

# SHADOWWORLD

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VOL. 2

Artwork by John Teszniek for Awakenings

# AWAKENINGS™

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# SHADOWLAND

**An Official  
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Volume #2      \$6.00US  
December 1995  
Stock Number: SOK202

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Sword of the Knight  
Publications, Inc.

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the publishers. Printed in the United  
States of America by Mar-Kel of  
Newburgh, IN.

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SHADOWLAND is published quarterly at the beginning of January, April, July, and October. One year (4-issue) subscriptions are \$18.00 (North America), \$22.00 (Overseas Surface), and \$30.00 (Overseas Air). Please make all payments in US funds or by Visa/MasterCard.

**Submissions:** We are looking for good articles and illustrations for Shadowland. When submitting manuscripts and artwork, enclose a stamped and self-addressed envelope with appropriate postage for the return of your items if you want them returned. We also would appreciate that article submissions be presented on IBM compatible diskettes along with hardcopy. Electronic submissions (the preferred method for articles) are received at our internet address.

# The Editor Speaks...

Greetings and welcome to the second issue of Shadowland, the Shadowrun support magazine brought your way by Sword of the Knight Publications! We hope you enjoy and come back for more!

First off, I'd like to say something...

## Sorry for all the typos in Volume #1!!!

We received plenty of letters chastising us for our poor editing job with the first issue. We tried real hard to make this one better!

*Kevin Knight*

## Comments from our readers...

A fine piece of work! Please do not disappoint me like KAGE did. I may have some additions for you.

Wade Pence

*Thanks! Glad you liked Volume 1! We'll strive to keep up the good work.*

*We always looking for new articles and artwork for the magazine so send in anything you might have. Remember, Shadowland is supported by the fans of Shadowrun. We don't have a professional staff or anything like that.*

KK

The magazine was worth the wait. The articles, ideas, and artwork were great. Can't wait for the next issue.

Ken Prejean

*Thanks, Ken. Sorry about all the hassles getting your copy to you. Hope you like this one, also!*

KK

# How Are We Doing???

Thanks to the 55 people who sent in their response cards from Volume #1! Please keep sending in your response cards, we really like to know what you think of our magazine! Winners of free copies of Volume #2 are James Watson, Joe Cluts, and Stephen Atkins! Congrats!

Each issue we'll draw out three response cards and send free copies of the next issue to those people! So send your response cards in!!!

## Responses from Volume #1...

Article	Rating
To the Bone	3.78
Nissan Stallion	4.05
Gross-Frankfurt Sprawl	3.33
Nightstalkers	4.00
Acers	3.70
MAO Inhibitors	3.33
Drak's Drek	2.84
Yuki No Onna	3.27
Virtual Realities 2.0	3.57
Headache	3.89
Cop Gear	3.59
Crimson Avenger	3.70
General Store	3.53
Rose Colored Glasses	3.83

Artist	Rating
John Zeleznik	4.69
John Morrissey	3.12
Richard Biever	4.22
Kevin Montanaro	3.84
Troy Nunis	3.53
Nathan Mezel	2.33
Christian Royse	3.31
Steve Bryant	4.04

Overall Rating of SDL 1 3.97

## Egyptian Campaign '96

**When:** March 29th, 30th, and 31st, 1996. Doors open at Noon Friday and at 8:00am Saturday and Sunday.

**Where:** On the Campus of S.I.U.C. in the Student Center's Ball Rooms on the 2nd floor.

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or call Joel T. Nadler at 618-529-4630 or Don Capan at 618-549-2392 or email to ECGamCon96@aol.com

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# Lunatic Fringe

by Phillip T. Adams

## Lunatic Fringe

In the twilights last gleaming  
This is open season  
But you won't get too far.....

- Red Rider

Saturday.....

July 6, 2056.....

Boston; UCAS.....

Beantown. Good old Beantown. Sweltering in the mid-summer heat. Even with ninety percent humidity after dark, the streets were swarming. Crowds of locals and tourists flocked to the ancient cobbled streets of Fanuel Hall to laugh and drink in the sidewalk cafes. Party boys and girls came sprawling down from Beacon Hill, last bastion of the old money, to the dark and sticky clubs of Southie. Neon-haired rockers thrashed out chromatic riffs in the ultra-chic nightclubs of the Back

Bay and in the Red Hat, on Bowdoin Street down by Government Center, it was business as usual.

The Red Hat's been around forever. Since before Bloody Tuesday. Before The Awakening. Before the formation of the ESCE (East Coast Stock Exchange). Basically, since God was a kid. Nothing more than a little hole-in-the-wall tucked away under the towering skyscrapers that have gone up both above and around it. Tenaciously clinging to life at the heart of the Boston Metroplex. The Red Hat hadn't changed much. Just the quality of the booze and the patrons. Neither had

improved.

The cramped confines of the bar were dark and smokey. The mahogany and brass interior had long since fallen into disrepair and seemed beyond salvation. As did many of the Red Hat's customers. But, all in all, it still ain't a bad place to toss back a couple (or a dozen) cheap whiskeys.

Gallow Joe liked it just fine. It suited his mood nicely. Like a pair of rank old shoes. Joe even preferred the whiskey, Black Moon by name, that he'd been drinking since before the sun kissed another day in the plex good-bye. It may be soy, but it ain't the bottom of the barrel. He even liked the dreary aged atmosphere and the company the Red Hat has to offer. These chummers ain't gutterscum, they're just a pack of drunk disenchanting losers. They leave him alone. Nobody frags with Gallow Joe. He liked that.

What Joe couldn't stand was swaggers. Come

jandering down from the Back Bay or Beacon Hill to sprawl with the poor folk. Sararimen acting what they ain't. All talk, no action. Smoke and mirrors. It's not that Joe's poor or gave a flying frag about the Plex's dispossessed. He just couldn't stomach people pretending to be what they ain't. Style over substance, that's what really pissed Gallow Joe off.

Like those grafted vat-jobs that strut their stuff all along Congress Street decked out in slick synth-leathers. Joe earned the impressive mass of muscle, that bulged from beneath his leather's, straining and sweating in the Iron House Gym in Roxbury.

What does one of those overgrown pansies know about bustin' a gut to hang one more negative rep. Nothin' that's for sure. And when it comes down to the wire it'll show. Joe



came through. That's why he had a rep and got paid like he did. Gallow Joe's a man of substance.

Outside the Red Hat Joe's 2043, 100th anniversary, 1500cc, tricked-out just like a 1995 Fat Boy, Harley-Davidson is parked. A great big chromed-out petro guzzling monster. A bike of substance. Not some battery powered whiner like a Rapier or an Aurora. A real bike. It took four runs over the course of two months to pay for. Joe would just as soon kick his grandma's butt off the Pru Tower as part with his bike.

Joe tossed back one more shot of Black Moon and then reached for his worn leather riding jacket. It dangled from one meaty paw as he turned and headed for the door. He'd need it later for it's armored protection, but for now it was just too damn hot.

With no more than a cocksure glance over his shoulder Joe strode purposefully out of the shadowy confines of the Red Hat and into the street. Expanding his thickly muscled chest, filling his lungs with hot sticky air, Joe made for the Harley. Reaching back to make sure the Colt Manhunter, tucked in the back of his leather riding pants, concealed under his loose hanging BoSox shirt, was secure, Joe reached for his keys. Time for biz.

"You Joe?"

Joe stopped two steps from the Fat Boy and turned at the sound of his name. He was already annoyed and half past pissed by the time he came full around. If some fragger thought he was gonna keep Gallow Joe from turnin' a few nuyen tonight he was gonna be sorry.

"What," he snarled, coming full around to face a tall broad shouldered man in a long grey coat.

"You Joe, Gallow Joe?"

"So, what if I am?" Joe growled sizing the stranger up. He was good size with close cropped white hair and black razor glasses. If he was lookin' for trouble Gallow Joe would give it to him in spades.

"Remember a girl named Susi?"

"Who?" Joe didn't like to answer questions and he liked this drek head even less.

"Susi McClaen. Petal."

"Yeah, so. She was a stupid BTL freak," Joe countered lowering his voice to a menacing growl. He could smell trouble a klick away and this stank, but good.

"You beat her up."

"So." Petal had been his input for a while.

"You killed her."

"Stupid little bitch stole from me." Joe started to reach for the Manhunter real slow.

"She trusted you."

"Who the frag are you?" Joe's temperature was on the rise. He had had just about enough of this drek.

"Justice."

"Huh?"

"You shouldn't have killed her."

"Yeah, well you're next asshole." Joe reached and tugged the Manhunter free to give this jerk off some

bad medicine courtesy of Gallow Joe. The stranger's left hand snaked out in a blur slapping the Manhunter out of Joe's hand. The big automatic clattered to the pavement. Following the same motion the man's hands wrapped around Joe's head and snapped his neck. Twisting it so far around that Gallow Joe was dead before he hit the pavement.

The Stranger reached down and retrieved the keys to the Harley from Joe's jacket. In one long stride he reached and mounted the bike. The Fat Boy came to life with a throaty growl. The Stranger pulled away from the curb and turned onto Cambridge Street, leaving Gallow Joe twisted and broken on the sidewalk in front of the Red Hat. Business as usual. Good old Beantown.

\* \* \*

Tuesday.....  
July 9, 2056.....  
Seattle.....

The killer's brain was squirming like a toad. Writhing with anticipation. Watching from the alleys and back streets. Eyes searching relentlessly. The killer waits. Hungers.

A greasy faced kid with long unwashed stringy hair, tucked up under a Timberwolves ball cap (worn backwards and slightly off center), shoveled noodles into his mouth like he hadn't eaten in a week. Which maybe he hadn't. Having staked his claim to a short span of curb, in front of the noodle stand, across from the Banshee on 163rd, the kid attacked the noodles with a pair of disposable chopsticks with savage intensity. He liked noodles, especially when they were his first meal in three days. That is, if you didn't count what he scavenged out of the garbage. That's the thing about Touristville, they had the best garbage in the Barrens. If the kid was in the mood to think, he might consider moving uptown where the garbage was hato. You know, the stuff the rich folk won't eat. But at the moment, he was too busy with his feast. Soy noodles with bits of soy, shaped and flavored vaguely like meat.

His name was Bennie, and he figured, after a contented belch, that his luck was turning around. And it was about time. He was tired of sleeping in dumpsters and ruined buildings. Fighting for the prime real estate, on the edges of Touristville, with the other gutterpunks and squatters. Tired of being hungry. Tired of being a loser.

Things were looking up. That sarariman Bennie rolled outside the Pheonix House, not more than an hour ago, was ripped to the gills, drunk as a skunk (whatever that was), and, above all, carrying cash. Cash! 123 nuyen. Hard to imagine. 123 nuyen, that was a lot of money where Bennie came from. Enough for a bus ticket uptown, food for a week and maybe a couple of nights in a coffin house. Wouldn't that be

wiz. A coffin, nice and cozy. With climate control even. No tossing and turning under a box sweating in the infernal heat. Sweating until you think you'll drown in it. In a nice cool coffin Bennie could sleep like the dead for maybe ten or twelve hours. Hell, maybe a whole day locked up nice and safe. Yeah, things were definitely looking up.

The kid dumped the noodle container in the gutter, with the rest of the trash, and stuffed the chopsticks in his back pocket. Waste not, want not. With the weight of 120 nuyen in his pocket, he headed for an alley to cut away from 163rd and make for the bus stop. Headin' uptown. This was a night Bennie would never forget. His luck was definitely changing.

With more spring in his step than he could remember, Bennie jandered through the dark rank confines of an alley skirting around a dumpster. Then something moved. Bennie came around, eyes wide, and screamed. And screamed. Screamed until it reached a soul wrenching pitch. Tonight he sleeps like the dead.

\*\*\*

Wednesday.....  
July 10, 2056.....  
Route 90, Souix Nation.....

The '43 Harley-Davidson Fat Boy devoured Route 90 just like it had for the past three and a half days. With ease. Rumbling across klick after klick of empty highway, only stopping to sate the big bikes need for petro and the driver's need for sleep. That's what it was made for.

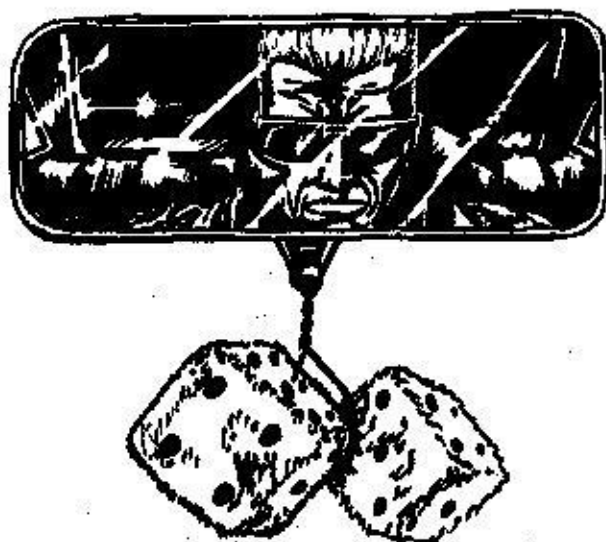
Route 90 ran coast to coast from Boston to Seattle through UCAS, the Souix Nation, and finally into the Salish-Sidhe Council. The Fat Boy chewed up one of it's loneliest stretches with a throaty growl. Having crossed the Souix border and the Missouri River at Chamberlain over an hour ago, what could be seen of the terrain on either side of the road, outside the narrow scope of the Harley's headlight, was as barren and yet starkly beautiful as one could imagine. The Badlands, of what used to be South Dakota, were like no other place on earth. As the desolate rocky terrain slipped past in the inky Stygian dark the bike was given it's head as the rider's thoughts drifted.

He's not sure how long it had been since he was lucid for this long. Maybe six months. Maybe a year. Hard to say. Unless you leave a message in a bottle. A note to tomorrow. Where the hell was I yesterday? Usually not worth remembering.

That's the downside of lucidity. It opens the door to memory, so it can claw it's way from the tenebrous recesses of your mind. Like Pandora's Box, in that, maybe it should stay shut. He remembers who he was and how that life, that existence, was taken away from him. Murdered. Of course he always remembered. When you crawl into a bottle you can't pull the cork

in and lock the pain out. Just dull the edge. For a long time that was good enough.

Good enough to keep him going. Working in the shadows like a hired thug. Not samurai, just muscle. Hired muscle. Finding people and making them pay for a real or sometimes imagined slight. Usually real, but it didn't really matter. Even wetwork sometimes. But only when they had it coming. No innocents. No suits. Gangers, muscle, runners. Like Gallow Joe. Joe helped hook a wide-eyed kid on BTL's, used her for sex, took what little money she had and when she tried to get some of it back, he beat her and then tossed her off a fifteen story building. After being missing for only three months her parents get a call from the local heat to ID what was left of the body. They hired him to find Joe and make things right. Even though they didn't know who Joe was, it was easy. That's what he used



to do for a living. Find the bad guys and bring them in or air them out as the case and circumstances dictated. Back when he was a cop. Back when all that mattered was being a good one. Working for the company. Before he became a liability. He would have geeked Gallow Joe for free. He didn't. But he would have.

The girl, Susi was her name, trusted Joe. Why is unfathomable. But it happens all the time. People trust the ones that frag with them the most. A lot of people trusted him. People he cared about. They trusted him and died. Jason was the first. Out on the town they ran into a gang of thriller-killers out to slash and burn. Wrong place. Wrong Time. Nothin' personal. They just got in the way. He tried to protect him and they both got fragged. Cut up real good. He lived. Jason didn't. Jason trusted him. His big brother. Jason paid.

Kiko was the last. The last that trusted him and the last straw. She trusted him and he handed her over to the company. They said they'd take care of everything. They kept their promise. No loose ends. Except for him. They took his life away, but he didn't have the

good sense to die. Quit burning the communal oxygen. They put metal where there was meat. Made him into what he was now. They made him and someday they would pay.

\* \* \*

Thursday.....  
July 11, 2056.....  
Seattle.....

The food at The Mogul was top-rate and though he had eaten there before, that's not what brought Silas Betancourt in tonight. He came seeking the cool introspective dark of the bar. He just couldn't go home and face his wife and daughter. At least not yet. His day had been too long and too hard to go home yet and The Mogul was mercifully close enough to his home in Yarrow Point to offer a few drinks and hours of solace.

Since his transfer to homicide, things just seemed to be getting worse. Before long it would be his turn to avail himself of the services of his peers. A few months on a nice soft couch spilling his guts couldn't do any harm. When Silas was attached to the Psychological Evaluation Section of the Lone Star Human Resources Division he had been able to leave his patients problems at the office. Even though some of the officers he treated, or evaluated for return to duty, had some severe problems, he had been able to keep his distance. Both from his patients and from the grim reality of modern police work in an Awakened world.

That all changed when he was attached to homicide out of headquarters. It had been a wake-up call for Silas of the rudest order. He was tossed head first into the slimy waters of the city's underbelly. Welcome aboard Silas. Sink or swim. Maybe he was sinking. He was up to his neck at the very least. Trying to sleep was like drowning in a sea of despair. Watching the faces of the dead float past like so much flotsam.

Removing his glasses, Silas tried to rub the tension out of his face. It was written all over his forehead where the hair had long since retreated leaving only a troubled brow. He was working on his third bourbon. If one more didn't do the job he would have to go home regardless or Sarah, his wife, would start to worry. That would just mean more questions. Questions he couldn't answer. Then the frustration would boil out and they would argue. A perfect ending to a miserable day.

There was a killer stalking the city. Tearing people up. With what seemed to be no pattern of discernable purpose. No motive except to kill. Seven bodies in two weeks. The brass had been breathing down the back of his neck for a week. As soon as the killings were linked together they started asking questions. Questions he didn't have the answers to. They wanted a profile to help them catch him. They wanted Silas to crawl into the twisted dark of the killer's mind and Silas wasn't anxious to go. With every new body attributed to the slasher the pressure mounted.

Silas downed his fourth bourbon and got up to go,



almost forgetting his glasses. He couldn't drive or do much of anything without them. Retrieving his glasses, Silas left The Mogul and started to cross the street to his car. His steel-grey BMW was waiting where he

parked it. Walking around to the passenger side, Silas removed his suit coat and fumbled for his keys dropping them on the sidewalk. Picking them up he went to unlock the door and put his coat on the passenger seat, but started when he noticed someone standing behind him in the dark glass of the BMW's window. Turning around, with a sign of relief, he looked the greasy faced kid up and down. The kid was probably looking for a hand-out. Underneath a crooked ball cap the kid smiled. It was a killer smile.

\* \* \*

Friday.....  
July 12, 2056.....  
Seattle.....

It was a bleak homecoming. No one cared that he was back. Most likely because no one knew he had gone. But the pizza and the Sammie's at Murphy's Law had taken the edge off. Pariah Dane was back. For better or for worse. It was late. Almost midnight. The night was crisp and clear and still smelled of the rain that had come down a few hours earlier. Crossing the street to where he parked the Fat Boy along Western Ave., Dane knew it was time to find a place to sleep it off. The big Harley grumbled to life and just as Dane was about to mount up a piercing scream slashed through the haze resulting from the thirteen beer's he had for dessert. Instinctively reaching under his longcoat, for the Ares Predator concealed there, his eyes hunted for the source of the scream. A muffled cry followed from an alley a few meters down the street. He reached the alley at a run and jerked to a halt before exposing himself to it's mouth. Even a dozen or so Sam Soy's couldn't dull years of training. Dane came into the alley low. The shadowy depths of the alley washed out in a greenish haze as his cyber eye's lowlight receptors came on-line. His finger, on the big pistol's trigger, activated his smartgun link and crosshairs came to life on the internal surface of his optic's. Beyond a stack of crushed and broken packing crates two figures struggled. One fighting in vain for freedom and whimpering horribly. The other, the attacker, tore into his victim savagely with teeth and nails. As Dane moved forward, keeping his back to the alley wall, the attacker's eyes darted up and fixed on him. Dropping his victim, he snarled blood smearing his fleshy face. Dane fired twice. Center mass. The killer jerked back and stumbled. Eyes glittering fiercely in the darkness, the killer's lips peeled back revealing sharp filed teeth. And then he was gone into the darkness. Dane didn't follow.

Crouching down beside the stricken form, that now lay motionless, he checked for a pulse or some other sign of life. The rapidly spreading pool of blood and tattered rent in the girl's throat told the tale. She was fifteen, maybe sixteen.

\* \* \*

Saturday.....  
July 13, 2052.....

Kevin O'Brien's comm rang for a good long time before it dragged him from the embrace of Morpheus. Finally he reached over and groggily fumbled for the answer key.

"Yeah," he rasped, trying to rub the sleep from his eyes.

"Kevin?"

"Yeah, you got him. Whose this?" he asked. The call was audio only.

"It's Hal."

"What is this some kinda sick joke?" he continued hesitantly. Jordan Hallis was his friend. Jordan Hallis was dead.

"No joke. I need your help."

Detective Sergeant Kevin O'Brien's heart was racing like a freight train. It was something about the voice. Like a ghost. "Can the drek. Hallis is dead." O'Brien tried to sound annoyed, but his throat seemed to be closing up.

"I quit, Kev. The company wanted everyone to think I was dead."

"This is hard to swallow."

"I need your help."

"Ah," he hesitated and gulped from a glass of water on the nightstand, "what do you need?"

"Information."

"About what?" O'Brien asked, trying to regain his composure. No harm in seeing this through. If it was a sick joke maybe he could find out who it was. If not?

"The slasher."

"Why?"

"He has to be stopped," the ghost-like voice from the past answered levelly.

"Okay," that would be just like Hal. He hated killers, even though some might have called him one when he was with C-Tac. But this wasn't Hal. Hal was dead. The company didn't do things like that. They were the law for God's sake. "What if I tell you?"

"I'll find him."

"Then?" he asked, even though he already knew what was coming.

"I'll air him out," the faceless voice answered as if it was a fact waiting to happen.

"What makes you think you can do better than Lone Star? We've got half of Central Homicide looking for this psycho."

"Do you want people to keep dying?"

"Listen I don't-"

"Then tell me."

"Okay, but if anyone finds out I leaked confidential information pertaining to an active investigation my ass will be hangin' in the breeze." O'Brien couldn't believe he was gonna do this. But, how could he not.

If it saved even one life it would be worth his ass.

"Tell me."

"Okay. Seven killings in two weeks attributed to the same perp. No apparent reason. The victims weren't robbed or molested in any way. No pattern that we've been able to nail down."

"What's the connection?"

"Cause of death," O'Brien paused and took another sip of water. "They were all ripped up pretty good and in the same fashion. All the victim's wounds were similar. Bite marks all the same radius and caused by sharpened teeth. Slash marks all caused by nails or claws of the same approximate length."

"Claws?"

"Possibly hand razors."

"Why?"

"No tissue samples found in the wounds," O'Brien answered. "In fact there is almost no physical evidence. No blood. No saliva. No torn bits of cloth. No one seems to have gotten a piece of this guy."

"No blood under the nails? No saliva in the bite wounds?"

"Only the victims," O'Brien continued, "that's why the investigation is goin' nowhere. It's weird. They all seem to have fought like hell and nobody got so much as a piece of him."

"Any connection between the victims?"

"Not that we can come up with. The first was a breeder from the Brain Eaters. Found her in Glow City. No, sorry. A suit from Maplewood in Renton was the first. They found him second, but the time of death preceded the whore. A squatter in Sophocles was the next one found, but the rats got to him. There wasn't much left. A secretary down the Bargain Basement was number four. Five and six were both in Touristville. The first was a tourist from FreeCal and the other was a kid. A gutterpunk. He was, the kid that is, later ID as having been a dipper. He lifted a wallet off of a drunk suit a couple of hours before he checked out. The last one was Wednesday. Another suit. This one down Rosemont Beach. Actually, the time of death is up in the air. He may have gotten it before the kid, but they pulled him out of the lake on Wednesday."

"He's moved from Renton up through the Barrens and into Bellevue."

"Looks like it," O'Brien hesitated. "There's one more thing about the victims."

"What?"

"The look on their faces."

"What?"

"They looked like they died in agony."

"They were ripped up."

"I know. It's more than that. I've been eight years in homicide and I've seen plenty of people cut up. This is different. Maybe more than physical."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure," he hesitated again. "Listen I can't give you anymore."

"Is this thing human?"

"That's the consensus. Really, there's no more."

"Who's doing the psych profile?"

"Some geek called Betancourt. I gotta go."

"Thanks, Kev."

"Wait." But it was too late, the ghost was gone. O'Brien sat on the edge of his bed confused. His hands were shaking. In time he tried to go back to sleep, but it never came.

\* \* \*

The Lone Star Security Building lies in the shadow of the massive Raku Arcology at the corner of Second Avenue and Union Street. Beneath the blue pyramidal building there are as many as twenty sub-levels. Silas Betancourt exited the elevator at sub-level four and began to cross the employee parking area. Halfway to where his car was parked he stopped and stretched. Switched his briefcase to his right hand and slowly rotated his left shoulder trying to alleviate the stiffness. Unsatisfied he continued working the shoulder until he reached his steel-grey BMW. Once there, he climbed in and discarded his briefcase on the passenger seat. Silas removed his glasses, placing them on the dashboard, and rubbed his eyes.

His eyes cleared and then widened. All the breath seemed to rush out of him as the stark figure in the backseat came into focus in the rearview mirror.

"Don't turn around."

"How did you get in here?" he stammered, trying to get a better look at the man in the backseat. He was tall, broad shouldered and thickly muscled. His head was crowned with a shock of close cropped white hair and his eyes were covered by a pair of black razor sunglasses. He was wearing a long grey coat and a black tightskin shirt. Both were worn and unkempt.

"Start the car."

"Ah... okay. Just don't hurt me. I'll do whatever you want," the shrink said as calmly as can be expected.

"Start the car." Betancourt started the car with a fairly steady hand. "Now drive out of here," he ordered. The threat was implied. Silas don't be a hero. Silas be a good boy and you won't get all broken to pieces or shot up. Seemed like sound advice and within minutes the steel-grey BMW had pulled out on to Union Street.

"What do you want?"

"I ask the questions." He was enjoying this. Betancourt recommended him for the assignment that ended his career. Pretty much his life. There's no way the shrink could recognize him now, not after the hacks remade him.

"Okay. Okay," he acquiesced. His voice quavering slightly.

"Tell me about the slasher."

"What?"

"The slasher. Tell me how to catch him."

"That's what the company wants and I don't have the

answer," he said hesitantly.

"Tell me what you know."

"What do you mean?"

"You gave them a profile. Now, give it to me."

"Well...I can't do..."

In the rearview mirror Betancourt could see a pistol, a big one, being drawn from concealment under the grey longcoat. "Tell me."

"I...ah...I'm not sure where to begin."

"Why does he kill?"

"Well," Betancourt took a deep breath and his voice steadied, "There are two different possible types of individuals, I believe, that we could be dealing with."

"Keep driving. What are they?"

"Ah...the first is a sociopath."

"What's that?"

"An individual who is a product of both genetics and his childhood environment."

"Insane you mean."

"No, at least not technically. This individual seems normal. Possibly charming, but is almost always marked by two aberrant traits."

"What traits?"

"Sexual abnormality and a consuming need for power."

"A sexual deviant?"

"Well...ah...killing satisfies the sociopath's need for power, both sexual and the ultimate power over life and death."

"He gets a hard-on from killing?"

"It is possible." Betancourt almost seemed to smile. "Though none of the victims have been molested sexually."

"And the other kind?"

"Paranoid Schizophrenic. He hears voices. Voices that tell him to kill. Dangerously insane."

"Voices. Voices from where."

"Oh, it varies. From the company. From aliens. God is rather popular. Maybe his dog."

"His dog?"

