

Loose Alliances™

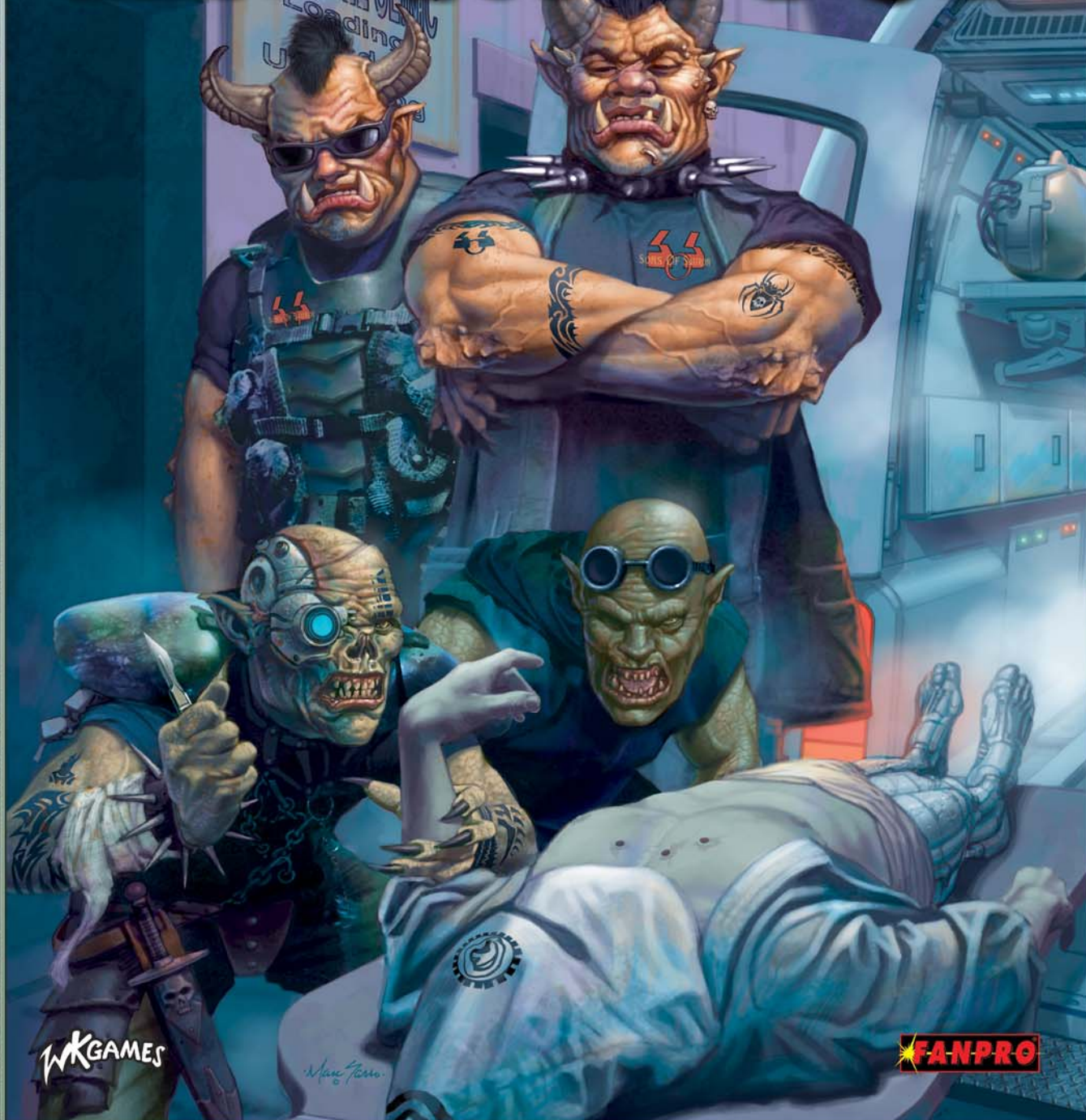


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LOOSE ALLIANCES

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INTRODUCTION

Shadowrun has often focused on the major power players in the shadows—the megacorps, organized crime, dragons, and so on. But there are many smaller organizations in the world of *Shadowrun* that also play a role—and even more importantly, are more likely to appeal to characters as groups they might want to affiliate with.

Loose Alliances explores these second-tier players—organizations that are more likely to have a smaller, localized effect than impacting on a global scale. These groups are perfect for using in street-level and alternate campaigns, whether they are used as antagonists, allies, or even as the uniting force that brings the player characters together.

Loose Alliances is presented as a series of electronic documents posted by Captain Chaos, sysop of the vast Shadowland archive and data haven—the number one source for shadowrunners on what’s going on in the world of *Shadowrun*. The documents come from a variety of sources, underground and mainstream, but are directed towards an audience of shadowrunners. These sources are each unique in outlook and perspective, influenced by their own particular prejudices and interests. Each article is marked up with a running commentary by shadow denizens who add to, revise and contradict the original post. These inserted comments add innuendo, allegations, opinions, rumors, misconceptions, misinformation, lies and sometimes even the truth to the information presented. It is left up to the gamemaster to decide what information is correct and which is just filling, as appropriate to his or her game.

The first section, *Political Agitators*, introduces a wide spectrum of policlubs, activist fronts and armed resistance

groups, from eco-groups to anarchists to fascists. It discusses their politics and goals and describes several types of groups in each category, as well as their allies and enemies.

The second chapter, *Hands of the Elite*, details three organizations that are puppets/servants (depending on who you ask) to the rich and powerful: the United Nations, the Aristo Cabal and Aegis Cognito.

Mystic Secrets first describes treasure-hunting arcano-archaeological groups such as the Atlantean Foundation and its competitors. It then moves on to cover magical groups in general, with several specific orders discussed in more detail, from the Illuminates of the New Dawn to the Voice of Ogoun to the Seers’ Guild.

The next chapter, *Keepers of the Faith*, introduces several religious groups, starting with the Vigilia Evangelica, the Vatican’s secret libraries and mystic defenders. A triad of Islamic groups competing for power in the Middle East are then featured: the Islamic Unity Movement, the New Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Renaissance Movement.

Finally, the *DIY Crime* section covers several criminal groups that fall outside the range of standard syndicates and gangs. In addition to Tamanous organleggers and Brokerage X black traders, it features several shadowrunner groups, including Assets, Inc. and the Smokers’ Club.

A *Game Information* chapter at the end provides advice for using these groups in campaigns, whether as employers, allies or enemies. Several adventure hooks are given for each faction as well, suggesting ways in which the gamemaster can introduce these groups into game play. Suggestions on combing some of these groups into “unholy alliances” are also included, to throw the players off-guard.



WATCH OUT FOR THE LITTLE GUYS

OK, terms. I'm aware that our file exposes here on Shadowland tend to focus on major events and key world players. Lately, however, more and more of you have been clamoring for a download that dives behind the scenes on the smaller-scale, more localized contenders—the ones we're all more likely to face off with on the street. There are a lot of factions out there trying to carve out their own niche in the world, from political extremists to religious dogma-dealers to good ol'-fashioned do-it-yourself crime outfits. Some of you have worked for or against them. Some of you are them.

Cynics will say that these movements and factions aren't likely to change the world—at least, not unless some major crisis comes along they can take advantage of. And groups that operate on this scale certainly don't have the resources to face off with the megacorps, the influence to stand-up to the big syndicates or the cunning to outmaneuver a great dragon. But down here, at street level, these outfits wield enough power to make the difference between life or death. And that's where it counts for most of us.

I know that a lot of our regulars here at Shadowland either support or are outright members of some of the organizations we're going to describe here. As always, we welcome your insight into the internal workings, and we ask that you don't take the exposure too personally—everyone gets their equal share of spotlight here on Shadowland, even shadowrunners. Most of all, keep the ideological debates and faction fights to a minimum, please—we're looking to provide some real pay-dirt here that may help some of you survive out there; we're not interested in making this a platform to draw in new recruits or settle old scores.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:24:25 (PST)

POLITICAL AGITATORS



Let's face it. Our world is no longer as comfy as it used to be, even in the prosperous countries. The rich are still getting richer, and the poor are still getting stepped on. Throw in some ecological devastation, megacorporate influence, radical technology and a minor little thing called the Awakening, and you've got the perfect recipe for mixing together some people with extreme political notions. These range from complete nut-job toxic avengers who view metahumanity as a parasite to be eradicated from the Earth, to more rational anarchists like me who have the radical notion that people should control their own lives. The more people get screwed over or faced with events that drastically change their lives, the more policlubs and underground groups we'll see popping up to throw a wrench in the gears.

We're covering a wide range of political ideologies here, and we here at Shadowland certainly don't support them all. But we understand that others who view these files might be interested or supportive, or might just want to know more about a group that they consider a threat. Please restrict your remarks here to postings that clarify, enhance or factually correct the information—if you're looking to spark a political flame war, take your opinions to the appropriate poli SIGs—you'll find plenty of mobs looking to riot there.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:28:35 (PST)

GREEN KEEPERS: THE ECO-ACTIVISTS

• Ecotope was my first choice to get you out of the 'plex into the countryside. Check out the war that's being fought on both political and physical fronts to save Mother Nature from further abuse by her children. As an environmentalist, he knows the eco-movement, from its historical roots to the thick trunk of green parties and policlubs to its sometimes radical branches and the dead wood that, rotten to the core, has already fallen.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:30:12 (PST)

by Ecotope

"When the last tree is cut, the last river poisoned and the last fish dead, we will discover that we can't eat money."





Starting with this old Greenpeace slogan seems appropriate as we draw closer and closer to a nightmare becoming reality.

Ecocide, as what we are doing to the planet is called, dawned with the Industrial Age and picked up speed through the centuries as the Earth was increasingly exploited and polluted. Look around. Sprawls like Seattle, London and Neo-Tokyo exist under a permanent pall of smog and acid rain. Pollution ordinances are jokes in the face of social-economic pressure. Soils are poisoned with pesticides and insecticides that eradicate entire animal and plant populations. Gene-engineered plants impact biological systems in ways no scientist could ever have imagined, leading to dangerous feedback or even collapse of working ecological cycles. We eat artificial meat or mycoprotein, grown in tanks, without true knowledge of long-term side-effects; food allergies are endemic among the poor these days. The main reason for all this—single-minded human stupidity.

Most corporations don't give a damn about filtering systems or residue collectors, spilling chemical byproducts and industrial toxins into the air, water or soil to shave costs off waste processing. Inadequate or ignored safety protocols lead to supertanker spills and pipelines breaches that ravage whole regions, killing thousands of animals and leaving millions to live with the aftermath. The examples of how Earth has been raped by corporations are manifold. But let's not perpetuate the lie. They aren't the *only* perpetrators.

The problem was never just the corps. It's metahumanity itself, with its slowly growing mountains of unrecycled garbage, its continued use of non-eco-friendly engines, its pillaging of Nature's bounty. The story of metahuman contempt, ignorance and lack of foresight is chiseled into the very face of the Earth in the irradiated wastes of the SOX and Tripoli Hot Zone, the toxic swamps of East Anglia and the Mazury Toxic Zone, the strip-mines of Africa and Russia, the sprawling metahuman hives of America's East Coast, Japan and the UK. We've done more in the last sixty years to turn Mother Earth into the toxic wasteland of that old slogan than in all of human history.

Is there still hope? Yes, because there are those that don't want to twiddle their thumbs while Mother Earth dies, who have realized that there will be no tomorrow if we do not stop it all now. Some of the eco-aware just make a small but important contribution by living cleanly, boycotting eco-hostile corporations or products or just by supporting the cause(s) via donations. Others, though, are willing to contribute to the rescue of the Gaia-sphere, to shout a wakeup call and pave the way for a new eco-awareness within the minds of metahumanity, be they salarymen, politicians or Joe Average.

OBITUARY FOR A RAINBOW WARRIOR

The motivation of an ecological movement has always been the vision of a green and peaceful world in which metahumanity lives at harmony with its environment and nature. While this dream survived the difficult years of the turn of the century, the ideologies of many environmentalists and eco-activists were put to the ultimate test as they faced ecological disasters like the Kent Meltdown or the Cattenom Gau. Some did not pass.

It isn't relevant exactly when eco-radicalism was born among our ranks—only that it happened. Even back in the last century there were those who pushed the envelope and chopped down gene-modified wheat, spiked trees, liberated animals from mass breeding farms or set corporate facilities ablaze. Though they crossed the line from civil disobedience to illegal acts of sabotage, these eco-activists were still careful to protect life. Because of their effectiveness in hurting corporate bottom lines, however, their activities were deemed "terrorist."

While actions like this are no longer uncommon, a major shift occurred earlier this century, bounding from peaceful activism and property-destroying radicalism over into actual eco-terrorism in the name of Mother Nature. The assassination of a German right-wing politician by an animal rights fanatic in 2006 and the bombing of the International Whaling Commission office in 2010, killing dozens of people, are seen by most as the birth of modern eco-extremism.

- It's time to pay the piper, chummer. In these desperate hours, there are no innocent bystanders. We either change our ways or face the fate we've created.

- Deep Green

- By advocating violent crimes, you'll never really change the minds of the masses. A Green Tomorrow cannot be built on the dead bodies of our opponents.

- Bari

- Open your eyes. Talk changes nothing. Direct action is the only voice the corps will listen to. I'm not advocating that we start capping everyone who drives a gas-guzzler, but if the CEO of Earth Rapers, Inc. takes an assisted dive out a window, I'd consider it a case of (planetary) self-defense.

- Green Piece

- We don't fight alone, either—The Mother is on our side. Take the VITAS plagues for instance; these were Gaia's revenge on the despoilers. It culled overpopulated urban areas like New Delhi and Rio de Janeiro and bloated Third World countries, giving her the chance to recover her breath.

- eXtinctioneer

- Racist drek. It culled areas where the poor didn't have access to proper medical care. Impoverished slum-dwellers aren't the real threat to the eco-sphere's well-being. The megacorp bastards that perpetuate non-sustainable technologies and practices all have healthcare packages and can afford inoculations and replacement parts. You want to buy our planet some breathing time, go cull some of that lot.

- Squirrel

Alarmed by the Resource Rush and the string of eco-disasters that struck early in the century, environmentalist attitudes and philosophies gained widespread support. At the





same time, however, large organizations like Greenpeace proved continuously ineffective at stopping pollutive practices. Disillusioned conservationists abandoned them in droves. Many good activists were driven to desperation in their futile struggle against their powerful and numerous enemies. Radical groups like TerraFirst! and Green Cells were founded to carry out campaigns of economic warfare against the polluters. Extremist groups like GreenWar also gained support, though their former comrades-in-arms greeted them with aversion and mistrust.

The onset of magic only made the situation worse. At first the Awakening was a dream come true, a natural way to soothe Earth's wounds. Then despair set in when we realized that the manosphere itself had been corrupted by pollution in unanticipated ways, giving birth to abominations like toxic critters and spirits. As Awakened environmentalists all over the globe lost faith in the face of Mother Earth's corrupted corpse, they became what we know today as toxic shamans, their idealism twisted.

- Some would say they just see the writing on the wall, and have thrown in on the winning side.
- Deep Green

GREEN POLITICS

Mainstream environmentalism today is embodied by two factions: democratic Green parties and various eco-policlubs that usually work towards a common conservationist goal. Green politicians face a bum deal these days. Most voters simply don't trust Green platforms where socio-economic interests rate second to environmentalism. And with most nations dancing to corporate music, it's hard for Green parties to find corporate support without compromising some principles, thus losing the trust of their supporters. As a result, even mainstream movements like Green Socialists or Left-Greens show poorly in the polls.

- Very few corps will donate money to Green party coffers—it usually conflicts with their self-interest, given that the Greens are most likely to push through legislation that is restrictive and costly to corporate productions. Some corps (*cough*Zeta-ImpChem*cough*) even go out of their way to sabotage Green party efforts and prevent them from becoming a threat in the first place.
- Bookchin

Fortunately, there are exceptions. The center-left wing movement with an ecological conscience, common in Scandinavia and the AGS around the turn of the century, evolved in the face of the numerous eco-catastrophes that shook Europe before and after the Awakening. They played the environmental crisis card and eco-interested politicians banked on it to garner popular support. The New Druidic Movement (NDM) in the UK and the Scandinavian Ecological Society have both made significant gains in pursuing eco-friendly agendas. Few nations, though, can boast a Green government, and

those that have seen their eco-politicos succumb to the temptation of power—particularly in Britain, where the NDM has forsaken its original goals.

- A lot of the UK eco-activists have withdrawn their support for the Green government and are collaborating with the new movement that's creating waves around the country.
- Anonymous Botch

Beyond Awakened nations like Amazonia and Yakut, only a few countries like Tír na nÓg, Sweden and some of the NAN can be called Green. These governments share a heavy pro-environment agenda and there is speculation that they fund, train and/or provide safe haven for direct action eco-cells.

- Sweden has in several cases blatantly refused to extradite eco-criminals to megacorp authorities or other nations, except for a few who engaged in extremely violent terrorist actions.
- Hazard

These Green countries also managed to resurrect the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) after a hard-fought battle with the megas. Tír na nÓg tipped the balance in the struggle by offering to share information gathered by their noteworthy EcoSat network for global environmental governance.

- Foreign governments pay high retainers in return for advance warning from EcoSat of important ecological changes. Since the institution of scientific advisory groups with the Dublin protocol of '58, some of the information (though not all) that EcoSat collects is shared with UNEP, which is led by a TNO rep—a Danaan family member, of course.
- Poguer
- Lot of good it's done. They didn't predict the earthquakes and volcanoes when the Ring of Fire went nuts—or if they did, they weren't telling.
- Keller
- UNEP depends primarily on voluntary support (receiving a ridiculously small share of the UN's budget) and private donations to the Environment Fund. With several great dragons (Hestaby, Hualpa, Kaltenstein, Masaru and Mujaji) sharing a Green agenda, however, this source of money is unlikely to dry up.
- Ambassador
- UNEP plans the erection of multiple Gaiaspheres—mini-arcologies that simulate different habitats from deserts to rain-forest—all over the globe. Proteus AG received the construction contract given their expertise in the field of hostile environments, with the exception of the underwater sphere that was assigned to Yamatetsu.
- Spotlight Sally



GRASS & ROOTS

Outside of the Green parties, there are thousands of eco-policlubs around the world that make up the bulk of the Green movement. Many of these activists are distrustful of “sellout” Green politicians or simply have no Green party in their country to support.

In the wake of the collapse of large international organizations such as Greenpeace that approached environmental protection on a broad basis, the field was open for eco-groups to pursue a new range of strategy and tactics. This led to an explosion of eco-motivated groups in the Thirties. They ranged from networks that relentlessly targeted specific industries and corporations to groups that infiltrated corporations to expose ecocidal practices. Their tools included such things as arcane circles that seek to heal devastated areas with magic to tech workgroups that promoted eco-friendly technologies. Many of these groups were dynamic, melting away and reforming as needed—or as activists switch gears and try new ideas. A considerable number survive to this day, despite corporate attempts to smash them as soon as they surface.

- That’s an exaggeration. The corps have better things to do than start a vendetta against eco-groups; it’s simply not worth the expense or bad press to send out corporate thugs to clobber activists.

- LabRat

- Of course they don’t send their own henchmen. They hire people like us to send the message to go bother another (that is, rival) corp. Environmentalists can be a useful tool for a corp to hit a competitor with while keeping its hands clean.

- Socio Pat

The interests of this new generation of activists are as diverse as the damage wrought on the Earth, ranging from forest protection, anti-whaling, safeguarding of (para-)fauna and -flora, stopping resource exploitation and control of industrial waste and toxic transport. A major segment of the movement also focuses on issues like genetic-hypermodified (GHM)-food or crops, the second generation fallout of gene-engineering on ecosystems and the emerging nanotech threat.

- Can you imagine what would happen if self-sustaining nanites were to leak into the environment? They would be a worse plague than any bacterial and viral infection in history.

- Trychosope

- The horror vision of a nanotech pandemic has been around since the inception of nanotechnology. To be self-sufficient, they would need the ability to self-replicate, which even SOTA nanites don’t possess. And they don’t evolve, they’re just robots.

- Warentester

- Yeah, right. And Als are just programs.

- Silvery K

Most organizations portray themselves as watchdogs whose mission is to alert the public to alleged environmental risks, using methods such as Matrix campaigns, trid piracy and good ol’ fashioned canvassing. Others engage in civil disobedience with office occupations, lock-ins and media jamming to garner attention and pressure their target. Still others focus on building alternatives or reversing the damage done.

- These activists are a little too quick to make demands, sound false alarms, point fingers and place blame. They don’t really perform a public service; they’re just a public nuisance.

- SPD

- Still smarting from that time you tried to pepper spray that group of blockading eco-activists, and their guardian spirit blew it back in your face, eh, SPD? Lackey.

- Gamera

- You have to give these eco-freaks credit for creativity. They’ve invented quite a few interesting ways to stop the corps without breaking anything or hurting anyone. They blockaded the Japanese fishing fleet off New Zealand with a sea spirit storm and delayed the transport of a Castor (nuclear waste) container by freeze-foaming it to the rails. They’ve also tricked the whales away from the whaling fleets with undersea drones and sent elementals to safeguard animals from poachers and safari hunters.

- Southern Cross

- Do-gooder pests, the lot of ‘em. They’re always sneaking into Grand Tour parties to mark known eco-polluters like French wine-growers with non-washable glowpaint. Don’t get me started on what happens if they see people wearing real fur.

- Gossip

To cover the spectrum, I selected the best known groups and a few minor ones to show you how widespread the modern grassroots eco-movement is.

Astral Space Preservation Society (ASPS)

Environmental protection isn’t limited to the ecosphere. The ASPS consists of a significant number of mages, shamans and even free spirits that take care of impaired regions of the astral world. Their goals are “to monitor potential abuse of astral space and its inhabitants, protect the rights of the denizens of the astral space, establish a set of parameters that will facilitate a positive working relationship between spirits and metahumanity and create a sanctuary in astral space for beings in search of a safe retreat,” as laid out by the great dragon Dunkelzahn’s will.

Though the ASPS is a *de facto* research branch of the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research and under its administration, the members view themselves more as a society of astral environmentalists than scientific researchers. Given this mindset, the ASPS works closely with the eco-movement to prevent further corruption of the manasphere by the toxic phe-



nomena that have created twisted astral zones like the SOX, North Sea, Yucatán and Tripoli.

A Balinese free spirit calling herself *Ibu Air* currently heads the society. She is normally accompanied by a Sumatran dwarf that acts as translator, since she speaks a specific and presumably old dialect of Balinese that no linguasoft has been able to translate.

- Some think she is one of the Bodhisattvas, a divine being worthy of Nirvana that remained on Earth to offer guidance for others on the Wheel.
- Magister
- Several other mysterious entities are known to support the ASPS in its work. It's believed that they've even got a line to the faerie folk of Tír na nÓg. I suspect the Seelie Court would be quite interested to know the details of that.
- Green Pixie

The ASPS acts as a magical group, drawing members from belief systems and traditions across the world. Initiates are normally taught metamagical techniques such as cleansing or filtering to handle the effects of contaminated astral zones.

- Without a healthy body, there is no healthy soul.
- Tsangara

- There have been several attempts to initiate talks between society shamans and various spirits in the Yucatán to find a way to stabilize the ecosystem—so far without success.

- Brujo

- We were hired to protect an ASPS lunatic on one of these missions. The drek was scared out of me when we were ambushed by some sort of toxic monster in the jungle, but I was scared even worse when our contractor began talking to the thing. Our mage said it looked as if they were engaged in some sort of astral contest—not fighting, but bargaining over something. Whatever he offered, the spirit obviously didn't like since it slaughtered him in front of our eyes. Luckily our mage had the mojo to deal with the thing.

- Wide Bertha

It is widely believed that the ASPS has carried through on its mandate and created a safe astral sanctuary as laid out by Dunkelzahn's will. The exact location of the sanctum is unknown, but buzz says that it is in one of the world's major metroplexes, perhaps Chicago (where the ASPS is headquartered) or Denver (where Ghostwalker invited the ASPS to open new offices). Other rumors claim that the sanctuary is secured within some unknown metaplane, or that the ASPS in fact has several sanctuaries.



- Wouldn't it be linked to a power site?
- Weaver of the Winds

• Too obvious. From what I've heard, it's some house that boasts maxed-out wards that even a great dragon couldn't penetrate, while still looking mundane for those unable to see through multiple layers of Masking. It's allegedly been used by the Draco Foundation as a safe-house for drakes in the last few years.

- Silicon Mage

• Word is that Ghostwalker and the ASPS have some sort of agenda cooked up for Denver, though no one seems to know any details. But there certainly is a lot of spirit activity in Denver these days ...

- Quinn

GenePeace

Originating from the Scandinavian Union, GenePeace campaigns for strict regulation of genetic engineering. This includes the restriction of genetic-modified food products and crops, metahuman cloning and the widespread use of biotech implants. The group's conservative membership condemns most aspects of genetech with exception of gene therapy. The Copenhagen Accords was their biggest coup against opponents such as Universal Omnitech, Shiawase, Yakashima, AG Chemie and Proteus. GenePeace also keeps a close eye on the practice of biotech medical providers such as DocWagon, BuMoNA and EuroMedis.

• Over 80 percent of today's agricultural crops are genetically modified to be resistant to all but specific fungicides, herbicides or pesticides (normally also provided by the corp that sells the seeds). Normal SOP. Making the plants grow in inhospitable regions like deserts or creating plants that you can harvest three or four times a year are the real challenges modern agricultural genetics hasn't been addressing.

- The Smiling Bandit

• It's worth noting that the eco-movement itself is divided over genetic engineering. Many are not opposed to it so long as it is thoroughly tested before implementation, and a few technophile eco-groups even embrace it as a tool to decrease environmental impact. But almost all will agree that corporate testing and motivation behind gene-modification is not to be trusted.

- Arkady

Now that GM foodstuffs are a fact of life for most people despite the rise of allergies and indigestibility of certain substances, GenePeace has given up on changing consumer habits and focused on direct action against food-industry corps like Meridional Agronomics, Danone, Genetique or Nestlé. To get rid of annoying GenePeace activists who chop down their cutting-edge genewheat or set fire to expensive greendomes,

Meridional recently began a campaign of its own, using runners and the unwitting help of German mediacorp DeMeKo to drag GenePeace through the public mire. In the past few years, GenePeace has taken quite a beating and lost many important financial supporters—which is just making the group more desperate and radical.

• GenePeace already employs fight-fire-with-fire tactics. I don't know how, but they got their hands on a box of bugs that are normally native to the deep Amazonian jungles and released them inside a huge greenhouse complex in Southern Spain. After completely defoliating 50 square kilometers inside the complex, the insects—thanks to some genetic modification by an unknown source—reproduced at an astonishing rate, escaped and invaded the neighboring farmlands. When GenePeace realized the scale of the disaster, they tried to blame it on Meridional, but it backfired and cost them even more face.

- Après Glow

• The policlub is on the brink of going extremist. Former leader Torben Leikoennen resigned from his duties and went underground to start a retaliation campaign against Meridional. In his case, it's personal. After Meridional arranged for a public exposé of his affair with a hot Latina babe, his wife filed for divorce and the judges stripped him of visitation rights with his two children due to his "dangerous activism"—guess who paid for his wife's lawyers? Buzz is that he's already dealt with the devil, spearheading a Z-IC sponsored shadow campaign against Meridional in preparation for a takeover bid.

- Agasul

Globewatch (GW)

On the surface, Globewatch seems to be a sort of distributed data haven, collating relevant resources on environmental issues as well data on polluting corporations on multiple subnets around the world. It began with a small group of enviro-deckers who set up a number of hosts in the Caribbean League's RTGs as a databank for multiple eco-minded groups to access. Globewatch's archives, newsfeeds and SIGs quickly earned a reputation for carrying some of the hardest-hitting environmental intel, including blistering insider exposes on corp wrongdoings. Globewatch's grids are a crossroads for eco-activists to share juicy data and brainstorm new strategies.

• Some Globewatch hosts are restricted to vetted members of specific policlubs—and if word on the street is to be believed, eco-terrorists also meet here in safety to plan further actions.

- Clockwork

Globewatch, however, is not just an interesting collection of archivists and sysops. At the core of GW is a dedicated network of deckers who infiltrate the hosts of corporate polluters on a regular basis, stealing incriminating evidence, defacing host iconography with slogans or footage of environmentally



destructive activity, or just wreaking mayhem on principle. GW also backs a number of deep-cover intel gathering operations, inserting moles into corporate operations to expose their wrong-doings later.

- Most corpers view them as Matrix vandals, but fact is the GW deckers are quite good at what they do. I hear they also take on support jobs for TerraFirst! or ALF actions, shutting down Matrix security or crashing hosts.
- Anubis

Save Our Seas (SOS)

SOS came about in the Twenties when the Sea Shepard Society merged with the remnants of the Greenpeace fleet to form an organization interested in preserving the conditions of the world's oceans and other bodies of water. Based out of California but operating from several offices in North America, Europe and Asia, they possess a fleet of roving research vessels used to probe the seas for new maritime pollution and track ships guilty of dumping industrial waste and tank fluids directly into the sea. But this is not their only task—they are often put into action to stop Asian whaling fleets or assist in the event of supertanker disasters. Boasting the latest envirotech and a high number of marine biologists, they have displayed their expertise in preventing oil slicks from expanding several times.

- SOS has a good relationship with Aqua Arcana, hiring magicians and sea life experts from the corp on occasion and cooperating on missions along the California coastline.
- Local Yokel
- They also employ a high number of riggers who use sensor-laden drones to probe the quality of the water in rivers, lakes and undersea strata.
- Impel

Though they spend most of their time at sea or cleaning up coastlines, SOS members also take the responsibility of insinuating eco-consciousness into people's heads quite seriously. Members give talks at schools or via Matrix and invite school classes to tour their ships and projects in order to promote insight into their operations and underline the importance of environmental protection. SOS also goes further than simply denouncing polluting corps, often publicly contacting companies and offering to help find more efficient ways of doing business, meeting environmental regulations or proposing alternative means of production without toxic byproducts.

- These guys are dreamers. Remember the Polydopa scandal in '42 when Zeta-ImpChem dumped neurotoxins in central African tribal lands? That's just one example on a very long list of a corp that knew exactly what it was doing and didn't care. The sea-savers won't change the corps by enlightening them on eco-business. The corps only learn the hard way.
- Deep Green

- Their success speaks for itself. They've helped a lot of corporations establish profitable eco-conscious operations like sustainable fish or seaweed farming in Japan, or establishing joint-ventures between corps that use byproducts as inputs in their production.
- Sea-Green Thumb

By not employing tough-tactic environmentalism, President Angela Devon has managed to give Save Our Seas a high credibility and reputation that's persuaded a lot of people to continue to donate to their cause.

- Those people would be stunned to know what goes on behind the scenes. Of course the sea-savers don't get their hands dirty—that's what runners are for. Sabotage of whalers, eco-espionage on polluters, blackmailing politicians and corporate execs to persuade them to accept the "help" of S.O.S. Face reality, Ecotope, Devon's a shark.
- Spook
- And let's not forget their pirate pals. More than a few whaling ships or tankers tracked by SOS have been sunk or gone missing under mysterious circumstances.
- Tikbalang

Sierra Inc.

On first inspection, Sierra Inc. is a mainstream environmental organization that uses a corporate front. Known for their strong morality concerning the methodology of environmentalism, they normally pursue their agenda through legislation, lawsuits, demonstrations, media appeals, boycotts and petitions. Supported largely by low-ranking corp workers who pay membership fees (50¥/year) to clear their conscience, Sierra is in fact a huge money collection machine that also reaps massive donations for various environmentalist charities it operates (similar to the World Wildlife Fund or the Atlantean Foundation). There are, however, persistent rumors that Sierra Inc. is the true driving force behind several North American eco-groups like SOS and TerraFirst!, providing key contacts and supporting their shadow ops with massive donations. No such rumors have ever been proven.

- Sierra's corporate targets have been spreading that rumor for years. There may even be some truth to it, but any support is from individual members who think Sierra's efforts could use a little push from more radical activity.
- G-Force

In 2052, hardball eco-lawyer Arthur Vogel became head of Sierra Inc., giving it a popular figurehead. "The environment's courtroom champion" became his campaign motto after he co-founded the One World Association party and ran unsuccessfully for president in '57. After taking a seat on the board of Ares Macrotechnology (thanks to a listing in the late dragon Dunkelzahn's will), Vogel's motivations have come into question, despite his track record. Though megacorporate-stock-



ownership isn't a crime (albeit *quite* uncommon among environmentalists), Vogel's eco-friends at Sierra and other groups have been harshly critical of his complicity in Ares's practices.

- Several key and vocal Sierra members have already demanded that Vogel resign from Ares completely—or surrender his seat at the helm of Sierra, Inc.
- Green Meanie
- Vogel's got his fingers in too many pies. He's trying to make a difference within Ares while still funneling Sierra funds to his deep green friends. Seems he isn't learning the lesson the great dragon wanted to teach him.
- Squire

Since Saito began calling the shots in Southern California, Sierra Inc. has temporarily relocated its main offices from CalFree to Pueblo.

GREEN LIVING

Though not policlubs by definition, multiple colonies of eco-dropouts and utopists exist on the edges of the developed world, living off reusable energies like solar and wind power. They are usually poorly equipped in terms of sophisticated facilities (hospitals, sanitary installations, etc.) and often rely on back-to-nature practices, native help or shamanic aid for survival. Others embrace technology, using it to live a low-impact and sustainable lifestyle. These groups are quite numerous in some areas of the world, like the Siida of the Scandinavian Union, the Isolates of Antarctica or the separatist Manitou of the AMC; other colonies exist elsewhere, of course, tucked away out of sight of the rest of the world.

- These colonies can be a nice place to lay low for a few months; they're so far under the radar they're usually not even on the map. Just don't expect to continue your bad habits like smoking indoors or racing your gas-powered bike around while you're there.
- Green Meanie
- I know a group of Luddites looking for an untouched paradise on an uninhabited island in the Southeast Asian backwaters to leave the normal world behind. With all the paracritters and pirates in that region, I suspect they'll soon find their paradise to be nothing but a hostile green hell.
- Tendrill

Gaia's Orphans

This group pursues their own utopian vision somewhere in the Alpine Interdikt Zone (AIZ) of the Swiss Alps. Their goal is to create a workable communal society based on an entirely new lifestyle and interaction with the natural world. Supposedly living in one of the old WWII bunker complexes, they grow and modify their own food in hydroponics, produce their own energy through various (non-polluting) means and seem to have an astonishing high recycling index—meaning

that they are essentially self-sufficient. Their new society is living proof that a new status quo is feasible—and unlike many other eco-lifestylists, the Orphans want to share this knowledge with the world.

- Share? A trid reporter from a Swiss newsnet tried to sneak into the Orphans' installation for a report. When the Gebirgsjäger found him, he was beaten up pretty badly and his memory magically erased. That does not sound very open to me.
- Poolitzer
- Ever wonder where their genetech and biotech came from? The Orphans didn't develop it themselves; they snatched it from some corporate installations during the recent corp war.
- Luka
- The Orphans have seen an influx of fresh blood lately, mostly changelings fleeing xenophobic persecution in Italy, Spain and, of course, Switzerland. I wonder how many people the community can take before it stretches its resources beyond the breaking point.
- Eiszapfen

Klabauterbund

The Klabauterbund (League of the *Klabauter*, a faerie-like being from German maritime myths) are more eco-anarchists than activists. Their variety of eco-activism is strictly anti-corporate—especially when it comes to the megas—and advocates an eco-conscious lifestyle without over-reliance on technology, which they normally dislike (even modern medkits). Most members are dropouts, artists or freethinkers, including a lot of neo-pagans and metas who are sick of being pushed around by mainstream society. They maintain good relationships with other policlubs and even groups like GreenWar, whose members often use Klabauterbund communes in the North German League (AGS) or the United Netherlands as shelters, hideouts or training camps. Thanks to friendly contacts with pirates and *kapers* of the North and Baltic Seas (the Klabauterbund supports piracy) and smugglers all over Northern Europe, they often function as intermediaries between Red Vory suppliers and eco-cells, dealing in weapons, chemicals and explosives from former Russian arms caches.

- We are doing this for the solitary reason of defending ourselves against megacorporate oppressors and their technological abominations. The corporate plague must be eradicated.
- Synthesizer

There are several Luddite undercurrents within the Klabauterbund directed against cyberware, media and even the Matrix. Others think that sooner or later the *Klabauters* (spirits of ships) will awaken from their slumber to avenge the defilement of the sea.

- Who's to say they haven't already?
- Pumuckl



- I once had to hold some of these Luddites back from beating down an otaku friend of mine. They somehow got into a conversation about spirituality, and the K-kids got all worked up, telling the code kid that his kind was a dangerous element who turned their backs on Mother Nature to worship an artificial entity. Both sides have screws loose, you ask me.
- Austen
- Oh come on! Evolve. We have. It's Nature's way.
- Mnemosyne

DEEP GREEN

The line between the radical and extremist eco-groups is a thin one. Though both are often labeled violent, the radicals tend to restrict their attacks to property, while the extremists don't bother with such ethical restrictions and will target people as well, sometimes indiscriminately. Their methods and tactics vary considerably, from monkeywrenching mining robots to hacking and nuking Matrix hosts, not to mention the occasional extremist bombing, assassination or viral strike.

- Don't mistake the radicals' respect for life as an indication that they won't fight. Just expect them to be armed with tasers, magic and other nonlethal weaponry. More than a few have no qualms about responding to gunfire with live bullets of their own.
- Green Piece

Members of these groups tend to hold more drastic viewpoints regarding ecology. Some are social ecologists who think environmental health and social justice are inexorably linked, and so they tie their eco-activities in with larger social issues, like environmental racism. Others are deep ecologists who view all life (not just metahumanity) as having equal value, and are willing to defend it as if a metahuman life was threatened. Many view industrial society itself as the threat, and long for a technapocalypse and return to a more primitive state.

Awakened Liberation Front (ALF)

The Awakened Liberation Front consists of many small autonomous groups worldwide who carry out direct action interventions according to the ALF guidelines. Their main goal is to liberate (para)animals from places of abuse like laboratories, factory farms, fur farms and sites where critters are trained for security or where they receive cybernetic or biogenetic implantation. Rescued animals are treated by a veterinarian, mage or paranormal expert for whatever trauma they have suffered. The ALF aims to place them in good homes or when possible to reintroduce them to their natural environment, where they may live out their lives free from suffering.

- Corps still use animals for testing of cosmetics and other care products. They're still cheaper than studying the effects on artificial human skin, though the ability to produce that has been around for decades. It's pointless cruelty.
- Monkeywrench

- Yeah, and what exactly do you do with a "liberated" monster like a Gabriel Hound with dikoted teeth? (Before you ask, yeah, I've seen one.) You can't say it's the typical family dog.
- Unnatural

- Well, you remove the 'ware when possible, or put the animal in the hands of an expert for special care. Not all of those critters want to be "liberated," though. A barghest, especially a trained one, will normally attack those coming to save it. You can't remove a lifetime of training from a corporate sec-beast. And you can't just release it back into the wild without months of proper training because it may never have been taught to hunt for food or other basic survival skills.

- ParaSci

- The difficulties of caring for rescued animals are why many ALF cells have turned towards campaigns of economic sabotage against animal exploiters. ALF members simply can't always rescue every animal; they lack enough sanctuaries and experts at hand to deal with them all.
- Ronnie

- Some ALF activists have allegedly opted to kill the animals they couldn't free to "liberate their souls and put an end to a life not worth living."
- Clausen

Beyond (para)animal liberation and the disclosure of atrocities committed against critters, they are also trying to inflict economic and physical damage on those who profit from the misery and exploitation of animals. To this end, they destroy labs, research facilities and farms with arson, Matrix attacks, smart chemicals and hands-on vandalism (ever see what a pair of trolls with sledgehammers can do to a lab?—it ain't pretty). ALF cells have also targeted those who fund these operations.

- And let's not forget compassionate acts like the torture of animal mistreaters to give them an impression how animals feel, bombing installations or even terminating repeat offenders.
- Silver

- Don't buy it. One of the ALF's strengths is that it's completely cell-based. Anyone anywhere can put a cell together and use the ALF name as long as they abide by ALF guidelines. Some cells work together or share intel, or participate in policlubs or mainstream activist groups, but most avoid it for security reasons. On the downside, this means that anyone can bomb a facility and call it in to the media as an "ALF action." The corps figured that one out years ago. Needless to say, a lot of the legitimate ALF cells digitally sign their communiqués or use other secret markers that they've shared with the authorities to avoid taking the blame for the actions of others.
- Coronado



- Or they hire shadowrunners to track down the fakesters using the ALF name and teach them a lesson.
- Justice Dept.

TerraFirst!

The roots of TerraFirst! range back to before the turning of the century, when radical eco-activists grew frustrated with the leadership, tactics and ineffectiveness of lethargic, compromising and corporate-manipulated environmentalist groups. The first TerraFirst!-oriented groups popularized the concepts of ecotage (eco-sabotage) and monkeywrenching, arguing that the corporate polluters only listened when their profits were threatened. Though early on TerraFirst! straddled the border between an aboveground civil disobedience activist group and clandestine sabotage network, it disbanded its open persona early this century and went into the shadows.

- Both the ALF and TerraFirst! still have “aboveground” support groups that separate themselves entirely from illegal activity but publish newsfeeds on their actions and provide legal support for arrested ALF/TF! activists.
- Coronado

- There’s a lot of crossover between ALF and TerraFirst! members and actions. Replace “(para)animal” with “Earth” and their propaganda reads the same. Both include Green anarchists, eco-feminists and pagans of various stripes in their ranks.
- Goat

TerraFirst! is structured as a network of cells rather than an organization to maximize both effectiveness and security. Cells typically consist of a few (3–8) activists that operate collectively. Each cell is anonymous not only to the public but also to one another. This decentralized structure helps keep activists out of jail and free to continue their activities.

- Just like the ALF, there is no leader tying the autonomous cells together. There is no official “membership;” individuals that take action under the banner of TerraFirst! or the ALF (or both) are driven only by their personal conscience within the borders of the group’s mission statement.
- Inupiaq

- In practice, a lot of the cells do know each other and sometimes interchange members, but they make a point of minimizing the personal info they share with each other. A lot of networking happens on secure Matrix hosts behind faceless icons and blind reputation networks; these hosts require a lot of vetting to gain access to.
- The Smiling Bandit

- Though TerraFirst!ers operate predominately in Europe and the Americas, they’ve taken action around the world. A lot of similar or splinter groups interact with and support the TF! network, such as the Dutch Noorderlicht, the Japanese Gutaisaku

or the evasive Earth Liberation Front (ELF).

- Green Piece

Most TF! cells run ecotage raids on polluting facilities, corporate headquarters, logging/mining camps or fields of biotech crops. They’ve also been known to take more drastic action—from beatings to assassinations—on corporate bigwigs, scientists and officials who show no remorse for their polluting ways, repeatedly engage in eco-destructive activity or persecute eco-activists. To TerraFirst!, these targets are a lost cause, and bring it upon themselves. Quite a few cells number computer wizards, former company men and/or radical top-notch scientists in their ranks, making them even more dangerous. Most megacorps and governmental security agencies consider TerraFirst! to be a “terrorist” group and so keep identified TerraFirst! supporters under close surveillance.

- With no leadership to keep the cells in check, some of them are ticking time bombs. During a house search of a TF! suspect two months ago, the FBI found several canisters of ?-Blaze, a cutting-edge derivative of Napalm that was originally developed by Z-IC.

- Mad Chemist

- That “suspect” was a Z-IC infiltrator who was trying to set up a TF! cell. Who do you think “exposed” him? We take care of our own.
- G-Force

- Nice bit of damage control, G-F. But can you explain why TF! doesn’t “takes care” of some of the known toxic avengers in its ranks? Their extremist actions are just reinforcing the terrorist label that TF! has been pegged with.

- Diana Nocturna

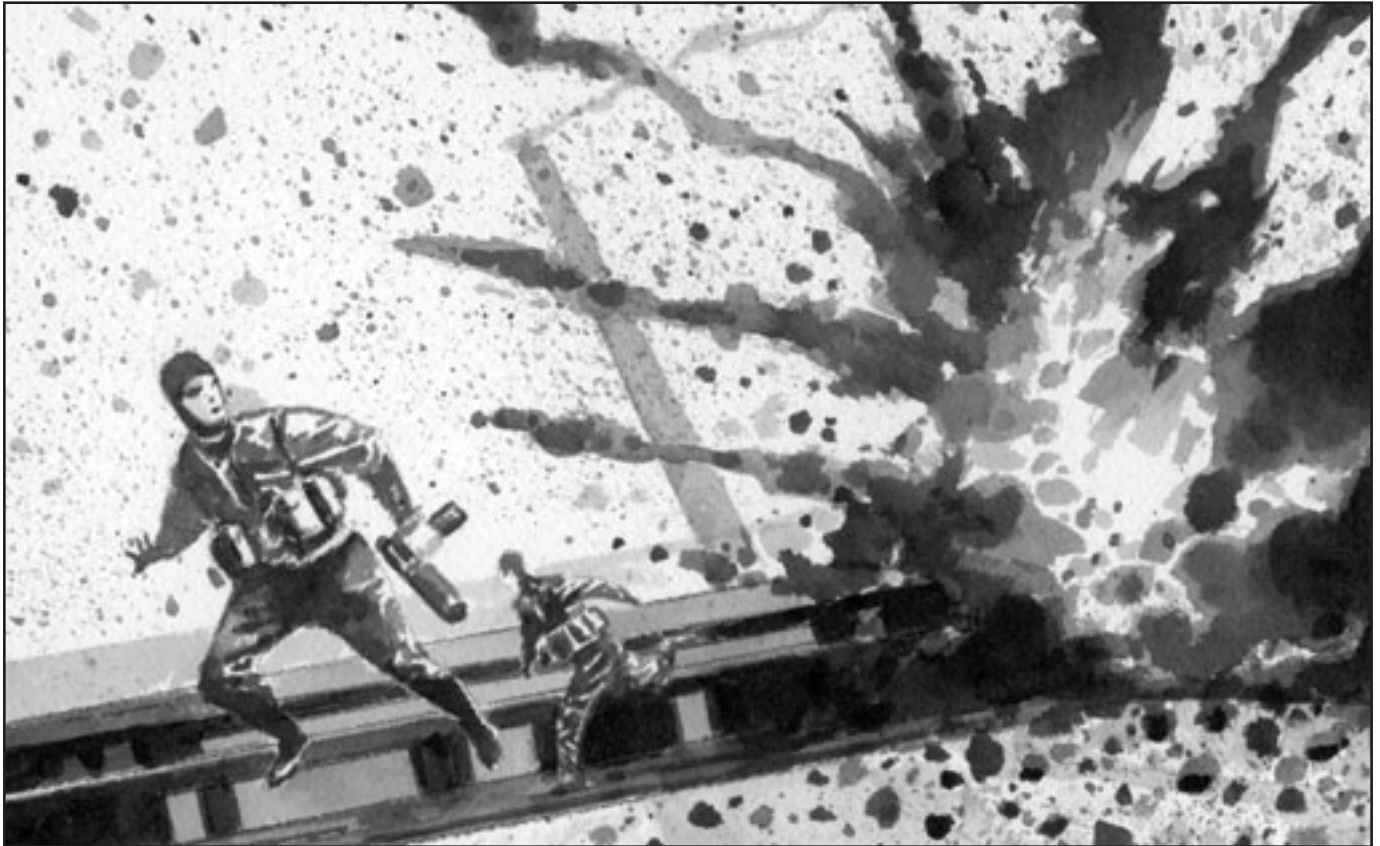
TerraFirst! runs several guerrilla camps all over the globe and keeps good relationships with arms dealers, smugglers, pirates and even organized syndicates.

- Though they possess plenty of skilled deckers, riggers and mages, these experts are not always available when a cell needs to launch an operation due to the lack of communication between the cells. They often draw support from the shadows to fill in the gaps.
- Flint

Green Cells

Though TerraFirst! is acting on an international scale today, its roots are undisputedly on the North American continent. The Green Cells can be classed as TF!’s European brother. A loose association of small radical environmentalist groups whose aim is to punish Eurocorps that engage in pollutive measures, they are more organized but less fanatic than TerraFirst!ers, who are more driven by their biocentric doctrine.

Like TF!, the Green Cells have no formal central command structure coordinating the various cells. Individual cells main-



tain informal connections to other cells using hidden Matrix boards, spirit messengers and encrypted e-mail to generate so called one-action or ad-hoc networks that are dissolved after completion of the mission. Because of these shifting networks and the relocation of the boards, Green Cells are infamously hard to track down.

The Green Cells have tight links with friends among different European political movements and share a lot of history with autonomous anarchist movements (like the different factions that established the Status F in Berlin in '39), feminists (Mother Earth, Rote Zora, Sie) and anti-fascists like Antifa Direct Action.

- Word is that a lot of Matrix anarchists like the Shockwave Riders and a mysterious new anti-corporate crew called UV-X are now backing the Green Cells.

- Drowned Rat

- There's also buzz in the AGS that a bunch of anarchists put up a new Shadowland node somewhere in East Berlin to take up the slack of the Frankfurt node that went offline in '63. Several Green Cells have already approached sysop Anne Archiste to use the host's resources for their operations.

- Carabas

- Maybe those cells will manage to pull a number of other cells together to form the powerful pan-European eco-organization several members dream about.

- Inupiaq

Green Cell tactics focus on quick hit-and-run attacks (like the rocket launcher attack on the ChemExpo in '47), magical sabotage (supported by neo-pagans) and Matrix trashing. Though they normally avoid taking life, there have been several incidents where bystanders have been accidentally injured or killed due to Green Cell actions.

- Usually because the authorities suppress the warnings we issue in advance rather than heeding our calls to evacuate people for their own safety.

- Green Meanie

EXTREME GREEN

True eco-terrorism is brutal and indiscriminate just like other forms of terrorism, with no respect for life and no consideration for public opinion. Green extremists are willing to engage in wide-scale and devastating attacks, with the full intention of destroying property and wreaking physical injuries to despoilers and their helpers—and no compassion for innocents caught in the crossfire. In their minds, it's war; collateral damage is something to be accepted. Even average people are



part of the problem if they're not fighting the war on the right side. I won't deny it; I loathe these extremists because of their methodology and the damage they have done in negative media coverage to the whole eco-movement. They are maniacs, nothing more.

- Eco-extremists are a wake-up call to both sides. If we're producing crazies like this, then we must be doing something drastically wrong to our world.
- Sagan

GreenWar

Numbering an estimated three thousand members and supporters worldwide, GreenWar is the largest and most notorious true eco-terrorist group in existence. While the ALF, TF! and Green cells occasionally make casualties out of eco-rapists, GreenWar is out to create as much damage as it takes to bring the whole system down and return the world to a primitive state. According to GreenWar doctrine, metahumanity has been pronounced guilty of twiddling their thumbs while Earth has been exploited and pillaged by greed.

- This isn't simply a justification for mass murder—GreenWar members sometimes believe themselves equally guilty of crimes against nature by not succeeding in their cause. GreenWar suicide bombings against corporate offices in the past decade have only been surpassed by Islamic fundamentalists.
- Green Piece
- As an example, GreenWar dumped several barrels of acid into a private, SK-owned water resort in the Algarve Corporate Enclave. No one was killed, but hundreds of acid-burned corporate citizens (including children) caused quite a stir.
- Spotlight Sally

Founded in Europe in the wake of the Black Tide in 2010, GreenWar has been a consistent threat to the world ever since—even to the eco-movement. In addition to bombing the International Whaling Commission office, they are also infamous for magically manipulating a toxic oil spill near Aberdeen, thereby creating the Scottish Fringe Zone. They often use magic to direct spirits and critters with their attacks, including kraken or leviathans to sink whalers, rockworms to penetrate reinforced walls and even proteans to contaminate sewage treatment and recycling plants. They also don't shirk from bioterrorism, using pathogens like smallpox, gamma anthrax or ebola plus to infect corporate offices.

- Not without reason does membership in GreenWar earn you at least fifteen years in European jails.
- Phage
- And it's also no wonder that TF! and Green Cells strike against rabid GreenWar cells on occasion, to keep the ferals in check.
- Bookchin

GreenWar is centrally organized with members receiving orders from somewhere in the AGS, but there seems to be major infighting among the upper echelons. The bulk of GreenWar members are deep ecologists who think that the ecological imbalance is due to overpopulation instead of industrial exploitation and that the only way to save nature is to eliminate greater parts of earth's population. These eco-racists pose a critical threat, pushing GreenWar members to commit mass murders in "regions of uncontrolled growth" such as India or city-sprawls like Metropole.

- There are several small deep ecologist policlubs like this scattered throughout the eco-movement, though nobody likes to talk about them. Most of the social ecologists actively oppose them because they are just racist groups operating under the cloak of environmentalism, distinguishing only by the ethnic or meta groups they want to see eradicated.
- Jesse Windwalker

GreenWar is also known to have Awakened members that have turned to the toxic path. Even the fanatics of GreenWar, however, watch these toxics closely—during the '40s, they learned the hard way that you cannot trust toxic shamans when a mad poisoner hunted down his own comrades-in-arms.

- Think that's ironic? Get this: GreenWar turned in several of their own toxic shamans to the Draco Foundation over the past six years to collect the bounty promised by Dunkelzahn's Will. I wonder what they are doing with the money ...
- Diana Nocturna

- Haven't you read the headlines? They stole a container of nuclear waste on its way to its final deposit site two weeks ago, killing all security officers on the train. Now they have enough radioactive material from old uranium fuel rods to build several dirty nukes.
- Poolitzer

FIGHTING FOR A FUTURE: ANTI-CORP GROUPS

by Red X

Welcome to a world created by your fathers and forefathers! It's 5 past 12, citizen, and nothing is all right. But still the tide can be turned, as the world is ruled not by shadowy figures in the background—but by ourselves. If we continue to keep our heads firmly placed up our asses, though, absolutely nothing is going to change around here.

The Captain has asked me to tell you guys about the basic principles of our work, and I want to use the opportunity for a little wake up call. Shadowruns are the grease that keeps the corporations running, so you shadowrunners are partly responsible for the world you're living in—maybe even more than all the little corp wage slaves! (Yes, I know you're all just doing your jobs, but that excuse is wearing thin. Rather than play the corps' games, what would happen if we all stopped and started playing one of our own choosing?)



• What a pile of bullsh*t! For years now I've spent my life sabotaging corps and causing them a great deal of material and financial damage—and each time some other corp has had to shovel out cred for me to do it. That's fighting the system more than being part of it, you ask me.

• Brutus

A SHORT HISTORY OF WORLD DOMINATION

Once upon a time, the world was reigned by states. Every citizen paid taxes that were used for all sorts of useful things—improving the infrastructure, public transportation, public health, public pension, police services, communication and so forth. Of course, lots of wheeling and dealing was going on, and a lot of money was wasted for all kinds of nonsense, but a great deal of it did a lot of public good.

In 1990, it became clear that the forces of “free market” capitalism had achieved a victory over the “evil” communist ideology. Nobody cared about social justice anymore, it was all about amassing as much money in as short a time as possible. The few people who pointed to the dangers of that ideology were slandered as nutcases and utopists, while the powers-that-be followed their new golden calf, throwing one social security system overboard after the other.

• Short history lesson: “social security” was economic aid that the state gave to people in need. If you were sick, you were entitled to cheap or free healthcare and you received an allotted period of “sick days” for which you were still paid your wage. If you retired, the state paid you a pension good enough to live on. If you lost your job, you received unemployment compensation until you found a new one. There was even welfare for those who couldn't find or didn't want a job, or who earned too little to survive on. There were whole cities completely without slums! It was a time when people still mattered to society.

• Cent Mental

• Yeah. And don't forget about the rivers of milk and honey ...

• Skeptic

Corporations had more power over states than people. Not only did most politicians receive huge “donations” from corporations (or came from corporate families), but the corps would also threaten to move their factories to less developed countries where wages were cheaper and regulations nonexistent. No factories meant no jobs which meant high unemployment rates which meant social unrest, so governments shifted their tax money spending away from people and into “corporate welfare.”

Environmental and workplace safety regulations were eliminated and trade unions shut down. The corps acted on a global scale, so state economies depended on them while the states themselves were still held in a deadlock of local bickering and had no effective means of uniting to stop the exploitation. International organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) played a major role in destroying all hopes for a new social world order. While the corporations withdrew their headquar-

ters into tax havens to reduce their taxes to zero, the population of what was then called the “First World” slowly tumbled into poverty.

• It's all the result of a natural development, if you ask me. Evolution stops for nobody, but obviously this won't stop people from whining about the “good ol' days.” Get real!

• Entropy

Instead, it was up to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to fight against the overpowering corporations. Big protest campaigns were undertaken and there was not a single international meeting of the WTO that didn't make headlines because of the sabotage actions, blockades, civil disobedience and even riots around it.

• “Protestors?” “Terrorists” is more accurate.

• Entropy

• Spoken like a true lap dog. While it's true that the anti-globalization movement sometimes acted with economic sabotage and violence, let's face it, those tactics work. You can protest all you want—the capitalists don't give a damn as long as their precious assets are safe and sound.

• Judi

Going Down the Tubes

If you were to ask Joe Seattle on the street why the world is such a drek-tastic place to live, he'd probably say VITAS, the Awakening and those damn Injuns, and maybe mention the local reactor meltdown or some other eco-catastrophe. Very few will say the megacorporations are to blame for it, though they are mainly responsible for the fall of the world's nation-state superpowers.

You know the history: In 1999, Seretech security goons gunned down a group of rioting truck drivers. The courts exonerated Seretech and ruled that corps can maintain an armed force to protect their interests. Thanks to the WTO, this right was quickly extended to most other countries. Two years later, at the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy, “corporate security personnel” (hired guns) opened fire on protesters, killing twelve and wounding more. The media, controlled by the pro-corp government, hushed it up as “defense against an act of terrorism.” It was a warning from the corps to the globalization critics: we have the weapons and we are willing to use them. Overnight, international protest campaigns lost momentum and support. The war had begun and the lines were drawn. From then on it was “us or them,” and the modern anti-corp movement was born.

The Shiawase Decision that granted the big corporations extraterritoriality was a mere formality. There was nothing left to stop the corporations from making unspeakable demands on the governments. Under massive pressure, the last remaining social security systems broke apart and millions lost their jobs while the rest worked double for half the money. An alleged “economic crisis” and depleted resources were blamed, even while boardrooms were flooded with unbelievable wealth. The middle class dwindled while the enormous



gap between rich and poor became clearly visible in every country. A hint of revolution was in the air, but unfortunately directed at governments more than corps.

Then the Awakening through the world in chaos. For two decades, every state, every community, every single metahuman only cared for their own problems. Governments collapsed one after the other and borders were redrawn as new ones formed. Meanwhile, the corporations not only survived, but some consolidated into unimaginably massive economic entities—the megacorps. With the establishment of the Corporate Court, their dominance was complete—no state could hope to resist their might.

Today, decades later, most people don't remember a world with social justice—and the corps do everything to keep it that way. Historic data was falsified (or "lost" in the Crash), the economics syllabus got a complete shake-up and every kind of social commitment was run down as political nonsense, while the media kept the people in a tight grip of fear/consume. The result is a modern society of intentionally dulled consumer zombies. Every wage slave is used to unpaid overtime, hard work is the biggest virtue of all and the unemployed, the sick and the weak are pushed out into the cold. Nobody cares for ecological restraint or sustainability, and only the self-protecting acts of nature keep the world from becoming one big toxic wasteland. An incredible number of metahumans are unbelievably poor, while the neo-feudal boardrooms feast on an incredible wealth.

- My investigations show a capita personal income of less than 2 dollars for 90 percent of the world's population in 1980. Today, it's 88 percent. So if anything the world is a better place under megacorporate rule!
- Entropy

- I don't trust statistics that I haven't forged myself.
- Bung

The only states still fighting corporate control are those who isolate themselves from the rest of the world through totalitarian, protectionist governments. Any charismatic leader who appears as if he might be capable of changing things for the better is blown from the scene before he can even start to do his work. But not all is lost yet—history tells us that the pendulum will swing back one day. Periods of crisis are inevitable, and we must prepare to exploit these situations when the system and its façade are weak. Suppression, exploitation and inequality cannot reign forever; sooner or later wisdom will prevail to lead metahumanity to its rightful legacy.

- Dunkelzahn said the same, and he's toast. If a dragon can't achieve it, who can?
- Skeptic

TAKING THE WAR BACK TO THE CORPS

Today, for the first time in decades, the anti-corp movement represents a power to be reckoned with. We still don't have massive numbers, but we hold our ground and consolidate our influence despite the corps' best efforts to hold us down.



Attack!

In hour of need, people tend towards violence. In the mid-'30s, when it became clear that the neo-feudal corporate structures were obtaining global control and there was no mass movement to stop it, the few remaining anti-corp activists went underground. They helped themselves to weapons, explosives and other tools of destruction and renamed their organization, with the new goal to fight the corps by any means necessary.

- Attack! takes its name from the anti-globalization group ATTAC—the Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens—that was active around the turn of the century. ATTAC wanted a tax of 1% on all international exchanges of money, which would have made financial speculation a thing of the past.
- The Chromed Accountant

Today, Attack! serves as an umbrella organization for activists to meet and work with other activists, regardless of particular political opinions. As a result, Attack! draws in everyone from radical eco-guerrillas, to neo-communists, to fascists and religious fanatics. Communication and coordination is largely handled via clandestine Matrix nodes. The group has no rigid structures with famous leaders or heroes. Instead, it's a chaotic network with a high turnover and only one goal: to hurt the corporations, no matter the means.

- Most of the recruits of Attack! are young metahumans who have not yet adapted to the system of oppression and exploitation and thus are willing to fight for a better world—the average age of Attack! members lies way below 25.
- White Bloc

• Things have changed. Today there are some powerful factions within the group. In Africa, the radical Islamic Freedom movement is the main player, led by the mysterious Nebukadnezar. In Europe, the Matrix anarchists of the UV-X coordinate strikes and disseminate the paydata. In South America, Juan Paulos's Communist Legions use the jungles and mountains to conceal their anti-corp operations. And in North America, Dr. Black and her Amerlnd eco-terror movement contest with the Corpbusters crew for influence. So far, none of them has been able to take a dominant position within Attack!, and I sincerely hope that it stays that way.

- Rest-in-Pieces
- If I were in Attack!, I'd worry that the whole organization would be riddled with corporate infiltrators. Can't you see how easily a corp could use Attack! against its rivals? When you hurt one corporation, you serve the other. It's quite the same as running in the shadows—just without the accuracy.
- Reality Czech

Attack! actions range from viral strikes on corporate data-cores to exposing illegal corporate schemes to the public eye. Most of the damage is economic or public-awareness in nature, though high-ranking executives are sometimes targeted with harassment campaigns or worse. If you believe the corp propaganda, Attack! is a senseless terrorist group who will kill anyone in the way of their goals. Different Attack! cells operate in varied ways, though—some consider even low-ranking corp personnel to be the enemy, while others only use violence against corp personnel in self-defense.

- In other words, innocent metahumans are occasionally harmed, but that's the price you pay for needing a job, you apathetic wage slave jerk.

• Bung

- Please. If you're not outraged by megacorp exploitation, you're not paying attention.

• Slogun

- Right, so I'll make myself suffer in poverty while I wait for the rest of metahumanity to spontaneously wake up and revolt against the corps.

• Bung

- Or learn to deck and steal your income from corporate accounts.

• Grid Reaper

Equity: New Enlightenment

"Enlightenment is our release from self-imposed dependence. Dependence is the inability to use our own reasoning. Instead, we rely on others to do our thinking for us. It is self-imposed not because we lack understanding but because we lack decisiveness: Sapere aude! Have the courage to think for yourself! This is the motto of the Enlightenment."—Kant

Now let me point you towards a group that keeps an eye on the big picture instead of just releasing their anger. Violence alone will never change anything; you also have to offer people some perspectives. That's what Equity is about.

Let's face it; the old concepts of nation-states are meaningless. Today, the people of the world are a big global community, wholly interlinked and wholly poor. But we are the ones who labor for the corps, who produce and consume their goods. If we were to stand united against the corporations, they would have no chance but to give in. Unfortunately, the global community is unable to act; it lacks decisiveness because it lacks perspective. The Equity group aims to inform people that there is an alternative to a world ruled by corporations, as well as what the alternatives look like and how we can get there. One day, we hope to create a critical mass of people so large that the corporations have no chance of stopping us.



- Sounds like a damn advertisement. Aw, frag it. Where do I sign?
- Brutus Strength

The key is the “equity factor,” which expresses the difference in income between the wealthiest and poorest of a given society. If the factor is high, the gap between rich and poor leads to social injustice. Reduce the factor to 1 and you have equality between all members of a society—the so-called communism—but we cannot and want not to go that far. Instead, we hope to achieve an acceptable equity factor by pursuing other models of social market economy.

- So an “acceptable” amount of inequality and social injustice is ok? What libertarian claptrap. Why give lip service to social equality but only go half way? Get rid of any hopes of reforming capitalism, it’s impossible to have it without some form of exploitation.
- Red Menace

Equity pursues its agenda by serving as a data exchange on corporate affairs and injustices as well as agitprop. Equity gathers and distributes intel from thousands of supporters who slave away inside the corporate machine. This virtual army of informants allows Equity to disseminate information to corporate watchdogs, data havens, trid pirates as well as Attack! and other anti-corp groups. Equity also acts as a fraternal mutual aid group; members help each other out in time of need, find support for wage slaves who get canned or in trouble, and even act as a sort of underground railroad for high-extraction-profile types who want to get out and start a new life.

- Remember that extraction of Shiawase’s nanotech golden boy, Sinna Marikar, last year? That was no kidnapping. Marikar wanted out of the restrictive corp cage he was held in, and Equity helped bail him out.
- The Smiling Bandit

KICK IT OVER: MODERN ANARCHISTS

• Some may have heard of the anarchist agitator duo that put together this next piece at my request. Going by the monikers of Sacco & Vanzetti (two anarchist martyrs from a previous century), they were convicted, some say wrongly, of re-routing a large Ares payroll transfer. Instead of paying top executives, Ares cred was diverted to various revolutionary organizations. Their trial was a media circus, but the pair was recently freed in a spectacular jail-break. Good luck, guys.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:44:57 (PST)

by Bart Sacco and Nick Vanzetti

If you believe the megacorp screamsheets, anarchists are mindless terrorists hell-bent on destroying society as we know it. That’s partly true, but anarchism is actually a sophisticated political philosophy that seeks more than chaos and lawlessness. We won’t delve too deeply into anarchist history of the

previous centuries, because for whatever reasons anarchists have been relatively decent historians of themselves and you can find a plethora of information out there in the Matrix.

Anarchism is a political theory that aims to create a society in which individuals freely cooperate as equals. As such, anarchism opposes all forms of social hierarchy and control, whether by nation-state or megacorp, as harmful to the individual and simply unnecessary. Anarchists are not opposed to organization at all—they simply want organization that minimizes any sort of power over others. Anarchism is the purest form of direct democracy, where people have a direct say in the decisions that affect their lives. Anarchists maintain that only be working together as equals can we maximize individual liberty and social equality.

In practical terms, this means that anarchists are opposed to government in all forms, as well as the inequalities of capitalism. Rather than having leaders, people in an anarchist society would make decisions in small collective bodies formed around a basis of affinity (workplace syndicates, local community groups, special interests). To avoid aggregation of personal power, responsibilities would be voluntarily rotated and shared. On a larger scale, these groupings would federate and use decentralized methods to coordinate and share resources. Money and property would be abolished; resources would be communally shared, “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.”

- This is a pipe dream. It assumes people are not naturally competitive or selfish. There are no social controls to keep people from being lazy delinquents, or taking more than their share, or just starting a gang and bullying everyone around them. People aren’t equal, and competition is nature’s way. It’s a dog-eat-dog world, my utopian friends.

- Entropy

• People are not inherently more competitive any more than they are naturally cooperative. There are numerous examples of animals that cooperate to survive (dogs hunt in packs, natch, and they don’t eat each other). If society is structured so that it’s in everyone’s best interests to cooperate rather than screw each other over, they’ll do so. The point is that we can choose how to relate to each other, so why not pick a system that maximizes equality? Capitalism inherently leads to social and economic exploitation. Anarchists feel that it’s much more egalitarian to work together and bond together according to our own free will.

Look at life in the Barrens. The corps pretend that if the police and authorities aren’t around, areas like this are swallowed by street warfare. But look at how people in the Barrens actually get by. They congregate in affinity groups and watch each other’s backs, share utilities, squat empty buildings, operate a barter economy and settle their own community justice. It’s a self-regulating organism. Not ideal by any means, but it’s the roots of anarchism in action.

- Brick



Anarchistic tendencies and organizations have existed in almost every major revolution: the New England Town Meetings during the U.S. Revolutionary War, the Parisian “Sections” during the French Revolution, the workers’ councils and factory committees during the Russian Revolution of 1917, the entire city of Barcelona and the Catalanian countryside during the Spanish Civil War, Hungary 1956, Paris 1968, Argentina 2001 ... the list goes on. Anarchism often develops out of a widespread resistance to authority and oppression during social upheavals. It’s the manifestation of working people’s experiences and analyses of what is wrong with the current system and an expression of our hopes and dreams for a better future.

- So what’s the difference between anarchism and neo-communism?

- Questor

- Often largely a semantic one, but to put it simplistically: communists oppose capitalism/megacorps because they make one “unequal,” anarchists oppose capitalism/megacorps because they make one “unfree.” Anarchists also oppose communist dictatorships for the same reasons.

- B. Traven

But anarchists are not just content to wait for spontaneous revolutions to develop—they want to undermine our corrupt society now. The question is: how to get from here to there? Different “schools” of anarchism have their own opinions regarding this, but most agree on a two-part strategy of: 1) planting the seeds for an anarchist life in the cracks of modern society, where people are forced to depend on each other and forget their reliance on the corps and state; and 2) agitating for insurrection and opposing the practices of the powers-that-be through campaigns of sabotage and direct action waged by autonomous cells.

On one hand you’ll see “liberated” areas from the free cities of East Berlin and Kronstadt to the collectivized squats of blighted urban sprawls. There you can find numerous anarchist projects devoted to survival and self-defense: free skools, community hydroponics gardens, agriculture and food distribution, free clinics, anarchist dojos, rigger and motor pools organized for neighborhood defense against cops and other predatory gangs, Matrix data exchanges and more. On the other hand, you will find anarchists fighting on the front lines in revolutionary situations (Poland, the UK, the Yucatán, the Philippines, to name a few) and working in all sorts of single-issue campaigns: metahuman rights, antifascism, feminist and gender/sexuality issues, labor organizing and anti-corporate assaults, eco-activism and (par)animal liberation, among others. As part of these struggles, anarchists hope to popularize anarchist ideas and build for an ongoing social revolution.

- A lot of anarchists get by as shadowrunners, of course. Most of us take on “hooding”—blacks ops on behalf of the poor and underprivileged—as our primary source of income, since we’d rather not be deniable assets for the corps. Others take the view that we’re still living in a capitalist-dominated society and

so we all sell out to one degree or another just to get by, and so will work for corporate Johnsons as long as the run targets another corp or similar deserving target.

- Autonomouse

ANARCHIST AGITATORS

There are all sorts of anarchist activists out there, it’d be impossible to describe them all. Three international projects deserve specific mention: the Black Cross, Black Crescent and Black Star (yeah, anarchists like black—it’s the “color” of the anarchist flag, or rather an anti-flag sentiment). But first we should introduce some of the notable anarchist tendencies. Though each of these philosophies comprises only a small fraction of the modern anarchist movement, their ideas deserve notice:

Anti-tech primitivists believe in establishing anarchist communities on the fringe of society, in untainted and isolated wilderness areas like Antarctica or Manitou lands. Some even prefer hostile environments to hide in, like abandoned orbital habitats or deep desert areas. Many of the first Caucasian “pinkskins” who formed tribal groups in the reborn NAN adhered to this philosophy.

- There’s a lot of crossover between this primitivist dropouts and ecoteurs like TerraFirst! Most seek a return to hunter-gatherer lifestyles, but a few bolster their isolationism with high-tech survival tools.

- Kazerzan

The libertarian “neo-anarchists” hope to transform market capitalism according to a complex (and in our humble opinion, impossible) mathematical formulae to achieve equity in a money-based economy. They play a prominent role in anti-corp groups such as Equity.

- Most of the other anarchists scoff at these guys—and for good reason. Most of them tend to be self-centered money-grubbers. Once the sheen on their idealism wears off, they usually end up in working in Matrix credit fraud or hook up with syndicates like the Vory on info-brokering or gambling scams.

