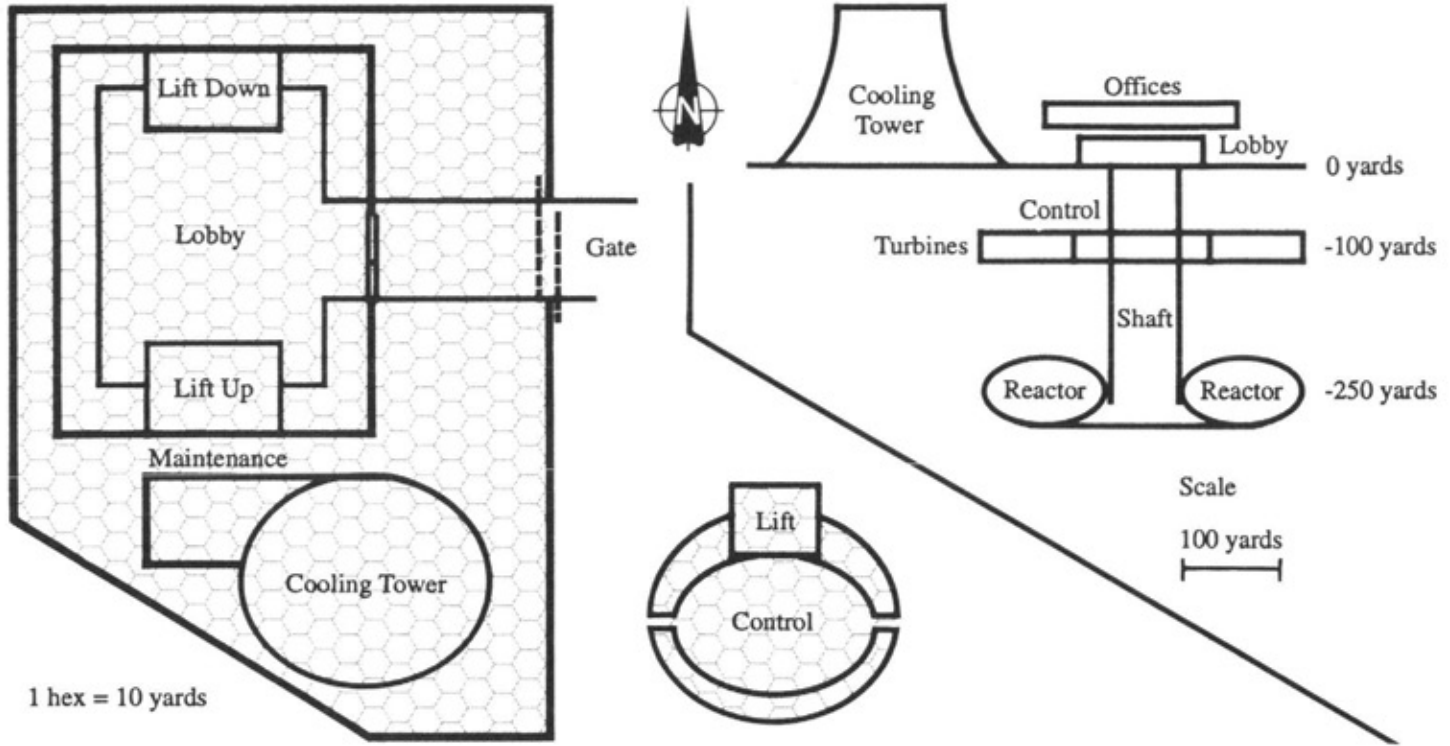
Overdrive uses the modified wedge as follows:

Point is out front with light, quick-firing weaponry (Gauss needlers and gyro pistols). SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon) is behind Point near the left flank, carrying an automatic missile launcher. Gunner #1 is the right flank across from SAW with a military laser rifle for heavy damage. Command is behind SAW, slightly in toward the center. Command coordinates communications and carries an electromag grenade launcher for heavy, long-range damage.

With more Linkers in a group, another gunner and SAW are added, and then another point, standing side-by-side with the first. Seven is the largest effective Linker combat group. They rely on strategy, guile and sudden, overwhelming violence, not straight-on mass attacks.



Scrambletown Power Plant



Lauren

Linker, age 27, 6' 148 lbs., dark olive complexion, auburn hair, green eyes.

ST 14, DX 16, IQ 14, HT 16.

Speed 8, Move 6.

Dodge 7.

Combat infantry dress (PD 4, DR 40), medium encumbrance.

Advantages: Alertness, Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Infravision, Lightning Calculator, Patron (HIG), Telescopic Vision $\times 6$.

Disadvantages: Duty (HIG), Overconfidence, No Sense of Humor.

Skills: Acting-14, Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-15, Armoury/TL8-14, Beam Weapons-16, Climbing-17, Computer Hacking-13, Computer Operation/TL8-19, Computer Programming/TL8-15, First Aid-16, Guns (Pistol)-16, Guns (Rifle)-16, Holdout-15, Interrogation-14, Literature-16, Mathematics-15, Poisons-14, Shadowing-17, Stealth-16, Tactics-16, Writing-15.

Linked Skills: Acrobatics-14, Area Knowledge (Jericho City)-14, Camouflage-14, Demolition-13, Strategy-13.

Cyberware: Basic Link setup, with Telescopic Vision $\times 6$ and Infravision.

Equipment: Gauss needler; gyro launch pistol, 100 APEX rounds.

Lauren is all business. She is there to get the job done. She is constantly on watch and primed for anything. She may be the most likely to break Overdrive's cover, but she will do it only if she perceives a threat. Most of the time she is right.

set up their defenses and hack into CHAIN (see *Netrunning vs. CHAIN*, p. 87). If they arrive late, the Linkers will be busy hacking the security codes to shut the power station down. In this case, the operatives will not be able to neutralize the link, but this will be balanced by the fact that one of the Linkers will not be involved in combat, and that the others will be working to protect her.

Arriving Early

When the PCs attempt to open the power station gate by running Pop's access card through the scanner in the security station, they will discover a small recording in the card's RAM. What they see is an image of Pop, on the security console's small vidscreen.

Pop's Epilogue

"This is one of those if-you-are-seeing-this-it-probably-means-I'm-dead messages. I hope you managed to get the information you needed from Frankie, because the Linkers are worse than anything I've ever come up against before. The ConFed will win unless you can stop them."

"There are three ways they can accomplish a shutdown of the fusion reactor: First, the Linkers will try to get past the autodefenses and down the lift into the control room." (Refer to the power station map on p. 82.) "There, they can access the central computer. There are no indials to the computer which controls the station, though it can call out. They'll still have to crack the security codes to shut the power off, but be assured, they can do it."

"Second, if they aren't able to get to the control room, they could destroy the cooling pipes between the cooling tower and the reactor core."

The computer would implement auto-shutdown when the temperature started to rise.

"And lastly, there is a chance that the Linkers will try to destroy the main relays down by the reactor core."

The image of Pop pauses, looks around behind him. For the first time, the PCs may notice that in the background, people are running frantically. An alarm goes off. Some of Pop's composure cracks as he looks back into the camera.

"No matter what happens to me," he finishes, "your contract is good, as long as Scrambletown remains alive, but I fear that your contract may be the last thing on your minds right now. Still, stay healthy, and beat the Linkers. Scrambletown can't survive without you."

An explosion goes off behind Pop and the image gets grainy.

"I'm downloading a map of the power station onto this card. It includes the locations of the autodefenses and how to bypass them and the password to the main computer node. I wish you the best of –"

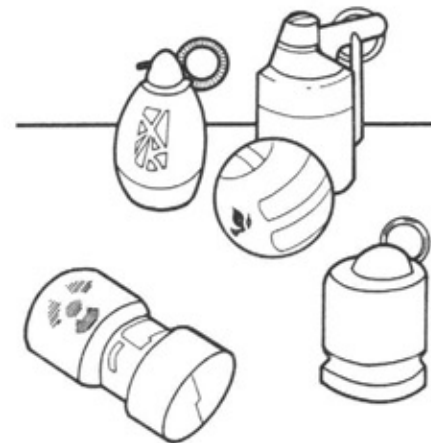
He's cut off by a blinding flash, which fades into the grainy schematic of the power station with the letters "XDXERTSW" in the bottom corner.

Inside the Station

The main gate opens when Pop's access card is skipped through the security console. The card shuts the autodefenses off for two minutes, plenty of time to make it to the central building. Once inside the main lobby, there are two elevators as well as a front desk and a locked doorway to a service staircase. As far as the characters can tell at this point, the power station is completely vacant. The elevators have LED diagrams next to them showing their positions in the shafts: both on the ground floor.

One of the elevators has a palm lock as well as an access card slot. The other is a simple elevator; it goes up to the second floor offices only. The down elevator will work with Pop's card; it provides access to the control room as well as the turbines and the fusion tokamak.

If the PCs descend to the control room, they will discover a single, dedicated individual operating the power station – Nick Anson. Nick is a



Vasso

Male Linker, age 28, 5' 6", 165 lbs., blue eyes, dark complexion, brown hair (crew cut).

ST 14, DX 17, IQ 15, HT 15.

Speed 8, Move 6.

Dodge 10, Parry 6.

Combat infantry dress and Toughness (PD 4, DR 42), medium encumbrance.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Acute Hearing +3, Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Patron (HIG), Toughness (DR 2).

Disadvantages: Duty (HIG), Stubbornness, Vow (never fail to complete a job).

Skills: Acting-15, Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-16, Climbing-15, Computer Hacking-14, Computer Operation/TL8-15, Criminology-16, Cyberdeck Operation-15, Demolition-15, Forensics-17, Guns (Pistol)-17, Guns (Rifle)-17, Karate-16, Knife-15, Law-14, Leadership-16, Lip Reading-18, Savoir-Faire-15, Shadowing-15, Speed-Load-16, Stealth-17, Strategy-16, Tactics-14, Tracking-17.

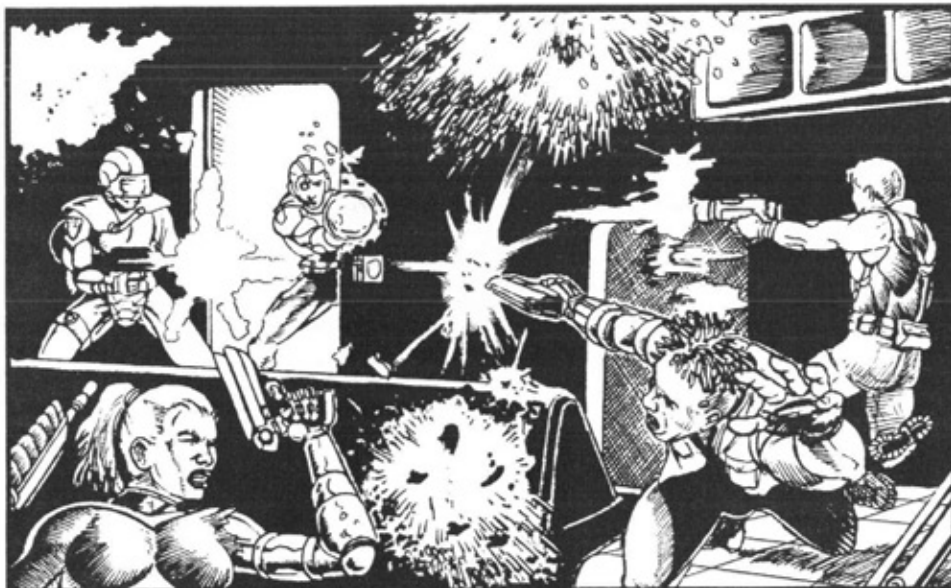
Linked Skills: Area Knowledge (Jericho City)-15, Camouflage-15, Disguise-14, Electronics Operation (Power Systems)-14, Lockpicking-14.

Languages: Japanese-15, German-15.

Cyberwear: Basic Link setup, with Acute Hearing +3.

Equipment: Electromag grenade launcher with 10 concussion and 5 fragmentation grenades; Gyroc pistol, 100 APEX rounds.

Vasso, also known as "Runt," is commander of Overdrive. He knows their limitations and how to compensate for them. He seldom speaks, and is terse when he does. Most of his conversations happen subvocally with team members over the Link. He is definitely the coolest head of the group and holds the team together. His past includes six intense years on the National Police Force.



Jerrod

Linker, age 21, 6' 3", 210 lbs., tan complexion, blond hair, blue eyes.

ST 18, DX 14, IQ 15, HT 14.

Speed 7, Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Combat infantry dress (PD 4, DR 40), medium encumbrance.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, Eidetic Memory (Level 1), Luck, Patron (HIG).

Disadvantages: Duty (HIG), Overconfidence.

Skills: Acting-15, Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-16, Carousing-15, Computer Hacking-14, Computer Operation/TL8-15, Cyberdeck Operation-15, Demolition-18, Electronics-15, Fast-Talk-14, First Aid-15, Gambling-16, Guns (Pistol)-15, Guns (Rifle)-16, Musical Instrument (Guitar)-15, Physician-15, Running-13, Shadowing-15, Stealth-15, Surgery-16.

Continued on next page . . .



young man of about 25, frantic to leave. If the PCs question him, he will only tell them that everybody has gone home and that his wife and kids are waiting for him. He stayed only because Pop begged him to. Now that the hired help is here, he will do everything in his power to leave as soon as possible.

Nick is near the edge, and more than a little paranoid. He will only show the visitors how to operate the consoles in the control room on a Good or better reaction. Otherwise he will tell the PCs that he has locked the station on automatic. If threatened with physical violence, he'll grudgingly answer any questions truthfully, but will not offer any information.

Once the agents have access to the console, they can get someone started on netrunning vs. CHAIN. For details on this, see p. 87.

Overdrive: Operation Blackout

The Linkers should arrive 10 minutes after the PCs. If the PCs have an console cowboy working at shaving some ice off the CHAIN, time may be crucial. Here's how the Linkers proceed:

The first sign the PCs will have that the Linkers are on their way is that a large crowd of men, women and children are being herded down the street toward the power station (if the characters are in the control room, they see this on the screens monitoring the outside cameras). The Linkers are riding in a hot-wired utility truck, a big one with huge steel bumpers. They are driving the crowd in front of them like cattle. One of the crowd makes a break to escape and is cut down by laser fire. No one else tries to escape. The Linkers herd the crowd through the power station's main gate and into the perimeter space in front of the offices.

The second the autodefenses detect the crowd, they treat them as a threat and open fire (see *Autodefenses* sidebar, p. 77). The Linkers are using the pedestrians as decoys, taking out the autodefenses as soon as each one fires on the citizens. Using the computer console in the control room, a successful Computer Operations/TL8 roll will allow someone to gain control of the autodefenses and direct the weapons against the Linkers only. In that case, the Linkers will gun the truck, running down any of the townspeople who can't get out of the way. They will return fire at any PCs or autodefenses they can hit, crash the gate, and ram through the front doors. Otherwise, the Linkers will disable the autodefenses in 1d minutes and then ram the doors.

Once inside, they destroy all the observation cameras in the lobby. Then they attempt to determine if anyone occupies Control by looking for evidence of entry. If the PCs damaged the lobby in any way or never sent the elevator back to the surface, it will be a sure giveaway. If the PCs made an effort to conceal their presence, roll a contest of the agents' average IQ vs. Jerrod's Tracking skill of 17. If the Linkers win, they have discovered fresh, though faint, tracks leading into the elevator (or the stairs, if the PCs went that direction).

If the Linkers determine that Control is occupied, the first thing they will do is call and open the elevator (they have taken Pop Mahoney's hand for the palmlock). They toss 1d nerve gas grenades into the elevator and send it down to the control level. Anyone occupying the control room can make a Vision roll to notice the elevator moving on the LED schematic. A



Computer Operations/TL8 roll will shut the elevator down before it reaches the control level.

The Linkers will then don gas masks and proceed down the service stairwell to control level. They will break in and start firing at anything that moves. Keep in mind that the objective of the Linkers is to deactivate the power station. They don't want to destroy it, if at all possible, because the ConFed could use it after everyone is gone. They will not hesitate, however, to take out instrument panels or cooling pipes as a last means of getting the system's fail-safes to shut the reactor down.

What this all boils down to is that if the Linkers decide that they can't take the control room, they will target the cooling pipes, figuring that with no one present and the autodefenses defunct, they will be able to place plastex charges directly on the pipes in question. The most accessible cooling pipes are in the turbine rooms (see the map on p. 82), which can be reached from two doors leading from the control room. The plastex charges are set with two-minute atomic-decay timers (Demolition-5 to defuse). Once the Linkers blow the pipes, the power *will* go down.

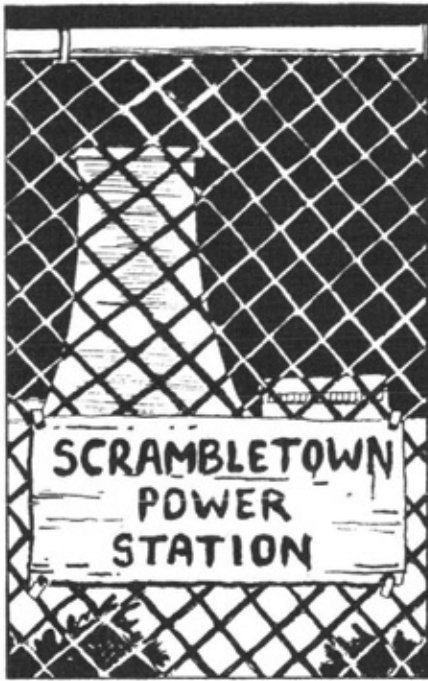
Jerrod (Continued)

Linked Skills: Area Knowledge (Jericho City)-14, Electronics Operation (Security Systems)-14, Electronics Operation (Power Systems)-14, Speed-Load (Pistol)-13, Savior-Faire-14.

Cyberware: Basic Link Setup, with Parabolic Hearing +6.

Equipment: Gyroc automatic missile launcher; gyroc launch pistol, 700 APEX rounds; 10 pounds of plastex; 25 atomic-decay timers.

Jerrod is the youngest in the lance. A real ladies' man, he is charming and cultivates an air of mystery, with classic surfer-boy looks and attitudes, he is brave and reliable under pressure, but happy-go-lucky when there isn't any fire or smoke.



'Chelle

Female Linker, age 23, 5' 10", 122 lbs., light complexion, long black hair, blue eyes. ST 12, DX 17, IQ 14, HT 14.

Speed 8.25, Move 6.

Dodge 7.

Combat infantry dress and Toughness (PD 4, DR 41), medium encumbrance.

Advantages: Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Luck, Patron (HIG), Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Compulsive Carousing, Duty (HIG), Code of Honor (Mercenary's).

Quirks: Stares at attractive men.

Skills: Acting-14, Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-15, Beam Weapons-17, Computer Hacking-13, Computer Operation/TL8-14, Cyberdeck Operation-14, Electronics-14, Fast-Talk-16, Forgery/TL8-15, Guns (Automatic)-17, Guns (Pistol)-17, Guns (Rifle)-17, Judo-18, Lip Reading-13, Sex Appeal-18, Shadowing-15, Speed-Load (Rifle)-18, Stealth-18, Swimming-17, Video Production-16.

Linked Skills: Area Knowledge (Jericho City)-14, Computer Programming/TL8-12, Detect Lies-12, First Aid-14, Holdout-13.

Cyberware: Basic Link setup: bionic eyes, bionic ears, 360-degree vision.

Equipment: Military laser rifle; gyro launch pistol, 100 APEX rounds; 50 plastex charges.

'Chelle is the free spirit of Overdrive. She is curious and outspoken, always looking for a little fun after a good day's work.

When the Link Goes Down

If the PC hacker is successful in breaking the Linkers' Link, the immediate effect is that the Linkers are stunned for two rounds. The severing of the Link creates a temporary sensory shut down to avoid overloading the hardware.

For 15 minutes, the Linkers will be unable to use their locators or sense through each other's eyes and ears. Count this as a -2 to all physical skills and a -1 to all mental skills because of the disorientation. They rely on the extra senses to function at their highest potential.

Arriving Late

If the PCs arrive late, the station grounds are a scene of death and devastation. Bodies of the herded citizens will be lying all over the grounds, burned by lasers or pierced by needlers. The gate will be rent from its hinges and the truck will still be jutting half-in and half-out of the double glass doors to the main building. If the agents run Pop's security card through any of the access slots (either at the main gate or at the elevators), they can see *Pop's Epilogue*, p. 81. Otherwise, they never get his final message.

The party will arrive at the control room while the Linkers are trying to access the shutdown program. One of the Linkers – Lauren – remains at the console while the others will defend the control room. It will take her 1d minutes to hack access (from the point at which the agents enter). (While the Linkers don't normally need a deck to hack – they are hooked into cyberspace via the satellite uplink – the power station computer system has no incoming lines, so they must access it directly.)



The Linkers will do their best to gain control of the reactor via the console before they resort to more violent tactics. They will only abandon the console if Lauren gets hit while she's hacking. In that case, they'll change strategy completely, leaving control for the turbine rooms and trying to blow up the cooling pipes with plastex charges on two-minute atomic-decay timers (Demolition-5 to defuse).

Apart from defusing the bombs, the only way to prevent the explosions from disrupting the station and causing it to power down is to locate three or more of the charges (out of a total of five), put them into the elevator and

send it toward the surface. Each charge that explodes within 25 feet of the pipes has a 2 in 6 chance of causing enough damage to initiate emergency power-down. The damage is cumulative; two charges will have a 4 in 6 chance, three is automatic. Also, there is a good chance that the elevator itself will be too damaged to function, requiring the PCs to take the stairs topside.

If they fail to blow up the cooling pipes, the Linkers will retreat into the staircase and descend further until they reach the main relays which regulate power to the electromagnets around the tokamak. As a last resort, they will destroy these relays with gyro HEX rounds. Shutdown will occur within 10 minutes of this action.

Once the Linkers have deactivated the power station, they are free to leave Jericho City and will do so at once, breaking off in mid-combat if necessary. They will head straight for the ConFed through the sewers (they have a map). Once in the ConFed, the Linkers will head for the shuttleport and hop the first shuttle out.

Powering Up

If the Linkers disabled the power by hacking the computer control, the PCs can try to reestablish power after the Linkers leave. The power station computer is a Complexity 6 mainframe system with a phase length of 500 milliseconds. The gateway is protected by Password-15, Watchdog-15 and Sever-18.

Once in the system, turning on the power is easy – there are no protection programs to prevent turning the power *on*. Turning it off is the hard part, requiring superuser access and the correct password; the designers of the system created two separate programs.

If the power is turned back on within a half-hour, Scrambletown will survive and the agents will get their contracted payment. Otherwise, the tension will have built up too much and the city will still self-destruct.

Escape From Jericho City

Whether or not the agents have accomplished their goal, they'll probably want to leave Jericho City. If they have defeated the Linkers, they can contact Chizmatron by vidphone or cyberdeck and request payment; Chizmatron will wire them the money, and they can use it to hire a chopper to fly in from Billings – the nearest city.

When the PCs make the call, they'll discover that rumors of Jericho City's civil unrest have spread. They will have to call several aviation companies before finding anyone willing to risk the trip. No pilot wants to put his life and craft in danger; the PCs will have to do a good deal of convincing as well as come up with at least \$2,000 a head. Alternatively, a good netrunner could simply break into the company's computer, schedule the flight, and indicate that payment has already been made. Use the same stats as for the power station computer (see above).