"It is possible." Betancourt's eyes strayed to a Lone Star patrol car passing them in traffic. In the mirror he could see the heavy pistol, kept low, but still pointed at the back of his head.

"Don't even think it. Just keep driving." Dane was quiet for a few moments trying to digest the information. "Is there a pattern?"

"Not that we have been able to determine."

"So, there is no pattern."

"No, that's not what I said. I'm sure there is a pattern. There almost always is. We just can't determine what it is yet. We may not be able too."

"Until you catch the killer."

"Of course."

"Any connection between the victims?"

"Not that we have been able to determine."

"Sexual preference? Does he prefer men or women?"

"None apparent. Four male victims and four female

victims."

Dane leaned forward, to conceal the pistol, which was now perilously close to the back of Betancourt's head. "Is the killer human?"

Betancourt's eyes narrowed. "Yes. Though to most he may seem inhumane. I am convinced that your slasher is human."

"Pull over."



The BMW slowly came to a halt alongside the curb and as Dane reached for the door handle he looked back and said, "You know how easily I can get to you. Keep your mouth shut."

Almost nonplussed, Betancourt retrieved his glasses from the dashboard. "Oh, yes, I will."

Dane slipped the Predator back under his coat and got out of the car. It slowly pulled away from the curb as he vanished into the shadows of an alley.

\*\*\*

Lunatic Fringe  
We know you're out there  
But in these new dark ages  
There will still be light  
An eye for an eye.....

Red Ryder

Sunday.....  
July 14, 2052.....

The beaded curtain chattered, like so many hushed voices keeping secrets, as a lithe dusky-skinned girl with innocent eyes emerged. She was Sugar Magnolia, most called her Maggie. She was a talismonger. A dealer in things mundane and not. Her shop, called the Sixth Worlde, was located along Sixth and Lenora. The shop proper was filled with dusty books, mundane arcana, fetishes, talismans, and a wealth of colorful amerindian art (both authentic and not). Maggie's workshop lay beyond the beaded curtain and her doss encompassed the floor above.

She was busy at work in the shop in the back when the chimes by the door indicated someone, hopefully a tourist, had entered the shop. Maggie was disappointed as she slipped through the curtain. There was little doubt that the tall stranger in the grey coat was no tourist.

"Hoi, can I help you," she greeted him sweetly with a smile.

"I need to see Lazlo," the stranger said, taking her aback. Ignoring the courtesy of conversation that usually preceded such a request.

"Sorry, I'm not sure what you mean," Maggie said, looking a little confused. His curt manner had her on guard.

"I need to see Lazlo, now." He didn't raise his voice, but punctuated his point by removing his black razor shades and fixing her with watery steel-grey eyes. After spending a day and a night crawling through the slimy underbelly of the Seattle Metroplex hunting for some sign or scent of the killer, Pariah Dane was in no mood to mince words. He was in doubt, regardless of Betancourt and O'Brien's assurances, that this killer was human. He was certain, or fairly so, even muzzy as he was from drinking, that he had hit the killer twice. No human walks away from taking two rounds from a heavy pistol. Not if you're not armored. Which he was fairly, again fairly, sure that the killer wasn't. That meant that the killer wasn't or isn't human. That also meant that he was far and wide out of what used to be his area of expertise. He used to track 'borgs. People so filled with metal that they completely lost touch with their humanity and it drove them nuts. Paranormals were a field best left to someone else and the first someone else Dane could think of was Lazlo.

Victor Lazlo made his living as a freelance corporate brain-picker. Tops in the field of deep redact.

Obviously, he was a mage. A hermetic, also an archeologist and most importantly, an expert in parazology.

The problem was that you just couldn't walk up to Victor Lazlo's door, ring the buzzer, and ask for help. If you weren't corporate and/or connected to his fixer, possibly Snow White (she was in his league), then you had to try and make the connection on the street. Through someone, word had it, like Sugar Magnolia.

"Well, I do know Mr. Lazlo, but I..."

"Just call him. It's about the slasher. I need his help," he interrupted.

"Okay, chummer. But, I make no promises," Maggie acquiesced. The stranger's manner left no room for argument. As she slipped back through the beads, Maggie began to worry in earnest. If Lazlo was unavailable and/or refused to help, she would be alone with the big man and didn't think he would be pleased. With reservation she keyed Lazlo's number into her comm and waited.

Back in the shop proper, Dane was haunted by reservations of his own. If Lazlo refused to help him he was at a potential dead end. One which would lead to more people coming to a grisly end. Not to mention, but he was brutally hung over. Which didn't help. He attempted to ease the ceaseless throbbing in his head by rubbing his temples and the flesh around his eyes. The eyes themselves were metal and required no such attention. Instead of trying to think, which was painfully difficult at present, he lost himself in the colorful riot of strange articles around him.

Shortly Maggie emerged from the back. "Okay, he'll see you," she said, somewhat less worried than before. If they reached Lazlo she knew she would be safe.

"How?"

"Come along, handsome," she said smiling and taking his arm, "and I'll show you." They left the Sixth Worlde, locking it up behind them. "You got a ride?"

Dane simply crossed the street to where the Fat Boy was parked and fired it up. Maggie, dressed more like a modern gypsy, all bangles, beads, and loose clothes, including a bandana covering the top of her head from which long dark hair streamed, seemed anything but out of place as she climbed onto the back of the big Harley.

"Regency Park," she directed and the Harley roared away from the curb and began to grumble through the Sunday morning traffic.

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Less than an hour later, Dane and Maggie stood in front of Lazlo's brownstone ringing the buzzer. The building rose five stories and was flanked, like soldiers standing in rank and file, by similar structures. The opposite side of the tree lined street held more of the same. The trunks of the trees were protected by wrought-iron cages that matched the design of the

balconies that jutted from the fronts of the brownstones.

Within moments, having verified their identities on the security vid, an utterly bald stern looking man in a tuxedo opened the door.

"Hoi, Gates. What's happening?" Maggie said, now totally at ease.

"Good morning, Miss Magnolia."

"Where's the boss?" she asked, slipping past him and bounding up the stairs like a kid headed for the playground. "In the study, Miss," Gates answered, trying to seem nonplussed. After eyeing Dane up and down, the butler stepped aside and let him follow Maggie.

Victor Lazlo awaited them in the study, which encompassed half of both the second and third floor. The walls were lined with towering bookcases containing shelf after shelf of dusty tomes. The study's furnishings were all brass, dark wood and old leather. The man himself was seated in an aged overstuffed leather chair pouring over an exceptionally thick black leather grimoire.

Maggie and Dane waited in silence,

until after a few moments, Lazlo looked up from the book, placed it on the table next to the chair, and stood. He was almost impossibly tall, taller than Dane, and rail thin. His coal black hair was pulled back into a short ponytail, which made his already hollow features seem

even more gaunt. Beneath the sweep of his hawk-like nose he wore a thin goatee. His impeccably tailored suit was of the deepest blood-red and when he rose a long black skull-crowned cane clicked on the floor. "Good morning, Magnolia," Lazlo greeted them, his voice heavy with a thick blue-blood accent.

"Mornin', Mr. Lazlo. This is..." Maggie hesitated.

"Dane, Pariah Dane," he interjected by way of introduction.

With a sweep of his long arm Lazlo gestured to two comfortable chairs facing the one he had been sitting in. "Please sit down, Mr. Dane, Maggie. Tell me how I can be of service."

"Someone," Dane paused, settling stiffly into the

chair to Lazlo's right, "something has killed eight people in the last two weeks. I want. I need to stop it before it kills someone else."

"Why have you come to me, Mr. Dane?" Lazlo asked.

"Lone Star is looking for a man. A serial killer or some sort of lunatic. I don't think the killer is human."

Lazlo leaned forward, ever so slightly, a dark gleam of curiosity flashing in his eyes. "Tell me everything you know."

For the next half an hour Dane recounted what he knew of the killings as Lazlo listened intently. When he had finished Lazlo gestured to Gates, who had either been standing nearby unnoticed or had materialized out of nowhere, and said, "Brandy? This may be thirsty work. You have a keen ear for facts, Mr.

Dane, and I am inclined to agree with your conclusion."

Dane leaned forward and accepted the brandy offered by Gates. After taking a long sip, he rolled the glass back and forth in his hands. The brandy settled warmly in his stomach as he waited for Lazlo to continue.

Rising from his chair, Lazlo began to pace slowly. "I agree with your conclusion," he began, "for two reasons. One more so than the other. First, most humans

cannot withstand the trauma, though I am no expert in firearms, delivered by a weapon like the one with which you said you shot this, shall we say, creature." He paused and sampled the brandy. Turning to look at Dane intently, he continued, "It was dark. Are you certain you did not miss, Mr. Dane?"

"Yes," Dane hesitated, "fairly."

"Fairly." Lazlo continued to fix Dane with a predatory glare as if he could somehow scry what had actually happened.

"Well, it hardly matters. The second and more important reason I agree with your conclusion is the near total lack of physical evidence. We must assume that your connection, at Lone Star I might think, is not mistaken or withholding information. So, there is no physical evidence. A virtual impossibility when the



victims were struggling for their very lives with an opponent who was assaulting them by main force. Which leads us to believe that our killer must be extraordinarily strong."

Lazlo turned, as he had strayed in his musing, and faced Maggie and Dane. He clicked his cane once stoutly on the hardwood floor of the study and standing still for a moment, continued, "Now, various forms of cybernetic enhancement could account for increased strength and also, I might add, the ability to withstand two direct hits," he looked at Dane for an instant, "from a heavy pistol. But could not justify the lack of physical evidence which is the mainstay of our argument." Lazlo resumed pacing. "However, even if the killer was a paranormal, it is still so unlikely, as to be almost impossible, for no physical evidence to result from such a violent and lethal encounter. So, the evidence must have been overlooked. Also a virtual impossibility with eight different crime scenes to analyze. Thus, we have a situation where it is impossible for there to be no physical evidence. Yet, there is none and it is impossible for it to have been overlooked."

Lazlo halted abruptly, raised an eyebrow, and looked at Dane inquisitively, "Am I correct so far?"

"Ah...so far," he answered. More bewildered now than he had been at the outset.

"This tells us much. And in the end I think shall lead us to our killer or at least to what sort of beast we are dealing, or rather, you are dealing with, Mr. Dane." Lazlo had begun to pace again and then whirled fixing Maggie with a pointed gesture from his cane. "When all that is probable has been ruled out, all that remains is the improbable or impossible. Do you know who said that, Magnolia?"

"Um...no," Maggie answered guiltily, like a kid caught napping in the fourth grade.

"Sherlock Holmes," Lazlo said, answering the question. He began to pace again. "And it seems that the old sleuth may have given us our only real clue." Having arrived back at his chair, Lazlo stood next to it and leaned on his cane. "That being, that there is physical evidence and it has, indeed, been overlooked. And this, above all else, shall lead us to your killer, Mr. Dane." Having said that, Lazlo slumped into his chair. "Precisely how though, at this point, I am not sure," he concluded with a sigh.

Maggie and Dane simply sat and stared at the mage totally bewildered. After what seemed an eternity of brow furrowing thought, Lazlo leapt up from his chair and, his cane beating a hasty staccato on the floor, crossed to one of the book laden shelves and began to search feverishly for some, as yet, unfound tome. After carrying the hunt to another shelf, he exclaimed his success and snatched out a narrow volume apparently bookmarked with old newspaper clippings. "If I'm not mistaken, herein, lies our answer." He slumped back into the chair and began to peruse the pages and

clippings.

Abruptly Lazlo snapped the book closed and after a pregnant pause, said, "There is physical evidence." He placed the book on the table on top of the one he had been reading when they had entered and then stood. "But, as I surmised, it has been, and only could be, overlooked. How you ask," he said, looking at them questioningly.

They both just sat. Sat and stared.

"Because all the physical evidence, be it blood, saliva, or otherwise, matched precisely that of the victims."

"What?" Dane said, his eyes narrowing in disbelief.

"Because having killed them, the creature assumed their form, as is it's nature, and thus, so did the physical evidence," Lazlo concluded with satisfaction.

"How?" Dane asked still doubtful.

"Because, quite simply put, Mr. Dane, that is what it does. It hunts, kills, and then assumes the form of it's prey. Moving, or rather, stalking everchanging through society. Which, I might add, is it's hunting ground. Almost virtually untraceable."

"That's insane!"

"No, Mr. Dane, that is a doppelganger."

"A what?"

"A doppelganger," Lazlo said slowly, as if to a child. "We are left, as Holmes put it, with only the impossible. And the impossible, Mr. Dane, is the doppelganger."

"So, how do I catch it and kill it?"

"On both counts, Mr. Dane, I shall have to leave that to you. I am neither a hunter nor a killer. But, with knowledge, I can forearm you against it."

"Tell me."

"This creature is as rare as it is clever. Only two cases of a doppelganger being uncovered have been documented. In both cases after the creature was killed it's body's paranatural molecular structure began to break down at an incredible rate."

"What does that mean?"

"In short, Mr. Dane, it dissolved or decomposed before it could be studied. But, that is a concern for scientists and not hunters."

"So, how do I kill it?"

"Tenacity, Mr. Dane. In both cases the doppelganger exhibited extraordinary regenerative powers. It required repeated mortal trauma or an immense amount of physical damage to it's entire body to halt it's regenerative processes."

"So, it can be killed."

"I believe I have said just that."

Dane set his empty glass down, long since drained of brandy, and asked, "What do you mean it changes form?"

"After killing or debilitating it's victim the doppelganger assumes it's form. It's molecular structure is malleable, like clay. Perhaps down to the DNA."

"Is it trapped in that form or can it change?" Dane continued his query.

"Unknown," Lazlo paused, "but, it may possess a sort of cellular memory that allows it to shift from one form to another."

"How many forms can it remember?"

"Also unknown," the mage took a deep breath, "but, if I had to venture a guess, I would say only a few."

"Does it have their memories?"

"An interesting question. One I must admit I had not considered."

Dane rose stiffly from his chair and as the blood began to flow back through his grafted muscles, asked, "Is there anything else?"

"Only a singular request," Lazlo said and stood. "Name it."

"Let me know what you find," the mage replied.

"That's it. Is that why you helped me? Out of curiosity?" Dane asked sounding incredulous.

"You find that strange. You came seeking knowledge and in return you shall bring it as well."

Dane simply shook his head. "Thanks. You may have saved lives."

"I know, that is the other reason I agreed to help you," he explained and then gestured to the door where Gates appeared to show them out.

\* \* \*

The Fat Boy battled it's way through the afternoon traffic, crossed Lake Washington, via the Council Island bridge, and turned north on Route Five. It was like a rolling anachronism, rumbling through the whirl of electric cars and busses, spewing petro fumes.

Frustrated by the Sunday traffic, Dane pulled over and shut the bike down. He walked to the nearest public

comm and keyed O'Brien's home and then office number.

The comm screen filled with the LSS corporate logo, which then faded and was replaced by O'Brien's thick jowled ruddy features. "Detective Sergeant O'Brien," he answered.

"Kev, anything new?" the ghost from O'Brien's past asked. Dane had set the comm for audio only.

O'Brien hesitated recognizing the voice.

He had seen a lot of strange things in his years on the force, but this was one of the toughest to slot. It was personal.

"No, nothin'. Not since we pulled that suit out of Lake Sammamish on Wednesday."

"What about the girl?"

"What girl?"

"The one down by Murphy's Law."

"Hal, we never found a body down there," O'Brien said, more confused than he already was.

"What?"

"Like I said, we didn't find anything down by Murphy's. Nothin' since last Wednesday, thank God. I'm up to my ass in this thing."

"Kev, how many of the victims have been female?"

"Three. The Brain Eater, the secretary and the tourist."

"Are you sure?"

"Hal, what the frag is goin' on here? Of course I'm sure!" O'Brien exclaimed.

A grim realization washed over Dane like the sun breaking through the clouds at sunset. "When nothing possible is left, only the impossible remains," he said, mostly to himself.

"What!"

"I know who the killer is, Kev. I need your help."

O'Brien wasn't really sure why he was going along with this. Maybe it was the voice. Maybe it was the slim chance that he might save a few lives. Maybe he



just wanted to believe that Jordan Hallis was alive.  
"Okay, what do you need?"

\* \* \*

Silas Betancourt sat at his desk, in his office, on the seventeenth floor of the LSS building. It was late. He should have gone home long since. It would be longer still before he did. It grated on him to face the strangers that were his wife and daughter.

Betancourt looked up from his computer as the door to his office opened. A tall man, the one hunting the slasher, stepped into the office. "How did you get in here?" he asked calmly.

"You said there were four."

"Pardon me?" the shrink said, removing his glasses.

"The company only knew about three," Dane said, removing his shades. He eyed the shrink intently searching for some clue that he was right. "And you need your glasses to drive."

Their eyes locked.

Betancourt's eyes narrowed to slits.

A killer knows a killer's eyes.

In one blinding motion Dane ripped open his coat and pulled his Predator. His smartlink came instantly on-line. Betancourt started to rise. The sound of the big gun exploded across the room as Dane fired. The first two shots knocked Betancourt down and the next two missed, punching through the floor to ceiling window behind the desk. Cracks shot across the window, like spider webs, but it didn't shatter. Betancourt had dropped behind the desk, but now leapt from concealment and slammed into Dane, suddenly a mass of sharp teeth and slashing razor-edged claws. The thing that had been Silas Betancourt was fast and inhumanly strong. Only the fact that he had been standing with his back close to the wall saved Dane. The force of the creature's leap slammed them into the wall with such violence that they were jarred apart. Dane reached for the Predator which had fallen from his grasp. The doppelganger growled low and animal. It's form still resembled Betancourt, but the savage expression that tore across it's face, not to mention the newly sprouted teeth and claws, left little doubt. Dane had found his killer.

His fingers were less than a handsbreadth from the heavy pistol when the beast grabbed him by the back of his longcoat and hurled him across the room like a ragdoll. Dane crashed into the wall, shattering a print that had hung there, with such terrific force that he dislocated his shoulder. He tried to rise and clear his head, but the creature was on him. The doppelganger lifted him off the ground like a child and slammed him against the wall. It's clawed hand closed around his throat. Razor talons began to gouge into his flesh. It's breath was rank and fetid. It's face twisted into a mask of bestial rage and in a voice no longer remotely similar to Betancourt's, snarled, "You should not have come."

Dane's head cleared enough for him to slam his knee into the beast's midsection with all the force he could muster. Caught off guard, anticipating the kill, the doppelganger dropped him. Dane gasped for breath and tried to slip past the creature. He took two steps before the beast recovered and turned on him. The doppelganger stepped forward and lashed out, backhanding Dane across the side of the head. He crashed into the desk, breaking four ribs. One of the shattered ribs drove a splinter into his lung and as he sprawled across the desk he choked on pink bloody froth.

The beast, which still resembled Betancourt, glared at him with animal eyes. Betancourt had cleared him for the assignment that had cost him life as he knew it. Now this beast, in Betancourt's form, was going to snuff it out entirely. Pariah Dane wasn't afraid. Life hadn't treated him kindly. He wouldn't miss it. Time to quit wasting the communal oxygen.

Through the encroaching haze of death one sliver of determination refused to yield. If he died here this thing would escape. And go on killing. Even if his life didn't matter, that did.

"You have come to your death, human. Now you shall join the fodder that have gone before you," the beast raged. With no more warning than that the beast leapt towards Dane with murderous fury. Moving as fast as his broken ribs and injured shoulder would allow, Dane brought up both feet to meet the doppelganger's furious charge. He slid back letting his booted feet and the creature's momentum propel the beast over him. It slammed into the already weakened window with a terrific crash. Dane slammed hard to the floor behind the desk and blacked out.

Consciousness returned moments later. Dane struggled weakly to his feet. Of the doppelganger there was no sign. He moved to the gaping hole in the shattered window and looked down. Seventeen floors below a crowd had gathered.

The passersbys on Union Street simply stood and gawked. The broken twisted form of a balding middle-aged man began to change. Features running like water. In the space of a few breaths the man was gone and a thing remained. Pallid and fleshy. But it too continued to melt away like clay in a torrent. Soon flesh, bone and viscera were reduced to dust. Wind, sighing like the breath of the city, scattered the dust. A tortured collection of lives and memories lost. Like tears in the rain.

FINIS

# Drak's DreK

## An Intro for Newbie Runners

By D. L. Knox

...can I gotta do it again?!? You said it was over! Now outta nowhere yer tellin' me I gotta... Oops.

Hoi again chummers! Yes, I'm back by popular demand to respond to any questions you might have about the two major focuses of every Shadowrunner's life - survival and wealth! Since my retirement I have managed to close a lot of the old books and get all my old enemies "out of the way" in one manner or another. Therefore, I am one of the few guys out there that can get away with giving out the not-so-secret tricks of the trade that can help make sure that the younger folks in my old line of work keep getting older.

For those of you that don't know me, I ran under the handle of Drak. Don't get cute folks, them's just initials. I ran in the shadows of the Memphis Metroplex for a while and then moved on to the cooler (for me) streets of Seattle. I had the good fortune of hooking up with a great fixer by the name of... oops. Sorry, chummers, but I better not say. Unlike myself, she is not retired. Anyway, the most important thing I have discovered about that peculiar breed of critter we call "Fixers" is that the good ones are invaluable and the bad ones can get you messily dead faster than you can spell b-a-n-g. What you have to realize is that the jobs Fixers get for you are the Fixers' attempt to meet a demand with whatever (or whomever) they can supply. Corps very rarely ask for anybody by name and frequently they just want armed bodies to be at a certain place at a certain time. If it's an exceptionally sensitive operation, they will flag the op and the fixer will contract the most experienced people possible within the limits of their all-important

profit margins. That's it. End of requirements.

Unfortunately, this also means that unless you are a relative of the Fixer you can be handed jobs that are just too tough. Nothing personal, but the Fixer's job isn't to wipe your nose for you. You are expected to keep yourself alive if at all possible and get the job done even if it is impossible. If not, too bad. Next runner please...



Don't believe me, though. Try this little party-trick so you can see for yourself. Look up an employer after a real poozer of a run. Make sure it's somebody you've and maybe some chummers too. That way they know you're one heap big loyal little attack-dog, you scan? Then try to invite yourself over for soykaf and see just what kind of affection Mr. Johnson has for the runners that probably got him his cushy office and job. If the response you get bruises your ego, well that's just too fragging bad. Better hurt feelings than dead runners.

Johnsons do not give a frag about *anything* but whether their ops go down the way they want and whether their "plausible deniability" buffer remains intact. If Fixers told you that up

front, instead of letting you find it out during the course of your street career, they would scare off a lotta runners who are still on the fence between going SINless and scampering back into the light like whipped dogs. That would reduce the number of new runners and could eventually dry up the pool of proficient, inexpensive operatives in the Fixer's network. See! There's that fragging old profit margin ghost coming back to haunt!

Now don't even think I'm saying that I got all the answers. Whenever you start thinking that you got this

"biz" thing down pat, that's when you should consider investing in a real mega-wiz life insurance policy. Oh, and don't worry about the premiums - they really won't matter for long at all.

If you are just starting out, then scan this: the only folks you can completely trust are the ones that you just saw die. After you have made a mint or two for a contractor, then you might be able to turn your back on them. Maybe. What's really cute about all this drek is that while you wait to take on an op so you can use all the precautions, checking up on the Johnson, the logistics, the target's background, ad-fragging-*nauseam*, the competition has already slotted and run with an easy paycheck. In the end this all boils down to what I said at first, you gotta be lucky and get a Fixer that sees no profit margin in having *you* fixed.

Now if you have somebody like *that* arranging your biz, you're set! That's how it was with my old team's first Fixer. If we needed special tech for a run, we could get it. If the logistics were fragged, we could turn them over to her network and the drek got strained out. If we knew we would need a dust-off from a hostile pickup-zone, she could get the job done. All for a fair price, of course! Chummer or not, I had the savvy not to get in the way of that almighty bottom-line.

Most importantly, she almost seemed to give half a frag whether my buddies and I got cacked on one of her ops. I was never stupid enough to ask whether it was because it would make her look bad, because a dead Drak was nuyen down the tubes, or because there was heart somewhere down underneath all that Kevlar and mascara. It was irrelevant one way or the other. She did me right and, in return, I never backed out on a run she sent me on - even the poozers. Whine about fees, yes. Yes and Amen! Back out, never.

I knew how she felt because I never had a problem with greasing a drek-head who was stupid enough or unlucky enough to get between me and a paycheck. My teammates and I had very little that was ever said about us on the street because we preferred the safety of anonymity over extensive rep in a world where the gunfighter mentality is as common as it is. You might be surprised to know just how few people will be willing to argue with you if the only definite word out on the street about you is, "We aren't sure who these fraggers are, but they kill anyone that gets in their way."

Now that wasn't *entirely* true. I can remember a great many people that I never killed. Some of them even torqued me off. They are breathing fine today and, more importantly, none of them have more than a passing grudge with me.

Sending an old enemy a picture of what happened to some poor fragger that got caught in a killer car wreck might sound weird but, if you make like it's the last guy that held a grudge against you, and send along a certified "Now-lemme-the-frag-alone!" stick for about 10K or so...

That's *really* wizzer magic.

I guess you just have to know how to reach people. Anyhow, I learned it was always best to stay out from under foot with your contractor. If the logic behind this escapes you, just scan this scenario... Team A and Team B are both solid groups of street-monsters who work for X. Now X is always having drek fly when A goes on an operation but B is real professional and quiet. Team A likes to kibbitz about their pay, the weather, their hairstyles, whatever. Team B negotiates their meal-ticket and goes off to do their job. A real hoop-kicker of a run comes down the line and X gives Team A the op (surprise, sur-fragging-prise). Team A gets whatever pay or tech-toys they want for the job (conditional upon successful completion, of course!) and when they get hosed Team B gets scavenger rights as well as the clean-up detail on a softened-up target.

Nice, neat, and nifty, neh?

The *VERY* worst people to torque off in the shadows are the ones who can move in and out of the light like sharks gliding through the water (Fixers), people who have ready access to hired talent that is just as good if not better than you (Fixers), people that can outfit their operatives with the best tech that can be found on the streets (Fixers), people that know your network of contacts and can hose your rep good and proper (Fixers), and people that can find you no matter what rock you hide under because they probably told you where all the best rocks were (again, Fixers).

Slot off your Fixer and you might as well bend over and grab 'em.

As I said before folks, this is only the semi-secret drek I'm shovelling for now. You street monsters are *supposed* to be in the know already. But those who aren't had *better* scan these posts I make *and* ask questions or I'll be reading about you in somebody's obituaries. I would much rather hear about inexplicable blackouts at Aztechnology and unfortunate gas main explosions at Renraku. It's nice to know that your traditions are being carried on by the next generation.

Ah, memories!

Next time, have some questions for me chummers. I could start yammering about the weather where I am but it never changes much. Besides, all that talk about sunny skies, beautiful white beaches, local girls who find the concept of a bikini to be ridiculous, and air you can actually breathe would probably start to annoy you poor Sprawl-dwellers.

Until then, stay alert and stay alive....

\* \* \*

There now. Okay baby now you can... Uh-oh. Honey, I know that look. Darling, what is it? Whats... Oh yeah, I get it. Yer hacked off by the bit about the local girls going natural all the time, aint'cha? Hey, you know you're the only one for...

Baby, put the chair down! I'm sorry, I didn't mean it! OH, DREK!!!

<CRASH!!!>

# McKissack's Chameleon

*Anolis McKissae*

By Andrew Ragland



## Identification

McKissack's Chameleon was originally identified in northern Greece, by a visiting herpetologist. Dr. McKissack was also the first to discover that its venom is not terribly dangerous to humans, much to his relief. The chameleon is a small lizard, averaging less than .25 meters in length from snout to tail tip. Its natural coloration is brownish-grey, but it can change color like a normal chameleon.

## Magic Capability

Parabiological.