- Tigger

Syndicalists still pursue the age-old method of organizing the “working class,” whatever that means anymore. They focus on labor issues, recruiting wage slaves and even disaffected salarymen into (sometimes illegalized) free unions. The syndicalists have actually achieved serious headway with strikes and similar tactics in Spain, the United Kingdom, the CAS and Malaysia. They also tend to overlap with anti-corpers like Attack! and Equity.

The **techno-anarchists** are notorious for their groundbreaking work in the Open Source and CopyLeft movements and highly-publicized Matrix pranks and large-scale hacks. These tech-savvy activists tend to coalesce in clandestine Matrix-based cells, and have been influential in the creation of Shadowland and other data havens, software and media piracy, data-theft and other underground online services.



- A lot of the deckers in groups like the Shockwave Riders and BSOD are techno-anarchists. They get a kick out of reverse engineering corporate sec protocols, finding exploits in the latest software bundles and trading hot utilities. A lot of them will sideline jobs doing Matrix overwatch for runner teams too—especially if the target is a formidable hack.
- Hacktic

Anarchist Black Cross (AB+)

The origins of the AB+ date back to 1905. Originally formed as the Anarchist Red Cross in Tsarist Russia, this group organized aid for political prisoners and their families as well as self-defense against political raids by the Cossack army. During the Russian Civil War, its name changed to the Anarchist Black Cross to avoid confusion with the International Red Cross, also organizing relief in the country. It has continued on ever since, often sporadically, supporting persecuted anarchists and prisoners of war (captured members of revolutionary groups).

As corporate power consolidated and the anarchist movement grew to be more sophisticated and shadow-savvy in recent decades, the AB+ has escalated its activities to include the liberation of captured comrades, maintaining a network of safehouses and supporters and manufacturing false IDs and credentials. Today the AB+ is an essential resource for anarchists on the run or in trouble.

- The AB+ doesn't just help anarchists. They've even been known to support and bust out what they call "social prisoners"—people who commit crimes because the inequalities of society pushed them into it. As a result, several street gangs with fugitive members owe big favors to the Black Cross.

• Makhnovista

- AB+ has some serious deckers on their team—some of the IDs they've produced have been more authentic than the real deal. Once in a while they've been known to have some fun with identity theft, stealing some major politico's credentials and accounts and just running amok. The best prank was when they smacked a criminal SIN on Fraser Atkins, a member of Lone Star's Executive Advisory Council, and forged a warrant for his arrest. The deserving slag spent five days in one of his own prisons on 23-hour lockdown before the mess was straightened out.

• Glitch

Anarchist Black Crescent (ABC)

Inspired in part by the Black Cross anarchists of Russia, who operated sporadic ambulatory services for their comrades, and also by the medic affinity groups formed to serve anti-globalization protestors at the turn of the century, the Black Crescent is an explicitly anarchist medical aid organization. Just as the Black Cross can be viewed as the paralegal arm of the anarchist move-



ment, the Black Crescent can be understood as its paramedic wing. Formed in 2038 by Ozgur al Houssari, a Turkish-Palestinian hobgoblin who had worked for years with the Red Crescent Society, and Louise Derrida, a hermetic doctor formerly with *Medicins Sans Frontieres*, the ABC first saw action in Berlin during the Nights of Rage when the anarchists there routed the racists after five days of street fighting and seized the city.

The ABC is comfortable both at the barricades during times of civil strife and providing health services and community clinics in anarchist-influenced impoverished areas. Its volunteers and staff provide a makeshift alternative to CrashCart, DocWagon and similar private health-care providers. Though they sometimes lack medicine, organs or equipment, they make up for it with improvisation and heavy use of magical healing methods. The ABC even operates sporadic ambulatory services in some areas, such as in Kronstadt, Berlin, Tricity (Poland), Merseysprawl (in conjunction with the Black Ork Defense Collective) and recently Chicago's Noose.

- And unlike DocWagon, these guys will shoot at corp security to help you out if they think they can get away with it. Now that's service.

- Giddings

- ABC does ask for compensation, but it's sliding scale and they'll accept volunteer work, data or just about anything in trade. They make a decent black clinic—no fears that they'll sell you out to Tamanous, for example. I convinced an ABC doc to install an implant upgrade package for me, and in exchange I ran shotgun on their ambulance for 6 weeks as an extra gun against hostile circumstances.

- Mongoose

- Naturally the ABC doesn't often deal through legal medical channels, so they dedicate some effort to stealing and smuggling medical goods, pharmaceuticals and just about anything else they need (but they won't steal from people in need unless it happens to be some rich slag.) They hire hooders to raid medical corps on occasion, paying with healthcare and services.

- The Smiling Bandit

Black Star

This secretive group is unusual for a large-scale anarchist organization in that it is composed almost exclusively of shadowrunners. Operating underground, its intended goal is to recruit, train and foster insurrectionist activities. Some anarchists view this group as somewhat elitist, and it does indeed serve a paramilitary special forces role for the anarchist movement at times. Organized into networked affinity teams, Black Star runners do not hesitate to take on shadow ops that put a dent in the system. They also run black ops training workshops, covering firearms, demolitions, self-defense, data gathering, infiltration and other fun topics. Interpol classifies them as a high-threat terrorist network, and the names of numerous Black Star runners have crossed the International Most Wanted lists.

- Black Star was founded back at the international anarchist gathering in Chicago in May 2036 (the "150th May Day Celebrations and Actions"). Presently, there are reports of Black Star teams operating in Atlanta, Barcelona, Chicago, Denver, Durban, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Jakarta, London, Montevideo, Prague, Seattle, SF-Bay area, Seoul, Toronto, and Vladivostok as well as the predictable Berlin, Kronstadt and Denmark's Ship City.
- Red Emma

We don't want to violate Black Star's security culture and reveal too much about them, but since Interpol already has this fact, we see no point in not sharing it. A large percentage of Black Star anarchists are Awakened, and the organization has an initiatory group that is mockingly called the "Triple-A Club" (Association of Awakened Anarchists). Most tend to follow the chaos magic tradition, of course, though hermetics, Coyote shamans and adepts of all stripes are common.

- Most members have learned to speak Esperanto as a code language on jobs; some of the magic types use it as centering technique.

- Emil

- I've seen some mojo-slingers be pretty diplomatic when calling up spirits, but this Black Star conjuror I worked with took the cake, debating with her air spirit why it was in its interest to stop the Lone Star Yellowjacket on our tail. Loopy idealists.

- Chrome Dome

- As I explained at the time, Dome, one does not "own" spirits. They are sentient comrades, not slaves, so it is only fair to deal with them as equals.

- WuFang Clan

RED MENACE REBORN: NEO-COMMUNISTS

- I was desperately looking for somebody to give me a short and to-the-point introduction to neo-communism, while at the same time Ted—a very talented otaku snoop—was literally hanging onto my legs to contribute something to this project. So I gave it a shot. I'm deeply sorry for any inconvenience this might cause you.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:46:29 (PST)

by Ted

Hey, all you runners!!! Ted is going to beam you all you need to know about the spooky neo-commies out there. So much to do, so little time—hang on tiight!

- Nothing like getting a kid's eye view on radical politics. This ought to be entertaining.

- PoliSci

- Ted's not a kid. Prepare to be nuked.

- Ted



COMMUNISM 101

Here's what Ted found out about communism. Ask 10 commies about their beliefs and you get 12 answers. The only thing the reds have in common is that they all hate Ted calling it "beliefs." Weirdos. Not even the fundie religious whackjobs spend so much time flaming each other over scripture written by dead guys.

Marxism

It all began with some old chummers with big beards named Marx and Engels. They lived waaaay back in the Nineteenth Century with lots of steam and metal and very little plastic or computers. They weren't gutter rats, but they scanned how all the poor slags were doing the hard labor while the rich fat cats were hoarding the wealth (nothing changes, natch). According to this Marx guy, all of history is a repeating cycle of struggle between the different classes, usually ending with the rich putting the smackdown on the poor. So Marx wanted to get all of the workers on the whooole planet together and have a big International Party (mega-rave, w00t!) and create a society without classes. Pretty weird idea back then, with no Matrix or telephones.

Communism

Communism is when everyone shares the wealth equally, so there's no "Ted's better than you because she's got more toys." Lots of people seem to think this is eeevil; Ted just thinks it's boring. That Marx guy thought capitalism would inevitably transform into socialism than communism—guess he didn't see the megacorps comin'. Guys like Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Castro and Ho Chi Minh had different ideas, though—they organized the wage slaves and peasants (Twentieth Century, still nooo computers!) and had themselves a revolution in places like Russia, China, Cuba, Korea and Vietnam.

State Communism

A lot of people think that the "state communism" of places like Russia and China was communism, but strictly speaking it wasn't. The problem with real let's-all-share communism is that people just aren't weird enough yet to live in it, so the first commie states all went boogey-woogey and evil I'm-your-father-Luke guys like Stalin and Pol Pot took over to dictate all the others what to do and kill-kill everybody who said no, or send them off to Siberian gulags. The commies even had Mega-supervillain world superpower status for awhile, but they never quite got things to work out like they wanted, and pretty soon nobody was left to scare the corps anymore.

- State communism isn't communism at all, it's rule by dictatorship, just another version of fascism. That's the real problem with commies, if you ask me—they never figured out how to keep the people in charge from abusing their power or selling out; they just created a new bureaucratic ruling class (hey, maybe those anarchists are right after all!).
- Red Emma

- The communists may mostly be gone, but there are still plenty of left-wing socialists out there. There are even plenty of them in megacorporate ranks, trying to equalize the economics inside the corporate "nation" and trying to get all of the wage-slaves appropriate health-care, education, good housing conditions and other benefits. Some corps even go that route, hoping that their corporate atmosphere will make them more attractive and buy them more loyalty.

- Nuyen Nick

Neo-Communism

Like all supervillains, communism didn't die (how many times to I have to tell people to make sure there's a corpse? Jeesh!). Nope, it slunk around the world and even mutated into a new form: neo-communism (bwahahaha)! Maybe Ted just likes neo-communism better because it was invented by people who used computers. Maybe Ted just likes to be scared. Anyway, the neo-commies mostly gave up on telling workers to revolt. Instead, they wanted to build their communist society by getting all of the middle-class people to connect their brains using tech or magic. Hmmm, no middle class people around these days ... guess they failed.

- Huh? Neo-communists want us all to have a hive mind? Ick! Hasn't anybody scanned these guys to see if they're possessed by bug spirits?

- Skaven

- Not a hive mind—hives have a queen, and the neo-communists don't want an overarching authority. They want something more like a mass-mind-meld. They even creep the other commies out, but they get along great with some transhumanists.

- Deprogrammer

MODERN COMMUNISM

Ted found lots of examples of old-school commies and new skool neo-commies:

Communist States

Ted was asked to tell you about communist nations, but there are none. Once there were lots of states calling themselves "communists," but it's all been lies—at best they are state communists. A few of them still milk the C-word for all it's worth, though:

Bolivia: Some miner named Limberg Velazco that no one had ever heard of before led the Aymaran natives of this country through a red revolution. El Commandante Velazco changes his party leadership more often than his socks, though, so it remains an unstable place.

Cuba: Ted doesn't get why Enrique Martinez continues to call his country communist, cuz it's clearly not. The few real commies there are kept repressed.

Henan: Henan is where all of the old hardline Chinese commies who still worship Marx and Mao holed up when China broke apart. Chairman Xientai Zao still pays lip service to



the revolution, but his state doesn't look like it will be withering away into a glorious worker's paradise any time soon.

Vietnam: The commies here don't play well with their neighbors, so after lots and lots of wars they've just tried to isolate themselves and hide. That didn't work too well either, so they nationalized their Khouang Combine to keep Vietnam from economically collapsing and opened up to megacorp investment. Ted bets his custom-written Groucho Marxist persona avatar they won't last long.

Angola: The Angolans used to fight each other a lot, but the commies still call the shots here. In fact, this is one of the few commie countries in which conditions have actually improved. Ted wonders what their secret is.

- Though isolationist, most of these commie regimes do want to see communism spread. Occasionally they'll hire runners to undertake propaganda actions in neighboring countries. Most of them are struggling to get by, though, which means they're desperate. So they're just as likely to hire runners to hijack shipments, steal trade secrets, spy on megacorps or rival nations—anything to give them an edge on survival.

- Flak Jack

- They don't tend to like megacorps monkeying around in their sandbox, either, so they limit their extraterritoriality. This makes them a place to consider if you have a mega hot on your trail. "Course, you'll have to deal with the commie secret police and other drek, but it beats hiding out in a cave somewhere. Sometimes.

- Traveler Jones

Commie Policlubs and Movements

Like little red weeds, hardcore communist groups keep sprouting up all over the world, fighting the governments and megacorps and usually either getting arrested/shot or breaking apart into dogmatic bickering factions. On the current menu we have the People's Labor Front (Tir Tairngire), the International Progressives (UCAS), Freedom Road (UK), the Socialist Workers (AGS), Red Fist (Poland), The Revolutionary Action Councils (France), the Malaysian Communist Party and dozens more. A lot of these activists work in larger political movements (like the Huk, or the UK's movement, or with anti-fascist or eco-groups), but they spend most of their time having meetings and trying to take control or recruit people, so they're not very effective. Only a few have mass numbers and are threats all by themselves, like the freaky Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, which spends a little too much time in the coca fields, if you ask Ted.

- Under just about every megacorp's laws and some nations' as well, communist and union organizing is illegal, so commies tend to operate in secret. And since they're already illegal, they usually don't mind bending the law some more, so specialists like us can be useful to them.

- Prole





• It's not really fair to lump these groups together; they can be quite different in ideology and practice. Some of them work by legal means, while groups like the Anti-Imperialist Army in the AGS blow things up. Some are creepy and highly centralized Stalinists, while others are actually anti-authoritarian and pretty cool politically—like the Assata Shakur Organization in the CAS and Carib League. Still others are just cultish wing-nuts, and have no qualms about brainwashing their recruits or hooking them up to a PAB machine.

• Symbiot

Zabotnikists

Raidri Zabotnik was an ethnic Indian working as transportation planner for the Netherlands in the early Twenty-First Century. He's the brain who invented and developed the ideas behind today's automated traffic solutions, like GridGuide and ALI. He also dreamed up a lot of weird ideas about connecting people's brains through the Matrix and making them all part of ONE mind. Naturally, he fell in with the neo-communists and disappeared in the late '40s. A lot of neo-commies still push his ideas around in policlubs like the Neo-Utopists, trying to convince everyone to mash their brains and identities together to achieve true communism. No more individualism. Creepy!

• And how exactly will that happen? Slap a datajack on everyone, link them online and then brainwash them all to think the same? It might work with cars, but people? Hell, we have feelings ...

• Ivan

• I think I know where Zabotnik went. I was doing a smuggling run through Yakut when I ran into some technical problems. I was grounded for 2 months trying to fix them, but luckily a local tribe helped me out in exchange for some of the goods I was carrying. This wasn't any normal tribe, though; they were more like Eurospawl folks who adjusted to living in the wilderness. They weren't keen on technology, and they had no Matrix links. But the weirdest part was that they never spoke with each other—they only exchanged looks, and they had an odd way of acting in unison. They never identified themselves individually, either, and a few times I started conversations with one of them who would walk off only to have someone different come up and pick up the talk exactly where we had left off. I couldn't get out of that place faster!

• Mad Mike

• Hey, I ran into a group like that too, only it was in Angola, not Yakut. The locals called them a "mindmelder tribe." I figured at first they all just had some sort of wireless headware links, but now I think it was something creepier than that.

• Traveler Jones

• I heard something about "mindmelding tribes" before. Some old Russian ork runner told me over shots of whiskey about how

his team was once hired to disrupt some magic ritual. According to his tale, a group of magicians calling themselves the Mindmelder Tribe were undertaking a huge ritual that would have mashed together the consciousnesses of everyone living in the city (Omsk, I think he said), a sort of hive mind. But he sniped the lead mage and borked the ritual, frying the brains of the rest of the mages. I wrote it off as half-decent sci-fi at the time, but now I'm not so sure.

• Roswell

• Ugh, this is creeping me out. I once took a job from some radical activists to steal some top-secret military tech from a certain corp that shall remain unnamed. I thought they wanted to expose the experiments and research to the public, but even though we turned it over, I never did see a stink about it. Now I'm worried, cuz the tech was a "mind-connect" system using vat-brains to operate fighter drones. I'm thinking those policlubbers were neo-commies, and they wanted the system for their own personal use.

• Wulf

• Ah, so that's what Halberstam is up to these days.

• Anastasia

HATE THY NEIGHBOR: ANTI-META GROUPS

• Everybody loves to hate the haters. But aside from the ritual booing and hissing when Humanis rears its head, how many of you keep tabs on the activities of your local human supremacists? I don't want anyone to be caught off guard, so I've asked Socio Pat to gather a few files for your viewing pleasure.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:42:18 (PST)

• Hey Cap—isn't this collection supposed to be for group that shadowrunners might be interested in joining or working for? If that's the case, then I have to object to you drumming up business for these guys. Exposure is one thing, publicity is another.

• Fatima

• Your objection is noted, but Shadowland does not filter access by creed or ideology. Fact is, we do have some Humanis supporters logging in, and fact is, some runners out there may end up working for Humanis or their ilk some day—willingly or not. I'm of the opinion that's it best to go into a situation fully informed, and I also figure that any attention we give to Humanis types is more likely to hurt their cause than help—they have secrets to hide, and they prefer operating in the dark.

• Captain Chaos

• Liberal drek. If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.

• Antifa



by Socio Pat

Racism and bigotry in one form or another has been around since the days when Caveman Og's tribe had a tiff with Caveman Grok's tribe, and the easiest way to tell the tribe member's apart was by skin and hair color. Some would argue that it's human nature to fear what is different—or at least that it was a survival mechanism, protecting you from things you didn't understand because they might kill you and eat you.

As civilization took hold, racism became a useful tool for social control. When you're conquering your neighbors, you paint them as uncivilized barbarians and tell your own people it's their destiny to dominate these others and take their land. When you're building an infrastructure, you pretend that other races are "subhuman" and enslave them en masse to do all of your hard and dangerous labor. When you're a king or president trying to hold a nation together, it makes economic sense to have an underclass—a group you can exploit and keep down, forcing them to take on the unpleasant tasks that every society needs to have done by means of scarce jobs, education and opportunity. The fact that they're constantly scrambling to keep themselves in the necessities of life prevents this exploited class from banding together to demand equal treatment, while the middle classes, with the uneasy knowledge that they aren't really that far away from poverty themselves, fight for the status quo to keep the underclass in line. Of course, all of this benefits the wealthy, who are really running the show.

Over time, certain extremely barbaric historical examples of racism horrified the world enough that the more blatant forms of discrimination were (usually) made illegal. But there was no denying that social inequalities based on race still existed, and thus institutionalized racism carried on, in the form of racial profiling, unfair treatment in housing and education, unequal legal penalties and similarly pervasive mindsets. Despite attempts at equality, race remained a hot button issue—primarily because it was real, but also because it was easy. Why delve into the root causes of social problems when you can just shift the blame onto some other ethnic group?

Cue the Awakening, with its waves of UGE and Goblinization. Throw in the emergence of magically active folks, and suddenly all the rules changed. For many people, some of the reasons for hating your fellow Earthlings didn't seem so important anymore: after all, that guy might have brown skin or wear a turban, but *that* guy over there is three meters tall and has horns growing out of his head. Orks and trolls especially, with their brutish appearance, became convenient targets of hatred, simultaneously seeing their strength and resilience exploited by the corporations while their people were largely kept at the bottom levels of society. Add this to a period where fast travel and instantaneous communication meant that the world was becoming a much smaller place where widely disparate cultures were getting more comfortable with each other, and people found themselves in need of new scapegoats. Anti-metahuman sentiments started cropping up almost as fast as metahumans themselves did, and anybody paying attention could see that something was going to blow up soon.

That something was the Night of Rage. I won't go into the history—you can find it in much more depth elsewhere—but

it's just important to note that many of the organizations I discuss in this file had their roots in this event. More than any other single event, the Night of Rage polarized the forces in the anti-metahuman war. And make no mistake—it *is* a war. Whether you fight with words or with fists and weapons depends on your point of view, but either way it's clear that we have a long way to go before it's over.

- I don't know what planet y'all live on, but I still see ethnic prejudice on a regular basis—especially outside of the sprawl. Sure, cultures and people are more mixed together in the city, but some people just live sheltered lives or never get over their cultural xenophobia. And drek if I don't see the most prejudice directed towards magicians. If you're a spell-slinger, most groggies (er, mundanes) either praise you or fear you.
- People Watcher

There are many more anti-metahuman organizations out there than those I discuss in this file, ranging from buffoons and fools to highly organized groups with highly placed members. They run the gamut from working people who are (in some cases justifiably) upset about society's efforts to redress metahuman grievances using such methods as reverse discrimination, to individuals and groups that can legitimately be called "evil"—if your definition of evil includes the pursuit of murder and genocide. If you're interested in the topic, I urge you to seek out more information. Particularly if you're metahuman, it can never hurt to know as much as you can about your enemy.

- It's interesting that Pat chose not to include the Sons of Sauron in this section. They're as racist as any Humanis cell, and twice as violent as most of 'em. Bias, anyone?
- SamIAm
- Read the file's metatags, stupid—it sez "Anti-Meta Groups." The Sons of Sauron are detailed in another file.
- Blade
- Hey, if you ain't a troll or an ork, the SOS doesn't give a frag about you. Besides, I thought we were all "metahumans." Isn't that what the touchy-feely love-your-neighbor types teach?
- Buzz
- See you on the streets, Buzz.
- Antifa

PHILOSOPHY OF HATRED

Thought I'd start by giving you a little taste of what you're up against. Racist policlubbers aren't all a bunch of spittle-flinging idiots. Some of them realize that couching the message in friendly terms gets better results. These folks can be the most dangerous of all. This guy is a PR flack for Humanis—naturally he doesn't include his name, but it doesn't matter. He's hardly unique.



//Begin File//

Let me start out by saying this: I don't hate anybody. I'm a good citizen just like you are: I have a wife and two little girls I love more than anything in the world. I have a good job, pay my taxes, go to church on Sundays, and complain about the prices at the Stuffer Shack. I might be your neighbor, your coworker or your tennis partner. I'm also a member of the Humanis Policlub. Does that surprise you? You're not alone. Many people still have an outdated view of our organization, which leads to a lot of misconceptions. They'll say, "Look at you—you're successful, you're happy, you're 'normal.' Why would you belong to an organization like that? Aren't they just a bunch of rednecks who like to beat up orks and steal milk from troll babies?"

- Got it in one.
- Cascade Trog

I'm the first to admit that Humanis had an image problem, and that's what I want to talk about here. That's all behind us now—the new Humanis is focused on positive political change. We aren't about hatred or violence, not these days—neither of those are much good for solving the long-term problems of society. The popular conception of Humanis members as ill-educated louts with sheets over their heads couldn't be further from the truth. What we *are* about is being proud of who we are as humans, and standing up for our rights as they're slowly eroded away, both subtly and not so subtly.

• He's right about the image problem, but for the wrong reasons. Thing is, while they were all busy trying to line up the eye-holes in their sheets so they could see, the rest of the world passed them by. Nowadays, kids grow up with metas all around them. They walk by them on the street, go to school with them, see them at their parents' workplaces—so Humanis's base of support is aging with few young, new racist recruits. This friendly spiel covers up the whiff of desperation, boys and girls.

- Observer

• Humanis has a lot more support among younger human's than you'd expect. They aren't signing up with violent anti-meta groups, but they do buy into Humanis's message, and they exercise their personal economic and political power. They shop at human-owned businesses, vote for pro-human candidates and support pro-human policies. There are lots of pols who don't have Humanis membership cards, but their ideologies are in line with Humanis goals. And in some parts of the UCAS and CAS, pols are not only open about their affiliations, but Humanis membership is actually considered a positive thing.

- Monitor

• Humanis might not officially condone violence, but we all know that every organization attracts the hard-core types who have their own version of the party line. Metas are just as beat-

en-up or dead whether or not the Humanis member doing the dirty work isn't "officially" supported by the club.

- Antifa

Let me ask you a few questions. Have you or a friend ever lost a job because a metahuman was willing to do the same work for less money? Has your child ever come home from school crying because he got beaten up by an ork boy—a "boy" who, at ten years old, is built like a linebacker for the Seahawks? Have you had your taxes raised to fund welfare programs for unwed ork women having four and five babies at a time without any way to support them? Or, here's one that's a little more insidious: have elves or dwarfs been rising into management positions at your company? Why should I be worried about that, you ask? Think about how long elves and dwarfs live. Nobody knows, really, except that they'll outlive us humans. Do you want your corporations to be dominated by them in twenty years? How do you think that will affect the business climate for the humans who work there?

- About like it affects orks now. Boo-fraggin'-hoo.
- Bung

It's a simple fact that any five-year-old can see: metahumans and humans are different. Science claims we're all just variations on the same race, but consider this: humans and chimpanzees share 99.4% of their DNA too. That doesn't mean you want one marrying your daughter, do you? Forgive me, I know that's a tired old cliché, but be honest: isn't it true? We of Humanis don't hate metahumans—we simply believe that humans have our society, metahumans have theirs, and it's best for all of us if everybody stays in their own sandboxes, as it were.

No one thinks it's odd if an ork is a member of the Ork Rights Committee or a troll belongs to Mothers of Metahumans, so why is it so strange that we humans have an organization to support and promote our interests and culture? That's all I'm saying—and all Humanis is saying. Membership simply demonstrates that you've taken the very logical position that you're going to put your energy and resources into advancing the cause of your own people: humanity. Think about that next time someone accuses you of being a "hate-monger" for holding a belief that's not in vogue as "politically-correct." If you agree with anything I've said here, consider giving us a listen. You might be surprised at what today's Humanis Policlub has to offer you.

//End File//

- Oh, where to start ...
- Solaris

• Never mind, Solaris. I don't think anybody around here is buying his brand of spew.

- Grifter

• That's not what worries me. There are plenty of disaffected humans who will buy it. It's human nature (if you'll pardon the



expression) to look for somebody to blame when life doesn't go your way, and metas have unfortunately always been a handy target. This "kinder, gentler Humanis" is just the sort of thing that will hook the folks who wouldn't respond to the hate-spewing messages of the past.

- Solaris

- So many racists, so little ammo ...

- Brick

HUMANIS POLICLUB

This transcript is the second part of a daring expose that was scheduled to appear on NewsNet two months ago (parts one and three were nuked by Scramble IC). The anonymous snoop behind the piece is a human-looking ork investigative reporter who went all-out, had surgery to make him look fully human and infiltrated the Humanis Policlub to see what really goes on behind the robes. Apparently he had his editor's full support for the story, but when he turned it in he was paid for it but it was mysteriously never run. Just lack of space or something more sinister?

//Begin File//

Between the Sheets, Part 2 of 3

I'd passed the first hurdle, the easy part. They accepted me as a human. My ruse of being a disgruntled dock worker who'd lost his job to an ork played right into their prejudices, and now it was time to attend my first Humanis Policlub meeting. Part of me felt like I was going to be sick, but part of me was exhilarated. How many orks get the chance to beard the enemy in his den?

The meeting was in the back room of a bar called Morey's, in Philly. My new buddy Deke picked me up. "You're gonna like this, kid," he told me. "We don't take nothin' from those fraggin' metas. You'll see."

"Do I need—uh—my own sheets?" I asked tentatively, "—or can I borrow some?"

He looked at me funny, then laughed. "Nah, we don't wear the robes except on special occasions—you know, like marches and stuff. They're mostly to scare the metas. We're all brothers in humanity, so we ain't got nothin' to hide from each other."

We got stuck in traffic so by the time we got to the meeting it was already started. Deke waved companionably to the barkeep and we hurried to the back.

They were just finishing up reciting something about the greatness of humanity as we came in. I looked around, taking it all in. There were about twenty-five people in here, all men, about three-quarters white. Two flags hung on the wall behind the guy standing up front: the UCAS flag and another one I recognized as the Humanis symbol. In the back was a table holding two big soykaf dispensers and a plate of doughnuts next to a stack of Humanis propaganda pamphlets. It struck me funny for some reason, so I bit my lip to keep from laughing. It was all just so absurd.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY HATRED: RACISM AND SURGE

The arrival of SURGE in 2062 was simultaneously one of the best and one of the worst things to happen to the anti-metahuman movement.

On the positive side, it came along right about the time when anti-meta sentiments (at least in Western societies) were on the downswing, as new generations got more comfortable with metas and no longer perceived them as a threat. This sudden appearance of freaks with fur, feathers, or bones sticking out of their bodies made many people think twice: what *was* "normal," anyway? Was the ork or dwarf down the street *really* just a human variant as they'd been told, or was SURGE just the next stage in a process that began with Goblinization and UGE and would end with—what? Nobody knows, and nothing scares people like the unknown.

On the negative side, SURGE posed some sizable problems. For one thing, it didn't discriminate based on policlub membership or political leanings, which led to more than a few embarrassing incidents when high-ranking policlub officials began turning purple and sprouting scales (see Jeremiah Adams of the Cult of the Seventh Seal for a good example). For another, it forced them into some uncomfortable reassessments of their philosophies: Did they focus on metahumans, or expand to hate SURGE victims too? If so, were changelings worse than metas on the hate scale, or not as bad? How should they pitch their message: do changelings make metas look more "normal" (and therefore more palatable) by comparison, or are they living examples that metas are growing further removed from "real" humanity with each generation?

With the SURGE phenomenon and changelings only a couple of years old, these questions haven't been sorted out very well yet, but the next few years promise to be very interesting.

It didn't stay that way long. Deke and I took seats near the back, and I listened. Let me tell you, it took all my self control not to jump up and start a fight. In just the first ten minutes I heard more slurs against orks, trolls, dwarfs, elves and changelings than I'd heard in a week as an ork—along with dirty jokes about women and gays and a whole lot of grumbling about how pretty much everybody who wasn't one of them was the cause of all the problems in the country today. And that was before the speaker started.

Drek, after listening to that man (he didn't give his name—I noticed that was fairly common) I can almost see how they manage to hook in as many poor disaffected slots as they do. He was a master at psychology, alternately getting the crowd revved and settling them down to make them think. The metahumans, he said, were the problem. They were taking our jobs, marrying our women, working for less money and pumping out kids by the dozens, all of whom (to hear him tell it) would end up on the welfare rolls, sucking money from honest hardworking humans. I could feel the anger and disgust welling up inside me, but around me I could see everyone else was eating it up—even Deke. These guys really *believed* this stuff. They honestly believed that it was the metas' fault that



they were losers who couldn't hold a job or keep their wives satisfied. Oops—there goes the journalistic objectivity. I'll try harder. I did my best to cheer at the right places and sound like this was the most logical stuff in the world, but inside I just wanted to get the frag out of there—even a seasoned journalist like me can only listen to so much of this drek without getting the urge to knock a few heads together in hopes of instilling some sense. For awhile I was worried I wasn't going to be able to stick this out long enough to get the whole story without inciting a little mayhem, but keeping it together and being objective is what they pay me to do.

I managed to keep my temper until the end, mostly by focusing on all the other metas this article would help. After the speech they did routine club business (I thought I was in a fraggin' Rotarian meeting there for a few minutes), sang a couple more patriotic songs (mostly off-key), and then it was over. The speaker got back up. "Don't forget to stay after if you're part of the Committee," he reminded.

"What's the Committee?" I asked Deke as I followed his lead in grabbing a doughnut and a stack of pamphlets before filing out.

"I'm not on it," he told me. "They're the ones who get together and plan the—special stuff. You know, with the robes. You'll find out about it later, after you've been in for awhile."

Special stuff. I nodded knowingly. Yeah, this was why I was here. I'd just have to stick it out awhile longer, I told myself. "So when's the next meeting?"

//End File//

- Special stuff?
- Curious George

• That's the stuff that's beyond the softer side of Humanis—the rank-and-file don't usually get their hands dirty, especially these days with all the PR problems they're having, but if you show 'em you've got the guts to take it to the next level, they recruit you for their first-string terrorist teams like Hands of Five and Alamos 20K.

- Magnificent Edward

• Actually, he's probably talking about more mundane stuff here like burning effigies in front of meta businesses, rallies, that kind of thing. I doubt they're so open about their connection with Alamos and the rest of the terrorist brigade. Even though everybody knows, if it came out officially they'd lose their legal status.

- Tangent



- I don't know which chapter this guy attended, but I had to infiltrate a Humanis meeting one time as part of a job, and those guys wore the full regalia—robes, hoods, insignia, the whole nine yards. They even called each other by silly titles like in the old Ku Klux Klan, and everything was very regimented. Didn't see any doughnuts, either.
- Mikhail

Organization

We all know that racism is a load of drek—it's based on superficial biases, stereotypes, cultural ignorance and primitive us-vs.-them mentalities. But every runner reading this has seen prejudice on a daily basis on the streets. That doesn't make it acceptable, but reality is not always pleasant. Nevertheless, I've seen too many runners talk about Humanis like it's a fringe group of rednecks and misfits—nothing couldn't be further from the truth. Humanis is an international, well-organized, politically sophisticated and well-funded policlub with *hundreds* of chapters, *thousands* of members and *hundreds of thousands* of supporters. It has numerous candidates in office in the CAS, UCAS and other countries. It receives major donations from numerous megacorporations, public endorsements from religious leaders and celebrities, and has the political clout to pass legislation and run candidates for president. It assembles and utilizes dozens of front groups, such as the Legion of UCAS Decency (LOUD), Citizen's Coalition for Security and the Institute of Genetic Concerns. This not a group to scoff at. You runners shouldn't be surprised at how many fixers, Mafia capos and Yakuza leaders donate cred to Humanis' coffers.

One good analogy is to compare Humanis to the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s. It has strong and active grassroots support and, believe it or not, actually pursues what many consider to be "positive" activities, such as clothing and food drives (for poor humans), working for improved (segregated) housing conditions and education, rallying in support of humans who've been laid off from their jobs, etc. Much of their support comes from an aging (but still around thanks to extended lifespans) membership that is still hung up on the Awakening and has nothing better to do than vote, contribute nuyen and clean their guns while watching game shows and televangelists on the trid. Most importantly, they represent a strong faction of rich and influential humans who are active in corporate and governmental circles, and who further Humanis's goals by recruiting other rich humans to the cause, holding fancy dinners to raise money, networking and exerting their considerable influence behind the scenes in the halls of power.

- Well if they're so "positive," I guess I'll head right over to sign up!
- Bung

Currently, former Pennsylvania governor Mark Lott serves as Humanis's President. The policlub has numerous other famous and influential spokespeople, however, including Seattle financier Karl Brackhaven, DeeCee policy consultant Donald Leyton and former Fuchi executive William Ager (running mate in Ken Brackhaven's presidential campaign).

- Karl Brackhaven is still hard at work trying to stem the tide of the new wave of Or'zet-language ork music. LOUD launched a new media campaign this month accusing Or'zet artists of spreading violence and racism to the nation's youth, urging for legislation to be passed against it. The old racist even had his grand-daughter Tiffany framed up on drug possession charges for dating infamous ork artist CrimeTime.
- Puget Deb

ALAMOS 20K

I can't by any means claim to know much about everyone's favorite boogeyman, Alamos 20K. This human supremacist terror cabal has been on the Most Wanted lists since they blew up the Sears Tower in 2039 and created the Shattergraves. There are a lot of rumors floating around Shadowland, but they're just as likely to be drek as fact. I did volunteer to do this section for Cap, though, so I dug up the following news items.

//Begin File//

Heiden Moves to MRC

Posted 11-12-63

BASLE [MediaSim]—Dr. Klaus Uwe Heiden has accepted the position of Director of Research at the Metagenics Research Consortium. Previously a top geneticist at the Celltec Bioengineering in Basle, Heiden, 35, is the youngest person ever to hold the Director position at Metagenics.

//End File//

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One Dead in Hit-and-Run in Munich

Posted 01-12-64

HANNOVER [DeMeKo]—Dr. Dieter von Kammelburg, 62, died yesterday as a result of injuries sustained when he was struck by a hit-and-run driver in Munich the previous evening. The incident is under investigation; so far no suspects have been identified. Dr. von Kammelburg (see full obituary), a longtime researcher in the field of genetics, was employed by the Metagenics Research Consortium.

//End File//

Before anyone asks what this has to do with Alamos 20K, let me recap a bit from the old *Threats* download. The partially corrupted file there was allegedly from a newshound who infiltrated Alamos 20K back in '57, posted shortly after she disappeared. It claimed that A2K was a cabal run by a Central Executive of five conspirators, each with their own faction. The one alluded to as "The Nazi" was into genetic experimentation and old-style occult stuff; "The Troll" was a real troll—who perhaps Goblinized early, before the first wave—who believed metahumans (including himself) should be "cured;" "The Zealot" was an Asian religious leader who might or might not be behind the Ministry of Mankind; "The Senator" was described as a high-up politico in CAS or UCAS who hoped to reunite North America under one human government; and "The Loon" was a wacked-out magical type with far-fetched theories about the mythic history of the Awakened. To hear



her tell it, all five of these factions are constantly squabbling with each other, but A2K has its fingers in a whole bunch of pies including Humanis, the Ministry of Mankind, and all sorts of lower-level human-supremacist movements. Pretty scary stuff, if you believe it.

- So if I'm reading these news items correctly, it seems there have been some serious shakeups in Alamos 20K's upper ranks. Based on my own research, I'm almost certain that Kammelburg was the Central Executive member known as the Nazi. To most of the world it may seem like Kammelburg and Heiden have no connection, but in fact I think that Heiden was the Nazi's protégé within Alamos. Heiden is a brilliant geneticist—sort of a wunderkind—who shares Kammelburg's anti-metahuman views. It was natural that they should work together.

- Grima

- That's bull-drek! Dr. Heiden's name has been associated with all sorts of genetic research benefiting metahumans. He's gotten awards from Mothers of Metahumans, for frag's sake!

- Tusk

- Great cover, isn't it? Believe me or don't—Heiden is a snake. He's charming, he says all the right things and makes all the right moves, but trust me, this guy's experiments make Josef Mengele look like Albert Schweitzer. If half of the rumors I've heard are right, you metas out there should be losing sleep and take extreme care about what you eat.

- Grima

- Hmm. Celltec is owned by Genom Corporation, though that's not something they advertise. And we all know Genom's reputation regarding this sort of thing.

- Shin Bet

- I still don't get it. Who killed Kammelburg? Was it an accident, or a hit?

- Bunker Buster

- Best I can determine, the good doctor got cacked by agents of the Shock Squad—one of the nastier secret arms of Humanis, under the direction of the Troll. (According to the original report, the Troll runs Humanis—but if you ask me, he's just one of the puppetmasters influencing Humanis's leadership from behind the scenes. Half of those bastards would probably croak on the spot if they learned their secret benefactor was a troll.)

- Grima

- Why would the Troll order a hit on the Nazi? I remember the report said the factions were squabbling, but what end does it serve to take each other out? And wouldn't the other three execs take exception to the troll in their midst taking their comrades out?

- Monkey

- It's going to sound like I need to be fitted for a tinfoil hat, but hang on tight, because this is where things get convoluted. And this is just my take on the situation—I could be wrong. But as I scan it, it's not just the Nazi who's gone. The Troll's gone too. Remember how the report claimed that the Troll has tried everything to be "cured" and it drove him insane? Well, it seems that our Dr. Heiden approached him and convinced him that his research had turned up a promising treatment that was capable of doing just that—turning the Troll back to human. Our wonder boy even presented him with appropriate (faked, of course, but very convincing) research and test subjects.

But Heiden wasn't just acting on altruism. He arranged to have the Troll set up the hit on the Nazi in exchange. You see, the Nazi trusted Heiden, and so the doctor was able to feed the Troll all sorts of inside information about the Nazi's organization and security. With the Nazi out of the picture, Heiden could take control of his faction.

Once the Nazi was dead, Heiden went ahead with the treatment. "Unfortunately," it failed, killing the Troll—or at least taking him out of commission. Naturally they kept that one quiet, since the Troll had been out of the public eye for years. At that point it was fairly simple for Heiden to step in and consolidate the Troll's and the Nazi's factions under one umbrella. In keeping with the names my colleague gave the leadership, I'm calling him "The Doktor."

- Grima

- So Heiden goes from nobody to one of the most powerful men in Alamos 20K in the space of a few days? That's pretty hard to swallow.

- Cracker

- I don't doubt it. I don't have any proof, either, but mark my words—keep an eye on Heiden. The man's a sociopath. Young, handsome, charming and utterly without conscience. To him, metahumans are simply experimental subjects for his ultimate goal: ridding the world of them. He's using his pro-meta research as a smokescreen—he can afford to save a few if it helps him eliminate the rest in the end. I haven't got a line on his ultimate plan yet, but I can guarantee it'll be something that takes the long view. It's no coincidence that he's a master chess player, and he's young enough that he can afford to wait to see his plans come to fruition.

- Grima

- Assuming this masterful tale is true, you'd have to be deep inside Alamos 20K to get that kind of a read on the situation. So either this is a complete smokescreen meant to throw people off A20K (and maybe bring harm to Heiden, who could actually be a great pro-meta researcher), or you've just exposed your position by dumping this data online—in which case you're a dead man. And even if your corpse shows up, please forgive me if I remain suspicious.

- Antifa



HUMAN NATION

Though no one's ever been able to plop down any hard evidence that this group exists, the name simply pops up too many times, in fitting circumstances, for it to be myth or urban legend. According to the rumors, the Human Nation is a fraternal cabal of extremely wealthy and influential Social Darwinist humans who take the long road to eradicating metahumans. Rather than promoting direct violence and terrorism, they plan to slowly accumulate power and shift society towards eugenics and otherwise acclimatize the world to accept their racist agenda. Unlike other rabid anti-meta groups, the Human Nation seems to consider itself a true elite and recruits only from the brightest and most powerful.

- I've seen more than a few hints of Human Nation activity, all linked to Yakashima. The corp's internal race policies are simply horrific, and they've been none too subtle about their external racist activities, either. The money's hard to track, but they seem to pump a lot of funds into various eugenics initiatives and anti-meta policy groups throughout Asia.
- Fury
- And of course there's General Saito, in Cali, the HN poster dictator. His media-savvy approach to metahuman genocide received a lot of coaching and funding from somewhere.
- Debord

Here's a challenge for the shadow-sleuths out there. According to Cap, this file showed up a few weeks ago and right away somebody nuked it, almost as if they were lying in wait for it to turn up. Even though there's not much left, I present it in case someone enterprising can fill in the blanks. Any takers?

//Begin File//

I can't take it any longer.

I am a coward. I admit it. If I weren't, I would have done this a long time ago. I thought I could learn to live with what I have become, but I should have known better. There is no living with it, no compromise or rationalization. I despise myself—but I despise my betrayers more.

My name is [CORRUPTED DATA]. Up until 2061, I was a senior-level R&D department head at Tr[CORRUPTED DATA] also a member of Human Nation.

[CORRUPTED DATA] I am still committed to the superiority of humans over the metahuman freaks who undermine our lifestyle. I say without humility that I was just the sort of person they valued the most highly—wealthy, intelligent, well-placed and totally devoted to the cause of human supremacy. During my years in the organization I participated in and even spearheaded countless operations against the metahuman threat.

Why am I writing this? My life is forfeit for revealing what I will reveal here. Why would I take such a risk for a cause that I wholeheartedly support?

Because they have betrayed me. In September of 2061, the unthinkable happened. Overnight, I transformed from a

human to a freak. I shudder even to remember it—to this day, the nightmares still plague me. In my fear and confusion I made a fatal mistake: I revealed my transformation to someone I thought was a close friend. It was only due to the excessive security features in my home (ironically installed to protect me from attacks by lawless metahumans) that I was able to escape, fleeing for my life and hiding [CORRUPTED DATA] have been forced to keep moving, to live under cover of darkness and trust no one.

Tonight I will end it, but not before I pay my "friends" back for their betrayal. I might be an abomination, but there is nothing wrong with my mind or my memory. I will reveal all that I know, and it will be left to those who succeed me to see what the airing of their secrets will do to their corrupt and traitorous organization. I will reveal names and locations, dates and operations. From the upper echelons of governments in Europe, North America and Asia to the corporate boardrooms to the entertainment industry, I will reveal their involvement—people whom you would never suspect of harboring such views. Let you dismiss me as insane, I will provide proof in the form of documents, audio and video files, and Matrix transactions, all of which I have used my considerable resources to gather in the past few months, and all of which are safely hidden and backed up in multiple trusted locations. What do I have to fear? They can do nothing else to me, as I will be dead and I have no loved ones they can punish. By the time I am finished, the very world will be rocked by the scandals of what is revealed. You believe Human Nation to be a fringe organization, an "old-boy" network of wealthy men? You will see otherwise.

[CORRUPTED DATA —END OF FILE ENCOUNTERED]

//End File//

- I'll take a shot. I'd bet big cred that the author was Niles Covington, formerly of Transys Neuronet. He disappeared in late September of '61, presumed kidnapped or dead—his house was ransacked. He had called in sick to work for three days beforehand. I also dug up a report of a changeling suicide in London about three weeks ago—guy blew his brains out, apparently. No positive ID yet, but my money's on Covington.
- Neurosis
- The Human Nation must have some heavyweight smart frames searching for certain keywords—like the guy's name and corp name—in order to nuke them as fast as they did this file when it appeared on Shadowland. They must have some drek-hot deckers, or at least the nuyen to afford top talent.
- Callope
- You call this a puzzle? Hey Cap—I've got the file, the whole thing—but I think rather than turn it in for your "challenge," I'm going to see what somebody might be willing to offer for it. Capitalism makes the world go 'round, right? Contact me if you're interested.
- Agent 814



- Nice one. Do you honestly think anybody's gonna fall for that drek? What easier way would there be to smoke out anybody who wants to investigate Human Nation than to pretend you've got the goods and then sit back to see who bites?
- Antifa

TURNING THE TIDE: PRO-META GROUPS

Ok, now that I've gotten everyone riled up with details on the anti-meta crowd, let's take a look and see how meta groups are responding to these threats. I've picked a few samples of the prominent groups that support metahuman causes, and in some cases tapped organization members to give you the low-down. Despite Humanis's claim to the contrary, metas are essentially human, which means they respond to threats in the same ways their human brethren do—from activism to outright terrorism.

ORK RIGHTS COMMITTEE (ORC)

President: Greg Jackson

Headquarters: Federal District of Columbia

The ORC is one of the oldest of the pro-meta organizations, getting its start shortly following the Night of Rage. Their stated purpose is to fight for ork rights, though various factions of their membership interpret this responsibility in different ways. On paper, the ORC advocates peaceful, political means of achieving their goals—employment and education rights for orks, improved pre- and postnatal care for ork children, making sure that orks are adequately represented in government (particularly city government) and other similar things. Their membership is large and varied: mostly orks, naturally, but a look at their member rolls shows a surprising number of other metatypes and even humans joining the ranks.

- Why is this surprising? Injustice is injustice, no matter who it's aimed at.
- Stellaluna

ORC isn't just about political action, though. Particularly among the younger orks, there is a strong belief that activism of a more direct path is not only a valuable tool, but a necessary one. The organization stages protest marches, sit-ins, media events, and other activities designed to get their message in front of as many people as possible. Usually these events are peaceful, but violence isn't unknown, and they make no qualms about organizing self-defense against racist attacks.

- Hey, it's not our fault if those Humanis drekwipes show up and start trouble. We don't start it, but we'll finish it if we have to.
- ORCin Man
- That's a nice sentiment, but it ain't true. I've seen plenty of rallies where the "ORC horde" (as they sometimes call themselves) threw the first punch (or rock, or whatever). I'm not saying they aren't justified—I've been on their side of the fight more than a few times. But let's be real and not pretend that we're talking about the Pollyanna Peacenik Society. Keep in mind that a lot of

the young orks drawn to these rallies-cum-riots have grown up in the Barrens, usually as part of a gang, and have seen their share of street violence. Drek, sometimes it's all ORC can do to keep rival ork gangers from tearing each other up at their own events.

- Crow

Whatever you think about the ORC, their membership is growing by the day (no surprise, even high infant mortality rates aren't keeping the ork population boom down—and for some of them, this is a part of their strategy). Their controversial politics don't keep them as well-funded as other groups, but they make up for it with a surprisingly charismatic leadership. Jackson has been likened to a combination of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Huey Newton all rolled into one, and his to rile up a crowd are viewed as the most potent weapon in ORC's arsenal.

- ORC may not be weighed down with cred, but they still offer plenty of jobs to us shadowy types. They number quite a few ork runners among their membership, but "plausible deniability" isn't just for corps.
- Hampton
- They make use of ork gangers for some of the smaller jobs where they don't need shadowrunner-level talent. Even though they do work to get orks out of the gang lifestyle, they're realists and aren't about to pass up useful resources. And since ORC mediates between ork gangs and tries to minimize the bloodshed, the gangers are usually willing to help out for kicks.
- Brick
- ORC is getting more heavily involved in the whole "ork nationalism" movement—especially since they've started to extend their influence outside North America. They've jumped behind the whole Or'zet language explosion wholeheartedly, and I've heard all kinds of rumblings about things like establishing an ork homeland ("like the elves have"). I'm not sure where orks would consider home, exactly—though all sorts of options have been tossed about, including orbital habitats and moon bases.
- People Watcher

MOTHERS OF METAHUMANS (MOM)

President: Betsy Grant-Masterson

Headquarters: Federal District of Columbia

Here's an organization that really doesn't have much in common with its name anymore. As the name implies, the MOM started back around Goblinization to help the parents of metahuman kids deal with their pointy ears and suddenly lumpy skin and to make sure that these kids didn't get screwed out of their rights by a fearful public. It wasn't long, though, before it morphed into an activist organization more concerned with meta rights in general, and nowadays motherhood has very little to do with it. They keep the name for tradition's sake



and because it gives people a benign impression of their purpose: people don't expect a group with such a kindly, apple-pie moniker to wield the kind of clout that MOM can bring to bear when it needs to, and this can sometimes catch opponents off guard.

- MOM may focus on activism, but it still engages in social service work like outreach and counseling services for metas in need. The local MOM chapter helped my brother find a job when he was this close to knocking over a Stuffer Shack so he could get enough cred to feed his kids.

- Rocky

- The sweetness-and-light thing only goes so far, though—these days, your average MOM member is more likely to be a young male ork than a kindly grandma with dwarf children. MOM doesn't quite have the street cred that ORC does, as they have a lot more human members and they tend to tie their work against racial discrimination to other social issues, like poverty and feminist issues, but they rake in more donations given their respectable façade. Still, certain elements of the MOM brigade like nothing better than a good old-fashioned donnybrook with the local Humanis chapter.

- Trager

- Don't start. MOM has done more for metahuman rights than most of the other organizations put together, and violence isn't part of their mission. They've got a lot of advantages: for one, they have chapters and supporters worldwide and have recruited all sorts of pretty celebs as spokespeople. For another, they've got a reputation for being reasonably moderate, which makes them more palatable to the guardians of the status quo. For a third, their mission is to aid all metahumans, which means they draw support from a broader range of metas and friends of metas. They've moved with the times, expanding into new areas like changeling rights and even poking their toe into the dangerous waters of rights for ghouls. Don't undermine a lot of good work by focusing on the actions of a few members with impulse-control problems.

- Metahumanis

Betsy Grant-Masterson is the top MOM in name only these days—she's pushing sixty pretty hard (she's an ork), and has delegated most of the administrative tasks to Toni Grundell and Dylan Case. Grundell's a troll lawyer—the first to pass the bar exam in the UCAS in fact—and is responsible for many of MOM's key legal victories. Case on the other hand, is human, but is undeniably more of a hard-liner. There's some grumbling in the ranks about having a human running the show again, but Grundell's also made a number of enemies with her showboating court cases, so the jury is still out.

- MOM makes considerable use of shadow talent. Naturally, they prefer using meta runners when they have the expertise needed, but unlike some policlubs they're not anti-human, just





anti-bigot. They've used human runners more than a few times to infiltrate the likes of Humanis.

- Beardo

- MOM must be doing something right—after all, the Big D left them a cool million in his will. As I understand it, they made some very wise investments with that money—investments that are paying dividends in more ways than just cred.

- Blackjack

SONS OF SAURON (SOS)

by Kronos

Funny how it is—if you fight for the right causes (meaning the ones that society likes) you get labeled as a hero or a “freedom fighter,” but if you do the exact same things for a group that isn't the media's darling, you're branded a terrorist.

The Sons of Sauron aren't interested in being anybody's darlings. We're big, we're ugly, we're loud and we're in your face about it. Get used to it. We're here to stay, and we want our fair share of the pie. We're not afraid to do whatever it takes to get it. If that means busting a few heads along the way, well, that's just the way it's gotta be.

Listen up—there's no way the nonviolent solution is going to work. Not when we're up against prejudice and discrimination from all sides. You think it's just drekwipes like Humanis and Alamos 20K to worry about? They're just the ones with the stones to get out there and say what they're really thinking. What's just as bad is the help-wanted signs that suddenly disappear when a troll walks in (except for the jobs where you have to be big and strong and don't mind getting dirty, especially if nobody has to see us doing them—those they love us for) or the way nice restaurants always seat us in the back so nobody has to look at us, or the way high-and-mighty smoothie breeders and dandelion-eaters view us with disgust because we're not pretty and soft and weak like they are.

The Sons of Sauron are about pride and about action. The humans fear us because of our size and strength—so we use that to our advantage. We take the fight where it needs to go—to Humanis's doorstep, to corps who won't hire trolls and orks, to clinics who sterilize metahumans in the name of “helping.” Every year, our membership and our influence are expanding, and now you can find us all over the world. We don't wait for our enemies to start things—that's a nice sentiment, but why should we play by rules we didn't write?

- Terrorism is terrorism, no matter whether the heads behind it are covered with sheets or horns.

- Origami

- Oh, give me a fraggin' break. You're a smoothie, aren't you? The only reason why our people are under the thumbs of this human-dominated society is because we haven't had the cojones to rise up and take what's rightfully ours. That's gonna change.

- Trog Power!

- Yeah, right. You didn't mention one thing you don't have—brains. Get a bunch of trogs together and what have you got? The strength of a runaway train guided by the brain of a ground-hog. That's why you scum will never amount to anything.

- Hugh Mann

- First and only warning.

- Captain Chaos

- Origami is right. Is terrorism any more justified because the perpetrators are an oppressed minority (or perceive themselves to be one)? Of course it's wrong for Humanis to attack the Ork Underground like they did back in '49, but is it right for the Sons of Sauron to respond by bombing a commercial building with a Humanis office in it, killing almost 40 people and leaving hundreds wounded? Were all those people Humanis supporters?

- Libra

- Hey, this is war. If the humans don't want the consequences, they shouldn't have started it.

- Ken E. Bunkport

- Don't get the idea that all trolls and orks support these guys. I'm a troll, and even though my life's not all roses and puppies, I do okay. If some human supremacist threatens me, I have no qualms punching his ticket. In fact, I'll support anyone who teaches Humanis supporters a lesson on general principle. And there are lots of humans that I think are far too privileged to comprehend the drek we trolls have to eat on a daily basis. But I don't need a bunch of trigger-happy terrorists killing random people in my name. As far as I'm concerned, SOS is looking to start a race war just like Humanis is. Frag that, I don't get along with many trolls, either. I have human friends that I'd much rather have watching my back.

- Ferdinand

- The SOS uses ORC as a recruiting ground and even launders some of their funds and shadow ops through them. They have especially strong links with some of the more vicious gangs, like the Ragers and Goblin Horde. You won't see an SOS booth at the local meta-pride parade, but if you know the right hangouts deep inside the ork and troll ghettos, you might spot their recruiters or arms procurers. Drek, I know some bars that drape their walls with the SOS symbol and openly display their support. It's a sad human that accidentally stumbles into one of those holes.

- Turvy

- So who calls the shots in the SOS?

- GnuB

- Nobody's sure—they keep tight ranks. Rumor is that some troll who calls himself Gothmog coordinates between most of the



SOS cells and supportive gangs. There's an ork named Rafa "Split Lip" Gonzalez locked away in San Quentin—doing life for mowing down a Humanis politico and the slag's entire family at a wedding—who runs the SOS's prison gang network. And then there's Marcy O'Riley, who was their top recruiter in Seattle until she was arrested a couple of months ago for conspiracy to bomb Karl Brackhaven's personal offices.

- Cascade Trog

STONECUTTERS GUILD

UCAS Grand Master: David Bellamy

Headquarters: Boston, UCAS

by Socio Pat

This organization's not new, but they don't get much press because they're not huge like MOM, militant like ORC or downright violent like the Sons of Sauron. Founded in Boston in 2043 by dwarfs Hiram Atkinson and John Price, the Stonecutters were conceived as a fraternal organization for dwarfs—you know, the standard fellowship, rituals and silly handshakes, along with a philanthropic arm aimed at supporting dwarf-related causes. Modeled loosely after the Freemasons (who, by the way, never did have any problem accepting dwarfs into their ranks) and given a name that evoked both the Masons and the stereotype of dwarfs' love of working in stone, the Stonecutters grew steadily throughout the next two decades from a few scattered lodges in the north-eastern UCAS to a network that extends across the UCAS and the CAS with a smaller presence in the NAN.

Ostensibly, Stonecutter lodges provide a place for dwarfs to get together, discuss business, make contacts and raise money for orphans, sick kids and the elderly—all dwarfs, of course. With the possible exception of elves, dwarfs have the least trouble assimilating into society and therefore enjoy a fairly high average standard of living, so the Stonecutters' coffers aren't hurting for cred. Add to this the number of prominent dwarfs who are members, and it all ensures that there's a lot of money around to support the club's pet causes.

- No kidding. I had a chummer who's a Stonecutter, and I went with her to one of their public fundraising dinners. Let me tell you, that place was a Who's Who of the movers and shakers of the area—and not just dwarfs. Great grub, too.

- Goblin-Boy

- What Pat is carefully not saying here is that the Stonecutters aren't just a folksy club where businesspeople can get a few tax write-offs and warm fuzzies by pointing some cred in the direction of widows and orphans. These chummers have members all the way up to the upper echelons of government and corporate boardrooms, and they're committed to placing dwarfs in as many positions of power and authority as they can manage. They're the secret bankroll behind a surprising number of dwarf political candidates (rumor has it, for example, that they pumped huge cred into Arthur Vogel's campaign accounts back in '57), and members have been known to sabotage the chances of prominent non-dwarf corporate climbers in order to

get their own boys and girls into position to move up the ladder.

- Lex Tallionis

- So what's wrong with that? Even if it's true, people have been doing that for centuries. Look how the old-boy networks kept women and minorities out of the top positions back in the good ol' days. It was only when they started organizing and mentoring each other that things began to change. What's wrong with dwarfs helping dwarfs get ahead?

- Politico

- Hey, as long as they keep funding the kinds of shadow ops they always seem to have their stumpy little fingers in, I don't care what they're into.

- Iron Mike

GHOUL LIBERATION LEAGUE

by Gravitas

Take the troubles that the "standard" metahuman races must endure and multiply them tenfold—that is what every one of my people faces daily. We ghouls are almost universally reviled and feared, driven from whatever homes we can establish, persecuted with impunity—many communities have even placed bounties on our heads, allowing us to be shot down like rabid dogs in the streets. Even the most basic of rights are denied to us—and why? Because of a condition over which we have no control.

That must change. The Ghoul Liberation League was born out of our betrayal in Chicago, and our numbers grow stronger each day as the more enlightened of metahumanity see the nobility of our struggle. The eloquent words of Tamir Grey provide a fitting foundation to the cause of ghoul rights, and we must carry on his lofty ideals—but we must also do what we must do to gain what is rightfully ours. We must fight, we must grow and we must organize to convince society that we are not all simply mindless flesh-eaters, but beings with intellect, compassion and the same needs and desires as every other metahuman creature.

- I dunno—last time I checked, trolls don't gnaw on people's arms for midnight snacks.

- Locke

- This is the kind of attitude he's talking about. Most people think ghouls are good for nothing but target practice and a way to pick up a few extra nuyen in bounties, but some of them are as sentient as you and me. Just because they've got a disease that makes them smell funny and need to eat flesh (and not even that much—only about one percent of their body weight each week) doesn't mean we can just line them up against the wall and blow them away.

- Parsons

Only when we can stand shoulder to shoulder with our metahuman brethren, sharing the same rights and the same responsibilities they enjoy—only when even those of us who



did not survive the transformation unscathed are given the dignity they deserve—can we call our struggle a success.

- I've met this guy Gravitas. His real name is Alan Thompkins, and he was one of the few ghouls who survived Bug City and got out. Tough fragger. Philosophically, he's somewhere in between Grey's peaceful solution and Blaine Hammond's militancy.
- Grid Reaper

- I've heard rumors of a new ghoul gang that's cropped up in a few cities recently—they call themselves the 162s. Are they connected with the GLL?
- Icehound

- No. Unfortunately some of our ghoul brothers choose paths that can do nothing but harm our cause, but such is the nature of free will.
- Gravitas

- "Paths that harm our cause"—so that's what they're calling cleanup duty for Tamanous these days.
- Cynic

- Interestingly enough, there's a growing group of ghoul-rights supporters—mostly non-ghouls, in this case—who are arguing hard for people who don't care where their bodies go when they die to donate them to ghouls. Sounds icky, until you realize that if you believe your soul's gone elsewhere (or else if you just don't give a frag at all), using your body to nourish ghouls isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's getting more support these days now that burial graves are subject to possible shedim infestation. Cremated or ghoul chow—is there really a difference?
- Dr. Bones

- There is if you don't have a choice. Some of these people have been quietly arranging with cities to take care of any indigent and SINless dead bodies they find. If you want to be a ghoul's dinner, that's frosty, but people ought to at least have the choice.
- Murphy

- By the way, don't figure you can just walk in to visit your local GLL office, even if you want to help. They might be making strides, but not very many yet and they're smart enough to keep their presence underground. If you need to find them, you should be smart enough to do your own investigating.
- Orly

BLACK ORK DEFENSE COLLECTIVE

by Socio Pat

The Black Ork Defense Collective (BODC) is a different sort of pro-metahuman group. It formed in Liverpool,

Merseysprawl (in the UK, that is), following the unprecedented high rate of Goblinization among the city's large population of black dockworkers, seafarers and laborers,

- 44 percent. That's the biggest anywhere in the world. To this day, nobody can explain why.
- Natasha

The BODC built on 250 years of proud cultural heritage to create for themselves an enclave of mutual support and assistance in the middle of a poor working-class area. Switching from their old lines of work to various forms of art (sculpture, painting, poetry and other crafts make up a significant portion of their income), the Black Orks have become famous throughout the world as an example of a metahuman society that has not only survived, but thrived in the face of poverty and discrimination.

- Sounds great, and it is, but it's not the whole story (as usual). The Black Orks are really good at keeping quiet about what they do when they're not painting pictures and luring tourists. You might be surprised to find that they're militant about meta rights—the only difference between them and other groups is that their support is mostly from the shadows. They provide the nice positive face for everybody to look at and say, "See how well orks can do?" while financing a few less socially-acceptable organizations with some heavy cred. Nobody says anything about it because the Black Orks are good for tourism, and precious little else is in that area.
- Mersey Street

- These days they're not quite as quiet as they used to be. More than one of the younger generation has been picked up by the police after getting involved in clashes with anti-meta groups.
- Bobby

- That might be true, but don't let that detract from the good they do. There are a lot of young ork kids in the area who'd be in jail or dead if it weren't for the BODC. They've got a definite talent for harnessing what could easily become negative energy and turning it into something positive. They coordinate everything from food and shelter to protection to activism, all without any formalized leadership. They just believe that orks can take care of themselves without outside help, and so far they've been proving it's true. I've even heard tell of other ork groups taking up the same model, though not as successfully (yet).
- Waylon

- Yeah, these guys are unique—not sure whether it's location, circumstances or just plain perseverance, but they've managed something that not too many others have been able to duplicate.
- Survivor



THE TRANSHUMAN LEAGUE

I may get flack for including this group, as the Transhumans are not necessarily “metahuman.” The Transhuman philosophy, in fact, challenges the limitations of metahuman physical (and mental) capacity and advocates the use of technology to enhance our bodies and pursue a posthuman condition. The Transhumans see metahumanity as merely the latest stage in our physical development and seek to accelerate our evolution into new life forms. To this end, Transhumanists promote anti-aging and longevity research, biotechnology and genetic manipulation, as well as means of elevating their emotional and intellectual capacities.

- In other words, this group is a haven for those freaks that go in for the extreme biosculpting—we’ve all seen the glowbugs, furries and androgynes out at the clubs. There’s even factions of the movement that pursue full-body cyborg conversion or seek to download their personalities into the Matrix. Drugged out weirdos, the lot of them.

- No Body

- They’re not all socially maladjusted. The League is actually pulling forward as one of the more vocal champions of changeling rights, and they’ve always shown a lot of support for metavariants and sentients like shapeshifters—and even ghouls.

- Grid Reaper

- Let’s not forget the faction that wants to meld metahumans and spirit forms together, to achieve a new form of astrally active entity. They’ve been a bit too interested in bug spirits, you ask me.

- Raid

- Word is that the Transhumans recruited a few scientists to the cause and even managed to scrounge enough cred to start up their own black clinic operation. They’ve been known to hire runners to steal the latest genetics research and bioware prototypes for their own uses.

- Fauna

NEW WORLD ORDER: MODERN FASCISM

by Poly Tick

“Fascist” is one of those terms that people like to throw around irresponsibly, whenever they think someone is too authoritarian, right-wing or just a drekhole. But what *is* “fascism,” and what makes a particular regime, movement or polyclub “fascist?” To tell you the truth, the political definition of fascism remains a controversial matter of debate even today, more than 130 years after its first manifestation in Mussolini’s Italy. Part of the problem is that the term has been so generalized that it’s become a catch-all for nationalists, racists, conservatives and reactionaries. A number of recurring elements, however, are present in most forms of fascism. Strictly speaking, a group that has *most* of these characteristics will likely be considered fascist:

- Nationalism and super-patriotism, tinted with a sense of historic mandate.
- Aggressive militarism or militancy, glorifying conflict as good for the national and individual spirit, and often leading to imperialism.
- Use of violence or threats of violence against the opposition and to impose views on others.
- Reliance on an “enlightened” leader or elite that is not constitutionally responsible.
- Cult of personality around charismatic leadership.
- Centralized, rigid and top-down organizational structure.
- Dehumanization and scapegoating of the *other*; the *other* is an outsider or enemy of society, defined as subhuman, degenerate and/or inferior, and often the subject of bigotry and racism.
- Self-image of representing a superior form of social organization to socialism, capitalism and democracy, presented as a heroic national undertaking.
- Romanticization of a mythic heritage, often tinged with mystic elements.
- Promotion of strict moral values and social control, prioritizing security over civil liberties.
- Patriarchal attitudes towards the subservience of women, even while advocating equal involvement from both sexes.

Some scholars define fascism as an archetypal economic-political model, an alternative to liberal democracy and communism. Others say it’s simply a virulent trend within Western democracies that manifests in times of economic instability and socio-political disenchantment, in stark opposition to the fundamental values of liberty, equality and fraternity.

- Still others say that fascism is a reactionary ploy used by capitalists to consolidate social control when their dominance is challenged by socialists, communists or anarchists. In other words, if the corps are afraid that a social revolution is going to steal their power, they call out the fascists to kick ass and take control until the crisis has passed. Problem with that is that the fash are not always pro-corp, and sometimes they kick the corps out while they’re in charge.

- Bookchin

- I obviously need to upgrade my polemic filters; these egghead definitions are getting garbled in translation.

- Prole

- Don’t sweat the definitions—treat it as a gut thing. You either know something’s fascist or you don’t; the blustering nationalist rhetoric and racist undertones are a dead giveaway.

- Reality Czech

As you can see, pinning the tail on the fascist isn’t easy. This is partly due to the varied incarnations that have arisen,



but also because it is at heart a schizophrenic ideology, blending populism with elitism, reactionary doctrine with revolutionary fervor, romanticized ideals of state with rigid social stratification. Fascism defines itself by opposing other social forces that it views as degenerative and corrupt, which fuels its violent expressions. Furthermore, it advocates the restriction and control of certain democratic and civil rights which it views as decadent and degenerative to the fabric of society and its concept of nation.

- Nothing wrong with that. Democracy is overrated. It levels government down to the common denominator. It places power in the hands of the unprepared and malleable masses, rather than the few with the intellect, spirit and vision to actually lead. Democracy's a façade for liberalism and capitalism to run unchecked. Just look around at the mess the world is in. We need a new way.

- Beowulf

- That's the sort of argument made at radical polyclub meetings and sugarcoated by the proto-fascist parties like the Alliance Nationale and Austrian Heritage Party. Put like that, it almost sounds appealing—but the facts are darker. Those select "few" tend to have an agenda of their own. Chronic cronyism, pervasive racism, catering to economic elites and violent expansionist militarism are all recurring flaws of fascist movements.

- People Watcher

- And you're saying those don't happen in democracies? Check your history. Turn-of-the-century America is far enough. Why do you think it fell apart so easily?

- Valkyree

What makes fascism attractive? Ultimately it's the fiery revolutionary rhetoric and the heroic spin they put on the idea of replacing the obviously flawed powers-that-be. Ironically, the revolutionary aspect is the first to get flushed once fascists attain power and evolve into a totalitarian regime. The extreme nationalism is also very appealing, evoking a sense of belonging to a community/nation that is destined (by biology, gods or skewed mysticism) to achieve greatness. It calls to those who prefer stability, law and order to the "corrupting influence" of democratic values. Finally, it provides two things the common man loves in politics: easy answers and scapegoats aplenty.

- Seems to be a bit one-sided. There's got to be some redeeming features, otherwise fascism wouldn't still be making a comeback.

- Biz Girl

- Sure, it offers security and pride and a strict value system to the masses—all illusions, and all at a price, of course. It's of great benefit to corporations and the ruling elite—or at least



the particular faction that gains the upper hand. But to everyone else, especially anyone that digs certain personal freedoms and those who are scapegoated, it blows. You ask me, fascism is a fundamentally dehumanizing ideology.

- Class Warrior

BREEDS OF FASCISM

When you account for the changes in the world so far this century—megacorp power, magic, metahumans—fascism becomes even more complex. There's certainly more for the reactionaries to react to, so modern variants of fascism diverge wildly. I'm going to take some liberties and slap labels on some of the more common current fascist trends here. By no means are these strict categories—I'm sure the eggheads on any poli-sci boards would shred them—and the differences between them are often blurred. Plus fascist groups tend to overlap a lot with paleoconservative politicians, racists like Humanis and even oddball groups like the European aristos.

A famous anti-fascist scholar back at the turn of the century said, "One virtually unique aspect of fascism is its ruthless drive to attain and hold state power. On that road to power, fascists are willing to abandon any principle to adopt an issue more in vogue and more likely to gain converts." Fascism is naturally "malleable" when it comes down to actual political issues, because it's based on what are ultimately irrational and emotional concepts rather than well-grounded political beliefs. That sums up most of the proto-fascists worth mentioning today.

- That's why you might see neo-nazis organizing support for the New Islamic Jihad, simply because the NIJ targets Israel—we all know how nazis feel about Jews. Never mind that Western white supremacists and fundamentalist Arabs don't make much sense as allies.

- Antifa

Ultranationalists

Regimes like the National Soviet Reconstructionists in Russia, the Azatlan Party in Aztlan and the Austrian Heritage Party embody ultranationalist ideals. Each steers their people towards a manufactured manifest destiny, using classic tools like secret police, censorship, corporate allies and even state religion. There are numerous extreme-right political parties and policlubs that push agendas like this around the world: Spain's Monarchist Party, Japan's Zen Ai Kaigi, the UCAS's Archconservatives and the Ute's Native Workers' Union, to name just a few. While they often agree on certain political issues like anti-immigration, large military budgets and big business economics, they often savagely disagree when it comes to conflicting national interests.

- Case in point: the Sons of the Alamo and the Azatlan Party. Southern nationalism vs. Aztec-revivalism, both with racist leanings. Get them talking about Pueblo, and they couldn't agree more.
- T-Bone

- A big alliance was in the works between a lot of the various Euro nationalist parties and policlubs to oppose the NEEC's formation, but it broke apart into bickering before getting off the ground. Chalk another one up for Lofwyr, eh?

- Felix

- I knew an Archconservative party boss who covertly supported several racist youth gangs and skinhead boot squads to keep "social undesirables" in their places.

- Prof

Supremacists

Traditional supremacists like National Action subscribe to the neo-nazi philosophy of "Nation is Race"—and they usually mean ethnicity, not just metatype. They often serve as the shock troops of more respectable far-right parties, stirring up riots, violence and attacks on refugee asylums to shift the public dialogue to the right. They recruit from street gangs and tend to operate underground as many countries illegalize them. Saito and his cronies in California are a textbook example of this kind of fascism in power.