If the agents failed to prevent the power from going out, all vidphones will be dead. The only ways to contact someone outside the city are with a long-range radio or a satellite laser-link. If the PCs don't have either of

Adapting to Other Genres

GURPS Fantasy

Turn the Linkers into a team of highly-skilled mercenaries, sent into to disrupt the social structure of a village that's sitting on a large deposit of gold. The ruler of a nearby city wants to mine the area, but can't legally force the villagers to move, so he's hired a covert group to poison the village's food and burn down its town hall.

The PCs are hired by Old Carghal, the village elder, to find who's coming in and stop them before they can burn the hall.

GURPS Supers

Leave the adventure pretty much as it is, except change the Linkers into telepathic energy-blasters. The ConFed wants the area taken up by Scrambletown so he can set up "pleasure parks," sleazy amusement parks for the very wealthy.



Character Points

Give each player one point for participating in the event, plus a bonus of 2 points each for stopping the shutdown of the power station. Additional points can be awarded for exceptional roleplaying and ingenious strategies.

Further Adventures

Gorgon's Plan

The Linker team failed, but Pop Mahoney and Frankie are dead, and Blackie turned tail. Tensions in Scrambletown are far from gone. A minor gang leader, Gorgon, is making a move to unify the gangs and take Scrambletown, maybe even the ConFed.

The only one left in Scrambletown with any power is Sven, who survived his wounds and helped organize local resistance after the PCs left, protecting the power station and getting the food processors and the hospital back on line. Sven calls the PCs to go into the Ruins and take on Gorgon and his gang.

Linker Reprise

Garth Trimble, the leader/owner of the ConFed, is very upset at the PCs' defeat of the Linker team. Not only did he waste his money on the team – he lost his deposit when the Linkers were killed. Now he has hired another Linker team to pursue the adventurers across the country . . . and the world if necessary.

these, there is a 2 in 6 chance that they can salvage one from the wreckage of Pop Mahoney's.

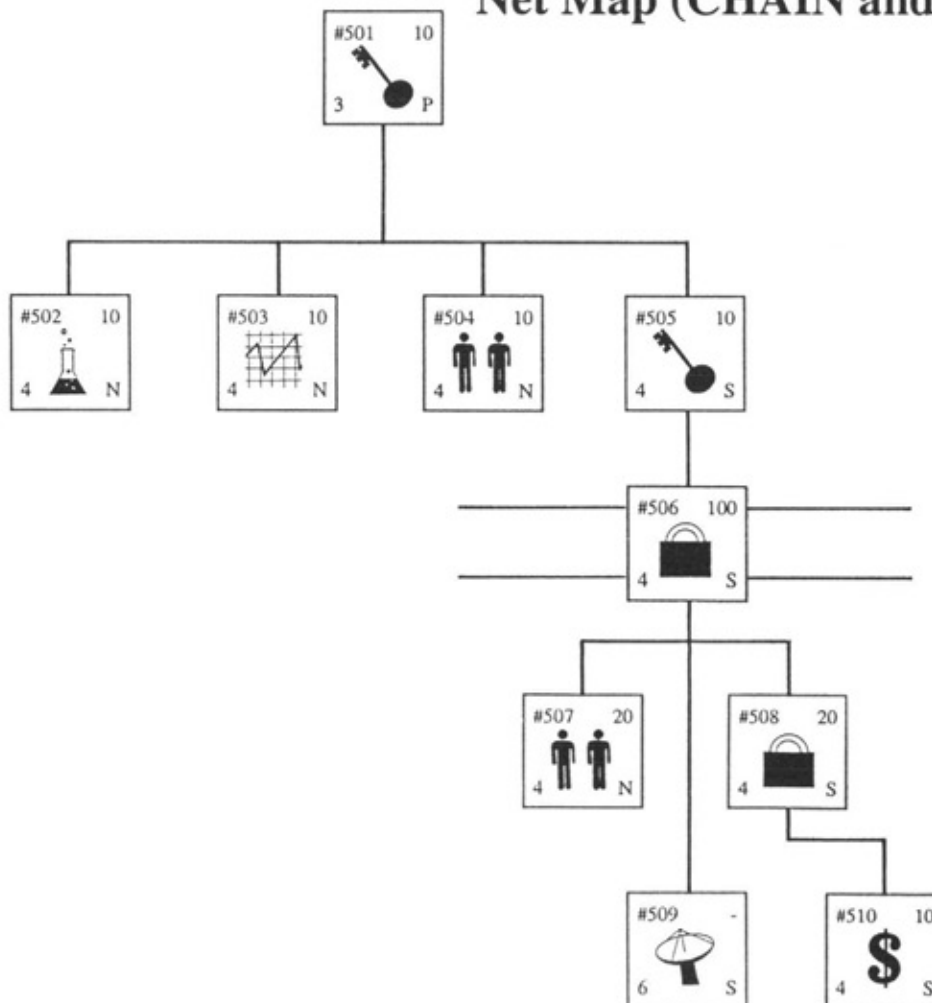
Barring that, the only way out of the city is through the sewers into the ConFed and out on a hijacked shuttle. Security at the shuttleport is light, but silent alarms in the sewers will have alerted the guards. There will be 2d guards with tanglers and needlers and light monocrys (skill 15 with the guns) waiting at the shuttleport.

Alternately, the operatives might want to wait it out in Scrambletown. The city is self-destructing in a blaze of mass-hysteria and gang warfare. It is left to the GM to determine suitable encounters for this situation, though it will inevitably be very dangerous.

Wrapping Up

The adventure is essentially over once the PCs have successfully escaped back to civilization. Chizmatron will pay them if they've succeeded. The PCs can choose any lab for the cloning and the personality downloads. The additionally money will be dispensed directly into their accounts, or can be given to them on \$10,000 credit chips. Perhaps they'll want to open an line of credit at Frankie's Triple X.

Net Map (CHAIN and Environs)



CHAIN Network and Environs

Netrunning vs. CHAIN

CHAIN is HIG's megacomputer (see p. 56). It is TL 8, Complexity 8. Though the net has been up and running for 12 years, the system is not self-aware . . . yet.

CHAIN has a false front on most large nets. The fronts are typically companies distantly affiliated with HIG. These false fronts exist to provide outside access for Linkers in trouble, and emergency contacts for agents who might get caught outside and need to get back in. Therefore HIG has gone to great lengths to disguise any connections between the front and CHAIN.

HighLine, Inc., is a fully functional front for HIG and has a standard guest-level access. The PCs will have to have Frankie's chip to know that.

#501 – HighLine, Inc., Gateway

Services available upon entering include company news, promotional materials, list of connecting nodes and in-house electronic mail. This system is Complexity 2 with no protection.

#502 – HighLine Research & Development

This is the R&D department of HighLine, Inc. The company works on advances in neurobiological technology – chip slots, jacks, etc. This system is protected by Password-12 and Watchdog-12, and will execute a Sever at skill 14 after 3 failed login attempts.

#503 – HighLine Accounting

This is the HighLine's accounting division mainframe. It doesn't contain any useful data for PCs. It is protected the same as #502, above.

#504 – HighLine Personnel

This mainframe contains HighLine's personnel data and work schedules. There is no useful information here for PCs. It is protected by Password-14 and Watchdog-14. It will send a Sever at skill 14 after 3 failed attempts.

#505 – Passage to CHAIN

This node is a hidden gateway with Camouflage-12. It is protected by Watchdog-15, Bluff (Black Ice)-14, Alarm-14, Trace-15 and Sever-18. Any presence in the login area will alert the Sysop-in-a-Box that monitors this system. The netrunner must give Frankie's NUI to get through this node, or the SIAB will run the Alarm, Sever and Trace. The Alarm alerts CHAIN that someone is trying to hack through a front corporation. CHAIN will put a human operator on the CHAIN gateway (#506, below) to manually sever any unauthorized logins.

Two Regenerate-15 programs run in the background, each checking all the security programs for corruption, one each phase and one phase apart, then checking each other before starting the next cycle.

#506 – CHAIN Gateway

This is the front end of CHAIN's secure system. All Linkers go through this node to access the information in CHAIN's several databases. The system is *very* busy – users flit by all the time.

The gateway is Complexity 4, with a Phase Length of 500 milliseconds. It has a Watchdog-18 that monitors the loiter time of anyone in the login area. Anyone who waits longer than four phases (2,000 milliseconds) is immediately hit with a Sever-18

and a Trace-15. If the Sever doesn't work, the Watchdog will wait another two phases before triggering an Alarm-15. Five seconds, later a human operator will do a manual sever.

To get through, the hacker will have to use one of the good passwords on Frankie's chip (see sidebar, p. 78, for a list of passwords which will work). Webster will not work on this passive Password program. Certain passwords are known to be stolen and will set off an Alarm-15, triggering Black Ice-14. Otherwise, the system will set the Alarm on the fourth incorrect attempt. If the Black Ice fails, a human operator will disconnect the line manually five seconds after the fourth attempt.

#507 – CHAIN Personnel

This node keeps track of all Linkers and non-Linker CHAIN agents. Normal accounts can read Linkers' ID numbers and codenames; superusers can access real names, backgrounds, off-duty addresses and current mission status. No protection programs are present.

#508 – CHAIN Financial Padlock

This padlock system is Complexity 4, PL 500, and protected by a passive Password program, unbreakable by Webster, plus Watchdog-18 and Alarm-16, triggering Black Ice-17. The Alarm will go off automatically on the third incorrect login attempt. If the Black Ice fails, a human operator will do a manual sever and Trace-18.

Two Regenerate-18s sit in the background, alternately checking the security programs and each other every other phase.

#509 CHAIN – Central Satellite Hub

This system is Complexity 6, PL 1,000, and is protected by Safety Net-17. Because of the speed at which Linkers need to access the other systems from this node, there is no security other than the Safety Net. CHAIN expects that all hackers will be stopped at the Gateway or before.

From this node, users can access the dozens of information databases that HIG has set up around the country for Linker download. It is one hop to and from any of those systems. The database systems are not accessible except through this node, so no one can hack into those systems and attempt to hack into CHAIN.

Crashing this system will cause the Linker network to go down for 15 minutes, causing all of the Link's advantages to be canceled for that time.

#510 – CHAIN Financial

This node controls the flow of money to Linker accounts. The money is used for equipment, lodging, fuel, ammunition, etc. Redirecting funds in this system will cause general havoc in the long term for Linker teams, but will have no effect on the present scenario.



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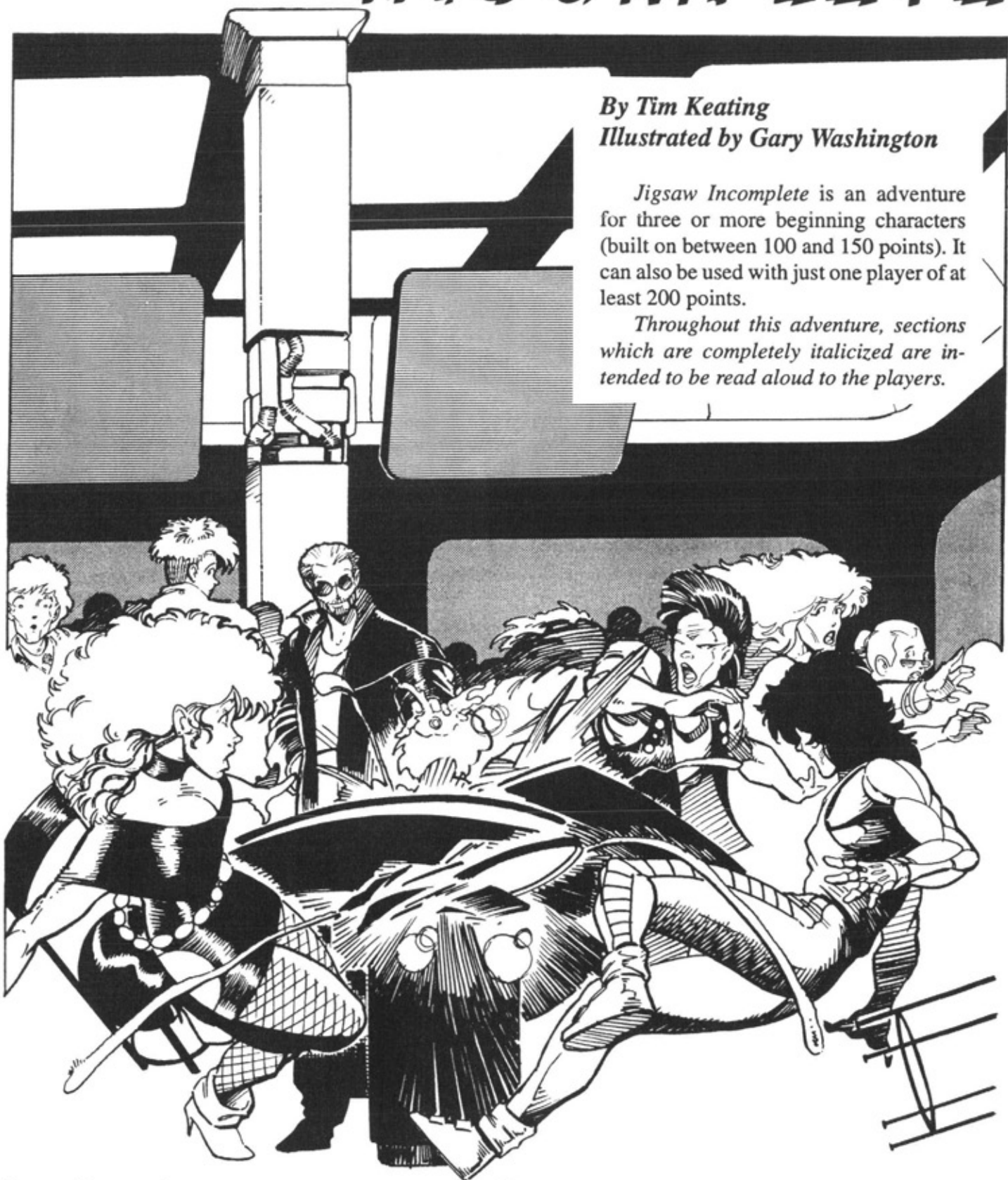
JIGSAW INCOMPLETE

By *Tim Keating*

Illustrated by *Gary Washington*

Jigsaw Incomplete is an adventure for three or more beginning characters (built on between 100 and 150 points). It can also be used with just one player of at least 200 points.

Throughout this adventure, sections which are completely italicized are intended to be read aloud to the players.



Synopsis

The main idea behind *Jigsaw Incomplete* is that one of the adventurers has participated in an adventure “off-screen” prior to the events described herein. During this escapade the character, along with an NPC named Vic Redmond, stole important data belonging to Onishima Corp, a small electronics zaibatsu. Onishima had entered into a licensing agreement with Damian Blake, a famous designer of dreamgames (see p. CY66). Under the terms of the agreement, Onishima was to braintape Blake, and use the data to create a skill chip, tentatively titled *Imagination!*

However, Cyberrad Games, Blake’s publisher, heard about the agreement. Although he was a free agent and, technically, he was not in breach of contract, top CG management concluded that he was “violating the trust and goodwill” between the designer and the company. It was decided that a major operation to interfere with the release of the skip was too risky. But a small-scale job looking as though a competing manufacturer were stealing the data to make black-market copies was viable and cost-effective. They hired a fixer named Nina Jerrold to find them a small-time op team capable of stealing the data. That op team consisted of the PC and Vic Redmond (see sidebar, p. 91).

Under Jerrold’s direction, the physically-oriented of the two (see sidebar) infiltrated the lab where Blake’s braintape was stored. A braintape contains 100 gigabytes of data; however, only about 2% of this (on average) is needed to create a functional skill chip. The Onishima scientists distilled this information from the braintape and burned it into a ROM deck. Ideally, the easiest way to steal the data would have been to steal the ROM.

However, security at the Onishima compound was tight; everyone leaving the area was carefully searched. Smuggling the ROM offsite was impossible. But it *was* possible to switch the deck with a dummy to slot it to a cyberdeck with a Net hook-up long enough for the netrunner to punch through Onishima’s ICE and download the data.

No operation of this sort runs smoothly, and this one went awry in a big way. At 20 minutes per gig, the download took a nerve-racking 40 minutes – ample time for the PC to get caught. If he was the inside man, he got nabbed on-site when the ROM cartridge was discovered missing. If he was the netrunner, Redmond left the Onishima complex immediately after switching the ROM decks. He picked up the data (on optical disks) from the console cowboy for delivery to Nina Jerrold. Shortly thereafter, the PC was nabbed by toughs from Onishima, following a Trace used by one of the zaibatsu’s nethacking hired guns.

Either way, the results were the same. Onishima interrogated the prisoner, producing Jerrold and Redmond’s names. They also extracted the account number and password containing the payment for the job. That money became a positive entry in Onishima’s ledgers. They used the cash to offset the expense of what they did next.

Imagination! was expected to be an all-time best-seller. Bootleg copies would cost Onishima millions. It was essential that they recover that lost data. But Redmond, double-crossing his partners, had hidden the data and dropped out of sight. The zaibatsu decided to use their captive as bait. They fitted him with a hidden chip socket and installed a *Lethe chip* (see sidebar,

About the Author

Tim Keating is a freelance author who lives in Galway, New York. This is his first writing project for Steve Jackson Games, though he is a regular participant on the Illuminati BBS, helps with the SJ Games booth at GenCon and often playtests new products.

His other writing credits include his regular contributions to *All of the Above*, the *GURPS* APA, and *Murder in Stronghold*, an adventure for the *Hero System*. Strangely enough, he has no cats.

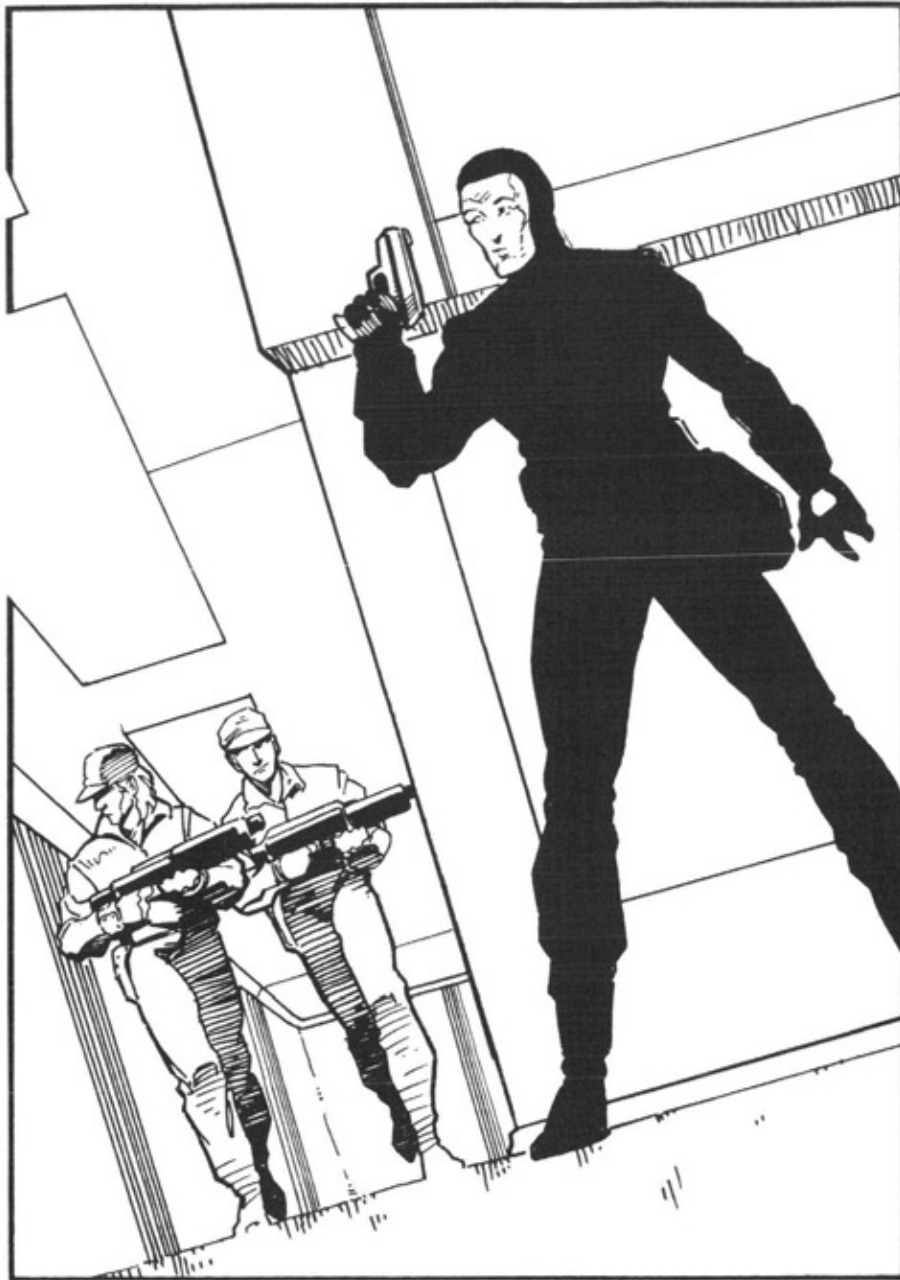
Coopting a Player Character

One of the characters in this adventure has a problem. He was involved in an illicit netrun before this adventure started, caught, and technologically “brainwashed” (see p. 90). Now he has new enemies and a new chip in his head. The GM must decide which character to choose for this.

The player should be a good, mature roleplayer. He should be told *only* that something has happened to his character offscreen, and that some of the things in the adventure will be as much a surprise to his character as they are to the player. He can be assured that his character has the same chance of survival as anyone else. That’s all the player has to be told.

Two kinds of character are suited to being the target. The first is a physical operative with infiltration skills. Necessary skills include Acting, Disguise, Electronics (Security Systems) and Stealth.

The other type is a netrunner. Cyberdeck Operation is necessary, obviously, but current ownership of a deck is not required – Onishima would have confiscated it after they captured him. Note that this provides a great opportunity to reward the character with a good deck – he can just “get it back” if he decides to negotiate with Onishima at the end of the adventure (see p. 117).



Ninja Stats

All the ninja in the first encounter have ST 10, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12. They have the following skills: Acrobatics-13, Guns/TL8 (Pistol)-13 and Stealth-12. The sniper also has Guns/TL8 (Rifle)-16. The driver of the truck has Driving/TL8 (Truck)-14.

The guards at the Yakuza headquarters (see p. 99) have the same stats.

the group (the target in particular) frequents. One possibility is a temporary dwelling used to conduct an operation, which is now complete. This scenario provides an additional benefit: if the characters were brought together exclusively for the mission they just finished, running this adventure will provide a good excuse for them to continue to hang out together, beyond the simple inertia following a job.

Other places where the ambush could take place include public areas like a favorite restaurant, a theater, and so on. The scene as written doesn't include mobs of rubbernecking bystanders, but wouldn't suffer from including them. (It would, in fact, be more characteristic of the genre for gawkers to be wiped out by missed shots – or used for cover!

Ambush!

The Yakuza strike! A sniper, positioned on the roof opposite a building

p. 102) which should have blanked the memory of his capture, and, more importantly, where his payment went! The hope was that he would unwittingly draw Redmond out of hiding so they could capture him and locate the data.

Unfortunately for them, the chip's programmer made a mistake. It erased not only the memory of his capture, but also a significant portion of his other recent memories – including the operation itself! Thus their stalking-horse had no reason to seek out Redmond or Jerrold, and simply went about his business.