## Habits

The chameleon has the same concealment power as the bandersnatch and is just as hard to spot. In addition, it can move with amazing speed when frightened or angry. The combination of the two, plus its relatively small size, makes the chameleon virtually impossible to get rid of once it's gotten in where it's not wanted. Its metabolism runs faster than a normal, non-Awakened lizard, and as such requires nearly twice as much food. This voracious appetite frequently leads the chameleon into human habitations or vehicles, in search of anything edible.

Anolis McKissae has a paralyzing toxin, but the venom is weak and unlikely to represent a threat to most people. Small animals are another matter. The chameleon has been observed stalking mice, biting them, then waiting for the mouse to fall over before following its fleeing prey. By nature, the chameleon is somewhat indolent, and reluctant to give chase, especially once it has made a strike. This seems to apply to larger animals as well, although if the chameleon feels threatened, it will bite and immediately leave the area as quickly as possible.

### Commentary

While its native habitat is in the northern Mediterranean and southern Balkan regions, the chameleon's camouflage ability has enabled it to spread widely. Specimens of Anolis McKissae have been found near the air and sea ports in Seattle, New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore and Sydney. While the chameleon is unlikely to establish itself in colder climes, isolated specimens can nevertheless cause terrific problems during their own lifespans.

### Powers

Adaptive Coloration (Selective), Enhanced Movement, Enhanced Reactions, Enhanced Senses (poison detection), Venom (M)

### Weaknesses

Vulnerability (Cold)

### Game Information

	B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Attacks
McKissack's Chameleon	1	8 x 4	1	--	3	3	(5)	7	4L

>>>>>[Man, these things give me a pain all the way up to my sigmoid. We had one get on a boat I was on, I guess it came on with some supplies we took on at Cyprus. Like to never get rid of it. Lay something edible down

and look away just for a second -- and poof! It's gone. Little fragger could tell what was toxic, too. Wouldn't touch the poisoned bait we set out. Finally took our mage tossin' a Mana Blast into a cabin we knew it was in to kill it.]

<<<<<

-- Krov (19:58:31/08-DEC-56)

>>>>>[Just one? Hey, count your blessings. Bones 'n' me, we pulled a security detail on one'a those corporate island retreats off the coast of Greece, and the whole island was crawlin' with the little fraggers. Bones, now, he's a troll, so he could see 'em by their body heat. First time he outs with his needler 'n' sprays a patch of bare dirt right by my foot, I thought he'd been chippin', but then there's this dead lizard the size of my forearm. Bones said it'd been about to take a piece outa my ankle. Lemme tell you, I burned my beach sandals and started wearin' jungle boots. The kind with the steel plates.]<<<<<

-- Ginzu Kid (21:12:21/09-DEC-96)

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# Gift Horse

by Erik Kjerland

Constant labored breathing filled the room, each breath a prolonged liquid suserration. A bubbling catheter kept his throat and mouth free of leakage welling up from his shattered body. His massive torso occasionally heaved with an uncontrolled spasm, but straps on his ravaged arms and legs kept him on the hospital bed. Innumerable tubes and probes penetrated his skin, monitoring, testing, stabilizing. Various displays stationed around his bandaged body revealed his deteriorating condition to even the most unread layman, but which he himself could not know. Beneath the bandages, his eye-sockets were burned-out pits of pain. Pain that pulled him from the depths of unconsciousness.

Indeed, he loathed the intermittent lapses of consciousness, when the agony was so great his tongueless mouth strained against the restraints to scream, causing even greater suffering. He struggled vainly, his handless arms sending unbearable jolts of pain to his overwrought brain, plunging him happily into a psychotic dreamland of bizarre imagery.

Tweedle Dee folded unbelievably amid the bars of his cell, a propeller beanie spinning on his broken head. Fear coils in his gut, darkness emanating from Dee's eyes. Light, searing, burning, unbearable. It advances on him, taking the shape of a bullet seeking him relentlessly. He struggles, but many hands,

tentacles, hold him down. He squirms, sees the bloodless body of Tweedle Dum beneath a portrait of a dragon. Pain, weakness. He cannot fight. The stench of burning flesh, his own flesh! Noise, voices. "Time to die, fatman." Fear, terror. Cool, sticky liquid flowing over his skin. Sizzling. Pain....



\*\*\*

"I'm sorry, Mr. Johnson, but the Georgia Detainment

Administration has not authorized any further expenditures on this patient," Doctor Brant informed the dark-suited man gazing through the glass into the ICU. "Standard expenditures for Mr. Vance were exceeded almost three days ago, and we have been ordered to remove all equipment."

Johnson watched the 200-kilo body of Marco Vance shudder with yet another paroxysm. The monitors surrounding him blinked ecstatically, then calmed. Johnson read the report on the ICU screen near the window. Collapsed lung, ruptured spleen, punctured kidney, arms and feet amputated, eyes seared out, broken jaw, tongue ripped out.... The details ran like a Freddy Kreuger XXII shopping list. Someone had been sadistically efficient with Vance. Yet the fat man still lived. Despite the massive damage to his obese body, he lived. He fought death to the last "How long before he dies?" Johnson asked.

"If we had authorization for surgery and organ replacement, we could probably save him," Dr. Brant said, his voice lacking any hint of emotion. "With the equipment currently in place... he may last one or two days. However, all equipment is to be removed by midnight tonight. When that is done, he'll die within minutes."

Johnson turned to look at the doctor, removing his dark glasses. "And you will remove the equipment at midnight?"

Dr. Brant did not meet Johnson's gaze, pointing to the official termination order on the ICU display. "That's right, Mr. Johnson. The hospital only has so many resources and so much funding, and the equipment on this man could be used to save someone that contributes to society. GDA will not provide any more funding for this felon, and the hospital administrators have decided not to assume the cost to keep him stabilized." It sounded like a quotation, one with which Brant agreed. Luckily for him the Hippocratic oath was not a prerequisite for medical training.

"In other words," Mr. Johnson still stared at the doctor, "someone has decided Marco Vance does not deserve to live." He smiled, grimly. "They're right, of course. But many who do not deserve to live, go on living. For a very long time."

The doctor remained silent. On the other side of the window, Marco Vance trembled yet again.

"Keep him alive, Doctor," Mr. Johnson ordered. "I will return with the proper GDA authorization for continued medical expenditures, as well as paperwork to remit Marco Vance into my custody. When his condition is stabilized, I will take him to a specialized clinic. Do you understand?"

Brant nodded.

\* \* \*

No pain? No feeling. No light.

He tried to move, could not, but felt nothing holding

him down. He could not feel his arms, his legs, his body. He floated in a senseless limbo, ethereal, incorporeal. A welcome respite to the eons of pain he had endured. Darkness, painless. Such pleasure he would not have dreamed possible.

He remembered. The prison, the attack. His enforcers and allies beaten, murdered. His enemies coming for him in the night. The torture they inflicted.

"Can you hear me, Mr. Vance?"

A voice stabbed through the silence. It reverberated with strength, power, and assurance. He did not recognize it.

"Can you hear me, Mr. Vance?"

The same question. He tried to speak, to answer. Nothing. A faint twitch near the mouth. He remembered, they had torn his tongue out. He cringed, the pain had been unbearable.

"Reduce the inhibitor."

The voice softened, no longer directed at him. Speaking to someone else.

A gnawing ache grew in his mouth, eyes, neck, his whole body. He could feel his body, and the pain. Not as terrible as before, but a haunting reminder.

"Can you hear me, Mr. Vance?"

This time, he could feel himself nodding, but there was a slight resistance, a coolness on his face, a bubbling sound.

"Good," the voice said. "My name is Mr. Johnson. I am here to help you."

He felt the drugs in him, painkillers no doubt. They made it difficult to think, his thoughts muddled, distorted. Johnson offered help, but why?

"Your condition is stabilized, but still serious. You've lost several organs. Your hands and feet have been amputated, and your arms and legs shattered beyond repair. Your eyes are gone, your tongue as well."

He remembered. They had spent hours torturing him. Slowly, cutting, breaking, stabbing. He had never seen them, but he knew who they were.

"You are not in good shape, Marco. I can help you."

But what is the price?

"I can make you better than you were. Replace your damaged pieces with vatjobs, cloned implants, cyberware, even bioware. I have the resources to assure you a perfect recovery. A recovery to a better, stronger, much more lethal Marco Vance."

Lethal. The corners of Marco's mouth twitched. He remembered his attackers, and they deserved lethal vengeance.

"Would you like me to help you?"

Silence. He could feel bubbles caressing his bare skin. He floated in water, liquid, totally submerged. He felt tubes intruding on his flesh. The pain grew, as did his lucidity.

"A nod will suffice, Marco."

Johnson wanted something. He was powerless to resist, his only strength in knowing that Johnson

needed him. For something. But what? He shook his head.

"Very cautious, Marco. But unwise. Without my help you will die. Painfully."

Threats. He hated threats. Except when he himself made them. He shook his head, harder. Vehemently. Liquid sloshed about his head. For a moment his knee touched something solid.

"You don't enter agreements lightly, I see. In this case, I would think you would be somewhat more yielding. However, you desire a detailed explanation of my offer. So be it."

Offer. Offer he can't refuse. Comply or die.

"In exchange for my assistance you will deliver something for me. You were once a big player in Atlanta, and I can help you regain that stature. For this, a rebuilt body and return to power, all I ask is that you deliver a simple message to a certain man at a certain time."

Atlanta... Power... Delivery boy? Delivery to whom? Johnson could find any number of henchmen to deliver a message.

"So, Marco. Do you want my help?"

Debt. He will owe Johnson. Owe Johnson a small service. Deliver a message. Simple, strange? But with the machine, his machine, up and running once again, debts may be reneged and debtors disposed of.

He nodded.

Liquid caressed his face.

\*\*\*

Twisted Shadows.

The Buckhead location was the same but the name had changed, as had the decor, clientele. Marco Vance watched the crowds of fashioned revelers enter the popular nightclub, the club he had once owned. It had been the Spiced Dreams, then, years ago. Frequented by the ultra-rich, sprawling with their toys of choice. Vance had provided them with their every desire, and they had been in his debt.

Debt. He did not like that word now.

The door to his limo opened and he stepped out, his body now fully back in his control and clothed in a spotless white suit. Beneath the suit, his body provided no hint of the chromed lethality of his new existence. His new optics picked out every detail of the crowd. His escort fell into step behind him, only to step forward and clear the way through the milling glitterati.

Amid grunts of displeasure and brief resistance, he soon stood before the double doors, splattered in neon paint. The doortroll turned from a pair of joygirls to

see Marco and his two escorts. A rigid stare froze on his rough face.

"Mr. Vance!"

"That's right, Carl," Marco smiled, his fat jowls quivering like pudding. "Let me in."

The troll hesitated. "I thought you was dead."

"You were obviously misinformed," Marco replied, a grin on his face.

Carl made no response. Marco could almost hear the gears churning in the big skull.

"Let me in, Carl."

"Uh, sure, Mr. Vance." The troll hesitantly opened the doors for Marco, who entered slowly, accompanied by his two shadows.

The interior of the Club of Twisted Shadows was not nearly as gloomy and dismal as its name implied. Color and light flashed everywhere, mauves and deep purple neon predominating, blinking strobes and sparkling motes. The interior was one big room, ceiling two floors above, with various open and enclosed balconies. Dancers squirmed on the floor, users crowded the bars, watchers occupied the tables. Raucous music emanated from the anti-funk band gyrating on the stage, the naked female musicians obviously enjoying the benefits of thousands in cosmetic enhancements. The onlookers stood in rapt attention of those benefits.

Using his bulk and his bodyguards, Marco forced his way to the back wall, past pushers, juicers, and wannabes, to a door marked "Employees Only". They had changed the club's name, look, and clientele, but

the sign on the door remained the same. The doorguard was different.

"What do you want?"

Marco smiled, looking up at where he knew the concealed minicam to be located.

"I said what do you want, porky?"

Marco's grin widened. Time to make a field test of his new body. His right arm swung out, wide, the giant fist aiming straight for the doorguard's head. The man, obviously wired, blocked the swing with his left hand and ducked low, his right hand suddenly holding a Colt Manhunter, but it was too late. His ducking head collided with the eight centimeters of razor-sharp



cerametal protruding from Marco's extended left hand.

The doorguard collapsed, blood spilling down his forehead and onto his clean purple suit. Several drops dripped onto Marco's white sleeve. The blade slipped back into his arm and, holding up the guard, Marco kicked open the door and walked through it. One of his escorts retrieved the guard's fallen Manhunter and assumed his position at the door, the other followed Marco.

Leaving the corpse near the closing door, Marco walked confidently down the hall, up two flights of stairs and around a corner. With a strong shove, he opened a pair of double doors.

"Marco!"

Inside a clean-cut dwarf wearing a lavender suit sat behind a synth-maple desk. Behind him, a window provided an impressive view of the glittering Atlanta skyline, dominated by the mile-high Cord Tower. In front of him four razors glared menacingly at Marco and his escort. Each held a firearm.

Marco walked farther into the room. The razors stepped to block his path.

The clean-shaven dwarf stood. "I thought you were dead, Marco!"

"There you go thinking again, Bunny," Marco replied. "Didn't I tell you thinking could be bad for your health?"

The dwarf's face darkened, and he glowered at Marco. "No one calls me Bunny any more, Marco!"

"I do."

The dwarf grimaced. Marco noted his expanded waistline, and the beginnings of a double chin. The expensive jewelry and fine suit, the aroma of rich cigars in the air.

"What are you doing in my office, Bunny?"

The dwarf hesitated. "It's not your office any more, Marco. The club's got new owners."

"And they let you manage the place? I'm surprised you haven't run it into the ground."

Bunny's face reddened. "I don't have to take this from you, Marco! You're old news, history. I could have you killed right now."

"Go ahead, try it. But you'll be missing out on a prime opportunity, one your new boss would be very upset at missing. But, if you've got the guts, have your gunboys geek me. Make an executive decision. I don't think you can do it."

Bunny moved away from the desk, standing and looking out the window. Marco saw his hands shaking.

"Want us to kill him, Mr. Kensington?" One of the razors asked after several moments of silence. No answer.

"Not much of a leader, Bunny," Marco reprimanded, putting his hands in his pockets. "I would have killed you the moment I pushed opened the doors."

Bunny spun around. "I ain't you, Marco! You got nabbed, I took over. I kept this club moving, making money! More money than it ever made while you were

in charge!"

"Money isn't everything," Marco grinned, smiled. His mouth opened wider and his jowls began vibrating violently.

The floor-to-ceiling window behind Bunny shattered, throwing shards of glass. A barely audible shriek filled the room, and everyone but Marco and his escort grabbed their ears in pain. Several soft thumps accompanied the collapse of Bunny's four guards. Marco's escort replaced his silenced pistol inside his jacket.

Marco closed his mouth, the shrieking stopped. He walked over to the cringing Bunny, lifting him easily back into the chair.

"But money can buy interesting new and experimental shadowtech."

Blood dripped from numerous cuts on Bunny's face, his hands shook uncontrollably. He looked up at Marco, at the wide, fat face grinning before him.

"Hey! Marco, I don't want to mess with you."

"You already did," he backhanded Bunny, sending the dwarf flying out of the chair, landing at the edge of the floor amid the shards of window glass. The humid Atlanta air wafted through the broken window, gently tugging at the satin curtains. "You were always a good little sycophant while I was around, Bunny. But looks like you got some upward mobility while I was away. Actually, you impress me. I never took you for someone with the nerve to rise to the top."

Bunny cringed on the floor, sucked at his bleeding hand. "What was I supposed to do, Marco? I thought you were dead! I heard you'd been geeked in prison!"

"You could have checked up on that rumor."

"I... I was too busy. Some new heat came to town, started eating up your action. I had to stop them from ruining everything you'd built." A gleam appeared in Bunny's eye, and the corners of his mouth curved up ever so slightly. "I thought I was doing the right thing."

"Does the right thing include selling out to this new heat and following their orders?" Marco smiled when he saw Bunny's face droop. "Yeah, I know, I know a lot. I know you helped this new heat eliminate those loyal to me."

"No, that ain't true!"

"Sure it is," Marco stepped nearer to Bunny, dropping down to his haunches. "Truer than true. And that's why you're going to die."

"No! Marco, listen to me! I had no choice!"

"You've got a choice now, Bunny," Marco stood, pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and dabbed at the blood smear on his jacket. "I've got enough blood on this suit already, and I'd really rather not get yours on it as well. So, let's see if you can be a good little rabbit and jump out the window."

Bunny swallowed. "What?"

"Either I kill you, or you jump out the window. It's only three stories, you may survive. And if you do, you can tell your new friends that I'm back in business."

"Marco! Please, don't!"

"You've got 'til the count of ten."

Bunny pulled himself to one knee. "Marco..."

"One. Two. Three..."

"I can't... You can't..."

"Four. Five. Six." Marco raised his hand and the blade slid out from his arm.

Bunny stepped back toward the window, his feet mere centimeters from the edge. "Please!"

"Seven. Eight. Nine!" Marco feinted forward menacingly. Bunny jerked and stumbled backward, dropping over the edge and out of sight. His scream was short.

Marco righted the dwarf's chair and pulled it around to face the Atlanta skyline. He appraised it suspiciously, then pushed it out the window after its owner. He sat on the edge of the desk and reached around to take a cigar from the box on the desk, clipped and lit it. He puffed on it appreciatively, looking back out the window. A Nerps adblimp emerged from behind the Cord Tower.

"I always loved this view."

\* \* \*

The elevator labored under the weight of Marco and his platoon of escorts, screeching threateningly. The ancient light flickered weakly, rocking back and forth, casting bizarre shadows across the five men and two women. Unidentifiable stains (blood, urine, oil?) marked the walls. Marco made sure not to touch them. His impeccable white Grussberg suit was unmarred, a red handkerchief folded neatly in his pocket. The rank stench of the elevator disappeared behind the pungent aroma of the thick Cuban cigar protruding from his mouth, the rising smoke disturbed by the swinging light.

The elevator stopped without warning, the floor display long ago shattered by some turbo-

wiped brain donor. The doors slid open, the four razors, each as impeccably attired as Marco, trained their impressive array of lethal accouterments on the hallway that appeared, screening him and the women from possible harm.

A lone elf stood there, hefting a Mossberg. Shades hid his eyes despite the dimness of the hall, a wire mike extended from his ear to his chin.

"All clear, Mr. Vance," he stated. The four guards advanced, weapons tracking together like some lethal choreography, covering every conceivable hiding place.

Marco followed them, a woman to each side, their bare arms wrapped about his, their refined and perfect faces scanning the walls and ceilings. The elf fell in step at the rear.

Marco's procession turned a bend in the decayed hall, discovering two trolls flanking a battered doorway. One raised a hand to his mouth, muttering something. Then he opened the door and motioned to the newcomers.

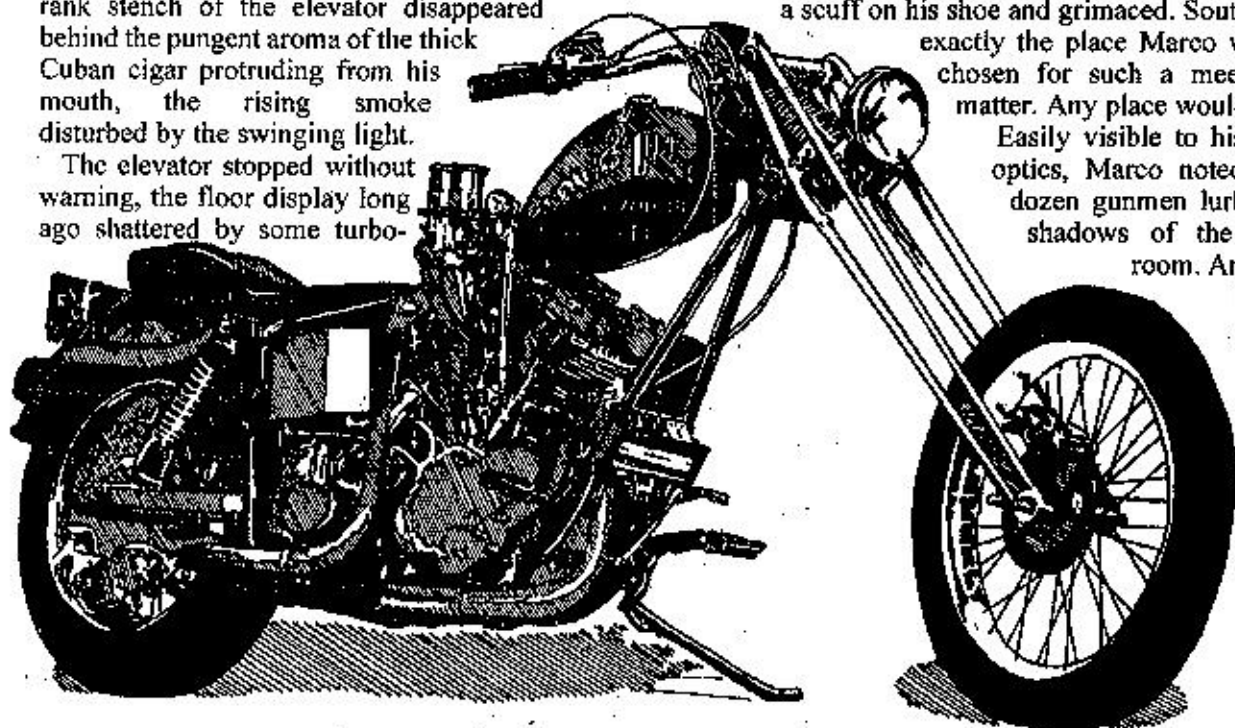
Warily, the razors moved forward and past the trolls. Marco granted the two trolls a jowlish grin as he walked through the doorway. Inside, his men had taken positions near the door, their fields of fire professionally overlapping and easily covering every corner of the large room.

Marco walked out into the middle of the floor, his two female companions flanking him at about two meters. This room was in no better condition than the rest of the building; crumbling macroplast walls, cracked and broken windows, water stains on floors and ceilings, trash everywhere. He looked down to see a scuff on his shoe and grimaced. Southtown. Not

exactly the place Marco would have chosen for such a meet. But, no matter. Any place would serve.

Easily visible to his enhanced optics, Marco noted the half-dozen gunmen lurking in the shadows of the dimly lit room. Armed with a

bewildering array of firearms, he was sure they were just as deadly as his own guards. Fortunately, this was a friendly get-together. A meeting



of two powers.

Marco searched the room for his adversary, but did not find him. He took a long puff on the cigar, stepped a few more meters into the room, and addressed one of the gunmen. "So, where is Mr. Gracante?"

The man did not reply, but spoke into the headset he wore. Only a few seconds later Marco heard a distinctive whirring sound from the windows. Turning, he watched as a large drone descended outside the shattered window, then delicately hovered into the room. Papers and trash scattered around the room, disturbed by the exhaust of the drone. Marco's blonde raised her hand to keep her long hair from blowing, the other women's short hairdo remained unaffected. The drone landed, and a panel slid away, revealing the emaciated torso and head of a balding, old man. The drone's whine died, and the room quieted once again.

"Mr. Gracante." Marco advanced on the drone, gazing down at the old man, a smirk on his lips.

"Yes, Mr. Vance," the old man responded, "you look just as you did four years ago."

Marco circled the drone, puffing appreciatively on his cigar. "And you look a hell of a lot worse. What's this?" He rapped on the drone. "Can't get around any more, eh? Old body finally giving out?"

"Is that why you requested this meeting, to insult me?"

Marco paced back to face Gracante. "Of course not. I called this meeting to tell you to get the hell out of Atlanta."

A weak grin spread across Gracante's face, creating chasms of wrinkles. He chuckled, but it soon turned to a racking cough. His thin hand pulled a tube from the drone and he sucked from it for several breaths. Finally, he spoke. "Strong talk for a fat man, Marco. What makes you think I will do what you tell me?"

Marco continued to puff on his cigar. "I've been back in town six months and I've already regained fifty percent of my old operation. I'll have it all back before the year is out. By bowing out, you'll save yourself a lot of lives, money and headaches." He bent down closer to Gracante. "And headaches can be fatal to someone your age."

Gracante's eyes narrowed. "I don't like threats, Marco."

"I do."

"Then listen to this," Gracante rose up straighter in the drone. "I came in to Atlanta when you were indicted and imprisoned. Within two months I had taken over your operation, and within a year it was grossing thirty percent more than you ever made! You may have initiated the Seoulpa Ring takeovers, but I exploited it to the fullest. Even if you hadn't been convicted, your operation would have collapsed soon enough. Either to the Yaks or the squabbling of the Seoulpas. I cemented what you started, and created a syndicate beyond your capabilities!"

"Who asked you to?"

Gracante laughed; a hollow, pathetic sound. "Nature loathes a vacuum, Marco. And the departure of that fat, bloated body of yours created one hell of a vacuum."

"A vacuum filled quite readily by you," Marco looked out the windows. "You sure moved in quickly, Gracante. A little too quickly, if you ask me."

Gracante smirked. "I'm always ready for an opportunity. And your wallowing operation was ripe for good management, which I readily supplied. With my leadership, Atlanta has become an incredibly profitable venture."

"Money isn't everything," Marco turned to look at Gracante. "You should have stayed in the gambling business. Leave now, and we can still be friends."

Gracante shifted in his drone, and a slight wheeze escaped his lips. "We were never friends, Marco. You were always an arrogant fat man with a lot of guts and little brains. A small-time fixer who got lucky and forged an alliance that created possibilities. Then you got stupid and brash. I would have thought the time you spent inside would have tamed you."

"As you can see, it did not."

Gracante did not speak for some time. At last, he said, "No, it didn't. How did you get out, Marco? I heard you were dead."

"Close, but not quite," Marco reached into his pocket. Gracante's men shifted suddenly, and two red dots appeared on Marco's head. He slowed his movement and held up his free hand, cigar held between index and forefinger. "No problem, gentlemen." He pulled a video scroll out of his pocket and hung it on a nearby column. It unrolled to half a square meter in size, covering the illegible neon graffiti on the support.

"What's this?" Gracante scrutinized the portable video screen.

"The answer to your question. You asked how I got out of prison. A mutual acquaintance helped me. Name of Johnson."

"Never heard of him," Gracante frowned in annoyance at the ubiquitous and useless name.

"He heard of you. You might say he's my silent partner, something of a cash cow. But he doesn't take a percentage, leaves all the action to me. A very altruistic man. The only thing he wants is for me to play this recording for you. Odd, eh?"

Gracante squinted up at Marco. "What kind of game is this, Marco?"

"No game, just listen," Marco reached out and touched the scroll's play button. The flatscreen blinked to life, revealing the refined face of Mr. Johnson.

"Good evening, Mr. Gracante," the deep, resonant voice of Mr. Johnson began, but Marco noted that Gracante did not recognize the voice or the face, "at last we have a chance to meet, in a manner of speaking. But, this is the only manner I could achieve, you are a very hard man to get an appointment with."

"You do not know me. Mr. Vance has probably told you my name is Johnson. Obviously, that is not true."

My name is Henry Brailer." Gracante's eyes widened. "You might remember my father, Tony. He was your friend, before you murdered him."

Gracante looked up at Marco, then to his guards.

Brailler continued: "Your only mistake was not killing me as well. But, you've made no others. I have tried for years to get near you, to avenge my father's murder. I've hired five assassins, and all have failed in their efforts."

A slight sheen appeared on Gracante's forehead.

"You let no one near you. You hide in that fortress you call a home in the Blue Ridges, never coming out except for important business matters. As luck would have it, I was able, with Mr. Vance's unknowing help, to provide just such an important business matter for you."

"Kill them!" Gracante yelled. "Kill them all!"