- Underground, my hoop. Part of their strategy is to run their enemies off the streets so they can operate in the open, even when their activities are illegal. Racist attacks are so common in Moscow and St. Petersburg, for example, that many embassies discourage their citizens from visiting Russia without armed bodyguards. Their ultimate goal is to drive or wipe out their racial enemies and "race traitors."

- Antifa

- At least things aren't going well for Saito. The siege of Chico-Oroville is draining his funds, while the upswing in Metahuman People's Army strikes and the meddling of CalFree bureaucrats are slowing his initiatives to a crawl. Plus, some of his corp backers are starting to show the strain of international pressure.

- Bright Rain

Eco-fascists

Eco-fascists intertwine the heroic national mission with an ecological agenda, often associated with a quasi-mystical Deep Green Paganism. What good is an Aryan homeland, after all, if it's a toxic swamp? The situation in the UK is a perfect example of Green fascism in power. The elitist New Druidic Movement came to power on a platform of national security and eco-radicalism—fueled by multiple harrowing eco-catastrophes—and consolidated its bureaucratic control under the centralized and unchecked Lord Protector's Office. Other eco-fascists can be found in terror groups such as GreenWar, primitivists such as the Aesir Society or in the upper echelons of strict Green regimes such as Sweden.

- Eco-fascists often use ecology to prop up racist policies. Overpopulation becomes an excuse to ban immigration or to refuse international aid to developing countries, for example.



And they love having eco-police around to crack down on "ecological deviants."

- Bookchin

Theocrats

Countries run according to strict religious principles and religious hierarchies are the dream of religious fascists, such as the Conservative faction of the Catholic church or the German state of Westphalia. Though fascism tends to be a Western philosophy, you can also find parallels with the hardline Arabic Wahhabist opposition to the IUM's pan-sectarian Islam.

Corporate Fascists

This new breed is a result of the megacorporate explosion and the side effects of extraterritoriality. With their own citizens, laws, corp patriotism, internal economic regulation and classic hierarchies, megacorps are proto-fascist by nature. The leaders of corps like Yakashima push this, maintaining strict regimentation over their citizen's lives and promoting a racial-tinted corporate ideology.

- Renraku and MCT aren't that dissimilar. Yakashima is by far the worst, however. Not only do they blatantly practice employment discrimination, regardless of local laws and penalties, but their business practices betray the board's racist agenda. Several rumors have pinpointed Yakashima as a key node in the Human Nation, to no one's surprise.
- Poli-Sci

Mag-o-crats

What's more elitist than a vision of magicians running our society? Though some proponents of this philosophy take the tack that the Awakened would act as enlightened caretakers and servants of this society, there are others who undoubtedly feel that their magical talent puts them in a class above the rest of metahumanity. The Chinese state of Szechuan serves as an example of this magocracy; let's hope we don't see more elsewhere.

- Despite the friendly intellectual and futurist façade, this is what a lot of the core cadre of the Illuminates of the New Dawn and the New Century Party have in mind—rule by the mages, for the mages. Just imagine what happy productive citizens we would be if our government used ritual control manipulation spells on us all—it's utopia!
- Cynic

Meta-Fascists

Lest you think all fascists are human, we have the Tirs. Despite their visionary idealism, Tir Tairngire and Tir na nÓg don't even try to hide their fascist leanings. Both nations were built on racial-based class stratification, boasting neo-aristocratic regimes with no historical roots except in a romanticized, mythical past when elves apparently ruled the other races. Both also feature strictly regimented (and collapsing) economies and oppressive security forces complete with secret police. One huge fascist cliché after another.

- All the more reason to act up. Remember kids, regime change begins at home.
- Unseelie Dan

- Elven fascists! Now that has got to be the funniest thing I've read in a long time.
- The Laughing Man

- I think people are overlooking the obvious. Who's got a bigger complex of racial superiority, rigid elitism and divine mandate? Dragons. I mean, just take a look at Lofwyr or Lung ...
- Augur

FROM BOOT PARTIES TO BOARDROOMS

Let's take a look around the world at some fascist groups, from extreme right policlubs to underground terror cells. I'm going to skip over entrenched totalitarian regimes like Tsimshian, Argentina and Turkey since they've received coverage elsewhere, and focus instead on some lesser well-known threats.

Most of these groups have memberships in the low hundreds but should be considered extremely dangerous for a number of reasons. Blocked from legitimate avenues to achieve power in most modern liberal democracies, they have nothing to lose by venting their bigotry, dissatisfaction and hatred on whoever happens to get in their way.

- Such groups often dabble in weapon, chip and drug-dealing—after all, selling guns and chips to metas will just accelerate their inevitable extinction even if it costs a few innocent lives along the way. Ties to racist-leaning syndicates are also not uncommon. In Russia, several Red Vory tzars are known to openly support White Cell extremists, while the Valdez Syndicate in Spain sponsors racist sects to keep their Muslim competition under control.
- Huey

Stormfront Network

The main actors in this mysterious network are adherents of "Third Position" fascism, an ideology derived from the Strasserite wing of German national socialism (which Hitler bloodily purged) that advocates a decentralized system of racially homogenous tribes or nations and is more critical of megacorps and capitalism. In some ways, their views are more socialist and internationalist, so they aim to network with and bond together fascists from around the world to collaborate for the common cause. They're only moderately successful politically due to factional divisiveness, but they have made great leaps in coordinating activities, propaganda, distributing information and commercial activities.

Stormfront operates several private Matrix nodes where fascists gather to network or share intel on their enemies. Most infamously, however, they run numerous public online outlets for racist music, fascist propaganda (from manifestoes to white power simflicks and extremist tridcasts) and unbelievable



amounts of fascist merchandise (from Nazi memorabilia to t-shirts to troll-horn daggers). Not only do they support a thriving commercial enterprise (Stormfront Media, among multiple other minor companies), they promote fascist ideology and activities to a wide audience.

- You might laugh, but they make enough cred to support dozens of paid staff in several countries, and a lot of their income goes to support groups like Nationale Aktion. Not to mention that they sustain a thriving racist music scene that is extremely influential in recruiting kids to the cause. They even undertake projects to blanket white human ghettos with free chips loaded with music, sims and Matrix agitprop links.
- Anders

- The Stormfront sites see a lot of tension and flame wars. The Christian fascists tend to argue with the pagans, while the older suit-and-tie crowd complains that the street-fighting boneheads give their movement a bad public image (go figure). Not to mention that their movement is riddled with cops and constantly harassed by anti-fascist activists.
- Green Pixie

Nationale Aktion

Nationale Aktion (NA) is the poster child of neo-nazi terror groups. Its longevity, capacity for extreme violence and high-profile strikes set it head and shoulders above its counterparts. Born in Germany, NA advocates both Aryan and human supremacy as a means of returning the country to its former glory. They were banned by the AGS government over two decades ago after initiating a low-level campaign to firebomb ethnic businesses and metahuman neighborhoods. More recently, they are noted for two major attacks at the Olympiapark Stadium in Munich. In 2043, they shocked the world when they detonated explosives hidden among UN aid packages distributed to the Euro War refugees camped out in the stadium. In 2061, they released stolen samples of VITAS-1 into the stadium, which by that time had become a metahuman shantytown. Hundreds of uninoculated died, and that was before Renraku went in and pulled a scorched earth number at the gov's request.

- Rumor has it that NA has been looking for more exotic terror weapons from unlikely sources. Feelers are out to both underground groups like Winternight and less reputable corporate players like Bioenergetica Ukraine.
- LabRat
- Leader Matthias Hesse has been on the run with a 50k euro price on his head since the Munich attack. He's unlikely to surface soon, but when he does expect something big.
- Schupo

Volksfront

Based in Scandinavia, the ultra-nationalists and ethnic segregationists of Volksfront toe the line of legality (most of

the time) and boast official recognition as a policlub in the Scand Union, AGS, Austria, Hungary and the United Netherlands. The policlubs main activities involve marches and rallies, disseminating racist propaganda and generally destabilizing anything that promotes Pan-Europeanism, from the Scand Union to the NEEC. It's an open secret that high ranking Volksfront members mobilize radical elements in other policlubs and parties, as well as their own supporters among the *Asatru* worshippers, *Siida* communities and Viking gangs. Clashes with authorities and pro-meta and minority groups are on the upswing. Rumor also has it that Volksfront has a clandestine alliance with a Germanic magic group with neo-nazi leanings called Runenthing.

- Police clashes my hoop. In Sweden and Norway the government and corps have infiltrated Volksfront to Hell and back. They're actually using Volksfront to take the strong Islamic minority and left-wingers down a peg. The suits would be only too happy to see Volksfront and Jihad X beat the crap out of each other.
- Hugin

- Runenthing is formally known as Verband für Völkische Zauberei (the Association of Primordial Magic). They're steeped in Nordic-Germanic imagery and mysticism and are also suspected of having links to Winternight and Nationale Aktion. Runenthing magicians are a scary lot, but the toxic shamans drawn to Volksfront and Winternight are worse.
- Talon

- Volksfront actually owns and makes a hefty profit from the Fenrir music label, which is a major player on the racist music scene. Bands like Aryan Cross and Spear of Destiny have an international following and sell millions of chips and downloads. Their European tours sell out months in advance, and even where illegal the authorities don't shut down the shows for fear of sparking a riot.
- Snoop Cat

White Resistance

This group evolved from the remains of several North American fascist brotherhoods and survivalist groups that outlasted the turbulent breakup of the USA. Much of its white supremacist ideology became tainted with anti-Native American sentiment when these groups were forcibly evicted from their lands and compounds. Teaming up with members of other racist groups such as Blood & Honour, a faction went on to form White Resistance. Though its estimated membership is less than 300, it has waged a focused campaign of terror in the UCAS and NAN, including no less than 14 bombings and robberies in the Sioux, Ute and Pueblo nations in the past decade alone.

- The group's leader, Michael Rockwell, is wanted in the UCAS and CAS. Truth be told, though, the authorities haven't put



much effort into tracking him down. Rumor is he has a lot of supporters in white communities and reservations in the NAN, and that he keeps on the move between them.

- DC Insider

- Well, he's number one on the Sioux Office of Military Intelligence's hit list and to his credit he's been there for 2 years now.

- Notch

ANTIFAS: TAKING BACK THE STREETS

The anti-fascist (*antifa*) movement isn't defined by a single ideology but by a common calling: opposition to the various movements that express fascist leanings or outright fascist agendas. This common hatred of fascism draws a motley bunch of activists, intellectuals, trade unionists and even liberals on occasion. The memberships of antifa groups often overlap with anarchists, neo-communists, syndicalists, pro-metas and anti-corporates, among other political creeds. Ironically, both antifas and their adversaries are often appealing to and fighting over the same constituency—people who are disenfranchised and radicalized.

- Due to the inherently violent and oppressive nature of fascist and racist groups, antifa are usually more than willing to fight fire with fire. As a rule, fascists are legitimate targets, in line with the slogan "antifa means attack." Though some try to be critical of the nasty and dehumanizing aspects of violence and use it only when appropriate, there are others who adopt gang mentalities and are in it just to get their kicks while smashing some fash.

- Red Skin

ANTIFA DIRECT ACTION (ADA)

This widespread network represents the most radical stripe of antifa, with branches in over 15 countries. Its methods are straight-forward—they go where the fascists go and do their best to shut them down. The ADA arranges counter-demonstrations, raids chapterhouses, breaks up rallies and



opposes fascists wherever they can find them on the streets. They're also quite effective in hunting down and crashing fascist Matrix nodes. The network is decentralized and politically diverse, coordinating primarily via the Matrix and according to some established points of unity. Many ADA chapters are rooted in counterculture youth groups that fought off fascist infiltration and subversion. They have also recruited antifa street gangs as allies. The ADA also draws a lot of support from radical pro-metahuman groups, anarchists, trade unions and neo-communist groups.

- The ADA is facing some growing pangs. Though it's been effective in certain street confrontations and shutting down some fascist activities, it lacks the numbers and coordination to really make a long-term dent in fascist groups. Its eclectic nature also keeps it from developing into a consistent political opposition force. As a result, some cells are getting more extreme, targeting fascist leaders with assassination attempts.

- Brick



- Eye for an eye is not the solution. Much as I'd love to see some of these neo-nazi drekheads eat dirt, I know this is exactly the stuff that provokes retaliation and gives the fascists the attention they crave. Such situations often spiral into politicized gang warfare.

- Concrete

- Ignoring them is not the solution. To quote Hitler himself: "The only way we could have been stopped is if our enemies had attacked us on the streets from day one."

- Antifa

EDELWEISS PIRATES

Named after an anarchist youth gang that fought against the Hitler Youth, the Edelweiss Pirates (EP) are less involved in direct action the ADA but are just as radical and equally widespread. Funded and supported by anti-fascist liberals and ethnic minority groups, the EP function's like a shadow fixer, bringing people together, arranging for appropriate resources and materials to be made available and generally coordinating everything it can to damage Fascist causes. The Pirates are dedicated to supporting direct action groups like ADA, supplying them with the information and resources as necessary to aid their actions. When there's no antifa group in place to get a job done, it calls on deniable assets to go after a particular fascist leader or group.

- One of the EP's head honchos is one James Briar, an Englishman and a former heavy-weight eurofixer. His 16-year old son was killed when the police charged demonstrators after last year's Mid-Winter Festival.

- Anonymous Botch

- The Pirates distribute a lot of their intel via the Manchester Data Haven. Word is they have a secret node within the haven that contains the real top-notch paydata on fascist ops, but they only give access to activists who have been thoroughly vetted.

- Anthony

- I hear the Pirates have an ambitious projects in the works that has placed one or more deep cover infiltrators inside Alamos 20K with the intention of getting enough data on the group for ADA and other cells to target it.

- Trouble

INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

I-Spotlight monitors fascist activities worldwide, reporting on them and creating public pressure to oppose them. Loosely allied with the British opposition movement and NGOs like Amnesty International, I-Searchlight's vocation is predominantly international. It releases quarterly reports to all major international organizations: NGOs, megacorps, governments and more importantly the media. These detailed dossiers expose fascist and proto-fascist activities and agendas, placing them in the spotlight and watching those behind them squirm.

I-Spotlight uses the media's unquenchable appetite for controversy and scandal to expose fascists to the world, placing its finger firmly in the wound. Its acid exposés have earned quite a bit of credibility their influence is substantial in many circles as corps and governments shrink a way from a well-timed I-Spotlight PR hit.

- One guess as to who the I-Spotlight crew uses to dig up the dirt? The real question is who's actually footing the bill for this?

- Ace of Blades

- My bet is they vary depending on who the targets are. Maybe Equity sponsors corp exposés and MOM anti-racist ones?

- Streak

- I hear I-Spotlight sometimes helps people looking for info on fascists and fascist movements for free.

- John Bull

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE:

MOTHER EARTH POLICLUB

- Here at Shadowland, we like to let Cap do the talking. There's a thousand reasons why, and it's not often he takes a vacation from it. This time, though, he and I both agreed that this one's mine. It's almost funny; I was reading over Cap's shoulder, when we turned to each other at the same time to say it. But enough about that.

While I tend to stay behind the scenes here, it's not because I feel oppressed. It's where I feel comfortable. I do have a voice, however, even if I'm going to let Rosy Baker, the author of this piece, do the talking for me. In fact, in exchange for her information here, we're helping her set up a new talismaner shop to replace the one blitzed during all that comet and cult craziness. I know a lot of you aren't used to random acts of kindness, but while you're commenting, think about sending Rosy a little donation too. If it helps, she probably won't mind giving generous donors a discount when she's open for business.

- Diabolique

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:32:07 (PST)

by Rosy Baker

Politics led me into and out of a personal hell after Halley's Comet had its way with me. Raving religious nutcases destroyed my livelihood because they didn't like the looks of me—Mothers of Metahumans and Mother Earth helped me regain a sense of pride and brought some of them to justice. It's strange to me, then, that I find myself exposing the inner workings of an organization that brought me to terms with my new life as an expressed person. Yet as strange as it may seem, I hold a mirror up to Mother Earth out of concern for its remaining ignorant membership, so that they can continue to walk the path with eyes wide open.



- Concern? Maybe. Nuyen? That's more likely.
- Cynic

- In case anyone's confused, "expressed person" is the term most politically active changelings prefer. It carries less pejorative connotations.
- Holly

Simone de Beauvoir once wrote, "One is not born a woman, one becomes one." This is a profound statement that separates the question of womanhood from the happenstance of her birth with a womb and not a phallus. Historically, however, many (not just male) have attempted to define women solely as breeders. What we could and could not do depended on our inherent ability to reproduce. As a result, women were often barred by both tradition and law from certain opportunities or activities, from manual labor or voting to sports or controlling our own reproductive choices. Many cultures reinforced these prohibitions with a belief that women were incapable or unsuited to such things anyway. We were regarded as lesser beings without hopes and fears of our own and ironically held back from discovering what womanhood meant to *us*.

- Not mentioned here, of course, are transgendered women—those born with the opposite set of plumbing, but who nevertheless feel in the marrow of their bones that they were meant to be female. We are a minority both in fact and in representation, and we're still trying to make the language of membership everywhere a little more inclusive for us. While we are mostly accepted, there are still some lingering territorial issues regarding womanhood and what it means.

- Inlé

- Religious attitudes have relaxed toward women, but there are still pockets of fundamentalists (whether Christian, Muslim or other conservative sects) that treat women as nothing more than incubators to be owned by men. This outlook manifests the worst in Army of God types, who murder geneticists, doctors that allow or perform abortions, clinic workers and anyone else who threatens to give women freedom to choose. What's even stranger are the non-traditional religions—like some of the comet cults—that have similar beliefs; their views can be extremely conservative, to the point of locking their women in private rooms, cutting out their tongues or otherwise rendering them incapable of having contact with the rest of the world.

- Hildegarde

The past hundred years or more have seen many changes in this regard, rolling back or outright destroying old prohibitions and beliefs. Though we may now have female CEOs and presidents, there are many parts of the world where women are still considered property, and every sprawl has a district where women are viewed as nothing but sex

objects. We're still not done; we can't rest on our laurels while we are still viewed as a minority class despite comprising just over half of the earth's population. Society rarely changes overnight, or even in the span of a hundred years. But so long as Mother Earth and sister organizations will be around, we can continue to steadily implement changes that may finally see women as full partners, not afterthoughts, in the growth and development of metahumanity.

MOTHER EARTH'S AGENDA

In case it's not clear by now, Mother Earth (ME) embraces a rainbow spectrum of interests. In addition to promoting feminist issues across the racial spectrum, they also encourage eco-activism and nature magic and promote the spiritual beliefs associated with druidry, shamanism and witchcraft. Most importantly, they seek to tie each of these concerns together, creating a dedicated sisterhood of pagan eco-activists.

- Reproductive health and freedom are top priorities, as conservatives around the world continue to wage a guerrilla cultural war. Mother Earth may have helped popularize male contraceptives and over-the-counter abortifacients, but religious fundies still have a death grip on some constituencies.
- Black Rose

Mother Earth presents itself as a legal policlub focused on education (lectures, forums, classes) and grassroots activity—but like all groups concerned with public image, this is a façade. Under the surface, it has many connections to illicit activities, and its membership is rife with extremists.

- So we're supposed to throw out the baby with the bathwater, Rosy? Your little expose here condemns a worthwhile group because you can't swallow some of the uglier aspects. Face it, men have been waging war on women and the Earth for centuries, and no amount of nonviolence or magic healing will solve that.
- Diana Nocturna

Dissension

One issue, however, threatens Mother Earth's internal unity. There is strong disagreement within ME over whether to focus on campaigns that work towards equality and social harmony and so benefit both women *and* men, or whether to solely focus on support for women alone and improving the quality of life for women worldwide. This split has spread into many arenas—many Mother Earth chapterhouses refuse to allow male members or supporters, despite pressure from the majority of the membership.

- Somewhere along the way, the movement attracted a number of women who not only resent male domination of society but actively feel wronged and vengeful. Luckily these are a minority, but they do stir up a bit of trouble before they run off and join more militant feminist groups like Sie or the Radical



Wimmin's Sewing and Sabotage Circle.

- Paisan

PROJECTS & SOP

Mother Earth's grassroots political activities are to be commended. Different chapterhouses pursue their own aims, but overall ME has seen a great deal of success with organizing women's shelters, abuse counseling centers, clinics for SINless women, ecological cleanups for polluted communities, and actual material aid for impoverished mothers and families. ME's base is among the poor and SINless, though they also make aims to infiltrate corporate strongholds. On a larger scale, they engage in fund-raising, lobbying and political pressure, and join in larger humanitarian relief efforts. For example, in California ME works alongside Mothers of Metahumans to provide safe houses for metahuman women and families that have suffered persecution under General Saito's regime. As another example, Mother Earth recently sent a delegation of magicians down to the Yucatán to aid in sorting out the ecological and spiritual mess.

- I have heard rumors that Hestaby is using ME as a cover for some of her ops in Saito's Protectorate. Hestaby wants to help out but needs to keep a low media profile, and the sisters are more than willing to accept the help.

- Cerberus

- Mother Earth has tackled other magic phenomena too, even sending a cell to Tír na nÓg to help the Irish druids defuse the magical storms and the recent mess with the Veil. Further, they're attempting to independently find a solution to Brittany's problem with the Mist, since the druids there aren't so cooperative. They think the two—the Mist and the Veil—may be tied together in some way.

- Cailleach

- Magically, the policlub is rather diverse. One week, they may perform a Druid ritual to promote reforestation. The next, it may be a Shinto observance to appease ancestor spirits and kami angered at a site's desecration via bulldozer. It always depends on the problem at hand and the people gathered together.

- Magister

But those are ME's public activities. In the shadows, cells tied to the policlub take more direct action, raiding warehouses for smuggled sex slaves, monkeywrenching logging drones, sabotaging fundamentalist operations and bribing corrupt officials to meet their goals. They'll even engage in Matrix graffiti campaigns, datatheft or online blackmail, though as a whole their operations lack significant decker support.

ORGANIZATION

ME began as a grassroots policlub in the Allied German States (known as Mutter Erde there) and has grown into a worldwide movement with a membership of several hundred

thousand (in Europe, North America, the Middle East and parts of the Pacific Rim), capable of shifting mountains if it chooses to.

ME's organizational structure is a queer hybrid of hierarchical and communal. Up at the top is the Triumvirate, which oversees each aspect of the policlub's concerns, speaks for the policlub on those issues and administrates the inner workings. Below them is an informal council made up of at least one representative from each major geopolitical area who keeps track of prevailing trends in her part of the world and reports them. Should there be a problem that the councilwoman and the rest of the council cannot solve, they present it to the Triumvirate, calling a special meeting for the occasion.

Below the council are the chapterhouse delegates, who meet formally at least once a year (and informally on other occasions) to reinforce solidarity, share problems, solutions and triumphs, and sometimes choose a new council representative should the current one die or prove lacking somehow. After that, organization differs from chapterhouse to chapterhouse. Most live and work communally, like an extended family, and make decisions based on consensus process.

- The Amazons, an ultra-feminist segment of ME who associate freely with Sie, have decided to revive the concept of the comitatus, a warband whose primary loyalty is to their leader rather than their community. It's tweaked in that they would still consider themselves members of Mutter Erde even if their chosen leader should fail, but considering their leader is none other than Virago, one of the Triumvirate, failure isn't likely any time soon.

- Socio Pat

Leadership

The Triumvirate is always determined along the lines of maiden, mother and crone, though the positions themselves are not hardwired to oversee a specific facet. Overlap happens often and is even encouraged. The current members of the Triumvirate are:

Virago: Filling the role of Maiden, she earned her name as a radical feminist and culture-jamming decker, leaving vast graffiti canvases on corporate Matrix hosts that earned her ire. Born in the CAS, her mother alone raised her and her younger sister after she left their abusive father when the girls were ten and seven years old. She champions the marginalized members of society: the poor, the Goblinized, the homosexual, sentient "others" (spirits, ghouls, sasquatch, etc), the transgendered, minority cultures and so on. She prefers handling matters via the Matrix, but has no problem showing up in person if it will accomplish her aims.

- She's a real firebrand, but her man-hating tendencies sometimes surface when diplomacy could have been the better option. She doesn't like my bombshell Matrix persona, and while I don't hate her black-and-red glowing bald tribal look, I can see how it can be off-putting. Just don't mention "biological destiny" while in her presence.

- Jane-in-the-Box



Maria Eglantine: As Mother, Maria presides over spiritual matters. Though she is High Priestess of a Weise coven devoted to Artemis, she regularly holds conferences with spiritual leaders from paths such as Shinto, Native American shamanism, Celtic Druidry (the elven ones have yet to respond in any way) and more. She promotes Goddess worship, dialogue between disparate faiths and the acceptance of women in spiritual leadership positions among traditionally conservative faiths. She also encourages the proliferation of nature magic for healing the environment and society. Maria is her birth name, but she adopted “Eglantine” as her surname after her rise to the Triumvirate. Her home is outside the Rhine-Ruhr sprawl, not far from ME headquarters, and it is here where she hosts most of her conferences.

- Some think that Eglantine is just a figurehead and that someone else, perhaps within her coven, is actually calling the shots. They think she’s too mild-mannered and demure. I say they simply don’t know her—when provoked, she is a force of nature. Her cuddly ally spirit becomes a mean, nasty bear when she’s upset. You ask me, she simply takes advice she believes is sound, no matter the source.
- Braura

- Such as the Duke of Pomorya?
- Socialite

Alarice Torsdottar: Yes, the very same woman who helped found Mutter Erde is still around. She’s an octogenarian now—the Crone—and even once found the wherewithal to undergo Léonization. She has been in the Triumvirate off and on, her current stay in its third year. She single-mindedly pursues eco-activist goals, having worked with or talked to nearly every eco-group conceivable, including the radicals who are hunted and banned in most places. She travels from one ecological hotspot to another, holding rallies where possible and releasing speeches where she can’t. No method is too unscrupulous to uncover corporate complicity in pollution or embarrass government officials obstructing cleanup efforts.

- I’ll say. My team and I were once hired to dig through incriminating trash, steal corpses and introduce corporate sewage to the same corp’s drinking water system to “encourage” a Mitsuhamma subsidiary to make real efforts to clean up their act.
- Quinn



- Alarice exemplifies the iron hand inside a velvet glove. Her concern for her fellow women, especially where the environment affects them, is quite genuine. She expects unquestioning loyalty, however—not through overt demands or “with me or against me” rhetoric, but as a matter of course, like a queen would her subjects. This sometimes rubs Virago and Eglantine the wrong way, who are strong leaders in their own right. Miscommunication results, exacerbating the problem. Differences have been patched up before, but some fear that tensions regarding “the man question” may lead to a permanent falling-out.

- Labrys

- Many think the death of Wilhelmina Hartmann, another founder, galvanized Alarice into the force she is. They were rumored to be lovers, and most believe that the Bavarian People’s Party had Wilhelmina assassinated. They thought it would demoralize a key segment of the anti-racist and anarchist parties that had successfully held Berlin against a full-fledged Night of Rage. Instead, Wilhelmina became a martyr and poster witch to rally behind.

- RZ

SPLINTERS & FACTIONS

Partly due to their internal disagreements, Mother Earth has spawned numerous splinter groups and branches, splitting their overall effectiveness.

BloxBergBund

This branch of Mutter Erde remains affiliated and has kept the group’s bylaws, but it centers its attention solely upon promoting feminism and nature magic within the Harz Mountains in Thuringia in the AGS. They’re well-known for hosting the May Day celebrations on the Brocken Peak.

- Ironical, as during the Inquisition, women were tortured into confessing they were witches and that they flew to the Brocken on Walpurgisnacht to kiss the Devil’s rear end. Perhaps there was some truth to it, after all.

- Templar

- People who post from traceable locations shouldn’t type inflammatory accusations. You’re lucky the BBB likes men.

- Hildegard

Matrikas

The Matrikas is a faction of “cyber-pagans,” witches who see technology as a useful tool for networking and environmentalism. They split after several heated debates with anti-tech segments of ME over complicated biotech and genetics issues, but they still work closely. They secure Mother Earth’s Matrix lines while doing their own bit of illicit research, datatheft and Matrix vandalism. “Matrikas” means “Little Mothers”—companions of the Indian goddess Durga.

The Pangaeon Movement

Based in the CAS, this splinter group preferred less radical feminism and more eco-extremism in their political soup. They support the Earth-as-living entity theory and feel that the rest of Mother Earth only pays lip service to this idea. They believe that the Awakening was only the alarm clock and Halley’s Comet the snooze alarm—and they hope to finish waking up Gaea.

- They take this idea to the extreme. Every time a mountain erupts, they take it as another sign of waking and renew their attempts at finding rituals that will get the planet to sit up and shake off us parasites. Rumors circulate that they’ve researched their own Great Ghost Dance and have begun fraternizing with groups like Winternight.

- Silicon Mage

ALLIES

Mother Earth doesn’t always have the pull or the resources or the bodies to get things done, but there are organizations it has a friendly relationship with that can help at those times.

The Empowerment Coalition

The Empowerment Coalition (EC) is regularly at the forefront of issues affecting women and has some political clout thanks to former UCAS-VP hopeful Anne Penchyk. Lately, the EC has been pulling all sorts of women with clout into their fold, including sim starlets, corp veeeps and several key DeeCee pols and bureaucrats. The EC’s politics are sometimes wishy-washy, though, and ME members often complain that the EC is more of an elite girl’s club than an activist group with a clear direction.

- If only they knew the truth.

- Grid Reaper

- The EC isn’t all upper crust—they have a few notable female street gangs at their beck and call, and those razorgirls have backed up ME more than a few times. I personally don’t get why the suits and gilletes work together, though.

- Fang

Mothers of Metahumans

MOM is arguably an even closer ally than the Empowerment Coalition, sharing information on helpful or harmful advances for women and metahumans. Together they hold meetings to educate about and provide contraception to women in poor meta communities. Ork ghettos used to treat them with hostility, but together MOM and ME have earned enough street cred to be welcomed with open arms.

- MOM and ME also work with the Ork Rights Committee where it’s entrenched in a particular community. There’s very much a mentality of “we’re all together in this.” On the other hand, most of Mother Earth tends to be at loggerheads with the Sons of Sauron. There are a few extremists who secretly give them a



helping hand, but otherwise dealing with the Sons sometimes becomes a point of contention between Mother Earth and MOM & ORC.

- Fatima

Rote Zora

I wish Mother Earth didn't associate with the likes of Rote Zora; it's not that I disagree with their ideas; I'm just not comfortable with their methodology. I admire those who would rescue women from sweat shops and forced farm labor, or put religious zealots in their place, but I cannot support the use of violence. When Mother Earth needs bodies for a raid, however, or wants someone to teach a self-defense course, the Reds are the first ones ME turns to.

- Red Zora is a European grouping of clandestine women-only cells. They made a big splash last week when they exposed a Shiawase subsidiary's illegal experiments on ork gestation cycles. Rumor is that some RZ cells are gearing up in North America and Hong Kong too.
- Devi

Sie

Sie (that's German for "She") is a secret society of feminist pagans and witches, also originally based in Germany. They have been known to undertake violent action against perpetrators of sexism, specifically pornography and the sex industry, where they overlap with Rote Zora. Both groups campaign against ad companies that treat/exploit women as sexual objects or perpetuate ridiculous standards of beauty. On occasion, they've even gone toe to toe with crime syndicates over prostitution rings and bunraku parlors.

- Sie could be called man-haters, except that's too mild a description. On a good day, they'll only "out" a rapist to every corner of the real world and Matrix. On a bad day, the police will be lucky to identify his remains. Sie takes the position that (thanks to the wonders of modern genetics) men are no longer interesting or necessary, and in fact are a threat to life on Earth with our patriarchal and warlike ways, so the women may as well wipe us out. They revere many of the fiery, independent or bloodthirsty goddesses found around the world, and some of their shamans are said to channel their essence prior to a battle.
- Martian
- I'd say that a few high-profile men are living on borrowed time.
- Raven

ENEMIES

Enemies of ME are abundant. Aside from just about every conservative religion out there, you have group's like the AGS's own **Runenthing**, a kind of girl-hating boy's club. While they haven't skirmished with ME in any way other than verbally, that's more than enough. The only thing that might bring them together is eco-activism, but even groups like GreenWar

would be insane to put members of both groups (ME and Runenthing) together on a mission.

- Don't be so hasty to dismiss Runenthing—they've become a bit too friendly with the likes of Winternight lately. It would be a shame if their hatred of women overcame their love of the environment.
- Hildegarde

As might be expected, **Humanis Policlub** and **Alamos 20K** hold a top spot on the list of ME's "People We Love to Hate." Wackos like these incited the cult that destroyed my life and my shop, just because I look different. I find I really can't talk much about them without wanting to hurt someone, though I know in my heart I could not do so.

- Hey Rosy, you don't have to hurt anybody. Just slip my 50¢ and I'll do it for you.
- Bung

These extremists are just the beginning. There are numerous corporations that exploit women and the environment and that don't appreciate ME's meddling. Then there are toxic shamans, chauvinist good ol' boy networks and magic guilds, and—most numerous of all—religious fundamentalists.

The **Army of God** and the **Order of the White Rose** may be ME's most feared enemies. These Christian fanatics have shown that they are willing to bomb, shoot and kill medical workers, geneticists and women activists—not to mention witches, gays and anyone they feel has sinned. Luckily they seem disorganized and ill-armed, though they consistently manage to populate their ranks and wreak havoc worldwide. Though the Catholic church does not openly support them, it is undeniable that key church leaders propel these groups forward.

- Just last week an Army of God member walked into a ME-sponsored metahuman outreach center in the Barrens and triggered a chemical warfare attack. There were a lot of women seeking birth control there, but also men receiving job and addiction counseling and children. The bomber almost got away, but ME managed to identify him from the surveillance records. Two days later, he was found floating in Puget Sound.
- Shirley 2

HOME GROWN REVOLUTIONARIES

by X-Wing

Captain Chaos asked me to take you through how revolutionary movements work. There is no hard and fast rule for organization, but Sociology 101 will teach you that there are some basic reasons why these groups form.

Revolution used to be a problem that only third-world countries needed to worry about. Other governments were too powerful to be challenged by anything but another superpower. Nowadays, the only real superpowers are the corporations. Everyone else is stuck watching their backs.



• Isn't it interesting how countries that don't offer extraterritoriality like Tir Tairngire find that their revolutionaries are well funded?

• Corp Watcher

Let's face it, there's a much larger and angrier underclass these days with loads of reasons to be pissed off, and the states have zero power to do anything about it. Even if you discount the SINless, there's unemployment, widespread pollution, pervasive corruption, racial/ethnic/religious tensions, out-of-control paramilitary police, corporate exploitation, eco-disasters, unchecked crime, dragons taking over your city and plenty of other reasons just about everywhere for people to get upset with the status quo. People are more likely to be politically radicalized by their daily experiences and more likely to see an opportunity to actually affect some change.

• Which is why I became a shadowrunner. Sorry, but I don't trust very many self-proclaimed revolutionaries any more than I trust Damien Knight. Best to clean up your own house before you try to clean someone else's, eh?

• Cynic

So why isn't the whole world in rebellion? Because capitalism is tricky and malleable, and it has many methods of social control. We're indoctrinated from day one to think that we have no power to change the system. The only choice handed to us is to elect Candidate A or Candidate B, never mind that they're usually the same and pawns of the corps anyway. We're paid off to just accept things, given a little bit of privilege and threatened that we'll lose it to metahumans/immigrants/foreigners if we don't play ball. And they throw lots of distractions at us too, to keep our minds off of how crappy things are: sports, sims, celebs, scandals and spook-stories about criminals, metas, magicians and dragons. If we ever do shake off the cobwebs enough to get pissed off about something, they quickly shove some convenient scapegoat in place for us to blame, before we get to the real root causes of the system's unfairness.

Occasionally, however, things don't go as planned for the powers-that-be. Maybe the exploitation went a little too far, or circumstances spiraled out of their control. Maybe the corps didn't allow the government enough power or resources to actually keep their populace in line. Or maybe a charismatic instigator has come along to whip the mobs into a frenzy. Before long, issues are polarized and protests turn into sabotage and armed actions. Demonstrations turn into riots. Thanks to the Matrix, mass movements develop overnight and coordinate their actions to more effect. People realize they have nothing left to lose, so they refuse to be pushed around any longer.

Modern technology lets the rebel's voice be heard, but it also gives the authorities more tools of control. The police spy on, track and infiltrate activists. Sometimes they crack down with vicious or selective repression, targeting leadership, but that often just breeds more anger and resentment. If they're smart, they try to subvert the revolutionaries from within,

breaking them apart with infiltrator-fueled infighting or steering them wrongly with subverted commanders. Nothing's better for authority than a loyal opposition.

Lucky for the rebels, we live in a world where you can order Semtex with your morning bagel. The glut of criminal organizations around the world makes it easy to get your hands on anything from handguns to serious military hardware. You won't have a hard time finding the financial supporters to pay for it either. From dragons to corps to religious groups there's a wide array of special-interest factions who may want to buy a share of the revolution you're selling.

• As many would-be-liberators have learned, however, revolution is not an event, it is a process. Too many rebellions overthrow a regime only to replace it with a new junta or elitist cabal, or they fall apart into warring factions. So if you're going to go out and start agitating for an uprising, let's hope you learn from the mistakes of the past.

• Red Emma

With that said, let's take a look at some of the current revolutionary movements taking place around the world. There are too many to cover here, so I'm only going to cover a few that I think are evocative or interesting.

RINELLE KE'TESRAE

This widespread rebel movement that grew out of Tir Tairngire's economic crisis and rigid social regimentation has seen several major successes over the past two years. First they organized a campaign of widespread civil disobedience against the Rite of Progression in May 2063. Millions took to the street, boycotting the tests, demonstrating and physically occupying and blockading testing centers. Despite a police counteroffensive that led to hundreds of arrests and hospitalizations (and a few deaths), the Rite was largely crippled. Two days after testing ended, the Proctor's office in Portland was bombed, reducing thousands of tests results to ashes. Before the year ended, Rinelle struck again, assassinating Feana Sterling just days after she claimed a seat of the Council of Princes. Another attempt at Prince Jonathan barely failed.

• A relative unknown named Cyril Le'Fien has taken the vacant council seat. Though her appointment was seen as a concession to Jenna Ni'Fairra—who had backed Sterling—Ni'Fairra seems less than pleased with it. The only details known on Le'Fien are that she was raised in obscurity as a paladin, an honest-to-goodness questor who has devoted her life to the land itself. She holds a doctorate in Ecology and is rumored to be a practiced geomancer.

• Aegis

• Cyril isn't a total nobody. She received well over a decade of magical training from Eهران the Scribe. The only question is: when she opens her mouth, who is talking?

• Kaige



Rinelle also suffered setbacks, however, when two of their top leadership cells were lost. The first incident occurred when one of Rinelle's outspoken supporters, Kespian Treefellow, was exposed as a Rinelle leader on the floor of the Star Chamber. A massive firefight broke out as Treefellow and his supporters attempted to escape, but none survived.

- Treefellow used to be one of Ebran's paladins. When the Scribe left the Tir, Treefellow took up office in the Star Chamber. Since his death, the princes have made it clear that Star Chamber representatives are being actively investigated for any ties to Rinelle, hampering some of the group's public support.

- Spes

The second incident involved a cell that coordinated clandestine activity among many of Rinelle's non-eleven metahuman supporters. The entire cell went missing after the Proctor's office strike, creating a tangle in Rinelle's communication structure for weeks. It wasn't until the ghost of one of the former cell members, an ork named Sylaias, was contacted that other cells figured out what happened. It turns out the cell was slaughtered by a rival Rinelle faction, allegedly acting on orders from James Telestrian. Sylaias's cell was planning a concentrated strike on Telestrian assets in opposition to his appointment to the Council of Princes.

Until that point, though it wasn't unusual for rival factions to struggle with each other (especially with encouragement from Information Secretariat spies), there hadn't been any bloodshed within Rinelle on that scale. The traitorous cell remains unidentified, however, and tension between Rinelle factions remains high.

- If they're not careful, the Princes will have the ranelles at each others' throats in no time.

- Natalie Dark

- Rinelle's still working hard to bring the Princes down. There was a meeting between upper echelon members of Rinelle and the Unseelie Court earlier this year, and word is that the two groups are planning something massive together.

- Maelwys

THE HAIDA NATIONAL FRONT

Visit Tsimshian for a week and you'll come to realize that it's the closest you can get to hell while still breathing. Only you won't want to breathe there, cause the air is so polluted.

For those who aren't familiar with Tsimshian or its history, here's the condensed version. When Tsimshian was formed as part of the Native American Nations (NAN), the dominant Tsimshian tribe viciously repressed Haida tribals who were agitating to form their own New Haida Nation. Later, when Tsimshian seceded from the NAN over its strict immigration controls, oppression of minority tribes and pollutive practices, in 2037, a movement of Tlingit, Haida and other tribals attempted to achieve social reforms, led by John George. The activists were again brutally squashed. Most of the leadership was killed in police raids, while George was sentenced to life in

prison for advocating civil insurrection. The remnants of the crushed movement went underground, forming the Haida National Front (HNF).

Over the last 20 years, the HNF has grown into a sophisticated guerrilla army, surviving and even thriving despite the strict police-state and witchhunts launched by the Progress Party and Mitsuhaman Tsimshian. In recent years, as MCT's stranglehold on the country grew tighter and a border war was provoked with the Salish-Shidhe Council (SSC), the HNF has turned up the pressure, sabotaging government and MCT operations, assassinating key officials and recruiting more and more support from disgruntled second-class citizens.

- The HNF has had some rough times and internal splits. A lot of the shamans that support their cause have gone toxic from the enviro devastation, and they've had their name pinned to some horrible terrorist atrocities.

- v Short Bear

- Speaking of corruption, the HNF has some pretty close ties to a group that they wouldn't want aired in public: Tamanous. Nobody wants to admit it, but the Tamanous legend started with the Kwakiutl tribe, co-founders of the Haida movement. Organ legging is big business, and coincidentally Haida groups never seem to have a hard time acquiring weapons. Makes you wonder how deep the ties between the two go, doesn't it?

- Siat

The HNF scored a major victory just last month by successfully breaking John George out of high-security prison. Though authorities tried to squash the news, a recording of the jailbreak made by the rescuers was distributed by a coordinated pirate trid- and Matrixcast around the country. The action was a major boost to HNF morale, sparking numerous riots and bringing new life to the resistance. Great Chief "Dangerous" Deborah Jim, however, has lost major face and is under increasing pressure from MCT to eliminate the "rebel problem."

- What no one in the upper echelons of the HNF is saying, though, is that they don't know what happened to John George. Believe it or not, they're not even sure who broke him out. They're riding with the wave of exhilaration and milking it for what it's worth, but they're getting more and more worried that they don't know who has George—or why.

- Grazer

- They don't have to worry too much, as George is safely out of the country. The entire job was orchestrated by the Sioux Wildcats. The Sioux have never appreciated the Tsimshian government's attitude, nor do they like that MCT is calling the shots there. Now that Tsimshian pulled out of the peace talks and is once again threatening the SSC, the Sioux are using the opportunity to unite the Sovereign Tribal Council behind the Salish. The Tsimshian may be able to take on the SSC with MCT's help, but there's no way they can take on the entire NAN. The Sioux



are preparing to force a change of power in Tsimshian, and they figured George would be a perfect ally to get on their good side as they groom him for the position.

- Spook

- From all accounts, MCT has seen the writing on the wall. Exec VP Masakura has escalated the timetable on almost all of MCT Tsimshian's operations, pushing forward the corp's own private resource rush. They're stripping the country clean of everything it's worth as fast as they can, so they can pull out before the NAN comes in swinging. There's a sense of desperation in the ranks of the Tsimshian elite—expect them to start acting like rats on a sinking ship any day now.

- Haida Hunter

- Desperate people do stupid things. I'd be really worried if I was the SSC right now. Tsimshian politicians or generals might do anything if they think they're going to go down anyway.

- Reciprocity Rik

THE FLAME OF FREEDOM

Aztlan—and Mexico before it—has a long and rich history of rebel insurgency. The current crop of rebels are known as *Llama de la Libertad* ("Flame of Freedom," or FF), though in truth this is but the largest of several revolutionary groups. The Flame's activities are mostly focused around the Yucatán region, but in truth they and their allies are active throughout Aztlan and have key support bases in the Carib League, Caracas and Denver, among other places.

The current Yucatán conflict began as a localized insurgency. A handful of peasants decided that they wanted better treatment were summarily killed and everyone who they'd spread their message to given several bulleted reasons why they should avoid thinking any further on the subject. This massacre sparked a grassroots rebellion that took on a strong anti-Aztlan character, promoting itself as based in traditional native and Mexican communities still suffering under colonial practices. Flame of Freedom signified the hearts of the peasants glowing brightly against the darkness of Aztech dominance.

Fast forward to today. It's no longer a civil war—the Yucatán situation has devolved into a free for all. In an attempt to squash the insurgency, Aztlan pursued a campaign to literally burn out their enemy. Ravaged by pollution, defoliants, fire and chemical warfare, the Earth itself seemed to strike back. An earthquake and massive weather disturbances were followed by what could only be described as an uprising of spirits that seemed to evolve into some of war between nature and toxic domains.

- I don't believe that drek about Gaia going to war for a minute. I prefer Occam's razor: the simplest answer is usually the right one. Someone—most likely the Amazonians—raised a spirit army to fight the Azzies. But as any mage can tell you, spirits don't always do what they're told, and the situation got out of control. Now, instead of a war between Azzies and rebels,





we have a three-way fight going on, as the spirits push to get their own way.

- Ley Lo

Over the past two years, this back-and-forth situation has declined, though elements of it still continue. The Flame of Freedom took quick advantage of the pullback orders given to Aztlan troops, denying them any significant opportunities to move back in. But Aztlan once again threw their considerable military weight into the matter, pushing inland and retaking several key points, only to pull out in recent months due to the outbreak of a devastating plague in critical areas. For the moment, Aztlan is pursuing a policy of containment and isolation, making strong efforts to blockade rebel areas and prevent them from obtaining outside support. A temporary cease-fire has even been negotiated, though rebel demands to lift the quarantine threaten its continuance.

Composition and Leadership

Like many revolutionary movements, the Flame of Freedom is a hodge-podge of elements. You have poor native peasants fighting alongside college-educated leftists who came down to join the fight. Poetic-speaking, idealistic career revolutionaries organize alongside mercenaries who are only loyal as long as they're paid. Groups like the Aztlan Freedom League, La Venta, the Yucatán Freedom Movement, Orgullo (a Mexican "Pride" outfit), the Catholic Action Front and Tierra y Libertad ("Land & Liberty") are all intertwined with the Flame, providing legal and extralegal support both inside and outside of Aztlan: lobbying, fundraising, smuggling, sabotage, propagandizing, etc. Many other activists also contribute to the struggle, from anti-Aztechnologists and eco-radicals to pirates who just like to spit in the Azzies' faces. Undoubtedly, indirect support also comes from Aztlan's rivals: Amazonia, Pueblo, CAS, Tir Tairngire and others.

- You can doll up the Flame in morally superior clothing, but it doesn't hide the fact that they use children to fight their wars. I don't care what your goals are or how short on manpower you are, putting an AK-98 in the hands of a twelve year old peasant and sending them out into the jungle is a fraggged-up thing to do.
- Puma

The Revolutionary Council that runs the Flame of Freedom remains understandably secretive. The only known member is an adult dragon known as Pobre. For a short period, there seemed to be serious concerns about Pobre's well-being, as his behavior allegedly turned quite erratic during the height of the "spirit war." Rumors flew that the dragon was being psychologically affected by the severe eco-devastation in the region, and that he was no longer fit to lead. But after a six-month absence, the dragon is reportedly back in his command tent and resuming control over Flame operations.

- So he was going toxic, and then goes missing for half a year, but now he suddenly "got better?" I don't buy it. I'd be real careful before I took any orders from that wyrm.

- Arctic White

- Not to mention that the Flame's higher-ups are trying to keep Pobre's new dining habits hushed up. According to rumors, he's been having "fresh" Azzie prisoners delivered to him every night for "interrogation"—and they're never seen again.

- Puma

- Azzie lies.

- Zapatista

The Flame also has a new public face in the name of PR guru Costaban Lopez. Lopez was born in Aztlan but raised in Denver after his parents were shipped there to work in Aztechnolgy's Mile High City office. His dislike for his parent's corporation is well known—he renounced his citizenship shortly after leaving home. Lopez has forged a successful career in the PR industry, most recently working several high-pay consulting contracts with Ares Global Entertainment and Hestaby's Shasta Enclave. He recently established a new media office for the Yucatán Freedom Movement in Jamaica, where he has been hard at work building worldwide public support for Yucatán independence. He was a key force behind the recent cease-fire negotiations.

- Lopez is a paid asset, a boardroom mercenary. So what will happen if Aztechnolgy decides to pay this guy more than the Flame can dredge up? With funding problems that groups like that have, it's bound to happen soon. It'll be interesting to see what side he chooses.

- Credmuncher

- This issue isn't about money for Lopez—he's already wealthy. For him, this is a personal cause.

- Webster

It's tough to say what the future holds for the Flame of Freedom. They've recovered fast from the recent turbulence and remain a significant threat. The entire situation has become a public disaster for the Azzies, who are already eager to find a solution so they can move on to bigger concerns—like Denver, LA, the CAS or Amazonia. Blame is being thrown about in Aztechnolgy's upper ranks, and heads will soon be rolling. The only question is whether Aztechnolgy will take the loss and come to terms with the rebels, or whether they'll bite the bullet and move in for the kill.

HANDS OF THE ELITE



Too many runners seem to believe you can only play the game if you're jacked into the wiring of an icy red host, crouched in a ventilation shaft or strapped into a parachute 2,000 feet above a battleground. Ain't necessarily so, and those who see it that way are missing a lot of what's going on in the shadows. You can hardly find more varied organizations than the ones presented here, and they all offer opportunities for biz. Hugely different in scope and objectives, mostly they wield no ideology, nor are they scary threats from astral outer space. They do have one thing in common, though: they deal in information, reputation and power, three areas that are tightly interconnected.

If you still believe shadows can't exist in plain light, take a look at our article on the United Nations. As powerless as ever to save the world from chaos and war, the UN is much more pragmatic nowadays; don't be shocked if you get hired by the High Commissioner for Human Rights for some high-end network in Africa. Sure, the UN pales in comparison to the Corporate Court, but it's got some resources of its own, believe me. You'll also need to get informed about that spooky cabal of aristocrats, originally limited to a bunch of stiff-upper-lipped blue-bloods in Königsberg, but who've been expanding throughout Europe and beyond, attracting all kinds of influential people opposed for various reasons to the reunification of Europe through the New Economic European Community. Then there's Aegis Cognito, a private intelligence agency based in Southern Europe. This corp used to restrict its operations mainly to Europe, but now it's jumped over the Pond and acquired a solid rep in the shadows.

As you can see, whether they're a loose alliance of reactionary aristos or the latest version of a downcast worldwide organization, we're leaving you in the hands of the elite. Better learn how to rub shoulders with them, chummers.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:54:50 (PST)

THE UNITED NATIONS

• Some of you may think it's strange not to hear more than the occasional word on a global intergovernmental org such as the UN, which must be an important player in interna-



tional affairs. The simple answer says the UN these days is little more than another pawn of the Corporate Court. That's true as far as it goes, but it doesn't go as far as most people think—so you might want to check out this write-up before making up your mind about this bunch of seat-warmers.

- Captain Chaos

by Ambassador

The United Nations never managed to match its lofty ambitions to its limited power. Stuck in place during the Cold War, it briefly promised to become worth the reckoning in the 1990s, but it lacked funding and power and lost much of its political weight at the turn of the century. Several setbacks finally finished it, starting with the Israel-Libya "Ten-Minute War" in 2004. That missile exchange was the worst atrocity on an international scale since World War II, and in its wake several Muslim states and Israel cancelled their UN membership. The destruction of the UN headquarters in the New York quakes of 2005 was the final blow, with several officials and diplomats killed during a Security Council meeting. Forty years would pass before a new HQ was inaugurated in Geneva to replace the provisional facilities hastily erected there.

Suffering from infrastructure and internal problems and running on half its former funding, the UN used what resources it had left trying to cope with the innumerable catastrophes that plagued the world in the following years. The floods and nuclear accidents in Europe, along with the VITAS pandemic, bled all the UN humanitarian organizations dry. Less efficient at providing relief work than some corporate-funded initiatives, the UN lost what credibility it had left, and large numbers of countries started leaving its ranks.

- Ever wondered why nothing could stop the spread of VITAS that claimed up to one-third of India's and Africa's population, leading to a worldwide epidemic? In a matter of months, the UN refugee, food and medical programs were moved to the rich countries, leaving tens of millions homeless, starving and dying.

- Brick

- To make things worse, the UN cancelled most peacekeeping missions worldwide because of credit limitations or new priorities, such as the Belarus or Korean wars. Countries providing troops for the UN reduced their numbers drastically, triggering bloodbaths everywhere the Blue Helmets had departed.

- Echec

The Crash of '29 marked the end of any funding for the organization, and several elements of the UN system were suspended, merged or disbanded. When the Euro-Wars broke out, the UN could do nothing but oust Russia from its roster and issue formal statements condemning the invasion. Having lost two-thirds of its members by then, either through formal withdrawal or geopolitical chaos, the UN faced dissolution in 2035—the Corporate Court resurrected

it through the recently acquired World Trade Organization. The revamped UN played a key role in the negotiations that followed the Euro-Wars, and its newfound respectability gave the Corp Court a legitimate front with which to consolidate corporate extraterritoriality and ensure its domination of the world's decisional bodies.

- Believe it or not, corporate action then was popular. People thought they were seeing the dawn of a new era of cooperation between political and economic forces. How wrong.

- Virtuelle

Streamlined and reorganized, the UN's various institutions were given smaller objectives that they could achieve more efficiently. The Second Charter of the United Nations was finally signed at the Prague Conference in 2045, marking the conception date of the United Nations of the Sixth World.

- Maybe it's not known in America, but in Europe the corps made sure the United Nations would regain its past prestige. I was at the Euro-War conference. Imagine representatives from a hundred countries and from the Big Eight of that time, silent in unity above the ruins of Brno where battles had been fought in both wars. The Old World was getting back on track by then, and the UN was a dream we still wanted to believe in.

- Veteran

The UN has remained under the Corporate Court's aegis ever since, and is little more than a corp puppet. The mega-corporations wanted it for PR and marketing purposes, and they have succeeded in making the UN a renowned and respected advisor. Some countries occasionally step up at the Security Council to oppose a united front on an issue and have forced the corporations to step back in several of their Economic Council decisions, but most UN operations exist only to serve corporate interests. To this end, the member nations implemented one of the corporate-controlled UN's major tools, the famous Resolution 3031 on Local Rights, in 2060.

- Famous?

- Deadwin RCTM

- For those of you who don't speak legalese, this text is a piece of legal jewelry. Secretary General Padiyar and corporate-supported Security Council representatives designed and used it during the recent corporate war. This resolution of the General Assembly gives UN teams the right to monitor respect for basic civil rights in agreed-upon areas of national or corporate jurisdiction. The Corporate Court supported the initiative to provide the world with a checklist of corporate ethics after the Marseilles scandals of '51 and the Copenhagen Convention violations, granting access to national and corporate facilities to "independent" UN observers. In theory, this move would have put UN officials





and Blue Helmets in an excellent position for intelligence gathering and military intervention. In reality, these delegations are either on the corporate payrolls and so automatically confirm the corporate authorities' compliance with human rights standards, or they're espionage operations sponsored by one corp against another. When they're not throwing real dirt at each other, the corps use Resolution 3031 to whip up a small-time scandal, usually sacrificing an A-ranked corp to keep the UN's work believable and popular.

- Ambassador

- When Aztech and Ares started praising the UN's work, using it as another weapon in the corp war, it was too late for the others to step back. The UN became a ruthless arena of subtle intrigues. It was all highly profitable for the corps, of course. They benefit from state and NGO-funded peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, as they keep poor populations healthy enough to work. The peacekeeping angle is also useful for running military ops against various opponents, from anti-corporate rebels to other corps. The corps even get a PR boost thanks to the UN's traditional respectability.

- Skarn Ka

- UN image is at an all-time high these days. It dealt with the Comet Chaos more efficiently than anyone else, using its resources in strategic locations to reinforce its humanitarian aura under maximum media coverage. Padiyar did not hesitate to strike deals with INN in America and DeMeKo in Europe for broadcasting Blue Helmet interventions. It hasn't turned to reality-trid yet, and it's no match for the Desert Wars mega-show, but it grows more popular every season nonetheless.

- Media Watcher

- I used to work in a WHO field agency near Jakarta, and I was browsing through the personal data of the people we cured. Several of them were infected with a toxin since developed by MCT to get rid of micro-bacteria in microtronics assembling facilities. The mission's main corporate fund-raiser was Aekei Heuristic Technologies, a discreet subsidiary of Mitsuhama in Southeast Asia. That's right, the corps use humanitarian agencies as a driving belt to field-test their products.

- Java Niz

COGS IN THE MACHINE

The main structure of the UN hasn't changed much, but the institutions that gravitated around it have undergone major reorganization. The United Nations has its new headquarters at the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva, where meetings of the General Assembly and the Security and Economic Councils take place.

- Guess what used to be HQed in that venerable building? You've got it right, the League of Nations, the powerless

ancestor of the UN that could do nothing to avoid WW II. Be assured this is no coincidence. The Corp Court wanted to remind everyone that the UN is a prestigious but utterly harmless institution.

- Poly Tick

Secretary General

Balaji Padiyar, an ork, has headed up the UN with broad smiles and ruthless backstabs since 2055. Formerly India's Foreign Minister, he's been a corporate yes-card ever since he took his seat after leaving the CEO's office of Fuchi subsidiary Ganges Softworks. Rumor has it he's caused some waves that almost cost him his position at the UN, but since the corp war he seems to be dancing especially fast to the corporate tune. He's an accomplished politician, criticizing the corporations in public just enough to remain popular while in fact playing their game.

- There's more to him than meets the eye. Padiyar is no longer a CC pawn: he despises it, but he knows that for the UN to grow more independent, he needs to expand UN influence at whatever the cost. No one knows what caused his change after Fuchi's fall, but in private he's a fierce anti-corporate. I've met him, and this guy's as cold as zero Kelvin. Inhumanly cold.

- Brick

- The corps have tried to sniff out rumors a few times that he has ties to Equity, the anti-corp policlub. Each time the Johnsons in charge either mysteriously cut the investigation short or were pulled off the project by higher-ups. Convenient, eh?

- Entropy

The Secretary General acts as an ambassador to the world's nations and extraterritorial megacorporations. Unlike his predecessors in the previous century, the current officeholder can take emergency measures to send a UN observation mission to the territory of any member if he gets that member's agreement. The General Assembly then has five days to decide whether to confirm the mission or call it back.

General Assembly (UNGA)

UNGA meetings look like giant fairs where various people, cultures and interests collide in an impressive mess. Many of the world's nations belong to the UN and have representatives in the Assembly (115 so far, the most notable exceptions being Russia and various war-torn Asian, African and Balkan states, leaving several empty seats). Regional organizations such as the Sovereign Tribal Council, the NEEC and the PPG are present, as are the CC, extraterritorial corporations and big NGOs such as the Draco Foundation. Various geopolitical oddities also have seats at the UNGA, such as the Provisional Tribal Council of the Manitou, the New Palestinian Authority, the Ecumenical Council governing Jerusalem and the Vatican Watch.



- The VW rep is a New Jesuit front. I guess you can figure every big organization with a political agenda has reps at the UNGA, either directly or through proxies.
- Church

The Assembly has little power and above all serves as a permanent forum to discuss the world's problems. It issues nonbinding resolutions, but it can ask the Security or Economic councils to legislate on a specific issue. Sometimes, however, the political impact of UNGA resolutions with massive international support is stronger than any legal decision (for example, the Local Rights Resolution).

Economic Council

Once upon a time, this body was the Economic and Social Council. Nowadays only the worst hypocrites dare to keep that second part; there's no pretending that the EC still represents labor unions, NGOs or civil society. Demographic and geographic criteria determine who gets a seat, rather than turnover or business size, but in fact the EC is the ultimate institutional puppet, its representatives all serving the triple-A and the first tier of double-A corps. The EC has grown as powerful as the Security Council, with legislative powers on an international scale.

- The EC has a cozy relationship with the Corporate Court through the World Trade Organization. When the former wants to implement something and win over public opinion, it uses the Economic Council to pass legislation and "force" the WTO to accept the text.
- Corpshark

Security Council

Historically the heart of power at the UN, the Security Council has suffered from the demise of nations and the rise of the Economic Council. It still fulfills its role as the geopolitical decision-making body, trying to regulate armed conflicts worldwide with relative inefficiency. It has undergone major changes since the twentieth century, losing three of its five former permanent members. Left mostly untouched by the Euro-Wars, France and the United Kingdom kept their permanent seats when a new Security Council was formed at the Prague Conference. The UCAS inherited the US seat and Japan joined in recognition of the Japanacorps' influence as well as Japanese military might in the Pacific. Willing to promote geographic, cultural, ethnic and Awakened equity, the SC awarded permanent membership to Amazonia over Aztlan. The non-permanent members have five-year rotating terms, but they can stay onboard via a complex co-optation scheme.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL (2060–2065)

Permanent Members

Amazonia
France
Japanese Imperial State
UCAS
United Kingdom

Non-Permanent Members

Azania
Aztlan
Athabaskan Council
Baule Nation
Czech Republic
Israel
Malaysia
New Zealand
Scandinavian Union
Tir Tairngire

- This system has enabled Israel to remain at the SC for eight years, from 2055 on. Aztlan hopes to use that same option as soon as the Yucatán crisis is cleared up.
- Cynical Paul

To avoid constant blocking of business, permanent members no longer have a veto. Instead they have two votes along with operational prerogatives, while the non-permanent members only have one vote.

Commission on Megacorporate Affairs (COMA)

No picture of the UN would be complete without a word about Padiyar's secret initiative that dates back to 2060. It started as an UNGA commission among tens of others that answered directly to the Secretary General and focused on "regulating the influence of economic powers in questions that should be answered by politics." When the corps found out it was intended to curb them, Padiyar denied knowledge of any anti-corp activities by the commission and did not hesitate to disband it—at least in public. In reality it went underground, spreading its agents and operatives throughout the UN system and perhaps even beyond.

- "Regulate the influence of economic powers"—i.e., frag the corps as often as possible. While most of the clandestine commission's work plays out on the legal level, it's deep into shadowrunning too. COMA agents unofficially supported by the SecGen make good use of Res 3031 to send observation teams anywhere the UN has an interest. Runners are often sent along as "experts" and benefit from the mission's privileges. Beware, though: serving the UN's goals according to Padiyar often means

working for one corp against another.

- Skarn Ka
- If this unlikely story is true, Padiyar should be careful to cover his ties to that commission. No doubt the corps would send him six feet under if they learned their faithful pawn was screwing them.
- Cynical Paul

United Nations Institutions

As noted in the window, several international organizations work directly under UN command. The World Trade Organization has become an arm of the Corporate Court, while a dedicated division of Global Financial Services (later known as the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank) took over



UN INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM: MAIN ORGANIZATIONS

Organization	HQ
UNATCO (UN Anti-Terrorist Coalition)	Liberty Island (NY)
Part intelligence agency, part police, UNATCO is dedicated to fighting terrorism in all its forms (which often includes shadowrunning).	
UNIAL (UN Initiative on Awakened Issues)	Metropole
This recently created organization fights discrimination against the Awakened, metahumans and changelings in all aspects of daily life, and also protects paracritters.	
UNEP (UN Environment Programs)	Stockholm
Revived by the "Green Block" of countries at the UN, UNEP comprises a set of ecological programs that provides its members with an efficient environmental watch tool.	
UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)	Paris
Recently revived by the Atlantean Foundation with some extra funding from Wuxing, UNESCO is in charge of protecting metahumanity's cultural heritage.	
UNHCR (UN High Commission for Refugees)	Geneva
This overworked agency handles refugee problems, but frequently suffers from a lack of cooperation by the countries in which it operates.	
WHO (World Health Organization)	Geneva
The WHO keeps tabs on global health problems and statistics, everything from disease outbreaks to infant mortality rates. Many humanitarian NGOs such as the Red Cross joined the World Health Organization in the 2030s.	

the roles of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund when those institutions collapsed.

KEEPING THE WORLD AT PEACE

According to the Second Charter, the UN's primary mission is to provide relief wherever needed (starting in the funding countries) and to promote sustainable development. Its other roles are to monitor armed conflicts, act as an independent negotiator and preserve peace.

The Humanitarian Platform

The UN system coordinates the action of more than 140 charities and NGOs, ranging from "forced relocation assistance" (High Commission for Refugees) to the promotion of economic and social development (UNDP, which includes the World Food Program). Most of these agencies are funded through independent initiatives, such as NGOs or religious groups, and sometimes benefit from corporate backing. These organizations rarely, if ever, cross any major corporate interests. Instead, they generally forward corporate goals in various ways, from enhancing a corporation's image to maintaining the relative health of the local workforce.

- The mandates of some of these "agencies" are less than clear. The UNDP used to make significant grants to the Universal Brotherhood for its "enlightened action." That experience sadly seems to have taught them nothing, since now they're allegedly funding Comet cults such as the Church of the Undying Flame.

- Poly Tick

- UNEP's director, Theresa Reinhart, is rumored to have strong ties to the Klabauterbund. Sometimes the UN treads on its own feet, since UNATCO openly fights the Ks.

- Green Pixie

- If you're looking for a way to go anywhere in the world for free with some hardware that can't get through Customs, get hired by a UN humanitarian agency. They're recruiting for protection for their missions, any length of time from one week to months.

- Rigger X

Diplomatic and Military Angles

The UN generally engages in four types of situations: monitoring, observation, mediation and intervention. Military operations are handled by the UN Armed Forces (UNAF), also called the Blue Helmets, a small but efficient intervention force. When peace (read: corporate interests) is threatened somewhere in the world, corps and nations alike sponsor a UNAF intervention to depose a dictator, crush a "terrorist hideout" or protect sensitive facilities.

- The real thing starts with the observation missions, when the megas use Res 3031 to send UN teams into restricted areas. If you're good and have a few contacts, you can get protection work or plain espionage jobs if that's your cup of tea. You might even score some bulletproof IDs with diplomatic immunity!

- JC Denton

- UNAF units conducted several direct hits on remote corporate facilities during the corp war, far from the trideocams that usually stick to the popular Blue Helmets (a name shared by Switzerland's Urban Brawl national team). Disguised as peacekeeping missions, Ares directed most of the hits against Shiawase, catching them off-guard. Actual UN troops engaged in such operations have to keep their numbers down, so there's always room for a few extra mercs.

- Exocet

- The Czech Commander-in-Chief of the UNAF, Jakob Kapralec, is a Euro-Wars hero who commanded the Allied armies at both Brno battles. Some rumors affirm he's on the S-K payroll.

- Veteran



- Sometimes anti-corp elements infiltrate the Blue Helmets and get into interesting positions to spy on the corps in the field. They'll also hire shadowrunners for those operations, planned only days in advance for secrecy's sake, under the direction of the Commission on Megacorporate Affairs. The nickname for these jobs is "Speed COMA."

- Skarn Ka

- Hey, I love those guys!!!

- Zero Glasgow Scale

While roughly two dozen UN monitoring and observation missions are currently operating worldwide, most of them no threat to corporate interests, the UNAF is only active at nine locations. The UN prefers efficiency, so with less than 30,000 troops and a small budget they selectively choose what situations in which to deploy UNAF. In many ways, the UNAF is closer to a small-unit commando force, relying heavily on drones when needed, than to a full-fledged military.

The troops that compose the UNAF are loaned primarily by Security Council members: Amazonia, the Czech Republic, France and the UK, with the latter mostly providing intelligence and logistics. Additional support comes from

the Scandinavian Union and New Zealand. When it needs greater numbers, the UNAF discreetly hires mercenaries. Differences in training are offset at the UNAF Academy in Berne, where Blue Helmets also get their gear and a full range of linguasofts.

- This core group of nations is mostly composed of "Green" countries, most of which are part of the UN Environmental Programs. If you add France and the Czech Republic—two nations largely pissed off by the megacorps' dominion—you get one nice alchemy of "anti-Corporate Court" interests providing most of the troops used by the corps for their peacekeeping ops. For now, the Court accepts this situation since the governments that contribute troops generally respect its objectives and it still has enough economic clout to bend these nations to its will. On the other hand, that core bloc of nations supporting Padiyar's anti-corp agenda is well-placed to one day disobey megacorporate orders.

- Skarn Ka

- Stop with the bulldrek! You see resistance where there's really only submission! Face the truth—your so-called alterna-



tive bloc is as subordinate to the CC as the others. They lend their military forces because they don't want to experience the Court's wrath. All this COMA stuff is nonsense distilled by a puppet SecGen who makes these nations believe they can waste their money paying UN dues to someday overthrow the corporate rule.

• JC Denton

Following is a short description of the UN's main missions across the world.

UNMIYUP (UN Mission in the Yucatán Peninsula): This observation mission established in 2062 is on the verge of becoming a UNAF intervention, now that Aztechnology has lost the Economic Council support that enabled it to block Security Council resolutions against Aztlan. Isolated at the SC, Aztlan will do its best to find allies among the remaining members and the next change of members set to occur in 2065.

UNIFOP (UN Intervention Force in Poland): This force was set up one month after the war broke out. At first simply counting casualties, it recently took a more pro-active stance after Saeder-Krupp threw its official support to what is now an NEEC-sponsored mission. Several clashes between the Red Army and UNAF have occurred since mid-July. A whole battalion of Blue Helmets also went MIA while protecting relief convoys in the Tatras Mountains region.

• Looks like Blue meat tastes as good as Red to Calo; he probably chars it all anyway.

• Wyrm Watcher

UNMIOC (UN Mediation Initiative in Occupied California): The support of the new Japanese regime enabled the UN to take a strong stance toward the California Protectorate. The recent change in Shiawase's policy that shifted its support away from General Saito has changed the balance at the Corporate Court and the Economic Council, enabling the Security Council to make a quick resolution and send observers to Sacramento and troops to key points around the Chico-Oroville dam. Blue Helmets are helping to defuse the tension between Protectorate troops, Northern Crescent militias and corporate forces.

UNEMEA (UN Emergency Mission in Eastern Africa): The official mandate of this intervention mission, initiated four months ago with massive media support from DeMeKo, is protection of the local population threatened by angry spirits. In reality, the Blue Helmets are here to protect the maglev space elevator project against the ethereal inhabitants of Mount Kilimanjaro and their corporeal allies.

UNIFII (UN Intervention Force in the Indonesian Islands): This mission, based in Jakarta, has the immense task of trying to bring stability to the various states and political forces of the Indonesian archipelago. Corporations largely support this, using UNAF forces to keep natives, pirates and local military leaders at bay to create a big free playground for the corps. The intervention force is also a rallying

point for the remaining humanitarian agencies and observation missions working in Indochina.

UNPROFOR (UN Protection Force: Balkans): In the mess this region has become, the UN presence is only significant around the Sarajevo Enclave and in Free Macedonia. The situation there is often pure chaos, with Blue Helmets compelled to work with and against the various warlords and mercenary groups that have an interest in keeping the situation unstable. This is the longest UN mission ever, dating back to the early 1990s.

UNMIJ (UN Mission in Jerusalem): When the Ecumenical Council that governs Jerusalem was created in 2046, it was allowed a special peacekeeping force of 10,000 Blue Helmet troops funded almost entirely by the Council, though they answer to the UNAF military command in Berne. The UN's help in solving the Jerusalem crisis after a century of unrest remains its most acclaimed success so far.

THE ARISTOCRATS' CABAL

• Our European upload a couple of months ago sparked a lot of interest in what's been going on in the Old World, so I asked French runner Fleur-de-Lys for some more insight on an aspect of Euro society we across the Pond aren't accustomed to—its neo-aristocratic elite and their intrigues.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 16:58:41 (PST)

by Fleur-de-Lys

Those of you who believe that reactionary, blue-blooded aristocracy went out of style back in the days of the guillotine are in for a shock. In Europe and elsewhere, *haute* aristocrats are not only well but thriving. Until recently, my own country (France) and the United Kingdom were textbook examples of the *aristos'* insidious return, and even with the current troubles they're still a power to be reckoned with. Austria surprised us all not so long ago despite a dark page in the Hapsburgs' recent history. So beware, *mes amis*, these nobs are nothing to thumb your nose at.

I must admit that when it comes to these high-society schemers, "cabal" might be a misleading term. It implies a conspiratorial cooperation which belies the group's faction-ridden bickering and self-indulgence. What keeps these strained alliances and network of connections going is their common belief that their titles, privileged upbringing and heritage raise them above the dirty plebeian masses and that they have a duty to reclaim their historic position of power. Our neo-feudal, balkanized world is the perfect springboard for them to reassert their birthright by political guile as well as the media and corporate influence they wield in spades. Believe me, I'm qualified to talk. Much to my regret, I was born an *aristo*.