This had Onishima officials puzzled. Unaware of the defect in the Lethe chip, the character's behavior made no sense at all. For a while, they simply watched passively, unwilling to tip their hand. Finally, they decided that the ploy had simply failed. Having tried the subtle approach, they decided to cut their losses. They would capture Jerrold and use her to reach Redmond. Meanwhile, any loose ends – such as the PC involved – would have to be eliminated . . .

Setup

The adventure begins with a bang, as hired Yakuza assassins attempt to eliminate the brain-blanked PC. The scene should take place somewhere

frequented by the group, opens fire at the target character, nearly killing him.

The building where the sniper is concealed should be 2 stories (10 yards) high and about 10 yards from the doorway where the target will emerge. To give the target a fighting chance, make sure that there are parked cars or similar objects around for cover. The GM can use the sample map provided on p. 92, or modify it to better suit his campaign.

The sniper (see sidebar) has Guns/TL8 (Rifle)-16. He's using an assault carbine (pp. CY44 and CY60). (Laser weapons and other such ultra-tech deadlies are assumed to be experimental, difficult to acquire or prohibitively expensive. If none of the above is true, the GM can equip the sniper with whatever weapon is desired.) Using the carbine (Acc 11), bracing on the roof's retaining wall and aiming for 4 seconds gives the sniper an effective skill of 31. Superior elevation means he subtracts half his height of 5 hexes, or 2, from his ground distance, with a minimum of half total horizontal distance. He's effectively firing at 8 hexes range, for a -4 penalty, or 27 or better to hit.



Vic Redmond

Age 34, 6' 0", 185 lbs., straight, brown, shoulder-length hair, headband, brown eyes.

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 12.

Speed 6.25, Move 6.

Dodge 6.

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Luck, Reputation +2 (the Sprawl, as a reliable and competent, though crazy, operator for hire).

Disadvantages: Compulsive Carousing, On the Edge, Reputation -4 (US Army, for his dishonorable discharge).

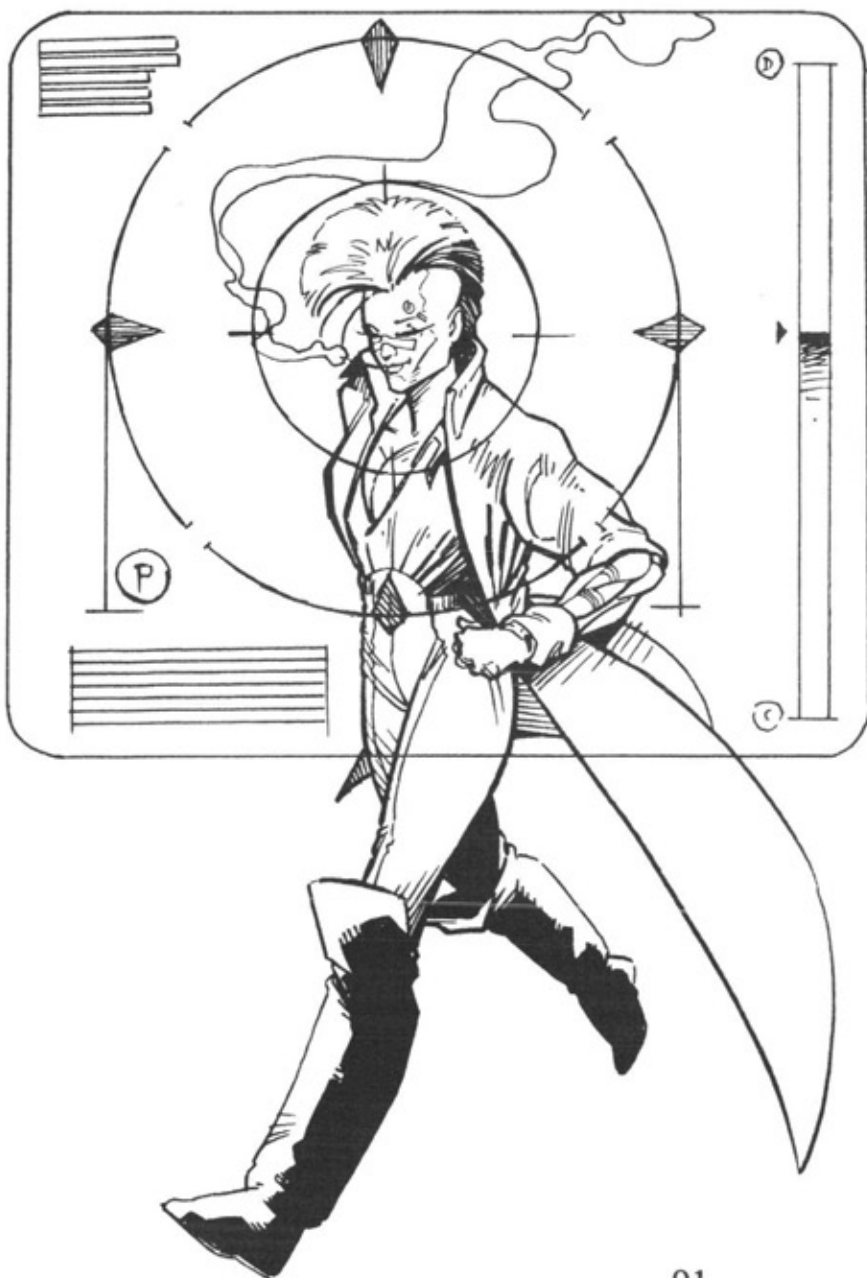
Quirks: Emphasizes his Native American heritage through dress and hair style; Has very little interest in sex or relationships; Spends money generously, when he has it; Sticks with one club until he's tired of it, then moves on; Won't talk about his military career.

Skills: Brawling-12, Carousing-13, Demolitions-11, Guns (Various)-13, Streetwise-13, plus:

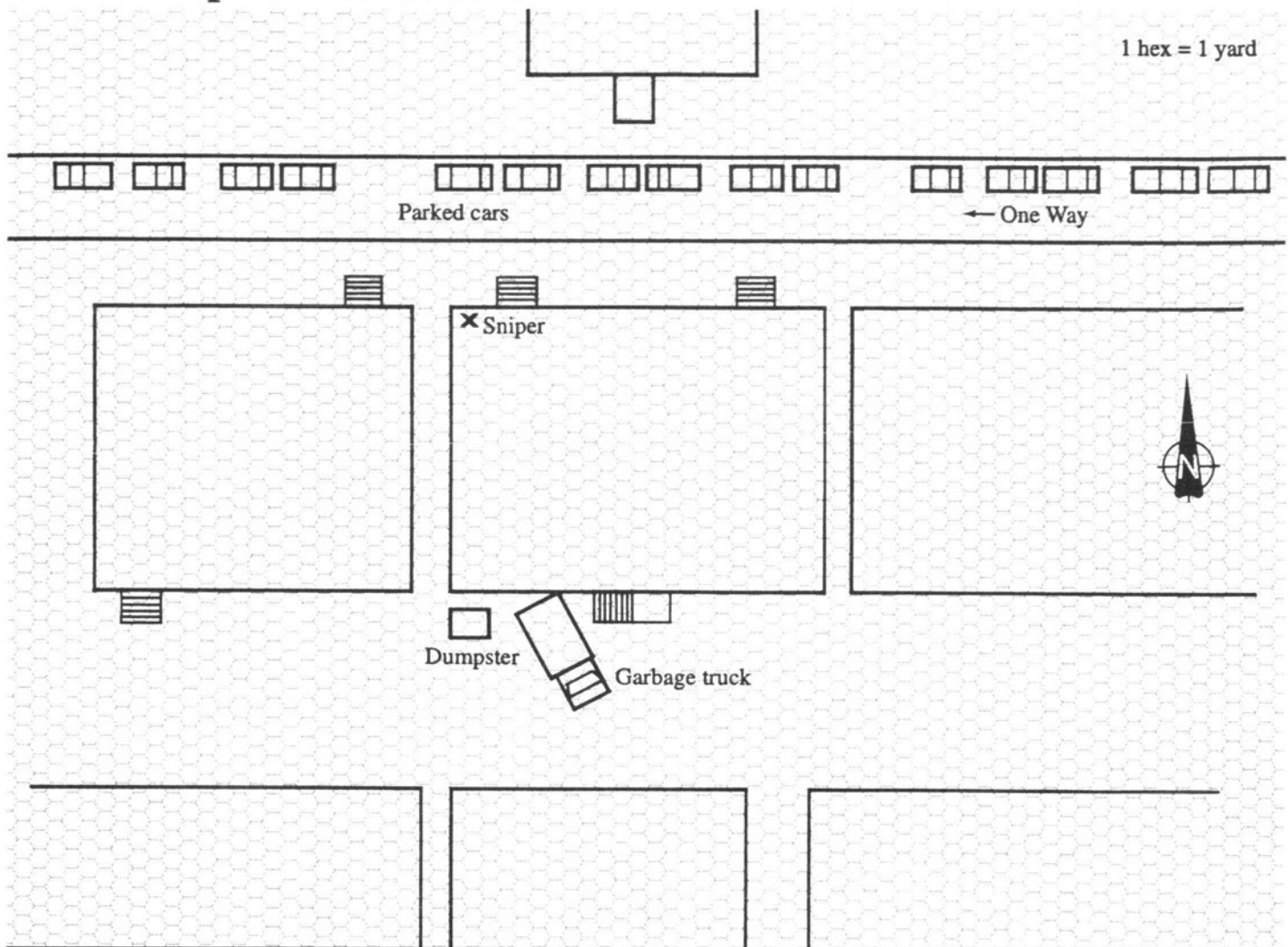
Netrunner Version

Area Knowledge (Local Cyberspace)-15, Computer Programming-13, Computer Hacking-14, Cyberdeck Operation-14, Electronics (Cyberdeck)-12.

Continued on page 93...



Map of Ambush Site



Imperial Stormtrooper Marksmanship Academy

Despite his awesome chance of success, the sniper's first burst *misses completely*. This is absolutely vital to the adventure – having an important character die in the first few seconds would be anticlimactic, to say the least. This can be accomplished in any number of legitimate ways. First, the GM should make sure that the target and his allies get several chances to spot the ambush in time to make a Dodge roll to get out of the way. Vision rolls (to spot light glinting off the barrel of the rifle) are first up. The GM should also check Danger Sense where appropriate. If none of these attempts works, simply throw huge handfuls of dice (preferably behind a screen), and lament “Rats! Not one hit. Bullets strafe the pavement all around you, throwing up chips of polycrete. Would you care to duck now?”

As a last resort, the GM can use the ubiquitous “lucky-silver-dollar-that-saved-my-life” trick: the target gets hit, but the damage is minimized because the bullet is deflected by some piece of gear he is carrying. This can be particularly useful for motivation – suppose it damages a netrunner's favorite deck . . .

And They're Off!

After the first burst, all bets are off. Bullets are real, and there are no script-immunity privileges: anybody can die. However, it's assumed that a party of three or four average street ops with reasonable combat skills (or one combat god) can survive this encounter with minimal casualties. Partly, this is because the attackers are fairly weak. There is only one sniper, with a limited objective and ammunition. His backup expects only to extract him and make a run for it, and they're lightly armed.

The reason behind this is that O-Mishu, the *oyabun* of the local Yakuza clan (see below), does not wish to waste resources on a relatively simple, straightforward hit. (It is unwise to use a bazooka to kill cockroaches, one might say.) It is to be expected that one individual without bodyguards or serious protective cyberware should die when unsuspectingly hosed with autofire from under 60 feet, discounting luck (and *deus ex machina*).

The sniper has two clips for his carbine. He will fire each turn at maximum RoF (10). If the target ducks behind cover, he might pause a second to cancel his recoil penalties. Or he might fire at the cover if he thinks he has a chance of penetrating it or blowing it up. After the first clip is exhausted, he ducks below the retaining wall, giving the PCs a couple of turns to jockey for position. Then he pops up, aims (if possible) and fires until the second clip is gone.

He will concentrate on the main target, unless someone else steps out into the open and shoots at him. Once his ammo is depleted, or if he takes 5 or more points of damage, he will retreat.

Run Away! Run Away!

The sniper retreats across the roof, away from the group. Parked in an alley on the other side of the building is a garbage truck. The back has been filled with plastic trash bags of polystyrene packing peanuts. The sniper drops his gun into the back of the truck and drops acrobatically onto the trash bags. The truck is 2 yards high, so the fall is 8 yards. Assume he makes his Acrobatics roll, subtracting 5 yards. The bags provide a soft landing; for a three-yard fall, that's 3d-12 damage.

The truck starts as soon as the sniper starts his retreat (he has a signal device). Each player should make a Hearing roll at -2 for their character to notice this.

The truck begins to pull away. It accelerates at 6 mph/second – in other words, it adds 3 to its Move every turn. Characters with their own vehicles may attempt to pursue. A more likely prospect is that the adventurers will try to shoot out the tires. The tires have 10 hit points and are at -5 to hit due to size (in addition to any distance penalties). Destroying one tire will reduce the truck's acceleration to 4 mph (2 yards/turn). Destroying two will prevent it from going anywhere.

Should any of the PCs present themselves as viable targets, the male driver and female passenger will shoot at them. They're armed with machine pistols; each has one extra clip. Otherwise, they will try to escape. If the truck is disabled, they will make a break for it on foot. If at all possible, they'll try to keep the truck between them and the PCs. This means that, if the group approaches from the rear, they will probably shoot and exit out the front windshield rather than through a door.



Vic Redmond (Continued)

Infiltrator Version

Acting-13, Disguise-14, Electronics (Security Systems)-15, Stealth-13.

Vic Redmond is a retired member of the U.S. Army Special Forces. During his tenure with Special Forces, he participated in several operations in South America which profoundly affected him. He was eventually discharged under Section 8 – unfit for service due to mental incapacity. He still doesn't talk about what went on during that time.

Stateside, he bounced from one VA hospital to the next. Eventually, he learned to cope with his problem by getting in touch with his Native American heritage (he is 1/64 Cherokee, and many of his friends are Native Americans). Regular barhopping also contributed to his "therapy."

The skills he learned in the Army didn't go to waste. He supported himself with the occasional mugging, armed robbery or murder. It was only a matter of time before he found steady work, ultimately earning a reputation as a successful street op.

Redmond is well-known on the streets as a man who can get things done – if he doesn't self-destruct, that is. Everyone knows that he's a little bit crazy. He'll take on any job, regardless of the risks, as though he no longer cares whether he lives or dies.

Despite all of this, it is likely that the group will capture or kill all three ninja. In the event that one is taken captive, he will kill himself (upon regaining consciousness, if knocked out) using a suicide implant. The net result is that the targets have no idea why these assassins were attempting to kill them.

Tracing the License Plate

Most players' immediate response to this incident is to ask "Who did this to me? And why?" In an ongoing campaign, they may believe the attempt a reprisal for past wrongdoing. In fact, an enterprising GM could intertwine the events of this adventure with encounters of his own.

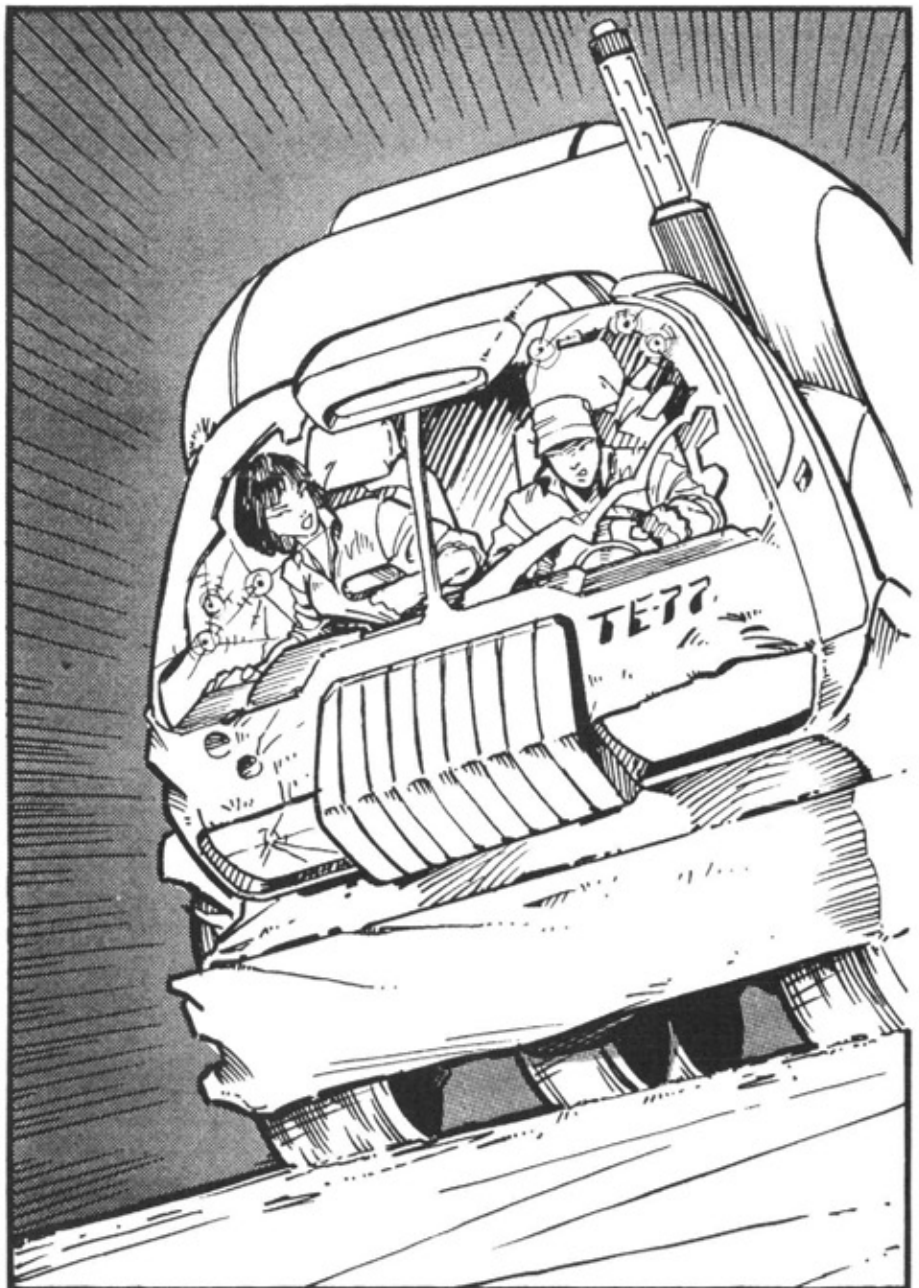
The best lead they have is the truck. If they think to get the license number, they can identify its owners through the Department of Motor Vehicles. *How* they go about getting the information from DMV depends entirely on the approach the players take.



Polly Chromatique of the DMV

If the PCs try to scam the DMV out of the information they need, they get to converse with Polly. After, of course, standing in line (or sitting on hold) for at least half an hour, and filling out the proper forms.

Polly is a new customer service operator, but she's already mastered the necessary skills. She has a Brooklyn accent (and is proud of it), chews gum (even though it's against the rules) and, after considering a request for information for at least five minutes, decides that she doesn't know and has to ask her supervisor. Her only pertinent skills are Fast-Talk, Electronics Operation (Telecommunications) and DMV Rep (professional skill, M/A), all at level 13. Anyone who's had the pleasure of visiting the Department of Motor Vehicles will probably have an idea of the way this encounter should play. If the callers get the impression that she couldn't care less whether they lived or died, they're overestimating her.



Contacts

If any of the characters have police contacts, this is the easiest way to get the data. Simply check to see if the contact is available. If so, they get what they need (or some facsimile of it, depending on the Contact's reliability). If not, they're going to have to get it the hard way.

Characters who *are* cops should have no problem getting the rundown on the truck. They'll probably wind up owing somebody a favor, though – providing a springboard for a future adventure.

Hacking the DMV

This is probably the route most groups will take, though it is the hardest. A party with one or more netridders can try to hack into DMV files. First, they need to establish a staging site – someplace where the hacker can try to punch through that bureaucratic ice without worrying about Yakuza goons trying to shoot him. If the players try to use an apartment, condo, etc., which they have used in the past, remind them (particularly those with Common Sense) that they are likely to be under observation. Lacking anyplace else, they can go to Cyber Jack's (see sidebar), a netrider's paradise.

Refer to the network map on page 120. The GM should be familiar with the territory before beginning the run. Allow the decker a roll against Area Knowledge (Cyberspace). On a successful roll, tell the hacker that the local government bureaucracy occupies a portion of the Net known as the Octopus. Also, give him the node number of the Regional Government Datalock (#4201). If the roll is failed, he'll have to feel his way through the net until he finds what he's looking for (or ask someone who knows).

The deck-jockey must navigate through the net to the Regional Government Datalock. He must cut through the Datalock's ice, then move beyond that into the Octopus. From there, he has to figure out which system belongs to the DMV, and then cut *its* ice. Once that's through, he can search the database for the information needed. The search doesn't take as long as a normal database search, however; license files are indexed for quick access (police doing a trace on a plate number don't have to wait 20 minutes, for instance). Have the hacker make a Computer Hacking skill roll. Search time is five minutes, minus 30 seconds for each point the roll was made by (minimum 30 seconds).

The Con-Job

The group may try to contact someone at the DMV and persuade him to reveal the owner of the truck. Use Polly, from the sidebar on p. 94, and roleplay it. Then, make a reaction roll. A Fast-Talk skill roll may be substituted, per p. B63. A plausible story and good roleplaying should certainly be worth a bonus to the reaction or Fast-Talk roll.

On a Good or better reaction, she gives the PC the information. On a Neutral reaction, Polly declines to give the PC the information, but her suspicions are not aroused – she doesn't set the police at the inquirer's heels.

On a Bad or worse reaction, she traces the call and dispatches police to the location. Roll Electronics Operation (Telecommunications) for her



Cyber Jack's

Once upon a time, there was a notorious netrider who called himself the Punster. This cowboy ransacked banks and corporate data havens, stealing millions. Then, unlike many of his peers, who self-destructed because they were too stupid to quit while they were ahead, he got out. His reflexes were no longer at their peak. He'd lost his edge. He laundered his fortune and dropped out of sight behind a curtain of respectability.

He wasn't completely out of the game, however. Part of his loot became a drinking establishment, which has steadfastly remained as countless others flared and died. The bar was called Cyber Jack's.

Continued on next page . . .

Cyber Jack's (Continued)

The place became a haven for console cowboys and technofreaks of all kinds. Drawn in at first because of the humorous name, they soon learned that Cyber Jack's possesses certain . . . special charms.

First off, it isn't cheap. There's a cover of \$100 just to walk through the door. Drinks run \$15-\$20 apiece. But there's no exclusive membership. Anyone can come in off the street, although they may not be aware of the bar's special features.

The reason the place is so expensive, of course, is that a percentage of the proceeds gets funnelled into kickbacks to the local authorities and organizations. Cyber Jack's is one of the few places in the city where you can do almost anything without fear of reprisal . . . unless, of course, you irritate the owner.

The need for such protection stems from the fact that several of the booths in quieter and darker corners have concealed cyberjacks that link the user directly into the Pirate's Cove BBS. Every day, countless illegal netruns are initiated from the bar. It has become known as a place of safety; as a point of origin, it's almost unTraceable. And even if found out, few people will risk attacking someone at Cyber Jack's. The place makes so much money that both police and criminals would risk losing a major source of income if it were compromised.



every 10 seconds; four successes indicate a successful trace. She must keep the PC on the line while doing this.

If the PCs don't turn up the leads to the Gomijutsu Corporation through the truck's ID, don't worry about it. It isn't essential to the adventure, and can always be followed up later, if necessary.