His guards opened fire, as did Marco's escorts. The sharp staccato of sustained machine gun fire filled the room. Marco's two joy-girls suddenly held hold-outs, but were soon ripped apart by heavy caliber machine guns. Smoke, spent shells, chunks of macroplast, drops of blood, filled the air. The two trolls smashed in through the doors, carrying heavy machine guns which spat out lead and death. The drone sealed itself, and Marco leaped behind it as bullets skittered off its surface.

The firefight lasted only seconds. Bodies lay everywhere, ruptured and torn. Dead.

One troll slipped down against the wall, his neck nothing but ravaged flesh and bone. The other limped into the room, heavy machine gun panning around. One of Marco's escorts struggled to rise, and the troll caressed him with a burst of fire.

Another of Gracante's men appeared, uninjured, from the darkness.

Marco pulled himself up to his feet, blood seeped through his white vest, oil stains spread on his sleeve. He limped back to the front of the drone, noting the lifeless bodies of his men, his two female companions looking like dolls ripped apart by an angry little girl. He grimaced, and turned on the drone.

The drone unsealed once more, revealing a grinning Gracante.

"Too bad, Marco!" He laughed, motioning for his two remaining guards to approach, they kept their weapons on Marco. "Looks like Brailler's little plan didn't work. You should have known better."

Marco frowned deeply, his face wet, pale. Blood seeped from a gash on his forehead. "I had nothing to do with this, Gracante. That wasn't the recording he gave me."

"Of course not! You had nothing to do with it," Gracante's teeth glittered in the flickering light. "It wasn't your fault! What will you do now, Marco, drop to your knees and beg?"

Marco's face darkened.

"Don't worry, Marco. I won't make you beg. Nothing

you can do will keep me from killing you. But I will make it quick if you tell me where Brailer is."

"I have no idea," Marco said.

"That's too ba-"

The video scroll buzzed from where it had fallen, crumpled, during the firefight. Gracante looked at it, as did Marco.

The crumpled and bullet-ridden scroll folded Brailler's image into a bizarre Pizzaro-like portrait. "I'm across the street in the white van, Gracante."

Gracante motioned to his human henchman, who ran over to the window and looked out. "There's a white van down the block, alright."

"But don't bother trying to come and get me," Johnson continued, "you're already dead."

Gracante hastily closed the seal on his drone and the turbofans whined to life.

"You might be wondering why I went to all the trouble of using Marco Vance," said Brailler, his voice clear over the whine of the drone. "Send a villain to kill a villain could be one explanation, but you'd also be amazed at the amount of concentrated explosives you can hide in a 200 kilo body."

Marco stared in disbelief at the video scroll, then back down at his arms and legs. The drone lifted off the floor, moving toward the window. The gunman looked back and forth between the video scroll and Marco, finally turning and running for the door. The troll dropped the HMG, and jumped on the drone, grasping for a hold on its smooth surface, forcing it to drag across the floor. Marco took a step toward the door, then toward the departing drone.

"Good bye, Gracante," Brailler said. "Thanks for your help, Marco."

Marco bent down and clumsily straightened out the video scroll. "Wait, Brailler! You can't do this! I helped you! I did what you asked!"

"And for that I'll grant you an even quicker death than Gracante promised you."

The drone struggled beneath the weight of the troll, scudding across the floor. A harsh metal tearing sound accompanied an explosion of sparks and smoke from one of the rotor housings.

"But you've made an investment!" Marco pleaded, screaming at the chip player. "You've put a lot of money into me! Thousands!"

The drone collided with a support pillar and spun around wildly. Gracante's maniacal voice could barely be heard emanating from within.

"Money isn't everything, Marco," Brailler said.

Marco stood and screamed.

\*\*\*

Henry Brailler pulled away from the curb as the top floors of the condemned building disappeared in a cloud of fire and smoke. Flaming debris fell from the sky like the unforgiving rain of a vengeful god.

# A 'Runner's Guide To Magic

by Linda Naughton

Freaks. Weirdos. Outsiders.

I know that's what some of you think about magicians. I know because I've been there myself. I've had some of those same thoughts. Now I know better. People tend to fear what they don't understand, and they try to shut it out, either through denying its existence or by down-playing its value. I know there are lots of magophobes out there who want nothing to do with magic. But when you're out on the streets, there's no room for prejudice. To survive, you need every edge you can get. And in our world, chummers, the edge is magic. Even if you don't have it, your competition will, and you're going to be doubly fragged.

Some of you are probably wondering why you should give a frag what I have to say. Well, like I said, I've been in your shoes. For three years I ran the shadows. The team I was with was among the best, and it was because we had magical resources and knew how to use them. I spent many months scanning every chip I could find on magical theory. I knew about physical threats, and I wanted to know about the magical ones, too. "Know your enemy" and all that drek. But then I got to know a few real magicians, and learned more about magic by experiencing it first-hand. With my skills as a street sam, and my knowledge of magical theory, I was able to integrate our team's resources, combining physical and magical means to give us the best results. Now I'm retired, and I guess the humanitarian part of me wants to help some

of you newbies out there get to the finish line, like I did. So if you're interested in living, read on.

In our Awakened world, no team of 'runners is complete without a magician. Of course, I realize that even after my spiel in the last few paragraphs, most of you are still going to be skeptical (if you're not, go home...you're not paranoid enough to run the shadows); so I'm not going to just tell you "Get a magician". Instead, I'm going to tell you what a magician can do for your team, using concrete examples, and then you can decide whether it's worth finding one of the gifted few and convincing them to join your team.

One note though, before I begin. Sometimes it may seem as though I'm ignoring the personal aspect of a magician by only telling you how you can best use one on your team. That's not meant to imply that magicians aren't worthwhile just as

individuals. In fact, some of my best friends are mages and shamans. I even married one, for that matter. But this article is meant to tell you why you need a magician on your team, not why you should set aside any prejudices and take the time to get to know him personally.

## 1 - Stealth

When you're on a 'run, the less attention you draw



to yourselves, the better. I think we can all agree that it's far safer to sneak past the sec guards than to duke it out with them. Maybe you like being shot at, but I'm a little sensitive to lead, personally.

A magician with an invisibility spell can make you disappear. Make sure it's a good spell, though...one that works against tech as well as against people. No sense sneaking past the gate guards if the rigger on the closed-circuit camera will be able to see right through the spell and sound the alarm. I've even known a few mages who have designed their own improved invisibility spells, that work against other forms of sensors as well... thermographic, RADAR, you name it.

If you're willing to fund your mage, you can get him (or her...like I said, there's no room for prejudice when your hoop is on the line) to conjure a water elemental to help out with the casting. But the ritual conjuring materials cost money, so you have to consider it an investment. It can be a worthwhile investment, though, if the elemental makes the spell work well enough to fool the big troll with the panther cannon.

Shamans' nature spirits can't help them cast spells like that. On the other hand, they have an extra advantage when it comes to stealth. Just about every type of nature spirit can conceal you (and it doesn't cost money to buy ritual materials to summon one). And the best part is that the concealment carries over into the astral plane. For complete undetectability, there's no substitute. The only down side is that a nature spirit is limited to a specific geographic domain. If you move from one domain to another, you'll be visible for the brief period of time it takes your shaman to summon another spirit appropriate to the new domain.

For optimum stealth, I recommend using an improved invisibility spell on each team member, and then have a nature spirit concealing the invisible team. That way, you've got all the bases covered, and are going to be nearly impossible to detect.

## 2 - Recon

Any 'runner who goes into a mission blind deserves what he gets. A rational team will perform recon first, to find out what they're up against. One common means of recon is a Matrix 'run to find out about the security surrounding a place. Another is using surveillance drones. A third is magic.

A mage or shaman can learn the clairvoyance and/or clairaudience spell. These two spells are invaluable when investigating a site without magical barriers around it. Just have the magician sneak a peek inside the building from a block or so away, and often you can find out anything you need to know.

Of course, most of the interesting targets are going to have magical protections up, so the spells become less practical. Another form of magical recon is to go in astrally. An astrally projecting mage is limited, however, to general layout, guard patrols, and other non-technological data. Unless he overhears

something, he won't be able to tell you what kind of electronic security the place has. Technology just doesn't show up that way in astral space.

I've found that the best way to perform a magical recon is to first have your astrally projecting magician (preferably with a nature spirit tagging along, concealing the astral spy from prying astral eyes) scope out the target, checking for obvious astral security like barriers or wards. Then, see what you can learn through clairvoyance. And then if you want more data, send in the magician again astrally to get a better look.

## 3 - Speed

The best getaway is a fast getaway. And when you've just finished a 'run and you're trying to get out before the Star shows up, having a spirit around to increase your movement can make the difference between slipping away and getting busted. It doesn't have to be a nature spirit. Elementals can also speed you up. However, nature spirits are better because they can conceal you as you're leaving the area at obscene speeds. They can also guard you from any unfortunate accidents (like wrapping your Americar around a phone pole when your spirit's got you going 800kph).

One of my favorite tricks (works especially well against facilities with good perimeter security and open killing grounds) is to use those Nightflyer gliders that came out a year or so ago. You cast invisibility on the team, and fly in on those things, guarded and concealed by a sky spirit of some sort (depending on the weather), and sped up with the spirit or an air elemental. You've landed at the front door before the guards even have a chance to react, assuming that by some miracle they actually spotted you. And then once the 'run is over, you do the same thing on the way out, and you're gone before anyone has a prayer of giving chase.

## 4 - Spells

It may seem pretty fraggin' dense to make a point of saying that magicians have spells. But aside from the fireball spells you see the wizzards slinging on the trid shows, what do you really know about the spells that are out there? I'm guessing not a lot, unless you know some magicians. So let me fill you in.

The best thing is that there's not a whole lot that can't be done with magic, once you spend time figuring out the right spell formula. Why bother with a disguise kit when you can get a spell to make you look like someone else? And I can tell you with absolute certainty that sometimes a good magician can be more successful treating wounds than the best doctor around. There are few limits on the types of spells you can design if your mage has the imagination and theoretical background to handle it. Of course, designing and learning new spells requires a lot of time and effort, but it can be worth it, believe me! I can't tell you the number of times a new spell designed by one of our mages has saved our hoops.

A particularly useful is one that detects people who mean you harm. It's the ultimate last-ditch safeguard against an ambush especially if your magician can get a good range on it. (Although you've still got to watch your back and be careful. Don't rely on the spell too much.)

One of a really good magician's most valuable abilities is Quickening. You want to be stronger? Faster? Smarter? Sure you could get cyberware...but did you also know that you could get a magician to put a spell on you to do the same thing? They can attach a spell to you permanently (until it gets destroyed, that is) which can increase your abilities. It takes a lot of investment on the magician's part, though, so you've got to do some fast talking to convince him. If you can, though, it's worth it. You do risk having some astral magician come along and tear the spell apart, but while it's active, it's great. I speak from experience, since for about a year I had a quickened reflex spell on me. I wasn't as fast as the fastest street sam or anything, but I could hold my own against most cyberjocks.

## 5 - Magical Defense

An old adage says that you have to fight fire with fire. Well, the corps sure believe in that one. They know that many 'runners are going to have magical support, so they're going to get some of their own. And when some corp sec-mage starts hurling fireballs at you, you'll be glad that your team's magician is there to help shield you from the spell. Of course, he won't be able to protect the entire team all the time, especially if you actually want him to be able to cast spells of his own effectively, but it can still be a lifesaver.

Another particularly nasty corp trap is to have an anchored mana barrier. When it detects an intruder, it goes off, trapping you in that area. Without a magician,

you're not getting out of that one, chummers. You can still shoot through the barrier (assuming they only have the one, and didn't add a bullet barrier, too), but you can't move out of it without first destroying the spell (which mundanes like us can't do.)

Also, manifested elementals and nature spirits can really make your life hell if you don't have a magician around to banish them or fry them with spells. Most spirits are tough to kill with firearms and explosions and other ranged attacks. You're better off walking up and pummeling them. (Unless it's a fire elemental, which will burn you...try throwing water on it instead. No, that's not a joke, it really works.) However, most spirits don't do too well against spells, in my experience.

## 6 - Conclusion

I could go on and on listing the endless possibilities available through magic, but that would take forever, and I hope you've gotten the point. Even if you can't find a mage or shaman willing to run with your team (which is entirely possible, considering that only 1% of the population is magically active), you will still be much better off knowing what can be thrown against you. The world has changed, chummers, and is only going to keep changing. Magic is a part of our lives, whether we like it or not. You can either deal with it, and learn to use it to your advantage, or you can wait for it to deal with you. Permanently.



# The Gross-Frankfurt Sprawl, Part Two

## by Jonathan Szeto

The Rhein-Main area (Rhein-Main-Gebiet) is a river valley formed where the Main River joins the Rhein. Surrounded by the Taunus hills in the north, the Spessart mountains in the east and the Odenwald foothills in the south, the Rhein-Main incorporates the actual city of Frankfurt, as well as most of the major sprawls in the Gross-Frankfurt state, such as Mainz, Wiesbaden, Offenbach and Darmstadt.

### ASCHAFFENBURG

#### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 180,000  
 Human: 76%  
 Metahuman: 24%  
**Per Capita Income:** EC 21,000  
**Below Poverty Level:** 23%  
**Telekom:** 0494-18

The easternmost city in the Greater Frankfurt area, Aschaffenburg (also known as A'burg) sits along the Main River, where it flows out from the Spessart mountains. Formerly a part of the state of Bayern (Bavaria), it broke away when the Franconia region seceded from Bavaria, and seceded in turn from the newly-formed state of Franconia and sought annexation with the Greater Frankfurt city-state.

>>>>[And when you consider how this city virtually stinks of money, wouldn't you?]<<<<

---The Frankfurter "Rat" (21:38:49/06-AUG-55)

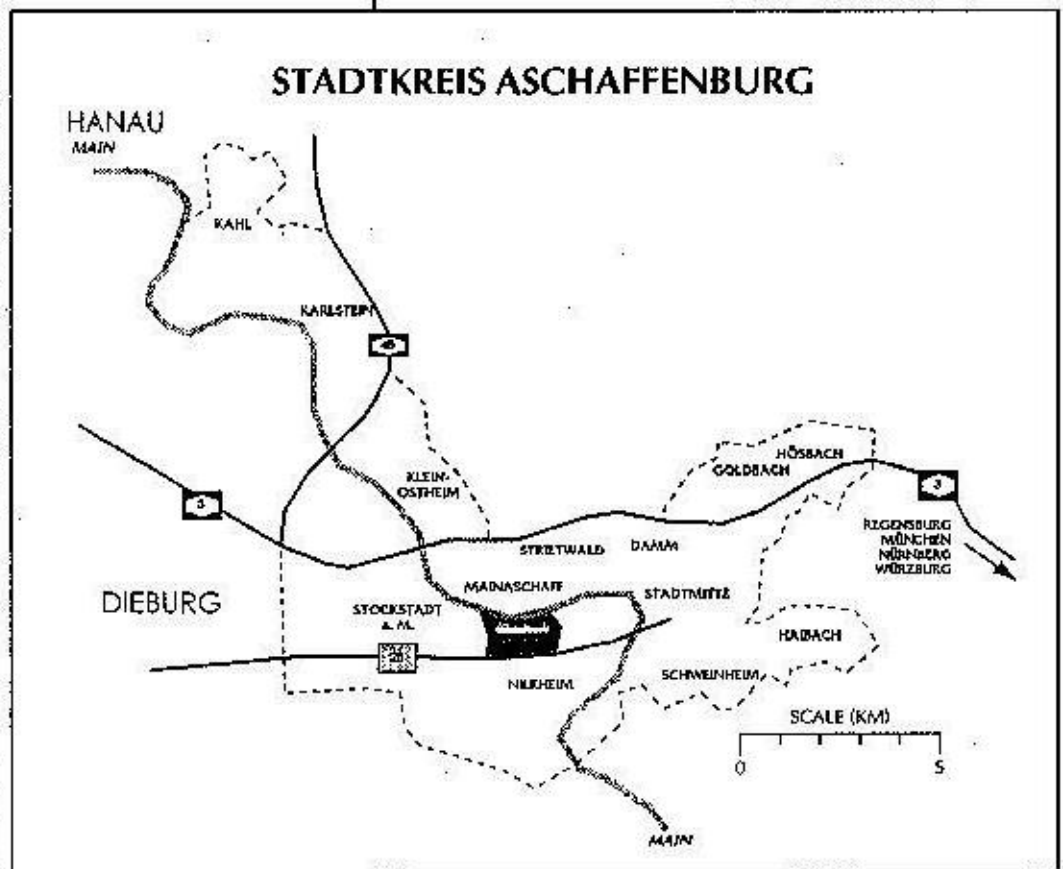
At that time Frankfurt was suffering from a debilitating longshoreman's strike, so the city government quickly approved the petition, annexing Aschaffenburg, in hopes of taking advantage of the city's river

ports on the Main.

The result was the direct opposite of what the city-state council had hoped. Instead of breaking the strike, the annexation worsened it, as angry longshoremen stepped up the level of violence. Armed bands of men began hijacking barges and brought weapons on board, firing up any ship attempting to move upstream towards A'burg. During late October of 2045, a couple of hijacked barges sailed up the Main and actually began attacking the Aschaffenburg Hafen. In response, Aschaffenburg called out the BIS, who intercepted the longshoremen near the town of Stockstadt. In what would later be known as the Stockstadt Massacre, the BIS engaged the rebellious longshoremen with autocannon and mortar fire from land-based APCs, as well as combat helicopters armed with Bandit AGM missiles.

>>>>[A little excessive, nicht wahr?]<<<<  
 ---Egon Eager (08:22:34/04-AUG-55)

>>>>[Yeah, well, by that point the strike had gotten out of hand, erupting into a full-scale riot.]<<<<  
 ---Hellter Skellter (14:32:29/06-AUG-55)



>>>>[In addition to fighting city hall, the longshoremen were receiving unexpected resistance

from the railroad trade unions, who were making a profit from hauling cargo out of the Aschaffenburg Hafen. A week before the Stockstadt Massacre, a bomb exploded on the railroad overpass over B469 near Babenhausen, forcing a freight train to derail onto the highway, killing the train crew and three motorists.]<<<<<<

--Struwelpeter (14:47:15/08-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Also, there've been a number of suspicions lately that the strike was being encouraged by some outside influences. Most likely anarchist polis or terrorist groups.]<<<<<<

--Prinz Cortio (21:38:21/08-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Neu-Baader-Meinhof, I've heard.]<<<<<<

--Frazier (03:09:00/10-AUG-55)

>>>>>[And I've heard that the state of Franconia was supporting the strike and fanning the violence. See the next para for clarification.]<<<<<<

---NWAF (10:53:13/10-AUG-55)

While all this was going on, Frankfurt was waging another battle in the Bundestag Assembly in Hannover, as a somewhat ticked-off Franconia challenged the annexation of Aschaffenburg as illegal and demanded that the city return under Franconian control.

>>>>>[And with good reason, as far as Nrnberg was concerned. As part of northern Bavaria, Aschaffenburg was a major industrial center, processing natural resources from nearby towns in the Spessart. Also, more importantly, Nrnberg desperately needed Aschaffenburg's river port, as an export center for Franconia; without it, ships would have to navigate a longer and more difficult trek out of Wrzburg, the harbors of which are nowhere near as large or accommodating as A'Burg's.]<<<<<<

---Prof M. (21:54:19/18-AUG-55)

Frankfurt countered that Aschaffenburg's annexation was legal, since it had seceded from Franconia, implying that if the annexation was illegal, then so was Franconia's secession from Bavaria. Not wishing to give that southern state any ammunition to use against them, Franconia backed down.

>>>>>[Though not before it gave Bavaria the idea to go to the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe to challenge Franconia's secession, which was recognized by the Bundestag. The justices are still working that one, but boy, is Franconia one unhappy state right now.]<<<<<<

---Rechtshund (09:55:41/20-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Not everyone in A'Burg is pleased with the Court's decision. Amongst the dissenters includes a

bunch of exemist guerillas/terrorists who call themselves the "Unterfranken Gemeinschaft.]<<<<<<

---Hellter Skellter (19:28:55/26-AUG-55)

Meanwhile, while all these controversies raged, Aschaffenburg suffered, as the violence and legal battles discouraged many businesses from investing there. However, now that both incidents are well in the past, the city has been recovering slowly, though not as quickly as the city council would like. Aschaffenburg's economy revolves around shipping and heavy industry. A'burg's industry primarily processes natural resources, from minerals in the Spessart to wood from the Odenwald. Shipping, however, as well as business round the Hafen area, has been recovering at a much slower pace, as it has to compete with the river ports in Frankfurt, Mainz and Hanau, as well as deal with an unwritten boycott by Franconian shippers.

### Innenstadt (A)

Rising above the glass and stone landscape of downtown Aschaffenburg sits the Schloa Johannisburg along the banks of the Main. One of the most prominent castles in the Rhein-Main region, this historic landmark is now owned by Lochund Brauerei, the largest brewery in Gross-Frankfurt, and one of the largest in southern Germany.

>>>>>[Wholly owned, operated and subsidized by AG Chemie Europa.]<<<<<<

---De-kanter (18:34:11/05-AUG-55)

Although most of the castle has been converted into office space for Lochund executives, the brewery still maintains the castle's historic museum in the eastern courtyard. Additionally, the brewery owns and operates a restaurant on the mezzanine overlooking the Main, recommended for its stockage of Lower Franconian wines.

>>>>>[They certainly aren't attracting customers with their beer...]<<<<<<

---Bischof (20:11:02/07-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Since AG Chemie owns Lochund, I've heard rumors that they (AG Chemie) has a secret facility underground, underneath the castle dungeon. What or why I can't say for sure.]<<<<<<

---Gold Main-er (20:42:33/10-AUG-55)

### Damm (B)

>>>>>[Also known as "Damn" by the locals.]<<<<<<

---Hellter Skellter (09:05:22/14-AUG-55)

Most of Aschaffenburg's heavy industries are concentrated in this district. Many of the plants here consist of metal and paper mills, and ore refineries

which create usable substances out of raw material exported from the Odenwald and western Spessart.

### Hafen (B)

Of all the ports in Groa-Frankfurt, the Aschaffenburg Hafen is the smallest, in terms of facilities and traffic. Hardly as busy as in its heyday during the turn of the century, the local area has fallen upon a chronic recessionary period, with growth being measured in the tenths of percentages.

>>>>[Interestingly enough, it also happens to be the only port not controlled by the German mafia, the Russian mafia, or any other gang for that matter. I guess there is an advantage to being boring, after all.]<<<<<

--Prinz Cortio  
(22:06:50/18-AUG-55)

### Schweinheim (D)

Up until the late 1980s this southern district of the cities was occupied by the US Army until the end of the decade, as American forces began drawing down. Although the Travis and Allen Park residential areas remained until the final pullout of forces around 2017, the other ninety percent of former American barracks remained unoccupied and unused, up to the present day.

>>>>[You mean some megacorp didn't grab up the territory and convert it into an arcology? How very strange....]<<<<<

--BlutBrut (00:08:41/19-AUG-55)

>>>>[Well, when the Americans first moved out, the city demanded that they clean up after themselves, and Germans being Germans, they demanded the property to be fastidiously clean, right down to the last drop of gasoline at the fuel point. Of course, the US Army had other problems at that time (like waging battles in Iraq, Somalia, and Washington D.C.) so they

put it off until tomorrow. Well, tomorrow suddenly came, the Americans went, and here's Aschaffenburg, left to finish the cleanup.]<<<<<

--Ammonia Euphoria (19:09:56/20-AUG-55)

>>>>[There's got to be more to the story than that. Remember two years ago, when Fuchi offered to lease the kasernes off of A'burg, even offering to pay for the cleanup? Well, not even a month after that, the project director, Heinrich Masska, fell victim to "street violence." Succeeding directors after that also perished from assorted "tragic accidents." Fuchi took the hint and backed down.]<<<<<

--De-kanter (07:15:22/22-AUG-55)

>>>>[So what? Sounds almost like regular Jap-bashing by one of those xenophobe policlubs.]<<<<<

--BlutBrut (12:36:45/23-AUG-55)

>>>>[Yes, but this had happened before. And with none other than AG Chemie Europa.]<<<<<

--The Frankfurter "Rat"  
(13:41:21/24-AUG-55)

>>>>[Here's another interesting footnote. The Roadgunner Brigade go-gang establishes the abandoned kaserne as its stomping ground. By day. Around sunset they emigrate en masse to A45, not leaving a person behind to guard their headquarters.

Nobody returns to the base until the sun comes up.]<<<<<

--Gold Main-er

(20:48:13/25-AUG-55)

Today Travis and Allen Parks are ghetto districts which house many of the metahumans in Aschaffenburg, while overgrown weeds continue to choke the grounds of the remaining kasernes. Predictably, Schweinheim is the poorest district in Aschaffenburg (and most of the Rhein-Main area as well), and it has the highest crime rate outside of Mainz.



## STADTTEIL Security Rating

Goldbach: Lower Class D  
Hsbach: Middle/Lower Class C  
Kahl: Middle/Lower Class C  
Karlstein: Lower Middle Class B  
Klein-Ostheim: Middle Class B  
Stockstadt: Lower Class C  
Mainaschaff: Lower Middle Class B  
Nilkheim: Lower Class C  
Strietwald: Middle Class A

## DARMSTADT

### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 346,000

Human: 75%

Metahuman: 25%

**Per Capita Income:** EC 55,000

**Below Poverty Level:** 14%

**Telekom:** 0494-16

Situated at the base of the Odenwald foothills, Darmstadt is the southernmost sprawl in the Rhein-Main region. Since the two major avenues, A5 and A67, to Mannheim, Heidelberg, Stuttgart and all other points south, run by Darmstadt, the city acts as the gate city to the South.

Often referred to as the garden city of the Rhein-Main region, Darmstadt still remains the greenest of all cities in Germany, despite the ravages of pollution over the last half-century, due, in most part, to the high devotion of land and city budget to maintaining parks all around the city.

>>>>[Yeah, well, the city elders had to do SOMETHING to hide all that ugly Nouveau architecture.]<<<<<

--Century 22 (12:51:33/08-AUG-55)

Darmstadt also stands out as one of the technological research centers in all of Europe. The city attracts thousands of students who enroll in the University's Technikhochschule Darmstadt (Darmstadt Institute of Technology, abbreviated THD), Darmstadt attracts thousands of students from Germany and abroad to

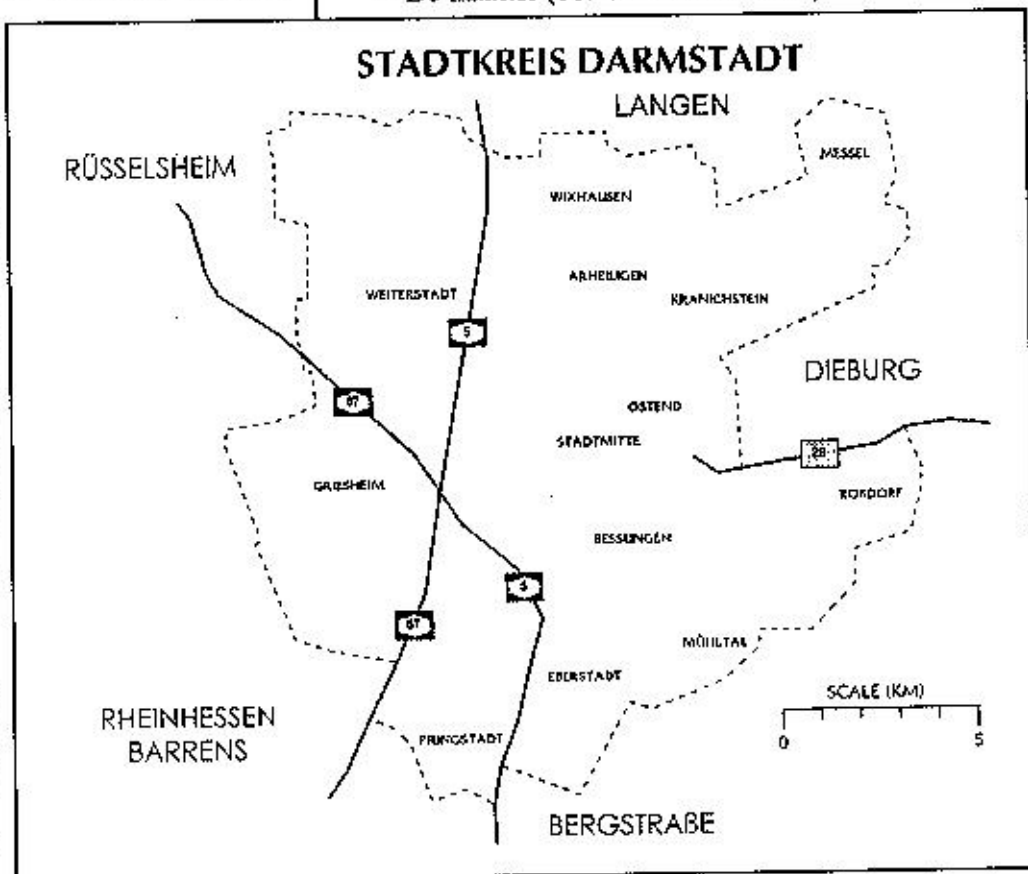
study and research in all aspects of science and engineering.