Though several thousand titled nobles are scattered across Europe, most are as dirt poor as any of us and less than a hundred hold any real power. Their names read like a Who's Who of European corporate leaders, media moguls, cabinet ministers and leading political figures: Saxe-Coburg,



Orléans, Rochefort, Bernal, Hapsburg, Rothschild. To these true movers and shakers, it's all about "us versus them," and if they win we'll be back to good old pre-industrial social classes. The vast majority are bred to be conservative-minded, nationalistic and reactionary. Traits like metaphobia, magophobia and xenophobia are selective and depend largely on national context; most nobles share an ingrained distaste for surgical augmentation and the "bourgeois posturing" of corporate elites.

- Fleur called it right. Some of these bastards are influential politicians, others old-money corporate oligarchs, a few are monarchists, and others are simply greedy for power and control. If you've run the European shadows for any amount of time, odds are one of these guys has been your patron.
- Mime

- Yeah, but her bias is showing. These guys aren't all on a power trip! I've dealt with many who have no agendas. In fact, my regular fixer down Monaco way is a blue-blood. Most are regular folks like you and I.

- Skarn Ka

- She might be biased, but she's right on about their influence and power. Just look at any society newsrag from the last thirty years and see how the masses have been trained to admire the aristos' opulent lifestyles and watch as they covort with simstars and politicians.

- Class Warrior

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Ever since Germany shattered, a number of noble-run oligarchies have shot up and grown roots in the new AGS. More appeared over the next couple of decades, but the reactionary knee-jerk nationalism caused by the Euro-Wars gave this trend its biggest boost. Thanks to the dislocations of war, the neo-aristocrats' goals of reaffirming the "traditional order" and restoring ultra-nationalist values got a huge shot in the arm. Even as the Danube Union collapsed under Leopold Hapsburg's insane attempt at imperialism, a loose network of nobles and old-money families under the charismatic (and opportunistic) leadership of Antoine d'Orléans maneuvered the Sixth Republic into place in France. In Britain, the local nobs, closely aligned with the New Druidic Movement, had long since made their play for power. It says a lot that the country's most powerful political office is in the hands of *Lord Marchmont*.

- A persistent rumor claims that the aristos in France had some sort of edge on events—something called Project Omen.
- Penombre

- The Continental nobility don't look too kindly on pseudo-bluebloods like the Tir Danaan and their trans-Atlantic cousins. As far as they're concerned, these upstarts can wait

a few centuries before they come knocking to be let into the ballroom.

- Shoot-Snoot

- Not entirely true. The Pomoryan set gets along well with the Königsberg and French cliques. Tir Tairngire nobles looking for some of the credibility that only a few centuries of inbreeding can bring have been using the Pomoryan connection to get themselves invited to all sorts of old-blood social events.

- Spider

The cabal's influence shows most clearly in the Austrian Heritage Party's landslide victory in the last Austrian elections and the well-orchestrated "popular acclamation" of a Grand Duke in Lithuania. All is not wine and roses for the nobles' plans, however—trouble is brewing. They suffered a major setback in the last French Presidential election when Aurélie de Paladines was reelected despite severing her links to her aristo friends. The advent of the NEEC threatens to diminish aristo influence and loosen their hold on governments, replacing it with megacorporate interference. Meanwhile, the ongoing war between the Vory and the Mafia threatens to expose the French nobility's dark underbelly.

POWERS BEHIND THE THRONES

If the cabal has a birthplace, it's Königsberg. Home to the Kalinin data haven and a bunch of decadent aristocrats whose families fell from grace—if not from wealth and influence—in the nineteenth century, this Baltic nation shelters two of the most prominent aristos in Europe: **Ludwig von Saxe-Coburg** of the old Belgian royals and the aging **Princess Eitel**, the last remnant of the Prussian royal house. Using all the vast resources old money could afford, they were the drivers behind the network of political and economic alliances, mergers and planned marriages that became the engine of the modern aristocrat movement.

Recently, they helped finance the rise to power of **Johanna Hapsburg** and her AHP, using their influence and wealth to push Salzburg and the other breakaway Austrian states back under national rule. Publicly, Johanna got the credit for this move. As an outspoken critic of the NEEC, Johanna Hapsburg reluctantly signed on in the face of mounting pressure from Saeder-Krupp and Zeta-ImpChem. Her contacts among the conservative Spanish and French nobles, however—especially the heads of the Orléans and Rochefort houses—have bridged old antagonisms and grudges with their Baltic cousins, and schemes are in progress to undermine the reviled NEEC before it takes root.

In national matters, the French bluebloods defer to **Antoine d'Orléans**, but the leading advocate of greater international cooperation is **Nicolas de Rochefort**. He called a discreet meeting of aristo leaders in late January at his Azay-le-Rideau *château* on the Loire to plot to destabilize the fledgling NEEC and coordinate various moves at this year's Summer Tour. Earlier this month, his cousin, Isabelle de Rochefort, publicly accepted appointment as one of France's three representatives to the NEEC's Social Policy Commission.



- Where better to start the rot?
- Il Padre

- Trumping S-K and the other Eurocorps is going to take a lot more coordination and less friction than the nobs have shown to date, but it explains that failed hit against Julian Sergetti—S-K's man in Brussels—a couple of weeks ago.
- Red Menace

- These "aristos" aren't S-K's only enemy, you know.
- Weaver

Meanwhile, in Brittany, **Michel de Rohan**, the Rohan family's heir-apparent and a figurehead of the Druidic Revival, has been busy straightening out the cabal's friendship with their neighbors across the Channel. The French aristos have been courting members of the House of Lords and the New Druidic Movement and getting friendly with Lady Rhiannon Glendower of Snowdon. Contacts with NDM reformists have proved fruitful, as there are those among the druids and British nobility who feel their positions may be at risk with the success of the People's Party and the growth of the local opposition movement. Reaching out to elven and Celtic factions in the UK through Lady Glendower is a smart move, stacking their hand just in case and earning them some support from the Danaan families in Tir na nOg to boot.

- As an exception to the general rule for aristos, the Rohan family's elven offspring appear all too happy to help forge new ties with Danaan scions.
- Gossip
- With all this conspiracy talk, people are forgetting to mention Rohan's and Rochefort's vast corporate empires. A lot of shadow work comes through those fronts.
- ChatNoir

Up north, Saxe-Coburg has also made tentative overtures toward the elven Duchy of Pomorya, using a Polish aristocratic family, the **Lubomirskis**. When the Rybinski regime called in the Russians, the Lubomirski clan—like many wealthy Poles with ties to French aristos as well as the Pomoryan House **Teleam**—went into exile. The rulers of the autonomous Baltic enclave have remained cautiously aloof from Continental politics, but with the NEEC affecting the AGS as a whole, this is bound to change.

On a lighter note (or maybe not), rumors are flying of an arranged wedding in the making between the French Rohans and the Teleam family to cement the North-South alliance. Coincidence?

- Wonder where Prince Aithne Oakforest went after he dropped his Tir Council seat? After a short stop in Pomorya, he headed for Brittany, where he stayed until last June as



guest of the Rohans. According to gossip, he got a lot of “soutien et consolation” from young Gaëlle de Rohan.

- Franc-Tireur

- Over here, no one knows what to make of Aithne’s behavior. He was outspoken about hating Europe; too many bad memories, he used to say. Somehow I don’t think he’s there for fun and games.

- Spes

THE GREAT GAME COMES AROUND

The downside of some individual aristos’ high profiles—and the reason many prefer the role of *éminence grise*—is that the press and the eager public they’ve been playing to all these years hang on their every move. When dropping their guard in a careless moment could expose their back-room deals, fragile alliances and occasional clashes, the nobles started looking for a way to keep their contacts and discussions out of the public eye. Fortunately, a small group of well-connected individuals, among them then-novahot supermodel Claudia Romanov, rising corporate royalty Mina Graff-Beloit and Swiss entrepreneur Richard Bührlé, were already conspiring to launch a new pan-European social season for the same purpose. The nobles pounced on the opportunity and the *Grand Tour* was born.

- Yes. That Grand Tour. What? You thought it was all celeb parties, DeMeKo and Sol paparazzi scrambling for the best shots? Think again. A man can make an easy living off the Tour.

- Church

- It’s see and be seen. The only time you ever get these people together in the same room. The media are like flies and security is unbelievable. There’s always lots of work for those with connections, but don’t forget to bring your tux.

- Deadwin RCTM

Combining the groups’ overlapping contacts and influence, the nobles and their powerful allies began holding a series of “traveling parties” in 2038, using the group’s celebrities and opinion-makers such as Romanov, a young Lucien Cross, society flirt Gisèle de Villiers (a second cousin of Richard Villiers), and later Johnny Spinrad, Zoe de Paris and Brit-Princess Caroline. These parties evolved into a month-long Summer Season that drew the *crème de la crème* of European society—not to mention the dregs—to a series of high-society events and balls.

- A lot of nobs like Cecilia Medici are either media personalities or are media-savvy. As in so many things, they used their contacts and influence to get the ball rolling. No pun intended.

- Exocet

The Summer Tour really heats up when the entourage hits Nice in the south of France and Monaco. All the big stars and jetsetters show up for the new Cannes Film Festival and the staple Monaco Grand Prix, which conspicuously *always* takes place while the Tour is in town. The Tour goes on to Venice, Vienna and finally Paris for the final ball, filling up with a glittering roster of Euro-politicos and high-society types as well as corporate and media figures.

- Doesn’t mean anything. Just good media sense to hype everything at the same time. Lucrative all round.

- Skeptic

- Way I always heard it, Lofwyr was behind the whole thing. Wonder who has it right?

- Virtuelle

A lower-key Winter Season—running from Paris to Alpine Tyrol, Salzburg and Prague, and closing with the Parisian Grand Ball—developed in the mid-fifties and gained popularity with the aristos over the glitzy partygoers and bubble-brain hangers-on of the Summer Season. Both serve as smokescreens for the aristo cabal to meet in person, pressure peers and politicians, and of course reaffirm networks of influence, friendship and power. It’s always amazed me how much leverage social standing and connections in high places grants you. Be it through a subtle word in someone’s ear or a hefty one-off loan around a casino table, the cabal excels at getting its way.

- Also noteworthy is the regular presence of the Cartomanciens, Tarot-reading members of the Seers’ Guild, especially given the rumors linking the Seers to the aristos’ rise to power in France.

- Magister

- The Cartomancers are firmly in the aristo camp, opposing Yohann Kervelec and President Paladines. This minor company’s leader is known only as the Cartier, but a spooky lady calling herself Frédérique de Malemort sometimes acts as his voice with the French aristos and shadows. A chance encounter with her in a Paris catacomb club scared the hell out of me. If you want some friendly advice, steer clear of les gars.

- Quasimodo

- Until recently, both the Milieu and the Vory liked to drop in on their aristocratic pals during the Riviera leg of the tour and reaffirm alliances and turf. With the mob war ongoing this year, things are in flux.

- Drackenfelts



AEGIS COGNITO

• When I decided to throw together this collection, I put some thought into how these would-be elites go about their agendas. We all know who does their dirty at the end of the day, but given that most of these groups don't have the intel resources of a nation at their disposal, let alone a megacorp, the question arises—where do they get their intelligence and how do they stay in the loop? Unsurprisingly, there are as many answers as there are factions at work in the Sixth World. One keeps cropping up, however: independent intelligence agencies, like our next organization.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:01:49 (PST)

by Spider

Those who've heard of it know it's a corp. So what's it doing in a non-corp compilation? Because Aegis Cognito isn't your typical moneymaker and it exists in the same murky niche inhabited by shadowrunners. Furthermore, Aegis and its counterparts cross a number of fine lines, which makes slapping labels on them quite difficult. The Captain and I crossed paths on the Helix a few months back on another project, and he told me he wanted to put together a profile on these operators. As it happens, I worked for Aegis as a handler for several years before going indie, so I volunteered to give him a hand.

ROOTS

Aegis Cognito was founded in the final days of the Internet as a small IT and data consultancy firm. It made a killing in the aftermath of the Crash by branching into data recovery and reconstruction, piecing together Virus-damaged and compromised data. It became famous with companies and individuals seeking to piece together lost research and business intelligence for its uncanny ability to recover and acquire difficult-to-retrieve information. While Europe wallowed in post-War depression, Aegis built an international clientele and developed into a world-class data retrieval and consultancy firm.

Later still, after the appearance of megacorporate intelligence divisions and the post-Euro-War restructuring of the European intelligence community, Aegis evolved into its current form as one of the world's first independent intelligence agencies, digging itself a cozy slot alongside MET2000's Argus, the French Infolio and the CAS-based Special Information Services (SIS), which soon followed suit.

• Most of these private intel corps have specializations. Argus primarily works in military intelligence, Infolio does market

watch and corporate intel. Aegis, SIS and Millennium Consulting out of Hong Kong prefer to dabble in a number of areas, even if that means "outsourcing operations to specialized independent consultants." You all know what that means.

• Captain Chaos

Aegis and its counterparts fill a necessary place in the corporate ecology; many small and medium-sized corporations and even a few countries (not to mention powerful individuals and organizations) simply can't afford the expense of integrated intelligence assets. This in turn restricts their access to various types of intelligence gathering that require long-term commitment (listening posts, sleeper agents, continual intelligence and market analysis, counter-intelligence overwatch, etc.). Many of these activities can't be carried out by deniable and expendable assets (including most of the folks reading this) because they involve a lot more logistics, coordination and commitment than your average shadow crew can bring to bear. Aegis and Co. provide ready-to-use intelligence infrastructure and resources in just about any field for anyone willing to pay the hefty price tag.

• Of course, it depends on your team's specialization. I know a couple of crews who run deep cover infiltrations, long term insertions and sting operations almost exclusively. They're top-class talent and their services are

in demand simply because not everybody is suited for this kind of black op.

• Ozzie

• One cool thing about working for Aegis is that a handler—like our pal Spider here—sees to it that missions are executed and the corp gets paid. Aegis depends directly on its success rate for its bottom line. That means that when they call on outside talent, they provide as much info as possible on the targets. Not your average Johnson by any means.

• Hammer

• A corp's a corp. No two ways about it. You can't trust them as far as you can lob 'em. They're just as likely as anyone else to send you on a tailchaser or use you as expendables on a sting. If anything, they're probably more ruthless than usual because this is their biz.

• Razzz-been

Because their operations are specialized and small-scale, corps like Aegis rarely rate extraterritoriality; they have to find creative solutions to avoid getting pulped or



AEGIS COGNITO

Since 2031

Visit our offices in
Atlanta, Bangkok, Boston, Cairo,
Calcutta, Canberra, Chiba, Denver,
Dallas/Fort Worth, Europort, Frankfurt,
Kiev, Lima, Macao, Metropole, Moscow,
New York, Seattle, Stockholm and
Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal, or connect
to our *Torre do Tombo* host

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four continents, strategically located near flashpoints for covert action or particularly active intelligence sources or markets. Most people find Aegis's physical and Matrix presences understated—a floor in an office building or an unassuming building in an office park.

- Aegis's Seattle offices are in the Ludlum Building, conveniently located within line of sight and three blocks north of the Arc. Coincidence?
- SPD

These places are Aegis Cognito's public front, where potential clients can find "case managers" for their individual agendas. The exception to this rule is the massive *Torre do Tombo* (also known as the Tomb) complex in Lisbon, Portugal, where the corp keeps its main assets and central databases. What used to be the National Archives building (and bunkers) was converted into a state-of-the-art secure fortress with zero-zone security.

- Forget the multi-tier Matrix host with all the fancy iconography and the public databases. That's just a red herring. Aegis's serious databanks are offline.
- Bloco Bandido
- Their databases have to be online somehow. Clients with accounts can access them.
- Curious Customer
- Ooh, those? If that's the kind of thing you're interested in, have a ball. I was thinking of the real dirt.
- Bloco Bandido

The facilities that Aegis calls "op centers" are spread evenly across the globe. Using various fronts, they provide the backbone of the organization's internal structure and represent a combination of staging areas, e-intel overwatch and intelligence gathering posts. Countries such as Aztlan, Russia, the Sioux Nation and the UK among others ban intel corps within their borders, but Aegis manages to get around those strictures.

- So do a few other players in the spook business. I know for a fact that SIS and Aegis have secure pipelines into and out of Aztlan. I expect Infolio and others do, too.
- Cloak

SERVICES

So what does this espionage corp offer its clients? Quite a bit.

Intelligence Gathering Services

Aegis is a small operation, employing less than 7,000 people worldwide. Most are case managers/handlers and

managerial, legal, office and research staff seconded to the corp's various public offices. Less than 400 are highly trained field agents and infiltration specialists (many of whom are permanently in the field, operating under deep cover). Aegis accepts contracts to perform specific objectives and ongoing intel gathering, allocating resources as needed to fulfill contract specifications. When data-snatches, operative extractions, stings and even tailchasers are needed (as the case may be), Aegis has no compunction about complementing its excellent ground assets by hiring shadowrunners. Shadow teams who've proven their worth might find themselves running for a number of different contractors through a regular handler at Aegis. During my days, I had four teams on retainer.

- Meaning you could just as soon have been working for the Polish government-in-exile, some aristo faction, Transys or Spinrad and never know it.
- Ryan
- And those are just the obvious ones in the Euro-theatre. In North Am, dozens of small corps and individuals use Aegis. I bet that's where that Dankwalther fellow gets his dirt on targets.
- Cloak

Aegis handlers generally provide all the necessary mission intel dossiers even when using freelance operatives, but in return they demand a high success rate and total confidentiality. Aegis runs are almost always high-risk; their own crack deckers are extremely efficient at acquiring low-security material through quasi-legitimate channels.

- Aegis has a deal with the guys over at the Zurich Vault. Their hosts are decked out with the same upgrades and nastiness found in the Swiss ICberg.
- Red Eye
- The cool thing about Aegis and its counterparts is that they offer clients an immunity clause. For a fee, all data acquired remains restricted for a predetermined period of time. Aegis refrains from accepting cases involving information collected for or on that particular client. Non-compliance means huge compensation payouts and loss of credibility, so it's understood that violating these terms would put an end to the delicate balance the corps tread.
- Ryan

I should point out that Aegis doesn't boast 100 percent success. Too many factors are in the mix, and there have been some nasty blunders involving misleading information or misinterpreted data. Aegis keeps a lid on these whenever it can, because the relatively few failures could really knock its credibility with clients.



Data Subscription and Consulting

Aegis also provides subscription-based intelligence and news analysis, as well as access to huge information and personnel databases. Database subscriptions range from Pearl (5,000¥/month) to Obsidian (150,000¥/month) and give varying degrees of access to information in Aegis's classified files. Pearl clearance gets you minimal corp and personality profiles on major figures, while Obsidian users get detailed personnel dossiers, strategic hotspot updates and meticulously researched corporate hierarchies. All mission-sensitive files or ongoing operation dossiers are kept out of the databases for six months after the relevant contract is terminated, but after that everything falls into the open databases. The vast Matrix and physical archives housed in the *Torre do Tombo* contain everything from personnel records to aristocratic genealogies to just-behind-cutting-edge corp research.

- And of course Aegis doesn't profile its own clients based on search parameters and consultancy briefs—right.
- Conspir-I-See

To complement its basic services, Aegis also subcontracts and outsources reports and forecasts to a number of independent (and not-so-independent) analysts and consultants on spec. Consultants range from academic scholars to specialists in diverse fields, depending on what the client requests. These analysts rarely receive a full brief—only the necessary details and parameters to provide a report—and are always left ignorant of who initiated the request. Specialists at Aegis then stitch together the final report.

- I hear some consultants provide know-how despite being under exclusive contract, some even with the Big 10.
- Espion

Data Reconstruction

The corporation retains its original focus: data reconstruction and decoding of physical records and damaged or missing old computer records. Its patented Enigma Knowbots are expert systems designed to rebuild files damaged or compromised (but not destroyed) by the Virus of '29. Aegis personnel use a variety of other techniques to reconstruct similar lost data from fragments using fuzzy logic constructs, sifting code meshes and advanced multi-phase emulation software. Aegis is a world leader in the field and though data reconstruction nowadays represents a small share of its overall business, it remains a steady source of profit. Regular clients range from North American security agencies to megacorporate research divisions.

- Cost me an arm and a leg, but these guys even decoded a file that got scrambled when I pulled it from an MCT host. Worth every nuyen.

- Link

COMPLICATIONS

So what else do you really need to know about Aegis? Well, for one, nobody knows who runs it. Argus belongs to MET2000 and Infolio to the French group Index-Axa, but ever since Aegis's founder Gustavo Carvalho passed away from cancer in 2051, nobody beyond the highest echelons of the company seems to know who is actually calling the shots. Day to day operations are run by Chief Operations Officer Teresa Santos (a Brazilian ex-pat), but no one knows anything about the current owner or owners. Aegis is a private corp, but exactly who it belongs to remains a closely guarded secret, part of the deal Aegis cut with Portuguese authorities back in the 2030s.

- Speculation is rife. The two most common theories are that the owners are nobodies who (correctly) believe secrecy is vital to remaining independent and alive, or that Aegis is some megacorp's secret side project—maybe even one of Fuchi's Corp War orphans.

- Espion

- It's an old tale, but apparently Carvalho had two inseparable friends all through his teens; they even went to Cambridge University together. Gustavo completed CompSci and returned to Portugal just before the big Matrix boom, but guess what? The other two vanished. All their records were wiped by the Crash. No one knows where they went or what became of them—at least, that's how the story goes.

- Restelo

- If I hadn't pulled runs on S-K Prime France and Iberia, I'd say this smacked of Lofwyr's style.

- Caballero

- For what it's worth, I have it on good authority that Aegis is clean of the wyrm's influence.

- Weaver

- And who might you be?

- Skeptic

MYSTIC SECRETS



I'm often asked to post information on groups involved in magical or paranormal activities: research, pararchaeology, parazoology, magical advocacy and so on. Sad to say, the only magic I know involves smart frames. Still, I worked a little of my personal mojo and convinced a few trusted friends to tell us about some arcane-oriented organizations that shadowrunners might be part of or employed by. I'm no magophobe, but some of the intel passed along here is downright spooky—and intriguing—and bears paying attention to.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:10:06 (PST)

RELIC HUNTERS

• Elijah is obsessed with mysteries, especially when it comes to the Awakened history of the Sixth World—and perhaps the previous “worlds” before this one. Various factions are clearly at work, exploring Earth's secret history by uncovering forgotten traces of previous ages, so this seems like the right time to do a little excavation concerning their agendas.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:11:28 (PST)

by Elijah

Metahumanity has advanced a great deal since the Awakening by studying the arcane arts, but the path has been long and rocky. Magic was a completely new phenomenon when it first appeared. Most of the Gifted—with the exception of a chosen few—knew absolutely nothing about how to deal with this strange force. Many magicians fell back on ancient belief systems like shamanism or witchcraft to form what we know today as traditions, while others—nowadays called hermetics—chose a more scientific, academic approach. The hermetics combined classic theory with scientific methods and sought the metaphysics of magic—and that's how magical R&D was born.

Even before thaumaturgy joined university curricula at the beginning of the 2020s, users of magic delved deep into mystic secrets to understand how it functioned on a scientific level. Others went in search of enlightenment, power or new methods to improve themselves and the world. Universities, private foundations and corporate interests quickly began pouring





money into funding various projects, along with sponsoring Th.D. and postdoctorate fellowships to make ongoing arcane research feasible.

One of the earliest sponsors of research, however, was the military sector. Though the US military was slow to accept the existence of magic despite UGE and reports of magic phenomenon around the world, it quickly pursued research into the matter when it finally realized that the Native Americans were winning with magic. Around the world other militaries were coming to the same conclusion, and within a few years the magical arms race was on.

- And believe me, it still is. Every military in the world wants to know the best way to shoot down a great dragon, magically camouflage a strike force or construct a defense for key assets from Ghost Dance-scale ritual magic. And if they find some answers, they sure aren't going to share them.

- Argent

Meanwhile, corporate interests were quickly moving beyond pure research and establishing thriving subsidiaries to produce foci or sell magical goods to Awakened clientele. As corporate pressure extended patent rights to thaumaturgical processes and applications, magic science became a competitive field. The results of arcane research became as valuable as any new technical prototype, so while some institutes found ways to collaborate toward common goals, most groups played their cards close to the chest.

- Which means that arcane espionage is a lucrative job prospect. Spell and foci formulae, metamagics, conjuring tricks—all of these can rake in licensing cred for years to come to who ever registers them first.

- Thaumus

- It's no surprise, then, that entities like the Young Elven Technologists, Atlantean Foundation and Saeder-Krupp have racked up an impressive array of patents and copyrights on magical theses.

- Felix

- Arcane research is a costly affair. Institutes experimenting with invocations or spells must be secured by magical wards and patrolled by mages or elementals in case something goes wrong. Security standards are likewise high for alchemistic or enchanting labs, as the refined radicals, orichalcum and foci used there tend to mysteriously vanish and re-appear in black markets if not locked away safely. Few organizations can afford these pricey installations, not to mention the crème de la crème of researchers necessary to keep on top of the pyramid.

- Magister

Nowadays, major players in magic include MIT&T University in Boston, the Charles University of Prague, the Zeiss-sponsored University of Jena, the Octagon (Spellweavers

Consortium) in Prague, the DIMR main research center in Boston, Mitsuhamma Computer Technology's R&D Department headquartered in Kyoto, the Oxford Royal College of Magicians in England, the International Centre for Arcane Development in Athens (Aztechnology), the Foundation of the Heaven People in New Hllobane, UCLA and the Atlantean Foundation's Central Archive in Atlanta, to name just a few. Recent breakthroughs in metamagical techniques such as severing and filtering have all come straight from one of these arcane institutions, and that's just the way they want to keep things.

- Buzz says the DIMR is working on a metamagical greater exorcism technique to banish shedim right out of a possessed body. There've been lots of attempts to steal research data and extract leading project eggheads.

- Nocturne

- As if those freakin' body-strippers would allow us to develop such a technique. As soon as the info leaked, the Langenzell Institute, one of the DIMR's research facilities near Heidelberg, got bombed by an undead suicide assassin.

- Voodoo Skull

Over the years, a number of new sciences have evolved from basic arcane research (magical and metamagical theory, ritual magic, spell design), melding magic with other scientific areas such as chemistry (alchemy, artificing), technology (technical thaumaturgy), genetics (magenetics), geography (meta-geography and geomancy), biology (parabotany, para fauna) and many more. Many smaller research groups specialize in one aspect of this vast field, finding their own niches and thereby avoiding competition with the big boys.

Research is never without obstacles, however. Though the technique for creating orichalcum has become widely known, all attempts to produce it industrially have so far failed. Similarly, the fusion of magic and technology has proved unpredictable and often prone to dramatic side effects.

As arcane research evolved, researchers realized that many of their achievements were not simply the result of long years of constant research, but represented rediscoveries of ancient knowledge that had been unearthed archaeological digs and from which they could reconstruct "new" magical techniques. The development of arcane archaeology began shortly after the Awakening, when the newly established Atlantean Foundation proclaimed its goal of rediscovering the lost wisdom of ancient Atlantis. Few things have inspired the imagination of metahumanity more than the legend of that sunken island nation. The AF easily garnered supporters who wanted to take part in this ambitious endeavor, and—more importantly—were willing to finance the expeditions, research and equipment needed to achieve it.

- All sorts of people are swept up and fascinated by media-driven conjecture of our "ancient magical history," but there's still a lot of skepticism from the scientific community. Though the evidence mounts daily, there are still enough missing pieces and conflicting results to make some researchers hold out for



more solid data—often putting them at odds with scientists driven by the agenda of their sponsors. All of this is just fuel for conspiracy theorists and cultists, especially when it comes to Tir dogma or fears of the role dragons played in history.

- Cynic

MODERN ARCHAEOLOGY

Over the years, the Atlantean Foundation took advantage of people's dreams of rediscovering lost civilizations to become the world's best-known archaeological institution. Until recently, they held that title uncontested. Recruiting archaeologists and historians from all over the world, they have funded some of the most impressive finds of our century, among them the unearthing of the city of Tantalus in the lowlands of Mount Siphylos, and the ruins of Gomorrah near Bab edh-Dhra. Subsequent commercial exploitation of these discoveries even turned them into profit-making ventures. These lost cities are remarkable relics from a traditional archaeological standpoint, but the AF and other organizations are after even bigger fish. What they truly seek is much older and more elusive.

The true meanings of the Greek words *archae* and *logos* are "ancient/beginning" and "word/knowledge," respectively. But what is the beginning of metahumanity? Before the Awakening, historians thought human civilization was about 7,000 years old. In the years since the Awakening, we've uncovered growing evidence that we really don't know as much as we thought we did. Plenty of people have speculated about the cycles of mana, the Mayan calendar and the origins of complex languages like Sperethiel and Or'zet. According to the popular (though unproven) hypothesis, we are currently on the rising arc of a recurrent cycle of magic—the "Sixth World"—that the world has undergone at least twice before. Much of this theory originates in the pseudo-science of authors like Ebran the Scribe, whose ties to the Tir government and the DIMR should be enough to make his opinions at least suspect.

- For what it's worth, Ebran isn't the only one to propagate this concept of the Sixth World. Several other well-known "mystics" who claim to have insight into the past have used the same terminology, as have numerous free spirits and even Dunkelzahn.
- Eli

On the other hand, we are confronted with dragons—if we're willing to trust them—who claim to have Awakened from a long slumber since the last age of magic. Dunkelzahn made numerous comments in public and private regarding "an earlier age," and if you believe the rumors several of the other great dragons have done the same. Nevertheless, the dragons have refused to answer direct questions on the matter (at least in public), and seem to share a common opinion that metahumans just have to figure out their history by themselves.

- All the more indication that they're hiding something they don't want us to know about!
- Dragonslayer

- Or that they like to yank our chain.
- Cynic

While nothing definite substantiates these speculations, intriguing evidence continues to accumulate, resurrected in archaeological digs at mystic sites like Nasca, Lake Mungo (Australia) and Teotihuacan (Aztlán), among others. Some of these clues suggest previous magic-using civilizations, earlier appearances of metahumanity and even the cataclysmic destruction of mighty empires. According to DIMR reports, hundreds of artifacts from the Ventspills dig were classified as unidentifiable in age and origin—and a significant number contained orichalcum. How can an ancient orichalcum artifact exist unless an arcane artificer produced it during a previous age of magic? Likewise, the Atlantean Foundation has unearthed hundreds of artifacts that were crafted by techniques that allegedly could not have been known to the civilizations existing during those times.

- I always wondered if it was coincidence that "modern" orichalcum looks the same as the stuff described in classic references to Atlantis.
- Audun

It's increasingly clear that we're missing important information regarding metahumanity's distant past. Whatever the truth may be, there are lots of groups out there digging for something.

Scanning the Dirt

Modern archaeologists use cutting-edge technology at their excavation sites to locate architectural remnants and ancient relics under tons of earth. While blanket surveys and aerial archaeology are still common (the latter done by drones or satellite), geophysical prospecting techniques are essential to discover buried sites. Data acquired by geomagnetism (seismotronic mapping), georadar (ground-penetrating radar), geoelectricity (geotomographic mapping) and electric induction is fed into field computers that verify the information and use high-resolution imaging software to compile an accurate composite of the scanned area. The combination of techniques and developments in measuring instruments and computer technology has made high-resolution scanning possible even at great depths.

Attempts to combine magic with geophysical surveying have not met with much success. Not only is a mage's ability to project through solid earth limited, but even earth spirits and elementals can't distinguish between natural and man-made formations after thousands of years. Detection spells don't fare much better. If there's something buried with a strong magical aura or that creates distortions in astral space, though, magicians can be very valuable. Dowsing and sensing techniques also work wonders.

- Archaeological digs like to have magicians on hand to scan the auras of preserved artifacts and bodies, or to inventory the dig results. Spirits can also be helpful with moving



earth, diverting water or protecting vulnerable sites from damaging weather.

- Goblin-Boy

All of these methods also come in handy for exploring the interiors of caves, pyramids, temples and other structures to detect hidden chambers behind apparently solid walls or to generate three-dimensional images of hollow spaces. Most of these sensors can be drone-mounted, making it easy to send a wired drone down a drilled shaft to get look at what's hidden.

- This gear isn't just valuable to archaeologists and grave robbers. Using an Eyes-Through-Walls 3D master unit with a Seismotron-scanner, you can easily track down secret hiding places, doors, panic rooms, even concealed safes in buildings that don't exist in the blueprints. Make sure not to set off motion detectors and passive security when scanning the wall with ultrasound, though.
- Warentester

Excavation Sites

Tracking down and digging up something located by the scans is the archaeologist's primary work. First, layers of earth must be removed without damaging the precious artifacts. Unearthed objects are then brushed free, cleaned and catalogued for later analysis.

- Or safeguarded if it's something valuable or something you don't want others to see.
- Golomyanka

While specialized excavator drones and crawlers exist, equipped with sophisticated sensor packages and autosofts to prevent damage to artifacts, manual laborers still do most of the work. As major digs normally take place at remote and undeveloped areas, it's cheaper to use locals than to bring in expensive drones.

A great number of those digs, especially Atlantean and Apep digs, are worse than labor camps. The folks in charge want the excavations completed as soon as possible, stripping the site before anyone notices. Trolls and orks get hired for the heavy labor, while humans, elves and dwarfs do the precision work. These metahuman resources sweat away for a pittance and are easily replaced if they collapse from exhaustion, disease or accidents. Of course, this sorry state of affairs never gets a mention in any *Tales of Atlantis* documentary.

- Accidents ... like the ones that tend to happen when you see something you shouldn't have?
- Hierophant
- Some UNESCO observers tried to rain on the Atlanteans' parade for their exploitation of the hinterland Ukrainian population, but unfortunately they suffered terminal difficulties before they could send evidence back to Geneva.
- Networks

One can encounter a variety of threats in these remote archaeological sites: critters, spirits, competitors and other uninvited guests, unstable political environments, the natural elements and astral phenomena. Consequently, there is always a need for qualified "protection specialists" to ensure that research is not disturbed.

- Don't forget the fun part of treasure-hunting, the threats that come from the find itself: ancient curses, spirits badly disposed toward grave robbers, deadly traps. Think fast and keep your notebook handy.
- Dr. Jones

While the above is true for most archaeological digs, things get even more complicated if the target of interest is underwater or beneath the sea floor. Low visibility, buoyancy, underwater threats and the limitations of excavation equipment are only a few of the problems often encountered in underwater archaeology. Undersea excavators and archaeologists have to be skilled divers, especially when operating at low depths.

- While the Atlanteans hooked up with Pentacle/MCT to pursue their undersea quest for lost Atlantis, the Apep Consortium struck a deal with Proteus AG for a mobile underwater archaeological platform in the Mediterranean and the use of the corp's fleet of submarines to scan the seabed for promising sites.
- Shockwave Sie

Artifact Analysis

Unearthed artifacts are normally not examined on-site, but instead sent on to proper facilities for analysis, ranging from typological classification to radiocarbon or thermoluminescence dating. Documents, fragments, carvings and all relics that contain some sort of script are handed on to linguistics experts, who try to translate the inscriptions and epigraphs. The advent of magic has lent its own twist to this procedure. In the past fifty years, excavators have found several objects that are indisputably magical or that contain traces of an arcane aura. These findings have mostly been kept classified, as have other perplexing artifacts of inexplicable origin—for example, a pre-Hellenic ceramic plate displaying a picture of a flying fortress island, the Speredhiel-inscribed slab stolen for the great dragon Celedyr from a Latvian dig, the mysterious drakkar unearthed in the Sahara and a pillar of pure orichalcum secretly dug up near Toubkal in the Atlas mountains during the '61 Rush.

I have no doubt that finds like these are the true motivation behind the growing interest in archaeology since the Awakening. Everyone wants to be the first to unearth the secrets of the past. The question is, for what end?

- To TAKE OVER THE WORRRLLDDDD!!! (cue scary music here)
- Skeptic



- Maybe to decide what information should be revealed and what should remain secret from metahumanity. These beings, leftovers from a former age unknown to most, have always patronized us and want to strip us of what makes us human: free choice.

- TomTom

- Get a grip. Choices are illusory if you are not prepared to make them. Experience shows that metahumanity is not always capable of making the right choice, informed or not. Perhaps you should be grateful that you are spared exposure to things you are unprepared to face, and that you still have time to grow and learn.

- Glitterfrost

- And what if those who hold the secrets misjudge metahumanity's ability to accept them, or keep them out of malice or contempt? What if they underestimate the time it will take to prepare? Is it not more fair to dispel all illusions and let the cards fall as they may?

- Orange Queen

- Who are you to decide?

- Lone Gunman

Field Trips

So how do archaeologists find interesting sites, and where are today's archaeological hot spots? If you're a mundane archaeologist, you play detective, poring over ancient sources and references for hints of sites worth exploring. You can always start with areas known for remnants of advanced human civilizations, like the settlements of the Incas, Mayans, Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks. These have been scoured several times, but there are still undiscovered pyramids and Mayan temples buried under sand or hidden deep in the jungle. If you're a member of the Atlantean Foundation or some of the other groups we're interested in, on the other hand, the usual spots are less likely to interest you. Instead, these folks are exploring places most historians would never expect.

If you open a map, mark the spots of many ongoing digs and compare them with old historical maps, you will find little correspondence or logic behind the excavations. A number of sites lie in Eastern Europe, like the two digs in Latvia—one in Ventspills (DIMR) and one near Riga (AF), plus half a dozen sites in the Caucasus Mountains (AF mostly, some DIMR). Others are related to ancient myths of a lost continent, like the Bimini Road site in the Bermudas (AF), underwater sites near Santorini and Crete (AF), and the Canary Isles (Apep Consortium).

- The Atlantean Foundation and the DIMR have both tried several times to undertake excavations in Aztlan, but the Aztlan government has so far declined all requests. The AF has also been banned from other countries that seem to be suspiciously hostile to arcane archaeology, like Tir Tairngire, Azania and Shaanxi.

- Theosophist

- The Foundation has digs there. They're very well hidden and well protected.

- Isabel

"An Island on a World"

Plato's tale about the fate of Atlantis is not the only tale about a mystical sunken isle. Many cultures boast Atlantis-like legends, such as Hyperborea/Ultima Thule (a northern Atlantis), Lemuria (an Atlantis in the Indian or Pacific Oceans), Keftu (an Egyptian variant of Plato's story about an island in the middle of a vast green sea) and Mu (a story that seems to originate from an erroneous translation of a Mayan text).

[10.2 Mp deleted]

- Please post follow-ups to the Atlantis/Conspiracy SIG, I haven't the space or the inclination to include them all here. And now back to our regular broadcast.

- Captain Chaos

Arcane archeologists have been having a field day lately with the emergence of alchera and natural orichalcum veins thanks to the passage of Halley's Comet. Apart from the obvious sites, however, we still cannot explain why some astral constructs or power sites appear at specific locations and not elsewhere. The simplest explanation is that we lack historical context for those sites. If half a century of magic has taught us anything, it's that myths can come true. Elves, fairies, trolls, cyclops, ogres and minotaurs, once known only from fairy tales and classical myth, now walk among us.

Does that make the tale of the Lost Continent probable? Who knows? A mysterious island named Lyonesse after the isle from Arthurian legend suddenly appeared in the English Channel just over a year ago. It could be a trace of an Atlantean culture or something completely different. Maybe it holds the Arthurian Grail, or the legendary sword Excalibur, resurfacing to call forth the land's true king. Lyonesse isn't even the first island reported to have resurfaced. It's entirely possible that Atlantis lies dormant somewhere below the waves, waiting for the mana level to reach a certain height.

- The UK's opposition movement went crazy when the island appeared. Many see it as a harbinger of a new age for Britain.

- Anonymous Botch

- The island has an unmistakably strong aura that's still in flux, almost as if it's still anchoring itself to the physical and astral sphere.

- Magister

I don't wish to speculate whether Atlantis will ever be found, or what the impact might be. People are digging out there who seem to know more than they are willing to say, and who think it's worth the effort. They may or may not be right... but if they are, then again the question arises: to what end will they put whatever discoveries they find?



- If you ask me, many of these digs have already turned up something—clues, artifacts, ancient magic—only the discoverers aren't sharing. Take the Atlantean Foundation's work around Crete. If you read *The Atlantean*, every other issue has some fluff story about new "evidence" they've located near Crete—but they rarely say a word about their operations on and around the island of Santorini 130 clicks to the north, even though those are the biggest money sinks in the AF's real budget (not the doctored one they pass around) each year. Companies just don't spend that kind of cred unless they expect a payoff of some kind.

- Lone Gunman

Chasing Myths

Digging for real power in ancient myths isn't limited to the Atlantis tale, of course. Cultures the world over boast a multitude of stories and legends of religious or mystical places, heroes, beasts and artifacts. Some of them may be connected to today's magical sites, and some may simply be silent witnesses to civilizations long gone. Forgotten temples of ancient gods hide inside the jungles, untouched for centuries and conquered by the forest. There have been countless expeditions into remote areas such as rainforests or secluded valleys to prove the existence of a core of truth in a legend. A lot of them never return, falling prey to the perils of the Awakened world.

- Horribly true. We got sent on a rescue mission up the Congo to haul out some lost researchers. We found out they'd stumbled onto the breeding grounds of an Awakened gorilla species in an old city ruin. With their ability to blend into the surroundings, we didn't even see the big apes coming. They killed the entire research team and most of my mates.

- Nile Raider

Returns on successful efforts, however, are immense enough to be worth the risks. There will always be those who hunt for gold, looking for El Dorado or the Amber Room, locating shipwrecks to loot the sunken treasure or scavenging old tombs. Some seek riches or the fame of making a major discovery. Others are desperate for eternal youth or the secrets of life and so search out places like Shangri-la (after all, even Leonization treatments have their limits). Others of us take the risks just to find the keys to the past, to uncover the truth.

- A number of Nazi gold vaults remain missing after the Second World War. The Reich was crazy for anything occult—I wonder what artifacts they dug up from their African colonies or Eastern Europe or stole from those they rounded up that are lost under tons of concrete in one of those secret installations?

- Echec

- I've heard rumors that a group of mountaineers stumbled on an entrance to a subterranean city in a mountain somewhere deep in the Alps. One of the mountaineers was magically gifted, and he said the city was shielded by some kind of



magical protection that dispelled his bound elementals within seconds but left the rest of the team unharmed. The whole climber crew vanished a few weeks after they came back from the mountains.

- Conspir-I-See

- I heard the Atlantean Foundation is paying good cred for “geomorphologic prospecting” of whatever lies hidden under the Auvergne Volcanoes.

- Goupil

THE ATLANTEAN FOUNDATION

President: Sheila Blatavaska

Headquarters: Atlanta, CAS

At first glance, the Atlantean Foundation seems to be an institution subsidizing arcane scientists, archaeologists and historians in the pursuit of their studies. Rather than merely a society of academics, however, it’s a collection of would-be rediscoverers of metahumanity’s ancient past, with devotees from all social strata. The Foundation solicits donations and charges membership fees to fund its projects.

The Atlantean, the Foundation’s monthly online magazine, updates members on projects around the globe and provides them with full-sim downloads from archaeological sites (in cooperation with Hisato-Turner Broadcasting), arcane research (live conjuration and abjuration for the non-Awakened audience) and other exotic material from almost everywhere on Earth. News and articles seen firsthand in *The Atlantean* often turn up later in *Tales of Atlantis* trideo documentaries for the Foundation’s own Ancient Wisdom Channel. Boasting more than 20 million members (one million in the CAS alone), the Foundation possesses impressive resources with which it bankrolls offices around the globe, magical research labs and facilities (including scientific and magical staff of all backgrounds), and the work of archaeologists, historians, educators and librarians. The Foundation also funds an even higher number of external research projects, along with Ph.D./Th.D. and postdoctorate fellowships at universities and at private, public and corporate institutes.

- Don’t forget co-funding Trans-Orbital’s probe during the Probe Race.
- Dezibel

Atlantis Online (nicknamed “The Virtual Digging Site”) is the Foundation’s public access PLTG, popular among AF members, scholars and anyone who wants to know what’s happening with this aspect of the Sixth World. It’s a useful repository of information if you’re interested in magic, archaeology, history or mythology, and has the clichéd iconography of an underwater neo-Greek city. For a modest member’s fee you can download trid recordings of expedition diaries, parazoological and parobotanical lexica, and historical encyclopedias, or you can shop at an online magic store for AF-developed arcana (spells, foci and metamagical treatises).

The AF Central Archive in Atlanta is the Foundation’s world headquarters. It contains some of the most important

discoveries and a massive library of archaic writings. A huge exhibition wing is open to the public. Entry into other areas, especially the various sub-basements, is restricted and secured by wards and elementals.

- The building itself radiates a huge amount of magical power in astral space that has increased gradually ever since Halley passed by. Despite, or maybe because of, the background count, the building has become a regular target for unexplained spirit attacks.

- South Bend

- Maybe they don’t like what woke there recently.

- Lovecraft

Sounds pretty harmless so far, doesn’t it? Few people, however, ever get to peer over the thick wall of hypocrisy built by the AF’s founder and her fellow board members. The archaeological labor camps give an inkling of how the Foundation actually operates: never use kid gloves when ruthlessness will work. Plus, prominent AF members wield enough political and academic influence to ruin the reputation of anyone who gets in their way.

Five people currently serve on the AF Board of Directors. I’ve included a profile of each below. Anyone with anything to add, please feel free to chime in.

Sheila Blatavska

Board President Sheila Blatavska established the Atlantean Foundation fifty years ago and remains its undisputed leader. Nothing happens at the Foundation without her knowing. The true identity of this enigmatic elf, who seems to have sprung into being in 2012, remains a mystery.

- She shares a relationship with other known elven supremacists like Ebran the Scribe and Aithne Oakforest. None of them have any record of a previous existence, either.

- Lone Gunman

- There’s speculation that Blatavska’s real identity is Maria Kapatelis, the daughter of the Greek shipping magnate Stavros Kapatelis who was kidnapped in 2010 at the age of nineteen. Though an exorbitant ransom was paid, Maria was never found and the kidnappers never caught—and authorities believe it may have been a scam. Where did Maria go with all that money, eh?

- MoleMan

Most people suspect that Ms. Blatavska uses several online personas, such as Hecate (which suits her perfectly, from all accounts), to keep an eye on Awakened community SIGs. She may also surface under the alias Miss Tick on shadowboards and on Magicknet.

- Elijah, Elijah, Elijah. You really should have come aboard when we made you the offer. We could do so much together.

- Hecate



- No, thanks. I've got principles. Freedom and professional ethics are among them.
- Elijah

An expert researcher, Sheila spends most of her time at the AF's headquarters or at her huge private research condo-plex on Crete. A workaholic with a fanatic devotion to arcane science, she is the driving force behind the constant quantum leaps in the Foundation's magical research.

- I saw her recently while attending one of Prof. Schwartzkopf's advanced courses on metamagical theory. Quite impressive in person she is, with that long raven-black hair, deep tan and dark eyes. She sat quietly in the last row until the professor said something she disagreed with. She walked right up to the front and accused him of teaching his students inaccurate material and then said that he—among others—should know better. Lady's got some cojones, dressing down a great dragon in front of an audience. After a heated debate on magical theory between them that none of the advanced magicians present could follow, Schwartzkopf threw her out of his lecture hall.
- Persephone

Baroness Marie-Claire de Rothschild

Hailing from France, Baroness Marie-Claire de Rothschild bought herself a seat on the board with a donation large enough to have its own gravity well. Though she is neither Awakened nor a scientist, she regards the study of the arcane as a serious hobby. She owns a huge collection of relics and foci, stashed away in one of the Rothschild family chateaux in France. She is also the Atlanteans' link to the aristocracy and rich collectors, to whom the Foundation regularly sells magical items and valuable antiques to fund its expenses. The Baroness frequently attends the Grand Tour, representing the Rothschild vineyards and the Foundation in Europe's high society, where she campaigns for donations.

- Marie-Claire's own private collection is said to include several noteworthy pieces—including a few with massive rewards attached should they be returned to their original owners.
- Daedhel

Casey Williams

Casey Williams does not show up in any records I'm aware of before 2051, when he opened a small talismonger shop on the edge of Decatur, Atlanta. Though he seems to have sold outstanding magical goods, talismans and foci, it's become common knowledge that the shop was a staging point for the Mystic Crusaders (which I'll get to in a minute). Williams' actual role in the Crusaders remains a mystery, though his bequest of four million nuyen in Dunklezahn's will and his admission to the board of the DIMR makes me believe he may be more influential in that organization than one might think.

- Williams is an upright player with a strong moral code. Though Blatavska and he did not get along well even before Williams

took the AF's seat at the DIMR in Boston, they've had more frequent personal clashes in recent months stemming from conflicts of interest between both organizations.

- Page

Franco Priachetti

Priachetti is the Foundation's spokesperson. This Parrot shaman often turns up on the trid giving interviews about the Foundation's projects and goals, shaking hands with sponsors, politicians and celebrities. Smooth-tongued and charming, he easily handles the media spotlight, combining his speeches with illusion tricks for the viewers' entertainment. He's also responsible for damage control when information on actual conditions at Foundation archaeological digs and various other shady dealings leaks to the public.

- He has excellent connections to media corps the world over, especially Sol Media and XX, where he's been bribing high-ranking execs for years with the Foundation's black bag funds.
- Blinky

Gamaebi X!olimbo

This South African Wakyambi is an Awakened anthropologist and the easiest to get along with among the board members, despite his strange appearance. Rumored to have grown up among the San people in the tribal lands of the Azanian Confederation, he is well-mannered and exceptionally polite in conversation. After working for the United Nations for a few years, he was invited to join the Foundation. What he actually does remains unclear, but rumors say he is heavily involved in overseeing the archives and classifying the most important discoveries from the AF's digs.

- He recently went to Nyamkopon as a negotiator between the Foundation and Queen Thema Laula of Asamondo. My contacts in Geneva tell me that the Atlanteans are willing to pull strings for the ghoulish nation to get international recognition at the UN in exchange for exclusive excavation rights within its borders.
- Ambassador

The Mystic Crusaders

The Mystic Crusaders are the Atlantean Foundation's private task force. They began as an independent organization but became associated with the Atlantean Foundation thanks to mutual interest in uncovering the mysteries of our world and its secret past. The farthest thing from a bunch of harmless scholars, the Crusaders are a chivalric order of mages, shamans, riggers, deckers and mercs that follow rules found in a mystic codex. They can be ruthless when dealing with individuals they deem dishonorable or unworthy (read shadowrunners), and are willing to make every sacrifice to protect themselves and the AF.

- I've heard rumors that the Crusaders are regaining their independence, breaking away from the Atlantean Foundation.
- The Theosophist



- Don't be so sure—they've had their hands full lately. First they had to root out members of the Atlantean Rebirth cult, and now they're handling increased competition from the DIMR and Apep Consortium.
- Crescent Cutter

DUNKELZAHN INSTITUTE OF MAGICAL RESEARCH

Chairman of the Board: Thomasin Martyn

Headquarters: Boston, UCAS

In the few years since its formation, the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research (DIMR) has become the AF's biggest archaeological rival. Backed by millions of nuyen from the great dragon's will, the Institute kicked off a number of research projects worldwide soon after setting up shop in Boston. Though the board of directors originally frowned on the idea of locating DIMR facilities outside the UCAS, they changed their opinion so that they could compete with the omnipresent AF in the future.

They've set up offices in Denver, Prague, Karlsruhe and Athens so far, and they have ambitious plans to open additional branches in Bangkok, Neo-Tokyo, Vladivostok, Lima, Sekondi and Buenos Aires within the next five years.

Among the many factions digging for ancient history and power, the DIMR has the cleanest record. Established from beyond the grave by a great dragon who was also President-Elect of the UCAS gave them an instant reputation that nearly trumped the one the Atlantean Foundation took years to establish. Run by the heads of prestigious scientific institutes, the global archeological and magical communities have generally embraced the Institute.

Despite the DIMR's meteoric rise to second place among major magical think tanks, they remain far behind the Atlantean Foundation for several reasons. Though the DIMR manages what remains of Dunkelzahn's 100 million-nuyen bequest, they need to find a way to make money out of their scientific work in the future, a talent the Atlanteans mastered years ago. The AF currently dominates the market for arcane and scientific services, and so the DIMR must rethink its approach—soon.

- They need a discovery that puts all other historical findings to shame and catches the media's eye. Like Atlantis coming out of the ocean with DIMR researchers waving from the still-wet surface.
- Prof. M

The DIMR also lacks a strong partner. Pentacle needed several favors from their mother corporation, Mitsuhamas, to

establish collaboration with the Atlantean Foundation, but that partnership has been fruitful ever since. The DIMR has no such arrangement with anyone. Given its origins in Dunkelzahn's last will and testament, cooperation with the other prominent corporate players in the magic biz—namely, S-K and Aztechnology—isn't really an option.

- Good reason to occasionally send runners to drive a wedge between Pentacle and the Atlanteans.
- Kensai

Alternatives include Wuxing, which expanded its market share in arcane goods and services during the Orichalcum Rush. The Draco Foundation is another potential partner, though rumor has it that the two dragon-spawned organizations don't talk to each other much.

DIMR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thomasin Martyn, Chairperson (Oxford Royal College of Magicians)
Dr. Edward Oden (University of Chicago)
Ehran the Scribe (Tir Tairngire)
Malcolm Grant (MIT&T)
Casey Williams (Atlantean Foundation)
Walks-with-the-Wind (Native American Nations)
Cormac McKilleen (Tir na nÓg)
Louisa Rhine (CalTech)
Chandra Patel (UCLA)
Juliana Merton (People's University of Berkeley)
Eva Vukovic (the Lagenzell Institute)
Tamara Nimbus (Loyola)
Felipe Rodriguez (University of Southern California)

- Negotiations have been going on between Ehran, Fu Peng and Sharon Ching-Wu, but without any satisfactory compromise. Wuxing doesn't want to get caught between MCT, S-K and the Azzies unless there's something big worth fighting for, and the DIMR doesn't have much to offer right now.

- Argent

- I doubt that. I had an interesting experience recently, when I scanned through the Middle Ages section of the DIMR history host. While I was browsing through an English heraldry book in a 12th-century monastery scriptorium, a huge scarab the size of a dog crawled through the room. At first

I thought I'd activated IC (I'm not a paying customer, you might say), so I got ready to defend myself. Then the scarab moved on and vanished through a solid wall. I gave that wall a closer inspection and found a hidden gap, a triggered SAN whose passageway had been frozen after opening. The digital scent of paydata kept me going, so I logged on to the hidden system. Inside was a high-end sculpted environment with virtual representations of old parchments and what I would call fossil steles covered with unfamiliar carvings. While I was admiring the detailed portrayal of the objects, the system's security measures kicked into action. Before I could put up my defenses, two Paladin IC-constructs swung their swords to chop me like sushi. Luckily, another IC party squashed the bug, which closed the SAN and dumped me from the system. I don't know to which cultures these different languages belong, but at least one text was written in Minoan Linear A.

- Ma'fan



- Linear A is an as-yet-undeciphered script from the Disc of Phaestos. It resides in the national museum on Crete and is the only known example.

- Ozzie

DIMR research has a broad scope, differing from the Atlantean Foundation by including the academic education of young mages. The Institute received several laboratories in magical-studies departments in Boston and Prague in exchange for giving lectures or doing practical courses in magical degrees, thereby gaining the chance to train prospective researchers and hire them firsthand before they reach the market. Practical field work isn't restricted to archaeological digs and includes the investigation of various magical phenomena, the search for power sites, analysis of mana lines and even behavioral studies of Awakened fauna in their natural habitats. The DIMR, however, suffers from a certain waste of resources as the board members withdraw experts and funds to pursue their own goals. Some of the board members also dislike each other, which leads to bickering and delays on important decisions.

- After the realignment of the Ley Lines during the Midsummer Solstice in England, Martyn immediately sent a group of top-notch researchers from Boston to England to acquire information on what happened that night. All data collected went directly to the New Druidic Movement and the Lord Protector's Office, and Martyn personally swore all the researchers to silence about what they found.

- Falcon

- Ebran's been the center of a whirlwind of activity since he stepped down from Tir Tairngire's Council of Princes. Word is that he took a few month's to personally visit many of the DIMR's digs, labs and project sites, as well as stopping in for personal one-on-ones with most of the other board members. Curiously, he also spent time in France, the Philippines, Sichuan, Amazonia and Mount Shasta. Was he just checking in with friends, collecting or paying on favors, or working on some new scheme? He's one to watch, chummers.

- The Lone Gunman

THE APEP CONSORTIUM

President: Abd El-Hameed Hassani

Headquarters: Cairo, Egypt

The Apep Consortium is the latest player to join the field of archaeological research, though their motives remain a greater mystery than those of the others. The Consortium's membership includes a number of names, most of which are letterbox companies intertwined to give the impression of a huge organization. In fact, however, only three existing corporations are involved: the Nubian Insurance Company (NIC), the United Bank of Panama and Jomaku Industries, a Japanese computer technology company. Additional individuals have helped finance the consortium since its formation in 2060, just before the comet hype started. Among these luminaries are Sheik Mohammad ibn Said of Dubai, the Munich-based solicitor's

office Stark, Theissen and Van der Mer, and Maria Karpattellos, a Greek black marketeer of arcane goods. While most organizations involved in archaeology are driven by a desire to rediscover ancient knowledge, none of the Apep's members are linked to research institutes or apparently give a damn about history—except for the NIC, which funds universities and museums in Cairo and Constantinople—which raises the question of just what drew them all together in this field in the first place.

- I did some extensive digging on all of the above. The only info I came up with is that Stark, Theissen and Van der Mer has an exclusive clientele of awkward customers that might come into conflict with the law because of their ... well ... feral nature.

- Nofretete

- What's that supposed to mean?

- Tracy

- That means their clientele tend to have a hunger for human body parts. Imagine you're a wealthy vampire who couldn't help himself and bled dry the hotel maid one night. What to do with the corpse? You call your trustworthy lawyers and they deal with it. And now guess who handled legal representation for the German offices of the Universal Brotherhood?

- Vitriol

Nevertheless, by offering impressive wages, the Apep Consortium has hired some of the best diggers and archaeologists right out from under the Atlantean Foundation's nose and handed them the best equipment money can afford. In the last two years, the Consortium has set up camps around the Mediterranean Sea, mostly in northern Africa, especially Egypt. Using its friendly relationship with the locals and the government, it secured the exclusive right to study power sites and magical phenomena reported along the banks of the Nile, thereby driving most rivals out of the field.

- Clever move, especially if these rumors that have been popping up of reincarnated Nubian descendants or the Akashic memory stuff are true. If they really find a way to tap into this memory bank by using people that have the ability, they'll get a better picture of how the Nile looked a thousand of years ago than anyone can currently provide.

- Asad

- Right, and in my last life I was a great dragon.

- Transplant

- Lots of the AF's subscribers have gone Egyptomaniac following the first reports, and are demanding coverage from the Foundation. The AF has been using its friends to put pressure on the Egyptian government to give them permission for scientific studies.

- Reliquary



While nothing unusual has yet turned up at the Apep Consortium's excavation sites, these guys give me the creeps. Their camps are in good shape, it appears no one is being exploited and the researchers do their ordinary work, but somehow these camps just don't feel right. I racked my brain for hours, but I can't put my finger on it.

- I think you're seeing ghosts where there aren't any, Elijah. Couldn't you just be finding it strange that an organization is emerging with no agenda other than finding the truth?
- Skeptic
- BTW, anything on Abd El-Hameed Hassani?
- Red Warrior
- Nothing much. He was born in Panama City (his parents were Libyan refugees) before it became a Corporate Court protectorate and he's an Aztlan citizen. He's been on the payroll of the United Bank of Panama for years as a magical consultant and was on "release status"—whatever that means—until 2058.
- Zapatista

- He never goes anywhere without six highly trained bodyguards, all former Jaguar guards paid by the Consortium.
- Isabel

INDEPENDENTS

Independent diggers are also around, mostly grave robbers, treasure hunters and tomb raiders who rarely care what they're digging up as long as it's worth some cred. While they sometimes show remarkable historical knowledge about particular wrecks, tombs or sites, they emphasize sheer material worth or a given artifact's personal value for their client over any larger importance of their findings.

Independent operators tend to serve the many private collectors among the aristocracy and top corporate echelons. Some of these just want to have something others don't—a unique *objet d'art* to put on a wall or in a display case and brag about. There's a huge black market for stolen historical items. Some of the fences in this area keep virtual databanks of their stock (including certificates of authenticity), where potential buyers can order via the Matrix. Institutions like Europol and the FBI regularly hunt down these operations, and so the SANs switch locations daily. A small clientele of



collectors know exactly what they want and hire freelance archaeological experts to locate specific historical or mythical objects. And of course, some treasure hunters follow their own agenda.

Æther

Æther is quite the character—a sixteen-year-old Indian girl with unusual magical gifts. An uninitiated adept with the ability to astrally perceive, she seems to have an innate knack similar to psychometry for reading artifacts, persons and places. She also appears—I don't know how—to have overcome the barrier that prevents initiates from reading impressions more than a few decades back, meaning she gets impressions of places that may be thousands of years old.

- She comes from a long line of mystics. Her father is a fakir, her mother a psychic healer and her grandfather a yogi. Maybe it adds up.
- Raji

After finding an interesting spot, she normally sells the info to the highest bidder via direct online auction or through Asgard, or strips the place for herself. Her frequent companions include a Calcutta street samurai named Radscha, two hobgoblins and an Asian troll who do the physical work and protect her from attempts to abduct her and exploit her talent.

The Solomonists

This order of scholars seeks arcane enlightenment from ancient knowledge. A group of spiritualists who follow the hermetic teachings of King Solomon, they are largely dependent on freelance consultants to acquire old tomes or folios. Some say these guys were behind the Priory of Sion, while others claim that was a different group.

- What teachings are we talking about? Biblical teachings like wisdom and understanding? Or those described in books like the Goetia or the Testamentum Solomonis? The latter deal with demonology...
- Nocturne
- Both. They want a deeper understanding of the essence of the metaplanar expanses through the guidance of its native inhabitants, apparently including alien spirits that some people would call demons.
- Rei
- I'm sure the Vatican just loves these guys.
- Asphaltpapst

Thais

Several rumors have made the rounds lately about an entity known as Thais. Though we've never crossed paths, the stories claim Thais is a naga or some kind of mutation. His field of operations currently centers around Southeast Asia. From what I've heard, he's on friendly terms with the new rulers of

Angkor. What he's up to and why is anyone's guess, but he's said to be busy searching for potent artifacts in the jungles.

- Everybody who's seen him describes him as half-human, half-snake, with the lower part of the body being a snake tail. There's even a rumor that he physically clashed with the great feathered serpent Arleesh, though another version sez they just had conflicting business. They seem to share an interest in the same kinds of artifact, spirits know why.
- Gecko
- No one human could fight a great dragon and live. My bet is that he spreads that rumor to boost his rep.
- Duy uy Minh
- Maybe he's a drake-like mutant locked in the transformation process. Or maybe a magical changeling.
- Blastoma

MAGICAL GROUPS

To mundanes, magic groups can be a bit intimidating. The idea of a single magician who can wave his hands and kill you or turn you into a newt makes them a little nervous—a whole group of people like that is downright scary. Luckily, I have a few associates on that side of the mana ball who can dispel some myths—and reinforce some fears. I've known Marcel Black, a detective who specializes in the arcane, for years and have even used his services from time to time. When I started putting this file collection together, I asked him to weigh in on magical groups and to give a little background to help the newbies follow along.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:13:55 (PST)

by Marcel Black

If you're reading this, you're probably a junior wizbanger yourself, hoping to sign on with a group that will raise your talents to the next level. Or maybe you're a norm who's been spending time on Magicknet trying to get a scan on what this magic stuff is really about. Magic is intricate, and try as they might, those who lack the Gift will never understand it or the bonds it builds between those who use it. Magic users are social creatures, drawn to each other by a hunger to know more about magic.

Magical groups form because magic users want to get better at their craft. There's always a moment in your learning when your magic advances from street corner illusions to a serious art. We call that moment initiation. No matter your discipline, you're either initiated or you aren't. When I started out, I ran with a street gang. Anytime we got caught up, I'd hurl a powerball at the guys chasing us. We were unstoppable. Ignorance is bliss, isn't it? The first time I came up against a serious mage, I threw that same powerball I'd been slinging all those years—except this time, nothing happened. He just looked at me and smirked. Cyrus was his name. He took a step



forward and rolled up his sleeves. What followed was the worst whipping me and my crew ever took.

Believe it or not, that was the best day of my life. Cyrus took pity on me. He decided to clean me up and show me where magic could take me. Initiation felt like I'd been given the keys to my first car. I wasn't trapped in my box anymore. I could see everything magic had to offer. Having his group around me gave me the tools I needed to take what I wanted from my craft.

You can become an initiate without a group. You can also build a house on your own, but it's easier when you're part of a construction crew. Groups share a common bond, usually the type of magic they practice. Initiation is the fundamental reason for joining a group, but it isn't the only reason. Ritual magic, cooperative learning and even political advancement are all good reasons for hooking up.

There aren't enough megapulses in Shadowland to tell you about all the groups out there, so I'll keep my post to some general notes on magical societies and then I'll detail a handful I've dealt with over the years. I invite you all to fill us in on anything I've left out.

BEHIND THE WIZARD'S CURTAIN

For the past twenty years I've made my living learning all there is to know about mystical groups. I get hired by the groups themselves to research potential members and make sure these individuals are a good fit. On occasion, I get parents or prospective members who come to me to learn about how these organizations work and explain it to them. In all those years I learned enough about magical groups to know that I'll never join one again.

This is not to say that magical groups are inherently evil, or any of that kind of conspiracy hogwash. Not much in the Sixth World is so black and white. In truth, the many shades of gray make what I do necessary. In order to understand what kind of group you're dealing with, find out how large they are. Who are the key players? What rules do they expect you to follow? What happens to you if you don't follow them? And then there's the most important question, the one nobody ever asks: why did they come together in the first place?

Membership

Not every magical group is composed entirely of magically active individuals. Mundanes flock around the Awakened as if we're trid stars, drawn to the power and mystery that magic offers. Mundane members serve the order in their own way, usually with money or social or political influence.

- Is he saying you can join a magical order without being able to use magic?
- Zoot
- It's not the norm, but it isn't uncommon, either. In some circles, non-Awakened members are honorary members or followers of the group. These additional members come up with the funding needed to maintain facilities and practices without

having to seek out a patron. In return, honoraries can observe rituals, handle bureaucratic office matters and assist in research and other tasks. Sometimes they take on other tasks, like physical security. If the group is involved in secret projects or research, having mundanes who have undertaken oaths of loyalty to the group can be a bonus.

• Magister

I come from a large group, the Illuminates of the New Dawn (IOND). In my experience, large groups work differently than smaller grassroots organizations. A small group ordinarily is a close-knit bunch, often hesitant to let outsiders into their circle without a heavy dose of investigation beforehand. Larger groups don't have that luxury. Can you say you have four hundred close friends? Consequently, big groups end up establishing more formal policies on who can and cannot join.

The single biggest factor in group membership is your magical tradition. A shaman won't get into the Society of Archmagi. Likewise, there's no point in a man making a go at the Sisterhood of Ariadne. Sometimes other factors matter: age, income, education, etc. I got hired last year by an ork who wanted to know why he was denied entrance to a group of healing mages called the Bonesetters. He wanted to study healing magic and thought that group would be the place to start. It would've been perfect for him, had he been human. As I found out, the Bonesetters were sponsored by and supporters of Humanis. That little tidbit wasn't public information, nor was the group's anti-meta policy.

- Public groups like the Bonesetters try to avoid making their politically incorrect policies public. These groups rely on their public image to get their members jobs. Having their anti-meta stance publicized limits the companies that Bonesetter magicians can work for.
- People Watcher
- Prior corporate affiliation is another big requirement. It's hard for a Yakushima employee to get a spot in a group sponsored by Cross. The same goes for prior affiliation with certain political groups, but it's harder to understand. The Shamans of Shasta, for example, won't touch you if you've been involved with the Children of the Dragon.
- Kham
- That's because they know there's no such thing as the Great Dragon Spirit.
- Dragonslayer

Once you've cleared the basic hurdles, the remaining hoops you need to jump through depend on who you're signing on with. They may involve a test of your abilities, background and reference checks or even magical mind scans if the group is paranoid enough. Some groups don't even take applicants; they go out and find potential recruits on their own, sometimes with mystic guidance.



- Some groups consult their Avatar before letting new members in.
- Magister

The Illuminates of the New Dawn let me in because a member in good standing sponsored me. Normally, street punks don't get to be in the IOND. Even with member backing, I had to pass two tests: one written, the other a display of my abilities. For that last one, I had to show them something other than my trusty powerball—I had to show them something that required control and finesse. That test taught me that, large or small, members of magical groups want to know what you can bring to the table and how you can help them grow.

- Or how they can exploit your talents to turn you into something that helps them get what they want.
- Conspir-I-See

My order is fairly typical of large groups in the ways members interact. I don't know everyone in the IOND or even everyone in the FDC office. I only dealt with the ten or so people that my mentor, Cyrus, hung around with. I knew who the other people were, but it was like being in high school. You saw them around, but you sat at your own table. Large groups are really just a collection of cliques, and if you know anything about cliques, you know that they don't play well with others.

Small groups aren't better, just different. In a small group, all the members know each other and are expected to assist each other in rituals and research. This can be tough, especially if you don't get along with certain members. Also, small groups tend to look for people who can fill specific roles in the hierarchy. For example, a group may need an enchanter or a shaman skilled at summoning a certain type of spirit.

Organization

On paper, everything comes down to who has the biggest bang, meaning the highest-grade initiates hold the top positions. Take a closer look, though, and you'll be amazed how these things really work. Usually a select few savvy members dictate how the group functions. Just as well-placed executives can tear down a megacorp, so a charismatic or affluent member can shape an Awakened organization.

Larger organizations usually care more about structure than smaller ones do. A group like the Hermetic Order of the Auric Aurora has a clear-cut hierarchy marked with titles and badges of office. You know which circle of mages is in charge and you're expected to cater to them, assisting with simple magical tasks such as overwatch during a summoning. Leaders watch for these things. They like to know you can follow orders and keep secrets. In fact, they look for that when they're deciding whether or not to move you to that next level.

- Magical groups lean toward cooperative leadership. One person may be at the top, but a council does most of the heavy lifting. Major decisions are made by vote and punishments are doled out by the guilty party's mentor. The top peo-

ple in the group spend their hours improving their skills, researching and seeking funding for the group.