Tracing the Ninja

If the group carefully examines the bodies of the ninja, they notice that the dead assassins have some unusual features. The sniper is missing the first digit of the smallest finger on his left hand. The woman who was riding shotgun in the truck has an ornate dragon tattooed on her back.

Players may realize that these are signs that the attackers were affiliated with the Yakuza. If not, anyone with Streetwise skill can make a roll. Success reveals this information.

The group may attempt to trace the Yakuza. Characters with street Contacts may avail themselves of them. Otherwise, another Streetwise roll will turn up Spider Corrigan, a street dealer in information pertaining to organized crime.

The contact will give the group the name of a Yak front company for a bribe of \$200. The players may try to dicker; roll a Contest of Merchant Skill. Spider's skill is 9 for general subjects, but he specializes in information, in which he has skill 15.

The name of the Yakuza front company is Gomijutsu Waste Removal, Incorporated.

No News is Good News?

Finally, ominously, make it blatantly obvious to the group that no sign of their scuffle appears in the news that day, no matter how vigorously they reported it. Or the following day. Or the day after that. This should suggest that whoever was involved in the assassination attempt is very powerful, with far-reaching influence.

Abamadeus Appears

While the group is "safely" sequestered somewhere, either making plans or doing a little netrunning, Abamadeus Kilifrey shows up to do a little body work. He's looking for the amnesiac, and he's not there to dance.

The purpose of this encounter is to dissuade the group from sitting in one place, seeking the answers to the mystery while safely hiding. They have to get out and keep moving, or their pursuers will catch up to them. The rest of this description assumes the scene takes place at Cyber Jack's, but it could easily be transposed to any sort of hideout that is reasonably public. If the group decides not to hide out (or goes to ground in a place that's totally private), change the scene or omit it.

The Lone PC

During a lull, have one of the characters (*not* the coopted PC) get up and leave the others temporarily. Pick someone who hasn't really had a chance to do much yet. Tell that player that nature calls, his drink's in need of refreshment, or something that will prompt him to leave the others

momentarily. In the process, he spots Ab at the bar (not a difficult task, given Ab's imposing appearance). The player should get the idea that Ab is there looking for someone. Anyone with a healthy dose of Paranoia (or Common Sense) should realize that his target is the group.

Dodging the Bullet

This is the observer's chance to avoid a combat situation – a good idea, since Ab will leave an average group in small pieces. If he tries to signal the rest of the group to skedaddle, he must make a roll vs. Gesture+1. Success means that he manages to communicate this idea. However, roll a separate Contest of Skills between the PC's Gesture and Ab's Vision to see whether Ab notices the motions. If he does, he'll confront the signaler. If this happens, roll a Contest of the adventurer's Fast-Talk and Ab's Intimidation skills (modified heavily by roleplaying!). If the PC wins, he manages to lie convincingly! If he loses, the jig is up. If the group hasn't snuck out the back door by now, they're spotted, and a full-fledged fight ensues (see below).

An innovative player may think of any number of ways to distract Ab so the rest of the party can escape. "Accidents," especially those resulting in messily spilled drinks, are likely, and are fun to roleplay. Remember that Ab, ruthless and deadly cyborg though he is, will not simply obliterate any random drunk that crosses his path. He might rattle some teeth – but that's much better than eating an APEX Gyroc round!

Ab Attacks!

If Ab spots the group, they're in trouble. He's no pushover like the Yakuza assassins. Unless they routinely carry rocket launchers, he should be able to laugh off anything they can throw at him, while launching gyroc rounds at them with ridiculous accuracy.

Hopefully, if they've gotten into these dire straits, the targets were at least sharp enough to turn all of their loose cash into armor, because the APEX rounds are flying fast and furious. Tables can be upended for use as cover. They have DR 4 and 20 hit points.

With his 40 DR, it will be difficult for the adventurers to hurt Ab. Once



Jack

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 12.

Speed 6, Move 6.

Dodge 6.

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Contacts (numerous), Filthy Rich.

Disadvantages: Enemies, Overweight, Secret.

Skills: Administration-15, Cyberdeck Operation-13, Detect Lies-8 [15], Guns/TL8 (Pistol)-12, Fast-Talk-14, Merchant-15.

Cyberware: 3 chip sockets, environmental cyberdeck interface. Typically slots a business database (Orders, accounting, tabs etc.), Amp chip, and Detect Lies [6].

The proprietor of Cyber Jack's is known simply as Jack. Nobody knows if this is his real name or not. Most people are smart enough not to ask.

Continued on next page . . .

Jack (Continued)

Very few people realize that Jack is the infamous Punster. It's a Secret. But anyone listening to the grapevine should realize that he made his seed money illicitly.

Jack is a tall, stout black man who seems to be in his 30s (although, if he's worth what people speculate, his apparent youth comes from a vat). He keeps his head shaved, and has an eye tattooed on the back of his head (this seems to be some sort of joke). He usually wears some implants, nothing too visible, but he makes no attempt to disguise them. And anyone in a position to recognize it will notice that he has a cyberdeck interface.

Jack hasn't done any serious net-running in years. His icebreaking skills are at least five years out of date – he's a businessman now, and as a console cowboy considers himself strictly a dinosaur.

they realize this, they will probably decide to settle for getting away alive. They can employ a couple of different tactics to buy some time.

Pound him: Conventional weapons will put him down, but not out. Still, this can buy precious time for the group to escape. Don't forget to use the Knockback rules for this confrontation – it's almost the only way he can be stopped.

Stun Weapons: Though tough, Ab has no special protection against nonlethal weapons such as stun wands (see p. CY47) or sonics (from *GURPS Ultra-Tech*). Immobilizing weapons such as tangles can also be quite useful. Again, the main thing here is for the group to slow him down long enough to escape.

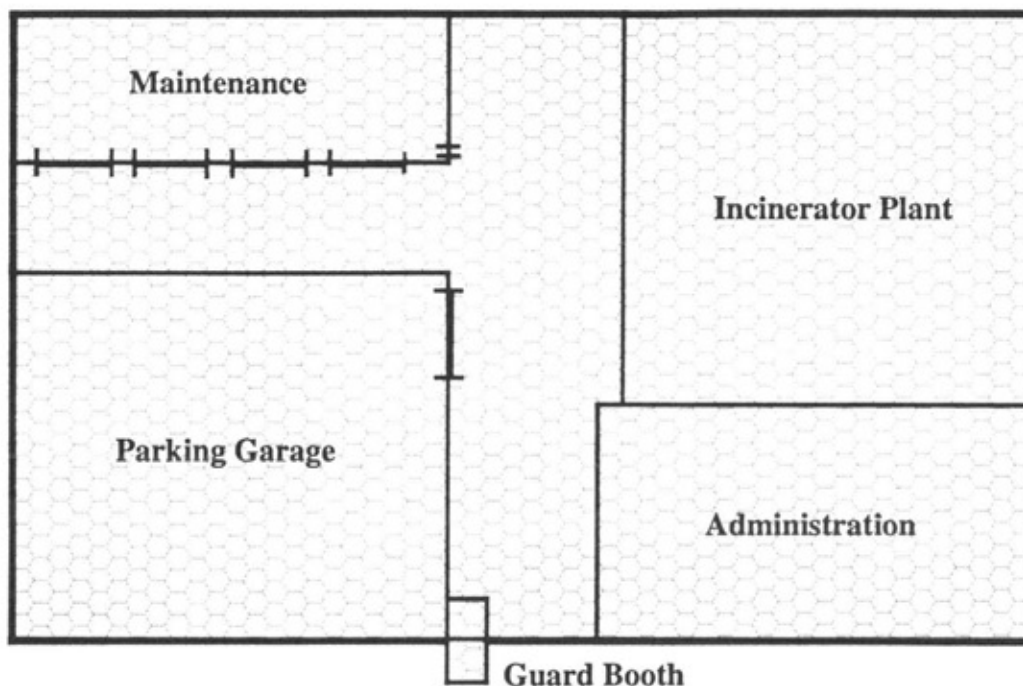
Fire: Setting Ab's clothes on fire will distract him long enough for the group to escape. His DR will protect him for 120 turns (see p. B130). However, there is a danger of his ammunition exploding! If the defenders think to ignite him (possibly after dousing him in high-proof drinks), he'll run for the nearest fire extinguisher.

Once they've manufactured some breathing room, the party can make a run for it. If they have their own car, they can escape in that. Otherwise, a cab, miraculously empty, is located nearby. As they pull away, Ab's driver steps away from his limousine, into the path of the PCs' car, and shoots at



Gomijutsu Waste Removal

1 hex = 1 yard



them with a sporting pistol. In all likelihood, they wipe him out in passing. He's a normal, with a Dodge of 5 and 10 HT. If not, the resulting car chase is left for the GM to devise.

If they *do* incapacitate the driver, they get away. Ab's Driving skill is poor, and, sadly, it's one of the few things he's not chipped for . . .

Gomijutsu Waste Removal, Incorporated

Once the group has a handle on *who* engineered the sniping attempt, it is possible they will proceed to the company's headquarters to find out *why*. One might argue that this is a foolish and desperate act. However, these *are* player characters, and this *is GURPS Cyberpunk* . . .

Before discussing the Gomijutsu site, it is important to mention what is developing in the background at this point. In an attempt to understand why the brain-blocked character is acting the way he is, the Onishima scientist who programmed the Lethe implant has been reviewing its code. At last, he stumbled across the error. Upon reporting this his superiors, they were ecstatic; perhaps the assassination attempt is just the catalyst they needed to put their plans on the right track! Gleefully, they postponed the contract, instead charging the Yakuza to follow the group, in the event that they find Redmond before anyone else does.

O-Mishu, the Yak oyabun, is none too pleased by this. She underestimated her target in the initial attempt, and this has cost her badly in the eyes of her peers. She would like nothing more than a second chance to exterminate the group, which would do a great deal to restore her lost face. However, like any good entrepreneur, she recognizes that the customer is always right.

Abamadeus Kilifrey

Age indeterminate, 6' 5" 300 lbs., short black hair. His eyes are bionic, and look like ball bearings (no pupil, no white, no iris, just a chrome sphere) He usually wears sunglasses with round lenses and blinders. He likes to intimidate people by whipping them off to reveal those eyes . . .

ST 20, DX 12, IQ 12, HT 14/20.

Speed 6.5, Move 5.

Dodge 6, Parry 9 (Karate).

Full Metal Jacket (PD 6, DR 40),
Light encumbrance.

Advantages: Ambidexterity (chipped), Combat Reflexes (chipped), High Pain Threshold (chipped), Hit Points +6, Wealth (Filthy Rich).

Disadvantages: Gigantism, Gluttony, Lecherousness, Sadism.

Quirks: Appreciates it when a target puts up a fight (it makes it interesting); Bored beyond belief; Seldom speaks because of his weird voice; Will try anything.

Continued on next page . . .



Abamadeus Kilifrey
(Continued)

Skills: Guns/TL8 (Gyroc)-16 [18], Intimidation-12 [15], Karate-13 [14], Savoir-Faire-13, Stealth-13, Streetwise-14. (Skill scores in brackets include adjustments for neural chips, but not other cyberware.)

Cyberware: 6 hidden chip slots – he typically wears Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Guns (Gyroc)[16], Intimidation[6] and Karate[8]; two bionic eyes (appear fake, include Light Intensification, Polarization and Weapon Link +2); Full Metal Jacket (appears normal, PD 6, DR 40); gyroc launch pistol implanted in left arm – 2d(10) SS 10 Acc 2, otherwise per page CY60. Ab loads all three firing ports with APEX rounds.

Abamadeus Kilifrey is the gunman hired by Cyberrad to recover the missing data and eliminate anyone who gets in the way. “Ab” (pronounced “ahb”) grew up wealthy, the sole heir to a billion-dollar shipping business. During his youth, he played the sybarite, spending a fortune on cyberwear and another fortune on his luxurious lifestyle. He and his army of groupies lived it up, while well-paid brokers managed his finances.

Continued on next page . . .

So, for now, she will do as Onishima requests. Her network of spies will monitor the movement of the group at all times. But someday, have no fear: her honor will be restored . . .

Headquarters

The Gomijutsu physical plant is not described in great detail here. It is expected that the group will either penetrate the administrative building, at which point they will meet with O-Mishu, or they will be knocked out by the guards’ nonlethal weapons.

Physical Layout

Gomijutsu’s operational headquarters is located on the fringe of the less-savory parts of town – an area that citizen groups are always badgering the city government to “reclaim.” It’s dingy and dangerous, but nothing compared to the slums. The HQ itself consists of four buildings:

Administration Building: This less-than-modern building is inconspicuous among the other businesses which take advantage of the low property values in this part of town. It is four stories high. Inside the front entrance is a security station manned by two guards. Both guards are chipped to trip an alarm by IR link (like a television remote). If either of them is knocked out or killed, the alarm is also activated.

Doors beyond the lobby lead to the elevator, and beyond that, the Customer Service area. This consists of dozens of desks with terminals and telephone headsets; Customer Service reps are responsible for handling customer complaints and resolving billing problems. This area is deserted at night.

The second floor features a locker room area for the garbage truck drivers and a large area sectioned into small cubicles, used by minor administrative workers. A clear glass walkway (brightly illuminated at night) connects the second floor to the parking garage (see below).

The third floor cannot be accessed without a card key used in the elevator. Ostensibly, it is here that the company’s computer is located. In fact, there are two separate computers on the third floor, but one is used strictly for Yak business, and is not part of the local net.

The fourth floor is locked out of the elevator, as above. It consists of the private apartments of O-Mishu and her most loyal retainers. It is noteworthy that this level features charcoal-tinted privacy glass, which can be seen from outside during the day with a Vision roll.

Parking Garage: This three-story structure provides parking space for Gomijutsu’s fleet of 40+ trucks and employees’ personal vehicles. It is connected to the main building at the second story by a glass walkway.

Maintenance Garage: This one-story structure is dedicated to repairing inoperative trucks. There is sufficient room for four trucks to drive in through the garage-style doors. There will always be a few guards in this area at night, as many of the tools here are quite expensive, and thieves will make off with anything that isn’t nailed down.

Reclamation plant: It is here that the massive loads of trash are brought to be destroyed. Recyclables are separated out, processed, and sold as raw materials to manufacturers. Non-reusable material is incinerated using a sophisticated process to reduce pollution.

The GM should note that the plant contains lots of interesting machinery and dangerous hazards (conveyors feeding into incinerators!) which can make for an interesting gunfight. At night, several guards patrol the grounds (which, as noted on the map, are completely fenced in). Unless otherwise noted, guards encountered within the confines of Gomijutsu have the same stats as the ninja from the sidebar on p. 90. They are armed with spring needlers (see pp. CY46 and CY60) using hollow needles to deliver a dose of Sandman (see p. CY59).

There are also two guards manning the gatehouse. They check IDs against their list of expected visitors (anyone they know by sight, they pass right through). Unexpected visitors cause a quick call to the *oyabun*. (If the party members present themselves at the gate, they will, surprisingly enough, be admitted!)

Penetrating the Compound

It is possible the group will try to climb over the fence, sneak through the parking garage, and enter the office building through the walkway. This can be accomplished if they move quickly and quietly eliminate a few key guards. If they make a ruckus, the alarm is sounded and dozens of guards will be all over them in moments.

Another way to enter the complex secretly is to hide in one of the trucks. Drivers are dispatched beginning at 4 a.m., and return approximately every two hours to unload. After observing this routine, it will be relatively simple for the invaders to waylay a truck. An average truck driver has ST 12, DX 11, IQ 9 and HT 10. If provoked, he attacks with a tool, such as a tire iron, rolling against DX to hit and doing swing/crushing damage. However, he will respond positively to bribery (make a reaction roll at +1 for every \$10 over \$50 offered, -1 for every \$10 less). And he will comply meekly with orders when a gun is thrust in his face.

If they make it inside, they can explore for as long as they are cautious. As soon as the alarm is raised, they will quickly be surrounded by many, many guards. They will then be escorted into the administration building, where they will be greeted by Kozuo (see sidebar, p. 106). He will courteously and diplomatically invite them to meet the *oyabun*, giving his word of honor that they will not be harmed.

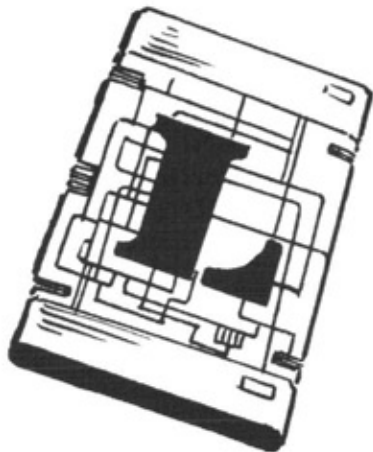
If they fight and are knocked unconscious, they awaken in O-Mishu's pres-

Abamadeus Kilifrey (Continued)

Eventually, he grew jaded. Since he could buy anything he wanted, nothing interested him anymore. He began to delve into forbidden pleasures. The people he hired to supply these entertainments were the rulers of the shadows: the Yakuza, the Tong, the Jamaican posses. Eventually, one of them suggested something completely illicit: a brutal, public assassination. Ab was intrigued. The rest was history.

Ab is one of the most notorious hired killers around. He isn't particularly talented, but what he lacks in skill, he makes up in hardware. He is chromed to the teeth. Short of using heavy artillery on him, he's virtually unstoppable.





Lethe Chip

A Lethe chip is an experimental neural implant, developed for use on trauma victims. The chip blocks out memories by identifying the patterns of mental activity associated with the memories and suppressing those patterns. The chip is considered cutting-edge technology; it isn't difficult to make, but its effects are still rather unpredictable. Patients fitted with Lethe implants who encounter the source of their lost memories have reacted in unusual and widely varying ways. In test cases on rape victims, most patients who were introduced to their attackers while on the Lethe chip simply did not remember them, although they retained the memories of the latter meeting. Some, however, lost any memory of the attacker, regardless of the time frame, despite encountering him again and again. In other women, meeting their attacker abruptly voided the effect of the implant, and in some it caused depression (in one severe case, catatonia), which the victim was unable to explain. In one bizarre case, the subject fitted with the Lethe chip seemed to be unable to perceive her tormentor at all!

A Lethe chip uses a standard neural interface. It is not particularly expensive, but it is rare and experimental. It is not available to the general public, but should be to the better medical clinics (and the large zaibatsus that control them).

Continued on next page . . .

ence, in her apartment on the fourth floor. They will have been stripped of all their weapons and ammunition (except cyberware, of course).

Audience With O-Mishu the Oyabun

O-Mishu reclines comfortably in a leather armchair on a dais. She is surrounded by her personal guard. This consists of two bodyguards per player character, plus Kozuo. The bodyguards have the same stats as the ninja in the sidebar, p. 90, but are cyborgs with DR5, Combat Reflexes, and retractable claws (for +2 hand damage). They have Fast-Draw (claws)-13 and Karate-15 (giving an additional +3 damage). If anyone attempts to attack O-Mishu, two guards use their bodies to shield her, while the remainder attack the aggressor, as does Kozuo. Characters with Common Sense get an IQ roll to realize that attacking her would be a *big* mistake.

The group is led before her. There is no other furniture in the room, so they'll have to stand (or kneel, if they wish . . .). Once assembled, she addresses them:

"My friends, you have put me in a difficult position. On the one hand, I admire the courage you have shown in coming here. Such bravery should not go unrewarded. At the same time, however, I have a client who has paid me a great deal of money to kill you. Such a predicament! It boggles the mind. In ancient Japan, one would never have been troubled with a situation such as this. What, then, am I to do with you?"

She is, of course, toying with them. Onishima has already instructed her *not* to kill them. Let the PCs grovel and debase themselves, then seem to win her over. Should one of the PCs suggest a grace period, she will agree to it heartily. Otherwise, she herself will reach this solution (possibly after a whispered "consultation" with Kozuo). She will offer them a reasonable length of time (say 48 hours), during which the Yak will leave them unmolested. Once they have reached this accord, she will have them escorted off the property and taken wherever they wish to go. If the PCs were knocked out and denuded of weaponry, all equipment is returned as soon as they are outside the Gomijutsu HQ.

Under no circumstances will O-Mishu reveal the name of her employers! The only information they will be able to wrangle out of her is that the amnesiac (whom she *will* identify) did something to someone who desires vengeance. She will express utter amazement at the fact that the target remembers nothing of it. If they press the issue, make a reaction roll. On a good reaction, she will politely terminate the conversation and have them shown out. On a bad reaction, she might become angry, have them tossed out on their collective ear, and refuse to return their gear.

Following The Meeting

After meeting with O-Mishu, the group will be kept under surveillance by Kozuo. However, he's effectively out of it until the end. He won't interfere with them until they have the data; nor will they have any chance to catch him in the act.

Dealing With the Chip

By now, the individual with the memory problem may be starting to

realize that something is seriously wrong with him. If there is a doctor in the party, a careful examination (requiring 1 hour and a successful Physician roll) will reveal the hidden chip socket.

Give a +2 bonus to the roll if the player whose character is doing the examining specifically mentions looking for evidence of brain surgery. If they have access to any kind of medical scanning equipment, the implant will be obvious – +5 to the roll, as all the physician has to do is correctly read the picture.