Not surprisingly, many corporations branch research centers in Darmstadt, which work closely with the Institute. Many corporate research projects often transform into student design projects, and an extremely high percentage of students are supported by corporate scholarships.

Of all the corporate research facilities in Darmstadt, the largest and best known is Darmstadt Bioptics, one of the major subsidiaries owned by AG Chemie Europa. Located in the southwest corner of the city core, en route towards Griesheim, Darmstadt Bioptics pursues cutting-edge research and development projects in optical engineering, and cybernetic applications in particular. With the recent growth in the field of bioware, though, Darmstadt Bioptics is diversifying into bionic applications and research.

>>>>>[Cutting-edge research, ha! Most of the "research" is grunt legwork for the top brains in DB's parent company. Darmstadt Bioptics is little more than a farm company for fresh minds out of THD.]<<<<<

--De-kanter (16:25:27/12-AUG-55)



>>>>>[DB does a lot for eyes, all right--AG Chemie Europa uses its participation in THD's research program to infiltrate the co-op database and spy on ongoing research projects by competitors. And, in some cases, they do more than simply watch.]<<<<<

--Allanon (22:49:56/14-AUG-55)

## Eberstadt (A)

Sitting at the southernmost reaches of the city, the district of Eberstadt is becoming the fastest growing in Darmstadt. Located on the northern extreme of the district is the Fuchi Technology Park. Occupying the remains of a former US Army post, the Fuchi Tech Park focuses its research primarily on inter- and intra-satellite communications and electronics. Additionally, the Fuchi Tech Park is the main south German server for FuchiNet, Fuchi's newly inaugurated online service.

>>>>[FuchiNet is merely an extension of the public server already available for employees and their families. Its value is passable at best, and not about to interest a serious Matrix surfer. FN offers little more than public tele-forums and, of course, virtual malls. The collective entertainment cells, though, are worth a look into.]<<<<<

--Fast Eddie (22:25:19/16-OCT-55)

>>>>[Don't write it off as a total waste, kleiner. One thing FuchiNet does offer is an up-close, zero lag, in-depth look at news in electronics business and technology. Not as fresh as what you might get from your fixer or Schmidt, but better than the daily newsfaxes.]<<<<<

--Sir SCSI (16:01:42/20-OCT-55)

>>>>[Forget about trying to find a back door into the Fuchi corporate net from FN. No SANs, no gateways, nada, nichts, nil. However, FN does have some nasty counter-reaction IC available to the sysops in the event of "suspicious guests."]<<<<<

--clypso (08:52:23/29-OCT-55)

>>>>[Getting back to the original subject, though, the Darmstadt Fuchi site does have an unusually powerful satcom station. Certainly a lot more than needed for a plain commercial server. Suspicions, anyone?]<<<<<

--Struwelpeter (23:32:14/1-NOV-55)

>>>>[Dangerous words, alter. Talk like that is gonna invite some Fuchi wolves knocking at your door.]<<<<<

--Digi-talisman (05:33:14/5-NOV-55)

Located at the south end of Eberstadt is the other major place of interest in the district, the Frankenstein kaserne. Sitting between the city districts of Darmstadt and the Bergstrae, the Frankenstein kaserne is a garrison for the Bundeswehr 123rd mechanized infantry regiment, as well as a Bundeswehr signal battalion and ordnance battalion.

>>>>[The regimental commander, Oberst <<Colonel>> Tomas Pforschlag, is not a man to be

trifled with. As a junior officer during the military regime, Tomas was court-martialed once for using excessive brutality while breaking up a riot in Stuttgart (when the charge comes from the military regime, you know that he's extreme!). He runs the garrison with two iron fists, and the security makes Tir na nOg look absolutely permissive!]<<<<<

--Odinwall (22:36:51/03-NOV-55)

>>>>[Yes, but with such a high stress environment, cracks are bound to develop. A lot of subordinate commanders hate his guts, and the politicking and infighting is intense. Also, Pforschlag doesn't have a really good grasp of electronic security and routinely abuses his signal troops.]<<<<<

--Captain Commo (02:12:37/07-NOV-55)

## STADTTEIL Security Rating

Arheilgen: Middle Class A  
Bessungen: Lower Middle Class A/B  
DA-Industriegebiet: Lower Class A  
DA-Ost: Upper Class AA  
Griesheim: Middle/Upper Class AA  
Kranichstein: Middle Class B  
Messel: Lower Middle Class C  
Mhlal: Middle Class A  
Pfungstadt: Lower Middle Class B  
Roadorf: Middle/Upper Class AA  
Wixhausen: Lower Middle Class B  
Weiterstadt: Middle Class A

## DIEBURG

### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 122,000

Human: 71%

Metahuman: 27%

**Per Capita Income:** EC 29,000

**Below Poverty Level:** 16%

**Telekom:** 0494-17

The majority of the grounds surrounding Dieburg is still farmland, providing what little food that can be produced to feed the Gross-Frankfurt area. Though hardly enough for Frankfurt to maintain self-sufficiency, it provides the majority of foodstuffs for this area.

The few towns in this sub-sprawl provide housing for the workers who maintain the farm-factories and hydroponic gardens in this area. Additionally, Dieburg contains a large number of food-processing plants which process the foodstuffs harvested from this area and the neighboring communities in the Odenwald.

## Dieburg (A)

To an outsider, the city seems to be smothered under

a blanket of drek, as the northeastern section of the city is choked with food processing plants and other factories and refineries that process all manner of organic material, from ersatz meat to fertilizer. To the south and upwind of the city lies the Deutsche Bundespost Fachhochschulen, a training academy for apprentices beginning work with the German national postal and telecom utility.

>>>>>[Also laden with glaciers of IC, though I don't know why, since there's hardly anything there worth breaking into it for.]<<<<<<

---Doctor Dax  
(22:37:29/10-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Maybe you're just looking at it wrong. Don't think of it as your traditional Universitt or Technikhochschule, which conducts all sorts of interesting research secrets. Think of it more as an bungplatz >>training ground:: Sysop<< for would-be corporate deckers.]<<<<<<

---Burnt Umbrage  
(03:46:04/14-AUG-55)

### Babenhausen (D)

>>>>>[Also called "Blab-enhausen" or "Babe-enhausen" by the locals in Dieburg, Darmstadt and A'burg. Go figure.]<<<<<<

---Hellter Skellter  
(20:32:05/17-AUG-55)

Since the withdrawal of American forces from the Babenhausen kaserne, this neighborhood has plummeted into a chronic recession from the loss of one major source of income. Today most of the wageslaves living in this area work for the EMC instrument plant, or the EBM2 research facility, standing where the kaserne used to be.

>>>>>[For a real good time, call 0494-16-073-3626. Ask for Erika.]<<<<<<

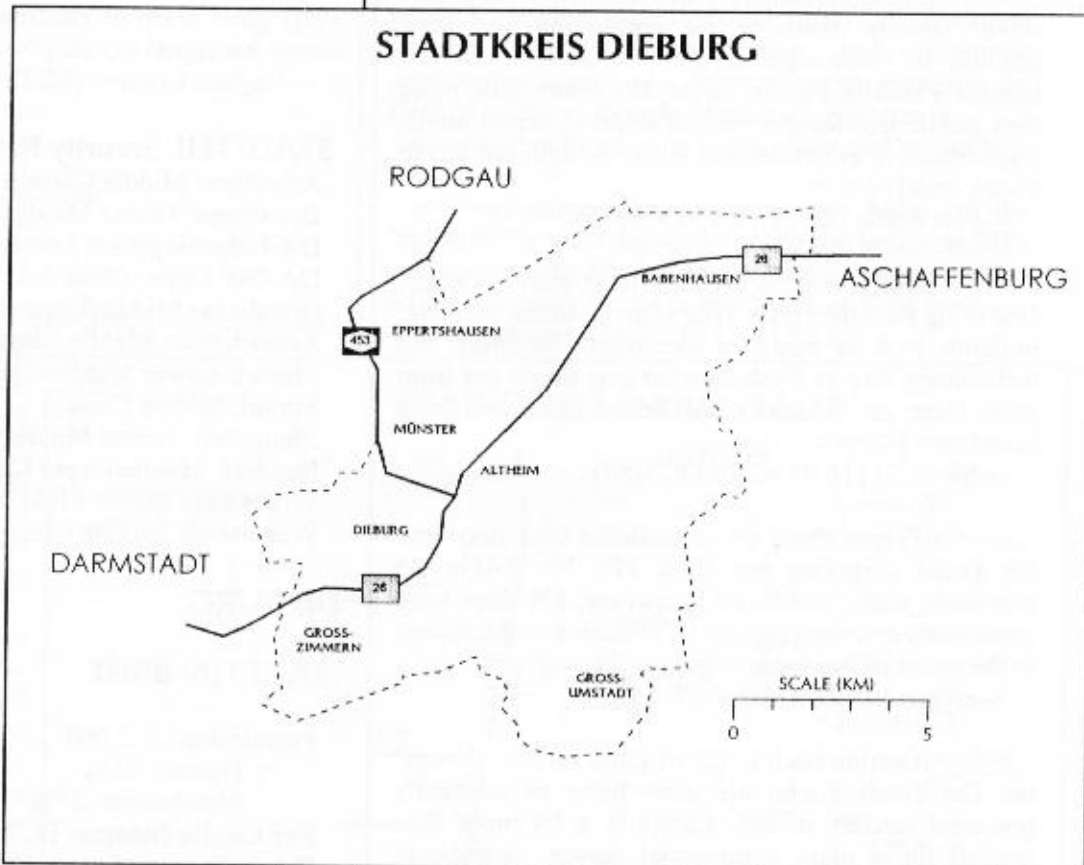
---Frulein Mller (13:13:13/20-JUN-55)

>>>>>[Somebody get the sick fraggers off this board...]<<<<<<

---Bischof (21:04:22/17-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Since the Awakening Babenhausen has been beset by an extraordinarily large number of magically-related incidents. Many sightings of ghosts have been reported to the local polizei, and there have been an unusually high number of magically related assaults and homicides involving magic. Last month there was a big ruckus raised when an EBM2 wage mage got geeked battling a wraith by the railroad yards. Since then a lot of magicians from Heidelberg and Marburg have been rolling into town in the hopes of catching it.]<<<<<<

---Gold Main-er (03:16:24/26-AUG-55)



>>>>>[Babenhausen has had a dark history of bizarre and sinister incidents, dating back since the town's inception in the Middle Ages. During the 16th century a series of plagues and ill events resulted in a massive witch hunt. If legend is to be believed, the town burned all women who had red hair. One particular woman, Frau Mueller, a red-haired cleaning woman, was burned at the stake, after three men, all who had previously courted her, were killed under mysterious circumstances.

During the mid-19th century, an unexpected plague and series of mysterious murders prompted another witch hunt. During one hunt, a woman reputedly descended from Frau Mueller, was stoned to death. Not less than 24 hours after this, her boyfriend bought it.

During the early years of the last century, several soldiers stationed at the kaserne began mysteriously

disappearing. After one soldier unexpectedly committed suicide, investigators discovered five of the missing soldiers dead in the attic. Also, they learned that the soldier was planning to marry a girl who worked on the kaserne. The Mdchen's name? Mueller.

Late into the twentieth century, a little girl belonging to one of the American military families stationed in Babenhausen disappeared during the middle of the night, only to be found several hours later that morning in a quarry, brutally murdered. Eight months later, following extensive DNA testing of the soldiers and townspeople, American MPs arrested a soldier on the kaserne. Although never admitted into the records, several soldiers claim that he was seeing a red-haired woman in town by the name of Mueller.]<<<<<<

---Dr. Strange (14:57:02/27-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Wait a minute...]<<<<<<

---Bischof (22:16:12/27-AUG-55)

### STADTTEIL Security Rating

- Altheim: Lower Middle Class C
- Eppertshausen: Lower Middle Class B
- Groa-Umstadt: Lower Middle Class C
- Groa-Zimmern: Middle Class A
- Mnster: Middle Class A

## HANAU

### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 233,000

Human: 71%

Metahuman: 29%

**Per Capita Income:** EC 25,000

**Below Poverty Level:** 31%

**Telekom:** 0494-15

The center of heavy industry in Gross-Frankfurt, Hanau is better known for the Gross-Auheim Atomkraftwerk (Nuclear Plant), which is the first sight that greets travelers departing from the Frankfurt Flughafen on Autobahn 3, for all points in Franconia and Bavaria.

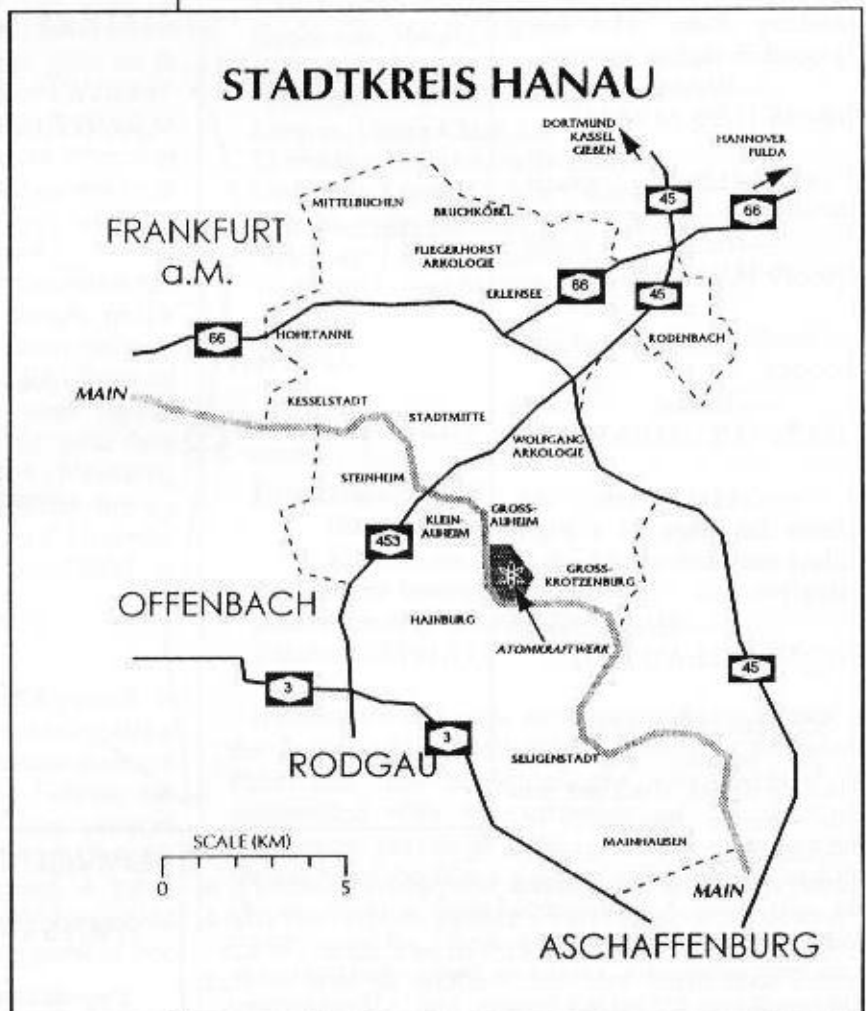
>>>>>>[That, in short, sums up Hanau in and of itself in a nutshell. Everything that follows from here on is essentially filler.]<<<<<<

---The Frankfurter "Rat" (21:44:38/14-AUG-55)

### Erlensee/Wolfgang (AA)

Following the departure of American forces, these neighborhoods degenerated into recession, until Ares Europe bought out the rights to the former American compounds. Nowadays the neighborhoods of Erlensee

and Wolfgang host workers belonging to the various arcologies of Ares Integrated Solutions. Most of Ares Integrated's offices and laboratories are located at the Argonner Zentrum in Wolfgang, while most of the development and production goes on at the Fliegerhorst Industriegebiet in Erlensee. Additionally, Ares operates a small research park outside of the Gross-Frankfurt area in nearby Bdingen, in the state of Hessen-Nassau.



### Gross-Auheim (A)

Infamous for its nuclear reactor, which converted over to fusion in the late 40s after a protracted and controversial decommissioning, the neighborhood of Gross-Auheim also has to live down AG Chemie's Radiological Laboratory, which was constructed prior to the reactor's changeover. As the name implies, the RadLab (as it's known by the locals) researches on the practical application of radiation and radioactive processes to industry.

Security in the area is very tight, following several violent clashes with environmental protestors in the last decade. Additionally, since 2045 Gross-Auheim has seen four attempted attacks from Greenwar ecoterrorists.

>>>>[Ever since the nuclear scare around the turn of the century and still continuing to the present day, allegations have been flying fast and furious casting suspicion on the Atomkraftwerk's safety standards.]<<<<

--Geistmann (10:45:20/18-AUG-55)

>>>>[This isn't proof, or even admissible evidence, but I'll say one thing: there sure are a lot of strange-looking folks who hang around in Hanau.]<<<<

--Bruder Grimm (04:46:11/20-AUG-55)

>>>>[Like yourself.]<<<<

--Niemand Sonder (06:29:48/21-AUG-55)

>>>>[Eat drek and die.]<<<<

--Bruder Grimm (23:51:14/21-AUG-55)

>>>>[Tsk, tsk, tsk. Such language in a high-class establishment such as this!]<<<<

--Struwelpeter (22:50:38/22-AUG-55)

### Seligenstadt (AA)

An historic old town before it was absorbed into the Hanau Stadtkreis of Gross-Frankfurt, Seligenstadt retains its Renaissance atmosphere, making it a popular weekend retreat for sararimen who can't afford to play in Bad Homburg, as well as a home for low-level executives who can't afford to live in Bad Homburg or Wiesbaden. On the opposite bank of the Main, towards Karlstein, MSI operates a research facility alongside the banks of the Gustavsee Lake.

>>>>[MSI all but owns this town. In addition to being a retreat for its sararimen and rest home for retired execs, MSI also uses the town as an important meetingplace. No, not the bigshot corporate power meetings that go down in Niederrad and Wiesbaden, but still important meetings for important operations (have I danced around the edges long enough for you out there to figure out what I mean?)]<<<<

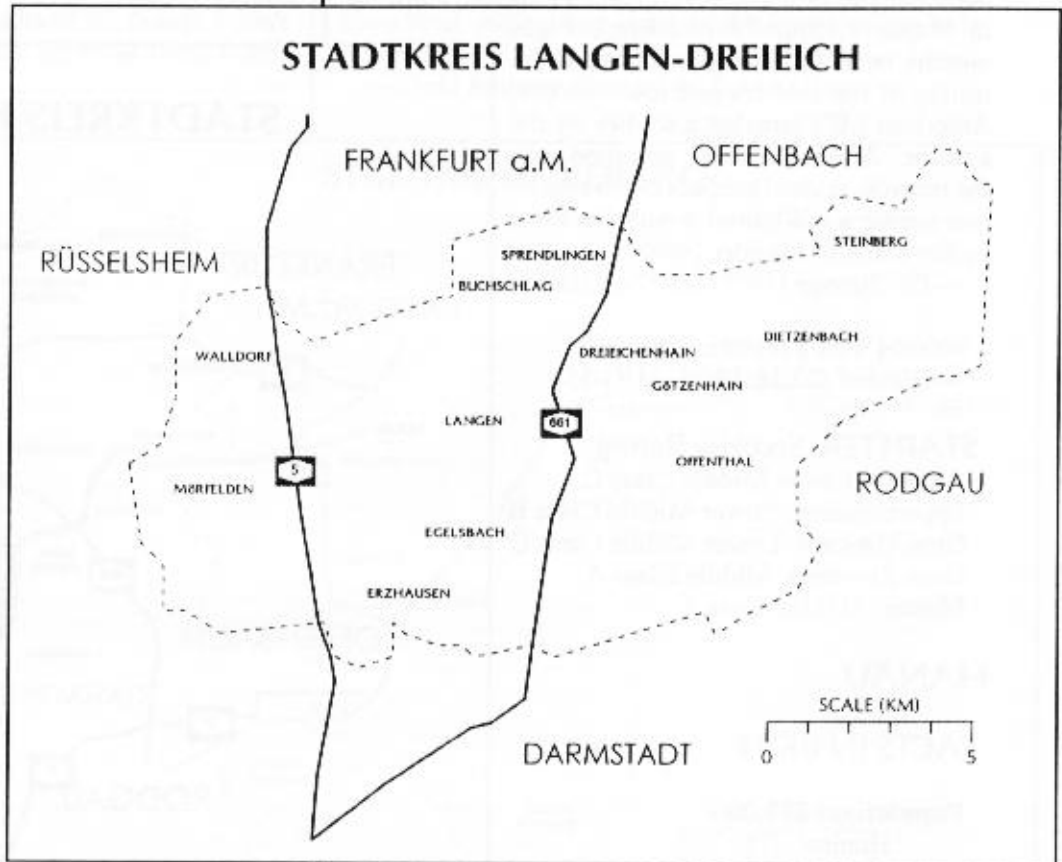
--Lemondeth (19:36:35/17-AUG-55)

### STADTTEIL Security Rating

Bruchk bel: Lower Class D

Groa-Krotzenburg: Middle/Lower Class C

Hainburg: Middle Class A/B  
 Hohetanne: Lower Class D/E  
 Kesselstadt: Lower Class C  
 Klein-Auheim: Middle Class B  
 Mittelbuchen: Lower Class D  
 Rodenbach: Lower Middle Class B/C  
 Steinheim: Middle Class A



## LANGEN-DREIEICH

### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 187,000  
 Human: 79%  
 Metahuman: 21%  
**Per Capita Income:** EC 41,000  
**Below Poverty Level:** 18%  
**Telekom:** 0494-16

Situated on the southern flank of Frankfurt am Main, between that city and Darmstadt, the cities of Langen and Dreieich merged in 2007, as middle-class sararimen emigrated en masse from Frankfurt a.M. and Offenbach in the wake of the exodus of refugees into the Rhein-Main area. Since the turn of the century, Langen-Dreieich has been the site of Frankfurt's growing microtronics industry and information systems management.

>>>>[Which run a distant second and third behind

its prime industry, the deforestation of the Frankfurter Staatwald.]<<<<<<

---Sachsen-squatter (22:53:40/17-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Well, give them credit for their infotech management. At least that corner of the Matrix isn't VERY obsolete, only slightly.]<<<<<<

---Odeor (23:39:41/19-AUG-55)

Although Mueller-Schlechter Infotech maintains its main office within Frankfurt a.M., most of the legwork of research, development and production goes on in industrial parks in Langen, Sprendlingen and Walldorf. Most of the R&D, though, actually occurs in Langen itself, with mass production relegated to the other two subcities, although the Sprendlingen plant carries most of the responsibility for producing prototype models.

>>>>>[Security note: the Frankfurt-Mannheim rail line, a main route for passenger and freight traffic between Frankfurt and all points south, runs right next to the eastern edge of MSI's Langen facility. With all the noise, heat, motion and all that other ruckus generated by the traffic, this plays havoc with their standard security systems along that flank. Naturally, however, MSI compensates for this vulnerability by generously contributing to the security of Deutsche Bundesbahn along that branch from Frankfurt to Darmstadt.]<<<<<<

---Alannon (17:21:08/21-AUG-55)

The other major presence in Langen Dreieich is DuPont Chemicals, which maintains several plastics factories throughout the area. Despite intense pressure from its main competitor, AG Chemie Europa, the UCAS-based DuPont home office has resisted intensive pressure to concede its Langen-Dreieich facilities to the German chemical company. A token presence, whose factories produce mostly household plastics, DuPont's facilities give it a small toehold into the European market.

>>>>>[Something which irritates the hell out of AG Chemie (simply because they don't own EVERYTHING in Frankfurt). Up until about two years ago, AG Chemie pulled every dirty trick in the book (and a few outside of it) to force DuPont Langen to its knees. Lately, though, the coercion techniques have tapered off, as AG Chemie's board has been re-examining whether it's worth spending millions of nuyen for a few small production plants.]<<<<<<

---Prinz Cortio (20:00:11/20-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Of course, DuPont has returned the favor by using its Langen offices as a springboard for some "unorthodox business initiatives."]<<<<<<

---De-kanter (19:57:22/21-AUG-55)

Except at the fringes, gang and street crime is mostly rare. Mob activity is moderately active, though nowhere nearly approaching the rampant level seen in Mainz or Frankfurt a.M. White-collar crime, however, has become a major problem for the Langen polizei.

### STADTTEIL Security Rating

Buchschlag: Lower Middle Class B  
Dietzenbach: Middle Class A  
Dreieichenhain: Middle Class A  
Egelsbach: Middle Class A  
Erzhausen: Middle Class B  
G tzenhain: Middle Class A  
Langen: Upper Class AA  
M rfelden: Lower Middle Class C  
Offenthal: Lower Middle Class C  
Sprendlingen: Middle/Lower Class B/C  
Steinberg: Lower Class D  
Walldorf: Lower Middle Class C

## MAINZ

### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 494,000

Human: 66%

Metahuman: 31%

**Per Capita Income:** EC 17,500

**Below Poverty Level:** 72%

**Telekom:** 0494-111

It's been a bad decade for this city. As the capitol of the former state of Rheinland-Pfalz (the Rhineland Palatinate), the health of the city declined in conjunction with the sufferings of the state, as metahuman revolts in 2042 led to the secession and formation of the Black Forest Troll Kingdom and the Duchy of Westrhein-Luxemburg. Additionally, the damming of the Rhein which sunk Koblenz had just as devastating effects on Mainz, kilometers upstream, as massive flooding washed out half of downtown and northern Mainz. As one of the losses was the State Council offices, the state government was relocated to a provisional capitol in Pirmasens.

Physically and economically devastated, the city of Mainz was unable to rebuild itself, nor could the state government of the newly-formed Badensian Palatinate offer any help, having recently suffered a major blow from the secession of Ludwigshafen, which was heavily influenced by AG Chemie Europa. As the city slipped further into anarchy, the Baden-Pfalz government appealed to the AGS. In response, Gross-Frankfurt offered to annex the now-ruined city, to which Pirmasens capitulated.