- D Bunker

- Organization can also be tradition-based. A coven that operates as a consensus-based collective has a different way of doing things than a shamanic order, who act more like a loose network of individuals. Neither of those will have much in common with a centralized elemental guild. Personally, I prefer groups where your education is based on your own initiative and commitment, rather than dictated step-by-step from above (and where you may be denied promotion for political reasons).
- Silicon Mage

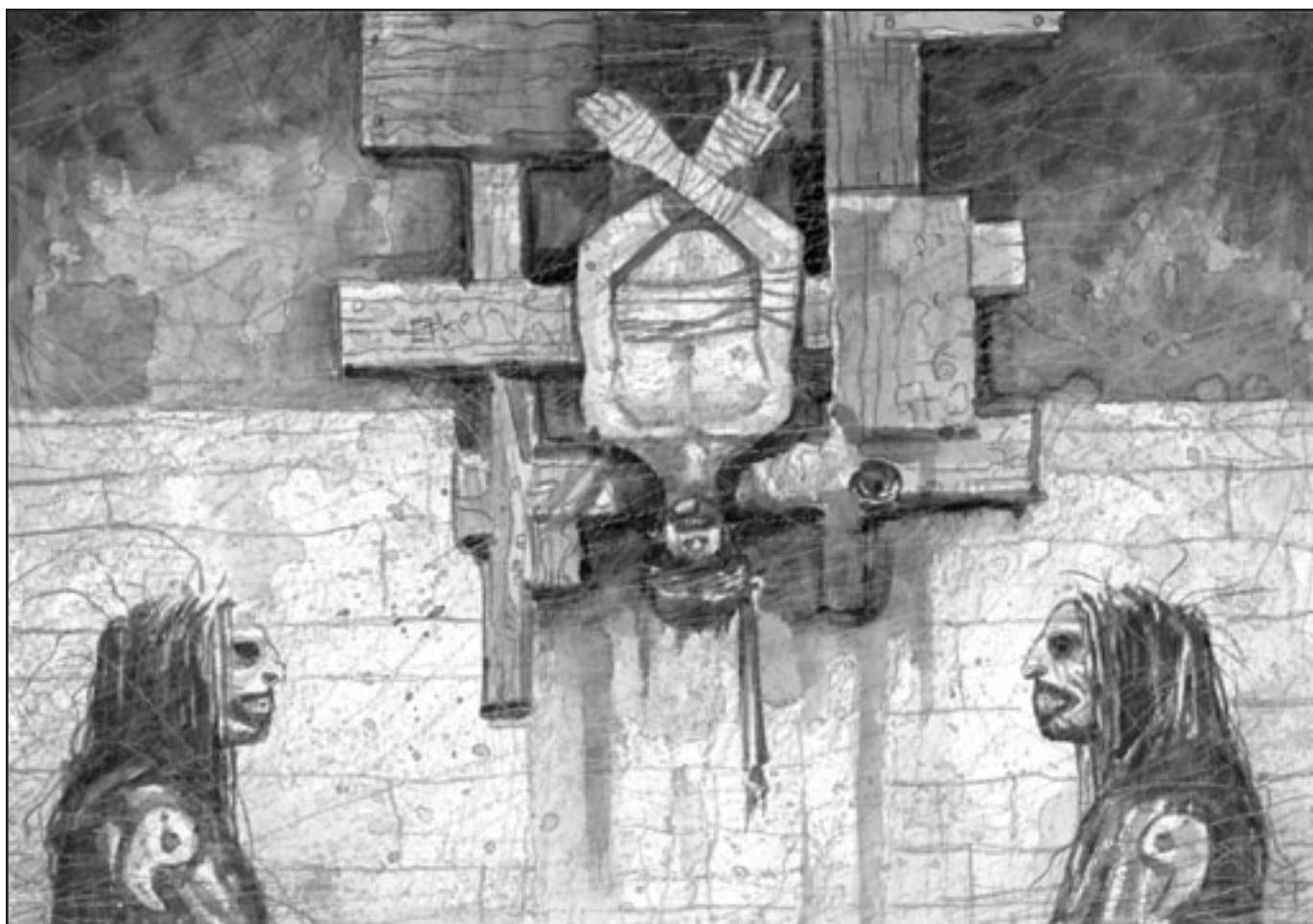
In simsense games, when you reach a certain level of knowledge, you automatically advance to the next rank. Not so in real life, my friends. To go places in the real world, you need to prove you deserve higher rank more than the guy next to you does. The competition gets even harder if the guy next to you is somebody's nephew. Nepotism is as big a deal in magical groups as it is in organized crime families and corporations. Rank often goes to somebody's son or daughter, especially in corp-sponsored groups. That means you have to be ten times better at what you do than somebody's relative in order to get the position. It's also about who you know. I tried for years to win a ranking position with the Illuminates, but the people in charge back then didn't care too much for my mentor. That meant that I wasn't going anywhere until a couple of folks above me disappeared.

- It's common for certain members of a group to be blacklisted based on the people with whom they associate. It doesn't have to be other group members, either. Germany's Dr. Faustus Society looks down on members who associate with shadowrunners. They won't kick you out, but you'll end up last in line for promotions.
- Hierophant

In a magical group, rank means the same as it does anywhere else. The higher your rank, the more access you have to secret techniques, formulae, ancient lore and even metamagical techniques. Trust me when I say it's good to stay in the dark sometimes. When I finally moved up the Illuminates' chain of command, I learned real quickly that I'd been better off where I was. Those secrets carry responsibilities that not everyone is cut out to bear.

Smaller groups rely less on rank and more on how long you've been with them. Trust takes time, so it may be a while before your group lets you in on all its private matters. Small groups are also usually free-form, where each member of the group has an equal voice.

Lots of groups appoint a mentor for new members, someone who practices the same discipline as the newbie. The mentor's job is to show the new member how the organization works, and he or she also frequently initiates the new member into the group.



Magical Strictures and Customs

Any time a client asks me what the big deal is with magical strictures, I tell them about Jane. She had a real tough time finding a coven and ended up joining the first one she ran across, despite not agreeing with some of their rules. She took her oath and assumed that if she stepped out of line once in a while, no one would be the wiser. A couple of weeks later, Jane comes to me, hoping I can find her a way out from her bind. See, Jane didn't read the fine print.

Every magical group has customs, whether it's helping the sick, wearing the "special" robes to group rituals or not feeding the loa on Mondays. Some are traditions, some are just "guidelines" and others are hard rules that you'll be expelled (or worse) for breaking. Some customs, however, are essential to the groups' magical integrity—we'll call these *strictures*—and violating them will cause a world of problems. Not only will other members of the group be able to read the betrayal in your aura like a scarlet letter, but it might interfere with your ability to initiate and may even piss off the group's avatar. I've heard rumors of worse happening as well—more than one Triad member has "spontaneously combusted" the minute they violated a stricture. In Jane's case, she broke a stricture by giv-

ing magical aid to a non-Wiccan, and they told her the only way to make it right was to take a geas.

- Customs range from the mundane, like "loyalty to the corporation" (retch), to the bizarre, like performing a weekly ritual on Fridays at 3 a.m., stark naked. So it's a good idea to find out a group's customs beforehand.
- Night Angel
- For rule-breaking on a slightly less fundamental level, I've heard of other punishments such as heavy fines, temporary restriction of magical practices, even doing penance in certain religious orders.
- BlackStone

One common custom, especially among secretive groups, is a requirement for members to hand over a material link. This gives them a part of you that they can use to find you at any time should you go missing, or to harm you if you do something that threatens them. Other groups commonly require an oath upon joining. An oath is binding, so it's important to locate a group that matches what you believe in. Once you



pledge your loyalty to a group, you're expected to stand by your words, no matter what the sacrifice.

- That's chip truth. I spent some time with a group called Stewards of Lemuria. When I took the oath, I thought these guys were just a bunch of shamans interested in furthering their craft. The longer I stayed, the more I learned about them. After a while it turned my stomach just to hear the kind of drek they were getting into.

- Abeline

- And that was?

- Twist

- Trust me, chummer, you'd rather not know.

- Abeline

- Getting out of some orders is as hard as getting in. Once they've opened up their vault of knowledge to you, they don't want you giving their secrets away to just anybody. I've heard of groups demanding a material link after you leave, to make sure you keep your mouth shut.

- Goblin-Boy

A lot of groups I've dealt with see themselves as a brotherhood. This means that if any member needs assistance, the others are obligated to help out as best they can. Fall short in this, and the whole group comes down on you.

- I've seen this in action. One of the Damaru Michi got arrested outside a club in Snohomish. Two other members were nearby when it happened and only one made a move to prevent the arrest. After the cops were down, the two Damaru walked over to the one who hadn't helped and gave him the same treatment they gave the police.

- Talon

- It could have been a test. Some groups test potential members to see if they have what it takes to live by the rules.

- Angeleno

- Sounds more like a gang than a magic group.

- Shadow

- Who said you can't be both?

- Angeleno

Not all groups are that close-knit, however. Early on in my career, I ran for and against Aqua Arcana when one member of that group hired me to find out what another member was researching. When I came back with the info, the Johnson asked if I'd do the run to pull the guy's data. Clearly, he wasn't in a brotherhood state of mind. Infighting can get pretty serious in some organizations. Backstabbing, literal as well as figurative, isn't out of the ordinary if your group is big enough for

you to get away with it. It's especially common to see internal struggles in research-based organizations, where how much funding you get depends on how good your magic is.

- Reminds me of a run I did in the NAN. Two university shamans were presenting to the board for the same grant. One hired me to "indefinitely delay" the other the day presentations were due.

- Bester

The interesting thing about customs is that they can change according to who the key players are. An influential member or patron runs into a custom he doesn't like and boom it's gone overnight, only to be replaced by a new one when another top mage gets his under-robies in a bundle. Take the Knights of Rage: time was you had to be a London street ganger in order to pledge to the Knights. Once Celedyr stepped in, the group dropped that rule.

- I've known groups to add new customs to support a specific agenda. Some time back, I spotted a news scan that said several UTA members were arrested under suspicion of talislegging. Right after that, the United Talismongers Association added an oath of silence to their long list of customs.

- Winterhawk

Avatars

The subject of avatars is Doctor of Thaumaturgy territory, so I have to confess I don't have a good handle on it. I can only tell you what happened when I initiated and draw conclusions from there. When I reached out to the astral, something there met me that had no form—it was just a woman's voice, and it seemed to come from everywhere. She nurtured me through every step of the initiation process. I felt like I was touching God. I've been told the experience is different for every person. Shamans tell me this Lady's voice was my spirit guide. They also say your spirit guide comes to you in a form you can understand. Mine came as something I needed: a mother figure.

The details may differ, but every initiate experiences something like what I went through. I've heard of avatars that took the form of dead relatives, talking trees, cold blue light and swarms of insects. In the cold light of science, my best guess is that an avatar is an astral being created by the link between group members.

- Avatars exist independent of any known group. They appear to the self-initiated and the group-initiated equally. The thing that sets a group's avatar apart from an individual's is the commonality of what the avatar spirit holds as valuable. A group's avatar embodies what the group believes in. An individual's avatar is much like a totem, composed of the individual's higher ideals.

- Magister





Patrons and Resources

A group's ability to help its members depends largely on their available resources. Magic requires money, for teslas, research space or just a soyburger to tide you over between spells. If your group doesn't have much cred in the bank, then they probably don't have the type of library you need in order to learn or work advanced magic, or they don't have the garden space to grow herbs for shamanic rituals. If you've ever tried to pay for an elemental summoning on your own, then you know how expensive magic can get.

Groups try to cover these expenses with membership dues, but even with mundanes on the roster, the take may be too small to make ends meet. One way of handling the problem is to recruit a wealthy patron. Magical groups are sponsored by everyone from socialite billionaires to megacorps—even dragons and benevolent spirits occasionally kick down donations because they're interested in watching us try to figure this magic thing out. Patrons that supply significant percentages of a group's coffers usually expect to exercise some influence over the group's customs and pursuits, so most groups choose their patrons wisely. The Shamans of Shasta, for example, pledged an oath of loyalty to the great dragon Hestaby, and so must make a yearly pilgrimage to her home on Mt. Shasta.

Patrons aren't an issue for people like you and me. Hestaby isn't going to float down from her mountain and share my cigarette. She deals directly with her group's leaders. The only way you'll deal with a patron is if you find yourself on the wrong end of a shadowrun directed toward an asset they own. If so, you'll probably end up out of the group, or worse.

- Nothing comes for free. Your group is indebted to those who fund you, which leads to complications such as your patron demanding spell services and even shadowruns from group members.
- Sprig

• On the other hand, magic is in high demand, so groups can get away with bossing around their backers and patrons. I've seen it happen from time to time with certain groups sponsored by Ares. A group decides they've had enough of following the corporate code and steps outside the box, and it ends up costing Ares a lot more in funding to bring the group back in line.

- Squire

ILLUMINATES OF THE NEW DAWN

High Magus: Dr. Rozilyn Hernandez

Grand Lodge: Federal District of Columbia

The Illuminates have been around longer than magic. Not until I rose higher in the order did I learn that the group is an offshoot of the Order of Illuminati that dates back to the 1800s. The name changed, but the message didn't. If you've read *Legacy of the American Dream* by Dr. Rozilyn Hernandez, then you've had a taste of the Illuminates'

rhetoric. Membership is limited to hermetics. IOND members consider shamanism and other magical traditions to be lesser disciplines stifled by unenlightened rituals and beliefs.

Illuminate means "enlightened person," and in *Legacy*, Dr. Hernandez explains that the world should be run by "those enlightened enough to lead it." She means mages, herself in particular. IOND stands behind her magocratic progressivism—as part of your oath of service, you're told to agree to government run by the magi, for the magi.

- Mr. Black speaks out of turn. Magocrats believe that magi should have a fair hand in how our government is run, as opposed to the corporate machine that has shaped our way of life for the past century.

- Sunburst

Organization

The Illuminates are fascinated by structure, and their own is very systematic. On one hand, you have the Outer Order, a sort of policlub composed almost entirely of mundane supporters (about 3,000), followed by the lowest-ranking uninitiated magicians, called Novitiates. The ladder continues upward all the way to Magus, with plenty of secrets to learn and palms to grease along the way. Each branch of the group is led by a Magus, forming a Magus Council, which is in turn headed by High Magus Hernandez. Estimates place the Inner Order at around 500-700 members, give or take.

Once upon a time, you had to be a member of the New Century Party to join the Outer Order, but that custom was dropped when the NCP ran into some problems the IOND didn't want to be associated with. Nowadays, the key to membership is having significant social or economic power. Members pay exorbitant dues for the privilege of saying they're a supporter of the magical aristocracy. Non-Awakened members can even receive honoraria in the first three magical rankings: Novitiate, Minerval and Magistrate.

When a new mage joins the Inner Order, a Magistrate is appointed as a mentor. All IOND initiates are part of one mentor circle or another, and often that's where problems start. Members end up divided into factions based on who mentored them. When infighting occurs, it's easy to follow the line of mages and discover whose disciples are in charge of the chapter office.

I can't tell you what I learned from being a Magistrate. I am no longer bound by my oath, but the Illuminates have a material link they can use against me if I speak. I know there are rooms I've never seen in the basement of the Illuminates' mansion, because those doors only open for those accepted as a true Illuminatus. That title contains three ranks that make up what members call "the higher mysteries:" Lesser Illuminatus, Master Illuminatus and Magus.

- There's lots of speculation about what the Illuminates have locked away in those basements: vaults filled with arcane artifacts, powerful free spirits bound in massive summoning circles, a secret bug spirit hive, or one of the most well-stocked alchemical workshop in the world, depending on which con-



spiracy freak you ask.

- Cynic

IOND members are taught to believe that a mage's first responsibility is to those who practice magic. In the oath of service, members pledge to "elevate the science of magic above all else." The organization comes before friends or family and its secrets should be carried to the grave. Above all, IOND is a fraternity of those who believe in magocratic progressivism. The Illuminates are dedicated to fostering knowledge of the magical arts, but they aren't dedicated to sharing that knowledge.

- IOND isn't all bad. They've created a lot of opportunities for mages and those interested in understanding magic. The group has an international scholarship fund that covers the education costs of nearly three dozen hermetic students each year. After the 2057 election fallout, IOND's message has been that technology and magic should work hand in hand to bring all of us into the next age.

- BethSheba

The IOND has been on a membership push recently, swelling its ranks and opening new lodges in Los Angeles, Prague and Singapore, to join those already existing in the UCAS, CAS, Denver, France and Australia. The order views its message as an international crusade, and would love for its message to reach the entire Awakened world.

- The IOND has a yearly meeting for the entire Inner Order, to set group policies and recognize new initiates, but even the Grand Lodge's massive Foggy Bottom estate can't fit the membership any more. They're considering moving it to the Hilton in downtown DeeCee—highly interesting, given its proximity to the Dunkelzahn Rift.

- Scarlet Rat

- A Council decision in 2060 made it illegal for the IOND to operate within Tir Tairngire's borders. The group has been lobbying to be let in, but it doesn't seem like the princes will change their policy anytime soon.

- Mage-o-matic

Dr. Rozilyn Hernandez

Among the magically "enlightened," Dr. Hernandez is known as a guru. I know her as a despot, an arrogant elitist who's convinced she knows what's best for the world. She's still serving double duty as head of the New Century Party, but she's slowly being drawn apart by the different directions these orgs are heading in. She's in danger of losing control of both if she doesn't act soon, but there's no telling which she'll choose. Already she's facing increased challenges from the Magus Council regarding her decisions. I can't prove it, but I suspect Dr. Roz has recently been strong-arming members in order to retain control over the council.

- The Magus Council appoints the High Magus. It's supposed to be a rotating office, but Hernandez is the only one ever to hold the post.

- Magister

- Rumor has it that Hernandez arranged to have the Denver branch leader killed in order to put someone on the Magus Council that would vote with her. Last month, that seat fell to Jason Banderman, Hernandez's head of security during the 2057 election.

- Denver Digger

Dr. Alaura Mayeaux

A quiet woman who prefers spirits to people, Alaura isn't the kind of person you'd expect to see running an elitist magical order. When I met her at the FDC office, I mistook her for a fellow novice. She doesn't carry herself with the swagger that other magi do. Nevertheless, she is a Magus and head of the Paris branch of the IOND.

Alaura learned magic at the Cannes Institute, but moved to the UCAS to join the FDC branch of the IOND. I worked with her for a time, studying paranormal hot spots. She was always more interested in research than in playing politics, and is a recognized expert in the field. The Draco Foundation contacted her first to assist in examining Dunkelzahn's Rift. After that, Alaura became a bit of a local celebrity. When reporters came around asking about the inner workings of the IOND, they went to Alaura, not Dr. Hernandez. And what Alaura had to say usually went against what the New Century Party stood for. It wasn't long before Alaura got booted upstairs out of FDC to run the Paris branch.

- Why appoint her as a branch head? She didn't do anything to deserve it.

- Camden

- Because that's how much it cost to shut her up. Mayeaux is almost as popular among rank-and-file Illuminates as Hernandez is. Moreover, she's well respected by those outside the order. When she started mouthing off about how twisted New Century was, people listened.

- People Watcher

- There may be another reason. Mayeaux earned her reputation through extensive study of Brittany's mists, and is one of the few humans who appear unaffected by it. Having her in place as the head of the French branch gives her the opportunity to continue those studies, while IOND reaps the benefits of her findings.

- Dream

Kevin MacNamara

This one's a shrewd individual. Only with the Illuminates for three years, he's already been offered the Boston branch to lead—not because of his magic, but because of his lineage.



MacNamara is a birth member of Tir na nOg's Danaan families, but too far removed from the eldest sons to hold any real power. The Magus Council hopes that his connection to the Danaan Families will enable the IOND to eventually open an office in Dublin. Negotiations are already underway, with the IOND offering to help investigate the magical storms plaguing parts of the country.

- Kevin Mac is a talented mage, but an even more gifted politician, with ties to the Seelie Court. But he faces a challenge in gaining the IOND a foothold in a territory that does not give aid and comfort to outside magical groups.
- Sinéad F
- Somebody firebombed the Boston IOND office the day MacNamara took over. Rumor is the Knights of the Red Branch were expressing their discontent.
- Padraig

VOICE OF OGOUN

Time was, the Voice of Ogoun was the largest and most popular Voudoun group around. Then the UCAS President-elect Dunkelzahn died and everything went to hell. Listening to Dunkelzahn's bequest of all those talon clippings reminded me of watching a car wreck. Maybe it was the dragon's plan all along to see the Voice torn apart by its own greed—because that's what happened. The dragon gave a year's worth of talon clippings to the leader of the Voice—except there was no leader, and suddenly everybody started scrambling up the ladder to claim that title. A lot of well respected hounsans died over the next six years. By 2063, the field had narrowed down to two contenders: Claude-Michel Flaubert, the mojo man from Trinidad, or Justin Rochefort, the shaman from the Big Easy.

The two men met only once, outside a temple on the shore of St. Eustatius, where Rochefort challenged Flaubert to a show of power. Accounts differ, but the most widespread goes this way. As if on command, the loa Ogoun himself mounted Flaubert. Speaking through him, the spirit claimed Rochefort could not summon any of the loa. Rochefort tried to summon a loa of his own, but none came. Flaubert then branded his rival a bocor, accusing him of conjuring shedim and saying that all the loa had turned away from him because of it. But no one listened. In fact, the whole incident strengthened Rochefort's position. He claimed Flaubert had used black magic to cut him off from the loa and said such a man could not be trusted. A week later, Draco Foundation President Nadja Daviar stepped in, declared Justin Rochefort the leader of the Voice and turned over the talon clippings.

Rochefort didn't live long enough to claim his prize, though. His plane fell from the sky somewhere over the CAS. There were no survivors. Rochefort's aide, Marcus Cross, was named his successor, but he was promptly arrested by Houston authorities for "conspiring to reanimate the dead" and placed in "protective custody." He remains jailed to this day, despite a set of charges that are thinner than monowire.

- Voice members have made every effort short of an all-out attack on the facility to release Cross. The CAS isn't budging, though. Meanwhile, the Draco Foundation holds onto the clippings and the Voice continues to tear itself apart.
- Mystic

By the time the dust settled, the Voice was permanently divided into two factions. The majority recognized Flaubert as the chosen leader. A smaller dissident offshoot rallied around the imprisoned Cross. Nowadays, this bunch calls themselves the Voice of Agwe.

- Agwe is the spirit of the water and the chosen spirit of voodoo pirates, which is what Flaubert was before leading the Voice of Ogoun. The choice of name is probably a slam on Flaubert and his claim to leadership.
- Diana Nocturna
- The Yardies, a British voodoo cult, has greatly influenced Flaubert's supporters and gave them plenty of funding in the overall group's civil war. The relationship between the Yardies and the rump Voice of Ogoun is described as a partnership these days, which represents a reversal of previous Voice policy toward the Yardies.
- Blackstone

Organization

Those who follow the Voice must be believers in voodoo and must accept the so-called "Five Conditions:" no speaking ill of the head hounsan, a promise to follow the head hounsan's leadership, no disrespect of one's parents, no adultery and no slander of a fellow hounsan.

- Those who violate any of the Five Conditions are kicked out of the group ... after the rest of the members torture them to make sure they understand the error of their ways.
- White Hat

Even reduced to a faction of a once-larger organization, the Voice of Ogoun is more than a magical group in the Caribbean. It's also the physical manifestation of a religion in which a large percentage of local people believe. The order is structured like a church. Among other things, hounsans and their female counterparts, called mambos, are required to hold services for non-Awakened believers. Members of the initiate group within the Voice are on equal footing, save for the head hounsan, who outranks the others.

- The present system is a shadow of what it was. With the two sides at war, members have rallied around the strongest hounsans. Cross' people have split into war parties desperate to recruit new hounsans, while Flaubert's people are carrying on like it's business as usual.
- The Gingerbread Man



- CAS authorities are still keeping a close eye on the Voice's activities, both to squash any more infighting but also to stop any dealings with shedim or zombies.
- Tex-Mex

Claude-Michael Flaubert

Flaubert is an ork who led the Shango Tribe of Trinidad before rising to power in the Voice. A vicious man, he's known for summoning Shango and Agwe in particular, so for Ogoun to mount him came as quite a shock. It had never happened before that day, and hasn't happened since. Flaubert keeps in contact with Ogoun and the other loa through the flock of serviteurs that always stays at his side.

- Since the beginning of the conflict, Flaubert has grown heavily dependent on his serviteurs. He doesn't make a move without consulting the loa first.
- Magician XX

Marcus Cross

A charismatic individual, Cross learned his craft in his native Houston. His power to persuade people is such that his imprisonment only expanded the number of his supporters. From what I've seen, compromise isn't possible

between Cross and Flaubert. They'll insist on settling the matter in blood.

- The case against Cross is a complete sham, and whoever Flaubert bribed to make it happen will have to drop it soon. Cross is already laying the groundwork to challenge Flaubert, but if I was him I'd concentrate on avoiding any unfortunate prison "accidents."
- Caribbean Red

GOLDEN ACORN SOCIETY

Leader: Yee Chan

Headquarters: Buddhist Temple, Oroville, CalFree

Like the Voice of Ogoun, this group was hardly on the map until Dunkelzahn's will came out and the Golden Acorn's leader, Yee Chan, received the Tome of Terrin from Dunkelzahn's estate. The Draco Foundation did a full workup on the book before they handed it over. According to my contacts, the book is an Italian military manual similar to Sun-Tzu's famous treatise, *The Art of War*. It describes highly secret martial arts techniques.

- I can vouch for that. I'm not one to brag about my failures, but this one's instructive. Awhile back, my partner and I were



hired to intercept a shipment of guns going into San Francisco. We pulled the truck over and made the driver get out. The second his feet hit the ground, he was all over us. His moves looked like a cross between aikido and capoeira. I'm no slouch in the martial arts department, and my partner has the best skillwires money can buy, but the guy bounced around so much we couldn't lay a hand on him. Next thing you know, we're lying on the side of the road with pounding heads and lots of new bruises, staring at taillights.

- Kennerman

- Those guns you're talking about were going to the Metahuman People's Army. Yee Chan's been supporting the resistance against General Saito since the beginning. He uses his adepts as couriers to ship weapons to the metas.

- Buzz

The Golden Acorn Society also runs a martial arts school, which I found out about by walking in the front door. Anyone can join the Golden Acorn Society, and as long as you pay your dues, you can train with the classes. If you want to get into the magical group, however, you have to pass some tests—and it helps to be an adept. I could only get members to 'fess up about the first challenge, a test of combat ability. Wannabe initiates have to defeat the lowest-ranked member of the order in a duel. I couldn't get anyone to talk about what the other tests involved. Chan's people keep a tight lid on data he doesn't want outsiders to know about.

- The second challenge is a test of stealth. Applicants must shadow an individual of Sensei Chan's choosing for an entire day while Golden Acorn members shadow them in turn. If the subject notices the applicant, the test ends in failure.

- Arlo

The Golden Acorn Society follows the ranking and culture of Japanese aikido. Yee Chan is the sensei; all other members rank below him according to belt color. Society members follow three key rules: attendance, obedience and dedication. All initiates must attend the weekly training sessions held by Chan at the dojo. On school grounds, members must wear the traditional martial arts uniform and must follow the instructions of those ranked higher than they. Initiated members teach martial arts for the school. The fees paid for those classes keeps the school and the order running.

- Unlike other organizations, non-Awakened members participate in Chan's hierarchy. A mundane black belt can hold higher rank than a new initiate, but the initiate will eventually surpass the mundane in rank and ability.

- Dancer

Yee Chan

Chan is a self-taught somatic adept of the Invisible Way. My people in California tell me he made his living running the Golden Dragon gang until he'd put together enough money

to open his own dojo. At that point, back in 2031, Chan turned the gang leadership over to his lieutenants and started training local metahumans to defend themselves.

- The Golden Dragons were a minor gang that served as muscle for the Triads in Macao. The Triads weren't pleased that Chan was training outsiders, but they still respect him and keep in contact to this day.

- Nightfire

- A KSAF reporter linked the Golden Acorn Society to Hestaby's Shamans of Shasta Lodge. The reporter had evidence that the two groups were working together, targeting members of Saito's regime. Funny thing—her news report never made it to the air. Someone broke into the station and wiped out the files. Wiped clean her home files as well.

- News Hound

- The Golden Acorns aren't even on Saito's radar yet. He's more concerned with attacks by the MPA, Hestaby and now the UN's involvement—as he should be. When Acorns come for Saito, he'll know it.

- Sojourner

Yee Chan hasn't left his school since receiving the Tome of Terrin. Some think he's trying to unlock the secrets of the Tome, while others claim he's sworn to protect it and is faithfully guarding it against others (rumors say there have been two attempts to steal it so far). Still others suggest that Chan is not studying, but is rigorously training his top initiates in the Tome's techniques until they have mastered them. Then again, his path is the Invisible Way, so Chan may actually be at large as we speak ...

DR. FAUSTUS SOCIETY

President: Andrew Brimmer

Headquarters: Frankfurt, AGS

I encountered this group in the Frankfurt metroplex while helping an executor track down a client's next of kin. The person I sought was said to be a fledgling mage with a lot of raw talent but no discipline. A friend put me in touch with the Dr. Faustus Society. I explained my situation to them and in less than fifteen minutes my rundown was standing in front of me.

- Lucky call. He just happened to get in touch with someone who happened to know his target.

- Incognito

- Don't be so sure. You can't cast a spell in Frankfurt without the Society knowing who you were aiming at. They have their hands in everything magical down there—and I do mean everything.

- Silicon Mage

Turns out the Faustus Society is geared toward assisting mages like the one I was looking for. They have agents on the streets and at the universities, all looking for talented young



men and pointing them in the right direction. The group has spread like wildfire over the years, and now their reach extends from the Czech Republic all the way to the UK. It all looked on the up-and-up when I met them, so naturally I decided to dig deeper.

- Young men? No women?
- Curious George

• Got that right. Faustus is a boys' club. I've seen them walk into a school and pick out the top male mage without even glancing at a woman who's three times better. No gir-ulz allowed!

- Valkyrie

• Odd that an order would name itself after a man who sold his soul to the devil.

- Rim Runner

• Scan your Dr. Faustus chip all the way to the end, Rim Runner. In the very last scene, the chorus talks about his lost potential. We exist to prevent such a loss from happening.

- Devil's Paw

• Yeah—to a bunch of dumb guys. Guess us womenfolk just know better ...

- Valkyrie

AG Chemie Europa sponsors the Dr. Faustus Society, which evolved from a Heidelberger University student fraternity called Burschenschaft. The founding fathers went on to work for AGC and decided to give back to future students by forming the Faustians. The connection between AGC and Faustus is public knowledge. Despite the fact that Faustians work for many of Europe's top corporations, no one seems particularly threatened by that relationship.

Faustus is on the books as a nonprofit organization. It has a president and a board of directors, the latter chosen from Germany's top magical institutions. AG Chemie selected the current president, Andrew Brimmer. From everything I can tell, Brimmer is as clean as clean gets. He comes from a wealthy family and only deals with those in a similar position. The guy's never worked a day in his life—nor will he, if the family pile is anything to judge by. Brimmer is what the Brits call an "old boy," and the Dr. Faustus Society is an example of the old boy network at its best. Almost every German university with a magic program has a Faustus Society member on the board.

• The best example of Faustians in high places is Prof. Dr. Horatius von Neurath, dean of Heidelberger University and a high-ranking retroalchemist. He represents the darker side of the Faustus Society, being what those on the other side of the world might call a black mage. He dabbles with shedim and other

monstrosities, all in a quest for alleged scientific knowledge.

- Wichita Cathedral

• The deep involvement of Faustians in business and education has become a problem for groups like the New Druidic Movement, whose members are treated by Faustians like second-class citizens. The Druids are fighting back, focusing their influence on companies that hire Faustians and really making them re-evaluate their hiring choices.

- Spell Sinner

Customs

The Dr. Faustus Society is a fraternity dedicated to discovering and training new hermetics. As part of their initiation, members take an oath of service to the society, which includes a promise to assist new mages in getting started with their studies. The group sponsors study circles of talented young mages and picks its members from the best the circles have to offer.

• Study circles? You mean like a library group or something?

- McCray

• Study circles are formed in colleges by groups of mages who believe in the same set of academic magical theories and paradigms. These study partners rely on each other for assistance in their magical training. The groups sometimes evolve into more than a bunch of friends exchanging information and become full-blown ritual groups. The founders of Faustus started as a study circle and later turned their magical beliefs into the influential powerhouse we all know today.

- Synner

• Anyone know the wording of this oath?

- Incognito

• Not repeating the oath to non-members is one of the rules, as is a prohibition against female members.

- Warlock

• That isn't entirely true. On rare occasions, they've let a woman join, but she must show exceptional abilities and must earn her own way. None of the very few lady Faustians have ever received a scholarship from the group.

- She-devil

Faustians generally come off as elitists. They look down on most ordinary ways of making a living, and of course regard shadowrunning as beyond the pale. A Faustian is expected to become a university thaumaturgist or to find a high-dollar corporate research position. The bylaws require Faustians to give a portion of their incomes back to the society in order to fund scholarships and other activities.



- It's considered taboo to act against AGC in any capacity. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.
- Devil's Paw

- Faustus also has a custom of helping its members into positions in their fields. If you're a Faustian and another Faustian is applying for a position with your company, you're expected to help them get hired.
- Prof. M

- Faustus has been banging heads lately with the Corps Astralia Jenense, a student society of mages they regard as upstarts. Two CAJ mages recently got arrested for vandalizing a Faustus member's home after they summoned an earth elemental to redecorate the living room. It sounds like student vs. teacher immaturity, but when mages are involved, it's a bit more serious.
- Madame Greer

- The CAJ is a glorified gang. They bestow rank based on the number of facial scars they've earned through ritual or battle.
- Dark Skye

The Hans Bruhl Story

A detective has to trust his sources, so I'm going to let this story loose. Bruhl was an orphan living near the Black Forest Troll Kingdom. Sometime before his sophomore year of high school, he disappeared. His story was all over the trideo, but nobody could find a trace of the kid. Seven years later, he showed up at the University of Cologne and enrolls in Thaumaturgy. No explanation of where he was or how he survived off the radar for that long. It took him just two years to finish his doctorate in magical theory, during which time he joined the Faustians and promptly began lobbying *against* AGC's ecology violations along the Rhine River. The kid's voice carried, and before long he had the left-wing Independent German Socialist's Party (USPD) cheering his name.

Here's where it gets crazy. While the USPD made moves to elect Bruhl as their spokesman, information started to leak about where he might have been all those years ago. My sources have evidence that he was living with the great dragon Klatenstein.

- Believe it or not? It's been rumored for years that the dragon recruits metahuman agents to push his agenda. Six other kids disappeared around the same time Bruhl did. None of them have resurfaced yet.
- Moscobyte

So if he's a student of Klatenstein's, why would he join Faustus? Good question. The Faustians can be as strong of a political force as the Illuminates of the New Dawn, maybe even more so because they represent so much of the German magical industry. All it takes is one person to harness that

energy. Bruhl is well-liked among his peers, and his magical theories are breathtaking. Maybe someone finally decided to make use of the political weight Faustus can muster.

LOCUS ELEMENTUM

CEO: Goro Sasaki

Headquarters: Tokyo, Japan

At first glance, this organization looks more like a start-up corporation than a magical group. Their headquarters takes up three floors in a downtown Tokyo high-rise. Instead of robes and chalk circles, you'll find members at the office wearing suits, sitting behind a computer desk and scanning the World News Report. These things make more sense, however, when you realize that Locus is Renraku Corporation's interdisciplinary magical research arm. Renraku founded the group in 2056, but it otherwise acts with some autonomy outside of Renraku's traditional structure and management style.

- Locus likes to portray itself as an indie corp, and to some degree it is. Someone at Renraku was smart enough to realize that to promote innovation means that you sometimes have to ease up on your grip. But you know the biz being done is in the best interests of the parent corporation, and Locus can't step too far out of line without getting a smackdown.
- Corp Watcher

If you've had problems with Renraku in the past, think twice before joining up with Locus. Potential members, sub-contractors and clients get run through Renraku computers, and if a flag pops up on your file, expect to find the Red Samurai sitting on your doorstep in the morning. Locus Elementum is a vested interest, kept profitable for Renraku by the money it generates on patents, licensing, new products and the high fees for services its members demand. Understandably, Renraku likes to keep a close watch on its investment.

- The group also represents a talent pool that Renraku doesn't want to see polluted.
- The Analog Shaman

Locus's structure and work is divided into four magical discipline areas, or "elements:" hermetic, shamanic, somatic adept and wuxing. Each element focuses on projects related to their tradition, led by a "steward" project leader. The group's pool of actual employees/members is rather small, with only a few members of each respective tradition—Locus is very selective about new members. Applicants are only accepted if they can perform a major service for the group—for example, publishing innovative new magical research, devising a new spell formula or acquiring any magical item deemed rare or highly valuable. Locus focuses on innovation and the bottom line—they're only interested in people who will ultimately help Renraku make money in the field of magic.



- Each separate tradition is also assigned an elemental motif: Air for the hermetics, Earth for the Shinto shamans, Fire for the adepts and Water for the wujen. I get the impression these “elements” are either a jab at the hermetic paradigm or else some sort of inside joke.

- Lucky

- Locus doesn’t advertise it, but they have a fifth “element:” blood magic. A sinister buggler named Alexander Tamarova serves as their Steward of “Spirit,” completing the element pentagram.

- Wu-Fang Clan

For the most part, each element pursues its own projects and research and is left alone as long as it produces more ways to make money. Locus also makes itself available to numerous clients for a range of services, from summonings to research to unspecified “field work”—all at a steep price, of course. Occasionally Renraku will bring a specific project to Locus’s table, handing it off to whichever element seems most likely to produce results. The hermetic element is definitely favored and serves as a sort of watchdog on the others, making sure they follow “scientific” methodologies.

- The original idea was for different elements to work together at a project, in order to produce the best concept/design/whatever. But the different magicians clashed so often over issues of theory and paradigm that the stewards usually keep a project under one element’s jurisdiction, unless the situation calls for otherwise. There’s a lot of in-house competition going on, and I wouldn’t be surprised if the stewards spy on, interfere with and steal each other’s work.

- Majo

- It’s worth noting that any inventions or discoveries made by Locus employees while on the payroll automatically become the property of Locus Elementum, the company—and thus, Renraku. That means the magicians in this group don’t earn royalties or even get personal credit themselves. Locus makes up for this, however, by treating its member-employees with style. Each gets their own platinum company credstick, unlimited travel funding, complete healthcare coverage, access to top-level magic, enchanting and research facilities and other perks that would make megacorp executives drool. It’s enough to convince many would-be innovators to sacrifice the rights to their own work.

- The Chromed Accountant

Goro Sasaki

The group founder and Steward of Fire, Goro began his career in Renraku with the Red Samurai, where he served as a team leader for twelve years. By the end of his tenure, he had earned the gratitude of several upper-level executives.

Instead of retiring, Goro went to the company and asked for permission and assistance in starting a magical research firm with his wife. Thus, Locus Elementum was born.

- Renraku approved Goro’s plan under the condition that he continue training Red Samurai. So far, he has lived up to his end of the bargain.

- Shen

- The Red Samurai knew Goro as as a hothead with a dangerous temper—that’s probably why he claimed the element of fire for the adepts in the group. They also called him the Red Death. Not a man to trifle with.

- Kiku

- Goro’s wife, Elisabeth Sasaki, is the group’s Steward of Water. Some of you might remember her groundbreaking MIT&T thesis, “Tapping the Dragon Lines.”

- Starfall

Sebastian Clarke

I don’t have much on this guy, who serves as the Steward of Air. According to what little I dug up, he’s a graduate of MIT&T who attended that university at the same time as Goro’s wife. After college, he went to work for Saeder-Krupp doing advanced elemental research. He was fired after a botched summoning killed six lab technicians. After that, Clarke’s trail went cold for a half a decade. I suspect he worked as a shadowrunner during that time, but I haven’t found anyone who worked with him.

- Clarke ran under the name Timbre. He did a lot corporate asset recovery all across Europe, with most of his runs directed against his former employer. Clarke has a real talent for ritual sorcery. His shadow work could be how he came to Renraku’s attention.

- Woodward

- Clarke was cutting-edge when he was with S-K. The business that got him canned is an example. He wasn’t summoning an elemental, like the paperwork said. He was trying to bind a spirit of the Wild Hunt. The binding failed and the thing went crazy, shredding everyone in sight. Clarke managed to escape with the help of his ally spirit.

- Black Knight

THE SEERS’ GUILD

Headquarters: Lyon

Dean: Lukas Constantinos

- I could have covered this one myself, but this bloke seemed eager to spill his mind and I always had a soft spot for guys out for revenge.

- Marcel Black



You can call me Quasimodo. Kervelec the dwarf—leader of the *Gilde Internationale des Voyants et Médiums* (International Guild of Diviners and Mediums, aka the Seers' Guild)—expelled me because I asked too many questions about our company's true goals. He made an enemy of me. His mistake. So here's all I know of the secretive Seers' Guild. Kervelec may have seen this coming, but the exposure will still hurt his plans.

The French Diviners' and Mediums' Guild originally arose as an umbrella association for French seers and to promote the arts of divination. In 2041, a young and unknown Yohann de Kervelec took it over and reshaped it into a powerful player among the French elite. Two decades later, The Guild has expanded worldwide and changed its name to reflect its international standing. I can tell you, however, that the Guild exists for the sole purpose of propelling Kervelec into his current position of influence.

- Quasimodo is biased. Kervelec doesn't look any different than anyone else in the flock of opportunists chasing the aristos' coat-tails. He's successful—being a seer probably has its advantages—but that doesn't make him evil.

- Max la Menace

- I've done some serious digging into the aristos' rise to power in France, and several times I've come across something called *Projet Présage*—that's "Project Omen" in English. I haven't been able to find any significant details, but it does seem to have been a key weapon in the nobility's arsenal. The Project seems to have come rather ominously to an end in the late 2030s. A few years later, the French Diviners' and Mediums' Guild suddenly transforms from an organization of raconteurs and scam artists to a respected advisory and magical group. There's got to be a connection.

- ChatNoir

Recently, the French Guild, guided by Kervelec, sided with French President Aurélie de Paladines against the wishes of the nobility. The aristocrats were not pleased, and moved to show Kervelec the error of his ways. Overnight, the Guild saw the bulk of its wealthy customer base vanish. Of course the seers did not find this move entirely unexpected, and their influence and focus outside of France had already increased.

Guild Organization

The Guild is an odd mix of a magical group, a trade union and an old-boys' network. Before one can join the Guild, each aspirant's ethics are evaluated and his magical abilities thoroughly screened to weed out con men and charlatans. Guild membership has no restrictions on gender, race, faith or magical tradition. If accepted, a new member joins the Guild's initiatory group and serves for a year on probation. After that, he is considered a full member and may choose which company he wants to join.

Though hermetic astrologers still dominate in the Guild, all traditions are represented. With expansion abroad, it's





recruiting new members with a different approach to divination, such as the Japanese Shinto priests who invoke ancestor spirits and the Native Americans who call upon their totems for guidance.

- This change has created some strife between the Guild's traditionalist founders. Some of them look down their noses at these "alternative" divining methods.
- Magister
- It's just a knee-jerk reaction. In time, the Guild will benefit from new blood and new outlooks.
- Talon

Members are not Guild employees, but are more like a brotherhood working under the organization's umbrella, with the reputations of the Guild and its members reflecting on each other. The organization connects seers who have taken the same oaths and abide by the same precepts, but who possess their own priorities. Some members also have other jobs and may even work for state agencies or corporations.

The Guild is organized into nineteen (originally thirteen) companies. Most of the newer companies are specific to certain nations, such as the Company of the Silvery Star in the UCAS and CAS, or the Company of the Silken Veil in Japan.

The Guild Council is the ruling body of this loose organization. Each company has one council representative to raise concerns, vote on Guild global policy, validate new members and expel unworthy ones. One representative is elected Dean of the Council, to lead debates and arbitrate internal tensions. Kervelec has been Dean since 2042, but he stepped down two months ago in favor of the Greek elf Lukas Constantinos, who simultaneously became interim Dean and head of the Via Stellae. The trendy Constantinos, architect of the Guild's international expansion, will almost certainly be properly elected at the next Council gathering. Meanwhile, Kervelec pursues his new political career.

The Council plays an enormous role in ensuring smooth working relations between companies that sometimes see each other as competitors, or worse, ideological rivals. Maintaining the image of a united organization is vital to guaranteeing the trust of the Guild's clients, and the seer/client relationship cannot exist without trust. The Disciplinary Committee, authorized by the Council, investigates complaints of fraud or indiscretion against Guild members and officially ousts them if they find evidence of malpractice.

- They can do more than just throw a guy out. The Disciplinary Committee sometimes sends bruisers to make an example of seers at fault or uses ritual sorcery to fry them.
- Over-seer
- Any breach of privacy could seriously damage the Guild's reputation and put it out of business. With info this confiden-

tial, many factions will pay big nuyen to know what a seer foretold to an enemy or competitor, or what others may have said about them.

- Sneak
- The same factions may also decide to eliminate the threat's source: the seer. Bodyguards are in demand at the Guild.
- Otaku Mike

Companies

The Company of the Via Stellae is the largest in the Guild, setting trends and standards for most of the others. It once thrived among the French elites, but now only a few media stars continue to consult it. The Via Stellae has also been the most vocal advocate of Guild expansion beyond France. Constantinos embodies the new blood taking the reins as Kervelec becomes less and less concerned with his company's future. The Via Stellae is now the most international of the Guild companies, with notable members in Dublin, Tokyo, Atlanta, Washington FDC and Seattle.

- Though the Council of Princes makes vague promises of imminent change, the Guild—and the Via Stellae in particular—is still forbidden to operate in Tir Tairngire.
- Elven Hunter

The Company of the Ethereal Voice deals mainly with corporations. The Ethereal Voice has its largest offices in Boston and Zurich, and it's said to be negotiating exclusive contracts with the Corporate Court.

- Given the extreme difficulties inherent in financial divination, they sometimes use an "external hand"—read shadowrunners—to help make their predictions come true.
- NMATH

The Company of the Alter Ego specializes in finding missing items or persons. Its members always work in groups of three or four, using sympathetic magic extensively.

- This company sometimes hires independent investigators to procure suitable material links or provide support to its client to retrieve a target once it's been located.
- Daegann

The Company of the Sun Wheel, a popular and populist group, finds customers among the lower and middle classes and keeps its fees as low as possible. Most of its members live in rural areas and less than 40 percent specialize in divination (and these often confine themselves to weather or other farming-related topics). They often act as healers or local sages, and many follow shamanic traditions (such as Idols or Druidism) rather than the hermetic tradition. This company recently picked up many new members among the European Druids and American Wiccans.



The seers of the **The Company of the Heralds** are the black sheep of the Guild. For some reason, this company attracts the members with the oddest looks and weirdest habits. The freaks are tolerated, though, as they're the Guild's best artificers, creating the magical items its members need (enchanted astrolabes, crystal balls, tarot decks, pendulums and so on).

- A lot of heralds seem to have lost their minds. They're known for making vague but ominous prophecies regarding a new dark age and a terrible threat to metahumanity looming at some undetermined point in the future.
- ChatNoir
- We Shepherds try to warn humanity, only to be ridiculed. Soon the time of sorrows and regrets will come. Join us to deliver the world before it's too late!
- Neo-Stradamus

Some of the less specialized companies gather seers with a common divining technique, such as the **Cartomancers**, whose members exclusively use enchanted tarot decks, or the **Astrologers**, who predict the future only through the study of star charts. The latest established company, the **Company of the Lightning Wave**, claims that its seers can use Matrix code and patterns to predict the future. The Council was reluctant to recognize this Denver-based company, but it apparently provided convincing evidence of divining achievements.

Ethics of Divination

The Council convenes in Lyon, France, twice a year on the equinoxes to discuss the Guild's objectives, deal with administrative matters and follow up on world events. The most important activity conducted during these meetings, however, is anything but paperwork. The Council secretly gathers the twenty-one most powerful Guild members once a year to perform a collective divining ritual oriented toward global trends and earth-shaking events. I do not know what they do with the predictions made during that ritual, but I know that they impact all decisions the Council makes. I participated in the ritual that foresaw the fall of Fuchi, but as far as I know, the Guild did nothing to take advantage of this information.

- In our world, no info that valuable remains unused. Someone did something with it—and they probably paid a lot for it. The same goes for every prediction on that scale the Guild may have to offer. The Guild may not be powerful enough unto itself to directly use such knowledge, but it can turn to powers that can, such as corporations or nations.
- Money Man

- Or dragons. Remember, Lofwyr pays Kervelec a visit every year.
- Wyrm Watcher

- Or media. KSAF get its info from someone.
- Trideoholic

- The Guild maintains relations with almost every power. Favoring one over the others would be suicidal. Hestaby is in contact with some important personalities in the Guild, such as Constantinos and Grégoire Doyert, the head of the Sun Wheel company. The late Dunkelzahan was a regular patron of the Cartomancers, and recurrent rumors associate Lofwyr with Kervelec. Other key execs from the Big Ten also keep close contact with the Guild.
- Fleur-de-Lys

- With at least all of the Council members and the twenty-one seers involved knowing the ritual's results, some leaks are bound to happen.
- Drackenfelts

Of all the topics discussed within the Guild, the question, "What is the proper response to a foreseen future?" always brings the most heated arguments. Does a seer have a right to interfere in the future? Is it even possible to change the future?

Some see the future as an inescapable force. What they foresee *is* the future and will happen despite any attempts to prevent it, and so they do not even try to interfere. Instead, these seers advise their clients how to make the best of the events to come.

Others consider their predictions as warnings about what *may* happen if nothing is done to change the course of events. They consider it their duty to change the future, their power giving them a kind of second chance regarding foreseen events. These seers try to help their clients avoid their likely fate.

- Accurately predicting the future is the next best thing to time travel, the Holy Grail of magic. That makes lots of people interested in the ways of divination, from John Doe who wants to know the next lottery results to Bob Megacorp who dreams of the next big financial coup. It also explains the smug I-Know-More-Than-Thou attitude that many diviners adopt.
- McFly

- Perhaps fortunately, divination is still an inexact science at best. The information diviners receive is usually highly subjective and subject to misinterpretation—flashes of insight, vague emotions, fleeting sensations. It's hard to pin anything down



with specifics. Some seers are arguably quite good—or simply lucky—at transforming these insights into useful advice; and if you believe the hype, some actually are just dead-on. But reality has a way of turning the tables on diviners who get too confident about their predictions, either with misleading omens or unseen information. That's why fortune-telling rarely comes with guarantees for its clients.

- Magister

I've also heard about a group that gives some nasty twists to divination theories. The **Order of the Hourglass** believes that fate is not inescapable, but that it is sacred. Consequently, good or bad, the future they perceive must be protected from "rebels" who might try to avoid their destiny.

- I once bodyguarded a suit from Esprit Industries who'd been told of his imminent death. Thanks to the seer's vision, I easily disabled the assassin sent by Ares. I was away for three minutes taking care of the fragger, but when I came back, my employer was lying in his own blood with an empty hourglass on his chest.

- Goupil

- Who are these people? Toxic seers? And how can you know that the guy predicting your future is telling the truth instead of manipulating you so that you'll "fulfill your destiny?"

- Buzzby

- The Disciplinary Committee of the Seer's Guild hunts this Hourglass group relentlessly. It's suspected that some Hourglass types have masqueraded as legitimate Guild members.

- Quasimodo

Of course, not all the visions a seer experiences are controlled. They may come in flashes or dreams that bring mere hints of the future. When they involve violent death or tragedy, some seers feel the need to answer Fate's call and act in response to the premonition. I admit to calling the firefighters a few times, and I once prevented a toddler from defenestrating himself. Things like that help me feel good when I look in the mirror every morning.

- My team was hired last month to prevent a toxic shaman from blowing up a chemical plant in Duluth. We learned only last week our employer was a rich Guild member.

- Strider

Mirror, Mirror ...

The Guild may have some of the best seers in the world and secret refined divination techniques that allow it to increase the accuracy of predictions tenfold, but it is not impervious to mistakes. Divination is far from being an exact or even accurate science. However gifted the seer, he is not going to win the lottery every day. Actually, reading accurate numbers in the future is probably the most difficult divination task—which is why most corporations don't have divination teams working around the clock.

- Take the Via Stellae's announcement that Dunkelzahn would be re-elected for a second term mere hours before his limo exploded, or when a seer of the Heralds announced that the Zurich-Orbital Habitat would crash into Paris after being struck by Halley's Comet.

- Paco

I've been out of the Guild too long now to know all the latest developments, especially abroad, but I can comment on Europe. The Guild's Old World expansion went quickly and smoothly, as the Guild already had numerous contacts in European corporate and aristocratic circles. When I was expelled, the Guild already boasted offices in Madrid, Dublin, London, Athens and Prague, and was making early contacts in America and Japan.

- I just checked the Guild's host, and they're currently implanted in Western Europe, North America, Australia and Japan. Offices are scheduled to open next in India and around the Pacific Rim.

- GnuB

- Remember that when they say "office," most of the time that means one Guild member and a secretary. That's a much more flexible definition than, say, a new megacorp office.

- Namergon

- The Guild is trying to recruit wujen fortune-tellers in Hong Kong, but with little success so far. Wuxing doesn't like to share its toys.

- HK Kid

KEEPERS OF THE FAITH



In this materialistic dog-eat-dog world of ours, it's not hard to see the fascination faith and belief hold for many people. The trials and tribulations of the past fifty years drove many toward faith in their quest for a safe haven, solace or plain old-fashioned community spirit. Though many converts have drifted away, the number of people who see religion as the answer to the modern world's evils remains impressively high. Current attitudes towards organized religion vary drastically, from those who view it as some form of social disease to those who think they've done a lot of good. No one can argue, however, that current faiths create politicized religious movements, clashing worldviews, radical creeds and zealots—nobody's exempt from blame here, Christian or Pagan, Muslim or Fordist. While planning this compilation, I decided that a few religious groups demanded coverage, either because they're hogging the rumor mills or because they aren't. It proved unexpectedly hard to nail down information on some of the ones I wanted, but I think you'll find what I turned up, like religion itself, both enlightening and ominous.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:24:27 (PST)

THE VIGILIA EVANGELICA

• I had a hard time finding someone who wanted to talk about the Vatican—even our contacts through the Helix seemed to have dried up. I hooked up with the author of the following section by accident while trawling several Catholic-related Helix SIGs for someone or something to go on. His alias is Padre Pedro, and I thought I'd wind up all the conspiracy theorists out there (yet again) by letting him tell you what he told me.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:33:19 (PST)

My name is Pedro Amato; my friends call me Padre Pedro. Those who know me know that even though I applaud John XXV's attempts at reform, I vehemently dislike certain institutions of the Roman Catholic Church. Today I've decided to tell you why, so that you too may decide if the dangers of the church's course are as great as I believe them to be.



Let me start at the beginning. Less than six years and a lifetime ago, I stepped out of the chapel at the St. Eugénio Seminary in Rome as an ordained brother of the Order of St. Sylvester, trained in the arts of healing and exorcism. I was bursting with righteous enthusiasm, ready to take up my calling within the welcoming arms of Mother Church—with no idea of what awaited me.

- Bet Pedro's a EuroWars orphan. You hear a lot of the same stories in Spain and Italy.
- Buscettino

- I can vouch for Padre Pedro. He's a straight shooter, if a little intense. He helped my crew out against a hive in Malaga. When we met again by accident in Madrid, he patched our rigger up without charge.
- Sepherim

RECRUITMENT

After serving as *Librarian custodius* in the Vatican libraries for more than three years, dousing my fire and enthusiasm, I struck up a seemingly harmless friendship with a regular patron of the archives—a Cardinal, one of the Pope's *Optimates* (inner councilors). We talked freely of faith and doctrine, the schism, church history, my meager talents as a theurge and my hopes for the future. One day he asked me to accompany him to retrieve a volume while we talked. Immersed in conversation, I suddenly realized we had walked into a vaulted library room where three ominous figures awaited—one in an Augustinian monk's white robes, the others in Dominican black and Sylvestrine gray. The Cardinal asked me to sit. Not knowing what to make of events, I obeyed. He then told me that he and his compatriots had been following my career for some time—since before I left the seminary, in fact. They needed someone with my combination of experience and gifts. The Cardinal had spoken highly of me. They asked if I wanted to learn a great secret, one I could never reveal until my dying day.

- Thanks, Captain; you've just made my decade. You've no idea how long I've been waiting for something like this.
- €spion
- Now the problem's going to be getting you to shut up about it.
- 0111011001

If I had known then what I know now, my answer would be no different. I had heard rumors of our secretive brethren in the New Jesuit Order and Knights Templar, but nothing prepared me for what they told me. As any custodius worth his salt, I had suspected the existence of something like the Secret Libraries. It's almost impossible not to—too many tomes and codices misplaced, coded notes to archives, artifacts removed and never returned ... the evidence adds up. Nevertheless, the truth about the *Aquinae* Vaults and the true nature of the Vigilia Evangelica came as a shock. To a humble friar like myself, the Vigilia was simply the Holy Office responsible for the Vatican's

Matrix and intelligence resources as well as the safekeeping of our libraries and computer systems. In a world where secrecy is nigh impossible and courts attention, the Vigilia chooses to hide in plain sight. The Cardinal and his companions gave me a choice: join, or have all memory of this encounter erased.

- I've seen these Vigilia guys around the Vatican net. Can't miss 'em—neon-white monk icons packing some serious software under those robes. They're the local GOD-types. Puns intended.
- Kid Code

HIDDEN TRUTH

And so I became a *praetor* of the Vigilia Evangelica. I learned the Vigilia's secret history while I studied archaeology, theology, physical sciences and theurgy alongside three other novices. I exercised with equal zeal—I had always dreamed of becoming a guardian of the faith. I learned about the tomes of proscribed knowledge and literature confiscated by the church under the *Index Librum Prohibitorum*, about the heretical artworks, scientific tomes and antique treasures that had come into the Vigilia's custody since its founding at the Second Council of Lyons. Confronted with such mysteries, I found it easy to understand why the Vigilia and the church had believed from the outset in secretly preserving the knowledge within such materials, so that they might one day be used to understand and combat the very evil that had spawned them.

Three other novices and I were ordained by Pope John XXV in St. Peter's Basilica. Each of us received a commission from the Vigilia's Prior-General at the end of the ceremony. A New Jesuit named Mateo—who would become a close friend despite his infuriatingly traditionalist views—and I were assigned to the praetor garrison at *Secundus*. The Franciscan novice was to become a custodius at *Tertius*. The last of us, an Augustinian friar, was called to additional training to join the Vigilia's intelligence apparatus.

It was Mateo who later suggested to me that the Vigilia had played a role in directing John Paul IV's attention toward the writings of Claudio Aquaviva, which in turn led to the founding of the New Society of Jesus—despite their decidedly reactionary views, the church needed a militant order. Personally, I suspected the Vigilia had played an identical role in the creation of the Sylvestrines and the reestablishment of the Templars, but I held my counsel.

- So he's telling us these guys have been around for what—500 years?
- GnuB
- The Second Council of Lyons took place in 1274, which would make it several centuries older. Despite having researched the period thoroughly, I've never seen any reference to the Vigilia. Make of that what you will.
- Echec

SECRET VAULTS OF THE VATICAN

Before continuing, I must make it clear that I will not break my sacred trust. I will name no further names or endanger my





former brethren by offering details beyond those necessary to make my point—but I firmly believe the world should know of the Vigilia and the secrets it keeps.

Throughout history, people have told tales of the Aquinae collections, the Vatican's secret vaults, rumored to lie in dozens of different locations. That neither invading armies nor schisms ever produced conclusive evidence to back these stories is a testament to the Vigilia's efficiency and influence. The truth is, the Sixth World possesses four such great libraries: the original *Primus* and *Secundus* in Europe, and *Tertius* and *Quartus* built later in the New World to safeguard them from the devastation wreaked upon Italy and the Holy See during the Dark Ages. One can only imagine what horrors might have been unleashed had the enemies of the church come upon them during the wars of the past three centuries.

Though I only ever saw *Secundus*, I can attest that the vaults boast impressive arcane defenses. Mother Church spared no expense. Coupled with state-of-the-art physical and technological measures, the Aquinae vaults are close to impenetrable by normal means. But make no mistake, despite the vaults' powerful protections, their most potent defense remains secrecy.

- So, speculation on where these vaults might be? Anyone?
- Riffael

- The Catholic Church owns thousands of locations across the globe. It's hard to even venture a guess. I assume they'd keep them as separate as possible for safety. I'd say one up North and one down South. In North America some of the oldest RCC strongholds are in East Coast cities and up in French Quebec. The RCC was huge all over Europe and South Am, so your guess is as good as mine.
- Ancient Scholar

I arrived at *Secundus* in the fall of 2059. Even after all I'd heard, I was unprepared for the cavernous halls of what looked like an underground cathedral—the seemingly endless shelves, glass displays and half-lit terminals crowded with evidence of a secret history of the church and the world. Cluttered and out-of-place laboratories filled corners attesting to the importance of artifact research in the Vigilia's mission, while Vigilia custodii worked under stark lights translating, deciphering and examining shelf upon shelf of books and relics. Tomes, parchments and scrolls dating back to time immemorial were being scanned into digital form before they were lost to the ravages of time.

I later learned that ever since the inception of the Matrix, digital reproductions and copies of all material transcribed and scanned have been sent to the Vigilia's greatest achievement in the Awakened age: *Quintus*, the Fifth Library, entirely digital and concealed in an ultraviolet host hidden within the stronghold that is the Vatican grid.

- That goes a way toward explaining the Vatican grid's security level. Inside, it's huge. It doubles as the RCC worldwide PLTG

and the papal administration, and security is benchmarked so high you'll be short of breath. Good luck finding a hidden SAN in there.

- Red Wraith

A testament to the Vigilia's power, the Fifth Library is also a safeguard against another unspeakable disaster such as the looting of the original vault at Melk Abbey during the Dark Ages. It took me many long nights of research to learn the whole truth, but Melk was pillaged by the Vigilia's own—my own—brethren, men of the cloth tainted by the forces they sought to hold at bay and corrupted into dark versions of themselves. Worse, I learned that the descendants of those men remain at large, grown powerful, dangerously aware of the Vigilia and the Aquinae vaults' existence. They pose a threat the church cannot ignore and the Vigilia cannot allow. The New Templars and the praetors of the Vigilia have covertly fought this growing danger in France and Quebec for years.

- Anyone? What's he on about now?
- Rose

- Melk: thirteenth-century abbey in Northern Italy that burned down under mysterious circumstances. It was the site of an internal inquisition for suspected heresy and inspired at least one novel back at the turn of the century.
- Echee

- According to existing records of the Holy Office (that's the Holy Inquisition, for those of you who don't recognize the name change), one of the Cistercian monks at Melk admitted to having visions or some such, and that brought down the Inquisitors on the whole bunch.
- Ancient Scholar

- So some of these Vigilia types went over to the Dark Side and started worshipping Satan or something? And they're still around?
- J-pax

- Or something. Something infernal and demonic.
- Lovecraft

- This makes ominous sense. I've heard rumors of a secret society subverting the hierarchy of the French Church. Lots of names floated, but nothing ever confirmed. I wonder.
- Fleur-de-lys

- I've been telling people for ages, but do they listen? At least one group is out there, magic-heavy, Illuminati-types with ties to all kinds of secret mystical societies throughout history. Fit the profile?
- Lone Gunman



- If you're talking about who I think you are, then I'd shut up. They may not be as powerful as they like to make out, but they will take offense at seeing their name posted.
- Crowley

The story of Melk planted the seed of doubt. It bloomed in the following months as I encountered wondrous and terrifying things in my work with new eyes. As praetors, we went anonymously out into the world to fight the human and inhuman evils that prey on the faithful and threaten to spread their taint across the world; but just as often, praetors travel to acquire wondrous items or information—even occasionally breaking the Commandments and stealing in the name of a greater good—all to be sequestered for examination in Secundus's vaults rather than put at the service of the community. Doubt about the Vigilia's path gnawed at my resolve.

- So what else have these guys got in their collections?
- Curious Customer
- The possibilities are endless: definitive references to Atlantis or Lemuria, the remaining Dead Sea scrolls, evidence of advanced pre-Classical cultures, the Magdalene Bible, Da Vinci's and Dupré's unpublished works, the Ark of the Covenant ... you name it, they might have it.
- Conspir-I-See
- While our friend may be letting his imagination get the better of him, he's right that there's no way of telling what the Vigilia may have collected in almost a millennium. Personally, I'm more worried about what they've been fighting all these years. I've heard tales of "spike critters"—paranormal creatures that appeared before the Awakening—but the good Padre seems to be suggesting a lot more.
- Reality Czech

CRISIS OF FAITH

My personal crisis of faith came after a mission at Kutna Hora in the Czech Republic, a terrifying encounter with shedim that cost Mateo his life. While the surviving praetors went through, I prayed for his soul and performed a nightlong vigil to purge any lingering taint. I found myself wondering, what right had the Vigilia to keep all the scientific and literary masterpieces, the grimoires ancient and new, and the wondrous items of power in the Aquinae collections, to itself? How many threats could be eradicated, how many lives saved, if only the Vigilia shared some of the secrets of the deciphered Voyanich manuscript, St. Malachy's prophetic words in *Lignum Vitae*, the mysteries in the Tulli papyrus, Dee's confiscated *Codex Hermeticum* or the Minoan tablets recovered from Easter Island, let alone the hundreds of other tomes and artifacts that fill the vaults?

From conversations with older custodii, I gathered the Vigilia knew the Awakening was coming long before 2011—at the very least, following the Lourdes apparitions in 2010—and I came to believe their warnings may have been partly to

blame for Pope John Paul IV's overzealous reaction. I began to wonder what other omens the custodii and Priors-General had kept from the world along with the knowledge they still zealously withhold. In their arrogance, the Vigilia's Prior-Generals discount the fact that the world today is a vastly different and dangerous place from anything in past experience. Despite their assurances to the contrary, I imagined the loss of such heritage. I wondered what would happen should Amazonia—or, God forbid, our common foes—discover what lies just beyond their borders. What would be the consequences to Mother Church's alliance with that nation and to Tertius?

I came to believe that the Vigilia's path has become a betrayal of the church's fundamental vocation: protecting and nurturing its lambs. I found I could no longer abide by vows and rules in which I no longer believed. I was endangering my friends and companions-in-arms. I was betraying myself. During an assignment to root out a Tamanous operation in Paris, I chose to escape my companions, to lose myself in the shadows. I've lived on the run ever since ... a free man, but with a burden on my conscience that I now discharge.

- Wow, that's one tall tale.
- Skeptic
- Believe what you will. I've seen enough in my day to know that at least some of it is true,
- €spion

UNITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

• We've heard quite a bit about Arabia, Ibn Eisa and the great dragon Aden in the past few years, but we haven't looked deeply into the thread that ties them all together: the Islamic Unity Movement and its redheaded stepchild, the New Islamic Jihad. I think it's time to remedy that oversight. The author is a moderate Sunni Muslim who comes highly recommended to us by Asian runner communities. He may seem a bit twitchy at times, but he knows what he's talking about and has insight into what's going on that outsiders like me just don't have. Read and learn.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:35:34 (PST)

by Farah

Welcome. The notable Captain Chaos asked me to briefly delve into the Islamic Unity Movement's origins and possibly explain some of the current situation in the Islamic nations of the Middle East. Before I begin, I must say that many topics affect conditions in one nation or another, and I cannot touch on all of them. I have neither the time nor the inclination to include such excessive details in this file. Instead, I will provide overviews of the subjects I consider most important in the spirit of this posting, and leave you to discover the rest on your own.

Let me begin with a broad description and history of Islam, followed by the same for the Islamic Unity Movement and those fools who call themselves the New Islamic Jihad. I



will then move on to some important Middle Eastern powers and their connections to the Unity Movement.

ISLAM, PAST AND PRESENT

To begin to understand the motives and actions of extremist Muslim groups, one must first have at least a basic knowledge of Islam. Before Islam existed as a religion, the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula worshipped a variety of gods, with the focal point being the Ka'bah in Makkah. This lasted until roughly the end of the sixth century C.E. At that time a man named Mohammed (pbuh) traveled to Mt. Hira near Makkah and received a revelation from the angel Gabriel. Mohammed (pbuh) began preaching in Makkah, spreading word of the one God Allah (meaning simply "the god"), who was also the God of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Mohammed (pbuh) called the people into islam, or "submission," to Allah.

- Makkah? Where's that? And what's this pbuh stuff?
- Tyro

- Makkah is another spelling of Mecca. Pbuh stands for "peace be upon him"—it's an honorific, and the acronym saves time and space.
- Mahmoud

Mohammed (pbuh) was both a prophet and a reformer, as his teachings went strongly against the political values of the time. The aristocracy persecuted him and his followers, and in 622 C.E. these early Muslims traveled to Yathrib, a journey known as the *Hijrah* that heralded the end of the *Jahiliyah* (what Muslims call the barbaric period before Islam was introduced). Eight years later, after several skirmishes, Mohammed (pbuh) returned to Makkah leading an army and took the city. The Ka'bah was cleansed and dedicated to the worship of Allah, and the tribes of Arabia converted to Islam and acknowledged the Prophet (pbuh) as their leader.

On June 8, 632 C.E., Mohammed (pbuh) died of illness, his mission fulfilled. Allah granted the Prophet's (pbuh) temporal authority to *khalifah* (caliphs), but did not pass down his spiritual authority. Over time, the realm of Islam grew to encompass much of the Middle East and Africa, and even spread to parts of Europe and Asia. While the basics of Islam generally remained the same, Muslims in different countries and different sects established new variations.

In 1914, Caliph Mehmet V called for jihad against Russia, France and Great Britain, but many Islamic groups actively opposed him, giving the lie to the notion of pan-Islamic unity. Other discords came to the fore in later years, including the Iran-Iraq War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Tensions grew between the Arab nations and Israel, culminating in a chemical weapons launch by Libya in 2004. Swift nuclear retaliation by Israel devastated Libya in turn.

- Let me get this off my chest, cuz it really bothers me. Jihad does not mean holy war—that's a phrase the Crusaders used for their invasions. It actually means exertion, or struggle, on behalf of the faith. There are two types of jihad: the greater,



which requires striving to live up to the requirements of Islam, and the lesser, which is primarily a community function. The emphasis on continuous struggle against nonbelievers keeps the spirit of community solidarity strong, so it falls under lesser jihad. Jihad by the sword is considered the lowest form—it's better to use the heart, the tongue or the hands.

- Ruthven

- That being said, most people only know about the violent kind.

- Amitri

The Islamic faith splintered even more in the wake of UGE and the Awakening, as sects developed that condemned magic. To my eternal shame, some even decried metahumans as creatures of Shaytan and treated them as less than dogs. In 2020, Ayatollah Hamidullah of Iran went so far as to declare a jihad against the new metahuman races. This jihad ended quickly when the sirrush Aden demolished the city of Tehran in retaliation. Amid this confusion, Badr al Din Ibn Eisa began his rise to power. Ibn Eisa was a well-known and respected mufti, or Sunni interpreter of Islamic law, whose piety and wisdom had gained him many admirers and students among the rulers of Muslim nations.

- How can all these sects exist? I mean, some of them have contradictory beliefs, but they're all still Muslim. Doesn't the Muslim church have any control, like the Catholic Church does over its members?

- Mospeada

- There is no Muslim church, chummer. Individual Muslims follow the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith (for the most part), and have no need for an institution to put forward an "official" Islamic view. Mohammed revealed all of the tenets of the faith, right? So followers already have access to everything needed to be a pious Muslim.

Now, as far as them all still being Muslim—that depends on who you talk to. Members of various sects sometimes refuse to acknowledge that other sects are actually Muslim. It can get downright unfriendly.

- Amitri

In 2032, more militant sects of Islam came to power in Turkey, Syria, Cyprus, Iraq and Iran, in some cases overthrowing the previous government and in others simply rising to the top of it. This mass upheaval resulted largely from the economic effects of the Euro Wars, as rapidly changing trade agreements shifted the balance of power within those nations. A backlash against the Awakening, along with infighting over depleting oil reserves, also played a major role. The new radical leaders of Turkey, Cyprus and Syria saw an opportunity to expand and formed an alliance that pushed toward Europe through the Balkans. Known as the Second Ottoman Jihad, this alliance ran up against a coalition of Eastern European forces as it made its way through the Balkans in 2034. Stopped cold, it quickly fell apart.

- The Jihad countries held on to the territory they took, though, and nowadays that area is home to a number of independent Islamic city-states—a situation that makes the Russians and Eastern European countries pretty damn nervous.

- Arctic Fox

The Second Jihad horrified Ibn Eisa, who felt that such a war was entirely unnecessary. In response, he began creating the Islamic Unity Movement, an organization that pushed for peaceful resolutions to problems among and within Muslim nations. Members of the nascent IUM were, and remain, some of the more moderate and traditional Muslims, representing strong support for the Shari'ah as the foundation of law and government. Magic and metahumans, though accepted, were viewed with suspicion, an outlook carried over from Islamic thought on new technology. Though not technophobes, the original members of the Islamic Unity Movement were conservative, and their views still influence the membership. The Western world and its corporate lifestyle, representing the new way of life in the Sixth World, are regarded with caution by most IUM members despite immense underlying curiosity about them.

Ibn Eisa's success at arranging a quick end to the Second Iran-Iraq War in 2040 helped draw many Muslims to his cause, including several heads of state. This support proved vital to Ibn Eisa's next project, the unification of the Arabian Peninsula under one government. It took him fifteen years of untiring diplomacy, but the year 2055 saw the birth of the nation of Arabia, made up of the former Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain. The various rulers of those former nations chose King Kalim Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia as the first Caliph of Arabia, with Ibn Eisa as his main advisor.

- It wasn't quite that easy. Putting Sa'ud on top took a lot of pushing from Ibn Eisa, in addition to several political marriages and a large number of key positions in the new government being handed out as incentives.

- Socio Pat

- Sa'ud also had a lot of help from Saeder-Krupp, behind the scenes. Several mysterious assassinations and some scandalous revelations occurred during this period, all striking key opposition members. It remains debatable whether Ibn Eisa was aware of this corp backing, though personally I find it hard to believe he didn't know. I'm not saying he supported it, mind you, just that he knew he couldn't do much to stop S-K.

- Felix

- Why would Lofwyr back Ibn Eisa? I don't buy it.

- Mach

- Think about it. Saeder-Krupp is the most influential corp in the Middle East—it controls most of the remaining oil reserves there and provides power to nearly everyone in the area. Used to be, S-K paid fees and taxes for transporting materials across nation-



al borders. With all the interconnections between the Arabian Peninsula nations, a lot of cross-border transport went on. S-K's profits far outweighed the transport costs, but the corp still had to throw away a big chunk of nuyen each year. Solution: help turn the peninsula into a single nation and cut that yearly cost significantly. In addition, dealing with so many governments meant that S-K regularly paid bribes to a number of people in identical positions—again, the cost of doing business. With the establishment of Arabia, S-K only has to grease one palm instead of seven. Supporting the creation of Arabia was purely a business decision.