Alternatively, they can hire a splicer to perform the examination for \$100. If the GM doesn't have one in his campaign, he can send them to Zaphod's Body Shoppe (see sidebar, p 108). The NPC physician will spot the implant automatically. Upon discovering the hidden socket, the plastikin cover can be removed. At that time, it should be obvious to anyone who knows anything about implants, including those who have implants themselves or the Electronics or Mechanics (cybernetics) skills, that this partic-

Lethe Chip (Continued)

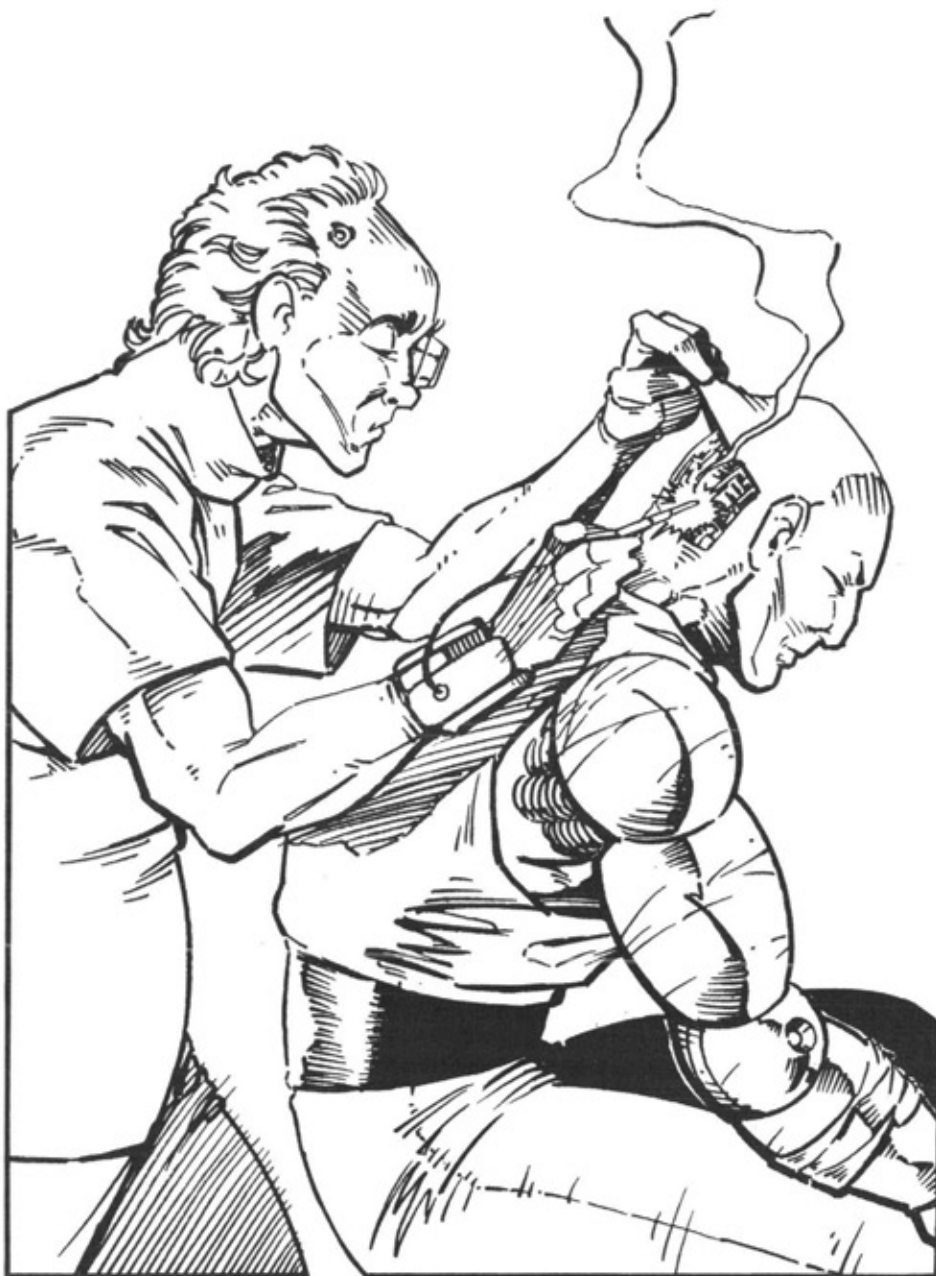
The chip with which the player character has been equipped has some specialized features. It was designed to block out a specific period of time in the wearer's memory, including the time when he was paid for attacking Onishima, his subsequent capture and interrogation, and being fitted with the Lethe Chip itself. However, because the Onishima splicer made a critical failure when programming the implant, it also blots out a week or so prior to that time, thus making this adventure infinitely more interesting.

The implant is plugged into a standard neural interface. If the character didn't have a chip socket before, he has one now. The new socket has been expertly concealed under fake skin. If he did have one (or more), a new one might have been added, or the chip might just be "hidden in plain sight," occupying one of his regular slots. If the chip is taking up a space in the character's chip inventory, note that he may try to do things he no longer has the ability to do! This can be amusing or deadly, depending upon the circumstances.

The chip has been physically locked into the socket. Removing it requires using a special code key, a standard tool of an implant technician. The key is a short wand and probe; the locking code is programmed into the key, which can then unlock the security mechanisms preventing the chip from being removed. Cracking the code requires 10 hours of work, with an Electronics (Cybernetics) roll every two hours, as per the rules on long tasks (sidebar, p. B93).

Finally, there is a cortex bomb built into the socket. Tampering with the implant without first disarming the bomb will set it off, killing the subject and endangering everyone nearby (see p. CY34).

Once all the dangerous hardware is removed, the chip socket may be used in the normal fashion.



Memories Awaken

As the PC encounters things involved in his run on Onishima, he may begin to experience unpleasant reactions from the Lethe chip. As described above, people and places from his lost memory should cause him no ill effects. However, as also mentioned, some people have bad reactions . . .

The GM can feel free to have the character experience headaches, nausea, depression, or whatever seems appropriate as the party begins to fill in the blanks. This can be especially useful in alerting the player that something is wrong.



ular one cannot be removed easily. It requires high-tech tools just to extract it because of the physical protection installed (see sidebar, p. 103).

Zaphod has a cybertech who will examine the chip. The technician runs a basic scan of the character's head. The prognosis, however, is not good. The physical locks, of course, are no problem. But someone seriously wants to keep that implant from being removed. A cortex bomb is attached to the implant, and rigged to explode if it is tampered with. The Body Shoppe will be happy to disarm and remove it, of course. All the character has to do is sign a liability waiver . . . and fork over \$1,000,000.

Nina Jerrold's Message

Once the group has reached an impasse (either they have contacted the Yakuza, or they have absolutely no intention of doing so), the key character receives a message from Nina Jerrold. The method of delivery is left to the GM to devise, based on whatever seems the most likely method for his campaign. The only requirement is that the message is a one-way communication.

Possibilities include, but are not limited to, answering machine messages retrieved from home via public phone booth; e-mail left in the Pirate's Cove message base; delivered on disk by a courier, street contact, etc.

Whenever the group has a chance to examine it, read them the following paragraph:

"[Character's name], it's Nina Jerrold. I need to see you. They contacted me today . . . I don't know why they let you go, but they've changed their minds. They want the data back, and they're willing to kill us to get it.

"You've got to find Redmond. If you can get the disc, return it to them, I think they'll let us live. If we drop out of sight for a while, make it expensive for them to flatline us, they might just let it go. I can give the fee back to our employers. I'm not saying it won't hurt, but I can do it.

"Look. Just find that double-crossing lunatic. I haven't been able to reach him. He ignores my messages, and nobody's seen him at his usual haunts. Try his friend, what's his name? Talltrees. The current freak. Anything, just find him and get it back. Do you understand me? That's the most important thing. Get it back."

Jerrold's vid number and address can be found in any public directory.

Nina's Place

After hearing the message, the group may try to contact Nina Jerrold. There's no answer. Earlier in the day, Ab paid her a visit. This was not unusual for her; he was her original go-between with Cyberrad. However, she miscalculated. Thinking that their best chance to find Redmond was through her, she overestimated her value to her employers. In fact, since Onishima had her name, she was a liability, the only one involved who knew that Cyberrad had sponsored the raid. When she admitted Ab, he shot her.

The adventurers should eventually tire of leaving Nina messages, and try to see her in person.

Security

Finding Nina's place is not difficult. It's part of a huge building, located in an upscale part of town, with several hundred condos just like hers. Getting in to see her, however, is not so easy.

In the lobby of the building is a booth with an armored glass window (DR8, 80 hit points), which is manned at all times. To enter the building proper, the guard buzzes a magnetically-locked door, which leads to the elevator foyer. The elevator is controlled from the guard booth as well, with an audio connection to the booth for tenants visiting other parts of the building.

The guard inquires as to which tenant the person is there to see. He gets identification from them through a security drawer. He then calls the tenant (unless that tenant has left orders not to be disturbed, or advance notice of the visitor's arrival), to confirm their entry. If the tenant approves, he'll buzz the person through, manually controlling the elevator to ensure that they aren't wandering around the building. The tenant is supposed to let the guard know when their visitors have arrived.

In order to get in to see Nina (since she isn't answering her phone), they'll have to get the guard to let them in. Chances are they'll try to con him. Attempts to Fast-Talk Byron, the guard, are at -4 (he isn't bright, but he's had a lot of experience). Note that due to the vast amount of information available in a cyberpunk world, most cons which would work today won't help here. For instance, the "exterminator" ploy (or meter-reader or whatever) won't work, since an appointment would be made through the building's central computer service, which Byron will check.

Others are possible, however; the "surprise visit by a relative from out of town" scheme could work, but the quality of roleplaying involved should impact heavily on the Fast-Talk roll. One other possibility is bribery. This will also be difficult, however. The condo association pays Byron well for his relatively menial job specifically to make him resistant to bribery.

However, Byron is a metalhead. He looks and talks like a metalhead, so this isn't difficult to deduce. At night, he plays with an amateur band called Crucifixx. Playing off this information to gain his confidence is probably the best way to get by him. While he'll resist cash (at *least* \$1,000 would be needed here), he could easily be bribed with a promise to introduce him to a popular metal band, or to land a gig for his band at a club whose owner a visitor "just happens to know."

Or, if the group *really* gets into his good graces, persuading him that they're fellow metalheads, he might let them in as a favor. Bargaining with appropriate skills (Musical Instrument, hobby skill Rock 'n Roll, professional skill Nightclub Manager and so on) allows a +2 bonus to Fast-Talk or substitution of the skill being used.

If they ask him if anyone else has been in to see Nina recently (which they will probably do on the way out), Byron says "Yeah, some big dude was here this morning. But Ms. Jerrold said he was okay." When asked to describe the man, Byron describes Abamadeus Kilifrey.

The Premises

Once inside, they find that Nina's home is a complete shambles.



O-Mishu the Oyabun

Age 45, 5' 6", 125 lbs., oriental, black hair and eyes.

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 11.

Speed 5.75, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 10 (Karate).

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Beautiful, Common Sense

Disadvantages: Duty (to clan), Social Stigma (second-class citizen).

Quirks: Dresses in the traditional Japanese style; Resents the fact that she is underestimated because she is a woman; Secretly a martial arts master (but admits it to no one); Starts the occasional sentence with "In ancient Japan . . ."

Skills: Area Knowledge (City)-13, Diplomacy-16, Fast-Talk-15, Karate-16, Leadership-14, Politics-13, Sex Appeal-12.

When her husband, the previous *oyabun*, died mysteriously, O-Mishu stepped into his role to prevent a bloody war between rival factions. She is one of few female clan leaders in the Yakuza; despite socioeconomic advances in its homeland, the criminal organization remains steeped in ancient Japanese customs. Yakuza wives are still considered second-class citizens, a fact which O-Mishu recognizes and resents.

Kozuo

Age 60 (looks much younger), 5' 8", 150 lbs., oriental, straight black hair, brown eyes.

ST 12, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 11.

Speed 6, Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 11 (Karate), 9 (Wakizashi).

Medium monocrys and Toughness (PD 2, DR 18), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Reputation: +4 in the underworld (known as "Deadly" Kozuo), Toughness +2.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Never attacks a lesser enemy unawares), Duty (to clan), Truthfulness.

Quirks: Calls O-Mishu "Daughter" when no one else is around; Collects kung-fu flicks on videodisc; Disdains guns; Polite to the point of obnoxiousness.

Skills: Acrobatics-15, Fast-Draw (Short Sword)-14, Fast-Draw (Shuriken)-14, Fire-Breathing (P/E, see below)-15, Holdout-13, Judo-16, Karate-16, Short Sword (Wakizashi)-17, Stealth-20, Throwing-15.

Note: If *GURPS Martial Arts* is available, Kozuo should be a master of ninjutsu, with all primary and secondary skills at skill-16 or better. He also possesses all of the cinematic skills and maneuvers. Otherwise, some of his talents – such as the ability to avoid detection by the group unless he wishes to be seen – must simply be assumed.

Cyberware: Kozuo has had most of one lung removed and replaced with a polymer sac which holds volatile chemicals. When the chemicals are mixed, they ignite, creating a substance similar to napalm. To use the flame thrower, Kozuo must concentrate for 1 turn. At the beginning of the following turn, he can breathe a flame jet up to 2 hexes long. This is treated as a melee attack with a reach of 2, rather than a ranged attack. The jet does 2d flame damage, can be blocked or dodged (but not parried), and there is a 10 or less chance on a successful hit that any flammable clothing will catch fire! See p. B129 for more about flame damage. This ability should be kept in reserve; Kozuo can use it 25 times before exhausting his fuel, but as close combat weapons go, it carries a lot of surprise value!

Continued on next page . . .



Someone has obviously searched it, and wasn't careful about it. Articles of clothing, furniture, and other small, loose objects are scattered everywhere. All of the larger furnishings have been vandalized – cushions ripped, light fixtures and artwork smashed, and so on.

The worst discovery comes last. In the office, they find Nina Jerrold – dead. She's sitting behind her desk, slumped over with several bullet wounds in her chest. A successful Forensics-2 roll will reveal the injuries were inflicted by APEX Gyroc rounds.

On a successful Criminology roll, tell the player it seems unusual, for so obvious an execution, not to go for a head shot. Perhaps there was a reason not to?

The Body

Upon close inspection, it becomes apparent that Nina Jerrold had two neural implants – one a chip socket, the other an environmental cyberdeck interface. Though she dealt in human resources, Jerrold made most of her deals through cyberspace, only rarely coming face-to-face with a client or employee.

The chip socket is empty, indicating that there is a potentially interesting neurochip missing. (Again, if the group gets stuck on this, give them

this information on a successful Criminology roll.) A thorough search of the office uncovers it lying on the carpet in one corner of the room. Chips of paint cling to it from where Ab bounced it off the wall. It's Nina's address book (see below).

The Computer Terminal

Nina's desk features her cyberdeck and a standard terminal which is wired into the building computer. It uses a flat, 2-D screen and responds to voice commands. The terminal is undamaged (strangely enough), and can be accessed by anyone. Nina kept all of her important data in her head and in cyberspace, so she took no special precautions with her house computer.

The data which can be called up is mostly dull. Included is mundane information such as the household schedule (wakeup calls, automatic meal processing, and so on). However, in addition to recording run-of-the-mill cable programs (she was a big soap fan), she had an active news daemon. This program gathered news which pertained to certain keywords. If the list is examined it includes such obvious entries as her own name and address, plus the target PC's name (and address, if available) and Vic Redmond's name and address (an apartment in the Projects). The daemon has one news report on file which hasn't been erased yet. The report details an explosion which occurred at the address listed with Redmond's name, a few hours ago. Specifically, police are looking for the tenant, a Victor Redmond, who wired his front door with plastique. Apparently, some poor soul set it off, but survived and escaped, leaving no clue as to his identity.

Once this information has been recovered, the group should move quickly. Remember, they've uncovered a murder scene, and are likely to become suspects. If careful about covering their tracks, they should have no trouble in the future. If not, however, they may find a cop on their doorstep . . .

Finding Vic Redmond

The Address Book

Anyone with a standard chip socket can slot Nina's address book. One thing will become quickly apparent, however: the chip was damaged when it was tossed away. It creates sensations of nausea for anyone who has it slotted – roll vs. Will every turn to avoid forcibly removing it.

After 3 turns of searching the database, the PC can come up with Redmond's address (which they should already have, if they checked the computer). If they didn't check the terminal, they might go to the address. It's a bombed-out mess surrounded by cops. Should the players get totally fixated on the place, the GM can let them find something there which will help them get back on track.

The key to finding Vic is in the message that Nina Jerrold sent. Remember, she mentioned a companion of Redmond's, named Talltrees. If they think to check the book for this name, they locate it easily: James Talltrees.

Talltrees' Apartment

Nina's chip lists Talltrees' home address. It's an apartment in a less-than-reputable part of town. Getting to the place without being assaulted

Kozuo (Continued)

Equipment: Nageteppo (Smoke grenades), super-fine vibro wakizashi (2d+2 imp, 2d+5 cut), ninja outfit composed of medium monocrys (PD2, DR16), Shuriken (treat as thrown knife doing thrust-1 cut damage).

"Deadly" Kozuo was a close associate of O-Mishu's father-in-law when he was *oyabun*. When her husband assumed the reins of control from his father, Kozuo became *his* most trusted advisor. Now he is O-Mishu's major domo, second in command only to the *oyabun* herself.

There are countless street myths about Kozuo's fantastic abilities. Some of them are even true. The fact that a man in such a lethal profession has lived to such great age is testimony to his matchless skill.





Zaphod's Body Shoppe

Unlike many street splicers, Zaphod doesn't rely on his excellent reputation to bring him customers. An enormous neon sign announces his presence to anyone who passes by. Inside, the Body Shoppe is clean, white and sterile throughout – even the waiting rooms are white tile.

The Body Shoppe offers a variety of medical services. Like any of the better splicer shops, Zaphod's can deal with both flesh and cyberware. Zaphod himself is an expert neurologist, and knows a great deal about cybernetic control systems and how they are grafted into the user's nervous system. He employs three other physicians, each of whom specializes in a different area, and one cybertechnician.

Continued on next page . . .

should be an adventure in itself – there are drug dealers and prostitutes on every corner.

The apartment building doesn't present much in the way of security. Just go on in . . . but, of course, the elevator doesn't work, so the group will have to ascend the four stories to the apartment on foot.

The apartment door is in a cul-de-sac, in a hallway with a dozen others exactly like it. At no time will any of the tenants of the other apartments appear – in this neighborhood, people have learned to distrust strangers. Should the PCs go around breaking down random doors, they will find the occupants frightened and unhelpful, possessing no useful information and reluctant to part with anything they *do* know. Most will have guns (largely TL7 antiques) and will shoot first and ask questions later.

The door to Talltrees' place is locked. Knocking elicits no response. The lock is a primitive manual deadbolt, easily picked or opened with a lock gun. Should someone attempt this, have him make a Lockpicking roll. If he succeeds, the door is unlocked – but this can have dire consequences (see below). If the group lacks a skilled locksmith, they may wish to batter the door down. The deadbolt has DR 6 and 25 hit points. They might also try to shoot the lock off. This requires a successful roll against weapon skill (aiming is allowed). A critical failure indicates a ricochet which hits a

randomly-chosen PC! Success does the weapon's normal damage to the lock.

Opening the Door

If at any point the players move to open the door, check IQ for anyone with Danger Sense. If the group saw the news report on the explosion at Redmond's apartment, check for anyone with Common Sense. If the door was forced open using brute force, give anyone who is watching, but not participating, a Vision roll. If any of these rolls are successful, give the players a hint about the bomb mounted on the door, whether a glint of metal, a feeling of unease or a nagging sense of something forgotten.

Redmond, who knew the value of the information he stole, expected someone to trace him through Talltrees. So he gave Talltrees some money, knowing the addict would lose himself at a wirehouse somewhere. He then entered Talltrees' apartment and wired half a pound of plastex to the door. The plastex is stuck to the inside of the door; the detonator (which operates on a simple A-cell) is stuck into the explosive. The detonator will be tripped when an electrical circuit is broken – and part of the circuit includes a set of contacts mounted between the door and the jamb, about six inches from the floor. Once the door is opened, the explosive goes off.

Hopefully, this will not happen. If the bomb does go off, it does 10d explosive damage from the concussion (see p. B121). If the door is intact, it absorbs 12 points of this damage (DR 2, 10 hit points) as it is blown to bits (generating deadly fragments . . .).

The person unfortunate enough to have opened the door also absorbs all the fragmentation damage. No active defense is allowed against this damage, but roll against PD (at +1). Success means he avoids frag damage; whoever is standing behind him must check PD+2. If that person is also missed, the one behind him checks at +3, and so on, until somebody misses a roll. The one who gets hit takes 3d cutting damage from wood fragments (and will be picking slivers out of his skin for a month).

As soon as the bomb goes off, neighbors will begin to call the police, who will arrive exactly five minutes later. While the party won't face any criminal charges, they will have some serious explaining to do.

Disarming the Bomb

If the bomb is spotted before it is detonated, Demolitions skill can be used to disarm it. On a successful skill roll, the GM should describe how the electrical switch works (based on the contacts, which can be seen in the crack between door and jamb). The easiest thing to do is bypass the circuit; this *can't* be done with the foil from a stick of gum, but connecting the contacts with a length of wire will permit the door to be opened as far as the wire will reach without setting off the explosive. This requires some wire and a Demolitions+3 roll. Once inside, the bomb can be defused by removing the detonator with a straight Demolitions roll. A critical failure on any of these rolls detonates the bomb.

If the group doesn't have any wire handy (or only has enough to open the door part way), the bomb can be defused using a mirror (-4 to all skill rolls) or by touch (at -8, and any failure sets off the bomb).

The door can be blown open from a distance. It has DR 2 and 10 hit

Zaphod's Body Shoppe (Continued)

Zaphod

ST 9, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 11.

Speed 6, Move 6.

Dodge 6.

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Common Sense.

Disadvantages: Honesty, Obsession (head-grafting), Rupophobia.

Quirks: Science fiction fan.

Skills: Electronics (Cybernetics)-12, Mechanics (Cybernetics)-12, Merchant (medical services)-16, Merchant-10, Physician (neurology)-20, Physician-14, Physiology (neurology)-18, Physiology-12, Psychology (organic)-13, Surgery-18, Zoology-14.

Unlike the fictional character whose name he adopted, Zaphod Beeblebrox (the second) has only one head. However, a fan of ancient science fiction, Zaphod was intrigued by his namesake. Here was something that would make him stand out even in this weird, ugly world! This curiosity motivated him to study medicine, and in his field he has excelled. He's one of the best medical experts around. He hasn't figured out how to graft on the head from a clone yet, but he will. Eventually.



Under the Wire Orderlies

ST 13, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 13.

Speed 6, Move 6.

Dodge 6.

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: High Pain Threshold, Toughness +1.

Skills: Brawling-13, Shortsword-14

Equipment: Keys, stun rod (jointed).

As might be expected in a place that caters to addicts, clients at Under the Wire sometimes get a little out of hand. That's why the Wire employs several toughs as "orderlies." Anytime there's a disturbance, an Under the Wire employee can set off an alarm from any convenient terminal. This summons 1d+2 orderlies.



points. Once it has taken 5 points of damage, however, the contacts will separate and the bomb will detonate, as described above.

Finally, if they decide they don't wish to try to disarm the booby trap, they can go around. If one of the intruders befriends (or incapacitates . . .) a neighbor, he can use an axe or similar implement to chop through an adjoining wall (walls have DR 3 and 20 hit points). As an alternative, ascending to the roof and climbing down to the window will demand rope and several Climbing rolls; the window is also protected by a grid of 1" steel bars (DR 6 and 25 hit points, cut through in 2 places to remove one bar). Removing one bar is enough to let an average-sized person slip in with a successful Escape roll, while removing two bars eliminates the need for the skill roll.

Any such activity should probably take place at night. During the day, climbing down from the roof will draw a crowd, and, eventually, the police!

Be it Ever So Humble

Talltrees' apartment is anything but luxurious. In fact, it's a one-room hovel. The only furniture is a futon, which fills most of the room. The other significant features of the room:

Cyberjack: This net hookup is obviously an illegal tap; the installation is crude and the jack itself protrudes from the wall. Anyone daring enough to jack in through this nightmare setup will find themselves in the Net at the Pirate's Cove (#1049 on the net map; see p. 120). It's actually safe; Talltrees did a good job.

Wirehead Gear: This is a small box, plugged into a power outlet, with several adjustable dials and gauges. It filters and modulates wall current for the best neuro-electrical high, cleaning up "dirty" electricity and regulating the level of stimulation. The output probe plugs into a wirehead implant, and does not fit in an ordinary chip socket. A Streetwise or Physician-2 roll will identify this for what it is (characters who are themselves wire addicts recognize the setup automatically).

Telephone: A battered old phone computer is plugged in beside the futon. An indicator on the display screen indicates that it has several messages to replay. It is voice-operated, and keyed to the owner's voice, so only James Talltrees should be able to play them back. However, there is a service mode which can be accessed by anyone who knows the proper codes. Once the phone is configured for a particular user, they are supposed to disable service mode – it is re-enabled if the phone actually needs to be repaired. In practice, however, some users forget to disable the mode – and James was none too bright, even before he began frying his brain for pleasure. Service mode is still available on his phone.

Characters roll against Electronics Operation/TL8 (Telecommunications) to see if they know the necessary codes. Other communications specialties are at -4. IQ and other forms of Electronics have the usual default with an additional -5. A character with a background in telecommunications (a former AT&T technician, for instance) should be allowed a bonus to the skill roll (at least +3). On a successful roll, the messages can be replayed.