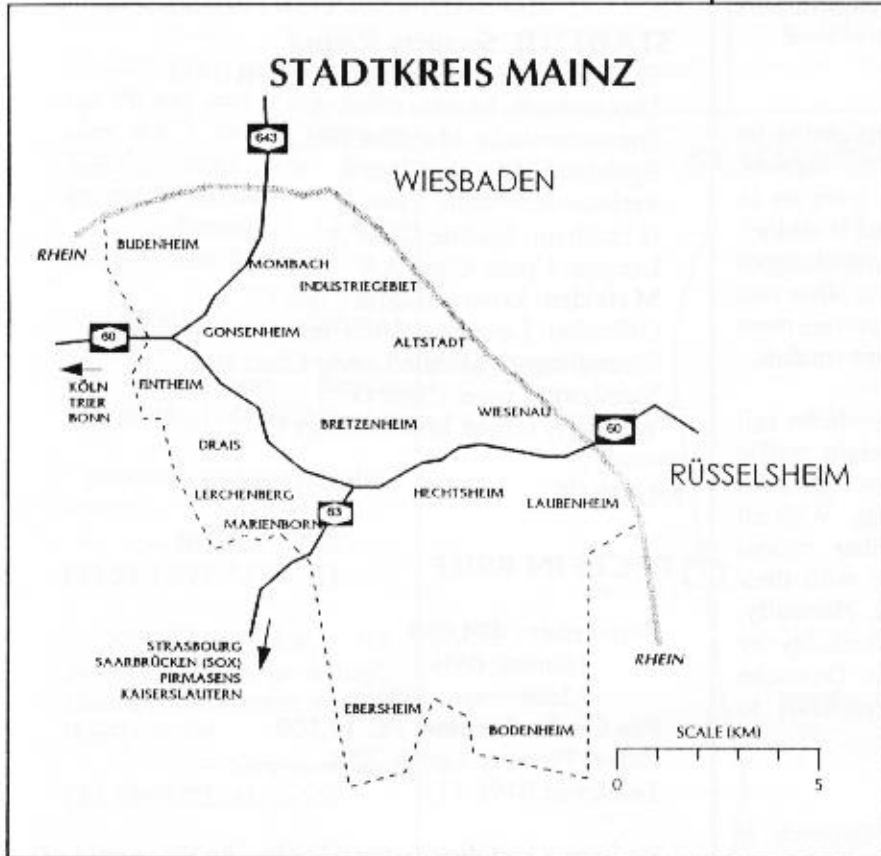
>>>>>[For the reasons why, see the section covering Wiesbaden.]<<<<<<

---Raghnal (21:56:22/19-AUG-55)

With financial help from Gross-Frankfurt, Mainz was able to hire enough engineers and magicians to terraform the area, siphoning off and diverting the floodwaters into artificially produced canals, reservoirs and the like.

the stretch of A60 from the Rhein River to the Sd Mainz Kreuz, where A63 intersects.

Throughout most of the city, the struggling economy depends on work from the various heavy industrial plants belonging to AG Chemie, ECC Eurotronics and Saeder-Krupp Sondergertebau. However, to the south, near Laubenheim, begins the Rheinhesse Wine Valley region, which has brought limited recovery to the southern part of the city.



### STADTTEIL Security Rating

- Altstadt: Middle Class B
- Bretzenheim: Lower Class D
- Budenheim: Lower Class D
- Draais: Lower Class D
- Fintheim: Lower Class/Squatter E
- Gonsenheim: Lower Class D
- Hechtsheim: Lower/Middle Class C
- Laubenheim: Middle Class A
- Lerchenberg: Lower/Middle Class C
- MZ-Industriegebiet: Lower Class B
- MZ-Nord: Lower Class C
- Marienborn: Lower/Middle Class C
- Mombach: Lower Class/Squatter E
- Weisenau: Lower Class C

### OFFENBACH

#### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 251,000

Human: 67%

Metahuman: 32%

**Per Capita Income:** EC 13,000

**Below Poverty Level:** 81%

**Telekom:** 0494-13

As refugees began pouring into the Rhein-Main area from the rest of Germany, an overburdened Frankfurt began pushing them away to the city of Offenbach, south of downtown and east of Sachsenhausen. The residents of Offenbach complained long and loud about the explosion of refugee camps and shantytowns that soon appeared on the fringes of the township. Eventually these complaints began to turn into acts of violence, but no serious damage had been inflicted before the new military government stepped in with its forced redistricting.

>>>>>[Most Offenbachers saw their annexation to Frankfurt am Main as an insult. For the past half century the city had lived under the shadow of its giant twin. By formally annexing Offenbach to Frankfurt, the government had effectively destroyed Offenbach's identity.]<<<<<

---Prinz Cortio (03:52:27/22-OCT-55)

>>>>>[In one particularly ambitious project, a circle of mages from Heidelberg got together to perform ritual conjuring, summoning a Great Water Elemental to manifest in the largest form possible, and simply walk off to the North Sea, where it dispersed, removing a lot of water in the process. After the second or third time, though, the drain began catching up to them. A damn shame what happened to Rdesheim.]<<<<<

---Safir (22:16:46/21-AUG-55)

Today, reconstruction efforts have restored all of downtown from the waters. Unfortunately, economic recovery has been slow in following, with massive unemployment still a major problem. This, in turn, has supported a massive crime rate, as the German mafia enjoys an unusually high level of control. (It's said they even have several members of the Mayor's Council in their pockets.)

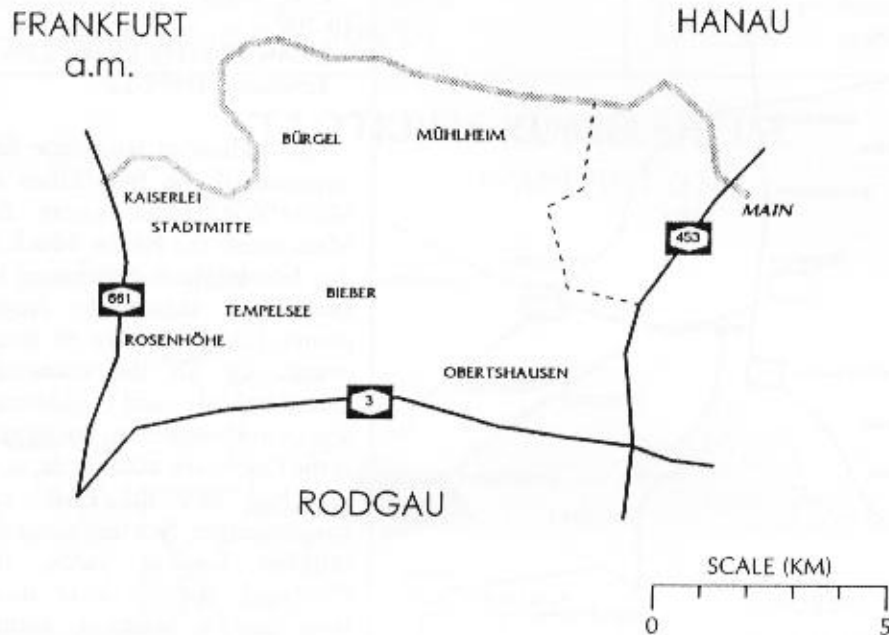
Street crime is also a major problem, almost as bad as in American cities. Particularly troublesome are thrillgangs marauding the peripheries of the city near the city-state border, as well as go-gangs who claim A60, A63 and A643 as their own. The worst and most infamous is the Autobahn 666ers, a go-gang that rules

>>>>[Not as if anyone respectable would want to identify with Offenbach, though.]<<<<<<  
---De-kanter (23:31:14/23-OCT-55)

>>>>[Stuck between street gangs and Frankfurt cops, a lot of Offenbach residents have turned to vigilantism. It's not surprising to find a group of a group of men armed with clubs, dogs, and handguns lounging at the local bar. Of course, these vigilante gangs are little better than the gangs and hoods they're supposed to protect against.]<<<<<<

---Bischof (04:13:10/27-OCT-55)

## STADTKREIS OFFENBACH



### STADTTEIL Security Rating

Bieber: Lower Class D  
Brgel: Lower Class/  
Squatter D/E  
Dietesheim: Lower Class/  
Squatter D/E  
Lmmerspiel: Squatter E  
Mhlheim: Lower Class D  
Kaiserlei: Lower Middle  
Class C  
Obertshausen: Lower  
Class/Squatter D/E  
Rumpenheim: Squatter E  
Tempelsee: Lower Middle  
Class C

Today Offenbach, as part of the Gross-Frankfurt sprawl, is a separate district from the city district of Frankfurt am Main. However, Frankfurt am Main uses it as a dumping point for its undesirables. Consequently Offenbach ranks as the poorest of districts in the Rhein-Main area, on par with Mainz, with high rates of poverty and crime. Most of the residents work as labor for the industrial plants in the vicinities of the Frankfurter and Offenbacher Autobahn-Kreuzen.

>>>>[Street crime is rampant in this district, almost as much as in some of the worst American cities. Street and go-gangs fight for dominance in this district. Street cops "walking the beat" are heavily armed and armored, almost reminding one of the military patrols in the Karlsruhe special zone.]<<<<<<

---Sachsen-squatter (01:29:57/24-OCT-55)

>>>>[Although they need it the most, residents of Offenbach tend to be uncooperative with the polizei (who are headquartered out of Frankfurt am Main). No, they don't throw rocks at them or anything like that, but in the course of polizei investigations Offenbachers become unusually close-mouthed. A small point you should take to heart if you ever find yourself on the wrong side of the law.]<<<<<<

---The Frankfurter "Rat" (19:50:30/25-OCT-55)

## RODGAU/NIEDER-OFFENBACH

### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 81,000  
Human: 78%  
Metahuman: 22%  
**Per Capita Income:** EC 26,000  
**Below Poverty Level:** 26%  
**Telekom:** 0494-14

The sub-sprawl of Rodgau stretches down along the southern stretch of B45, from where it intersects with Autobahn 3. Belonging to the Offenbach Landkreis, this stretch of development played suburbia to Offenbach, until around the turn of the century, when refugees began pouring en masse into Germany. As refugees began flooding Offenbach, many folks began relocating outside the city here.

Nowadays most of the well-to-do or better-off-than-most have relocated even further, to Wiesbaden or Darmstadt, returning Rodgau to a working-class town. Things are a little fancier in the southern part of the sub-sprawl, near R dermark, where remnants of the middle class reside. Though things could be better, life in Rodgau is light-years better than trying to survive

in Offenbach.

>>>>>[Except for a high risk of acute terminal boredom.]<<<<<<

---Bischof (23:02:51/22-AUG-55)

## RSSELSHEIM

### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 243,000  
 Human: 70%  
 Metahuman: 30%  
**Per Capita Income:** EC 26,500  
**Below Poverty Level:** 22%  
**Telekom:** 0494-12

This industrial landscape lies opposite of the twin cities of Mainz/Wiesbaden, where the Main meets the Rhein. Much of this floodplain is dominated by sprawling industrial megaplants, many the size of small towns. Of all the chemical, metallurgical and industrial works in Rsselsheim, the largest is the Opelwerk auto yards, now absorbed into the EMC car conglomerate. Not including the railhead loading yards, the Opelwerk sprawls over more land than a Stadtteil, almost covering two.

>>>>>[Although it ain't the only megaplant in the district, it

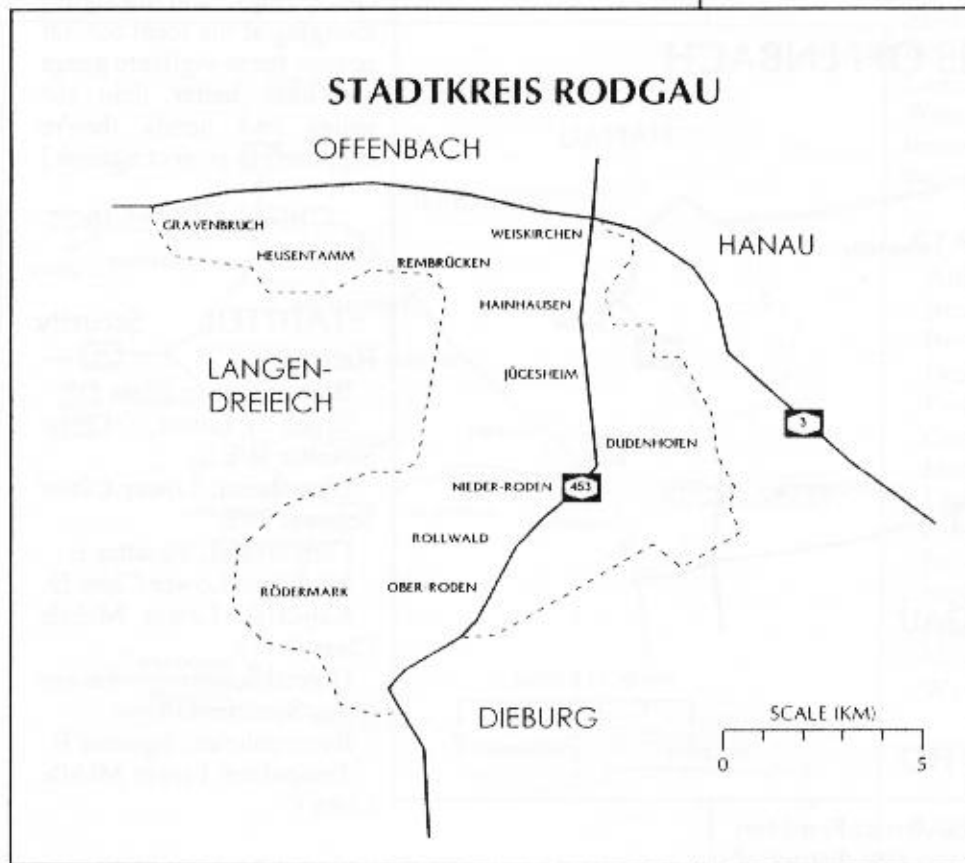
is the largest, which tends to dominate and define the work done at the other plants. No? Well, then, surely it must be a coincidence that AG Chemie-Shell has its largest petroleum refinery just across the river from the Opelwerk. Just as Ares Makrotech is to Hanau, and Frankfurter Bankverein is to Frankfurt, so is EMC to Rsselsheim.]<<<<<<

---NWAf (23:10:57/24-AUG-55)

More than its neighbor Mainz, Rsselsheim has the highest percentage of metahuman residents in its population. Thirty-six percent of Rsselsheim's population is metahuman, the overwhelming majority of which are either dwarf, ork, or troll. Of the human population, two-thirds of them are of non-German heritage, most of them descendants of the Turkish and Slavic gastarbeiters who settled in the area during the last half of the previous century.

>>>>>[Although Rsselsheim tends to have the highest concentration of metahumans in the Rhein-Main, racist groups such as Humanis Europe and the Siegfriedbund tend to steer away from the city in favor of higher-profile areas, such as Wiesbaden, Darmstadt and Frankfurt-Bockenheim.]<<<<<<

---Prinz Cortio (19:51:13/25-AUG-55)



>>>>>[Residents of Rodgau, which technically still belongs administratively to Offenbach, like to emphasize the difference between Offenbach-Stadt and Nieder-Offenbach (Lower Offenbach), which they describe themselves as. Kind of like the way northern Californians like to emphasize the difference between California and Southern California.]<<<<<<

---Anschlua (14:26:15/23-AUG-55)

The economy of Rodgau revolves around commerce houses in Weiskirchen, near the autobahn, and manufacturing plants in the southern-central parts of the sub-sprawl, in Dudenhofen and Jgesheim.

### STADTTEIL Security Rating

- Dudenhofen: Lower Class D
- Gravenbruch: Lower Class D
- Hainhausen: Lower/Middle Class C
- Heusentamm: Lower/Middle Class C
- Jgesheim: Lower/Middle Class C
- Nieder-Roden: Lower Middle Class A/B
- Ober-Roden: Middle Class A
- R dermark: Middle Class A
- Rollwald: Middle Class A/B
- Weiskirchen: Lower Middle Class B

>>>>>[One indirect result of this is a general squabbling and infighting amongst the diverse racial and ethnic groups in the area. Without a common foe (racists), the various factions have taken a falling out amongst themselves. You can see it in the local city politics, as well as in the segregated ghettos in the city. The racial divisiveness also fuels the crime rate in the city, which make street gangs and gang-related crimes as Rsselsheim's biggest headache.]<<<<<<

---Emilgarten (02:15:47/26-AUG-55)

along the banks of the Rhein. Following the volcanic eruptions in 2042 that sank Koblenz, this seasonal problem became a permanent one, depriving Rsselsheim of thousands of hectares of potential farmland and real estate.

>>>>>[Another direct consequence of the floods is that it destroyed Rsselsheim's river Hfen. As a result, all products produced in this city can only be delivered by means of railway, which covers most of the

remaining land not occupied by industrial megaplants.]<<<<<<

-Stiff Steffan (04:20:11/25-AUG-55)

Particularly hit hard by this chronic disaster is Rsselsheim's westernmost suburb, the town of Gustavsburg, which sits right on the corner where the Rhein and the Main meet. With eighty percent of its streets flooded out, Gustavsburg has gained the nickname of "Klein-Venedig" (Little Venice). As the floods destroyed the river ports in this town, Gustavsburg has plummeted into a downward economic spiral with no end in sight.

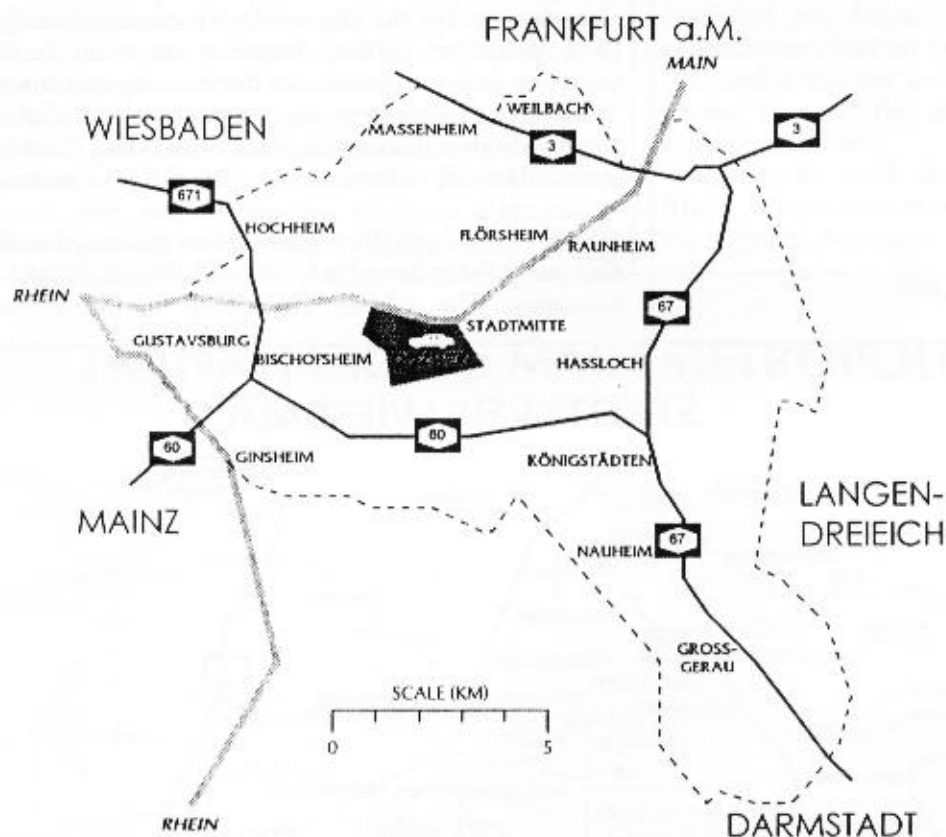
>>>>>[Predictably, a gang of river raiders known as the Rhein-Raub-Ritter have made Gustavsburg their base of operations. Essentially a go-gang on jetskis, the

RRR have taken to terrorizing river traffic along the Rhein and Main at random.]<<<<<<

---Emilgarten (01:17:23/27-AUG-55)

Additionally, to the south of the Rsselsheim district is what is now called the Oppenheimer Marsh. Until a decade ago, this area used to be farmland, until the floods of 2042 destroyed the soil and wiped out the small villages in the area. Nowadays the Oppenheimer marsh is a wilderness inhabited by dangerous mundane and paranormal critters. However, some semblance of civilization exists in the southern part of the swamp, bordering Darmstadt and the Rheinhessen Barrens, as AG Chemie Europa has established several marshland oil wells drilling under the marsh bed for petroleum and methane.

## STADTKREIS RÜSSELSHEIM



>>>>>[There's a particularly interesting rift that's been ongoing in the ork community for quite some time. In Rsselsheim there is a distinctive majority of orks with the smooth-skinned ogre expression (see Paranormal Animals of Europe). This has led to a contentious battle between ogres and traditional orks, a lot of which has spilled over into gang violence.]<<<<<<

---Schaeren (11:15:26/28-AUG-55)

Another distinguishing feature of Rsselsheim is the floodplains running along the Rhein along the city's western region. Towards the end of the last century, seasonal flooding in the spring had started to become a serious problem, flooding out many small towns

### STADTTEIL Security Code

- Bischofsheim: Lower Class D
- Ff rsheim: Middle Class A
- Ginsheim: Lower Class D
- Gross-Gerau: Lower Middle Class B
- Gustavsburg: Lower Class/Squatter E
- Hassloch: Lower Class B
- Hochheim: Middle Class A
- K nigstften: Lower Middle Class B
- Massenheim: Middle Class A
- Nauheim: Lower/Middle Class C
- Raunheim: Lower Middle Class A
- Weilbach: Middle Class A

>>>>>[But to keep Old Man Rhein at bay? That's got to be some serious magic-----and some serious nuyen laid out.]<<<<<<

---Kaiser Malcolm (18:13:30/20-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Yeah, well, Wiesbaden is a rich city, dontcha know. (You didn't? Where HAVE you been the last century, Malcolm?)]<<<<<<

---Zricher Zwerg (21:11:32/22-AUG-55)

As the former capitol of the federal state of Hessen, Wiesbaden's rolling landscapes and hot spring baths attracted many German banks to set up offices in the city, thus turning the city on the Taunus into a major financial center rivalling Frankfurt am Main. In the years before the dissolution of the federal government, Wiesbaden abdicated its role, when it joined with its neighboring southern prefectures in seceding from the state of Hessen, to form the new state of Rheinhessen.

>>>>>[Although the secession was described in the first part of this download, some additional insight is necessary. The schism developing in the Hessen

## WIESBADEN

### FACTS IN BRIEF

**Population:** 336,000

Human: 83%

Metahuman: 16%

**Per Capita Income:** EC 135,000

**Below Poverty Level:** 8%

**Telekom:** 0494-110

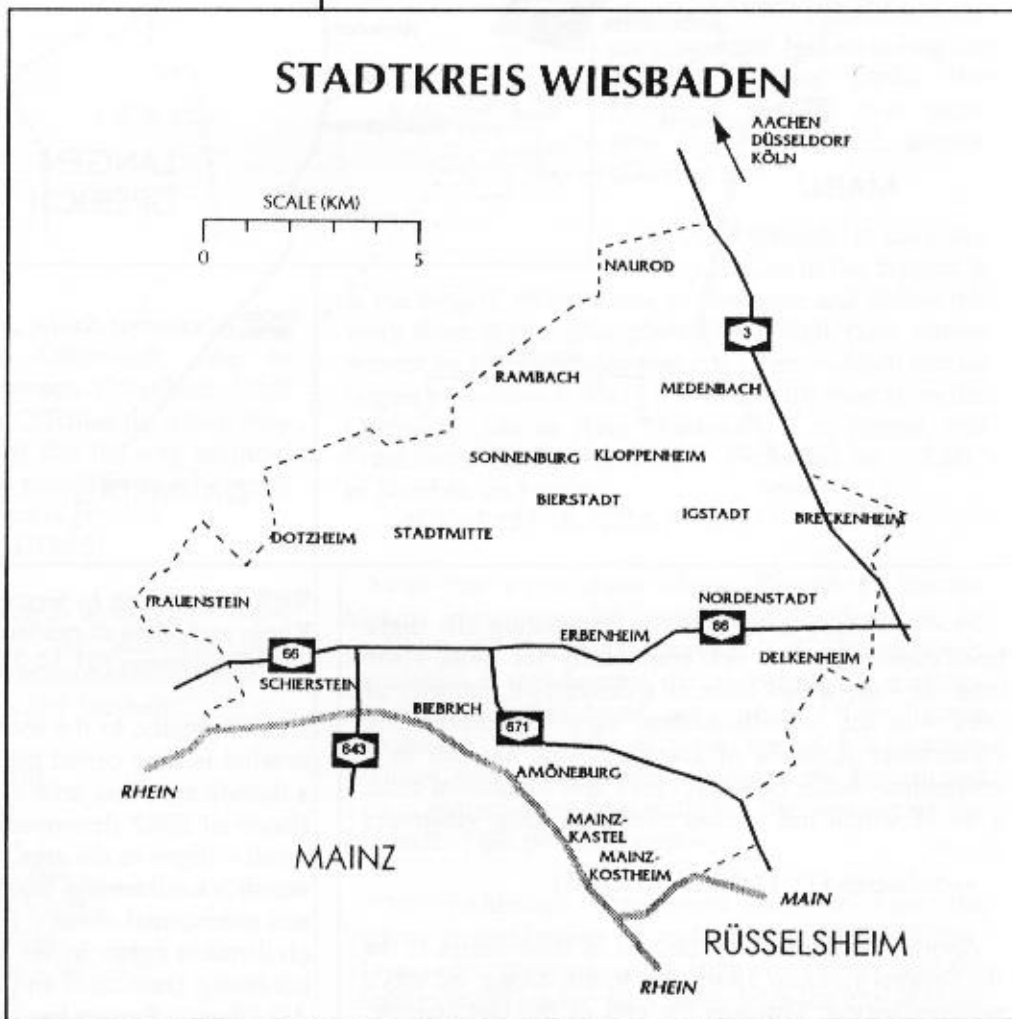
Sitting on the base of the Taunus foothills, the city of Wiesbaden rises above the landscape of its neighboring city-districts. It was due to its higher elevation that Wiesbaden escaped the devastating floods which ruined its twin city, Mainz.

>>>>>[Does anyone care to remember also how the swollen Rhein somehow only caused minor flooding on the Wiesbaden side of the river? While the Mainzers in the Altstadt were standing on their tiptoes to keep their necks above the water, Wiesbaden residents in Am neburg and Schierstein waded through water that was oddly ankle deep.]<<<<<<

---Kaiser Malcolm (23:26:53/17-AUG-55)

>>>>>[Magic, chummer. Where you been the last half-century?]<<<<<<

---Bundes-weird (16:27:25/19-AUG-55)



government was more of a party split within the majority Social Democrats, between environmental

factions, who remained loyal with the party alliance to the Greens, and the business-minded factions, who had more in common with the Christian Democrats (CDU) minority than they led others to believe. If one examines the voting records of SPD representatives in the years before secession, they might discover that most of the business-minded SPD members came from the Rhein-Main area.]<<<<<

---Prinz Cortio (23:53:37/22-AUG-55)

Although unfettered by the cumbersome weight of state politics, Wiesbaden soon faced other problems. Goblinization, VITAS, the Euro-Wars and ecological disasters had created social unrest by the boatload, and violence threatened Wiesbaden at all its borders. The worst threat came from the depressed and recently flooded city of Mainz, where anarchy was raging unabated. Faced with this dire situation, the city and corporate councils got together and did something unusual: they worked together to create a proactive recovery plan for its twin city.