- The Chromed Accountant

- I still don't buy it. The saying goes, "divide and conquer," not "unite and conquer." You of all people should know that.

- Mach

- Sa'ud rules Arabia according to the Shari'ah, fundamental Islamic laws derived from the Qur'an and Hadith (the words of Mohammed the man, as separate from the words of Allah recorded by him in the Qur'an). This isn't anything new. Islamic nations have been ruled according to the Shari'ah for a long time, which is one reason why the governmental change went so smoothly for the people. They didn't have many new laws to adjust to—only the folks in charge had changed.

- Sayyid

- The formation of Arabia has done wonders for the Islamic Unity Movement. Many Muslims of Arabian descent already felt a tie to their "Arab brethren" in other nations, and that feeling only got stronger with the unification of the Arabian homeland. The spirit of cooperation is growing in many areas across the Middle East.

- Bure

After that, Ibn Eisa worked tirelessly to draw the Islamic world together, gathering support and respect among the leaders of many sects and nations. His work appeared to pose a major threat to the Hebrew nation of Israel, as Ibn Eisa orchestrated the reclamation of Lebanon in 2061.

Not long afterward, tragedy struck ... or appeared to. While Ibn Eisa performed Umrah, in the midst of the Rite of Tawaf at the Ka'bah, several men emerged from the crowd and fired guns at him. Enraged guards slew the gunmen, but too late. A bullet through Ibn Eisa's forehead had killed him instantly. The Caliph's men later determined that the murderers were Mossad agents, though most in the shadow community believe Israel is smarter than to invite war in such an obvious fashion. All of Arabia began mourning the loss of the great man, but the mourning period unexpectedly ended two days later when Ibn Eisa rose from his resting place, his wound healed, and returned to the Ka'bah to complete Tawaf.

Reactions to his return differed among the many sects of Islam. Most Muslims believed (and still believe, in their hearts) that Ibn Eisa's wound simply was not as bad as initially report-

ed and that modern medical or magical science enabled him to recover. In other words, he never died. Others, more devout or perhaps more easily duped, claim he is a Prophet, support him as such and hang their own titles on him. Some of his earliest supporters now claim he is a minion of Shaytan, based on his change of viewpoint since his return. Whatever the truth, Ibn Eisa's defeat of death has caused much ill will and even violence between Muslims over the past two years, and it only seems to be getting worse.

- This whole situation has to be some sort of hoax. The assassination was staged, or a body double was used in his place, so that Ibn Eisa could gain even more spiritual credibility. Or he did die, and Saeder-Krupp or someone instituted an imposter to "come to life" and take his place. Even in the Awakened world, that kind of resurrection crap just doesn't happen.

- Skeptic

- One of the first things you learn as a magician, at least as a shaman, is that the word "impossible" is a waste of breath. How the drek do we know what's possible? The possibility certainly exists that Ibn Eisa is an S-K double or something else, but it's equally possible he really did rise from the dead. Open your blinders.

- Carter

- For what it's worth, Ibn Eisa has submitted to numerous third party scans—magical, genetic, psychological—to counter those who voiced suspicions. Nothing suspicious was ever found—assuming you trust the people who did the testing.

- Amitri

- Like the man says, Ibn Eisa's return to life has caused some Muslims to consider him a new Prophet. Sunni Muslims believe Mohammed was the final Prophet, and as a Sunni Ibn Eisa should have declared right away that he's not a Prophet. As yet, he's made no statement either way. This hasn't dissuaded many members of other sects, who continue to call him Prophet. Some Shi'ite Muslims even consider him the Muntazar Imam returned. Of the twelve Imams who led the Shi'ites in the period following Mohammed's death, all died except the twelfth, who simply disappeared. Legend says he'll return to usher in a golden era of true Islam shortly before the world ends. Ibn Eisa has made no statement about that, either. Regardless, Ibn Eisa's support has grown steadily among non-Sunni sects.

- Socio Pat

Following his return to life, Ibn Eisa resumed his duties as advisor to the Caliph, but has also begun strengthening his hold on the Islamic Unity Movement. He has become more and more militant, which worries the Caliph and many other moderate Muslims. With their growing support in other nations, Ibn Eisa and the IUM could theoretically begin a jihad much larger than the Second Ottoman Jihad. The more peace-



ful members of the Islamic Unity Movement, including many of Ibn Eisa's original supporters, have recently begun joining forces as a power bloc within it. Sadeq al-Bahiy, an influential publisher and traditional scholar supported by the Caliph, heads this group, whose members are forcefully challenging Ibn Eisa's control. Recent support from the Islamic Renaissance has made the situation even harder on Ibn Eisa, and things may come to a head there soon.

- The big mystery here is why Ibn Eisa changed from a man who hated war to the possible danger he is now. Did returning to life somehow alter him, if that's truly what happened? Arabian initiates who've assented him before and after his "death" say his aura remains unchanged, which seems to mean that he really is Ibn Eisa and isn't under a spell. Something must have happened—people don't just change that drastically without a reason.

- Baron

- Bullet to the brain? There's your reason. Major brain injury. If he really survived something like that, he might well show a radically altered personality, depending on where the bullet did its damage. There are documented cases of horrific head injuries where the survivors—normally peaceful, gentle types—turned angry and violent. Their own families and friends swore they were different people.

- Doc Zhivago

WHO DOES WHAT

- Farah didn't say much about the IUM's internal organization, so I did some digging. Apparently, the vast majority of members are what they call *rasul* ("messenger" or "Apostle" of Allah), and don't spend a significant amount of time dealing with movement matters. They just support it politically, attend a weekly meeting and help the IUM however their talents allow. Oh, and they stand ready for the call to jihad, of course.

Only a small number of IUM members focus their lives around it, organizing meetings and ensuring that the movement has what it needs to survive as a viable entity. These guys also make plans for the future. Many of these full-time members, known as *mujahideen* ("strugglers"), are respected scholars or well-known Islamic figures. Most of the orders originate at this level.

Then there's Ibn Eisa. He's in charge of the IUM, keeping a careful eye on the entire situation and giving orders to his subordinates that commonly affect the movement as a whole. Ibn Eisa has a core group of *mujahideen* who act as advisors or his personal expeditors. But Ibn Eisa's real influence lies in his personal relations with the Islamic world's top leaders, from the House of Saud and the Arabian Mudaween religious police to Iran's Society of Assertive Clerics (the *Mobarez*) and Iraq's President Shari'ati.

- Guyver

- A lot of these *mujahideen* are clerics or serious politicians who have their own loyal local followings. A few others act as mobile organizers and negotiators, traveling about to work the IUM's deals and influence. Some keep a low profile and work in the underworld, making deals with gangs and criminal groups.

- Amitri

- Several loyal IUM members act as bodyguards for each *mujahideen*, a necessary precaution given the activity of the Bohras and other sects. Ibn Eisa has bodyguards too—at least ten always accompany him—but his are seriously hardcore. The IUM's upper circles call these guards "Jinn," and they're referred to with obvious awe and sometimes fear by those in the know. To become a Jinn, the recruit enters a soundproof room alone with Ibn Eisa (after careful background checks and substantiation of the recruit's loyalty to Ibn Eisa, of course). Several hours later, he or she emerges, radiating a newfound fanaticism. No one seems to know what goes on during this "test"—but some say blood magic is involved, as evidence of split blood has been found in the room afterwards.

- Al-Sharif

- Jinn? Hmmm. "Islamic origin. Created from smokeless fire, they once roamed the heavens spying, but in the time of the Prophet Muhammad could learn no more of its secrets, and some were converted by his teachings." Or so claims a very quick search on MagickNet. Sounds like Ibn Eisa may have made a statement about being the Prophet after all.

- Ruthven

- Even though large numbers of Muslims exist across the world, the IUM's core influence is centered in the Middle East. A few *mujahideen* and *rasul* are active outside of the Middle East, but their activities are focused on recruitment rather than influence-peddling. Several *rasul* meet every Tuesday at the Nyen Lang restaurant in Seattle, but as far as I can tell, all they do is eat and talk about how great it would be if the faithful united again, like it was in Mohammed's day.

- Baron

THE NEW ISLAMIC JIHAD

Taking their cues from Ibn Eisa's new, more militant message, the New Islamic Jihad (NIJ) is an offshoot of the IUM whose members are determined to return the entire Middle East to Muslim hands and to destroy the enemies of Islam so that Muslim lands will never again suffer the touch of infidel feet. Organized and dangerous, the Jihad is a perversion of the Islamic Unity Movement's ideals that dances like a puppet to Ibn Eisa's whims. By all reports it is small but growing, made up mainly of Shi'ites but also well stocked with foolish Sunnis and members of many other sects. They have subsumed the remnants and cast-offs from previously existing terror networks such as Hamas, Hizbullah, the Damascus League and the Islamic Brotherhood. The New Islamic Jihad is a bomb waiting to go off.



- The NIJ has nearly split the Middle Eastern Muslim world. The old factional differences are still there, but now people argue over war and peace within their sect, too.
- Socio Pat

Thus far, the New Islamic Jihad has been fairly secretive about its activities, though members are known to sponsor terrorism throughout the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Observers have spotted military camps in remote desert areas in Arabia—here one day, gone the next. Eventual military action seems to be the goal, though where the troops will come from remains an open question.

Mahmud Fakhsh, an Isma'ili ex-security guard for a small Jordanian corporation, is the current leader of NIJ. Fakhsh's military advisor is a renowned old Sunni mercenary, Sayid Mujtaba Musawi, and Fakhsh never goes anywhere without Yasin al-Faruqi, a Shi'ite and former black-ops agent from Iraq. Ibn Eisa gives the orders behind the scenes, of course, but for now Fakhsh, Musawi and al-Faruqi are the "public" New Islamic Jihad.

- With the recent growth of opposition to Ibn Eisa among moderates in the regular Islamic Unity Movement, I wonder how long it will be before Ibn Eisa openly takes the helm of the Jihad.
- Mach

- He won't. It would kill whatever's left of his public image with the rest of his old supporters. Besides, why advertise it when you don't have to?
- Bure

RELATIONS WITH ISLAMIC SECTS

The Islamic Unity Movement and the New Islamic Jihad draw support from quite a few Islamic sects, as well as other groups. Individuals espousing both viewpoints frequently coexist within the same sect, and so I will describe the major sects and give an overview of what their members think. These descriptions apply primarily to those sects in the Middle East; the IUM and NIJ have less influence in the rest of the Muslim world.

Sunni Sect

Sunni Muslims, regardless of which of the four rites of the sect they follow, are split roughly down the middle with regard to the IUM. The largest sect of Islam, Sunnism is also known as orthodox Islam, and strictly follows the teachings of the Qu'ran, as well as the sunnah (the path laid out by the Prophet (pbuh)) and the Hadith. It tends to be the least radical of the sects as well, which explains why roughly three-quarters of all Sunni who do belong to the movement, including myself, no longer support Ibn Eisa. He is extremely charismatic and knowledgeable, however, and has convinced many that he follows the proper path. The NIJ, by contrast, are vile, and few Sunnis pay them any heed.



- Most Sunni supporters of the IUM live in Arabia, where people are still in awe of Ibn Eisa for uniting the peninsula. He has support among the Sunnis of other nations, but on a much smaller scale.
- Sayyid

Shia Sect

The next largest sect after the Sunni, easily a third of the Shia very much favor Ibn Eisa's views on Islamic unity. Only where national rulers feel threatened by his influence do Shi'ites oppose the IUM, and many of them also support the NIJ in secret. Such nations include Iran—where people who believe Ibn Eisa is the Muntazar Imam make ruler Ayatollah Abdallah very nervous—and Iraq, where President Shari'ati has constant problems with Shi'ite activism. If enough Iraqi Shi'ites work together, Shari'ati could lose his position. It is not lost on the Iraqi president that Muslim cooperation is one of the IUM's stated goals.

- The threat of a Shi'ite revolution like the one led by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran helped spark the First Iran-Iraq War in 1980. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, a Sunni Muslim, had no desire to see an uprising like that in Iraq, so he invaded. This is grossly simplified, of course—many other factors came into play, some dating back centuries—but the possibility of such a revolution remains a nightmare for today's Iraqi leader.
- Argent

Isma'ili Sect

Isma'ilis have much in common with Shi'ites, but believe there were seven Imams, not twelve. In fact, the Isma'ili sect pays a lot of attention to the number seven, and most important positions or revelations come in groups of seven. This sect also focuses more on the inner meaning of things, as opposed to literal meanings. Application of this idea to the Qu'ran has earned them disdain from most Sunnis, as it allows them to effectively rewrite the word of Allah to fit their needs. Nearly all Isma'ilis support Ibn Eisa, seeing him as the Muntazar Imam, though they call him the returned Seventh Imam rather than the twelfth, as the Shi'ites claim. They are fervent supporters of the New Islamic Jihad as well.

Bohra Sect

In 1256, the Mongols destroyed many strongholds of this Isma'ili sub-sect, known as the Assassins, with the rest falling to the Mamluks in 1272. The Assassins, however, did not simply disappear. Instead, they relocated. The largest remaining group operates from the Gujarat area of India and is now known as the Bohra sect. The Bohras abhor technology such as cyber- and bioware, instead using magic and drugs to augment their already formidable abilities. The Bohras violently oppose both the IUM and the NIJ. They have made several attempts on Ibn Eisa's life and assassinate members of the IUM from time to time, likely out of self-preservation. Nearly all the other sects consider them heretical and persecute them, and the threat of a united Islam dealing with their heresy looks overwhelming from where they stand.

- The Bohras are a real mess to deal with. Protected by spells, physically enhanced by drugs and firmly believing that they will enter Paradise by becoming a martyr to the cause, they are true fanatics. They have no fear of dying and obey their orders without question. Scary bunch.
- Mahmoud

OTHER SUPPORTERS AND OPPONENTS

Saeder-Krupp has more influence in the Middle East than any other megacorp, and draws a large percentage of its profit from doing business in the various Muslim nations. Though S-K supported Ibn Eisa while he worked to unite Arabia, they have since become antagonists. Ibn Eisa's more militant stance is pushing the Middle East closer to war, which the corp doesn't find convenient for its bottom line. The weapons sales generated would not compensate for the inevitable collateral damage in such a war, which threatens to cost S-K a sickening amount of nuyen—not to mention considerable lost revenue as people have less money to spend on anything but food. According to rumor, Lofwyr is taking a personal interest in the situation.

- The dragon recently ordered physical security increased at all Saeder-Krupp facilities in the Middle East. That took a serious chunk of nuyen, so Lofwyr is obviously concerned about how things might go down.
- Amitri

The great dragon Aden appears opposed to a united Islam, whether peaceful or not. His attitude seems more tied to his battles with Lofwyr, of course, than to any religious or political feeling.

- Mossad didn't kill Ibn Eisa. Aden ordered it done. Even you people should be able to see this one.
- Dragonslayer
- For once, I may actually agree with Dragonslayer. That's amazing. Then again, like Mossad, it's too obvious.
- Ruthven

Israel is a prime target if the New Islamic Jihad gets its way and the Islamic Unity Movement changes its focus. Mossad agents stand accused of killing (or trying to kill) Ibn Eisa, and relations between Israel and the various Muslim nations have been poor ever since Israel's birth. The Israelis and Palestinians reached a solution after decades of mutual bloodshed to allow for an uneasy peace between them; the area has been quiet for some time, but the NIJ is stirring things up enough to jeopardize that agreement.

- Great. That's what the Middle East needs, Israel and Palestine at war again. Thanks, Ibn Eisa.
- Socio Pat



The Islamic Unity Movement has had a more positive impact in **Turkey** and **Egypt**, helping to open up diplomatic communication between those nations and Arabia. While the movement does not yet have a huge following in either nation, it includes enough important members among its numbers to have some influence.

This posting by no means covers all that I have heard about the NIJ and the IUM, but it does contain what I have managed to verify or at least find some corroboration for. I chose not to include the less solid information, because doing so would be irresponsible; some of it may create hatred for Muslims who have nothing to do with Ibn Eisa and want only peace. I am sure those among you with skill and talent will discover on your own what I have left unsaid.

Al-salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatu 'I-Lah.

- "May peace be with you and the mercy of God also." Even if he chooses not to tell us everything, Farah is being very polite about it.
- Captain Chaos

THE ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE MOVEMENT

- The Islamic Renaissance Movement may be a minority in the Muslim world, but they're fighting for a modern take on Islam, so they're worth some attention. I've asked Almond White to write about the IRM. My contacts tell me she's a hard-core activist and has her hands in a lot more IRM operations than she cares to admit.
- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:39:23 (PST)

by Almond White

May peace be with you, my friends.

For many of you, Islam brings to mind fundamentalist terrorists who live in medieval nations. While this perception is biased, it is true that many Muslims live under restrictive and often primitive religious laws. They follow not the word of God, but interpretations of His will by Islamic scholars who lived more than a thousand years ago. Even the holiest metahumans are not perfect, and these scholars' interpretations sprang from the primitive age in which they lived.

Unfortunately, down through the centuries these interpretations hardened into law and dogma. Monarchs and religious leaders twisted them to suit their needs and make the faithful obey them or be deemed infidels. Religious dogma developed along with autocratic government. Many Islamic countries remain under the stringent rules of the Shari'ah (Islamic law), and even in so-called free countries many Muslims must choose between their liberty and their religion.

We desperately need a new, modern Islam. This new understanding of our ancient faith should not be imposed by a single visionary leader and his followers, but must freely emerge from the Muslim community. For this to happen, all Muslims must be free to read and understand the Holy Qur'an for themselves. The Islamic Renaissance Movement (IRM) is dedicated to helping Muslims worldwide shape their own religion.

- These infidels want to interpret the word of God as they see fit, ignoring the example of Mohammad (peace be upon him) and his companions and followers. And they accuse us of twisting the Qur'an!

• Crescent Moon

- The contention between the IRM and traditionalist Muslims can be summed up in one word: *ijtihad*, the ability to translate the principles of the Qur'an into practice. Traditionally, *ijtihad* is limited to religious leaders and judges; the IRM says it belongs to all Muslims. A pretty democratic approach, if you ask me.

• Levantine Son

- Even the IRM accepts that scholars can translate the principles of the Qur'an into Shari'ah. For the IRM, however, this means a kind of Islamic constitution dealing with ethical issues and metahuman rights, which serves to inspire government lawmaking. This clashes with the Islamic Unity Movement's view of Islamic government, where the Shari'ah is law and religious scholars are lawmakers.

• Anwar

The esteemed Dr. Mohammad Yusif, a wealthy Indonesian investor horrified by the suffering of Spanish Muslims after the Alliance for Allah's invasion, founded our movement in 2037. He gathered other like-minded souls to create a network of schools and charities that soon spread all over Europe. In time, the leaders of this "Islamic Renaissance" realized that fundamentalists were once again spreading ignorance and hatred among the faithful, and so they joined with moderate religious and community leaders to discuss how to respond. The debate soon evolved into a new Islamic political movement poised to overcome the challenges of the Sixth World.

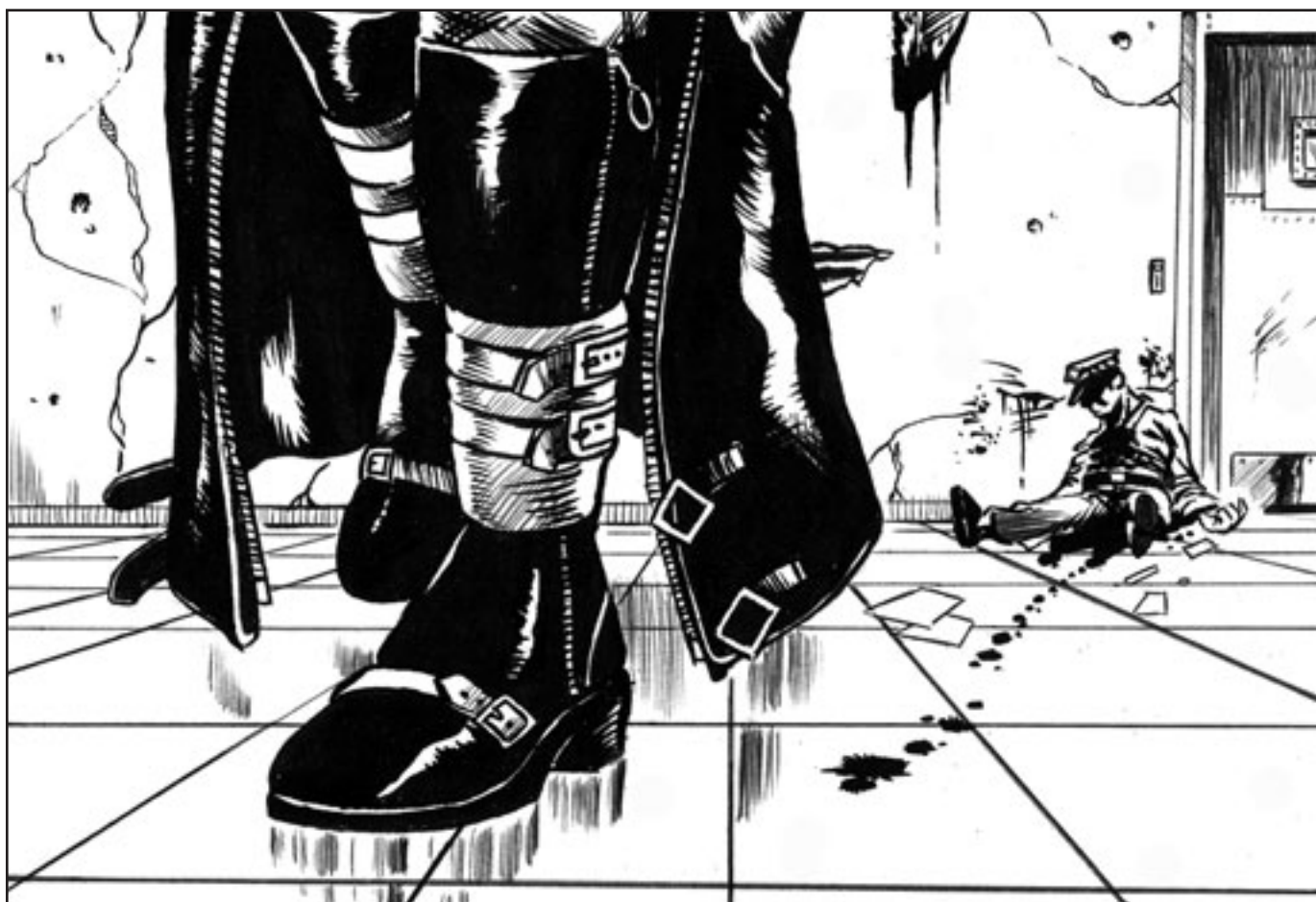
Last year, we entered a new and dangerous phase in our history. Our current leader, Dr. Nabil Toufiq, narrowly survived an assassination attempt by IUM delegates whom he had received in good faith at our Seville headquarters. Those delegates did not live to see the light of day. Since then, we have suffered many attacks from Muslim fundamentalists, many affiliated with the so-called New Islamic Jihad, while religious leaders in the Middle East call us infidels and traitors. A time of testing has arrived, and it is up to us to overcome it.

- Rumors abound as to what happened that night in Seville. So far, my best guess is that the delegates tried to take control of Toufiq using magic. Looking at the changes the movement's been going through in the past few months, I'm not so sure they failed.

• Ersatz

- This marks a sad end to the days when the IUM and the IRM fought jihadist elements together. The modern IRM has turned so radical that it no longer appeals to more traditional Muslims.

• Farah



THE MOVEMENT TODAY

The Islamic Renaissance helps Muslims all over the world to assert themselves and Islam under the guiding principle of knowledge with conviction, known in Arabic as the *Sabeel* (the "Way"). Our offices give charity, education and legal advice to needy Muslims. This vital work falls to activists like me, learned Muslims who pay our duty of charity with our time and expertise. We also support religious schools where students learn and discuss the Qur'an in a rational way. Many in the movement point to the enlightened era of Islamic Spain as an example to follow, and this is one reason why we keep our headquarters in Seville.

- Islamic Spain and the Cordoba Caliphate are the IRM's best propaganda tools, implying that "religious freedom" is related to Muslim prosperity. They conveniently forget that the Caliphs were Sunni Muslims who followed tradition a lot more closely than the IRM does.
- Crescent Moon
- In truth, the IRM traces its roots to more secular movements that appeared all over the Islamic world in the late twentieth

century, such as Iranian and pan-Arab Islamic socialism. They draw a lot from the works of Ali Shariati, which explains why, politically speaking, the movement leans toward the left.

- Anwar
- IRM's schools support the occasional political debate. A favorite topic is the role of the Shari'ah in common law. A lot of secular politicians, mostly with leftist tendencies, get invitations to attend.
- Poly Tick

The Awakening still poses the main theological challenge for our religious leaders. Allah created all creatures gifted with intelligence, metahumans and others; they can therefore understand the Qur'an and join the faithful. Magic is also a gift from Allah and must be studied like all other sciences, with obedience to the principles of Islam. The Jinn, those that you call spirits and elementals, are described in the Qur'an. Islam welcomes shamans as long as they do not worship Jinn like gods. The Islamic University of Cordoba, funded by the movement, does a great deal to promote greater use of magic in daily life while fighting superstitious theories about magic, such as witchcraft.



The movement also fights for the equality of men and women in Islamic societies. Though based in the Qur'an, traditionalist patriarchal Muslims find this position the hardest to accept. Women form a majority of IRM activists in Europe and North Africa, and they are often the first ones to join the movement in more traditionalist Middle Eastern countries. Women are accepted as equals by men in all secular duties, and while theologians still debate our role in religious leadership and interpretation, I'm confident that we will ultimately take our rightful place in these endeavors as well.

- Many street activists are already taking steps. Check out the works of female theologians like the late Zafirah al-Hijazi, killed by extremists in Madrid two months ago.

- Goat-Footed Lady

- The IRM attracts many Muslim women who feel uncomfortable with the religious basis of feminist groups like the Mutter Erde. They wear a headscarf as a sign of modesty, not as a sign of submission, and women have attained many positions of power in the movement.

- Anwar

The *Jamiatul Ulema* (theological council), a congregation of Islamic thinkers and leaders that meets annually in Seville, takes up theological and other issues for the IRM. The IRM Secretariat, also located in Seville and headed by Dr. Toufiq, organizes and funds this meeting. Every Islamic scholar is welcome, from Sunni and Shi'ite theologians to Sufi mystics, but the traditionalists don't bother to attend. The Jamiatul has the hard task of creating the basis for an Islamic liberation theology, while the Secretariat is in charge of opening up the worldwide Muslim community.

- The Jamiatul is a body of Islam, and their propositions are accepted throughout the Muslim world. IRM activists, however, tend to be secular, and their left-wing sympathies make them close to atheists.

- Amitri

- That's how you Salafists want us: confined to the university. But we're out on the streets, chummer, and that's what scares you.

- Goat-Footed Lady

- A lot of tension exists between the Jamiatul's "purists" and the Secretariat's "realists," especially ever since the Seville assassination attempt. Toufiq is a businessman with a lot of corporate contacts, especially in Morocco. Notable scholars like Dr. Lahbib Aziz el-Hababi, one of the movement's most prolific writers, have even accused Toufiq of dealing with Satan.

- Poly Tick

- I'm not sure about Satan, but he has dealt with a dragon or two. The IRM claims it gets its support from wealthy Muslim businessmen, but if you check out S-K's donations to charity in the past few years, a lot of IRM-sponsored groups stand out. And don't tell me Lofwyr has converted!

- Conspir-I-See

- Actually, the Secretariat acknowledges corporate funding, though they don't like to brag about it. One of the major backers is Spain's Meridional Agronomics, but the corp and the IRM both prefer to keep it on the down-low. Meridional values its connections with Islamic groups, but the IRM's reputation is too radical for the corp's comfort.

- Espion

- Meridional likes Muslims quiet and obedient. Just visit Islamic Granada and you'll see what I mean.

- Levantine Son

ACTIVITIES

The IRM has offices throughout the Islamic world, from Indonesia to North Africa, and every other place where Muslims live. We have planted the seeds of the Sabeel in some of the freest countries, like the UCAS and Turkestan, though it is too early for them to put down roots and flourish. We've had less luck in the Middle East and the Balkans. Many of our brothers and sisters have died there, victims of persecution or the dangers of the place. Since last year, we've also had to contend with violent attacks from traditionalist Muslim groups all over the world.

- The IRM has grown in North America ever since the Year of the Comet. They have offices in every major city, with the largest in New York and Washington. They've been getting into trouble, too. The Seattle office got firebombed three times already this year.

- Captain Chaos

Europe

We focus most of our activities on the NEEC's fifteen-million strong Muslim community. Here we find the greatest freedom of movement and the most support; half this community has lived in Europe for generations, far from the rule of traditionalists in the Middle East and elsewhere. Even newcomers are tired of decades of failed jihad and putting all the blame for Islamic stagnation on the countries that have welcomed them to a better life.

- This represents one of the few points of agreement between the IRM and the IUM. We all miss the days when the Jamiatul called Ibn Eisa a visionary.

- Poly Tick



Our movement helps these Muslims understand and integrate into European society. Promising youths receive university scholarships. Religious leaders are encouraged to meet and discuss the Qur'an. Muslim community leaders who stand for election receive financial support. Many persecuted Muslim dissidents find a haven in Europe, aided and protected by the IRM.

- A few IRM-affiliated party members have been elected in left-wing lists all over Europe, as they make natural allies in the fight against nationalist movements. This also lets them tap the significant but usually apathetic Muslim voter segment.
- Poly Tick
- Remember Hussein Ibn Rashad, the Jordanian metahuman rights activist living in Lisbon? I was part of the team that extracted him from a Beirut jail. Our Johnson had close ties to Toufiq, and he's not the only one. Quite a few dissidents who show up in Europe were "liberated" from the Middle East by runners like you and me.
- Flak Jack
- If you ever want to smuggle anything (or anyone) into nice places like Lebanon, try working for the IRM. They have contacts in crime outfits like the Cosa Nostra and the Al-Akhirah Aswad Mayia syndicate; these people can get you across the tightest Arab borders.
- Xunga LX

Unfortunately, some of our more traditionalist brothers and sisters do not understand our goals. They question our right to ignore established tradition, however faulty it may be, and our disagreements sometimes turn violent. Groups such as Jihad X and the Sayid Jazir Brigades are targeting more and more movement members, and evidence suggests that these groups are no more than fronts for the New Islamic Jihad. We also have serious problems with racist Europeans who question our right to live in "their" lands, and even to exist. Terrorists like the Pelayo group in Spain have vandalized our offices and attacked our activists. They cannot shut us down or drive us out, however, no matter what they do. Our defenses are ready, and our enemies attack us again at their peril.

- We know the real objective behind these IRM moros. Just look at the number of "activists" they've elected to European parliaments. These people want to turn back time to the days of Islamic Spain. But we defeated them then and we'll defeat them now.
- Heroé
- The IRM lost seventeen activists this year alone; remember the Frankfurt massacre in February? After that, local militias started turning up around every IRM office. These guys usually handle security at mosques, schools and offices, and

Europol and local police agencies throughout Europe are taking notice of the shift.

- Anonymous Botch
- They're looking for shadowrunners to provide a little extra protection to, or perhaps to provide some training or transport some weapons.
- Amitri

North Africa

Our movement has always drawn strength from the Maghreb, thanks to Morocco's liberal atmosphere. We have the sympathy of King Hassid II; his Minister of Religious Affairs, Dr. Hauad Hecham el-Kharraz, has helped religious leaders affiliated with the IRM dominate the most influential mosques. The Sabeel has taken root amid the educated middle class in Rabat and Casablanca, and the IRM has as much influence here as in Europe.

- It's confined to the cities, though. Traditionalist Sunni peasants don't care much for the IRM's attitude, and support from the Spanish-controlled monarchy doesn't win them any friends in the hinterland. No wonder terrorist movements like the Ceuta Liberation Front are growing fast in the countryside.
- Socio Pat

Cairo represents another IRM bastion, especially the exiled Arabian community. Our movement strongly supports the dragon Masaru's efforts to rebuild the Great Library of Alexandria, which has won us the loyalty of that city's inhabitants as well. Many close-minded Muslims remain in the rest of the country, however, contesting our presence in mosques and sometimes in the streets. Here too, we face attack by movements close to the New Islamic Jihad. Our Secretariat chose Egypt as a stronghold; if we win the battle with extremist Muslims here, we can gain a foothold in the Middle East.

- Cairo is a good example of the rift between followers of the Sabeel and traditional Sunnis and Shi'ites. Some sociologists claim the IRM is turning into an Islamic sect, just like the other two.
- Levantine Son
- The IRM also has discreet support inside Al-Azhar Islamic University. It's surprising how they manage to thrive in such a conservative environment, but the movement wants to keep a foothold among influential scholars.
- Sayyid
- They wouldn't be interested in the ancient tomes hidden away in the Al-Azhar library, now would they? Last month I got paid good nuyen to smuggle some small packages out of that place. I earned every cent, too. The university's magical defenses are way too strong for its peaceful reputation.
- Babylonian



Middle East

Despite our current strained relationship with the Islamic Unity Movement, the IRM has gained some support among local religious and prayer leaders. Unfortunately, the grip of tradition remains strong in places like Arabia and Syria. Sunnis in those nations don't like to hear about separating Islamic and common law, and so the preachers we support limit themselves to asking for a little freedom of speech and a few basic women's rights. Middle Eastern Shi'ites pose a different problem; they are open to discussing doctrine, but get upset when the Jamiatul Ulema questions their worship of the twelve Great Imams or the presence of Shi'ite clerics in the Iranian government.

- This hasn't prevented Ayatollah Abdallah from tolerating IRM operations in Iran. Some radicals call him a heretic over this, but they're also the ones calling Ibn Eisa the Twelfth Imam.
- Levantine Son

We face the harshest difficulties in Arabia. The IRM claims some support among educated corporate workers and Bedouin tribal sheiks, but fundamentalist Sunnis vehemently oppose the movement. Officially, the IRM is banned in Arabia, but our activists are tolerated as long as they only provide charity. Government officials, especially those close to the IUM, make life difficult for IRM members every way they can. We also suffer constant attacks from "bandits" surely linked to the New Islamic Jihad. Invariably, the police do nothing about these outrages.

- Not strictly true. Police officials politely tell the IRM folks that people who insist on offending sensible Sunnis often end up dead somewhere. Remember that Arabia tolerates honor-motivated crimes, so this response can't really be called discrimination against the IRM.
- Sayyid
- It is right to mistrust these heretics. They receive support from the Saeder-Krupp dragon worshippers in Arabia and Iraq. Saied Bey himself has shown interest in the Sabeel, and many corporate workers follow this heresy. The IRM is just another pawn in the hands of the New Crusaders.
- Crescent Moon

With the help of Allah and each other, we continue to overcome these hardships. Followers of the Sabeel in the Middle East remain in touch with each other and with the rest of the movement, keeping us informed of the worsening situation. Recently, some of our less patient activists traveled to the Middle East with the help of this network. These brave

volunteers go from mosque to mosque, questioning the Sunni version of the Shari'ah with quotes from the Qur'an. Arabia's religious police, the *Mutaween*, dog their every step, and many end up arrested and tortured. Our people face these threats with courage, and they remain our greatest hope for taking the Sabeel to the Prophet's own land.

- IRM's network is one of their most important assets in the Middle East. Though members rarely break the law, Arabian and other local intelligence agencies keep them under close watch.
- Sayyid
- They should. Part of this network supports the movement's less legal activities. Toufiq set up an Analysis Office in Seville that looks a lot like an intelligence outfit.
- Amitri
- The network is made up of amateurs, so security's not airtight; Mossad and some European intelligence agencies have infiltrated it—to a much greater extent than the IRM knows. The Analysis Office also occasionally works with Aegis Cognito and Saeder-Krupp, with Toufiq's blessing.
- Ersatz
- Anyone here ever heard of Farid al-Mansoor? He's some kind of anti-Jihadist, known for seeking out and destroying New Islamic Jihad cells all over the Middle East. Arabia calls him a criminal, but many people link him with the IRM.
- Poly Tick
- I've heard lots of rumors about that guy, but no hard facts. People I've talked to say he's a powerful mage, a former Lebanese operative, a SURGED Hashishin, Saladin's great-grandson—and so on, and so on. IRM officials are quick to condemn his actions, but the activists think he's a real hero.
- Levantine Son
- Here's a hard fact for you, chummer. My contacts tell me Toufiq set up al-Mansoor's operation after the Seville incident last year. This guy has access to lots of hard tech and an incredible contact network. The IRM must be stretching their resources to support him.
- Ersatz
- Mr. al-Mansoor remains a dear friend of Dr. Toufiq, but he also has Kurdish friends who have been quite helpful with supplies—courtesy of his large, winged ally in Mount Ararat.
- as-Sadiq

DIY CRIME



Let's face it, a lot of us turned to crime because we didn't want or didn't have access to the normal 9-to-5 lifestyle of Jane Average. Rebellious street scum like us aren't exactly well known for our ability to take orders and kiss hoop. It's only natural that some of us have written off working for Johnsons or fixers or mob bosses and decided to make a living on our terms. They don't exactly have grant foundations or corporate sponsorships for illegal entrepreneurialism, so it's all about DIY: Do-It-Yourself.

This file focuses on a few crime outfits that were started by or for shadowrunners, or that otherwise don't fit the syndicate/gang profile. I decided to steer away from smuggler groups, pirate crews and similar operations—they come a dime-a-dozen anyway—and focus instead on operations that break from the norm. This may inspire some of you to go out there and found your own gig, dedicated to the criminal project of your choice. Best of luck to you.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:41:19 (PST)

BROKERAGE X

• I'm sure some of you wonder how so-called prime runners can afford the cutting-edge tech toys, spanking-new spell formulae and high-grade Chiba cybertech on the kind of pay most shadowfolk get. Answer: they play it smart and call on the services of someone like our next poster and his cohorts.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:44:20 (PST)

by €spion

From what the good Captain tells me, this compilation is meant to cover a great many groups and organizations for which runners sometimes work. As a break from the norm, I'm pleased to introduce a group that can work for you instead. We're well established in Europe and expanding into North Am, so my thanks to the Captain for this opportunity to plug our services to a completely new clientele.

Many of you probably wonder how the big players in shadowbiz can afford their downtown penthouses, '62 Saabs, Chiba cybertech or orichalcum sword—especially when, con-



trary to popular belief, the pay scale in this kind of work isn't all that flexible. Of course, some company men and specialist crews are good enough to name their price, but ultimately the Johnson's projected profit return on a given target or operation dictates the payoff—and nobody's going to fork out a million for a person, item or datafile that they can hire, acquire, develop or reverse engineer themselves, unless it's absolutely vital. Established crews with a solid rep pull in maybe a couple hundred thousand nuyen a month at best, so how do you reconcile that size paycheck with living and running expenses and padding your nest?

How do they do it? Simple. They call us. And now so can you.

STOCK IN TRADE

So who and what are we? Brokerage X is a stock brokerage firm with a twist. My colleague 0111 and I started off working the fringes of the black tech market in Scandinavia and made enough money to move on to bigger things. These days we and our associates work exclusively with shadow folk, maintaining investment and stock portfolios for the best runners in town—no hassles, no red tape and no questions asked. Nice but uninspiring, right? So what's all the fuss about?

Here's where the twist kicks in. Ever been on a run where you've netted some juicy data about a corp, and then used that info to invest in stocks and make an extra buck? Or incidentally nabbed some smoking paydata that has yet to hit the markets? You probably have. Most shadowfolk do at one point or another. You might have been a bit disappointed when the corp's stock jumped 20 points and you only netted 2,000¥ on your 10,000¥ investment. Fixer and broker fees probably whittled that down to 1,500¥. Barely worth the effort, right?

The problem is twofold. First, even the most revolutionary release or biggest tech toy has minimal impact on a megacorp's global stock profile. Second, the amount of cash you usually put up for such a one-shot deal won't buy you a significant amount of stock. Combined, these two realities make the whole prospect of playing the market less than interesting, especially if it's a one-off gimmick.

- Frag if that isn't true. Plus, you have to have a SIN for most brokerage firms to even give you the time of day. Pain in the hoop.
- Bung
- Espion is making a pitch and it shows. He's correct that 10K¥ is an insignificant amount when it comes to megacorp stocks, but not when we're talking start-ups and local companies. The problem there is that small corps have a hard time getting quoted on the big exchanges these days with all the big-boy pressure.
- The Chromed Accountant.

Now imagine a way for runners to turn a regular buck off ill-gotten information, share the wealth without upsetting the markets and possibly even make a real impact on corporate stocks. That's where Brokerage X comes in.

- If you don't want all this hassle and have a friend at a brokerage firm, you can do what I do and pass on the info for a little extra beer money.
- Boston Hound

SECRETS AND SERVICES

So what happens at Brokerage X? We turn secrets into money.

Let's say you've just swiped the prototype and data for a next-gen hydro-cell from United Oil, dropped a cascading virus into the system to destroy backups and then handed it over to Zeta-ImpChem. Normally, if you had some cash to spare, it'd be a good idea to pick up some Z-IC stock through a broker and make a little extra cred when they patent the new tech as their own and their stock rockets. If you have a portfolio at BX, however, what you do instead is drop by your friendly neighborhood Matrix branch and fill in your broker on what stocks to buy, and explain why!

- As if! What's to stop them from turning around and ratting on me?
- GnuB
- Their livelihood and reps, for one. A business like this is based on trust. They screw you over, and word gets around. Soon enough they have no clients.
- Nuyen Nick
- Exactly. We're not newbies. We've been around for the better part of a decade in Europe, and the fact that we're expanding to your shores should tell you something. But don't take our word for it. Feel free to do some digging yourself. Get some opinions.
- 0111011001

We take care of all the paperwork for you, using the very best shells, double blinds and front men money can buy to handle our transactions through licensed brokerage houses—making them virtually untraceable. You get complete deniability—and that isn't even the best bit. At BX, we plan investments for all the runner portfolios we maintain. That means all the other chummers on our client lists stand to make a profit from your information, and you make a profit off of theirs. Let your money do your work for you.

- Cool. Where do I sign on?
- Kid Code
- You wish. This is the big leagues, kid. Amateurs need not apply.
- Link
- We'll see about that, old man.
- Kid Code





Now you're probably wondering: where's the catch? There are several.

First, our services aren't free, nor are they open to one and all. Our retainer is 30,000¥, which we use to offset any slips you might make—too many strikes on your record and we reimburse what's left and drop your account. The retainer is in addition to the investment money you put up for your portfolio, and we also charge a strict 10 percent of net profits to cover operating costs.

Second, we're pros and we prefer to work with pros. BX provides portfolio management and risk assessment based on runners' reputations and mission success rates, as well as the data valuation itself—most of our brokers have extensive know-how in the finance and tech fields. If you choose to contact us, expect a thorough background check, detailed profiling and a psych evaluation. BX will make discreet inquiries through fixers and via our connections in corps and syndicates. If your rep makes the cut, we'll be in touch. If not, you might want to try again in a couple of years.

- Count me in.
- Prime Runner

• Not if I have anything to do with it! I warned you last time about making copies of data and reselling it. Ares was not pleased and neither am I.

- Six

• Come on, Six, you can't hold it against a guy for wanting to make a bit of extra cred!

- Prime Runner

• You cost me a commission, drekhead, so just watch me!

- Six

• Finally somebody takes him down a peg. Good for you, Six.

- Fatima

BRANCHES AND ASSOCIATES

Even though Brokerage X operates exclusively online through a number of restricted hosts hidden in the Matrix, each of our branches restricts its clientele to a specific region. This has to do with the way most stock exchange manager companies scrutinize international transactions, but also because we like to know who we're working for. To contact us, just log on to one of our drop point nodes—you'll find links on most data havens with a simple search—and send us your details. We'll check you out and get in touch if we're interested.

- Don't call us, we'll call you. Right.
- Jaxon

• I can't shake the feeling that something's not quite right here. What the hell do these guys do with all the info they collect? Who's to say this isn't a megacorp scam to get the goods on the competition and do damage control on its own

leaks? Sounds like something Shiawase's MIFD or maybe HKB would pull.

- Glitch

• I remember 0111 being tight with the Yaks on the Oslo black stock exchange during BX's previous management. Who's to say he still isn't?

- Anders

• With stuff like that, it'll always be impossible to disprove a connection to everyone's satisfaction. I admit I remain on friendly terms with the Korogai-gumi, despite the current BX crew severing ties with many of our former Scand associates, but the only proof of our independence I can offer is our track record for confidentiality and deniability. Ask around.

- 0111011001

• All I know is, you guys are sitting on one hell of a motherlode of intel. A guy can't help but wonder why the corps aren't all over you.

- Saladin

If we approve an account, you'll get a weekly password and the floating Matrix address update for your local branch where you can log on, chat with your broker, check up on your portfolio and browse the latest M100Q quotes from Boston, Tokyo, Frankfurt and Zurich. Currently we possess dedicated hosts in Northern and Southern Europe; our first North Am operation will be up and running by the end of the month, though our British expansion has been postponed until the local situation cools down.

• Seems like you boys are getting too big for your britches. If BX is half as successful as they claim, sooner or later someone'll catch on that they're dealing with this much insider information. Not necessarily exchange management corps, but big financial players like HKB, Frankfurt Bank Association and S-K.

- Money Man

• That is a risk. So we make sure we've got more fronts and blinds than any runner could ever put together, and we're constantly on the move. We're also heavily protected from data snoops. Knowing we're out there is very different from having a handle on us. Tracking transactions won't work and sniffing around our old Scand hosts like MCT's been doing will get them nowhere. I'm pretty sure more than a couple of corp spooks are over on the Helix trying to nail some leads, for all the good it'll do them.

- €spion

If you don't have a local BX branch, don't despair. We have contacts with enterprising friends who offer similar services in other parts of the world such as Japan, Australia and Calcutta. We'll be happy to forward your details to them, for a small fee.



- Those Aussie friends wouldn't be the Hawke's mob, would they?
- Carver

TAMANOUS

• This file turned up in the mailbox of a friend of mine a couple of days ago. I tried to get a line on Karl, but couldn't get much—just that he's a small-time shadowrunner out of LA, the kind of guy who'd do anything for nuyen. Seems he dropped off the face of the earth recently, so keep that in mind when you read the file.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:46:41 (PST)

by Karl

You've all heard the cliché about how if you're reading this, I'm already dead. Well, hopefully it isn't true in this case. With a little luck after I post this I'm going to go someplace where nobody can find me, and maybe if this gets out, it'll get too hot to cack me. I can hope, can't I? If I get lucky, I'll stay in one piece for awhile. If not—well, let's just say I might be the gift that keeps on giving.

Sounds sarcastic, neh? Fact is, I'm scared drekless. Anybody who knows me knows that's not an easy thing for me to admit. I've been around for long enough to see just about everything—or so I thought. Anything for nuyen, that was my motto. Had quite the rep as the guy who'd do whatever needed doing, without any pesky inconveniences like conscience or morality. Hey, biz is biz, right?

- If this is the guy I think it is, he's not drekkin' us. He'd cack little old ladies if the cred was right.
- Norteño

That's probably why I got tapped for this job—because nobody else would take it. Maybe I should have thought about that when the Johnson (I never saw him—it was a Matrix meet) offered me and a mage chummer big nuyen to grab a pair of five-year-old twins from a fancy Beverly Hills private school and deliver them to an address. I figured it was a ransom grab, 'cause it takes more cred than I'll see in this life to put one kid in a school like that, let alone two.

The job went off better than I expected. We grabbed the kids (don't ask me how—it's not important), drugged 'em and put 'em in the trunk of my car, then called the Johnson for the drop address. He told us to bring 'em to a place in Thousand Oaks and we'd settle up there.

We did what we were told. He was waiting for us, standing next to a van with blacked-out windows. Then things started getting weird. As we loaded the kids into the back of the van, I got a quick look at the driver. The sight of him gave me a really bad feeling that I covered up fraggin' fast before somebody noticed. I had a pretty good idea that if the Johnson figured out I'd seen his ghoulish driver, my life wouldn't be worth the cred it would take to clean up the corpse. We collected our nuyen and watched the Johnson climb back into the van. Deep

down, I knew those kids weren't gonna be held for ransom. Nobody'd ever see them alive again.

- Ghoul driver? What a load of drek. Ghouls can't see, dimwit, they're practically blind. This story has holes in it that even a ghoulish could drive through.
- Skeptic

- Maybe it was a ghoulish rigger, omae.
- Grid Reaper

So I did something way out of character for me. I always carry a couple of little homing tracers—they come in handy when I have to track something down. I slapped one on the van's bumper, let them get a head start and then followed them. My chummer wasn't too thrilled, but I didn't give him much choice. All the while I was kicking myself for doing it. Why would I put our hoops in a sling for a couple of little rich kids I'd never met, except to grab them and knock them out?

We followed them at a discreet distance up north to Ventura. The van pulled into a warehouse down near the ocean and the door went down. We waited a few minutes and then my chummer took an astral gander. Next thing I know he's back, his face white as a sheet. "Frag!" he whispers. "Let's get outta here—*now!*" Behind him, I could see the warehouse door open and something moving. Ghouls. six or seven at least, making a beeline straight for us.

So much for altruism. I burned rubber out of there. It wasn't until we'd gotten twenty clicks away and were looking at each other over our third beer that my chummer gave me the whole story. "The place was full of *bodies*," he whispered; I could see the whites all the way around his eyes. "And not all of 'em were dead. They had this guy laid open on a table and they were cutting out his parts—while he was still *alive*." He shuddered and wouldn't say any more.

He didn't have to. I'd heard of these guys—Tamanous, they call themselves. Not fraggers you mess with. I'd like to say I was a hero and went back, guns blazing, to rescue those kids, but that ain't the way it happened. Sad thing is, I really am sorry about it. If I'd known, I'd never have taken the job, but I'm not tangling with those guys again for all the cred in the Sprawl.

- I'm almost afraid to ask, but did anybody find the kids?
- Mookie

- The kidnapping made all the papers around here a couple of weeks ago. No leads—until now, anyway. From the sound of this, there won't be a happy ending.
- Angeleno

- Anybody heard from Karl?
- Carlito

- He popped up in New York City for a day or two, then disappeared again. Wouldn't be at all surprised if he was right about



being "the gift that keeps on giving." Wonder how many rich corp slots he's powering these days?

- Torque

- Serves him right. Poor kids ...

- Auntie Em

- Can somebody fill me in on this Tamanous thing?

- Curious George

- What rock have you been hiding under? Tamanous is the big fish in the organlegging biz—you know, harvesting dead bodies (and live ones) for their parts. It's a huge industry: plenty of people out there are either rich enough to afford to get their faulty parts replaced by young vibrant ones, or desperate and broke enough to take a chance on spare parts of unknown origin. Remember, there's a lot of clonal drek out there, along with bio and cyberware, but all of that takes time and a lot of money. You can't just grow a clone of your liver overnight—and if it's bad to start with, you wouldn't want to. Used to be this kind of thing got handled haphazardly by a whole bunch of small gangs, but when Tamanous came on the scene they consolidated a lot of it and took it to the next level. If you need it and can pay the price, they can get it for you. Think of them as an auto chop-shop for people.

- Stillman

PARTS IS PARTS

- This next file comes from a street doc who won't forget his first encounter with Tamanous anytime soon. He's still around and still helping out a lot of people, so anybody who knows who he is, keep it under your hat.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:47:55 (PST)

by Welby

When most people think of Tamanous, they think of the spooky guys who swoop in after firefights or haunt hospital corridors, making off with the bodies to parcel out for their nefarious plans. Kind of the modern-day bogeyman, good for scaring kids. Let me tell you, chummer, you don't know the half of it. Working at a clinic in Redmond (I won't tell you exactly where, because even though I don't exactly have an MD, a lot of poor slags would be in a world of hurt if deprived of my services), I tangled with Tamanous and their flunkies more often than you'd believe. I've seen a lot and heard more, but even I don't think I've got the whole story. These guys are enough to make a horror-story writer sleep with the lights on.

My first run-in with them came just a day or two after I'd started at the clinic. I won't say the place was crooked when I got there, but our mortality rate was deplorable—and funny thing, when I started

looking into the records, I discovered that they either didn't exist (old computers, corrupted data, you know how it goes) or that bodies were being released to "relatives" who never signed any release forms. I was working late one night patching up gangers when I heard a knock at the back door. I got my Predator (hey, I'm an almost-a-doctor, but I'm not an idiot) and





went to check it out, figuring it was another ganger. Instead, a man stood there, looking impatient, with a van idling behind him. "Got the package ready?" he asked.

I stared at him. "What package?"

"C'mon, Doc, don't waste my time. Two human males, late teens. I ain't got all night."

When I told him I had no idea what he was talking about, he really looked at me for the first time. I think he realized I wasn't who he was expecting. He muttered a curse under his breath and asked where the former doctor was. When I told him that doc was gone, he cursed again, then spun on his heels, jumped back in the van and took off like the Devil was following him.

When I turned back around, one of the less-injured gangers was standing there, covering me with a pistol. "You don't wanna mess with those chummers, Doc," he told me. At my confused look, he stowed his pistol. "You ain't heard of Tamanous?"

I gaped at him. "I thought they were a myth."

He shook his head. "Naw, man—they're as real as you and me. I'm just glad you were here tonight, 'stead of the old doc. Sounds like he'd have sold us for parts by now."

Back then, all I could do was stare at him some more with my mouth hanging open. That was six months ago, and I'm sorry to say I've gotten quite an education since then.

- Alright, let's get real and just drop the pretense of being horrified, shall we? I bet half the slags reading this have turned to Tamanous or a similar outfit when you had some pesky bodies that you needed to dispose of. C'mon, we've all been there. Why bother with chopping off limbs for easier transport, digging shallow graves or loading down the meat so it doesn't float when you can just call these guys to cart away the corpse for you? With all the ghouls they got cleaning up after them, you sure don't have to worry about forensics being used to trace a stiff back to you. And "recycling" is good for the environment, right?

- Hacksaw

- I always preferred woodchippers myself.

- Fargo

- Nah, man, it's all about the flesh-eating beetles. Or pigs—they'll eat anything. Better yet, I heard from a chummer about some bone-liquefying nanites he stole from Biogene once; that would be sweet!

- Grim

- Sick fraggers.

- Fatima

- Hacksaw's right—having to think about these sorts of things isn't pleasant, but it's part of the job description. But it's not the fact that Tamanous harvests organs, kidnaps people or takes away people that aren't quite dead yet that makes them real-

ly scary. It's the other side of their operation that bothers me—the side that's less about harvesting and more about "producing." They're in the business of selling parts, right? Let's face it—they don't just deal in used goods. We've all seen black clinics that offer newly vat-grown and even custom-tailored organs—you think they all have the facilities to grow their own? To care and store for all those clones? No, they get their goods from black market distributors—the same ones that sell the used stuff: Tamanous. Those same dealers also handle special orders, from genengineered organs to specialty clones to slaves. And why grow all those clones from scratch when there are so many unwanted children in the world anyway? Tamanous is international in scope, and with that kind of demand, you can bet they look into all of the options available ...

- Reality Czech

- He's not exaggerating. I should know. It's only lately that I've stopped having nightmares about those bastards—about the rooms where they kept us pregnant women, about the screams each time they took one of us away and then brought her back not pregnant anymore, about the cold sterile labs where they used artificial insemination to make us pregnant again after they'd harvested our fetuses. Some of the women had been there for months, years—going through the same ordeal as many as four or five times. I was lucky—I got out of there before it was my turn. My daughter is happy and healthy—but that's more than I can say for her mother.

- Chica

- You know, I can't help thinking Chica must have fragged somebody off big-time to end up in a fetus farm. It makes a lot more sense to use mindless clones—less trouble with the law, for one thing, since nobody misses them. Plus, they can mess around with them genetically to get shorter pregnancies and custom-tailored kids to fit particular clients. I also wonder if they wouldn't prefer orks, who have multiple kids at a time. More ... efficient <shudder>. It seems like it's all about efficiency with these guys.

- Sojourner

- These guys are so fraggin' scary because they've got the organlegging thing down to a science. People picture a bunch of ghouls picking over dead bodies on the street, but these guys are organized. I haven't actually seen it, but I've heard tell that one of their new tactics is to disguise their ambulances to look like DocWagon rigs, then listen to the radio chatter and beat the real ambulances to victims. By the time anybody figures it out, they're long gone and so is the vic.

- Keller

- So this Tamanous thing is run by ghouls?

- GnuB



• Yes, but not necessarily the literal kind. It's more likely that whoever runs Tamanous finds real ghouls useful and vice versa. The ghouls provide dual-natured security and muscle in exchange for the scraps the Tammy boys don't need.

• Bergie

• If ghouls were treated with the dignity they deserve, they wouldn't need to resort to this kind of thing. It can mean nothing but trouble for us—isn't our reputation bad enough already, without resorting to bodysnatching?

• Van Zandt

• Get with the times, old man. We do what we must to survive. Society frags us—we frag 'em back.

• 162

• Getting back to Tamanous being serious—it's true, you never heard on the trid any more about the Star busting up organlegging rings. Tamanous got a lot better at not getting caught. I hear they even have moved some of their operations into mobile "clinics"—big trailer rigs kitted out with the latest medical gear. It's a lot harder to track them down when they're moving around than if they've set up in a warehouse somewhere.

• Nursie

• That's assuming they're even in the Sprawl. The biggest part of their operation is located in backwater countries and places where they can pay off the law to stay out of their business. If you're sick enough to work for these guys, there's major cred to be had smuggling parts and bodies in and out of North America and Europe.

• Bizwatcher

• That may be true, but some of them do work out of legitimate clinics. They have plenty of rich clients who are looking for mods or treatments that are illegal or not approved, who want a "special" child or want to acquire clones for their own uses. Rich corpors pay well for "goods and services" like that, and even bad doctors gotta pay those golf-course fees.

• Cynic

• Don't get the idea it's just corpors, Cynic. Nobody talks much about the Tammies' "fringe" clients—people like blood mages looking for sacrifices or voodoo types looking for zombie fodder. And then there are the real freaks who just like the taste of flesh. Not ghouls, just plain old cannibals. Tamanous supplies them all.

• Bizwatcher

• If you want something else to keep you awake at night, here's one for you: A couple of decker buddies and I got hired a few months back to break into a small hospital's system and extract patient records. The Johnson wasn't looking

for anybody in particular—just wanted all the records. Naturally, we kept copies. I didn't think anything of it until another chummer mentioned he'd been hired by the same Johnson to snatch a couple of folks and deliver them alive—folks who didn't seem to have any value as kidnap vics. One was a taxi driver, the other a schoolteacher. On a hunch, I checked the hospital records we'd lifted, and sure enough, both names were there. A little more checking turned up three other names of people who'd disappeared. Can anybody put two and two together on that?

• Falcon Eddie

• They're tracking people. Identifying them and then keeping an eye on them until their particular type is needed. Parts on the hoof.

• Dr. Bones

• Score one for the Doc.

• Falcon Eddie

• I can see why they would do this. It would save 'em costs and storage space—why keep a body on ice when you can let the guy walk around and knowing what his genetic and medical profile is and snatch him up if a client ever comes along that he's a match too? Not to mention that you wouldn't have to worry about dead bodies getting up and walking out the front door.

• JR

• Shedim? If that wasn't so sick, it would be funny.

• Rabbit

• Funny, but true. I hear Tamanous is experimenting with all sorts of new ways of handling organs and bodies these days: using shapeshifters to regenerate removed organs, transplanting organs into animal bodies to keep them viable, genetically modifying animals to have metahuman organs, that kind of thing. These guys have a rep as the bogeymen, but I think they live up to it.

• Drac

• So anybody know who's behind Tamanous? I've heard lots of rumors. Anybody got anything concrete?

• Wonko

• Isn't it obvious? The ghouls are running the show—the smart ones, anyway. All the organlegging stuff is just a smokescreen to finance the rest. All they care about is maintaining a steady supply of flesh.

• Jaxon

• Were you born an idiot, Jaxon, or do you have to take special pills? Ghouls have plenty of easier ways to get their munchies than to set up something this complex. This kind of



biz is purely economic—you wouldn't believe how much money is in organlegging. As long as there are rich people who need parts they can't grow or build, or SINless folks who can't get 'em the legit way, the market'll be there. Some mighty sick puppies are out there with MDs and nuyen signs shining in their eyes.

- Ged

- Any truth to the rumor that a wendigo's involved? Seemed farfetched to me, but these days you never know. For all I know it could be a fraggin' dragon.

- Daytripper

- I heard it was started by a group of cannibalistic Native American shamans.

- Ravenous

- I don't know who's behind Tamanous and I don't really want to, but I can tell you they're not the only ones in the organlegging biz these days. Nobody wants to admit it, but some Mafia and Yak groups have their own small operations in a few cities. Mostly they use hired contractors rather than their own people—they're worried about taking a hit on their reputation. I think it makes them a little queasy to get their hands bloody like this, but the money's too good to ignore. Same is true of a few scattered gangs, though they're less squeamish about using their own guys and a lot more low-tech. Drek, even a lot of the groups that work with Tamanous don't call themselves Tamanous—the name's got too much baggage associated with it. Then again, others that aren't associated sometimes use the name if they think they'll get intimidation value out of it.

- Tango

DRACONIC INFORMATION VIRTUAL EXCHANGE (DIVE)

- I know that giving Wyrmspace space on this compilation for DIVE will earn me an earful, as some of you consider it a joke. I know it's more than slightly flaky, but having read Wyrmspace's material, I can say that—as with so many oddities in this day and age—there's more to it than meets the eye. So keep cynicism to yourselves for a minute and prepare for some surprises. And remember: knowledge is power.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:49:16 (PST)

by Wyrmspace

DIVE was started way back in 2011 by Toshiro Harumori, a passenger on the bullet train who witnessed Ryumyo's first appearance over Mt. Fujiyama. It began as a dedicated newsgroup and mailing list with a handful of members fascinated at the existence of dragons and devoted to following and collecting all the information and sightings they could. We knew almost no hard facts about dragons back then, and not much has changed in that respect in the decades since.

So, in addition to collecting news items and images, DIVE dug up a lot of material on the mythological origins of dragons and their presence in human cultures and history.

After the Crash, the group reappeared, restoring and reposting lost files from personal scrapbooks and backups onto the fledgling Matrix. Like others at that time, I naively volunteered my meager skills to help put together a new network of SIGs—without a thought to where all the drive was coming from. DIVERS went back to sharing gigapulses of files in no time, posting their sightings, personal stories, maps, newsfax clippings, trid excerpts, stats and all manner of interesting details concerning the comings and goings of dragons in the Sixth World.

To the cynical crowd in the shadows, we're just a bunch of geeks and fanboys. I'll grant that we get our share of paranoids and xenophobes, and even a few cultists, but DIVERS come from all walks of life. Some are amateur dragon enthusiasts; others are scholars, parabiologists, corporate middle managers, muckrakers, infomongers and taxi drivers. This huge range of individuals from all over the world shares one common passion: dragons. The hype around Dunkelzahn's Presidential campaign and assassination, reignited by Ghostwalker's appearance, pushed membership through the roof, and the latest newsletter places our numbers at more than 300,000 worldwide.

- The discussions can get inane and picking through all the dross is a pain, but when I recently hacked the Seattle DIVE host to look at something unrelated, I found complete annotated transcripts of Dunkie's Will and Wyrmspace Talk. Pure gold!

- Data Prospector

- True, you can find valuable stuff—if you don't mind wading through Rhonabwy's favorite musical scores and empty speculation on Lofwyr's slipping hold on S-K. I've found listings of magical groups under Schwartzkopf's patronage, notes on which Transsys Neuronet facility Celedyr visited recently, the transcript of the final transmissions from EuroAir 329, uncorrupted trid files of the Frankfurt dogfight and loads of details on lesser known dracos the world over.

- De Rake

- Of course, you also run into worthless discussions on such subjects as comparative wing spans, dietary habits, dragon dung's potential as fuel and the inevitable crossbreeding-with-metas theories spawned by the rumors of drakes. Yuck!

- Oolong

- The Children of the Dragon use DIVE SIGs to troll for recruits. More than a few DIVERS fall for the "omnipotent draconic rulers of metahumankind" schtick. The CoD regularly feeds pseudo-hard facts into DIVE's archives on the role of dragons in human existence, referring to medieval and earlier legends and supposed records of dragon existence throughout history.

- Wild Child



DIVE enforces a three-strike rule to make sure crap and disinformation doesn't make it onto the archives. We ask members to report any info known or suspected to be false; then we check it and remove it if we can't verify it. Three reports against the poster mean expulsion, though the member may present his case before a committee of randomly drawn peers. The system ensures that most information on DIVE SIGs is trustworthy—however, the verification of uploads is voluntary, and we can't stop all disinformation and fake data from occasionally making it into circulation. In addition to verifying reported posts, fact-checkers sort through data and cross-reference it as best they can. As an additional filtering measure, active members must sponsor new recruits and must pay an initial membership fee of 50¥ plus monthly dues of 10¥. These monies go into a local bank account intended for maintaining the network. I say "intended" because that's where a problem's cropped up.

- I was going to bring that up. I did some quick math based on the figures listed and it doesn't add up. Your funding is way beyond what you need for SIGs, archives and newsletter services and even the odd con. Someone's raking in millions every month in dues alone. If I were you, Watcher, I'd ask for an account statement at your next convention.

- Chromed Accountant

- It's a CotD scam. I knew those cultists were up to no good!
- Large Mike

- You don't think at least one of these dragon overlords caught on to what you're doing and has been feeding you disinformation? Yeah, right.
- Lone Gunman

- Wouldn't it be twisted if the dragons themselves put DIVE together?
- Cynic

For a while now, something's been gnawing at the back of my mind that I couldn't quite place. Last month's assassination attempt on Marcupo (an adult dragon ally of Masaru's that lives a "metahuman" lifestyle in Cebu City) brought it home. A proponent of metahuman-and-dragon interliving, Marcupo is quite well-known and respected by his neighbors. Quite a few DIVERs followed Marc's affairs and regularly posted uploads on him. Though the attack was officially blamed on a criminally-inclined gang who hoped to steal the dragon's "hoard," it smacked of something more deliberate. The more I read about it, the more something clicked.

I looked through the records and found a shocker: twenty-one confirmed dracoform deaths (many of them females) and at least three greats in the past fifty years, most under mysterious circumstances, and a few conspicuously timed shortly after key data got uploaded to DIVE. I didn't want to believe it. I couldn't. So I decided to look into things to prove myself wrong.



• He's onto something there. Attacks on dragons have skyrocketed over the past few years. Not that any of the big 'uns bit it, mind you; lesser dracoforms are usually the targets, especially those with a certain notoriety. Damon, for instance, after causing all that stir on the Atlanta nightlife scene, saw his downtown penthouse go up in a fireball last month. Rumor has it he's taking a vacation somewhere less ... intense.

• Zephyr

Tracing the electronic trail of membership fees and donations was beyond me, so I hitched along with a chum to do some serious decker digging. She followed the funds to several secure bank accounts in Switzerland and the Pacific Rim. From there, a fraction of the money gets paid out to the various DIVE service providers; the rest is transferred to numerous bank accounts across the globe. These accounts can only be accessed by small groups of individuals. In one Swiss account, my friend also turned up a timed satlink backdoor to a restricted host.

It took some doing, but we slipped in. The node was decked out as a medieval Great Hall—walls covered in gigantic shields, old portraits and tapestries, long oak tables, etc. The scary thing was the plinths scattered around, which boasted guess what? Virtual reproductions of *the trophies of the dracoform kills*! I still can't believe it. These fraggers have been using honest people's contributions to DIVE to prepare their hits!

The tapestries turned out to be recordings of their attacks, the portraits reproductions of what looked like ancient paintings of past members of this "secret brotherhood." And by ancient, I mean "Dark Ages" ancient! I'm not a history buff, and none of the names sounded familiar. Older paintings had no names at all, and the first one with a nameplate—Maurits van de Eiken—was decked out as a medieval knight. My friend ripped what she could before we were caught by some serious IC; we'd inadvertently tripped a security measure. Not being prepared for combat, we jacked out.

• I can verify the van de Eiken reference. The Teutonic Knights had a Grand Master by that name in the early 1300s; I've never heard of a portrait of him, though.

• Echec

I dug into the heraldry on the shields I'd seen and came up with more troubling surprises. They matched the Order of St. George, the Sons of Siegfried, Roland's Sword and even a Japanese dragon-hunting society. The frightening thing is, a little research will show some of those references dating back at least several hundred years. I know it doesn't make sense, but there it is.

• Give me a break. Just because some nut-job anti-dragon cultists want to pretend they're part of a long lineage of "dragonslayers" doesn't mean it's true. They're just jealous that the dragons can claim an ancient heritage, and they

want to have their own secret club.

• Skeptic

• Let's not rule it out entirely. Even the great dragons have let slip that more than a few of their kind didn't survive their last hibernation cycle, implying that someone was actively hunting them while they slept. No one knows how dragons related to metahumanity in the distant past—for all we know, dragons used to be our hated enemies. So maybe there actually was some sort of anti-dragon hunting club that passed its lore down through the ages. In an age of dragons, spirits and AIs, I'm prepared to believe anything.

• Bad Karma

Using the files as a jumping-off point, I did some more research and identified at least twenty people, all active members of DIVE. Radicals and loners, divided in their beliefs and behavior—some scream "human supremacist" while others are just sociopaths—they all cooperate on their common agenda: stopping dragonkind's dominion over metahumanity.

If that doesn't shake you, their files list dozens of stashes of mil-tech weapons, including proscribed bio-chem, viral and isotope weapons, as well as contacts and black bag financing from a dozen major corps. I'm not stupid enough to point fingers and name names, but be warned—these nut jobs are out there, and they've been using us. Watch your back, because who knows—someone on your crew might be one of these guys!

• I think we can safely peg Aztechnology as one of those corps. With the exception of dracoforms employed by the corp, the Azzies have a fairly hostile attitude towards dragons. It could be because so many are allied with Amazonia or the Yucatan rebels, or it could just be because dragons have a way of poking their snouts into things, and the Big A likes to keep lots of secrets.

• Pyramid Watcher

• What about the rumor of a dragon on the Azzie board? How could he support dragonslayers?

• TomTom

• You're assuming that the dragon, whoever it is, isn't behind the whole thing. The question you have to ask is, why would a dragon support the killing of his kind? If dragons are as territorial as they sometimes seem, any dragon in the Azzie hierarchy may automatically view dragons that aren't his pawns as competitors. Wouldn't that be just like a dragon, to use draco-phobes as pawns to kill off his rivals?

• Conspir-I-See

• I wonder if these guys had anything to do with offing that dracoform who worked for United Oil Seattle—or, dare I say it, Prez Dunkie?

• Curious Customer



- I'm surprised all the usual suspects are keeping their counsel.
- Orange Queen

• Since your majesty has joined us, you might want to take this message to your kind: we know you, we know your secrets, and now you know us. We fight for our future and all humankind's. We are faceless. We are legion. Know fear. We have nothing to lose but life and nothing to offer but death. We will free ourselves of your shackles. There can be only one outcome.

- Dragonslayer

- Time for lunch, dear?
- The Laughing Man

IN THE SHADOWS

• Our next scan is based on information passed to me by a chummer deep inside the FBI. The file couldn't be posted to the net without putting the people it talks about in serious jeopardy, so I passed along a watered-down version to a "shadowrunner aficionado" named Bonez. He pooled what I gave him with stuff he knew from the streets. Pay attention to this thread, because you never know—Big Brother could be watching you.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 19 February 2064 at 17:56:47 (PST)

by Bonez

Scan the headlines on any given morning and you're bound to see "Shadowrunners Raid Corporate Lab" or "Security Officer Killed in Shadowrun Violence." It's not too hard to find out about the runs themselves; newshounds are all over anything that sounds like runner work. What they find tough is putting a name to the biz. In the shadows, your reputation is currency. You want all the right people to know you did a job and all the wrong people to think you didn't. That's what this document is about. I'm here to spread the gospel to all the right faces.

A lot of the info I'm starting with here comes from one of the wrong faces: the FBI. The feds keep an eye on shadowrunning activity just like they watch all other sorts of organized crime. Most shadowrunning teams are too small to make it worth the feds' time to track them. Instead they undertake wide-ranging intel-gathering and disruption programs like the COINTELPRO of last century, using informants to keep tabs on who's doing. Whenever a particular shadowrunner group starts to develop a reputation, develops links to groups the FBI doesn't like or blossoms into some other sort of more organized activity, they start taking a closer interest and even make moves to sabotage their rep or otherwise hinder them. They also pursue other solutions to the "shadowrunner problem," like painting runners as "terrorists" and "threats to international security" in the media.