Failing this approach, a technically-oriented character can dismantle



the phone and improvise a way around the software restraints. This takes 1 hour, a good electronics toolkit and a roll against Electronics (Communications) or (Computers). Again, success permits the messages to be played.

Talltrees' messages are 2-D text-and-graphics. All of them are notices of collection-debits rejected from his account due to insufficient funds. Most of these are from the usual bill companies – telephone, electricity, and so on. However, there is one message from a place called Under the Wire, complaining that the debit transmitted to his account for payment of monthly membership dues has been rejected, and would he rectify this at his earliest convenience?

Under the Wire

Under the Wire is an establishment that caters to current addicts. As noted on p. CY97, most wireheads just stay home and plug in. However, some addicts who live in unsafe neighborhoods want private places where they can plug in and be assured of good personal and medical care. Under the Wire is just such a place.

Entry

Under the Wire takes up three floors of a downtown office building. The lobby resembles a doctor's waiting room. Uncomfortable chairs are arrayed around the room, interspersed with small vid-screens showing

Handling Netruns

One problem in an adventure which includes computer hacking is that netrunning is a solo endeavor. It excludes other members of the group from participating, leaving them sitting around impatiently while the netrunner does his thing. There are many possible ways to get around this. Here are three:

Flip

Switch the focus of the action back and forth between the netrunner and the rest of the party. If nothing exciting is happening to the group, make something up or reorganize the encounters in the adventure. For instance, while the decker is hacking into the DMV, have Abamadeus Kilifrey show up while he's still in cyberspace. This lends a sense of urgency to the decker's actions. But be aware that it is difficult to juggle point of view like this and keep everyone happy.

Run the Net Offscreen

Have netruns take place between play sessions. Get together with the netrunner outside the group and play out the hacking attempt.

Draft the Players

This works best if there are only a few players in the group, and they are all familiar with the netrunning rules. Copy the descriptions of the most pertinent nodes onto index cards. When the hacker tries to penetrate them, let the players run their own nodes.





Running the Adventure for Tougher Crowds

It should be apparent that this adventure is intended for lower-powered operatives. The ninja sent to kill the group in the first encounter are ineffectual. Should they manage to infiltrate Gomijutsu, the Oyabun has the group knocked out, congratulates them for their persistence, and sends them on their merry way. And in the one encounter where they could conceivably be wiped out (the bar scene with Abamadeus Kilifrey), they are given an opportunity to circumvent a fight with him.

For a group of more powerful players (say 200 points and up), this will not be nearly so challenging. For a team of experienced cyberpunk characters, the GM should modify the adventure slightly.

Abamadeus Kilifrey: Make them confront him. Several 200-point characters, some with significant combat cyberware, should be a fair fight against Ab. If they don't have armament tough enough to breach his hide, reduce his DR to 20 or less. If they should happen to kill him, see the sidebar, p. 119.

Continued on next page . . .

various cable programs. A receptionist mans a desk near the door leading into the heart of the establishment. He logs all visitors, issues memberships and schedules appointments. The receptionist is a man named Jordan, with "cyberprep" written all over him. He's decked out in the latest hairstyle, makeup, outfit, and so on. He has a backbone of stainless steel, however, as the group will find out if they try to steamroll him on their way in. If they take the "you're just a peon, and you aren't going to get in my way" attitude, he shows them just what he's made of. He resists intimidation effortlessly. If anyone begins to get violent, he will threaten them: "If you don't leave (tell me what you want, etc.) right now, I'm calling the cops." As the hardened adventurers snort with derision, he adds "And not the *city* cops, mind you, our corporate police." Or he might grab the meanest-looking party member by one finger and twist (Judo-16). He can sound an alarm from his terminal which will bring the Wire's orderlies, but he'll save that as a last resort.

Jordan is immune to bribery – in the form of cash, anyway. However, he will respond positively to anyone praising his appearance, his good taste, and so on. He'll be as helpful as possible, within the limits of his authority, and might even stretch the rules a bit. An extremely good reaction results in his giving the group Talltrees' room number (number 31). However, he cautions them to be quiet. Allowing anyone to interfere with a client is strictly against the rules.

Finding Talltrees

Once the group gets by the receptionist, they enter the inner sanctum of Under the Wire. Beyond the waiting room are numerous small chambers. As they pass unoccupied rooms, they can see that each is equipped with medical monitoring equipment, a divan, and wireheading apparatus which runs on a timer.

Talltrees is on the third floor. As the group approaches the elevator, the doors open and several people (two doctors and an orderly) step out. (If the group is prudent and takes the stairs, have this happen as they exit the stairwell – rolls to duck under cover are at +2). The party must be quick on their feet in order to avoid detection! A successful Shadowing or Stealth-4 roll lets them duck into an empty room. Otherwise, the doctors confront them: "Who the drek are you? And what are you doing running around unattended?"

If this happens, they will either have to silence the three (using quiet weapons or hand-to-hand techniques – if they raise a ruckus, *someone* will hear it and pull the alarm). Or they can try to talk their way out of it. (It will be hard to convince the doctors of anything if they're armed for bear!) The best possible result they can hope for using Fast-Talk is to convince the doctors that they're clients, wandering around lost. In this case, the doctors will assign a few orderlies to show them to their rooms.

Talltrees

Finally, they make it to Talltrees' room. He's wired when they get there, reclining comfortably on the divan and drooling. He is blissfully unaware of anything going on around him.

The only way to get his attention is to switch off the current. Unfortu-

nately, this will alert the orderlies who monitor the clients, and bring them running (in 2d turns). Make an Electronics Operation (Medical) roll for everyone in a position to examine the wirehead setup (+2 for anyone who makes a point of checking it out). On a successful roll, warn that player that turning off the current will probably set off an alarm somewhere. They can now switch off and risk detection. They can find and take out the orderlies on this floor (there is a monitoring station, similar to a nurses' station, at the far end of the hall; assume there are 2 orderlies, 3 if the party numbers 4 or more). Or they can pull the plug out of his head live. This does 1 point of damage to the person removing the wire (insulated hand armor protects), and requires a successful Surgery roll or it does 4 points to Talltrees' brain!

Once Talltrees' wire has been removed, the party can interrogate him. He knows where they can find Redmond, but it will be difficult to get that information out of him. He will be dazed, disoriented, and will care nothing for anything except getting his fix back. He is normally weak-willed (Will 9), but gets a +6 bonus because he is fixating on getting his current. Physical violence and intimidation will have little effect on him – he's too far gone. Extorting him – the info in exchange for the wire – eliminates the Will bonus, requiring him to roll all Con-tests straight.

After working around his frustrating communications block, it comes out that Redmond has elected to hide in plain sight. He can be found at a bar called Club Neurosis.

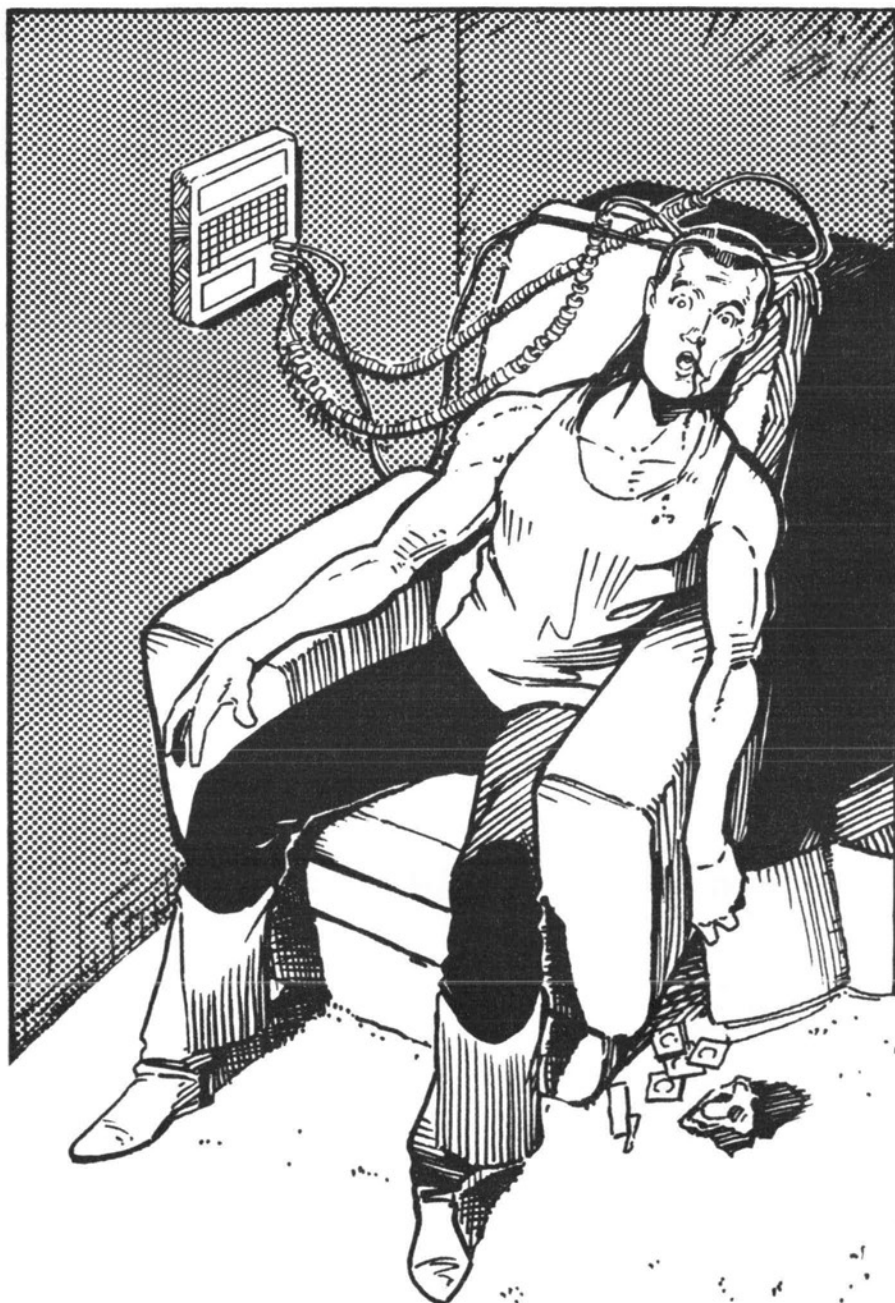
Club Neurosis

Getting into Club Neurosis requires paying a \$12 cover, which must be paid in the foyer. Payment is made by credcard to a machine, which then prints an ultraviolet stamp on the back of the individual's hand. A bank of floor-to-ceiling turnstiles (i.e. no hopping over them) prevents gatecrashers. Putting your hand under the black-light scanner unlocks the turnstile. The first thing noticed upon entering the club is the dance floor. Apparently, the goal of the revelers is to pack as many people as possible into that limited space. To the deafening beat of the music, they slam together in a multicolored mass. It should seem that if Redmond is there, he will be difficult to find. Not so, however. Moments after they arrive, Redmond disengages himself from the throng and approaches them.

Running the Adventure for Tougher Crowds (Continued)

The Yakuza: Equip the guards at Gomijutsu with silenced machine pistols. They shoot to kill. If the group is captured, O-Mishu has them stripped of possessions (possibly including cyberware!) and thrown in a cell to rot. The next step of the adventure then becomes to survive and escape.

The Ending: Use the optional *Data Safe Deposit* ending (sidebar, p. 116). Requiring the physically-adept characters to infiltrate the high-security DSD compound while the netrunners cut through its ice should be a challenge even for high-powered characters.



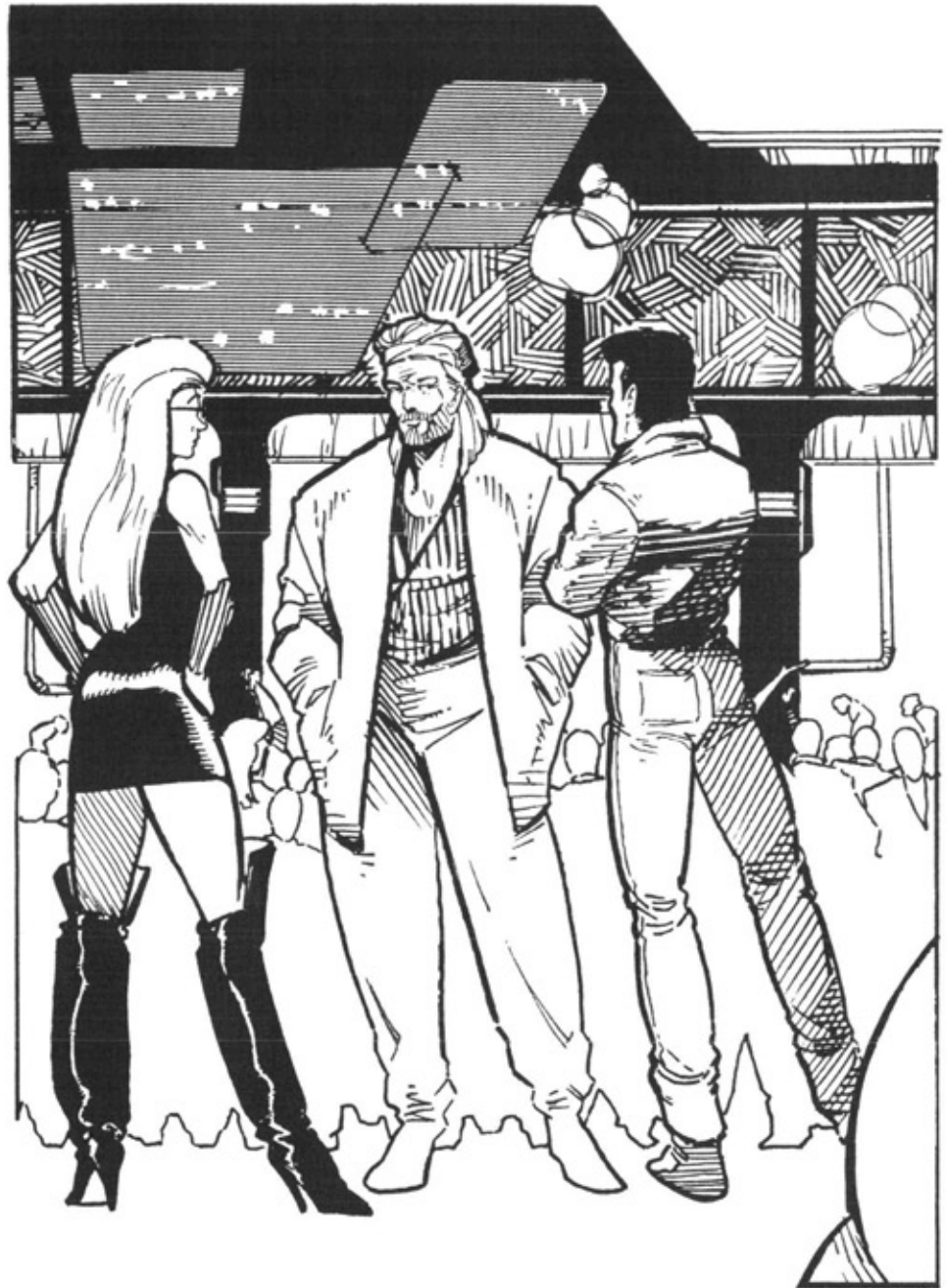
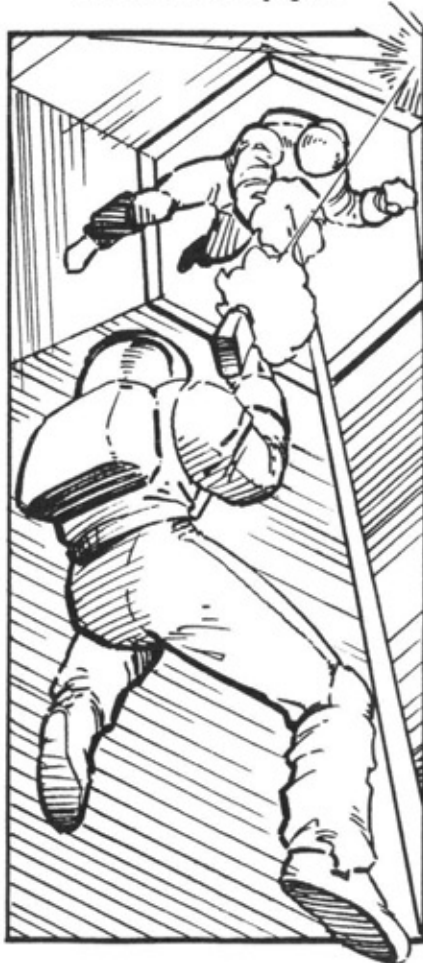
Adapting to Other Genres

Although *Jigsaw Incomplete* has many features unique to the cyberpunk genre, it can be transplanted into other campaign types with a little effort. The plot can remain largely intact, as long as some of the elements are rearranged. The storyline boils down to a character whose memory has been altered, who then must figure out who did it to him, and why, all the while trying to keep these people from cooking his goose. The adventure is completed by finding the missing data and deciding what to do with it.

Space

In a Space campaign, this adventure could be run as is. However, there are some alternate possibilities. The PC could be a double agent, working undercover for Onishima *against* Redmond in order to foil the theft of the data from the inside. But the effort is botched, and Redmond gets away. The loyal PC is then hypnotically reprogrammed to believe he really *was* cooperating with Redmond, in order to track him down.

Continued on next page . . .



He doesn't seem especially surprised to see them. He speaks to the Lethe-chipped character as though they are old buddies, which may surprise the PC. The fact that his old buddy doesn't remember *him* will surprise Redmond. When this comes out, Redmond will fill everyone in on the background of the adventure: "*Nina hired the two of us to hit Onishima. Apparently, they have a license with Damian Blake to do a skill chip based on his talent. Braintaped him, sifted out the necessary data. We were supposed to lift it. I was the inside man, you ran the net (or the opposite if the PC was the infiltrator).*"

"*We lifted it almost clean. But you got caught with your hand in the cookie jar, while I got off scot free. I guess they must have messed you up pretty good, if you don't even remember the run.*"

Negotiations With a Madman

At some point, the group will try and persuade Redmond to give them

the data. When playing Vic, the GM should keep in mind that the key element of Vic's personality is his near-deathwish. It would be in character, for example, if he pulled out a gun butt-first, put it in the hand of the PC he double-crossed, held it up to his own head and goaded the PC to shoot him. "Go ahead. I know you want to. I betrayed you. I deserve to die. Pull the trigger."

As he gets into this state of mind, his responses become more erratic. He gets very agitated. He might talk (in the vaguest of terms) about the atrocities he witnessed in South America. He might break down crying, or do something to hurt himself. His exact behavior is left to the GM, since there is room here for him to get more aberrant than some gamers might like. This encounter should be entirely roleplayed – Fast-Talk and Diplomacy are no help here! However, a successful Psychology roll will give the players a clue. To anyone with psychological training, it is apparent that Vic is still holding on to a great deal of guilt about something he once did. He no longer values his own life, and does self-destructive things to punish himself.

The best way for the group to "talk him down" is to convince him that he isn't responsible for his actions, or that there is a more constructive way of expiating his sins. If anyone goes beyond simply conning him out of the data, and makes an effort to help Vic personally, it should be worth an extra character point or two (as long as it's in character!).

Once the PCs have talked him into giving them the data, Vic reaches into his mouth and removes a minidisk. (He has a Flesh Pocket installed in his nasal cavity, with the access port in the roof of his mouth.) The disk has the data on it, unless the GM wants to end the adventure with another netrun. (If this is the case, see the *Data Safe Deposit* sidebar, p. 116.)

If Vic is Attacked

More than 4 points of crushing damage to the head destroys the disk. Finding the pocket in his head requires a successful Contest of Holdout skills against the pocket's Holdout-22 skill, whether the disk is intact or not. See p. CY35 for more on searching for flesh holsters.

Wrapping it Up

As the negotiations with Redmond draw to a close, there's a commotion at the entrance to the club. Ab is there, trying to get in, but he can't get through the turnstile! The PCs have a moment or two to consider their options. Their best choice is probably to run, unless they've got weapons powerful enough to take advantage of his indisposal. If they won Redmond over, he urges them to go, offering to hold Ab off while they make good their escape.

If the players ask, there *is* a back door. The only other alternative is to get past Ab – not a promising prospect. The players could, however, hide (in an office, the DJ's booth, a restroom and so on), and sneak past Ab once he's inside.

A few moments' searching yields a fire exit (marked with the traditional red and white sign). The door opens only from the inside, and sets off an alarm as it is opened.

Adapting to Other Genres (Continued)

Supers

The PC is captured by a major villain, who uses a mind-altering gadget or power to program the super to steal a computer file for him. The file contains technical data which would permit the villain to build a world-shattering device.

Psionics

In the world of the Phoenix Project, the data can be stored in someone's head! Vic Redmond becomes an ex-ESP agent with powerful telepathic abilities. The stolen data is a secret list of psionic individuals taken from a government agent, who was sole custodian of this valuable information (and is now dead or brainwiped). Or, perhaps the PC is the agent Redmond took the data from, and was left with a fragmented memory by his hasty and careless mindwipe.

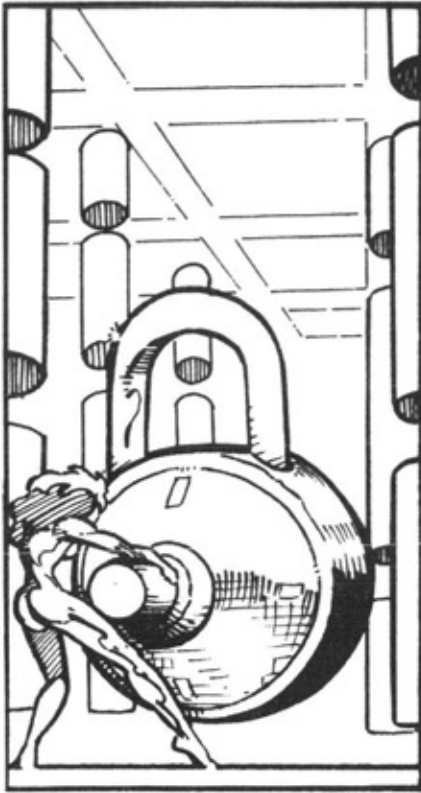
Fantasy

Substitute a puissant, clandestine order of mages for Onishima Corp. The stolen data becomes a scroll with the only copy of a powerful new spell. The mind erasure can be accomplished via a series of Permanent Forgetfulness spells.

Japan

The data becomes a peace treaty between two warring clans. Redmond and the PC are ninja working for a third clan (or other major political faction, such as a powerful merchant) who do not wish to see an end to the conflict. The amnesia is the result of magic, if it exists, or perhaps just a coincidental side-effect of a blow to the head.





Data Safe Deposit Corporation

This section is included to allow the GM to extend the adventure a bit. If it is used, the disc which Vic Redmond gives the PCs contains, not the actual *Imagination!* data, but a Datakey which allows access to rented RAM on the Data Safe Deposit mainframe.

DSD is a data haven, one of the most secure on the net. It rents RAM on its ultra-secure mainframe for \$10 per gig per month (this rate is discounted for customers who utilize large quantities of space). DSD is physically located in a facility 100 miles outside the campaign city. The physical plant is buried deep in a series of abandoned mine shafts, and security is second to none.

The mainframe itself is protected from cyberspace incursions in two ways. In addition to its ice (which is formidable), DSD employs several Database Operators (DOs). The DOs enter cyberspace when a login is detected. There, they perform certain tasks to verify the identity of the customer. They check the log to confirm point-of-entry and deck characteristics, including its ID number (if this is a standard in the game world). They also check the aspect the person has chosen, and communicate with him verbally.