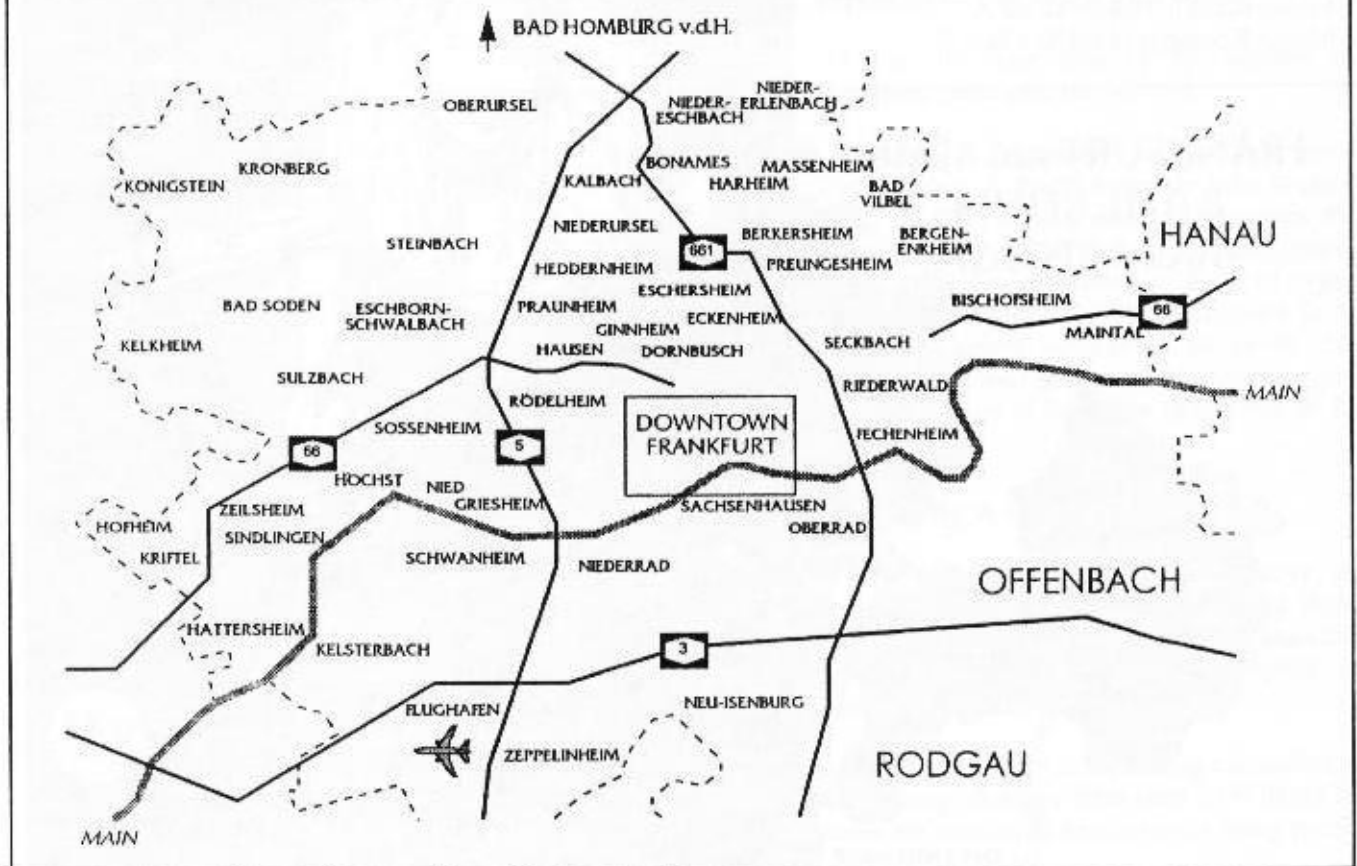
>>>>>[There's more to it than that. The good residents of Wiesbaden were also afraid of the vile stuff that was coming out of Hanau and Mannheim. The solution? Build a waste treatment plant. Where? "Not in my backyard," said the residents along the shore. "No space available here," said the residents of Rsselsheim. And Mainz? They said, "Sure, but you need to do something for us. You see, we got this problem with raging anarchy...."]<<<<<

---Saarmeister (17:48:12/25-AUG-55)

Today Wiesbaden still stands as the number 2 financial center in Germany, behind neighboring Frankfurt am Main. While finance in Frankfurt concentrates more on the business aspects, finance in Wiesbaden focuses more on the investment side of money. One will find more banks in Wiesbaden than brokerage offices.

Towards the south near the juncture of the Main and Rhein, Wiesbaden operates a water treatment plant on the island of Petersaue. Covering the island, the plant

## FRANKFURT am MAIN METROPOLITAN AREA



>>>>>[Strange as it sounds, sometimes altruism can be good for the bottom line. The situation in Mainz was so desperate that the city elders feared a flood of criminals over the river unless something was done.]<<<<<

---Zricher Zwerg (00:04:21/24-AUG-55)

removes most of the toxic pollutants in the Rhein and Main rivers, thus keeping the pollution down to a tolerable level.

>>>>>[Only to be re-polluted by the AG Chemie

plants in Biebrich.]<<<<<

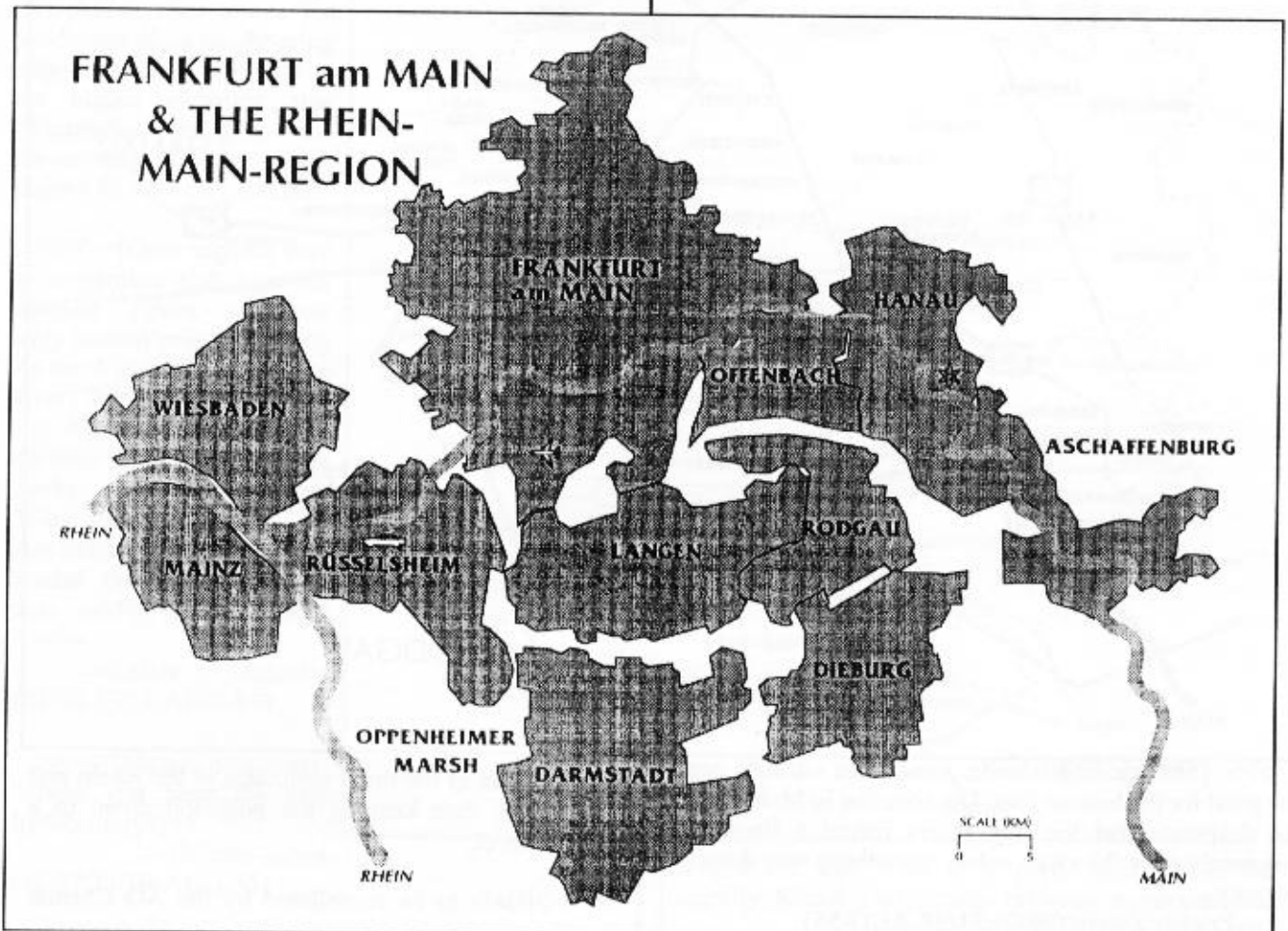
--Sachsen-squatter (01:25:31/27-AUG-55)

At the extreme southern tip of the city-district, near the Rhein-Main district, most of the area is dedicated to storage stations, distribution centers and factory outlets which handle the bulk of rail freight coming in by rail to Frankfurt and Wiesbaden from the Rhein-Ruhr, via Mainz. Additionally, the sub-community of Mainz-Kostheim grows several vineyards along the north bank of the Main, next to the Rsselsheim subcommunity of Hochheim.

### STADTTEIL Security Rating

Am neburg: Middle Class A  
Biebrich: Middle Class A  
Bierstadt: Luxury AAA  
Breckenheim: Upper Class AA  
Delkenheim: Middle Class A  
Dotzheim: Middle Class A  
Erbenheim: Upper Class AA  
Frauenstein: Middle Class A  
Igstadt: Upper Middle Class A  
Innenstadt: Luxury AAA  
Kloppenheim: Upper Class AA  
Mainz-Kastel: Middle Class A  
Mainz-Kostheim: Middle Class A

Medenbach: Upper Middle Class AA  
Naurod: Upper Middle Class AA  
Nordenstadt: Upper Middle Class AA  
Rambach: Upper/Middle Class AA  
Sonnenberg: Upper Class AAA  
Schierstein: Middle Class A



# Learning and Improving Skills

by Linda Naughton

The following rules are modifications to Shadowrun Second Edition. They were created and playtested by Dave Hoops, John Jacobson, Josh Karabin, Linda Naughton, Craig Sanchez and Walt Schellin. Shadowrun Second Edition is copyrighted by FASA Corporation.

These rules were created after noticing that there is no existing restriction on learning new skills. So to

immediately going from a level 6 to 7 in the Sword specialization of armed combat, these are the rules our group came up with for how long it takes to learn a new skill or improve an old one.

## Learning a new skill

The base time to learn a new skill (at rating 1) is 30 days. The character may reduce this time by making a skill check against that skill against a base target number of 4. Obviously, since you're just learning the skill, you're going to have to use the skill web and default to something for the roll. The base target number is modified as per the normal defaulting rules explained on p68 of the SR11 book.

Divide the base time by the number of successes generated on this roll.

*Example: Phantom wants to learn Demolitions: 1. It will normally take 30 days to do so, but Phantom can roll to reduce the time. He chooses to default to Intelligence. There are 3 dots inbetween, so it's a +6 target number. Phantom rolls his intelligence (a 5) against a target number of 10 (4+6). He rerolls sixes and gets two successes, which brings the time to learn the skill down to 15 days.*

## Improving a skill

When a character wants to improve an existing active, build-repair, or social skill, the base time required is (in days) 7 times the number of karma points being spent to improve the skill.

When a character is improving a knowledge or language skill, the base time is (in days) 30 times the number of karma points being spent.

Note that this means it takes longer to improve a general skill than to improve a concentration or specialization, since general skills cost more karma points.



keep our rigger from spontaneously picking up a new piloting skill just because he had karma to burn, and to keep my samurai from spending the karma and

As with new skills, the character may make a skill check to reduce the base time. Only this time he doesn't have to default. He could default in order to get more dice, especially if the skill being improved is at a low level, but mostly the character will be rolling the skill he's improving. The base target number, as before, is a 4, modified per the normal default rules.

The base time to improve the skill is divided by the number of successes.

There can be another modifier to the base time, but it requires some GM bookkeeping. After you divide by the number of successes, take the resulting time and subtract the number of days worth of actual use the character's had in that skill since the last time it was improved. A day will count as a day's worth of practice if the GM rules that the skill was used in a challenging manner.

*Example #1: Fenris wants to raise his Firearms skill from a 6 to a 7. It's a general skill, so that's going to cost him 14 karma points.  $14 \times 7$  is 98, so the base time is 98 days. However, Fenris gets to make a Firearms skill check to reduce that time. Fenris could default to another skill, but his Firearms is high enough that he doesn't want to. He allocates 3 dice from his karma pool for "extra dice", rerolls failures and ends up with 9 successes. So it's going to take him 11 days to improve the skill. However, the GM rules that Fenris has already gotten 11 days worth of practice since the last time he raised Firearms, and subtracts 11 days from the total, bringing it down to a 0. It takes Fenris no time to improve the skill. He's gotten enough practice at it that he can just spend the karma and advance.*

*However, Fenris decides he's not satisfied with that. He wants to spend the rest of his karma to improve firearms again, RIGHT NOW. He makes the roll and brings the time down to 19 days. However, since Fenris just improved his skill, he has no time accumulated to subtract from those 19 days. He'll just have to keep practicing for the full 19 days.*

*Example #2: Sasser wants to raise her Medicine from a 2 to a 3. (Medicine is a concentration of Biology.) The karma cost is 4 so the base time is 120 days since Biology is a knowledge skill.  $(30 \times 4)$  Sasser must make a Medicine skill check. She would be rolling 2 dice against a target of 4, but she decides to default to Biotech instead (since she has a skill of 7 in that). There are two dots between Biology and Biotech, so the target number is an 8. Sasser uses her karma pool to get some extra dice and reroll failures, and ends up with 4 successes. The time is reduced to 30 days. Sasser doesn't use Medicine very often, so the GM doesn't let her subtract any time from those 30 days.*

## Instructors

These rules assume that as long as you are able to default to something on the skill web, you don't need an instructor to learn it. However, the GM may feel free to impose a restriction that you do need an instructor for certain skills.

When you get someone to teach you, you can learn faster. The instructor must have the skill at least at the level you're trying to learn.

The instructor makes a skill check using the special skill "Instruction", which we decided fits at the same place as Leadership on the skill web. The target number is a 4, modified if you are defaulting. Every two successes generated by the instructor count as a success for the pupil when cutting down the base time.

*Example: Scarecrow wants to improve his Armed Combat from a 3 to a 4. This is a general skill, so the base time is 56 days. Scarecrow rolls his Armed Combat skill against a target number of 4, and gets 2 successes. This ordinarily would bring the time down to 28 days. However, Scarecrow has arranged for Sasser to teach him Armed Combat. She has Armed Combat 6, which is high enough to instruct Scarecrow at level 4. Sasser rolls her Instruction skill, defaulting to Charisma. She gets 2 successes, which counts as 1 extra success for Scarecrow. This gives him a total of 3 successes, bringing the final time down to 18 days.*

## A Day By Any Other Name

The rules above talk about it taking a certain number of "days" to learn or improve a skill. This uses the following convention:

A "day" when we're talking about base time means eight hours of training. So you could just as easily say that learning a new skill takes a base time of 240 hours rather than saying 30 days. However, not everyone is capable of practicing one single skill for eight hours a day. So, you can only spend a number of hours per day equal to your willpower rating studying. This time can be divided among different skills, but most often you will be spending them studying one skill in particular.

In other words, in order to determine the actual number of days it takes to learn a skill, take 8 divided by your character's Willpower (hold onto the fraction, don't round down), and multiply that by the base time (now you can round down).

*Example: In the previous example, it would have taken Scarecrow 18 "days" (in which he studies 8 hours a day) to improve the skill. However, his willpower is only a 5. So he can only spend 5 hours a day in*

training. Therefore, to find the real time, divide 8 by 5, which gives you 1.6. Then you multiply that by the seven days, which tells you that Scarecrow must spend 11.2 days in training (round down to 11). During those eleven days, he has dedicated five of his hours into studying *Armed Combat*.

## Improving Attributes

This system of skill improvement can also be used when a character wants to buy up one of his attributes. The base time is the same as for an active skill (7 days times the number of karma points being spent), and is reduced by making an attribute check against a target number of 4. Just as with skills, you must practice the attribute in order to improve it. For the physical attributes, it's pretty obvious how to practice. With Strength, weightlifting would be appropriate. With Body, a regular regimen of exercise and good eating would work. The non-physical ones are a bit more difficult, and can require some creativity on the part of the players. The player must state how his character is practicing to improve the attribute, and the GM must decide if it's appropriate.

Example: *Golden Eyes* wants to improve her *Charisma* from a 6 to a 7. That's above her racial maximum, so the cost is 14 karma points, which gives a base time of 98 days. *Golden Eyes* decides to practice by socializing as much as possible. She spends her nights at the bars and at parties, and also buys an instructional tape entitled "assertiveness for Southern women". She makes a *Charisma* roll, with a target number of 4, and gets 5 successes. This brings the base time down to 19 days. Her *Willpower* is a 6, so that translates into 25 days of practicing 6 hours a day.

## Virtual Instructors

A character can attempt to buy a virtual tutor program instead of finding a real-life instructor. The program must have two ratings. The first is its effective skill rating (remember, an instructor can only teach a student whose skill is less than his own). The second is its quality rating, which is its effective rating in the "Instruction" skill.

The size of the program can be determined by using the average of its two ratings (round down), and consulting the skillsoft chart. A virtual instructor program counts as a specialization. The cost of the chip is the size in Mp times 50 nuyen (so it's like a *Linguasoft* in this respect).

Example: *Wraith* decides he wants to learn *Zoology*, a concentration of *Biology*. He goes to the chipstore and finds a program to teach all about animals. He finds the best one on the market, which the GM decides



has a rating 6 *Instruction* skill. The chip contains enough data to bring a character up to rating 3 in the skill, so it's effective skill rating is 3. The average of these two ratings is a '4. So it will take up 80 Mp. Its cost will be 4000 nuyen.

As always, feel free to use or throw away whatever fits best in your game. All rules are optional.

# Path of the Tiger

by Gabriel Salazar

**Characteristics:** Tiger is the classic predator. According to Chinese folklore, Tiger is of a rebellious nature. He has strong emotions and usually throws caution to the winds. Tiger is introverted, but straightforward when interacted with. He is a fierce warrior, but does not use violence in excess, preferring to strike hard but only once and only continuing if absolutely necessary.

>>>>[The Tiger shaman's golden rule of combat is "a strike that fails to hit is worse than no strike at all". They are masters of ambush and surprise. In a fight these guys are pure energy. It's no wonder that the shadows refer to these guys as War Shamans.]<<<<<

--Mystik (12:25:56/01-11-55)

>>>>[Do not underestimate them either. Tigers are capable of extreme violence, especially when something they are loyal to is in danger (especially their kids). Usually, they operate on the principle of using fear of force rather than force itself.]<<<<<

--Walks-on-Sky (13:56:23/01-11-55)

>>>>[You people are missing the whole point. The Tiger shaman, or more correctly, Follower of Tiger, will not fight unless it has to. They have very strict personal codes. These people are cool-headed and have the most objective minds so you should consider yourself lucky if he doesn't nail you at first when you pick a fight with him. As for "throwing caution to the winds", A Follower of the Tiger's Path will do so only if it is in his advantage to do so. By the way, Walks-On-Sky, Asian folklore classifies the Tiger as being the Protector of Children, so that includes all kids.]<<<<<

-Archangel (12:17:16/14-NOV-55)

>>>>[That can be a drag...]<<<<<

-Nemo (22:24:16/11-25-55)

He is by nature hot-headed and curious, but always keeps the balance between logic and emotions in check.

>>>>[With Tiger, there is Control. When there is Control, there is Balance. And when there is Balance, there is Perfection.]<<<<<

--Sabretooth (03:26:35/03-13-56)

Tiger possesses a tremendous amount of self-control. He is deceptive, spontaneous, imaginative and, therefore, unpredictable. He will blend in with his environment, appear strong when he is weak, and does not let things like injuries or fatigue slow him down.

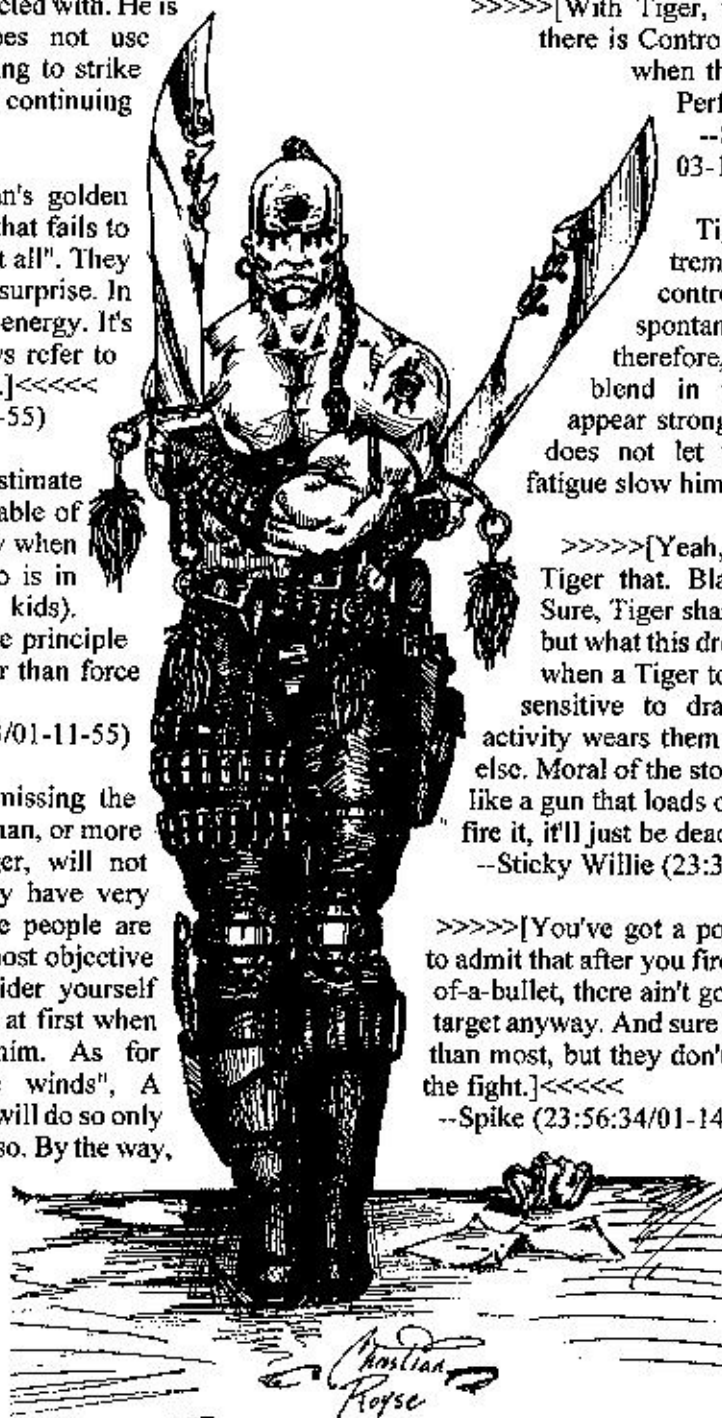
>>>>[Yeah, yeah, yeah. Tiger this, Tiger that. Blah, blah, fraggin' blah. Sure, Tiger shamans crap bigger 'n me, but what this drek doesn't tell you is that when a Tiger tosses a spell, he is more sensitive to drain and any strenuous activity wears them out easier than anyone else. Moral of the story is: Tiger shamans are like a gun that loads one big bullet. Once you fire it, it'll just be dead weight.]<<<<<

--Sticky Willie (23:35:45/01-13-56)

>>>>[You've got a point there, but you have to admit that after you fire off that big ol' mother-of-a-bullet, there ain't gonna be much left of the target anyway. And sure they tend to drain easier than most, but they don't feel it until the end of the fight.]<<<<<

--Spike (23:56:34/01-14-56)

>>>>[I have the fortune of knowing a Tiger adept and he is very easy to get along with (despite his dark, twisted sense of humor. Just don't get on his bad side). They are excellent providers of magical muscle and stealthy as all hell. They also seem to have a preference for



hand-to-hand combat. I suppose you can say that they are the magically active version of street samurai. Natural born pros.]<<<<<

--Eyeball (17:26:45/01-30-56)

Tiger is also possibly the most rational or scientifically-oriented totem in existence. Oddly enough, Followers of Tiger have an aversion to insects. As a result, they are more effective in combat versus insect spirits of any kind. They consider it their spiritual duty to cleanse the planet of this kind of threat.

>>>>>[Hell-fraggin'-yeah! I once saw a Tiger-babe duke it out with an ant warrior spirit of some kind hand-to-slottin'-hand. She kicked the frag out of this thing, threw it up against a wall and emptied her Manhunter into its head. Mind you, this thing was no pee-on, either. Before Sandy, the shaman, wasted it, the thing tore through Juno, our muscle (you've been avenged!) like he wasn't even there, and chromed to the max, I might add...]<<<<<

--Chew (21:35:35/02-07-56)

>>>>>[<ZZZZ>]<<<<<

--Mr. Blond (15:25:25/02-08-56)

**Environment:** Lightly mountainous regions, jungles, and some plains, but a handful can be found in the largest cities with a higher concentration in Asia. Shamans of the wilderness are more anti-technological, while their urban counterparts have easily adapted to city life.

**Advantages:** Tiger shamans receive a +2 bonus when casting Combat and Detection spells as well as 2 more dice when confronting insect threats. They also receive +1 to conjuring spirits depending on the shaman's environment. They ignore modifiers due to injury, fatigue, or drain for a total of essence (round down) minutes after a fight or fight scene.

**Disadvantages:** -1 Manipulation, -4 Health. The Followers of Tiger get a -2 dice penalty for any Drain tests. The Gamemaster must keep track of all damage and Drain, because at the end of the fight or fight scene (plus essence minutes, see above) the gamemaster applies all damage at once to the shaman. The shaman makes a Body or Willpower test (whichever number is higher, no modifiers) against the number of boxes of damage taken. If the Follower of Tiger does not get more success than damage he falls into a stupor and must sleep for 1D6 + 4 minutes.

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# Headaches: Social Animals

by Chris Hussey

Headaches are short shadowruns for an average size team of shadowrunners. These 'aches are designed to be played out in one or two sessions and can be used as stand-alone runs or as a sideline to a current mission, or even as a plot element to further confuse and frustrate the players (sadistic gamemasters only please...).

The following headache takes place in Seattle but is easily adaptable to any urban location. The scenario is fairly self-contained but allows for gamemaster tweaking and modification. The end of the headache gives hooks for possible plot expansion and potential runs down the road.

## SOCIAL ANIMALS

### Tell It To Them Straight

Yes, indeed, it's your fixer again. Says he's got a unique job offer for you this time. Oh great, whenever he says that, you know it's not going to be easy. Then again, what is easy in your line of work. Sounds like you're supposed to act as bodyguards (even though he calls it "escort work") at a party. Oh that's fraggin' great. Time to step out of the urban camos and into your best corp suit ("Hope it still fits, it's been a while...")

### Behind the Scenes

The runners have indeed been hired by a woman named Katie Montalo. Ms. Montalo is a VP for SkinTech, a fast-growing cosmetic surgery firm. Every year, SkinTech holds a party for many of its clients. This year, however, Montalo is a bit nervous. She suspects that one of her subordinates may be gunning for her position. She doesn't know who, but thinks that they might try something at the party.

Montalo wants the runners to act as not only bodyguards for her (in the event that Montalo may lose her life), but as detectives, to possibly find out who is going after her.

The party will be happening in one week, giving the runners plenty of time to conduct legwork, and get

some spiffy duds.

Montalo is willing to pay the team 15,000 total for the mission, but she may be bargained up.

### Dressing Up

As this is a formal party, the runners may not wear their normal gear of heavy body armor, urban fatigues, and guns up to their chins. Subtlety is the key. The runners may be able to purchase fashion items found in the Neo-Anarchists Guide to Real Life (p. 35-8), or they may simply purchase fashionable clothing for 200 nuyen per point of Body.