- All that hype has actually had the opposite effect, though. Trid and sim studios have latched onto shadowrunners as their favorite bad guys and antiheroes, creating what amounts to a shadowrunner fan base. Leave it to the networks to boil down a lifestyle into sixty minutes of unreality 3V.
- Media Watcher

Truth be told, though, the feds and other police agencies keep an eye on shadowrunners for other reasons too. For one, the feds themselves need to use deniable assets once in awhile, and so it pays to know what teams are capable or what sorts of allegiances they might have. Second, the corps *need* shadowrunners—we're a vital element in the corporate food-chain, as much as they don't like to admit it. The feds know this, and so they know it's in everyone's best interests to tolerate shadowrunners and let them squeak by as long as they stay below the radar. But if shadowrunner groups starts to make waves ... then they're in trouble.

So far, lack of info has been the biggest stone in the feds' shoes. Shadowrunners excel at staying out of sight and barely leaving a paper trail. The FBI watches everything, though, and sooner or later every runner drops some crumbs. Take the groups that were mentioned in the fed files that the Cap passed my way—these are seriously talented people, folks. If the UCAS feds can get even this much on them, imagine what Big Brother might get on you unless you're damned careful!

As for the runners described in this posting: before any of you decide to drive up to Seattle and cack me, I want you to know I'm posting this info to give you an idea of what's out there on you already. Maybe it'll help you stay one more step ahead of the FBI. In the meantime, I'll be happy if it just gives you the fame you deserve.

ASSETS, INC.

Assets, Inc. is an officially recognized subsidiary of the Draco Foundation. The corporate charter lists this bunch as a security organization, but anyone who's heard of them on the street knows that Assets is a shadowrunning crew, no matter how they try to clean it up.

• Ryan and company should be applauded. It's not easy to put a public face on what we do. Having a corporate charter gives the team freedom that most runners can only dream of. It lets them operate in the open. Local police outfits ordinarily back down from the glare of the Draco Foundation.

- Argent

• That's not shadowrunning—that's called being a company man. Openly operating under a legal aegis just gets them more legal scrutiny, and any "freedom" they might have is subsumed by the fact that they have to follow Draco orders.

- Prole



- So are you saying you don't follow your Johnson's orders? That's a way to kill your rep fast.
- Prime Runner

- Not if the Johnson asks me to do something that violates my personal ethics.
- Prole

I first heard about this crew back in 2054 when folks were calling them the D-Team. Turns out the "D" stood for Dunkelzahn, and this was his personal group of runners. Back then, Kaylinn Axler led the team of five. The other four were an ork rigger named Terr Dhin, a dwarf street samurai who calls himself Grind, a mage named McFaren and Jane-in-the-Box, their decker. Ryan Mercury, an adept, took over in 2057 after McFaren died during some hush-hush biz near the Tir border.

- That dwarf has one serious jones for metal. He replaced both his arms with cyberlimbs and added a third arm that sticks out of his chest. He doesn't go out to the mall much, but if he's put himself through all that, you have to recognize how dedicated he is to the biz.
- Jammer

Since then, the crew has been a carousel for mages. Their first recruit, a magician named Miranda, died not long afterward (I don't know how, so don't ask me). A mage named Talon ran with them for a while, but then left to form his own crew. More recently, they added an elf named Snow. Word to the wise, Mr. Snow—read up on the insurance plan, because mages don't last too long with Assets, Inc.

- Snow is an initiated elven mage, powerful enough to have attracted the interest of several Tir-based lodges. He's been running the London shadows for years. Before that, who knows? I had pegged him for a Tir na nOg native until I saw the ring he wears around his neck. He says it belonged to his Irish mother, but it has an inscription in Portuguese. I've never managed to read the whole thing.
- Geraint

For the past few years, Assets, Inc. has specialized in extraction and recovery work. They don't have to look far for jobs. Big D's will provided the funding for several missions, along with strong "suggestions" that Assets handle them personally. A couple of you might remember Dunkie's decree that someone slip into the Chicago Containment Zone and pull out James Delaney, Dr. Edward Oden, Gregory Armtwister, Protacio Corcoran, Katherine Sitsu and Sissel McCarthy. Well, most of those folks didn't live to see that mission come off. The D-Team went in as ordered and pulled out Sitsu and Oden. Corcoran was confirmed dead; nobody knows what happened to the others.

- The crew fulfilled another one of the dragon's wishes a few years back by rescuing Mary-Beth Tyre. Poor kid had been held prisoner by an Ant shaman named Crosetti, leader of a larger order of insect shamans. I'm sure Assets and the Draco Foundation will face repercussions, but nothing's gone down yet.
- Spin Doc

- The Assets crew is still working on locating someone referred to in Dunkie's will as TX. They aren't the only team assigned to that job—last count, they're one of at least ten. So far, no success, which means that particular ten mil reward is ripe for the picking.
- Strings

- Assets isn't only pulling jobs for Draco; they've also been called on by none other than Prez Kyle Haeffner. With resources like this crew on hand, he'd be a fool not to take advantage of it.
- Nee

- The Haeffner situation has gotten complicated in the past few months. Haeffner can't stay president forever, and when he leaves, Nadja Daviar is a shoe-in to take over the reins. But Haeffner wants to push Kevin Minns into the spotlight instead. Minns served as a New York senator for a term before joining the president's team as an advisor. Tensions around the Oval Office have been a little high lately—Assets may have to choose who to side with, and that won't be pretty.
- Watergate

The Assets crew has also been tracking drakes for the Draco Foundation. I heard recently they have a personal angle on the drake thing, but I can't say I believe the story. Word on the street says that Ryan Mercury himself is a drake who discovered his true form soon after the Big D died. Make of it what you will—I'm only the messenger on this one.

Ryan Mercury

Mercury used to go by the street name Quicksilver, but ditched the cover after he took over Assets. Rumor has it the Big D groomed Mercury from the time he could walk and talk. In the will, Dunkelzahn left Mercury his "heart." The jury is still out on what exactly that is and whether or not Mercury still has it.

- I can shed some light on this one. The Dragonheart is an ancient power focus. What's most unusual about it is that the heart works equally well for hermetics and shamans without the need to be bonded to it. The heart clearly wasn't designed for a metahuman to wield; in fact, I can only think of a handful of people who have enough command of magic to use it.
- Talon



- So what happened to it?
- Fastdos

- The Dragonheart triggered Mercury's Awakening. The device is magnificent. Every magically active individual near it can get a sense of the awesome power it holds. The heart disappeared soon after Mercury's transformation.
- Half-Elven

Mercury's rumored to be the better half to none other than Nadja Daviar. He's been her public escort to various events for over six years now, much to the glee of gossip-rags and paparazzi. He keeps a low profile, though—probably because the DF has kept him very busy.

- It makes sense. Dunkelzahn was Mercury's employer and mentor, Daviar the dragon's right hand. With the kind of time they've spent together, it's no surprise that a romance budged. Must be hard for a woman in Daviar's position to find a man who isn't intimidated by her.
- Socio Pat

Kaylinn Axler

All the talk about Assets tends to swing around Mercury—Axler gets lost in the shuffle, and maybe that's the way she likes it. Mercury is the team leader, but when it comes down to bullets, Axler pulls the strings. She's definitely ex-military, but not even the feds know where she served.

- She's too young to have seen action in the Euro Wars. Maybe she put in time with a merc group in Africa?
- Ballidou

Axler does a terrific job of hiding her corporate ties. She used to work freelance for Aztechnology, until the jobs she did there convinced her to become one of the good guys. Lucky for us she did; the lady has a serious track record. I recommend not ever pissing her off.

- Whatever she did for them, Aztechnology considers it unfinished. The Jaguar Guards have a standing order to shoot her on sight.
- El Corazon

Jane-in-the-Box

One of the top deckers out there, Jane runs tactical support for the Assets team and covers their end in the Matrix. She's in the biz not because of the cred it nets her, but because she knows she's helping people. Not a lot of runners feel that way—hell, most of us are just trying to pull in a reasonably steady paystick—but the ones who're in it to do some good are worth their weight in orichalcum.

In addition to being the team decker, Jane acts as their liaison, which makes her the contact for Draco Foundation

shadow ops. Assets, Inc. subcontracts some of the Draco jobs they don't have time to handle to other teams they trust.

THE SMOKERS' CLUB

These days a lot of shadowrunners—especially you newbies—like to talk about being noble and bringing a sense of decency to the streets. No offense, but nobility doesn't mean squat to the six-year-old girl who just found out her father got cacked for being a corper on the wrong side of a shadow war. On the other hand, if the work is out there, someone'll do it if the pay is right. One of the best crews in the extermination biz is the Smokers' Club. Now, I'm not saying they kill without regard—they're not gonna take a job to pop a bishop during Sunday Mass. But corporate personnel, organized crime figures and anyone in the government—those folks are fair game. Wetwork is a dirty business and these guys get downright filthy in it.

An old-school runner out of New York who calls himself Yankee founded the Smokers' Club after spending a few years scouring the streets of Seattle looking for the right group of partners. The rest of the team includes a top-grade wizbanger named Seta who used to do research for Mitsuhama; a top gun named Kai-lin, whose specialty is sniper attacks; and a rigger named Strafe who looks like a walking nightmare. Guy gave himself jet-black skin and silver eyes. There's also a fixer named Riser who handles the negotiating and knows his way around a street fight. Their newest member is an adept they call Static. I hear he's a deserter from the Sioux Special Forces.

The Smokers' Club started out doing contract corp work and made a name for themselves whacking a Mitsuhama bigwig in the middle of a corporate dinner. Yankee found a way to get invited to the party and plugged the guy with a dinner fork right at the table. Everything the Smokers do is big. When they hit Danny "Little" Bigio a while back, they used an air elemental to rip his limo off of the North Seattle bridge and dump it into Lake Washington.

- That fits the M.O. of the Rochefort crash last year. The police report said the pilot couldn't maintain control and the plane crashed in the swamp. The authorities never published the fact that the Investigators found astral traces suggesting an air elemental forced the plane to descend too quickly. Furthermore, the crash survivors were murdered exiting the wreck. All the killing was done with blunt weapons so the causes of death would resemble injuries from a plane crash.
- Kannibal

The Smokers mainly do wetwork, but occasionally stray into personal security. The crew spent all of 2063 serving as a personal guard detail to Carla Gassina, Seattle bureau chief for IIN News. She spent the year working on a big-time story that never made it to air.

- Alamos 20K tried to take her out in '62. An independent outfit called Centurion Security held the assassins off until



Lone Star could arrive with support. If she's hiring runners now, it means she no longer trusts Centurion to cover her assets.

- One Knight

Last I heard, the Smokers were still working out of Seattle, though Yankee retired and moved on to the quiet life in New York City.

- The club ran into some trouble this year with another local cleaning outfit called Chimera. Turns out a Mr. Johnson who regularly went through Chimera hired the Smokers' Club instead for a major hit. Chimera did the hit anyway, and then tried to kill one of the Smokers to send a message. No word on whether the Smokers are planning their own payback.
- Talon

Yankee

Yankee worked the shadows for a quarter of a century at all levels of the biz, making contacts along the way. He's best known for his ability to understand people and how they can work together. Since retirement, several corporations have tapped him to put together teams for their missions.

- Here's a little-known fact: Yankee got his start and his name working overseas for Wilhelmina Graff-Beloit. Last November, a company called Terra Nocti flew Yankee out to Lisbon for a private meeting with their CEO, supposedly an old friend of Wilhelmina's. When I looked into it, I found out Terra Nocti doesn't exist. Whoever Yankee met with dropped a load of cash to stay invisible.

- Corp Watcher

- Isn't that right about the time the Grand Tour was passing through Lisbon?

- Espion

Riser

Jonathan Riser grew up a Seattle street kid with a knack for fast talk. He got into smash-and-grab crime and spent a few years in juvie. I'd chalk it up to a misspent youth, but the time served didn't do him any good. His Lone Star jacket is longer than my arm. The FBI only red-flagged one piece of information in it—a bit about him being a lifelong member of the Cutters gang. The Cutters went professional about a



decade ago, becoming more a network of fixers than a gang. With Yankee retired, Riser now leads the Smokers' Club.

- The Cutters have been making moves against the Ancients lately. Looks like that old feud may be starting up again. Most of the drama centers on a useless stretch of turf in what used to be the Aztech section of Denver. Don't know if the Smokers plan to get involved yet, but for a ganger, you're either still with your crew or you're dead.
- Wolf Larson

DAMAGE

In case you're wondering, DAMAGE stands for Drastic Assault Measures and Global Engagements: the one-time motto for a runner group called the Wrecking Crew. DAMAGE is run by a decker named Peg, one of the two surviving members of the Wrecking Crew. The other survivor, Argent, works for DAMAGE on occasion but isn't officially on the payroll.

- DAMAGE is Peg's brainchild. After we disbanded the Wrecking Crew, Peg rang up some chummers we'd worked with in the past and put together an outfit.
- Argent

The team gets their jobs primarily through a fixer named Argus. DAMAGE is different from your regular runner crew, in that they're not a single close-knit team. The crew has a rotating roster of members that numbers up to fifteen. Argus picks and chooses the personnel best suited for each particular mission. I've only nailed down the front men; the scan on them starts below.

This operation makes the FBI real nervous because they've got a highly successful track record. This is the sort of crew that you sic on a target when you really want to hit 'em hard, and you don't carry too much about retaliation because they'll likely be nothing but rubble left. The feds are keenly interested in the jobs DAMAGE has undertaken over the past year, as the bulk of them have targeted Novatech or Novatech subsidiaries.

- Isn't that interesting. I did some checking, and I see that DAMAGE has also done multiple runs on two other corporations in the past few years: Tokugawa and Gunderson. Now, it's not unusual for a Johnson to hire the same team multiple times and repeatedly target the same rival, but let's take note that Tokugawa and Gunderson both went down hard recently—as in, they were intentionally obliterated. I'm sure DAMAGE isn't entirely to blame, but if you read the Captain's files on Shadowland regularly, you might scan who is. As I recall, a certain ridiculously rich bastard with a revenge fetish went after both those corps as trial runs before he took on Novatech ...
- The Chromed Accountant

- That true, Argent? You pulling jobs for Art Dankwalther?
- Krispy

- From what Peg tells me, the man hasn't come out of hiding to meet with group members personally, so we can't confirm any of this. Make of the evidence what you will.
- Argent

Peg

I've never met her in the flesh and I'd give money to anyone who can prove they have. More than a few stories circulate around the Sprawl about who Peg is and why she never comes out of the Matrix. The most common answer is that she can't because she has a disease that's eating her body away. Whatever she is in real life, she's a vixen in the Matrix.

- Peg is one of the most stand-up people I've ever met. It's not like me to shell out a lot of praise, but in this case it's overdue. Say what you will about Dankwalther footing the bill, but if Peg is involved, you can bet the cause is righteous.
- Argent

- Always the charmer.
- Peg

Argus

I had to do some serious digging to get the skinny on this one. Argus Connelly earned his stripes as a fixer for Yamatetsu. When that corp moved its operations to Vladivostok, Argus didn't move with it. Until now, it's remained unclear who he was doing business for. He left Tokyo for the warm shores of Miami Beach for a few years, but now he's all over the UCAS, presumably setting up jobs and recruiting shadow players to the cause.

- When he worked for Yamatetsu, Argus gained a reputation for setting up high impact distractions. He'd lowball a runner team for a mission near his actual target. While the cops and corps were running around trying to get their hands on the distraction team, Argus would send another crew to carry out the real mission. A lot of his distraction teams never made it back to collect the cash.
- Spiderhawk

TECHNICOLOR WINGS

This is another group of shadowrunners masquerading as legit businessmen. The company advertises itself as an express delivery firm with offices in Vladivostok, New Orleans and Seattle. It's chip truth that they ship to these places, but the way they do it sure ain't legal. Wings is a full-scale smuggling network made up of several T-bird and boat crews. The crews get their cargoes from one of their offices and then hustle the stuff to other locations around the world.

Wings claims they can deliver anything, anywhere, for a price. That's probably true, but you're better off asking them



to run your package along one of the regular routes. The group operates airstrips and ports along the Big Dance (Seattle to Denver) and the Gauntlet (St. Louis to New Orleans). From their new office in Vladivostok, they've also begun recruiting smugglers who know the quickest routes to San Francisco. Wings crews also make the South American stroll from Texas to Amazonia, but that kind of biz will cost you more than it's worth.

The group subcontracts the bulk of its work to private crews who've proven they can handle the biz. It's no stroll to get into this club, either. A boat or T-bird crew gets a specified amount of time to run a package along one of the better-known smugglers' routes and check in at a handful of "challenge stations" along the way. So far as I can tell, the challenge stations are a series of traps designed to slow the crew down.

- I can attest to that. They give you a crate about the size of an ork and tell you that if you open it, you'll be automatically disqualified. Then they make you stop at the stations, which are nowhere near the actual route. After the first station, we realized we had serious blue heat on our tail. Turns out the station was a police scanning zone. Part of the test was man-aging to get away from the police.

- Crash

- It's the same way at sea. On my first run, the checkpoint turned out to be a pirate hideout. Needless to say, we cut and ran without dropping anchor. The pirate crew we'd stumbled on chased us for the rest of the day.

- Daredevil

A paying job for Wings usually means smuggling pre-cious items for corporate officials who'd rather not declare their plundered treasures to Customs. The FBI thinks this team has been smuggling weapons and explosives to La Venta and the Tupac Amaru, but they don't have enough hard evidence to prosecute.

- Assumption is not evidence. If it were, we'd all be in jail by now. Odds are that the people running Technicolor Wings have enough lawyers and accountants on their side to make sure the numbers all add up and the government gets its cut.

- Poly Tick

- Can you imagine that? A smuggler paying taxes on his haul!

- Racer X

- A Technicolor Wings crew will move anything they can fit in a LAV. It's not personal, just business. So long as the nuyen is proportional to the risk, they'll get the job done.

- Jammer

Membership in Wings has its privileges. People in the know tell me Technicolor Wings maintains docks and airstrips across the world, complete with mechanics and shops. Members park free at crew hideouts, but better bring a credstick if you need repairs.

DESOLATION ANGELS

The FBI scan had some pretty scary drek in it about this crew. The Angels are an all-girl gang that earned a name for itself during the Bug City occupation. Everything the FBI has on them from that time frame comes from Ares intel, so make of it what you will. According to Firewatch officials, the Desolation Angels took control of several key trouble spots near the main Bug City hive.

- Read "took control" as "eradicated every fraggin' thing in the area." I'm talking metahuman and spirit alike. They didn't stop to ask what side anybody was on.

- One Knight

A Firewatch captain named Ramsey filed a report about the Angels just before the Chicago CZ reopened its borders. Apparently, his team had been tailing a small group of them, suspecting they might be working with a faction of bugs. The Angels descended into an underground parking garage, where they found an active Ant hive. Instead of drawing down on the bugs, they strolled right through. Not a single bug tried to stop them. By the time Ramsey posted his file, somebody'd authorized Ares's final solution, and the Powers-That-Be ignored the situation.

- Captain Bill Ramsey never made it out of Chicago. He died less than a day after the CZ reopened. The docs called it a heart attack.

- Crembone

When I asked around about the Desolation Angels, I got a lot of blank looks. The one chummer of mine who'd heard about them told me to steer clear. Seems he and a few other guys he ran with came up against the Angels once. That was all it took. When the fight went down, the girls started moving like they weren't human. I'm not talking about wired reflexes, either. My chummer said he took a peek at them on the astral and saw something that scared him to the core: insects.

- I was afraid of that. Everything we've heard about what went down in Bug City pointed to several groups of insect spirits escaping. Frankly, I'm not surprised this group decided to go into business for themselves. The bugs have an agenda here. Direct assault on a city didn't work, so now they're trying a new tactic—building contacts and a reputation among metahumanity.

- Silicon Mage



I don't know if I believe my chummer. He was so greased on synthohol at the time that he could have been making the whole thing up. Here's what I do know, from him and others. The Desolation Angels are twelve women, none of them metas. They work a job in groups of three and rarely travel alone. They specialize in personal security and occasional extractions.

- Something happened between the Angels and KE in Chicago that made the girls mad enough to take a swing at the corp anytime they get a chance. Every extraction they've ever pulled has been against Knight Errant. The ladies are pretty hopped up to give that corporation a black eye.
- Errant Knight
- Anyone ever heard the name Valery Klaw? My old fixer got hired to put together a team to extract her from Ares two years ago. Someone beat us to it. From the way it went down, I'm starting to believe it was the Angels. Three women walked into her apartment building. No stealth, no armor—they just walked in, grabbed our target and walked out. Klaw had been working on critical fat bacteria research, and Ares was fighting mad to get her back. Here's where it gets interesting. She didn't sign on with another corp. She didn't turn up at all until exactly a year later, when she got dumped in front of a Miami shadow clinic. Ms. Klaw hasn't touched a microscope since.
- Sun Runner

MAGESTONE

It's not often you hear the word magic associated with a decker outfit. But if anyone deserves the moniker, it's these guys. Information is trickling out that Magestone wiped the results of California's gubernatorial election in 2046. Word is, it wasn't even a paying gig. They did the Cali job just because they didn't like what was going down over there.

- We can call it a noble gesture, but truth be told, a spotlight job like that only has one purpose: to get you noticed, like tagging your name on the playground wall. Way back before Echo Mirage, deckers used to slam corps with viruses. These days, we go in and blitz some IC just to let them know we can. It's how you make your rep.
- Sidewinder

The FBI says Magestone has five members, but I know they've got more than that now. The five founders all came from universities in CalFree. We're talking lab rats, government techs and teachers, people, not your run-of-the-mill shadow folk. They've been hiring net runners lately in order to get themselves some street cred, but that may not be necessary. Nobody does crypto or viruses like Magestone.

- For those of you who haven't heard the folktales, the Magestone is a mythical construct that's supposed to be

floating somewhere in cyberspace. It's the modern-day version of the Philosopher's Stone: a crypto-key that can sleaze past any chunk of IC on Earth and that opens every lock. No one's ever seen it. No one really believes it exists.

- Fastdos

The first Magestone deckers were cryptologists. The group's founder, Dr. Edwin Beasley, used to work with the FBI as a contract code breaker. There wasn't a node built he couldn't get into. He started Magestone as a legitimate freelance operation, but went rogue after a job for the FBI turned ugly. The Bureau hired him to break into a Sioux LTG, and after the job, the Sioux paid the Beasley and his family a visit. Beasley hasn't worked for the Bureau since.

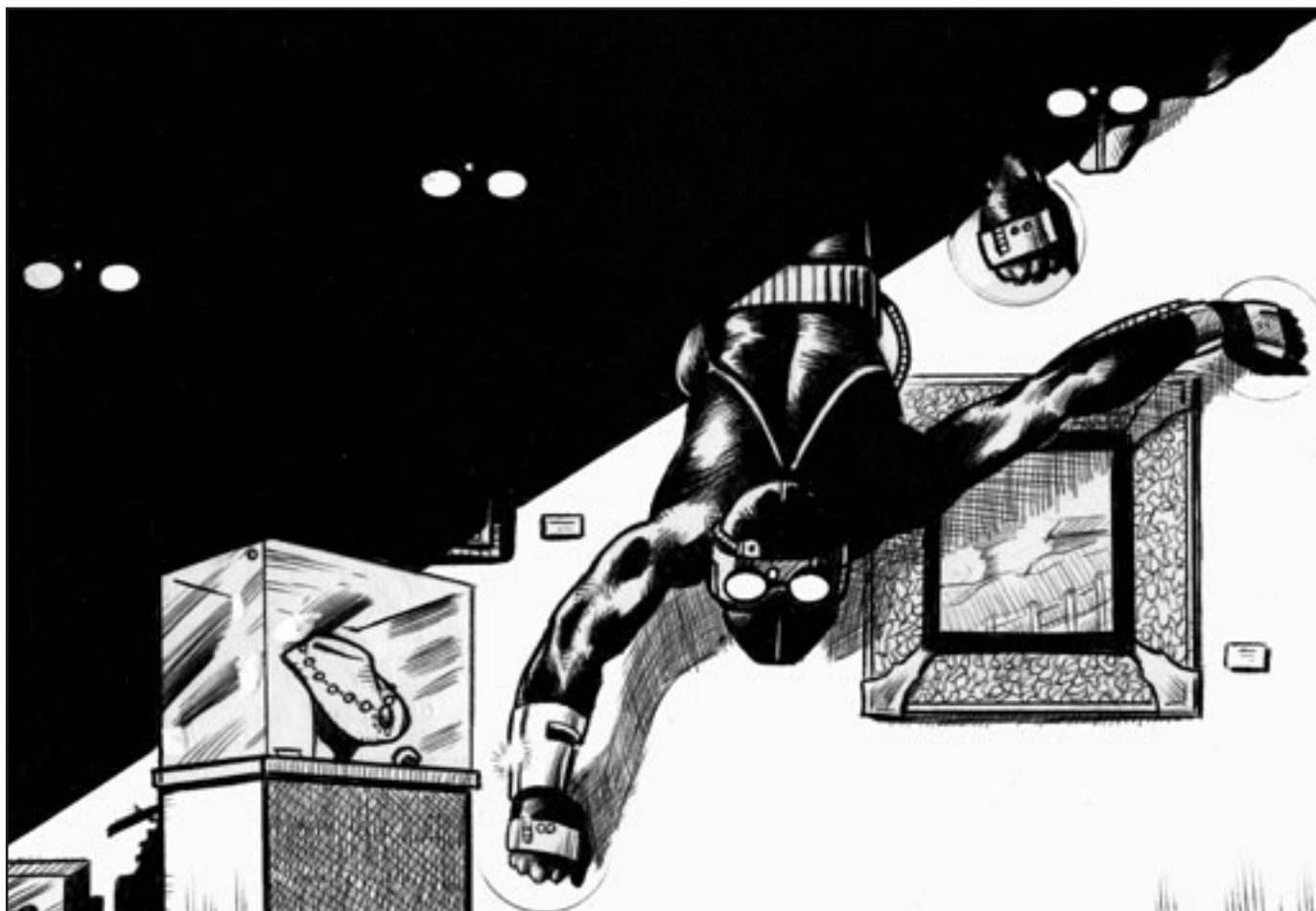
- It's almost impossible to trace this group's activities back to the jackpoint these days. They link to the Matrix from a rogue satellite feed to which only Magestone members have the passcodes.
- Slamm-O!
- How'd they get a hold of that?
- Smiley-3
- You'd be surprised how much junk is floating around up there. When NASA sold out to Ares, dozens of operable satellites got "lost" in the shuffle. Most of them ended up sold to private interests by high-level employees just before the purge.
- The Keynesian Kid

Magestone deckers are solid at creating highly specialized viruses called worms. One of these puppies ate the 2046 CalFree election. Another Magestone worm chewed its way through Calablack Investments last year, nearly wiping out the company. Shiawase tried to respond to the attack on its subsidiary, but they couldn't figure out where the worm came from.

- I've GOT to work with these people! Where do I sign up?
- Kid Code

THE NIGHTINGALE SYNDICATE

A couple of years back, a fixer I know named Handsome asked me to pick up a package from a runner he was working with. So I show up at the meet early to case the scene, and the runner is already there. She's standing at the end of an alley looking like a joygirl in a trenchcoat. While I'm staring her down, I swear I see a tail poking out of the back of her coat. The whole time we're doing biz, I feel like I'm surrounded—even though my eyes tell me there's nobody but me and Ms. Tail. She split with her cred and I headed back to Handsome with the goods. I know the rules—never open the package. I shook it a few times, and it tinkled like jewelry. Later, when I read the FBI file on the Nightingale Syndicate, I realized they were talking about the same person.



Her name is Callista Brightmore and she runs point for the Nightingales, an outfit that specializes in cat burglary. I'm no history buff, and when I heard this group's name, I had no idea what it meant. So, I researched it and came up with a reference. The name comes from a security measure straight out of feudal Japan, called a nightingale floor. The floor sings at the slightest touch. It was meant to prevent thieves and assassins from entering a home undetected. Ironical, because thievery is this group's stock in trade.

The Nightingale Syndicate is older than anyone else we've talked about on this list. They've been around in one form or another for the past sixty years. The first Nightingale group was a loose collection of international jewel thieves who came together to steal the Orloff Diamond. A descendant of one of the originals supposedly runs the current roster. The Nightingales have widened their focus from diamonds to other precious artifacts, including magical tesmas, rare paintings and even classic cars. Nightingale operatives work their own jobs, but they've been known to do contract thefts if the pay is good enough.

- I was in Madrid last year and saw the wildest thing: this girl with a tail scaling the back of an eighteen-wheeler. She climbs in through the top and a couple of moments later pops back out. I'm following along, just curious to see what happens. A Jackrabbit convertible pulls up behind the truck, and Ms. Daredevil flips off of the truck into the car! She had to be one of them Nightingales.

- Lacey

- Last May, Brightmore hired me to move some cargo to St. Louis from Geneva. I don't get much call for international work, but she wanted to make sure her cargo stayed in the same hands from start to finish. I snuck a look at her stuff, just to make sure it wasn't bugged. Had to be eighteen paintings, all wrapped up in individual tubes.

- Speed Freak

- Art thefts have risen 22 percent over the past year in Geneva. I thought it was an anomaly, but now it sounds like a Nightingale crew may be working the town.

- Cutter

GAME INFORMATION



These rules describe a number of different organizations based in the world of Shadowrun. In addition to *Shadowrun, Third Edition (SR3)*, the rulebooks *Shadowrun Companion (SRComp)*, *Magic in the Shadows (MITS)* and *Mr. Johnson's Little Black Book (MJLBB)* may be helpful when using some of these groups in your game.

USING LOOSE ALLIANCES

This book is intended to introduce a number of organizations outside of the usual corporate and criminal spheres that shadowrunners might be part of or work for or against. Most of these groups are smaller and less influential than the standard megacorps and crime syndicates shadowrunners deal with, but they are still rich sources of adventure and drama. Their lower position as power players allows the gamemaster to craft scenarios that focus more on low-level interactions and the day-to-day problems people face.

For players who want to run an alternate campaign where their characters are not run-of-the-mill shadowrunners but are instead part of some larger entity, this book offers a range of groups the characters can be loyal to. Like the alternate campaigns covered in the *Shadowrun Companion*, being members or supporters of one of these groups will put the characters in situations that shadowrunners might not normally face, which is nice for a change in pace. If the characters all agree to be part of one organization, it will be the gamemaster's task to flesh out the group's inner workings, key members, available resources and other relevant factors. Membership often has privileges (backup, useful resources, clout, built-in allegiances), but it also comes with responsibilities and, quite often, strings attached.

Alternately, characters who are part of a regular *Shadowrun* campaign may choose to associate with some of these organizations on an individual basis, whether they have contacts there or are full-fledged members/supporters. This can be the basis for some interesting background details on the character and help provide ideological motivation.

While contacts with group ties may be beneficial as they have the resources of their organization to call on, gamemasters should take care that this is not abused—a character shouldn't have an entire polyclub at his beck and call for the cost of buying one contact. Groups will likely only provide assistance to people on the outside if it suits their purposes, and they will certainly expect some sort of compensation or reward for their efforts (allow-





ing a gamemaster to set the stage for future plots when these favors are cashed in). There might be a situation where a contact utilizes his group's resources on behalf of a character without authorization, but this should have potentially bad consequences for both the character and contact. For more details on using contacts who are members of a group, see p. 64, *SRComp*.

The various groups described here can also be used as simple clients who approach the shadowrunners because they need someone not linked with them to get some work done. Several plot ideas are included with each group description for this purpose. The groups might also be set up as antagonists to the runners, competing with them to get a job done or to obtain a critical piece of data or a magical artifact.

USING OTHER GROUPS

There are too many different groups in the world of *Shadowrun* to cover them all in one book; *Loose Alliances* merely offers a selection of those available. Players and gamemasters should feel free to use other groups mentioned in other *Shadowrun* products or simply make up their own. For example, the players could be members of the Aesir Society (p. 135, *Shadows of Europe*), the Young Elven Technologists (pp. 51–65, *Harlequin*), the Gingerbread Gang pirate crew (see p. 49, *Cyberpirates*), the Knights of Rage (p. 58, *DSW*), a 2064-version of the Queer Nation activist group or an outfit dedicated to liberating spirits from magical control. Think of any sort of issue or interest, and there is a probably a group that rallies around it.

When choosing a group for a character to be part of, both the player and gamemaster should discuss the nature of the group as well as its organization, membership privileges and expectations of members/supporters. Some groups may simply not be appropriate for player characters, either because the group is exclusive (*Ordo Maximus*) or because its concept works better for NPCs/bad guys (*Alamos 20K*).

UNHOLY ALLIANCES

Catching shadowrunners by surprise keeps them off-balance and entertained; one good way to surprise them is to have informal partnerships between groups who ordinarily wouldn't want anything to do with each other. The complexity and shifting morality of the Sixth World guarantees that there are times when organizations go against their better instincts, hold their noses, and enter into an unholy alliance with a group they truly dislike.

One difficulty in creating an unholy alliance is making it both surprising and believable. Some groups would be hard-pressed to form an alliance in even the direst of circumstances. For example, having *Alamos 20,000* work with the Metahuman's People Army would be an unbelievable stretch, as no common cause could overcome the two groups' hatred for each other. Such an alliance breaks the reality of the gaming world.

The key is finding groups seemingly distant from one another but sharing a strong common interest. As long as the organizations are not sworn enemies, an informal alliance may be feasible. Such alliances should almost always be unofficial and are usually extremely limited. The partner-

ship might be distasteful, embarrassing or even illegal, so neither of the groups involved would want knowledge of it to get around. Most members of the organizations would know nothing about the partnership, and a great deal of antipathy or hostility may remain between organizations temporarily working toward a common goal. These partnerships come to life only with great difficulty but are easily breakable, as both sides are not fully convinced of the true value of the relationship. Runners hoping to expose these alliances cannot count on finding signed contracts or written agreements; the best they may hope for are records of clandestine bank transfers, information extracted by torture or trickery and the like.

Methods of working unholy alliances into a campaign include having a secret ally surprise the runners; having runners who are part of an organization under assault from an unexpected source; or hiring the runners to uncover proof of an unholy alliance by someone wishing to embarrass the organizations involved.

Below are a few examples of possible unholy alliances. These are far from the only alliances possible, and individual gamemasters should brainstorm to create interesting alliances of their own.

Mother Earth and the Islamic Unity Movement

Plot Hook: Amidst rising tensions and violence in Lebanon, a dramatic increase occurs in kidnapped women. These disappearances are brought to Mother Earth's attention, as they believe the women are being targeted for their "decadent" Westernized ways by Islamic fundamentalists. A mujahideen for the Islamic Unity Movement knows this is not the case, however, and suspects that Tamanous or other organleggers are abducting women to populate fetus farms and their slave trade. Mother Earth hires the runners to look into the matter, but agents of the IUM get wind of them and try to convince them they are not at fault, offering to help find the real culprits.

Uniting Interest: Putting a stop to the fetus farming, organlegging and slave trade of Tamanous and related groups. The IUM is concerned about their image while Mother Earth is concerned about women being targeted.

Tensions: A pro-choice feminist organization is always going to have a shaky relationship with a conservative religious group.

Anarchist Black Cross and the United Nations

Plot Hook: The UNHCR needs to deliver some supplies to refugees stranded near the front line in the Polish civil war (see *Shadows of Europe*) and is looking to hire runners to protect the delivery. The Polish "guides" hired to escort the mission into the area, however, are actually ABC members who plan to travel with the convoy into Poland and free a prisoner held within ten kilometers of the refugee camp. The ABC team would appreciate help, but they are wary of spies or double-crosses.

Uniting Interest: Undermining corporate power. As the United Nations under Balaji Padiyar's leadership attempts to break free of corporate influence and craft their own identity



and power structure, they see the need to undermine the corps every once in a while. They certainly are not as anti-corporate as the ABC, but they see the value of working with experienced corp-fighters. Additionally, the ABC's focus on unjust imprisonment and draconian corporate laws meshes well with some of the UN's humanitarian efforts.

Tensions: While each group is happy to undermine the corps, their eventual goals are radically different. The UN wishes the corps to share power but, unlike the ABC, does not dream of a day when the corps don't exist. On the other side, should the corps ever be eliminated, the ABC's next targets would be large governmental organizations—like the UN.

Brokerage X and the Seers' Guild

Plot hook: A month ago, a seer named Bellik Castro told his close friend Ellen Staph that he had experienced a vision about a major event affecting Proteus AG (he did not, however, say if it would be positive or negative). Castro has not been seen since.

Staph suspects that Proteus or one of its competitors spirited Castro away, hoping to gain sole knowledge of his divination and use it in the market. Knowing Castro has fed information to Brokerage X in the past, Staph calls on them, baiting them with the chance to get Castro's golden nugget of information before his kidnappers can pry it out of him. Brokerage X in turn looks for runners who can find Castro while keeping their connection to the Seers' Guild secret.

Uniting Interest: Both organizations know the usefulness of knowing the future before it happens, and both are always looking for new sources of cash.

Tensions: As it is an inexact science, divination from the Guild often causes brokers to make unprofitable investments, which makes them question why they bother getting the information at all. Within the Guild, meanwhile, there are ongoing conversations about the ethics of using divination for profit, with many seers convinced that the practice is unethical and those involved should be turned over to the Disciplinary Council. Additionally, corporate relations with the Seer's Guild could be threatened if the corps knew the Guild was involved in any insider trading (assuming one who knows the future may be considered an "insider").

Attack! and Aegis Cognito

Plot Hook: A deep-cover Equity agent who has worked her way deep inside a powerful megacorp is discovered, but manages to escape with a highly-sensitive datafile and go into hiding. Attack! wants to track the agent down before the corp gets here and probably publicize the information if it would damage the corp (they don't know the details yet). Aegis Cognito, on the other hand, does know the basics on what the datafile contains, and has a client who is extremely interested in obtaining it. The runners are hired by the corp and told to retrieve the file or destroy it if they can't.

Simply obtaining the file doesn't end the story—if the runners get it first, Aegis and Attack! try to steal it away from them. If Aegis or the anti-corpers get it first, they begin fighting about whether to sell it or simply making it public, creating a rift the runners may be able to exploit.

Uniting Interest: Information. Both groups want to pry it away from the megacorps and other organizations that clutch it tightly.

Tensions: Aegis Cognito, in its heart, is capitalistic. Attack!, naturally, is not. Deciding how to divide the spoils from any joint effort is always contentious.

Illuminates of the New Dawn and Terra First!

Plot hook: Despite protest from environmentalists, plans to construct a Shiawase hydro-power facility are continuing apace. The sudden appearance of strange magical phenomena in the river, however, draws the attention of the IOND, who hire the runners to investigate. A Terra First! cell is also interested, however, and approaches the runners, looking for any help it can get in stopping Shiawase's plans. When the runners discover that a free spirit is responsible for the effects, however, the IOND decides it wants to bind the spirit for its own uses.

Uniting Interest: Stopping Shiawase. The IOND wants to buy enough time to investigate the disturbance and then bind the spirit. TerraFirst! wants to disable the Shiawase operation entirely.

Tensions: The IOND is purely motivated by its pursuit of magical power. TerraFirst! will oppose any attempt to enslave the spirit and tear it free from its domain.

USING POLITICAL AGITATORS

The first question when designing a character who works with a particular political movement is "What motivates them?" Was the character raised to adhere to a particular ideology, or was he recruited later in life? Was there some pivotal experience in the character's life that changed his way of thinking, such as witnessing or being victim to brutal oppression, injustice or environmental destruction? Is the character motivated by altruism, by a philosophical outlook to create change in the world, or she has just hooked up with a particular group as the most expedient way to have an effect or build towards other goals? Is the character driven by an over-arching ideology (like socialism or anarchism) or spiritual beliefs, or is she focused only on a single issue, such as feminism, gay rights or animal liberation?

Activist groups—especially the radical or illegalized ones—often lack the resources they need to accomplish their goals. They also may need to keep a spotless record in order to keep getting funding from certain sources. Out of frustration or a desire to keep their illegal activities secret, they will often turn to runners. This kind of work doesn't pay well, however, so they turn to "hooders" who are willing to run for altruistic reasons. It's possible the group may be able to offer other types of payment (magical services, smuggling, political connections), but usually these hooding runs are only rewarding to the runners' consciences.

Local political issues are a great way to get characters involved in a specific local setting and to acquaint them with the local people of influence (or the local underprivileged, for that matter). This can be a great backdrop for a low-level campaign, where the Johnsons and big opponents might be the local gang, crooked cops, alderman or neighborhood business



association rather than a megacorp or dragon. On the other hand, global political issues give the characters the option to pursue their political actions around the world—perfect for a globe-hopping, multicultural campaign.

If all of the characters in the group are part of the same political unit/cell, a key question to answer is how much independence do they have? Do they receive orders from superiors that they are expected to report to? Do they have others below them in the chain of command? Do they have the autonomy to plan their own missions? Decentralized groups like the Green Cells or Black Star anarchists operate under their own aegis; this type of campaign offers players more freedom in the development of their own characters and the direction of their group. It also brings more responsibility on their shoulders, as they must gather their own intel, make their own contacts, raise their own funds, acquire their own gear and do everything else that runners sometimes rely on Johnsons or superiors for. It also provides interesting roleplaying opportunities in the interaction with other cells (either more radical or peaceful) and how the group will handle manipulation and retribution by their enemies after the cell has managed to be a constant disturbance or threat.

It's possible to use conflicting politics as a way of creating tension and roleplaying between characters within a group—consider an anti-tech Luddite and transhumanist as part of the same running team. Likewise, some apolitical characters may be alienated by the political pursuits of activists in their group. This gives you an opportunity to remind them that everything is political, by creating situations where choices must be made—even not making a choice is often a political decision.

ECO-ACTIVISTS

Green organizations (from grassroots to deep green and even eco-terrorists) are a good choice for campaigns as many players like fighting for the just cause of awakened nature against corporate pollution. Eco-activist characters tend to have Knowledge skills useful for eco-activism—Chemistry, Botany, Ecology, Parazoology, etc.—and may be experienced in Wilderness Survival (see p. 105, *Target: Wastelands*) and other outdoor skills. Shamanic magicians are more common than hermetic in eco-circles, as are Pagans and Idol worshippers. Magicians in this line of activism often learn Cleansing metamagic and various detoxifying spells. Vegetarians and vegans are common (who can afford real meat in 2064 anyway?), and most eco-activists try to live a low-impact, sustainable lifestyle (no fossil fuel cars). Some may even be anti-tech Luddites, refusing to use the Matrix or other modern conveniences.

An all eco-activist character cast could be assigned to a research vessel of the SOS fleet, allowing for a diverse crew (ecologists, scientists, magicians, parazoologists, riggers, engineers, computer specialists); alternately the team could be a deep field research unit, traveling to remote wilderness areas to study impacts and conditions (and defend them). Green lifestyle characters might all be part of the same isolated community, forced to defend it against corporate encroachment or environmental hazards (paranimals, extreme weather, marauding bandits). Deep Green characters may operate as their own

independent cells, operating much as regular shadowruns only with an ideological drive.

Eco-activists pursue a range of activities: espionage against corps and polluters, sabotage on whalers or factories, blowing the whistle on the wheelings and dealings of biotech corps (like violations of the Copenhagen Accords or environmental laws), cleansing of toxic zones, rescuing endangered animals, and so on. Some of the assignments can be more radical, using runners for direct action methods like destruction of corporate or private property, blackmailing or even kidnapping. Eco-cells may also recruit runners to acquire weapons, explosives or even biohazardous material.

Aside from the standard corporate opposition, eco-cells may face dilemmas when dealing with other eco-activists. How do they handle eco-fascists? Do they cooperate with toxic shamans? Do they support acts of eco-terrorism? How do they deal with rampaging wild beasts or malignant forces of nature?

Adventure Hooks

- The Astral Space Preservation Society gets word of an astral rift that has opened without notice in the midst of a densely populated urban center. They send runners to evaluate the rift and find a way to close it—unfortunately, several mundanes have already gotten lost in astral space, and the rift has attracted the attention of unfriendly spirits.
- The ALF obtains details of a Parashield mission that hopes to illegally capture and transport endangered bandersnatches for study. They send runners to sabotage the hunt and liberate any creatures already captured.
- High rates of birth defects and toxic allergy syndrome in a Barrens area convince a local eco-cell that a secret corporate facility is somehow polluting the area. Runners are sent to break-in and obtain evidence, only they find a lot more than they bargained for.

ANTI-CORPSTERS

Members of anti-corp groups come from all sorts of backgrounds and embrace a range of ideologies, from anarchism to libertarian reformism to fascism. Activists tend to aggregate in groups that share those common political beliefs, and it's very difficult to fit in if you don't agree with their basic opinions. The activists themselves pursue a range of tactics, from the idealists who try to expose and blast away as much as possible to the pros who pursue long-term infiltration and destabilization projects. The corps, of course, have a vested interest in silencing or distracting these groups, and so players who like to play really evil characters in an Orwellian black and white world of corporate rule may be hired to track down anti-corpsers to capture/kill them or destroy treacherous data.

Attack!

Attack! is a huge umbrella organization with thousands of members worldwide. There is no headquarters or established leadership—local groups carry out activities on their own, sup-



ported by all kinds of political factions and sponsors. This makes Attack! a front for many different and sometimes contradictory motivations which have only one thing in common: hitting the megacorps as hard and as often as possible.

Attack! often tries to recruit runners who already have a shadowrun against a corp in the works to do a little extra damage. If you're already breaking into a facility to steal data, why not also leave a bomb behind to cover your traces?

Attack!'s loose structure makes it vulnerable to corporate infiltration. The runners themselves may be corporate agents planted within the network to gather intel and steer the anti-corporate towards their employer's rivals. Their mission may be to get to know the group's members, leaders, hide-outs, supporters and loved ones for later bribery or elimination—the job may even include wetwork on the activists. Alternatively, the characters may have to root out corporate spies from within their group before it is torn apart from within.

Equity

Equity members tend to fall into three roles. The first are corporate infiltrators, slaving away as good megacorp citizens while actually feeding sensitive data back to Equity. Player characters that choose this may actually work as company men, only owing their true loyalty to Equity; they would play a dangerous game of striking out at their corp's rivals while also selling out the corps on both sides.

The second are data-thieves and info-mongers. These are either deckers who penetrate corporate systems for the cause or researchers who mine through data havens and other databanks for gems of information. Some may closely monitor a corp's activities, transactions, financial records and reports to forecast the corp's secret plans and activities. A team like this would emphasize deckers and surveillance experts, with an assortment of shadowrunning skills to act on data if necessary.

The third are trid pirates and other propagandists who take these corporate secrets and expose them to the world. Trid pirates need to stay mobile to avoid being caught by the authorities and they require a steady stream of fresh dirt in order to keep their broadcasts interesting. Shadowrunners are often hired by these crews for protection or to acquire news on their own.

Adventure Hooks

- Operation Mad Cow: Renraku is importing great quantities of wheat from African countries where the population is starving to feed type IV cattle (no legs) on their factory ranches. Dr. Elisabeth Black, a former bioengineer and now leader of an Attack! faction plans to introduce a deadly virus that will kill the cattle. Ares wants the mission to succeed, so they send the runners to infiltrate the group and help out.
- An Equity member who had spent years infiltrating Aztechnology turns up mysteriously dead. Equity sends in a team to find out how the Azzies discovered him and had him killed, but then the runners find out that Aztechnology is investigating the death as well.

- An Ares infiltrator inside Attack! is discovered, but not before he has compromised everyone in the Attack! cell with a vicious time-sensitive toxin. The runners have only a few days to carry out a mission against a rival of Ares and be paid with the antidote.

ANARCHISTS

Many shadowrunners are anarchists at heart, despising authority, operating outside the system and looking out for their "family." Actual anarchists, however, actively work towards overthrowing the system that exists, or at least to create a functional anarchist counterculture that operates independently of mainstream society. Player character anarchists are likely to seek to make decisions collectively, share responsibilities and shun reliance on corps, money and government institutions. In addition to having a healthy dose of disrespect for authority figures of all types—cops, corp execs, mob bosses—they will pursue shadowruns and illegal activities for altruistic or basic survival purposes rather than wealth.

Anarchists commonly get involved with other left-wing and radical political groups—TerraFirst!, Attack!, Antifa Direct Action and ORC among many others—working towards more immediate goals of social equality or progressive change. Others take up arms and join revolutionary movements—Flame of Freedom, Rinelle ke'Tesrae, the Polish AK, among others—seeking not just to undermine the current political power, but to eliminate bodies of authority altogether. Still others will focus on sustaining an egalitarian community in the cracks in the system, whether in the remote wilds or the heart of the Barrens.

Anarchist Black Cross

The AB+ focuses on aiding persecuted anarchists, radicals and political prisoners. Anarchist characters in legal trouble may be able to count on the AB+ for support in the form of legal funds, hired lawyers, support campaigns or an organized break-out. The AB+ is also very efficient at helping fugitives, providing excellent fake IDs and operating a network of safe houses. Naturally, the AB+ makes use of a number of deckers and runners skilled at liberating prisoners. Preferential treatments is given to anarchists of course, but the AB+ also helps out activists promoting good causes or people who are simply victims of persecution when it has the resources. Runners who are given support are asked to contribute back to the AB+'s cause, using their own skills to help someone in need.

Anarchist Black Crescent

The ABC provides healthcare from emergency services to cybersurgery to anarchists and people in need. Understandably, their resources are stretched quite thin and their equipment and supplies are not always in top repair or up to date. Those who are given medical care are asked to do an appropriate favor in exchange, whether volunteering as an extra medic or gun on an ABC ambulance vehicle, performing some magical healing of their own (if a magician), or stealing



or smuggling medical supplies. The gamemaster should determine the quality of care and gear available to the ABC as appropriate to the campaign and circumstances.

Black Star

Black Star is a network of anarchist shadowrunners. In addition to their regular 'hooding lifestyles, Black Star runners take time out to provide training for anarchists and revolutionaries and perform armed actions for good causes. Whenever an anarchist community comes under attack, you can expect a local Black Star cell to rise to the occasion. The Star's network is limited, however, so they occasionally implore or employ other runners to help out, offering shadowrunning favors in return.

Association of Awakened Anarchists

The Awakened members of Black Star have the option of joining the AAA initiatory group:

Type: Conspiratorial

Members: 150 worldwide.

Resources/Dues: Low. Members pay dues of 200¥ per month.

Scriptures: Belief (Insurrectionist Anarchism), Fraternity

Adventure Hooks

- An ork anarchist working with the Metahuman People's Army in Oakland is captured by Saito's troops. The AB+ send runners in to San Francisco to track her down and rescue her before she disappears forever.
- A Humanis-backed street gang lays siege to a squat inhabited by dwarf refugees. Several dwarfs are badly injured and trapped inside. A local ABC unit is called on to help.
- A group of Arab anarchists working with the Islamic Renaissance Movement discover that a powerful conservative Islamic cleric is cultivating an alliance with a megacorp. Black Star is asked to drive a wedge between the two groups.

COMMUNISTS

Communist characters seek to overthrow the government and create a communist society; or if they already live in a communist state, they want to perpetuate and spread the revolution worldwide. Depending on the particular brand of communism they subscribe to, they may seek to be the intellectu-



al vanguard of a working class movement, wage armed struggle against capitalism in urban areas, or seek out methods of mind-melding people to create a society where everyone is interlinked and individuality is erased.

The communist states that do exist are under tremendous pressure from other countries and the Corporate Court, so they often rely on clandestine support. These states may employ runners to hijack shipments, steal intellectual property for counterfeiting purposes, or sabotage the efforts of meddling megacorps—not to mention undermining governments so that communist parties and policlubs can seize power.

Communist groups and union organizing are illegal in many countries, so communists often go about their activities with subtlety. Some communist parties have large memberships and resources at their disposal, however, and occasionally are allied with communist groups in other countries or even communist states like Henan.

Neo-Communists

Neo-communists seek to directly link people's brains together and create a common mind. In theory, this sort of mindmeld would eliminate the barriers of individuality and put people in a position where we really do all have the same interests and goals as a species. To achieve this, the neo-communists seek out advanced technology or magical means of mindmelding—mind-connect rigger-based networks, new virtual reality, quickened mass-telepathy spells, multi-person magical possession, nanotech virii to rewrite people's consciousnesses, paranormal "brainworm" symbiotes and other esoteric, untried methods. Whether or not they have actually achieved this is uncertain—and even if they have succeeded, the results may not have been what they intended. It is also possible that neo-communists may be seeking to spread this to the world at large. As a result, neo-commies are very interested in corporate research projects that explore these areas, and seek to have runners steal their secrets.

A team of neo-communist characters that sought to link themselves together as much as possible (constant wireless headware links, Mindlink spells, etc.) could be an interesting experiment in roleplaying.

Adventure Hooks

- A communist-organized illegal union seeks to stage a wildcat strike of a megacorp factory. The communists bring in the runners to help defend the strikers from corporate attacks until their demands are met.
- The runners are sent on a corporate mission that conflicts with the goals of a neo-communist group. A steady wave of relentless and eerily well-coordinated opponents comes after them, each taking over where the previous left off, and increasingly attacking on multiple fronts in unison.
- The Malaysian government sends runners in to track down and capture or kill the leadership of the Malaysian People's Front, hoping to decapitate the communist insurgency. The runners face a moral dilemma when they find the communists are

entrenched in and supported by a large peasant community that lives in abhorrent conditions.

ANTI-META GROUPS

Anti-metahuman organizations are the groups everybody loves to hate in *Shadowrun*, and they provide a relatively safe way for gaming groups to explore the politics and philosophies of racism without getting into real-world problems that might be uncomfortable for some players to handle. Even so, gamemasters can get more out of using these organizations in their campaigns if they make an effort to make them more "human" (so to speak). Just like racist groups in modern society, these groups in *Shadowrun* run the gamut from the political organizations that spread their message through pamphlets, speeches and media outlets to the terrorist groups who seek to get their views across with violence and fear. Naturally, each of these types is going to employ different tactics and espouse different means to their ends.

It's possible that some gaming groups seeking a new and different experience might want to try running a campaign in which the shadowrunners work for (or even are members of) an anti-metahuman group. This is a touchy and potentially divisive topic, and is only recommended for mature gamers—FanPro isn't interested in perpetuating racism.

One possibility is to start the shadowrunners as members of a racist policlub such as Humanis, but early on they learn the painful (for them) lesson that metahumans aren't the subhuman monsters they were led to see them as. Perhaps they encounter a group of metahumans helping humans in some way or are even rescued from certain death by a metahuman, or perhaps one or more of the characters transforms via SURGE or gets infected by HMMVV and becomes a ghoul. Thus enlightened, the characters spend the remainder of the campaign pursued and persecuted by their former Humanis "brothers."

Humanis Policlub

Of all the anti-meta organizations in *Shadowrun*, Humanis is the easiest to reduce to a caricature or a stereotype: a bunch of bigots dressed in sheets and hoods who run around beating up metahumans and burning effigies. That's not to say they *don't* do those things—more than anything else, Humanis's tactics and trappings resemble those of the Ku Klux Klan during its resurgence in the early twentieth century.

Humanis is a lot more, however, than simply a Klan clone transplanted into the 2060s. For one thing, it are the largest of the anti-metahuman organizations, and one of its candidates—Kenneth Brackhaven—came very close to achieving the highest office in the UCAS. It has far-reaching support, and even many of those who wouldn't be caught dead wearing the robe and hood or attending a rally still donate vast amounts of money to the organization's coffers. Almost as much as the cause of human supremacy, Humanis plays on people's nostalgia for "the good old days."

In addition to opposing metahumanity, Humanis isn't too keen on women's rights, gay rights, Catholics, Jews, atheists or (their version of) immorality. It's suffering from an image problem these days as more and more people grow comfort-



able with metahumans, and upper-level leadership is focused on changing perceptions from sheets and effigies to education and guardianship of cultural heritage—all without compromising their ideals. They've got a tough road ahead of them.

Alamos 20K

Alamos 20,000 is experiencing major upheavals in the early to mid 2060s as the infighting of its factions explodes following the machinations of the amoral and calculating Klaus Uwe Heiden, former protégé of "The Nazi." When the dust clears, Heiden's carefully-laid plans have led to the deaths of both the Nazi and the Troll, leaving "The Doktor" sitting pretty at the head of the now-combined factions. Though the Zealot, the Senator and the Loon remained largely unscathed by these recent events, both the Zealot and the Senator have approached Heiden (separately, unknown to each other) with their own plans designed to take advantage of the new status quo. How things shake out from here is left up to the gamemaster.

The Doktor: Dr. Klaus Uwe Heiden is a brilliant sociopath, charming and debonair but utterly without virtue. Only 35 years old at the time of his appointment to the position of Director of Research and Development at the Metagenics Research Consortium (the Nazi's old stomping grounds, and not by coincidence), Heiden uses his stunning advances in the field of metahuman genetics to cover a more sinister master plan: secret Mengelian-style experiments on living metahumans with the ultimate aim of discovering a means to rid the world of what he considers to be "subhuman vermin." He is not troubled by the contradiction: as in his favorite game, chess, it is sometimes necessary in life to make a few "sacrifices" in order to achieve one's long-term goals.

The Human Nation

Human Nation is an organization that player characters should probably never encounter directly. Even their existence is couched in shadows—though there is enough evidence out there these days that it's probably a safe bet to say that they do exist, it's almost impossible to track them or pin anything on them. They don't even have a formal organizational structure, but function more as an old-boy network of wealthy social Darwinists who get together in the boardroom and at the charity ball to discuss ways to implement their anti-metahuman and anti-poor strategies.

Most likely, shadowrunners will encounter Human Nation by becoming unwittingly involved in the lower levels of one of their plans. Human runners might be hired to do a job seemingly unrelated to anything resembling anti-metahuman activity, while metahuman or mixed teams might be tapped to foil some shadowy anti-meta plan at the grassroots level. Rarely if ever will either side even suspect that anyone is pulling the strings, since the direct Human Nation involvement is usually at least two or three levels removed from the runners' sphere of influence.

Adventure Hooks

- A Humanis leader's wife SURGEs into a changeling, forcing the racist into a change of heart. Before he

can pull out and establish a new life under a new identity, others in Humanis discover his wife's condition. He calls in the runners for protection.

- The runners are hired to steal and destroy research into what they are told is a biowarfare virus. Halfway through the run, they discover it is actually a serum to counter a specific strain of deadly avian bird flu that only affects elves.
- After a group of metahuman runners are captured on a run-gone bad, an influential Human Nation member offers to pull strings and get them free—if they agree to perform a suicidal mission on his behalf.

PRO-META GROUPS

Pro-metahuman organizations (both those specifically mentioned here and others that guard the rights of everything from garden-variety metas to changelings, shapeshifters and spirits) can make good additions to campaigns, since many players like the feeling of vicariously fighting for justice and taking on "the man" in defense of the underdog.

Ork Rights Committee

The ORC is happy to have support from anyone who shares their beliefs that orks are getting the short end of the stick in many areas and that something should be done about it. ORC straddles the line between the Mothers of Metahumans, who tend to favor political solutions, and the Sons of Sauron, who go right for the violent tactics. ORC is satisfied to lobby for their cause through political action, rallies, and education, but they also sponsor (unofficially, of course) many more forceful activities.

Characters who are ORC members or "friends of ORC" would take on tasks like "discouraging" those who persecute orks, stealing data or items that would incriminate anti-metahuman political candidates, or providing security for ORC functions. ORC also has close ties to many ork and metahuman gangs, allowing gang characters to also be involved in ORC activities.

Mothers of Metahumans

The Mothers of Metahumans welcome members of all races, including humans. Runners who are members could undertake assignments such as intelligence gathering (human team members are valued for this, since they can get into places other metahumans can't), security at rallies, spying on anti-meta organizations to learn of and foil their plans, helping metahuman victims of persecution, and other similar jobs. Alternatively, the player characters can work as outside contractors who maintain strong ties to MOM but who can undertake jobs where plausible deniability is required. For example, the group could get into a lot of trouble (legally and otherwise) if caught breaking into a Humanis Policlub chapter house to steal plans for a strike on a metahuman rec center, but hiring non-member shadowrunners to do it means that if they get caught, MOM can claim no knowledge of their plans.



The Sons of Sauron

The Sons of Sauron is a terrorist organization, pure and simple. They justify their actions the same way many other terrorists do: since trolls and orks are society's underclass and denied many of the benefits other members enjoy, this gives them the right to use violent resistance to achieve their goals. Many would argue that their motives are pure and therefore their methods should be excused (especially since they often do try to confine their violence to acts against anti-meta groups), but others argue equally eloquently that the definition of terrorism doesn't change because the reasons for it are noble. Either way, the SOS is a pro-troll and ork, pro-Awakened, virulently anti-human organization that considers any actions that advance the cause of troll and ork rights to be justified. Some members take it a step further, espousing ork- or troll-supremacist ideology, or perhaps arguing (similar to Humanis) that the metatypes should exist separately.

Sons of Sauron characters would almost certainly be trolls or orks—the group doesn't take anyone else except under very rare circumstances. Shadowrunner members of the Sons would likely be given violent assignments such as destroying Humanis or Alamos 20K assets, instigating violence during rallies (even other pro-meta rallies when sponsored by groups seeking peaceful solutions and cooperation) and breaking into enemy installations to steal data or gear or cause mayhem. The Sons haven't forgotten the Night of Rage, and they certainly haven't forgiven anyone for it.

The Stonecutters Guild

The Stonecutters Guild is a fraternal organization for dwarfs that masks a larger and more secretive aim: to install as many dwarfs into positions of corporate and political power as possible. Its membership is 100 percent dwarf (one has to be a dwarf to join) but they do number other metatypes among their friends and supporters. The Stonecutters aren't against anybody—they are pro-dwarf. Officially, the organization doesn't have any overarching plans for the power base it is building (though many of its individual members have their own ideas about the matter)—its only concern is to elevate enough dwarfs into high positions so that their voices will be heard loud and clear in decisions regarding public and corporate policy.

An alternative campaign involving the Stonecutters could involve a group of chapter members who have been charged by lodge leadership to undertake various covert operations designed to advance the lodge's goals: perhaps undermining the campaigns of a lodge member's rivals for a political office, or extracting a dwarf scientist from an unfavorable position in order to gain his expertise at a corp where the Lodge has greater influence. A Stonecutters campaign would likely be political in nature, full of more intrigue and infighting than gunfire and derring-do.

The Ghoul Liberation League

Of all the metahuman races, ghouls get the worst of things—even worse than orks or trolls. Their image as mind-

less, bloodthirsty flesh-eaters isn't helped by the fact that, for many ghouls, it happens to be true. Among the more "enlightened" ghouls (that is to say, the ones who didn't lose their minds during their transformation), a schism is building about how the cause of ghouls should be advanced—some, like Tamil Grey, argued that the peaceful approach was the only workable solution, while others, like Grey's erstwhile lieutenant Blaine Hammond, rejected peaceful means and argued that violent resistance was the only way to get their point across. The Ghoul Liberation League tends more toward Hammond's approach, but there still exist cooler heads in the organization who seek to temper violence with education.

Player character ghouls (along with others who support ghouls) would find themselves at home in a GLL campaign, where their talents will be put to good use advancing the cause of ghouls. In addition to protecting the identities of ghouls who have infiltrated society (with corrective surgery and other means), they could defend ghouls from persecution and interfere with bounty hunters that hunt ghouls.

The Black Ork Defense Collective

The Black Ork Defense Collective is based in the UK's Merseysprawl, but members and supporters can also be found in other cities. The BODC is similar to the Black Panther Party: a tightly knit collectivist gathering of like-minded individuals whose goals are the well-being, prosperity, and economic freedom of their members—and who are willing to defend that with armed force. BODC-oriented runs could include dealing with threats to the Black Ork community, taking direct action against anti-meta groups, or helping another group of orks set up a similar system elsewhere. BODC members could also be tied up in the growing social movement within the UK, seeking to overthrow the stranglehold of the New Druidic Movement.

The Transhuman League

The Transhumans seek to elevate themselves or metahumanity at large to a new stage of physical form and consciousness. Popular with changelings, the Transhumans also attract people who like to enhance their bodies and minds in all sorts of creative and interesting ways, from biosculpting and heavy cyberware implantation to mind-altering drugs and perpetually jacking-in to the Matrix. The Transhumans are active proponents of cyber and biotechnology, genetic manipulation, nanotech, magical alteration and "enlightened" modes of thinking. Transhuman characters may seek to protect a changeling community from Humanis attacks, steal and release secret research on new technologies or seek out new forms of life deep in the Matrix or metaplanes.

Adventure Hooks

- A gang backed by the Sons of Sauron has been terrorizing a local (predominately human and elf) neighborhood. MOM asks the runners to convince the gang to cool down, but things get ugly when Humanis supporters call in a gang of their own.



- A group of ghouls is being used as slave labor and astral security for a corporate facility. The Ghoul Liberation League seeks to set them free, but a group of bounty hunters has other plans.
- A Transhuman League member exploring the depths of the Matrix for the secret to digital consciousness turns up brain dead. Other Transhumanists seek to find out whether he has downloaded himself into the Matrix, but the runners instead discover foul play at work.

FASCISTS

Along with megacorporate power, fascist governments are staples of dystopian cyberpunk. The changes wrought to the Sixth World allow for a number of interesting variations on this reactionary ideology, from racial supremacists to ultranationalists, from eco-fascists to corporate fascists. Fascist doctrine may be something that appeals to some people in the world of Shadowrun, but it is above all an undemocratic approach to government, where might makes right and where society's evils find easy scapegoats. The historical truth is that this is an ideologically bankrupt and opportunis-

tic philosophy, one that mutates all too easily into a totalitarian oligarchy of party elites, nepotism, rampant abuse of power, government by intimidation, corruption and pandering to big economic interests. Fascist governments and political movements will pursue agendas of racial persecution and segregation, censorship and restriction of civil rights in the name of national interests and order, mass mobilization and militancy/militarization.

It is not advised for gamemasters to allow characters to be active members of fascist organizations in his game, unless of course, this fits the group's playing style and the group would like to explore this dark aspect of politics. Let's be blunt though: if fascist ideologies are actually attractive to your players, they should probably not be playing this game and should go get their heads examined instead.

That said, fascists have become a stereotyped bad guy, and clichés tend to get old. An alternative way for gamemasters to use fascist groups is to play an independent group of runners that is drawn into the sphere of influence of one of the fascist entities described in the fiction (or one of their allies), performing operations for them but remaining independent. Thus you can gradually confront the characters with



the realities of fascism from a first hand but personal point of view, without the characters needing to subscribe to them. Alternatively, if a mature group wishes to approach the issue directly, they could start out as members of such a radical group, exploring the brutal realities of the fascist mindset in practice rather than the grandstanding rhetoric of political rallies and charismatic leaders. In either approach, the group should be confronted with the effects of fascism on both society at large and on its individual victims (often minorities and disenfranchised, not unlike runners themselves) and allowed the opportunity of redeeming themselves—possibly through an epiphany or an unexpected turn of events—when their fascist and/or racist beliefs are shattered by one of their victims' unquestionable act of compassion, courage or self-sacrifice. Of course, enlightenment doesn't mean the characters can easily extricate themselves from their violent and less-understanding associates ...

Adventure Hooks

- Runners are employed by a Johnson to carry out a campaign of terror and intimidation against several mayoral candidates. They will eventually realize they are targeting minority and metahuman leaders backed by groups like MOM or the Stonecutters. They are confronted with the choice between making money and helping place a fascist-backed politician at the head of local government or doing the right thing.
- Unwitting runners are contracted by someone allegedly representing the CIA to take down a terrorist group hiding out at a safehouse outside town. They are told the group is backed by a friendly corp and the government wishes to preserve deniability. The twist comes when the terrorists turn out to be Sioux OMI agents preparing to hit White Resistance leader Michael Rockwell, and the Johnson is Rockwell himself.
- Runners who are smugglers or just smuggling their own goods are asked by a friend of a friend to transport a box along with them. Along the way, however, something occurs that allows the runners to discover that the box is a shipment of illegalized fascist propaganda, sims and music.

ANTIFA

Anti-fascists (*antifa*) are an eclectic bunch that often share affiliation with other activist groups and ideologies—pro-meta groups, communists and anarchists, among others. Antifa vary in tactics and attitude even more than those they oppose. Groups like Antifa Direct Action adopt a confrontational and violent approach to fighting fascism, organizing against fascists on a street-level, localized scale. Other groups, like the Edelweiss Pirates, take a strategic view and plan out organized campaigns that involve coordinating and providing support for other antifa as well as using deniable assets. Others, like International Spotlight, focus primarily on intelligence-gathering, occasionally using runners to infiltrate fascist groups or steal data.

Some shadowrunner characters may work as antifa on the side, or may simply offer their services to antifa on a pro-bono basis. Fascists seek a totalitarian state, after all, which would likely involve violent crackdowns on lawbreakers and other “undesirables” such as runners. An entire group of antifa runners is an ideal way to explore political, cultural and social themes often left obscure by the high-adrenaline reality of shadowrunning. In fact, antifa have the added dimension that membership can overlap with other groups with similar or coinciding agendas, and so gamemasters can add multiple layers of intrigue and political machinations.

Adventure Hooks

- A group of fascist skinheads have moved in and taken over leadership of a local gang and plan to use the gang to initiate a campaign of street terror against a local metahuman community. Members of the gang who aren't pleased with their new bosses turn to the runners for help.
- When the runners are hired by I-Spotlight to investigate a leading German aristocrat's ties to Volksfront, they turn up a hit list of the group's enemies, ranging from ADA members to NEEC politicians. The first few names are already crossed off—can the runners stop the assassins in time?
- An antifa group asks the runners to gather details on a major fascist leader whom they suspect of organizing covert ops. The runners discover, however, that the leader is actual a police agent, and that the cops are manipulating the fascists against left-wing troublemakers.

FEMINISTS

Feminists seek to establish equal rights for women in all arenas of life. For centuries, men have dominated politics, the distribution of wealth and jobs and “ruled the roost.” Establishing even the possibility of equal footing has been an uphill battle; actual social change and acceptance has been tougher. Along the way, their opponents have labeled feminists as man-eating, unfeminine, lesbian shrews bent on destroying marriage. In the Sixth World, times have changed, and women have made further advances ... but the struggle goes on, not only to attain full equality, but also to establish a feminist perspective towards metahumanity and ecology. As the feminists see it, the same male attitudes that forced women into being second-class citizens are at the core of racial discrimination and ecological devastation.

Feminist groups come in many flavors. Some work towards making a better life for all women, from SINless ork mothers to corporate ladder-climbers. Some focus on reproductive rights, protecting clinics and healthcare choices against anti-choice religious groups, or on issues of sexuality along with gay and transgendered rights groups. Still others help women in need, operating battered women's shelters or rape crisis centers. Only a few feminist groups are actually closed to men, though women usually take positions of leadership.



Mother Earth Policlub

The feminism espoused by Mother Earth is infused with environmental consciousness and a form of spirituality tied closely to nature magic. The Awakened members of Mother Earth are devoted to shamanic paths such as witchcraft, Weise, Native American traditions, wuxing, Tir Path magic, UK and Irish druid paths, and more (see *Magic in the Shadows* and *State of the Art: 2064* for more details on these traditions). The dominant faction, however, is composed of Wiccans.

As allies the policlub can be a mixed bag, depending on which element the runners are in contact with. Some factions may refuse to work with men, others may only be interested in causes involving women or ecology. They may be willing to provide aid and services for free if the cause is just, or they may politely but coldly request donations or for the runners to use their influence in return. For example, they may ask the runners to help out with a female-run commune's composting work, volunteer at or help protect a clinic, or go on a run to steal evidence of discrimination in a government office.

Mother Earth Magical Group

Type: Dedicated

Members: 4–100, depending on the chapter

Resources/Dues: Low. Members pay dues of 200¥ per month.

Scriptures: Belief (Ecological Feminism), Fraternity, Sacrifice

Adventure Hooks

- A prostitute seeks help from a feminist group, claiming she is trying to get free from her pimp. They put her up at a women's shelter, but she later turns up missing, so they get the runners involved. Did her pimp find her? Or could it really have something to do with the Empowerment Coalition, which her roommate claims spoke with the girl several times before her disappearance
- The runner team is hired as security for an all-elven female beauty pageant. The managers of the show, however, are sent death threats that decry the beauty pageant's bias and are signed "Mother Earth." The plot thickens when one of the managers is murdered, and all clues point to an inside job, maybe implicating one of the runners. Even the contestants aren't free from suspicion, with all manner of shady pasts ranging from cosmetic surgery, blackmail and nepotism to membership with ... Sie?
- A ME witch working to reclaim an astrally polluted area discovers an astral rift and is possessed by an alien spirit. The disembodied witch warns her allies, but before they can do anything, the possessed body is kidnapped by the Army of God, who hope to obtain the security passcodes to ME's chapter-house. The runners are called in to help.

REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS

Revolutionary groups come in many varieties, sometimes—but not always—defined by the regime they are trying

to overthrow. Some are communists or anarchists seeking to establish a new egalitarian society, some are rabid nationalists who feel their government is selling them out to foreign causes, while others simply want to see an end to rampant exploitation or corruption. At some point, these groups realized that they weren't going to be able to effect change from within or achieve their goals through passive resistance, so they have turned to armed struggle. Depending on their particular philosophy, they may be encouraging riots and street-fighting, waging an armed guerrilla warfare campaign or they may pursuing terrorist tactics.

Revolutionary movements often include groups that, while united in their goal of toppling the government, vastly disagree in other areas. These groups may have formed a temporary alliance in order to defeat their common enemy, but in the meantime they are maneuvering for position so that they'll be the ones on top when the revolution succeeds. This internal conflict creates a viable source of tension for plot opportunities.

Revolutionaries live a clandestine lifestyle just like shadowrunners, hiding out from government persecution. It is highly likely that characters who make their home in a nation where revolutionary groups are active will have to deal with them on a regular basis. Rebels typically seek to dominate underworld affairs and so will move to take over or eliminate other crime outfits. The shadows are their primary source of income and weapons and their only safe haven against the authorities. The runners may even be full or part-time supporters of the revolution, especially if the government takes a hard-line towards shadowrunners.

Revolutions aren't for everybody, though, especially if you're the target of that revolution. The regime in power and political opponents of the resistance will utilize runners of its own to infiltrate, capture, assassinate and destabilize the rebels. Runners who are amoral or politically opposed to the revolutionaries cause can easily find such work.

Rinelle ke'Tesrae

Stopping the Rite of Progression was a huge victory for Rinelle, but their advances have been marred by major losses and treason and infighting within their own ranks. It remains to be seen if Rinelle can continue to build enough pressure to dismantle the Tir's aristocratic system or whether it will succumb to infighting and repression.

Runners who work for are supporters of Rinelle need to be careful about who they deal with. Tensions within Rinelle are very high, as some cells are suspected of owing loyalty to James Telestrian or other princes, and the Tir Paladins and Information Directorate are working hard to snuff them out. Rinelle operations are focusing on destabilizing the Council of Princes and upper ranks of nobility as much as possible, and runners are being heavily utilized to gather info, spread discrediting rumors and smuggle gear through the border.

The Haida National Front

The Haida movement suffered a long winter while John George was in prison. Now that he's out, they've refocused their efforts against MCT and the government. All of the PR in



the world won't convince the Tsimshian government to recognize them as anything more than a band of terrorists. The HNF has found new support, however, from the Sioux and Salish-Shidhe, as the Sovereign Tribal Council gears itself towards collective action against Tsimshian hostilities and eco-devastation.

The HNF relies on shadowrunners for everything from courier missions to personal security operatives to trainers. HNF cells prefer to do business with people they can trust to get the job done right. On the flip side, if players fail to execute a mission with the proper amount of secrecy required, it is unlikely that they will be asked to work for the Haida again. Mitsuhamas has spies everywhere, and they also hire runners to work as double-agents. The Sioux are seeking to interfere more while keeping a respectable distance, so they are bound to recruit runners for their operations.

The Flame of Freedom

The situation in the Yucatán jungle has become a free-for-all. The spirit war and rebel resistance have pushed Aztech forces out of the zone, but flare ups continue. The Flame is attempting to get a handle on the spirit conflict and negotiate a cease-fire with the Azzies so they can buy enough time to recoup their losses and reorganize their forces.

All sorts of characters work with or for the Flame: mercenaries, smugglers, anyone willing to contribute their gun to the cause. The movement is desperately in need of magicians, particularly shamans, to deal with the spirit threats in the area. Working for the Flame means a hard life of bring constantly on the move, in the jungle, contending with dangers from toxic spirits to Leopard and Jaguar Guards to paranormal creatures. Wilderness survival skills are mandatory.

Adventure Hooks

- Rinelle assigns the runners to do some dirt digging on Prince Jonathan Reed. The characters are given the name of a woman that Reed is thought to have "relations" with and to convince her—through honest convincing or threats—to supply information on Reed and his activities. The woman, however, is already an agent working for another player—Hestaby? Another prince? Tir na nOg? Saito?
- The HNF hires the runners to seize a local trideo station long enough for a Haida decker to release a broadcast over the air. Unforeseen complications arise, however, leaving the runners surrounded.
- The adult dragon Pobre, one of the Flame's leaders, has gone missing. Both the rebels and the Azzies send runners deep in the jungle in search of the feathered serpent.

USING ELITE GROUPS

Corporations and dragons are not the only ones pulling people's strings in the world of Shadowrun. There are plenty of other players who have carved out their own fiefdoms on the playing board and who continue to maneuver for power and influence. These may range from the individually wealthy (Art

Dankwalther) to conspiratorial groups (immortal elves, anyone?), and include the three groups described below.

Runners are unlikely to be members of any such elite group (if they are, well you must be running an *interesting* campaign). Instead, they are likely to be its lackeys, dupes and agents, pulling jobs behind the scene so the elite entity can get its way. On the positive side, elite groups usually have massive resources at their disposal. Not only can they pay well, but they can often provide additional resources of value to runners (background data, useful contacts, hard-to-acquire gear, time in a shadowclinic, etc). On the down side, the elite are very protective of their interests. Runners may do jobs for the same client for years without even realizing it. The minute they screw up or get too close to their sponsor, however, they'll find out why they're called "expendable" assets.

Some runner teams may score a position of trust and responsibility with an elite group, essentially acting as an "in-house" runner squad or at least getting put on retainer so they can be called on whenever necessary. Characters in a unit like this would likely be experienced and well-qualified, and would have access to their employer's resources (see *Running High-Level Campaigns*, p. 118, *MJLBB*). Campaigns of this type can be quite interesting as the runners know who they're working for and what their agenda is, so they'll have more data to make decisions on. On the other hand, they will have assigned their loyalty to their sponsor, which makes them a target for rivals and enemies.

THE UNITED NATIONS

The power games at the UN are involve most of the actors important enough to play a role on the international scale. The Corporate Court exercises its influence through the Economic Council, legislating economic measures and ensuring the presence of an underpaid workforce and stable markets. The corps also sometimes use the UN against one another to field-test new technologies or to depose unfriendly regimes while keeping their hands clean.

On the other hand, a coalition of environmental and Awakened governments has combined forces to utilize elements of the UN for their own purposes, particularly to help keep the megacorps in check. Secretary General Padiyar may have danced the corporate gig until recently, but he has since changed his mind and forged a secret alliance with the nations opposing the Corporate Court's dominion. Though he was forced to publicly disband COMA, he continues to secretly support it as a covert agency.

Characters who work for the UN could be UNATCO operatives, UNAF specialists, UN observers (i.e. diplomats and spooks) or humanitarian workers sent to gather intelligence while doing their work. Social and language skills and an ability to adapt to different cultures (Etiquette skill) would be essential.

UN missions typically fall into four categories. For *monitoring* missions, the UN sends small units of 3-4 representatives to a hot spot to gather data on humanitarian issues and human rights violations. If the situation warrants it, an *observation* mission of up to 20 operatives can be sent *within* a national or corporate territory (with their agreement) to ensure that human



rights are respected. For a *mediation* mission, the UN sends in a team of independent diplomats to negotiate the terms of peace, starting with a cease-fire, then disarmament and terms for granting amnesty to combatants. Runners are often used here to protect mediation diplomats. If negotiation fails, the Security Council can decide to deploy blue-helmet UNAF troops for an *intervention* mission that may involve actual combat and hostilities.

Runners could also be agents of COMA, specifically working to monitor megacorp activity and sabotage Corporate Court plans. COMA counts less than fifty members spread throughout UN organs and institutions, ranging from representatives to deckers and fixers. Operations typically focus on illegal corporate activities in matters of biotechnology, weapons, Matrix crime and economic fraud.

Corporations and some governments may also hire runners to sabotage UN missions, arrange kidnappings of inspectors or conduct "terrorist attacks" when a mission is about to discover something dirty.

Adventure Hooks

- A corporation that supports Saito's regime in California hires the runners and gets them included in the UN observation mission around the Chico-

Oroville Dam. The corp hopes this will get the runners close to the dam, giving them a chance to sabotage it.

- COMA sends the runners to interfere with the corporate space maglev launcher project at Mount Kilimanjaro, and to try establishing contact with the spirits and locals that are combating it. Much to the runners' surprise, they find that the corps have eliminated much of their spirit opposition and are further along in their plans than anticipated.
- The Palestinian rep at the Ecumenical Council of Jerusalem, a supporter of the Islamic Renaissance, brings in runners to investigate ties between the New Islamic Jihad and Hamas that are trying to radicalize the New Palestinian Authority. The runners are given UN diplomatic immunity to pursue the case. They are asked to uncover any links to Ibn Eisa, and to reveal his plans for the West Bank.

THE ARISTOCRATS' CABAL

While a loose alliance of noble families isn't the most obvious mover and shaker in the *Shadowrun* universe, with their reactionary traditions, nineteenth-century values and pompous



mannerisms, these high-society schemers and their goals are well-suited to the Sixth World's balkanized and neo-feudalistic society. The aristocracy is far from extinct; a peek at many modern Eurocorps and institutions, not to mention the scandalsheets, underlines the fact that even if old money aristocrats are out of fashion, they still possess economic power and a certain fascination to the masses. The aristos have learned from history the dangers of blatant power, so their sway over institutions is subtle but pervasive. In countries with a strong aristocratic tradition, power is asserted more openly, but these are the exception rather than the rule.

Cabal members—which by no means includes all the nobility—are generally extremely rich and well-educated individuals, brought up to believe their wealth and titles place them above the plebian masses. They are a generation of blue-blood scions groomed to be political leaders, corporate schemers and skilled diplomats with astounding (and suspicious) foresight. Each is trained to manipulate parliaments and boardrooms and win the people's support for their causes *despite* their fancy titles and hyphenised names. Branching out from financial power to politics and media during the Euro Wars, they spin-doctored their image in the collective mind to equate to *stability*, *tradition* and *patriotism*, and assumed vital positions in companies, governments and political movements.

Their stance towards the corps is paradoxical: while they criticize the domination by “bourgeois” elements on one hand, on another they are major shareholders in a number of mid-level corps merely to defend their own interests. The birth of the New European Economic Community has turned this game against them, as the new attempt at European unity threatens the aristo's established local power.

The nobles are unused to cooperation. The alliance is tenuous and uneasy, with Nicholas de Rochefort playing the role of mediator and conciliator. Were the conditions different, they would revert to ancient antagonisms and clashing personal agendas. Even though they cooperate, competition for primacy within the cabal is fierce—especially to claim leadership, currently in the hands of the French houses. Traditionally isolated from their continental cousins, even British and Danaan nobles are starting to see the cabal as an opportunity to expand their power.

For more information on the blue bloods, readers may want to check *Shadows of Europe* (Austria, France and the UK, particularly) and *Target: Matrix* (Kalinin).

Running for the Cabal

Characters working as agents or sympathizers of the cabal would likely work to protect and advance the goals of a particular family or alliances of families. Their opponents and targets would be NEEC corps, intelligence agencies or other governmental organizations. They might find unwitting support in various nationalist and fascist movements like Volksfront, Alliance Nationale and Bloc Identitaire, as well as mainstream political movements such as the Spanish Partido Monarquico and the Austrian Heritage Party. Possibly due to their heritage, most nobles prize honor and loyalty as much as talent, but a charac-

ter who earns their respect will enjoy long and profitable (if hazardous) employment. It is unlikely that the characters would be full-fledged members of the cabal, though specific characters could be related to one of the families or even be a minor noble of some sort. This type of campaign would lead to high-rolling, jet-setting, intrigue-heavy games as the characters rub shoulders with the elites in backdrops like Paris, London, Monaco and Vienna.

Adventure Hooks

- As the Grand Tour hits Monaco, the runners are hired by a cabal fixer on Johnny Spinrad's behalf to recover some compromising information on deals Saeder-Krupp intends to strike with the French military. The runners need to infiltrate a luxury hotel to recover data from a corp Johnson's personal computer *and* the encryption key from his headware memory. They're then to deliver the goods in Paris, pursued by S-K goons and other interested parties.
- As war breaks out between the Mafia and the Vory across France, the cabal looks for some expertise to know with which syndicate to throw in its lot. The runners receive an anonymous invitation to a reception during the Paris Tour stopover. There they meet the mysterious and disturbing Frédérique de Malemort, who hires them to research both syndicates' leadership, weaknesses, powers and goals. The mission is highly dangerous but they're aided by the Cartomancer's predictions.
- The wedding of elven nobles Cédric de Rohan and Ydil Teleam of Pomorya will mark the “official” entry of the latter into the ranks of the respectable century-old aristocracy. Some anti-meta figures within the cabal are unhappy with this and want an “accident” to befall the couple before a child is born and the union sealed in the blood. House Rohan has other plans and hires the runners to protect the pair from “any problems” during their honeymoon. They must then find which family was calling the shots and settle the score.

AEGIS COGNITO

Aegis provides a crossover element between the traditionally parallel and distinct worlds of the shadowrunner and the espionage community. It allows gamemasters to run espionage-style scenarios involving all the traditional elements of the genre, while not forcing them to completely change tracks for an alternative campaign. The gamemaster can spin this into an all-out over-the-top action/espionage game or keep it as grim and gritty as Cold War cloak-and-dagger games. For more information on the state of the spy game in Sixth World, the gamemaster may want to refer *State of the Art: 2064*.

Teams who build up a certain reputation and trust with an Aegis Johnson will find themselves hired for a variety of runs mostly involving data retrieval, Int-Sec stings, technology theft and asset acquisition rather than operations that involve wet-work, corporate extractions and asset destruction. Unlike run-



AEGIS COGNITO SERVICES AND FEES

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES:

Pearl Clearance (5,000¥/month)—Offers limited intelligence on corporate, political and military subjects and access to Current Affairs bulletins. Basic profiles and general information in easy-to-digest briefs (equivalent to the collected info available on the open Matrix or 2–3 successes in a standard Legwork Test).

Emerald Clearance (25,000¥/month)—Offers detailed profiles and specific information on targets. Up-to-date data includes personnel dossiers, detailed corporate and research profiles on major individuals, countries, corps and their interests (equivalent to a detailed background check performed by professionals or 3–4 successes in a standard Legwork Test).

Ruby Clearance (75,000¥/month)—Offers restricted information and reports into activities and agendas of major Sixth World players down to outlines of Aegis-pilfered research data (available for a negotiable fee) and personal schedules (equivalent to what any major corp intelligence operation would have on file for major players, or 5–6 successes in a standard Legwork Test).

Obsidian Clearance (150,000¥/month)—All the dirt. From intercepted personal correspondence to latest known activities of politicians, executives and even shadier individuals. Complete dossiers on everything Aegis could acquire of activities and agendas *except* currently restricted case information (equivalent to everything the gamemaster has on hand—if the players can afford this Aegis service they deserve it).

INVESTIGATIVE PROFILES AND CONSULTATIONS:

5,000¥ to 20,000¥ (depending on subject and detail)—Equivalent of Ruby Clearance profiles executed on demand within 7 days.

DATA RECONSTRUCTION AND DECODING:

Roll an Opposed Test between Enigma Knowbot's Data Reconstruction Rating of 8 vs. Rating of the Scramble IC that damaged the file. Each successes = 25% of the file size in Mp reconstituted.

Time Required: (Rating of Scramble IC) days.

Cost: File size in Mp x Rating of Scramble IC that damaged the file x 10¥.

ners, Aegis deals almost exclusively with information and its operations are geared towards that end after all, in the right hands information is the most valuable commodity in the Sixth World. Due to the nature of its operations, Aegis prefers infiltration specialists, stealthy and surveillance types and magicians of all kinds over big and violent physical types. Confrontation is *not* the name of the game. Discretion and subtlety are.

Aegis handlers have a reputation for being straight shooters and providing as much pre-op intel as possible to ensure success. Teams that prove themselves competent and successful may be hired on retainer and/or approved for Aegis subscription services above their normal resources. On the other hand, since Aegis faces competition from its counterparts and traditional corporate and governmental agencies that don't approve of this generation of upstarts, clashes are inevitable. It

also has to tread a delicate balance between the various powerblocks, making itself essential to all and gathering enough dirt to ensure retaliation is too costly to consider. The final and biggest problem running for Aegis entails is that a runner's contractor will always be unknown—Aegis itself provides that anonymity. Runners might be working for their greatest foe and never know it.

Aegis is used by power players who lack the resources for their own permanent intelligence divisions, including many of the groups mentioned in this sourcebook. As such it can be used as a springboard to any number of storylines and plots involving these and other factions. Some plot ideas include:

Adventure Hooks

- After acquiring crucial information from a deep-cover agent inside Aztechnology, an Aegis team must race against the clock to find a rebel commander in the Yucatan (the client) and deliver news and plans for a coming government offensive.
- The media corp DeMeKo wants the inside scoop on the ongoing Polish Civil War without taking risks, so it hires Aegis to acquire proof of the Rybinski regime's alleged atrocities and human rights violations. Diving into the shattered nation, the team will likely be unprepared for the hardships of war and the ravages of battle firsthand.
- A strange elf of unknown origin hires Aegis to investigate the English vigilante rabble-rouser known as "Pendragon" and the claims to the effect that he possesses the mythical sword Excalibur. Runners on this mission would be dropped into the turmoil that is enveloping Britain—the closer they come to Pendragon the closer they'll be to the heart of a storm which is about to break.

USING MYSTIC GROUPS

The Awakened world has a longer history than some would like to admit. There were ages before the Sixth World, and yes, there was a previous age of magic which some still remember. There are many secrets buried away by the past that some are eager to unearth—and there are some secrets that they may wish to keep buried. Likewise, there are many new discoveries to be made, new advances to be achieved in an age of education, worldwide communication and science.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUPS

Along with the revelation that magic existed in our past came a shift in archaeological interests and practices. A new wave of arcane archaeologists came to the fore, using magical scans and methods in conjunctions with standard archaeological science to discover and evaluate evidence of metahumanity and magic in the distant past.

In addition to making archaeological groups the sponsor or target of a shadowrun, it is possible to build a campaign around an archaeological team. The team could be employed by one of the archaeological groups described below, acting as "specialists" who handle unusual and high-risk situations.



Alternatively, they could be freelance archaeologists, pursuing relics and occult objects for their own interest or profit.

In addition to scientific characters skilled in Archaeology, Anthropology, History, Geology and other disciplines, the team would find aircraft and boat pilots/riggers essential. Wilderness Survival and (ancient) Language skills would also be a prerequisite. Smugglers and fixers who could find or move artifacts on the black market would be valuable contacts.

An archaeological team of this sort could find itself sent to a standard excavation site that is in need of certain skill sets or protection from competitors, paranormal animals or angry locals. They could also be sent into remote areas to retrieve artifacts or find lost ruins, visiting inhospitable areas like the Amazonian jungles, desert wastes, flooded tunnels, deep cavern networks or high mountain ranges. Perhaps they need to beat a rival team to the goal, or steal/retrieve a treasure that has already been found. They may even be sent in pursuit of legendary quests, searching for the Holy Grail, the Fountain of Youth or the fate of Atlantis.

The Atlantean Foundation

The public face of the Atlantean Foundation is similar to that of National Geographic today—they are a reputable source for scientific and historical news and programs. The main goal of the foundation, however, is to retrieve artifacts from ancient civilizations. Their motivation is arcane research—they wish to unearth old tomes and relics in order to expand the modern understanding of magic. The foundation's resources are vast—from a staff of hundreds of scientists, historians and researchers to a vast collection of mundane and magical lore—but its knack for knowing *where* to dig is uncanny, leading some to believe that larger forces are at play. The foundation also has a suspicious number of secretive projects, leading others to believe that knowledge is not all it searches for.

Both the archaeological and the magical R&D fields have become more competitive in recent years, leading the AF to seek out new talent. It has also become quite ruthless when dealing with competitors and pulls no punches. In addition to working on or for an archaeological team, AF runners may find themselves protecting research facilities from rivals, tracking down and stealing artifacts moving through the black market or even sabotaging research efforts in corporate magical R&D departments. Characters who wish to be part of the AF may work best as members of the Mystic Crusaders, the AF's signature security force. This mystic and chivalrous warrior society follows its own interests, however, which are not always in line with those of the AF.

The Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research

Less secretive than the AF, the DIMR also makes more of an effort to share its knowledge and research results with the global community. Though the dragon's name gives it a widespread reputation, the DIMR lacks the extensive staff and resources that the AF has built up over decades—it is still acting as stiff competition, though.

Runners who work for the DIMR will likely end up working on projects of interest to one of the specific members of the

board, as each diverts DIMR resources towards their own pet projects. If the characters are not careful, they may find themselves at the center of an in-house rivalry, or be put in a position where they are working against another DIMR faction.

The Apep Consortium

The vast bulk of the Apep Consortium's work is seemingly innocuous and no more insidious than any other archaeological outfit. A look at the group's backing interests, however, might give one the suggestion that the consortium pursues "darker" interests. Whether or not this is true is up to the gamemaster. Certainly the consortium features a number of "unfavored" occultists—petro hounsans, demonologists, blood mages and even toxic shamans—among its members and clients, but this is no guarantee of a dark agenda. Even black magicians have need of mystic secrets that are not in and of themselves corrupt, and certainly archaeology and research can be profitable ventures. Perhaps the consortium engages in occasional activities such as seeking to free long-trapped spirits, discovering lost but grisly treasures or unearthing secrets that others want to leave undisturbed. Is there some sort of unified "evil" agenda to this? Perhaps ... or maybe the consortium is an alliance of players who share common interests, but do not always get along or support each other.

Characters who work for the consortium may be unaware of the group's sinister-sounding backers. They may find themselves working for one particular sponsor, never quite interacting with other elements of the consortium unless an internal conflict results. Over time, bit by bit, the characters may learn about the true agenda of who they're working for—but by the time they figure it out, they may already be in too deep.

Adventure Hooks

- An independent researcher at a prestigious university translates an ancient text that gives clues to the location of a lost city in the Arabian Desert. The runners are sent to find and claim it, but in addition to rival archaeologists they must face fierce desert conditions and Bedouin raiders.
- The Apep Consortium hires the runners to steal a recently uncovered set of Coptic jars from an AF dig. When the great dragon Arleesh comes after the items, however, the runners discover there's more to the jars than they expected.
- The DIMR hears rumors that another archaeological group is secretly excavating a site it had its eyes on in the Andes Mountains, and sends the runners to get a take on the situation. When they discover that another faction in the DIMR secretly sponsored the site, they're sent after a particular board member to uncover the truth. In fact another archaeological group is operating the site, posing as the DIMR.

MAGICAL GROUPS

Rules for magical groups are given on pp. 61–68, *MITS*. Rules for magical campaigns can be found on pp. 119–120, *SRComp*.



Illuminates of the New Dawn

Details for the IOND are given on p. 68, *MITS*.

The IOND has spent the last few years untangling themselves from the specter of the New Century Party, but they are still interested in drawing government and other officials around them. This goal is being met in a number of ways, including spying, blackmail and providing favors for high profile individuals they feel can help the IOND cause.

The IOND has a number of non-Awakened members, so an all-IOND team is certainly a possibility—each character must merely support the cause of magocratic progressivism. A team like this would pursue projects of particular interest to their local IOND lodge—investigating local phenomenon, background checks on new members and Novitiates, “recruiting” support from local politicians, conducting magical research, acquiring exotic materials for enchanting, etc. The Magus Council (and individual Magi) also keeps runners who are not IOND members on hand for important jobs that they wish to maintain plausible deniability for.

The Voice of Ogoun/Agwe

Type: Dedicated (Voudoun)

Members: 33 (750) Voice of Ogoun/15 (250) Voice of Agwe. The numbers in parentheses indicate non-Awakened members.

Resources/Dues: High/Middle. Members of both groups pay dues of 75¥ per month.

Strictures: Belief (Voudoun), Limited Membership (Voudoun followers only), Oath

The rift between Flaubert and Cross spreads past the Caribbean to the shores of Europe and the Americas. Flaubert’s Voice of Ogoun has formed a shaky alliance with the Yardies, but it remains fragile. Flaubert needs the Yardies to keep the pressure on against the Voice of Agwe, while the Yardies need the Voice to help cement their fledgling smuggling operation. Though Flaubert appears to be influenced by the loa, it is unclear what their plans are for the future of the Voice.

A group of Voudoun-following characters could easily be a member of either Voice faction, using their skills to undermine the other. Perhaps the players are caught in the middle, torn between who to support, and waiting for the loa to make a decisive move.

The Golden Acorn Society

Type: Initiatory

Membership: 19 (120). The number in parentheses indicate non-Awakened members.

Resources/Dues: Middle. Members do not pay dues.

Strictures: Attendance, Fraternity, Limited Membership



(Invisible Way), Oath, Obedience, Sacrifice (must teach at the school)

General Saito has brought war to the Golden Acorn's doorstep ... and it is obvious that the piecemeal resistance needs help. Yee Chan's society is providing assistance to the militias and Metahuman People's Army—smuggling weapons, serving as couriers, infiltrating enemy headquarters—but they are pursuing it with subtlety, as befits their Way. No one knows what Chan and his top adepts are doing—aside from studying the Tome of Terrin—and no one is likely to find out, though they will certainly play a role in combating Saito.

A team with several adepts who follow the Invisible Way could be part of the Golden Acorns; non-adepts would merely be members of the school but not the initiatory group. Missions would primarily revolve around stealth and infiltration: fact-finding, datatheft, smuggling and possibly even assassination.

Dr. Faustus Society

Type: Dedicated

Members: 1300

Resources/Dues: Luxury. Members pay dues of 250¥ per month. This money helps to fund scholarships for future members as well as other projects. The group has access to college campuses throughout Europe, with the hermetic libraries of each at the groups' disposal.

Strictures: Fraternity, Limited Membership (Hermetics only), Link, Oath

Patron: AG Chemie Europa

Faustus is one of the largest magical orders in the world, and the fact that its membership is localized gives it incredible influence and power in those areas. Though it primarily serves as a support network, individual leaders within Faustus have their own plans and are not afraid to swing the society's weight around to get their way. Both AG Chemie and the Faustus Society benefit from the patronage; AGC receives a network of top-notch hermetics at its disposal while the Faustians put even more clout under their belt. The influence of Hans Bruhl, however, with his Anti-AGC activism, shows that the Faustians' power is not just in the hands of a small cabal. The Faustians also have a number of rivals, from feminists to Britain's New Druidic Movement to eco-activists dismayed by the Faustians' ties to AGC.

Characters who are Faustians could learn some lessons from Bruhl and take on their own crusade to harness the Faustians' leverage for some other cause. A woman who manages to join Faustus would face an uphill battle, but the internal reforms she might achieve could lead to some interesting roleplaying opportunities.

Locus Elementum

Type: Initiatory

Members: 12

Resources/Dues: High. All members receive a base monthly stipend of 7,000¥ in addition to other benefits. This number varies based upon individual achievements and ranking. The groups' office is equipped with a Rating 9 hermetic library and

THE SEERS AND DIVINATION

Seers initiated in the Guild are allowed to pick Divination metamagic more than once; in other words, they can choose Divination again at subsequent initiations. Each time Divination is taken past the first, the number of Divination Tests the seer can perform per week is doubled. Additionally, each time Divination is taken past the first, the seer also selects one of the following cumulative advantages:

- The target number for Divination Tests is reduced by 1 (to a maximum of -6)
- The target number for Astral Tracking Tests is reduced by 1 (to a maximum of -4)
- The target number for Linking Tests when using sympathetic magic (p. 47, SOTA: 2063) is reduced by 1 (to a maximum of -2)
- The seer's Divining skill is increased by 1 (to a maximum of +3)

a Rating 9 Shinto (shamanic) lodge, as well as room for a Rating 10 hermetic circle.

Strictures: Attendance, Deed, Obedience, Material Link

Patron: Renraku Corp

Locus is in the business of discovering new magic and magical techniques that Renraku can profit from. Though small, the company is focused and struggles to stay on the bleeding edge of magic. Locus members are constantly on the watch for new developments or new items that may lead to a breakthrough. They are willing to bargain, but they have no qualms with stealing what they need. Pressure is high on individual members to regularly produce new product—those who slack don't stay members for long.

Individual members of Locus tend to have their own network of contacts and runner teams on call. A team running for Locus will never lack for interesting work, but ultimately they are working on Renraku's behalf.

The Seers' Guild

Type: Initiatory

Members: 285 (19 companies, with an average of 15 members per each)

Resources/Dues: From Luxury to Middle depending of the company. Likewise, dues range from 1,000¥ to 100¥.

Strictures: Attendance (varies by company, from every month to twice a year), Deed, Limited Membership (Diviners only), Material Link (all samples are kept in a secure vault in Lyon)

With Kervelec no longer head of the Guild, his personal vendetta barely affects it anymore. The process to develop the organization abroad is well underway, but some members long for the days when they walked among the French elites as equals. Among those, the Cartomancers are the most loyal to the aristocrats' cause, creating dissension while Constantinos leads the Via Stellae and the Guild out of France. The nobility are calling in all the favors that the seers owe and drawing as many members as they can to their cause, luring them with the sparkle of lost prestige. Though Lofwyr's grasp on the Guild is



also weakened, he will try to reassert it. As other players see an opportunity to increase business with the Guild, subtle tensions are erupting between companies and individual members as loyalties shift.

Any character with Divination metamagic can be a member of the Guild; its membership is not exclusive and will not interfere with the player's activities as long as they don't threaten the Guild's reputation. Members vow to serve their clients following a moral code similar to the Hippocratic Oath. This is not a magical deed, though, and thus is not as limiting as an actual Stricture would be.

Adventure Hooks

- A magic groups' avatar has gone missing, and the runners are recruited to help figure out what has gone wrong. They discover that a rival magical group has discovered how to bind the avatar, and must free it before the group's link to the metaplanes is lost forever.
- A houngan mounted by the loa Obatala confronts the characters and demands their help in resolving the conflict that has torn the Voice of Ogoun apart. The loa sends them to investigate the crash that killed Rochefort as a starting point, implying that what they discover will unite the Voice once again/
- A member of the Golden Acorn Society approaches the runners looking for support. The adept is on a mission to infiltrate Yakashima and uncover links between Saito and the Human Nation—but the job is very high risk, and he cannot do it alone.
- The characters are hired to bodyguard Kevin Bartolli, a powerful member of the Guild, only to have him mysteriously die just a few days after participating in the Guild's 2065 equinox Divination ritual. Having foreseen his own demise, Bartolli left the characters a letter to open if he died. The document contains a potent prophecy from the ritual, foretelling a major upheaval in the Matrix, with the instruction to make it public. *"A giant artificial tree stands on an artificial green hill. One section of the boughs is withered from blight. The blight spreads and corrupts the trunk. The tree falls and breaks into many pieces. The branches are absorbed into the ground, and the hill becomes a cloud."*

USING RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Though organized religions are on the decline in *Shadowrun*, the Awakening and similar upheavals in the past century have left many people looking for spiritual guidance and answers to difficult questions. Likewise, as magic use has spread, many dying belief systems—from Paganism to Qabbalism—have been revived. There is no shortage of cults for those who are desperate or unwary. A character's spiritual beliefs can provide a certain moral barometer for his actions and make for some interesting and challenging role-

playing. It can also be a cause for tension between characters of conflicting beliefs on the same team.

Loose Alliances only touches on a minor selection of the many religious groups of which characters could be followers. In addition to groups we have mentioned in previous books, such as the Catholic Templars (*Threats 2*, *SOE*), the Pueblo Kachina Society (*SONA*), the Children of the Dragon (*YOTC*) or the Aesir Society (*SOE*), there are many other religions and belief systems that characters could explore. For example, characters could be Hindu dervishes, Aztec Sun followers, Rastafarian runners, Jewish activists, Orthodox mercenaries, Druidic ecologists or Matrix-worshipping otaku. Many of these groups also overlap with magical groups, political activism and/or criminal enterprises, as is the case with the Voice of Ogoun (p. 91), Mother Earth (p. 47) or certain Triads.

Like magical groups, religious groups vary greatly in their strictures, resources and customs. A team that works on behalf of a certain religion may have complete autonomy in its actions (if Pagan or Taoist, for example), or it may answer to a strict hierarchy (if Christian or Islamic, for example). Missions would likely revolve around increasing the power and influence of the religion, acquiring religious artifacts or items of spiritual significance, investigating and countering the religion's enemies (from other religions to governments to malignant spirits), safeguarding places of worship and so on.

To make such campaigns interesting, the gamemaster should endeavor to put characters in situations where their moral boundaries are blurred to test the character's convictions. Even better, the gamemaster can create scenarios that might cause the characters to question their own faith, leading to dramatic scenes and interesting roleplaying.

VIGILIA EVANGELICA

The Vigilia Evangelica is a secretive and influential brotherhood within the Roman Catholic Church answerable only to the Pope and led by two Priors-General. It was established at the Second Ecumenical Council of Lyon by Pope Gregory X and given the commission of protecting the congregations of the Holy Church from all the hidden and unholy things, which by their very nature needed to be kept from secular society. The great theologian and scholar St. Thomas Aquinas died en route to the Council. Among his writings and effects delivered to the Pope with the news of his death were incomplete notes on his research regarding mystical phenomena and the numerous artifacts in the Church's possession. The Pope decided that if the dangers and powers described in St. Thomas's words were real, they required an appropriate response—and so the Vigilia Evangelica was born. Across the centuries the Vigilia has carried out a pogrom against the dark arts of witchcraft and Satanism, riding into secret battles and exorcising spirits—sometimes alongside allies such as the original Knights Templar, other knightly orders and even the diocesan hierarchy—but always moving behind the scenes, its existence veiled to most even inside the Church.

The Vigilia is not an Order, it is a Holy Office of the Vatican, a clerical brotherhood that transcends both the Diocesan and Order hierarchies. In the pursuit of its two-fold mission, it draws members from all factions, remaining aloof from the schism that divides the Church. Its primary vocation is to expand and safeguard the *Aquinae* collections, the forbidden Libraries of the Church; the other is waging covert war—seconded by the New Knights Templar and New Society of Jesus—against the hidden forces of darkness that threaten the congregations of the faithful. Though the Vigilia is rarely seen in the field, it supplies the information and tools used by the Militant Orders to accomplish their goals. While the Vigilia mostly coordinates, its *praetors* are occasionally sent to aid the other Orders against specific enemies armed with *Aquinae* items or grimoires or on missions to acquire new materials or artifacts for the vaults.

Few know of the Vigilia's existence; its enemies are mostly those it targets: insect spirits, shedim, demonic entities, malignant spirits of all types, the odd dragon and the Black Lodge. There are many other agencies that would love to raid the contents of the *Aquinae* Vaults if they knew for certain they existed (Arleesh, the Atlantean Foundation, Saeder-Krupp and numerous others).

The Aquinae Vaults

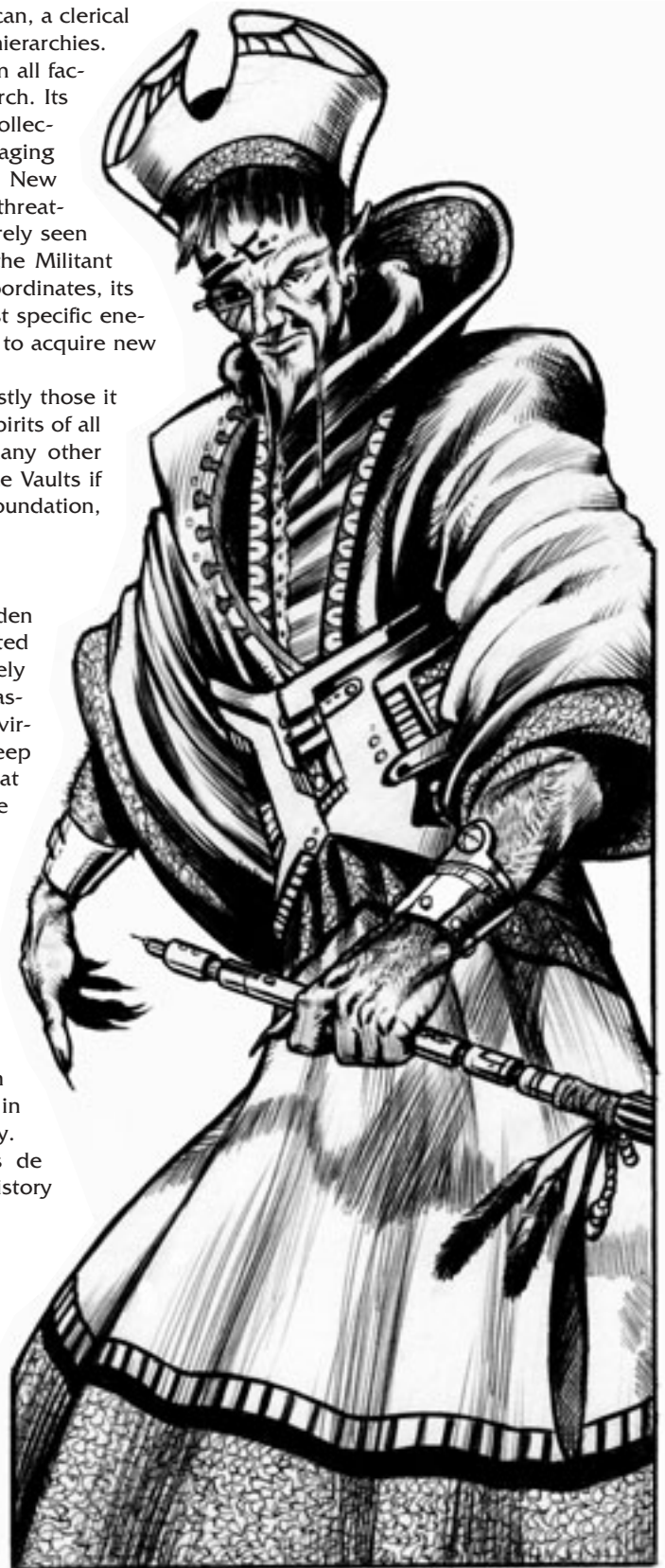
Named after St. Thomas Aquinas, the immense hidden libraries of the Vatican are secreted around the globe, protected by the best magical and technological defenses and completely concealed under otherwise normal churches, convents, monasteries and cathedrals. Four such vaults exist, while a purely virtual vault one, *Quintus*, exists within an Ultraviolet host deep within the Vatican's ultra-secure RTG. It's suggested that at least one vault be located on the border of Amazonia, but the gamemaster is free to place the remaining ones wherever he prefers; some suggestions follow:

- Hidden under the Sylvestrine Societ  Thaumaturgica in GeMiTo (former Turin, Italian Confederation).
- Hidden within the famous island monastery of Mt. St. Michel (Normandy, France), site of a number of magical legends and a Sylvestrine stronghold.
- Under the monastery atop Mt. Nero (Italy), razed and rebuilt after World War II and also a site of magical tales.
- Under the chapel of Basilica of the Virgin of Luj n (Luj n, Argentina), one of the first great churches built in the Spanish New World during the seventeenth century.
- Behind the walls of the Monast re des Augustines de l'H tel-Dieu (Qu bec), a hospital-monastery with a history of miracle cures.

Playing the Vigilia

Members of the Vigilia are all devout believers and members of the Roman Catholic faith—the vast majority one members of the Religious Orders (including the magically gifted Sylvestrines and New Templars and the magophobic New Jesuits) and regular clergy, while a limited number are dedicated lay brethren. All are sworn to secrecy—the Vow of Silence is particularly common among the custodians of the *Aquinae* Vaults.

The Vigilia is divided among the Custodians (the keepers of the archives and vaults) and the Praetors (the





guardians and field agents that are the Vigilia's hands). Player characters would most likely play praetors who exercise a range of specialties: Augustinian deckers, cyber-augmented New Jesuits, Sylvestrine theurges and even friendly Franciscan negotiators. Campaigns or adventures of this type will inevitably center on acquiring new artifacts, defending the Aquinae collections and/or targeting specific threats to the church and the faithful like shedim, nasty spirits and the occasional Pagan mystic or dragon.

Adventure Hooks

- Suspicion that Monsignor Amaury de Lubersac, the chosen heir of the French Cardinal, is actually a high-ranking member of the Black Lodge spurs the Vigilia into action. A team of praetors is sent to aid the New Templars in unmasking this serpent in the bosom of the church.
- News that the great dragon Arleesh has been sighted repeatedly in the vicinity of one of the vaults alarms the prior in charge. The praetors must discover how much the dragon knows and how she is locating the hidden archive.
- A custodian has gone missing from one of the vaults, along with a mysterious codex of dark magic. The runners are sent after the missing librarian and the book—with orders to destroy both or either if they can't be safely returned.

THE ISLAMIC UNITY MOVEMENT AND NEW ISLAMIC JIHAD

The Islamic Unity Movement and the New Islamic Jihad can be powerful forces for instability in any games dealing with the Middle East. Before the assault that claimed his life, Badr al Din Ibn Eisa was a charismatic leader who had almost unconsciously attracted a large following. These People believed that he was the key to a return to the Muslim unity experienced in the time of Mohammed. He enjoyed the loyalty and devotion of the members of his Islamic Unity Movement, as well as the respect of many other Muslims. Ibn Eisa's goal, which he believed was a divine command from Allah, was to reunite the Muslim nations of the Middle East under one banner and convert the populace of the surrounding areas to Islam.

Ibn Eisa was a quiet, humble man who was fired with religious zeal. As his influence grew, he attracted the attention of several power-hungry people who sought to manipulate him and use that influence for their own ends. Upon finding that he was difficult to manipulate, most of these leeches abandoned his cause. He directly admonished them before their defection to cease their quest for temporal power, and several of them are now motivated by vengeance for their humiliation by working against him with various national governments—both Islamic and otherwise. The most active opponents are in Iran, Iraq, and Israel.

Whether Ibn Eisa was a pawn of Lofwyr or whether the dragon was just a strong proponent of Islamic unity is up to the gamemaster. Whichever the case, Ibn Eisa's switch in temperament since his revival has thrown a wrench in the dragon's plans (see the chapters on Aden and Lofwyr in *Dragons of the Sixth World*). If the IUM continues under Ibn Eisa's cur-

rent fiery guidance, the Middle East is likely to be plunged into instability and conflict. Other factions within the IUM are seeking to salvage their movement's integrity—and the only way they see to do is to remove Ibn Eisa from its helm.

One theory that people whisper behind closed doors is that the Badr al Din Ibn Eisa who rose from the dead has been possessed by a powerful and intelligent shedim. This spirit, one of the very first to take direct action in the mortal world, saw the possibilities implicit in such an opportunity, and inhabited Ibn Eisa's corpse to take control of the Islamic Unity Movement, seizing and reinforcing power in one movement. Why it would want to do such a thing is another source of whispered speculation. Power? Insanity? To provide more bodies for other shedim to inhabit? Who knows what such a spirit might want? Whether this is true in your campaign is entirely up to your gamemaster.

When using the IUM as a power within the game, gamemasters should subtly emphasize the disparity between the old and new Ibn Eisa. While the old Ibn Eisa was filled with spiritual passions, yearning to bring all peoples into the holy light of Allah, the new is far more concerned with secular power. After Ibn Eisa's resurrection, his focus becomes markedly temporal; he may use his influence in Arabia to expand his power base. He may also secretly direct the New Islamic Jihad to foster invasions of Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey or other nearby nations to consolidate his control over the region. The old Ibn Eisa was a fiery, enthusiastic man—a charismatic leader of peoples. By comparison, the new Ibn Eisa becomes far more cold and distant, and seeks opportunities to manipulate and control wherever he can.

Playing IUM Supporters

Running a game where the characters are members of the IUM can be a great way to introduce them to the politics and conflicts of the Middle East. Contacts within the movement could provide them with information or jobs pitting them against NIJ members or opponents to unified Islam. Perhaps the team itself is split over which faction of the IUM to support. Successful runs may open doors for characters in the Middle East, making travel there a possibility in the campaign and unlocking a whole new chapter of the game, something completely new and different in feel and tone. The growing conflict between IUM and NIJ members—not to mention the rival Islamic Renaissance Movement—makes a great backdrop for political and action campaigns.

Adventure Hooks

- A leader of the IUM who wishes to depose Ibn Eisa asks the runners to conduct surveillance on one of his prominent mujahideen supporters. After a week of being bored by the mujahideen's ordinary affairs, the runners suddenly follow him directly into a major secret NIJ meeting. Can they report their findings before the Jihadists track them down?
- An opponent of Ibn Eisa wants to uncover the cleric's future plans and hatches a plot to capture



and interrogate one of his Jinn bodyguards. The runners find the Jinn more difficult to abduct than expected—is the Jinn a shedim as well?

- The runners are approached by an IUM cleric who wants them to assassinate a prominent IUM figure in Palestine, claiming that he is the secret conduit between the NIJ and Hamas. In reality, their employer is a NIJ who seeks to frame the Israelis for the assassination and rile up a new Intifada.

THE ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE MOVEMENT

IRM activists are Muslims who support a rational and liberal approach to Islam, especially to interpreting the *Qur'an*. Following the Islamic principle that everyone can directly read the *Qur'an* and apply its teachings, the movement's main tenet is that all Muslims must be free to do so. Though there are no other tenets or set dogmas, movement activists generally share an idea of Islam (informally called the *Sabeel*) and of their role in the Islamic world.

The *Sabeel* descends from many rationalist Islamic tendencies, from the ancient *Mu'tazilah* school of thought to twentieth century Islamic socialism. There is a fair share of European ideals such as democracy and human rights, though activists usually deny this. The *Sabeel* is still a young doctrine, constantly being debated and refined by the *Jamiatul Ulama*.

The first point in the doctrine is that the *Qur'an* is clear enough to be understood by everyone. Islamic scholars can be helpful in interpreting the word of God, but they are only human and therefore fallible. Human creations such as the *Shari'ah* are imperfect and cannot be held as dogma on traditional grounds. And, most important of all, all interpretations of the *Qur'an* should be approached with a critical view.

The second point is that nothing in the *Qur'an* is contrary to reason; some things might be beyond reason, but those are matters of faith. Therefore, rational debate can be used to improve human understanding of Islam. IRM activists point the *Shari'ah* as a good example: it represents a medieval version of Islamic principles, especially where it addresses personal life and the role of women. The *Shari'ah* must be dynamic and negotiated by the entire Muslim community. This revised *Shari'ah* can serve as a guiding set of principles, but the actual laws are the responsibility of governments and ultimately the people.

The IRM's position in the Islamic world can be deduced from these points. When religious doctrine and the *Shari'ah* are considered dogma, Islam cannot improve. Activists must make sure all Muslims can know and discuss their faith. They often feel intellectually superior to traditional Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, who are seen as backward conservatives. Their take on the rest of the Sixth World is even worse. Democracy was a beautiful creation, but without the *Qur'an* its creators fell into corruption and decadence. Many activists believe that Islam is the only possible path to a democratic renaissance.

Many activists also follow a radical version of the official *Sabeel*. They defend that no one should stand between

Muslims and the *Qur'an*, and that megacorps are oppressing the Islamic world as much as fundamentalist regimes. They often work together with left-wing and anti-corp groups, especially to oppose Saeder-Krupp dominance in the Middle East.

Working for the Movement

Though the movement's main activities are socio-political, their offices have suffered increased attacks by nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups because of the Seville incident. The IRM will hire runners to protect the worst-hit offices and neutralize the most dangerous and resilient troublemakers; these include anything from fascist policlubs in Europe to Muslim fundamentalist cells. The IRM is already under watch by law enforcement and intelligence agencies, so hired runners might find themselves under unwanted attention.

The IRM's semi-legal activities throughout the Islamic world have usually relied on their connections with criminal networks. Their recent fallout with the al-Akirah syndicate, however, has led them to use individual contracts for these jobs. Runners are commonly hired to smuggle people in and out of the Middle East, extract political prisoners from Arabian jails, and generally help the IRM network with any dirty work. This is a good way to introduce shadowrunners to the Islamic world, which spans a good portion of the globe.

Adventure Hooks

- The IRM's offices in Seattle have been under steady attack from a local Muslim fundamentalist group, the "Martyrs of Mecca." Runners are contracted to dismantle this cell and trace its financial backers, which leads to a small electronics corp in Riyadh. The runners' final mission is to travel to Arabia and hurt the corp's ties with other North American fundamentalist groups by damaging the CEO's reputation as a good Muslim or exposing his connections to the NIJ.
- The Islamic University of Al-Azhar in Cairo is well-known both for its religious scholars and the wealth of information stored in its library. Shadowrunners are contracted to infiltrate the university, posing as students of the *Qur'an*, and extract a certain book from the library's well-protected vault. If they don't know anything about Islam, now could be the time to learn a few basics.
- Runners are contracted for a simple merc job: extract Leila al-Ahmed, a Jordanian female rights activist, from her captivity in Amman. This is actually a trap set up by Arabian Intelligence. Runners will have to break out from the place they broke into before their captors decide they're not as valuable as they thought (they were expecting some of Farid al-Mansoor's men).

USING CRIMINAL GROUPS

Criminal groups come in all shapes and sizes, from worldwide syndicates to small-time neighborhood outfits.



Pick any illegal item or activity, and somebody has figured out how to make a profit off of it.

There are plenty of criminal activities that characters may partake in outside of run-of-the-mill shadowrunning, piracy (see *Cyberpirates*) or smuggling (see *Target: Smuggler Havens*). For example, the characters could run their own local B&E operation, fence illegal goods, steal and chop cars and drones, deal BTLs, run a prostitution ring or protection racket, blackmail small-time politicians, hijack shipments, take confidential courier jobs or play the role of fixer.

If the characters want to be independents, they'll be forced to raise their own capital and rely on their own smarts, business sense, contacts and hard work to keep their criminal enterprise afloat. Not only will they have to stay below the police radar, but they'll need to avoid attracting the attention of larger syndicates who may attempt a hostile takeover, not to mention avoiding crossing over into some other operator's perceived turf.

On the other hand, the team could just be members of the local branch of a larger criminal organization, such as the Yakuza or the Cutters street gang. Rules and suggestions for gang and syndicate campaigns can be found in the *Underworld Sourcebook* and *Shadowrun Companion*.

BROKERAGE X

Originally a loose group of fixers and unscrupulous licensed brokers, BX started playing the Oslo Black Exchange. Looking for additional capital to bolster their game, they began offering their investment services to the best and brightest among the local shadow community. Nobody knows exactly when but at some point a runner must have asked a BX broker to buy some stocks for him based on some information that had come his way ... and the rest, as they say, is history.

The main BX node is hidden in the Christiania net (in Copenhagen, Scand Union), accessed through a floating address that changes every few days. The group also possesses physical offices there (the authorities believe it's just another Matrix-tech startup, common in the Union) where they run operations for Scandinavia, UK and AGS. Secondary offices are hidden away in Amsterdam (UNL) and services the UNL, France and Southern Europe through a restricted Helix host. Two North American nodes are planned to be up and running by the end of 2064. The East Coast one has already set up shop in Boston, but the West Coast branch is still scouting possible locations in Seattle, Denver or Los Angeles. Meanwhile BX reps are discreetly sounding out fixers and

infomongers to build up a potential client list. Who knows, maybe someone's regular fixer will call him up and give him a number to call?

Snags and Complications

Brokerage X's operations are highly illegal; if their extent became public, stock exchange boards would have fits. Law-enforcement departments and corporations assigned to Matrix and financial crime will be looking to find a way to crack BX's system and break it up once they learn of its existence. Of course, one of the obvious ways of doing this is by using BX's clients as moles—runners beware.

BX brokers are privy to a huge amount of confidential information about corporate operations, products and agendas—far more so than regular fixers with their ears to the street. More than stock brokers, they are information brokers. What happens to that information? Where does it end up?

And what happens when someone really doesn't want a certain piece of information getting out?

So far Brokerage X has remained under the radar of the big boys and many specialist corps. Sooner or later, though, someone is going to catch on—maybe Shiawase's MIFD, financial giants like FBA and HKB or a major crime syndicate—and when they do, they might just want to tap into this cozy little setup and scan the data that goes through it for themselves.

BROKERAGE X TEST MODIFIERS

The runner's tip-offs:

	Modifier
Relate to major national or global ramifications to the corps involved	+10
Relate to a major product release or change within a major corporation	+5
Relate to minor product release or has ramifications within a minor corporation	+3
Relate to minor product release or has ramifications to a local corp	+2
Were contingent on a run succeeding, but it failed	-2
Were a red herring or rendered effectively useless	-5
Were bogus or the run was a tailchaser	-10

USING BROKERAGE X'S SERVICES

At its most basic level, BX could be treated as a useful contact (gamemasters are encouraged to reserve BX membership for character that have earned sufficient reputation), which will allow runners to supplement their normal income without changing the standard pay scale the gamemaster has established for his setting.

In general, a runner's return on investment in a BX account can range from anywhere between -5 and +25 percent each month. This can be cashed in at any time, though the process takes a couple of days to complete. The gamemaster can define a value based on his perception of affairs in the shadows and corporate world and how they might impact on the stocks (for instance a corp war could lead to a general crash, while new developments announced in a field will spike speculative interest in that sector of the economy while deflating others).

Alternatively, the gamemaster can make a random test and figure in modifiers. At the end of each month roll 2D6



and add the results, then apply any appropriate modifiers from the Brokerage X Test Modifiers table (p. 160). The resulting figure x 2 is the percentage increase or decrease the character earns.

Adventure Hooks

- Shiawase's MIFD or any number of other corps could hire the runners to extract a BX broker to get the inside story on the group's operations. Alternatively, BX could hire runners to discover just how much the corps already know.
- When a BX broker breaks a client's trust and the corp that was to be affected finds out, other BX brokers hire the runners to set the situation straight before the client is tracked down and killed by the corp.
- BX hires the runners to provide security and protection to one of the group's big shots while he scouts locations for BX's new offices in various cities and countries. A law enforcement agency finds out the runners are involved, however, and finds some way of leaning on them (blackmail, threats against loved ones, etc.) to sell out their client.

TAMANOUS

Tamanous and similar organizations are great adversaries for shadowrunners—after all, who's going to complain if the team ventilates a few organleggers or blows up an operation that's running human chop shops and stripping homeless people for spare parts? Equal parts boo-scary bogeyman and ruthless criminal organization, the bodysnatcher boys operate far back in the shadows by necessity, shielding themselves behind layers of misdirection, unwitting dupes and red tape. Except for their front-line forces who do the actual collection and delivery of the bodies, the rest of them take great pains to keep any association with the organization well hidden.

Tamanous is primarily known for bodysnatching and harvesting corpses for spare parts, but gamemasters can indulge their most ghoulish fantasies by coming up with new operations for them to get their fingers into. Fetus farms, growing (and maintaining) clones as renewable resources for organs, breaking into hospital records to identify potential donors, getting involved in the actual running of hospitals and clinics—all of these and more are potential activities for Tamanous and their competitors. In the post-Comet days of shedim spirit possession, they've had to get even more cre-



ative in their methods for obtaining and preserving bodies and organs until they're needed.

Though they're a very pragmatic and ruthless organization with both eyes always on the bottom line, they work best when played as spooky and creepy as possible. Characters should encounter the results of Tamanous's handiwork a few times before actually encountering the individuals responsible. Even so, shadowrunners should rarely if ever come into contact with any Tamanous members above the street-level bodysnatchers and perhaps a few of the medical personnel who handle the surgical end of the transaction. The upper-echelon leadership of Tamanous remains a mystery: speculations run the gamut from ghouls to organized crime to crooked doctors to wendigos, but nobody outside the organization knows for sure.

Being a Bodysnatcher

Some shadowrunners may decide that the profits to be had are worth the stigma of being on the bodysnatchers' payroll. Jobs for Tamanous Johnsons are usually indirect in nature: getting hold of some paydata from a hospital or clinic, tracking a potential "donor" or playing courier for a sealed container with a gruesome cargo. Since they need to stay on the cutting edge of biotech to continue their innovations, they also hire runners to liberate research, gear or scientists from biotech corps. Tamanous rarely hires outside contractors to do the core work of grabbing the bodies and harvesting the organs, preferring to keep these jobs in-house.

Of course, it's always possible that runners might also decide to make a little profit by selling the corpses of their opponents—this is frowned on by polite society, but since when has politeness ever stopped teams from making a nuyen any way they can? In this case, Tamanous operatives are more than happy to oblige, provided that the runners can find them (they don't exactly advertise on street corners) and gain their trust, and provided that the bodies in question contain something the bodysnatchers want: viable organs and functioning cyberware being the top two. Cyberware generally brings a fraction of the cost of new 'ware (figure 10 percent of book value for common cyberware up to 20–25 percent for rare or custom stuff), while the prices paid for bodies vary widely based on many factors including condition, time of death, metatype, and desirability. Gamemasters are free to set prices for such things as dictated by their campaign needs.

Remember too that working for organleggers *does* carry a stigma: even other runners tend to avoid teams who do so (unless they're very good at keeping secrets). Likewise, law enforcement takes a very dim view of it, to the extent that they will go harder on runners rumored to be involved in these activities.

Adventure Hooks

- The team is hired by a corp to rescue a test subject who was implanted with some promising new bioware. The subject was snatched from a clinic by Tamanous following a bar fight. The run-

ners must figure out a way to get the man out alive before he can be cut up for parts.

- A prominent member of the Ghoul Liberation League who plans to run for public office hires the runners to infiltrate a Tamanous cell and extract his son, a member of a ghoul gang working with the bodysnatchers, before someone makes the connection and torpedoed the ghoul's campaign.
- Shortly after the runners sell off the body of one of their opponents to Tamanous, they discover that the corpse was carrying a highly valuable encoded message in his headware memory. By the time they track down what Tamanous did with the 'ware, it has already been implanted in someone else!

DIVE

DIVE is a treasure trove of information on the Sixth World's most mysterious and secretive inhabitants: dragons. Written off as fanboys and cultists, the group's archives include just about every scrap of info about dragons ever made public (and a lot that wasn't), from news items and speculation on the origin of drakes to extensively annotated copies of Shadowland's *Dragons of the Sixth World* file collection. This provides the gamemaster with an ideal resource with which to offer his players plot hooks or red herrings involving dragons.

The DIVE network offers members a small number of Matrix Hosts that provide SIG's and archives for them to share all kinds of files, discussing every tidbit they can lay their hands on concerning dragons and their affairs. The group's diversity—members hail from all walks of life and corners of the world—makes for an immense variety of data (for better and for worse).

DIVE Hosts are notoriously easy to hack (Green-6/6/10/9/6/6), however, and not all DIVE data is relevant, verifiable or even true. It isn't easy to sort out what is and isn't. A gamemaster should apply +3 modifier for any Matrix searches done on a DIVE Host, +1 if the decker specifies more than 1 search parameter.

Becoming a DIVER is relatively easy and only requires digging up someone who is a member and will vouch for you, a one-time DIVE registration fee (50¥) and regular membership fees (10¥/month). The fee allows the DIVER to log onto the SIG, browse the archives and receive the weekly newsletter as well as obtain convention tickets for the two annual DIVE-Cons at a premium rate.

It's not unheard of for a wealthy DIVER to pay some of the more "talented" members to acquire dragon memorabilia or to watch a particularly interesting specimen. Some DIVERs effectively work as dragon paparazzi, closely monitoring the activities of certain public and not-so-public dragons and selling their footage and reports to news outfits.

The Dragon Hunters

Behind the DIVE's innocuous façade, a small number of individuals have been using the network's information to covertly pursue their genocidal agenda—the eradication of dragonkind. If the group's own pretenses are to be believed,



it has existed in one form or another for hundreds (possibly thousands) of years. The true origins are left to the gamemaster to decide. Perhaps the dragon slayers are a Medieval knightly order devoted to exterminating dragons, maybe they're descendents of a lost cult from a previous age of magic, or—if the gamemaster prefers—they may simply be crusading modern metahumans steeping their activities in historical references for validation.

This secret society claims at most 70 or 80 members around the world, from all walks of life, united by their fanatical dedication to seeing dragon kind eradicated. Organized in a loose cell-like structure whose anonymous members are in constant—if discreet—contact the society carefully plans and carries out attacks on important assets and minions of various dragons, and occasionally even dragons themselves.

The group prefers to recruit fighters with significant military experience and combat prowess—both mundane and arcane—preferably skilled in a variety of weapons and demolitions, and always someone with a true hate of dragons. Besides the funds secretly channeled from DIVE, certain individuals in the society receive financial backing and equipment through undisclosed contacts. These sources may be anti-Awakened/anti-draconic organizations, certain multinational corporations and governments or other shadowy figures—perhaps even dragons themselves, manipulating the society for their own ends. A network of non-combatant supporters discreetly facilitates their efforts and shadowrunners are often unwittingly contracted to carryout the society's missions.

Characters who are members of this society have their work cut out for them—taking on dragons is a thankless task. Perhaps unsurprisingly, members of the society are often mentally unbalanced, possessing one or more Mental Flaws. On the other hand, the society has excellent resources and data on its prey, including hidden caches of the weapons, explosives and magic materials. Dragonslayers plan their attacks meticulously, utilizing every possible resource for intelligence on the target and its activities and backing this up with covert surveillance. Attacks invariably count on total surprise and always target dragons away from their homeground. After intense rehearsing and planning, cells of dedicated and highly-trained individuals come together to execute these plans, fading back into their anonymous lives when finished. Tactics vary enormously from target to target as circumstances dictate. Whenever possible, slayers prefer to strike from a distance and in multiple fronts to ensure elimination.

Adventure Hooks

- The runners are hired to do surveillance on a target without being told that it is really a disguised adult dragon. The dragon hunters are watching carefully to see if the dragon spots the runners and how it reacts. If the runners succeed without being noticed, they may be surprised to later hear of their data being used to attack the dragon.
- Having learned of Arleesh's interest in an artifact recently unearthed by the Atlantean Foundation,

the society hires a team of runners to replace the object with a booby-trapped enchanted copy laced with a tailored virus in case the dragon tries to get its claws on it.

- The runners are sent to kidnap one of a great dragon's key agents so that the society can probe her mind for useful data on the dragon. The runners are surprised to find out, however, that their target is in fact a drake.

SHADOWRUNNER GROUPS

Runners who are highly experienced or specialized in a certain area of work may eventually draw the interest of a big-name running crew. These crews are often small criminal enterprises unto themselves, with a number of personnel who handle grunt work and back-up the top-notch talent. A qualified runner team could be brought under such a group's wing, occasionally interacting with the group's upper crust, but primarily handling job of their own.

Some of the teams described below are among the top teams in the *Shadowrun* universe. Characters will find them to be formidable opponents, so pitting any but the toughest player teams against them wouldn't be advisable. The gamemaster could, however, use them as rival teams competing for the same goal as the runners, or as temporary allies against a larger threat.

Assets Inc.

Though Assets primarily takes on jobs for the Draco Foundation, they also find themselves tied into UCAS and even Ares's politics, thanks to its relationship with Nadja Daviar. Characters who are members of Assets Inc. will be working for a high-profile outfit that needs to tread with exceptional care in order to keep its activities out of the tabloids, not to mention the front page news. Nonetheless, the team is quite active still tying up a number of loose ends from Dunkelzahn's will, as well as tracking down drakes (see *Threats 2*). Likewise, the group has earned a number of major enemies over the years, from Aztechnology blood mages to the Big D's dragon rivals.

The Smokers' Club

When Yankee formed the Smokers, he had no intentions other than profit. As they began to gain a reputation, however, his aspirations grew. The Smokers are no longer motivated by pay itself, what matters to them is the *importance* of the job. If the target is small-time or won't be missed, they're not interested. If the job will destabilize a corporation, decapitate a crime family or make worldwide news, they'll take it in a heartbeat. Harder targets with top-notch security are just a bonus, cuz the Smokers' just increase their lethal rep when they pull it off.

The Smokers use outside assets (player characters) to conduct background research on their targets. They also take on extra help for any personal security details they take on.



Damage

As the name suggests, many of this team's runs are designed for maximum impact. DAMAGE members may be asked to destroy research, extract employees, sabotage corp operations or even assassinate key members. DAMAGE calls on a lot of other runners to assist in operations, picking and choosing based on the skill sets that are most appropriate for the job at hand. Currently, DAMAGE is pursuing a series of runs on behalf of Art Dankwalther (see *Threats 2*), aiming to hurt Novatech and its subsidiaries as much as possible. Dankwalther's plans and Argus's cold-blooded nature, however, are sometimes at odds with Peg's altruism.

Technicolor Wings

As a new outfit, Technicolor Wings is looking to recruit clients. If a character can bring in new, then she has a better chance of being hired as a TW rigger. Riggers can only work for TW if they pass the initiation test run. Once in, they'll be assigned a route and given a few low-level hauls. The level of work increases as the players have more success.

TW customers pay 250¥ per 10CF of gear to be shipped per day. The cost is escalated if the goods are extra risky to move: multiply that amount by 2 for paralegal/Class A goods, 4 for security grade/Class B goods and 6 for military grade/Class C. For example, if Spinner wants to move a case (10 CF) of rifles to St. Louis from Seattle, rifles are paralegal and therefore cost 500¥ per day to ship. Moving the rifles from Seattle to St. Louis would take two days and cost him 1,000¥. If the customer does not wish to reveal what is being shipped, a flat rate of 1,000¥ per day (per 10 CF) will apply.

The Desolation Angels

The Angels are a collection of free female mantid spirits that exist by feeding on other insect spirits. Though the Angels have an alien mindset, the longer they interact with metahumanity, however, the more they tend to follow traditional metahuman interests and pursuits. Whereas before they rarely interacted with metahumans, they now have many as allies and contacts.

The group's interactions with Ares/Knight Errant in the Chicago Containment Zone lead them to view the corp as hostile to their way of life. They seek out work directed against Ares/KE, especially if it has anything to do with research into FAB or similar astral weapons.

Player characters may not be members of the Desolation Angels (mantid spirits only); they may have them as contacts or be hired by them.

Magestone

Magestone's agenda is to increase business for its members. They do this in two ways: first by building high-profile viruses such as the election virus; second by code-breaking. The group is dedicated to decrypting encrypted data. New members are chosen based on their ability to hack well-protected sites. They prefer corporate targets as these companies have access to the best net defenses.

The Nightingale Syndicate

The Nightingale Syndicate is an association of cat burglars who boost high price tag items and sell them on the black market, either to dedicated buyers or the highest bidder. The group considers itself a secret society of top-rate thieves. To them, theft is as much of an art form as the sculptures, paintings and jewelry they steal. Members impress each other by committing what was believed to be an impossible crime.

The Nightingales tend to operate solo, but they occasionally band together for difficult jobs. They make use of runners to gather intel, create distractions and to plan red herrings and false trails.

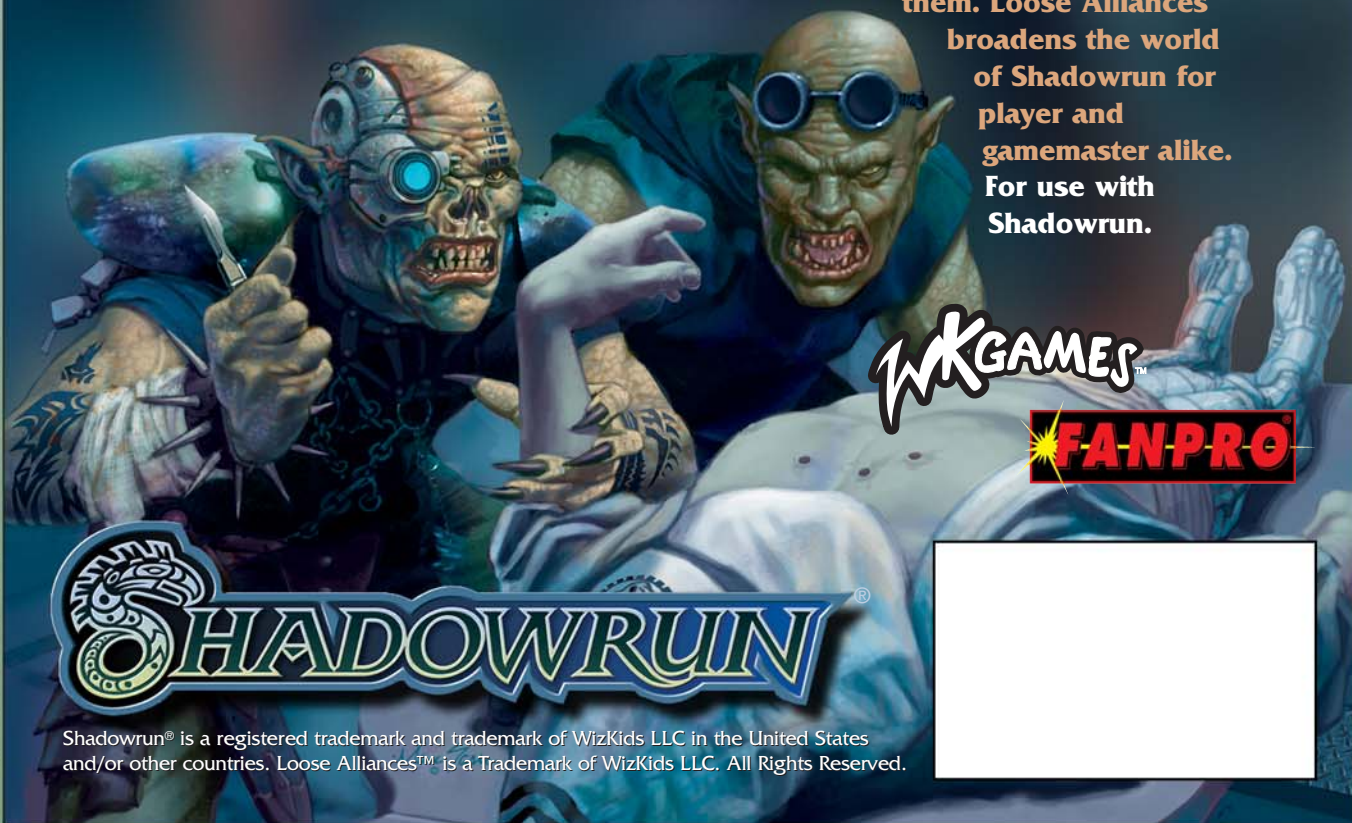
Adventure Hooks

- Axler of Assets Inc. wants the runners to take on some off-the-record work for her. An enemy (perhaps an Aztech executive, one of Daviar's political rivals or some dragon's pawn) has uncovered secrets from her past that she would prefer stay buried, and is using them as leverage against her. Axler asks the runners to track the blackmailer down and bring him in for a "face-to-face" meeting.
- Knowing that Lofwyr wants his head on a stick, Johnny Spinrad hires the Smokers' Club to provide him with personal security. Yankee needs additional manpower to cover Spinrad, so he brings the runners in as backup.
- Novatech's Simplex Software has been gaining ground on the leading anti-virus providers, mostly due to the work of lead programmer Petra Frederickson. DAMAGE is hired to remove her from the picture. The runners are brought in to create a distraction while DAMAGE makes the hit.
- Magestone's latest virus is aimed at New Life Harvest Incorporated. The virus is set up to devour any files listed as classified, then decrypt and dump them into public data stores around the world. In order to get the virus running, Magestone needs the runners to get inside the corporation and connect the research computers to the Matrix.
- A pirate has been intercepting Technicolor Wings shipments between Seattle and New Orleans. The runners are called in to find out who this pirate is and how he knows so much about the TW operation.
- A powerful insect shaman has gained control of one of the Angels and is using her to create more spirits. The runners are hired to find out who he and his allies are and help the women plan their sister's rescue.
- An exchange of property goes bad and the Nightingales end up stiffed by the Johnson who hired them. The runners must steal back the item the Nightingales stole for the Johnson as well as additional items from his collection in retaliation.

Who's Got Your Back?

Corps don't give a drek about the runners they hire—that's why they call us expendable assets. Forget working for the Mob or the Yakuza, too—once you're in, you're part of their family for the rest of your life. Lucky for us, there are swarms of other groups looking to claim their piece of sprawl—and who are willing to bypass the law to do it. Policlubs, magical orders, religious factions, black marketers—these are just a few of the species struggling for survival in the shadow ecology. Hooking up with such an organization has its advantages—resources, steady employment, backup—but pick the wrong outfit to run with and you'll regret it when they kick you to curb. So what's it going to be, chummer? You can't roll solo forever."

Loose Alliances is a sourcebook for organizations that operate by their own set of rules in the Shadowrun world. From political factions and religious movements to treasure hunters and organleggers, it provides a wealth of information on the more obscure parties in the shadows and the benefits and drawbacks that come with them. **Loose Alliances** broadens the world of Shadowrun for player and gamemaster alike. For use with Shadowrun.



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