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The door opens to an alleyway. To the left (exiting the club), the alley dead-ends about 20 feet away. In the other direction, it runs about 40 feet, where it meets the street which passes in front of the club.

Deadly Kozuo

As they exit the club, Kozuo steps out of the shadows: "Greetings! I am Kozuo, humble servant of Takematsu O-Mishu, oyabun of the Takematsu clan. I must respectfully ask that you surrender the data disk given to you by Redmond-san. You will comply, yes?"

At this point, the players need to decide what to do. Kozuo will make no overt threats, but it will be obvious that he means to hurt them if they don't turn over the disk. If they ask what he will do if they don't give it to him, he'll say something like "Ah, neither you nor I would be gratified by that situation."

If they debate for too long, he says "Only the saints have infinite patience. I am no saint. Make your decision, and quickly."

They Surrendering the Disk

Kozuo thanks them politely. "You have made a wise decision. This will be returned to its rightful owners. I suggest that you become lost like the wind for a time." If the group keeps a low profile, there will be no more ninja attacks. Except for following up any loose plot threads, the adventure is over.

Fast-Talking Him

It will be impossible to persuade Kozuo to simply walk away and leave them alone. However, if the players try to appeal to his sense of honor, they have a chance to keep the disk. They must cite some reason for keeping the data to which Kozuo can relate. Vengeance (against anyone but the Yak or Onishima!), reclamation of lost honor and so on are excellent approaches. This can be roleplayed straight, or the GM can allow a Contest of Fast-Talk for the group's representative vs. Kozuo's IQ of 13, with modifiers based on the story they come up with.

If they are successful in persuading him, Kozuo lets them keep the data and releases them. They can then do whatever they wish, within reason. Naturally, Kozuo will resume observing them! Should they do anything suspicious (e.g., buy tickets on the next shuttle), Kozuo will confront them again, without mercy.

Attacking

Although not physically a match for a group of tough adventurers, Kozuo should have a fighting chance, thanks to his extraordinary talents. Kozuo is a master of Ninjutsu. GMs who enjoy the *GURPS Martial Arts* cinematic rules can let him use cinematic skills from that book. Chances are good the PCs will outclass him technologically – he can hardly stand up to a group of adventurers with auto weapons. In this case, he'll use a nageteppe, creating a cloud of smoke, and disappear, using his Invisibility Art, under its cover.

If *Martial Arts* is unavailable, the GM can simply assume that these abilities work. Or he can fudge the occasional Dodge roll for Kozuo.

(Think of this as the karmic wheel; at the beginning of the adventure, *deus ex machina* was employed to let the group live. Now it's being used to make things hard on them.) Or he can require Contests of Vision vs. Kozuo's Stealth skill to spot him. The master ninja will sneak up behind a foe, appear, and attack him. He gets 2 attacks and two parries per turn, whether open-handed or using his wakizashi.

Finally, don't forget his flame throwing ability. The first time this is used, it will probably come as quite a surprise, and will be very effective against a lightly-armored opponent.

If the GM still doesn't feel that Kozuo is up to taking on the group, he can reinforce the ninja master with one bodyguard (see p. 90) for each player character.

Other Possibilities

If the group exited via the fire door, an alarm will go off. Most club-goers will be nonplussed, engrossed in the fight between Redmond and Abamadeus Kilifrey. Some, however, might just stampede over one another to reach the exit. And a few might also leave via the fire door.

Some players might get the bright idea to plant the disk on someone in the rush and recover it later. If this is the case, and they are up front with Kozuo (telling him that they don't have the disk, not that they ditched it!), and they let him search them carefully, he will be satisfied that they don't have it and let them go. It is then up to the agents to recover the missing disk . . .

There is also the possibility that the disk was destroyed. The PCs can bluff Kozuo with a different disk (he can't read the data on it!); either way, they will eventually have the Yakuza on their tail again.

Bargaining with Onishima

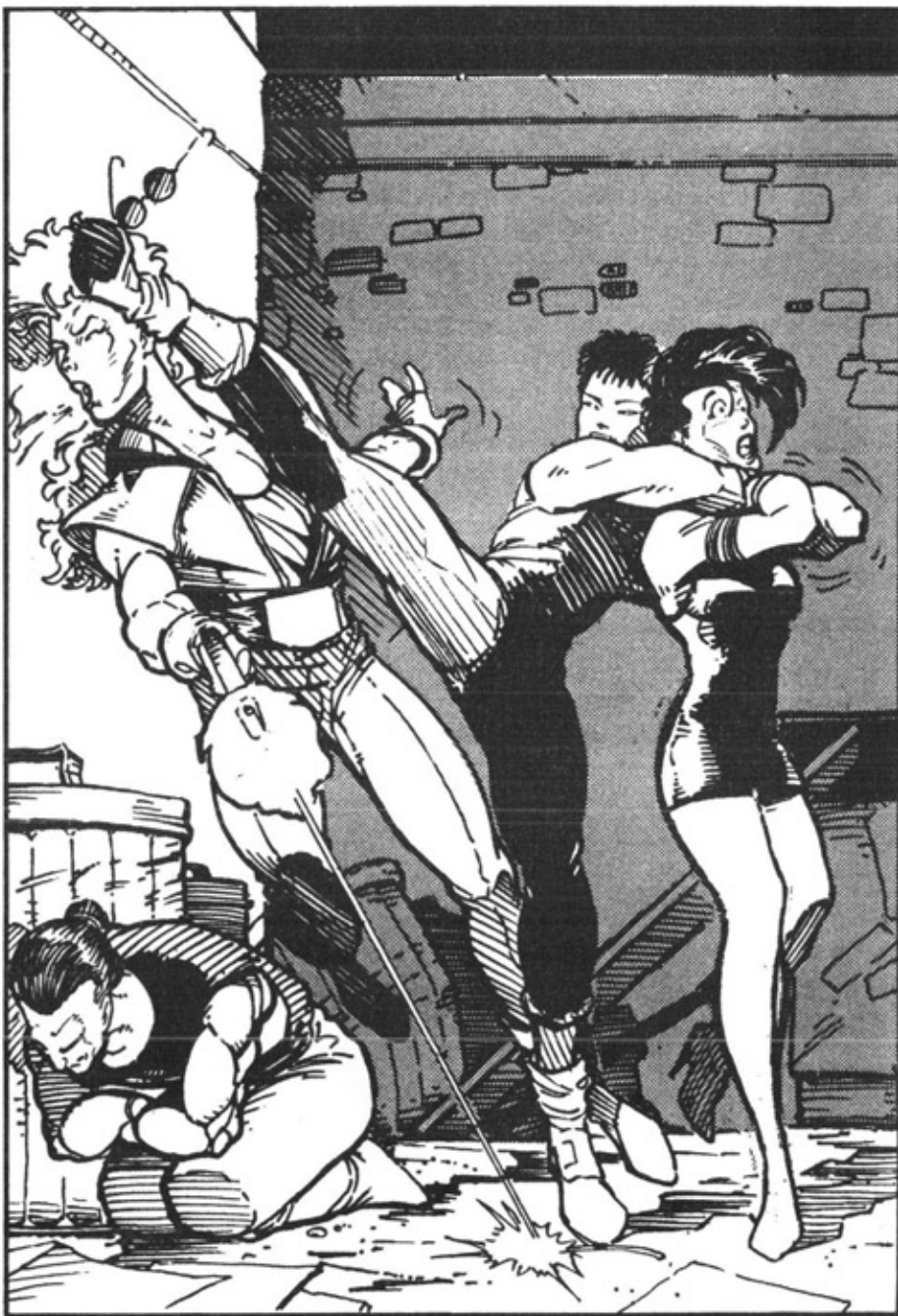
The PCs may attempt to let Onishima know that they have acquired the data, and would be willing to return it – in exchange for their lives.

The zaibatsu sets up a meeting, trying for a place where they will have a tactical advantage – like an alley near their headquarters. Barring that,

Data Safe Deposit Corporation (Continued)

If the person seems to be the database's owner, or his chosen representative, the customer can access the database. This requires two Datakeys: one from the customer, and one from the DO. The DO's key changes constantly, and must be entered from one of the on-site terminals in order to work, making this system virtually impossible to crack by conventional means.

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Data Safe Deposit Corporation (Continued)

If any of the customer's statistics are out of the ordinary or missing, the DO ducks back into realspace, and contacts the database's owner via telephone. If monkey business is suspected, the company will refuse to permit access to the database until such time as the data's owner can produce the electronic equivalent of a notarized request to reopen access.

The Last Netrun

All of this makes the prospect of getting the *Imagination!* data out of storage much more challenging. The netrunner can try the brute force method, but this is unlikely to work. This would require someone on the inside at DSD, to enter the DO's datakey. Player characters could try to get hired by DSD, but the GM should keep in mind that the company does *extensive* background checks on potential employees. The group might also hire a band of mercenaries to break into the DSD headquarters. Either of these options will be an adventure unto itself.

The easiest way to retrieve the data (aside from keeping Redmond alive and making *him* do it) is to investigate the site and outsmart its defenses. A successful Research roll at +1 will come up with a *detailed* description of the way DSD works (in the form of promotional material). Armed with this information, the netrunner can attempt to fool the DO into thinking he is Redmond or Talltrees. This will be easy if he uses a deck that is similar to Redmond/Talltrees', and uses the same point of entry. Otherwise, the player may have to do some very fast talking . . .

For more on DSD's system defenses, see p. 122.

they'll try for a public place on neutral ground.

The company goes about the deal in a fairly stupid manner, setting up snipers all over the place. If the PCs are wise, and get there early, they can methodically eliminate the snipers before it's time to meet with the Onishima execs. The execs all have secure implant communicators, so they will know their defensive measures have been countered. They'll still keep the appointment, but they'll be sweating bullets the whole time.

If the group *doesn't* eliminate the snipers, the negotiations will be very different. As soon as it is appropriate, the Onishima envoy mentions the snipers. The PCs might try to shoot it out, run, or grab one of the corps as a hostage. If it comes down to a firefight, there are at least six snipers. Each has the same stats as the ninja sniper from the sidebar, p. 90, and is similarly armed.

Doing the Deal

The representation from Onishima consists of a couple of execs, an accountant, several bodyguards, and a "specialist" (read: interrogator) who has an implanted polygraph (Detect Lies-30, minus range modifiers). During the exchange, the interrogator will make a point of asking whether the group has copied the data. They will probably know if the PCs lie (although if they try to be clever – e.g. by having someone else copy it, and saying "None of us copied it" – roll a Contest of Fast-Talk against the interrogator's skill-16).

Once it has been established (or the corporate side has been fooled into believing) that the disk is unique, negotiations begin. Onishima opens with "give us the data and we'll let you live." The group can counter with whatever they like. Each time the PCs make an offer, the execs confer with their accountant, a little, balding man who runs the figures through a pocket computer.

The deal can be resolved through roleplaying, reaction rolls, Contests of Merchant skill (the execs have Merchant-15), or any combination of the above. The best deal they can work is \$50,000. Onishima will also agree to return any equipment which belonged to their former captive. Even if he had nothing, this will allow the GM to plant things on the party, which can lead them into their next adventure.

Negotiating with Cyberrad

If the adventurers are indecisive about what they want to do with the stolen data, and they appear anywhere in public, Ab approaches them (waving a white flag). He'll make a big show of unloading his implanted gyro weapon before he begins discussion. Ab has an unusual voice. One might expect that he would have a loud, rumbling basso, but his voice is soft and high-pitched, almost like a falsetto. "I've been authorized by my employers to make you an offer of \$100,000 for certain data in your possession. This offer is not negotiable, and it ends the moment I walk out that door." The party can now decide whether to take the offer or not. Ab has a microcomp with him, and will check anything they give him before he leaves. Of course, they could give him a copy – he doesn't care whether it's original, just that it's legit.

Most PCs will jump at this offer. However, every coin has a flip side,

and this one is Onishima. The company will be more upset than ever with the group. For the brief remainder of their lives, Yakuza assassins will be swarming about them like mosquitoes – and that, of course, will be the next adventure.

Fencing the Data

Lastly, the party might decide to forego dealing with either corp directly, and contact a fence. If a PC has a fence as a Contact, he can attempt to use that. Otherwise, the GM should make a secret roll against the best Streetwise skill in the group. On a failure, they are unable to contact such a person. On a critical failure, they blunder into an Onishima trap, police sting operation or other such nightmare!

A fence will examine the data, take a day or two to make discreet inquiries, and come back with an offer. The street value of the data is low – probably not as high as \$50,000, since it is information needed for a specific (though profitable) use. The fence would have to find someone who would want to make the bootleg skips in order to sell it. He initially offers \$10,000.

Through good negotiations (the fence has Merchant-16), they can talk him up as high as \$20,000.

Further Adventures

The Chip Revisited

If the individual with the Lethe chip implant happens to contact Zaphod again, he will make an amazing offer. His technical people have been going over the CAT scans he took of the chip, and they're just amazed at the advanced architecture. He offers the character a deal: he'll disarm the cortex bomb and disable the Lethe chip for nothing up front. In exchange, he gets to keep the chip. The neurotech involved, once decrypted, will be worth a *fortune* in the black market medical implant industry (though he doesn't tell *them* that). Oh yes, there's just one more thing – a little favor that he needs a small group of skilled operators for – and he'll call it even . . .

Savvy players might deduce the value of the chip, and wrangle a better deal out of him. Should they try to deal service-for-service, they'll make out much better than if they ask for cash – another way for them to pick up cheap body mods.

Whatever Happened to Damian Blake?

A few months after the adventure, Onishima releases *Imagination!* Much to everyone's surprise, the chip is a flop. Sure, it enhances the user's imaginative faculties, but it doesn't actually design a dreamgame. Those who bought the chip expecting to crank out a bestseller in an hour are sorely disappointed. The ones who could really benefit from using it – hard-working, practical people with the imagination of a brick – are not really the demographic group Onishima is targeting.

Naturally, the Onishima exec responsible for the project has concocted a scheme to cover himself: blame the PCs. He alleges that the group somehow corrupted the code used to make the chip. Once again, the data chase

Character Points

Each character who participated in the adventure gets 1 character point. Good roleplaying or clever solutions to the problems encountered should be worth an additional 1 or 2 points each. See p. B184 for further suggestions.

Debugging

If Ab Dies

If the players manage to eliminate Ab, it will alter the course of the adventure. He kills Nina prior to encountering them, so that will not change. However, later scenes where he is slated to appear – the ending, in particular – will. There are two ways to deal with this.

First, of course, he can be replaced. The GM can come up with another Cyberrad representative (possibly someone's Enemy), who simply does what Ab would have.

Second, Cyberrad can be eliminated from the picture. After their main operative is taken out, the company becomes wary of leaving fingerprints and opts out. Have Kozuo confront the group inside the club, rather than in the alley, as soon as Redmond hands over the data.

Missing Talltrees

As the adventure is written, unless the group contacts James Talltrees, they have no chance of finding Redmond. This can be rectified by allowing other NPCs to furnish clues to his location. Particularly important is his club-hopping habit, and his tendency to stick with one club at a time. Once this information surfaces, searching among the newest clubs will lead the group to Redmond (2d-2 clubs searched before encountering him). The GM should improvise encounters with ninja, police, false alarms and so on, to keep the search interesting.

Byron (Nina Jerrold's doorguard) might supply this information, although, if asked about Redmond, he wouldn't remember him when first encountered. He might meet the group again by chance, and casually mention it. This information could also be unearthed by diligent use of Streetwise, by inquiring about Redmond's nature and habits.

Network

This network fragment is intended to represent a small segment of a citywide net. It corresponds to the "business district" of a city; the network features several businesses of varying sizes, and some city government computers. As such, it is an area of prime interest to cowboys: defenses here are tight, but there is serious money to be made.

Most of these systems have not been thoroughly developed, and several that are on the net map are not described at all. This is partly due to space constraints and the fact that these nodes have no real impact on the adventure. The player characters should simply pass through these systems on their way to the pertinent ones. They are included to give the net design a more rounded appearance, and provide some adventure seeds for the future. If the GM wishes to continue to use this section following this adventure, he should simply expand and detail individual nodes as needed.

The Corporate Sector (#784-793)

This part of the net is dedicated to several large corporations. Most of the systems are mainframes, running several different subsystems (accounting, human resources, etc.). Some are fronts for hidden micro-networks, featuring smaller machines, each dedicated to a single corporate function (per the KarNet example, p. CY94).

If a netrunner tries to hack into a system for which defenses are not provided, use the following generic defense scheme:

The default corporate system is a complexity 5 mainframe with 10 slots and processor speed increased by 25% (phase 750 msec). It slots Password-14, Watchdog-15,

If, for some reason, the PC tries to break into a system for which detailed defenses are not provided, use this generic scheme:

The standard node is a complexity 3 minicomputer with 3 slots and a phase of 4,000 msec. It has Password-14, Watchdog-13 and Regenerate-12 slotted. The Watchdog logs all incoming connections. Regenerate checks the other two programs, and will launch a disk-based Alarm-13 (which notifies the sysop of the trouble) if it detects any sign of tampering.

Systems in the Banking and Corporate Sectors have their own defaults. See below.

Standard Assumptions

Where Password programs are used, assume that they prompt the user unless the text says differently. All connections are one hop long.

Regenerate-13 (x2), Alarm-12, Bailout-12, Safety Net-12, Sever-13, Trace-14 and Bloodhound-12. Upon attempted login, the Watchdog launches a Trace, using Bloodhound as needed. The Watchdog needs a successful response from the Trace to prompt the user for a Password. *Without this prompt, the user cannot log on to the system!* After 10 seconds, if the Watchdog cannot tell whether or not the Trace is still active, the system attempts to log the user off with Sever. It will continue to launch Sever every phase until the Watchdog reports a successful Trace or a severed connection.

The Regenerates run down the list of programs, checking one per phase. The first one starts with Password (skipping itself, but checking the other Regenerate), while the other starts with Bailout. If either detects tampering, it will immediately check the Alarm program, refresh it from ROM if necessary, and activate it. The active Alarm throws Severs at the user, one per phase, and activates a warning message to the sysops.

#784: Con-Am Steel

The Consolidated American Steel Company has ten plants across the globe. It employs thousands of workers, and supplies over 50% of the raw refined steel market. This machine is a front for a worldwide network (which includes private satellite uplinks) which is not depicted on this map.

#785: PGT&T

After the dissolution of most of the world's airlines following the recession of the late '80s and early '90s, a new force emerged to dominate the industry: Pan-Global Travel and Transport. With its lucrative perks and benefit plans, PGT&T has become *the* company to work for, much as IBM traditionally was. It also has a good reputation with customers; its on-time record is high, and, due to the corporate policy embracing safety as its number-one priority, not once in its history has it suffered a major accident.



#786: Personal Connections

This is a dating service chat system (which also provides public bulletin boards and private e-mail). At login, Password-14 prompts for the user's name. It then checks the name against a database of users protected by Datalock-16. If the user is found, it asks for a password; otherwise, it asks if the person wants to log on as a new user. A Watchdog-13 keeps an eye on all logins, and launches a disk-based Alarm-12 if it sees the netrunner launch any offensive programs. It will then throw up a Codewall-13, followed by Sever-13, continuing to launch these programs on alternating phases until the decker is evicted.

Few people realize that this system has a connection to the business sector. Many hackers use it as their entry point into the sector. A user must be logged onto the system in order to use the connection to node #785.

#787: Sector Lockout

This machine is the front door to the corporate sector. It runs Password-13; information requested on login includes name, company, and password. Watchdog-12 checks this information with an encrypted database (protected by Datalock-15), and logs all users passing through the system in a separate database with identical defenses.

#789: Data Safe Deposit (See p. 116)

The actual area where data is stored, DSD's complexity 5 mainframe has very little in the way of defense, relying on the customer service machine (#792) to protect the machine from illicit penetration. Individual databases on the system are each protected with 2 different Datalocks. One, Datalock-15, must be unlocked by the customer. The other, Datalock-20, requires a DO's datakey; it can only be unlocked through a DO terminal in DSD's high-security complex.

#792: DSD Customer Service

This is the front end machine for DSD. It is a complexity 6 mainframe with a phase of 500 msec and 12 slots. It runs every piece of defensive ice at skill-16 except Disinformation, with 2 copies of Regenerate, slotting every program but Bailout and Safety Net (these are executed on system startup, and are kept on disk). The remaining slots contain Sever-16 and Loop-16. At login, the user transmits his user information, which is kept on a data card issued by DSD. This will allow the user to bypass the Password program.

Miscellaneous Systems (#1049-1182)

#1049: The Pirate's Cove BBS

This is a common meeting-place for netrunners of all kinds. The sysops have the system set up to be difficult to crack, which lets the expert hackers in while keeping snoopy feds out. It has several dedicated connect-ins, one of which is Cyber Jack's. When a user connects to the system, it immediately launches Trace-13. Watchdog-14 keeps an eye on this Trace, waiting for the response. If the Trace reports a connection from one of the dedicated locations, the Watchdog gives an OK. If the Trace yields a different

User info is too lengthy and complex to be cracked by a Webster – it must be legitimate, or the Password must be corrupted.

On a successful login, the Password passes a success code and the user's info to the Watchdog, which logs it. The Watchdog then notifies the DO of a waiting customer; the DO enters cyberspace and checks the user out (per the sidebar, p. 116 – Trace and Bloodhound are also skill-16, and are launched from disk). If the DO confirms the user's identity, he leads the user through the Camouflaged link to node #789, where they can use their respective Datakeys (for the user, this is the same as the login information) to unlock the customer's database.

The Regenerates are running all the time, checking the integrity of all defensive ice on the system. If they detect corruption at any time, or if the Watchdog detects something unusual about the login, it sounds the Alarm. This alerts the DOs that there may be an intruder. The DOs can then opt to close down the connection to the databases, Severing all users in that system.

Meanwhile, the system launches Loop, Codewall, and Sever during its next three phases. If this fails to get rid of the pesky intruder, it repeats the cycle. If this still hasn't worked, it launches Black Ice.

#793: Onishima Corp.

Onishima is the newest tenant of the corporate sector. This does not make it the easiest nut to crack, however – especially at the time of this adventure! In light of the recent security breach, all system ice is at its nastiest.

At the login area, the user must defeat Password-14. Then, armed with information from the user's personnel file, a SIAB grills the user on personal topics (“What's your wife's name?” “How many kids do you have?”). If the SIAB is not satisfied (and it can't simply be fooled; system pirates must have access to the real stuff), it launches programs in the following order: Trace-13, Snare-13, Alarm-15 and Loop-12, and the Watchdog-16 kicks in. Regenerate-17 checks the Watchdog for corruption every other phase, running through the list above on the off-phases.

Watchdog examines the state of the vandal, launching a new program each phase until either the user is logged off or the system crashes. If the Alarm has been sounded, and the pirate has neither left the system nor been Snared, it launches Sever-15, which is added to the list of programs monitored by the Watchdog.

location, the Watchdog checks the source with a database of registered users. Again, success lets the hacker pass.

If either the Trace fails to report back after 16 phases or it reports an unregistered origin, the Watchdog launches a Sever-15, followed by a Bluff-16 of Black Ice.

After defeating these initial defenses, the user must enter a Password-12. This password does not prompt, and is Masked at -2. After defeating the Password, the user is confronted by a SIAB. The SIAB asks their opinion regarding software piracy and grills them on hacker jargon, proto-

cols and techniques. This is usually resolved as a Contest of Skills: the hacker's Savoir-Faire (Netrunning) skill, which defaults to Computer Hacking-2, vs. the SIAB's IQ of 13.