The runners may also find it difficult to sneak big weapons in. Montalo has cleared the runners to take in any weapon with a Concealability of 6 or higher.

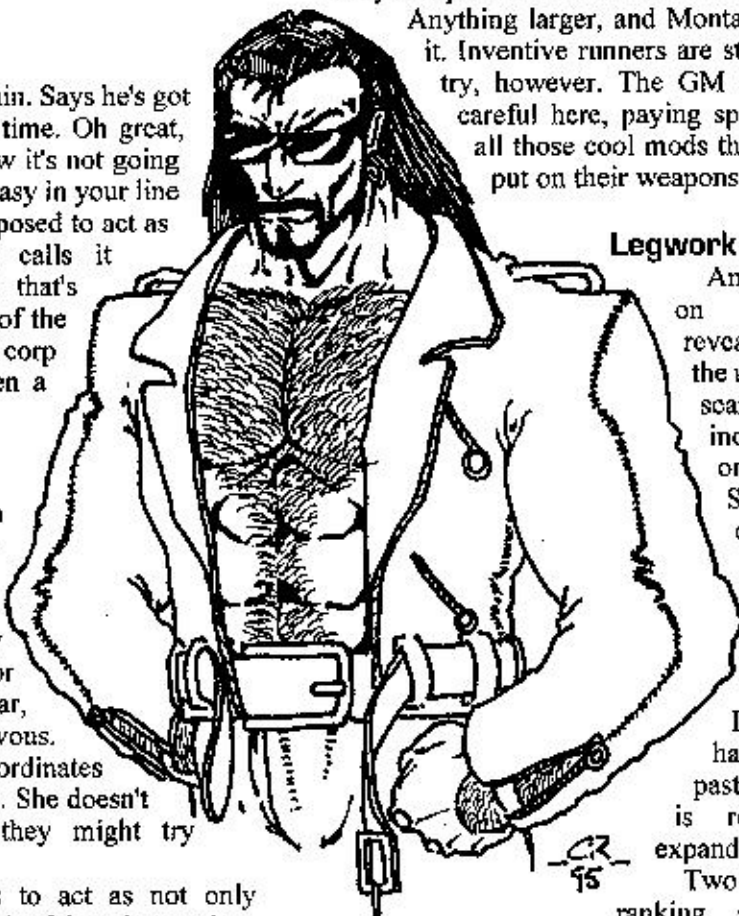
Anything larger, and Montalo will not allow it. Inventive runners are still encouraged to try, however. The GM needs to be real careful here, paying special attention to all those cool mods that runners like to put on their weapons.

### Legwork

Any research done on Ms. Montalo reveals that she is on the up and up. No real scandalous or incriminating dirt on her is available. SkinTech also comes up fairly clean. The corp has been around for nearly 40 years and has a solid record. Indeed, it's profits have grown in the past five years, and it is ready to begin expanding.

Two of the higher ranking surgeons within

SkinTech however, may draw some suspicion. Dr. Clement Daley has been providing surgery to lower class and poorer clients over the past year. While most of these clients do have SINS, a fair portion do not.



Almost all of this so-called "charity surgery" was done outside of SkinTech grounds. Dr. Daley himself has had a spotless record, but this change of clients is unusual for him.

Dr. Sheena Watkins has also been doing some questionable surgery of late. Most of it is for SINless folk, but the fees charged were larger than those for SINners (shadowrunners perhaps?). The greater influx of cash seems to have kept any complaints by SkinTech upper management to a minimum if at all. Before the past year, Dr. Watkins had never operated on a SINless client. Watkins has also been sighted with Vincent Schneiderman, one of SkinTech's major investors, in non-business settings.

### The Party

The party is being held in the Coast Reef Ballroom of the Westin Hotel, right in Downtown Seattle. The ballroom itself is fairly large and has a connecting kitchen, and entrances into two large, separate, outdoor gardens that overlooks the Seattle skyline. The Ballroom is on the 53rd floor.

Approximately 85 guests will be at the party, including the runners and Ms. Montalo. The majority of the guests are patients from the previous year (the higher paying ones, of course). The other attendees are made up of SkinTech staff and several of the corp's more prestigious contributors. Most of the contributors are philanthopists who are shareholders in numerous corps. Some names for the GM to use during the adventure are Derrick Montgomery, Caine Johannsen, Shelley Brown, and Vincent Schneiderman.

### What's Really Going On

SkinTech and even some of it's minor contributors are slowly being taken over by Ghouls. Dr. Daley is in charge of the SkinTech takeover effort, but not the top ghoul. The top ghoul, named Kamente, is merely a guest at the party, who infected Daley a little over a year ago. He then had Daley do numerous surgeries on other, more stable ghouls, in an effort to integrate them into Seattle's upper crusts. This night Daley plans on making a big move against Montalo, Dr. Watkins, and Vincent Schneiderman, and Kamente is here to oversee the operation.

Daley, and his boss, Kamente, have infiltrated a number of ghouls into the party. These ghouls are filling roles as guests, dinner servers, and waiters.

### Encounters

Following are several encounters that should occur during the evening. The first two encounters allow the runners to gather their suspicions about both Dr.'s Watkins and Daley. They may occur in any order. The final two encounters should occur in the order presented, as the first involves saving Watkins, and the second involves saving Montalo herself (and escaping)

Besides these specific encounters, the gamemaster should have the runners meet many of the guests at the party. Most of the guests will know both of the doctors and even Ms. Montalo, and will offer what tidbits they can about their personal lives that they do know. This part of the scenario stresses heavy role-playing.

### Hooks

There are some general "things" about the party that the runners will become aware of. It is important that the GM not overemphasize the significance of these "things" as it will only raise the players suspicions. Indeed, the GM should do all he can to downplay them, even after bringing them to the players attention.

The Ballroom is quite, well... aromatic. As no real way has been developed to take care of a ghoul's natural putrid odor, the room has been heavily scented with perfumes, food odors, flowery incense, and other items to distract from the scent of the ghouls present. Only upon close examination, can someone detect the awful smell of a ghoul, which is often masked with more colonge and perfume. This would require a Perception (10) test, and can only happen in close contact with a ghoul. Even if successful, the runner may not be able to place the scent.

Because of ghouls dual nature, Kamente has taken care to secure astral space from any suspicious parties. Several Astral Static spells have been Anchored to various items throughout the ballroom, creating a Background Count of 2 in most places. These places are not listed specifically, allowing the gamemaster to place them wherever it serves him best to keep the story flowing and interesting (most likely Dr. Daley and Kamente will stick by them, so as not to be detected). Also in astral space are several Force 3 Watchers functioning as Attack Dogs. These spirits attack any other spirits that appear in the ballroom.

The GM should also be aware that almost everyone in the room has had cosmetic surgery, and so detecting a ghoul in the crowd by purely visual means will be very difficult. Dr. Daley is one of the top surgeons at SkinTech for a reason, he's nova hot, and did some of his best work on his ghoul patients (he had to!).

The runners will also not be able to stay all together throughout the evening. They must split up if they will ever find any hints of what is going on. If they are determined to stick together, have Ms. Montalo come over and order them to split up, threatening to fire them if they do not do their job properly.

Of course, it goes without saying that the entire evening will be filled with noise, not only from general conversation, but from the string orchestra (all ghouls, by the way) playing throughout the night.

### Meeting Dr. Daley

Dr. Daley will always be found around a group of people, talking and chatting away. The runners are more than welcome to butt in on the converstaion, and

it will be up to them to bring up questions about the doctor's work. If asked about his "charity surgery" the good doctor will be more than happy to tell the runners that he had a "religious experience a little over a year ago" and "realized that there was more to life than the tall towers of Seattle". The doctor will go on to say that helping to improve the lower classes has not only helped to bring up their self-esteem, but it has filled the doctor's heart with joy. The doctor seems quite sincere about his work and will go into length about particular cases where he helped many disfigured patients.

The doctor may bring up several questions to the runners about who they are, why they're here, and why would Ms. Montalo need special security? "She has absolutely nothing to be afraid of."

### Meeting Dr. Watkins

Dr. Watkins can be found in almost anyplace within the ballroom. She is quite sociable, up until the point the characters begin asking the tough questions. If with a group of people, Dr. Watkins will excuse herself from the group and try to leave the situation. If alone, she will deny knowledge of the runners accusations and their connection to Ms. Montalo.

In reality, Watkins is gunning for Montalo's job, but of course will deny it. This should raise the runners suspicions about the wrong person. The runners will have a chance to deepen those suspicions later on. If the runners really press her, Watkins will eventually shoot back, accusing the runners of being spies for Montalo. She may even attempt to call security on the team (Dr. Daley may intervene in this situation. He needs to keep things calm for his later efforts). The doctor is happy to talk about anything else.

### Saving Dr. Watkins

Later in the evening, some (but not all) of the runners will notice Dr. Watkins and Vincent Schneiderman out in the right garden. They may wish to investigate. Allow them to sneak out into the garden unnoticed. When they are set up in a good observation spot, read the following...

You crouch down, behind a thick set of shrubs and listen in. It seems like the good doctor and Mr. Schneiderman are talking about something other than business. By the way of sounds, they may be in love with each other. Pretty sneaky, you think. Using one of SkinTech's major investors to move up in the corp. You're about to go find Montalo, when a noise draws your attention back to the couple.

Three figures emerge from the bushes and charge both Watkins and Vincent. All three are snarling with a guttural voice and look as though they are out to kill. What the frag is going on?

### Ghouls (3)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
7	5x4	6	1	4	5	(4.8)	4

*Initiave:* 4 +1D6

*Powers:* Enhanced Senses (Smell, Hearing)

*Weaknesses:* Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate) Reduced Senses (Blind)

*Attack:* 6M Stun

*Threat/Professional Rating:* 3/3

*Notes:* These ghouls had standard Cybereyes before they became ghouls, allowing them to see normally. They do not suffer from blindness. Their objective is to knock out Dr. Watkins and Vincent Schneiderman, but will turn their attention to the runners when they make their move.

Once the runners have eliminated the ghouls and saved the couple, they both think it wise to alert Ms. Montalo. That however, will lead into the next encounter...

### Saving Montalo

Not long after the one group of runners goes out to investigate Dr. Watkins, the other half of the team will notice Montalo and Dr. Daley heading out to the left side garden. They are more than welcome to come along, although Dr. Daley will protest saying he has private matters to discuss. A successful Charisma (5) test by Dr. Daley will convince Montalo that the runners need not accompany her directly, but can remain a distance away.

Once in the private confines of the garden, Daley will discuss his satisfaction with his work and congratulate Montalo on her excellent leadership skills. He thinks that SkinTech needs to move in a bold, new direction. With that, he will seize Montalo and Kanente will come out of the bushes to attack the runners. He is not alone, however...

### Kamante's Thugs (5)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
7	5x4	6	1	4	5	(4.8)	4

*Initiave:* 4 +1D6

*Powers:* Enhanced Senses (Smell, Hearing)

*Weaknesses:* Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate) Reduced Senses (Blind)

*Attacks:* 6M Stun

*Threat/Professional Rating:* 3/3

*Notes:* These ghouls had standard Cybereyes, allowing them to see normally. They do not suffer from blindness.

### Kamante's Lieutenant

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
7(9)	5(10)x4	6(11)	1	4	5(7)	(.55)	6(12)	6/4

*Initiave:* 12 +2D6

*Powers:* Enhanced Senses (Smell, Hearing)

*Weaknesses:* Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate) Reduced

Senses (Blind)

*Skills:* Armed Combat 6, Edged Wpns 8, Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 5

*Gear:* Fine Long Blade Knife w/ Dikote (12S Damage), Armor Jacket (5/3)

*Threat/Professional Rating:* 4/3

*Cyberware:* Bone Lacing (Titanium), Wired Reflexes 1, Cybereyes (Low-light, Thermographic, Flare Comp)

*Bioware:* Muscle Augmentation 3, Adrenal Pump 2

*Body Index:* 4.9

*Notes:* This lieutenant was a former street samurai that was infected by Kamente. He was fortunate enough to retain a few shreds of his sanity and now has become a deadly killing machine. He will attack with his knife primarily, then move to fist attacks if he loses his blade. Note that his blows do either physical or stun damage (14M) because of the bone lacing.

#### Kamente

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
6	5x4	6	2	5	5	(5)	7	5	3/3

*Initiative:* 5 +1D6

*Powers:* Enhanced Senses (Smell, Hearing)

*Weaknesses:* Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate) Reduced Senses (Blind)

*Attacks:* Humanoid

*Threat/Professional Rating:* 5/3

*Gear:* Armor Clothing (3/3), Colt American L36 [Light Pistol, 12(c), SA, 6L]

*Skills:* Sorcery 6, Unarmed Combat 4, Firearms 4, Latin 4 (Centering Skill)

*Spells:* Mana Missile 7\*, Sleep 5, Sight 3, Invisibility 4, Treat 4, Astral Static 3, Personal Bullet Barrier 4, Influence 3, Personal Spell Barrier 3, Levitate Person 5, Physical Mask 6

*Initiate Grade:* 2

*Note:* Every spell listed here, with the exception of Mana Missile, are all able to be cast at 1 force point higher, due to Kamente's use of reusable fetishes. Kamente wears an ornate necklace with five charms attached. Each one is for a different spell. Five rings are also on his fingers, one for each remaining spell. Also note that Kamente has Quickened Sight and Personal Spell Barrier on himself. The Sight spell is a Detection spell that allows Kamente to see in the normal light spectrum. (Its stats are unnecessary, so they have not been included here.)

#### Dr. Haley

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
7	5x4	6	3	6	5	(4.8)	5

*Initiative:* 4 +1D6

*Powers:* Enhanced Senses (Smell, Hearing)

*Weaknesses:* Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate) Reduced Senses (Blind)

*Attacks:* 6M Stun

*Threat/Professional Rating:* 2/3

*Notes:* Dr. Haley, of course, has Cybereyes, allowing him to see just fine.

#### Katie Montalo

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
3	5	3	5	6	5	6	5

*Initiative:* 5 +1D6

*Skills:* Unarmed Combat 2, Negotiation 4, Firearms 2

*Threat/Professional Rating:* 1/2

Once the runners attack, Haley will stay out of the fight, letting the other ghouls and Kamente finish the runners off. Montalo, will also try and get clear. If the fight is going against the runners (and it probably should be), the GM may allow the other part of the team to rush in and be the cavalry. Depending on the noise level the fight makes, other guests from outside may notice. This is both good and bad. Good, because security will be called, forcing the ghouls to flee (which they will do directly through the crowd), and ending the fight sooner. If this does happen, hotel security will arrive in 1D6-2 (minimum of 1) minutes. It is bad, because it may attract the attention of more ghouls (up to 10) who will come to aid their master. Use the same stats as Kamente's Thugs.

Kamente himself will fight until the tide turns too far against him. He will then try and flee over the edge of the garden. He will of course cast Levitate to save himself, and possibly Invisibility to hide his descent from the runners.

#### Wrapping it Up and Keeping it Going

Once the dust settles, Ms. Montalo will most certainly have who she thinks was after her job. In a way, she is right. If the runners performed admirably, Montalo may give them a bonus.

If Kamente escapes, he can make a long time enemy for the runners. His spell listing given here is only a partial list, and Kamente has many ghoul and non-ghoul contacts in the city.

Montalo may seek out the runners again for future work as SkinTech's profits and prestige rise. This could allow the runners to travel and run into all sorts of problems with SkinTech's competitors.

#### Karma

This run starts off slow, but picks up fast near the end. If the runners pulled it off, without anyone important dying, they can earn 2 karma each.

# The Hermetic Lodge

by Chris Hussey

The area for all that's magic, both of a Shamanic and Hermetic nature.

>>>>[Welcome all to our little corner of Shadowland. Hope you like the new graphics. The boys who spend too much time with their decks rather than their magical endeavours made them up for you. Anyway, you've got your choice of areas to pursue. Just pick up the right grimoire, and you'll be flying...]

<<<<

-Henning's Boy (14:34:59/10-3-56)

>>You have chosen Illusion Spells. Do you wish to proceed?  
Y/N

>>Y

>>Do you wish to view all spells, or new? A/N

>>N

>>Read on, oh great and powerful magician!!!

>>>>[Hey all. Got a few new spells I pulled from a Snake Shaman I tangled with a few months back. Tough little fragger. Got away too. I hate loose ends. Enough bulldrek, though. Some of these spells may already be old news, but others are sure to get you thinking. Don't have the formula, but a chummer of mine was able to reverse-engineer them in no time flat (so he says). Thought I'd post 'em for your benefit. And just in time for the holidays!]<<<<

-Jack Sprat (03:12:11/11-22-56)

## Phantom Bolt

Creates an illusionary bolt of varying color and shape that travels from caster to target. On a successful Spellcasting Test, the target believes the bolt is harmful. The target suffers "damage" and all appropriate modifiers for a number of Combat Turns equal to the number of boxes of damage inflicted (i.e. a Serious Wound would cause such penalties for six Turns of suffering from the fake damage). Deadly damage knocks the target unconscious for ten Turns.

**Type:** Physical **Range:** LOS **Target:** Intelligence (R)  
**Duration:** Instant **Drain:** [(F/2)+1]M

>>>>[This spell works! I nailed a trog who thought he had me cornered out in the Barrens. Didn't knock him out, but dropped him to his knees. Enough time to turn myself invisible and get the frag out.]<<<<

-Fleeson (22:48:32/12-10-56)

>>>>[Gee. What other spells do you have in your arsenal, you fragging Breeder]<<<<

-Proud Trog (23:10:01/12-10-56)

## Reflections

This spell creates multiple images of the caster that mirror the caster's actions in every way, including aural. The number of images created is equal to half the number of successes rolled, rounding up. Each image can appear up to a number of meters away equal to the caster's Magic attribute. The number of successes rolled indicates the realism of the illusion. Each image will remain, even if something passes through it.

**Type:** Physical **Range:** LOS  
**Target:** 6

**Duration:** Sustained  
**Drain:** [(F/2)+2]S

>>>>[This one is great if you need to create some confusion. The images follow your every move. It can really confuse folks if an image is hit and you act out the motions.]<<<<

-Shadow Dancer (04:12:57/12-14-56)

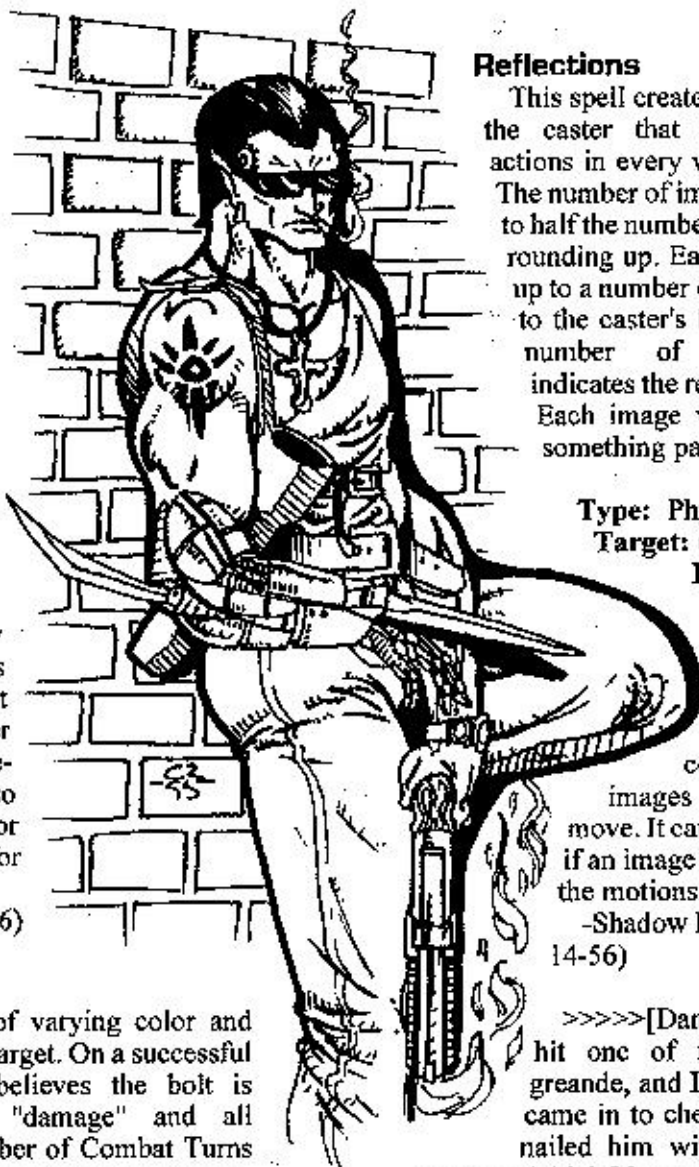
>>>>[Damn straight! This slag hit one of my images with a grande, and I (it?) went down. He came in to check it out, and then I nailed him with a stun bolt.

Dancer, I think I know you. Didn't I see you at the Big Rhino the other night?]<<<<

-Angel (15:59:03/12-14-56)

>>>>[Well, I was masked as an ork that night, yes.]<<<<

-Shadow Dancer (02:34:45/12-15-56)



>>>>>[Thought so. I was sitting right next to you.]

<<<<<

-Angel (10:10:47/12-15-56)

>>>>>[No you weren't. That seat was empty-- ah, I get it! You're good.]<<<<<

-Shadow Dancer (13:09:36/12-15-56)

### Displacement

Creates an illusionary double of the caster in every way (visual, aural, smell). Caster can displace image up to number of meters equal to the caster's Magic attribute. The image mirrors every action done by the caster. The caster himself turns invisible and is treated as if a regular invisibility spell had been cast. The number of successes indicates the realism of the illusion.

**Type:** Physical **Range:** Touch **Target:** 6

**Duration:** Sustained **Drain:** [(F/2)+1]S

\*\*Note. An advanced version of this spell which allows the caster to have the image remain motionless, while the caster moves about has a drain code of [(F/2)+3]S.

>>>>>[This spell is amazing! If you concentrate hard enough, you can create amazing detail. I once conducted a negotiation for a run using this spell. Johnson never knew what was up.]<<<<<

-Shadow Dancer (13:15:25/12-15-56)

>>>>>[He does now.]<<<<<

-Joe Johnson (17:26:17/12-20-56)

>>>>>[No he doesn't. I was masked at the same time.]<<<<<

-Shadow Dancer (07:46:23/12-22-56)

### Aural Entertainment

This spell is the same as the Entertainment spell (p. 156, SR11), except that it is only aural in nature. The number of successes indicates the quality and realism of the sounds produced. Successes can also be used to increase volume.

**Type:** Physical **Range:** LOS **Target:** 4

**Duration:** Sustained **Drain:** [(F/2)+2]L

>>>>>[A simple spell. Sure as hell can get you out of a large number of scrapes. Like to use it to create gunfire when I'm on the run or in a jam. Combine that with the regular entertainment, for muzzle flash's sake, and you've got yourself instant backup.]<<<<<

-Shadow Dancer (13:25:26/12-15-56)

# FASA Info!

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### Sourcebooks

*Virtual Realities 2.0* by Paul Hume is shipping in November 1995

*Awakenings: New Magic* by Steve Kenson in 2057 is shipping in December 1995

*Australia* by Corey Swallow is shipping in January 1996

*Running Short* by various authors in February 1996

*Threats* by various authors is shipping in April 1996

### Various

*Shadowrun Trading Card Game* - mid 1996.

### Novels

*World's Without End* by Caroline Spector shipping September 1995.

*Just Compensation* by Robert Charrette shipping November 1995

*Black Madonna* by Carl Sargent shipping February 1996

*Preying for Keeps* by Mel Odom shipping April 1995.

## Errata

### Cybertechnology -

p. 90 the 6 Million Nuyen Street Samurai  
The Essence should read -0.76.

P. 89 the Cyber Assassin

The Adrenal Pump should be deleted and the Body should read 4.5. The Adrenal Pump was not calculated into the characters stats.

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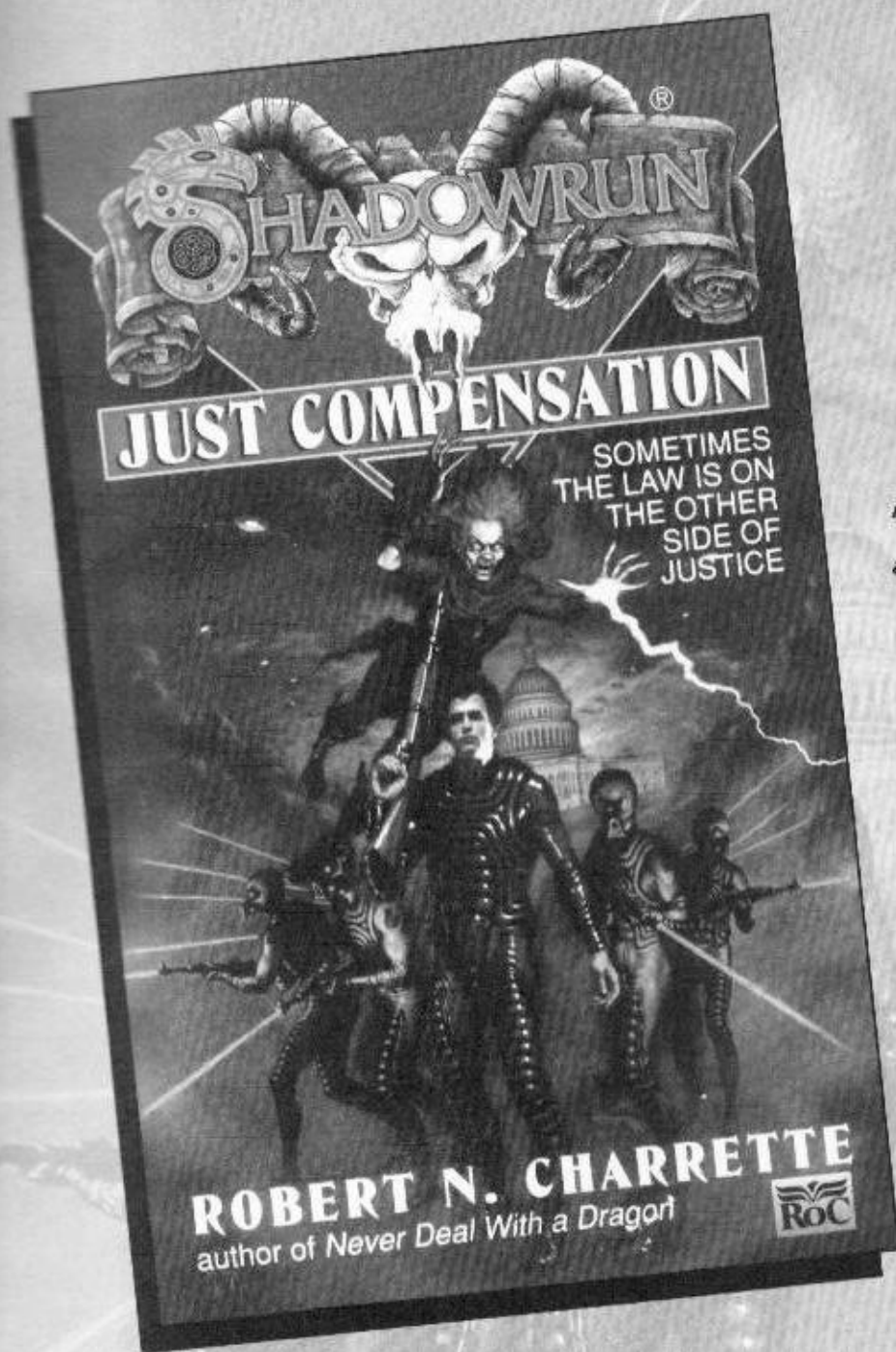
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