Finally, once the user fools (or Corrodes!) the SIAB, he can enter the system. However, there is little he can do. A message base is the only visible function available, but it is a bogus collection of "hackers" swapping targets, secret account numbers and passwords, and so on. In fact, it is something of a hobby for most of the system's regulars to see who can make up the most creative bogus messages.

In order to do anything useful, one must use Promote to become superuser. Once a user has successfully run Promote, the system can access the areas of real value in the system: the legitimate hacker message base and private mail, the outgoing connection, and the (mostly pirated) software libraries. There is also a Hall of Fame; users who manage to go from connection to promotion in minimum time are prompted to enter an identifier, which is displayed prominently to all users.

#1050: Pink Frost Beverages

This is a small soft drink distribution company. It was started by Cyber Jack and several other serious netranners as a means of disguising their access to and from the net. Though the president of the company is aware of its secret function, the remaining dozen or so employees are not. It isn't involved in anything illegal. It simply distributes Pink Frost soft drinks locally, employing independent truckers to do the work.

The external ice on the Pink Frost system is laughable. The login area is protected by a Password-12. Watchdog-13 keeps an eye on all users attempting to log in. Three failures on the password prompts the Watchdog to launch a disk-based Sever-12.

Regenerate-13 sits in the background; it checks the Password and Watchdog every other turn. If it finds corruption in the Password, it conveys this information to the Watchdog, which will attempt to Sever the cowboy's connection.

Inside the system, however, defenses are far more sophisticated. From inside the system, a user can peruse all of Pink Frost's files - its tiny personnel file, payroll and so on. The online ordering system permits anyone in the system to order supplies of Pink Frost by entering the address for delivery, the account number they want charged, and a password authorizing the charge.

Note that the line running to Pirate's Cove (#1049) is totally invisible, within and without the system (Camouflage-19). A secret Password-15 which *does not prompt* gives access to the line. A Regenerate-18 watches these two programs, while a Regenerate-13 watches the first Regenerate! (All of these programs are Masked -2).

Anyone who is Promoted to superuser will be aware of the secret programs, though not necessarily the line which is Camouflaged.

#1055 Network Gateway

This system is an outdial permanently connected to another net somewhere. The GM can use it to link this frag-

ment to his own network, or one published elsewhere. It has no defenses other than Password-14.

#1181: ThruNet

This is a commercial computing service. It runs on a complexity 5 mainframe which can handle up to 400 dial-ins simultaneously. The system has 5 slots and has had its phase shortened to 750 msec. The usual way to access the system is to call it directly. It has a local number which multiplexes numerous dial-ins. However, dial-in users are limited in the areas of the system they can access (-3 to all hacking attempts; -8 to Promote). The system offers countless databases, most of which are accessed for a fee (think of it as a public library). It also offers the convenience of conducting banking transactions, completing bureaucratic details (such as renewing a vehicle registration) and making travel plans at home. However, these system functions cannot be used to hack into the banks or travel agencies, since they use extremely limited "go-fetch" software running on the mainframe.

Commercial customers can access the system normally through the net. Its defenses include Password-15, Watchdog-12, Sever-13 and Loop-14. The Watchdog monitors all connections; failing the Password twice causes it to launch a disk-based Alarm and begin attacking the netranner with



Loop. It will throw Loops until it fails twice; after that, it will attempt to Sever the connection. The system is complexity 5, with a phase of 750 msec.

#1182: Money Any Time (MAT)

This is the mainframe which handles remote banking

The Banking Sector (#1318-1323)

Naturally, because of the value of the data they contain, the systems in the banking sector are prime targets for hacking. Consequently, this is one of the best-defended portions of the net. Bank computers are Complexity 5 mainframes running massive defensive ice. Additionally, there is an entire mainframe simply dedicated to security (#1320).

The individual banks' defenses are not detailed here. If a hacker should try to penetrate one of them, the GM can develop its ice himself, or refer to the section on corporate defenses, described above.

#1318: First World Bank of Nippon

As one of the largest banks in the world, FWBN has branches on every continent. Each of these mainframes (including the one here) has a private satellite uplink (not shown) to the company's private network sector in Tokyo.

#1319: Union Solidarity Trust Co.

Union is a local bank, operating only within the campaign city. Its advertising appeals to the blue collar workers and lower-class citizens, and its products are designed with this in mind. Union thus has the largest customer base of the banks described here, but its deposit base doesn't even come close to touching the rest.

#1320: Joint Lockout Ventures, Co.

JLV was originally started as a joint computer security company by the five banks in this area. The plan was to isolate the banks' systems in the net and set up a security front-end machine run by JLV. Eventually, the techniques

transactions. The MAT mainframe has thousands of remote, dedicated banking terminals, where users can transfer credit from their account to their credcards and vice versa, and transfer money to other people.

that JLV created for protecting data from piracy became so well-known, they were able to become a profit-making venture in themselves. Today, they supply security (both internal and external) to banks all over the world.

JLV's own operating systems are not located in this part of the net.

When a user logs on to the padlock system, the Watchdog prompts the user that it is Tracing him. The Watchdog then watches the netrunner. If he launches any programs *at all* before the Trace is complete, it activates Codewall-14, then throws a Sever-16 at him every phase thereafter until he is no longer detected in the system.

Inside the system, the user is confronted by a Password-18 disguised as a SIAB. The prompt for the Password is in the form of an informal greeting and question: "Hello, Bob. How are the wife and kids?" Legitimate users know that they are supposed to enter their password at this point; illicit ones may try to answer the SIAB, which is of course interpreted as a wrong guess at a password – and on this system, you only get one try. After the first failure, the Password program launches the same routine as above – Codewall followed by a barrage of Severs.

#1321 First Online Bank of America

First Online is just what it claims to be – the first bank which operated solely through the net. Consequently, it tends to be more up-to-date technologically than the others here. Its defenses should be better than the other banks in this sector.

Regional Government Sector (#4201-4208 – The Octopus)

The systems in this sector are largely identical, and, for the purpose of this adventure, have identical defenses, except for the Datalock (#4201, below). Each is dedicated to a different government function – one serves the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Public Works and so on. The Department of Transportation occupies system node #4207; the Department of Motor Vehicles is a subsidiary of that organization.

All systems are complexity 5 mainframes. They are each equipped with 16 comm lines, a fact which is occasionally exploited by enterprising hackers. They have 5 slots and a phase of 1,000 msec. Slotted ice includes Password-14, Watchdog-14, Trace-13, Codewall-12 and Sever-15.

#4201 Regional Government Datalock

This system ostensibly serves to keep snoops out of the

local government's business. In practice, the ice here is pretty laughable. Mischievous hackers like to communicate with one another via message bases inside the city's systems! For obvious reasons, the city's network is known to hackers as the Octopus.

The Datalock is a complexity 4 microframe with 4 slots and a phase of 2,000. It normally slots Password-13, Watchdog-12, Regenerate-13 and Sever-13. The system also keeps Bailout-15 and Safety Net-13 running at all times. These programs are initiated at bootup, and are loaded from disk.

The Watchdog observes all logins. If the password is muffed three times, it launches Sever, logging the failed attempt. The Regenerate checks the other five programs, one per phase, backing them up as needed.

Note that, in order to get into the systems beyond, a netrunner must log (or hack!) into this system.

APPENDIX

The following information is reprinted from pp. CY82-87 of *GURPS Cyberpunk*. The only new information is the description of the pirate system, on p. 128. This is a new system type, with its own icon, that designates an illegal bulletin board, acting as a haven and information exchange for console cowboys. For a specific example of a pirate system, see the description of the Pirate's Cove BBS, on p. 122.



Mapping the Network

The GM will need to construct a map of the computer network for the world. While it isn't necessary to map the *entire* world (which may consist of hundreds of thousands of nodes), he should have the network(s) in and around the PCs' "home base" constructed fairly well.

Looking at the net generation tables, the GM will notice that a surprisingly large number of systems will have little or no security; they will be "open" or "normal" systems.

This, however, is accurate. The vast majority of systems will be of the "normal" variety, because most system operators/owners think that there is nothing anyone else would be interested in on their system.

The GM should make sure that *obvious* targets – banks, S&Ls, military systems, corporate R&D computers, etc. – are appropriately protected.

Connections

To connect to the matrix, a decker merely jacks in and connects through a comm-line. Once he's made it to the main network, he can begin connecting to nodes at random. If the GM wants him to connect to a certain node, he should make it so. Otherwise, he should generate a random node (the GM may wish to do this beforehand to save time during the play session.)

A node is represented by an icon box. Not all systems will have all pieces of information in their icon box – satellites, for instance, have no System Complexity or Type. Also, the GM shouldn't make anything but the Node Number and System Icon public when the player encounters the system – he'll have to figure out everything else himself!

Node Number: Assigned by GM, and purely for record-keeping purposes (although GMs running a realistic net-

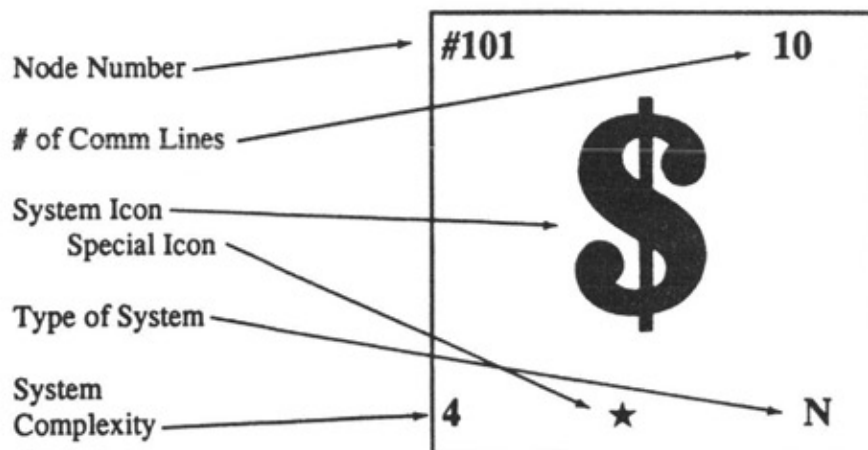
work may wish the Node Number to correspond to a network address of some sort).

System Icon: Each type of system has its own icon, allowing a GM or player familiar with the icons to quickly identify it. A star (★) indicates that it is owned by the government. A ∞ symbol indicates an AI.

System Complexity: This is a quick reference for the GM as to how fast the system can execute its attack and defense programs.

Type of System: See p. CY68. Either P (Public), N (Normal) or S (Secure).

Number of Comm Lines: This represents how many users can be attached to the system *externally* – there may be a huge number attached to the system within the building where it is located, but there will usually only be a small



number of inward lines. Many systems have their lines set up to *refuse* any connections not originating from a certain place – this isn't ice, it's a function of how the line is installed and can't be altered. But they can call out.

When a decker is attached to a system, he occupies one of the comm-lines. If there is more than one line, extras can be used as *outgoing* comm-lines back into the Net. The advantage is that any subsequent machines will trace the connection back to the outbound link rather than the netrunner's home node.

These can be used to connect anywhere in the world. They usually have built-in fax and Voice Synthesizer/Recognition programs so normal communications can be established (systems of Complexity 5 or higher may have

holovid synthesizers so video connections can be simulated . . .)

System Links: If two systems can reach each other *directly* through the network, they are connected with a line. If there are a number of systems that are geographically close, they may all be connected to the same line. If the netrunner cannot trace an *uninterrupted* line from one system to another, he will have to route the connection through another machine. The link between two systems should have a number representing the number of hops between the two nodes.

The GM should determine and record the type and operation of the defense programs on a system. See the *Launching Programs* sidebar, p. CY83, and the net map on p. CY94 for examples.

System Types

Academic

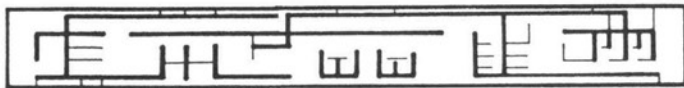


Almost every university, college and even some secondary schools have their own computer systems or networks. Machine type will range from Complexity 2 personal computers to Complexity 5 mainframes. Rich universities might have a Megacomp.

University computers are usually well-networked, with lots of inward and outbound lines. They also tend to be less restricted than most systems, so are often used for chat systems (see p. CY69) or as underground bulletin board systems and samizdata distribution sites (see p. CY113).

Hacking academic computers is not usually very profitable – unless the school is engaged in cutting-edge research. University administrative computers are often good sources of information about former (or current) students.

Most academic systems have weak security – but one doing significant research (especially if it's government-funded) will have state-of-the-art ice.



Banking/Financial



These systems are used in the trading of cash, stocks, bonds, commodities and anything else of value. Naturally, these are going to be the best-protected systems on the network – the GM should be careful that the financial systems in his world are protected against all but the absolute *best* netrunners.

A typical system runs on a Mainframe or Megacomp – if AIs are common, there will undoubtedly be one in charge of system security for large banking systems.

Everything that happens on the system – every connection and command – is probably logged on both the machine and hardcopy, so a successful penetration might have

to involve physically entering the site. The GM shouldn't roll for random defense programs – he should assign them manually. A typical medium-size system will have a Watchdog running that executes a Trace and Sever on any unauthorized connections, a Mask, and a plethora of Datalocks and Codewalls. Many times the links to a banking system will be Camouflaged.

Diverters/Outdials



Some companies maintain banks of modems or comm-decks so that their employees can connect to the outside world. These are not run by a separate system; they have their controlling software built-in. Unfortunately, their security is usually lax. Most systems are treated as a Complexity 2 machine running Password-12. Roll on the *# of Outbound Lines* table to see how many lines are available to call out with – there is a 50/50 chance that each line will be busy at any time. It takes 5d minutes for a line to release.

Government Systems

There are many thousands of different government offices, bureaus, departments and agencies that require computing power. The *Government Type* table points the GM toward the general area that a system is involved in, but specifics are up to him. If corporations rival governments in a particular world, these might actually be corporate systems!

A star (★) at the bottom of any system icon indicates a government system.

Judicial Systems



Judicial systems are typically large databases on criminals and current investigations. They are usually kept fairly secure, and will attract a large amount of publicity if penetrated (assuming the intrusion becomes public knowledge).

Legislative Systems



Legislative systems are mainly used by lawmakers to track current laws, voter information, and the like. One of the most interesting things on a legislative system would be the list of campaign contributors (and possibly the account numbers that the money is stored in!)

Administrative Systems



Administrative systems are typical “red tape” machines – large, with many gigs of databases on everything from population figures to rainfall density. The bulk of government computers will be administrative in function.

Military Systems



Easily-accessible military systems will never be controls for weapons (those are always on isolated networks with no inbound lines)! They’re more likely to be concerned with supplies, logistics and administration. That’s not to say that they won’t contain information of strategic value to an enemy . . .

Systems that contain top secret or classified information are almost *never* available from the mainstream network. This isn’t to say they aren’t networked – but the network has to be accessed from certain physical locations.

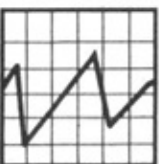
Netrunners should be careful when hacking government computers. Private companies won’t usually come after someone who only cost them a few hundred (or even thousand) dollars – it just isn’t profitable to track down *everyone*. The government, on the other hand, has no need to show a profit, and will quite willingly dedicate massive resources to hunting down and eliminating anyone they perceive as a minor threat.



Large Business

The bulk of the machines on the network are owned by large businesses and corporations. Without a massive amount of processing power, companies of this size simply can’t function.

Accounting Systems



These are used for day-to-day management of the corporation’s assets. They are usually well protected, as they are often targets of both freelance netrunners out to make a quick buck and industrial espionage. A microframe is the usual choice for this type of work – the biggest corps will use mainframes.

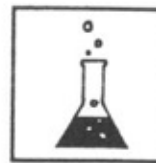


Personnel/Administrative Systems



This type of system handles all the paperwork concerning employees – records, history, job duties, insurance, vacation and sick leave, etc. Minicomputers or microframes are usual systems for this type of work, and security is somewhat lax.

Research and Development



R&D systems are used by scientific personnel to store data and perform calculations. They are generally large, powerful systems capable of hosting a number of users and performing complex calculations quickly – a mainframe or megacomp. System security will vary from system to system. A company working on a new nerve gas will have tighter security than one working on a new glue.

Medium Business



This system is also quite common – it is used by mid-sized offices and provides computing power for the business operations. Often individual users will have a Complexity 2 personal computer attached to it. Security on this type of system is not usually state-of-the-art, not often is much worth stealing kept online.

Small Business



This is most often a minicomputer or microframe that provides the computational power for an entire small business – inventory, payroll, accounting and other record keeping. As above, it usually employs protection commensurate with the value of the data stored on it.

Network Gateway



This node connects you to an entirely new network. It is not so much a computer as an outdial that is permanently connected to a secondary network. The destination of this gateway can be chosen by the GM, or it could be another net generated using the random tables. Some gateways will be protected with Password programs. If so, they should be

treated as Password-12 on a Complexity 2 system unless the network has military or confidential applications, in which case both skill and Complexity will be higher.

Private System



This could be anything from a Complexity 2 personal computer with a modem attached to a megacomp – it all depends on the individual who owns it. Generally, it will be a small system with only a password defense, no outbound lines, and absolutely nothing of interest to a netrunner.

The GM should feel free to be creative, though . . .

Pirate System



This type of system is usually a bulletin board that caters to netrunners, specifically those involved in illegal activities. Some pirate systems are menacing, highly secure nodes, with complicated SIABs and Password programs . . . and, occasionally, Black Ice.

Other boards might have false fronts – for instance, an innocuous BBS message base with nothing much of interest. However, if a hacker can beat the board's security and promote himself to superuser, he then sees the real messages and users on the board.

Other boards are populated with the darkest, most sinister netrunners, who would just as soon send someone to cut a hacker's throat as sever his connecton. Breaking into these systems can lead to some interesting encounters for unwary hackers.

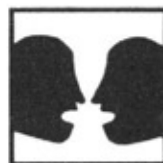
Satellite Uplink



This is a connection straight into a comsat. From here, a connection can be made directly to any other uplink in the world – it has an effectively infinite capacity for line transmission, but adds one hop to any data passing through it.



Commercial Computing Service



There are many systems that allow users to *purchase* time on them. The modern-day equivalent to this service would be a network such as Compuserve or GENIE. Users log in under a specific account that is billed to them, and then use the system for everything from electronic mail to research to making airline reservations. Prices range from \$20.00 to \$60.00 per hour for a typical commercial service.

Data Haven



Occasionally, someone will find themselves in need of secure, reliable and completely anonymous offline storage. A data haven offers a large amount of protected offline memory that they'll allow a netrunner to use – for a fee. The most common legal use of a data haven is for offsite backups. Illegal uses range from storing stolen programs or databases to holding the books for a crime organization. Data havens usually encrypt (see p. CY63) all data stored in them.

Storage in a data haven costs \$1,000 a week per gig for the average haven. The best Swiss data havens are hundreds of times more expensive. Payment is usually made through an anonymous electronic funds transfer, and access is controlled with a unique user number and password. If someone forgets their password, they're out of luck – and can kiss their data goodbye.

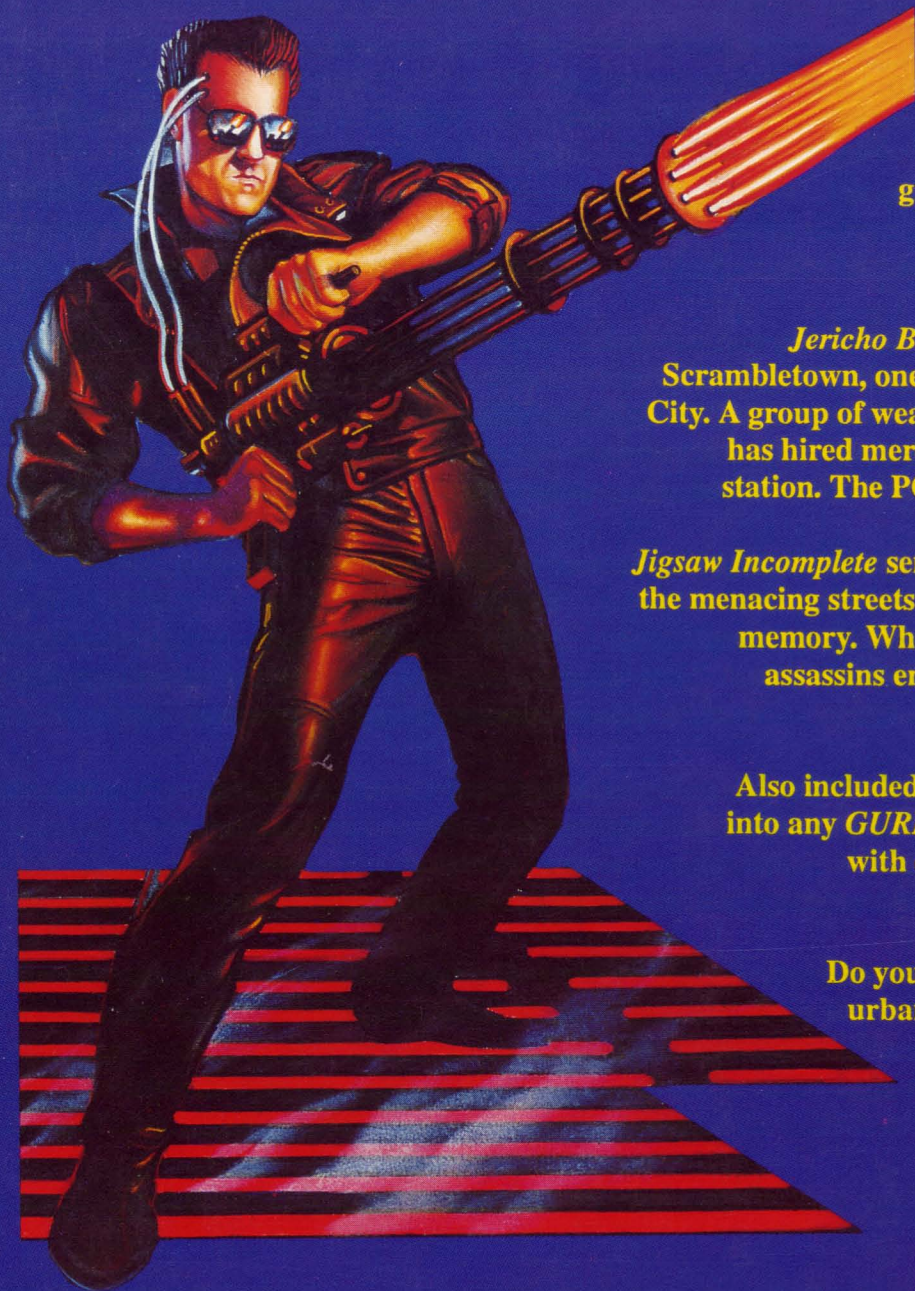
Padlock



A Padlock is a system that is dedicated to just one thing – security. Padlocks are generally used as front-end machines for business networks. A typical Padlock is a high-Complexity system with the maximum number of slots, plus a number of disk-based ice programs. Most Padlocks will have some form of a Sysop-in-a-Box (see p. CY80) running as well as standard ice.

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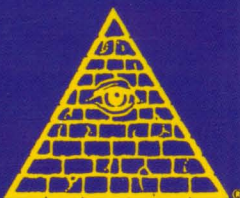
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